Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE5387

Exel, Audette

(1963 -)

Born	19630101, Dunedin / Ng?i Tahu Otago New Zealand
Occupation	Businesswoman, Lawyer, Managing Director, Philanthropist

Summary

Elected a Global Leader of Tomorrow by the World Economic Forum, Audette Exel is a founder of the Adara Group, established in 1998, and Chief Executive Officer of its Australian private placement and corporate advisory business, Adara Advisors. A qualified lawyer, she has used her knowledge of corporate law to establish not for profit businesses that help to generate wealth for women and children in developing nations.

Her business success has seen her recognised with multiple awards over the years. She was the recipient of the Economic Justice and Community Impact Award from the Young Presidents Organisation Social Enterprise Networks in 2010. In 2012, Exel won the Telstra 2012 NSW Commonwealth Bank Business Owner Award, and she was the winner of the 2012 NSW Telstra Business Woman of the Year Award. She was also one of The Australian Financial Review's 100 Women of Influence in Australia in 2012. In 2013, Exel was awarded an honorary Order of Australia for 'service to humanity through the establishment of the Adara Group to provide specialist care to women and children in Uganda and Nepal' and was recognised by Forbes as a 'Hero of Philanthropy' in 2014.

Details

Audette Exel was born in New Zealand in 1963, the second child of Mary and David Exel. Her father, journalist David Exel, covered the Vietnam War for the New Zealand Press Association in the 1960s and early 1970s, during which time his family was based in Singapore. This gave Exel the opportunity to experience multiculturalism first hand. It had a great impact on her.

Following her schooling, Exel, undertook a law degree in Australia at the University of Melbourne. Already a passionate advocate for a variety of social justice issues (she was particularly active in the anti-apartheid rallies that coincided with the 1981 Springbok World tour), Exel realised during her time at university that if she was going to create significant change for people in need, she needed to understand the worlds of business, money and power. To the shock of many of her friends, who assumed Exel would use her Arts/Law degree to work in the field of Human Rights, she instead began a career in corporate law at Allen, Allen and Hemsley in Sydney. This was followed by a stint in Hong Kong with UK law firm Linklaters & Paines. She quickly developed a reputation as a specialist in international finance, an interest that would see her move to Bermuda in 1992.

Exel began her time in Bermuda working with a small law firm, but at age 30, she became one of the youngest women ever to run a publicly traded bank when she became Managing Director of Bermuda Commercial Bank (BCB), one of Bermuda's three banks. During her tenure, she managed to bring the then failing bank to profitability, returning an average increase in profits of over 75% p.a., increasing assets by US$280 million, and increasing the assets under administration, custody and trust by over US$2 billion to US$4.5 billion. With Exel at the helm, the BCB became the best performing bank on the Bermuda Stock Exchange (BSX). During 1995 and 1996, Exel was also Chairman of the BSX, and from 1999 to 2005, she was on the Board of the Bermuda Monetary Authority, Bermuda's central financial services regulator, and was Chair of its Investment Committee.

Despite her great success at BCB, by 1997 Exel was yearning to return to her social justice roots. She began to think of ways she could use the skills she had developed over her career to help people in need. She spent the next year travelling and learning about development work before beginning the Adara Group (formerly the ISIS Group).

The Adara Group was born from Exel trying to reimagine ways of achieving equality, wealth, security and hope in the world, and was driven by two underlying philosophies. The first was the belief that all people deserve good quality health and education services, no matter where they live. The second is that the halls of business and power have incredible potential for creating change for communities in need.

Given these guiding principles, Adara Development implements international development work, undertaking projects in three main areas of expertise: maternal infant child health, remote and rural community development, and care, support, and reintegration of children at risk. Adara also conducts detailed research to ensure projects are always evidence-based, and shares the knowledge it has gained locally, nationally and globally in the hope of making a greater impact. It is estimated that since the group began in 1998 the organisation has reached hundreds of thousands of people.

The principles also inform the operations of Adara Advisors which Exel describes as 'a business for purpose rather than profit'. It exists solely to fund Adara Development's administration costs and emergency project costs. At the end of 2014, Adara Advisors had donated more than US$6.89 million (AU$8.3 million) to Adara Development. This innovative partnership model allows 100% of all other donations received by Adara Development to go directly to improving health and education for women, children and communities living in poverty.

Alongside her work with Adara, Exel is also the Vice Chairman of the Board of Steamship Mutual Underwriting Association Trustee (Bermuda) Limited. Steamship Mutual is one of the world's largest Protection and Indemnity clubs for the shipping industry. She is also a Non-Executive Director of Suncorp Group Limited, an ASX 20 company.

Exel's achievements through the Adara Group have seen her recognised with multiple awards over the years. She was the recipient of the Economic Justice and Community Impact Award from the Young Presidents Organisation Social Enterprise Networks in 2010. In 2012, Exel won the Telstra 2012 NSW Commonwealth Bank Business Owner Award, and she was the winner of the 2012 NSW Telstra Business Woman of the Year Award. She was also one of The Australian Financial Review's 100 Women of Influence in Australia in 2012. In 2013, Exel was awarded an honorary Order of Australia for 'service to humanity through the establishment of the Adara Group to provide specialist care to women and children in Uganda and Nepal' and was recognised by Forbes as a "Hero of Philanthropy" in 2014.

Published resources

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Article
Rebel With a Cause: How Audette Exel is bridging worlds, Richards, Nicole, 2014,
http://www.generositymag.com.au/rebel-with-a-cause-how-audette-exel-is-bridging-worlds/

Banker Saves 20,000 From Nepal to Uganda With Her Profits, McDonald, Sarah and Mellor, William, 2013,
http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-07-30/banker-saves-20-000-from-nepal-to-uganda-with-her-profits

Resource Section
Audette Exel: High Flyer, Leser, David, 2012,
https://davidleser.wordpress.com/2012/06/03/audette-exel-high-flyer/

Site Exhibition
Australian Women Lawyers as Active Citizens, Trailblazing Women Lawyers Project Team, 2016,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/lawyers

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Digital resources



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