

Manifesto

My name is Lerato Vusumuzi Nhlanhla Msibi, and currently serving in the role of a Senior Manager within MTN Group Forensic Services.

I have never written a manifesto before and I really had to think long and hard about it and what better place to start than my name. My name is Lerato VUSUMUZI Nhlanhla Msibi. VUSUMUZI loosely translated means "...to raise a home..." and my dad gave me this name because my birth resolved a feud that was taking place between my parents at that stage. At that stage it would appear that I was already influencing behaviours and this is what leadership is about. Leadership is not about dictating and I will LEAD through influence.

Events that shaped my life

Passing my CTA exam and qualifying to be a Chartered Accountant - CA (SA)

It was during this stage of my life that I questioned the sayings: "...You reap what you sow..." and "...hard work and dedication are a recipe for success..."

I had worked hard and was consistent in my performance during year (even making it to the top 10 lists) but failed the exams, two years in a row. The results were not matching the input, I was devastated and at that point I remembered what my mom always told me "...Son, the success of man is not in the never falling but the rise up each time after a fall..."

I eventually identified my Achilles heel (Management Accounting), worked even harder to overcome my struggles, passed the CTA exam (on my third attempt) and passed both my board exams on the first attempt. Now I can proudly say that I am a qualified Chartered Accountant - CA (SA). The sad part of it all was that I did not celebrate my success.

Lessons: *Hard work and dedication yield no results without PERSEVERENCE!!! Self-Awareness is quite key in achieving success, you are as strong as your weakest link. Always celebrate your own successes!!!*

United States of America

Towards the end of my articles, I had an opportunity to go to the USA on secondment for three months. I was based in CHICAGO and naturally did some travelling within the USA. I was quite an exciting time of my life, new country, new people and new experiences.

As soon as I arrived in the USA, the excitement was soon replaced with fear as it dawned upon me that I will be all alone in the USA, all my colleagues whom I applied with were based elsewhere in the USA and I was the only one based in Chicago.

Apart from the fact that I was alone, needed to forge new friendships/connections, needed to navigate the city on my own, what contributed the most to the FEAR was the lack of a sense of belonging, a sense of being African. I mean here I was interacting with black people but yet I could not speak to them in any vernacular language I understood.

I have never seen myself as a person who confides people in boxes through judgement and stereotype but I remember travelling to New York and when I arrived at the airport I jumped into a cab and gave the Muslim cab driver my location. I did not know how far the location was from the airport but 10 minutes into the journey I started panicking thinking what if there is a bomb in the car. For me that was out of character because my entire schooling career was based in Laudium, an Indian community in Pretoria with a large majority of the community belonging to the religion of Islam.

Lessons: *To survive and thrive one needs to adapt to their environment and have a sense of belonging. Acknowledge and be aware of how a change in environment might impact your outlook and influence your position and point of view.*

Transitioning into Forensic

Upon my return from the USA, I joined the Forensic division of KPMG. This was a daunting challenge as I was transitioning into an entirely new career path. During this transition, I met Mr Andre Groenewald who was at that stage one of the partners in the firm. What an inspirational leader, always seeking everyone's opinion regardless of the level of experience, recognised potential and nurtured it to its full value, protected his team but at the same time held them accountable for their actions.

On one of the projects that was led by Mr Groenewald, I failed to deliver on certain key tasks that delayed the report and when I spoke to him about it all he said was "...you should have come earlier and we would have found a way around it..."

Lessons: *Without a challenge there is no GROWTH. Always own up to your shortcomings and be upfront with all parties concerned. Diverse views and opinions produce a complete picture.*

Support Structure

Through all these highs and lows, there was but one constant.....MY MOM! My mom was a professional nurse and naturally she impacted on people's lives through her work. However she did not stop at the hospital, she always willing to help in whatever way she can. My mom once brought home a homeless boy and we lived with him for a couple of years.

Lesson: *To impact people's lives one needs to have genuine compassion, care and concern for others.*

If you haven't picked it up, the values I strive towards are:

- Integrity and Honesty
- Hard work, Dedication, Perseverance and Patience
- Genuine Compassion and Care
- Self-Awareness
- Adaptability

I strive to be a leader that has a lasting impact on the people I interact with.