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GETTING TO KNOW THE CEO



Nadima Reynolds the Principal Communications Officer, held an interview with company CEO Mr. Anthony Ngcezula on 9 May 2017 in an attempt to get to know him better.

Part of the interview was published in the May newsletter as many of you may have seen, this however is the all-inclusive interview.

Here are the questions that were asked and the CEO's responses thereto.

You were in the position for just over two months, what would you say your first impressions were and how do you intend to change it?

Answer: "It's a great company with good infrastructure in place. There are good employees. I found a few things around employee conduct which relates to discipline which needed a bit of improvement, as well as some company processes and procedures that needed a bit of improvement. There has been a positive change in the last two months with the introduction of attendance registers in different departments and the HOD's taking responsibility for those items. I'm notorious for my walkabouts and people can see that I am not budging in certain areas. I believe that it's good corporate practice for things to be done this way, conduct such as this has a positive influence in the performance of the organisation so it's non-negotiable and in my doing so I don't merely enforce, I educate on the importance of correcting behaviour."

Are you aware that punctuality was not an issue previously, but there was in fact a culture of as long as we get there, this being from the top at CoJ ?

Answer: We need to respect our colleagues who arrive on time, so the tone from the top down is always important. He said resistance comes with change management but you just have to manage it and convert it to acceptance. A leader will not give up on something because there is some resistance to it".

Directors: Bhekisipho Twala (Chairperson), Anthony T. Ngcezula (Chief Executive Officer), Success Marota (Chief Financial Officer), Lesenyego Matlhape, Siphon Mhlongo, Thabo Motloutung, Ntobe Nyembe, Moses Molefi, Tumelo M. Mlangeni, Molefi Olifant and Bridget Laka (Company Secretary).

Registration Number: 2003/008/063/07

What part of being CEO do you most enjoy and what part of job do you think you would wish away?

- Answer: I really enjoy seeing people happy at work, growing, and fulfilling their potential. He reiterated that the driver for success is the discipline within, because you are never able to reach your full potential if you are not disciplined.
- I want people to see JOSHCO as a good company to work for where their rights are respected, but of course we do place responsibilities on the employees, the two go hand in hand. Also to see the company offering employees opportunities to grow themselves and further their studies. I would also like to see the Interns being grown into full time employees within JOSHCO. There is nothing more important than that.
- The second thing that I enjoy is interacting with our customers i.e. our tenants. So far since I have arrived two months ago, I have attended approximately six meetings with tenants (mainly in the evenings when it is more convenient for them) in Alexandra and Antea just to sit with them and to hear what their input is on what they would like to see JOSHCO doing to make their environment a better place to live in for them and their families. I would like to see that some of their visions are realized in the future. It would make me very happy.

What is your take on the tenants wanting ownership as part of their wish list?

- JOSHCO's mandate is to manage the City's rental stock for perpetuity. There is nothing in the mandate which says that at some point during the relationship between JOSHCO and the tenant that there is a possibility that might change to ownership. He said that he would address some of the tenants to make them aware that JOSHCO merely implements the law. We are governed by the Social Housing Act, which does not allow us to hand over title deeds.

I explained that the perception of the people out there is that if they keep pushing for this, perhaps we will give in.?

- Pushing and being hard will not change the mandate. He said a better course of action should be that the tenants lobby for the law to change and if that happens, it is then that JOSCHO can look into giving title deeds to those who have lived in the units for a long time and met the requirements. There is no way that it will be happen if the law does not change.
- We as JOSHCO need to have information sessions from time to time with the Councillors so that we make them aware of what we can do and what we cannot do. We can't respond to market demands that are impossible to respond to.

He agreed that this kind of information can be put into the project newsletters to keep the tenants up to date on matters that are discussed with their ward councillors, ensuring the same message is taken to them.

What would you consider your pet peeve in being CEO?

Answer: As CEO people see you as a super human being who has a solution to all problems. It's romanticized as a position that everyone aspires to, but it is a stressful position to be in. The thing I really do not like is that even in difficult times you have to put on a brave face regardless of whether you are in good spirit or not, because it filters down into the whole company.

What intentions do you have to move JOSHCO forward, and what time frames do think it will take to achieve?

Answer: I would like to see professionalization. Everyone who walks in says, *that is a professional environment*. I really dream of that.

- There is a lot that can be done to improve client satisfaction. The Information Communication Technology Department can assist us in putting in place a way to give instant feedback to clients. Giving people a feel good experience when dealing with JOSHCO, where we can get a complaint and or applications and respond instantly by giving feedback to our clients.
- It would be nice to have a constant feature that gives instant feedback to sort things out quickly rather than at the end of the year when we do our tenant satisfaction survey. *I would like JOSHCO to be a high work performance organisation.*
- I have been worried that we at times leave things to the last quarter. *I would like us to be a lean mean machine that delivers on every quarter on every target and not be under pressure at the last quarter to perform a herculean act.* That's what I would really like to see by the end of this financial year, setting us up for the new financial year in that high work performance culture.
- By this time the issue of work discipline and things such as punctuality and professionalism will be in place because that is the foundation. High work performance does not happen in a vacuum, there has to be a foundation and for me the foundation is the professional look, the professional act, the professional talk and then, a drive to a high work performer”.

At the time you were appointed, JOSHCO was in a process of re-structuring. The proposed structure by Stratalign was presented to staff and awaited Board approval. When do you see it coming into fruition, if at all?

I have had a look at the Stratalign proposed structure, I agree with 80 % of the recommendations. But I have identified some weaknesses so that is where I will refine the structure not change it. There are two areas that I have identified as weaknesses which the structure did not address. These areas are:

- Project development and management in JOSHCO. We seem to have a lot of that competence outsourced. This creates a problem and one of them is that it means you do not have the internal expertise and it is costly to outsource that competency. It is very important that if you are a social housing company, that you have professionals within the company with a very high level of competence in built environment; project management and programme management
- The second thing is the issue of community development. There is agitation by tenant committees, and residents against JOSHCO. The issue of disgruntled tenants comes from there being no initiatives to help communities understand what we do, and have them participate in what we do, so that they see themselves as our partners and this will remove the mentality of us versus them.
- We need to strengthen our community development capability to make sure that our tenants participate in the management of their projects, not as employees but by being involved in some initiatives that are assisting in creating a peaceful co-existence of JOSHCO and the tenants. These are the two major things that I have incorporated on the structure.

- One of the other things I have seen is that the issue of complaints management is not taken very seriously. We see tenant complaints as a minor irritation, we have no understanding that it can give an insight on where we can improve as a company. So in the structure I am also looking into having a complaints officer, somebody who's going to be responsible for tracking all complaints that come in from the beginning to the end, as well as get feedback from the complainant as to whether or not they are happy with the way in which they were assisted.
- It's not a major shift, not even in the top structure which staff will see this when it comes back to them. It really is an enhancement of what was overlooked in the structure which I feel is necessary to enable the organisation to meet its objectives as well as service delivery targets.
- There will be further consultation in a few week once I have met with the CEO of Stratalign, although my meeting with him is not to seek his approval because the structure of the organisation lies with the CEO. I have improved the structure because I am the social housing specialist. What I have brought in will improve it because I have a top notch social housing mind and enhanced the structure from that perspective.
- Marketing and communications will now be called Customer Service, Marketing and Communications. That's where the complaints officer will sit. With the changes and amendments there will be a gradual increase in staffing because it does have cost implications.
- It is my intention that JOSHCO will not only take people from outside to fill positions, but that he has ensured that at least 50 % (if not more) of the positions will be filled by internal staff. He was clear on the fact that only after it is identified that there are no people who meet the requirements internally with the particular skill that is required, will JOSHCO look outside the organisation.
- I would like to grow people internally and give staff something to aspire to. The structure is very flat, and as it stands it's difficult to move from a middle management position into an Executive position. Currently we would have to look outside for such a person and he felt that such a situation is undesirable.

There are many challenges that we face as JOSHCO:

- **One of them being corruption:**
How do you propose to take the current Vuthel Impempe campaign forward, ensuring that it is intensified and doesn't lose momentum?
- I am an analytical person and I cannot say the corruption is big. There are incidents of corruption and there are positive steps in place to try and deal with it. The Vuthel Impempe campaign can be intensified through the community newspapers, community radios and outreach programmes that we will have in certain areas and in our projects.
- The tenants need to blow the whistle when units have been sub-let. Corruption is not a culture at JOSCHO.
- Some of the processes and procedures have created fertile ground for corruption within the organisation. There needs to be separation of duties where a person does not deal with an application through the whole process and different people handle different stages of the application process.
- The introduction of technology where the documents that people submit can be verified as legitimate or not would assist us in sifting out problems. There must be successful prosecution

of those found guilty be it internally as JOSHCO or members of the public that, is very important and as a leader I must:

- Be a constitutionalist – believing in the constitutional rights of all the employees
- Believe in the law of common justice – presumption of innocence until proven guilty.
- Handle issues with sensitivity because it involves dignity of people, so while a process in place to investigate matters, he will be cautious in terms of having a knee jerk reactions and jumping to conclusions about anyone until the due process has taken place. People need to have a fair platform to prove or disprove allegations without any fear or favour and biasness. It will be corruption in itself to fight corruption outside the precinct of the law. I cannot have a predetermined outcome in mind, the process must take place. It is easy for people destroy ones career and character by an allegation, people who make those allegations must provide some form of proof and evidence. They need to say:
 - Where did it take place
 - Were the any witnesses
 - Provide proof

JOSHCO will do everything to fight against corruption but will do so within the ambit of JOSHCO's Fraud prevention policy as well as the Combating of Fraud and Corruption Act.

- **Riots in projects: This is brought about by serious dissatisfaction of tenants, whether their claims are valid or not it is a reality. Have you got a plan to address these kind of issues?**

Mr. Ngcezula addressed this item in the beginning when he spoke of the community involvement and engagement, making the tenants see themselves as partners with JOSHCO rather than US versus THEM.

- **Service Delivery: JOSHCO's mandate to build and provide housing to a limited income group is becoming more difficult to achieve – creating a bad/ negative perception. The income brackets influence people to create fake pay slips in order to qualify. Is there any ideas that you have to address the incomes between R7501 and R15000.00 per month? I asked if there was any way in which he could do something to address this concern.**

Yes, there has been an increase in the social housing income bracket recently but it's not yet gazetted. There is something in the pipe line. He also said that people earning under R3500 per month seem to be limited and he would like that to change in future projects. We need a formula where the allocation will be equitable across all the income bands.

- **Limited Units: JOSHCO is competing with other social housing entities, how do you intend to keep JOSHCO the Leader in Social housing considering the demand for affordable rental accommodation and the limited amount of space available?**

We are weak in the area of project development. Project development is the engine where JOSHCO churns out units for allocation.

- If we consistently have projects that are stalling, consultants are inflating prices, and construction companies abandoning projects, it places a huge burden on JOSHCO and it becomes a big elephant that is being leached from every side.

- The issue of a sleek, mean machine project development function is what will take us forward. JOSHCO will then start a project which will be completed on time, to correct specifications and within budget. That is the way to do it. Our projections will be spot on with less delays.
 - This model which I am bringing in will put us in a better position to ensure that we produce projects on time and as we insource some of these competencies, we will improve cost efficiency and put JOSHCO in a much better position to produce more units than in the past.
 - The inner city is where we can pick up quite a lot of building because there is a budget allocated for Inner city buildings which is now a major focus for the new administration. A combination of green field projects that are completed on time and to specification plus some refurbishments of buildings from the inner city will ensure that JOSHCO will remain a leader in the social housing industry.
 - I believe green technology saves the tenant money and JOSHCO too. So it will be in our best interest as well as the tenants to install things like the JoJo tanks for the tenants to use that water for example to wash their cars instead of the tap which will create a higher water consumption.
 - Also the design of the building should be making the most of natural light which can make the place a bit warmer without using the heater.
 - Things such as recycling and food gardens in our projects to help people get food from the garden and not have to go shopping for it. These are some of the things I would consider to be the new proto type design of our projects.
- **Arrears: On one hand the mandate is to accommodate lower income earners, on the other hand many of those people fall into arrears with rent because it is least of their worries since they are perhaps single parents with one income and their other expenses tend to take priority. Do you have any ideas on how such matters can be looked into and perhaps change the mind-set of people to realize the importance of paying rent.**
 - We are introducing a JOSHCO co-operative programme. It will target the unemployed tenants because we have a problem of evicting tenants, so to have a programme where some of the unemployed tenants are encouraged to earn some money through this initiative means we can collect a portion of the money for rent.
 - It will reduce the anguish and pain of going through the eviction process. Continuous tenant education is the only way to make tenants aware of their obligation to pay rent. JOSHCO staff must be able to make the tenants understand that.
 - The strategy and policy is there, the tenants must pay their rent. It is in the lease agreement. There is a legal obligation to pay rent, whether a social housing landlord or a private landlord, it is a legally binding contract and nothing can excuse from the obligation.

What encouraged you to leave the banking sector for social housing?

One particular incident where a pensioner who missed a debit order had a penalty which was higher than the debit order amount, this made me uncomfortable and I spoke to the superiors and mentioned this matter. I kept on discussing such matters with the superiors. So it was a principled decision I thought I could contribute more in a company with a social motive.

End...