



Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises  
in SOUTH AFRICA's Tourism Sector



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## Improving communication:

### Using white boards to clarify roles and responsibilities

*Reed Valley, Woodbury Lodges and The Safari Lodge are situated in the Amakhala Game reserve. The game reserve covers 6500 ha of land that has been converted from sheep and cattle farming to a conservation area with re-introduced wildlife, including lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo and cheetah.*

### Workplace Challenge

Operation of a luxury safari lodge needs to ensure that all members of staff are aware of their roles and responsibility - not just from their job description, but also what actions they need to take each day to make the enterprise run efficiently and effectively. Lodges are busy enterprises, with many people, roles and responsibilities. Keeping track of activities, and ensuring that everyone knows what they need to do, is an important part of creating an efficient and effective operation.

At *Reed Valley, Woodbury Lodge* and *The Safari Lodge*, it was noticed that sometimes duties were not completed on time, or that there was confusion about who was supposed to do what! For example, sometimes if a manager reminded a staff member about a particular duty, they might be told, 'Oh, I didn't know about that!'



*"Before the white board we sometimes had the problem that rooms were not ready when guests arrived. Now that everyone knows what to do, they are prepared on time, and our guest are happy."*

- Rene Kapp,  
General Manager, Reed Valley Lodge -



### Meeting the Workplace Challenge

After hearing from Fair Trade in Tourism (FTTSA) about SCORE, the lodges of the Amakhala Game reserve participated in the SCORE training programme in 2009. Part of the course (Module 1 – Workplace Cooperation) included the 'Fishbone' exercise, and the 5 Why's. A Fishbone diagram is used to study a problem to understand its cause, develop a common understanding, and guide data collection. The 5 Why's is used to establish the cause and effect of relationships underlying a problem, by asking the questions 'Why' five times. Using these techniques, managers and employees realised that the core of many problems was the lack of information on duties and a simple way of visualizing them. To correct this, the enterprises placed a whiteboard in the kitchen area where



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all staff regular passed by. During daily morning meetings, staff would discuss with managers what activities needed to be completed that day. These would depend on the arrival and departure of particular guests, and any special needs that they may have, or any maintenance required. The staff member responsible for completing each activity would be indicated with their name next to it. When completed, either the staff member (at Woodbury) or the manager (at Reed Valley) would tick off the item. At Reed Valley the board has activities written on it once a day; while at Woodbury additional items may be added during the day. At The Safari Lodge, the white board is located in a staff corridor which staff pass regularly.

Overall, managers and employees noticed that there were fewer misunderstandings since the introduction of the notice board.

Expanding the use of the white boards, Reed Valley also uses the tool to organize a small incentive scheme. The manager takes note of who completes their tasks most effectively over a month, and who is willing to go the extra mile. At the end of the month she rewards the best worker with a small gift: or R50 in cash, or a cellphone recharge voucher to that value (depending on what they want). Although this only represents about 2% of a monthly pay check, it has been sufficient to boost morale and improve performance.

## Results

Interviews with the lodge staff confirmed that the white boards helped staff understand what was expected from them and when. They enjoy using the white board, particularly when their names are on it. They feel motivated, inspired to do their work, and are keen to tick to-do items of the notice board (instead of trying to hand on their tasks over to others). The white board also hinders managers from favouring particular staff members to do certain activities all of the time.

## Key Learnings

1. A simple planning and communication tool – a white board – can make tourism operations more efficient and effective.
2. Managing activities on the publicly displayed white board makes operations more transparent which staff appreciates.
3. Putting the white board into a strategic location where staff and management pass by often is key.

Target group	Benefit
Employees	Clarity on roles and responsibilities. More transparency in lodge operations. Financial reward if they are the best worker of the month (at Reed Valley).
Company	Clarity on roles and responsibilities. Better communication. Less risk of customer complaints.

SCORE is an ILO training programme that supports small and medium sized enterprises to increase productivity by promoting responsible workplace practices. Short training sessions for workers and managers are followed by enterprise visits and counselling to meet the needs of individual enterprises. The programme is particularly relevant for enterprises that face problems relating to quality, productivity, pollution and waste, workplace health & safety or human resources management. The training programme starts with Module 1: Workplace Cooperation – A Foundation for Business Success. Through this module, the enterprise managers and workers set the strategic direction of the enterprise and identify a number of practical workplace cooperation projects and to gear the enterprise towards a continuous cycle of improvements everybody in the enterprise has to play an active role.



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<b>Size:</b>	A4	
<b>Colour:</b>	CMYK	
<b>Finishing:</b>		
<b>Client:</b>	ILO	
<b>Content:</b>	ILO CS White boards at Reed & Woodbury & Safari 27072011.pdf	
<b>Date:</b>	17 October 2011	
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