The business
Kimberly-Clark South Africa employs approximately 950 permanent employees. The company’s head office, is based in Bedfordview, Johannesburg, its two manufacturing operations are based in Springs, Gauteng, and Epping, Cape Town.

Human Resources Director Hamilton Sithole believes that it is the company’s culture that differentiates it as an employer. Kimberly-Clark’s culture has transformed significantly over the last three years. ‘Unlike many organisations, where the culture is entrenched, at Kimberly-Clark we are continuously adapting and adjusting to change, and in so doing, become more relevant,’ Sithole comments.

Historically the company’s culture has been conservative and engaged in little external communication. In more recent times, the flexible nature of the organisation has come to the fore, and the culture has become values driven with a system of open communication, prompting the need to take part in brand building activities.

‘In addition, the caring nature of the organisation has been highlighted, with a number of community projects taking place, many of these driven by employees themselves,’ Sithole reports.

Facts and figures
Total number of staff employed: 950
Industry sector: Consumer goods and Services
Percentage of black employees: 64%
Percentage of previously disadvantaged individuals in management: 16.66%
Percentage of women employees: 24%
Percentage of women executive (senior) management: 33%
Employee Wellness Programmes: ‘Be the best you Can Be’ has recently been introduced and caters for all aspects of employee and immediate family wellbeing. This includes psychological counselling for trauma, abuse and stress, chronic illness and HIV/AIDS case management as well as overall health and wellbeing awareness and education initiatives.

Introduction
Kimberly-Clark established its South African presence 60 years ago. The company’s operations span three market segments – consumer personal care and tissue retail; industrial washroom and workplace environment and theatre specific segments of the healthcare industry. As manufacturer of global brands such as Kleenex®, Huggies® and Kotex® and local brands such as Babysoft®, Carlton® and New Freedom®, Kimberly-Clark is recognised as a market leader.

Biggest plus
As a multinational, employees have access to leading-edge technologies, business capability building and international exposure. The organisation is driven by four key values: accountability, authenticity, caring and innovation, which underpin its culture.

Biggest challenge
Internally, the company must ensure that it is positioned as a leading developing and emerging market growth proposition for the Kimberly-Clark Corporation globally. External acquisition and retention of top talent is crucial to this end.

Talent management and development
In 2008, the company introduced a talent-management strategy focusing primarily on three pillars; the creation of a learning culture, mitigating risk and planning for growth.

Talent Investment is a top priority at Kimberly-Clark South Africa, as is the implementation of “One K-C", an organisational development programme,’ says Sithole. For employees, this means that Learning and Development initiatives relevant to individual employee needs and that create a culture of learning have been instituted at all levels of the company. For example EQ (emotional intelligence) learning intervention has been introduced, which helps to prepare the individual for learning and change. ‘After all, one needs a sense of self awareness in order to develop,’ Sithole insists.

Risk mitigation pertains to succession planning. At Kimberly-Clark, this is a process of identifying skills gaps and implementing development actions for employees who show potential for future leadership roles. Learning and Development Interventions to best close the gaps are determined, and relevant succession plans are developed.
In order to prepare the company for future growth, Kimberly-Clark employs learners and apprentices to take part in a four-year programme, aimed to result in the employment of these candidates. ‘We currently have 34 candidates participating in the programme which is specific to pulp and paper manufacturing, addressing skills such as converting as well as tissue and diaper manufacturing,’ Sithole informs.

2009 saw the launch of the company’s Graduate Programme which caters for graduates in the fields of HR, marketing, supply chain and engineering. At present, there are five graduates on the two-year programme, which allows them to learn different aspects of their chosen professions, as they transition through various business functions.

Factory employees are offered a skills development programme which focuses on professional and behavioural skills development such as safety, machine operation as well as tissue and diaper manufacturing.

Kimberly-Clark, in partnership with the University of Stellenbosch also offers Leadership Development Programmes to entry-level and current supervisors and managers. The 2009/10 period saw 30 employees taking part in two programmes, with 2010/11 extending to three programmes and 50 employees.

Mentoring and coaching for learners, executives and senior managers is an additional key area of focus. To this end, both formal and informal mentoring takes place. In the process of informal mentoring, employees are allocated a senior mentor from within Kimberly-Clark South Africa. Formal mentoring is given to those employees who are being groomed for management positions but have exhibited certain skills gaps. In such cases, a mentor from Kimberly-Clark globally will be assigned to address the specific skills gap. Coaching for employees on Leadership Programmes, as well as executives and senior managers focuses on behavioural as opposed to functional skills gaps. Career opportunities exist within the fields of marketing, sales, HR, engineering and finance as well as process and product development.

Salaries, rewards and benefits
Salaries are competitive and benchmarked annually against market trends. In addition, incentive programmes (based on business performance) have been designed for managers and executives at each level of the organisation, with a sales and performance incentive for other staff members.

The company pays a 50% contribution towards medical aid for all employees, as well as provident fund. Financial study assistance is available, as long as the course is aligned to career functions at Kimberly-Clark. Furthermore, educational assistance is extended to the children of employees at primary, secondary and tertiary level.

Flexitime is available to employees, provided that they are in the office during core hours. Three months of paid maternity leave, plus one month of unpaid is offered to new mothers; in addition they are given the option to work reduced hours for a fixed period of time. Paternity leave of one month is granted to male employees. Eligible employees are entitled to one year of sabbatical leave, which is unpaid; while benefits are continued.

Black economic empowerment
Kimberly-Clark has a Level 5 BEE rating. The company has developed a five-year plan which closely mirrors the report it submits to the Department of Labour. In the last few months, significant progress has been made in the area of employment equity.
Individuals who are goal driven and hungry for success will thrive in the Kimberly-Clark environment.

Skills development is a key focus and Kimberly-Clark participates in learnership programmes for technical skills development in the factories. ‘Our endeavours in this field have been recognised by the Department of Labour,’ comments Vijay Gajjar, Corporate Governance Director. General skills development programmes for internal employees and their families are available. In terms of SMME support, where necessary, Kimberly-Clark assists its emerging customers to set up their businesses, providing guidance with preparing tender documents, business management and debt collection.

The policy on suppliers is to support black empowered and SMME emerging vendors.

Responsible citizenship
All operations have been set energy, water and landfill reduction targets. Performance here is measured monthly and annually. In addition, the company purchases only Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) approved pulp. Programmes aimed at reducing transport, packaging and carbon footprint have also been introduced.

CSI initiatives range across financial, material, product and operational support.

International stance
The Kimberly-Clark Corporation has a presence in 150 countries, with offices in 80 countries. The South African office represented one of the organisation’s first forays into global expansion.

The future
Kimberly-Clark’s global five-year strategy centres around four areas; unleashing the power of its people, creating a better future, developing core brands and delivering results that exceed shareholder expectations.

‘From a South African perspective, while we are aligned to these business objectives, we have expanded on them to reach what is essentially our “true North”. We aim to establish Kimberly-Clark as one of the top ten best employers to work for in South Africa, while positioning ourselves as an investable business proposition,’ explains Managing Director Garth Towell.

The people
In accordance with our talent strategy, the resourcing approach is to fill vacancies internally prior to external sourcing. ‘In addition, an Employee Referral Programme is in place and staff are rewarded for successful placements,’ Sithole explains. Online tools such as ‘HR Smart’ are used to advertise career opportunities within the company.

Individuals who are goal driven and hungry for success will thrive in the Kimberly-Clark environment. Staff prepared to live the company’s values will also flourish. As some of Kimberly-Clark’s employees are unionised, the company is proud of the good relationships it has fostered with the unions. Employee relations are good throughout the company and new recruits are exposed to a three-month onboarding process.

The Work Group Forum provides a vehicle for employees to address any workplace matters that require resolution.

Company culture and style
The Kimberly-Clark culture is customer focused and characterised by a philosophy of diversity and inclusion. Employees are encouraged to consider what is best for the company and the consumer. Towell explains that the company’s culture is fluid and describes it as a journey, as opposed to something that is set in stone.

‘I worked here during the eighties and then left to start my own business. After 14 years, I returned to the company and 10 years later, I still love what I do. I have learnt excellent personal and technical skills. It is the brands, the people and the passion that make Kimberly-Clark such an incredible place to work.’

Aniza Lambat
Pricing Controller for Consumer Sales