

SABPP AGM 2021: Staff perspective



Our Annual General Meeting was held on the 24th of June 2021 and was a great success. Well, maybe that is what we think. We asked a few junior staff to reduce to writing their experience on the day.

Michelle, Tshilidzi and Zodwa share their experience.



Experience of the AGM (Michelle Monyamane: YES Intern)

The AGM illustrated how the SABPP tried to cope as best as they could with the situation at hand. The SABPP had to make hard decisions and, sadly, the organisation went through a difficult retrenchment process. In as much as they let go of people, through the YES programme they provided opportunities to two youngsters to gain valuable work experience. And in doing so they managed to meet one of their 2020 goals which is to play an active role in youth employment and entrepreneurship. Although they can't afford to recruit more permanent staff, they thought of the next best thing which is to host youth who are financially sponsored through a programme such as YES.

I liked how Jaap Nel emphasised that each individual is born with a unique purpose that needs to be

channelled effectively. We need to nurture local talent and give the disadvantaged a platform to prove themselves as worthy contributors to society. It was encouraging to see people awarded so they know their efforts were not in vain. Because those people did not cross their arms and say even if they don't perform well, they can always blame it on the pandemic. Something that a lot of HR managers are crying about as employees make false claims about being exposed to COVID-19 just to be excused from work. It was also highlighted how we were forced to adapt to the new normal where human interaction was confined to virtual interaction. But adapt the SABPP has. The first virtual accreditation was done successfully for MUT. The SA Institute of Digital Learning (SAIDL), to develop the community of digital learning practitioners, was launched. Conferences were held virtually, including the first virtual HR audit and AGM. In fact, a total of thirteen companies were successfully audited virtually last year.

Despite the crippling effects of the COVID-19 and the lockdown regulations imposed by government, it just goes to show that if enough people care then anything is possible. The SABPP's faithful members came through and responded when SABPP needed their support. A number of them renewed their membership, helping ensure the survival of the company. And hence the SABPP strives to create value for their members that is undeniable and if possible, tangible.

And lastly as Samkelo Blom stated HR needs to be inclusive. If we work from home, then it's sort of an obligation to not only ask how I am doing but to ask how my family is as well. He also mentioned HR must take the lead and safeguard employees from what many have reported to be struggling with since the pandemic, which is depression, suicide, divorce, and debt. So, it is vital to check in on one another, even if it is virtually.

My AGM experience: What I have learned. (Tshilidzi Matsharini: YES Intern)

It was great experience for me to attend the AGM. I got to understand that through all the challenges SABPP is still giving members what they want and letting its purpose known to members. In the midst of all the challenges of the COVID pandemic, the SABPP remains, and it is all because of the dedication of the staff and the Board. They keep on supporting and encouraging each other and the HR profession as a whole. What I have learned from this is that having the mindset to start right and having purpose is key. There is no way we will succeed if we don't know our purpose and persevere when faced with challenges. It was great to listen to all those HR professionals and learning from them.

The future of HR in the light of the pandemic: The pandemic has put HR centre-stage, as HR deals with people and how they are affected in the workplace, mentally and physically. So that's where HR Profession needs to change the way they do things and how they handle situations. Line management will be coming to HR practitioners for solution. Thus, HR is at the centre of everything.

What I have learned is that in all this we need to stand firm and not give up in the midst of challenges, and we need to support each other as HR practitioners. It's easy to adapt if you are working with other supportive people. So, SABPP was backed by its staff who are focused on giving members the best

customer service and experience. The fact that we have changed because of the new normal does not mean we neglect interacting with our members and assisting them with their queries. "It's not over until it's over". SABPP is for the people and its members.

Learnings from the 2021 AGM (Zodwa Tshonaphi: HR Intern)

2020 has been strenuous in more ways than one to most, if not all organisations, due to the covid-19 pandemic. SABPP was definitely one of the organisations that was immensely affected. This year's Annual General Meeting gives the Board members the opportunity to share the previous years' activities by reflecting on the highs and lows experienced during the adverse year of 2020, as well as the plans for 2021, with our members and the public.

SABPP had to endure great hardship, with the prevalent challenges, amongst a number of others, led to staff retrenchment, cancellation of face-to-face events, and many financial difficulties. However, in the midst of the storm, the leadership helped sail the ship through the turmoil and successfully highlighted more successes than challenges, from membership growth to a number of successful audits, to more training providers being accredited and more. Besides, the numerous plans mentioned for 2021, such as member value and segmentation and working strategically with competitors and alliances, will be a great opportunity to increase revenues for the remainder of the financial year! With so many lessons learnt, there are a number of aspects that are crucial for organisations to survive. The need to have a clear purpose, strategic leadership, commitment, sacrifice, and sustainability, which is good for business, especially during times like these, when facing the inevitable. In as much as tribulations were faced, it is important to create coping mechanisms individually in order to act with a clear mind and to add more efficient value to the business at large. It was really humbling to also note how students were affected. They nevertheless endured the unforeseen circumstances by building strong bonds, reaching out for help, having "self-care" days, and learning to adapt by the use of various coping mechanisms they have effectively used. In my learnings, I thought of the wise words of Louisa May Alcott, "I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning to sail my ship". We need to unlearn some things and learn from others to make it. We fight battles that seem hard, but with a great plan, great leadership, and agility we will be able to gradually embrace changes and adjust as we go.