

Anne Pratt

a tall poppy in the field of many

“I must commend you for your professional approach, your complete understanding of the brief given to you and your continuous and expert communication with myself and my ExCo during the entire process. Thank you for a job exceedingly well done”.

Mr. Mike Edwards - Previous Executive Director, Forestry South Africa

– Amanda Dormehl

Meet Anne Pratt. This engaging and successful businesswoman recently received the CEO Magazine’s “South Africa’s Most Influential Women in Business and Government” award, in the Business and Professional Service category. The award is based on strategic financial business track record, gender empowerment, commitment to social upliftment and concern for the broader environment; in essence, the triple bottom line.

Anne is a senior partner at Memela Pratt and Associates, a world class, global executive search organisation. They are part of a global network and lead the industry at the premium end of executive search market within a South African, African and global context. They have strategic international alliances with 50 offices around the world and are committed to successful transformation and empowerment.

Anne’s colourful career is seeded with many awards received from numerous organisations and institutions focussing on the development and empowerment of women. She says that “the greatest need in women’s leadership is for women to develop self-esteem and self-belief. We need to learn how to market and promote ourselves with confidence, not arrogance. There is a view that most women do not support other women in business. I think if we are comfortable with who we are, then we will be comfortable about supporting other people.”

She adds, “Get to know yourself better. I personally use and talk to others about the five Qs. Firstly there is IQ, the outward signs of intelligence, followed by EQ, our capability to take notice and understand our own emotions, and to manage them in such a way that supports us and others. The third is PQ, practical intelligence - that which we apply what we have learnt in the classroom to day-to-day work situations. It is how we cut through theory and textbooks and make changes in our organisations that are simple and practical. Next is SQ or our spiritual intelligence. It is not religion per se, but centres on your belief system that there is a greater force in the universe. It is about serendipity and synchronicity with your soul. The fifth Q is about physical intelligence. Fitness and a balanced life is a big part of it. By ‘balanced life’ I mean being conscious of being connected to all aspects of me as a human being.”

Anne describes some of the methodologies that Memela Pratt and Associates use during recruitment: “We do an extensive briefing with the client upfront. It documents what their strategic challenges and objectives are and what kind of leader or individual would rise to them. During this briefing session we obtain information on their organisational culture and values. There is also an informal process followed to corroborate what we have been briefed on formally. We would experience it in



the feel of the environment and how the staff and executive team treat us. We may pick up discrepancies between the formal brief and our experience of the culture and values. Whether there are such discrepancies or not would really depend on the leaders. Bob Garratt wrote a book titled *The fish rots from the head* and the key essence of it is that the tone of the leader at the top is the overall tone set in the organisation.

Once we start talking to applicants we ask them which type of organisations they would choose to join and which ones not, and most importantly, why? The 'why' is really the motivator to determine what culture the applicant would be best suited for. We ask what motivates and drives them and it is very interesting to hear how people answer these questions, how they prioritise these drivers and which ones they omit.

We ask them to share a little about where they grew up, what their parents did, what their values are and which life experiences shaped

their values. In this way we really start distilling the human being, and defining the nature of the individual. The briefing, the informal process for experiencing the culture and these specific questions ensure that we align applicants and organisations to get the best fit."

In closing, Management Today asked Anne to comment on what she sees as the biggest challenge facing leaders in South Africa today. She highlighted two characteristics that were paramount in great leaders, namely integrity and courage. "Integrity is a critical issue in the country at the moment and without integrity there is no trust. And we need courageous leadership. It's not about being popular; it's about making the right decisions for the right reasons and being able to explain that to people. It is about being able to stand up against a trend which says 'we're all catching the gravy train'. There is an Australian saying: 'Don't be a tall poppy because tall poppies get their heads chopped off.' We need more leaders who have the courage and who are willing to be tall poppies."

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