

MB Technologies

MBT makes waves in the information technology sector

Nelson Mandela once said, "It always seems impossible until it's done." This is how Lucas Ndala leads the board of MB Technologies (MBT), South Africa's leading black-owned information technology (IT) distribution group.

His managerial and leadership skills have seen him win numerous performance awards and lead a team of professionals who undoubtedly believe that if there is one man who has proven that nothing is impossible, it is Ndala.

He realised his childhood dream of becoming a chartered accountant, today, he is the Group Financial Director of Royal Bafokeng Holdings (RBH), Chairman of the MBT board, and serves as Director on the boards of RBH, DHL Express and South African Coal Mining Holdings (SACMH); in addition, he is the Audit Committee Chair of SACMH and alternate director at Senwes, Atterbury Investment Holdings, Royal Bafokeng Enterprise Development and Royal Bafokeng Sports. "I'm ready for any challenge that comes my way. It's a huge responsibility," says Ndala.

MBT's primary focus is on premium IT hardware and consumables, components and software distribution; its involvement in numerous IT areas has seen it gain expertise in the latest trends in the local IT market, as well as challenges faced by the industry and its customers. This knowledge has been integrated into a set of group-wide value-added services that address the needs of both the reseller channel and the larger IT market.

MBT was established 26 years ago and today boasts a very stable management team with extensive experience in the sector. In 2006, RBH bought into MBT and now owns 55%. With Investec owning 45%, MBT is strategically positioned in the market.

"We are empowered, which gives our customers the ability to maximise their BBBEE [broad based black economic empowerment]



Lucas Ndala, Chairman

credentials in technology purchases," Ndala says.

The Group's strong focus on corporate social investment, BBBEE and employment equity has seen its companies becoming partners of choice within their specific area of business. Its operating companies include Advanced Channel Technologies, Channel Capital, Channel Risk Management, Platinum Micro, Printacom and Tarsus Technologies.

The various value-added services are aimed at assisting customers and resellers with overcoming IT-related obstacles; the logistics solutions incentive schemes, training programmes, financing solutions and product management strategies that have been implemented across the Group have been recognised as some of the most innovative by market commentators and the local IT sector.

As a leader, Ndala believes in strong personal values; and to provide leadership to his team, he needs "to be approachable and trustworthy". Even as a student, his leadership abilities were

recognised by others when he won the Best Postgraduate Diploma in Management Student Award at the University of Cape Town in 2007, the Deloitte & Touche Best BCom (Accounting) Student Award at the University of the Western Cape (1996) as well as the Arthur Andersen Most Versatile Student Award in the same year.

In 1999, Ndala's first year at Deloitte & Touche, he won the Acceptance of Diversity Award; and the following year, coined the Performance Leaders Award. Several awards followed. "It's in my DNA," he says.

It is not surprising, then, that Ndala ended up being Group Financial Director of RBH. Juggling his duties as Chairman of the country's leading unlisted black-owned IT distribution company is much like being a father, he feels. You have to earn respect and be firm while you lead.

"I find that listening well and offering advice and direction without much interference earns you trust. As an entrepreneurial business, we encourage individuals to express themselves, which I believe is done through interaction with your team," says Ndala.

As a father of two boys and two girls – who "keep me on my toes" – and husband to Kearabetswe, he believes family is very important. "The corporate world can be very time-consuming, so you have to strike a healthy balance. Work hard and play hard." While he dreams of becoming a farmer later in life, he recently took up running and has completed the Two Oceans Marathon, among others.

Like the open road beneath one's running shoes, the wind in your hair and the sun on your face enables you to think clearly about your aim to finish a marathon, he says.

MBT's aim is to expand into the public sector, offer more value-added services and become the leading distributor of premium IT products and solutions. "Many municipalities, for example, lack proper IT infrastructure. This is where we can come in and be a one-stop shop," he says. ▲