

Mavuso Msimang - man with a mission

■ Gillian Handley

Mavuso Msimang, Executive Director of Satour, has the kind of CV that leaves you feeling inadequate. Director U-Pride Development Trust, Director Emergency Programme of UNICEF in Ethiopia, Director of Care International, Director Relief and Recovery Programme WUSC - if it's worthwhile - he's done it.

Ask him if he's an idealist, he laughs and considers: "I think I must be, otherwise I would not have left a very good job and returned to South Africa after 30 years in exile. In a sense, I wanted to come home."

And how was home? "The question is can we get together in South Africa, as a nation and forge a nation. I thought this would be difficult and it has been at Satour. Not because of a racial problem but because the bureaucracy here is more stifling than I could have imagined. In order to change the organisation, one must understand it perfectly and this is impossible as a total outsider."

"Although Satour is responsible for promoting South Africa, we are not in the business of collecting revenue and depend on public funds. To qualify for these funds we have to conform to the Public Service Commission which is in dire need of reform.

"As a result the management consultancy recommendations were not implemented. We were looking at plans to flatten out the multi-tiered employment structure at Satour; we would have broadened the areas in which staff could operate and take responsibility.

The government's response to this proposal was to cut funds in half. The current system denies recognition and reward at lower levels and is demotivating. We should not be penalised for changing it for the better.

"A positive development is the strong indication that the Public Service Commission is undergoing reform resulting in greater motivation, less restrictions and less artificial, power-related bureaucracy".

PMR: Is your position at Satour a total departure from anything you've done before and what needs to be done?

MM: Satour focuses on marketing and I have done marketing before, particularly at the UN where I was lucky enough to work for UNICEF which is a far less bureaucratic organisation possibly because the source of its funding allows for more flexibility.

This is my first experience of tourism and I enjoy it although I am kept extremely busy. The industry has great potential but a reordering of objectives is required and many things still require definition. It is almost a cliché now to say that tourism is a great generator of jobs, forex etc. We must work hard to ensure that these generalisations can be optimised through effective planning and through involving people who have been left on the outskirts of the tourism industry in the past. There must be coordination with other sectors. Tourism encompasses so many sectors: transport, culture, trade, sport etc - all could be given added value through a well formed tourism strategy.

We still have a long way to go. We



Mavuso Msimang, Executive Director, Satour.

are still riding the election euphoria and the Mandela phenomenon but unless we get down to the basics of managing the tourism industry within the next three years or so, we may come to grief. There are complex issues at the moment surrounding the decentralisation of tourism. This is not a negative development but remember international tourists choose South Africa as a destination before they select a province to visit, so we must ensure that we have the correct formula for provincial and central government roles.

Also there is a generic aspect of tourism, the promotion of which is the responsibility of the public sector but it must be done jointly with tourism product owners through the forging of winning partnerships.

There is also the issue of legislation. To minimise conflict, responsibilities at provincial and national level must be delineated among the various stakeholders. Implementation whether at national or provincial level is an issue. I am not pessimistic but it will take time before we see light at the end of the tunnel.

PMR: What is the biggest challenge facing you?

MM: Primarily - how to forge successful partnerships with tourism stakeholders and secondly, how best to utilise some of Satour's assets such as the highly trained people and excellent equipment. We must look at this and see that it is applied in a way that is self-liquidating. We have already started setting ourselves up in groups as business centres.

Another major challenge is to bring a proper representation of South African society into Satour. This is necessary, not to correct the wrongs of the past but because of the important perspectives that are gained by having input from people of different backgrounds and cultures.

PMR: What were the highlights of last year for you?

MM: Well, we can't lay claim to the

increased tourism figures but we were able at least, to bring about a reasonably smooth phase-out of our regional offices, generating sufficient good will at the same time, at Satour.

The image of Satour has been very bad in the past particularly among Black groups and internationally. We still have some problems in some countries. Black communities were ignored in the past and influx control meant it was extremely difficult to be a Black tourist. Tourism messages overseas were often propaganda and during sanctions, international tour operators were often bribed to include the South African product in their brochures. We must fight hard to regain credibility.

This requires more than good communication - action must be taken by ensuring firstly, that the organisation is in line with current philosophy which will be reflected by the people employed

by Satour. Secondly, we must assist provinces with technical expertise. Then we can communicate and show the private sector that we're not all know-it-all bureaucrats.

There is an enormous amount of professionalism and expertise that has been built up over the years at Satour and our critics should perhaps take a closer look at us.

One particularly positive note, last year: the private sector showed a tremendous amount of confidence in Satour. We had 12 Black interns with very little preparation. The manager of the programme sought help in the private sector and received more than R1 million worth in the form of training and placement assistance. This is an indication that the private sector is appreciative of what Satour is doing particularly in the area of capacity building in disadvantaged groups.

PMR: Do you work to a personal philosophy?

MM: I like to give authority and power - room to move - to people who work for me. If they succeed, the credit reflects on me. This is how organisations succeed, not through one individual but through the good work of a number of people.

I am still concerned about the issue of Black and White. This must be addressed if harmony is to prevail. As long as Blacks perceive the grass to be greener on the other side of the fence, instability will remain. I find it equally distressing that there are not enough women key decision makers. The issue of gender is important to me. If our country is seen as a bird with one male wing and one female wing, imagine how far we could have flown if the female wing had not been crippled.

PMR

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planning?

Even Michael Porter, the Harvard professor who has made a career of the most structured planning system, agrees: "The criticism of strategic planning is well deserved. Strategic planning in most companies has not contributed to strategic thinking."

Other experts are saying the same thing.

Why doesn't planning pay? My experience is that we would spend three months in an exhaustive process to conduct a detailed, competitively-focused strategic plan. We would print it in high quality binders, distribute it, sell it to the board and the divisions, then congratulate ourselves on the result. We would then be so exhausted that we would rest until the process starts itself in the next year.

Tom Bonoma says strategy is, by definition a parity game. All firms call on the same planning resources, the same systems. Similar situations call for similar strategies. During Porter-mania in South Africa, there were times when all the top companies in an industry would be planning to become the "lowest cost producer." Not a recipe for competitive

success!

Mintzberg believes the problem is planning itself, rather than a failure of planning. "Planning may, in other words, impede itself from functioning as its proponents claim it should." Bonoma demonstrates how this happens with the following diagram.

Bonoma says most companies are in quadrants I or III. The rarity is quadrant II, where well-executed bad strategies cause disaster (Sony's dogged support of the Beta VCR format long after it was dead and buried). Quadrant IV companies go out of business slowly but surely.

The vast majority of companies are in quadrant III. Strategy is parity. Everyone owns Porter's book, everyone has been to the same business school. The problem lies with the execution of the strategy, not its content, but chief executives do not realise this and they change the strategy. Of course, this does not work because, first, they are not addressing the real problem and second, the new strategy is likely to be worse than the original strategy. Part of the problem is that making strategy is fun; executing strategy is hard work.

		<i>Quality of Strategy is</i>	
		<i>Better than or equal to competition</i>	<i>Worse than competition</i>
<i>Quality of Execution is</i>	<i>Better than or equal to competition</i>	I	II
	<i>Worse than competition</i>	III	IV

Why does faith persist?

If it is becoming clear that structured strategic planning, the stuff we teach in most schools, does not pay, why does it persist? One reason is faith: there simply must be an advantage. We are different from those other firms that failed; it's better than it was.

Bonoma asks, Would you rather be a foot-soldier, camping out in the mud, perhaps to die tomorrow, or the General, in his tent, with his bottle of whisky and his map? Most people would choose to be the general in the tent, but it is the chief executive who is out on the front line, inspiring the troops, in touch with customers, who wins the competitive war.

PMR