



IT'S TIME TO REFLECT ON A SUCCESSION PLAN

This has been one of the tougher years for business in all sectors ... and the current state of political affairs and the drought are not making it any easier. We have the rating agencies on our back with Pravin Gordhan trying his level best to keep the country away from 'junk status' ... and then we have #FeesMustFall. All of these issues are making it more difficult for business and it isn't easy for us to see a silver lining in the future.

But, all that aside, there is some good news: We're fast approaching that time of the year when we will be able to sit back, relax and enjoy the long-awaited rest we've been working towards all year. It is also

when we share some quality time with family and friends and, if we're lucky, we can look forward to receiving that special gift – the one we have been hinting about for months.

During the last few months, we've been bombarded with the uncertainty around us and, for many, the consideration of training for the future has not been on the radar. Listening to the 'experts', things should start improving next year; so the question you should be asking yourself is: "When the economy starts to pick up, will I be ready to take advantage of everything that comes with that?"

I can already hear some readers telling me to

wake up and smell the coffee ... However, I do believe that the people of South Africa are beginning to recognise that we all need to work together to combat the issues that are currently plaguing our country in order to bring about a new dawn in South Africa.

For a while now, many of us have been getting by with skills in our companies that are 'aging'. Many companies have been 'sitting on the fence' and adopting a 'wait and see' attitude. This December, while you're sitting with your feet in the pool or the sea, I'd like you to consider a succession plan.

It's now time to begin the uplifting process and to start training the people who will, in time, take

over from those 'aging skills' you are probably sitting with within your company. You would need to consider how much time you, or your skilled staff or colleagues have left before retirement. Working back from there, you would have an idea of when to begin introducing or recommending a succession plan.

Assuming you need a new artisan in your organisation, here is a possible planning process to follow:

- Step 1:** Recruiting to appointment – three to six months.
- Step 2:** Training an artisan to trade test – three years.
- Step 3:** Allowing the newly qualified artisan to gain experience under the guidance and mentorship of your current artisan who will be retiring in the next three years (some would say that they would need 20 years!).

This shows that to get a new employee to perform at the same optimal performance of your experienced artisan could take up to five years to achieve. This process could also be used to determine the potential cost to your future business if you do not implement a succession plan for all key positions.

It is imperative to consider which employees would have to be replaced and how long it would take to replace them to ensure that your business remains sustainable. So, it would be a good time now – while you have the 'quiet time' to stare into the braai fire or contemplate your toes in the water – to review the people, positions and skills that are vital to your company. Will you be ready to take advantage of the new dawn I mentioned earlier?

The alternative is that you may be forced to take what is available and go through a dip in productivity while you upskill the new staff to your standard.

Succession planning is seldom an urgent consideration because most of us think that we will be superman forever. Just think about how quickly this year has passed us as you stare into the fire.

Remember, it's the time of giving and, between the SETAs and the taxman you can get back some of the contributions you have made throughout the year via the Skills Development Levies (SDL).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who have commented on the articles I have written this year and I wish all our Christian readers a peaceful, joyful and Christ-filled Christmas. To all, if you are lucky enough to be going on holiday, drive safely and look out for other drivers.

Should you have any training issues you'd like to discuss with me, please email me at nick@pandttechnology.co.za and write 'Sparks Column' in the subject line.

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