

PASSION

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IMPACT OF THE APC RESULTS

We have much rebuilding to do!

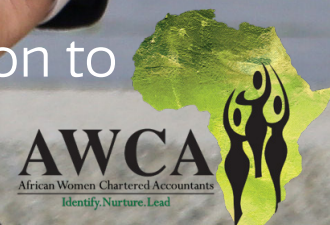
CLAIM YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

- Workplace bullying
- Go on a workcation
- Tips for juggler moms

EXTRA, EXTRA
Compassionate leadership needed urgently!

PROFESSOR MAMOKGETHI PHAKENG

On demystifying the stereotype that Black women have affirmative action to thank for their top positions



DEVELOP AS WE LEAD



129 BURSARY STUDENTS



7308 QUALIFIED BLACK FEMALE CAS(SA)

MEMBERSHIP TIERS

Student
R150

Trainee Accountant
R650

Core Membership
(Qualified CA)
R1250

Friend of AWCA
R1250

Corporate Membership
R75 000

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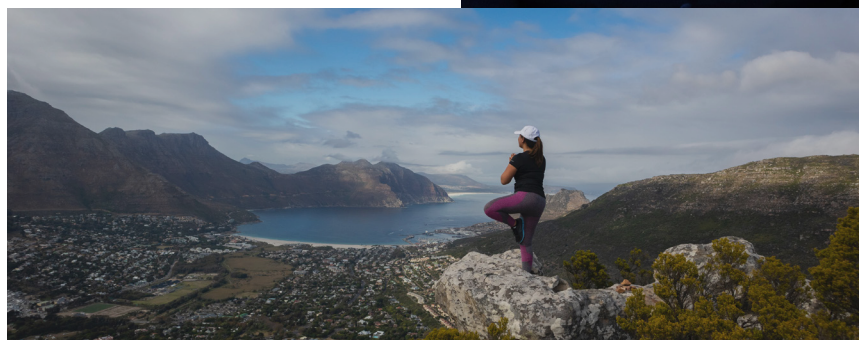
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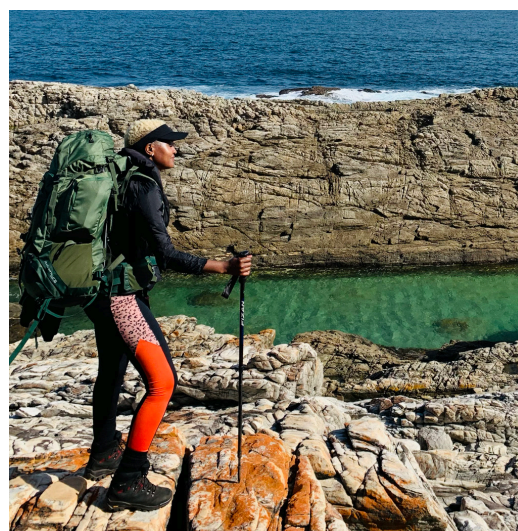
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TIME TO ROLL UP
OUR SLEEVES

As I write my last President's note, South Africa is deeply embroiled in a concerning state of affairs. From the second quarter unemployment statistics cautioning that the economy needs urgent restoration to citizens demanding a new dispensation... change is beckoning hard!

In pre-pandemic times, there already was a low negative growth signalling that to restore the economy, much needed to be done across all spheres of society. Upon careful inspection of the Economic Recovery and Reconstruction Plan that President Cyril Ramaphosa first announced in October 2020, we are reminded that the meaningful participation of women is one of the key contributors in ensuring that we restore and grow our economy. Given how far off we still are in transforming the leadership structures in most entities, gender mainstreaming in South Africa, sadly, has no end date. That said, the AWCA's mandate of increasing the number of Black female CAs(SA) will clearly never be redundant. We cannot tire until we have edged closer to ensuring that women have meaningful representation in economic structures.

Throughout lockdown, the country was forced to sit up and take note of the intolerably high Gender-Based Violence (GBV) statistics. GBV infringes on the basic human rights of women, impacts their self-esteem and how they show up in the world. Having a campaign that implored men to declare a war against the GBV scourge, and urge their peers to join in, was a big milestone for our organisation. Prior to the pandemic, we had noted that mental health ailments were an ongoing challenge within our profession. We, therefore, became intentional about weaving mental health narratives into all our interactions and events.

South Africa's July 2021 civil unrest brought Black people's plight to the fore, and further highlighted the socio-economic ills – unemployment, inequality and poverty – that still exist among us. These events, and many others that seldom attract media attention, placed a spotlight on the importance of an organisation like the AWCA in providing access to education as a key tool in undoing some of South Africa's social ills. Crafting a permanent solution to these stubborn socio-economic ills starts with good leadership. On page 40, Net1 CEO Lincoln Mali penned a double-page column titled *A Humane Approach to Leadership*, in which he ponders on a new cohort of leaders needed to urgently lead with "integrity, a moral compass and a conscience!"

The 2021 Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) results (page 20) continue to propel us to dissect the issues causing a sharp decline in the pass rate of Black candidates, particularly females. It has been rather heartbreaking to observe the loss of the past transformation gains made in the CA profession. Though South Africa's population of Black female CAs(SA) has increased to 7308 to date, this is not happening at a rate representative of what we observe across gender and racial lines when strolling the streets of South Africa.

This recurring challenge with the APC results has highlighted the importance of concerted collaborations with key stakeholders within the profession. Most notably, it has also allowed us to introspect! During conversations with stakeholders, we came to the stark reality that the same ecosystem of challenges that previously hindered Black candidates from achieving the same pass rate as their White counterparts exist to this day. The impact of these APC results is far-reaching. They have placed

a question mark around our leadership initiatives, and earnest intention of building a lesion of ethical, formidable Black female CAs(SA) to lead in the private and public sectors. What impact can we later have in our members' leadership development journey if the pipeline and throughput rate of Black female CAs(SA) is declining? We are resolute in our commitment to see change in this space. Our members, and the profession at large, can rest assured that we continue to join heads with our key stakeholders in pinpointing these challenges and systematically addressing them. One of these solutions is ensuring that we have enough touchpoints, with our members, to help us successfully execute our three-tier strategy – *Identify, Nurture and Lead*.

Taking over the AWCA leadership reins back in 2018 was not a responsibility that I took lightly. I will be the first to admit that it unnerved me, slightly, because I was stepping into the gigantic shoes of past Presidents and many indelible trails previously blazed by the founding members. I now realise that the dedication to the AWCA's core pillars displayed by the current board, various subcommittees, Student Chapters, esteemed stakeholders and members helped in quickly quelling any initial anxieties I may have felt. My AWCA leadership tenure is testament to author John C. Maxwell's quote: "The truth is that teamwork is at the heart of great achievement."

Of the many highlights the AWCA achieved in the past three years, I am particularly proud of the initiatives outlined below. They, in my humble opinion, were proof points of our continuous effort to meet our members' most pressing professional and social needs.

#FlourishFriday. This initiative has become an important platform that recognises the achievements of women across various leadership tiers and sectors. It has given us room, outside of the annual Recognition Awards, to acknowledge and keep up with celebrating the slew of accolades attained by many successful women out there. This has helped broaden the base and visibility of role models that inspire and motivate young girls and women.

ITC Workshop. After noticing the need to prop up the support for candidates writing their first board exam (ITC), we added this initiative to our suite of technical workshops targeted at assisting our members in preparing for their board exams.

Workplace Readiness Programme. Intergenerational changes, coupled with being mindful of what drives millennials and Generation Zs, led to this initiative that aims to holistically prepare our members for the student-to-first-time-employee transition. A trainee entering the workplace is technically strong as they would have recently completed their CTA/postgraduate studies. This initiative bolsters their soft skills and provides 'soft landing' in the work environment.

Financial Wellness Training. We often assume that by virtue of members having spent four years studying accounting and related subjects, they are therefore well-equipped in handling their personal budgets. Not the case, unfortunately! Most of our members need to handle rent and car instalments for the first time in their lives, while balancing this with a sense of obligation to look after their parents and other family members. Through this initiative, our members learn how to take conscious ownership of their financial journey and a mindful approach to wealth creation.

Career Lift-Off. We curated this offering to serve the segment of our membership currently at the end

of their articles. We found that the first big decision may be choosing the CA profession but the second, and often most confusing, is deciding what career stream to follow post articles. The Career Lift-Off programme guides our members in making the most informed decisions on where to use their skills and knowledge.

Entrepreneurship Forum Summit. This annual gathering presented an opportunity to address the challenges our members grapple with by curating appropriate discourse and networking platforms that support them on their entrepreneurial journeys.

Website Relaunch. The revamp was a big exercise aimed at solidifying the AWCA's online presence and reputation.

To ensure the seamless continuity of the AWCA's leadership structures, we have always leaned towards subcommittee structures and succession planning. We are currently in the process of a leadership handover. I am confident in the future leadership of the AWCA to lead with vigour, while continuing to address the systemic challenges in our profession. This is certainly not a goodbye from me! I will lend my help through other support structures such as the AWCA Advisory Council – a pertinent body made up of the AWCA's founding members and past Presidents – that continues to fortify the leadership of the organisation.

Leading the AWCA has stretched me in unimaginable ways, and brought more purpose into my life. Many full circle moments have been gratifying to witness. But none have been as impactful as identifying a bright-eyed and energetic young girl in high school – encouraging them along the way, watching them complete university through their active involvement in the AWCA Student Chapters, and finally seeing them qualify, enter the workplace and live out some of the dreams they once considered too far removed for them to achieve. This, has filled my cup.

I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to our founding members for their vision, and past Presidents for laying a strong foundation that has solidified the AWCA's place in the market. We are proud of the many effective collaborations with our key stakeholders established over the years. A heartfelt 'thank you' to SAICA for providing operational support to the AWCA, as well as other professional organisations for the meaningful partnerships and collaborations.

We are also eternally grateful to our corporate sponsors, and those companies that find alignment with the AWCA's vision and mission by providing the financial or non-monetary support that propels the work that we do. A big 'thank you' to the passionate ladies who serve on the various subcommittees, and the board members for their tireless work – particularly the Deputy President, who supports me closely in my role.

The daily running of the AWCA office would be unfeasible were it not for the efforts and patience of the following individuals – Zea Zama (Operations Manager), Gugu Mthonti (Office Administrator) and Phumelele Zulu (Finance clerk).

Lastly, a big 'thank you' to our members, our *raison d'être*!

Yours in service,

Zama Khanyle, Outgoing President of the AWCA

2021 AWCA BOARD MEMBERS

Meet the dynamic leaders invested in making the AWCA a force to be reckoned with.



Zama Khanyile CA(SA)

AWCA Board Designation: President

Job Title: Divisional Executive: Venture Capital and Corporate Finance, National Empowerment Fund (NEF)

What social cause is important to you? Any cause that seeks to even out the playing field. We are all born equal and full of natural and nurtured potential. However, the hurdles we face come in different sizes. Inequality exacerbates the impact of these hurdles. We, therefore, have to ensure that these hurdles are done away with over time. As a Black woman, the issues of Black people and Black women in particular are close to my heart. I dedicate my time to assisting the most marginalised demographic.

What song best summarises your career journey?

I'm Coming Out by Dianna Ross



Buhle Hanise CA(SA)

AWCA Board Designation: Deputy President

Job Title: Chief Financial Officer, BAIC SA

What social cause is important to you?

Empowerment. We need to work towards having equal opportunities for women. A perfect world would be one where women occupy and lead the majority of JSE-listed companies, SOEs and in government.

What song best summarises your career journey?

I Know Who I Am by Sinach



Zama Gumede CA(SA)

AWCA Board Designation: KwaZulu-Natal Board Member

Job Title: Accounting and Taxation Lecturer, University of KwaZulu-Natal

What social cause is important to you? Empowering young women through access to information, career guidance and economic empowerment.

What song best summarises your career journey?

Can't Give Up Now by Mary Mary



Thina Themhani CA(SA)

AWCA Board Designation: Strategic Alliances

Job Title: Executive Assistant to Rest of Africa CEO, Rand Merchant Bank

What social cause is important to you and why?

Issues pertaining to youth and women are very dear to my heart. My lived experiences as a young woman have made me empathetic to these challenges. Outside of the AWCA, I'm a volunteer in several NGOs focused on the developmental needs of young women.

What song best summarises your career journey?

You Are The Universe by The Brand New Heavies



Hlengiwe Ndlela CA(SA)

AWCA Board Designation: KwaZulu-Natal Deputy Chairperson

Job Title: Assurance Markets Segment, Ernst & Young

What social cause is important to you? Women and youth empowerment – through development, mentorship and equal pay. When you empower a woman, you empower an entire nation. The current youth are the future of our country, and we need to start preparing them for taking up the leadership reins someday.

What song best summarises your career journey?

Can You Stand The Rain by New Edition.



Pumla Nhantsi CA(SA)

AWCA Board Designation: Marketing and Public Relations

Job Title: Fund Manager, Visio Fund Management

What social cause is important to you? Gender inequality and quality education, the latter being the key to alleviating poverty and uplifting communities. Though they have the qualifications, women still lag behind men where salaries and top leadership positions are concerned.

What song best summarises your career journey? *Stronger* by Kanye West



Nokukhanya Sithole CA(SA)

AWCA Board Designation: Western Cape Chairperson

Job Title: Group Executive: Finance, AYO Technology Solutions

What social cause is important to you? I'm passionate about education. It is the key to unlocking many opportunities. Education has the power to illuminate minds, influence behaviour in the direction of success and improve communities.

What song best summarises your career journey? *Girl On Fire* by Alicia Keys



Lebogang Senne CA(SA)

AWCA Board Designation: AWCA Secretary General
Job Title: Technical Director, Pan African Federation of Accountants (PAFA)

What social cause is important to you?

Social inequality. I believe that once we end inequality, we'll be one step closer to addressing its siblings — poverty and unemployment. We cannot, and should not, continue living in a country where others are left behind due to circumstances outside of their control.

What song best summarises your career journey?

Something Inside So Strong by Labi Siffre (PS: I prefer Lira's rendition)



Nonkululeko Sigudu CA(SA)

AWCA Board Designation: KwaZulu-Natal Chairperson

Job Title: COO, Sphola Consulting

What social cause is important to you? Poverty alleviation. When people are hungry, not only does it affect their stomachs but it also leaves them with a negative view of themselves and the world. This, in turn, robs society of future innovators who could contribute positively to our economy.

What song best summarises your career journey?

It Wasn't Easy by Cece Winans



Gugulethu Mayisela CA(SA)

AWCA Board Designation: Leadership Academy and Entrepreneurs Forum

Job Title: Managing Director, New Era Projects

What social cause is important to you? The empowerment of women and African people. I believe in justice, equality and equity.

What song best summarises your career journey?

Run the World (Girls) by Beyonce



Tumi Mokgoko CA(SA)

AWCA Board Designation: Professional Development and Woman of Substance

Job Title: Regulatory Investigations Specialist, Johannesburg Stock Exchange

What social cause is important to you? Mental wellness. The lockdown has reinforced just how urgently access to mental health services is needed. Having witnessed the effects of the July 2021 political riots and looting on the mental health of South African citizens, I'm passionate about access for those who mostly need it.

What song best summarises your career journey?

Dark Fantasy by Kanye West

Phetogo Mabaso CA(SA)

AWCA Board Designation: Finance and Power Tea
Job Title: Senior Consultant: Financial Solutions and IFRS 17 Head, Munich Re (Group)

What social cause is important to you? It may sound clichéd, but I think empowering the youth and women is the best way to truly transform every sphere of society and to move our country, and the world, forward. This has the potential to improve the lives of the marginalised and future generations.

What song best summarises your career journey?

Wake Up Everybody by John Legend and The Roots featuring Common

A PURPOSE-DRIVEN *Student Life*

The AWCA Student Chapters are responsible for spreading the organisation's core mandate in universities and high schools around the country. This, along with creating awareness around the CA(SA) profession. Not discouraged by the current global pandemic, these driven young women continue to plan for the futures of their respective Chapters.





UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL WESTVILLE STUDENT CHAPTER

Executive Team: Ntobeko Ntombela (Chairperson), Noxolo Ngcobo (Deputy Chairperson), Nompumelelo Shezi (Public Relations), Asanda Mabovula (Treasurer), Sbongeleli Mpanza (Community Engagement), Tholumus Cele (Community Engagement) and Nomcebo Mdluli (Secretary)

Future Plans: "Our vision is to align our objectives with those of prominent accounting bodies such as SAICA. We believe that this will help us make an impact on smaller scales and reach those areas that big organisations may not be able to access. We are committed to developing students into impactful professionals who will serve with the utmost integrity in the future."



UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL PIETERMARITZBURG STUDENT CHAPTER

Executive Team: Lungile Vilakazi (Chairperson), Nonqubeko Hlongwa (Treasurer) and Wendy Hlongwa (Secretary)

Future Plans: "Our Student Chapter was previously unrecognised on campus but through our dedication to serving in the best interests of our fellow members, we eventually got approved. This, was a big milestone for the organisation. On our list of plans for the 2021/22 academic is providing mentorships for all members, and host meet-and-greets every semester with the aim of building a close-knit society. We also plan to invite qualified female CAs(SA) to more of our motivational talks. We have previously witnessed how the messages of encouragement from these talks help members keep their heads and shoulders up throughout their studies. Lastly, we plan to ramp up our high school drive in which we educate learners about the different facets of the accounting profession."



WITS UNIVERSITY STUDENT CHAPTER

Executive Team: Nonhlela Chauke (Chairperson), Noluthanda Vilakazi (Treasurer), Yolaine Ngueranga (Deputy Treasurer), Khanya Sibango (Outreach officer), Nomfundo Zitha (Media officer), Refilue Kome (Deputy Media officer) and Karabo Molefe (Deputy Secretary)

Future Plans: "Though many of our 2021 plans had to yet again be modified, and some frozen, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are still passionate about helping advance the CA(SA) profession in whatever creative way we can. As we sit back and anticipate how the 'new normal' will play itself out, we look forward to hosting more virtual initiatives – open-ended discussions to stay abreast of what is happening in the world, as well as tutorials informed by our members' needs. As part of our outreach programme, we look forward to doing more charity drives that will make a difference in nearby communities and schools."



MONASH UNIVERSITY STUDENT CHAPTER

Executive Team: Precious Mapanya (Chairperson), Mmathapelo Banda (Deputy chairperson), Prudence Sithole (General Secretary), Tabitha Ng'ambi (Treasurer), Sizo Hobo (Public Relations and Marketing), Jane Maleka (Community Engagement Officer) and Thato Mabaso (Social Media Liaison)

Future Plans: "The vision of the AWCA Monash University Chapter is to allow young Black women who aspire to be Chartered Accountants an opportunity to gain access to career opportunities, career development, professional and student mentorship and to gain critical skills that will allow her to excel in the future. We aim to attract a membership base of between 50 and 120 young women. This we plan to do by hosting events and programmes that are relevant, vital and will nurture their unique skills."



UNISA STUDENT CHAPTER

Executive Team: Phelokazi Madinga (Chairperson), Nomthandazo Mpungose (Deputy Chairperson), Usisipho Mdingi (Secretary) and Michelle Podisho (Treasurer)

Future Plans: "Some of our proudest highlights in the past include building a sponsorship relationship with the Auditor-General South Africa and visiting numerous high schools to offer career guidance. Among these schools was the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls. 2019 was our biggest year yet – we recruited more than 300 students to join the Student Chapter."

20% of these recruits weren't accounting students, but expressed how our events always contribute to their individual growth. Going forward, our main goal is to curate more development-focused events and to work closely with the collective leadership of the AWCA in supporting our members on their journey to becoming influential leaders."



UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO STUDENT CHAPTER

Executive Members: Moshole Kgothatso (Chairperson), Linda Mokgophi (Deputy Chairperson), Phetho Ramatsimele (Treasurer) and Khutso Motlotsi (Secretary)

Future Plans: "We recently elected a new executive for the 2021 academic year. This, after a year of no activity due to the pandemic. We look forward to implementing better changes, and hope that things will soon go back to normal. We cannot wait to help breed an entire generation of aspirant Chartered Accountants through our high school visits. Until then, we will continue flying the AWCA flag high."

MEET OUR 2021 Bursary Recipients

The AWCA, in partnership with the Motsepe Foundation, added two students to its cohort of bursary recipients this year.

We remain steadfast in living up to our commitment of developing and investing in more young Black women who aspire to join the CA(SA) profession.



Name: Ntombifuthi Nkuna

Hometown: Lethabile, North West

Institution: University of South Africa

Degree: Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Accounting Sciences (CTA), 4th year

How long have been funded by the AWCA? Since the start of 2021.

Career choice after qualifying: A Chartered Accountant practising in auditing. What have been some of your greatest lessons on this journey? It certainly hasn't been easy, but it remains fulfilling because this is what I have always aspired to become. Through it all, I have learnt to be patient, resilient and hardworking. I want to someday look back at the effort I have put in and be proud of myself. Thankfully, I have my family, friends and a mentor to always remind me of the bigger picture.

What's the first thing you plan to treat yourself to after qualifying? A getaway to relax and celebrate all my hard work.

Do you have a role model whose career you have always admired from afar? Media personality and entrepreneur Bonang Matheba. Even though we are not in the same industry, I'm in absolute awe of her work ethic and how she always pushes herself beyond any boundary.

How do you plan to pay it forward after qualifying? I plan to further my studies, and hopefully become an Auditor General in the near future. This, with the aim of inspiring more Black females who want to walk the same career path. I would also love to lend a helping hand where I can so that many more young women can achieve their dreams.

Favourite motto: The following words by the late Dr Maya Angelou fuel me: "You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from and how you can still come out of it."

Name: Nomathemba Tshabalala

Hometown: Bethlehem, Free State

Institution: North West University, Potchefstroom Campus

Degree: Bachelor of Accounting and currently Postgraduate Diploma in Accountancy, 5th year

How long have been funded by the AWCA? From January 2021.

Career choice after qualifying: I would like to pursue a career in auditing or taxation because I resonate more with the compliance side of the CA(SA) profession. What have been some of your greatest lessons on this journey? To use my professional skills to not only improve the quality of my life, but of those that I encounter too.

What's the first thing you plan to treat yourself to after qualifying? Definitely seeing more of the world and indulging in hobbies that I currently cannot afford [chuckles].

Do you have a role model whose career you have always admired from afar? I'm still charting my own journey and have not encountered anyone whose career path I wish to emulate.

How do you plan to pay it forward after qualifying? I would like to put my hand up for any opportunities that will assist me in mentoring those who desperately need guidance.

Favourite motto: Success and wanting to be great come with accepting that failure is inevitable!





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A Dream Definitely WORTH PURSUING

AWCA Deputy President **Buhle Hanise** urges young Black females not to be deterred by the declining APC exam results.

I have always considered myself a catalyst for change. It is a purpose I make an effort to squeeze into my daily schedule. It is also a passion that I inherited from both my parents, who share a deep love for education. From as far back as I can remember, my parents stopped at nothing to help young people in our hometown to further their studies. It was a noble gesture on their part, one that left me with many older siblings that I am not related to by blood.

ALL IT TAKES

Why the aforementioned point, you may be wondering? In this age of individualism, we really need to extend and adapt the 'it takes a village to raise a child' maxim to educating young people – especially young Black females! What would be equally important and compelling is encouraging more and more CAs(SA) that have walked this professional journey to share the hard truths about making it to the top.

The fact of the matter is that no chartered accountancy qualification journey is similar to the next. Some journeys are long, and winding, based on the course conversions one may have to make. These are usually dependent on which institution one studied through, or the number of times they have attempted the two pertinent board exams. And then there are those diligent candidates who complete in record time. Whether you reached the finish line first or last has no bearing on the future success of your career. What matters, and separates the winners from the strugglers on this journey, is a trait as basic as resilience.

The 2021 Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) outcomes have had many tongues wagging – and for justifiable reasons. In fact, the alarming trend of the past three years has taken us back to the drawing board, where together with our stakeholders and founding members, we have been deliberating on some strategies that will help us forge ahead.

Out of a total of 1 639 Black females that took the 2019 APC, 934 were unsuccessful. The 2020 results saw a 14% drop with 1 368 of the 1 792 Black females that sat down for the APC failing. SAICA described the overall 2021 APC pass rate of 43% as disturbingly low. Even more concerning was the Black female pass rate of a mere 24%, out of the 1 792 candidates that wrote the exam.

THE APC WAR

This regression is disheartening given that we had already made giant strides in growing these numbers. It's a realisation that has forced us out of our comfort zones and compelled us to tweek our three-tier strategy. We have decided to pour more resources into supporting the 'Identify' tier, which is our grassroots and most basic phase.

To say that Black females ranking at the bottom of the pass rate has not caused us many sleepless nights

would be a grave understatement. In a recent conversation with the AWCA's founding members, we came to the debilitating realisation that between 2018 and 2021, the Black female pass rate had declined to pre-2002 levels. It was in the year 2002 that the AWCA was established with the pure aim of bolstering the number of qualified Black female CAs(SA).

There once was a time when both the APC pass rate painted a promising picture of more and more young Black females being handed their rightful spots at boardroom tables – based purely on merit and drive. Though that picture currently looks gloomy, it's no indication that nothing can be done to remedy the situation.

//

Our mission is to increase South Africa's number of Black female CAs(SA), while also ensuring that their career goals are not impeded by whatever systemic challenges they face along the way.

The present calls for us to show up to this 'declining pass rate' war fully armed, and ready to encourage more young Black females to still enter the profession – and arrive prepared to weather every storm. As the AWCA, we will support from the ground up by curating more experiences and events that support our new members' most fundamental needs.

We urge the current candidates, both new and returning, to remain energised and fight off the urge to be intimidated by the APC results of the past three years. And someday, when they finally make it to their positions of power, we encourage them to create more room at the boardroom table for other young Black aspirant CAs(SA).

DRAW STRENGTH FROM WITHIN

The APC at its core requires candidates to respond to real-life tasks expected of entry-level CAs(SA). It is a competency-based assessment that, via a case study, assesses the candidates' ability to demonstrate their professional competence which includes a review of a candidate's ethical, personal and professional attributes and their application of these skills to real-world scenarios using their technical know-how. This description brings to light the advantage of having mentors, or access to corporate environments, that will assist candidates in practising the line of technical and practical thinking required for passing an APC exam.

The reality of any unjust society is that where others work hard for their success, there are certain groups whose success will merely be handed to them on a silver platter. Ours isn't a mission that seeks to encourage Black female candidates to internalise inequalities and brand

themselves victims. Instead, we want to teach them to bulldoze any inequalities and obstacles that stand in their way by exposing them to various corporate and entrepreneurial opportunities that will help make their APC experience less intimidating. It may sound too simplistic, but adequate exposure to the right opportunities is the thin line between a 'pass' and 'fail'. We are inviting more organisations and corporates to help build the dream of a young Black female. They can achieve this through opening doors for job shadowing, agreeing to mentorship requests, willingly sharing information and creating opportunities where they can.

IN CLOSING

When the AWCA was established 19 years ago, there were only 407 African, Indian and Coloured female CAs(SA) out of a CA population of 20 903. Though we now live in an era where celebrating 'first Black to...' narratives is often viewed as somewhat barbaric and unnecessary, as the AWCA we have always carried our mission to the world with much aplomb!

Our mission is to increase South Africa's number of Black female CAs(SA), while also ensuring that their career goals are not impeded by whatever systemic challenges they face along the way. Bridging the gender gap between qualified male and female CAs(SA) is also another one of our focus areas. The aim is not to stop at just producing more Black female CAs(SA), but to empower them with the kind of expertise that will assist them in comfortably occupying future leadership positions.

One thing is for sure, a CA(SA) qualification opens many career doors. If planned with intention, it's a career journey that will expose those who dare face it head-on with invaluable experience, lifelong fulfilment and a professional siblinghood that will stand them in good stead for years to come.

CAREER EXPLORATION

The second annual Career Lift-Off event empowered trainee accountants with insights to make informed career decisions from the numerous options under the CA(SA) umbrella.

By Tumi Mokgoko CA(SA)



Famous author Richard Bach once said, "You are always free to change your mind and choose a different future, or a different past." In this ever-changing world, what our goals looked like when we were younger may be vastly different to what they look like today – and that's perfectly okay. In an effort to support these choices that often lead to meaningful change, the AWCA held its second annual Career Lift-Off event, albeit in a virtual format.

Following the resounding success of the inaugural Career Lift-Off workshop in October 2019, the AWCA's Professional Development sub-committee went to great lengths to share extensive information and different perspectives on the career paths available post qualifying as a CA(SA).

The aim of the event was to showcase the various career paths available to trainee CAs upon completion of their SAICA training contracts. This initiative was conceived after observing that the majority of newly qualified CAs(SA) tended to lack knowledge of, and exposure to, the various career options available to them.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic and its global impact, the Professional Development sub-committee thought it important to continue with its Career Lift-Off plans under a virtual format, instead of postponing to when a sense of normalcy returns. What

we had envisioned were a series of online events, with various themes, that tied into the possible questions that usually flooded the minds of trainees when trying to decide on the next career step.

The virtual series format was aligned to the key aspects of a trainee's journey outlined below:

TO STAY OR TO GO?

Upon completion of a SAICA training contract, most trainees grapple with whether to stay within audit or exit into corporate. Tshedza Commercial Tutorials accounting tutor Walter Mutsware CA(SA) talked us through his journey at KPMG. Taumang Talane CA(SA), Portfolio Management Associate at the Public Investment Corporation, drew a vivid picture of life in corporate South Africa.

SELLING YOURSELF – A GUIDE

HR specialist Bongumusa Sangweni and professional CV writing specialist Mawande Molosi shared invaluable knowledge on creating a professional public profile, writing a curriculum vitae that sets one apart from the crowd, the benefits of social media – and its related responsibilities. Trainees left better prepared to handle interviews and present a glowing professional profile.

CHICKEN OR BEEF?

Exploring the various industries within which CAs(SA)

can build fulfilling careers, the IDC's Lorna Moneti, Nancy Chakabuda of Cummins and Imtiaz Abdul from FNB unpacked the perks and challenges of pursuing careers in the public and commerce sectors, as well as the interesting career path of being the right hand to a CEO. Broad brushstrokes over the mettle required as well as a hunger for learning and growth were some of the key insights emphasised to attendees.

Due to the demand from trainees, a special segment was dedicated to career avenues in the financial services sector. ABSA Investment Banker Adjoah Kwawu and Private Equity Transactor at Sanlam Naledi Gule presented a solid case for the exciting world of corporate and investment banking.

Specialist careers also worthy of being explored, such as academia and technical accounting, were outlined by SAICA Top 35 Under 35 finalist Mojalefa Mosala and IFRS specialist Mthobisi Malinga.

The ability to change one's mind and choose a different future is a privilege that should never be taken for granted. The AWCA would like to extend its gratitude to the Professional Development sub-committee, and all the esteemed speakers who made the 2020 Career Lift-Off event a reality. We look forward to contributing to an increased pipeline of CAs(SA) who exercise their right to make informed choices.



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Know Better, DO BETTER

The disappointingly low APC exam pass rate of the past three years has been perceived as a cry for help. Despite lockdown, the AWCA continued with providing the much-needed APC Workshop.

By Tumi Mokgoko CA(SA)



On December 5, 2020, the AWCA hosted its first-ever virtual Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) Workshop – different setting, same impact. This preparation workshop was aimed at assisting candidates to prepare for an exam that has become notorious for its dismal pass rates over the past three years.

As is custom, the AWCA was determined to play its part by being a vehicle of change. This, we achieved by delivering a workshop with substance, invaluable takeaways and impact – despite the lockdown restrictions.

The workshop was driven by the APC participants' specific needs. Both our content and selection of speakers were guided by a prior questionnaire that we used as a needs analysis to map out the candidates' key areas of concern and focus. We thought it necessary to host a workshop targeted at addressing not only technical gaps

and exam technique, but mental space and anxiety management as well.

CLASS IN SESSION

Our guest speakers represented each of the key areas we wanted to address. They were APC marker Desiree Maseko, APC lecturer Ferdinand Mokete as well as two past candidates, with vastly different experiences, to convey some of the lessons learnt on their APC journeys.

Integrated thinking comprising technical competencies, enabling competencies, professional values and attitude were the building blocks of Mokete's presentation. The esteemed KPMG partner with a passion for education and the youth kicked off proceedings with the characteristics of a responsible leader. Simulating the exam with short questions, pre-release points, research and APC groups, Mokete managed to capture all the fundamental principles and key focus areas the APC candidates should

address in their preparation.

This was followed by the question on most APC candidates' minds: "What do markers look for?" Maseko shared some nuggets on how candidates can successfully respond to questions and present their solutions. Maseko's practical guidelines had attendees on the edges of their seats – virtually, that is.

The rest of her presentation focused on the dos and don'ts of exam technique, e-writing tips, time management, exam curveballs, what makes a script easier to mark and the two words every APC candidate loves to hate – depth and coverage. In closing, she reiterated that candidates needed to give their full attention and dedication to each task, and be conscious of the length and complexity of their answers as these could impact their chances of passing.

FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

The two real-life testimonies in the latter half of the workshop injected some much-needed enthusiasm, and also warned of the complacency that often engulfs trainees.

The first testimonial from Ashley Arandu, a third year trainee at Ernst and Young, gave practical steps on what it takes to achieve a competent rating based on her experience and the importance of consistency. "In the world of trainees, it is far too easy to be carried away with work deliverables and therefore neglect your studies," she warned.

Touching on the business ethics question that has appeared in previous exams, Arandu took attendees back to second year basics. She drew the focus away from the ethics of a CA, which candidates tend to focus solely on. Her discussion on strategy also included being strategic with one's file, something candidates incorrectly consider their 'holy grail'.

"The day before the exam should be dedicated to that file – flag it, know it and understand it so you know when not to rely on it and when it can come in handy," she advised. Lastly, she urged candidates to be honest with themselves, and do the work if they don't understand a trigger, standard or legislation. "Your group is not meant to act as a crutch but as a supplement," were the words she used to drive home her point.

The second presentation from Nhyira Asante, a past candidate who now works for Barclays as an



Remember your ability to pivot. You are not a tree, therefore being stuck is all in your mind!"



Investment Banking Analyst, embodied tenacity. Most importantly, her take on how candidates should dust themselves off after failing was exactly what everyone needed to hear. Whether they had previously failed the actual APC exam or a preparatory course exam, the temptation to think you 'CAN'T' when you actually 'CAN' plague, even, the strongest minds. "For the longest time, failure was an unfamiliar concept in my life.

I had to redefine failure and adopt a new mindset," Asante shared. Her tips on controlling anxiety by visualising the end goal, and employing a few effective coping mechanisms, made for good advice. Along with these words of encouragement, she also maintained the honest fact that the journey won't be easy. On the topic of feeling stuck and anxious during the exam, she shared the following: "Remember your ability to pivot. You are not a tree, therefore being stuck is all in your mind!" It is through platforms such as at the APC Workshop that the AWCA is able to achieve its vision of "Accelerating the advancement of Black female Chartered Accountants" through continuous efforts, dedication and passion from our members, stakeholders and teammates.

We are most grateful to our esteemed speakers for making the time to address our attendees. Your wisdom, insights and motivation went a long way in shaping many minds and dreams on this day. The effort that goes into successfully organising a virtual APC Workshop is one that cannot be overlooked. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to the Professional Development sub-committee and the AWCA office. Until the next one!

DISCLAIMER: The images used in this article are from the 2020 APC Workshop.



2021 Power Tea

This year's mentorship Power Tea theme explored Black women's role in post-school education and training.

By Zea Zama

A large part of what has always made the AWCA mentorship Power Tea event a success is its ability to provide access to industry leaders in a relaxed environment, while engaging in constructive and solution-based dialogue. **Enter the opportunity to dress up and show up – and you have a winning formula for robust engagement!**

Not even the COVID-19 pandemic could stop the AWCA team from rolling out the virtual red carpet and putting on a stellar show. This year's Power Tea event shone a spotlight on the role of Black women in post-school education and training (PSET). The PSET system provides the opportunity to develop, nurture and showcase the required competencies and skills for individuals to be exceptional at their roles.

The AWCA's 'Develop as we lead' motto is the golden thread that runs through all our initiatives. To fully make an impact, it is therefore important that Black women have representation in all sectors – and PSET is no exception. As it stands, only five out of the 26 universities in South Africa are led by Black women. The same low stats can also be observed in the roles occupied by Black women in administrative functions. While there is a presence of women in PSET, there are concerns around the number of Black females in the system relative to other racial groups, the extent of their participation, and influence in decision-making.

To offer some perspective, we were joined by the University of Johannesburg's CFO Noluazi Mamorare, UNISA's Head of Auditing Department Karabo Siyila and Bambili Group CEO Zanele Mavuso-Mbatha. The profiles of these three trailblazers clearly demonstrate outstanding accomplishments in their respective fields.

In academia, the representation of Black women remains poor which includes the future pipeline. Mamorare relayed the importance of young women being exposed to successful Black women who hold positions such as professors, lecturers, training officers and faculty deans. "This gives them access to relatable role models and exposure to the many horizons offered by the CA qualification." Furthermore, Mamorare stated that institutions needed to play a role in positioning themselves as employers of choice through investing in Black women, and creating conducive and supportive working environments.

Siyila shared that her entry into academia was inspired by the need to help transform PSET and to see change. She believes that interventions should be intentional and meaningful in the form of clear directives and programmes. "These interventions should also be rigorously evaluated and measured for efficacy. In addition to transforming the various sectors within academia, it is vital that the study material provided to students is also filtered through the same process," she noted.

Responding to why she would definitely consider going into academia, Mavuso-Mbatha said: "Education has the potential to be a great leveller in our society. This is where I feel I can make a difference in not only my own life, but those of young people as well." It feeds into the theme of being the changes we wish to see in the world, added Mavuso-Mbatha.

Though there are a limited number of women with accomplishments such as those of our esteemed guests, the few that exist provide a scaffolding for the young women who are pursuing their career in different fields. It is therefore incumbent on young Black females to use these outstanding women as a frame of reference in pursuance of their careers. That said, it is unfortunate that women are still adversely affected by South Africa's structural challenges. These challenges include not being afforded opportunities to sit on the boards of companies or hold executive positions.

So how can we, as professionals, make a difference in PSET?

- Take an authentic interest in what takes place at universities.
- Volunteer time and expertise to university and college councils.
- Take part in smart partnerships with other stakeholders, professional bodies and government.
- Demystify the stigma of transformation as a punitive measure through education.

Whether in academia, mining or banking, transformation is always on the agenda. The question remains, 'What is beyond getting Black women in leadership roles?'. Innovate and be impactful by training and bringing more Black women on board.

Simply put, MAKE THE CIRCLE BIGGER!

DISCLAIMER: The images used in this article are from the 2019 Power Tea event.





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THE BIG APC CHALLENGE

What will become of the current challenges enveloping the APC and ITC exams? After three consecutive years of Black candidates' exam results declining rapidly, AGSA and ABASA weigh in on a sustainable way forward.

ABASA'S TURN

There has been a fairly consistent downward trend of the number of Black candidates in SAICA's Initial Test of Competence (ITC) and Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) exam results over the past five years. Naturally, this trend has been of concern to many stakeholders. What has made this trend more alarming, however, is that despite numerous stakeholders' efforts to remedy, or to reverse the situation, it continues to persist. These results are against the backdrop of a profession that is in great need of transformation – less than 15% of its members are African. Along with a general decline, there has also been a widening of the racial disparity of outcomes – especially between White and Black candidates. Worryingly, this increase in the racial disparity of results is more attributable to a steep decline in Black candidates' performance, rather than an improvement of White candidates.

Tabular representations of the trends in SAICA's ITC and APC results:

TREND IN SAICA ITC EXAM RESULTS					
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African/White Differential
Apr 21	52%	69%	63%	85%	33%
Jan 20	46%	60%	59%	78%	32%
Jan 19	56%	65%	75%	88%	32%
Jan 18	64%	72%	72%	86%	22%
Jan 17	59%	69%	63%	73%	14%

TREND IN SAICA APC EXAM RESULTS					
	African	Colored	Indian	White	African/White Differential
Dec 20	24%	45%	53%	64%	40%
Nov 19	43%	50%	66%	73%	30%
Nov 18	48%	73%	78%	86%	38%
Nov 17	69%	80%	84%	89%	20%
Nov 16	81%	85%	92%	94%	13%

IMPACT OF RESULTS

The most evident impact of this trend in results is that many aspiring Black Chartered Accountants are not able to achieve this goal. Consequently, the profession is not able to transform itself to match the demographics of the country. The chartered accountancy designation is viewed as one of the key designations necessary for unlocking top executive and non-executive positions in many large companies, the JSE-listed as well. Therefore, the slow progress in transforming this profession effectively hobbles efforts to transform the demographics of the commanding heights of our economy.

Candidates failing the ITC or APC exams contribute to a problem that compounds itself. Due to workplace pressures, diminished self-esteem and the erosive impact of time of retained knowledge, we find that a candidate's chances of passing become lesser and lesser the more they attempt the exams. Therefore, a candidate failing the exam on any given attempt leads to a decreased chance of success on their next attempt.

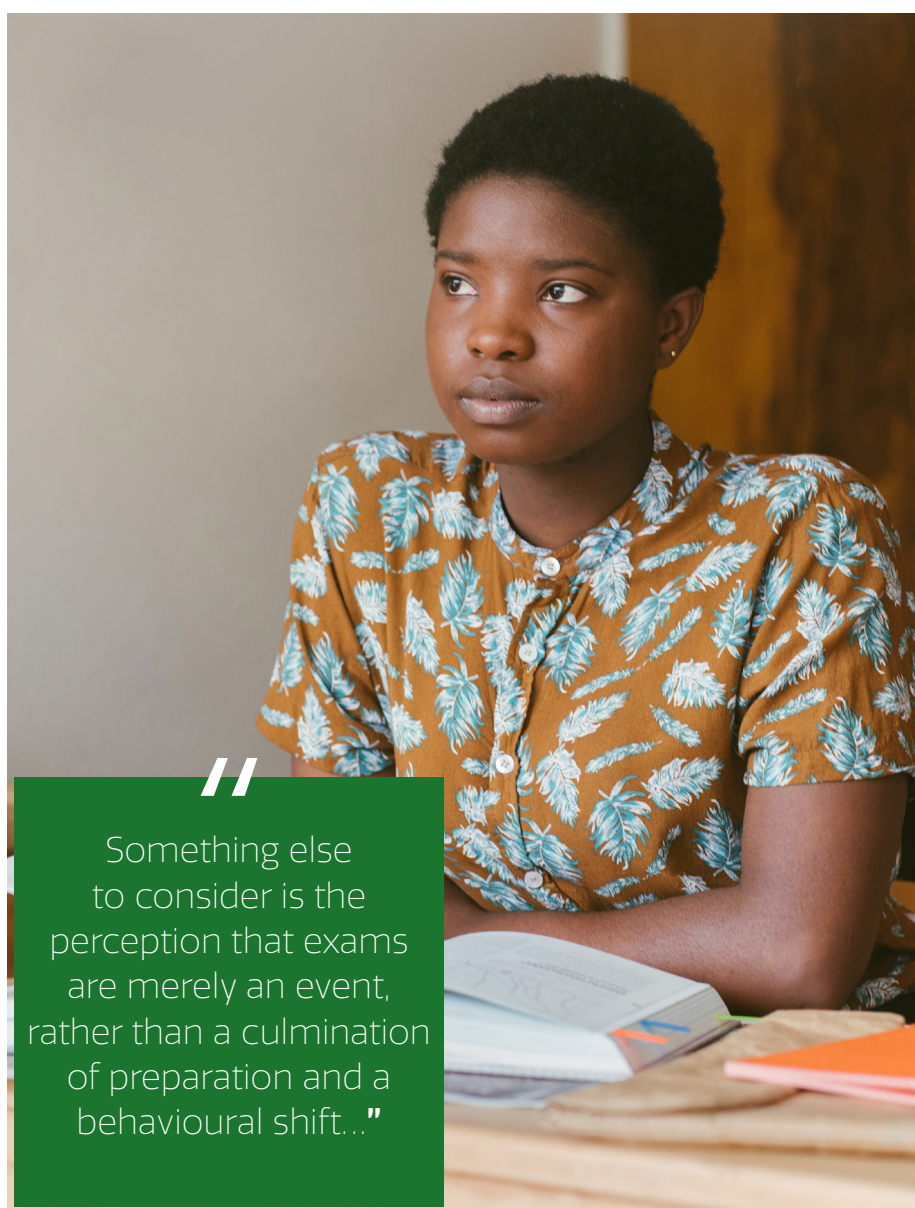
The least obvious, but arguably most destructive impact is that there may creep into the national psyche a notion that Black candidates are, somehow, inherently less capable than their White counterparts. Such a notion may create an artificial ceiling for the aspirations of young Black people and, invite Impostor Syndrome, even for those who attempt and succeed in becoming CAs(SA).

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

ABASA was established to promote the professional interests of Black people in the accounting profession, as well as those aspiring to join it. Chartered accountancy is widely regarded as the most respected and sought-after designation in the accounting industry. To obtain the CA(SA) title, candidates must sit for and pass SAICA's ITC and APC exams.

ABASA is concerned with the trends in outcomes for Black candidates in the ITC and APC exams as these results, effectively, create a serious barrier to entry for aspiring Black Chartered Accountants. Over the years, ABASA has engaged with various stakeholders, SAICA in particular, with regards to the downward trend in exam results for Black candidates. Some initiatives arose from these engagements, and also from within ABASA itself – which did have positive outcomes. However, these were not enough to stem the tide.

In response to these stubborn trends and the failure of previous initiatives, ABASA has taken a more direct approach to resolving the challenges in the ITC and APC exam results. ABASA has launched a number of new and more streamlined initiatives to address the issue of declining outcomes for Black candidates.



“Something else to consider is the perception that exams are merely an event, rather than a culmination of preparation and a behavioural shift...”

These initiatives are housed under the newly-formed ABASA Education National Committee. They include, among others, an APC Support Programme for repeat candidates, mentoring for aspiring professional accountants and fundraising for university students who have financial difficulties.

ABASA also recognises the initiatives undertaken by stakeholders such as the AWCA, SAICA and

many others which have an interest in promoting the success of Black candidates in the ITC and APC exams. ABASA believes that together we can reverse the trends, and must continue to collaborate and strengthen our efforts to ensure that Black candidates have a fair opportunity at achieving their aspirations of becoming CAs(SA) and leaders within the professional spaces they occupy.

THE AGSA'S TAKE

The Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) is the leading contributor of aspiring Black Chartered Accountants in the SAICA professional exams. As an organisation we are committed to developing audit professionals and transforming the accounting and auditing industries, which remain a source of pride for the AGSA.

As South Africa's supreme audit institution, it is fundamental for the AGSA to have credible, relevant and future-fit professionals to help in achieving its mission of strengthening our country's democracy. This we do by enabling oversight, accountability and governance in the public sector through auditing, thereby building public confidence.

Owing to the organisation's commitment and investment, the AGSA has, so far, assisted over 1 300 young professionals qualify as CAs(SA).

The AGSA has a keen interest, and strategic intent, to create access to education and develop young aspiring accounting professionals. It allows us to disseminate hope and realise the dreams of many who thought it would be impossible – including those pursuing a post-graduate diploma in accounting (PGDA) through distance learning.

Of all training offices of scale, the AGSA has the bulk of distance-learning and part-time candidates. Unfortunately, the reality is that the performance of candidates from residential, full-time universities has

historically, and consistently, been better than that of distance-learning, part-time candidates – with the latter comprising mostly Black students.

THE CAUSE

Over the past five years, for instance, the ITC performance of Black candidates has lagged compared to other race groups. Due to deviations from regular time necessary in the academic and technical assessment journey, such candidates continue to illustrate poor performance, even at APC level. The primary reason for this knock-on effect is that, despite a widely held misconception that the APC has less to do with technical competencies, success in the APC is influenced by proficiency in technical skills or competencies.

In response, the AGSA embarked on an in-depth investigation to identify the root causes that could provide better insights in developing a tailored approach and bespoke response plan. It was found that these root causes result from variables in the training programme's different aspects and candidates' qualification journey.

During the organisation's research, it became clear that specific dimensions of the root causes were in the AGSA's control, while others extended to external stakeholders such as SAICA, academic institutions and professional programme providers. There is, thus, a need to reflect on the status quo as being more than just the training office's crisis. It is

a systemic and value chain problem that needs all stakeholders' interest and solutions.

The root causes are divided into the following broad categories:

- **Trainee-specific issues.** Candidates' research skills are not harnessed at university or in the workplace – and cannot be sufficiently developed during a board course programme. That said, these are expected to be demonstrated at a high level during the APC.

- **Training office-specific issues.** The training programme and candidate preparation are calendar, rather than competence driven.

- **Board course-specific issues.** Such a calendar-based approach directly links to the board course programmes, where the basis for access to a board course is the sum of hours rather than the sum or range of competencies.

- **AGSA training programme-specific issues.** Technical competency gaps directly affect performance at APC level. Such gaps are manifest in the AGSA environment because many candidates' track record indicates multiple attempts at CTA and ITC. Using financial reporting frameworks that differ from the APC financial reporting framework (IFRS) amplifies this gap.





“
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THE CURE

As these key issues are intersectional, interrelated and interdependent, initiatives aimed at addressing them require all moving parts of the ecosystem to be considered and addressed. We have been sharing our insights and ideas with relevant stakeholders, including SAICA, to assist them in responding to their

areas of control and responsibilities. While training offices are responsible for ensuring trainees gain the required exposure and professional development to prepare for the APC examination, SAICA should ensure the exam is equitably positioned and its expectations of an entry-level CA(SA) are realistic and relevant for all candidates.

Trainees remain responsible for identifying gaps in their own competence, and ensuring that these have been addressed through exam preparation, commitment and ownership. This is especially important as most training offices and professional programme providers are attempting to cater for all, as opposed to tailoring interventions per the gaps identified.

Something else to consider is the perception that exams are merely an event, rather than a culmination of preparation and a behavioural shift to create impact agents in the form of CAs(SA). Preparation for the APC begins from the first year of articles. The AGSA adopted the #APCLifestyle that addresses the gaps the organisation identified through bespoke and tailored interventions.

The way forward is based on the premise that trainees come first. Having identified what we can control as the AGSA and a key contributor to the APC population, executing the bespoke response plans is key. We will continue to support SAICA and influence, through our data-driven, quick-win solutions and discoveries.



SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

UCT Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng is exemplary of how composed one must remain when facing a battle of opinions. She shares some world class insights on resilience and taking risks!

By Kemong Mopedi



When my peers graduated with doctorates alone, I walked away with a complete career because I played the university game well.



An en caul birth — a medical term used to describe babies born covered in a placenta or ‘veil’ over them — is believed to mark the start of a magical and luck-filled chapter. The veil, African mythology states, is symbolic of the baby’s general giftedness. Superstitions around en caul births range from old Romanian women selling the placenta to lawyers who were convinced that it would help them win cases, to dry placenta having the necessary medicinal properties to cure malaria. Scientists are unanimous in acknowledging that en caul births occur in less than 1 in 80 000 births globally. The University of Cape Town’s Vice-Chancellor (VC) Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng happens to form part of this rare statistic. ‘I was born wrapped in a placenta. My life has just been magical,’ she enthuses in between effortless giggles.

In an age where circumstances often force women shrink themselves, and shy away from unapologetically announcing their achievements, hearing Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng declare how exceptional her career journey has been is refreshing. The mathematics boffin graduated at age 21. In 1988, aged 22, she became a lecturer at Hebron College where she taught students training to become teachers. At 23, she was appointed acting principal and maths teacher of a new high school in Kokosi Township that had no building. Led by a desire to explore more uncharted territories, she dabbled in the NGO world before moving on to strategically curate a worthwhile career in academia.

LEADING THE NEW DAWN

That Professor Phakeng has awoken the world of academia from its deep slumber is a fact that needs no unpacking, nor verifying. From her stand-out, artsy ensembles to her glaring online activism, she is by far one of the most accessible VCs to date. Equally inspiring is the authenticity she has brought to this role! Her nurturing persona has even earned

her the alias ‘Deputy Mother’, a title she seems to be embracing wholeheartedly.

The University of Cape Town (UCT) is currently home to approximately 29 00 students — 40% of them postgraduates. Following an appointment process with its own fair share of challenges, Professor Phakeng admits that leading UCT is still no walk in the park but refuses to buckle under the unnecessary pressure brought on by naysayers. ‘They can fire me if they want, but one thing’s for sure, I am staying because I am committed to ensuring UCT’s sustainable success! When we leave, we give naysayers the upper hand!’ she explains matter-of-factly. Describing her three-year tenure with the highest ranked university in Africa, she adds that ‘being VC is similar to running a small country with different facets and I have to manage each one of them — and I don’t even have half the resources.’

Since ascending the VC throne, Professor Phakeng’s agenda has been intentional. Prioritising students’ needs, transformation and decolonising the institution are foremost on her agenda. For instance, she declined an inauguration in 2018, suggesting that the funds be rather spent on those students who had completed their studies but couldn’t graduate.

‘My value system wouldn’t allow me to have an inauguration when the university didn’t have money. It’s also my value system that wouldn’t let me accept a driver, personal security or flying business class on UCT resources. How could I say ‘yes’ to those luxuries when I am constantly surrounded by so much lack,’ she reflects.

Below, Professor Phakeng lets us in on her career journey. And if the superstition around en caul births is true, then hers is a double blessing — a life abundant with pure talent and being a hard worker.

Talk us through your career journey. What, in your opinion, got you to the top?

Being a VC of a university was something that I stumbled upon as my career journey unfolded. In my undergrad, I majored in Mathematics, Setswana and Education. The story behind this odd combination of subjects will be in my memoir someday [chuckles]. Mathematics was always my first love, everything else was just an accompaniment. I passed mathematics with a 74% average in my last year. I honestly should have fought for that additional 1% so I could graduate cum laude. However, all I cared about in those days was finishing university in record time.

People see me as a VC now and think I was parachuted to this role. That couldn’t be further from the truth. I took every strategic step necessary to get here. Prior to my teaching years, I started out as a maths tutor at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University). I then moved on to become senior tutor, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor, professor and later the founder of a research and development centre. After 12 years as an academic at Wits University, I was appointed Executive Dean of the College of Science, Engineering and Technology at UNISA. I later, also, served as Deputy VC (DVC) for five years. I had my second round as DVC at UCT before being appointed VC 18 months later.

I may look like one, but I am no affirmative action appointee. Not only did I walk every step, but I distinguished myself. When you’re a Black South African woman, often the narrative is that we are snuck into positions of power. I’m currently a B1 rated scientist, and I keep renewing this internationally acclaimed peer review rating — even though I’m in management — to deal with the stereotype that Black women get their positions simply because they are Black.



Where your career is concerned, what is the one thing your family, friends and colleagues would unanimously agree on? That I work hard. I'm committed to what I do and never stop. Secondly, I love young people. I am dedicated to ensuring that young minds make the most of their time to get higher education. Thirdly, I love South Africa with every fibre of my being. As recently as last year, I was recruited and shortlisted to be a VC abroad, but I bailed out each time.

What are some of the sacrifices you are grateful to have made? After completing my Masters in Maths Education in 1996, I remember my supervisor asking what my next career move would be. I bluntly told her that I wanted her job [chuckles]! I'd already decided that I wanted to be an academic but didn't know how to go about it! I earmarked 1998 as the year when I would return to do my PhD. To earn my place in academia, my supervisor suggested I join the big research project that she was running. She ultimately appointed me to a research assistant position on the project. I took leave without pay at the NGO where I was employed as a programme manager, and fully embraced my new position as a research assistant so that I could start my PhD.

The plan was to work on the research project for six months, but I ended up extending by another six. When a tutoring vacancy in the maths department opened up, I went back to the NGO to say, "Thank you. I think I have found my new passion!" The money wasn't good by the way, the NGO paid far better. My gross salary at Wits University was nowhere near my net income at the NGO. I completely downgraded my lifestyle, and my salary never caught up for another three years. I never bothered negotiating my Wits University salary because I wanted the academic career badly. During all of this, I was married with a child! When I completed my PhD in 2002, I had already published in journals, won grants, attended international conferences and contributed chapters in books. When my peers graduated with doctorates

alone, I walked away with a complete career because I played the university game well.

Education is one of many sectors of our society that had to quickly pivot during the pandemic. What are some of UCT's 2020 undertakings that you are most proud of? We went online quicker than most institutions. Were it not for the pandemic, I don't think our transition to online would have been as quick. Fortunately, we'd always had the ongoing project of giving NSFAS recipients laptops – which we started in 2018. We also used 2020 to start the consultative process for our Vision 2030 strategy.



They can fire me if they want, but one thing's for sure, I am staying because I am committed to ensuring UCT's sustainable success! When we leave, we give naysayers the upper hand.

As a top-performing institution, it's easy to rest on our laurels and think that change is not necessary. I remember telling colleagues that because we were already successful, we needed to disrupt ourselves lest we lose our success. To drive my point home,

I used the popular Jim Collins' phrase: "What got you here, won't get you there!" My statement was perceived as controversial, with some colleagues arguing that they were still traumatised by the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall protests.

Some of the themes we are having tough conversations around include, reconceptualising what internationalisation means for us. We are also figuring out how to internationalise UCT while also making it accessible to working class students who don't have the resources to travel abroad, but want a world-class education.

Under your leadership, how would you like to see UCT contribute towards rebuilding South Africa during/after this life-altering pandemic? I would love to see UCT unapologetically rising to the challenges that South Africa, and the continent, face. We are an institution of excellence, but being an island of excellence in a country and continent that is impoverished is futile. How can we remain unbothered by all the poverty and inequality? This is why our massive transformative purpose for Vision 2030 is: 'Unleash human potential for a fair and just society.' If we don't work towards the above, then we are no good for this country.

This is also one of the main reasons why we felt strongly about launching our online high school innovation. Yes, we can continue producing brilliant graduates, but the truth of the matter is that we are only selecting the cream of the crop.

As a leading university, we have the opportunity to inject our excellence into basic education, and create an ecosystem that can benefit more students than those who previously qualified to come to UCT.

You hosted an insightful open lecture with Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in July this year. What was its goal and will we be seeing more of these? I host the Vice Chancellor's Open Lectures four



Yes, we can continue producing brilliant graduates but the truth of the matter is that we are only selecting the cream of the crop.

accepted. If there ever was a time when UCT needed authentic leadership, it is now.

By embracing my township roots, my Africanness or my womanness, I am reaffirming students from disadvantaged backgrounds. I think it makes them feel included. I am saying, 'Being loud, having kinky hair or not having a Model C accent doesn't render you any less successful. You can still prosper just the way you are.'

How has the UCT experience stretched you?

It has taught me to prioritise the entity that I am leading, over myself. UCT has forced me to stop often and ask: 'By the way, why am I doing this?' My choices are shaped by a deep understanding of why I am here. Being UCT's VC means that I am not just leading this one institution, but also give direction, motivate, inspire and mentor beyond it. Social media allows me to reach a much wider population of young people.

UCT has also helped me see exactly how Black female leadership is perceived in this country. We may tick all the professional boxes, but cultural capital is still very key. UCT has pushed me to believe that not everyone who smiles with you is for you, and just how supportive people can be even when they do not look like you and there is nothing in it for them.

Who are you outside of work and your public persona? I am a mother to my boys – aged 34, 31 and 24 – as well as many other young people. Even in those moments when I don't intend to, my motherly instincts always rear their head to intervene, or assist in whatever way.

What are you yet to achieve? Personally, I look forward to my grandchildren. Professionally, it has to be my first memoir.

OFF THE CUFF

What was the last book that made you reevaluate your choices? *Malcolm Gladwell's David and Goliath.*

What's inspiring your life right now? My boys. I love the men they are becoming.

What's your superpower and how are you using it to serve others? Giving and sharing. I contribute 20% of my salary to UCT's scholarships. 10% goes to the Mamokgethi Phakeng Scholarship for Women Postgraduate Students, and the other 10% goes to the Rhodes Must Fall Scholarship.

There's also the Adopt-A-Learner Foundation, a non-profit organisation open to non-UCT students that I set up in 2004, and fund out of my own pocket. Its aim is to help students from township and rural schools gain access to higher education.

What's that one bad habit you have been meaning to give up? Biting my inner lip. I always catch myself doing it [chuckles].

What are we likely to find you doing on a Saturday afternoon? Binging on NikNaks and sweet chilli Doritos, hiking up Lion's Head or attempting to out-jump my boys off of my SUV at the Atlantis Dunes in Cape Town.



times a year. I just happened to have invited someone of Chimamanda's stature this time around. I use this platform to invite scholars and thought leaders who inspire us to be our best selves, both, as a university and individuals – and this is why they remain open to everyone. It's a space for ideas, inspiration and for thought leaders to share their work with us.

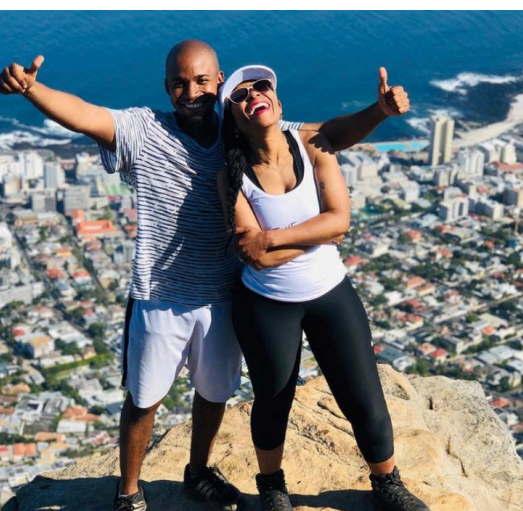
Between the late night Instagram Live sessions, events and being an all-round accessible leader, when do you rest – and what's your favourite form of downtime? I'm a physically active person. I absolutely love hiking, and Cape Town is the ideal location for such. Sometimes I run, and also enjoy doing fun activities at the Atlantis Dunes with my sons. I love travelling and cooking, too, though I'm no expert!

Are you still as bold and colourful as you were when you first took on the VC role back in 2018? How important is it to bring our authentic selves to leadership positions? I think most people would vouch that I've remained as colourful as when I first joined. My hair went from purple to blonde and back to black between 2020 and 2021 [chuckles].

My colourfulness, however, isn't just limited to clothing. It is important to bring our authentic selves to the table. The fact of the matter is, I may be VC but I'm also human. I'm 54 now and I want to look back at my life and say, 'Through all the challenges I faced, I still enjoyed being who I truly am.'

When you bring your authentic self to a leadership position, you are in fact rendering the best service because whatever entity you are leading is getting your utmost.

What, in your honest opinion, were the 2015 and 2016 fallisms all about? That #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall period was about challenging what historically white institutions do to Black students and staff. For example, the expectation that they must assimilate into Western culture in order to be





President's Ambassador AWARDS WINNERS

The efforts and dedication of these remarkable AWCA members continue to help grow our organisation. We thank and appreciate you!



Bawinile Gwala, KZN Professional Development Sub-Committee

Bawinile is a third year trainee at one of the 'Big 4' firms in Kwa-Zulu Natal, and a member of the AWCA since her student days. Until 2020, the KZN committee did not have anyone overseeing the Professional Development portfolio. Having previously been in the Student Chapter leadership structure while at university, Bawinile volunteered herself. She assembled a subcommittee constituted by a group of eight young women, all trainees at different levels, reporting directly to the regional chairperson.

The KZN Professional Development team has been exceptional at pioneering certain engagements within the region, as well as partnering with the national team. Not only has Bawinile been a team player, but she also leads from the forefront – often initiating conversations around how to cope when preparing for articles. She has also hosted a number of engagements aimed at contributing to the professional development of our members.

An advocate for collaboration, Bawinile is also a significant contributor in the national AWCA professional development portfolio. We appreciate her continued effort and dedication, despite her own commitments that come with being a trainee.

Nominated by Hlengiwe Ndelela



Paballo Phiri, Professional Development Sub-Committee

Paballo completed her articles at one of the 'Big 4' firms, and since qualifying as a Chartered Accountant, continues to lift as she rises. Her passion for the development and nurturing of trainees is evident in her contribution to all sub-committee initiatives.

Often arriving to the party with mind maps and structure, hot takes on the powerful use of social media to market and drive events, and leveraging off her contact base, Paballo has helped the sub-committee plan and execute successful workshops. From beginning to completion, Paballo puts in the work and takes all learning experiences for what they are – with sincere gratitude for each opportunity to be involved.

Paballo also uses her academic and technical prowess as a Certificate in Theory of Accounting (CTA) marker, at one of the Professional Programme Providers accredited by SAICA to deliver board courses in preparation for the assessment of the professional competence of trainees. When the AWCA's Professional Development sub-committee undertakes its initiatives, Paballo's insight into the trainees' activities, schedules and challenges help in the development of meaningful, targeted content that is aligned to the strategy of the organisation. Her contribution to the AWCA and the Professional Development sub-committee as a headstrong, resilient and agile member is appreciated.

Nominated by Tumi Mokgoko



Lutfiya Fajandar, Leadership Academy Portfolio

Lutfiya has been serving in the Leadership Academy portfolio for years. She is currently running the board placement programme and nurtures the AWCA's relationship with the 30% Club. She drafted and presented a revised strategy of the relationship with Business Engage, leading to a renewed and energised partnership. In a short space of time, she has mobilised sub-committee members to establish the AWCA's first board placement programme, with eight individuals already serving on the boards of four NPOs.

She also took over the management of the relationship with Duke University, and wasted no time in identifying gaps and opportunities in the relationship. In 2020, when the Mahube Roundtable Panel was not materialising, Lutfiya mobilised her network to participate as panel members. She takes challenges in her stride, and is bold enough to step outside of her comfort zone.

She is a resourceful and experienced financial director, and an exceptional MBA graduate who always delivers. She has always been supportive of the AWCA Mentorship Programme. Not only does she think initiatives through strategically – including drawing up concept papers – she is able to effectively execute and troubleshoot as required. Lutfiya is passionate about the organisation and its objectives.

Nominated by Gugu Mayisela



A view from the top:

How leaders are addressing the gender agenda

Makgotso Letsitsi

Diversity in the workplace has finally earned its spot as a critical business imperative. Research tells us that companies with more women in leadership can leverage more talent, get access to more diverse perspectives, have increased productivity and are more profitable. With more clients desiring to do business with entities that are both diverse and inclusive - and legislative provisions becoming more stringent, the business case for diversity is overwhelmingly compelling. However, the Global Gender Gap Report 2020¹ highlighted that it would take an additional 100 years to achieve gender equality in the workplace. This is a grave concern, especially given the devastating effects of COVID-19 on careers and roles, namely that of women.

But there is a positive side to this, and that is, as business, we have the transformative power to make a difference, to respond to crises and to bring about the much-needed change. Change for a society that can recover, that can be more open, fair, free, inclusive and diverse. As the people leader for KPMG SA, this meant introducing a comprehensive plan for supporting and advancing women. It required a paradigm shift in our corporate culture, and it included investing in coaching, mentoring, sponsoring, profiling and developmental opportunities. Our hiring processes had to be scrutinized and it required us to be open to giving employees greater flexibility to fit work into their lives and to own their careers. Most importantly, it requires continued and sustained efforts to keep gender as an active agenda item and a key priority on our leadership dashboard.

Empowering women means creating a more gender balanced and inclusive future for all

Makgotso Letsitsi is an Executive Director at KPMG, Head of People, Citizenship & Transformation. She sits on the organization's Executive Management Team and is responsible for driving the execution of a leading-edge Talent Strategy for South Africa. Makgotso has over 22 years of experience in advisory, management consulting and strategic human resources. Makgotso is a Chartered Accountant with extensive experience spanning finance, culture transformation, change management consulting, leadership development and other strategic people management practices.

¹ "Global Gender Gap Report 2020." World Economic Forum, 2020.





Hello Excellence, Is That You?

For years, the 2021 AWCA Recognition Awards winners have been breaking glass ceilings and charting inspirational paths for others to follow.



PRIVATE SECTOR CFO OF THE YEAR

Bongiwwe Ntuli CA(SA)
Chief Financial Office, The Foschini Group

What do you believe is the role of CAs(SA) in the current context of COVID-19 and a challenging economic landscape? Supporting the CEO and the board in the execution of the company's strategic objectives is key. Where finance is concerned, decisive leadership focusing on cash preservation, robust leveraging and operating expense metrics is imperative. Ours is to also drive digital transformation, not lose sight of the vision, seek fit for purpose opportunities to drive growth in shareholder value and maintain competitive advantage.

What are some of the traits and skills leaders need to dial up during these unprecedented times? Integrity in these times goes a long way. So does

continuous communication, empathy for staff, suppliers and the communities businesses operate in. We should also focus on job creation and preservation, as well as taking brave but risk-calculated decisions.

Post-COVID, what lessons do you wish to roll out in your work environment? To continue forecasting and reforecasting, as well as create future-fit finance operating models and embrace digital tools.

Which leader, dead or alive, do you wish to have a one-on-one with? Oprah Winfrey. The story of how she overcame all odds to empower the entire world, especially women, to succeed is inspirational to say the least. I love that she leads with integrity and does not tout perfection. Though she isn't from Africa, the literacy initiative and spirit of ubuntu that she

has extended to our continent are truly admirable.

Who and what keeps your mental health intact? My parents keep me grounded. Reading, voluntary work, exercising, prayer, traveling overseas and shopping keep me sane.

What are you uncompromising about? Accountability and diligence. Do everything with excellence – working and playing hard included! Lastly, forgiveness because it allows me to live without inhibition!



TRAILBLAZER IN ACADEMIA

Boniswa Madikizela CA(SA)
Senior Lecturer in Accounting, University of Johannesburg

What do you believe is the role of CAs(SA) in the current context of COVID-19 and a challenging economic landscape? The role of a CA(SA), in any environment that we occupy, is to empower others – especially young adults – in developing the skills that help them to be better prepared for life's curve-balls and challenging economic landscapes.

These last 19 months have taught us that technical and academic skills alone are not enough if we are going to permeate businesses, corporates and communities with innovative problem-solvers whose efforts will benefit many others.

What are some of the traits or skills leaders need to dial up during these unprecedented times? Leaders need to dial up their spiritual quotient (SQ) in addition to their intelligence quotient (IQ) and emotional quotient (EQ) so as to make work environments a place of creativity. These unprecedented times have added to the stress and anxiety individuals face daily. It is our role as leaders to infuse a sense of meaning and compassion in the workplace.

Post-COVID, what lessons do you wish to roll out in your work environment? It's a lesson captured in the pages of Stephen R. Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. We often emphasise short term results at the expense of long term prosperity. It is okay to be more concerned with doing the right things (effectiveness) rather than with doing things

right (efficiency).

Which leader, dead or alive, do you wish to have a one-on-one with? My grandmother, who passed on in 2002. Through her eyes, I always saw my potential and limitless possibilities reflected back to me.

Who and what keeps your mental health intact? My faith in God has definitely kept me intact during the most challenging times, including this pandemic.

What are uncompromising about? Authenticity.

ASSURANCE PARTNER OF THE YEAR



Nomathamsanqa Ashom CA(SA)
Managing Director, Ngubane & Co.

What do you believe is the role of CAs(SA) in the current context of COVID-19 and a challenging economic landscape? As someone who always sees the glass half full, I believe that difficult times afford us an opportunity to reset. Our profession just came out of a dark era that challenged us to return to our core – which is built on trust, diligence and people. The current pandemic and economic landscape provided us with an opportunity to, once again, be trusted advisors and business partners providing honest advice on how to save businesses, and ultimately preserve jobs. It is also an opportunity to influence policy and regulation, as well as drive growth in the economy and create opportunities for our people.

What are some of the traits or skills leaders need to dial up during these unprecedented times? Most of us have not lived through a pandemic and as a result, people are fearful and uncertain about the future. Working from home has fueled these negative feelings as we are mostly isolated. I therefore believe that leaders need empathy, resilience and good communication. Self-leadership in stress management and positive thinking are key for a clear, and sometimes very hard, decision-making process.

Post-COVID, what lessons do you wish to roll out in your work environment? I plan to encourage an output-based flexible working environment that supports rest and time with loved ones.

Which leader, dead or alive, do you wish to have a one-on-one with? Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. She has gone beyond the borders of being an author. Her writing has cultural, social, and political influences – which, in turn, has made her a thought leader in many fields.

Who or what keeps your mental health intact? My family, friends and my Ngubane & Co. team have played a big role in supporting me. I try to delegate as much as I can and when I fail, I am kind to myself.

What are you uncompromising about? My family, faith, truth, caring for and loving people.

PUBLIC SECTOR CFO OF THE YEAR



Sibongiseni Ngoma CA(SA)
Chief Financial Officer, Auditor General of South Africa

What do you believe is the role of CAs(SA) in the current context of COVID-19 and a challenging economic landscape? To be futuristic and visionary leaders. Envisioning challenges and opportunities way in advance should be a regular habit of ours.

We need to spot these from afar and start making plans to mitigate – whether the risk is a pandemic, economic difficulties or climate change, they must find leaders ready to attack.

What are some of the traits or skills leaders need to dial up during these unprecedented times? We should aspire to be future-fit leaders who are also agile growth catalysts – the type who are not only

obsessed with numbers and the effectiveness of controls, but can introduce tactics that drive efficiencies and change culture. Furthermore, our relational intelligence should help us navigate people relations and achieve sustainable results.

Post-COVID, what lessons do you wish to roll out in your work environment? I look forward to preparing for the next business disruption and being crisis-responsive. COVID-19 was a rude awakening so climate change should now take priority. We all witnessed the positive environmental transformations during induced lockdowns. We need to urgently tackle the rate of pollution and its harmful consequences. Secondly, profitability and the health of employees are connected.

Organisations need to invest heavily in the mental wellness of employees. Lastly, people can be productive working from anywhere. Most organisations are slowly embracing this reality, which brings with it plenty of benefits and work-life harmony.

Which leader, dead or alive, do you wish to have a one-on-one with? Thuli Madonsela. She is the epitome of an inspirational feminine leader who serves with professionalism, excellence and passion. She reminds me of my future self. From her, I would like to learn how best to navigate the leadership journey, particularly when the odds seem to always be stacked against you.

Who and what keeps your mental health intact? My family brings harmony into my life, and so does my faith. I rest assured knowing that, "All things work together for good to all who love the Lord".

What are you uncompromising about? My faith, and the knowledge that we serve a Creator who is intentional in all lives.

LEADING CORPORATE EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR



Yolanda Cuba CA(SA)
Group Regional Vice President Southern and East Africa, MTN Group

What do you believe is the role of CAs(SA) in the current context of COVID-19 and a challenging economic landscape? To be the voice of reason and continue maintaining high standards under pressure. Lastly, we need to continuously invest in new and evolving ways of doing things – including transformation technology and pushing the envelope to benefit the profession's next level of evolution.

What are some of the traits or skills leaders need to dial up during these unprecedented times? To be more humane and authentic in our interactions with teams and stakeholders. To also focus on the big picture, while allowing our teams some flexibility. We need to be empathetic and remember that individuals' situations have changed immensely.

Post-COVID, what lessons do you wish to roll out in your work environment? A flexible work environment and working times – we have proven that we can decouple location from productivity. I have also learnt that people cannot sustain isolation for long periods of time, and that mental health is a core part of economic delivery.

Additionally, until we have equitable distribution of and access to resources, we will not be able to solve the unequal outcomes that COVID-19 demonstrated in education, employment and medical treatment among many other areas. We should be working towards ensuring that more and more people have equal access, all the time.

Which leader, dead or alive, do you wish to have a one-on-one with? Aristotle, who discovered that the Earth is round. He figured out something so fundamental in our evolution at a time when the world thought the absolute opposite. In his time, this was absolutely revolutionary.

Who and what keeps your mental health intact? My children, family and giving back to society.

What are you uncompromising about? Integrity.

ENTREPRENEUR CFO OF THE YEAR



Buyisiwe Makhunga CA(SA)
Managing Director and Founder, Kazi Capital

What do you believe is the role of CA(SA)s in the current context of COVID-19 and a challenging economic landscape? The recent political and social unrest heightened the urgency required in addressing the high levels of inequality and unemployment in our country. More than ever, expanding the econ-

omy in an inclusive manner, through growing existing businesses and creating new ones, has become critical for South Africa's sustenance and social stability. We need courageous, innovative and ethical leadership in all spheres – be it government or big business – as well as increased focus in supporting and investing in SMMEs. As CAs(SA) – with our deep understanding of business dynamics, financial and risk management frameworks, strategic thinking and

good governance principles – we have the ability to meaningfully contribute to our country's economic growth objectives.

What are some of the traits or skills leaders need to dial up during these unprecedented times? Knowing and believing that with effort and a relentless attitude, setbacks can turn into bigger opportunities. Equally important is leading with empathy and compassion, and recognising the devastating impact poverty, lack of education and hopelessness has had on the general population.

Post-COVID, what lessons do you wish to roll out in your work environment? Every crisis presents an opportunity to grow and adapt. It might take you off course, but may lead to better and more exciting paths.

Which leader, dead or alive, do you wish to have a one-on-one with? Shonda Rhimes' success as one Hollywood's most influential executive producers, while balancing it with raising her three kids and social activism, is admirable. Her courage and commitment to excellence is inspirational, especially to us Black women who are determined to occupy spaces previously not open to us.

Who and what keeps your mental health intact? Exercise keeps me sane. I also incorporate solo retreats in my calendar for time to reflect and recharge. My family keeps me grounded. Cooking with them allows me room to explore my creative side.

What are you uncompromising about? Trust is very important. It is the cornerstone and foundation of every successful engagement and relationship – firmly guided by the principles of integrity, mutual respect, accountability, fairness and honesty.

PUBLIC SECTOR LEADER OF THE YEAR



Mpho Mookapele CA(SA)
Chief Executive Officer, Energy and Water SETA

What do you believe is the role of CAs(SA) in the current context of COVID-19 and a challenging economic landscape? COVID-19 presented many challenges and opportunities. When lockdown restrictions kicked in in late March 2020, we did not anticipate that, over a year later, the economy would still be on its knees. The skills and competencies of CAs(SA) are critical to the reconstruction and recovery of the South African economy. Our contribution is not only limited to financial expertise, but general advisory to both private and public sectors.

What are some of the traits or skills leaders need to dial up during these unprecedented times? In these times of rapid changes and uncertainty, leaders must adapt easily. This quality will ensure that leaders don't get easily uprooted and disoriented during crises.

Post-COVID, what lessons do you wish to roll out in your work environment? During and post COVID-19, it's important that organisations continue to drive and maintain a culture of innovation and create space for creativity, even, beyond uncertain times.

Which leader, dead or alive, do you wish to have a one-on-one with? I would do anything for a hot cup of tea with the late Maya Angelou. She displayed admirable self-leadership that impacted the world.

Who and what keeps your mental health intact? Knowing who I am in God, as well as acknowledging and accepting my purpose regardless of the challenges around me. This grounds me mentally and spiritually.

What are you uncompromising about? All can be stripped away but not my integrity.

It's Called Blinkered Planning

Richard Walker, Head of Risk Advisory Services at BDO, argues that the arrival of COVID-19 and the July 2021 lootings do not qualify as 'Black Swan' events.



In the last 19 months, two mass-scale events have rocked the entire country – the arrival of COVID-19 on our shores and the July 2021 looting, which led to a loss of lives and damage that ran into the billions. Many have labelled these two as 'Black Swan' events, after professor Nassim Taleb's 2007 book of the same title. On the surface, nobody could have predicted their arrival and the impact they would have on the wellbeing of the country and economy. In reality, however, that is not how the events unfolded!

WHAT CONSTITUTES BLACK SWAN?

To qualify as a Black Swan, an event must meet all of Taleb's three criteria. Firstly, it must be an outlier. It must lie outside the realm of regular expectations because nothing in the past can convincingly point to its possibility. Secondly, it must carry an extreme impact. Thirdly, in spite of its outlier status, human nature makes us concoct explanations for its occurrence after the fact, making it explainable and predictable. More like an 'unexpected' event rationalised by hindsight.

Much to his annoyance, Taleb recently told the New York Times that his work was not meant to provide "a cliché for any bad thing that surprises us". Indeed, COVID-19 fails the Black Swan test because Taleb himself – alongside Bill Gates, Laurie Garrett and others – predicted it. A paper he co-authored with Joseph Norman and Yaneer Bar-Yam in January 2020 warned how the virus would spread based on the world's interconnectedness, and our reliance on those connections to function.

Based on this explanation, there's an argument to be made that South Africa's violent looting of July 2021 do not qualify as a Black Swan event either! A whooping 7.8 million people were unemployed in the second quarter of this year – with millions more classified as 'discouraged work seekers'. Placed in a pressure cooker steadily heated by over 500 days of subsequent lockdowns – millions more lost jobs, precarious living, endured dire economic conditions and apparent fomenting by forces bent on political upheaval – it was a question of when, rather than if, the lid would blow off.

A MAJOR SETBACK

The cost of the looting and violence is still being tallied up. So far, over R50 billion from Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal's GDP, piled atop the loss of over 330 lives and threatening more than 150 000 more jobs, as over 4 000 stores suffered damage and loss. All the actions may not have been preventable, but there's an argument that big business could have been better prepared to avoid the subsequent disruptions which crippled supply chains. If anything, business should have learnt its lesson from the preceding COVID-19 lockdowns.

Pivoting and agility became the order of the day to ensure some semblance of survival when cut off from customers and suppliers. While more of a struggle for providers of products than services, plenty of businesses were able to take operations online nearly overnight, with 'Work-From-Home' becoming a reality during such a time. For many, that agility saved entire industries, while those who turned to long-neglected Business Continuity Plans (BCP) and Succession Plans (SP) found that the dust brushed off from their covers and pages revealed no answers in the face of disruption and death.

There's a place for BCP and SP in the future of business, where unexpected events are inevitable. However, to allow them to cover more lateral eventualities, they should be founded in understanding the causes of these events. A company that is in touch with the economic, social and governance realms will be better placed to make decisions as the ground shifts beneath its feet. It's more than lip service to encourage community involvement, staff wellness and protection of livelihoods – it's a rooting of the business in the world in which it operates, which is likely to have few downsides.

There's an opportunity to introduce lateral thought into the process of ensuring a business' sustainability of operations during a crisis. Having seen two massive upheavals take place in just 19 months, there's an argument for planning to explore tangential paths to explore how a business could survive the most outlandish challenges, and ensure its future continuity and sustainability.

PIVOTING IS THE WAY

If suit, tie and boardroom can be traded for pyjamas, slippers and kitchen counters overnight, there is hope for South African businesses to address larger challenges in their longer-term planning. It's far easier to take thought to the boundaries of possibility when those boundaries are reframed by reality. These plans then need to be stress-tested against left-field challenges. Most BCPs cover how quickly a business can get back online in the event of the loss of a server centre, but what about the human element? It's great that the business can re-establish its IT network operations within an hour, but where is the direction if the Chief Technology Officer is incapacitated by COVID-19 and the warehouse is simultaneously being emptied by violent, desperate people?

Any plan to counter risk also needs to be aligned with the strategic objectives of the organisation. The decentralisation of manufacturing is one path on the cards, along with distributing risk. If a warehouse is likely to be looted, it could make sense to keep the stock levels at that warehouse lower, but the stores served by the warehouse still need to cater for customer demand. Instead of keeping



If suit, tie and boardroom can be traded for pyjamas, slippers and kitchen counters overnight, there's hope for South African businesses to address larger challenges in their longer-term planning.



45 days' worth of stock, the warehouse declares that it will hold 15 days' worth and the supplier needs to manage the process of ensuring that the other 30 days' worth is available at a moment's notice. With the supplier unable to store stock, they could reduce production and return to a 'just-in-time' model. Or they could decentralise their manufacturing process and seek to establish more plants in more locations, spreading their network, speeding up their delivery and creating jobs in new areas.

There are plenty of considerations around what that does to the logistics and transport industries, so it requires a chain-wide shift in focus and approach, and a middle-ground agreement that prioritises agility for all sides. BCP isn't about a roadmap to return to normality, it's about embracing a changed world with new risks, challenges and nuances to ensure that a business is sustainable and can continue to meet the new needs of its customers and staff in an environment it never envisioned itself operating in. Taleb says that an event being declared a Black Swan depends on the view of the observer. The example he uses is, what may be a Black Swan surprise for a turkey is not a Black Swan surprise to its butcher. The objective should always be to avoid becoming the turkey!



Navigating Your Business Through LOCKDOWN

Seasoned entrepreneur **Mmahlapa Mkandawire** shares some much-needed nuggets on maintaining a healthy state of mind in order to win in your business.

As lockdown regulations begin to ease, most entrepreneurs are probably trying to wrap their minds around the dire effects of COVID-19 on their business ventures. What we often ignore is that when our emotions and mental health are in top form, it almost always places us in a favourable position to achieve our goals. After all, in the quest to just keep afloat or expand our bottomline, it's easy to overlook how well we, ourselves, need to be.

If anything, these times teach entrepreneurs about the importance of strategising, which the *The Business Dictionary* describes as: "A method or plan chosen to bring about a desired future, such as the achievement of a goal or solution to a problem." Strategising, especially in times of uncertainty, helps you find the next best step and how to boldly go about taking it. In order to do this, one needs their mind and spirit to be clear and in an optimum state. Never fall into the trap of undervaluing your wellbeing and its effect on your business.

Here are some tools to help keep your mind healthy – and achieve your business goals:

Connect with other business-minded people. There is something powerful about spending time with

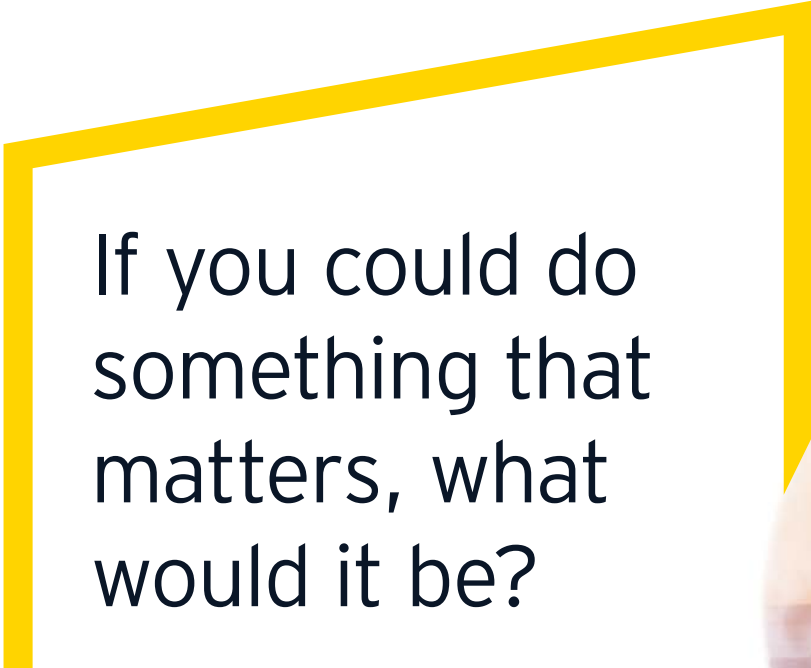
people who are just as ambitious, and focused, as you are. Those interactions have the ability to challenge your thinking and expose you to opportunities and business solutions that you were probably unaware of. Not forgetting the infectious energy and conqueror mindset that comes with these conversations!

Carefully select your entertainment. Opt to read, listen or watch content that is inspirational, informative and sparks your thinking. It seems too simplistic, but try it for seven consecutive days and watch the difference it makes in your life. It's as though your mind will be thanking you for finally challenging it. When consuming content that just distracts and doesn't add much value to your life, you will most likely end up feeling drained and lost, somewhat.


Get enough shut-eye. Seven to eight hours is the recommended duration of sleep. Sleeping well rejuvenates and cleanses your mind. A mind that constantly receives adequate rest is better equipped to make good decisions and come up with progressive solutions. It's easier to create healthy sleeping patterns by disconnecting from the outside world, and quietening down your space from around 8pm.

This may not be possible each day of the week, but put in the effort and allow your mind to gradually adjust. Waking up early to visualise and plan the day ahead has wondrous effects on your overall mood. Think: Robin Sharma's *The 5am Club: Own Your Morning, Elevate Your Life*. According to a research article published on [frontiersin.org](https://www.frontiersin.org) – titled *The effects of a single night of sleep deprivation on fluency and prefrontal cortex function during divergent thinking* – when the prefrontal cortex, the part of your brain that controls your decision-making and reasoning ability is not well-rested, we often find ourselves making emotional rather than rational decisions.

Accept and refocus. It's important to always accept your current reality before looking forward to the future. Where you are headed is far more important than where you currently are. Never shy away from being an eternal learner because that's where all great masters start. Lastly, never be intimidated by being around people who are more successful than you. It's an opportunity to grow!




If you could do
something that
matters, what
would it be?



We are inspired by purpose-driven women who challenge conventional ways of thinking, who dare ask questions to seek better answers.

At EY we are creating an inclusive culture to enable women's potential to truly transform society and build a better working world. We seek to empower a diverse workforce by enabling women and girls to reach their potential through education, mentorship, innovation and entrepreneurial opportunities. Creating a workforce that will support the closing of the gender gap and nurture an environment where everyone is able to become architects of the transformative age.



The better the question. The better the answer.
The better the world works.

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We have a solution.

What needs to happen
now is for **enough people**
to trust in science!

THE KEY TO VACCINE ADOPTION IS BUILDING TRUST

The Solidarity Fund's health pillar co-lead
Dr Gugu Ngubane believes that exposing citizens to open
and accurate information gives way to trust.



While side-effects may be unpleasant, it's important to remember that these are signs that your body is building protection...

As the roll-out of South Africa's National Vaccination Programme continues, the debate over whether to vaccinate or not seems to be getting more heated. While it's easy for vaccine advocates to dismiss anti-vaxxers as ill-informed or simply 'wrong', the potential impact of this resistance cannot be ignored.

Persuasion must begin with an acknowledgement of people's fears and doubts. While emphasising the benefits of vaccination, we must also acknowledge the limitations of the vaccines and our current gaps in information about this new virus. When people are exposed to honest, open and accurate information, trust is born.

WHERE WE STARTED

South Africa is over six months into its rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations. The first vaccination was administered through the Sisonke Study, on February 17, which vaccinated almost 500 000 frontline healthcare workers with the single dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. As of August 17, 9 753 138 vaccines had been administered in South Africa, representing 19.08% of the adult population who have received at least 1 dose.*

Science tells us that mass vaccination programmes against COVID-19 offer the best hope of protection against serious illness and death. While the virus continues to present new challenges to scientists and researchers, COVID-19 vaccines offer hope that this pandemic that has gripped the world since December 2019 may be mitigated, and our world can start rebuilding and finding a new balance.

VACCINE DENIALISM

Despite global optimism, many are still not convinced of the safety of the vaccines, or how effective they are in reducing the impact of disease. Doubts, fears and distrust exist around the fast pace of the development and approval of the vaccines, the side-effects it will produce and the long-term effects it will have on our bodies.

Public trust is essential for the acceptance and adoption of vaccines. For that reason, managing misinformation and vigilance in creating a safe vaccination environment during this massive national vaccination rollout programme are crucial.

Accurate and up-to-date knowledge is power. Scientific and historical facts still provide the most compelling defence of vaccines. Historically, vaccines have been used to successfully control and even eliminate the spread of virus-based diseases and epidemics since the late 1700s.

Life-threatening diseases such as Polio, TB, measles, smallpox, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), to name a few, are managed through extensive global vaccination programmes.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that immunisation currently prevents 4 to 5 million deaths annually. Vaccines have been, and continue to be, the best hope we have of controlling and even eradicating infectious disease. We all get vaccinated as children to provide us with a safe and infectious disease-free environment to grow into healthy adults

— without being sickly from preventable diseases.

SIDE-EFFECTS ARE NORMAL

Of course, vaccines, as do many medications, produce side-effects. And the COVID-19 vaccine is no different. While side-effects may be unpleasant, it's important to remember that these are signs that your body is building protection and they should disappear within a few days. Not only are side-effects normal, they are common — even the most commonly used paracetamol has them.

In the field of medicine, it is accepted that there may be some mild and short-lasting symptoms following vaccination and, rarely, serious ones needing emergency medical attention. There are many factors that contribute to how a person responds to medication and vaccines.

In South Africa, the vaccination programme currently administers two vaccines — Johnson & Johnson, a single dose vaccine and Pfizer, which requires a double dose. Johnson & Johnson common side-effects include pain, redness and swelling at the vaccination spot, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever and nausea. Common Pfizer side-effects include headache, joint aches, muscle aches, pain at the injection site, tiredness, chills, fever and swelling at the injection site.

Side effects can be more common after the second dose. Serious side effects should be reported immediately to the National Vaccine Roll-Out Programme call centre on 0800 029 999, and to a physician. There is currently no scientific evidence that shows that vaccines change your DNA. Globally, over 4.78 billion shots have been given, with a significantly small percentage of individuals reporting serious adverse effects.



While side-effects may be unpleasant, it's important to remember that these are signs that your body is building protection...

HOW VACCINES WORK

A vaccine uses your natural defenses to train your immune system to recognise and combat viruses or bacteria. When exposed, antibodies are naturally produced by the immune system to fight the disease. If the bacteria or virus reappears, the immune system will remember how to respond and quickly destroy it.

Before a vaccine is introduced into the population,

it must first go through rigorous testing and clinical trials, where it is administered and monitored in groups of volunteers. Once a vaccine is shown to be safe and effective, it is approved by national regulators, manufactured to exacting standards, and distributed. While the COVID-19 vaccines were developed at an accelerated pace, they were developed on the back of significant advances in biotechnology and existing knowledge in genomics science.

While vaccines are essential in helping our nation build immunity, it is crucial not to overpromise or distort the facts on how they work. Clear and consistent messaging around the vaccine and its efficacy will help encourage acceptance. If questions such as, "If I have been vaccinated, why do I need to wear a mask?" and "I've had COVID-19, why do I need to be vaccinated?" are not answered adequately, they will fuel confusion and distrust.

So, here are some truths: The COVID-19 vaccine is not a silver bullet. While trials show impressive efficacy percentages, it is not 100% effective.

Johnson & Johnson has shown to be 66.9% effective in an ongoing, large-scale clinical trial, while Pfizer has shown to be 95% effective. The WHO states that a widely used COVID-19 vaccine that's at least 50% effective will help control the pandemic. But, while the vaccine may not be a guaranteed barrier against infection, it can help reduce the severity and duration of the disease. In the same way that it is possible to get the virus after vaccination, it is also possible to be reinfected with COVID-19.

PRECAUTIONS STILL NECESSARY

Although this is not common, our knowledge of the dynamics of the disease changes all the time — and "better safe than sorry" is wise medical advice. Another important note is that the vaccine does not take effect from the moment it enters your body. It could take weeks for its effectiveness to take hold, and it takes two weeks for your body to fully mount an adequate response. So taking the recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions such as mask-wearing and social distancing is essential to stay protected.

Being vaccinated provides you with a fighting chance to experience a mild disease and to prevent hospitalisation, and/or possibly death. Non-pharmaceutical interventions still need to continue because we are still in the pandemic phase and the chances of being infected, even, when fully vaccinated are still a reality.

We are, of course, still learning about the longer term impact of the vaccines. For instance, we do not know at this stage, how long the vaccines will protect us against the coronavirus. It may be similar to the influenza virus, where one requires a booster each year.

What we do know though is that vaccines work. Our world was knocked sideways when the global pandemic struck. Locally and globally economies were affected, health systems stretched and communities devastated. We have a breakthrough! What needs to now happen is for enough people to trust in science!

A HUMANE APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

If there ever was a time when the world is in need of leaders who lead from the heart, it is now. Net1 CEO **Lincoln Mali** unpacks this pressing phenomenon...

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We do not need more new laws to police ethics and morality. Instead, we need new leaders with integrity, a moral compass and a conscience!



South Africa faces a range of multifaceted crises – COVID-19 pandemic, poverty, inequality and unemployment, violence against women and children, rampant corruption, looting and unethical conduct and mental health challenges. All these are both overlapping and interconnected, and if not properly addressed, may threaten the future of our young democracy.

As millions of people search for meaning, answers and a reason to hope for the future, we are experiencing collective pain, anxiety and confusion across institutions, families and organisations. This moment calls for a special breed of compassionate leaders to help society through finding meaning, assisting with the healing process and clearing the mist to create a bold path forward. This can be done by taking concrete actions, in our spheres of influence, that demonstrate our own compassion, thereby unleashing a wide ranging compassionate response.

In these difficult and painful times, the greatest asset of a leader is the size of their heart. A leader with a big heart is able to understand, know and appreciate the people they lead in the deepest possible way. This goes beyond a superficial grin-based relationship, and has more to do with displaying genuine, authentic empathy towards the people we lead. Those who subscribe to these values and principles are the compassionate leaders we need to meet this moment.

Lincoln Mali has over 25 years' experience in the financial services industry. His core expertise is in the areas of leadership, people management, customer service, sales management, digital transformation and business performance.



In these difficult and painful times, the greatest asset of a leader is the size of their heart.

IN TIMES OF TURMOIL

The violent scenes over the last few months laid bare for all to see that the current South African socio-economic trajectory is unsustainable. We as the economic and political elites, the most fortunate societal leaders, need more compassion and understanding. We need to urgently engage our fellow South Africans who are less fortunate.

We must compassionately demonstrate, through words and even more importantly, through concrete deeds, that we hear their desperate cry as they toil through a life of misery, poverty, and hardship daily. We must accept that their patience is wearing thin. We must articulate a clear path towards prosperity for them, with clear timeframes and milestones.

South Africa needs to build a more equitable, inclusive, yet internationally competitive economy through bold and far-reaching structural reforms – empowered with everything she needs to heal herself.

TRUE CAMARADERIE

Women's Day has come and gone, but women's issues remain. We need a concerted effort, across all spheres, for accelerated change in our society beyond the month of August. Such a change must be about a daily and deliberate focus on the real challenges facing women in society.

Our duty as leaders is to create an environment where women will not only succeed, but thrive and take deliberate steps to ensure that their voices are heard loudly and clearly.

Some of the urgent changes required include taking decisive action when there are incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace, clear career opportunities for women, visible progress and promotions into senior roles; salary parity and equity; empathy and support for women who are going through personal difficulties in their lives, creating an environment where young women can see many role models in key positions in organisations; and ensuring that women are respected as professionals and given meaningful roles and challenging projects.

Our daughters' futures are on the line, so we dare not fail.

A FEAR-BASED LIFE

We hear daily of vicious and cruel attacks on women and children, high levels of violent crimes including rape and murder, single mothers battling to make ends meet, and sexual harassment in the workplace by senior corporate executives and powerful politicians.

We know of countless stories of physical and emotional abuse in relationships and marriages. We, as men, are the source of that fear! Let us be that generation of brave men who will make a difference to the lives of our daughters, wives, mothers, friends, and family members. It starts with me.

It starts with how I behave and conduct myself as an executive and a leader in my organisation, a father to my children, a husband to my beloved wife, a friend



and a mentor to women, an uncle to young women and a member of my community. Then it's you. How you conduct yourself as a man, how you behave and how you help us remove the fear that many women grapple with daily!

YES TO AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP!

In times of crisis many leaders put on a mask of power, infallibility, bravado, strength, invincibility, confidence, competence and authority. This manufactured facade is meant to assuage followers, boost confidence and allay fears.

Today, we look up to leaders who come across as human. We connect with those leaders who display high levels of self-awareness and are not afraid to be vulnerable.

Vulnerability and authenticity enable leaders to meet this moment of uncertainty with an open mind, willing to experience all the ups and downs that come with it. Being vulnerable will make us more open and emotionally available to those we lead, creating more opportunities for bonding.

Let's be more human and embrace our foibles and flaws and do away with the 'untouchable' facade, and the false masks in order to present those we lead with our authentic selves.

ETHICS FIRST

It is important to ensure that all leaders, both in the private and public spheres, appreciate that 'ethics' and the 'law' are not identical. Typically, the law tells us what we are required to do or prohibited from doing. It sets minimum standards of behaviour. Ethics on the other hand are about a higher standard of behaviour.

Those in leadership roles have to go beyond just complying with the law, they must set the example in ethical conduct. Leaders should avoid any conduct that may raise any questions of impropriety. Society rightly expects that those serving in leadership and decision-making roles should not maintain relationships that create or may create the appearance of a

conflict of interest.

These ethical standards are intended to promote public confidence that the decisions of those in leadership roles are made without partiality or favour stemming from a real or perceived benefit in the outcome. This is also to ensure that relatives, family members and friends of those in powerful positions do not gain an unfair advantage over ordinary citizens. We do not need more new laws to police ethics and morality. Instead, we need new leaders with integrity, a moral compass and a conscience!

PLAINLY PUT

In the seminal words of Dr Martin Luther King Jr, "When we look at modern man, we have to face the fact that modern man suffers from a kind of poverty of the spirit – which stands in glaring contrast to his scientific and technological abundance. We've learned to fly the air like birds, we've learned to swim the seas like fish, and yet we haven't learned to walk the Earth as brothers and sisters..."

These difficult and painful times call for us as leaders to demonstrate deep concern, compassion and empathy for our employees, their families, and all those less fortunate in society.

True and genuine leadership will only shine through during this period if we strive to become purveyors of hope, offer guidance, give direction and offer assistance and support. The mental and physical health of employees is as important as the financial health of businesses and the economic well-being of a country. It is about time we learnt to be the chief communicators, comforters, and counsellors we were destined to be.

In this way, we can save lives and livelihoods simultaneously, ensure that our society is more equitable, protect the lives and well-being of women and children, while creating an ethical society. Maybe, maybe, just through leading with compassion and humility, we will learn to walk the earth as brothers and sisters!

On-The-Job BULLYING

The following pointers will help you beat workplace bullies at their own game, and also keep you in check.



It's a Monday morning. You've just drafted a to-do list and triaged your email inbox. Then, your boss' name flashes on your cellphone screen. Without even knowing the reason for the call, your stomach sinks, palpitations appear out of nowhere, shoulders tense up and your voice breaks into stutters as you answer, "Hello!" Any form of communication from your boss is always enough to plunge you into the throes of anxiety.

In fact, you'd prefer it if they sent you work instructions without talking to you at all. Unfortunately, that

is not how office dynamics work! If you're a victim of workplace bullying, the start of each week is your absolute worst, and knock-off time on Friday signals the start of a short, but much-needed break.

The US-based Workplace Bullying Institute defines workplace bullying as "any mistreatment severe enough to compromise a targeted worker's health, jeopardise their job and career, and strain relationships with friends and family." This noticeably abusive behaviour impacts the quality of your life in and outside work.

Workplace bullies often assert themselves using some of these behaviours and more:

- Subtly, or blatantly, criticising others
- Giving unreasonable deadlines and/or workloads
- Overly-criticising colleagues
- Screaming at others
- Taking credit for work done by others
- Dropping snide comments
- Undermine their victim's contribution

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Bullies waste no time in using the confidential information you share with them against you.



In her book *You Can Heal Your Life*, author Louise Hay argues that an illness, whether moderate or critical, is a reflection of one's emotional state — caused by your own thoughts and focus areas. Anxiety, panic attacks, high blood pressure, increased stress, insomnia and sometimes ulcers are some of the ailments that can present themselves in victims of bullying. As these symptoms escalate, the victim's productivity, self-esteem and concentration levels suffer. Work tasks suddenly become about ticking items off a to-do list, as opposed to being a labour of love.

A study conducted by researchers at the University of Manitoba in Canada discovered that workplace bullying was more pervasive than sexual harassment. This, however, does not suggest that the latter carries less weight than workplace bullying. And workplace bullying doesn't only start and stop with its victims but those who witness it too, according to the abovementioned study.

UNDERSTANDING BULLIES

Bullies generally have an insatiable power appetite due to their own insecurities. Somehow, they are convinced that the only way to maintain their power is through duress. They achieve this by either intimidating or humiliating their victims with the clear aim of feeling superior. If you're a victim of workplace bullying, you probably live under constant fear of losing your job. Chances, therefore, are that most victims keep quiet instead of standing up to or exposing the bully.

Workplace bullying mostly occurs between managers and their subordinates, and between colleagues as well. The latter battle is usually about coming across as more competent than others, and placing oneself in the best possible position for a promotion someday.

Though it may be difficult to prove a correlation between the bully's actions and your compromised health, that is still no reason to give up. The first step is empowering yourself with enough knowledge to protect yourself against any abusive behaviour that the labour laws may deem legal.

On a battlefield with bullies, there is no room for being meek. One of the initial steps in dealing with a bully according to *Bullying Bosses* author Robert Mueller is to cut back on the amount of personal information you share with them.

Bullies waste no time in using the confidential information you share with them against you. Mueller also suggests using what he has coined the "Restroom Retreat" strategy. Instead of waiting for the bully to complete another one of their episodes, politely ask to use the bathroom.

Stepping away will convey a strong message that will hopefully inform the bully that you are aware

of their actions, and will not tolerate them. If you decide to resign before or after confronting the bully, remember to list someone else within the company as a reference — especially if the bully was your direct line manager.

HOW BULLIES IDENTIFY THEIR VICTIMS?

The silliest, or perhaps funniest, dynamic is how workplace bullies pick their victims. Because theirs is an insecurity void that constantly needs satiating, they generally target anyone whom they feel outshined by. We have listed some of the characteristics that may make you prone to bullying. However, do not be tempted to tone down on your best qualities for fear of aggravating the workplace bully. These pointers are meant to offer insight into why you are being targeted.

You attract a lot of positive attention. You are diligent, intelligent and take initiative. Your hard work always gains recognition from the powers that be within the organisation. Workplace bullies like targeting hard workers because they either feel inferior or worry that they are stealing their shine.

Loud, popular colleagues are at risk too. No, bullies don't only target introverted colleagues who keep to themselves! If you exude positive energy and always have colleagues gathered at your desk, then the bully might feel as though you are threatening their office popularity and status.

Are you a nurturer and team player? These characteristics may agitate bullies as they go against everything they want to achieve — power and tainting others as incompetent.

You are vulnerable. You probably keep to yourself to avoid any conflict and confrontation. Or, it could be from depression or anxiety. Failure to seek professional help could lead to the incidents of bullying aggravating your mental health conditions.

Bullies thrive on prejudice. Your gender, race, sexual preference, race, religion, disability or health status could make you susceptible to bullies. If the bully makes blatant and uncomfortable statements about any of the above, you may proceed to file a complaint with HR.

COULD YOU BE A BULLY?

Most companies have zero tolerance for employees whose behaviour coincides with the general company culture set. If any of the below statements resonate with you, perhaps it's time to introspect.

Others' shortcomings are enough to plunge you into a bad mood. People won't always perform how you want them to — and that doesn't necessarily make them incompetent. Instead of displaying frustration, rather initiate a conversation about how they can improve.

Yelling at colleagues. This kind of behaviour is generally intolerable, whether in or outside the workplace. In fact, it treads the violence and emotional abuse line very finely. Treating others with respect is non-negotiable.

Saying hurtful things in jest, when you actually mean them. Keeping communication professional, even when we dislike someone, is far better than blatant disrespect. Our communication style is something to always mull over.

Believing that your colleagues are idiots. Bullies often hide under the guise of being more passionate than everyone else about their work. Not the case! Their impolite form of communication is, in fact, a reflection of their own failure to manage their emotions. Ask yourself: "Are my colleagues really incompetent or have I set the bar unreasonably high?"

Make others feel small for their mistakes. If a colleague makes careless mistakes all the time, then granted, it may be a performance issue that needs HR to intervene. If, however, the mistakes are small and sparse then consider finding out how the mishap came about.

Micromanaging much? Do the tasks you give your subordinates match their competency levels? Is your micromanaging unwarranted and targeted at one person? Do you find yourself plotting to manage people out simply because they are not performing to your liking? Micromanaging often results due to a lack of trust. Being obsessed with keeping tabs on your team or wanting to catch them out points to a bigger personality issue on your part.

Your performance reviews always dwell on the negatives. Performance evaluations should be used as an opportunity to inform your subordinates about what works and doesn't. Give feedback continuously instead of waiting to interrogate them at the annual performance review. For improved performance, always balance out each negative point with some positive feedback.

Ignoring the views of those you consider beneath you. If you often turn a deaf ear when one specific team member that you don't like speaks, or interrupt their thoughts, then you might just be a bully. Being courteous when others speak is a sign of professionalism.

Bad-mouthing others to management. Sometimes there really is a good reason for discussing someone with management. However, it starts erring on the side of slander when it becomes regular and unnecessary.

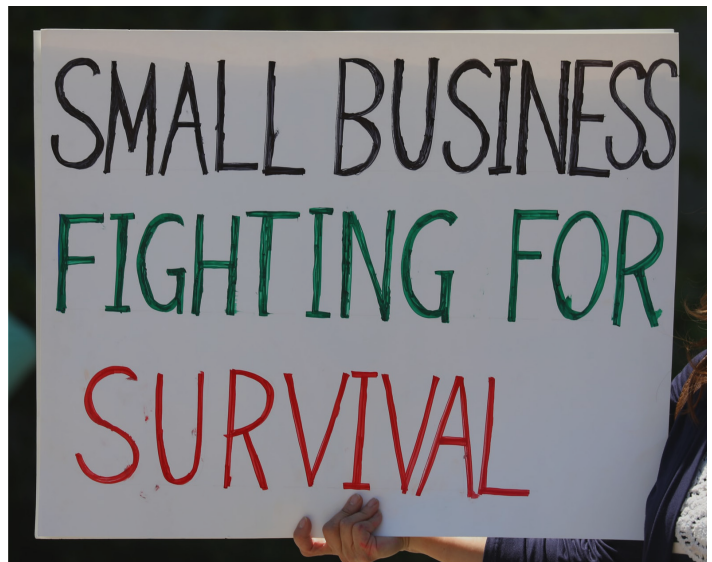
Funding Women ENTREPRENEURS

Lorna Moneti, head of the AWCA's Entrepreneurs Forum portfolio, highlights the urgency of funding women-led enterprises.



Lorna Moneti is a Deal Maker at Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and also heads up the AWCA's Entrepreneurs Forum.

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64% of businesses owned by women were strongly affected by the pandemic compared with 52% of businesses owned by men."



The traditional roles of women are constantly changing, mostly due to the economic circumstances of most African countries. Empowering women, especially in the entrepreneurial space, should be an imperative on our agenda. The Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) noted that 72% of micro-enterprises and 40% of small enterprises are currently owned by women. However, only a small percentage obtain funding and financial support.

FUNDING WOES

We cannot deny that access to capital is crucial to small enterprises' growth trajectory. To date, there exists an underlying issue that stands in the way of women being more impactful than they could be. Female entrepreneurs are still finding it challenging to obtain funding by means of investments and/or loans. The key merely lies in women networking and finding investors, or lenders, with a special focus on financing women entrepreneurs. However, it's easier said on paper than it is in reality!

The recent COVID-19 global outbreak has thrown the global economy into disarray, severely stalling economic growth across all stages of development and economies of wealth. The impact has been considerably greater for women-led businesses. A recent study conducted by the International Trade Centre revealed that 64% of businesses owned by women were strongly affected compared with 52% of businesses owned by men. More than 90% of women entrepreneurs reported a decrease in sales during the pandemic.

YES, IT'S POSSIBLE

While difficulties in obtaining business funding, specifically for women, remains a concern, not all hope is lost. Access to funds for women entrepreneurs is improving thanks to private enterprises and government funds that aim to assist in overcoming these setbacks.

Networking with other women entrepreneurs is another avenue that will assist women in accessing funding, and the AWCA's Entrepreneurship Forum is a great platform as it aims to facilitate networking opportunities for Black women entrepreneurs – with the aim of finding the necessary aid for them to succeed.

WOMEN-FRIENDLY FUNDS

Below are four funds and financial assistance initiatives for women entrepreneurs in South Africa.

The National Empowerment Fund (NEF)

The National Empowerment Fund (NEF) is providing funds to Black entrepreneurs with the aim of facilitating access to finance, in support of BEE and government legislation. The funding is between R250 000 and R75 million across a range of sectors – for start-ups, expansion and equity acquisition purposes. The NEF funds sectors such as tourism and enter-

tainment, retail, property and engineering to name a few. To qualify for funding, the entity should have a minimum of 51% Black female ownership, and operational involvement at managerial and board levels by Black women.

The application process includes screening of the funding application form, submission to the investment committee, due diligence as well as legal process and procedures.

For more information regarding the application process, sectors, funding requirements, and access to the Fund A Woman Brochure, visit www.nefcorp.co.za/funding-solutions/how-to-apply-for-funding/

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 Networking with other women entrepreneurs is another avenue that will assist women in accessing funding..."

Isivande Women's Fund

Isivande Women's Fund is a fund by the DTI aimed at providing finance to enterprises so as to accelerate the economic empowerment of women. The funding benefit is in the form of user-friendly, customised loans within a range of R30 000 to R2 million.

Entities that qualify for funding include formally registered enterprises that are 50% plus one share owned and/or managed by women. This fund also targets entities that are starting up, expanding, rehabilitating, franchising and those that need bridging finance. The aim of the fund is to create self-sustaining Black- and female-owned businesses by offering primary financial and non-financial support.

To be eligible, female-owned companies need to meet the following criteria:

- Your business must be operational for 6 months.
- Your business requires early stage capital for expansions and growth.
- 50% plus one share owned and managed by women.
- Your business requires potential growth and commercial sustainability.
- Your business must improve social impact with employment creation.

For more information, visit www.idf.co.za/ or email info@idf.co.za

Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA)

SEDA's mission is to develop, support and promote small enterprises, and to ensure their growth and sustainability in co-ordination and partnership with various role players. This includes global partners who make international best practices available to local entrepreneurs.

SEDA aims to offer financial and non-financial support programmes to develop local entrepreneurs as they grow and make their businesses more competitive.

Enterprises that can benefit from the SEDA's programmes range from bakeries and confectioneries; motor mechanics and spray painters; clothing, leather and textile; butcheries; shisanyama and cooked food; fruit and vegetables and personal care services.

To apply for funding and support programmes, a proposal must be submitted via the application form, as per the guidelines stated on the online application platform.

For more information, visit www.sefa.org.za or www.seda.org.za

Masisizane Fund

The Masisizane Fund is a division of Old Mutual (Pty) Ltd and focuses specifically on black women, youth, and people with disabilities. The fund's investment is concentrated in underdeveloped areas of South Africa, including rural areas, where businesses are typically seen as high-risk and struggle to secure finance through traditional channels. The fund is committed to job creation that, in turn, contributes to poverty eradication in South Africa. This is achieved through enterprise financing, encouraging entrepreneurship and capacity development – thereby contributing to the sustainability of SMMEs.

The fund invests in agro-processing, franchise and supply chain. To apply, a business plan with relevant supporting documents is required. The application will be submitted for review to the Sector Head and once all approvals have been obtained, the relevant team will proceed with a due diligence on the site where additional documents will be required to take the application forward.

For more information, visit www.oldmutual.co.za or email masisizaneenquiries@oldmutual.co.za



HABIT YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS

Serial entrepreneur **Mmahlapa Mkandawire** on why it's important to make good habits your best friend on the path to success.

Habits play a big role in determining whether we achieve success or not. Yep, read that again! Ever wondered why you do certain things without, even, thinking much about them? Are you even aware of your habits? Experts agree that the key to success is developing habits that help move you closer to your goals, or personal concept of success. You might want to pause here and process that last point!

HABITS ARE KEY

The subject of 'habits' has been widely written about because, though very significant, it is often the most overlooked. Habits are defined as "a consistent manner of behaviour, or an acquired mode of behaviour, that has become nearly or completely involuntary." If we ponder over our bad habits, we will probably realise that they develop almost effortlessly — and overnight.

The truth is that they may have been simple to gain, but they were acquired over a period of time and through practice. In the same breath, building positive habits that stretch you beyond your wildest imagination takes time and consistent practice. And there definitely is no guarantee that the process will be easy. In fact, it's usually harder because you are likely

to be unlearning a negative habit as well.

So, what positive habits can one develop to help them along the path to success? The habits listed below have helped me grow on my entrepreneurial journey. Some I developed from reading, while others I picked up from observing how some of the most productive and successful people around me conduct themselves. These are:

- Avoiding or resisting distraction
- Committing to learning a new skill
- Seeking constructive criticism and guidance
- Choosing to be fair in every situation
- Being ethical
- Embrace positivity

HOW TO HONE NEW HABITS

Now here comes the question: How can you develop new habits that will get you from disorganised to effective in no time? Well, the 21/90 rule is a good start. It is often said that it takes 21 days for your brain to familiarise itself with a habit, and another 90 days for it to become a long-term lifestyle change.

This '21/90' school of thought encourages the following:

- **Make a list of the new habits that you would like to adopt:** preferably under four habits to make it sustainable.
- **The key to sustaining new habits is making them regular:** practice them at least four to seven times weekly.
- **Focus on each day, not the entire 21 days:** there's absolutely no need to overwhelm yourself!
- **Always keep the bigger picture in mind:** therein lies the power to persist with the new habit!

To further encourage yourself along this journey, another great tip is rewarding yourself weekly for practicing your habits daily. The reward doesn't need to be anything expensive or complicated. It can be as simple as cooking a special meal, spending quiet time with yourself or spending extra time with someone you care about.

Remember to be intentional about building positive habits that move you closer to your definition of success. Most importantly, be patient with yourself. On those days when you make mistakes, or forget to practice them, get up and try again!

TRANSFORM Your Relationship With Money



Believe it or not, how we relate with money plays a significant role in how we handle it.

Money has long been cited as one of many key factors that contribute to our happiness – alongside social relationships, adapting comfortably to one's society and culture, plus a positive mindset. No matter how you choose to look at it, money forms an integral part of our lives. As such, it affects our lifestyle choices and behaviours.

HEART-TO-HEART WITH MONEY

Whether you're wondering how to make it, save it, grow it or spend it, money is right at the centre of how we navigate our daily lives. So, how can you stop yourself from getting that pang of guilt whenever you make a purchase you hadn't budgeted for?

Or tormenting yourself with anxiety over how to stretch your Rands to cover your bills, insurances, savings and investments while still being able to indulge in your desires? How can you change the way you think about, and behave with, your money?

Research has found that our money outlook and habits are primarily set by age seven, with socioeconomic factors playing an important role in how we relate to money. South Africa's currently ranked the most unequal society in the world, and the COVID-19 pandemic has definitely exacerbated matters. Therefore, it is no wonder that a vast majority of South Africans have a contentious relationship with money.

NEW MONEY HABITS

Looking to improve your relationship with money? Understanding your financial standing, interrogating your limiting money beliefs and behaviours, and building a tangible plan to better your situation are some of the pivotal steps you'll need to introduce – urgently. But like with all new habits, the journey won't be smooth-sailing and will be intimidating in some parts. Be patient and kind to yourself. Start today and focus on what you can do!



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HASSLE-FREE COVID TRAVELLING



Buckle up because while planning a holiday during the pandemic may be a tad tedious, travelling is always a good idea!

By Puleng Pitso

It's been well over a year since the global pandemic eroded all things normal. Most of us are still approaching, even navigating, travel with caution. Travelling, sadly, is no longer as easy as whipping out your destinations bucket list and scouring the internet for travel deals. Researching country-specific bans, quarantine periods and COVID test requirements have all made pre-travel admin a laborious, instead of a joyous, task. It also doesn't help much that travel regulations are continuously changing, and scattered all over the internet. However, no pre-travel admin could ever be too much to deter us from this mind-altering passion.

Narrowed down, travelling during COVID requires three things — affordability, being certain about your destination of choice and courage. We unpack these three points below:

AFFORDABILITY

I always get asked if travelling is affordable. And my response is always a resounding, "YES!" Over the past year, and relative to pre-pandemic times, the cost of travel has decreased significantly. Travel has, pretty much, become a buyers' market. In order to recoup

whatever costs they can, many travel and tourism businesses have had to offer discounts — making now an affordable and ideal time to travel.

South Africa is no exception — travelling locally has never been this affordable. With there having been various levels of travel restrictions, and the number of international tourists who would usually be making their way to South Africa significantly declining, local establishments have opted to stay afloat by reducing their rates to appeal to domestic travellers.

The following platforms offer great travel package deals:

Secret Getaway. A voucher-based, flash sale travel website that offers good deals whether you're looking for a beach break or a safari getaway. The site's interface is great. You can buy and pay for travel vouchers instantly, as opposed to going back and forth with travel agents.

Your Perfect Africa. The site offers discounted rates across their portfolio of luxury game lodges, private villas and hotels in South Africa.



CHOICE OF DESTINATION

"Where should I go?" is always the next question. My answer is generally for us to support the local tourism industry whenever we can. South Africa's travel and tourism industry has lost over 300 000 jobs, and billions in revenue, since the start of lockdown in March 2020. The logistics around travelling internationally, versus locally, have changed significantly over the past year.

Most international travel requires a negative real time RT-PCR test at your own cost — even if you've been vaccinated — upon arrival and departure. Some countries even require mandatory quarantining upon arrival. Before finalising international bookings, please double check if there aren't any travel restrictions in the country you plan to visit. For instance, South Africans needed to spend 15 nights in an unbanned country before onward travel to the USA or United Kingdom. But with more and more people getting vaccinated, most countries are likely to adjust their travel restrictions accordingly. For thoroughly curated and up-to-date information, restrictions and tips pertaining to travelling abroad, join the Facebook page *South Africans Flying During COVID*.

COURAGE

Deciding whether it is safe to travel boils down to an individual's comfort levels, and ability to shove their fear aside. Remember to remain pedantic about wearing your mask, sanitising often and social distancing while travelling. Other factors to consider while traveling during this time:

Cancellation policy. Remember to ask, specifically, about any travel disruptions resulting from stricter lockdown regulations.

Travel insurance. Know exactly what your policy does and doesn't cover.

Monitor COVID statistics and protocols. Regularly check the statistics, as well as the health and safety protocols of the city or country you are visiting. You, ideally, don't want to travel to an area with high infection rates.

Social Distancing. Choose destinations and activities that, ideally, take place in wide open spaces — and allow you to social distance with ease.



WIPHOLD

*An African woman is the
mother of the land and the people;
the curator of culture and society.*

*She plays the key role in the
social welfare of all the people,
especially the children who are the future.*

Workcations, The Latest Travel Trend



Still aimlessly chasing the idea of balance while working remotely? After going on one, **Vuyokazi Henda** is convinced that a workcation offers a perfect blend of work and play.



LET'S TAKE A STEP BACK

Here we are, more than a year later and things still haven't returned to normal. And in many ways, they probably never will! What is likely to replace the current work-from-home scenario is a hybrid model where employees alternate between working from home and the office. Social networking company Twitter has been bold enough to go fully remote, even shutting down its offices in big cities. While music streaming platform Spotify is embracing a flexible work-from-anywhere model.

Working from home has definitely had its perks. For starters, you can wear your yoga pants and slippers while attending a meeting that you would have suited up for in the past. In between work responsibilities, you can find rare gaps to run errands, handle family responsibilities and be emotionally present for the children. There have been many downsides, too! Hours of prolonged screen-time can take their toll on the body and mind. In some instances, people are working longer hours than before. That is a recipe for fatigue and burnout as pressures — sometimes self-imposed — start to threaten our mental and physical wellbeing. The one important lesson lockdown opened our eyes to is that we are social beings. We love having options. And we are energised by new, fresh surroundings.

THEN CHANGE CAME KNOCKING

I work for a large multinational. Like most companies, our offices shut down completely during lockdown to safeguard employees. Then six months into lockdown, I lost sense of all routine. My work demands seemed to grow, and the extended working hours began weighing heavily on me. Travelling and surrounding myself with friends had always helped fill my cup — and I missed them terribly. While sharing my frustrations with an acquaintance, they suggested I consider changing my location to effectively have a 'workcation' — essentially a working holiday! They reminded me that because I wasn't office bound,

I could work from anywhere with zero disruption to my productivity.

The beauty of workcations is that you get to go on these working holidays, while saving your leave days [wink, wink]. At the time of my planning, international travel was prohibited so I only had South Africa's backyard to explore. Just the thought of working elsewhere was enough to boost my energy levels. I started plotting my escape, carefully imagining the exact environment I wanted to be in.

For me, escaping to somewhere where I could easily access the city was vital. I needed to be in nature, but still close enough to amazing restaurants and activities to feel like I'm on holiday. My pondering and long internet searches led me to an Airbnb in Franschhoek, a town 90 minutes from Cape Town.

Franschhoek has all the charms of an idyllic village, featuring some of the finest bistros one can find.

My week-long sojourn at a small, boutique apartment was perfect. The change of scenery immediately pepped up my soul, and did wonders for my productivity levels. I used Airbnb because I wanted a home away from home. At the time, most places had offered locals reduced rates and many other winter specials. Whenever I would look up from my laptop, my eyes met a gorgeous view of a mountain in the near distance and a lush garden. Now tell me if that's not inspiring!

During my tea breaks, I'd spend time outside soaking in the sun and new surroundings, or stroll to a quaint bistro for an indulgent meal paired with great wine. That week introduced me to the perfect balance of adventure and productivity. I was able to meditate and exercise in a conducive space.

I managed my team and delivered on deadlines, joyfully. I was more patient, and had the inner fortitude to handle some of the pressures work threw my way every few days. Having experienced these mental and physical benefits, I committed to taking workcations regularly. I have learnt that no matter what the new normal brings, keeping myself energised is my responsibility.

Here are a few things to consider when planning your own workcation:

Choose the location wisely. What exactly is your soul calling out for — a city break or uninterrupted sea views? Do you want something local or international? For international travel, you would have to consider first getting vaccinated and quarantine regulations. If you plan on being abroad for an extended period, then understand what the tax implications will be. Lastly, the time difference between South Africa and your country of choice is something you would also need to consider.

Convenience. Ensure that there is little to distract you from focusing on the work tasks at hand. Find out what amenities they have in case you feel like working outside your room.

Connectivity. Ask how stable the Wi-Fi connection and your network signal are. Bring back-up in case you run into trouble.

Leisure. Make a list of all the fun activities available within a short distance from your base. For instance, if you can spend mornings hiking in nature before your first meeting, then all the better!

Ratings and reviews. Read both bad and good reviews. Naturally, the good ones tell you what to look forward to, while the negative reviews give you a sense of what might ruin your experience. Also look at the date of the reviews to ascertain if the bad ones are recent or old — as they could have been resolved already.

Going solo or with friends/family? In that case, be mindful of enough comfortable working space for you.

Duration of stay. Self-catering options, over a longer period, can be cheaper than short stays in a hotel or resort.

Draw up a work schedule. Be deliberate about keeping to it. Knock off timeously so you can weave in some self-care time.

As I reflect on the last 18 months, I appreciate the unintended gifts lockdown has brought us. Chief amongst them is the freedom to work from anywhere in the country, or world. This time has proven that work isn't a place we go to, but what we do. Despite all the changes in how we live and work, the need to care for our mental wellbeing remains a top priority. That said, consider working in places and spaces that will help you nurture yourself, and perhaps achieve the ever-elusive balance. Now, go forth and explore!

My Hiking Diary

Kefiloe Mphatwe reflects on her four-year love affair with hiking, an experience she describes as “peace of mind like no other!”



My first hiking experience was a 10km hike that I attempted with friends at the Hennops Hiking Trail in June 2017. I was unfit, and so the hike was nothing my body had experienced before. Aching body and all, I still enjoyed the experience. The great company, conversations and laughter that echoed throughout the sparse forest exposed me to a form of relaxation I never knew existed. Subsequent to that, I went on other ad hoc hikes with family and friends. And the rest, as they say, is history!

A LOVE AFFAIR

We can all agree that the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions have been no stroll through the park. I started taking a serious liking to hiking in January 2021. As someone who lives alone, I was desperate for human interaction and the outdoors. Naturally, hiking allowed me to interact with others while also maintaining a safe distance.

A friend, also a founding member of the Mzantsi Hiking Divas, introduced me to this social club whose members swear by this hobby-turned-passion. We spend weekends attempting local hikes and every third month, we set about on an out-of-town hike. The group's administrators are organised, love what they do, and do not charge a cent for all their hard work. So far, we have explored the Sporekrans Hiking Trail in the Free State — a breathtaking experience that exposed us to jaw-dropping mountain ranges, had us swimming in natural pools and sleeping in a cave. We also tackled the iconic Otter Trail along the

Garden Route, located in the Tsitsikamma National Park. Words alone cannot capture how beautiful the trail is. Fortunately, we took enough pictures to do all the talking on our behalf. Picture hiking along the Indian Ocean — simply heavenly!

IS HIKING EASY?

Definitely not! It is a true test of character. Often during hiking, the thought of the treacherous path that lies ahead is enough to make the fittest person give up. But very often, fellow hikers are always right by your side to remind you of how far you've come. During those moments in my 'real life' when I feel like throwing in the towel, it's these mental snapshots of my hiking experiences that help me soldier on.

Hiking, for me, is no longer just a hobby. It has become an all-encompassing companion that exposes me to South Africa's beautiful hidden gems. It has uncovered the pockets of strength within me that I didn't know existed. Most importantly, hiking affords me a peace of mind like no other. Similarly to getting lost within a Netflix series, hiking affords me the chance to escape my normal life and truly connect with nature.

Between purchasing the appropriate gear, utensils and budgeting for out-of-town travel costs, hiking is not friendly on the pocket. Though costly, it's definitely worth the peace of mind you walk away with at the end of each expedition.

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WINE THAT **MAKES A DIFFERENCE**

Creative Ways To Keep Your Mental Health Intact

Puleng Pitso recommends some nearby sanctuaries to escape to when staying home gets too lonely.

A decade from now, the terms 'Social Distancing', 'Wear Your Mask' and 'Stay Home' will be probably be triggering to us, the generation that lived through the COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly after the announcement of the first hard lockdown, South Africans took to social media to crack joke after joke speculating about what life in isolation would look like. This, until it dawned on us that lockdown living was here to stay.

Though virtual activities have taken centre stage, staying home doesn't mean we can't explore the outdoors and beauty around us every once in a while. From a hike in nature and a game drive, to a beautifully curated picnic, here are a few fun and safe activities to try during our new normal:

Hike and brunch at Modderfontein Reserve

A walk in nature can nurture even the weariest of souls. It is a great form of cardio too! Not only is the reserve perfect for hikes, but also offers cycling trails, as well as picnic and braai facilities. Modderfontein Reserve is also the new home of the Fourways Farmers Market, the perfect spot to reward yourself after a long, winding morning hike.

Cost: A conservation fee of R30

A few other hiking trails worth checking out are:

- Hennops Hiking Trail, Pretoria
- Lions Head Hiking Trail, Cape Town
- Ou Kraal Hiking Trail, Cape Town
- Sugar Rush Park, Ballito

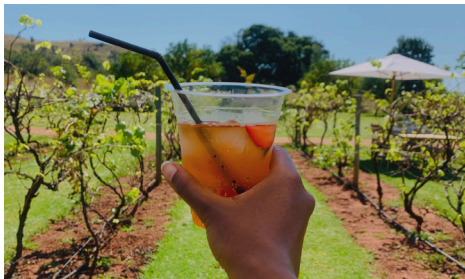
Afternoon walk and lunch at Nirox Sculpture Park

Located in the Cradle of Humankind, Nirox offers many opportunities to wander about the park, while in the company of the many contemporary sculptures — created by local and international artists — scattered across the park. When done with your walkabout, stop by the restaurant And Then There Was Fire for some most mouth-watering flame-grilled meals.

Cost: Entrance fee is R120, but you qualify for a R50 discount if you have a booking with the restaurant.

Other sculpture parks worth checking out are:

- Benguela Cove Sculpture Park, Cape Winelands
- Everard Read Sculpture garden, Leeu Estates in Franschhoek



Picnic at GROUND The Venue in Muldersdrift

GROUND offers beautifully curated picnics fit for hardworking professionals like ourselves. All you need to do is book, pay for the picnic basket and show up on the day. You can also upgrade your experience to the vineyard picnic — which includes a table and chair set-up — if sitting on grass isn't exactly your scene. GROUND also has five hiking trails, one which is child-friendly.

Cost: Depends on the picnic option selected

Escape to The Tangarua Strawberry Farm

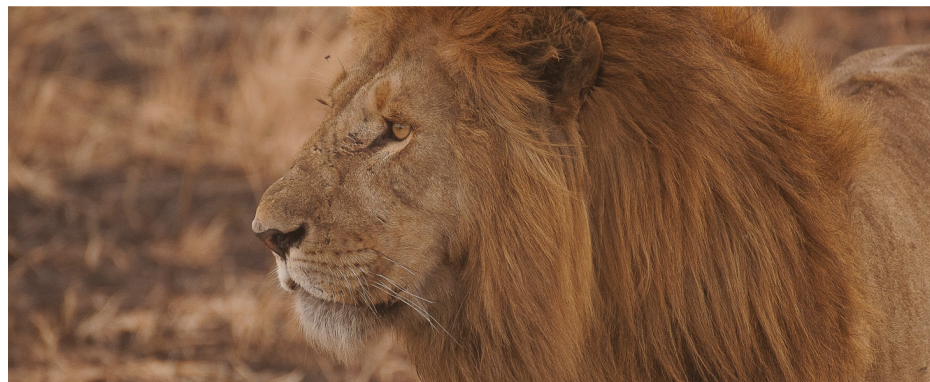
Feel like picnicking in the sun, getting your hands dirty and rewarding yourself with some juicy strawberries at the end? At the base of the Magaliesberg mountains, near Hartbeespoort Dam, lies this strawberry haven where you can pick and eat as many strawberries as you wish. Depending on how rich the harvest is, the farm also offers the option to purchase for taking home.

Cost: R70 allows you to use the picnic facilities



Tapas and wine at Almost Orange

Located on an orange farm in the heart of Hartbeespoort, Almost Orange is a Tuscan-inspired restaurant that serves delectable tapas and cocktails. With picturesque views of orange trees and wide open spaces all around, you certainly won't feel crowded or overwhelmed while enjoying your meal.



Game drive at the Lion and Safari Park

Approximately 40 minutes from Johannesburg, the Lion and Safari Park is a great excuse to be out and about with your family. The park offers guided and self-game drives. The park also boasts a large children's playground and restaurants.

Cost: Depends on the game drive option selected

A few other animal sanctuaries worth a visit are:

- World of Birds Wildlife Sanctuary and Monkey Park, Cape Town
- Boulders Beach, Cape Town
- Elephant Sanctuary, Hartbeespoort and Plettenberg Bay



Feast under the shade at The Kitchen L'antico Giardino

Comfortably nestled in the nooks and crannies of Lanseria, this gem offers an al fresco ambience like no other. The nutritious farm-to-table food, perfect relaxation under the grove of canopy trees, plus the dilapidated garden sculptures offer the perfect Instagram backdrop. A visit to The Kitchen L'antico Giardino will have you feeling like you're out in the bundus.



Indulge in Greek cuisine at Molitva

With an Orthodox Mediterranean menu, featuring subtle surprises, and cooked using homegrown fruits and vegetables, the Cradle of Humankind-located Molitva is a clean eater's haven. Lush countryside and mountainous views surround this greek eatery that is a mere stone's throw from the Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve. With lots of activities to choose from in the area, you're guaranteed to have a memorable outing!



LOCKDOWN AND IMPORTANT **Motherhood Lessons!**

Owning your strengths and flaws as a working mother is the key to truly flourishing. OH, and outsourcing where you can!



Word of caution: Never take on too much!

A quirky, but very true, social media motivational quote has been doing the rounds lately. 'Sis, breathe... There is no award for overworked female of the year!', it reads — another tacit reminder that the rat race has no finish line. This quote couldn't be truer for those mothers who experienced lockdown with little to no help. Between the growing mountain of dishes in the sink, the neverending meal preps and the outbursts for attention from the little one(s), never has there been a time that exposed just how stretched working moms are the way lockdown did. Add to this list: coordinating home schooling amidst your own workload, quelling your own anxiety while also bargaining with the guilt of sometimes allowing YouTube to 'babysit' while you steal some alone time.

In fact, a Washington Post article published in May 2020 — titled *A Working Mom's Quarantine Life* — offered a perfect summary of the 'busy' to 'suddenly domesticated' transition that most moms had to endure: "Tasks that had been outsourced to schools, grandparents, nannies and sitters are now falling squarely on parents and disproportionately on mothers. It is surreal for some of the women, who often found themselves feeling that their busy jobs kept them away from their children. Now, they are spending more time than ever with their kids — but this isn't what they had in mind."

EASY ON YOURSELF

Lockdown was no time to be trying to prove just how much of a superwoman you are. Now it's time to take off your cape, and make peace with just doing enough. Even if that enough entails going to bed with the house looking like the aftermath of a war.

Where stereotypical motherhood roles are concerned, society has a lot of unlearning and new learning to do. No mother should ever base or measure their self-worth on their ability to juggle work and the home front, says Canadian author Amand Watson in her book *The Juggling Mother: Coming Undone in the Age of Anxiety*.

The 'Juggling Mother' is often neatly packaged as a working mom leading a contemporary life without ever displaying an ounce of fatigue, or coming undone at the seams. This idealised version of motherhood, argues Watson, is informed by the media and seeks to normalise long established inequalities of gender, class, ability and race. To assume that mothers can juggle without ever getting tired is a fallacy and inhuman.

"To work and parent is never about balance, but rather, a frantic juggle", argues Australian freelance writer Carla Gee in her column on ABC Everyday's *Good Enough* series. For Gee, deciding between being a career woman or primary caregiver often leaves her feeling 'not good enough' in either of those roles.

THE ART OF JUGGLING LIKE A PRO

The following tips, curated with the help of various moms, will hopefully ease your load and have you feeling alive, again, in no time. *Word of caution:* Never take on too much!



Toss 'mom guilt' out the window. There still exists a concerning stereotype that moms who choose to build their careers are, in fact, prioritising work over child rearing. Firstly, being a working mom means making peace with not always being present — either physically or emotionally. Let go of the 'mom guilt' that usually shreds your conscience to pieces for missing your child's Zoom concert or any other big milestones. To make up for your unavailability, show up fully during those moments when you are free! Being a working mom is a personal choice that should never be shamed, nor shunned.

Use your energy sparingly. When juggling a few things, it's easier to just focus on those areas — and do so confidently. Juggling too many responsibilities on the other hand distracts your focus, and leaves you feeling mentally depleted. Find out what drives you to bite off more than you can chew. If it's fear of failure, then remember to always narrow your focus in those moments when you feel overwhelmed.

Be intentional with your time. Reduce time wasters such as social media and TV. Draw up a list of priorities and create structure around your days. Lastly, be careful not to get caught up in activities that drain your energy.

Tackle difficult tasks first. We all have one or two activities that we aren't particularly fond of, which usually takes forever to complete. Instead of postponing these, set a timer to see how quickly you can accomplish them. You'll be amazed at how much you can fit into 30 minutes.

Offload onto others. There is no such thing as a

supermom. Believing in this hype is a one-way ticket to fatigue and resentment. Between your siblings, nanny, friends and grandparents, there's always someone eagerly awaiting that you ask for help. Living with a partner? Also rope them in instead of assuming that you are bothering them. Taking on too much, even when living with a partner, often leads to a type of resentment informed by how much free time the other party enjoys — unbothered!

Nourish yourself first! You can't pour out love and care if your own fuel tank is on reserve. Neglecting your mind, body and soul can make life seem harder than it actually is. Are you sleeping enough? When last did you have a glass of water? Do you wake up and head straight to your home workstation before the kids wake up? How about waking up and meditating for a change? Being a mother should not be a lifetime punishment of giving to others at the expense of your own mental health. *Read that again — slowly!*

Organise your life. It's near impossible to keep on top of grocery lists, school concerts, extra-mural activities, doctor's appointments and your own work diary. Relieve your brain from the pressure of remembering all these activities by creating lists and recording activities in planners or productivity apps. Where possible, plan way in advance to avoid overwhelming surprises at the eleventh hour!

Lower your expectations. It eliminates a lot of stress! You can't say yes to every kiddies' party invitation. Nor can you be a textbook perfect parent or cook full seven-colour meals every night. Be careful of those unspoken pressures because they are often self-inflicted!

THE **ART** OF SIDE-HUSTLING

Serial entrepreneur **Mmahlapa Mkandawire** gives an honest account of what it really takes to juggle multiple business ventures with being a mom and wife.





I have come to learn that striving for perfection is unrealistic, and often leaves me feeling exhausted and frustrated.

Talk us through your career prior to becoming a serial entrepreneur. How did you transition from employee to entrepreneur?

The real beginning of my transition began when I became pregnant with my firstborn son, Xian. I knew I had to make an important decision about what life I wanted to create for us. After his birth, I quit my job, moved back home and began rediscovering my passion and love for entrepreneurship. I went through the humbling process of accepting that I had to start over, and that I had no real plan other than a commitment to explore my potential. Before I started working and studying, I had pursued a series of businesses that I had abandoned. I had to commit to getting back on track and equipping myself with the knowledge I needed for the ventures I was pursuing.

Talk us through your various businesses and what services they offer.

I have been fortunate enough to be involved in a number of businesses over the last decade. My most recent and exciting ventures are V-spark, Faith & Love, an executive matchmaking agency seeking Christian singles to join the search for love. I'm also involved in Quiver, a business solutions company run and owned by Black women. We partner with our clients to deliver world-class business solutions to African businesses. Lastly LaVida Africa, a water treatment and beverage bottling company.

How do you juggle the demands of your multiple business ventures with home life and downtime? I

get hives every time I get asked this question because it's something I am still figuring out. It's a process of constantly negotiating my expectations against my children's and husband's, plus my work, dreams and hopes. I feel like I am mostly failing at meeting my own expectations of how I should show up in every moment of my day – whether as a mother, wife or employer.

I am working hard at changing my expectation of perfection into excellence, instead. I have come to learn that striving for perfection is unrealistic, and often leaves me feeling exhausted and frustrated. Striving for excellence, on the other hand, reminds me that I am still a work in progress!



“Entrepreneurship may be lonely, but I have learnt that investing in a small group of meaningful friendships is better than investing in a large pool of acquaintances.”



What inspired you to go the entrepreneurial route?!

I am very fortunate to be a third generation entrepreneur – both my grandmother and mother are entrepreneurs. I was fascinated by how my mother used her innovation to create things that added value to people's lives. I was also seduced by the possibility of living a life where I could explore my potential and define myself by the impact I make and the value of what I create, rather than a mere job title.

What's the biggest lie ever told about entrepreneurship?

That it allows you to be your own boss. No, it only allows you to be a boss in your office, but you are a servant/employee of every client/customer. Without a certain level of servanthood and humility, success in entrepreneurship is almost impossible. Another argument is that it's impossible for ambitious women to be emotionally present mothers and partners. This lie serves to undermine our ability to create the life we desire and deserve. We, women, are no longer at the mercy of society's expectations of us.

Entrepreneurs most often describe the journey as lonely. What helps you stay afloat when challenges arise? It's lonely, but I have learnt that investing in a small group of meaningful friendships is far better than investing in a large pool of acquaintances. I have

also learned to be more proactive by considering risks and doing my best to manage them.

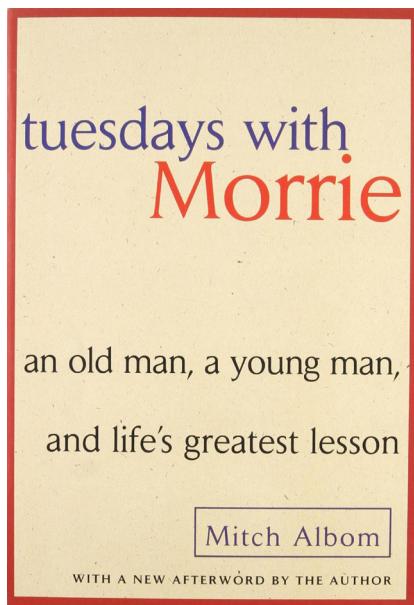
What advice would you give to a professional with entrepreneurial ambitions, but feels that there just isn't enough time to work towards their dreams?

I would encourage them to start by having an honest conversation, with themselves, about what their real concerns are. I have found that time is often not the real problem, but fear, lack of confidence, an obsession with status and a lack of will are the key issues.

The biggest trap to change is comfort and the need to maintain a certain status. The risk involved in pursuing your dreams is unavoidable. It will be the hardest thing you will do, but also the most fulfilling. My husband often says that we must choose to either live for pleasure or fulfillment. Fulfillment leads to pleasure, but often begins with sacrifice and personal growth. Pleasure is more accessible, but also short-lived. Pleasure enslaves us, while fulfillment frees us to live fully and authentically.

LITERARY PICKS

Here are four life-altering books we recommend you read before the end of the year!



//

Devote yourself to **loving others**, devote yourself to your **community around you**, and devote yourself to **creating something** that gives you purpose and meaning.

Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom

**Mmapula Mokoena, Senior Manager:
Brand (Fintech & Digital)**

Book that made me cry: *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom

Synopsis: A heartwarming story about a man, Mitch, who reconnects with his old professor and mentor, Morrie, years after graduating from college. At the time of their reunion, the old professor has been diagnosed with ALS and given only a few months to live. In the spirit of making the professor's last days memorable, Mitch decides to visit him every Tuesday.

It is during these Tuesday meet-ups that the professor reflects on his life – what he found to be important – and imparts this wisdom to Mitch.

How the book changed my life: This book had me bawling from start to finish. The overriding lesson was: 'Don't be afraid to pour yourself out in love!'

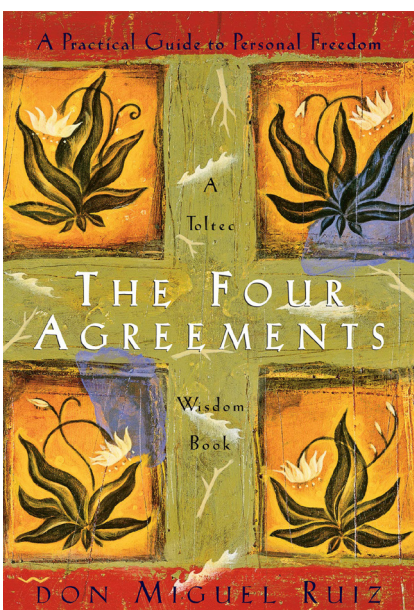
For me, it means always extending kindness to others, no matter where I am in my journey. For, it is in kindness and truly caring for each other that we become a better humanity.

After reading the book, the one question that kept replaying itself thereafter was: 'How did I manifest love today?' Perhaps I should set this intention at the start of each day, and afford myself plenty of opportunities to manifest the love this era so desperately needs.

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It is when we **lose control** that we **repress** the **emotions**, not when we are in control.

The Four Agreements by Miguel Ruiz



Kgomotso Molewa, Governance Risk and Compliance Professional

Book that helped me navigate the world: *The Four Agreements* by Miguel Ruiz

Synopsis: The book is premised around four habits that we can change to help us live a shackle-free life.

And these are: *Be impeccable with your word* – Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean. Use the power of your word in the direction of truth and love. Don't take anything personally – Nothing others do is because of you. What others do is a projection of their own reality.

Don't make assumptions – Find the courage to ask questions and communicate clearly. *Always* do your best – Your best will change from time to time; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to

sick. Under any circumstances, do your best to avoid self-judgement, self-abuse and regret.

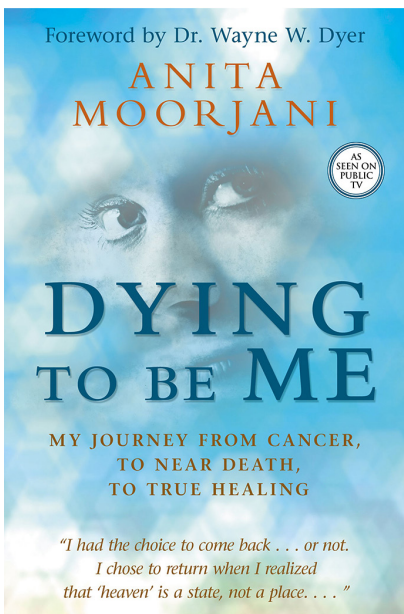
How the book changed my life: I have always known of the maxim, 'It is not what happens to you, it's how you respond to it!' However, I lacked the skills to convert this knowledge into actionable everyday behaviours.

I recently reread *The Four Agreements* as part of our book club task. Reading it as a group helped me contextualise that everyone was going through a difficult time, and that my challenges are not unique. The uniqueness in the situation is how I choose to speak, respond and show up. This book helped me exist fearlessly, without overthinking every decision and intention.



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I can't say this strongly enough, but our feelings about ourselves are actually the most important barometer for determining the condition of our lives!

Dying to Be Me: My Journey from Cancer, to Near Death, to True Healing by Anita Moorjani



Thimna August, Entrepreneur

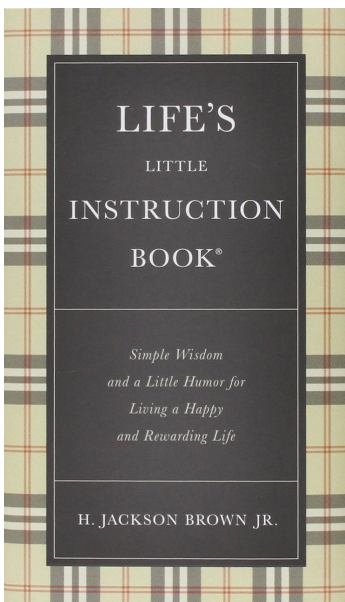
Book that helped improve my mental wellbeing:
Dying To Be Me by Anita Moorjani

Synopsis: Author Anita Moorjani details how after fighting cancer for almost four years, her organs began shutting down — hurling her into a near-death experience layered with many epiphanies that ultimately healed her. One of them was that she had been the cause of her cancer. When she eventually regained consciousness, Anita's condition had improved significantly, leading to an early release from hospital weeks later.

She recounts countless childhood anecdotes, personal struggles and what eventually led to her being labelled 'the patient who defied all medical knowledge'. In this brutally honest account about healing, illness, fear and "being love", Anita shares her biggest lesson to date — that she has been empowered with everything she needs to heal herself.

How the book changed my life: This book couldn't have come at a better time on my ongoing journey to seek self. It was a gentle awakening and reminder of the gift, power and privilege that is the human experience. For those of us who have, perhaps, forgotten who we are and our purpose, *Dying To Be Me* is the ultimate navigation tool.

Knowing just how much of our human experience is actually in our control is empowering. Anita's lessons on dogma, detachment, surrendering, fearlessness, unconditional self-love, self-acceptance and self-kindness serve as healing agents that continue to guide me to this day. We truly are magnificent spiritual beings choosing to have a human experience. And it's an experience we should relish every single moment of!



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Never deprive someone of hope; it might be all they have.

Life's Little Instruction Book by H. Jackson Brown, Jr

Busi Sibanyoni, Entrepreneur

Book that helped me survive lockdown: *Life's Little Instruction Book* by H. Jackson Brown, Jr

Synopsis: This booklet — made up of 511 suggestions, observations, and reminders on how to live a happy and rewarding life — was initially a gift from a father to his son when he started college. The father had penned it as a life manual, hoping it would provide a road map on how to navigate everyday life, for his son. The son enjoyed the book so much that he added his own instructions as well.

How the book changed my life: I found this book tucked away in a corner in my parents' bedroom. Upon opening it, my eyes landed on what I thought was the most beautiful instruction — one that I also needed to read on the day: 'Never deprive some

one of hope; it might be all they have'. I kept flipping through the pages, and found more witty and resonant instructions.

I read and reread these for days on end. Some instructions have become my personal mantras, especially during the lockdown period. Between the bad news, thick grey clouds of grief and anxiety attacks, I found it particularly challenging to focus on tasks that required long concentration, outside of my everyday work.

Reading was, also, often hard. Coming across this book that didn't require much effort from me was a huge relief. I keep it on my bedside and often pick it up when in need of a new mantra to keep me going.



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THROUGH MENTORING
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Zanele Maduna, CA(SA)
Difference Maker

#DifferenceMakers

Zanele Maduna, CA(SA) credits being a Thuthuka Bursary beneficiary with not only enabling her to become a Chartered Accountant, but with empowering her to 'pay it forward'. Recognising that her success is a result of the coaching and mentoring support she received through the fund, Zanele started her own Learning Centre, No Valo Learning, where she coaches and mentors students and young professionals. Today, she diligently executes her belief that students who have access to coaching and mentoring have a greater chance of succeeding and breaking the cycle of poverty.

Zanele Maduna became a Chartered Accountant because of the Thuthuka Bursary.

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