

EAC



**Revolutionising Office
Support for a Smarter Future**
Harnessing the Power of AI in Administrative Functions



EAC

Empowered Adminstrators Conference Conference Programme

Revolutionising Office Support for a Smarter Future

Introduction

This two-day conference is meticulously designed for office professionals operating within higher education institutions, governmental agencies, corporate environments, and a diverse array of organisations seeking to leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance their everyday functions. Throughout the conference, participants will engage in comprehensive explorations of innovative methodologies that can significantly augment efficiency and effectiveness across a range of tasks.

By the end of the event, attendees will have gained invaluable insights and practical tools for seamlessly integrating AI into critical domains, including project management, time management, travel planning, and minute-taking.

This conference aims to equip professionals with the necessary knowledge and skills to excel in an increasingly dynamic technological landscape. The emphasis will be on the practical implementation of artificial intelligence to optimise and enhance administrative functions, helping professionals thrive in their dynamic roles.

Conference Convener: mbali@mut.ac.za

General queries: DubeN@mut.ac.za

Conference Coordinator: MthiyaneJ@mut.ac.za

<https://www.mut.ac.za/eac/>



FOUNDERS' WELCOME NOTE

From Customer Centricity to AI Empowerment: Our Journey Together

EAC Convener and Founder, Mbali Mkhize

Twelve years ago, the Empowered Administrators Conference was born out of a vision to elevate the role of office professionals—shifting perceptions and unlocking potential in one of the most critical engines of organisational success. We began with a sharp focus on customer centricity, understanding that service excellence was the bedrock of professional value.

As the workplace evolved, so did we. We expanded our mission to sharpen technology skills, enabling administrators to embrace digital tools that enhance efficiency and communication. From mastering productivity platforms to developing an agile mindset, our delegates became indispensable, tech-savvy assets in their workplaces.

But technical skill alone isn't enough. That's why we infused our programme with strategies to enhance professionalism, emotional intelligence, and project management. We nurtured a generation of confident professionals who lead initiatives, build strong workplace cultures, and rise into roles once thought beyond their reach.

In recent years, we have focused on the Fourth Industrial Revolution, a shift that redefined the skills landscape. We have tackled automation, digital transformation, and the reshaping of administrative functions. You have responded with agility, courage, and a commitment to continuous learning.

And now, as we gather for our 13th conference, we enter a new frontier: Artificial Intelligence. AI is no longer a distant concept; it is here and transforming how we work. This year, we focus on helping office professionals adapt to AI, embrace it, and make it work for them. Whether using AI tools to streamline workflows, improve decision-making, or enhance creativity, the future belongs to those who are ready to lead with human and artificial intelligence.

As the Founder, I am profoundly proud—not just of the skills our delegates have acquired but of who they've become. I've watched administrators rise into management roles, start businesses, return to study, and mentor others with confidence. You've grown not only as professionals but as people—with resilience, purpose, and power.

This conference is more than an event—it's a movement. And if you're ready to grow, to lead, and to thrive in the AI era, then this is your time.



Mbali Mkhize

FOUNDERS' WELCOME NOTE

Reflections on the Empowered Administrators Conference (EAC)

By Zama Sishi, EAC Co-Convenor

As the Co-Convenor of the Empowered Administrators Conference (EAC) at the Mangosuthu University of Technology, it's an honour to reflect on our journey—from the initial idea to a truly transformative experience for office professionals like you. The EAC was designed with you in mind, aiming to provide knowledge and a sense of community and empowerment in your daily roles.

From the beginning, I focused on building a strong network of stakeholders. By collaborating with organisations for block registrations, we've ensured that professionals across departments can benefit together. This not only boosts participation but also fosters invaluable peer learning among colleagues. It's all about helping you grow as a team and sharing strategies and insights that can elevate your workplace.

I cannot emphasise enough how pivotal our sponsors have been in this journey. Their trust in the EAC's vision enabled us to invite top-notch speakers and curate an exceptional experience for every delegate. Their support has allowed us to expand our outreach and create a powerful platform for empowerment and growth. We are incredibly grateful for their partnership, which makes this journey possible.

Our commitment to maintaining a reliable stakeholder database is central to our success. This dynamic tool allows us to communicate effectively, ensure easy registration, and build lasting

relationships with individuals and organisations that return year after year. We are here for you, and we want to grow together!

We've consistently chosen relevant themes like "Reporting to Multiple Bosses," "Project Management for Admin Professionals," and "Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace." These topics resonate deeply with the challenges you face daily. At the EAC, you'll find strategies to tackle these issues head-on and a supportive community ready to lift one another up.

Looking ahead to EAC 2025, we are charting a new path. With the emergence of AI, there's understandable trepidation in our profession. However, we are committed to equipping you with the tools and knowledge necessary to harness the power of AI as a supportive ally in your work. We've secured some of the best speakers who will share tested insights from various sectors, enabling you to advance confidently into the future. Our promise remains: we are here to help you shine. Join us at the EAC, where your growth matters, and together we will redefine what it means to be an empowered office professional.



Zama Sishi

EAC FOUNDING TEAM

Online Communications Perspective

Online communications have been the lifeline of the EAC—expanding our digital footprint, streamlining registrations, and connecting a community of professionals beyond borders. Through strategic content and tech platforms, we've turned clicks into connections and curiosity into community.



Webmaster, Jay Roopsunker

Media & Direct Marketing Perspective

The media has amplified the EAC's impact, turning powerful stories into national conversations. Through direct marketing and focused PR, we've turned the spotlight on administrators—proving they're not behind the scenes, but at the heart of innovation.



Press Officer, Bheki Hlope

MarComms EAC support

Success is in the follow-up. By staying consistent, communicating clearly, and always following through, we've ensured that every detail of the EAC reflects excellence—and that no delegate is left behind on their journey to empowerment.



EAC Team

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Meet Your Speakers



Vice-Chancellor and Principal
Nokuthula Sibiya



Sandile Mahlaba
Microsoft Specialist
and EAC Patron



Mr Mlamuli
Oscar Kheswa



Danny Venter
Smart Technology Guru



Dr Manoshni Perumal
Director (HRD)



Lonwabo Ntsinde
Co-founder of CloudNala



Bjorn Ekblad
Founder & Cyber
Security Consultant



Dr Thandeka Ellenson
CEO of the Moses Kotane
Research Institute



Mr Mlamuli Oscar Kheswa

Mr Kheswa serves as the Deputy Registrar: Governance, Secretariat and Convocation at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU). He had previously held various administrative roles (Project Administrator, Senior Committee Officer and Manager Committee Administration) at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) and UNIZULU respectively. Mr Kheswa has considerable experience in the fields of applied governance, company secretariat practice and corporate administration.

Mr Kheswa holds a National Diploma (Executive Secretaries) from MUT, Bachelor's Degree in Technology: Business Administration from Durban University of Technology, Master of Commerce (Management) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Occupational Certificate: Company Secretary from the Chartered Governance Institute of Southern Africa. He further holds certificates in Management and Senior Management Development Programmes and Professional Business Coaching Programme from the University of Stellenbosch Business School and Gordon Institute of Business Science (University of Pretoria) respectively.

Mr Kheswa was born in KwaHlathi, a rural village in the city of Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal. He is blessed with three children, namely Njabulo (son), Bayanda (daughter) and Elihl'ikusasa (son).



Dr Thandeka Ellenson CEO of the Moses Kotane Research Institute

Dr. Thandeka Ellenson is a trailblazing leader who has made a lasting impact in her field. Currently, she serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the Moses Kotane Research Institute, where she oversees the implementation of provincial research and innovation mandates. Her journey to this role is marked by dedication, hard work, and a passion for excellence.

With a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree from Columbia Southern University, Dr. Ellenson brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to her role. Her leadership style is characterized by action-oriented approaches that drive growth and progress. She values respect, continuous learning, and excellence, which are evident in her work.

Before becoming the CEO of the Moses Kotane Research Institute, Dr. Ellenson served as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the same institute, where she honed her skills in financial management and strategic planning. This experience laid a strong foundation for her current role, enabling her to drive innovation and growth.

Dr. Ellenson has also made significant contributions in other areas, pioneering various provincial strategies in KwaZulu-Natal and contributing to the region's economic development and growth. Her experience spans both the public and private sectors, and she is known for her commitment to fostering positive relationships and driving innovation.

Dr. Ellenson is also an accomplished author, having penned the book "Authentic Leadership Mindset". Her commitment to respect, continuous learning, and excellence is inspiring. As a respected leader, she continues to make a meaningful impact in her community.

Some of her key strengths and values include:

- Leadership: Proven track record of driving growth and progress through action-oriented approaches
- Strategic Thinking: Expertise in developing and implementing provincial strategies for economic development
- Innovation: Passionate about promoting research and innovation to drive economic growth
- Values: Respect, continuous learning, and excellence are core to her leadership philosophy
- Author: Published author of "Authentic Leadership Mindset", showcasing her expertise in leadership development.



Lonwabo Ntsinde **Co-founder of CloudNala**

Lonwabo Ntsinde is a co-founder of CloudNala, a Microsoft-certified enterprise consultant with a career spanning Microsoft, Accenture, and DVT. CloudNala is grounded in deep technical expertise and strategic insight. Lonwabo brings a unique blend of hands-on engineering experience and business acumen, allowing CloudNala to deliver solutions that are not only innovative but also operationally sound and aligned with long-term goals.

CloudNala is an innovation-led consulting firm based in South Africa, dedicated to helping organizations reimagine what's possible through the power of cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and modern digital strategies. With a mission to drive meaningful transformation, CloudNala partners with enterprises, public sector institutions, and emerging startups to architect, integrate, and deploy scalable, secure, and intelligent solutions tailored to complex business environments.

The firm specialises in leveraging Microsoft Azure, cutting-edge AI platforms, and industry-aligned DevOps practices to build future-ready systems. From cloud strategy and infrastructure automation to data-driven forecasting, responsible AI, and enterprise modernisation, CloudNala delivers end-to-end capabilities that bridge vision with execution.

The company's services extend across cloud architecture, DevOps engineering, FinOps, AI integration, data governance, ERP modernisation, and digital product enablement. CloudNala also provides advisory and technical coaching for startups, aligning innovation initiatives with government grant opportunities, especially within the education and SME sectors. With a strong focus on responsible technology, agile delivery, and measurable outcomes, CloudNala continues to empower organizations to innovate with confidence and scale with purpose.



Bjorn Ekblad **Founder & Cyber Security Consultant**

Bjorn is a seasoned cyber security professional with extensive experience helping South African universities, enterprises, and global brands strengthen their security posture. As founder of Askaris Cyber Security South Africa, he has led engagements in areas such as network, cloud, email, endpoint security and end user awareness training.

With a passion for bridging the gap between technical complexity and business strategy, Bjorn equips organisations with practical solutions to defend against evolving cyber threats. He is committed to building cyber resilience in South Africa's digital economy and empowering the next generation with knowledge, discipline, and actionable frameworks to stay secure.



Dr Manoshni Perumal **Director (HRD)**

Dr Perumal has over 40 years of experience with a demonstrated history of working in the higher education landscape and in industry. Her skills include industrial psychology, Strategic Alignment (certified with Kangan Batman University), Leadership Development (Manipal University), Performance Management (certified by Deloitte and Touche), Profiling and Job Grading (certified by Deloitte and Touche) and Organisational Development. She has a strong emphasis on strategy and performance alignment with a PHD focused on Leadership & Complexity and serves on the panel of experts for the National School of Government (NSG).

She is currently the Director (HRD) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and is responsible for the management of Human Resources Development, Ethics, Employment Equity and Change Management, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), Employee Wellness, Performance Management and the Academic Promotions.



Sandile Mahlaba **Microsoft Specialist and EAC Patron**

Sandile Mahlaba is a seasoned technology strategist and digital transformation leader with over a decade of experience driving innovation, emerging technology integration, and inclusive digital skills development across South Africa and the African continent. As a Senior Government Executive at Microsoft South Africa, Sandile leads transformative engagements with the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, eThekweni Municipality, the State Information Technology Agency (SITA), and the Mpumalanga Provincial Government. He oversees a team of specialists focused on deploying Microsoft technologies to enhance public service delivery and operational efficiency.

Sandile has played a pivotal role in shaping smart city frameworks, advancing data-driven governance, and launching youth-centered Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) capacity-building initiatives in collaboration with government and private sector partners.

Beyond his corporate role, Sandile is a Patron and Strategic Community Leader at the GoDigitalSA Foundation (NGO), where he champions the development of Digital Economy Precincts, AI literacy programs, and Community-Centric Innovation Hubs aimed at bridging the digital divide in township and rural communities.

He also contributes to international collaboration as a member of the BRICS+ Skills Development, Applied Technology & Innovation Working Group, helping to align vocational education with economic needs and shape future workforce strategies across member countries.

A passionate advocate for responsible innovation and equitable digital access, Sandile is known for building multi-stakeholder coalitions, unlocking funding, and delivering impact-driven technology programs that position Africa for competitive growth in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

18 SEP 2025



08:00 - 09:00

Registration and networking refreshments

Conference moderator: Mbali Mkhize

- Enjoy refreshments and meet other conference participants.
- Get ready for an insightful day ahead!



09:00 - 09:30

Welcome and opening remarks

- MUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi
- Overview of the conference theme and objectives
- Introduction to the potential of AI in revolutionising office support roles



09:30 - 09:45

Spotlight with the Keynote:

From the Executive Suite: Transforming Administration with AI and Insight – Mr Sandile Mahlaba, Microsoft Executive & EAC Patron



09:45 - 11:00

Master Class:

The future of office administration – Integrating AI into Everyday Tasks

Speaker: Lonwabo Ntsinde Co-founder of CloudNala

The examination of emerging trends in artificial intelligence (AI) reveals significant implications for office professionals seeking to enhance productivity, improve accuracy, and optimize workflows. By integrating AI technologies, individuals in administrative and managerial roles can harness advanced tools and methodologies that streamline processes, facilitate data analysis, and automate repetitive tasks. This session will highlight the transformative potential of AI in reshaping organizational practices and underscore the necessity for professionals to adapt to and leverage these innovations for improved operational efficiency and effectiveness.



11:00 - 11:20

Mid-Morning Break

- Refreshments and informal discussions

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

18 SEP 2025



11:20 - 12:10

AI-Powered Insights

Curating Key Takeaways from the Spotlight Session

Speaker: Lonwabo Ntsinde Co-founder of CloudNala



12:10 - 13:00

Master class:

AI in Project Management – Boosting Collaboration and Efficiency

Speaker: Danny Venter, Smart Technology Guru

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools can significantly enhance the efficiency of project planning, facilitate task delegation, and streamline progress tracking. These innovative tools empower office professionals to effectively manage intricate projects, ensuring that all aspects are coordinated seamlessly to meet the expectations of their line managers. By leveraging AI capabilities, teams can optimise workflows, prioritise tasks, and monitor milestones, ultimately leading to improved productivity and project outcomes.



13:00 - 13:45

Networking Lunch

- Informal networking lunch to discuss the morning's sessions and connect with peers.



13:45 - 15:00

Master Class:

Time and diary management: Automating scheduling and prioritising tasks

Speaker: Sandile Mahlaba, Microsoft Specialist and EAC Patron

Artificial intelligence-driven tools are revolutionising calendar management by providing smarter solutions for organising schedules, prioritising urgent tasks, and automating the process of scheduling meetings. These innovative tools streamline time management, allowing users to focus on what truly matters while efficiently handling their commitments.

We will provide an engaging, hands-on demonstration of the top AI scheduling tools available, showcasing how they seamlessly integrate with existing systems to enhance productivity and ease of use. This session will highlight the practical applications of these tools, helping you leverage technology to optimize your daily operations.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

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15:00 - 15:15

Afternoon Tea and Networking break

- Coffee and light snacks



15:15 - 16:00

Session 3

Minute-Taking with AI – Revolutionising accuracy and efficiency

Speaker: Teboho Semmelink, COO, GoDigital, SA

The utilization of artificial intelligence (AI) in the context of minute-taking and meeting documentation presents an innovative approach to enhancing organizational efficiency and effectiveness. By harnessing advanced AI algorithms, it becomes feasible to record accurate meeting minutes, succinctly summarize discussions, and generate actionable follow-up tasks with minimal manual input. This automation not only reduces the administrative burden on participants but also ensures a higher degree of precision and comprehensiveness in documentation.

By adhering to these best practices, organizations can optimize the impact of AI in enhancing their minute-taking processes, ensuring that critical insights and action items are accurately captured and effectively communicated.



16:00 - 16:15

Day 1 Wrap-Up & Q&A

FUTURE FORWARD A NIGHT WITH AI

**An Exclusive Gala Dinner
Celebrating Innovation,
Intelligence, and the Future
of Work**

Join the MUT Vice-Chancellor and thought leaders for an evening of immersive experiences and cutting-edge entertainment—all centred around the evolving role of Artificial Intelligence in the professional world.

Dress Code: Futuristic Formal

18 SEP 2025

Time: 18:30-22:00

Venue: Elangeni Hotel, Durban

RSVP: MthiyaneJ@mut.ac.za

CC: Mbali@mut.ac.za

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19 SEP 2025



08:30 - 09:00

Morning coffee and networking

- Coffee and light snacks



09:00 - 10:00

Keynote Session:

Personal branding for the Office Professional – Using AI to elevate your role

Speaker: Dr Manoshni Perumal, and Dr Thandeka Ellenson

By adhering to these best practices, organizations can optimize the impact of AI in enhancing their minute-taking processes, ensuring that critical insights and action items are accurately captured and effectively communicated.



**Always on point,
sleek and modern**

Ayanda Bulose

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

19 SEP 2025



10:00 - 11:00

Session 4:

Securing the AI-Powered Office: Cybersecurity Best Practices for Administrative Professionals

Mr Bjorn Ekblad, Business Development Director, Askaris Cyber Security; Dr Marlo De Swart, Senior Director: ITN, MUT, and Njabulo Xaba, MUT

This comprehensive session could explore the intersection of AI and Cybersecurity in modern administrative environments, covering five critical areas:

- How AI Tools Introduce New Efficiencies and New Risks: Exploring how AI-driven automation, data analysis, and workflow management are transforming administrative roles, while examining the cybersecurity challenges that arise as sensitive data is processed and stored digitally.
- Practical Strategies to Protect Sensitive Information: Highlighting best practices for securing AI-driven administrative tools, including implementation of strong authentication protocols, data encryption standards, and comprehensive access controls.
- Detecting and Responding to Threats in Real Time: Demonstrating how AI can help monitor for anomalies, detect insider threats, and automate incident response procedures to maintain secure administrative systems.



11:00 - 11:20

Morning break and networking

- Refreshments and discussions on the previous session

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

19 SEP 2025



11:30 - 13:00

Session 5:

Aligning with Departmental and Institutional Policies –Ensuring Compliance

Speaker: Mr Mlamuli Kheswa, Deputy Registrar, University of Zululand

- Compliance and Policy Integration: Discussing how AI can assist with automating compliance checks and ensuring that administrative processes meet both institutional and regulatory standards.
- Empowering Administrators with Cybersecurity Awareness: Offering actionable tips for office professionals to recognize potential threats, protect their digital environments, and contribute to building a culture of security within their organizations.
- How AI can assist in adhering to institutional policies, automating compliance checks, and ensuring that administrative tasks meet departmental standards.
- Case studies on the successful integration of AI into policy management



13:00 - 14:00

Networking Lunch

- Opportunity for participants to network, share insights, and discuss collaboration ideas.



14:00 - 15:00

Session 6:

The Road Ahead – Implementing AI in Your Daily Workflow

Featuring Mr Sandile Mahlaba, long-standing EAC Patron

- A practical guide on how to start integrating AI tools into your role.
- Key takeaways for personal action plans, overcoming resistance to change, and building a roadmap for the future.



15:00 - 15:30

Closing Remarks & Final Networking

- Conference summary and thanks
- Final opportunity for networking before departure

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