

## Can BEE work?

Mark Orpen, CEO of Institute of People Development (IPD) is prepared to be blunt and up-front about black economic empowerment and his company's transformation agenda in an unfolding, shared economy.

"We went into a consortia to meet BEE requirements and we failed miserably and from this the company has learnt valuable lessons that it is taking to heart," he admits. "The reasons were not complex – the relationships were not strong and though we had achieved organisational trust to some extent, we had not matched this with cultural trust.

"All the BEE frameworks in the world do not produce trust through all levels, these have to be developed and we didn't achieve it. Both parties felt aggrieved and disappointed and we had to rethink our strategy.

"What we have done now is to nurture a close, three-year relationship with an individual and allowed him the time to assess our organisational culture, ethics, vision, beliefs and vice-versa. This gave us all the time to see we were willing to go the distance and we are now ready for this true partnership. Like a courtship, I believe that BEE partnerships need time and trust and should not be entered into lightly.



"John Fanana has joined the Institute of People Development as a director and a trustee and he brings with him not only practitioner capabilities but strong abilities to serve our HR needs.

"The Broad-based black economic empowerment (B<sup>3</sup>E<sup>2</sup>) concept is the empowering way forward for South Africa and we are delighted to serve the process at IPD," concludes Orpen.

John Fanana elaborates on this theme, "Relationships are what count the most in any business. We have had an opportunity over the past four years to build on trust not only in business but also in our personal lives. Our wives have also formed part of the relationship in supporting one another and ultimately both of us.

"Without a genuine relationship, the communication between directors becomes a camouflage for hidden agenda. Much has been spoken about in South Africa about transparency but in our case it is rooted in reality – I trust Mark behind my back as he trusts me.

"I have now been a director for two and a half years as well as a trustee of the holding company. I come to the head office on a weekly basis to oversee human resource issues and encourage cultural interchange. My prime function is staff development and I am seen as the 'wellness' director – ensuring that staff and management have a mediator with whom they can discuss issues of organisational culture, values and goals. I am involved in certain interviews and conduct all exit interviews, as I feel it is important to see why people join us and why they leave. At present we are growing nationally and I expect to extend my duties to other provinces as IPD extends its reach."

Being fully accredited in April 2002 and re-accredited until 2011, IPD has become a market leader in the provision of Education & Training Development learning programmes. IPD has enabled thousands of workplace trainers, vocational educators and hundreds of ETD provider companies rendering an invaluable service to public and private sectors in South Africa and to further the goals of the NSDS.

