

# Fuel attendants: protect yourself



**Ashley Mmolutsi, a MISA Member in Northcliff posed for the photo as illustration.**

**A** fuel attendant was charged with gross negligence when a vehicle drove off, after filling the bakkie and three containers with fuel to the value of R2 700.

"It is very unfair that I and my 4-year old daughter now have to suffer. I have worked as a fuel attendant for a very long time and this is the first time a motorist did this to me. I can no longer trust anyone," says the fuel attendant.

The fuel attendant from Brits in the North West opened a theft case with the SAPS, only to hear that the motorist used false number plates.

He was charged with gross misconduct by the service station because he did not comply with their internal procedures, intended to prevent fuel theft, when this incident occurred.

"I am so sad. As a fuel attendant I don't earn more than R7 000 a month. Why did this motorist do this to me," the fuel attendant asked.

MISA spoke to several fuel attendants who confirmed they have either been subjected to fuel theft or heard about similar incidents.

"Fuel attendants are soft targets. We don't have the luxury of arguing with motorists if they ask something. The customer always comes first and service delivery is key."

According to a General in the SAPS incidents like these happen often nationwide and has increased over the past few years due to the economic strain in households.

"This is not an organised crime and there

is no syndicate behind it. It is common theft where a motorist is opportunistic in the spur of the moment and exploits the good-hearted nature of the fuel attendant.

"Awareness amongst fuel attendants is key to combat these type of crimes," he says.

A fuel attendant must immediately be suspicious if something out of the ordinary occurs.

**"It is a red flag if someone wants to fill up a bakkie and an additional three containers for example."**

Another red flag was the fact that the bakkie only had a number plate at the back and not in front. The use of false number plates is very common.

"The fuel attendant should have insisted on removing the containers from the bakkie because he did not know the client or recognise him as a regular customer.

"Always use your common sense and be alert because thieves target unsuspecting people," he says.

Tiekie Mocke, Manager of MISA's Legal Department, agrees and urges fuel attendants to adhere to the procedures of the service station to protect themselves and their employers against fuel theft.

According to her, the fuel attendant did

not follow the procedure his employer implemented to prevent these types of incidents.

Mocke said the procedure of this service station was that the containers had to be removed from the bakkie before the fuel attendant filled them up.

As a precaution, the fuel attendant had to receive payment from the motorist before replacing the containers.

"The fuel attendant had to have the card machine with him at all times. The motorist drove off when the fuel attendant walked away to fetch the card machine. Had he followed the procedure, the theft could have been prevented," says Mocke.

According to Mocke, employers implement rules not only to protect the business, but also to protect the employees.

"If you followed the rules and the theft still occurred, it will be unfair for the employer to hold you accountable. However, if you don't comply with the rules, you create loopholes that criminals will take advantage of."

According to Mocke, the same principal applies when fuel attendants accept cash payments.

The employers have a procedure that they need to comply with, to ensure that the fuel attendants don't accept fake banknotes.

"Conduct becomes misconduct if you are aware of a rule, but you don't comply with the rule."



# Message from *Martlé Keyter*

MISA CEO: OPERATIONS

## Urgent steps needed to protect our children

I am utterly horrified to learn six learners died and more than a hundred learners in four provinces were admitted to hospital for food poisoning in less than a month.

Although the Ministers of Basic Education and Health immediately reacted and ensured investigations underway, to date no suspects had been arrested to be held accountable.

**More than 11 million people in the townships are dependent on the 75 000 spaza shops nationwide**

Children are vulnerable and must be protected. The incidents were very similar and could have been prevented if frequent health checks had been done on spaza shops selling food and sweets outside of schools.

According to MISA there has been no vetting or checking of these spaza shops prior to the latest surge of incidents.

At the Ngaga Primary School in Mtubatuba, KwaZulu-Natal, 43 learners fell ill with symptoms of vomiting and diarrhoea. The learners had to be treated at a clinic after buying snacks from spaza shops.

Food poisoning also caused 25 learners of the Mshuluzane Mayisela Primary School in Bronkhorstspuit being hospitalised.

In Hammanskraal north of Pretoria, 47 learners of the Rapelego Primary School were hospitalised due to food poisoning.

The learners were believed to have eaten chocolates, which had an expiry date of June 2024.

Weeks before the national senior certificate examinations for the Matric's of 2024 were about to start, 74 Grade 12 learners of the Fochville Secondary School, Badirile Secondary School and Wedela Technical School were rushed to Carletonville Hospital following a



**Martlé Keyter**

food poisoning incident at a matric camp.

In Limpopo, 35 pupils from Makahlule Primary School fell ill after buying snacks from vendors.

In Mpumalanga 21 learners of the Marhagi Secondary School in Nkangala were hospitalised for food poisoning after complaining about stomach cramps and headaches.

In the most tragic incident, six learners from Naledi, Soweto, died after buying contaminated chips at a local tuckshop. Preliminary investigations by health inspectors indicate that the snacks was contaminated with rat poison.

The families of these learners demand justice.

"How did poison end up in the snacks sold to kids? This cannot be a mistake; someone did this and they need to be held accountable," said a spokesperson of the families.

Joe Maimela, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education, appealed to parents rather to buy snacks for learners from reputable shops as the health and safety of our young ones are at stake.

She also called on schools to run awareness campaigns to keep learners vigilant regarding buying snacks. "We need to take the health of our learners seriously. They are our future," said Maimela.

The Gauteng Health Department urged the public to prioritise food safety, emphasising the importance of proper handling and storage of both perishable and non-perishable food items. The department advises against consuming food that has expired, even if it appears safe to eat.

Health minister Aaron Motsoaledi said his department is coordinating the work of six bodies of government to investigate and act.

According to Keyter MISA has been hosting events attended by hundreds of learners since the establishment of the Union's Women's Forum in 2009 and the Young Workers' Forum in 2013.

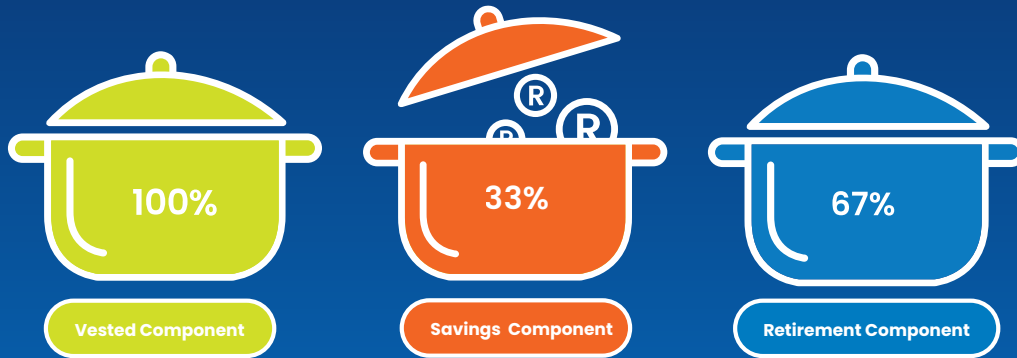
To date the trade union never experienced a food poisoning incident.

"At MISA we care about all our members, staff and guests at events. The Union is mindful of the serious consequences it might face if an individual falls ill due to negligence on our side.

"We take proper care in vetting vendors and caterers, ensuring that we use registered service providers providing quality. MISA believes that every child must have access to food that is safe and nutritious."

The Union demands that going forward the Department of Health should inspect all food vendors and spaza shops around schools to ensure food safety and compliance.

We cannot allow children to die from food poisoning.



## Need more information on the **two-pot retirement system?**

Before you decide to withdraw your money from your savings pot, listen to our information videos, now available in four different South African languages, on how the new system will work and how the process will work. Make an informed decision so that you can protect your future retirement savings.

Click to access videos



# Check if your contributions are paid-up



The Two-Pot Retirement system exposed thousands of employers who were deducting contributions from employees, but failing to transfer the money to the retirement funds, instead using it to subsidise cash flow.

Martlé Keyter, MISA's Chief Executive Officer: Operations, says 25% of employers in the retail motor industry are in arrears with provident fund contributions.

This figure includes employers with pending applications for exemption from MIBCO, the Motor Industry Bargaining Council.

These employers are representing 14% of employees in the industry.

"This is shocking. If an employer deducts any contributions from the employee, whether or not it is towards the provident fund, the Union or the Unemployment Insurance Fund, it must be transferred to the beneficiary. Failure to do so is fraud."

"The Pension Funds Act was amended in 2014, adding provisions that make controlling shareholders, members of close corporations, company managing directors, trustees and

partners personally liable for an employer's failure to pay contributions. They can be fined up to R10-million or imprisoned for up to 10 years," says Keyter.

MISA's Legal Department received complaints from members wanting to withdraw their savings pot, only to find that their contributions are not up to date.

Tiekie Mocke, Manager of the Legal Department, says the Union reports these employers to MIBCO. Where MISA has laid criminal charges against employers in the past, there was a reluctance from the SAPS to investigate because they prefer it to be handled as a civil matter.

According to Mocke this conduct of employers places the affected employee at risk that benefits like the Death Benefit won't be paid out to loved ones should something happen to you. The same principal applies if you are suddenly unable to continue working due to ill health.

"Affected members going on pension will also be severely affected as there will be

outstanding contributions and the interest they would have earned if the money was invested on their behalf as it should have been," says Mocke.

**Keyter says that it is the employees' responsibility to check if their contributions are paid-up.**

This problem is not limited to the retail motor industry.

The Pension Fund Adjudicator and Financial Sector Conduct Authority is concerned by the failure of some companies to contribute towards pension funds. According to the Pension Funds Adjudicator Office for some companies, this goes as far back as 20 years, which is a criminal act and there needs to be accountability.

Pension Fund Adjudicator Muvhango Lukhaimane said that 82% of their caseload for the current financial year is complaints by workers whose employers are not paying their pension deductions over to administrators.

# Megan is grateful she has a voice

**M**egan Stevens (32) is ready and excited to steer the MISA Young Workers' Forum and encourage young workers to get involved and make a difference.

"I will serve our members to the best of my ability with a focus on awareness and education on the retail motor industry and the career opportunities available."

Stevens is a Free State/Northern Cape Regional Committee member and MISA Woman of the Year 2021. She is also a proud activist for people living with albinism.

Stevens works as a Receptionist at Volvo Trucks & Buses Bloemfontein. She was born with albinism, a rare mutation of certain genes that affect the amount of melanin your body produces, controlling the pigmentation (colour) of your skin, eyes and hair.

She was elected Chairperson of the Forum after the tragic passing of Vincent Krouse, her predecessor. He passed on after a serious motorbike accident on Heritage Day.

"Vincent left big shoes to fill and I am grateful and honoured to be given the opportunity to spread my wings and make my voice heard.

**"I am passionate about giving a voice to those who feel that they are not heard. Winning the Woman of the Year gave me the experience and confidence to guide others."**

According to Stevens the forum has its work cut out for it to educate learners who want to pursue careers in the retail motor industry to choose the right subjects in Grade 10.

Once in the industry, the forum plays an important role to assist young workers to improve their skills and to obtain new skills thanks to the numerous benefits they enjoy as MISA members.



**Megan Stevens**

"MISA encourages continued learning, to stay ahead of the game in our industry. With new technology and the global move to electric vehicles, the retail motor industry is the best place to be.

"But you must learn hard and not shy away from new challenges. I know young workers don't like serving on committees because it comes with a lot of work, but this must be seen as new opportunities which will allow you to grow and create your own legacy," says Stevens.

The primary objectives of the Young Workers' Forum, amongst others are:

- To assist youth in capacity development for the transition to adulthood;

- To assist youth with the development of leadership and management skills;
- To increase young workers' economic and financial independence and decision making;
- To address issues relating to youth, such as youth unemployment, entering the world of work and development of young workers;
- To address issues on access to education and training;
- To assist youth to live above the expectations of society;
- To motivate civic engagement, democratic participation and social innovation and responsibility.

# MISA Maternity claim paid in two days

**M**ISA member, Andrea Raaths-Duarte (25) was very pleased after she received her Maternity Claim in two days.

The first time mother and Financial Manager at Mahindra in Pretoria North thanks MISA for the Maternity claim of R3 000.

She joined the Union in 2018 after one of the Recruitment and Liaison Officers explained the financial benefits of joining the fastest growing trade union in the retail motor industry.

MISA parents with 26 weeks' consecutive contributions, can enjoy MISA's Maternity Benefit of R3 000 per annum.

Applications must be made within 17 weeks from date of birth.

"Although I have not yet utilised the Study

Assistance as I wanted, I believe being a mother will now be the right push to grow further within the industry.

"The excellent service received from MISA is appreciated. It was fast and professional. Tamsanqa Ngcobo, one of MISA's Fund Administration Officers assisted me.

"It is my first time belonging to a Union and it is a pleasant experience to be a MISA member", says Raaths-Duarte.



**Andrea Raaths-Duarte**

# Meet Vinnie, MISA's Superhero



MISA's Superhero Competition starts 1 November 2024.

**There are three categories:**

**Ages 2 – 5:** Colouring In - Prize R1 000 (picture enclosed)

**Ages 6 – 9:** Design a MISA Superhero - Prize R1 000

**Ages 10 – 12:** Design a MISA Superhero - Prize R1 000

The competition closes on 7 December and the winner/s will be announced on 10 December 2024.

MISA's Presidential Committee and two Chief Executive Officers will be the judges.

The winning MISA Superhero coloring and drawing of each category will be posted on our social platforms.

Only the children of paid-up MISA members can participate.

Only 1 entry per child in the category.

Terms and Conditions Apply.

Please email entries to [Sonja.Carstens@ms.org.za](mailto:Sonja.Carstens@ms.org.za)

MISA will be embarking on the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign starting on 25 November 2024 continuing until 10 December 2024 to raise awareness against gender-based violence.



# Always eager to learn new skills

MISA's Tamsanqa Ngcobo (37) believes in the importance of education and always being one step ahead.

That is why he completed a certificate in Google Digital Marketing & E-commerce at Coursera, an American online course provider.

During Covid-19 Ngcobo also completed his Tasol certificate which enables him to teach English abroad at an international academy.

The Fund Administration Officer in the Union's Claims Department says, "I started watching YouTube videos to understand how influencers on social media makes money."

**"I am inquisitive and want to know more about interesting topics like history and science."**

After matric Ngcobo did promotional work for different organisations.

He got a permanent position at Truworths as Cash Desk Supervisor.

After 3 years he joined Discovery Limited for a few months moving to Budget Rent as a Customer Service Agent.



**Tamsanqa Ngcobo**

Later he joined MIBCO as a Customer Service & Claims Consultant. His work experience has always exposed him to dealing with customers and clients.

While at MIBCO, he learned of an opening at MISA for a Recruitment and Liaison Officer

position, he applied and as they say, the rest is history.

He joined MISA in 2016 as a Recruiter and moved to the Claims Department 2 years later, dealing with member claims. He loves helping MISA members in times of need.

## Watch your mouth

Employers can't speak as harshly as they like to an employee or address them in a hurtful manner because it can lead to severe reputational damage and financial loss.

Bullying and harassment in the workplace is front-page news and employers should not underestimate the severe impact. This is the stern warning of Jahni de Villiers, Director at Labour Amplified and an experienced labour law practitioner.

Labour Amplified and MISA, the Motor Industry Staff Association, presented a training session on bullying and harassment in the workplace to the IEDF, Industry Equality and Diversity Forum.

**MISA is at the forefront to eliminate bullying and harassment in the workplace and to educate employees and employers about their rights.**

According to De Villiers bullying ranges from numerous acts, for example a manager's tone of voice can be perceived as demeaning and belittling.

"This will certainly lower a person's self-esteem and self-confidence. The victim's productivity will diminish due to stress and healthcare cost will escalate. Besides



reputational damage and a financial loss to the employer, the morale of the office will also suffer.

"Employees are not robots and can bring their issues at home to work. Therefore the employer needs to apply emotional intelligence and treat them with empathy, realising that the person might be going through something beyond their control," says De Villiers.

According to De Villiers the employer is compelled by various legislations to act against workplace bullying but there is no one size fits all.

"There must be trust in the grievance procedure, with quick and easy steps. All complaints needs to be handled confidentially and taken seriously."

"The reporting procedure needs to be clear. Maintain an open door policy. It is important to have more than one person able to assist to prevent the bully being the one that an employee needs to report to."

According to De Villiers prevention is better than cure.

"You want to be in a safe workspace where individuals actively listen to each other with empathy and where there is effective communication.

It is always important to place yourself in someone else's shoes. Create an environment of mutual respect. Don't allow dirty- and demeaning jokes."

She urged employees not to be bystanders but to stand up against unacceptable behaviour.

De Villiers referred to a powerful slogan "if you see something, say something."

# Nothing compares to MISA's benefits

Charles Chauke (42) received MISA's School Support of R1 500 for the first time this year.

The AutoHouse Panelbeaters & Spraypainters Production Manager of Akasia in Rosslyn, Pretoria joined the Union in 2023 after Lebogang Mathibedi, one of MISA's Recruitment and Liaison Officers, explained why this trade union is unique.

"I compared MISA's benefits with that of other unions and immediately joined."

"With my daughter doing grade 11, the School Support Benefit assisted with stationery."

The MISA School Support annually pays R1 500 to the first one thousand members, who successfully apply, to support them in paying for their children to complete grades 10 to 12 at a school registered with the Department of Basic Education or duly accredited authorised entity.

Claims can be submitted from 1 January 2025 subject to 26 consecutive weeks' contributions. Applications are treated on a first-come-first-serve basis.

For more information, phone the Training Department on 011 476 3920 or send an e-mail to [Training@ms.org.za](mailto:Training@ms.org.za)



Charles Chauke

## Ndziweni graduates, thanks to MISA Study Assistance

Boniswa Ndziweni (30) thanks MISA for the Study Assistance after graduating from Boston City Campus. She enrolled for a 12 month Receptionist course that she completed in 6 months.

Ndziweni read on MISA's Facebook page about the Study Assistance and sent an e-mail to the Training Department to see if she will qualify and Amandla Kuse, MISA's Senior Training Officer, assisted her.

"Amandla was very helpful and patient", says Ndziweni.

The Access Controller at We Buy Cars in Johannesburg South joined MISA in 2022 after Thulani Maseko and Khehla Radebe, MISA's Recruitment and Liaison Officers explained the union's benefits.

"I saw the opportunity to develop myself as I have always wanted to study. The day I joined MISA is a day I will never forget. It was tough studying while working full time but all the hard work was worth it in the end. Should there be an opening at work, I will be applying," says Ndziweni.

Earlier this year she received the Healthy MISA Women claim of R3 000 and recently won the Heritage competition worth R300.



Boniswa Ndziweni

MISA offers study assistance of up to R12 500 to assist 150 MISA members annually with their studies, to grow and enhance their promotion opportunities in the retail motor industry. Terms and Conditions apply.

For more information regarding the Study Assistance benefit please contact the Training Department on 011 476 3920 or [training@ms.org.za](mailto:training@ms.org.za)

**"Thank you MISA for the support and the benefits."**



# Another successful Beauty and the Beast project

MISA's Beauty and the Beast project gave MISA member Kate Khune (39) the opportunity to give her first born son, Gift Khune (18), a beautiful matric farewell.

The Invoicing Clerk at CMH Honda Menlyn in Pretoria was able to complete everything for her son by buying him shoes with the assistance received from MISA.

Khune learned of the Beauty and the Beast project from a colleague who previously received assistance from MISA.

**“These are the last years and the beginning of a bright future ahead for him and I wanted him to be proud of how far he has come.**

“Thank you so much MISA for all you do for us, please do it for others as well. A Union that cares is everything.” says Khune.

In 2021, Khune received a Maternity Claim of R3 000 and a Loyalty claim of R750 this year.

The Beauty and the Beast forms part of the MISA Women's Forum, giving Matric learners the opportunity to enjoy a fairy-tale farewell.

MISA assists them through its established network of service providers with whom the Union had built a relationship over the years.

Any MISA member can apply, and the financial situation of the member will be assessed to see if he or she qualifies for project assistance.

MISA Women's Forum Northern/Highveld Representative, Claudine Marais, coordinated this project.

“I plan on applying for a MISA Bursary as he would like to further his studies in Project Management. MISA makes it all a possibility, thank you MISA”, says Khune.



Gift Khune

# Single mom grateful of belonging to the Union

Dilshaad Williams (47), got the opportunity to give her daughter, Nishaat (18) a night to remember.

The Receptionist/Administration Clerk at the Kia Parts Distribution Centre in Edenvale, Gauteng is also a mother of three.

“Thank you so much MISA. I knew she would not attend her Matric Farewell because it was impossible due to finances, as I am an only parent and depend on just my income”, she says.

Nishaat is a Matric learner at the Dawnview High School in Germiston.

Williams has been a MISA member for 2 years and was not aware of the Beauty and the Beast project. Her colleague advised her to reach out to MISA.

After speaking to Karen Gouws, the National Secretary of the Women's Forum, she was referred to the Claudine Marais, the Women's Forum Representative in the Northern/Highveld.

Thanks to Marais, MISA paid for Nishaat's nails and hair.

**“She looked gorgeous and was so nervous. Thank you MISA for making it possible for her to attend”**, says Williams.

For more information about this project, please contact Gouws on 041 364 0102 or send an e-mail to Karen.Gouws@ms.org.za.



Nishaat and Dilshaad Williams

# MISA's Child-at-Work Day

MISA, introduced another hundred Grade 11 learners nationwide to the retail motor industry.

These are learners who indicated that they want to experience how a dealership works after they attended MISA's annual Career Expo in May this year.

Martlé Keyter, MISA's CEO: Operations, says this industry is the fourth biggest in South Africa making a significant contribution to the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

**“Thousands of learners don't qualify to further their studies at a tertiary institution or don't have the financial means to do so. MISA educates learners to realise that there are alternative opportunities in our developing industry,”**  
says Keyter.

She thanks the eight dealerships and a workshop establishment who partnered with MISA to host learners from seven schools.

This following the MISA Women's Forum and Young Workers' Forum annual Career Expo in May to assist learners in considering the industry knowing what it entails.

The participating schools were:

**Eastern Cape**  
East London

Port Rex Technical High School  
Gqeberha  
Otto du Plessis High School  
Gelvandale High School

**Free State**

Bloemfontein  
Heatherdale Secondary School

**Gauteng**

Roodepoort High School  
Tetelo Secondary School, Soweto

**Western Cape**

Cape Town  
Princeton Secondary School, Mitchells Plain

The participating companies were:

**Eastern Cape**

East London

Ronnies Motors (Mercedes-Benz)

Kelston Chery East London

Gqeberha

Tavcor Motor Group (VW Commercial)

Denys Edwardes (Panelbeating & Spray-painting establishment)

**Free State**

Bloemfontein

Swedo-Tech Services

**Gauteng**

Action Ford Roodepoort

Maponya Motors, Soweto – VW and Toyota dealerships

**Western Cape**

Cape Town

BMW Tygervalley



Gelvandale High School at Denys Edwardes (Panelbeating & Spraypainting establishment) in Gqeberha





Heatherdale Secondary School to Swedo-Tech Services in Bloemfontein





Otto du Plessis High School at Tavcor Motor Group (VW Commercial) in Gqeberha





Port Rex Technical High School at Kelston Chery East London and Ronnies Motors (Mercedes-Benz)



Princeton Secondary School, Mitchells Plain at BMW Tyger Valley



Roodepoort High School at Action Ford Roodepoort



Tetelo Secondary School at Maponya Motors Toyota in Soweto





Tetelo Secondary School at Maponya Motors VW in Soweto



# The Pros and Cons of taking a gap year



**A**fter Matric you just want to relax, have some time to yourself and consider what you are going to do with the rest of your life.

You must decide between commencing with tertiary education, looking for a job or taking a gap year.

A gap year is a period of time between high school and a tertiary institution when learners decide to take a break to pursue other options such as upgrading their marks, to gain work experience by volunteering or continue with the journey of self-discovery.

A gap year gives one an opportunity to develop valuable skills and maturity.

Atelisha Harilal, Head of Marketing and Student Recruitment at Stadio, says financial constraints are the leading causes for matriculants to pause furthering their studies until they can afford it.

To some learners having a break after a long 12 years is much needed to be able to navigate the next step for the future.

Not all of them proceed to study further to tertiary institutions due to a variety of reasons which may include:

- Failing matric
- Not meeting the minimum requirements for the specific field
- Lack of finances at home
- To take a break from their studies
- Looking for employment

For some parents this might not be ideal as this could mean that their child is lazy or is

delaying their studies. Some believe that a break is needed in order for one to make better decisions as far as their future is concerned.

Pros of taking a gap year includes:

- Improve marks in order to qualify at a tertiary institution.
- Consider your interests: this gives one enough time to decide on what you would like to study. This gives you well informed and strategic decisions to take.
- Travel: this enables you to experience different cultures as well as languages. Some volunteer and find work.
- Gain work experience and learn a new skill
- Learn independence and possibly pursue a passion
- Prevent burnout
- Becoming more self aware

Cons of taking a gap year

- Lose momentum
- Finish college late
- Cost you more
- Require planning

While every parent should be supportive and mindful when it comes to such decisions however, making well informed decisions is important.

Bernadine Harmse, MISA Northern/Highveld Committee member and MISA Women's Forum Representative, says that

opportunities are available for those who have matriculated.

The Learnership programmes has a number of opportunities:

- eDeaf: NQF level 4, 2 years programme with 1 year of school and 1 year of work. This is for people living with disability.
- A 12 month contract as well as those who need in-service training.
- The children of employees being exposed in the retail motor industry."

The MerSETA (Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Seta) has various opportunities such as apprenticeship, learnerships and internships.

The various industry sectors are covered by six chambers within MerSETA such as metal and engineering, auto manufacturing, motor retail, tyre manufacturing, plastic manufacturing and components manufacturing.

Learners who are interested to work in the retail motor industry should follow them on their social media platforms or contact them directly on their call centre on 086 163 7738.

While the country is experiencing an increase in the unemployment rate, those who recently finished school should use the gap wisely to benefit their future and never look back in regret.

MISA also has job shadowing opportunities for learners to be exposed in the retail motor industry. For more information about this project, please contact Karen Gouws on 041 364 0102 or e-mail Karen.Gouws@ms.org.za



# Incorporating civility to create an inclusive culture of respect

Article by Thandeka Phiri: MISA National Training and HR Manager

Are you not seeing eye-to-eye with colleagues, or experiencing difficulty balancing workplace pressures?

The above, other challenges and scenarios may lead to amongst others: tension, heightened stress, and misunderstanding, interactions which are disrespectful, rude or aggressive, etc. It is at times like these that workplace civility becomes essential.

“Workplace Civility refers to the respectful and courteous behaviour exhibited by individuals toward their colleagues in the workplace. It involves treating others with dignity, showing appreciation for their contributions, and refraining from any behaviour that may be perceived as rude, aggressive or disrespectful. We will explore some tense workplace scenarios.

## Scenario 1:

You receive an email from your colleague. The subject line is blunt, and the tone feels curt, with short sentences lacking warmth. Phrases that might usually sound casual or friendly instead come off as abrupt and even potentially aggressive.

You wonder if there’s underlying frustration towards you from your colleague, or if perhaps the message was simply written in a hurry. You consider how best to respond, feeling the weight of the message’s tone and the importance of maintaining a positive communication dynamic.

## Scenario 2:

Department A has invested countless hours into the development of a project, and now it’s time to pass it to Department B, who will take it through the final stages. However, as the meeting progresses, it becomes evident that there is miscommunication between the Departments.

There emerges a lack of understanding about critical details, expectations and deliverables, resulting in a series of confusing exchanges.

## Scenario 3:

Members of a department are gathered for a brainstorming session on a new project. While some are keen to push boundaries and explore innovative ideas appealing to a diverse market, others take a more analytical and practical approach focused on viable solutions and risk management.

In discussions, tension start to rise as members from both sides defend their perspectives. Voices become louder, and the original purpose of collaboration begins to fade as the atmosphere grows increasingly charged.

## Scenario 4:

While experiencing difficulties in meeting



deadlines or not coping well with workplace pressures, you approach a colleague or a leader for guidance; you are informed that “the workplace is a high-pressure environment, with no space or time for niceties or politeness. Everyone needs to get things done quickly and people need to toughen up and stop taking things so personally!”

You immediately feel disrespected, doubtful, unsafe, fearful and unsure of whether to adopt a fight, freeze or flight strategy. You find yourself unsure how to respond to the statement as your self-esteem is shaken; trust and confidence in the leader or colleague, broken.

In each of these scenarios, tension and misunderstanding can be diffused through the following steps:

### 1. Stop, Consider, and Clarify Intentions

Emails often lack the subtlety and context of face-to-face interactions, thus leading to a higher likelihood of misunderstandings. If you receive an email that seems curt or aggressive, take a moment to pause before responding. Consider the sender’s perspective, and if needed, seek clarification through a conversation whether in person or via a call. Aim for clarity and respect in your response.

Miscommunications and misunderstandings can be a source of frustration, especially around tight project timelines. To respond civilly, take the time to clarify intentions.

If you suspect a misunderstanding, ask questions to get to the root of the confusion and make sure you fully understand the other individual’s message.

### 2. Practice Active Listening

Actively listening promotes effective communication and collaboration. Focus on the speaker with as minimal distractions possible, maintain eye contact to reinforce attentiveness. Avoid interrupting, and allow the speaker to finish their thoughts before responding. Ask open-ended questions to encourage deeper dialogue and demonstrate your genuine interest in each other’s perspectives. Then, reflect back what you’ve heard to confirm your understanding and address any discrepancies.

### 3. Be Open to Receiving Feedback, and Give It Intentionally and respectfully

Recognize that misunderstandings happen, and be willing to learn from the experience. Likewise, when delivering feedback, approach the conversation with empathy and clarity. Start by acknowledging the situation and expressing your intention clearly.

Encourage a two-way dialogue by inviting the other person to share their perspective or concerns freely. Highlight specific examples to illustrate your points and offer constructive suggestions for moving forward.

Identify common ground and where possible explore collaborative hybrid solutions. This aids in maintaining focus on the goals at hand while encouraging a culture of shared ownership.

### 4. Realise that high pressure or crisis environments do not mean lack of civility

High pressure, crisis environments can be characterised by civility, listening, empathy and respect. Although at times conversations may need to be direct, it is also necessary, to ensure that people feel safe to speak up, to disagree, and to give their opinion without fear of negative repercussions. When people feel heard and are responded to appropriately and respectfully and their contribution is valued, they can make better, safer and more informed decisions.

Workplace civility also encompasses active listening, empathy and constructive communication, which adds to fostering positive workplace relationships, increasing job satisfaction, and improving organizational outcomes. There can be civility, a sense of fairness and respect even in a high-pressure environment. Resulting in inclusion and strengthening of interpersonal relationships to withstand the pressure.

Individuals who are self-aware and respectful enough to communicate constructively and with civility cultivate trust levels within their teams.

Civility in the workplace is not just a nice-to-have; it is essential for building a thriving, inclusive and productive environment. Lack of civility leads to poor performance, poor decision making and people suffering.

# switch

Article by the Strategy and Development Department.

*"There's no better time to rein the sales of these foods in — the hotter future will only make us further dependent on them."*

— Lindsey Smith Taillie, director of the Global Food Research Program

*This article is based on the insights of Lindsey Smith Taillie, who explores how heat waves and droughts are increasing junk food sales.*

Climate change is exacerbating global food and water shortages, allowing companies to exploit vulnerable communities by marketing unhealthy foods and drinks, particularly to children.

In La Guajira, Colombia, a region plagued by drought and water scarcity, residents increasingly turn to sugary drinks due to a lack of accessible drinking water.

Over the past two decades, climate change has worsened these conditions, leading to a rise in ultra-processed food consumption. Despite initiatives claiming to combat malnutrition, the area still faces alarmingly high rates of malnutrition-related mortality.

Global nutrition experts note that food companies exploit climate-related crises to boost sales of unhealthy foods. In response to natural disasters or extreme heat, companies launch aggressive marketing campaigns for junk food and beverages.

The reliance on ultra-processed foods in destitute communities is understandable.

In the Sundarbans, a mangrove region in India and Bangladesh, rising sea levels and severe weather have devastated fishing and agriculture. Parents often leave to seek work, sending money home that children use to buy packaged snacks, one of the few affordable comforts available.

Climate change has made fresh foods harder to find, and even when available, cooking them becomes challenging without water, making packaged and fast foods more attractive. Higher temperatures also accelerate spoilage of fresh produce therefore options like powdered drink mixes, canned soups and granola bars seem ideal as they contain preservatives.

They are produced by large multinational companies that are able to source ingredients globally. In South east Asia, some consumers perceive packaged foods as healthier due to their longer shelf life, creating a strong but misleading affinity for these products.

The food industry has swiftly seized on the opportunities presented by climate change. During heatwaves, companies bombard consumers with advertisements for sugary drinks and junk food. For example, McDonald's launched a heat-sensitive billboard in the Netherlands that dispensed free McFlurry

vouchers when temperatures exceeded 38.6°C. In India, ice cream companies rolled out new flavours online during a recent heatwave to boost sales. Advertising in Bangladesh featured the tagline, "No matter how hot it is, just stay cool with Sprite!" Similar trends have been observed in Australia and Mexico, where research links increased heat to higher consumption of soft drinks and alcohol.

In the aftermath of natural disasters, these companies often provide emergency food aid.

This year, after recent floods in Brazil many residents received large amounts of cookies and chips as government assistance.

In South Africa, Coca-Cola and the leading local food producer, Tiger Brands, distribute free packaged products to thousands in need.

There is a growing consensus that addressing the climate-food nexus requires collaboration amongst government institutions, businesses and individuals.

As climate challenges grow, it's crucial to find sustainable solutions to prevent further dependency on unhealthy food options.



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