

## Absa's changing strategy



Gavin Opperman speaking at WBS

Absa must undergo a major change from a sales- to a service-oriented business model, according to Gavin Opperman, chief executive of Absa Retail. This new service model will aim to improve the customer experience and enable the bank's frontline and its staff to operate more efficiently, said Opperman, who spoke at a WBS Distinguished Lecture on 30 June. "It is the customer and the people of our business that make our

bank what it is," he said.

Opperman explained how Absa is strategising for a competitive advantage within a volatile economic environment. "It's not only about a product push but about understanding the customer."

Macro-economic conditions in South Africa remain tight and the economy has shown a slow and gradual recovery, he said. "Over the past two years, consumers throughout South

Africa experienced a record level of indebtedness and a record level of financial strain." Opperman cited household debt in 2010 as being at R1.2 trillion, up from R517 billion in 2004. In addition, the prime interest rate is the lowest it's been since 1974, and credit growth is low.

Regulatory changes, increased competition, scarcity of customers and changes in consumer behaviour are some of the other challenges the banking sector faces.

Taking this into account, Absa's strategy focuses on creating value for customers and the bank, while continuing to manage cost and risk. The strategy is broken up into several goals, including gaining a full understanding of customers' needs and spending behaviour and matching these to product use; value-based management; investing more in employees; and managing distribution channels, from branches to mobile technology and Internet banking.

In keeping with leading international banks, Absa is looking at gearing charges to client income level. It has also started a rewards programme.

"We've got to grow our existing customers by extending our relationship with them and making sure we can move throughout all the different life stages of those customers."

In conclusion, Opperman said: "The innovation must be biased towards a holistic customer experience and cannot be toward the product, as previously."

## Heads up

### Academic programmes:

The applications process for all academic programmes is open until 30 September. If you are applying, please ensure your application is submitted by that date.

### GMAT preparation course:

WBS is offering a five-day GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test) preparation course for prospective MBA students who need to sit for this test. It will be held from 20 to 24 August, from 8.30am to 5pm.

If you are interested, contact Kathy Cannell at 011 717 3130 or e-mail [kathy.cannell@wits.ac.za](mailto:kathy.cannell@wits.ac.za) before 15 August.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**28 July 2011** – As part of the WBS Distinguished Lecture Series, Jeremy Langley, regional director of Lumesse (Western Europe, Middle East and Africa) – a global talent management organisation – will speak on 'Back to basics: a simplified approach to great talent management'. The event will be held at the Bert Wessels Lecture Theatre, WBS, at 5pm for 5.30pm, and entrance is R150 pp. For enquiries, contact Sue Gibson at 011 880 5202 or e-mail [sue@vibrantmedia.co.za](mailto:sue@vibrantmedia.co.za).

**29 October 2011** – Keep this date open for the Alumni Open Day, to be held at WBS. Details will follow in *WBS News* closer to the time.

# WBS mastering strategic marketing management

As of January 2012, WBS will be offering a new Masters in Strategic Marketing Management.

"This degree will fill a gap in the marketplace for a postgraduate qualification in marketing," says Professor Geoff Bick, WBS Coca-Cola Africa Chair in Marketing.

"The traditional route has been through a research-based M.Com, with the dissertation focusing on marketing. However, this has been a fairly academic route. The Strategic Marketing Management degree will provide an opportunity for development of the candidates via applied learning, where the theory is applied to the real business situation."

He adds: "So candidates with a B.Com (Honours) in marketing or equivalent prior studies, plus two to three years' experience, can now develop themselves further and gain a masters qualification in the process, where there has been no such opportunity available previously."

This degree will require a 50% dissertation to follow on the 50% course work. It is aimed specifically at practising marketers, with marketing qualifications and experience, who wish to develop



*Professor Geoff Bick, WBS Coca-Cola Africa Chair in Marketing*

their careers in marketing further.

Students doing this degree will be exposed to the latest thinking in advanced marketing concepts in a variety of specialist areas. They will learn critical thinking about marketing issues, the analysis and application of advanced marketing tools, and the practical development of marketing solutions in a business environment.

The programme builds on undergraduate marketing studies to hone the skills of the students further. The courses will be taught in an interactive manner through case studies and group presentations, to develop practical applications of the concepts.

Applications for the first intake in January 2012 are now open.

To apply or get more information, contact Lerato Moepye on 011 717 3510 or e-mail [Therese.Moepye@wits.ac.za](mailto:Therese.Moepye@wits.ac.za).

# A partial farewell to Professor Kathy Munro

Professor Kathy Munro was thrilled when she stumbled on the farewell tea at WBS in honour of her retiring as acting dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management on 28 June. Part of her excitement, she says, was because WBS and the Graduate School of Public and Development Management had worked together to host it for her.

"One of my challenges as dean was to get the various schools working together, so it made me proud," she says.

But while each of the schools under her leadership gave her some kind of farewell party, Munro has not left Wits University, and is not planning to any time soon.

"I don't think Witsies ever really leave, because there is always something interesting to absorb them," she says.

She has moved into the Architecture and Town Planning Department and already has a host of fascinating projects on the go.

"My relationship with WBS has been one of admiration this last four years as acting dean," she says. "It is important for the university that the business school is successful."

"As acting dean, I have enjoyed the hectic activities of the faculty, and it has been interesting trying to pull 7 000 students (including 2 000 postgraduates) together and make sure their needs are met. Each school has its own different needs. The business school, for example, often has more in common with other business schools than the rest of the faculty. But it is really important to look for things that it has in common with other schools here. In truth, part of what makes the business school so impressive is that it is a part of the university."

So, while Munro relinquishes her management position, she will still be very much around and doing what she loves best... research.

*Please keep us all up to date! Let us know about any news relating to WBS, its staff and alumni, or if there is an event you want alumni or staff to attend. If you have innovative or fun ideas for WBS News, we'd like to hear from you as well. Contact Rutendo Nxumalo at WBS Marketing on 011 717 3615 or e-mail [Rutendo.Nxumalo@wits.ac.za](mailto:Rutendo.Nxumalo@wits.ac.za).*

## Harvard beckons WBS PhD student

Who would have guessed that, when WBS hosted a presentation of the Harvard South Africa Fellowship Program to prospective students in March, the chosen student would come from this campus?

Hugo Canham, a PhD student at WBS, was awarded this year-long fellowship that was established during the apartheid era to address the needs of South Africans who were then denied access to further education.

Canham is excited at the good news. "I have struggled to get funding for my research and I continue to pay for data collection, transcribing and general research costs," he explains. "Against this background, hearing about the successful outcome of my application for the Harvard Fellowship was great news for me."

Canham is researching employment equity and professional identity development in the banking industry but, due to having a full-time job at Wits

University's Transformation Office, his research is mostly relegated to the weekends.

"My motivation for wanting this fellowship was really about getting time out to focus on writing, as well as immersing myself in a stimulating research environment," he says. "The fact that it will be at Harvard is an additional bonus."

This fellowship will assist Canham to complete his PhD. "It will give me the much-needed time to focus on writing, without the additional pressures of work."

It will also enable him to return to WBS with his "new learning" to benefit his work at the Transformation Office. "In future, I would like to concentrate my energy on the synergies between the practice of talent retention, development – of blacks, females, people with disabilities – and research on key social asymmetries," he says.

"My belief in both the subject of my research, as well as my personal worth as a researcher, has been restored and bolstered by getting this fellowship."

# Turnaround management book is a first

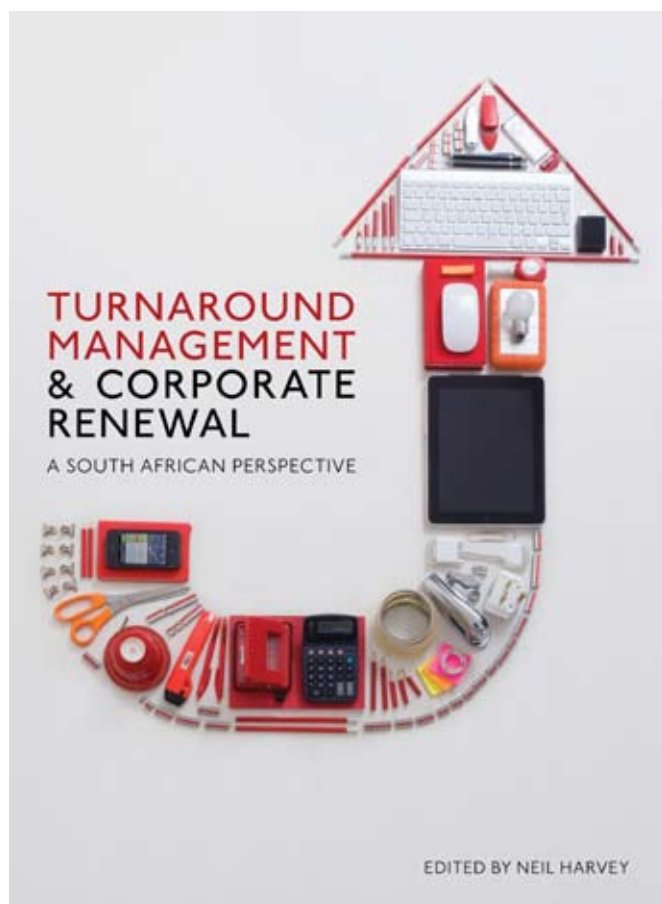
Neil Harvey, a seasoned turnaround practitioner, recently launched *Turnaround management & corporate renewal – a South African perspective* at WBS.

Harvey, who has orchestrated massive turnaround projects at multinationals like Anglo American and SA Breweries, brought together 34 noted management and turnaround practitioners, consultants and academics in South Africa to write this book. He aims to assist people and corporates with their turnarounds by covering as many aspects of the subject as possible.

The book provides meaningful insight into the processes of turnaround management and corporate renewal, including the stages of a turnaround, rapid appraisal and detailed analysis, recovery-plan development and implementation, according to Harvey. "Tools and techniques that can be used to deal with many different turnaround challenges are explained in considerable detail, complemented by case studies written by people who have led successful turnarounds in South Africa," he says.

The book is partially based on a successful WBS executive education programme on managing turnaround projects, which was originally convened in 2002 by Harvey and Frans van Heerden. WBS was one of the first business schools in the world to introduce such a programme.

Former WBS director Professor Mthuli Ncube wrote in the foreword: "It is timely when we consider the state of the world economy and the challenges facing Africa and South Africa. There has never been a greater need for turnaround management than there is now."



## WBS short courses

### SENIOR MANAGEMENT

**WBS International Executive Development Programme (IEDP) (including international study tour)**

11 August–11 September 2011

Contact Faith Koroloso on 011 717 3569

### GENERAL MANAGEMENT

**Strategic Leadership**

19–21 September 2011 (JHB)

**The Art and Science of Negotiation**

16–19 August 2011 (JHB)

**Thinking and Planning Strategically**

22–25 August 2011 (JHB)

### SPECIALISED TOPICS

**BBBEE – Unpacking Strategy and Codes**

17–18 August and 15 September 2011 (JHB)

**Climate Change and Carbon Markets Management Development Programme**

15–19 August 2011 (JHB)

**Project Management**

14–18 November 2011 (JHB)

### CERTIFICATE PROGRAMMES

**Management Advancement Programme**

9 September 2011–20 May 2012 (JHB) (Part time)

**New Managers Programme**

19 September–9 December 2011 (JHB)

### FINANCE

**Finance for Non-financial Managers**

22–26 August 2011 (JHB)

**Technical and Financial Evaluation in Mineral Projects**

19–23 September 2011 (JHB)

**Integrating Strategy, Budgeting and Reporting**

3–5 October 2011 (JHB) (Private sector)

24–26 October 2011 (JHB) (Public sector)

### MARKETING

**Product Strategy and Brand Management**

10–12 August 2011 (JHB)

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CENTRE PROGRAMMES

**Leading Developing Economies**

2–4 August 2011 (JHB)

**Personal Effectiveness Through Emotional Intelligence**

18–21 October 2011 (JHB)

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