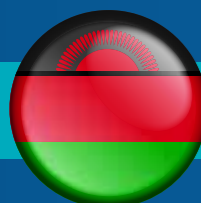




A most optimistic leader



Gus Banda

GM: MultiChoice Malawi

In every challenge lies an opportunity. These six simple but powerful words have come to define Gus Banda's approach to life, from his personal development to his professional career and even, on a much greater scale, to his aspirations for his own country. Because yes, Gus is a man that thinks, and dreams, big.

TACKLING ADVERSITY HEAD-ON

The two factors that are largely responsible for cultivating this go-getter, 'never say die' attitude are Gus' schooling at the renowned Pretoria Boys High School in South Africa, and his early career as a professional rugby player for the Blue Bulls.

"High school left an indelible impression on me. It taught me valuable lessons about being ethical, professional and conducting yourself with integrity. You are literally shaped that way from the moment you enter the school, so it stays with you for a long time," Gus explains.

A talented rugby player at school, Gus then went on to join the Blue Bulls, a move that forged his leadership qualities and nurtured his strong sense of teamwork. However, a severe injury put paid to his rugby career, and Gus was forced to move from the try line to the sidelines.

But it was through this incident that Gus first found the strength to turn adversity into opportunity, and transformed his career into one focused on sports management by drawing heavily on his personal experiences as a professional sportsman.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

This took him to various African countries, but it was back home in Malawi, the country of his birth, where it had the most profound effect on him. "I was privileged to travel extensively and work in several positions, from hands-on posts looking after top athletes to managerial and exco positions. But it was coming home to Malawi where I faced my greatest challenge. As director of the College of Medicine High Performance Centre, I worked with young Malawian athletes, helping to groom them for international competitions. Collectively, we helped athletes bring home 57 medals from sporting events from across the world," he says proudly.

During this time he collaborated with world-renowned organisations, including the US Olympic Committee, and earned a number of awards honouring his leadership and innovation.

This recognition speaks to Gus' tenacious spirit and unwavering desire to find opportunity in the most unlikely places. "Coming back to Malawi, I was acutely aware of the struggles faced by our country and our people. In the sports arena, for example, I had seen better equipment and coaching at school level than our athletes had at professional level. I wanted to help bring dignity to these athletes, and empower them to improve their careers," he adds.

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And he did. It's this innate understanding of the challenges facing ordinary Malawians and his relentless pursuit to find the positive opportunity in every situation that perfectly positioned Gus to step into the position of MultiChoice Malawi (MCM) GM.

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF INNOVATION

He joined the company in October 2017, when the country was grappling with electricity outages and the satellite TV sector was becoming more competitive.

But in his inimitable style, Gus saw the opportunities these scenarios presented, not the difficulties. "I believe these challenges are creating a new space within which we operate as MCM; a space that is more innovative, more creative and where customer engagement is prioritised. The power crisis, for instance, affords us the chance to conceptualise solutions, possibly bundled with our products, which

help address the broader power problem our country is experiencing," he explains.

This thinking reflects Gus' vision of transforming MCM into a solutions-based company that proactively looks for ways to positively contribute to the Malawian economy.

"This really excites me. We have the opportunity to be more than just an entertainment business; we have the opportunity to be an entertainment business that effects real, positive, tangible change in the lives of Malawians, every day. One idea we are pursuing on this front is working with our universities to also become more solutions-driven. So instead of just being institutions of higher learning, they become hiveminds of research and development, where students generate solutions to help solve the challenges facing our country," he says.

ENRICHING LIVES

This approach is closely aligned to MultiChoice's promise of enriching lives, which Gus wants to maximise in both local communities through these solutions and in his immediate family of colleagues.

To this end, his vision is to create a space where staff can grow into leadership positions and not only love the business, but become the business, embodying all its ideals. As such, career progression and empowerment through skills development are high on his agenda.

Personally, Gus says his life has been enriched in more ways than he ever could have imagined. "I will never be the same again. I may have only been here for a short time, but it has changed me," he explains. "I have learnt so much from so many people. I needed a new space in my life that would help me grow both personally and professionally, and this position is doing just that. Sometimes you hit a ceiling in your career where you can go no further, then you must look for the next opportunity to grow. It's a humbling experience, it's challenging, but right now, there isn't anywhere I'd rather be."