

# Vukosi Nkhata: Public servant committed to self-improvement and better service delivery

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Nkhata's foray into the field of accounting was more a matter of coincidence than a determined plan: her primary school marks were so impressive that she landed a spot at the best school in town, which happened to specialise in commerce subjects. She enjoyed these subjects and, along the way, discovered her love for numbers.



## The accidental accountant

After high school, Nkhata completed her junior degree, but Vukosi failed her postgraduate diploma in accounting twice, dashing her ambitions of becoming a CA. She opted to go the BCom Honours route but then failed that, too. Discouraged and unsure of what her next steps should be, at the end of 2010 she decided to give schooling a break and rather focus on her SAICA articles at the Auditor General (AG).

## A changing world

After four years Nkhata left the AG and joined local government, shifting her focus from being a CA to public service. Though initially she enjoyed her work, she started to feel uneasy about the pace of transformation.

"When you're in government and have been in the same environment for a very long time, you can feel that one qualification isn't enough. You also realise that things are changing whereas studying helps to enhance your knowledge and exposes you to new things. I felt that what I had studied and graduated from in 2008 was no longer relevant. That prompted me to go back to school."

That's how Nkhata, who was a CFO of a local government at the time, found herself registering with Milpark Education for a Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting in 2020. It was a short-lived occasion, however, as crippling mental health challenges, the pressure of being a full-time working mother and wife, and her 10-year hiatus from formal studies overwhelmed her to the point of dropping out.

But she recovered, regained her strength and determination and re-registered in October 2021 for a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Administration. "I knew that I needed to go back and get my qualification. I had to expand my knowledge beyond just accounting and strengthen my ability to deliver improved service delivery to the communities we serve – hence I needed to go back and do it, and I never looked back," said Nkhata.

“ Graduation gave me that sense of having accomplished something, that all my hard work has paid off. ”

– Vukosi Nkhata

## A study journey to remember

Although it was brief, her earlier encounter with Milpark was positive enough to make it the obvious choice for her second attempt. "I had attended a few classes initially and liked how the online programme was designed. I also compared Milpark with other institutions, and in terms of support and accessibility [to lecturers], Milpark was stronger. I didn't want to do distance learning without the support I knew I would need knowing the health issues I had experienced."

The adjustment to studying while juggling her professional and family responsibilities stretched her but she soon found her groove (with much thanks to the support of her husband, sister, friends and her boss) and recalls 2022 being a breeze.

The only hiccup was that along the way Nkhata fell sick and was admitted to hospital for an emergency procedure. She attended class from her sick bed until one evening she responded to a question from her unsuspecting lecturer, who then enquired about the beeping machine noises in the background, prompting Nkhata to admit that she was not well. She was offered options to allow her to focus on her health but all she wanted was a bit of extra time to submit assignments that had been scheduled for that week, which the school was happy to grant her.

“That whole experience really made me feel that Milpark went beyond the student-university boundary because they treated me like family; they came through for me when I was in need of help. I will not forget that; the help and the assistance was very meaningful for me,” recalled an emotional Nkhata.

### **An enriching experience**

Despite her anxieties about returning to formal studying after a decade, Nkhata considers her study time at Milpark as seamless, enjoyable and enriching. From the easily accessible lecturers to well-structured courses and the psychosocial support provided, she feels she had everything she needed to succeed.

And indeed she did: Nkhata completed her studies with several distinctions (including in People Management, Programme Monitoring and Public Service Projects) – an achievement not to be taken lightly.

“Graduation gave me that sense of having accomplished something, that all my hard work has paid off.” With her post-graduate Diploma in Public Administration in hand, Nkhata returned to the workplace a more confident, knowledgeable and innovative public servant who’s better able to manage in today’s fast-evolving world of work.

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