

A message from the newly elected chairperson of the board

SADJ April 2019, Vol. 74 No. 4 p108

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A couple of minutes after having been elected as the new Chairperson of SADA I sat down at Head Office to have a conversation with the newly elected Vice-Chairperson, Dr Nadeem Osman. We agreed that we are excited about the future of SADA and the newly elected Board of Directors. Make no mistake, we have lots of work to do and goals to achieve but we are excited and eager to start working towards that future!

Dr Yvette Solomon, delivering her farewell message at the last National Council meeting in March, quoted Peter Drucker: "Whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision." I want to take it even further and say then "whenever you see a successful business, someone once made courageous decisions *and made great sacrifices*".

It is now up to the newly elected Board to carry those decisions further, to make those sacrifices count towards a successful future for SADA. A metaphor attributed to Bernard of Chartres from the 12th century was made famous by Sir Isaac Newton in 1675 when he said: "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." We as a new Board are standing on the shoulders of giants who have gone before us. The work that was put in by previous Boards and the sacrifices that were made, allow us to now be able to stand solid, look further, have a clear picture of where we have come from and where we are going.

In his book, "Good to Great", Jim Collins concludes that after a five-year research project about how good companies become great, the number one underlying variable that contributed to this success was not some masterplan and a new direction, vision or strategy for the companies. It was not about getting people excited about this new vision for the companies to follow. It was about getting the right people to lead the companies, and only then figuring out where the companies should go and which direction to follow. People and relationships determine success.

The National Councillors recently attended the first meeting of a new four-year term. Whilst sitting at the meeting I looked around the boardroom and was greeted by quite a few new faces. It is good to see new and young dentists willing to sacrifice time to serve our profession. Leading on from Jim Collins's conclusion, I believe that by and large we have the right people leading our branch structures, sitting on National

Council and the Board and leading the organisation at Head Office. These are the people holding the keys to a successful future for SADA.

I truly believe that there exists within the Board a cohesive unity and willingness to truly do what is in the best interests for SADA and its members. During training done by the Institute of Directors Southern Africa (IoDSA), a metaphor was used depicting SADA as a baby. We as the Board all need to work together to take care of the baby. This metaphor comes up repeatedly in conversations at Board level and I can assure you that we are all cognizant of the fact that we are here not to boost our own egos but to take care of the baby, SADA.

I am proud, honoured and blessed to stand at the head of and to lead an amazing Board of Directors. These Directors, your friends, your colleagues, make enormous sacrifices to stand at the helm of this great organisation. Many hours are spent travelling to and from meetings. Time with family and loved ones is very often sacrificed in order to attend to SADA's interests. This bunch of heroes do it without ever complaining.

You as SADA members have elected us through the National Council and we stand here not serve a selfish interest, but to serve the profession, serve the membership and to serve SADA. There is a bond of trust and camaraderie that exists at the Board. We do not always agree at Board meetings, in fact, we very often have great debates, but we never ever play the man, to use a sport metaphor. We debate issues and argue over certain viewpoints but always without attacking on a personal level.

SADA is a membership organisation. We do not sell a product. SADA's business revolves around people and relationships. Relationships with our members, relationships with all our stakeholders and relationships between SADA and the different levels of governance structures.

The giants on whose shoulders we stand gave us the foundation which now allows us to foster and to encourage the development of our relationships with our stakeholders and members. I am confident that the Branch structures, National Council, Board and Head Office staff are the right people to lead this organisation and to determine our strategic direction. Lastly, I am grateful to my fellow Board members who are willing to have debates and to take those difficult decisions. I am looking forward to my first term as Board Chairperson, knowing that these are the people alongside whom I shall be working. I am honoured to call you my Colleagues.

Renier Putter: Chairperson of the board, SADA