

MEC Dhlomo congratulates KZN Health's I.T boffin for his innovative computer software that saves money; makes patient's lives easier

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AWARD-winning IT specialist Xolani Phakathi has been quietly designing a range of innovative computer programmes that are helping the KZN Department of Health save money, while significantly enhancing its ability to deliver services smoothly and efficiently to the people. These include:

- A revolutionary web-based application that prevents patients from obtaining multiple devices such as wheelchairs, walking and hearing aids.
- A computer programme that enables the Department to consolidate and monitor procurement plans for health facilities – making it unnecessary for employees to drive to head office from all over the province to submit dense documents and data, which are impossible to email.

Now these computer programmes are being showcased nationally by the Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI), with the possibility of being replicated in other Government departments around the country.

The CPSI is a Government Component within the Ministry of Public Service and Administration, reporting directly to the Minister. It co-ordinates the Public Sector Innovation Awards Programme with the aim of entrenching a culture of innovation in the public sector, to contribute to the enhancement of service delivery.

Inanda-born Xolani, 34, who is due to give a talk on Innovation as a guest of the Public Service and Administration Minister Dr Chana Pilane-Majake in Cape Town on the 29-30 August 2018, has also designed a system that manages the application process for nursing training at the KZN College of Nursing (the Department gets up to 60 000 applications each year). He was recently nominated by the National Youth Development Agency among the country's top young achievers; and was recognised by President Cyril Ramaphosa during this year's National Youth Day Commemoration event.

On Friday, Xolani was congratulated by KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, acting Head of Department Dr Musa Gumede and other senior leaders of the departments. *"We are extremely proud to have in our midst a person of Xolani's calibre,"* said MEC Dhlomo. *"He is one of our most hard working and valued employees whose skill and expertise is saving the Department a lot of money, while also helping us serve the people of this province better and more efficiently. His work and the contribution that he is making in the field of IT becomes even more special when you consider his humble beginnings. He is just a young man from Inanda, north of Durban. It shows once again that anything is possible if you work hard, remain focused and dedicated."*

As a youngster, Xolani taught Mathematics and IsiZulu at Ziphembeleni College, from where he matriculated. He would go to the Eastern Cape on weekends to sell shoes and curtains, which he had bought from factories in Durban. However, he realised that his true calling lay elsewhere, away from the classroom. Fortunately, he had saved up enough money to travel to England in 2004, to study Information Technology, at the UK College of Business and Computing and later at City College Coventry.

Today he holds a Diploma for IT Practitioner (Systems Support); an Advanced Diploma for IT Professionals (ICT Systems Support); a B.Tech: Higher National Diploma in Computer Science; and a Postgraduate Diploma in Strategic Business Information Technology.

When you enter Xolani's office in Pietermaritzburg, you are greeted by an impressive array of awards, trophies and certificates plastered across the wall, and on top of cabinets.

Among them are two recent ones; a Special Recognition award from the KZN Health MEC's Service Excellence Awards; and another for "Best Public Service Innovation/ Creativity of the Year", which he bagged at the recent KZN Premier's Service Excellence Awards Ceremony.

They all bear testimony to his high work ethic, knack for innovation and hunger for achievement.





Although he has been involved in the planning, conceptualizing and implementation of a number of IT-related innovative solutions for the Department, he singles out the Assistive Devices Electronic Management System (ADEMS) as one of those that he is proudest of. *“Basically, the system regulates the issuing of assistive devices. It manages information on who has these devices, when they were issued, and who is still waiting to receive them. Our mandate as a Department is to provide accessible services to our citizens by bringing about efficiency and effectiveness. I believe that this is what the ADEMS system does, as well as the many others that I have been involved in.”* He believes that continuous self-improvement is key to staying relevant in the ever-changing field of IT. *“You stay relevant by learning new and relevant skills. On-going engagement with other developers in the industry and stakeholders is also important. Employers would also be well-advised to encourage innovation and reward excellence,”* he said.

Xolani is looking forward to helping to implement a number of web based applications in the Department, such as the Condom Distribution tracking system; Laboratory Order Entry System (LOES) and as well as the Staff Satisfaction Survey.

One of his important goals is to help steer the Department towards an electronic patient record management system.

His advice to young people wishing to follow in his footsteps is: *“Never give up, pursue your dreams and always strive for excellence. Always keep yourself relevant by keeping abreast of the latest developments in information technology. Be passionate about what you do. Stay focused and determined to succeed. Deliver more than what is expected of you. Understand your industry and keep your vision clear at all times.”*