

**#LeadershipStandard**

**#LeadersMustRise**



# AN INVITATION TO JOIN THE LEADERSHIP STANDARD JOURNEY



**SABPP™**

SA BOARD FOR  
PEOPLE PRACTICES

*Setting HR standards*

## **DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL STANDARD ON LEADERSHIP FOR SOUTH AFRICA:**

A common platform of understanding what leadership means for South African leaders in all fields so that we can unlock the potential in SA's workforce and society in general

**Day 1: (Leadership Standard Development)  
14 September 2017**

**Day 2: (Leadership Standard Launch)  
26 October 2017**

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG



SABPP is pleased to announce the first in a series of two Leadership Indabas as key milestones on the National Leadership Journey – a national conversation about creating a leadership standard for all South African leaders.

The Leadership Standard Journey, in partnership with Talent Talks and Wits Enterprise aims to bring the importance of leadership to the forefront of South African society by highlighting its pivotal role in determining its economic future.

This is not a leadership conference but rather a leadership journey about creating a national leadership standard to guide all leaders in their daily leadership practice. It will tackle the issues of ethics, governance, responsibility, accountability, purpose, trust, decision-making and influence, and the duty of businesses and associations to form a united body to support leaders who can take the country on a new course and give people tangible direction and hope for the future.

The first full-day event will be held at the Theatre on the Track, Kyalami, on 14 September 2017 followed by a second on 26 October. The outputs of the first session will be launched at the second session, thereby ensuring a sustainable journey of short, medium and long term impact.

The event will feature powerful speakers such as Adam Habib, Sim Tshabalala and a special leadership panel representing top professional bodies.

The objective of the leadership journey is ultimately to create a set of leadership standards for the country. It aims to inform stakeholders and debate their role in the leadership landscape, as well as to motivate people in business and government with the power to take action.

A 'hands-off' approach to leadership issues is no longer an option. Leaders need a framework with a clear standard on what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The right leadership behaviour will enable the right staff and stakeholder behaviour, thereby leading organisations and the nation towards success.

## The need for a Leadership Standard

The SA Board for People Practices (SABPP) is an HR professional and quality assurance body operating in accordance with the NQF Act and the Skills Development Act. Under the leadership of the SABPP Chairperson, Siphwe Moyo, a new era for Human Resource (HR) Standards was embarked on as the top priority of the 11th Board of SABPP (2012-2015). In March 2011 when the new CEO of SABPP, Marius Meyer was appointed, the first thing he did was to visit HR professionals in all nine provinces of South Africa in order to learn about their needs. The major message from these road-shows was that HR practitioners lacked a national identity given the absence of a national framework on HR professionalism. In short, each HR practitioner does his own thing, or conforms to his or her company's approach to HR. Hence, the reality is that there are inconsistencies in HR practices, within companies, across companies, industries and nationally. The HR standards model was unanimously supported throughout the country and subsequently approved by the SABPP Board after extensive multi-stakeholder consultation and involvement. Since then, a full audit framework has been developed to audit organisations against the HR standards.

The South African HR standards have provided leadership within the HR domain of practice, and have successfully been implemented in several countries and have attracted interest from all over the world.

Inevitably, with SABPP having raised the bar on HR practice, attention is drawn by many stakeholders to the parallel need to raise the bar on the people management skills and behaviours of organisations' leaders and line managers, and the SABPP has been requested to address this issue. Many of the HR Directors implementing the HR Standards have commented on the lack of leadership and people management skills of their management teams, which are seen as a major obstacle to implementing the HR Standards successfully within their organisations.

Something must be done, and it starts with the collaboration between the SABPP, Talent Talks and Wits University to drive excellence in leadership as one of the key people practices. The SABPP sees leadership as the first in a list of key people practices that managers need to master for proper governance and performance. Once the leadership standard is in place, other people management standards can follow.

As partners in developing this unique Leadership Indaba, an opportunity is created to reach a common understanding on the demands of leadership which can serve two important functions:

- To present to leaders in simple terms what is expected of them; and
- To form the basis from which to understand current failures of leadership in many sectors.

From here, we can identify actions to improve leadership in South Africa. The country calls on leaders to share, develop and create the change they want to see.

### **What is expected of leaders?**

Within an organisation, especially those with multiple sites, inconsistencies in leadership and people management practices occur. The problem is further exacerbated by the fact that leaders at different levels have different levels of competence. The different philosophies of universities, business schools and other learning providers contribute to the problem, given

the fact that some institutions' management and leadership curriculums are dominated by traditional management approaches developed during the previous century, while current and future demands require a different leadership paradigm and competence. The result is that students exiting these institutions come from different academic backgrounds based on vastly different schools of thought. In many cases, these students have to be retrained according to the needs of the organisation, and some companies even go as far to create their own corporate universities to train their own leaders.

The enormous body of research and academic writing on the topic of leadership illustrates how complex the concept of leadership can be. However, most people taking on leadership roles would like to know in simple terms what is expected of them and how they can continuously improve their leadership skills.

### **What are the root causes of leadership failures and what can we do about them?**

Poor leadership is holding back the development of the South Africa we want to see, so the SABPP, Talent Talks and Wits have committed to bring forth action and lead with a standard of excellence in leadership. The effects of poor leadership can be seen across society:

1. Private companies are limiting their own profits by not leveraging the role of leadership in driving performance, others are simply maximising profits at the expense of key stakeholders such as employees, customers and society at large;
2. Public service organisations and government departments in all three spheres of government are under-performing when it comes to service delivery and ethics, as a result of ineffective leadership;
3. Non-profit organisations are stagnating, limiting their own growth or moving backwards, due to a lack of leadership in crafting better strategies and execution plans.

The period 2015-2017 has presented us with several cases of poor leadership in each of the above three categories. Some of the reported cases in the media are as follows:

- State Owned Enterprises becoming financially compromised, thereby increasing the State's risk of debt defaults on its contingent liabilities and thus investment ratings agencies downgrading the country;
- More than a hundred mental health patients dying at unregistered NGOs under the auspices of the Gauteng Department of Health followed by the resignation of the MEC for Health;
- Companies in several major sectors of the economy such as construction charged with collusion and anti-competitive behaviour;
- Pastors at some churches spraying their congregations with Doom and Dettol and letting them eat Rattex;
- Ongoing violent protests at universities and in several towns throughout the country;
- Several schools achieving (sic) a 0% pass rate in the matric examination, attributed to poor leadership by principals.

Some of the possible causes of leadership failures are as follows:

- People with functional knowledge or technical expertise move into leadership positions without leadership training or skills;
- Different and divergent perspectives and definitions of leadership with the result that different leaders try different approaches, some of them failing in practice;

- Managers attempting to apply management theories from overseas without adapting them to the South African context;
- A lack of leadership vision and strategy, and many execution gaps;
- Poor decision-making skills by leaders resulting in disillusioned followers;
- Ineffective and outdated leadership and management practices frustrating employees and customers;
- A lack of accountability and responsibility;
- Poor governance and ethics;
- Inadequate leadership development inside and across organisations;
- Managers often do not have the right qualifications and/or the right leadership skills to take their organisations and people forward;
- Chasing short-term targets at the expense of long-term sustainability and social relevance in the broader society.

The results of poor leadership are manifold and include, amongst other things:

- Waste of resources and disengaged workforces;
- Inability to perform or compete internationally on key benchmarks;
- Inability to build and sustain high performance organisation cultures;
- No or poor corporate citizenship;
- Slow progress in implementing the National Development Plan (NDP);
- Poor service delivery;
- The perpetuation of a “business as usual” approach by not making any difference to the country’s big problems: Education, Inequality, Unemployment, Poverty, Health and Crime;
- Many lost opportunities to resolve South Africa’s problems as a result of the inability of leaders to form and build effective public-private partnerships.

## **The leadership challenge and opportunity**

Even good leaders will admit that the role and task of leadership is complex in the year 2017. A volatile business environment, a lack of economic growth, uncertainty, increased compliance regimes, business and political scandals, rapid change, technological advancement, disruptive technologies, globalisation and a myriad of other factors complicate the role of leaders. Against this backdrop, leadership needs to be clearly and simply defined and conceptualised and clear standards and practices need to be developed to guide leaders during this difficult period of change, transformation and sustainability. However, notwithstanding our leadership failures, South Africa has been blessed with pockets of excellence as far as leadership is concerned. This is evident in the leadership of top companies and some university leaders during the “Fees must Fall” campaign. A noble stance of commitment, ethics and excellence in leadership can be seen within South Africa, and acknowledged as an inspiration to drive excellence in a volatile environment.

An explicit model and approach is needed to utilise the knowledge of South Africa’s good leaders and to replicate and build on their successes. Good leadership should become the norm and not the exception, hence the need for a leadership standard that spans across industries, sectors and spheres of society. Exceptional leadership is needed to take organisations, industries and South Africa as a country forward.

## Developing a Leadership Standard for South Africa

Against the backdrop of the leadership crisis, the development of a national leadership standard will assist in mobilising and developing authentic leaders to rise to the occasion with clear guidelines for leadership practice. An honest conversation will form the foundation, followed by focused collaboration and action. As authentic leaders we will recognise our shortcomings, but individually and collectively commit to improve our leadership based on a clear standard of action. Collectively we will also support one another during the process of implementation. The standard will be developed in a collaborative manner on 14 September and formally launched at the 5th Annual HR Standards conference on 26 October. More than a 1000 leaders will be mobilised to join this leadership community in 2017, and this will grow to 5000 in 2018, 10 000 in 2019 and 20 000 by 2020, thereby creating a strong community of leaders living the standard on a daily basis in taking their organisations and the country forward towards excellence.

The leadership development event will include active involvement by several professional bodies. They are independent professional bodies that champion professional leadership in their fields and do not have any political motives – they represent 50 000 professional leaders who make things happen in their professions every day in South Africa and are already world leaders in their fields.

## A Call for Action – The way towards a Leadership Standard

In the light of the above explanation about the need for a national leadership standard, it is clear that a formal approach is needed to commence with this important initiative to formalise a national approach to first set leadership standards, and then to develop the country's leadership talent. It is the intention of this project to move away from the current approach of leaders being appointed without leadership skills, but rather to encourage good leadership behaviour and practices. SABPP is ready to start discussions and engage stakeholders to gather momentum and to steer the process forward. The SABPP has in place since 2014 a leadership development Professional HR Practice standard and we have committed to our members to follow this up with a people management (generic leadership) standard. **The following phases are envisaged to get the project going:**

1. Initial consultation and planning;
2. Stakeholder analysis of initial parties to involve in the set-up and implementation phases;
3. Development of draft leadership framework/standards model;
4. Formal Leadership standard development session;
5. Market consultation;
6. Publication and launch of leadership standard (26 October);
7. Awareness and capacity-building;
8. Leadership standard implementation at workplaces

SABPP as a world leader in HR Standards, and as the HR Professional body will drive the project with its access to top HR and other leaders. Talent Talks as South Africa's only dedicated talent management platform provides a network and publishing house for talent management and leadership content. Wits Enterprise has been active facilitators of leadership development in several organisations. As a multi-stakeholder collaborative effort, we welcome partners and sponsors to join this exciting initiative.

**Contact Sue de Waal on [sue@talenttalks.net](mailto:sue@talenttalks.net) for more information.**

The leadership standard journey starts in September 2017, but it will continue through the different phases and milestones of the process until pockets of excellence are replicated to multiply leadership success stories. Also, a leadership network will be formed to ensure that leaders are supported by fellow leaders and leadership experts in ensuring that all leaders are set up for sustainable success. In 2018, further people management standards will be developed in support of the leadership standards. These people management standards will guide all managers to become better managers of people, thereby assisting them unlock the potential of their people and organisations. The following hashtags will be used to ensure the campaign maintains momentum as part of a process of daily communication and engagement:

# #LeadersMustRise #LeadershipStandard

For daily leadership updates, follow **SABPP on twitter @SABPP1** and **Talent Talks on @talenttalksnet** or visit their websites **[www.sabpp.co.za](http://www.sabpp.co.za)** and **[www.talenttalks.net](http://www.talenttalks.net)**

Individuals and Organisations who have an interest in joining the Leadership Standard Journey, can contact the **CEO of SABPP, Marius Meyer** on **[marius@sabpp.co.za](mailto:marius@sabpp.co.za)** or **(011) 045 5400**