

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE



PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME: Prof Portia Heynes

NATIONALITY: South African

LANGUAGES: English, Afrikaans and German

SECTORS Consulting, Financial Services, Telecommunications, Mining, Energy, Agriculture, Hospitality, Gaming, Tourism, Contact Centres, Retail, Property, Public Sector

Prof Portia Heynes is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the UCT Graduate School of Business and collaborates with leading business schools in South Africa and internationally as a convenor, lecturer and thought leader. She is the founder and director of Upliftment Inspired Consulting, where her work focuses on unlocking human and organisational potential through systemic approaches to leadership, innovation and transformation in an era of rapid digitalisation and disruption.

As a multipotentialite with diverse interests and creative pursuits, Prof Heynes has collaborated with both local and global organisations across a wide range of disciplines, industries and cross-functional roles. Driven by an insatiable curiosity for systems thinking and innovation, she engages organisations in co-creating future-ready capabilities in rapidly evolving environments. Her experience spans government, the private sector, academia and civil society across industries including telecommunications, banking, retail, insurance, health, mining, agriculture, energy, contact centres, and the tourism, hospitality and gaming sectors.

As a “pracademic,” she integrates academic insight with real-world application in her facilitation and consulting work. Her work focuses particularly on strategy development, organisational and learning design, drawing on systems thinking and design thinking approaches. In academia and organisations, her holistic approach to curriculum design and learning journeys has enabled the creation of engaging and relevant learning experiences through interactive platforms and innovative pedagogical practices.

Prof Heynes holds a Doctor of Management in Technology and Innovation, an Executive MBA, and a Bachelor of Commerce (BCom), and has completed executive study at INSEAD Business School in Paris.

Her research led to the development of a Systemic Employability Framework, offering a new lens for addressing the mismatch between prevailing views of employability and the skills required in a rapidly changing global economy. The framework seeks to shift the narrative from employment to employability, recognising that much of the current discourse remains tethered to traditional notions of jobs. She views this work as an important contribution toward reframing employability in the context of the future of work and the broader sustainability of society, and as part of her legacy.

EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Doctor of Management in Technology and Innovation
- Executive MBA, UCT Graduate School of Business
- BCom, Banking Management – Damelin / Oxford Brookes
- INSEAD (France) – Transition to General Management
- SingularityU – Executive Programme
- GIBS – Absa Management Programme
- Additional certifications: 4MAT Master Instructor (USA); Graphic Facilitation (3 Stick Men); Advanced Marketing Programme; Property Finance

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Upliftment Inspired Consulting

Founder & Director | 2008 – Present

- Lead strategic consulting engagements across sectors
- Design and deliver leadership, strategy and capability development programmes
- Develop organisational frameworks, policies, and performance management systems
- Convene and facilitate executive workshops, learning journeys, and transformation initiatives
- Deliver keynote presentations and speaker engagements

Various Universities (UCT GSB, Wits, Stellenbosch, DaVinci Institute, Qatar University)

Programme Director | Convenor | Sessional Faculty | Speaker | 2016 – Present

- Convene and deliver programmes in systems thinking, strategy, innovation, operations, and digital transformation
- Facilitate action learning and business improvement projects
- Design curricula and learning journeys using innovative pedagogical practices
- Facilitate group sessions, executive education programmes, and speaking engagements

Sun International

Group Head: Learning & Development | 2014 – 2020

- Designed and implemented an enterprise-wide learning strategy aligned to business objectives
- Established leadership and management development frameworks
- Increased learning investment by 700% through demonstrated ROI and value creation
- Built a high-performance learning culture and launched a multi-academy learning ecosystem

Vodacom/Vodafone South Africa and Africa

Executive Head: Learning & Development | 2012 – 2014

Executive Head: Vodacom Academy (Retail) | 2009 – 2012

- Led group-wide learning strategy aligned to Vodafone global standards
- Led divisions and teams successfully through the Vodacom/Vodafone merger
- Established a centralised learning operating model
- Delivered large-scale digital learning architecture and capability programmes, including 7 academies serving 36,000 employees across retail, contact centres and group functions
- Positioned Vodacom South Africa as a global leader in learning innovation and design

Earlier Career (Absa, CIDA, LR Group, Property Entrepreneurship)

1989 – 2008

- Held senior leadership roles across banking, contact centres, talent development, and operations
- Led divisions and teams successfully through the Amalgamated Banks of South Africa (Absa) and Barclays merger
- Developed expertise in sales, operations, customer experience, people management, and strategy execution across retail, commercial and consulting domains
- Recognised with national awards in leadership, innovation, and customer service

SELECTED IMPACT & ACHIEVEMENTS

- Built high-impact learning ecosystems across local and global organisations
- Designed accredited leadership and coaching programmes in partnership with universities
- Increased learning spend in a federated model from ZAR 9 million to ZAR 86 million over 4 years
- Developed ROI frameworks linking learning to measurable business performance
- Led large-scale transformation and capability-building initiatives
- Pioneered the opening of the first coffee shop within banking and retail environments
- Successfully navigated and led teams through global and local mergers and acquisitions

RESEARCH & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Developed a Systemic Employability Framework to shift the narrative from employment to employability, recognising that current discourse remains tethered to traditional notions of jobs. Contributes to advancing thinking on sector-led ecosystems to address employability in an era of rapid digitalisation, disruption, and societal sustainability.