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Prof Piet Naudé

# NEW DIRECTIONS



On 1 September this year, Prof Piet Naudé joined the University of Stellenbosch Business School as its eighth director in five decades. Business strategist and consultant **Bongani Mgayi**, who is involved with USB's marketing, communication and social engagement initiatives, talked to him.

## 'Do what you do today as best as you can'

### A place where we can change lives

"I would like USB to be known as a place with a heart for Africa and the world, and a place where we change lives," said Prof Piet Naudé about his plans as the new director at USB.

Prof Naudé has a long relationship with the community of Stellenbosch University (SU). He started his career as a part-time junior lecturer in Philosophy at SU in 1980.

Today, Prof Naudé is a seasoned scholar and university administrator. He has held various leadership positions within a university – including that of head of a department, dean of a faculty, head of a research unit and, until recently, vice-rector of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth. His career is underpinned by significant business consulting, public speaking as a way to build relationships and extensive travelling throughout Africa.

### Ethics and edge

In a SU media release, about his appointment, Prof Naudé said that he wants to grow the footprint of the business school in Africa. As a professor of Ethics and man of the cloth, the community of USB should be

assured that this growth will not come at just any cost.

"Ethics relate to living out, internally and externally, institutional values. We must incorporate ethics and governance in our various academic programmes while participating in research locally and globally on the latest developments in ethics, reporting frameworks and ecology," explained Prof Naudé.

"My plans for USB will be shaped by a good analysis of the situation and consultation with relevant people. At this point I can state that these plans include:

- Maintaining the top quality of USB already recognised through various accreditation bodies
- Increasing academic staff capacity as soon as possible
- Increasing the number of students on the Development Finance programmes
- Focusing on stakeholder engagement, including SU (internal) and public stakeholders, and
- Expanding our executive education footprint via USB-ED over the longer term so that we are recognised as a leading global brand in management research and education." >





**‘... seek out the top employer in your field. If you cannot find one, start your own business.’**

It should all be in a day’s work for this achievement-driven academic leader. “Do what you do today as best as you can – better than others – and doors will open. The best plan or idea is useless unless it is implemented.”

What is it about academic life that intrigues him?

“The freedom to research, think and write what you want.”

Prof Naudé holds a master’s degree in Philosophy and a doctorate in Theology. In 2011, he was named the Vodacom Journalist of the Year for his work as a columnist. He writes a weekly column and his most recent book on global ethics was awarded the Desmond Tutu Prize for academic literature.

What is his career advice to postgraduate students?

“Study hard to equip yourself with the best possible technical and personal skills. Then seek out the top employer in your field. If you cannot find one, start your own business.”

Prof Naudé may sound like a rebel, but he is recognised widely as a scholar and top researcher, with several national and international awards, and has a high profile as an itinerant speaker and consultant. He was also a visiting professor at the University of Heidelberg in Germany in the context of the Alexander Von Humboldt Foundation.

While he has more than 20 years of university management experience, he has also published over 100 articles in academic journals and has presented papers to nearly 150 national and international conferences on topics related to public ethics and social justice.

Apart from his keen sense of fun, he

brings an intellectual mind to his new role:

“USB has a definitive role to play in Africa. Firstly, we must open our ears and eyes to other African scholars and business people so that we better understand our own continent. Secondly, we need to provide relevant and top-quality academic opportunities, and thirdly, we need to assist in improving management capacities and practices via USB-ED. There is ample research evidence showing that poverty in Africa is not a necessity – it is a (bad) leadership choice.

### **Real relationships**

“USB must take its position as the place for cutting-edge, high-end management knowledge, and a source of social development and hope. In my view, these two ideals are not in conflict. In fact, they reinforce each other – especially in our South African and larger African contexts where business success depends on social cohesion.”

Prof Naudé concedes that success will not be possible without good relationships with key stakeholders. Also, he believes that the best way to build relationships is through authentic personal contact and delivering on the promise inherent in the USB brand.

He concludes: “USB must ensure that it continues to operate on the global playing field. We must retain our accreditation status, disseminate our best research on the global stage and deliver top-class academic programmes. We must also provide the business world with smart solutions and ensure that our alumni represent us around the world through their achievements.” **a**

## TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

### **Which leadership traits have you made your own?**

I firmly believe that the combination of a great vision, sharp communication and caring for people always works well.

### **Why do you get out of bed every morning?**

Because I have appointments ... No, really, because I enjoy what I do so much. Although, eating and sleeping are necessary disruptions in the flow of events.

### **How do you recharge?**

I am a social jogger and recharge best on long beach runs with my dog and having breakfast with my wife. I also write for fun and will publish two books this year – one popular and one academic.

### **What books are you currently reading?**

I have just finished reading *Rumours of Spring* by Max du Preez (before it won the prize), and I am currently reading Sampie Terreblanche’s *Verdeelde Land* – his latest book on the growing inequality in our country.

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