

Further research

Pursuing new knowledge: Four USB researchers share their research agendas aimed at serving the needs of industry and society.

The place of marketing in business



In his contact with various industries, **Frikkie Herbst**, associate professor in Marketing, has noticed that the marketing budget is often the first to face cuts when the effect of an economic slowdown is felt. He, however, questions such reactive tactics. In tough times, especially, marketing should be done more smartly – certainly not shifted aside. He therefore takes a deep interest in the strategic role of marketing in modern-day business. In order to align the USB's research with the practical needs of business, he is committed to research that asks penetrating questions about:

- The continued relevance of marketing
 - Where marketing should really fit into the organisation
 - The differences between marketing as a tool for creating long-term value and marketing as a tool for driving short-term sales
 - Boardroom views on marketing
 - The degree of common understanding about marketing in industry today – what is marketing, and what not?
 - The role and style of marketing in building brand, and customer and relationship equity
- In addition, Herbst believes that research that takes a critical look at marketing should also pay attention to the issue of metrics. Much more research is needed on ways of measuring the return on investment generated by marketing.

Enlarging the economic cake



The USB is actively engaged in research into the roles of both the public and the private sectors in the eradication of poverty in South Africa and Africa. Directed by **Wolfgang Thomas**, professor extraordinaire in Economics and Doing Business in Africa, these studies focus on taking economic progress to underdeveloped areas. A few examples are:

- Corporate engagement at the *base of the income pyramid* in South Africa as well as the rest of Africa
- Case studies of doing business in Africa
- Case studies of local business development in towns
- Case studies of enterprise development in townships

With the enrolment of growing numbers of students from countries in the rest of Africa on the Master's in Development Finance and MBA programmes, the opportunity for clustering similar research topics and doing comparative studies on cases in different parts of Africa has presented itself. This provides exciting potential for the transfer of learning from different success stories.

Aligning IS with business strategy



The quest to align investment in information technology with the strategic intent of organisations is an on-going, and ubiquitous, challenge. Although various academic frameworks exist, these have seen very limited application in organisations. **Martin Butler**, senior lecturer: Operations and Information Management, takes a special interest in research aimed at assisting organisations to leverage their technology investments fully and to ensure that IT departments deliver what the business really requires. His research interest centres on:

- Measuring and understanding the factors that drive the disconnect between information systems and organisational strategy
- Critically evaluating the practicality of the theoretical frameworks available to measure alignment
- Doing case studies in order to learn from organisations that have been successful with alignment
- Investigating the contribution of enhanced knowledge management processes towards better alignment

Societal sensitivity in the future workplace



Dr Babita Mathur-Helm, senior lecturer: Gender Studies, Multi-cultural Sensitivity and Diversity, focuses strongly on the impact that societal issues have on business and leadership decisions. Transformation in South Africa is strongly driven by BBBEE policies and targets. However, too many organisations focus primarily on scorecard compliance and ignore the need to change the corporate culture in order to make transformation sustainable. Therefore, some of the more pertinent practical issues that drive her research agenda are:

- The gender perspective in leadership and the factors that prevent women from progressing to senior positions in particular industries
- Leading a cross-culturally diverse workforce and creating an integrative corporate culture that emphasises the development of people
- How private sector organisations can transform more effectively towards procuring from BBBEE suppliers in order to broaden economic participation
- Creating an empowerment model for implementing sustainable BBBEE in the South African business environment
- Leveraging the talents of professional women to contribute to more innovative, productive and profitable organisations ■