Connecting the dots...

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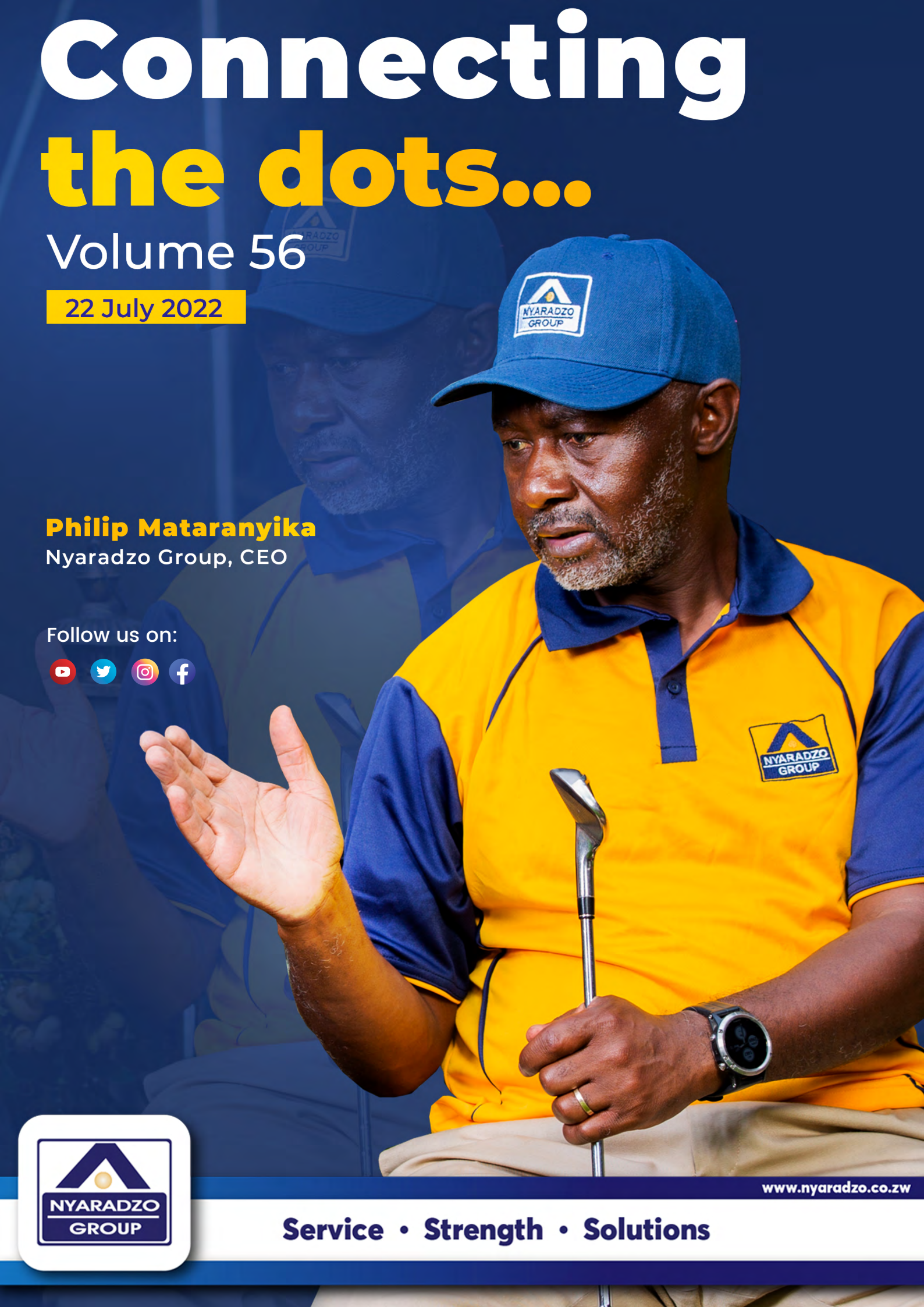

Philip Mataranyika
Nyaradzo Group, CEO

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Service • Strength • Solutions

Serving customers who supported me in my days at Old Mutual...

Even as we were setting up Nyaradzo, we continued to receive enquiries from clients to whom I had provided financial advisory services while working for Old Mutual, as to how we would continue to serve them. Our licensing conditions as Nyaradzo had no provision for signing up for life policies which is what I did working for Old Mutual. Back then, Old Mutual had a subsidiary conducting short-term business called Royal Mutual Insurance (RMI) which has recently been rebranded as Old Mutual Insurance. As an Old Mutual Financial Advisor, I also did business for RMI signing up short term insurance clients. Now that I was working for Nyaradzo Funeral Assurance Company, whose license was limited to providing funeral cover, I had to find a home for my Old Mutual and RM Insurance clients before running the risk of losing them to agents who had stayed with Old Mutual. I had always been customer-centric in my approach to business. When I advised my clients about my pending resignation, most of them expressed a desire to have me continue as their intermediary. In addition, a good number of them had welcomed the idea that we could also now provide them with additional products in the form of funeral policies.

From a prospecting and new business perspective, it made sense for me to retain all my clients. If not only for good customer service and business retention, it was good that we had names of people we could go to immediately so we could sign them up for our funeral policy products.

We could not retain them under Nyaradzo Funeral Assurance Company and I was not keen on being a sole agent for Old Mutual and RMI or running our broking business as a multiple agent. The only option, therefore, was to register as an insurance broking firm, which I did. Like Archimedes the multi-talented Greek scientist who screamed “Eureka!” after his discovery of buoyancy and displacement theory in a bathtub many years ago, I was taking a bath one morning when the idea of forming a broking firm crystallised. I aptly named the new broking firm Eureka. Loosely translated, Eureka means a cry of joy or satisfaction when one finds or discovers something they were desperately looking for.

I went to the office that morning and called members of my team together so I could share the good news with them after which, we started the process of registering the company and getting it off the ground.

I had walked the path of establishing an insurance broking firm before when I was part of the team that founded Hostcare Insurance Brokers (HIB) in 2000. The idea then as was the case now, was so we could offer both life and non-life products under the same roof. Now that Nyaradzo was up and running, it was time to rekindle my dream and continue to serve my clients who had been indubitably loyal to me.

Eureka Insurance Brokers (EIB) would be incorporated at the beginning of 2002 as we set out to establish Nyaradzo Group of companies. Eureka provides insurance risk advice on personal and corporate portfolios, as well as employee benefits and funeral cover. Simply put, an insurance broker acts as an intermediary between a consumer and an insurance company by helping the prospective policyholder find a policy that best suits their pocket and needs. They do research on behalf of clients, finding the best risk management solutions that meet their requirements. They represent their clients, placing cover with insurance companies that they know will honour claims at the time of loss. Clients can rest assured in the knowledge that when it comes to the settlement of claims, their insurance broker will be there to represent them. Insurance brokers make money from fees, which are generally commissions derived from either selling insurance to individuals and businesses or from providing risk management services to clients.

In order for my vision for EIB to grow wings and take flight, I knew I needed the right skillset. Brighton Chinyere, whom I wrote about in one of my previous instalments, was the first to respond to the call. His mandate included following up on all our Old Mutual clients so we could do their short-term insurance as well as offering them funeral policies.

A man of many firsts, Brighton had previously achieved another first when he joined NFACO on the 1st of May 2001 as our pioneering Financial Advisor, whom we tasked with growing and maintaining our funeral policy policy book. I charged him with the role of oversight at EIB, reporting directly to me, before we regularised the reporting line after Leonard Madzivire accepted our offer to become the Managing Director for the new entity.

At first, the task looked intimidating and daunting for Brighton, considering the environment he had been accustomed to at Old Mutual. He was, however, able to convince himself that no challenge was insurmountable and that should he fail, he had no one else to blame but himself.

That alone inspired him to work even harder to achieve his personal and organisational goals. What I liked about Brighton, amongst other things, was that he was driven by the desire to achieve set goals within defined timeframes and was also good at creating and maintaining relationships, which made him popular with clients.

Apart from luring Brighton from Old Mutual to be part of the team at Nyaradzo and later on moving him to EIB, we also engaged Christopher Hudube, Precious Kwashirai, Claris Mabika, Samantha Nsamba, Gamuchirai Nyikadzino and Norbert Mache, amongst others, all of whom were recruited by Leonard as he set out to build his team. Leonard inspired his team to achieve more with very little. Leonard started at EIB at the age of thirty, which should have made it difficult for him to lead a start-up in a market dominated by much older players. Against all odds, he rose to the occasion and came up with a checklist of things that needed to be accomplished within set timelines, including having in place a claims memorandum; a client report writing structure; departmental structures and staff requirements.

Leonard's knowledge of insurance broking, along with his experience, was invaluable. A graduate in Risk Management from the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) and an associate of the United Kingdom (UK) Chartered Insurance Institute, Leonard had previously worked for the Zimbabwe Insurance Brokers (ZIB) – a unit of ZimRe Holdings Limited. On leaving ZIB, he worked for Unity Insurance Company and AIG Zimbabwe. All his previous employers were amongst the most trusted brands in the insurance industry, known for their robust systems and responsive structures, which is exactly what I was looking for when I settled on Leonard.

On joining EIB in May 2002, his mandate became that of growing the business and recruiting the best in the market, riding on his network of contacts and experience in the field – and he certainly did not disappoint. I also tasked him with ensuring that EIB stayed compliant with the regulatory requirements, which he did to the letter and spirit of the word. Amongst his earliest staff members at EIB was Gamuchirai Nyikadzino who joined us on the 1st of February 2003 from the Insurance Institute of Zimbabwe (IIZ) where she was employed as an Administration Clerk. Gamuchirai assumed a new role at Eureka as Leonard's Personal Assistant (PA), with the added responsibility of manning our Front Office Desk.

When she joined EIB, she received a lot of flak from her friends and work-mates at IIZ for leaving her stable job to take up a new job with a start-up whose future could not be guaranteed.

Back then, there were many fly-by-night business people who were in the habit of selling exaggerated hope when recruiting employees only to abandon them midstream when their ventures collapsed. However, Gamuchirai knew she had made the right decision upon seeing men and women of high professional standing who made up the panel that interviewed her for the job. She would feel vindicated when Leonard took her through his vision for EIB, with the icing on the cake being her boss's ability to walk the talk with the mood and the ambiance at Eureka also saying as much.

Because of her outstanding performance, I made a special request to Leonard to release Gamuchirai to become my PA, resulting in her transfer to my office in November 2003. She was thoroughly efficient and enjoyed what she did. Another of her unique characteristics was that she never claimed credit for any of her many contributions and achievements, allowing others, especially her superiors, to enjoy the limelight and wallow in glory while she tirelessly worked behind the scenes. We have since given her another onerous responsibility, that of raising visibility for Sahwira Events and Lifestyle where she is the Leisure Officer with oversight of our Lifestyle Section, incorporating houseboats in Kariba, cottages in Nyanga and Vumba, and apartments in Harare. Kudzai Sadziwa, who had worked at JD Agencies as the Secretary to the Finance Manager before joining Eureka, came on board shortly after Gamuchirai assumed her new office. Kudzai, who had attended Vainona High School in Harare, graduated with an LCCI Executive Secretarial Diploma from Speciss College, a Diploma in Clearing and Shipping Management from the Association of Business Managers and Administrators (ABMA), and a Bachelor of Business Management with Honours in Marketing from the Catholic University of Zimbabwe.

Aaron Randazha, like Kudzai, came to Eureka from JD Agencies, where he worked as a Creditors Clerk. He began working at EIB in November 2003 as an Accounts Clerk and worked his way up to Assistant Accountant before being promoted to Accountant. Among his many tasks was making payments to insurers, which was a critical job requiring meticulous attention to detail. It helped that his motto was "doing things right."

Aaron would be transferred to Calundike Exports at a later date where he became a key member of the team that grew Calundike Exports' asset base from three old machines to the current position of Generation 4.0 machines, as well as site purchases for future expansion. He was also a support member of the team that initiated the diversification into furniture. Aaron and his lovely wife, Bertha, have four children, daughters, Melissa, Mitchell, and Timukudze, and a son, Misheck. He has expressed that he would like a quintet with another boy in the mix and I hope his wish will be granted. I am grateful for Aaron's contributions to Nyaradzo's success, particularly his eleven-year dedication to the manufacturing side (Calundike Exports) and currently as the Accountant for Nyaradzo Funeral Services.

About two years later, Samantha Nsamba came on board as probably the youngest staff member when she walked through our doors on the 1st of July 2005 to start her working career as a Trainee Broker. Never one to shy away from responsibilities, Samantha's duties encompassed assisting her superiors with underwriting new and existing business, claims processing, premium collection, attending to walk-in or call-in clients, and assisting with the maintenance and servicing of all existing business. In a nutshell, she acted as an intermediary between clients and insurance companies, with an overarching responsibility of ensuring that all policies were renewed on time. Despite being thrown at the deep end, Samantha carried herself with amazing grace and made an immediate impact on all the clients she served. During the course of her work, she would come across cases where some insurers would turn down valid claims on flimsy grounds. Through her persistence and persuasive skills, the claims would eventually be settled in full, to the delight and relief of her customers.

For her efforts, Samantha's superiors would always acknowledge her contribution to the team goals, which encouraged her to want to do more. As she gained confidence in her job, it became apparent to me that we had a gem of a team player, keen on making an impact on her customers by delivering on the promises we made to them. In her line of work, she was also able to create many valuable contacts from whom we got a lot of referral business. Because learning never ends, Samantha continuously improved herself professionally, whilst perfecting her art of communication by keeping communication channels with clients open and providing regular updates and feedback with regards to state of their policies as well as claims.

As a result, Samantha was also able to climb the corporate ladder and currently serves as an Account Executive, whose responsibilities include ensuring that our clients get the best in terms of their insurance cover as well as negotiating the best terms with insurers.

Because she is conversant with all our insurance products, Samantha serves our team well by communicating these to our clients and overseeing all underwriting, claims and premium collection, while assessing their risk profiles and proposing the necessary cover. We were all happy for Samantha when four years after joining EIB, she married Howard Machera in 2009. The couple has since been blessed with two girls and a boy.

Christopher Hudube was more of an engine room team member. Apart from being resourceful, he was a marketer par excellence who did not hesitate to venture into uncharted territories. It was also a pleasure to have Claris Mabika and Norbert Mache on the team because they were all committed to putting their shoulders behind the wheel without minding the squeeze. Together, EIB's pioneering team succeeded in putting the business on the insurance map in Zimbabwe with speed during very difficult times, when the country became isolated in the international community after a fallout with former colonial master, Britain, over the seizure of farms from former white commercial farmers for redistribution to the landless black majority.

The key highlight for Leonard and his team came in their first year when they pulled a shocker by successfully tendering for a sizeable portfolio in what clearly announced Eureka's arrival on the market. Together, they also sold policies for several life companies, amongst them First Mutual Life, Zimnat Life, Old Mutual and Fidelity Life, winning several awards in the process, in recognition of their efforts, especially for Old Mutual, where they had the biggest portfolio.

Sadly, Christopher's promising career would be cut short when he lost his life in a tragic vehicle accident. Brighton's stay at Eureka would also be short-lived as his experience and knowledge of new business processing procedures were required at NFACO. I would offer Brighton the Operations Manager position within the Group in 2003, before promoting him to General Manager four years later, a position he held until 2010 when he became Business Development and Projects General Manager, a position he still holds to this day.

Having successfully set the business on a firm foundation, Leonard would leave Eureka in 2005 to form a successful insurance underwriting management agency along with his wife Tambu. Over the years, Leonard has accumulated vast experience in insurance and reinsurance, having worked in Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Tanzania and Botswana.

Following Leonard's departure, we appointed Hilguard Muwirimi to replace him. Born in Gokwe in 1972, Hilguard graduated from NUST in 1998 with a Bachelor in Commerce Honours Degree in Insurance and Risk Management before joining Zimnat as a Graduate Trainee. That Hilguard had commenced his career in insurance at such a top-notch institution gave him a solid foundation to build on what Leonard had put together and the foresight to take the business to the next level.

After his graduate training at Zimnat, Hilguard made another career move to SFG Insurance Company as a Business Unit Assistant where some of his responsibilities included the implementation of underwriting activities and technical audits on policies for acceptance and renewal. Once he proved his mettle, Hilguard was promoted to Assistant Manager where he was tasked with setting up SFG's Mutare Branch. In October 2002, Hilguard was moved to Dawn Insurance as an Account Executive where his tasks included formulation and implementation of marketing strategies and recruitment and training of new staff on operational training. Hilguard was about to complete his Master's in Business Administration from the University of Zimbabwe, as well as his Chartered Insurance Institute fellowship, when he joined Eureka Insurance Brokers. Not only did he bring his insurance expertise to Eureka, but he was also able to share his knowledge and experience in management and training with subordinates, which benefited both him and the company, whose junior staff required lots of training.

Amongst the top-performing staff members that Hilguard was able to bring on board was Justin Chidemo Muchazivepi, who joined the team as the Manager for the Gweru Branch on the 1st of January 2007 to replace Christopher Hudube who had died tragically the previous year. Justin had been with Zimnat Insurance for five years as a Claims and Underwriting Clerk; SFG Insurance for three years as Branch Manager - first for Masvingo and then Gweru. It was during his tenure in Gweru that I would request him to have oversight over the funeral assurance side of Nyaradzo Group as well as overseeing the establishment of a funeral services centre in Gweru.

He would prove instrumental in identifying a building in Gweru, which we proceeded to acquire from the Chidyausiku family and converting it into a funeral parlour, making it the first service centre in the Midlands Province. This was followed by a similar acquisition in Zvishavane, when Justin facilitated the purchase of another building from the Dube family, which resulted in the establishment of our second service centre in the province.

During that same period when hyperinflation was at its peak, he facilitated the cement-for-land deal with Redcliff Municipality at a time when the whole economy was plunged into a tight liquidity squeeze that required organisations to innovate in order to continue to deliver on their mandates. The deal saw Sino Zimbabwe deliver cement, being the value due to Redcliff Municipality for the purchase of a piece of land where we constructed the Redcliff Service Centre, becoming our third service centre in the Midlands.

At the time, the Midlands Province saw the commissioning of three service centres ahead of other provinces, which had one or none at all. On the human resources side, he was also instrumental in identifying talented individuals whom we would bring on board, amongst them Kumbirai Tavagwisa who would rise through the ranks to become Redcliff Branch Manager, Habakkuk Garakara who is now Bulawayo Branch Manager and Derek Ndebele who is now Mutare Branch Manager.

Justin would spend seven years in Gweru and thereafter we would transfer him to Bulawayo where he oversaw the construction and commissioning of the Donnington Service Centre. His stint in the Matabeleland region saw the growth of the Gwanda, Hwange, Victoria Falls and Beitbridge service centres.

A marketing and insurance person who, like me, is a practicing undertaker, Justin has through and through been driven and motivated by results and wants to see people succeed and grow in the workplace. Because of his terrific work ethic, tenacity and strong educational grounding, I have no doubt in my mind that he will achieve his vision of becoming a Chartered Marketer and Chartered Insurer. He has since risen through the ranks and is currently the Operations Manager for Nyaradzo Funeral Services. Born on the 26th of January 1976, Justin attended three primary schools, namely Magura, Kudzanayi and Seke Six. For his Secondary School, he enrolled at Danhiko Secondary School, Cranborne Boys High and Nyatsime College. Married to Leticia, the couple has four children, a daughter and three sons.

Justin is a holder of several qualifications, amongst them a Certificate in Proficiency from the Insurance Institute of Zimbabwe; an Intermediate Certificate in Business Studies from the Insurance Institute of South Africa; a Bachelor of Commerce Honours Degree in Marketing Management from the Midlands State University (MSU) and a Master of Commerce in Marketing Strategy, also with MSU.

Justin has been with Nyaradzo for the past fifteen years. For his sterling work after joining our team on the 1st of January 2007, he has been recognised by many credible organisations for his contribution to the business and the industry in general. Examples of accolades donning his trophy cabinet include the Zimbabwe Institute of Management (ZIM) Manager of the year for the Southern Region in 2014. In the same year, he went on to become the second runner-up at the national level of the awards. In 2017, the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce bestowed him with the Manager of the Year award for the Southern Region.

After he left Eureka, Hilguard's position would be taken by Michael Kunaka who had grown with the company since 2006 when he joined our team as a Portfolio Executive, where his role was to identify potential clients and handle their portfolios, offering them any advice and guidance they would need.

Michael would stay in this role for the next five years, until he was promoted to General Manager in 2011, a position he held until his passing in 2017. Born on the 22nd of August 1957, Michael's great personality made him an asset in the insurance sector and within the Group. He would be remembered fondly for being a great people's person who would take his time in explaining a concept, making him natural at selling insurance.

Michael had started off his career in insurance at RMI, a subsidiary of the insurance giant, Old Mutual. The experience he brought was what the newbie Eureka needed on joining the company in 2006 as a Portfolio Executive. After Michael's passing, Tendai Gwatiringa who had joined the group as Marketing Executive a few years earlier would be redeployed from Marketing to take over as General Manager of Eureka. Born in 1970, Tendai brought vast experience amassed over two decades in the insurance and financial services sector.

On completing his A-Levels at Victoria High School in 1989, he immediately joined Sedgwick Insurance brokers, now known as Marsh Insurance Brokers, as a Trainee Broker, leaving them three years later at the position of Senior Broker to join Willis Corroon (Private) Limited, a company founded in 1977 and has traded under a number of names including Alexander Forbes Risk Services and currently the WFDR Risk Services.

Tendai holds a Master's in Strategic Management from the University of Derby, UK, among other qualifications. He has vast experience accumulated from working for different organisations, including Pinnacle Investments, where he was a Broker Liaison Manager and pioneered the introduction of the Premium Finance concept in Zimbabwe, which is basically about offering businesses and consumers the opportunity to take out a loan to pay for their insurance in monthly instalments, just like a phone bill, gym membership or direct debit. By managing insurance payments in this way, businesses and consumers alike are able to spread the cost of their insurance, rather than as a high premium in one large payment.

Tendai later moved to Altfin Premium Finance in 1999 as the Divisional Director where he had overall responsibility of the Premium Finance Division with emphasis on marketing the product to key stakeholders. When he left the company which was a subsidiary of the Interfin Group about six years later, he was the Managing Director responsible for the whole company. Following the restructuring at Interfin after the closure of Altfin, he became the Head of the Premium Finance Division with the task of handing over the Altfin Premium Finance portfolio before assuming the position of General Manager of Marketing and Communication.

It brings joy to my heart to see how Leonard built a legacy that has been passed on from one Managing Director to the other with the likes of Hilguard, Michael and now Tendai, all playing their role in ensuring that they continue with the tradition of delivering nothing but the best of service to our clients. Over the years, Eureka has witnessed remarkable growth in its portfolio, derived from its personalized service and the customer-centric approach that distinguishes it from the rest. Given the challenging operating environment in our country from 2002 onwards, this is no mean feat.