

# The Three Gs of **Good Leadership**

In its 150th year of service to South Africa, the South African Weather Service (SAWS), under the leadership of Chief Executive Officer Dr Linda Makuleni, has built up a modern infrastructure of trained scientists, cutting edge research and development programmes and high standards of excellence in achieving, through science and technology, sustainable development not only for the organisation itself but also the country and the African continent.

**M**akuleni says it is not a case of whether leaders are born or are they taught, "For me, it's not about whether one has trained at a business school or not. Leadership is about integrity, and the ability to empower those around you." Empowerment allows employees to confidently practise their skills, and are allowed to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes. This, Makuleni feels, is also a cornerstone to developing trust, "Employees begin to trust in a leader who allows them the freedom to perform well, while a leader, in turn, learns to trust that the people can get the work done. Being a trustworthy leader, makes your team believe in you," she enthuses.

In striving to be a strong leader, that not only builds trust and fulfils the vision of the organisation, but also effectively build relationships with its outside stakeholders, Makuleni leads with a simple but effective philosophy. Guide, guard and gauge.

She explains, "One must counsel and guide your staff in the direction of where the organisation must go. Here at the Weather Service, my role is not as a scientist. I am not here to tell my staff how to do the job they have been trained to perform. I am here to create and outline a purpose for that work." For SAWS' clients, the same applies, "My role is to create applications and platforms, based on research and development, to assist them in making sound decisions and reduce the risks for their operations and businesses."

Guarding and protecting of the well being of the people within the organisation is paramount, Makuleni continues. "It is vital that the employees are protected as investments for SAWS, and in order for me to do this, I must be able to listen to what my team needs to do the work effectively."

A balance of resources must be found, she says, in order to advance the work that in turn meets the demands of the stakeholders, and best fulfils the service to customers. "Guarding the well being of your customers uses the same approach, when you have to understand what needs are to be achieved, and effectively protect their needs to build a strong relationship."

Gauging is a continual assessment of the organisational vision, and how this vision affects the people who work for the organisation, as well as the client-base and stakeholder interests.

"As a leader in an organisation, my important role to continuously formulate and review strategies that are appropriate for how well the company can run," says Makuleni. Leaders must never be afraid of making changes that can benefit the organisation. "You must be able to scan the external environment, looking at what competitors are doing, what new scientific developments are now being used and how

you can use that information to better position the organisation," she says. The role of a leader is to be aware of changes within the socio-political or technological sectors that can affect the success of the organisation in performing its service. "Something like the effects of the current economic crisis is something leaders must pick up on in order to ready an organisation for response and recovery to the situation."

According to Makuleni, the future for SAWS, and indeed South Africa in general, is positive.

"We are starting to embrace transformation more now," she says, "yet it is essential that we expand our potential. While South Africa has the infrastructure, the banking system, the natural resources and, specifically for the Weather Service, the intellect, the scientists, we must start to increase this pool of human resources through a concerted effort to encourage education, particularly in maths and science, and retain this talent for the good of the country," Makuleni concludes. □

Dr Linda Makuleni, Chief Executive Officer, South African Weather Service

