



The **AIDS MANAGEMENT STANDARD (AMS)** provides guidelines for the effective management of HIV/AIDS by South African businesses. Using the second KING COMMISSION REPORT ON CORPORATE GOVERNANCE as its basis, the AMS promotes corporate reporting on HIV/AIDS by putting forth a measurable benchmark for corporate commitment to the disease. In particular, the standard encourages businesses to analyze the impact of HIV/AIDS on their bottom line, design appropriate HIV/AIDS policies, monitor key HIV/AIDS indicators, and report regularly to stakeholders.

Companies that use the standard must undergo an independent audit to be eligible to apply for AMS accreditation. Assuming an applicant passes all given criteria, they will receive the AMS logo to display on their products, letterhead, promotional materials, and website for one year. The logo is a short-term incentive for companies to invest in long-term solutions to the HIV/AIDS crisis. Wearing the AMS logo is indicative of a company's commitment to a climate of sustainability in the South African business community.

WHY A STANDARD?

The negative consequences of HIV/AIDS on business can be mitigated if organisations plan ahead. The AMS provides a basis for businesses to formulate and execute an effective HIV/AIDS strategy. By delineating quantifiable and auditable HIV/AIDS criteria, the standard provides a succinct and manageable framework from which businesses can assess their risks and plan accordingly.

THE AMS LOGO

The AMS logo acts as a discernable badge to a company's competitors, consumers, shareholders, and business partners. It is indicative of an organization's forward-thinking attitude with regards to HIV/AIDS, and shows analysts and investors that the epidemic is being taken seriously at the board level. The logo is a source of competitive advantage to those who wear it, and will add significant value to their business, with direct effects on the bottom line.

In short, the AMS logo, and the brand value associated with it, is an incentive for managers and directors to act immediately in the short term to ensure the long-term survival of their companies.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AS A BLUEPRINT

Responsible corporate governance is a key aspect on the business agenda, and one that investors and the media are taking very seriously. The King Report identifies four key measures that board of directors should instigate in order to successfully manage the virus in the workplace. These are to:

- **EDUCATE** themselves about the potential impacts;
- Adopt appropriate **STRATEGY, PLAN** and **POLICIES**;
- **MONITOR** regularly and measure performance; and
- **REPORT** to stakeholders on a regular basis.

The structure of the AMS adheres to these four key measures. For example, the board of directors must engage in workshops to ensure they understand the potential impact that HIV/AIDS will have on the organisation. An appropriate policy document must be formulated and distributed to employees. Indicators must be identified and monitored from which data about the impact of HIV/AIDS on the candidate organisation can be derived. Finally, the activities partaken by the candidate organisation to comply with the AMS must be reported to the board of directors and the company stakeholders.

The AMS is non-prescriptive, encouraging company-specific solutions.

THE WAY FORWARD

The AMS does not prescribe any particular intervention, but rather encourages companies to ask the right questions and to find what intervention is necessary for their particular business. By engaging the attentions of senior managers the AMS will go a long way to convincing the South African private sector of the business rationale for HIV/AIDS intervention.

Although it is possible to gain accreditation by passing the standard's minimum requirements, it is in the best interests of most companies to go beyond so as to achieve maximum effectiveness. For many, however, the mere process of planning in terms of the standard's requirements will be a quantum leap forward in preparing themselves and raising awareness.

ABOUT AMSI

The AIDS Management Standard Initiative (AMSI) is the non-profit organisation that formulated the corporate governance standard for HIV/AIDS. The organization is run in consultation with key players in the HIV/AIDS-business arena, and its purpose is to assist companies in responding effectively to the pandemic. The core functions of AMSI are to:

- ❑ Develop and maintain the AMS and its integrity;
- ❑ Coordinate the certification of auditing bodies;
- ❑ Oversee the accreditation of candidate organisations; and
- ❑ Sustain and advance brand equity so the AMS logo is recognised and valued by all corporate stakeholders.

AMSI encourages interested parties to make contact in order to seek advice on the accreditation process or how to go about implementation of the standard. Please address any queries to Richard Southern at richard@amsi.org.za.



AIDS Management Standard

HOPE IS A HUMAN RESOURCE

***Facilitating Effective HIV/AIDS
Management in South African Businesses***

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