



Conversations with Talent Management Thought Leaders

Shirley Zinn:

Best Practice In Establishing a Global School of Excellence

CONVERSATIONS WITH TALENT MANAGEMENT THOUGHT LEADERS

HCI interviews thought leaders in the talent management space, whose views and insights add perspective to the work of Human Capital & Talent Professionals.

Deputy Global Head of HR for Standard Bank and Group and HR Director for Standard Bank South Africa, Professor Shirley Zinn, shares her expertise in the area of establishing a Global School of Excellence.

Best practice in establishing a Global School of Excellence

“A Global School of Excellence has a key role to play in an organisation’s success. We have not only invested in bricks and mortar and technology, but in people, who have to lead and drive this organisation now and into the future. Investment in people development is absolutely critical and must never be underestimated in terms of an organisation’s success,” says Deputy Global Head of HR for Standard Bank and Group and HR Director for Standard Bank South Africa, Professor Shirley Zinn.

Standard Bank aspires to be the leading African financial services organisation. As Deputy Global Head of HR for Standard Bank and Group and HR Director for Standard Bank South Africa, Professor Shirley Zinn is tasked with building a global talent pipeline.

Zinn concedes that equipping people with the requisite skills to operate globally “is a huge challenge”: “Firstly, we need to ensure that all of our people understand what our strategy is. Our Leadership Development Programmes are stitched into our overall Group strategy. Everyone understands what is it that we are trying to achieve, and what it requires of you as a leader in this organisation.”

Foundation Leadership Programmes and Executive Development Programmes for the entire Group are delivered at Standard Bank’s state-of-the-art Global Leadership Centre in Morningside, Sandton: “We source the very best of local and international schools to provide our employees with cutting edge, developmental opportunities. We partner with the very best institutions in the world to get the very best thought leaders, gurus and academics into our programmes. We want to equip our managers with the very best practices available worldwide, and not only from a western perspective. We want to provide a holistic view of where the world is going. We want to instil the type of leadership that is required to confront a new normal, a leadership that is resilient,

enabling us to adapt to the evolving issues in a very volatile and complex world, while still growing our business.”

Programmes are aligned to Standard Bank’s strategy. Everything is done “*The Standard Bank Way*,” underpinned by Standard Bank’s values. “We want to create a culture of high performance, an environment in which people can thrive. We invest in our people from a wellness, from a balance, from a developmental point of view, so that we can shape the hearts and minds of people as we evolve our strategic journey in to Africa,” Zinn informs.

The focus is on developing, holistic, values-led leaders. “It is not just about the technical skills of what it takes to be a great leader, it is also about the attitudinal and behavioural changes that we need to make in the way we engage people, whether staff, clients, or other stakeholders.”

Continuous professional development is emphasised. “Even if you have a doctorate in your field, it does not mean you have arrived. Because your operating environment is changing so quickly and so fundamentally, you cannot rely on some of the old tricks that you knew. You have to be open to learning,” Zinn cautions.

While the banking sector in South Africa emerged relatively unscathed from the global meltdown in financial markets, there is recognition globally that there is a need to build a cadre of leaders, who people can trust: “We want to ensure that in a global environment, where there is lack of trust around banks, that we can instil a sense of trust among clients, that the bank is run well, is led by a credible leadership, is visible, and seen to be making a difference in the world.”

Leaders are taught to take care of the triple bottom line: “We want to create awareness around environmental issues, people issues, and societal issues. We want to deploy our competencies as a bank, to have an impact on society.”

Zinn cites the quality of Mathematics and Science education in South African schools as a risk to the development of a pipeline of new age skills. Recognising the importance of helping to shape the evolving policy landscape, under the auspices of the BANKSETA, Standard Bank, together with the banking sector, has submitted comments on the Green Paper for Post-school Education and Training to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

Zinn prefers to view success as “an on-going achievement”. “Success is a combination of achieving what one has set out to achieve; assimilating learnings; adjusting behaviours sufficiently to be able to deal with conflict effectively; creating an inclusive culture; and creating highly mobile talent. Going into new jurisdictions, preparing our leadership to go there, and having people on the ground, tells us we are getting it right,” Zinn concludes.