



...With Kwanele Dhladhla



ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS:

Master of Business Administration	- MANCOSA
Airline Transport Pilot's Licence	- USA, Eswatini, SA
Line Training and Check Pilot	- USA
Accident Prevention and Investigation	- Sweden
Government Safety Inspector	- ICAO
Flight Operations Management	- IATA
Certificate in Business Studies	- MANCOSA
Diploma in Adult Education	- UNESWA
Diploma in Aviation Safety Management	- IATA

RENAC CEO:

★ Captain President Dhlamini ★

A perfectionist at heart

A pro-active perfectionist.

This best describes Royal Eswatini National Airways Corporation (RENAC) Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Captain President Dhlamini, whose role entails providing leadership for all aspects of the company's operations with an emphasis on fulfilment of mandate and attainment of long-term goals, ensuring that growth and profitability aspirations are met.

The role includes making sure that the right resources (funds, manpower, skills, time, equipment) get sourced competitively and utilised for the right purpose optimally to get desired outcomes.

Over the past number of years, RENAC's operations primarily involved management and maintenance of State aircraft, operation of a travel agency business, as well as ground handling services offered to various air operators and VVIPs who land at KM III International.

Dhlamini, who holds an Airline Transport Pilot's Licence (USA, Eswatini and South Africa), disclosed that during my tenure, RENAC revised its business plan.

Through this plan, the corporation aims to upscale the level at which they fulfil RENAC's mandate of providing air services and growing aviation in the country. Among others, Dhlamini announced that they would launch commercial direct air services linking Eswatini to various cities in Southern Africa. He said they would start with two to three destinations of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Harare. "Downstream and in months to come we will add cities in other neighbouring countries and other parts of Africa," Dhlamini promised.

The CEO went on to say Eswatini as a landlocked country and despite having a modern airport that meets international standards, the status of the coun-

try's aviation sector lacks behind its full potential, and the country relies heavily on foreign infrastructure and operators.

He pointed out that alliances with international partners in aviation was a good thing as it improves efficiencies and economies of scale. However, he advised that this needed to be managed, so that as a country we do not find ourselves impoverished of the necessary skills and resources to decide our own destiny.

Dhlamini unpacked that the programme and mission they embarked upon aimed to reduce dependency and help grow the local aviation sector, leading

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to a situation where citizens had the privilege to afford and start using air services as a means of transport.

"With development of the aviation sector, we will open the country and make it easily accessible for tourists and business people, which will help increase both investments in the country and tourist arrivals. These will contribute to pushing the level of economic activities up, ultimately creating jobs for our nationals,"

Dhlamini said. In terms of successes, Dhlamini added that they had also transformed their travel agency strategic business unit, from a quasi-travel agency to a fully-fledged travel agency having received IATA accreditation during 2021. The IATA accreditation enables the travel agency to trade directly with airlines unlike before when they used to buy tickets through other travel agencies (as an indirect supplier).

The IATA accreditation status will also help improve on pricing, as well as customer service improvements especially on 'turn-around' times for when clients ask for quotes or refunds, since RENAC will have direct access to relevant airlines.



RENAC CEO Captain President Dhlamini.

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THE JOURNEY OF CAPTAIN PRESIDENT DHLAMINI

DHLAMINI's professional career started off as a motor vehicle mechanic at the Central Transport Organisation (CTO).

He then joined the Umbutfo Eswatini Defence Force, where he was selected to be one of the first four pilots.

After serving 10 years as a military pilot, where he achieved the rank of Captain, a senior rank those days, Dhlamini was commanded to join the then Royal Swazi (now Eswatini) National Airways Corporation (RSNAC) as a pilot, where he spent another 10 years.

During his tenure at RSNAC, he progressed from Second Officer to First Officer, Senior First Officer and eventually Captain. At RSNAC, he was appointed to the positions of Safety Officer and later Chief Pilot/Flight Operations Manager. Dhlamini's professional aviation training included aviation institutions in Israel, USA, Switzerland, Sweden, the Netherlands and South Africa.

Operations

Royal Swazi Airways ceased operations in 1999. He then moved to Airlink Swaziland now called Eswatini Airlink, where he occupied the position of Chief Pilot/Flight Operations Manager and later General Manager. In 2007, Dhlamini joined the South African Civil Aviation Authority as Flight Operations Inspector, later Manager Part 121 and exited as Senior Manager Flight Operations to join Eskom in late 2008. At Eskom, he initially served as a Chief Pilot Fixed Wing and later as Accountable Manager Eskom Aviation, a position he held until 2017, when he moved to join Royal Eswatini National Airways Corporation Chief Executive Officer/Accountable Manager -current position.

"While at Eskom, we operated a fleet of helicopters for line inspections and maintenance. This service we provided to neighbouring countries as well on commercial basis. We also operated a fleet of fixed wing aircraft, for transporting Eskom Personnel and Executives as well as spares in transit to remote Eskom sights. While working at the various organizations stated above, I also served as a non-Executive Director of various Boards, which include ESWA-CAA (founding Director and eventually Chairman of the Board), Commercial Aviation of Southern Africa (Board Member), Recreation Aviation Association of South Africa (Chairman), Air Traffic & Navigation Services (ATNS - South Africa) (Board Member)," Dhlamini said.

Pro-active; Travel agency to minimise COVID-19 shocks

RENAC CEO President Dhlamini admits that the impact of COVID-19 was felt, more in the form of lost opportunities, as a result travel bans across the world.

Dhlamini disclosed that their travel agency business saw revenue drops of more than 95 per cent per year during the period and as a result of COVID.

However, he said the upgrading of their travel agency to a fully-fledged travel agency would position it to be more competitive and reduce the shock

of similar challenges in future. When asked what other challenges were faced by RENAC, Dhlamini explained that aviation remained a complex sector to venture in, which required large amounts of capital to be invested and high technical skills which were expensive and took many years to develop. For launch readiness, including acquisition of equipment needed to operate the scheduled operations, Dhlamini said they had to use internal savings which RENAC accumulated over the years.

"Government has a tight budget and they are faced with critical competing priorities and were thus restricted to the extent to which they could assist RENAC with the funding requirements for the launch of the airline," Dhlamini explained.

Hindrance

He pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic played its role and was by far the biggest hindrance to their programme since borders were closed and traffic movement restrictions nega-

tively affected.

"This caused serious delays to our program and timelines, the related demand shock also led to us revising our revenue prospects downwards. The upside of this was the realisation that as a Country we are blessed with an infrastructure that was able to bring in much needed supplies to combat the pandemic. We also realised that we needed our own capacity to transport our people in and out of the country at will," Dhlamini added.