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The Best Companies to work for in South Africa

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Beyond Outsourcing is a performance improvement company providing outsourcing/co-sourcing operations implementation run through a 'managed service factory', utilising proprietary generic and scalable toolkits, supported by IT, private equity and consulting, to provide speed, agility, overall performance improvement and sustainable business transformation. The company prides itself on tangible performance improvement and outcomes-based delivery on repetitive activity. It is firmly positioned in the business transformation outsourcing space.

OUTLINE

Having spent five years building proprietary software and processes, Beyond Outsourcing then spent a year restructuring its business in order to add an assertive sales strategy to its armoury. With the restructuring complete, the company has been re-branded Beyond Outsourcing, previously IDCS, more aptly describing the company's business, and has hired top-level sales personnel and administrators to tackle this strategy.

BIGGEST PLUS

Beyond Outsourcing is a medium-sized organisation and is of a sufficient size for individuals to be able to make a difference. Furthermore, the business transformation outsourcing space is a fast-growing industry.

BIGGEST MINUS

The nature of the business is operations execution and therefore this leads to processes governing many tasks. Some people may not want to work in a highly disciplined and process-oriented environment.



SCORECARD

Salaries and benefits:	★★★★
Internal promotional mobility:	★★★
Education, training and development:	★★★★
Communication/working atmosphere and environs:	★★★★
Black economic empowerment:	★★★
Corporate social investment:	★★★★
Diversity:	★★★

FACTS & FIGURES

Absenteeism and sick leave taken during last financial year:	0,6%
Women employees:	40%
Women in leadership:	32%
PDIs in leadership:	15%
Workplace accidents in the last year:	1
Total number of staff employed (full-time):	274 including vacancies
Turnover in 2005:	Not available as a private company

THE PEOPLE

Suzanne Ravenall is the group chief executive of the company and holds 100% of the equity currently. She started the company in 1997 at the age of 28, and has seen it grow to comprise more than 200 people.

Grant Fagan is the chief operating officer of the group and the CEO of the managed services business. He joined Beyond Outsourcing after running organisations such as Deloitte in PNG and working for Corpgro, building substantially sized businesses, as well as his own concerns. His background in merchant banking spans a period of 15 years.

The company aims to employ people who are driven, focused, ambitious, flexible and tenacious. It is an environment that appeals to those who like to find solutions on their own. It has created a hard-working culture which offers much in the way of opportunities for people who are entrepreneurial and assertive.

In terms of black economic empowerment, a transaction has just been finalised with 25,1% of the managed services holding company going to Unipalm/Afripalm.

In other areas of empowerment, Beyond Outsourcing states that previously disadvantaged individuals make up 40,8% of the staff, 35% of its preferred supplier base is made up of black empowered suppliers, and 48% of the company's spend is with black empowered businesses.

With regard to corporate social investment, the company focuses on educational institutes, and homes for orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV and Aids, such as Nkosi's Haven.

THE BUSINESS

Beyond Outsourcing started out in 1997 as a company that aimed to help other companies implement solutions in areas where the challenges

were generic. With this in mind, Beyond Outsourcing developed its own toolkit for:

- HRM (human resources management)
- CRM (customer relationship management)
- BOM (back office management)
- SCM (supply chain management)*
- EAM (enterprise asset management)*

*To be launched soon.

The toolkit consists of:

- Generic and scalable processes
- Methodology
- Enabling technology
- Behavioural change – fully integrated performance solution.

People who join Beyond Outsourcing are highly accountable, responsible and empowered

Beyond Outsourcing now comprises a group holdings company and of subsidiaries:

- Beyond strategy and global alliances (maximising its strategic alliances)
- Beyond international operations (licence and outsourced operations in Africa)
- Beyond delivery (management consulting, programme management, process re-engineering, compliance and technology)
- Beyond markets (cross-sales across group)
- Beyond shared services (central administration services for the group)
- Beyond managed services – Middle East and Africa (full managed outsource/co-source factory for the respective focus area).

The company's offerings are flexible – they range from traditional license to straight outsourcing to shared risk/reward JV models. A variety of visioning options; customer managed; BPO; and BPO with full transition services.

COMPANY CULTURE AND STYLE

The company culture revolves around execution and process. People at Beyond Outsourcing are highly accountable, responsible and empowered. They are encouraged to feel like they are running their own business. And since the restructuring they have been learning to deal with different internal business units as customers. Attention to detail is a must. Ravenall says the Beyond Outsourcing culture is not for the faint hearted as people push each other with robust debates. Work is hard and the



'A core component to our thinking is the development of great leadership behaviours.'

SUZANNE RAVENALL, CEO

WHAT SPECIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS WERE ACHIEVED THIS YEAR?

Suzanne Ravenall was nominated as one of the five finalists for the Nedbank Businesswoman of the Year 2004, received a commendation for African Investor as runner-up for Business Woman of the Year 2004 and a nomination for Ernst & Young World Entrepreneur of the Year, SA leg for 2005 but she takes care to state that all such nominations and awards are really a reflection on her staff. According to her, the business constantly receives letters of praise and thanks from clients, which testify to her staff's dedication and hard work. In addition, there are a number of staff who play sports at a provincial or national level. 'People do amazing things here all the time,' she says.

WHAT HAS THE COMPANY DONE THIS PAST YEAR TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE/EMPLOYER RELATIONS?

Improving communication is a constant theme at Beyond Outsourcing. The business encourages people not merely to e-mail each other, but to walk over to them and talk. Ravenall herself takes the time to meet all new recruits personally. She also attends management committee meetings whenever possible and sends out bulletins from her own PC. She regularly walks around the building to visit with staff and responds directly to queries. Beyond Outsourcing runs a staff survey each year, the results of which are pulled through to the company and divisional balanced scorecard for the following year as well as to the generic KPIs surrounding directors, managers and staff.

long, but according to Ravenall audits have shown staff enjoy their work, feel challenged by it and feel that they can make a difference.

Despite the company's work ethic, the bar opens every Friday afternoon, and once a month there is a company meeting before the bar opens. Ravenall herself makes a concerted effort to make contact with staff through various mechanisms.

HUMAN RESOURCES PRIORITIES

People are an important part of the Beyond Outsourcing business – it is their drive and intellectual capital that keep the company going.

All new staff therefore go through an intensive induction process, which Ravenall likens to a boot camp. This process is designed to show new staff exactly how they are going to function within the company, so that when they get to their desk for the first time they hit the ground running.

RECRUITMENT This has been recognised as a vital part of the company's health. To this end all managers have been sent on recruitment courses. They learn how to hunt for talent, how to conduct interviews and how not to fall into the trap of hiring people who are clones of themselves. Agencies look for people and CVs are screened centrally. Managers then select candidates, interview them and choose their top selection. Human resources then put the candidates through rigorous assessment tests which are both technical and behavioural. Potential managers go through an additional management assessment centre.

THE HUMAN AND LABOUR FACE OF THE COMPANY Most staff at Beyond Outsourcing are services- and customer-focused. Customers are monitored on a daily basis, and the toolkit that Beyond Outsourcing has developed measures the company's performance when it comes to keeping clients happy. Ravenall describes it as a joint balanced scorecard where the client and Beyond Outsourcing

are very aware of what they need to do for each other. Furthermore, Beyond Outsourcing has adopted what it terms a rotational policy whereby the client is met at all levels – various office holders in the client firm are engaged by their peers from Beyond Outsourcing.

SALARIES, BENEFITS AND WORK ENVIRONMENT To attract and keep talented employees, Beyond Outsourcing tends to pay slightly ahead of the market. Staff are also able to benefit from performance bonuses. These bonuses are simply modelled on stretch targets which are set for a year. The targets will include five or six key areas for the member of staff to work on and the goals are not subjective. All staff can earn up to 8% extra of their overall salary as a bonus. But 8% is not the ceiling – high performers could earn a higher bonus depending on how their managers distribute the finances. Each manager is given a bonus budget to share among staff, and must make the decisions about who to give average rewards to against a clear company matrix.

Salaries have increased by up to 8% each year, with good performers rewarded more substantially. Directors are able to earn vested equity delivery to the business against target. Within the next 12 months for staff shareholding will be incorporated. There are interactive appraisals every three months as well as an annual survey on how about the business.

While pay levels are in line with the industry, Ravenall says the company will not make interim adjustments after hiring someone, unless relevant movement – Beyond Outsourcing believes in taking people on at the level at the outset.

BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

There is an EmpowerDEX rating on the way which is expected to be high. Beyond Outsourcing can show good empowerment credentials with regard to internal staffing, ownership, procurement and spend.

CORPORATE SOCIAL INVESTMENT

The company is actively involved in a number of corporate social initiatives, and says it spends up to 20% of its after tax earnings on such activities. Ravenall is careful, however, to point out that the majority of this is spent on staff activities.

Although the business has not listed and has no immediate intention of doing so, it follows the King II guide on corporate governance closely. Beyond Outsourcing conducts its own internal SLA and Contact deliverable audits once a year and also calls in auditors on a quarterly basis for external review.



WHAT WAS THE MOST INNOVATIVE IDEA SUGGESTED BY AN EMPLOYEE THIS YEAR?
Beyond Outsourcing encourages staff to have ideas all the time. There is a development request system built into the business, which means that the company logs the workflow for the acceptance of ideas. About 98% of all new ideas are implemented in some way. The turnaround time for a new idea to acceptance is usually about six days for software development changes and, once accepted, all staff are e-mailed about how systems will change thereafter. Good ideas are linked to bonuses.

MORNAY VIVIER, EXECUTIVE HEAD OF BEYOND DELIVERY

'I enjoy working for Beyond Outsourcing because there is tremendous opportunity for personal and professional growth. This company is a place where I can live out my passion and make a contribution.'

STEFAN DIEDERICKS, CEO PROJECT OFFICE

'Beyond Outsourcing provides me with a challenging environment that allows me to increase my knowledge levels, experience and exposure, while continuously focusing on quality service delivery to the client. My favourite moment at the company in the past year was being asked to manage four different client accounts within three different disciplines of operational execution. This afforded me great challenge and excitement.'

TERATO BOPAPE, CHANNEL LIAISON OFFICER

'Beyond Outsourcing is not only a company that has set a benchmark in the outsourcing market for others to envy, but it has been a pillar of strength for one of the leading telecommunications companies in SA. My individuality as a young, black, aspiring woman is accommodated by everyone, and that helps me to take charge of my destiny.'

INTERNATIONAL STANCE

With restructuring complete the business is ready to start expanding into other regions, but the main focus will be South Africa in first instance. Nonetheless, Beyond Outsourcing does have a contract with Aramco in Saudi Arabia, and there are moves to go into Botswana, Nigeria, Tanzania and Angola. Once operations are established and local partners found, Beyond Outsourcing staff will have opportunities to travel. Beyond Outsourcing will look to the rest of the world only after sufficient expansion has been achieved in Africa.

THE FUTURE

There is no listing on the cards for Beyond Outsourcing just yet. The company plans rather to get its black empowerment partner in place, sell its services successfully, and expand slowly into other African countries, all the while hiring aggressively and developing its staff.