

MY GRP EXPERIENCE

9 JULY 2009

I am employed in The Presidency, by the Independent Commission for the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers. In the beginning of 2008, the former Head of the Secretariat, Mr. Neil Ulrich, asked me whether I was willing to attend a course during 2008 for which I would have to write an exam. I must confess I was a bit weary about this prospect, not having studied for some time and not been the best scholar around.

However, in the end it turned out to be one of my best career experiences. The Global Remuneration Professional (GRP) certificate course was everything, but a walk in the park. The format of the course was as follows: four one week blocks spread throughout the year. The first was in March, the second in June, the third in August and the last one was in November. Three were in Cape Town and one in Johannesburg. Each week was divided into two modules. We had lectures on the Monday and Tuesday and then wrote the exam on the Wednesday. On the Thursday and Friday we had lectures again and the exam on the Saturday. The exams consisted of between 90 and 100 multiple choice questions, with a maximum time limit of four hours. However, in order to pass, one had to obtain a minimum of 75% for each module, before qualifying for registration as a Global Remuneration Professional.

The modules that we completed were: Total Rewards Management; Quantitative Methods; Job Analysis, Documentation and Evaluation; Base Pay Management; Performance Management–Strategy, Design and Implementation; Variable Pay Incentives, Recognition and Bonuses; International Remuneration: An Overview of Global Rewards; and Strategic Communication in Total Rewards.

It was an extremely enriching experience, being exposed to new terminology, principles of remuneration in general and many real-life practical case studies relevant to my current working environment. The networks that were established throughout the year were also meaningful. However, the course was not on post-graduate level, but with such a high standard, one can appreciate that it is a highly regarded learning opportunity that would add much value to any remuneration specialist's résumé.

During the course we were exposed to three different instructors, all of which were of a high caliber. The instructor that stood out the most to me personally was Mr. John Rubino, an international consultant from the United States of America. He has an enormous amount of relevant human resources and remuneration experience in many different countries of the world and was willing to share many of them with us on each occasion. We also had opportunities to discuss our career aspirations with him and his sound advice was much appreciated.

The most difficult part of the course was studying into the late hours of the nights and doing the exams for more than three hours the next morning. However, the rewards were more than worth it when the final results were published on the internet in December 2008.

A positive outflow of completing the GRP course was being registered with the South African Remuneration Association (SARA). During the year SARA had a number of human resources and remuneration related events that we could attend. The exposure gained from these was also invaluable. In November 2008, SARA held its annual end of year conference with a number of speakers from the Public Service, Private Sector and overseas. The exposure gained from attending the conference was well worth attending.

Now that the GRP course is finally successfully completed, it is now the remuneration specialist's responsibility to apply the knowledge that was acquired. This is probably the most challenging part of attending development opportunities such as these. On more than one occasion during the course it was said that we should keep our files close by as many have attested to the fact of consulting the study material in the work place, something that I personally would want to do, if I want to reap the full benefit of such a sound training and development opportunity, which should certainly enhance ones career prospects.

This was certainly an event in which The Presidency's investment was money well spent. It would be useful to mention that the Public Service's human resources components would benefit significantly by sending there human resources practitioners on the GRP course. For those who would want to become remuneration specialists, go for it, it is a wonderful career building exercise. Finally, thank you to my employer!