

Getting Close and Personal With Dr James Ramakau

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PERSONAL WITH...

DR JAMES RAMAKAU

NEWLY ELECTED SABPP BOARD CHAIRPERSON



SABPP recently elected a new Board Chairperson Dr James Ramakau. X-Factor spent a few minutes getting close and personal with James.



X-Factor: Congratulations on your appointment as the chairperson of SABPP.

— “ James:

Thank you, it is really an honour for me to be entrusted with such a great responsibility for this great organisation of ours.



Tell us briefly about the person James Ramakau.

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I grew up in a small village in the Eastern Cape (Kwa-Boklein) with my grandparents where I believe I learnt most of my foundational life principles such as respect, kindness and sharing. I later joined my parents in the Vaal Triangle (Sebokeng) where I completed my format schooling at Pele-ya-Pele Secondary School. For my tertiary education, I studied at Potchefstroom University which was later named the North West University (Vaal Triangle Campus) where I graduated with my master's degree in Industrial/Organisational Psychology. While at university, I had the opportunity to serve in the Student Representative Council (SRC) as the Cultural officer during a merger of two institutions. At the time we integrated Potchefstroom University and Vista University to "One North West University".

I have been privileged to work for reputable organisations in South Africa where I have learnt from well experienced men and women in the field of Human Resources. Most of my experiences have been in Metals and Mining. I started my career with Cape Gate, a Steel and Wire Manufacturing Company. Then I joined Exxaro Resources, where I spent most of my formative years, from a graduate in training and grew in the ranks until I was appointed as the Manager Talent Planning. I also had a short stint with deep Gold mining (Anglo Gold Ashanti) as the Senior Human Resources Manager and now I am currently with Anglo American at Kumba Iron Ore.

Besides my professional life, I am a proud father to Ntokozo (8), she is the love of my life. She is a continuous reminder to me that our aim as parents and HR professionals, our fundamental mandate, is to mould and build our people to realise their potential. I love people. I love seeing people grow and becoming better citizens and them affecting many others positively in their different journeys. I am a lifelong learner and aspiring to travel more should the pandemic be under control.

In the quest to better myself, I further obtained a PhD in Industrial and Organisational Psychology in 2015 with the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. My research study was conducted in positive psychology titled: A study of happiness in the mining industry. Briefly on the findings – happiness has rather a unique meaning to employees but with some broad themes in common. The themes include positive emotions and pleasure, engagement, positive relationships, meaningful life and growth and achievement. Also interesting was that money contributes to happiness, though to a certain extent.



What is your vision for SABPP?

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My vision for SABPP is that of growth, expansion and impact. I would like to see all HR professionals in South Africa registered with SABPP, as this will have a direct impact on how Human Resource functions are run in all South African organisations (both in the private and public sector). Our offering as a professional body is one of its kind, and expanding to the rest of the continent and the world is not a far-fetched dream. It's possible.



Is there a future for professional bodies?

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Absolutely! professional bodies provide assurance and confidence to the labour market that the registered professionals are well qualified, with a high moral and ethical compass that ensures competence and governance in our organisations (big or small). If you think about it, unregistered professionals have no one to account to besides the organisations they work for – however with registered professionals, they are held to account at a national level of the profession which fosters responsible and ethical conduct.





Why should HR professionals join SABPP?

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For the longest time HR professionals have been striving to have a valid voice in the boardrooms to elevate the people agenda. SABPP has the formula to make that possible in any type of organisation. The time for HR professionals being relegated to administrators of leave and absenteeism management are long over - we need to elevate our HR contribution through all levels of the organisation, from HR Officers to HR Directors, and SABPP has an offering for all. Joining the SABPP elevates the professional delivery of all HR services from both an HR Generalist and HR Specialist view. Furthermore, the world of work is changing at such a rapid pace and so is HR. For professionals to keep up to date with technology advancements in the people domain and the future of work, SABPP provides continuous thought leadership papers and articles on what HR professionals need to know to remain relevant.



How do you intend on working together with other HR bodies?

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There is a big ecosystem of professional bodies in the country across professions, and all of them have a common goal - to professionalise, improve capabilities and govern professional practice. Similarly, in the Human Resource domain, SABPP is not the only professional body thus making it important to collaborate with these bodies, as in many cases these professional bodies carry different mandates but all work to one goal. SABPP is open and willing to collaborate with all professional bodies within and outside the domain of HR with the intent of improving the human capital of South Africa and beyond.



Is SABPP adequately resourced for the future?

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SABPP is well positioned and resourced to service the South African HR professionals now and for the future. With its 38 years of experience, and a duly qualified Board and Executive and Professional Office, SABPP is a credible and trusted professional body that meets the needs of the current members and with capacity to service new members. I can confirm that SABPP is future fit. We have been evolving and redefining our purpose over the years to ensure that we maintain relevance.



What is your motto that guides you on a day-to-day basis?

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The motto that I follow is borrowed from East Asia, and it is simple yet profound. It says, "If you have or know something good, and you do not share it then you are evil". I firmly believe that the more we share our learnings and experiences, the more we understand ourselves and the more we multiply wisdom to our people to build a prosperous nation.



Wishing you the best of luck



Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.

- Warren Bennis -