

Top Women

Since it was first launched as IDCS in 1997 as a company that built generic and scaleable proprietary software and processes for the purposes of operations execution, it has literally been in a league of its own. The first operator in its particular outsourcing field, IDCS was ahead of its time, as is Beyond Outsourcing of today.

IDCS's founder, Suzanne Ravenall, says: 'Beyond Outsourcing is a business transformation outsourcing company, at the forefront of developing strategic alliances with clients of measurable financial value, to transform performance in the operational execution of the client's strategic objectives. Through the deployment of world-class tool kits, Beyond Outsourcing implements sustainable performance improvements within a specifically identified business unit through to the whole business.'

When asked about her management style and qualities Ravenall says: 'I see coaching as an important element of leadership, and it forms a vital part of the management strategy within Beyond Outsourcing.' She stresses the difference between coaching and training, noting that outside of instructive teaching, people also need guidance.

'Coaching is about understanding people's challenges, where they're going to and where they're coming from, and helping them to get on to the right track. It's about life skills, not just business skills,' she adds, pointing out that most challenges within the business environment lead back to personal issues or lack of a particular life skill. Coaching not only focuses on the symptom, but also identifies and deals with the root cause of challenges that arise.

Ravenall believes that wisdom increases with age, as does finesse, and that through her years in the business, she has been able to add new skills to her armoury. Qualities



that she values include discipline, brutal honesty, deliberate practice, execution and tenacity. She also prizes the ability to spot talent and pick the right person for the job, and believes that personal development and talent management are key areas in which a good CEO should be involved.

Having built her successful business without the benefit of tertiary education, Ravenall values personality, capability and a can-do attitude above qualifications, saying that with the skills shortage facing SA businesses, one needs to choose people with the correct behaviour and be prepared to train them up. Accordingly, Beyond Outsourcing has developed a talent

management strategy that starts right from recruitment, and includes constant assessments and reviews – all of which focus on measurable outcomes and encouraging personal growth. Ravenall believes that her work philosophy has mellowed somewhat over the years, but maintains that her attitude towards business remains unchanged.

'When I first started the company I was excited and passionate. I wanted to make a difference and add value to people. If you lose any of those core components, you lose it completely,' she says, adding that while her general goals stay the same, this incorporated a strong desire to give back to the community.