

From the Editor's Desk

This edition of **Izwi** is no different from the previous ones, as it contains a good balance of informative content. In this edition, we feature the reviewed Employee Performance Management and Improvement System (EPMIS) policy, which is aimed at amongst others, providing a user-friendly framework for performance management, employee development and reward processes within the Office of the Public Service Commission (OPSC).

We also report on the inaugural Disability Inquiries Workshops conducted by the OPSC. This article provides insightful information into the public service's inability to recruit and retain people with disabilities.

Information Knowledge Management (IKM) seems to be a misunderstood phenomenon. It was therefore befitting to feature an article on the management of knowledge or intellectual capital in relation to the Public Service.

In what will be a series on key aspects of personal finance management, we feature an article on retirement planning. Other articles featured in this edition of **Izwi** include, Heritage Day celebrations, visit by Kenyan and Nigerian delegations as well snippets on some of the prominent PSC reports tabled in Parliament. Moreover, **Izwi** will not be complete without featuring comical takes on a variety of issues.

Your views and ideas are always welcome. You can send them to sammym@opsc.gov.za or kabelol@opsc.co.za.

We trust you will find this edition enlightening. Happy reading.

Sharp!

The OPSC engages Departments around the recruiting and retaining people with disabilities.

Article by Kabelo Ledwaba



Concerns have been mounting around the public service's inability to recruit and retain people with disabilities. In terms of a decision by Cabinet, people with disabilities should comprise 2% of the public service personnel by 2009. However, previous studies by the PSC have shown that there has been very little progress in attaining this target. In line with its mandate and in an effort to get to the root

of the problem, the OPSC engaged five provinces and six national departments on the matter.

A first for the OPSC, this fact finding mission took the form of 'Inquiry Hearings', whereby Heads of Departments (HoDs) had to present their responses to a set of uniform questions that were formulated and circulated to them prior to the Inquiries as well as the PSC's comments on the status of disability equity in their departments. In addition, HoDs were provided with a platform to articulate challenges inhibiting them from achieving the set targets. Likewise, a platform to highlight and share strategies that underscored their achievements was given to those departments

that managed to achieve and in some instances exceed the set target.

The findings of the Inquiries will form the basis of a research which will eventually lead to a report that will reflect on the challenges and strategies to be adopted in achieving disability equity. Using Inquiries as a foundation for a report seems to be a winning formula. The Director-General, Odette Ramsingh, elaborates: "The slow progress in achieving disability targets clearly demonstrated a need for intervention. The OPSC took a decision to engage departments as to why they are battling to achieve the specified target. An assessment of their written responses indicated that there were few departments that achieved or exceeded their targets. It was therefore necessary for the OPSC to get to the bottom of these disparities, and the best way to go about this is through face-to-face dialogue; hence the Inquiries."



"The decision to hold formal Inquiries proved worthwhile as we managed to unearth insightful information from participants as opposed to written responses, which often depicts a lack of senior management input. Given the success of these inquiries, I sincerely believe that we should use this formula for future projects," she explains.



The Disabled People South Africa, a cross-disability umbrella body of organisations of people with disabilities in South Africa, formed

an integral part of the Inquiries, with its Secretary General, Mzolisika Toni, forming part of the OPSC panel.

A common thread of issues resonated throughout the Inquiries. Issues that stood out, include:

The need to change attitudes towards disability amongst 'able-bodied' employees.

Reluctance by people with disabilities to disclose their status to employers due to perceived discrimination.

Lack of clear strategies and policies around human resource transformation, which leads to unfocused and inefficient recruitment approaches.

The need for employers to think beyond 'wheelchair ramps'. Most institutions are obviously focused on making their work environments friendly to paraplegics, thus neglecting other forms of disability.

"Throughout the Inquiries, it became evident that departments are grappling with the same issues. While we appreciate the challenges they are dealing with, we nevertheless can not sit back and hope the matter will resolve itself. In essence, we cannot assume that the public service has fully transformed until such time that people with disabilities are adequately represented in all spheres of government. We hope that the envisaged report will help the public service reflect on and deal with issues around the employment of people with disabilities," concludes the Director-General.

A revised Employee Performance Management System on the cards

Article by Joseph Malekana

Since the second quarter of the year, the Directorate: Human Resource Management and Development has been on a trail towards implementing a revised performance management system. In an effort to create awareness about the renewed system, the Directorate has been on the road conducting workshops - targeting employees on salary levels 2-12. The 'road trip' saw HR officials (Simon Malema, Disei Thubakgale, Dikeledi Nkhona and Tebogo Leshaba) visiting several regional offices, since mid July, including the Free State, North West, Limpopo as well as the Eastern and Western Cape. The workshops are currently held for staff based at Head Office.

The reviewed Employee Performance Management and Improvement System (EPMIS) policy was approved by the Director-General in May this year. Among others, EPMIS aims to:

- facilitate appropriate recognition and reward processes of work performance contributing to the realisation of the OPSC's objectives and service delivery standards;
- ensure that all employees are at all times fully informed on what is expected from them and the applicable work standards; and
- identify the development needs of employees and to collectively plan, implement and monitor relevant intervention activities.

"EPMIS has been introduced with the view to provide a user-friendly framework for performance management, employee development and reward processes within the OPSC. In effect, EPMIS strives to establish an integrated system and processes

that define and improve the best job related outputs," explained, Disei Thubakgale, Assistant Director: Human Resource Development.

Thubakgale said that the EPMIS has been warmly received by staff; adding that the workshops proved to be necessary and vital. "While the workshops are mandatory for all employees on salary levels 2-12, we also encourage and have had a good response from SMS members as they are the ones who would ultimately implement the reviewed policy," he said.

According to Thubakgale, there are considerable differences (as reflected in the table below) between the old and the reviewed EPMIS systems.



OLD SYSTEM	REVIEWED EPMIS SYSTEM
In the past the Office had seven (7) Moderation Committees dealing with all the assessments for employees on salary levels 2 to 12.	The Moderation Committees have been reduced to three (3), in which it will be constituted at a branch level in order to ensure consistency in the assessment processes and to establish a mutual understanding of standards in the branches.
Role players in the application of the EPMIS were both the supervisor and the supervisee.	<p>The role players in the application of the EPMIS are the employee, supervisor as well as the overseeing manager. The overseeing manager is an individual one level higher than the supervisor. His/her role would be to ensure that all staff in his/her components have signed Job Descriptions and annual work plans.</p> <p>The overseeing managers take full responsibility for the performance management process in their components, and will be responsible for the final signing of all bi-annual assessment reports.</p> <p>He/she will approve the individual work plans developed by employees and their supervisors and should further ensure that individual work plans support the manager's performance agreement.</p>
In the past key performance areas were not weighed.	Each and every individual will have to weigh their own key performance areas according to their inherent importance in terms of the employees' job. Furthermore, the Office has introduced the EPMIS calculator which will be used to add the final scores.

Information Knowledge Management – a must have or nice to have?

Article by Palesa Mafihlo

There is no contention that this is an information-driven era. In fact, knowledge has become a valuable asset. In order to thrive, economies around the world rely on information, most importantly, instant accessibility to information. Regrettably, the management of knowledge or intellectual capital still remains a challenge for many organisations. Public service institutions are not immune to this challenge.

One of the key dilemmas confronting organisations is the question of whether intellectual capital should be treated as a strategic imperative and in the same manner as other management functions such as human resources, finance, production and marketing. This is an ongoing debate and in this case, a discussion for another day. This article focuses on Information Knowledge Management (IKM) in relation to the public service.

The State of Knowledge Management in the Public Service

Government has in the past few years invested substantial resources in an attempt to build an effective system of institutional knowledge capital. This new approach is seemingly intended to support the State's capabilities in accelerating service delivery. While this is certainly a commendable endeavour, one of its potential downfalls could be the blasé approach to knowledge management by some of the public service institutes. The importance of IKM in public institutions, especially those line departments that rely heavily on information to provide an efficient service to citizens, can never be overstated. Coupled with the indifferent approach is the lack of know-how, which is key in ensuring that the right infrastructure is put in place and most importantly utilised to its best capabilities.

Regardless, it is encouraging to observe that an increasing number of institutions are putting in place plans to build strong knowledge management systems. Nonetheless, infrastructure and policy alone is not enough. A change in culture and most importantly attitude towards IKM and new ways of doing things is critical.

IKM in the PSC

In 2003 the PSC recognised that although it had in place an information technology infrastructure, with widespread access to email and the web supported by a shared server, there was no system in place for managing knowledge-based processes and institutional memory. Moreover, the network infrastructure had almost reached its full capacity.

In order to address these challenges, the PSC prioritised the need to create a knowledge-based system to enhance the management of the tremendous quantity of information and knowledge generated by its research and investigation activities. This process led to the development and deployment of the IKM system.

The IKM system entailed two phases. The first phase was geared towards providing information on specific topics and ensuring that the information can be easily accessed and drawn together from diverse sources. This allowed the creation of useful institutional memory that can be drawn upon by all OPSC staff as they need it. Moreover, the system boasts the following critical components.

An archiving and knowledge storage component in which reports and documents can be stored and easily retrieved by staff as required.

A project management component in which plans for all PSC projects can be laid out and progress tracked as the various activities required for each project are completed. This component allows management to quickly and easily update themselves on the progress of each project undertaken in their units and thereby ensuring that potential delays and problems receive appropriate attention expeditiously. Added to this is a module for project costing and expenditure management.

An on-line chat room facility that facilitates collaboration, debate and information sharing amongst staff members. Task management components in which individuals and teams manage activities by assigning tasks, scheduling date/time and monitoring the progression of various tasks due for completion.

In essence, this first phase of the IKM system provided an 'entry point' to a repository of consolidated organisational knowledge and offers a platform for rolling out the knowledge management initiative.

The second phase of the IKM solution upgrade entails the development of additional software components for the critical and strategic outputs of the organisation and the enhancement of functionality of existing modules. This upgrade comprises of the following components.

Case Management System which is essentially a document management system that assists in capturing and tracking grievances and complaints as well as accessing statistical data of cases captured.

- An IKM and BAS Integration aimed at automating all project costing processes and providing an overview of all project components.
- An enhanced navigational structure to improve usability and overall system functionality.
- An invoicing system for the automation of processes and workflows related to the invoicing procedure.
- A dedicated system for capturing of Performance Agreements of HoDs, ratings and providing relevant statistical data.

Lesson Learnt around the Implementation of the IKM System

A common 'concern' which is in fact a misconception amongst most users is that the IKM system is cumbersome and therefore time consuming. The truth is that, as with any other new application, speed comes with familiarity with the tools. In this case, this can be augmented by training to improve skills.

Although it can at times be unpleasant, change is necessary and almost a certainty. However, it is in the nature of humans to want to continue with the status quo or old habits. Most importantly, if consistency does not form an integral part of the implementation process, it is almost guaranteed that once the novelty of a new project wears off, people will return to old habits. It therefore becomes vital that the use of the new system becomes mandatory and staff appreciates the value of continuous learning and improvement.

Likewise, a framework to develop key performance indicators and measures for knowledge management solutions is vital. Once the structures and processes are designed, purposes that the IKM should achieve in order to meet strategic objectives must continuously be gauged.

Overall, IKM is certainly a 'must have' function that should form part of any organisation's strategic priority. If managed properly it can save time and assist in developing and recording intellectual capital as well as providing management with instant access to a knowledge base needed in decision making.

PSC releases several reports pertinent to the discourse around good governance

Article by: Ben de Villiers

The PSC has been relentless in fulfilling its mandate as an oversight entity tasked with ensuring good governance and sound administration in the South African public service. In achieving this purpose, the PSC conducts research and investigations leading to the production of high quality reports with recommendations on a number of issues pertinent to the public service. These reports do not only serve as a reliable reference but also generate a broader discussion and debate around conduits toward the envisaged State.

Below are brief notes on some of the PSC reports recently released and tabled in Parliament.

Report on Financial Misconduct in the Public Service for the 2005/2006 Financial Year

The *Report on Financial Misconduct for the 2005/2006* financial year provides a statistical overview and analysis of the information provided by national and provincial departments on finalised financial misconduct cases reported to the PSC for the financial year.

Cases in the category "fraud and theft" comprise a significant portion (64.7%) of the overall number of cases reported.

Regarding responses from departments, the Report notes that although departments are compelled to report the outcome of finalised misconduct cases to the PSC, most departments do not comply with the prescripts and must on a continuous basis be reminded to report to the PSC. In addition, some departments seem indifferent to accurate reporting or lack the capacity to pay proper attention to accurate reporting.

According to the Report, a total of 771 cases of financial misconduct were reported for the 2005/2006 financial year, compared to 513 during the previous financial period. Cases in the category "fraud and theft" comprise a significant portion (64.7%) of the overall number of cases reported. Of the 771 cases where charges were brought against employees, 81% of employees were found guilty of financial misconduct. The total cost emanating from unauthorised, irregular, fruitless

and wasteful expenditure as well as losses resulting from criminal conduct reported by both national departments and provinces for the 2005/06 financial year was slightly over R45,6 million.

The Report notes that the largest number of financial misconduct cases is encountered at the production level, that is, salary level 1 to 8; while employees on salary level 6 and 7 committed the highest number of financial misconduct cases.

The Report concludes that, overall, it would appear that risk control mechanisms, such as awareness programmes and training on the PFMA that were put in place resulted in financial misconduct being exposed within departments.

Report on Trend Analysis on Complaints Lodged with the Public Service Commission

The *Report on Trend Analysis on Complaints Lodged with the Public Service Commission* provides baseline information regarding complaints lodged during the 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 financial years, through both the National Anti-Corruption Hotline (NACH) and the Complaints Rules.

During the 2005/2006 financial year, 757 complaints relating to the behaviour, competency and attitude of staff, as well as standards of service were lodged with the PSC via the NACH. Of these, 389 related to national departments, 353 to provincial departments and 15 to private companies. The majority of cases lodged with the NACH (other than those relating to corruption) involved unethical behaviour, followed by poor service delivery, prison conditions for inmates, and human resource related issues.

employees were reluctant to provide the necessary information to the investigating teams appointed by the PSC

In terms of the **Complaints Rules**, 116 complaints were lodged with the PSC during the 2005/2006 financial year. Of these, 67 related to national departments, 38 to provincial departments, four to local government, and five to private companies whilst in two instances the institutions involved were unknown. In both the 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 financial years, the majority of allegations related to human resource issues.

The Report notes that a major obstacle encountered during investigations conducted in departments was poor document and record management which in most instances made it difficult to access important information timeously. In addition, some employees were reluctant to provide the necessary information to the investigating teams appointed by the PSC, sometimes for fear of being victimised. Furthermore, anonymous complaints could in some instances not be investigated by the PSC due to insufficient information provided by complainants. Delays in responses by departments/executing authorities to allegations/preliminary findings also hampered the finalisation of investigations by the PSC.

Compliance with the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act

The PSC, Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD) as well as German donor agency (GTZ) cooperated in undertaking research aimed at reviewing the ability of the public service to implement the Promotion of Administrative

Justice Act, 2000 (Act No. 3 of 2000) (PAJA).

The Report notes that there is a very low level of awareness of PAJA in both the national and provincial departments and a higher level of awareness in the local authority and civil society organisations. In addition, there seemed to be no awareness of the time limits set by PAJA to respond to requests (i.e. within 90 days) and little effort is made to ensure that applications were considered within the limitation set by PAJA. This is of great concern especially for those entities that have substantial public interface and provide vital services to the public.

The Report further notes that it seems that while there was a general and discernable desire and intention to make administrative actions fair and just, the PAJA legislation did not necessarily result in the alignment of administrative practices with its requirements.

The Report states that the key driver to comprehensive compliance with PAJA is knowledge, which can be achieved through proper training. The Report further notes that there is a need to introduce strategic plans for the implementation of PAJA, which should also clearly spell out responsibilities.

The Report also urges the public service to improve its capacity to deliver on the requirements of PAJA thereby ensuring that it does not subject citizens to unlawful, unreasonable and procedurally unfair administrative decisions. It concludes that in essence, a culture of compliance with the constitutional values of openness, transparency and accountability is required to ensure that the implementation of PAJA is more than merely legalistic compliance.

Citizen Satisfaction Surveys - Economic and Infrastructure Services Sector

The aim of this Survey was to determine the citizens' expectations of services versus their actual level of satisfaction with the services. A process of extensive consultation, involving the PSC, Departments of Water Affairs and Forestry, Agriculture as well as Land Affairs, resulted in the selection of 14 services across the these three departments for inclusion in this Survey.

the citizens' expectations of services versus their actual level of satisfaction with the services

The overall satisfaction scores for the departments were 79% for the Department of Agriculture (DOA), 73% for the Department of Land Affairs (DLA) and 71% for the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAf). The satisfaction scores for DOA ranged from 68% (Farmer Settlement) to 81% (Engineering Services) while that of DLA ranged from 62% (Restitution) to 79% (Surveys and Mapping). For the services offered by DWAf, the satisfaction scores ranged from 67% to 79%. The average percentage for this survey including the previous two is 71%.

On a service level, the highest-scoring services were Agricultural Engineering (81%), Breeding Registration Certificates and Authorisations (80%), Surveys (79%) and Licensing of Activities on State Forest Land (79%). The lowest-scoring services were

Farmer Settlement (68%), Land Reform (68%), Restitution of Land Rights (62%), Authorisations for Water Use (69%) and Billing of Major Water Users (67%).

It can be concluded that the departments that participated in this Survey generally met the needs of clients, as the majority of citizens were satisfied with the service they received. There are, however, several capacity challenges that have been identified and need management attention.

Are you ready to retire comfortably?

Article by: Ben de Villiers

Media reports frequently suggest that consumer debt in South Africa is exceptionally high. The reports also suggest that individuals and households spend more money than they earn. Even more alarming is the fact that too many people are not saving enough for their retirement. This article provides salient points around retirement planning.

Please note that this is an attempt to provide pointers and not necessarily professional advice, hence we recommend that you seek independent financial advice from a qualified financial planner.

Start now...

Whether we want to accept it or not, we will all ultimately retire at some point in our lives. In fact, at some point in our lives we will not be able to work to generate an income and will therefore need to depend on our retirement funds, that is, if we have such funds and most importantly that those funds will sustain us till death. Astute financial experts often suggest that we make sure that our money (that we work for while we are still able to) should work for us (when we can no longer work). It is therefore imperative to start saving for retirement as early as possible.

The best way to start would be by evaluating your financial position, both current and future. You need to know where you want to be financially when you retire. Another pertinent question is how you'll get there.

According to the Nedbank website, the best way to determine your requirements is to calculate the income you will need when you retire. As a general rule, you will need between 70% and 85% of your current income when you retire if you are to maintain your current standard of living. Most retirement calculations presume that your commitments will decrease as you grow older because:

- Children have left home and have become financially independent;
- Your house and car have been fully paid off; and
- Your lifestyle has slowed down a little, and your needs have become more modest.

However, a lower income may not always fit the bill because:

- The cost of medical care has risen over the last 10 years;
- The level of medical attention you require tends to increase as you grow older;
- You may still have certain financial commitments; and
- No doubt, retirement is one of the most important life events many of us will ever experience. From both a personal and financial perspective, realising a comfortable retirement is an incredibly extensive process that takes sensible planning and

years of persistence. While all of us would like to retire comfortably, the complexity and time required in building a successful retirement plan can make the whole process seem nothing short of daunting.

It is obviously impossible to determine how old one will live after retirement, but you can still make an informed guess. Most people underestimate how long they live after retirement. At 65, a woman's life expectancy is 17 years, while a man's life expectancy is 14 years.

How Much Will You Need?

- "How much money do I need to retire comfortably?" The answer to this question contains some good news and some bad news. First, the bad news. There really is no single number that would guarantee everyone an adequate retirement. It depends on many factors, including your desired standard of living, your expenses (including any medical costs) and your target retirement age.
- Now for the good news. It's entirely possible to determine a reasonable number for your own retirement needs. All it involves is answering a few questions and doing some number crunching. Providing you plan ahead and estimate on the conservative side, it's entirely possible for you to accumulate a nest egg sufficient to last you through your golden years.

You can also make use of the Government's Employee Pension Fund's calculator on their website

<http://www.gepf.co.za/home.asp?mainurl=calculators/default.asp> to calculate rough estimates of payable benefits on your retirement. Once again, you should discuss your financial and retirements needs with your financial advisor, as this article serves to provide valuable information and not advice.

What Vehicle Should You Use?

According to IOL's Personal Finance website <http://www.persfin.co.za>, there are many ways to save for retirement, including:

- As a member of an employer-sponsored scheme;
- As a member of an industry-wide scheme, either a restricted-membership umbrella scheme or an open-membership umbrella scheme made available through your employer; and
- Taking out a retirement annuity.

All the above methods have their advantages and disadvantages, hence it is important to discuss your needs and situation with a financial advisor.

Some of the commonly known companies that provide retirement annuities include Momentum, Old Mutual, Sanlam, and Metropolitan. It is important to verify that the financial advisor / company you are using is indeed legitimate; and you can do that through the Financial Services Board's website at www.fsb.co.za – and then click on the FAIS tab. Make it your responsibility to ensure that:

- You make adequate provision to save for retirement; and
- You do not fall victim to poor advice or purchase a badly constructed, high-cost retirement savings product.

Notably, many people have expensive policies in place that they believe will afford them a retirement, but all they have is risk cover with a very low investment component. Income protection and life cover are important parts of an investment plan but they should be in separate vehicles from your investments. You should not indiscriminately cancel an investment of this nature - instead you need an advisor to look at your portfolio to make suggestions in terms of restructuring.

One should remember that, financial planning is not just about retirement - it is about identifying and achieving all of your financial needs. These include health, disability, life assurance and estate planning. Moreover, a financial needs analysis is not something you do once and forget about it. You need to have it done on a regular basis - at least every three to five years, especially when your circumstances change.

Staff members who require general advice, counseling and coaching facilities may make use of the PSC's Employee Assistance Programme. Call Tshidi Dibetle on 012 352 1073 for more information.

Sources

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The OPSC hosts delegates from Kenya and Nigeria

Article by Thulisile Mthimunya

The OPSC recently hosted delegates comprising senior public officials from the Nigerian and Kenyan public services. The delegates, who were hosted simultaneously, were in the country to attend a training programme on Performance Management in the South African public sector. As part of the visit, the delegates were keen to learn from and exchange ideas with the Public Service Commission.



"The sheer number of delegates we host annually speaks volumes about the work and subsequently the profile of the PSC. This demonstrates that we are doing something right and possibly unique, and as a result our counterparts across the globe hold us in high esteem," said Dovhani Mamphiswana, CD:SDQA.

"What was distinctive about these delegates was that they primarily wanted to interact with line function officials at a senior level. They also had a clearly defined topic that they wanted to focus on. I find this approach refreshing as it gives them something tangible that they can easily apply when they get back to their countries," explained Mamphiswana.

During the discussion, the visitors showed keen interest in the Performance Management Framework and tools used to enhance the Framework. These visits are valuable as they provide a forum to test methodologies and a platform for basic benchmarking against global trends.

The PSC panel consisted of the Deputy-Director General: Monitoring and Evaluation, Mashwahle Diphofa, the Chief Director: Service Delivery and Quality Assurance, Dovhani Mamphiswana, as well as the Chief Director: Leadership and Performance Improvement, Balungile Mbanda.

OPSC hosts a day of Celebrations and Awards

Article by Ben de Villiers



On Thursday, 20 September 2007, the OPSC hosted Heritage Day celebrations as well Long Service Awards. Directed by Ms Lindiwe Mahlangu, the proceedings began with a welcome speech delivered on behalf of the Director-General by Ms Mmathari Mashao. In line with this year's theme of "Celebrating South African Poetry", Ms Tracy Reddy recited

an enchanting poem while the Bela Bela Cultural Group entertained the audience with their singing and energetic dancing.

Mr Mufaro Gunduza of the Cambridge College carried on where Mashao left, delivering an enlightening and inspirational



speech that reflected on the history and importance of heritage.

The celebrations took another form with the Deputy Chairperson, Mr John Ernstzen,



presenting Long Service Award certificates to deserving staff members. Recipients of this year's Awards are:

- Mr IA Naidoo
- Mr EA Raath
- Mr MN Mohale
- Ms MV Slier
- Ms SS Masilo
- Mr AM Dandu

Lesson in communication

Submitted by Kabelo Ledwaba

"How well you are understood is more important than how well you say things."

The CEO calls the General Manager and says: "Today at 11 o'clock there will be a total eclipse of the sun. This is when the sun disappears behind the moon for two minutes. As this is something that cannot be seen everyday, time will be allowed for employees to view the eclipse in the parking lot. Staff should meet in the parking lot at ten to eleven, when I will deliver a short speech introducing the eclipse, and giving some

background information. Safety goggles will be made available at a small cost."

The General Manager then calls the Head of Department and tells him that:

"Today at ten to eleven, all staff should meet in the parking lot. This will be followed by a total eclipse of the sun, which will appear for two minutes. For a moderate cost, this will be made safe with goggles. The CEO will deliver a short speech beforehand to give us all some information. This is not something that can be seen everyday."

The Head of Department meets with the Unit Manager and tells him that:

"The CEO will today deliver a short speech to make the sun disappear for two minutes in the form of an eclipse. This is something that cannot be seen everyday, so staff will meet at the parking lot at ten or eleven. This will be safe if you pay a moderate fee."

The Unit Manager then informs the Supervisor that: Ten or eleven staff members are to go to the parking lot, where the CEO will eclipse the sun for two minutes. This doesn't happen everyday. It will be safe, and as usual it will cost you.

Supervisor calls a Staff meeting and tells them that: Some staff will go to the parking lot to see the CEO disappear. It's a pity that this does not happen everyday.

Management Lessons

Submitted by Nelly Lukhero

Mandla had just been hired as the new CEO of a large JSE-listed company. The CEO who was stepping down met with him privately and presented him with three numbered envelopes. "Open these if you run up against a problem you don't think you can solve," he said.

Well, things went along pretty smoothly, but six months later, sales took a downturn and he was really catching a lot of heat. About at his wits' end, he remembered the envelopes. He went to his drawer and took out the envelope marked Number 1. The message read, "Blame your predecessor."

Mandla called a media conference and tactfully laid the blame at the feet of the previous CEO. Satisfied with his comments, the media and eventually the JSE stock market responded positively, sales began to pick up and the problem was soon behind him.

About a year later, the company was again experiencing a slight dip in sales, combined with serious product problems. Having learned from his previous experience, Mandla quickly opened envelope Number 2. The message read, "Restructure the company." This he did, and the company quickly rebounded.

After several consecutive profitable years, the company once again fell on difficult times. Mandla went to his office, closed the door and opened the last envelope.

The message said, "Prepare three envelopes."

Lessons in logic

Submitted by Kabelo Ledwaba

- All stressed out and no one to choke.
- So many men, so few who can afford my daughter!
- If you want breakfast in bed, sleep in the kitchen.
- Dinner is ready when the smoke alarm goes off.
- How can I miss you if you won't go away?

Weird Messages

Submitted by Kabelo Ledwaba

Out of the Office Messages

Hi. I take it you do not have a landline or mobile phone, hence this message. I am afraid I will not put my neatly manicured nails at risk and reply to your email.

You are receiving this automatic notification because I am out of the office. If I was in, chances are you wouldn't have received anything at all.

Hi. I am at the surgeon having my brain removed. The panel that assessed my performance reiterated that my duties do not require a brain.

Thank you for your e-mail. Your credit card has been charged R10 for the first ten words and R5 for each additional word in your message. Hope to do business with you again in the near future.

Cell phone messages

Hi. I'm unable to attend to your call right now. Feel free to leave a message. However, please note that anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.

Hi. I would have loved to take your call, but I cannot tolerate bad breath. Please SMS me instead.

Sorry I did not pick up your call. It is just that I find it cute when people talk to themselves.

Hi. Whatever you are going to request from me or want me to do.... The answer is no... so please don't leave any message.

Hi. I'm busy finalising my contract with my new employer. Chances are I am going to ignore your message.

Learn to read between the lines

Submitted by Kabelo Ledwaba

This is the FIRST email the Senior Manager sent to the Performance Evaluation Committee about Billy Jackson.

1 Billy Jackson, my Assistant Manager, can always be found
2 hard at work in his cubicle. Billy works independently, without
3 wasting company time talking to colleagues. Billy never
4 thinks twice about assisting fellow employees, and he always
5 finishes given assignments on time. Often he takes extended
6 measures to complete his work, sometimes skipping coffee
7 breaks. Billy is a dedicated individual who has absolutely no

8 vanity in spite of his high accomplishments and profound
9 knowledge in his field. I firmly believe that Billy can be
10 classed as a high-caliber employee, the type which cannot be
11 dispensed with. Consequently, I duly recommend that Billy be
12 promoted to executive management, and a proposal will be
13 executed as soon as possible.

A short while later, the Senior Manager sent this email to the Performance Evaluation Committee about Billy Jackson.

Apologies for the inconvenience. That idiot, Billy, was looking over my shoulder while I wrote the report sent to you earlier. Kindly **re-read only the odd numbered lines**.

*Izwi is produced by Directorate: Communication
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