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Style Series: Founder of Black Pumps Inc: Noni Nwasike

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[Black Pumps Inc](#) is an organization focused on advancing African women in career, business, and wellness all over the world. Could you tell us a little bit more about the mission of your organization?

We're trying to step outside the normal to do something different. If you look around the nation, there are a lot of professional organizations, but there are none targeted toward African women. So we thought there was a vacuum there that we could fill. And we can also take the initiative to Nigeria where it can really be effective to

helping women there as well. Black Pumps was formed because we know that technical skills can only get you so far. Much of the rest is networking and finding a sponsor or a person who will mentor you and use their political capital to help you get to the next level.

I'm also huge on wellness. In Africa, you see women not knowing how to do their medical checkups. There's no medical screening. That's what I want to help with through our organization, because I believe in the total woman, the total package.



What does the name Black Pumps mean?

I love shoes more than I even love purses. If you go into my closet now, there are probably over 100 pairs of shoes, but there's always those black pumps that will take you everywhere. It doesn't matter where you're going or what you're wearing- I'll take them to soccer, to the grocery store, to work, to dinner or to go shopping. I look at them as being versatile, and I look at a black woman being like that. We're smart, versatile, intelligent, classy, flexible and everything that a black pump represents. Also, I look at the name as [an acronym], **Pulling Up Magnificent Professional Sisters**. So you can look at the name either way.

Why is an organization like this needed?

I've always had the passion of helping young girls. I work for a very large CPA firm and one year, we went to women's regional conference. In a room full of 200 women, I was the only African woman there, and the only black woman there. For example, look at the Fortune 500 companies. Out of all of these CEOs, you only have 1 black woman.

When I look around at many different organizations, there aren't many black partners, and even fewer black women partners. The corporations have to lean in and we [as black and African women] have to lean in. We need to be taught the tools to get to the higher echelons of the company.

Based on the name, Black Pumps, we think you know the power of a good wardrobe staple. How would you say style of dress makes an impact on the way people view women in business?

Often in business, perception is the truth. You have to dress for the job, that's what it's all about. Also, you have to bring in your style to everything you do, because that's your authentic self. You can't go into your job dressed as a secretary, you must dress for the job. You have to wear something that makes people look at you, then look at you again.



You have a lot on you plate, what motivates you?

This is what God wants me to do. If you're *passionate* about what you're doing and you're *persistent* and push forward, you will be successful. It'll take time but it will be successful.

How do you manage to schedule time for both your personal and business life?

Time management has always been my good skill. There are only 24 hours in a day, I wish there was more but unfortunately I've always been a workaholic. I work for an accounting firm so I've worked 20 hour days but the thing that keeps me healthy and strong is the huge support from my family. My husband supports me and my

children support me, and they are grown so it gives me more time to do other things. Also, I don't relent on my exercise, I exercise a lot and that keeps me sane.

What is the best piece of business advice you've ever received? How about fashion advice?

The best business advice I've ever received is to trust your own instincts and go with it and that's what I've done. When I trust my own instincts, it always works better for me. Another one that is not that great but I have to follow is that, if you want to do something well, you have to do it yourself. I always have to do something and lead by example. If I start a new project, I can always delegate the work to other people, but by doing it the first time myself, I then know the best way to delegate the work the next time.

My father gave me my first fashion advice. He always says be proud of your color, and that's what I do with fashion. [In Nigeria] I wanted a white pair of closed toed shoes but my father advised that I start with the black pump because it is a basic that goes with everything. His advice has always been to remain classic and don't go with what's in Vogue, because many years later I can bring out [those pieces] and wear them again.

What are some of your sources for inspiration in business and fashion?

I turned 50 this year so I've thinking about this for a while. I contemplated what I could do to give back and how I could inspire others to give back. When you leave this earth, what are you known for? What have you done? What life have you changed? God put us on this earth to do something and I've always believed that, to whom much is given, much is required. God has given so many riches and there is so much you can do, you're not going to the grave with that [money], so change a life. If you can just change one life, that would be great. I want to encourage my African women to give back to society, fully give back. Medical missions are good but something that's more sustainable, something that will permanently change somebody's life.





Since 1st Class Fashion is both about traveling in style and looking fashionable every day, we want to know a little about your chic travel secrets.

I travel a lot for work and pleasure, and I really plan out my travels. Let's say I'm going to the Bahamas and staying at the Cove. I always think, "what am I going to do there, and who am I going to see there?" I really believe in networking; you don't know where you'll meet someone, so I always pack according to where I'm going. I always bring something nice and something casual, and I always over pack. If I'm going for 4 days, you would think I'm going for a month.

What long-term changes would you like to take place for the Black Pumps organization in the future?

The plan is to grow it. We want to launch it in Nigeria in January and our first annual conference is at the Vdara during the last weekend in July. We're still looking for sponsors for that event. We are not trying to be apologetic, everything we're going to be doing will be grand so we want to attract people who have the resources to give back. We also want more people to get involved with the 2x20 project, to give back and change people's lives. If you change one girls' life, you will change her family and her community. (The mission