

Beyond The Tracks: Mongezi Sibiya



INTRODUCING: Mongezi Sibiya, Head of Testing & Commissioning

Starting Out and Progression

MEET Mongezi Sibiya the Head of Testing & Commissioning. He joined Gibela as a Senior Test Manager in April 2017. He was then promoted in 2020 to the position of Head of Testing & Commissioning. "I fell in love with testing and commissioning of power products back in the early 2006 where I was a Trainee at ABB South Africa. This is because of logical thinking, creativity and paying attention to details involved when dealing with testing big machineries," he said.

Prior joining Gibela, Mongezi was working as a Project Manager at ABB and had to adjust from ABB's electrification & automation and switch to testing and commissioning of trains. His academic qualifications entail a Bachelor of Technology (BTech) in Electrical Engineering (Heavy Current) from the Durban University of Technology(DUT). Prior joining Gibela, he also worked in Finland(Europe) where he received training in Electrical Protection for various products.

Managing Work-Life Balance

"I plan my week ahead. By doing so, I list all my tasks ahead in their order of priorities. The weekly governance tool in my department also make things easier where the team is aware of their expected outputs. Also, practicing effective communication is key for success and managing team dynamics," stated Mongezi.

His social life is rooted around his family, church and sport. "I normally spend time reading the bible, praying and extending social teachings to my kids," he shared.

Overcoming Challenges

One of the biggest challenges Mongezi continues to face is high employee turnover in his department. "An engineer is regarded competent after three years of practical work exposure. Most of our employees become more attractive to recruiters across the globe after gaining that type of experience and therefore get difficult to match offers from these recruiters. This then always creates huge gaps in our operations as there has to be continuous recruitment of new entry-level engineers," he said.

In overcoming this bottleneck, Mongezi has had to train a pool of electrical engineering interns each year. This tact helps his department to handle the replacement of engineers and technicians who abruptly leave his department [Test & Commissioning]. "We call this strategy a "Plug & Play method" and it has made it easier for our department to also maintain on-time delivery, safety and quality," he said.

Supportive Work Environment

"Gibela Rail is fortunate to have a diverse and dynamic workforce that is largely dominated by young talent. I enjoy working for top organizations where talent is recognised, and throughout my years here at Gibela, that is what I have seen happening which has made me excel more in my work," he shared.

Memorable Experiences

When joining Gibela in 2017, switching from a completely different organisational outlook, was a culture shock for Mongezi to experience a company like Gibela having so many indigenous South Africans granted massive opportunities to occupy prominent and strategic positions.

Another milestone and memorable experience for Mongezi was his involvement in setting up the M04 building [Testing & Commissioning work station] and tooling the whole workshop. He also stated that the recruitment of almost 99.5% of the team (back then) and seeing the first train being tested & commissioned remains at the top of his Gibela memories. He further said "seeing my signature signing off the Certificate of Acceptance has always been a marvel to watch."

Family and Personal Life

The soft speaking Sibiya, identifies with social values such as identity, self-awareness and *ubuntu*.

Sibiya as a family man enjoys imparting these values to his children and the younger generation within his family and community. "In the main, I always tell the younger ones that success is earned. It is not inherited. You need to work hard in order to achieve success," he stated. Sibiya, popular for his humbleness, further stated that he enjoys helping people. "Helping someone in need takes nothing away from you," he said.

Future Aspirations

Sibiya is passionate about empowering young talent at Gibela and beyond. He enjoys transferring skills and knowledge to entry-level engineers. He plans to further his postgraduate studies soon in preparation for his retirement to be an academic professional and an engineering consultant.

One-Day CEO

Mongezi has multiple ideas that can bring developmental changes in making Gibela one of the best work environments. "I can introduce a hybrid work mode for certain positions. Some work done by colleagues can be easily done at the comfort of their homes with strict signed rules. This can create a huge office space for Gibela whilst ensuring that those employees work in comfort. Also, I will make annual succession planning compulsory for all departments which will advance the performance management system. Lastly, I will introduce a session called "Tea with the CEO" where all employees get a chance to interact with me in sharing their developmental ideas," he shared.



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