



ZIMBABWE EZEKIEL GUTI

UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF LAW, BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE AND ECONOMICS

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS, MARKETING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

EXAMINATION PAPER

COURSE CODE : MBA 524

COURSE TITLE : BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION ON PROJECT

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS : NONE

DURATION : 3HRS

LEVEL : 1.2

DATE : 9 APRIL 2025

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES:

1. No cell phones are allowed in the examination venue.
2. Use of silent, non-programmable calculators is allowed.
3. Answer question 1 from section **A** and any **three (3)** questions from section **B**.
4. Begin each question on a new page.
5. The number of marks for each question or part question is shown in brackets
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SECTION A

QUESTION 1

Read the case and answer the questions from the case below.

Econet CEO attributes top company performance to culture of innovation

ECONET Wireless Zimbabwe Limited fended off stiff competition from a strong field of blue-chip companies to win the coveted Top Companies Survey Award. According to the judges of the annual survey of Zimbabwe Stock Exchange-listed companies, conducted by The Financial Gazette and Old Mutual, the top accolade is awarded to a company that not only performs exceptionally well on the stock exchange, but also excels on other issues to do with social responsibility, environmental, leadership, corporate governance as well as disclosure and investor relation factors. Our Deputy Editor Tabitha Mutenga (TM) caught up with Econet Wireless Zimbabwe chief executive, Douglas Mboweni (DM), after his company received the coveted award, to find out what he attributes the stellar business performance to and what the market and investors can expect going into the future.

TM: Congratulations to you and your company on winning this year's prestigious award.

DM: Thank you. We give all the glory to God who gives us and our teams the grace and ability to create wealth and add value, to serve our customers, to create value for our shareholders and to make a difference in this market.

TM: This award is for ZSE-listed company performances for the period covering the full year financial results for the past year which, by any accounts, was not an easy one for businesses operating in Zimbabwe. Yet your revenue for the half year to August 31, 2019 was ZW\$1,3 billion and your EBITDA margin was an impressive 42 percent. What do you attribute your company's outstanding performance in that period to?

DM: I have to say first of all that I am grateful to our customers whose loyalty and custom we never take for granted. Our customers are the reason why we are in business. Then I am thankful to the clear and enabling leadership of our board in all that we do as management and staff, to effectively implement our business model using various

strategies. Of course, management implemented appropriate revenue-optimisation and cost-management strategies in the period that was under review, in light of the challenging economic environment we are operating in. But I would hasten to say our strong performance had its foundation in our fundamental values and business performance culture. As an organisation, we embraced innovation as a business culture from inception, and we apply it consistently to remain agile, to drive performance and to lead change. Our innovation DNA runs throughout the business, in our internal processes and our cost-management initiatives.

It shapes how we execute our new product development pipeline as well as how we continuously deploy new technologies and solutions that solve people's problems. Our innovation DNA shows through in our service delivery, where — as you may be aware — we are increasingly leveraging digital platforms to create channel convenience and improve our customers' experience. All these, I would say — plus of course the exceptional diligence of our staff — created the platform for the solid performance we achieved in the period under review.

TM: Long-term, what is your company's focus?

DM: We remain focused on offering our customers the best value for their money and in continuing to contribute to the growth of this economy through the technologies and services we offer. We believe in the power of technology to transform people's lives. So, our goal is to offer the market the endless possibilities that a fully digitalised organisation delivers. And so, as we deal with the current business challenges in our operating environment, we are fully engaged on our future-focused, on-going transition from a communications service provider to a full digital service provider.

TM: Besides the overall Top Companies Award, your company also won the Top Life Insurance Award, and the Special Merit Award for outstanding contribution to a current issue. When Cyclone Idai hit eastern Zimbabwe early last year, Econet was one of the first organisations to respond and to mobilise humanitarian assistance and emergency relief on the ground to victims of the cyclone. Well done! This year again, we see Econet has been quick off the blocks, leading a spirited private-sector driven response in support

of government efforts in mobilising resources, sourcing ventilators for public hospitals, PPE for frontline health workers and over 100 000 test kits in the fight against Covid-19. What motivates Econet in this particular effort?

DM: We see Covid-19 as a common enemy against us all; against our staff and our families, our customers and our businesses, against our suppliers and our partners, and indeed against our country. And so, to help ourselves, we have to help others, and by helping others we are really helping ourselves because we are in this together. As we support our government and WHO-backed programmes in the fight against Covid-19, we believe there are several opportunities for private-sector driven initiatives, and for Public-Private-Partnerships. I am very confident together we can defeat this foe. I must also acknowledge the leadership and support that we, as a company, have received from our group chairman, Strive Masiyiwa who, as you know, is an African Union Special Envoy in the fight against Covid-19 on the continent. We have benefited immensely and drawn vital learnings and inspiration from the work he is doing as well as leveraging his partnerships and the several initiatives he is driving to try and make a difference where we can. These include his leadership in developing the Health Status Report, a mobile-based, global health information platform that captures a person's Covid-19 testing data and results, and is set to help to get economies going again, especially as private and commercial travel resumes, and borders reopen again starting this month.

TM: Thank you very much, and all the best for you and for Econet Wireless Zimbabwe.

DM: Thank you and God bless you.

(Financial Gazette 5-10-20)

Required

- a) "We give all the glory to God who gives us and our teams the grace and ability to create wealth and add value, to serve our customers, to create value for our shareholders and to make a difference in this market". This was the response from DM after receiving congratulation messages from TM. As an expert in business

- leadership and evidence from the case, Is the success of Econet from god or business leadership? (10 marks)
- b) Identify Econet's DNA from the case and how it is shown through (5 marks)
- c) Econet's success is attributed to an enabling leadership, explain the traits of an enabling leadership (15 marks)
- d) Econet's chairman was instrumental on initiatives to fight against COVID 19, are his initiatives justified as good leadership initiatives with benefits to the business of Econet. Argue your case (10 marks)

SECTION B

QUESTION 2

Innovation is often seen as intangible and difficult to measure. Discuss how leaders can evaluate the success of innovation within projects, including key performance indicators (KPIs) and qualitative assessments. Provide examples from industries like tech, healthcare, or manufacturing." (20 marks).

QUESTION 3

Identify a Zimbabwean organisation you are convinced has adopted innovation leadership as its approach to creating sustainable competitiveness. Detail the specific actions that the organisation is exhibiting to support your opinion (20 marks).

QUESTION 4

Using examples from your organisation or any that is familiar to you; provide an appraisal of its main drawbacks to innovation. Suggest ways that may be adopted to ameliorate the circumstances (20 marks).

QUESTION 5

Many project management tools can be used for innovative problem-solving. Discuss some brainstorming techniques that a leader can use to stimulate creative thinking within a project team (20 marks)

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