

2026

THE PEOPLE
FACTOR MAGAZINE

August | 2026





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ANNUAL PEOPLE FACTOR CONFERENCE

**PEOPLE STRATEGY FOR COMPLEX AI-LED REALITIES:
FROM HYPE TO CO-CREATING IMPACT**

An invitation to

CPOS, HR EXECUTIVES, CHROS & SENIOR PROFESSIONALS



3 - 4

September 2026



ICC

Durban International
Convention Centre



11

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ANNUAL PEOPLE FACTOR CONFERENCE 2026

PEOPLE STRATEGY FOR COMPLEX AI-LED REALITIES:
FROM HYPE TO CO-CREATING IMPACT

Giyaya eThekwini

PEOPLE STRATEGY FOR COMPLEX AI-LED REALITIES:
FROM HYPE TO CO-CREATING IMPACT

AN INVITATION TO AN INVITATION TO HR LEADERS, HR SPECIALISTS AND HR PRACTITIONERS

We are entering a decisive chapter in the evolution of work one that places unprecedented responsibility on those entrusted with people, culture, and organisational stewardship.

The defining question now is whether HR leaders and practitioners will translate AI into meaningful, responsible impact or allow it to outpace governance, ethics, and human value.

This shift demands intentional HR leaders, specialists and practitioners - leaders and practitioners who take ownership, deliberately design how AI integrates into the enterprise, and ensure that efficiency never comes at the expense of trust, fairness, and long-term sustainability.

This moment requires decisive action.

Organisations must redesign workforce models, enable continuous human-machine collaboration, and ensure that decision-making remains accountable, transparent, and grounded in human judgment. For HR, the expectation is unequivocal: to act as a strategic authority and custodian of organisational integrity, ensuring that transformation is not only innovative, but lawful, ethical, and sustainable.

Impact is not accidental. It is designed, governed, and led with clarity and discipline.

AN INVITATION TO HR LEADERS AND PRACTITIONERS

This event is an invitation to HR leaders, specialist and practitioners:

- To move beyond reactive compliance and incremental change
- To position HR as a co-author of enterprise strategy
- To intentionally design workplaces that are resilient, principled, and future-ready

The future of work is already being shaped—through today's governance choices, technology frameworks, workforce strategies, and leadership behaviours.

I invite you, as stewards of organisational integrity and performance, to join us in shaping that future with clarity, responsibility, and purpose.

Together, let us ensure that as our organisations become more intelligent, they also become more trustworthy, inclusive, and human.

 3 - 4 September 2026

 Durban International Convention Centre (ICC)

 11 CPD POINTS

THE GATHERING

This gathering, taking place on **3-4 September 2026 at the Durban International Convention Centre (ICC)**, is convened with that responsibility at its core.

Over two days, HR leaders, HR specialists and HR practitioners across sectors will engage in focused dialogues on how to shape the future and co-create impact and the required capabilities and leadership. The dialogues will explore both strategy and execution to ensure delegates take away practical insights and tools from the conference.

On the evening of Day One, we will host our **Gala Dinner Awards**, recognising HR and business leaders who demonstrate measurable impact, ethical leadership, and courageous innovation - leaders shaping the future of work rather than merely managing its consequences.

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Xolani L Mawande

Chief Executive Officer
Clarity-Seeking Leadership



ANNUAL **PEOPLE FACTOR** CONFERENCE 2026

**PEOPLE STRATEGY FOR COMPLEX AI-LED REALITIES:
FROM HYPE TO CO-CREATING IMPACT**



The conference explores how our complex realities are reshaping work, leadership, governance, and organisational value creation, with a focus on ethical, inclusive, lawful, and sustainable transformation.

CONFERENCE **SUBTHEMES**



The Current AI and Human–Machine Realities

examining the present organisational realities, opportunities, and constraints of AI adoption.



HR as a Strategic Enabler of Lawful, Inclusive, Ethical, and Sustainable Transformation

exploring HR's role in stewardship, governance, inclusion, and responsible change.



Co-Creating Capability and Intentional Leadership

focusing on leadership, organisational learning, and the deliberate building of capability for AI-enabled transformation.



Redesigning Work and Workforce Models

considering how jobs, roles, workforce structures, and operating models are evolving in response to AI.



Evidence-Based and Ethical Decision-Making

addressing how data, analytics, and AI can inform decisions while protecting transparency, fairness, and accountability.

PROGRAMME

Day 1 PEOPLE STRATEGY FOR COMPLEX AI LED REALITIES: FROM HYPE TO CO-CREATING IMPACT

TIME	TOPIC	SPEAKER	
08:00 – 09:00	REGISTRATION		
09:00 – 09:10	MC welcome + programme and venue outline	Luyanda Duma-Khumbuza	
09:10 – 09:30	Setting the scene	Mr Xolani Mawande CEO SABPP	Current AI and Human-Machine Realities + HR as strategic enabler
09:30 – 10:00	AI realities, opportunities and challenges	Grant Kemp Chief Information and Digital Officer PwC Africa	Current AI and Human-Machine Realities
10:00 – 10:35	KEYNOTE: Powering Growth Sustainably: Eskom's Journey from Recovery to Reinvention	Dr Candice Hartley Chief People Officer Eskom	HR as strategic enabler
10:35 – 11:05	TEA AND COFFEE BREAK		
11:05 – 11:40	Strategic role of HR: Reflections from eSwatini	Boni Bonisiwe Masuku Group Human Capital Executive Royal eSwatini Sugar Corporation	HR as strategic enabler
11:40 – 12:10	Africa's HR revolution 2030: Geopolitical shifts, technological disruption, and the strategic role of people practitioners in shaping the continent's future	Amb Prof Tal Edgars Group Executive Chairperson GBSSH Consult	Current AI and Human-Machine Realities + Co-Creating Capability and Intentional Leadership
12:10 – 13:00	PANEL DISCUSSION HR as a strategic enabler: Realities, opportunities and challenges	Dr Candice Hartley Chief People Officer Eskom Sane Ngidi Executive Head of People Imagine Worldwide Boni Bonisiwe Masuku Group Human Capital Executive Royal eSwatini Sugar Corporation Leroy Moalusi SABPP Board member, Executive Head of Human Capital Momentum Insure Lerato Mahlasela SABPP Board member, Managing Executive Human Capital GIBS	HR as strategic enabler
13:00 – 14:00	LUNCH		
14:00 – 14:35	NSG positioning the public service for the future	Ms Phindile Mkwana Principal NSG	Co-Creating Capability and Intentional Leadership
14:35 – 15:25	PANEL DISCUSSION Developing the future professionals for our complex realities	Yvonne Tshepo Mosadi SABPP Board Chairperson Prof Nicola Taylor President SIOPSA Kershen Pillay CEO GIFS Pravashen Pillay GIBS	Co-Creating Capability and Intentional Leadership
15:25 – 15:30	MC WRAP-UP OF DAY 1		

PROGRAMME

Day 1 GALA DINNER

TIME	TOPIC	SPEAKER
18:00 – 18:05	WELCOME BY MC	Siphiwe Moyo
18:05 – 18:20	Welcome by Board Chair	Yvonne Tshepo Mosadi
18:20 – 18:40	TBC	Motivational speaker TBC
18:40 – 19:40	DINNER	
19:40 – 20:15	AWARDS	

Day 2 PEOPLE STRATEGY FOR COMPLEX AI LED REALITIES: FROM HYPE TO CO-CREATING IMPACT

TIME	TOPIC	SPEAKER
08:45 – 09:15	REGISTRATION	
09:15 – 09:25	MC welcome	Siphiwe Moyo Organisational Behaviour Specialist, Global Keynote Motivational Speaker, Workplace & Team Culture Facilitator
09:25 – 10:00	KEYNOTE: Unlocking strategic value through HR Analytics and AI	Dr Mamello Masia Chief People Officer McDonalds Shemane Masia Agency Director of Headbrid Digital Marketing Agency Evidence-Based and Ethical Decision-Making
10:00 – 10:30	Beyond collaboration: Co-creating the future of work through strategic partnerships between academia and industry	Prof Bongani Dlamini Head of Department of Applied Management Durban University of Technology Co-Creating Capability and Intentional Leadership
10:30 – 11:00	TEA AND COFFEE BREAK	
11:00 – 11:30	Making a lawful and strategic impact in complex AI-led realities	Judge Connie Phakedi TBC HR as strategic enabler
11:30 – 12:00	TBC	Moketenyane Moleko Chief Officer of Corporate Services uMngeni-uThukela Water TBC
12:00 – 12:45	PANEL DISCUSSION Youth perspectives on our complex AI led realities	TBC MUT student chapter representative TBC UKZN student chapter representative TBC
12:45 – 13:00	Closure and vote of thanks	TBC TBC
13:00 – 14:00	LUNCH	

MEET OUR SPEAKERS



SIPHIWE MOYO

Organisational Behaviour Specialist, Global Keynote Motivational Speaker, Workplace & Team Culture Facilitator

Siphiwe Moyo is a sought-after and highly-rated International Keynote Speaker, Author and Facilitator. A Southern African Speaker Hall of Fame and a Southern African Educator Hall of Fame Inductee, Siphiwe is a safe pair of hands for Executives trying to solve people-related issues in organisations. He is a seasoned HR practitioner and Organisational Behaviour specialist. He is the Executive Director at the Organisational Behaviour Institute and is currently pursuing a PhD degree in Organisational Behaviour & Leadership.

Siphiwe designed the initial postgraduate module in Organisational Behaviour offered at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. He has worked as an Adjunct Faculty member at GIBS, Henley Business School Africa, Wits Business School and the Johannesburg Business School. He is the author of four best-selling books.

He was vice president of the Professional Speakers Association of Southern Africa and was chairman of the South African Board for People Practices.



GRANT KEMP

PwC | Chief Information and Digital Officer | Africa

Grant Kemp is the Chief Information and Digital Officer for PwC Africa, with over 20 years of experience in technology, including more than a decade in leadership. He specialises in aligning technology strategies with business objectives, leveraging data, AI, and digital innovation to drive impactful outcomes. Grant is passionate about data-driven decision-making and leads ethical, secure, and people-centric digital and AI transformation. A values-driven leader, he champions ethics, empathy, and inclusion while creating high-performing teams. He is a strong advocate for digital and AI upskilling and collaboration, taking a pragmatic yet forward-looking approach to help PwC Africa thrive in an increasingly complex digital landscape.



LUYANDA DUMA-KHUMBUZA

Career Strategist, HR Thought Leader, Moderator, and Podcast Host

Luyanda Duma-Khumbuza is a Career Strategist, HR Thought Leader, Moderator, and Podcast Host known as "The Voice of Transformation." She is the founder and host of The Enlightened Podcast — a platform focused on career growth, leadership, workplace transformation, and the future of work through meaningful and thought-provoking conversations.

With a background in Industrial Psychology, Human Resources, talent development, and leadership conversations, Luyanda has positioned herself as a trusted voice helping professionals and organisations navigate the evolving world of work with clarity and intention.

She is currently pursuing her Master's in Strategic Human Resource Management at the University of Johannesburg, further deepening her interest in the intersection between people, technology, innovation, and the future of work.

Luyanda is passionate about youth development, women empowerment, leadership, and creating impactful conversations that inspire growth, adaptability, and transformation.

MEET OUR SPEAKERS

BONI BONISIWE MASUKU

Royal eSwatini Sugar Corporation



Boni Masuku is the Group Human Capital Executive at RES, a position she has held since July 2020. She brings more than 20 years of experience in Human Resources, with 18 years in executive leadership roles across leading organizations.

Before joining RES, Boni served as General Manager: HR & Administration at the Central Bank of Eswatini (2017–2020). She previously spent six years as Head Human Capital at Standard Bank Swaziland, and has held senior HR leadership positions at Peak Timbers, ENPF, and ESWADE. Earlier in her career, she worked at FSE (now BE Eswatini) and EPTC as Training Officer and HRD Officer respectively.

Beyond her corporate career, Boni has contributed significantly to governance and education. She served as a Board Member and Chairperson of the Remuneration Committee (REMC0) for ENPC and FSRA between 2021 and 2024. She has also shared her expertise as a part-time lecturer at UNESWA from 2015 to 2019 and again from 2021 to 2022.

DR CANDICE HARTLEY

Group Chief People Officer | Eskom Holdings SOC



Dr. Candice Hartley is an experienced executive, having held various people leadership roles in the public and private sectors nationally, regionally and internationally. Her passion is in growing businesses through ensuring excellence in people management strategies and creating an inclusive world of work. With over two decades of experience spanning the financial, industrial, information technology, and fast-moving consumer goods sectors. She has held several leadership positions in both listed and multinational companies both locally and abroad. This includes companies such as KPMG, AECL, Pernod Ricard, Barloworld, SAB, Lenovo, Standard Bank and British American Tobacco.

She joined Eskom Holdings SOC in 2025, in her current role as Group Chief People Officer she is responsible for ensuring that the organisation has the skills it requires to operate in a competitive marketplace, transitioning the human capital practices and workforce plans to align with the business strategy, and ensure the wider adoption of technology across the organisation.

Dr Hartley holds an MBA and a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration from the University of Pretoria (GIBS), and a BA (Hons) in Psychology from the University of Johannesburg and completed her PhD in Business with the University of Cape Town's Faculty of Commerce.

PROF. DR. AMBASSADOR TAL EDGARS

Group Executive Chairman | GBSH Consult Group



His Excellency Prof. Dr. Ambassador Tal Edgars is a globally recognised economist, strategist, futurist, and senior diplomat. One of Africa's most authoritative voices on governance, strategic foresight, adaptive leadership, and the future of work. Holder of three doctorates (Strategic Foresight, Diplomacy & Security Intelligence, Psychology of Law), plus advanced degrees in International Law and double Masters in Actuarial Science and Economics, he is a Yale Fellow bringing exceptional depth to continental challenges.

With experience spanning 51 countries, he has advised Heads of State, Governments, Fortune 100 companies, and international organisations on competitiveness, human capital strategy, board transformation, and sustainable development. Notable roles include Envoy to the UN Security Council, Advisor to Former State Secretary Hillary Clinton, Advisor to Cherie Blair, Taskforce Member to B20 (Brazil), B20 (SA), B20 (USA) G20 Presidencies. As Group Executive Chairman of the Financial Times-ranked GBSH Consult Group, Prof. Edgars is a visionary keynote speaker bridging geopolitics, technology disruption, and people-centric leadership and is uniquely positioned to guide Africa's HR Revolution 2030 and the evolving role of People Practitioners.

MEET OUR SPEAKERS



PHINDILE MKWANAZI

Acting Principal and Deputy Director-General: Learning and Professional Development at the National School of Government

Ms Phindile Mkwanaazi is the Acting Principal and Deputy Director-General: Learning and Professional Development at the National School of Government. She is responsible for providing strategic leadership and management of the design, development and implementation of Education, Training & Development (ETD) interventions from Cadet to Executive levels across all spheres of government and organs of state. She has a Masters in Development Policy and Practice from the University of Cape Town: Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance. She has worked in senior management roles in public service and other state organs since 2005. Ms Mkwanaazi has worked as a Chief Finance Officer and has been credited with securing clean audits for her organisation. She has substantive strategic capability and experience in developing capabilities for client-focused delivery.



PROFESSOR BONGANI I. DLAMINI

HOD | Applied Management | Durban University of Technology

Philosophy (PhD) degree from the University of Zululand, with a specialization in Industrial Psychology. He currently serves as the Head of Department (HOD) in the Department of Applied Management at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). Professor Dlamini has extensive experience in higher education, having served at several reputable institutions, including the University of the Free State, Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), the University of Zululand, and the Durban University of Technology. An active scholar and academic leader, Professor

Dlamini has represented South African academia on numerous international platforms through conference presentations and academic collaborations. His international engagements have taken him to countries such as Germany, Turkey, Ghana, China, Japan, and Nigeria, among others. He is actively involved in postgraduate education and research, supervising Master's and Doctoral students at DUT. His research contributions are substantial, with more than 40 publications in accredited academic journals, conference proceedings, and book chapters. His scholarly work continues to make a significant contribution to the fields of management, leadership, human resource management, and industrial psychology. Professor Dlamini remains committed to academic excellence, research development, postgraduate supervision, and the advancement of knowledge both nationally and internationally.



DR. MAMELLO PATRICIA MASIA

Chief People Officer of McDonald's South Africa

Dr. Mamello Patricia Masia is the Chief People Officer of McDonald's South Africa, an accomplished HR executive, researcher, and governance leader with nearly two decades of experience across the retail, financial services, manufacturing, chemicals, technology, and property sectors. She has held leadership roles at Pareto Group, Protea Chemicals, Evonik Africa, Emerson Network Power, Nedbank, and Toyota South Africa, driving talent, culture, leadership, and organisational transformation initiatives. Mamello holds a PhD in Human Resources Management from the University of the Witwatersrand, where her research explored Human Resource Analytics as a strategic HR competency. Her Master's research examined the benefits and challenges of Human Resource Information Systems implementation and their contribution to strategic decision-making. A passionate advocate for talent development, inclusive leadership, and lifelong learning, she is also committed to promoting the concept of antifragility, helping leaders and organisations thrive through change, disruption, and uncertainty.

MEET OUR SPEAKERS



GALALETsang PHAKEDI

Founder / Director / Phakedi Attorneys Incorporated

Ms Galaletsang Phakedi is the founder and Director of Phakedi Attorneys Incorporated. She is an admitted attorney and Notary Public. She was appointed as an Acting Judge of the Labour Court of South Africa in December 2023 and to date she has presided over complex labour disputes with distinction.

She possesses a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree and a National Diploma in Language Practice from the University of South Africa (UNISA), and currently finalizing her dissertation for a Master's degree (LLM) with specialization in Corporate Law. She completed the CCMA Commissioner's course with Stellenbosch University in March 2023 and completed the mediation training with Mediation in Motion accredited by University of the Western Cape in 2024.

Ms Phakedi completed her articles of clerkship at the Office of the State Attorneys in Johannesburg, where she gained extensive experience in legal services. She has been in the legal fraternity since 2007, having previously worked for the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development in various roles as a Court clerk, Admin Officer, Labour Relations Officer and Judge's Secretary at the Labour court.

She participates in mentoring law students through the South African Chapter of the International Association of Women Judges (SACIAWJ) and Black Lawyers Association Student Chapters.



LERATO MAHLASELA

SABPP Board member, Managing Executive Human Capital / GIBS

Lerato is a human capital executive with expertise in leadership and organisational development, recognised for leading complex institutional change and embedding people strategy. She brings over 25 years of cross-sector experience spanning Financial Services, Engineering and Construction, Consulting, and Higher Education.

Most recently, she led the globally ranked Corporate Education division at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, where she championed the development of high-impact learning and leadership development solutions.

As Executive Director: Human Capital & Development, Lerato now leads a dynamic team in designing and delivering forward-thinking people and organisation solutions. Her focus is on cultivating 'Magicians', the passionate and skilled professionals who bring transformative learning experiences to life for clients and students.

Her academic credentials include a Mastère Spécialisé® in Consulting and Coaching for Change from HEC Paris, an Honours degree in Industrial Psychology from Rand Afrikaans University, and a BCom in Human Resources Management from the University of Pretoria. She is a registered Chartered HR Practitioner, a board member of the South African Board of People Practices (SABPP), and a member of the Professional Speakers Association of Southern Africa (PSASA).

As an executive, coach, speaker, and mentor, Lerato is committed to empowering individuals to claim their agency in shaping the futures they envision. Her purpose is to act as a catalyst for change, mobilising people of all ages to build thriving, sustainable organisations and communities.



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BREAKING SILENCE: PROPOSING A DEDICATED CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR WORKPLACE BULLYING

By: Mpho Matshego, MA in Labour Relations Management and SABPP Committee Member with the Events and Professional Development portfolio

For decades, the term "bullying" was confined to schoolyards and playgrounds. However, in the modern professional landscape, bullying has emerged as a sophisticated and destructive force that threatens the very fabric of South African workplaces. While our labour law has evolved significantly since 1995, the path toward resolving workplace bullying remains remarkably less clear than other unfair labour practices

Recent research indicates that the consequences of bullying are far-reaching, extending beyond individual trauma to impact organizational health, productivity, and legal standing. To address this, we must move beyond treating bullying as a subset of general harassment and establish a dedicated Code of Good Practice on Workplace Bullying.

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BREAKING THE SILENCE

A PROPOSED CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR WORKPLACE BULLYING

The High Cost of Organizational Silence

Bullying at work is defined by more than just an occasional "off-day" or a demanding boss. It is a systematic exposure to humiliation, hostile communication, and the persistent manipulation of work tasks. Whether it is withholding vital information, assigning work below a person's competence, or the subtle use of social isolation, the goal is often the same: the degradation of the target's dignity.

From an HR lens, the data is alarming. Studies have shown that nearly 80% of respondents in certain South African sectors have experienced hostile behaviour. For the organization, this translates into:

- Increased Attrition: Targets and witnesses alike are more likely to leave the firm.
- Health Risks: Chronic stress leading to ulcers, panic attacks, and long-term psychological trauma.
- The "Work-Life Abyss": Erosion of employee loyalty and a surge in sick leave and healthcare claims.

Legal Grey Area

Currently, the South African Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) views bullying as a form of harassment. While the 2022 Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassment provides some cover, it is insufficient. Bullying is so varied in its execution—from cyberbullying to "degradation ceremonies"—that it requires its own standalone cause of action.

Section 138(6) of the Labour Relations Act (LRA) compels commissioners to consider Codes of Good Practice during arbitration. By elevating bullying from a "guideline" to a formal "Code," we provide employers, employees, and trade unions with the certainty needed to deal with disputes effectively.

The Proposed Framework: A Human-Centric Shield

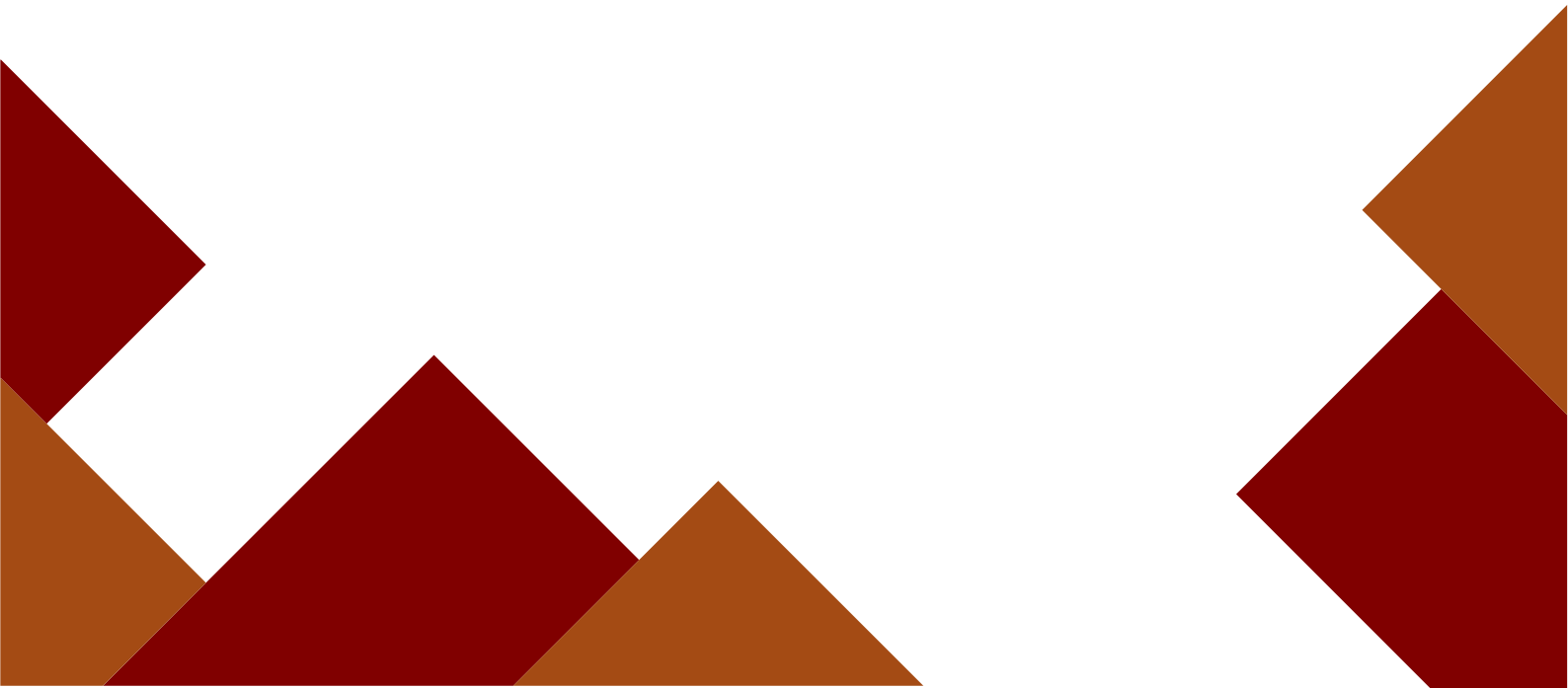
The proposed Code follows a unified approach, using the structure of existing LRA codes as a template. It is designed not just to punish, but to provide a roadmap for prevention and management. Key components include:

- **Substantive Definitions:** Clearly distinguishing between "reasonable management action" (like setting performance goals) and "unwanted conduct" (like public belittling).
- **The Role of the Employer:** Shifting from a reactive stance to proactive prevention. This includes creating "zero-tolerance" cultures and ensuring bullying prevention is included in the performance contracts of senior managers.
- **Informal vs. Formal Procedures:** Providing a safe pathway for victims to raise concerns.
- **Informal mediation** can often resolve conflicts before they escalate, while formal procedures ensure the perpetrator faces documented disciplinary sanctions, including suspension or termination.
- **The "Human Firewall":** Protecting witnesses and maintaining strict confidentiality to ensure that those who speak up are not targeted next.

Defining the Future of Work

Meaningful inclusion and psychological safety require more than just goodwill; they require design. As we navigate the complexities of AI-led realities and evolving workforce expectations, the "human factor" remains our greatest asset.

Opening the door to young talent is only the beginning. The true measure of our commitment to the South African workforce is what happens after they walk through that door. By adopting a dedicated Code of Good Practice, we ensure that our workplaces are environments where confidence is built, dignity is preserved, and every professional has a fair opportunity to grow.



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Employment Practice Liability: A Strategic Risk Hiding in Plain Sight

Insight from Galit Sabbagh and Herwee Ebersohn, Principal Brokers for Financial Institutions at [Aon South Africa](#).



For many South African organisations, employment practice liability has evolved from merely managing disputes at HR level, to sitting at the intersection of regulatory complexity, social expectation and organisational resilience. It is about protecting the balance sheet, preserving reputation and enabling leadership to act with confidence in a highly regulated labour landscape.

A structurally litigious environment

South Africa's labour ecosystem has evolved into one of the most accessible and active dispute environments. The combination of well-established forums such as the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), relatively low barriers to entry for claimants and a strong legislative framework, has created a system where disputes are both frequent and difficult to predict.

The scale is material with the CCMA reporting total referrals fluctuating in the 150 000–220 000 range over the last decade with over half of cases decided in favour of employees. It's an indication not only of volume, but of how embedded dispute resolution has become in the employment lifecycle, introducing a level of uncertainty that is difficult to manage through policy alone. Even well-run organisations, with robust HR frameworks, are exposed to inconsistent outcomes driven by interpretation, process and circumstance.

The direct financial impact of employment disputes in the form of awards, settlements and legal fees, only tell part of the story. Every outcome is underscored by time diverted into hearings, internal investigations and documentation. But perhaps, the most critical results are the reputational consequences. In an era of heightened awareness around workplace fairness, inclusion and conduct, employment-related issues can quickly move beyond internal processes into the public domain - impacting employer brand, stakeholder trust and even customer perception.

The Link Between EPL and Governance

Employment Practice Liability (EPL) insurance provides financial protection against the consequences of employment-related claims, covering approved legal defence costs, damages and settlements arising from allegations such as unfair dismissal, discrimination or harassment in the workplace.

EPL insurance provides both a financial safety net and access to specialist expertise when issues escalate. The ability to draw on experienced practitioners across CCMA processes, labour courts and arbitration forums can significantly improve how disputes are managed and resolved.

Importantly - cover is typically triggered by both actual and alleged violations, which means that the cost to an organisation begins long before a claim is proven. Defence, process and management time are incurred from the moment an allegation is made.

EPL policies are designed with clear boundaries. For that reason, EPL insurance is optimised when it sits alongside strong business governance.

Adopting a Resilient People Risk Strategy

Leading organisations are increasingly reframing EPL as part of a broader people risk strategy.

This begins with recognising that employment-related exposures are not static. They evolve alongside regulatory developments, shifting societal expectations and changes in workforce structure. Hybrid work models, increased transparency and a growing emphasis on employee rights are all reshaping the risk landscape.

In this context, resilience is built through alignment between policy, process and protection. Clear and consistent HR practices remain the first line of defence while management capability - particularly in handling disciplinary and grievance matters - becomes a critical control point. Early engagement with legal and risk advisors can materially influence outcomes.

Elevating the conversation

Employment practice liability deserves a more prominent place in enterprise risk discussions. It is a risk that combines high frequency with variable severity, shaped by factors that are not always within an organisation's direct control.

Organisations that treat EPL as a strategic priority, can integrate risk transfer, governance and expertise into a cohesive approach. In South Africa's labour landscape disputes are common and outcomes unpredictable. The question is not whether an employment dispute will arise, it is whether the organisation is prepared to navigate it - decisively, defensibly and with minimal interruption to the business.

Ends...

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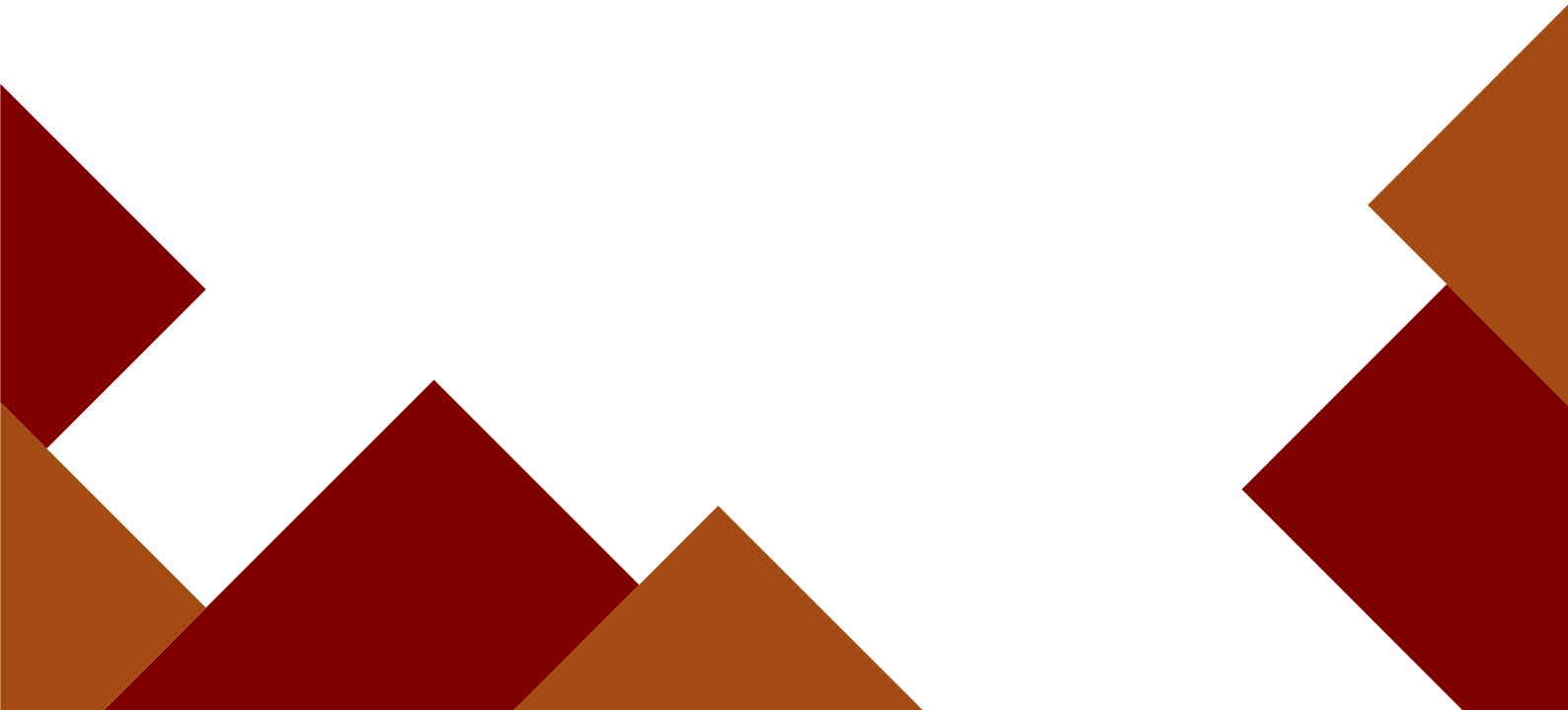
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Nobody said it out loud. It just happened. On the Professionalisation Framework, what change management demands of us, and the gap between policy on paper and reality on the ground

By: Nkululeko Khweshiwe Assistant Director: HRD Provincial Coordination, Office of the Premier (NC)
Chairperson: SABPP Kimberley Region | Member: SABPP National Change Management Committee

Nobody decided the public service would stop being professional. That is the thing. There was no meeting where someone said: from here on, we prioritise loyalty over competence. It happened in thousands of small decisions — a panel that scored the preferred candidate higher, a training budget that was the first line cut in the adjustment estimates, a performance review that everyone signed off on because challenging it meant conflict nobody wanted. That is how you get to where we are.

The Professionalisation Framework is government's attempt to reverse that drift. Cabinet adopted it in 2022. The DPSA has been driving implementation since. If you work in public sector HR and you haven't engaged seriously with this document, that is a problem — not because you'll fail a compliance audit, but because this is the work. This is what we're here for.



What it says

The framework does a few specific things. It sets minimum entry requirements by occupational category. It mandates the NSG's Compulsory Induction Programme — the CIP — for all new entrants. It requires a pre-entry certificate as a condition of SMS appointment, which has been in effect since 2020. In addition, it puts career pathing on paper in a serious way, for the first time: the expectation that an official should be able to trace a credible development path from entry level to senior management, based on demonstrated competencies.

The SMS competency clusters are where I always tell people to look closely: strategic capability and leadership, programme and project management, financial management, change management, knowledge management. Notice that change management is on that list. Government has written into policy that senior public servants need to be change agents. Most are not. Most departments are not equipped to develop that capacity. That is precisely the gap HR is supposed to fill — and where, in my experience, we have been most absent.

PAMA — the Public Administration Management Act — adds the legal layer. It prohibits appointing anyone dismissed for misconduct anywhere in the public service. It creates the basis for a central database so departments can check. Combined with the pre-entry requirement and the competency framework, there is now a coherent accountability chain from appointment to exit that should, if properly implemented, make the kind of deployment that has hollowed out certain departments significantly harder to sustain.

I said 'if'. That word is carrying a lot.

The policy is not the problem

I have been in enough inter-departmental HRD coordination sessions to know the pattern by heart. The circular comes. There is a workshop. Someone forms a subcommittee. A report goes up. And then, broadly, nothing changes. The officials appointed through networks are still there. The supervisors who manage through information hoarding rather than actual capability are still there. The culture that treats a performance discussion as an attack on someone's dignity rather than a professional conversation — still there.

This is a change management challenge, and we need to be precise about what that means. The Professionalisation Framework is not a policy rollout. It is a transformation initiative running simultaneously across national departments, nine provinces, and 257 municipalities — each with its own political dynamics, history, and capacity constraints. Treating it like a directive to be communicated and logged is exactly why so many departments are technically 'implementing' while substantively doing nothing differently.

If you apply something like ADKAR to how your department is moving on this — tracing whether people have Awareness, genuine Desire to engage, the Knowledge and Ability to comply, and a Reinforcement system that makes the change stick — the gaps become uncomfortable quickly. Most departments have done Awareness. Circulars were sent. Workshops happened. Almost nobody has worked seriously on Desire: understanding what motivates their officials to engage with professionalisation. And Reinforcement is almost universally broken. A PMDS cycle that doesn't track development commitments is not reinforcement. It is form-filling. We know the difference. We keep pretending we don't.

It is not one problem across three spheres

I'm deliberate about this in my coordination role: national, provincial, and local government are not facing the same challenge, and treating them as one entity produces advice that is useless to everyone.

At national level, the architecture is mostly in place. Some departments are implementing meaningfully. The SMS pre-entry requirement is functioning as a filter — imperfectly, and there are workarounds people have found, but it is working better than nothing. The gap at national level is more about consistency across departments and about HR units that have the capacity to lead doing so, rather than waiting for the next circular.

At provincial level, almost everything depends on the Office of the Premier. Where that office takes HRD coordination seriously as a governance function — where there is an actual provincial implementation plan, a functioning HRD forum, someone whose job it is to monitor and report on departmental compliance — you see meaningful movement. Where that function is weak or absent, provincial departments are essentially alone. And most are not equipped for that.

Local government is the most fragile context. The Municipal Systems Act already required competency compliance for key roles long before this framework. The track record there is not encouraging. Municipalities deal with acute skills shortages, high turnover in exactly the roles professionalisation targets, and council interference in administration that in too many cases is not the exception but the pattern. Implementing a professionalisation agenda in that environment is not impossible. But it requires HR practitioners who understand municipal governance, not just people who can run a training register and compile a WSP.

What this requires from us

I want to be specific, because I think we talk about HR's strategic role in the abstract when we should be talking about what it means on a Tuesday morning.

Start with a real workforce readiness assessment. Not a report on induction completion rates — a genuine competency gap analysis that maps where your workforce sits against what the framework requires, by level, by occupational category. Most departments have the data in PERSAL — the government personnel and salary system — to begin this. It requires HR to pull and interpret that data rather than run the standard monthly headcount reports. If you do not know your gap, your implementation plan is a fiction.

Stop using the NSG as a course catalogue. The National School of Government has curriculum design capacity, e-learning infrastructure, and sector-specific expertise that most departments never engage with beyond distributing the training schedule. The departments making genuine progress are those whose HR units have built actual working relationships with the NSG, contextualised programmes to their operational context, and integrated NSG offerings into structured development pathways. That is not a large resource investment. It is a different orientation.

Tie development commitments to performance contracts in a way that has real consequences. If an official's IDP says they must complete a programme by June, and they don't, and the year-end review ignores that — you have communicated that the framework is voluntary. We all know it. PMDS is our reinforcement mechanism, and we have allowed it to become an administrative exercise. That is an HR failure, not a system failure.

Find your change coalition inside every business unit. You cannot drive this from a central HR office across a large or geographically dispersed department. Identify the officials at middle management and operational level who understand what professionalisation is trying to do and believe in it. Invest in them. Give them language, context, and backing. Change moves through trusted peers, not through compliance reminders from HR.

And have the appointment conversations, even when they are difficult. When a candidate doesn't meet the requirements — when the pre-entry certificate is missing, when the qualification doesn't hold up to scrutiny, when the competency assessment was a formality — HR needs to say so on the record. I know what environment some of you are working in. I know what that advice costs in certain contexts. I'm not dismissing that. But if we process those appointments and say nothing, we are not just failing to implement the framework. We are actively participating in what the framework was designed to stop.

One more thing: watch the change saturation risk. Professionalisation is arriving in organisations that are simultaneously managing digital transformation, budget cuts, and post-COVID workplace shifts. There is a limit to how much change any organisation can absorb at once, and HR needs to be the voice that names that limit to leadership — not just the function that loads more initiatives onto an already overloaded system. Sequencing matters. Prioritising matters. Being the person who says 'not now, and here is why' is a strategic contribution.

So where does that leave us

The framework represents genuine progress. The SMS pre-entry requirement has changed who is to be appointed to senior roles — not perfectly, not without people finding workarounds, but measurably. The explicit competency framework gives HR a defensible basis for development planning. The growing alignment between the DPSA, the NSG, and bodies like the SABPP suggests an institutional ecosystem that is maturing. These are real things.

Nevertheless, none of that changes the basic fact: a framework does not transform a culture. People do. And the cultural shift that professionalisation requires — where a candidate's actual competencies matter more than their political connectivity, where development is something we invest in rather than perform, where accountability in the PMDS process is real rather than ritualistic — that shift will not come from a document. It will come from HR professionals who decide to lead it.

I work in a province where resources are tight, and governance pressures are real. I have seen what a department looks like when HR is genuinely driving transformation. I have also seen what it looks like when HR is managing the appearance of it. The difference is not always obvious from the outside. But the family that waits three months for a social grant outcome, or the small contractor chasing a department for payment, or the learner in a school that cannot fill a critical post — they feel it.

We have the framework. The question — the one that will define what this generation of public sector HR professionals contributed — is whether we are prepared to be honest about what implementing it really demands of us. Not the version we put in the annual report. The actual version.

The author would like to hear from you, please click [here](#) to share your feedback with us...

Provincial Highlight

Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) Accreditation



Academic panel members	Industry panel members
Prof Calvin Mabaso (Chair, UJ)	Preshina Pillay
Dr Joyce Baloyi (Vice Chair, UNISA)	Dr Sisiwe Dlamini
Prof Ashika Maharaj (UKZN)	Samke Mtolo
Dr Lucia Zithobile Ngidi (DUT)	
Dr Fumani Mabasa (UJ)	
Dr Josiah Masoka (VUT)	

Members of the SABPP Higher Education Committee and the KZN Regional Committee conducted the accreditation site visit to Mangosuthu University of Technology on 27 and 28 July. The members included Prof Calvin Mabaso (Chair of the accreditation panel, from UJ), Dr Joyce Baloyi (Vice Chair of the accreditation panel, from UNISA), Prof Ashika Maharaj (from UKZN), Dr Lucia Zithobile Ngidi (from DUT), Dr Fumani Mabasa (from UJ), Dr Josiah Masoka (from VUT), Preshina Pillay, Dr Sisiwe Dlamini, and Samke Mtolo.

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Power Abuse is Poisoning Our Workplaces

By: Thandiwe McCloy, Public Relations Lead – Papasha Media,

Across South Africa, many employees dread going to work because of corporate bullying. Corporate bullying is repeated abuse of power directed at individuals or groups within a workplace characterised by behaviour that impairs dignity and creates a hostile environment. It often manifests in various ways, including isolation, victimisation and harassment such as verbal abuse, passive - aggressive behaviour, cyberbullying, psychological and physical bullying.



As part of its initiatives, the South African Institute of Employee Relations Professionals (SAIERP) is addressing the widespread issue of bullying in the workplace. Established in 2025, SAIERP is a premier professional body dedicated to addressing the pressing need for regulation and professionalisation within the field of employee relations.

Corporate bullying is a critical employee relations issue.

Lwandile Hasheni, the Executive Chairman of SAIERP, explains that the organisation aims to establish high standards, promote ethical practices and foster continuous development among employee relations professionals because effective employee relations are vital to organisational success and the well-being of employees.

By providing a platform for knowledge sharing, networking, and collaboration, SAIERP seeks to elevate the status and credibility of employee relations practitioners while promoting a culture of fairness, productivity, and positive labour relations within South African industries.

Taking professional, effective and sustainable steps to address corporate bullying is necessary to promote positive labour relations and psychological safety in the workplace. Hasheni says there are various reasons why some managers bully their subordinates, with most of it being attributed to power abuse and professional jealousy.

“Every measure should be taken to deal with harassment in the work environment because it negatively impacts both employers and employees,” he adds. “Corporate bullying leads to a drop in productivity, a stifling of organisational culture and unavoidable toxicity in the workplace. It can also lead to less engaged and despondent employees as well as high staff turnover. In the long term, the company's bottom line is affected and productivity declines detrimentally, which has an overall negative impact on the organisation.”

Hasheni continues by stating critically important action an employee who is being bullied can take is to remember to always keep some form of evidence. “Ideally, a victim of this scary scourge must make sure to diarise everything that happens to them,” says Hasheni. “They should collate evidence to ensure the perpetrator is exposed.”

He says corporate bullying in the workplace is a very tricky issue to handle because by and large, the perpetrators are top management members of staff. He adds that every organisation should have a designated committee dealing exclusively with corporate bullying. It's also important to check if there is an anti-bullying policy that would guide the employee on internal procedures.

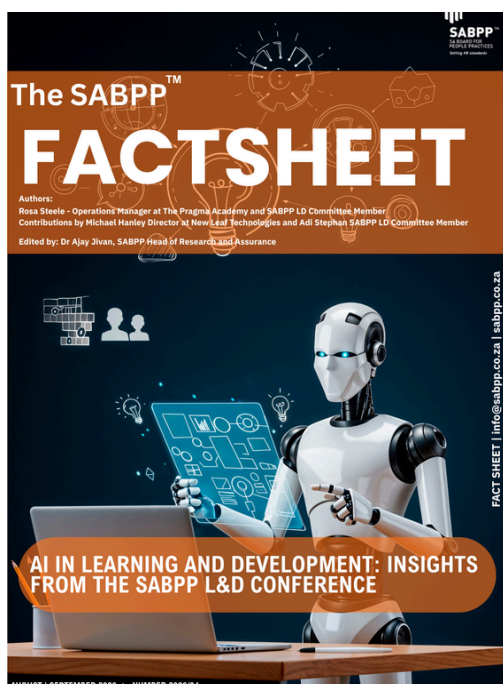
Hasheni advises that if you're being bullied, you must not just keep quiet but report the behaviour. “It's vital to seek support by talking to someone you can trust,” he says. “Know your rights and persist in legal protection.”

Hasheni goes on to say that the biggest challenge is practically all the above is impossible in some organisations, especially if bullying is part of the organisational culture. In cases like these, all perpetrators are simply protected, and victims choose to keep quiet. To address this, SAIERP is reactivating its Corporate Bullying Hotline. Those being bullied in their workplace can contact the hotline anonymously to protect their identity and ensure they are shielded against any form of victimisation and harassment. A case is then registered and investigated further to verify the allegations. SAIERP then prepares a comprehensive report and approaches the reported company to ensure the perpetrator is compelled to take accountability for their actions.

It's critical that corporate bullying is addressed, so employees can uphold their right not to be relentlessly troubled at work, which enables them to perform at their best and protect their dignity in turn enhance the overall performance of a company.

If you want assistance on dealing with bullying in your workplace, email: info@saierp.co.za

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FACT SHEET JUNE/JULY 2026

Authors:

Rosa Steele - Operations Manager at The Pragma Academy and SABPP LD Committee Member
Contributions by Michael Hanley Director at New Leaf Technologies and Adi Stephan SABPP LD Committee Member

Edited by: Dr. Ajay Jivan SABPP Head of Research and Assurance

This Fact Sheet shares insights from the L&D conference and translates these into practical guidance. It provides a comprehensive reference guide on L&D roles, the AI tools most relevant to those roles, and the terminology practitioners need to be conversant in to make informed, ethical and business- aligned decisions. The aim is not to promote technology for its own sake, but to help HR professionals understand where AI can potentially improve learning impact, where human judgement remains essential, and what governance is required before AI is embedded into learning processes and the HR value chain.

[Read more..](#)

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Three Principles for HR Leaders in the Age of Agentic AI

By: Fabio Klassen, Head of HR

HR has been having generative AI tools for the last couple of years - chatbots that can generate policies or discuss their own practices. But we are now entering a different paradigm: agentic AI.

These are AI systems that do not wait to be asked. They sense their environment and respond accordingly, acting, sometimes across multiple systems, and escalating to a human when their own knowledge or authority is exceeded. This represents a governance shift and has ramifications for the SABPP People Practices and Governance Standard (PPGS), which has been created to support HR practitioners to deliver on their duty of care to employees and stakeholders, in the face of changing technologies.

The principles below are written in the context of the PPGS's pillars of Duty to Society, Ethics, Professionalism, and HR and Business Knowledge, as well as its governance competencies.



Agentic AI is a significant change to the way work is automated, and therefore to the way HR works. Previously, we had tools and processes where a specific action was automated, such as sending out reminders or generating reports. Agentic AI introduces the ability for an entire process to be automated in this way - from applying for leave, through to payroll adjustments and submitting the relevant documentation.

CHROs are forecasting significant adoption of agents in the next 12 months, with most indicating that people and agents will be working side by side in five years' time. However, while most organizations are planning to adopt some form of agent, relatively few are currently doing so.

Why Multi-Agent Systems Are Different

A single agent that performs a set of actions to complete a larger process is relatively easy to understand. The more interesting developments are taking place in multi-agent systems, where two or more agents can work together, similarly to how different members of a team would.

One agent may prepare documents for the next steps while another interacts with external systems such as IT, and a third prepares the relevant payroll adjustments. These agents can work together seamlessly in a coordinated manner through orchestration to achieve outcomes faster than a human team could manage.

This creates governance challenges that are significantly bigger than those presented by a single chatbot:

There are more decisions to be made and overseen, and decisions can have more downstream impact, particularly around data quality. Accountability for decisions made by agents needs to be managed, particularly if there are multiple agents involved.

Here are three principles for thinking about this challenge.

1. Duty to Society and Ethics: keep humans in decisions that require judgement

PPGS requires us to think beyond the organisation and the value of our activities to the broader community, and to make ethics a priority within our organisations. Agentic systems offer opportunities to automate many aspects of administrative work, however, they are not a replacement for human judgement on matters that require us to consider the impact on people. The critical question in relation to any activity being performed by an agent is whether human judgement is required to discharge a duty of care.

2. Governance, Risk and Compliance: treat data integrity as governance, not IT

Governance of the HR function, including risk and compliance, is a key competency as per the PPGS. Agentic AI is only as good as the data it is trained on, and therefore poor data integrity will lead to even more downstream issues, particularly in multi-agent systems. There should be appropriate oversight of the data that informs these systems, and the decisions they make, similar to how we would review and monitor other items on the HR risk register. It is essential that data integrity is treated as a governance matter.

3. Analytics and Professionalism: build traceability into systems

The PPGS emphasises the importance of analytics in supporting the decision making of HR professionals, as well as delivering on their duty of care. As per POPIA, the Employment Equity Act and fair labour practice requirements, HR functions may not utilise technology to make decisions on matters affecting employees if there is insufficient transparency and audit trails. It is a critical requirement that analytics and traceability be built into any agentic AI implementation, allowing for full oversight of the recommendations and decisions being made by the system.

The Bottom Line

Agentic AI represents a shift from asking a system for assistance to delegating responsibility to it, and multi-agent systems accelerate this change by distributing tasks among multiple such systems. This presents new opportunities for delegating responsibility, but also new governance challenges.

The PPGS offers guidance on how to approach these challenges, which boil down to ensuring that ethical, professional, well-governed and evidence-based practices are applied regardless of the technology used. The organisations that will get ahead of this trend are unlikely to be those that adopt the latest innovations first - rather, it will be the HR leaders who have ensured that duty of care, governance and accountability frameworks are in place to support the judgements of both employees and systems.

This article is intended for publication in the SABPP newsletter and reflects views and opinions relevant to the SABPP People Practices and Governance Standard. The views expressed herein are those of the author and may represent general commentary on certain industry trends and are not specific to any organisation.

The author would like to hear from you, please click [here](#) to share your feedback with us...





My name is Elroy Gelant and I am based at the North West University. I invite you to participate in a research study exploring employer and student expectations and perceptions of work readiness and employability within the Human Resource (HR) profession in South Africa. The study seeks to examine how HR professionals assess graduate readiness and employability, and to compare these perspectives with how final-year and Honours HR students perceive their own preparedness for the workplace.

Your participation would be greatly valued if you meet the following criteria:

- You are permanently employed in a role such as HR Manager or HR Professional with direct responsibility for hiring or managing HR students or graduates.
- You are directly involved in graduate recruitment processes or in managing HR graduates.
- You have at least five years' work experience in human resource management or in managing HR students within South African organisations.

If you are interested in participating, please follow the following link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSffa-PiVnBEm5kpi67EnX7OmN507LXiTnjS_hhJ6xB06rJdTQ/viewform

For any additional information, please feel free to contact me at Elroy.Gelant@nwu.ac.za.

Research Invitation: SABPP Members Needed for PhD Study on Graduate Employability Skills in Banking



My name is Sakhile Phiri, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences at Nelson Mandela University, supervised by Prof. Syden Mishi and Prof. Willie Chinyamurindi. I am conducting a study titled “The Evolving Graduate Employability Skills in the South African Banking Sector: Identifying Future Employability Skills Requirements” (Ethics Clearance Reference: 2108). The study explores how graduate employability skills are evolving in the South African banking sector, particularly in response to technological advancement and rapid digitisation.

If you are a SABPP member involved in recruiting graduates for the South African banking sector, I would like to invite you to take part in a 40-minute online interview sharing your insights on the employability skills graduates need to enter the sector. Participation is voluntary and confidential, with no compensation offered, and your input will help inform policy, curriculum development, and recruitment practice. If you would like to take part, please complete your contact details via the link below:

[Contact details for participation in PhD study – Fill out form](#)

For queries, contact Mr Sakhile Phiri at s207094058@mandela.ac.za or 0792985075

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Virtual commissioners of oaths. Wag 'n bietjie!

By: Tim Fletcher



The Supreme Court of Appeal's judgment in *LexisNexis South Africa (Pty) Ltd v Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development (2026) (3) SA 71 (SCA)* confirms that these websites are rushing the goalie. LexisNexis, having developed a web-based platform for virtual commissioning, asked the High Court for a declaratory order that "in the presence of" includes virtual presence. The issue is Regulation 3(1), which requires a deponent to "sign the declaration in the presence of the commissioner of oaths". The High Court said no. LexisNexis appealed.

The SCA dismissed the appeal as the regulatory power vests in the Minister of Justice under section 10(1)(b) of the Justices of the Peace and Commissioners of Oaths Act 16 of 1963, and it would be "wholly inappropriate for a court to usurp the Minister's powers" by deciding that the regulations should include live electronic communication. Compliance with Regulation 3 acts as a "guarantee to a court that the oath was understood and accepted by the deponent", a guarantee an unregulated video platform cannot reliably replicate.

The doctrine of substantial compliance creates a narrow exception where physical presence is genuinely impossible, not just inconvenient. In *Knuttel NO v Bhana* [2022] 2 All SA 201 (GJ), the deponent had COVID-19; in *ED Foods SRL v Africa's Best* [2024] ZAGP JHC 311, the deponents were in Italy and the affidavits in those specific circumstances were accepted. But the court in *FirstRand Bank Ltd v Briedenhann* 2022 (5) SA 215 (ECGq), when deciding that “in the presence of” means physical presence, cautioned that “it is not open to a person to elect to follow a different mode of oath administration to that which is statutorily regulated”.

LexisNexis argued unsuccessfully for a broader reading given section 39(2) of the Constitution, which requires courts to “promote the spirit, purport and objects of the Bill of Rights” when interpreting legislation. An insistence on physical presence may impact access to justice, but section 39(2) does not empower a court to rewrite clear statutory language. Separation of powers requires respect for the Minister’s regulatory bailiwick. The practical risk in ignoring the regulations is real. Consider how the convenience of a virtual commissioner stacks up against starting urgent proceedings entirely afresh when a court refuses to accept a virtually commissioned affidavit. Signatories might be prepared to accept that risk, but commissioners perform a solemn public function. When a commissioner states in the jurat (the commissioner’s certificate) that the affidavit was “sworn to before me at Johannesburg”, but the deponent was elsewhere, the commissioner lies to the court. Section 9 of the Act criminalises false statements, extending to commissioners who knowingly certify improperly administered oaths. A legal practitioner or chartered accountant commissioning documents virtually without compelling justification could face disciplinary proceedings, adverse costs orders and reputational harm. The same applies to certification of true copies. When a commissioner certifies a document as a “true copy of the original”, they represent that they have physically examined the original. This cannot meaningfully be done over video.

Ontario, Canada, has shown what is possible in Regulation 431/20, which expressly permits remote commissioning, subject to mandatory safeguards:

- real-time audiovisual communication throughout;
- identity confirmation;
- a modified jurat disclosing remote administration and recording both parties’ locations;
- reasonable precautions, including ensuring the deponent understands what is being signed; and
- retention of a record.

South Africa’s Minister could adopt a comparable model under section 10(1)(b) of the Act without amending the primary legislation. The structure is there; the Minister just needs to grasp the nettle. Again, the law lags behind society. We bank online, sign contracts electronically, run trials over audiovisual platforms. But the solution is not in judges manipulating clear statutory language, nor in online services misrepresenting on compliance as innovation. The solution is in the Minister changing the Regulations. Until then, Commissioners of Oaths must discharge their solemn duty as the law requires: in person, and with the full weight of the responsibility that the office demands.

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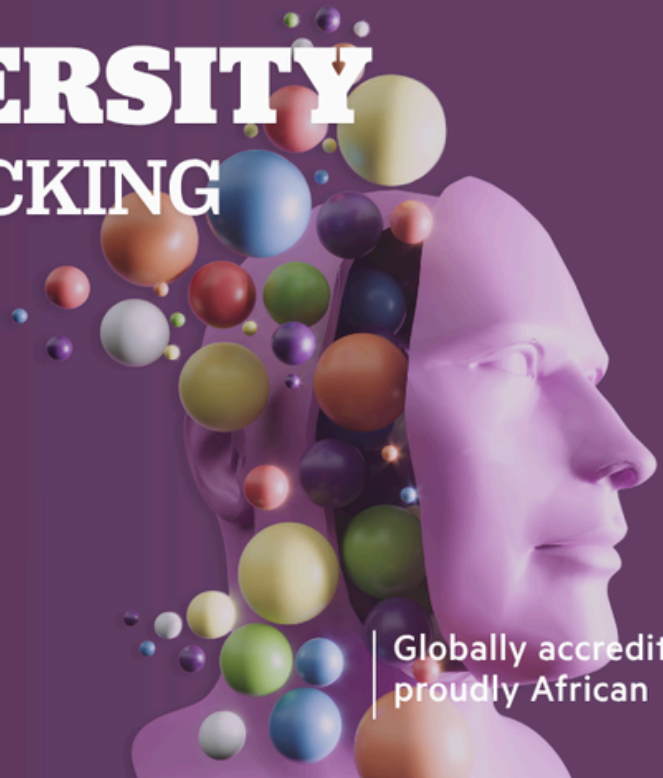
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