

Swaziland Railway

CEO's Article for Loliwe Magazine - 4th Quarter and Year End

Swaziland Railway continued to operate in a difficult trading environment, an environment of low economic activity in the country and the region, in particular the South African economy which is declining. Recently the South African economy has been declared in recession after a consecutive negative growth for two quarters. SR largely depends on transit traffic originating from South Africa hauled through Swaziland to South African Ports, most of the transit cargoes are minerals for export and local use in the manufacturing of fertilizer in Richards Bay (rock phosphate).

Traffic Volumes and Revenue

Tonnage recorded in the 4th quarter was above budget by 20% and revenue above budget by 18%. This was a very good performance despite the harsh trading conditions that showed in the recession of the South African economy. The demand for rock phosphate and magnetite remained very strong. The train operations through Swaziland was excellent, thanks to the Operating Section which is the cutting edge in service delivery. We appreciate the support from all departments which ensured that infrastructure and our communication systems were tip-top. Our survival in this harsh trading environment will largely depend on improving the quality of service. We have to operate safely and ensure that our trains run on time. Our Employees have to be fit for duty at all times and maintain high level of competence.

Annual Tonnage and Revenue Figures

Having completed our financial year which ended 31st March, 2017, tonnage hauled amounted to 8.12 Million, above budget by 21% and the corresponding revenue topped E 302.5 Million, above budget by 20%. Achievement of this level of performance is attributed to high focus on the business by all the players in the organization.

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It is important to remain focused and knowing that an organization only exists because it has something to offer, and what it offered is in demand by the customers, on top of that the service provider knows the requirements of the customers. The Marketing Section is key in obtaining feedback on how SR fairs in providing the required services.

Risk Management

The operations of SR are by nature hazardous, we deal with moving objectives and there is always the likelihood of something going wrong as the location of our equipment changes. Given the different scenarios, we have to proactively identify potential risks at the planning stage. This applies to all our activities where we have to assess what is likely to go wrong, once the assessment is done we put in place mitigation plans to reduce or eliminate the risks that would cause failure of the project or activity. The Risk Management Unit under Internal Audit has made tremendous strides in building the capacity and inculcating the new approach to project planning to all our Managers.

Strategic Plan Implementation

SR activities continued to be guided by the Strategic Plan running from 2014 to 2019. The implementation of the Strategic Objectives is priority, the snag is the limited financial resources and to some extent limited internal capacity, however, the prioritization helps deal with the high impact activities/projects. One area that has improved significantly is the provision of rolling stock to convey fuel and containers.

Safety, Health, Environment and Quality

SHEQ programs will ever remain top priority because as they are successfully implemented, the organization prevents losses in human capital and equipment, a safe environment is conducive to achieving high productivity. Quality systems prevent wastage of resources and ensure the right service is provided at the right time and place, and at the right price. The culture of safety is sinking in very well with all employees.

Article by: S.Z, Ngubane- CEO

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