

ANNOUNCEMENT

CGF further diversifies governance services with appointment of Debbie Sinclair

22 October 2015
Johannesburg

In constantly striving to enhance and diversify its service offering to its clients, CGF Research Institute (Pty) Ltd ('CGF') is delighted to welcome Debbie Sinclair as the newest member of its team of Lead Independent Consultants.

Debbie has a diverse background that spans both the legal and publication sectors, and as such, brings a unique skill set to our team. Debbie qualified from the University of Cape Town with a BA.LLB degree and began her career at a blue-chip law firm in Gauteng. She was admitted as an attorney in 2004 and gained experience in the commercial sector, working on one of the largest bank mergers in South Africa at the time. In addition, she was put through her paces in drafting and reviewing various agreements, conducting research and writing opinions.

Looking to diversify her skill set, and following her passion for writing, Debbie moved out of the legal environment to become the Deputy and later the Editor of a business-to-business journal, where she managed its publication, from concept to completion, on a monthly basis.

Prior to joining CGF in October 2015, Debbie ran a company which provided writing, editing and minute-taking services to various private businesses and Government agencies.

As such, Debbie has established herself in a niche position and is able to offer CGF's clients assistance with a wide variety of services which fit comfortably within the corporate governance services offered by CGF. These include: drafting; report and article writing; editing; minute taking; scribing; legal research; crafting of public announcements as well as internal broadcasts and newsletters.

Debbie has a specific interest in drafting and producing Integrated Reports, the proper compilation of which she sees as essential for all JSE-listed and private companies, as well as government and municipal departments.

In a presentation made to the KZN Institute of Internal Auditors South Africa by CGF's CEO Mr Terrance Booysen, the importance of committing South Africa to Integrated Reporting was highlighted. Indeed, Integrated Reporting -- which combines an organisation's financial and sustainability reports -- is a perfect platform for stakeholders to have the opportunity to have a good, clear view on what a particular organisation says it stands for, what it says it will do, how it will do it and the impact it will have on the environment, people and our planet. Through this knowledge, stakeholders can have a clear conscience regarding the reasons they support (or don't support) an organisation. Those organisations that are out of kilter with stakeholder expectations and demands will need to 'shape up or ship out'. This is -- in the new age where consumers have been given extraordinary powers to act against unscrupulous operators -- long overdue.



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So often, the compilation of an Integrated Report is simply seen as another item on a 'to do' list and it is passed off to a junior person in the organisation who simply does not understand the critical role it can play in the promotion of the organisation's activities. Used correctly, this report has as much meaning to a potential investor, as it does for any other stakeholder (e.g. shareholders, employees and suppliers). Get the contents wrong, and the organisation can get into serious trouble with shareholders, the media, activists and even the various regulatory bodies who use the information, or lack of information, as a tool for further interrogation.

Integrated Reports and reporting are progressively receiving attention both locally and internationally, and this stems from the need for transparency and disclosure pertaining all issues that affect the organisation's sustainability. Increasingly, stakeholders are concerned with organisations that show scant regard for; ethical leadership practices (at personal and organisational levels); early warning risk detection or strategy failure; increased fraud and corruption; issues of dwindling natural resources and environmental protection; including the change of social values. These and other corporate governance factors influence the ongoing sustainability of organisations and they play a vital role in an organisation's overall strategy.

Current reporting methods that are not Integrated Reporting-orientated have been found to be inadequate and have not provided more forward thinking stakeholders with sufficient information (neither confidence) to make fully informed decisions regarding the organisation. To this point, merely reporting on financial matters gives a one-sided perspective of the organisation. Through Integrated Reporting, organisations must demonstrate to stakeholders that their business is sustainable, both now and in the future, and that it is prepared for the various financial and non-financial challenges it will face.

Each element of an Integrated Report should provide insights into an organisation's current and future performance. Indeed, the report must show proper and applied integrated thinking; rather than some slapdash approach of useless, or even worse, false information. This report must be a 'living' document, accessible to all employees and people who have a vested interest in the organisation. Besides the board and shareholders, HR, marketing and all senior management must be 100% familiar and comfortable to use and/or refer to this report.

Debbie's experience and skill, which is underpinned by a clear understanding of legislation and business processes, equips her in compiling, or assisting companies with the compilation of meaningful Integrated Reports.

Another matter which Debbie believes is essential to the proper and effective functioning of an organisation -- especially at an operational level -- is taking accurate, concise and action-driven minutes at Board, Executive and Committee meetings. This function is imperative in the interests of good corporate governance, and it is often only in retrospect that the potentially disastrous consequences of inaccurate minutes are realised. Among other things, decisions that are incorrectly recorded can lead to actions being taken without consideration or approval, and the legal importance of minutes can be substantial in the context of litigation. The preparation of minutes can be seen as a menial task that is completed by someone who does not have the insight or business acumen to distil the essence of a high-level discussion or debate, and translate that into a clear minute. Over the past five years, Debbie has concentrated on honing this skill and is able to offer CGF's clients the benefits of this particular service. These services can be offered either on a short-term basis (i.e. when a permanent employee is on leave), or as a long-term commitment in circumstances where the organisation's existing company secretary requires additional assistance.

As such, CGF regards Debbie as a 'perfect fit' in complementing its company secretariat team, which comprises legal, governance, risk and compliance specialists. Should you wish to meet Debbie to discuss these services, please contact her on +27 (0) 74 420 9735, or dbb.sinclair@gmail.com

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