

## **"Vuselela" Means "Rebirth"** **For South Africa's Largest Retailer**

Take any well-known "super" store, add a few more 'supers' in front of that, then think South Africa, and the result is Pick 'n Pay. South Africa's leading retailer, Pick 'n Pay operates 123 corporate stores employing more than 30,000 people. The company's story is one that is as emotionally inspiring as it is financially impressive.

In a business journal profile of Pick 'n Pay as one of the top 100 companies in South Africa, the writers observed that, "As a predominately cash business, Pick 'n Pay has been sheltered from much of the depredations a tough economy has wrought on credit retailers. However, internal innovations have also been driving its growth." Those internal innovations, the emotionally inspiring part of the story that has given rise to the enormous success of the stores, began with a "rebirth" of the company four years ago.

Sean Summers, Pick 'n Pay CEO, championed the change initiative that focused the organization on the mission to hone quality service levels and become the best "people company" in the retail industry worldwide. The banner for the mission became known as Vuselela, a term meaning "rebirth."

The Vuselela metamorphosis began by canvassing employee opinion on the corporate mission statement. The result was the rebirth of Pick 'n Pay's core philosophy: Our Mission ~ We serve. With our hearts we create a great place to be. With our minds we create an excellent place to shop. Our Values ~ We are passionate about our customers and will fight for their rights. We care for, and respect each other. We foster personal growth and opportunity. We nurture leadership and vision, and reward innovation. We live by honesty and integrity. We support and participate in our communities. We take individual responsibility. We are all accountable.

Also inherent in Vuselela are the strategies and tactics for fulfilling the promise contained in the mission and values statements. The company sees Vuselela as a process, not an end in itself. It is the vehicle through which every employee can realize his or her full potential as an associate of Pick 'n Pay. The company believes its long-term growth strategy hinges on its ability to develop people and harness their incredible energy for wanting to make a difference.

Because service excellence is such a high priority at Pick 'n Pay, the performance of their staff is now monitored on an ongoing basis. The company developed the "Dare to Dream" program

in cooperation with management, unions, salaried front-line employees, and even external customers to recognize and reward all employees who go the extra mile. In addition to other rewards, "Dare to Dream" provides an opportunity for employees at all levels to qualify for a trip to Disney Institute in Lake Buena Vista, Florida for an intensive ten-day learning experience.

Since 1997, more than 600 Pick 'n Pay employees have traveled to the Walt Disney World Resort to attend a customized Disney Institute program. The program, designed in conjunction with Pick 'n Pay and Disney Institute executives, immerses Pick 'n Pay's employees in "The Disney Approach" to quality service, leadership, and management. Through the experience, employees learn how to help their company adapt Disney best practices to improve their own practices back home.

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Eighty percent of "Dare to Dream" program participants have never been outside of their own province, much less traveled on a plane, and the experience is overwhelmingly life-changing. Leaders of "Dare to Dream" have noted that the capacity of people to learn and change is enormous — they see people blossom in amazing ways over the course of the program, both as individual contributors and as team members. With the company's extensive independent measurement system in place, significant improvements in quality service and productivity have been documented.

Sean Summers contends that, "The very essence of our initiative is to create a society in Pick 'n Pay that mirrors that which South Africa is striving to become. A society that is just and fair and accords to all the freedom to grow and pursue their chosen careers, and to deliver to our consumers, both internal and external."

The initiative is paying off. Pick 'n Pay has quadrupled its spending on training in the last four years and the leadership team sincerely believes it's worth every penny. They made the commitment to embark upon a journey within their company that was envisioned and designed by all employees. The result, Vuselela — rebirth. It can be seen in their bright attitudes, in their fresh, new stores, and in their reenergized approach to service excellence.

To learn more about how Disney Institute can assist your organization on its own journey to excellence, call **407.566.1738** or visit **[www.disneyinstitute.com](http://www.disneyinstitute.com)**.