

Making a splash in the world of public sector finance

Hundreds of thousands of tourists visit [Ushaka Marine World](#) on Durban's beachfront every year, making it a huge income generator for the city. Xoliswa Hlongwane is about to take over the theme park's finances in her role as chief financial officer (CFO). She shares her insights on working in the public sector.



Xoliswa Hlongwane, CFO designate at uShaka Marine World

The young professional would like to see a shift away from the less than favourable public perception about the calibre of people working in the public sector.

“This perception deters much needed high-quality professionals. I usually educate my fellow professionals or aspiring professionals that the way to counter non-adherence to best practice is by introducing strong internal controls and risk mitigation procedures.

“The leadership at the top sets the tone to enforce controls and contributes to a best-in-class organisation. Public sector organisations which have invested in a highly skilled workforce in critical areas have seen dividends in this regard,” she says.

At 31 years of age, Hlongwane is making remarkable progress in her career. Her previous portfolio was deputy head within the eThekweni Municipality Audit and Risk Advisory Services Unit. Aside from being the CFO designate at Ushaka Marine World, she was recently appointed an external expert to the Audit and Risk Committee at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The winner of the 2017 Business Women's Association (BWA) award in the government category reflects: "You never really take stock of your achievements until you are required to put together a portfolio of evidence. Being a finalist and a subsequent BWA award winner was a great experience."

'By-chance' career decision

Hlongwane reckons that becoming a chartered accountant (CA(SA)) was the best 'by chance' decision that she has ever made. "Honestly speaking, I heard my friends at orientation week saying they would be pursuing the profession, so I got on the bandwagon," she says. "There wasn't much information available at KwaMncane High School about career choices. It was up to me to find the information that would influence my career choices."

Although her high school in rural Elandsdorp in Pietermaritzburg had limited resources, Hlongwane was determined to get a university education although she had no idea how she would pay for it.

A recipient of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (Nsfas), Xoliswa Hlongwane recalls praying that her great-grandmother would continue being able to sign her financial aid affidavit each year as the person who stood financial surety for her student loan. Thankfully her granny was able to do so with unfailing regularity, being both healthy and committed to seeing her great-granddaughter eventually graduate one day.

Never compromise on principles

Hlongwane shares her tips for standing her ground on tough issues, professionally speaking. "It is about viewing yourself as a brand and not wanting your name to be tainted by a bad decision on your part. If you aren't sure, consult.

"Responsible leadership means assessing the overall impact of your decisions and choosing an option that optimises shareholder value. Earn your salary and give what is expected of a professional and more."

There is little difference between her personality at home and at work. While Hlongwane can be playful, she treats matters of principle very seriously. "My sisters and cousins tell me I am strict," she confides. "I believe you should always be yourself and do what you can answer for. And respect everyone."

BizFin Focus is a Bizcommunity special report covering all aspects of finance, whether its the Budget Speech, fintech or investments, you'll find it here.



BizFin Focus 2018 - Attract more interest

Bizcommunity.com 25 Jan 2018



For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>