

It's win-win for dealmakers on new UCT course

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The UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) will this March launch a short-course geared to provide dealmakers with the negotiating skills to turn tough stand-offs into win-win situations.

It is the first programme of its kind on offer by a Western Cape university and aims to provide a negotiation skills boost across all industries, including key groups such as employers and trade unionists, as well as professionals such as lawyers, mediators and financial advisers.

According to course directors Barney Jordaan and Ulrich Stander, consultants at Jordaan Stander, a specialist employment law and relations consultancy, the new course is the distillation of years of experience in negotiation and addresses an important shortfall in skills development in the field.

"The case of Transnet this past week, which saw a major costly strike as it restructures, has driven home the reality that effective negotiation is a critical skill that every organisation needs, or they may face costly consequences. Yet, there has been very little training focus on best practice in this area," said Jordaan.

He added that this need for expertise applies to all types of negotiation, whether it involves individuals or interest groups, commercial transactions or legal settlements, or collective agreements between employers and unions.

The new course, running from 6 - 8 March, aims to teach these individuals to take on an "interest based" approach to negotiation, and move away from the outmoded "winner takes all" approach which can damage relationships and prove costly.

"Few negotiations involve once-off deals - most, like the situation between Transnet and its employees, happen in the course of a relationship of one kind or another or are aimed at establishing an ongoing one," said Jordaan.

"When negotiations are 'winner takes all', the deal is often not the best one that could have been obtained and worse still, the relationship that was supposed to be maintained or established starts off on a strained note or is destroyed altogether," he added.

"An interest-based approach is one that respects both parties needs and produces better long-term results while preserving, or even improving, inter-personal and inter-organisational relationships, which are critical for two reasons: making agreements last and facilitating the implementation thereof."

Jordaan explained that the course will explore different approaches to negotiation in detail and teach negotiators how to advance their interests in a co-operative manner.

"It combines both theory and practice and uses a host of relevant real world case studies. Negotiation is like training for long distance running - being good at it requires training and thorough preparation. To be an effective negotiator, you also require problem-solving, analytical and communication skills - essential life skills we don't get taught as a standard part of our secondary or tertiary education. Yet they are critically important in today's changing world," he said.

For more information on the course contact the UCT GSB on (021) 406 1346 or go to www.gsb.uct.ac.za/execed

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