

Leading Edge Effectiveness Company
by Andrew Ngozo

A portrait of Dr. Suzanne Ravenall, Chief Executive Officer of the Effectiveness Company. She is a woman with long, straight blonde hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a white collared shirt under a dark blazer. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Execution with Excellence

Dr Suzanne Ravenall, Chief Executive Officer, the Effectiveness Company, believes that living one's life in honesty and with integrity is the certain way to thrive in business. She shares her ingredients to success, and explains why execution is important for business success. Operating in a dynamic and unique environment of business transformation outsourcing, Ravenall says you either innovate or you will never realise real profits.

*Dr Suzanne Ravenall, Chief Executive Officer,
Effectiveness Company*

The Effectiveness Company has been named among the Best Employers for five consecutive years. What do you attribute this recognition/success to?

We are not a massive global organisation with thousands of employees that provide, or are even able to match, all the benefits. However, we are an organisation that believes that pushing the boundaries to the edge and providing ongoing consistency put our people in a position where they understand how they can improve on a day-to-day basis. So, they say the breakfast of champions is feedback. Not something we are all very good at receiving. We believe that people can do anything they want to do if they put their heart and soul into what they do and continue to observe their behaviour and adjust it for the better to achieve a greater outcome every day. Our ability to provide employees with feedback that allows them to transform themselves daily should they choose, surrounded by a challenging environment that observes the elements of what makes a successful business, has earned this recognition. When a defining moment comes along, you can do one of two things, define the moment or let the moment define you.

How does the way you treat your employees benefit the customer?

Do not follow where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

Our key competency is transformation through execution and in order for you to execute well, you have to be attentive to detail. It is about the small things you do on a day-to-day basis that give the customer satisfaction. We can achieve this by continuously reflecting back to ourselves in order to improve on how to do things differently. There is not a day in the business that we don't reflect on how to do things differently, reinvent and improve. Ultimately our customers are looking for transformation solutions that will make things better, faster, more efficient than they were before.

Do you think a woman leads differently from a man, thereby extracting the most out of each individual member of staff?

People often say women are from Mars and men are from Venus! Whilst we are different, I believe that both men and women, over a period of time, must develop a certain set of leadership behaviours and a lot of courage in order to be good or great at what they do. It is not about your gender or your colour, but it is the wisdom and the capabilities you bring to operate successfully. Winston Churchill once said the kite rises higher against the wind. People come in all

different colours and have different capabilities. We should therefore focus on those areas in which leaders should excel and hone those skills and in so doing, set an example for others to follow. Often leadership is about the tough decisions, the right path is rarely the easy one. If we do that, then we may have better businesses all over the world. Be daring, be first, be different, be just.

What is your perspective on what gives you the competitive advantage over other players?

We are a business transformation outsourcing (BTO) organisation and we operate in an industry that is worth about US\$450 billion worldwide and of that, if we work on the standard numbers, South Africa gets about 11%. It helps us understand the potential size of the market for BTO. BTO as an industry is right at the bottom of the bell curve, poised for an explosion, demonstrating substantial

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In Africa there are not many BTO companies, however there are many outsourcing companies. Our core differentiation is in the depth of execution capability and as a result the transformation that is achieved and the areas that we outsource. I like to say we get stuff done, at speed, professionally, with high impact that is sustainable.

Do you face operational challenges in Africa as companies in other sectors do?

We have already gone into the African space and the challenge we have faced thus far is financial. As we travel around Africa, we find that the customers really need you to have a base in the countries in which we intend to operate and, as a medium-sized company, it is quite a challenge. I think every country in Africa has its own conditions and requirements in terms of doing business, as in other parts