

## Protocols

Hon Minister, captains of industry, fellow stakeholders in hospitality, other distinguished guests, gentlemen of the press.

## Preamble

I seize this opportunity to congratulate and commend the organisers of the Hospitality Business Summit and thank you for creating this forum for like minds to network, deliberate, proffer solutions to common challenges and chart new pathways towards improving the industry.

Now more than ever before, there seems to be a paradigm shift towards the exploration and patronage of industries that provide escapism through leisure services.

Despite the prevalent economic downturn, parameters indicate that all sectors of hospitality are growing exponentially.

Hotels, Spas & wellness centres are consistently booked. New restaurants and bars keep springing up. Event planners are inundated with entertainment & other engagements, while hikes in airfare tickets have not succeeded in deterring destination weddings, holiday makers or travels for other purposes.

All sectors of hospitality predominantly requires physical human presence, especially at the front end of operations for professional delivery of premium customer care.

It is impossible to adopt a virtual, hybrid or remote approach to providing premium consumer satisfaction.

With this in mind, emphasis must be placed on the fact that human capital is the driving force within any hospitality business, and as such, the wellbeing of staff cannot be overlooked, compromised or undermined.

From hotels & lodging to food & beverage, as well as travel & tourism or entertainment & recreation, client facing is unavoidable, non negotiable and crucial for maximum efficiency.

As such, it is pertinent for employers to accept that the rudiments and nature of the industry, relies heavily on staff and acknowledge the correlation between workplace stress and worker's output.

To consistently maintain high standards in hospitality, It is imperative for employers to be

intentional about putting strategies, policies and amenities in place to mitigate potential high stress levels amongst staff.

Some occupational hazards in hospitality hover around burnout, diminishing returns and reduced productivity.

Some major contributors to this, are unavoidable long working hours and unsociable shifts, inclusive of evenings, weekends, and holidays.

Extensive working hours negatively impact employee's work-life balance, making it hard for them to connect with family and friends outside work. insufficient personal time may contribute to stress, depression and mental health issues.

For businesses to thrive, staff must not become despondent, discouraged, depressed or emotionally disengaged.

No doubt, there have been notable efforts within organisations to generally create conducive work environments. However, more can always be done.

I have been in the hospitality business for 24 years running a Spa & Wellness Centre. Some staff members have been in our employ from the onset and several others for well over a decade.

While change is constant and good, consistency is extremely important in business. From our experience, staff retention has been invaluable, especially in areas of maintaining standards, ensuring seamless operations and streamlining the vision and mission of our business.

Also, having been privy to first hand knowledge of the F&B sector. With 10 years of actively being involved in QSR, bakery and lounge businesses, regularly managing large staff strengths with diverse responsibilities and duties.

I wouldn't even want to imagine the chaos that would ensue should staff choose not to turn up even for one day. To say the least, it would be an absolute nightmare.

From managers, pastry chefs, cooks & mixologists, down to cleaners, drivers and security personnel.

Each and every staff member is valuable, unique and instrumental to the overall success of our operations.

It is therefore wise to prioritise the wellbeing of our workforce, in order to improve the quality

of work they in return bring to our organisations.

From experience, I note that, to build efficient teams, truly committed to delivering quality service and consumer satisfaction employers must constantly invest in staff.

I have also observed that when labour is dignified and there is job satisfaction, mutual growth and respect, staff are reluctant to leave, even when encouraged and supported to do so.

In this regard, regular training, staff meetings, appraisals, retreats, bonding exercises and opportunities for employees to socialise, celebrate successes and receive constructive feedback are crucial for creating harmonious work environments, promoting mental health, allaying anxiety and keeping depression and existential crisis at bay.

Well defined reporting lines, staff handbooks, clear policies , explicit job descriptions, unambiguous rules and regulations, give employees clear directions on expectations and reduce misconduct, altercations and misunderstandings.

HMO, pension schemes, leave benefits, perks and promotions when due, also generally improve health, boost confidence and self esteem amongst employees.

Wellbeing is strongly linked to happiness and job satisfaction.

Regardless of the nature of work, staff level or ranking, everyone desires respect, fulfilment & contentment during their financial sojourns.

Therefore, in my opinion, creating non toxic, harmonious & enabling environments within workspaces, is fundamental to achieving success in any business sector.

Thank you for listening