

Passionate IT developer overcomes disability to celebrate 10 years with Shoprite

Magda Spence, a senior developer for the Shoprite Group, has not let her disability curtail her potential and has for the last ten years been part of a dynamic team that finds IT solutions to retail challenges.

Spence is deaf and joined the IT team in 2009 as a Test Automation Developer for Money Market. She paid her dues and moved through the ranks at Money Market to the position she currently occupies.

“Shoprite has definitely provided me with new and exciting challenges. It is the kind of place where if you are open about the direction of your professional growth, people will create opportunities for exactly that growth and development,” says Spence.

She obtained a B.Tech in Software Engineering from Unisa in 2005, and says that because she is shy one of her greatest challenges involves telling people of her disability: “People don’t know that in order for me to lip read, they must face me and not put their hands in front of their mouths.”

“It’s best to let people know from the onset and to remind them of your needs and shortcomings and how they can accommodate you,” she advises people managing their disabilities in the workplace.

Originally from Goodwood, where she attended mainstream institutions throughout her school career, Spence now lives near the Shoprite home office in Brackenfell and enjoys trying new recipes and watching cooking shows-

“I was born deaf and so was my mother and sister, but my grandfather, a former school principal, insisted that my sister and I not attend a special school for the deaf. It was very difficult because we had to work harder in order to succeed in our studies. Also as an introvert, I struggled to mingle with the other kids.” However the difficulty they experienced as children prepared them well for conditions in the ‘real world’ and today both she and her sister are successful professionals in their chosen careers.

Spence is full of praise for her team, who always accommodates her: “They take care to speak clearly and face me when addressing me. They also do not mind when I ask them to repeat something because I could not lip read or understand.” She is inspired by them and is very grateful to those who have mentored her through the years. A senior member of the team, she now acts as mentor allowing younger colleagues to benefit from her extensive experience and knowledge.

END

CAPTION: Magda Spence, who is deaf, has not let her disability stand in the way of a successful career as a senior developer in Shoprite’s IT department.