



Benita Petersen

Prospective student talks about the need for NPO leadership skills

For the past 21 years, Benita Petersen has been working at the League of Friends of the Blind (LOFOB) – an organisation that caters for the needs of blind and visually impaired individuals. During October 2017, she completed the Management Programme for Non-Profit Organisations, a joint initiative of USB, the USB Alumni Association and USB Executive Development.

Seeing the bigger picture

Community development is my passion. I started working at LOFOB as an occupational therapist in 1998. For the past eight years I have been managing a wide range of support services as the manager of Services to Children. Together with two colleagues I participated in the week-long Management Programme for NPOs, and it was really exciting to see an academic institution like USB engage with NPOs.

The facilitators were experts in their fields, which made the programme really dynamic. The content of the short course spoke directly to me – not around, above or below me. The assignments at the end of the programme were useful because they were based on real-life scenarios that you had to link to your specific environment.

I challenge myself to be a more responsible leader. As a manager I have learnt over the years how important it is to have oversight of the whole organisation. It is my responsibility towards the organisation to understand what everyone does and how I fit in. The course made me realise that this is my duty to fulfil as a manager.

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The PGDip in Leadership Development for NPOs is definitely something that I consider applying for. It is a lot of time to invest but I do think it is important for me as an individual to invest in my career development, because I have come to realise the value associated with such a programme. As I am maturing as a person in my organisation, it is important that I challenge my mind-set. I am also very fortunate to have an executive director that supports this kind of development.

If I do the PGDip it would benefit me as well as the LOFOB. The question I ask myself is, "What will I leave behind the day I no longer work here?" The organisation has been around for 86 years; how can I contribute so that we can continue for the next 86 years and more? Those are the things that I keep in mind when I make decisions about further development.

I am also a wife and mom, and I will never find the "right time" to continue my studies. Working in the NPO sector comes with quite a few challenges. But we cannot keep on saying, "We don't have enough time, we don't have enough funding, and we don't have enough resources".

"We need to become active problem solvers and I am ready for that now."



