



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF M S MAKHANYA

CONGRATULATORY ADDRESS: LONG SERVICE AWARDS

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Members of executive and extended management, colleagues and our honoured guests here today, the recipients of our long service awards

When I was busy signing the long service awards that will be handed out shortly, I was quite amazed to see just how many there are. And I got to thinking about the colleagues receiving these awards and just what each of these certificates represents in terms of qualifications, skills, expertise, experience, commitment and loyalty. When one considers that one spends an average 8 hours a day at work (although at Unisa we might be able to get into a good debate about that!), then one begins to get some idea of the contribution that has been made to Unisa, individually and collectively, over the many years represented in the certificates.

And so I went and did a bit of digging about on the internet, and as I read I realised that we are living in a vastly different world to that which existed even a mere ten years ago, let alone the 20 or more which some of our recipients have worked at Unisa.

It is perhaps understandable that after the great world wars people tended to stick to jobs for life because of the security it afforded them and their families. Loyalty to a company or institution, as represented by a lifetime of devoted service was the norm, often with little in turn, except for a watch and a handshake on retirement. You know I have always wondered why on earth anyone would want a watch, when in those times, the only thing to look forward to after retirement, was the Grim Reaper.

Like it or not, on occasions such as this one we tend to reflect and acknowledge that we are all getting older. Some more than others. You will know who and what I am talking about if you can remember any of the following:

- Life before TV (which came into South Africa in 1976) and watching the test pattern in eager anticipation – or even knowing what the TV test pattern looked like
- acceptable work for women was confined to nursing, teaching or being a secretary.
- You are the only one at work that can add without a calculator
- You catch yourself starting sentences with, “Back in the day....”
- Hair starts sprouting out of places that should never have hair.
- Hair disappears in places that really need hair.
- Your eyes refuse to work properly, and you happily “borrow” your partner’s or your colleagues reading glasses when you can’t find your own.
- All of your friends and colleagues talk about “brille, kwale en pille.”
- Happy hour is a nap.
- You wake up with that morning-after feeling and you didn’t do anything the night before
- You learned WordPerfect or Lotus 1-2-3
- You had to ask your kids to fix your computer, cell phone, iPod, etc...
- Getting lucky means you find your car in the parking lot
- You are cautioned to slow down by the doctor instead of by the police.
- You know you’re getting old when... snap, crackle and pop is the sound your body makes when you get out of bed, instead of the sound you hear from a bowl of your kid’s Rice Krispies!

Colleagues there can be no denying that times have changed, and while our parents may have enforced the idea of job security, the notion of a job for life has now been replaced by quite a few jobs during the average lifespan. For example, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S., the *average person* born in the later years of the “baby boom” (which was the period from the end of the fifties to the mid sixties), held 10.8 *jobs* from age 18 to age 42. In 2008 it was determined that the average person held a job for 4.1 years before changing to another. In some fields such as the IT field that time is as little as 18 months to 3 years, and to make matters more interesting the average age of managers is reducing with each passing year. Nowadays the average age of a male manager is about 41 years across all industries and the average age of female managers is about 42.

Of course the kinds of skills that are required nowadays are also different. People have to be multiskilled and able to adapt to a fast changing environment. For those of us who are older this will probably mean that we will have a boss who is younger than we are, and for those who are younger, it may well mean that the time to make one’s mark and prove oneself in the workplace is reduced. For all of us it means

that if we are to stay current and to add value as employees, we will need to be adaptable and keep our skills up to date.

But at the the same time, employers not only require and desire loyal and reliable employees, they actively seek them. Loyalty to one's employer remains a highly prized attribute and I would suggest that it is fundamental to the healthy growth and development of any institution. The pile of certificates here today, represents precisely that kind of loyalty, particularly in light of the quite difficult years that we have experienced since the merger.

But I would also like to suggest that Unisa has returned that loyalty with very fair conditions of employment - which I can assure you are easily comparable across the higher education domain and even in the market place. Not only that, but Unisa is also genuinely committed to hearing staff concerns and dealing with them in an honest and fair manner. The visits that I have been undertaking to the colleges and the regions bear witness to that. Concerns that have been raised are being attended to in an appropriate and timely manner and outcomes are being communicated to the institution.

But our celebration today is not about Unisa as such. It is about the loyalty, commitment and pride that you, our recipients have demonstrated in your service to our institution, and we have come here to acknowledge you and applaud you. Colleagues, we are proud of you and deeply appreciative of the service that you have rendered to this University in the years you have been with us.

On behalf of not only management, but the entire university, we would like to acknowledge you and express our thanks and appreciation for your contribution to the University of South Africa. Well done!