

# ICF Conference Program

## Session 1:

Keynote Speaker:

Debra Patta

## **Topic: Lesson from History's Front Row Seat – Making a Difference in South Africa**

### **SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY**

Debra Patta is one of the most respected broadcasters in South Africa.

Her 20 year career spans radio and television as both an on-air newswoman and a senior editorial manager.

She began working in radio freelancing for the BBC and in 1990 started at the well-known Johannesburg based talk radio station 702. Here she started as a reporter and worked her way up to News Editor covering some of the biggest stories of the day. She is particularly well-known for her coverage of Nelson Mandela from his release to his election as South Africa's first black head of state and of course his presidency.

Patta moved to independent free-to-air television station e.tv in 1998 where she is currently Executive Producer and host of the current affairs show Third Degree .

Until September 2009 she was the Editor-in-Chief of e.news. She has trained and mentored a generation of reporters and led the team that launched South Africa's first 24 hour news service. Under Patta's leadership e.news became the most watched English television news service in the country.

As host and EP of Third Degree, Patta has become famous for her no-holds-barred interviewing style in which she is not afraid to ask the tough questions. Third Degree is a cutting edge investigative journalism programme which has the highest audience ratings of any current affairs programme in South Africa across all channels.

Patta is an multi-award winning journalist – her most recent being Vodacom's Media Woman of the Year for 2009. Patta has also co-authored two books Baby Micaela and One Step Behind Mandela.

She has covered stories ranging from South Africa's township violence in the late eighties and early nineties, the Rwandan genocide, Nelson Mandela's release and Presidency, Princess Diana's Death, 9/11, Obama Election campaign and virtually every major event in South Africa's history over the past 20 years. She has interviewed heads of state, business leaders, actors and actresses – all in her trademark tough interviewing style.

## **Abstract**

Well-known investigative journalist Debora Patta draws from her 20 years of broadcast experience to look at what makes South Africa, despite all its problems, a great nation.

She looks at stories that have made headlines over the past two decades as well as interviews with politicians, celebrities and business leaders. Debora will draw the lessons from her unique front row seat on history and look at what we can do to make a difference in South Africa.