



MIKE TEKE (MENTOR)
MUZI KUZWAYO (EDITOR)

THIS GENERATION LEADS

*The Latest Leadership
Ideas from South Africa*





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Mike Teke (Mentor)
&
Muzi Kuzwayo (Ed)



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CONTENTS

Mentor's Note	i
<i>Mike Teke</i>	
Foreword	v
<i>Muzi Kuzwayo</i>	
CHAPTER 1	
<hr/>	
Project Porcupine: My Greatest Inspiration	1
<i>Sthabile Zwane</i>	
CHAPTER 2	
<hr/>	
Ethical Leadership	9
<i>Zipho Buthelezi</i>	
CHAPTER 3	
<hr/>	
Philanthropy and Leadership: Hearts and Minds	19
<i>Boipontsho Mnguni</i>	
CHAPTER 4	
<hr/>	
It was never meant to be a Man's Game	27
<i>Seapei Mafoyane</i>	
CHAPTER 5	
<hr/>	
Leadership and the Corporate Ladder: My take	39
<i>Mfanasibili Emmanuel Mdhluli</i>	

CHAPTER 6

- Hitch your Wagon to the Stars: “Finding the Right Mentor” 51
Priscilla Pholotho

CHAPTER 7

- The Importance of Purpose and Personal Vision in Leadership:
A Conversation with the Next Generation of South African
Leaders – the Meaning and Essence of Leadership 65
Msizi Khoza

CHAPTER 8

- The Union of Leadership and Management in the Role
of a CEO 73
Althea Discala

CHAPTER 9

- Leading with the Heart and Mind 81
Justin Plaatjes

CHAPTER 10

- The Right Leadership Style 91
Fanele Mnguni

CHAPTER 11

- The Politics of Leadership 109
Banzi Giyose

CHAPTER 12

- Best Led Organisations 123
Andries Nkabinde

CHAPTER 13

Credibility and Thought Leadership 129

Mpumelelo Mdhladhla

CHAPTER 14

God and Leadership 141

Nina Christina Greyling

CHAPTER 15

The Theory and Practice of Leadership: An Experiential and
Reflexive Perspective in the Context of
Professional Development 147

Sizwe Phakathi

CHAPTER 16

Discovering the Leader in You 163

Mbali Mkhonto

Mike Teke

Making a difference in the lives of other people is close to my heart. Therefore, I always want to be a catalyst in assisting others to be better in their crafts. I wish to become more benevolent and useful to humanity and to be dependable to those who need my assistance. I believe I can make a difference in young people's lives.

The assistance I am referring to includes mentorship and guidance regarding life in general, personal development, business, and any other matter that improves my fellow citizens. We need a generation of visionaries. We need a generation of confident, hardworking, smart, great attitudes and bold young people – dependable citizens!

This book was borne out of an idea that I had during the period in which I spent time with several young people who had approached me to assist them in different ways, including personal development, career advancement and growth, as well as growing their businesses and entrepreneurial acumen and skills. I took the challenge but felt that more could be achieved, hence this book.

The chapters in this book are written by each one of these young people. They chose the topics, guided by me, and the plan was to simply convey a message from each one of them about leadership. They did not do this for fame or to sell this book to make money, but to share their ideas. The topics covered in this book will appeal to different readers, and some readers might find more lessons in one chapter or in more chapters than one.

My message regarding this book is that individuals out there who have the time and energy to mentor young people, should do it. I find it gratifying when I sit for half an hour to an hour with each one of these individuals and discuss matters that are close to their hearts, and at times matters that become very sensitive to both of us.

These mentees differ from each other in more than one way. There are proactive individuals who make a serious effort to meet me frequently and have a plan of action on what they wish to achieve. Then there are those who have had several conversations with me, but their level of commitment is not so strong, and I tend not to push them hard. Again, I question myself whether I should be more aggressive in my approach to forcing these engagements, or should I just

leave it to individuals to take ownership. I am seeing great results, but I will do better to make these young people better human beings.

I urge each one of you who read this book to pick one or a few lessons and share it with those you wish to make a difference to. Mentorship of young people is critical, but this does not mean that the mentors will provide handouts in the form of money. People who wish to grow, are not interested in money, they are interested in a piece of your generous heart.

Enjoy!



MIKE TEKE was born in KwaThema, Springs. He is married to Sandile and is blessed with two children, his son, Boikanyo and daughter, Tshiamo.

Mike matriculated at Kenneth Masekela Senior Secondary School, where he enjoyed his football. He obtained excellent results but his family could not afford to send him to university, so he looked for a job. Luckily, he found one at a factory called Van Leer, earning R76 per week. He worked for a year and saved enough money to go and study at the University of the North. He played for various soccer teams in the local league. His first business deal came when he raised R10, 000 which is equivalent to more than R100, 000 in today's money

After graduating with a B.Ed degree he went back to Kenneth Masekela to teach. He then crossed over to the corporate world, and worked in various human resources roles at Unilever, Bayer, Impala Platinum and Bhp Billiton, respectively.

Mike left Bhp Billiton to become the founding CEO of Optimum Coal and listed the company on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in March 2010. In September 2012, he resigned as CEO and became the Non-Executive Chairman until April 2015.

Mike has served the South African industry in various roles over the years. He was elected as the Vice President of the Chamber of Mines for two years and then ascended to the role of President. He served until 2017.

Mike started Masimong Group Holdings, a diversified investment holding company and sits on various boards. Mike wants more people to succeed and has started the Masimong Foundation which supports many young people in achieving their dreams.

Muzi Kuzwayo

A leader is measured by the quality of leaders they create and definitely not by their number of followers on Twitter. Years ago, Mike Teke, who is an accomplished businessman and investor extraordinaire, established a mentorship programme with the specific aim of creating a deep layer of leaders from which corporate South Africa and indeed the rest of the world can benefit. His mentees now shine brightly as leaders in a kaleidoscope of different spheres. This book is their personal perspectives on leadership, gained from experience as well as observations, reading and thinking deeply about this desperately needed topic.

Sthabile Zwane writes about climbing the hard, unpaved, and uneven road to professional success while being a mother. “One of my greatest inspirations is the existence of my daughter and my deep need to be the best mother I can be for her,” she writes with an eloquence and beauty of the heart.

In this age, when you’ve seen and heard everything – what can surprise one in the post-Covid world? – Mbali Mkhonto reminds us how so many great South Africans have triumphed through very difficult circumstances. He was born in a remote village, called Wilverdiend in what was then the Transvaal. He now runs his own successful company. According to him, “Many failures in organisations are caused by leaders who are not decisive enough.” This is exactly what South Africa needs today – decisive leaders.

Our country is drowning in the sewage of corruption. Ziphoh Buthelezi, with a beautifully written chapter, *Ethical leadership*, points out, “In our current world, the biggest newsmakers are those who flaunt wealth and make others aspire to lead lives of opulence and over-consumption.” In true leadership style, Ziphoh does not prescribe how we should live, but reminds us that ethics leads to sustainability.

Philanthropy means “love of humanity.” Boipontsho Mnguni’s piece is aptly called *Philanthropy and leadership: Hearts and minds*. Think about it this way: What good is a leader who does not care about the community or the people he or she is leading? Boipontsho learnt from her grandfather the age-old triad of honour, respect, and integrity.

“Leadership was never meant to be a man’s game,” Seapei Mafoyane reminds us. Is it about how you raise your daughters and sons? Do you have to be tough on your children for them to cope in the hostile world? Seapei quietly

challenges us about our thinking on creating new leaders who will face this tumultuous world.

Emmanuel Mdhluhi tells us what it means to be born in the shadows of Sandton, in Alexandra township, to getting to the helm of a corporation. Like most formulae, the intrinsic machinations may be complex, but it is the simplicity that makes it succeed with ordinary people. “The more you open to others and are helpful, the more you open yourself up for blessings and positive karma,” Emmanuel tells us.

The path to greatness can be confusing, which makes finding the right mentor a crucial step. “I’m a firm believer that in the search for success, a stepping-stone to a great future is the ability for one to be aware of and appreciate their own mistakes,” Priscilla Pholotho writes in her topic, *Tow your wagon to the stars*. Her theory to success is grounded in her experiences growing up in Tlhabane township to being the founder of Fabuloux Skin and Body Aesthetic Clinic.

Experience without theory is nothing but bumbling foolishly from accident to accident. Sizwe Phakathi gives us both the theory and practice of leadership. He goes beyond the literature of the various theories of leadership. There are so many buzzwords on leadership these days. What is transformational leadership? What is transactional leadership? Which styles of leadership produce the most impactful results? Read his piece, and you will understand why Sizwe is a recipient of a number of academic and scholarship awards, including the Commonwealth Scholarship Award and the Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Trust Scholarship Award.

What motivates a leader? Does it help if a leader has a personal goal? What are the characteristics of good leadership? These are some of the questions that Msizi Khoza is dealing with in his chapter, *The importance of purpose and personal vision in leadership*. He shares his invaluable experiences after working alongside many senior leaders across different sectors.

Althea Discala is the Chief Executive Officer of Masimong Group Holdings, a diversified investment holding company. She is a strategically and operationally focused leader with close to 20 years of business commercial investment experience. Her topic is *The union of leadership and management in the role of a CEO* and soundly bridges the gap between the concept of leadership and management.

Some people speak as if leadership is a heartless science that can be manipulated like molecules in a test tube. Justin Plaatjes gives us a plethora of leadership styles and fads and then distils this elusive concept into bite-sized

chunks. This is a wonderful perspective in the chapter called *Leading with the heart and mind*. Justin is a chartered accountant and works in investment banking where he deals with high net worth people.

How do you define the right leadership style? Fanele Mnguni takes us on a journey of discovery in the chapter with the same title. As he tells us, “As time went by, my interest in certain people that I looked up to, grew even bigger. I started to understand the path that those people followed to get to where they are in life.” Isn’t it wonderful to learn from the growth of others?

Banzi Giyose discusses various aspects of politics in leadership. Like all the writers in this book, he offers his experiences and observations. He explains the “cigar gang” which exists in every organisation: “The cigar gang name does not necessarily mean or require one to have an affinity to cigar smoking.”

Andries Nkabinde gives us a glimpse of the best led organisations. First in his formula is the integrity of the leader, a theme that comes throughout the book. “Best led organisations always have clear set targets that are not influenced by emotion or populism, but concrete realities prevalent within that given scenario.” Andries joined the liberation movement at a young age, and is also an ex-political prisoner.

Mpumelelo Mdhlahla is an example of a leader who metamorphoses with the times. He adapts to the changing industries and seizes rare opportunities. “The biggest failure we have as humans is procrastination. It is not laziness or a lack of intelligence, it is the inability to act immediately and accept that you may fail in the process,” he cautions.

We sometimes think that we have all the answers. Nina Greyling reminds us of that. “What would happen if leaders would learn how to trust in someone who possesses much greater capabilities and abilities than they have?” Nina is a lawyer and understands and devotes her time to non-profit activities too.

By reading this book, you will get a glimpse of the oft unseen and unspoken about positive changes that are shifting South Africa and indeed the rest of the African continent into a better place. Flip to the topics that interest you or find the writers that you already know, respect, and love. I know you will find powerful ideas that go straight to the point.

Project Porcupine: My Greatest Inspiration

Sthabile Zwane

Without jumping down a spiralling rabbit hole of dictionary definitions (which in this context do not suffice anyway), it is necessary to explore the meaning of inspiration. In this context, we can define inspiration as the thoughts and feelings that spur people on to reach seemingly unachievable results or to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges. All human beings have these thoughts and have a burning sensation somewhere in their bodies when they experience the feelings which are driving them forward – be it fear or excitement, be it a desire to escape something, or an objective they wish to attain. How people respond when they are inspired and the things that inspire them differ vastly.

Personally, it is difficult to pinpoint one thing and name it my *GREATEST* inspiration, but Jordan Peterson, a controversial character as far as his views on political correctness go, teaches that life means suffering, and instead of pursuing happiness which is fleeting, we should pursue the reduction of suffering. This sums up quite well my personal motivation to go out and be a productive and useful member of society.

This mission to reduce suffering, applies to one's personal life and expands to various spheres of influence. We start with self, so that at least we do not loathe ourselves, and at best we have a sense of personal fulfilment. We then try to provide for our loved ones – ensuring that they will survive, for them to be able to live a good life and maybe even an enjoyable one, raising our children well (so that they actually like themselves too, and that we like them and so that they grow up and can make it in the world). We find communities in which we can nurture and be nurtured, where we can be valuable members of society and contribute to reducing the suffering for people in our neighbourhoods, churches, and other social networks. And if we are particularly fortunate, we can reduce the suffering of multiple groups of communities – comprising of multiple families and individuals whose suffering would be reduced (even if it is only marginally) because of our existence. Perhaps one of the individuals touched by my efforts will take up the same mission.

In short, my greatest inspiration is when I have reached the end of my life, to look back and have a sense of personal achievement because my family is well taken care of and Africa's suffering due to poor socioeconomic conditions is reduced.

But how does one achieve this lofty mission?

I believe that first, we do so by mastering ourselves. I came across a quote by Wes Fesler in which he says, "Self-mastery is the challenge of transforming yourself from own worst enemy into your greatest ally." From my perspective there are only a few expressions of the true purpose of mastering one's self that capture it so succinctly. We are taught self-mastery in our youth through accountability to our parents, teachers, and other authoritative figures. Later in life, we become accountable to our spouses or partners, colleagues and managers, and social groups, but at some point in our lives, we are only in the truest sense accountable to ourselves. If we don't set our house in order or "clean our room" as Peterson would say, we have little opportunity to realise the great inspirational objective of reducing suffering for ourselves and others.

How I was raised, played a pivotal role in this view of self and the world. This relates to the role that I had to play with reference to accountability and partnership in the household. It has assisted me in how I raise my own family today and how I respond when called to a position of leadership.

My first experience of accountability and leadership was in the home. I was blessed by being the last of four children, with an 11-year age gap between me and my preceding brother. In our home, I observed the age old, "baba is the head, but mama is the neck" and the rest of us were either consulted or informed as the need and age appropriateness required.

If you wanted something from dad (who back then seemed to be the easier target because his answer to our requests was always "yes"), he'd first ask whether we'd spoken to our mother and if not, he'd send us back to talk to her. Sometimes, mama's first answer would be "no," other times it would be "go and ask your dad."

Being the unicorn – only daughter/lastborn/"laatlammetjie" – of the family, I had the privilege of being doted on by everyone in the family, especially by my father, and I frequently tested the resolve to their agreed strategy, but was never successful. Their implementation was watertight.

I only realised much later in life that this was their way of not only managing our expectations, it was also their way of keeping us accountable to both of them, all the while keeping each other accountable in their parenting.

We knew that if mama said “no,” The answer would not change if we asked dad; and if dad said “yes,” it was because mama had agreed that it was okay.

I also learnt that a similar tactic was applied with discipline. If she thought the message would be learnt from a hiding, mama would execute the punishment. To be honest, she would beat the living daylight out of me. Baba’s role was considerably different: He was the one who held me to account, and his strategy was more frightening than the prospect of being walloped to the point where I prayed for forgiveness. Baba was the bogey monster we were threatened to be confronted with if mama felt a beating wouldn’t suffice. His methods were cool and calculated. You would be called to the study or the private lounge (which we’d renamed “the courtroom”) and you’d be called upon to state your case and face a litany of questions:

- ◆ Why is it that we’re having this conversation?
- ◆ What did you do (or failed to do)?
- ◆ Why did you do it?
- ◆ How did you go about it?
- ◆ Do you think it was right? If not, then why did you do it?
- ◆ What do you think is a fitting punishment?
- ◆ What will you do to avoid repeating the same thing?

This is how we continued until I was empowered to negotiate for the things that I wanted, but it also entrenched a sense of accountability to myself and others, knowing that if I miss-stepped, there’d be some tough questions to answer. As I grew up, I was subjected to “the courtroom” questioning more than the hidings. I suppose this is what began to develop the accountability to self, thinking through certain actions before they became issues that the family would have to address.

I also consulted my older brothers often, particularly the oldest, assuming that at some point in their lives, they had been in similar situations – whether they wanted the exact thing that I was asking for and were refused, or were granted their request with conditions. So, they guided me on my approach – where to yield and where to hold firm. In other instances, they played advocate on my behalf. Sometimes my parents would have them shoulder the responsibility squarely, and they would agree. I learnt there about the commitment of people who were willing to stick out their neck for me. Another important life skill that I required to become successful, was: *Let your word be your bond, a commitment made is a commitment fulfilled.*

Other than the responsibility to limit TV time and extend study time so that I passed well, the most vivid memory I have of self-mastery was when I wanted to go to the Matric dance after party. My parents had agreed wholeheartedly that I could buy whatever outfit I desired, but in no uncertain terms was it clear that I would not be allowed to attend the after party.

I was distraught. After all, I had spent my entire high school career being the boring one who was never allowed out and at some point, I even stopped asking to go out with friends to events. This time I was determined that the outcome would be different. This was not some random house party that a peer had arranged, this was *MY* after party. I was adamant that I would attend both the official school dance and the after party. So, I called in the artillery and briefed my oldest brother (17 years my senior) to come and mediate between my parents and me. We all sat in “the courtroom” and he began to help me state my case. As usual, after answering a litany of questions including why this was so important to me, my brother was left with the cross to bear: “If anything goes wrong, it’s on you,” To which my brother agreed.

VICTORY!!! I exclaimed it internally and excitedly gave them all a hug and ran off to prepare for both events.

As the evening progressed at the official ball, I noticed that some of the details of the party I was initially told about were totally different. There would be no adult supervision, the location was different, and several other details differed. My gut began to churn but my insolence also began to burn. I thought that it shouldn’t be an issue since I got no conditions to my approval. Only my brother was on the hook. I really wanted to experience this kind of life for the first time.

In the end, when the time came to change and thoughts of all the things that could go wrong came rushing over me, how misfortune would affect my family – most notably the brother who accepted accountability for me – I didn’t go to the after party.

There I began affirming my sense of self-mastery, a concept to which I had never previously given any thought. The lessons imparted in my home over years of discipline and discourse finally came to bare. My parents and brother knew when I came home early that I was ready to face the world.

Today, I learn about self-mastery every day and allow a little part of self-destruction to die away from me. Life keeps teaching me that as much as we may want to do certain things because it feels liberating, that there may be much greater freedom in constraining the desires that set us back and achieve nothing.

Sometimes, we sacrifice our desires to attain something of much greater value, and by so doing we get out of our own way and become our greatest ally. As we reflect and consciously undertake internal discourse, we realise that the journey of self-mastery never ends, as we're never perfect, but the journey begins when those who are tasked with raising us say their first "NO."

The second thing I've observed to be useful to achieve the mission of reducing suffering, particularly internally, is to *maintain a teachable spirit* – trying to approach all interactions not from a place of judgement but from a curiosity to learn from people of all walks of life – to observe leaders that we admire, also prominent members of society, and try to emulate their positive qualities. If we have access to them, we could ask them how and why they do the things that they do.

It is a great inspiration for me to hear stories of individuals who have overcome enormous adversity to become the people they are today. They were often born in abject poverty and endured family dysfunctions, but they chartered their own paths to personal and communal success. Then there are the stories of addicts who acknowledge their dependency and take extraordinary steps to overcome it. There are stories of people who we'd assume have had easy lives because of their financial means, but pressed on to overcome internal battles which no one else knows about. We learn to know about these individuals who treat others humanely and exhibit humility.

I have had the good fortune of being mentored and coached by people who have imparted lessons that carried me through my life, whether they knew it or not, great leaders whose consciousness is that their actions should inspire others to take up the call to leadership and to provide the type of leadership that we can admire. One such person is Nomfundo Cebekhulu. I met her early in my career, being barely out of university, still very wet behind the ears. Having reached senior management levels in a multinational corporation (for which we were both employed at the time), she had a hardened exterior and a take-no-nonsense reputation. Her work was meticulous, and she expected the same from her team. Under her stewardship, I learnt that as a team we hadn't delivered until the last person in the team had delivered. If we recalled e-mails after sending them, we'd be reminded that tardiness reflects badly on all of us and that it is better to spend extra time refining the details than perpetually correcting errors.

We often had multiple edited versions of the same document which the team reviewed internally – we seldom sent out a first attempt. She often said,

“We’ll get it perfect before the deadline.” This frustrated me, to the point that I commented that nothing is ever perfect, and that everybody knew that fact. Her response changed my mindset forever. She recited a quote by Vince Lombardy, “*We relentlessly pursue perfection knowing we won’t catch it, but in the process, we’ll achieve excellence.*”

In that moment, I understood why all these gruelling hours mattered. It wasn’t because of what others would think of us – that was secondary – the primary reason was for the personal sense of achievement, to attain excellence. This lesson has carried me forward through my career and I am grateful to Nomfundo for imparting this to me among all the other technical skills she taught me.

Being teachable also means that it is important to reflect on the identity of the leaders we admire, what makes them who they are, and the things that inspire them. Leaders are individuals in our lives, communities, families, and workplaces who by some miracle are willing to take decisions that others may be reluctant to make. They are the individuals who take actions that have a long-lasting impact on those around them, and in many cases for a considerably long time. They are individuals who bear the burden of having people around them, looking to them for guidance, protection, provision, and inspiration. Exceptional leaders take it further and look for opportunities to inspire, to pick others out of mediocrity or even inadequacy, to raise their excellence without denigrating them.

Leaders expand their reach through the people whom they direct and provide corrections without humiliation. Appreciate those who lead others to a point that spurs everyone forward in the common objective. Leaders are also compassionate, as they see the potential of seemingly ordinary individuals that they lead and in whom they invest time and energy to elevate their potential. This compassion earns good leaders’ trust so that they may guide others through a dark forest not knowing what lies ahead but having their trust that all will be well. This is an example of leadership that I’ve had the personal benefit of receiving at Seriti Resources. This is the kind of leadership that gives me a sense of ownership of the vision that is shared, the type of leadership that has my family invested in Seriti’s success. This is inspirational leadership in action.

Leadership as an act of service it is not always glamorous. Sometimes you have to sacrifice a part of yourself for the greater good – in school we called this *service before self*, and as Nassim Taleb teaches, leaders should be willing to suffer the consequences of their own decisions. Both of these principles mean

that we must invest ourselves wholeheartedly in those that we lead. How else do we leave a lasting positive impact in their lives, leading with principles and sacrifices being likeable to get things done? Earning trust can be a trade-off of congeniality as liking you doesn't necessarily mean people respect you, which is an inevitable part of leading people. They need to respect and trust their leader, whether they like them or not. This often means taking accountability for the errors of those you lead. It is your problem to solve – that is how to bridge the gap. That is how leaders build lasting relationships that earn themselves, their family, and associates social capital well into the future.

One of my greatest inspirations is the existence of my daughter and my deep need to be the best mother I can be for her. If we were exploring inspiration shallowly, I'd easily say that she is my greatest inspiration. "Mother" is my favourite title. Knowing that there is someone totally dependent on me getting my house in order so that hers can be exceptional. Her coming into being gave me a deeper sense of purpose. "What a cliché!" I would have thought before she was born, but this is relevant because wanting to do my best for her benefit, energises me to make the necessary sacrifices required in self-mastery, teachability, growth investment, and taking on leadership as an act of service.

However, when thinking about inspiration more deeply, I recognise that the thing that spurs us on to persevere, has internal origins. All the examples set out above, form a part of legacy building to me, leaving something that future generations will thank us for. I have a deep desire to attain this goal at some significant level in my lifetime so that not just my child, but a whole generation will be able to advance themselves further than where I left off. My greatest inspiration is leaving a legacy.



STHABILE ZWANE is an ambitious young leader who believes in leaving a strong positive legacy for generations to build upon.

Personally, Sthabile is a mother of one who recognises the purpose that raising a family can contribute to a female's drive for professional success. Well supported by her family, Sthabile has been able to dedicate many hours to her personal development which has incited her vision to cultivate a career culture in South Africa that promotes individual's (female and male) choice to raise wholesome families without compromising their career prospects.

Professionally, Sthabile has 12 years in the mining industry beginning as a vocational worker at the thermal coal mines near her home town now called Emalahleni. She later graduated her undergraduate accounting studies at the University of Witwatersrand to take up a professional traineeship by her bursar, Anglo American, and serving there as a divisional treasurer. Sthabile subsequently joined Seriti Resources Holding as a group treasurer and now leads a multi-disciplinary team in governance, risk management and insurance.

Ethical Leadership

Zipho Buthelezi

*“A leadership strategy without ethical clarity
produces moral and economic bankruptcy.”*

- Bill Donahue

Ethics is derived from the Greek term “ethos,” which denotes to the characteristic spirit of a culture, the inner disposition, or morality.¹ Ethics can be defined as a moral system of a particular school of thought. It has to do with the application of moral values to people’s behaviour. Starting with Aristotle, ethics are regarded as a moral virtue which could be instilled in individuals through practice and learning.² Aristotle acknowledges the role of nature in developing certain characteristics in humankind which are more a way of life, grounded in a system of rules and principles. Similarly, this discourse of virtue propels leaders to be obliged by motives of duty and moral standards by considering the principles of accountability, responsiveness, and commitment to their duties. The futility of relying solely on compulsion to produce virtue, becomes even more apparent when one considers that there is an obligation for a leader to be sure that their actions appear ethical.

The King IV Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa (2016) defines ethics as something that is good and right for the self and others, and that it can be expressed in terms of the golden rule which asserts that one should treat others as you would like to be treated yourself. In the context of an organisation, ethics refers to a system of moral values which are applied to decision-making, conduct, and the relationships between the organisation, its stakeholders, and the broader society.

The term “leader” comes from the old English word “lædan,” That can be translated as “to go before as a guide”.³ Leadership is the decision to avail oneself to serve people in pursuit of a common goal. It is about taking responsibility for the group achievement of predetermined goals, and it’s closely linked to ability. Leadership must add social influence to the people and it comes with additional responsibilities and ownership.

Ethical leadership can be defined as the “practice of holding the interest of the group that someone is leading, aligned to their interest but never above the interest of the broader society.” It is to act in such a way that people who are led by you, know that you are consistent in your word and deeds – even if no one is watching. Being an ethical leader means to always align the many defined and undefined interests of the stakeholders with the goals by which one is leading. It is about the approach that is centred on good principles and values, where right is right and wrong is wrong, irrespective of the outcomes or consequences of the decision.

Ethics is stakeholder-focused and about meeting the goals of the organisation in a manner that is responsible and sustainable. Therefore, it might be necessary to spell out what the characteristics of ethical leadership are, using ICRAFT, pertaining to an ethical leader:

- ◆ **I – Integrity:** The leader must act in good faith and in the best interest of others, and they should set the tone for an ethical culture in the organisation.
- ◆ **C – Competence:** The leader must have sufficient work knowledge for their particular organisation.
- ◆ **R – Responsibility:** The leader should exercise courage in taking risks and capturing opportunities, and do so in a responsible manner and in the best interest of others.
- ◆ **A – Accountability:** The leader must be willing to answer to the execution of their responsibilities, even when the responsibilities are delegated.
- ◆ **F – Fairness:** The leader should adopt stakeholder-inclusivity (balancing of all material stakeholders in the best interest of others).
- ◆ **T – Transparency:** The leader should be transparent in the manner in which they exercise their role and responsibilities.

Why be Ethical?

If you are given 100 percent assurance that your organisation will not be caught out on unethical practices, are there any compelling reasons to still be ethical? There is a need for leaders to be ethical because it defines how leaders should act individually and as part of a society.

Conversations held with numerous people indicate that most people have never heard of the former Uruguayan president, Jose “Pepe” Mujica, and there is a high probability that they never will. Mujica has been dubbed the world’s poorest president. When he became president of Uruguay in 2010, Mujica announced that he would donate 90 percent of his monthly salary to charities.

He refused to move to the presidential palace and stayed in his two-bedroom farmhouse. He even kept and drove his 1987 Volkswagen Beetle. He broke the trend of world leaders using their political office as a means to accumulate wealth for themselves, their families, and their networks. So perhaps, it is not surprising that very little is known about him.⁴

In our current world, the biggest news makers are those who flaunt wealth and make others aspire to lead lives of opulence and over-consumption. A modest lifestyle like that of Mujica would not be aspirational to many. Being ethical and living within your means are seemingly uninteresting and not at the top of the list of things that people strive for. So, when people complain about the lack of good leadership and the corrosion of values in society, it is because the world is moving away from morals and ethics, and towards the pursuit of affluence by whatever means necessary.

It is easy to prescribe how others should behave, but many people fail to reflect on their own experiences and life choices. We can only help to create a more ethical society through leading by example, taking the initiative to care about the common good, not acting selfishly in business and making a conscious effort to help those who are less able and fortunate to live better lives.

Usually, businesses and most of the institutions blame strategic, financial, or operational risks for their state of affairs. However, the one thing that most organisations have in common is a lack of an ethical culture. In the South African business context, many of our core state and private listed organisations have been embroiled in ethical failures, usually from a governance of ethics standpoint, and have been implicated in wasteful expenditure, employee intimidation, procurement fraud, employee and leadership incompetence, and the inability to meet the core mandates for which they were initially formed.

The King IV Report on Corporate Governance for SA indicates that corporate governance is the exercise of ethical and effective leadership towards the achievement of an ethical culture and sustained good performance. While the cultivation of an ethical culture is a tall order, some organisations seem to be grasping the concept better than others. Ethical organisations seem to have certain characteristics that organisations with poor ethical cultures do not have. Through differential analyses, certain dimensions of ethical culture have emerged as being described by the characteristics of ethical leadership through ICRAFT.

Being ethical is more than not succumbing to corrupt business practices, which sadly have become the normal thing to do in our society. Paying bribes

for businesses and tenders, colluding to rig contracts and greasing politicians' palms are all too common, and the experience of those unethical behaviours has unfortunately not shocked our country sufficiently enough to expose and eliminate these practices.

Encounters on Unethical Leadership and Learnings

Reputation counts, guard it with your life. In June 2018, I was scheduled to be in an interview for a water entity as a board member. I was excited and nervous at the same time due to the fact that I wasn't sure what would be in store for me at the interview. I was prepared and ready to show the value I could add to the organisation with my knowledge and skills. When my turn arrived to be interviewed, I was surprised that the panel was chaired by the then water entity CEO. This was highly irregular, as the appointment of board members is not done by management, according to the King IV Report. The CEO of an organisation reports to the board, not the other way around. Corporate governance is very clear in this regard. Ethical leadership will always uphold good corporate governance. I objected to the anomaly – even though it jeopardised my chances of getting the position. It is the price one pays for swimming against the tide.

The other encounter occurred in May 2015 when I was employed by an entity in which I was the operations manager, responsible for a West African mining operation, which at that time, was the organisation's golden goose with prices of rutile products soaring high. I was assigned to their mineral separation plant with the simple task of maximising the good quality of the rutile product. At that mine their proportion of the feed of HMC (heavy mineral concentrate) was supplied by a Chinese company which they had been using for years to ensure that the plant reached name plate capacity.

The Chinese mine was being run in an unsafe manner and many of the safety rules espoused by occupational safety and health principles were not followed. Although I was only a few days at the mine, I shut it down and instructed the owners that until they comply with the safety rules, they would not operate. Little did I know that my decision, which was based on the safety regulations as an operations manager, opened a can of worms for the entire operation.

Two days later, I was visited by the owner of the mine, who tried to convince me to reverse the decision to shut down the mine. He had a bag full of money in US currency, which he presented as an incentive to reopen the mine. Of course, the offer was tempting. In my mind, I did the currency conversions to work out the Rand value of the bribe – it would have been a life changer.

However, I stuck to my guns and told the owner that I could not accept his money. I told him to ensure that his operations were compliant with safety regulations so that lives would not be lost. These two anomalies were reported to the relevant authorities and unfortunately no action was taken to correct or rectify those unethical behaviours.

These experiences showed me that temptations would always present themselves and that the possibilities of succumbing to them are immense. However, so are the repercussions of partaking in such activities. Many people believe that because of the ineffectiveness of our criminal justice system, there is a good chance of getting away with taking a million Rand here and there under the table. Corruption is not something that happens only at high levels in government and the top strata in business. We all have had experiences of some form of corruption and perhaps talking frankly about it is what is necessary for people to distinguish between right and wrong.

Speaking at the launch of the Daily Maverick book, *We have a game changer*, Investec Joint CEO, Fani Titi made this point: “To remain independent in the world of polarisation is really difficult.” This is true in many contexts, including in the business sector where it is increasingly difficult to be your own person and act according to the dictates of your conscience. The consequences are even bigger: Partaking in such behaviour or turning a blind eye to it, makes us complicit in contributing to the culture of rot and immorality in our country and in the world. Our decision not to act against corruption, encourages others to participate in corrupt or rather unethical activities.

No matter how much we may seek to convince ourselves, it should be noted that corruption is not and never will be a victimless crime. There are always people who will suffer as a result of fraud, malfeasance, and unethical conduct. The important thing to also note and admit in this instance is that the victims of corruption are very much removed from these corrupt activities. They are mostly not part of the corrupt activities, but nonetheless bear the brunt of the harshness of a society that conducts itself in a manner which is devoid of a value system. This is not sustainable.

It is undeniable that our society is deficient of good role models. These are not just people who live exceptional lives and reach their full potential, but those who abide by the rules of law and contribute to making the world a better place. This is especially the case in townships, such as the one in which I grew up. There was a known car thief who used to drive a fancy BMW and dress in expensive clothes. He was the star of the neighbourhood. Being youngsters and

naïve, we admired and idolised him. At that time we did not realise that to be like him, we would need to be car thieves too. We were drawn to his so-called “good life” while we would call the real leaders who used to do good work by developing our community, “amabhari” (fools).

This speaks to the slant of our society to aspire to quick wealth through crime rather than ethical lives through hard work. Perhaps if we were exposed to other kinds of people who were leading successful lives in business or reaching great heights in their careers, we would not have idolised a car thief.

To expose this lack of role models further, you only have to take a look at the black middle class on weekends. They live in Sandton, Fourways, Umhlanga Rocks, Ballito, and Camps Bay. On weekends they go to popular township *shisanyamas* to drink with unemployed people. They pay alcohol bills of R5,000 or R10,000 – some even pay R50,000 alcohol bills. Of course, there is nothing wrong with socialising with people, with their owned hard-earned money. However, perhaps we can pause to ask those people who are unemployed how they can be assisted to create income sustainability. That R50,000 or even R10,000 alcohol bill could perhaps help to change people’s lives and create a new future for them.

Something must change our vision to real role models to play an active ethical leadership role in our townships and rural communities. Sometimes it is the little things that define our mindsets towards ethical conduct and care for the world in which we live.

Think of littering. It might seem like a small and insignificant thing. A friend’s NPO proposed a fine system for people who litter, but she was told by the municipality that it would be a breach of bylaws. Why it is that littering is not illegal in South Africa? In Singapore you are fined for chewing bubble-gum in public. I am certain that that law was adopted in response to a littering problem that Singapore was experiencing. All it took was the will to deal with the problem at hand, using any possible means.

It is time for us to take responsibility for the environment in which we live. In our homes, we don’t throw trash on the floor. It is therefore surprising why people think it is acceptable when they throw their rubbish on the streets. The Singapore angle is a good example of how it could be done. There appears to be an outsourcing of responsibility among many of us, which is unethical and irresponsible. Acting ethically starts with little things like these.

However, does being ethical count for much and make you a good leader? A process is underway by the Catholic Church to beatify former Tanzanian

president Julius Nyerere.⁵ He was revered by his people as the father of their nation and was known for his idealism and personal integrity. When he died in 1999, the Tanzanian bishops opened a cause for his beatification, which the Vatican has since approved. However, despite being such an upright leader, Nyerere left Tanzania as one of the poorest, least developed, and most foreign aid-dependent countries in the world. Although he remains a giant of African leadership, the state of his nation after his presidency does not speak well of his legacy. Ethical leadership therefore does not necessarily lead to the success of a nation when many other factors count against it, but this should not be a deterrent against morality and conscientiousness.

In a seminal speech in Johannesburg in 2018, former US president Barack Obama, spoke of how the world was at a crossroads and how we had to “fight harder to reduce inequality and promote lasting economic opportunities for all people.” There might have been big problems, mistakes, and deficiencies during his presidency, but there is no denying that Obama had a passion and a vision – rare qualities in political leadership nowadays. Delivering the 2018 Nelson Mandela lecture, Obama brought the house down when he spoke of the extreme disparities in the world and how in every country, a handful of wealthy elites has a “wildly disproportionate influence on their countries’ political life and on its media; on what policies are pursued and whose interests end up being ignored.”

Obama pointed out that many titans of industry and finance “are increasingly detached from any single locale or nation-state, and they experience life more and more insulated from the struggles of ordinary people in their countries of origin.” He continued: “I believe in a vision of equality and justice and freedom and multi-racial democracy, built on the premise that all people are created equal, and they’re endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights. And I believe that a world governed by such principles is possible and that it can achieve more peace and more cooperation in pursuit of a common good. That’s what I believe.”

He also rang the warning bells: “The fact is that authoritarian governments have been shown time and time again to breed corruption, because they’re not accountable to repress their people; to lose touch eventually with reality; to engage in bigger and bigger lies that ultimately result in economic and political and cultural and scientific stagnation. Look at history. Look at the facts. The fact that countries which rely on rabid nationalism and xenophobia and doctrines of tribal, racial or religious superiority as their main organizing principle, the

thing that holds people together – eventually those countries find themselves consumed by civil war or external war. Check the history books.”

Obama also made a striking admission that few affluent people are willing to attest to: “Right now I’m actually surprised by how much money I got, and let me tell you something: I don’t have half as much as most of these folks or a tenth or a hundredth. There’s only so much you can eat. There’s only so big a house you can have. There’s only so many nice trips you can take. I mean, it’s enough. You don’t have to take a vow of poverty just to say, ‘Well, let me help out a few of the other folks – let me look at that child out there who doesn’t have enough to eat or needs some school fees, let me help him out. I’ll pay a little more in taxes. It’s okay. I can afford it.’ I mean, it shows a poverty of ambition to just want to take more and more and more, instead of saying, ‘Wow, I’ve got so much. Who can I help? How can I give more and more and more?’ That’s ambition. That’s impact. That’s influence. What an amazing gift to be able to help people, not just yourself.”

These are questions we all must and have to ask ourselves. If we make a choice to live ethical lives and provide leadership wherever we are in society and in whatever we do, it means taking a look around and doing what is right. Every day we face new choices and new dilemmas. Irrespective of the rules of law and the price of getting caught doing the wrong thing, there should be a voice inside us that dictates what choices we make.

That is the essence of ethics.

And that is the essence of a good ethical leader. This ensures sustainability.

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Endnotes

- 1 Oxford Dictionary 2002:397.
- 2 Grint 2007:238.
- 3 Macmillan Dictionary n.d.
- 4 Hernandez 2012.
- 5 Nguyen 2007.



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Philanthropy and Leadership: Hearts and Minds

Boipontsho Mnguni

I am persuaded to think that philanthropy is born of charity and broadly speaking can only be carried out by a person or group who is driven by a wellspring of love and a mindset that supports and aims to eliminate social problems. I find the following words by Thomas Monson on “Pure religion” inspiring: “We are surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our kindness... We are the Lord’s hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us.”

These quoted words help to explain the importance of compassion and service, and help found in the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*. When closely examined, we find specific steps that illustrate what it takes to serve others, like

- ◆ *consciousness* – awareness of your surrounding plight and suffering;
- ◆ *compassion* – love and welfare of fellow people as demonstrated by Christ;
- ◆ *contact* – involvement and action;
- ◆ *care* – aid, facilities, maintenance, and support; and
- ◆ *cost* – financing and donations, e.g., providing a home and funding for students.

I’ve always been fascinated by the work and services of groups and organisations that serve and work in the aftermath of disasters or in areas stricken by poverty and hunger. Our churches, through their guilds or leagues, groups, associations, and individuals also render their help as best as they can in whatever way possible and wherever a need is identified. I also regard the family as a place where we learn to act out our roles of love, charitable, and philanthropic leadership roles.

Some time ago, I was listening to a Radio Talk Show about the sanity of naming babies. Belief systems, culture, circumstances, reasons, and justification of naming the newly born were as varied as the number of callers. Whilst continuing listening to the callers, I took a keen interest in the rationale that was expressed by especially mothers and fathers in naming their bundles of joy. Mind you, there’s nothing sinister about the exercise. It has been done from time immemorial. I’m told that my birth was a special moment and prophetic

in nature and naming me was a crowning moment of the envisioned birth. I remember later in life that the closest we could translate my name from Tswana to English was “Envisioned.” I also remember in my youthful years that I was flattered by the qualities guessed by an app about my name and its meaning. I think of what my father said, something like: “That it says so doesn’t make it so. Look within your heart for your God-given talents and do it.”

I’m told that my story of being brought into the world was that my dad had three days before, without any influence of prior medical professional information, dreamed of my birth which he shared with my mum. He told her of the day and time when she would give birth to a baby girl after friends who had visited had left. As it was in the dream, so it happened, and Mama had to give guidance in spite of her condition. Papa recalls that it was almost like an uninitiated pilot following instructions for an emergency plane landing. Papa says because he could not bring himself to cut the umbilical cord, a nursing sister in the neighbourhood was urgently called. She arrived in time to wrap up the process which ended with the first cry of a baby girl in Mama’s hands and beaming with thankful smiles. Papa named me Boipontsho, which simply means “Envisioned.”

I’ve observed that I have a special bond with my dad and it probably stems from the prophetic dream that came true. On the Radio Talk Show, I listened to a host of callers, while those who sent in their voice-notes were evidently of varied backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicity, and they all seemed to underline the fact that baby naming is associated with events, character, behaviours, heroes and heroines, and a selfless concern for the welfare of others – the list is endless.

Papa and Mama built us a home. There was laughter, music, and healthy relationships with neighbours and families. I grew up in a company of brothers who responsibly cared for their only baby sister and who were always protective and controlling. Whenever my parents were not around, they would become deputy parents. At times when I felt I’ve been pushed around too much, the first person to whom I would lodge my complaint would be my father. I would hear him briefly urging them to treat me nicely. On the other hand, my mother would remind me to be respectful and know or acknowledge my boundaries.

Our home was a meeting place for friends of my brothers and kids in the neighbourhood, especially during weekends and school holidays. The main attraction was the English soccer matches on M-Net, KTV, Gospel and Choral Music, and the American Awards on TV. I remember our Hitachi portable Hi-fi that had a good and powerful sound and Papa would easily lend it out to family

and friends for entertainment for special occasions. These were times when family and friends just enjoyed themselves.

During school holidays, my mother made sure that we cooked enough food for our family and friends. Our favourite meal was usually homemade fish and chips or pap (porridge) and stew. My father made sure that we were never without a bag of potatoes, 5 kg of hake fillets, and oil. It was during these times that Mama devoted her space to teach me cooking and baking skills that were later refined by my sister-in-law.

Often whilst my brothers and their friends were glued to the M-Net shows, Papa would call the rest of us to the kitchen and together with him we would start playing a game of eye-contact exercise. He always said he is doing the exercise to remind us to focus and look people straight in the eyes at all times and never fall prey to put-down looks from anybody. This would move over to us reciting the poem *Desiderata* and would end off by reciting Psalm 23.

My mother was much loved by all my friends and neighbourhood kids because of her goodhearted nature and the ability to involve them in whatever she was doing, if anyone of them wished to join her and help out. If she spotted any of them with untidy hair, she would insist on fixing their hair. She taught me to always be helpful and to enjoy doing simple home chores and assist wherever possible and whenever available. Added to this was the “Just do it” attitude that my brother impressed upon me.

In the course of time, I found myself able to raise my hand and stand up to be counted, be it at school, church, or among my peers and friends. During these times, I’ve made friends and lost some, won some fights and lost some, and also let go. I’ve realised that nothing was and is perfect, for I’m forever learning from my life world and experiences.

In growing up, we are influenced by what happens around us, the way we behave and do things and also affect each other – be it at home and in the family, within groups and our community, we are impacted by change and forced to make choices that are good or bad, negative or positive. My dad had a funny way of putting it by saying, “You make choices and decisions of your own. Don’t let it affect me – carry your cross and make it right.” I’ve notice that with the bad choices and decisions I’ve made in life, my first point of call for disclosure and cry for help was usually Mama, while Papa would be told later on.

My Christian faith continues to be an integral part of my life. I used to organise, participate, support, and help out in special activities. One that comes to mind and that always brings about cherished memories is the *Seven Words on*

the Cross. With my pleading, Papa had agreed to help prepare a short play for a handful of church youth who would act out the scene on Good Friday. Our practice progress was slow and punctuated by a handful of excuses and as a result the play was called off. I seized the moment and stepped up to make a solo presentation of the *Last Seven Words of Christ on the Cross* in a packed ELCSA Church in Kwa-Thema. The preparations and practices that Papa put me through really helped to underscore the message of the cross and I was humbled by the spirit of appreciation.

In the course of time, we relocated to a nearby suburb and after a year or so, I decided to join the Word of Life Church in Springs where, during my active membership, I was trained and developed to run youth and community projects such as helping out with finances at a local orphanage, and in assisting the fund raising for the church. My pastor, Dr Steve Ward instilled in us the importance of sound knowledge, passion, and commitment in all our undertakings. The orphanage home, among other community projects, enjoyed support from the church.

In one of our visits, I came into contact with a young boy called Siyabonga with whom we bonded at first sight. I remember him saying, “Are you also going to leave me and never come back to visit again like everyone else?” That left a lump in my throat and I never wanted to disappoint him ever since. I was overwhelmed by his observation as a child. I never wanted him to ever feel that way in his life again. So, I made it a point to visit him once a month. Sadly, that commitment did not last very long because Siyabonga was finally taken away from the orphanage to live with a family member.

The experience and voluntary services at the orphanage left me with unforgettable memories that strengthened my resolve to extend a helping hand whenever and wherever I identify a need. The depth of practical exposure at Word of Life was usually a refreshing and inspiring experience, all because Pastor Ward made us understand what it means to be Christ-centred servant leaders. Every role and function had as basis, a biblically based job description that empowered us to execute tasks like being an usher, part of the hospitality team, or woman’s ministry, catering, pre-service prayer, or alter worker. All of these I devotedly did out of love. With a youthful spirit and courage to do this, I found myself also involved in the mercy ministries where we would give Christmas gifts for needy children and help pack, coordinate, and distribute groceries to the needy within the church and communities.

During my employment at Edcon, I had an opportunity to make use of the different CSI initiatives as a middle person tasked with identifying and applying for the children's homes that received donated clothes which were stored at the distribution centre for this purpose. The donations which we received and kept for continued distribution ensured that the children would receive clothing throughout the year. On my numerous visits to assess the impact of Edcon's support of these orphanages, it was satisfying to find children clothed warmly, especially during the wintertime, and appropriately on the alternative seasons of the year.

Time and again, on reflection, I reach the conclusion and resolve that I'll always be deliberate in making a difference in people's lives wherever I am and whenever I can. The empathy and the selfless concern for the welfare of others, the habit of lifting my hand and be available to give a helping hand and assisting organisations and church structures have made me to rethink and learn ways and means of making an impact in small things and not only on the broader scheme of life's community and family.

My grandfather used to tell me many stories, but my favourite was his 1c story of rental arrears at the time when he was employed by Mr Truter for almost 20 years. He would still relate the story in disbelief in spite of it having occurred almost 20 years to my birthday because the threat of losing his house was real.

In his distress, he spoke to his employer, PJ Truter who wrote to the council, submitting that my grandfather worked for him for 30 years and has never failed to pay his rent. He was the horticulturist in Kwa-Thema and has won a number of garden competitions for years. He described my grandfather as a respectable man and resident, and that a street was named More Street, after his brother. Mr Truter then in turn wrote a cheque of 1c to the administrative office, which meant that it would cost the municipality more to write off the debt.

My grandfather was a man of his word, loved working with his hands, and had a passion for gardening – a love that he shared with my mom. He would always teach me lessons about planting seeds and how that would result in a harvest – the joy that comes with it when you see how the seedlings are growing. He taught me about honour, respect, and integrity, how it would fight for you in the darkest of times. He would always say, *Tlhompha motho, o tlhomphe mosebetsi* (Respect people around you and respect your work). He was also an established barber and many of his customers came on Saturday afternoons and would be listening to the radio soccer matches or rugby. However, as times

went on, he went back to his favourite hobby – vegetables and flower gardens that won him unforgettable accolades. My grandfather was principled. When the occasion arose that he had to ask my father for some money, he would make sure to repay him and would be against any attempt to cancel the debt, insisting that the money was lent to him, and he must therefore repay it. He used to say there's a difference between "lend me money" and "please give me money" and would never pretend he had forgotten.

"A rolling stone gathers no moss," is said of a person who is always on the move and perceived to be unproductive and unreliable. I've always wondered why this was followed like a gospel because it is also true that working in different jobs at different institutions and places can enrich one with vital hands-on skills and knowledge. Today there are better tools to measure a person's productivity and reliability.

I've worked at different places and enjoyed top of the drawer employee training and skills development. At Nedbank, I found that the company is dedicated to making an impact on communities. For this reason, employee community involvement and voluntary participation were encouraged, and we all gave of our time and talents to exploit available resources in order to make an impact in people's lives. The volunteerism programme offered tangible ways for employees to be involved in dealing with the social, economic, and environmental issues in order to alleviate the plight in our communities and country, e.g., Nedbank Children's Affinity accounts platform and caring for communities and WESSA (the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa).

The following proverbs will always act as differentiators in relation to the things I give my time to, and where I make my voice heard:

- ◆ Surround yourself with people that challenge you.
- ◆ Learn and learn quickly.
- ◆ Be open-minded and embrace diversity to learn from everyone.
- ◆ Be unapologetically yourself.

There is still a purpose for my life and a place in the society for me to make a difference. I strive not to settle for less but to do the best that I can, even at times that I struggle with my own confidence, when I am consumed with fear and not want to take the glory. That can be good for just a little while, but don't let that fool you that you don't go for what you are good at. With all the lessons that I learnt throughout my life journey, I want to highlight the following:

- ◆ My parents taught me the value of work and consistency.

- ◆ My grandfather taught me the value of respect for self and one's work.
- ◆ My pastor taught me the value of leading with Jesus' principles and love for his people.

In whatever I do, my efforts are always honest, and in the event of the lack of success, I exploit failure as a stimulating ingredient that prompts me to relook, to revisit, and redo in order to get rewarding outcomes. I've learnt that being a leader starts with one's own conviction of making a difference and having influence wherever you are.



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It was never meant to be a Man's Game

Seapei Mafoyane

This chapter is dedicated to the women who are changing the world, one moment at a time – our forebears known and unknown. This is an ode to all the women – diligently doing things big and small – to advance the world for the better.

Here's to my legion of change agents, all of them an incredible part of the tapestry of my life. My late grandmothers, Mme Tabane le Seapei, the late Mam Winnie Ngomane, the late Mme Betty Matlhare (my kindergarten teacher), Mrs Carol Ashman (my childhood speech and drama coach), Tselagale Mafoyane (my queen and mother), my small but distinctive tribe of sister friends, my nieces, and every woman who has positively touched my life.

In many African households, children are supposed to be seen and not heard. However, I was the antithesis of that from as early as I can remember. I've always been fascinated with rules and conformity – especially the reasons why we follow the norms we do. As a child, this meant that I asked a lot of questions and was never happy to readily accept the “rule set” That is so often spelled out for children. My mother as the stern disciplinarian in our home had the worst time with my inquisitions and sadly, often saw them as a challenge to her authority. As an adult, I can appreciate how challenging it must have been to have me in the home along with three other siblings and whatever other life challenges my parents were dealing with at the time.

This crazed inquisitiveness in my childhood would later impart upon me the desire to critically analyse and understand things. In High School, my interest gravitated both towards the Performing Arts as well as to the Sciences, though my natural choice in tertiary education was the science field.

When I was younger, I didn't consider my parents' compatibility or what they drew from each other in raising me and my siblings. My view of them was based primarily on how I experienced their personalities and so, in judgement, I viewed my father as the more amenable, patient parent and often mistook my mother for the judgemental and less pliable of the two. In retrospect, their partnership offered me all of the makings of a great childhood, structure,

accountability, and consideration for those around me – which is literally like gold when living in a household with six people in it.

My mother is one of the strongest people I know, a strong woman who was raised and surrounded by strong women herself. My maternal grandfather left his family when my mom was only six years old – a political exile separated from his country and family for many years. So, the circumstances which were implanted in our country's painful tapestry, caused by apartheid, made my grandmother a single parent and for all intents and purposes, a widow when she, along with her children were very young. That separation, along with her sheer stubbornness, invoked the type of strength which is best described by an expression in Setswana, my mother tongue, which goes, "*Mmangwana o tshwara thipa ka fa bogaleng*" which loosely translated means "a mother protects her family, even in the face of danger."

My mother and aunts, having come from a home made up of four women and an estranged father, embraced the notion of self-reliance. In our home – taking some lessons from my mother's upbringing – my parents embraced an early version of a gender fluid home, assigning any and all chores to us – my brother and the three sisters. My parents' mechanism for assigning these was based on age, not on gender and so for a good long time, I believed that every household functioned in this way. From around the age of four, my parents were encouraging us to read and write, and even though we were reading children's books, we were still reading. Each of us was expected to learn how to write their names and learn to count, all before we started Grade 1. The achievement of learning to hold a pencil or crayon and master the spelling of one's name, even if some of the letters were facing the wrong direction, was rewarded with a promotion to the task of washing one's own socks and polishing school shoes from Grade 1.

Like army sergeants, our parents continuously drilled us, while all the while letting us believe that this growing task list was a great achievement in life and so we all strove, each of my siblings and I, seeking the validation and applause. Polishing our shoes would move us over to sweeping our bedrooms, then in time the kitchen, mopping and polishing the floors, washing dishes, and eventually cooking and cleaning like absolute masters by the time we were in our early teens.

In all of my formative years, my parents habitually held us to a life standard based on self-reliance, high achievement, and distinction. These standards were anchored by their love, support, selflessness, and faith in God.

What I remember most about my childhood is that I absolutely mastered those things that were dear to me, like singing, dancing, reading, and writing, and never for a single moment considered that my ability would somehow be linked to me being male or female. In much the same way, I performed very poorly at those things I wasn't good at. I could never run fast as a child – well, I still can't. Although I would have loved to be a prolific sketch artist, my artistic ability was and still is non-existent and even then, I never associated these shortcomings with my gender.

High School was one of those defining periods for me in the clear demarcation of personal ability by gender. From sport to academia, the school system enjoyed the distinction in the celebration of performance by gender. Across the different sporting codes, there was always the best girl or boy swimmer, athlete, gymnast, or even archer. As a child and as most children do, I fell in line and followed the rules – well most of the time – and never paid attention to any of the limitations or privileges that the separation would have on how I saw my place in the world.

Entering the corporate world was a combination of generations of dreams coming true, all at the same time. As children, my parents had never coddled us and so we were probably more independent than children should be, sooner than we should have been. We took on more responsibilities than some of our peers would, purely because our sense of duty was stimulated very early on in our lives. I left home for boarding school at the age of 12 and so any puerile attachment that 12-year-olds still have to home was considerably diminished. By the time I got to first year at university, I wasn't only dreaming about the all night partying that some of my peers would have been – although that didn't stop me indulging in it. I yearned for financial freedom, progress, and greater independence over everything else in order to liberate my parents from what I still feel was the noble and generous investment in a great education for my siblings and me.

This sense of duty made me feel right at home once I entered corporate South Africa. I may have been a novice in my humble job, but I was immensely proud of the modest living that it afforded me and the freedom my parents could begin to enjoy. The initial assessment that my analytical mind undertook in that first job was the leadership. I scanned that environment as I wanted to know two things: First, who was in charge, and second, what I needed to do to rise up the ranks. I quickly identified my team leader, divisional manager, general manager, and director, and established two things with that assessment:

One was the sobering realisation of just how low I was on that corporate ladder, and second, how very masculine and untransformed my leadership team was.

Some of the generous benefits of youth are the innocent ignorance it is often veiled in and the overzealousness that one may have about their own capabilities at that age. Not only was I employed in the richest square mile in Africa, but I was persevering – a small-town girl with big city dreams. In my mind, I was simply unstoppable! I was employed in what was then a small division within a new age financial services company in the health sector. Their leaders were young, the energy prodigious and that was fertile ground for a young and determined girl. I scanned my division and the odds appeared to be stacked against me. There were, in my assessment, too many of us in the entry level roles. I was concerned about getting lost in the system and becoming part of the furniture, so I set off to distinguish myself.

Within my second month of work, I resolved to remain at work well after the close of business. There was really no work to do, at least nothing intricate, given how junior I was at the time, but still, I stayed back after everyone had left. I had nothing to rush home to and hated the scramble for public transport at peak times, so I would simply sit in the office and stare at my computer. On the odd occasion where there'd be admin to complete, I was more than happy to take it on. What I soon realised is that the leadership team would also reappear from their engagements and meetings at that hour. That excited me.

I didn't have to sit and stare for long before one of these leaders walked up to me one day to make small talk. In these ten minutes that it took for us to get acquainted, he had inquired about my background and was excited by the fact that I held the same undergraduate qualification as the divisional manager. By the end of that evening, he'd introduced me to his peers and the very next day, I was assigned to working directly with him on special projects. That was my first step towards corporate distinction and away from the crowd. I couldn't have been happier.

That divisional manager would become one of the most significant influences in my life and to my career. His name is Stephen Mitchley, and he became my very first corporate mentor. He coached and I listened, he instructed, and I did – I moulded my behaviour around his. I observed him and kept a mental note for myself. I strove to anticipate his requests, to do more than he asked, to think how he did, which was often three steps further than I would in resolving a problem. That earned me the privilege to walk into meetings which I ordinarily would not have been able to have access to. I gained a seat at the table,

albeit as an observer and became the quiet but ever-present young female voice in those sessions.

It was great to get a seat at the table, but no one ever told me that there'd be more to be expected of me once I was there. While I was confident and expressive around my mentor, I wasn't always vocal at the management and strategic meetings that he'd let me tag along to. It wasn't long before my input was being sought around the table and I came to the realisation that a seat at the table comes with the responsibility to add value.

I had a lot to say in the company of my friends, and my parents had encouraged us to speak up when required to, but I was uncertain about the terrain that a boardroom presented and whether my voice would carry. In those early years, I often limited my input to responding to questions when asked and reporting back on tasks to which I'd been assigned. It didn't take long for me to realise that simply showing up and fading into the background wouldn't suffice. It sounded simple, but transitioning from being a university student and debating ideas with my peers in class to leading and potentially challenging the ideas of people with more experience than me, was daunting.

In my first job I experienced a lot of my professional firsts and that prepared me for the spirited career that would follow. My meander through corporate South Africa may appear to be ill thought from the outside – well it may be muddled, but it's been organised chaos for me. It took me six years to summon the courage to leave my first job – one of the toughest decisions I have ever made in my early working years. I had little to complain about. I was in a wonderful job and had risen up the ranks quite impressively in those six years. I was well regarded among my peers and leaders (that's what I tell myself) and had even won an annual company-wide Star Award in recognition of my performance.

For all intents and purposes, I could have drifted into cruise control and continued to do "just fine," but I've never been one for averages or safe spaces. The yearning to distinguish myself was once again surfacing and it was loud. At this stage, I had two internal mentors, one of whom was a member of the group executive, and they both cautioned me to "stay the course," To "be patient" while all my internal panic signals were sounding. I was in my mid-twenties, had enjoyed a relatively good career with a clear path towards stability but again, I was displeased at my own achievements.

I didn't just want to enter those spaces which I was given permission to occupy, I wanted to be trusted to chart new territory. Once I made the decision

to seek new paths, they came out to find me. I was invited to interviews with two different financial services companies and inside I felt alive again. I hadn't a clue about finances or financial management, but that insecurity fuelled the desire to learn. I enjoyed great satisfaction from my periods of learning. Those moments which required me to first admit that I'm in over my head because once that humility sets in, my curiosity is awakened, and in those moments, I learn a tremendous amount.

The one institution had quite a celebrated brand and the other was regarded as slower, older, and perhaps less agile. In all honesty, I could have gone with either one, except that the former extended an offer to me after a single coffee meeting with their Africa Executive, while the latter had been putting me through their rigorous selection process for four months. In my mind, the choice was simple, if they hadn't seen in four months what the other one had seen over one sitting of coffee, they may never have seen it – and so off to the Jurassic I went with my mouth shut and my ears and eyes wide open. That Africa Executive would become and remains one of my most trusted mentors and voices of reason today.

One of my most sobering engagements at “the Bank” was a meeting to which I was invited by my director within my first month on the job. I had been given the Basel Accord as my induction read, the most intimidating piece of literature for someone with my sparse knowledge of the banking sector, and was supposed to understand it well enough to consider its impact on my division. My parents raised strong girls. If they hadn't, I may have gone running for the hills. I had gone through the Accord at least twice before the concepts started to make very basic sense to my scientific mind. Armed with my rudimentary knowledge, I braved this first director's meeting, while I wasn't even a head of a department, thus another invitation to the table. I rushed into the meeting when all the other participants, all better informed, all with more experience, had already taken their respective seats at the table. I scanned the room and once again staring back at me was a room full of only men. I greeted and took my seat, exchanging a brief smile of acknowledgement with my director. Just as the meeting started, one of the other directors who clearly had no idea who I was, made a head gesture at me and asked if I was going to take the coffee orders!

The what? I was confused at first – coffee and Basel. Had I perhaps missed this reference in all my nervous reading? I'd never imagined that in a room full of very knowledgeable men, all of whom I was hoping to learn from, I'd be mistaken for the tea lady. I didn't know whether to be annoyed or impassive.

Suddenly the voices of all the naysayers were ringing loud in my head – perhaps joining “the Bank” would be a regrettable mistake.

I could have easily chosen to let the annoyance derail my plan at work. I could have also allowed myself to feel victimised by a single individual's bigotry, but when you've had to fight for everything you have, you learn to roll with the punches. This close-minded encounter and some of the disapproving stares and glances at meetings made me determined to work through the aggravation. I was in a new environment and all my previous glory from my first job was long forgotten. I had to start all over again and prove why I could be *young* and *female* and *black* and *deserving* of my seat at their privileged table.

My parents had taught us to work hard from an early age and the rewards of a good work ethic were evident in the stable life they'd been able to create for us. Having received a scholarship in High School and spent a long time around children from different countries, cultures, and ethnic groups, I'd imagined that I was better prepared than some others for my place in the world. However, I wasn't. School had provided an incredible opportunity to appreciate the differences between us, while celebrating what we had in common. Within my school system, all intolerance and any intransigence were weeded out. That may have made for a great place for school children, but created a pseudo-culture which I learnt was quite unrealistic in the real world.

Ursula Burns, the 1st African American Woman to head a Fortune 500 company once said, “Keep your eyes on what's important and everything else will fall into place.” That's exactly what I started to do. I was in a place that was more narrow-minded and less welcoming, but it was when I simply stopped paying attention to those annoyances and started carving out my own space that I felt more comfortable. I hadn't ever let a little discomfort derail me before and I wasn't about to start, so I stopped expecting the welcome, the greetings, or the smiles. It was great if I got them, and just as great if I didn't. I found my own tribe, those people who encouraged my growth and I leaned heavily on them. I asked questions, I tried new things, I worked long and I worked hard. I was relentless.

I was also a little older – I hoped I was a little wiser – but I was more confident than I had been all those years ago in my first job. No amount of nerves could keep me from taking my seat at the table, no matter who was unsettled by my presence. I realised that I had to be me at all times and that the world had to adjust. I may not have known everything about financial services, but I was learning more each day and I wasn't afraid to ask. I was determined

to do everything that I needed to enable me to add the value that I was certain I could add.

To be fair, the corporate world is not homogenous. No one company is exactly like the next. With each move I've made, there have been great lessons to learn. Sometimes, you may have to take up a torch and crawl into the dark because people may not always be forthcoming or excited with the idea of supporting you. That's okay. What my responsibility was and always will be is to stay the course, to understand the requirements, and to add value.

Over the years, I have celebrated with admiration, just like those women who have walked boldly into spaces which women have previously not occupied. The limitations in what we're able to achieve exist most loudly in our minds. Women have said so much about how our interests have not always been well represented across different spaces. We'd do better to inhabit those spaces ourselves and represent our own interests.

Practice may not necessarily make perfect, but practice will refine what you're good at, so that you can learn to focus on that. I know that practice will never make perfect because if it did, I'd be a world-famous artist. As a child, I had the greatest admiration for artists like my brother. They'd think of something or simply take a look at something and then with simple strokes on a piece of paper, manage to translate that into something magnificent to look at. No, I didn't become a great artist, but I grew very comfortable in the sound of my voice.

There's an interesting thing that happens when you learn to trust the sound of your own voice – it's called confidence. Once that is realised, you learn to take charge of your interactions, to not only listen while at the decision-making table, but to also add value. I have learnt to trust my conviction, to be open to learn from others around me, but to take full charge of my own thoughts. I've also learnt that I have at least one thing in common with my male colleagues at the table, and that was to see the company or task to succeed, and if we can all equally focus on that, then the route by which we get there can be a matter of compromise.

"I didn't learn to be quiet when I had an opinion. The reason they knew who I was is because I told them" – Ursula Burns said that about her journey to chairperson and CEO at Xerox, and my heart had said it a million times over. My opinion of myself is more valuable to me than the opinions that others hold of me. I appreciate that while some may look at me and see the world, there may be others who see only ruins, so instead of yielding to these yo-yo views of me, I

have chosen to focus on building a life based on how and what I want for my life. I speak openly when I have something to say and at the same time, I keep quiet when I have nothing to say. I know that always having something to say, even when it adds no value, can be as wearisome as never having anything to say at all – especially when you occupy those spaces in which your input is expected.

What I didn't know when I started working was just how generous life would be in the experiences it would bless me with. In that first job, when I felt like I was facing an uphill battle to the top, I couldn't have imagined what my view would look like over 10 years after starting in corporate South Africa. In 2012, I was invited to meet with two gentlemen who were looking to appoint a seasoned professional onto their board of directors. This was one of the most exciting undertakings of my career. It's that excitement that almost split me in two: The one part of me was enthralled by the opportunity, while the other was wanting to run for the hills as I was nervous about messing it all up.

What made that encounter more nerve-wrecking is that one of the two gentlemen that I met with, is quite a household name. He had enjoyed a remarkable career and very public profile, so not only was I nervous, I was also a little star struck. A wonderful friend recommended me for this opportunity, and I remember sitting down to lunch with her and trying to draw out all the information I possibly could to prepare me for this meeting. I may be confident, but this would be taking my corporate exposure to a completely new level, and I was certainly anxious.

I remember rushing to go and buy the newspaper on the day that the SENS announcement was published. I stared at my name in the paper, sitting in my car at the petrol station in awe and excitement. My foot had once again made it through the door and although I've made it inside, I'd have quite a task learning the ropes. My first ever board meeting was in September 2012 and by then I was no longer surprised at the representation inside the boardroom. My esteemed colleagues were primarily men, while the women, including myself, made up about 30 percent of the room.

At the *Women in the World Summit* in 2016, Christine Lagarde, the previous chair of the International Monetary Fund and now president of the European Central Bank, said, "For women to get to the top, you need skin as thick as a crocodile." This is ever true of a journey of women in any sphere. As I've kept on learning, it's not enough to just get your foot through the door. Once inside, accepting a seat at the table will also not necessarily keep you there. The only

certain way to own that place deservedly is to keep performing at the highest level, every single day.

I've come quite a long way since the butterflies that I felt as I took up my very first board role with a JSE listed entity in 2012, but the importance of what I'm doing is not lost on me. My career has taken me on an incredible journey of gratitude. I have met many incredible people on my travels and realise that the human connection is about much more than one's gender. When I opened myself up to the possibilities, I have been well received by good people and invited to speak on their stages at home, on the continent, and abroad.

The very first nerve wrecking opportunity opened up many others. In many instances, it has been my very male colleagues in corporate corridors who have reached out to me when other opportunities have arisen. For them, it has been their experience of me over the years. The combination of the value that I bring and the congenial way that I have approached even our greatest disagreements, have prompted their regard of my contribution.

As I reflect on my almost 20 years' experience in corporate South Africa, I realise that my career has been well supported by incredible human beings – both men and women – along the way. I choose to believe in the ubiquitously affirmative human spirit which thrives in spite of the opposition it faces. So, while it's evident that the place which women fill in the corporate space is still small, I can also comfortably say that we must never stop putting our names forward. We need to take the chance on ourselves that we wish others to. We must knock on the doors, walk the corridors, take the seats, and do absolutely everything we can to make our voices heard.

Women cannot in one instance or with a single action end the incredibly constrained way in which the world continually deals with them. We may not be able to stop it, but we should impede it. We also should not accept it, nor should we tire because our work is far from over. It was never meant to be a man's game when women have, for generations received, carried, and brought forth life. Rupi Kaur says it most elegantly, "Our backs tell stories no books have the spine to carry."



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Leadership and the Corporate Ladder: My take

Mfanasibili Emmanuel Mdhuli

Growing up in the township is very challenging and quite daunting. One is faced with so many challenges on a daily basis. It can either make you or break you – and often, the latter happens. It’s a daily life-and-death struggle, literally. Poverty, strife, hunger, violence, etc. are experiences that play out every day in many townships, fortunately not in all of them. So many never get to see the other side: Joy, breakthrough, opportunity, and growth. They never get the opportunity to get a different viewpoint. I know I’m painting a very gloomy picture, but it is the reality of life in the township and there’s nothing romantic about it. I could go into more detail about what I mean, but it is not for the topic I’m writing about. What is the other side? It is the world outside of the township. It is the multitude of opportunities and possibilities that exist beyond one’s immediate surroundings in the township. Don’t get me wrong, there is life, plenty of life in the township. There are plenty of opportunities as well, however, these are covered in difficulty, trial, and fear. It is just many a time very difficult to see them or even pursue them because of the prevailing dogma that to succeed or “make it,” one must leave the township. The other sad reality is that so many young lives are cut short because there is no vision, support, or even thought about what lies beyond. Bread and butter issues take priority and there is never much time to dream. Township life is a real depiction of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. There are exceptions though, quite a number of them.

I was born and raised in Alexandra Township (Alex), north of Johannesburg. It is nestled between the shiny and opulent northern suburbs of Sandton *et al.* It is surrounded by Wynberg on the west, Marlboro and Kelvin on the north, Kew, and Lombardy West, and Lombardy East on the south. Formed in 1912, it is one of the oldest townships in South Africa and has produced several prominent individuals such as Kgalema Motlanthe, Dr Irvin Khoza, and one of my all-time favourite soccer players, the late great Isaac “Shakes” Kungoane. It also produced me, a future prominent individual, ahem.

Growing up in the 80s and 90s wasn't easy, but my parents worked hard despite systemic challenges to provide for me and my three brothers. They ensured that we had a roof over our heads, food to eat, and that we went to school. They made our house a home. They worked so hard that they even were able to at least send me and my younger brothers to the then Model C schools to try and improve our social and economic prospects with the dawn of democracy on the horizon. A mother and father, despite clear obstacles, still ensuring that their children grow up with good manners, respect, self-belief, ambition, and drive. This for me is leadership, some will call it parenting. I have learnt courage from my mother. She always finds a way even in extremely difficult times. Raising four boys is extremely challenging, but she did it. Her boys are all still alive today because she was there and led by example. She is very special to me. My mother and father will always be heroes to me. I am forever grateful for all that they have done for me and my brothers. I must also emphasise that my primary schooling in Alex was great and helped to shape the man I have now become. I am forever grateful to the teachers and principals at Emfundisweni Primary and Pholoshoh Higher Primary Schools respectively. Their dedication, diligence, empathy, love, and care affected me positively and made me believe in myself and had a profound impact on me to this day. I can recall our principal at Pholoshoh, Mr Mashiloane, emphasising cleanliness, pride, hard work, and respect. He and his staff took pride in us and the school and ensured that they developed future leaders who would go on and do great things. That is leadership! My time at St Mary's and Redhill Saturday school also immensely strengthened my resolve and belief that I can achieve anything if I believe and diligently apply myself. There are so many of us out there who were blessed to have attended these Saturday schools as they made a positive impact in our lives and improved our academic and social skills across racial and cultural backgrounds. Again, this for me is leadership – developing young people to their full potential and positioning them for the future. My high school experience was one that instilled pride, dedication, courage, and hard work in me.

My time at King Edward VII School (KES) (Standard 6 till mid Standard 9) and Sunward Park High School (mid Standard 9 and Matric) was special and I cherish it deeply. My time at KES really opened my eyes to what was possible. At the time I was young and did not have a grasp of what it meant to be in that environment and interact with boys from different races, cultures, and backgrounds. You can imagine a 13-year-old from Alex going to Standard 8 at a model C school in Houghton in 1992 and being only one of two black boys in a class of 30. It was really daunting but with hindsight, we had so many great

experiences and learnt so many lessons, which I still apply to this very day. One of my fondest memories at KES happened in 1993 when former President Mandela visited the school. My then guidance teacher offered me a one-on-one meeting with Tata and I thought she was joking, but on the day of his visit I remember being called out of my Afrikaans class to meet Tata. I can vividly remember walking down the long corridor towards the quad and there he was with my guidance teacher and a few others waiting for me. It was surreal and it still is to this day. That is leadership for me. My guidance teacher showed great leadership in living up to her promise and creating a lasting experience for me. Tata Mandela showed great leadership in being patient, humble, and interested in meeting with me after having to meet the entire school and teachers. By making time for me, the gesture indicated to me that he cared and was interested. I will forever cherish that experience.

Throughout my childhood I was fascinated by business, companies, investments, and suits, yes suits. It all started at home when, everyday I would observe my father getting ready for work. He was smartly dressed in his suit and looked the part. He worked for a well-known Japanese motor company for many years and was highly regarded at work. On top of that he spoke and wrote extremely well. You would have thought he was the CEO. I can recall marvelling at his signature's complexity and exquisiteness. I can recall his stories about business calls he would make to Japan and the awards he would annually win at work. In my eyes he was a great business/corporate leader even though he was a middle manager with limited prospects of climbing higher in the corporate ladder due to the apartheid laws and limitations placed on black people. My dad's working career was very interesting despite the clear limitations due to the laws of the country at that time. He was extremely disciplined, hardworking, and intelligent. He assisted so many and created opportunities for them within the companies he worked for. He did not only look out for himself but also for others. In the 24 years spent working at Motor Corporation, he ended up being the sales warranty manager. He then joined a retail giant in the FMCG space where he worked for 10 years, eventually becoming a store manager. In my view, if times were different, he would have ascended to the top of the corporate ladder. My dad was a leader in my eyes. He cared about people and their wellbeing. He led by example. He solved problems and even created a home environment that was great to grow up in. My interest in the corporate world was sparked.

Growing up, I was always a good academic student, and this afforded me the opportunity to attend Saturday schools (as stated earlier) in the previously

white schools in the suburbs. This allowed me to get a glimpse of the world beyond my township and to interact with people from different backgrounds. It also enabled me to further improve academically and somehow prepare me for competing at a different level, especially in high school where I was classmates with bright young people from different cultural, socio-economic, and racial backgrounds. There was a guy at school named Tony Wu. I have never met anyone as clever as he was. I remember him getting 100 percent for Maths and something like 99 percent for Art. Who gets 99% for Art? How is that even possible? Additionally, my aunt worked as a home assistant for the CEO of the same company that my dad worked for. This enabled me during school holidays to visit and interact with them. This further increased my interest in the corporate world and business in general. I believed that this business interest coupled with my academic rigour plus perceived leadership abilities would stand me in good stead when the time came. Further evidence was when I dropped out of my Computer Systems engineering studies at Wits Technikon due to financial difficulties. Truth be told, I did not enjoy most of the course at all and felt relieved when in a roundabout way I could stop it albeit not by default. In my heart I knew I wanted to study business and progress up the corporate ladder.

I must point out that it never naturally dawned on me what the corporate ladder really was and what it entailed. I had no clue about what it takes to be a good business leader and corporate head honcho. However, having spent time at the local library in Alex, I became interested in business studies, especially the Masters in Business Administration degree (MBA). As I got older, that feeling got stronger and stronger and I became obsessive about studying and completing an MBA. In my view, it was the ticket to business success and climbing the corporate ladder. I now have an MBA but still have a lot to learn, still have a lot of growing to do and barriers to break. The journey is only beginning and I'm very excited about the future and what it potentially holds. By the way, an MBA is a good "toolbox" To have but does not automatically translate to the corner office or even competence. You still need to be good at what you do to grow and succeed in the corporate world. I'm still glad I have it though.

My definition of Corporate Leadership

It has been said over time that leaders are born and not made, while others believe the inverse to be true. Some have said that leaders serve, must be authentic, must care about people and must leave a trail of leaders wherever they are. All these are true and noble traits of leadership to live by and aspire to.

In the corporate world, it is critical that there is a strong leadership pipeline to ensure continued growth and sustainability of the business. It is also important that succession planning is undertaken to safeguard the organisation against a leadership vacuum in case of departures, retirements, or passing of existing leaders. Over the years it has been shown through real corporate examples that sound and true leadership is necessary for business to grow, flourish, and even survive. We've seen supposedly good businesses unravel due to poor leadership at board and operational level. The devastation to shareholders, employees, and society has been colossal. My sincere belief has always been and continues to be that authentic leadership is critical to business success and sustainability, which is why my ambition has always been to be one of the cohort or pool of potential leaders to be in line to lead when called upon in business. I continue to learn and grow daily to ensure that when the time comes, I'll be ready.

Taking lessons from my childhood, family, schooling, corporate life so far, and general experience, I will try to further define corporate leadership in my own words and analysis. I will use the simple and yet powerful analogy, in my view of an individual in possession of a ladder. He will be using it to climb on top of a house to get a great view of the horizon as the sun rises and sets. One usually begins as a general employee, managing oneself, and then climbs the ladder through the management levels to then ultimately get to the executive suite and potentially CEO, and at times even to being part of a board of directors of a company, if that is their career path and journey. Therefore, the analogy I want to make is a perfect illustration of climbing in the leadership context, at a simplistic and basic level.

The first illustration is of a person with a ladder climbing up the roof and then pulling the ladder with them onto the roof and thus depriving others of the opportunity to climb as well and join them to see the view – **the all-about-me syndrome**. The second illustration is a person using the ladder to climb up the roof and then pushing the ladder down, forgetting that at some point they will need to climb down from the roof. They remain trapped on the roof and are at the mercy of those at the bottom who can then decide whether to put up the ladder so that they can climb down safely – **the I-did-it-myself loner**. The third illustration is of a person who uses the ladder for not only themselves but brings others along with them to climb to the top of the roof so that they can all enjoy the great view and in the end safely descend down as well – **the my-brother's-keeper cool cat**.

In the next sections, I will explain the individual illustrations, using my personal experience of each and made-up scenarios and how these have shaped

me as a person and aspirant leader, trying to climb the corporate ladder. Keep in mind that this analogy can be used in any leadership setting and not only in the corporate world.

The All-about-Me Syndrome

Getting to the top of any endeavour or discipline, whether in business, sport, creative arts, or the like is not easy. It takes a huge amount of dedication, fortitude, self-belief, and support. There is also an element of luck or what I call *stepping out*: It is the act of putting oneself in a position to attract or take advantage of opportunities without them being visibly available. It is the adage of “the more you try the luckier you get.” However, there is this prevailing belief of “self-made” people. These are the people that supposedly reached the top on their own, using their own strength and abilities, with no assistance or help. In my opinion it is not possible to make it on your own without some sort of support or assistance. Even the greats have had support: Warren Buffet had Benjamin Graham, Indra Nooyi (former PEPSICO CEO) was inspired by her older sister, Patrice Motsepe had his dad, and Mike Teke had his beloved grandmother. The point I’m trying to make is that nothing happens in a vacuum. The road to success or greatness is paved with a great support system and people who believe in your dreams and help you make them a reality in one or the other shape or form.

Therefore, I don’t buy into the all-about-me syndrome. Let me elaborate. Above I have referred to this individual who wants to get on the rooftop of the house to take in the great view of the horizon. It looks spectacular from the top of the house. He owns a ladder and uses it to climb onto the roof to enjoy the view. He is fortunate as he is the only one in his neighbourhood who has such a view and a ladder to take it in. When he climbs onto the roof, he takes the ladder with him onto the roof and thus deprives others from joining him. Yes, it is his ladder and he has every right to do as he pleases with it. However, my sentiment is that being in a position of privilege affords one the opportunity to include others and bring them with to also access and enjoy the benefits. In this case, sharing the ladder with others and being open to assisting them to climb, takes nothing away from you and instead creates a lasting and impactful pipeline of leaders who will share the same belief system and ethos of serving and building up others to become leaders as well.

I have had the experience of self-centred and inept leaders whose sole focus was on themselves and not their teams. Everything was about them and how they toiled to get to where they are and therefore expect others to do

it for themselves as well. Essentially, this was about getting your own ladder and view. It is the belief that my struggles give me the right to not share or not be open to assisting others, as that would be a negative enabler. It is like ascribing overcoming difficulties to a strong character. It may be so but not in all cases. There are times where it is unnecessary to put others through struggle in the hope that they will appreciate their success more. It makes no sense to me that if I have the means to make someone's life easier, I don't because I believe they will take it for granted because they did not suffer in attaining it. I truly believe that my suffering and overcoming strife are the building blocks to creating a stronger and firmer foundation for those who are coming after me. Therefore, I believe leaders primarily exist to build other leaders and leave a positive legacy of servanthood and service, whether in corporate, government, or social enterprises. The inability or unwillingness to impart knowledge, share, assist, mentor, coach, sponsor, and engage is a massively missed opportunity for leaders and deprives organisations of the opportunity to create an enabling culture that supports leadership development which in turn has a positive long-term effect on succession and sustainability.

The I-Did-it-Myself Loner

This individual is like the all-about-me guy. The key difference between them is that the loner climbs onto the roof and has this great view alone but then throws the ladder back down to the ground, forgetting that at some point they will need to climb down the roof. They remain trapped on the roof and are at the mercy of those at the bottom who can then decide whether to put up the ladder for them to climb down safely. This is the individual who has forgotten where they come from and are so engrossed with being on top that they forget every sense of reality. They forget that more often than not people gravitate towards them because of their position or title and not necessarily their true being. Remove the position/title and no one cares. This scenario plays out so often in the corporate world and even in other spheres that the office you hold is respected and therefore you are automatically "respected" Too. The leader mistakes the respect afforded to their office to their personal importance. The loner leader is concerned about how they are perceived and who they associate with and not the substance of their character. They look down on those who are in their care. I've even heard of a leader who would remind his team about how much he is paying them and that without him they are nothing. It is as if he was paying them from his own pocket. I had an unfortunate experience of a very senior leader who would walk past the teams in his division without even a

glance at them and never greeting them on his way to his office. I also remember that when he was unceremoniously removed from his position, no one blinked or was sad about it. No one cared. No one respected him and no one felt sorry for him. He had thrown the ladder back down to them during all those times that he puffed out his chest and walked by without even acknowledging them, and they took the ladder and walked away with it.

A friend of mine once relayed a story about a leader who frowned upon juniors who would try to engage with her and ask her to mentor them and become their sponsor to advance their careers. She is from the school of thought where self-sufficiency and hard work are the primary drivers for corporate success and climbing the corporate ladder. She credits her personal character, steeliness and chutzpah to her career growth and success. Although it is true that these traits played a key role in her success and progression, I do not believe that these are the only qualities that led to her ascent. There must have been a leader or leaders who believed in her, made space for her, and pitched on her behalf in rooms where she was not present. She must have had great relationships with leaders of influence and sway to enable doors to be opened for her over and above her innate capabilities and skills.

In my experience, time and time again I have seen that having an influential leader as a sponsor is important to help advance your career and move you up the ladder. Without a sponsor, one is stuck with continuously trying to prove themselves and coming up short in the recognition stakes because they lack representation where it matters. Don't get me wrong, not everyone wants to be recognised or even become a leader in business. However, for those who want it, having meaningful support through great relationships and a sponsor is key to growing and advancing one's career. It still boils down to competence though. Without it, no one will avail themselves to mentor or even sponsor someone.

Therefore, I struggle with the so-called I-did-it-myself loner because they clearly have benefitted from having support, sponsorship, and mentorship from other leaders, but they did not pass it on. They were provided with platforms and opportunities to showcase themselves under the guidance of seasoned leaders who believed in them and put them on. So why not pay it forward? Why not develop other leaders? Why not grant others the same opportunities which were granted to them? Why do they want to be the only one who has a great view of the horizon? Is it not what leadership is about: Growing other leaders and creating a lasting pipeline that will strengthen the organisation and thus ensure its sustainability over the long term? There are so many examples of this being done from an organisational perspective. Think of General Electric under

Jack Welch. A continuous stream of leaders was created through a deliberate and structured leadership development process that ultimately produced such a great calibre of leaders such as Jeff Immelt who took over from Jack Welch at GE; Robert Nardelli who went on to run Home Depot; Jim McNerney, former Boeing chairman and CEO, and many more. There is a clear value in transformational and deliberate leadership and its effects are long lasting.

My-Brother's-Keeper Cool Cat

This illustration is of a person who uses the ladder not only for themselves but brings others along with them to climb to the top of the roof so they can all enjoy the great view and, in the end safely descend down as well. I truly believe that for organisations to continue to thrive and succeed, leadership plays a key and at times even an understated role. We know of the saying that people do not leave organisations but leave their managers. It is because leaders renege on their role of leadership and focus on managing. You don't manage people, you manage processes, systems, and events. You lead people. You take them on a journey with you, you make them see the vision and make them feel part of the process and at a granular level make them understand how their role and contribution is a critical part of the whole machinery and the success of the organisation. Building a culture of trust, transparency, authenticity, and approachability gains the leader huge amounts of goodwill, buy-in, and support. True leadership is a great motivator. Using the ladder analogy, in my view great and lasting leadership is premised on taking your team with you on the journey, making them feel valued, seen, and heard. This means making the ladder available for them to climb and also helping them to climb up and ensuring that all those that want to climb up are given the opportunity to, especially if they have demonstrated a willingness to learn, grow, and perform at a high level consistently.

Organisations are built and sustained through people. People need great leadership to thrive and become the best version of themselves. I'm sure you have seen the meme based on Richard Branson's words where the CFO says to the CEO, "What if we train them and they leave?" The CEO responds, "What if we don't train them and they stay?" This meme shows two schools of thought: One is focused on potential loss, where the organisation will potentially not get the return on investment from training and developing its people. This is very short-sighted and negates to consider the role that leadership, culture, etc. play in decisions that people make about working in organisations. It presupposes that people are two dimensional and have no intrinsic connection with the organisation. It is a transactional presupposition. The second school of thought is

one that in my view aligns to the my-brother's-keeper analogy of understanding that you bring others along with you as a leader and you provide them with the tools to be great, and in turn they make the organisation great too. Yes, you will lose some people along the way – that is natural and expected. However, in the long term the organisation will benefit greatly from developing and leading them authentically.

In my career so far, I have been very fortunate to have had great leaders who have supported me and believed in me. They have created the space for me to flourish, express myself, and develop to my true potential. I have learnt so much from them and continue to do so even today. Some have become great friends of mine and I cherish them. I have experienced the positive impact of a leader who is a my-brother's-keeper. They have enabled me to access platforms to showcase my skills and strengths, and to test myself with challenging assignments. They provided me with access to decision makers and influencers whom I know very well now. Even when I have fallen short or have failed, they continued to trust in me, drive me forward, and encourage and support me to be better.

As a leader, it is greatly fulfilling when you can see a positive change in people due to your support, motivation, and caring. It goes a long way in building confidence in others and creating an environment of trust, accountability, and delivery. As much as I have and continue to have great support from leaders I directly work with, as well as others through mentorship and coaching, I must also pay it forward and help other young leaders to reach their potential. This is how I help them climb the ladder to get a better view and fulfil their ambition and drive. There is enough space for all of us to thrive and be successful. Creating opportunities for others does not take away from your ability to access the right prospects for yourself. I believe the contrary. The more you are open to others and are helpful, the more you open yourself up for blessings and positive karma. I have seen this manifest in the corporate world, and it is a beautiful experience.

The corporate world is very complex and demanding. It is not for everyone. In my view, leadership is a deliberate concept. It is a conscious mindset that translates into tangible actions that positively impact people, whether they are your superiors or your colleagues. Leadership is even more critical, now more than ever as we meander through a fast-changing world with raised levels of uncertainty and complexity. VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) is at an all-time high, exacerbated by the global pandemic that has changed life as we knew it. Change is a constant. Therefore, I believe that real, authentic, and impactful leadership is critical for continued business success,

and building a strong leadership pipeline will minimise succession risk and improve long-term sustainability.

In conclusion, one's title does not automatically translate to good leadership. Being a good corporate leader and helping others to climb the corporate ladder starts with the understanding that one does not get to the top on their own. Leaders should be servants and as Simon Sinek says, "Leadership is not about taking charge. It is about taking care of those in your charge." One of the ways of doing that is by developing new leaders and paying it forward, as sharing your knowledge and skills go a long way in bringing others with you on the journey and ultimately benefit the business and society as a whole.



MFANASIBILI EMMANUEL MDHLULI is a natural relationship builder, he is equipped with the vision and purpose to drive organizational change and is able to adapt positively to any challenges that arise both personally and professionally. He is a self-starter who is goal-driven, dynamic and passionate in his dealings with people and business. He is an excellent communicator and networker with well-developed interpersonal skills. He is a team player and has the ability to form trusted relationships with clients, partners, subordinates, as well as superiors. His business ethos is based on shared value and long-term sustainability.

Hitch your Wagon to the Stars: “Finding the Right Mentor”

Priscilla Pholotho

This chapter is dedicated to those who managed to rise against all odds; those who saw obstacles as opportunities to turn their situation around; those who had the courage to face resistance and walked through it; and those who persevered in the mist of doubt, fear, pain, and hardships.

If I could do it, why not you?! I know, this may sound easier said than done and maybe impossible to some of you. Some may even argue that I struck it lucky. As good as your arguments sound, I am going to challenge your mindset. Our society, particularly the black community needs people with a “can do” attitude – people who will stop wallowing in self-pity, who take accountability for their journey, and have a hunger to succeed. The world can only be a better place if all of us can acknowledge that hard work, determination, and perseverance surpass all the hardships. The mentors I’ve been fortunate to cross paths with, had all these traits.

Don’t get me wrong, the journey to success is not all rosy. It comes with its own challenges and sacrifices. There are many bumps that we will encounter as we travel through the various stages of our lives. There will be lots of mistakes that one makes, lessons and setbacks that one will encounter, and many difficult decisions to be made. However, without proper guidance from the right people who experienced life better than us, chances of wondering aimlessly are high. I’ll often refer to those right people as “destiny connectors” whom most of you famously call “mentors.”

Destiny connectors – people I regard as influential, have solid track records, resources, connections, and can link you to the next level of your life.

I’m a firm believer that in the search for success, a stepping-stone to a great future is the ability for one to be aware of and appreciate their own mistakes. I will share some insights from my personal experience with the hope that when you relate, you will find some of those lessons and successes more valuable to adopt.

My journey to date taught me that qualifications, experience, and capabilities alone are not enough for one to reach the stars. A key lesson that I learnt as a young adult is that pursuing lofty goals for oneself, often by partnering with someone that is already successful or revered, is imperative. I met Yvonne Mfolo in 2009 on a business trip. I was a senior manager at a mining company and Yvonne was an executive manager at another business unit. The moment that our paths crossed, we connected. Even though our relationship started as a professional one, as we got to know each other better, it became easier to share challenges and successes in other aspects of our lives. Yvonne became a mentor, a sister, a friend, and ultimately a manager. In 2011, she was looking for a group stakeholder relations manager and approached me to join her, a position that I'm still grateful for, as it exposed me to unleash my potential and do things that I'm truly passionate about.

Even though I worked under her leadership, I never took our relationship for granted. I respected her as my leader, I respected my work, and in return, by showing appreciation to the opportunity given, I gave it my all. Yvonne ultimately left to another business unit and our relationship continued to grow even stronger. We shared the same values and similar hardships. Something that we both acknowledged and even today still share the same sentiments about, is that we knew we were both smart, hard-working, we love what we do, we excel in our jobs, we relate well with people, but are often overlooked as and when we attempt to move up the corporate ladder. We knew very well that we took networking for granted, we didn't invest any time in surrounding ourselves with destiny connectors, and were highly dependent on our capabilities and qualifications to pave the way. Sadly, life doesn't work that way, especially when one has the ambition to grow one's career further. We regarded people who networked as suck-ups, oblivious of the role that networking with people in higher and influential positions played in helping one to get ahead.

People make you.

I'm privileged and honoured to be one of the contributors to *This generation leads*, an opportunity that I never imagined or dreamed of as a young girl who witnessed the unkindness of the apartheid era of South Africa, under extremely challenging and impoverished conditions. Being the first grandchild, I grew up in a tiny four-room house that I shared with my mother, her parents and two siblings. My memories of the early stages of my childhood are that of having no role model in my family or neighbourhood. I had a routine schedule. I woke

up for school, after school go back home, knock door-to-door to sell packets of tomatoes that my grandmother nicely packaged the evening before, to make means for survival. At dinner time, I would eat whatever food was placed on my plate, sleep, and look forward to the next day. When I look back, I realise that this experience taught me a very important value that for one to succeed, hard-work, perseverance, and determination are key. As a young girl, I was relatively aware that if I don't sell all my stock, we would go to bed hungry.

Selling tomatoes was normal to me and everything looked normal in my neighbourhood. Our family's circumstances were no different, no one was better off, we were equal if not similar. My childhood friends and I were raised by uneducated single parents or grandparents. Our mothers were forced to leave home and worked far and their parents helped raise us. That for me was my frame of reference, I knew no better life than the one I was exposed to.

My adolescence stage was confronted by new environments and people that defined my ambitions. Despite my circumstances at home, as the first grandchild, the love and praises from my family groomed me to become an extremely assertive and proud child. My personality and unique stylish outfits that my late mom would bring whenever she visited home, attracted wealthy kids that I met during my high school days. My “so-called” normal life was no longer normal. I guess that peer pressure played a significant role to what I regarded as normal and acceptable. Our tiny four-room house that had an outside toilet bucket system challenged my normality in relation to my peer-group affiliation.

Every morning, I would feel even more ashamed whenever I went outside to empty dirty water from my bathtub into the outside drainage. This was a norm, and I continued with that ceremoniously, even during the rainy days and cold winter days, while my wealthy friends had access to luxurious indoor toilets and bathrooms. Added to these, they were dropped off at school, whilst I walked approximately 15km to school, and the same back home.

My upbringing bothered me. As an adolescent, I developed more complex cognitive skills and became envious of my friends' lifestyles. I questioned a lot of things that remained unanswered. In my childhood days, children were taught to never question the elders. I silently blamed my absent father in my upbringing and thought that my life would have probably been a lot better with him around. This stage of my life was a life-changing event and one that I believe has influenced my values and aspirations. I set ambitious goals for myself. I regarded education as a ticket to escape poverty and I knew I had to work hard, excel at school, and get good marks that would earn me an entrance to university. All of

these were self-motivated with no guidance. I knew I had a passion for numbers. I knew I excelled in Mathematics and Physical Sciences, but having attended public schools, I did not have any career guidance on what's next after Matric. All I wanted was to go to university, study hard, get a degree, get a job, and build a beautiful mansion with an *en-suite* bathroom for my folks. My bigger goal was that of buying myself a beautiful house and a convertible car. At that young age, that was my definition of success.

The definition of success can mean different things to different people.

Did I achieve all of that? Yes, absolutely! I think I even exceeded the goals that I considered ambitious and set for myself as a young girl. With two Master's degrees years later, I proudly built my late grandparents the mansion that I dreamt of, bought my beloved late mother a beautiful home in the suburbs, got myself that convertible car with a few properties, and landed senior management roles at various mining companies. As I grew further in my career, I realised that those early childhood goals and aspirations were no longer relevant. My perspective of what I regarded as success was no longer driven by those things that mattered most to me as a young girl. As I matured and developed in my career, I got exposed to influential people that inspired me to renew my ambitions and goals. I knew that I needed to re-evaluate my perception of success. I needed to repaint my life with a new set of brushes – and hitching my wagon to the stars was key to enable me to proceed to the next chapter of my growth.

I further learnt throughout my career development that the journey to reach the “stars” becomes even harder as one moves up the ladder. In her book *Lean in*, Sheryl Sandberg, former CEO of Facebook, stated that ladders are limiting – people can move up and down, or on and off. However, if one plans to grow one's career, it's important to be aware that careers are a jungle gym and not a ladder.

Closer to home, I can relate to Sheryl's analogy. My career journey to senior management was a lot easier than my progression to the next level. I spent more than half of my career life occupying various senior management roles. This stage, in my view is very critical in one's career development, where one's network and relevant destiny connectors tend to play a critical role. The lack of participation in something revered, or the absence of partnering with a right mentor to help shape the remaining stages of one's development can often lead to career stagnation and can be equally frustrating and demotivating for any ambitious individual.

During the early stages of my career, I was fortunate enough to cross paths with destiny connectors who were generous enough to polish my skills and share their wisdom and guidance. They influenced my life immensely as I advanced in my career. To name a few instrumental figures, Prof Otieno, my lecturer who also supervised my MSc (Eng.) dissertation, recommended me for a vacancy as a water scientist at Rand Water. In my early days as professional environmental practitioner, I was handpicked by the former power station manager at Eskom, Khumo Radebe, who at the time was appointed as the first black woman in Africa to oversee a power station. Khumo became very instrumental in my career and personal growth for more than 15 years. Her guidance and support in all aspects of my life continues to add value and challenges my level of thinking to this date.

My first corporate role as head of safety, health, environment, and sustainable development in one of the mining companies in South Africa and being the only black woman at senior management level, faced several challenges. It is then that I met the late Dolly Mokgatle, who was the chairperson of the safety and sustainable development board committee. Mining had just undergone transformation and the environment in which we operated was not conducive for a black woman in a senior management role. Coincidentally, Sis Dolly, just like all mentors I crossed paths with, noticed my perseverance, determination, and tenacity, believed in my potential and took it upon herself to invest her time to groom and nurture me. She helped me to navigate most of the challenges that I faced in my first corporate senior management role, which at the time was dominated largely by male counterparts. My role model, Yvonne Mfolo’s leadership style, and the role that she played in paving my way to secure a job that I’m passionate about, are equally noteworthy. In the 12 years that I’ve known Yvonne, she continues to unselfishly share her expertise and wisdom.

*Reaching the stars can only be possible
when one is surrounded by destiny connectors.*

During March 2018, I was fortunate to meet one of the most remarkable human beings, Mike Teke, my previous CEO and mentor. I’ve watched him closely, admired his way of thinking, followed his humble upbringing and secretly adopted him as my mentor. Mike as my CEO saw me in action and took interest in my growth by constantly challenging me to be the best version of myself. The one thing that I pride myself of is that I thrive on feedback and constructive criticism, particularly when that is meant to help me work on my developmental areas, personally or career wise, and Mike is that frank person.

One afternoon of November 2019 revealed my “aha moment”. While addressing some constructive criticism from Mike at one of the work events that I chaired, he suggested that I attend a session where he was invited as a guest speaker, and later during that day to join him to his mentorship year-end lunch session. It was on a Saturday which I had already planned a weekend away with my family, but I realised that this opportunity is one that I could not miss. Hours later, my name was included in what I regard as a generation with great minds and wisdom, a generation with ambitions to lead, influence, be movers and shakers, shape the economy, and instil a positive “can-do” mindset particularly to disadvantaged black communities. For a moment I thought, “Have I been that stagnant that I almost missed my boat? I almost gave up on my mojo!” That burning desire I had in my early childhood and adolescent stage was finally getting rekindled!

Finding the Right Mentor

As I reflect on my career journey to date, I notice a similar trend from the mentors that I mentioned above, that I was blessed to cross paths with – they all hand-picked me, and neither were they strangers to me. My observation which some of you may relate to or rather share different perspectives, is that mentors often select their protégés from people they know. These mentors have noticed their potential and saw it in their best interest to nurture such potential for their protégés to unleash it to the fullest. This connection, in my view is key to establish a long-term mentor-mentee relationship as both parties have a common goal, that is, to reach the stars.

When a mentee strives and succeeds in life, so is his/her mentor.

I further believe that the formula to finding the right mentor or be found by the right mentor is to give your utmost best in what you are doing, and deliver excellently, then your hard work and determination will speak for you. Destiny connectors always notice potential, they always have the hunger to give back by investing their time unselfishly to those that deserve it. Despite their busy schedule, they are always willing to share their wisdom, experience, and knowledge to shape and create future leaders of tomorrow. The success of their mentee is equally important to them, hence the choice of the right protégé is equally important.

*When a mentor is matched with the right mentee,
the relationship equally thrives.*

An interesting observation in my career so far is that surprisingly, my relationship with the mentors that I chose, or mentees who approached me to mentor them as a result of the employer’s compulsory development plan, never really worked. These relationships, in my view, was often a tick box exercise that formed part of mentors’/mentees’ key performance indicators, suggesting that forced relationships and connections between mentees and their mentors don’t really work and again, that’s my view based on personal experiences and observations. I further noticed that most mentees often came with an expectation that when they have a higher senior person supporting their career development, then career growth is guaranteed. When such expectations are not met, the mentee does not regard the relationship as beneficial. This experience, however, is not cast in stone and can differ from one individual to the other – again, it’s different strokes for different folks.

When you have the Right Mentor

It was Christmas eve of 2019 when I sat quietly in a waiting room at Unitas hospital, waiting for my late sick mother to wake up after being sedated with pain medication. I used my idling time to draft the unedited version of this chapter. Writing at the time helped me to de-stress from mom’s sudden traumatic illness. Days into the new year, mom’s oncologist broke the news that she was suffering from stage-4 cancer that was so aggressive that it affected both her kidneys. I felt my life reached a detour, I got scared and imagined the worst. My reason for being, my motivation to achieve more, to aim for the stars, was suddenly left with a few months if not days until her last breath. I stopped writing....

A day after the sad news was broken to the family, an e-mail with a deadline from Mike to submit our draft chapters followed. I knew I had a daunting task to complete but hated to use my personal predicament as an excuse to miss the deadline. That has always been my work ethic. As days passed and mom’s situation deteriorated, I realised that my chances of meeting the deadline were slim. I relied on my tenacity to push myself to submit my first draft, failure of which I would have missed an opportunity to be one of the authors of this inspirational book.

Mom sadly crossed over on 31 January 2020, and after her burial I struggled to pull myself together. I lost hope. I questioned my reason for being.

This traumatic life changing event really knocked me down. I suffered from depression shortly afterwards. As I battled with making that difficult decision on whether to continue writing or to stop, I reached out to my personal mentor, Themba Masondo for guidance. Themba was my chief operations officer at the time and always played a vital role in providing guidance whenever I needed it. Although Themba advised against me quitting, I still battled to continue and a few days later I decided to opt out. Themba understood and supported my decision. I also found courage to explain my situation to Mike who understood compassionately. For a moment I thought about giving up on this amazing opportunity of sharing my inspirational journey that could touch the lives and bring hope to many people who would probably relate. This opportunity knocked on my door when I least expected it. I knew I would regret my decision for a very long time, but I needed to recharge, refuel my mind, body, and soul, and seek a new meaning, a new sense of purpose for a new chapter in my life, a chapter I needed to face on my own without my beloved mother in it.

Even though I still maintained my position not to proceed, one of the wisest lessons I learnt from Mike was that life will always be cruel and as we are faced with such cruelty, we should never stop chasing our dreams. Mike and the team continued to progress writing their pieces, whilst I mourned and focused on my health. I had just finished off my day on 15 June 2020 when Mike shared a link titled Stop feeling sorry for yourself by Muzi Kuzwayo. This line in particular, “it is the people who can look up who win” spoke volumes. I felt as if it was directed to me. I knew that I was not a quitter and opting to quit really unsettled me. I contemplated on whether to take a chance and push myself harder and be on par with the team. I boldly took a chance!

Without a doubt, what I know for sure is that the presence of the right mentor will push you to achieve the impossible. All my mentors certainly played that role, and they still do. I further know that my mom, if given a second chance on earth, would have been very proud of me. I also know that all my mentors would feel equally proud.

*Great deals are achieved through
well-established and mutually beneficial relationships.*

Lessons Learned – Not playing my part enough to Hitch my Wagon to the Stars!

As I climbed the corporate ladder, I made many mistakes. I thought I knew better, I thought I had it all. Halfway through my senior management role, I neglected my networks and the people that shaped me. I used my hectic work-life as an excuse not to make time to meet with my destiny connectors. One of my values, “independent” dominated. I relied strongly on my beliefs that hard work, experience, capabilities, and qualifications would pave my way and help to advance my career. With that in mind, I neglected those key relationships that were essential to my growth, personally and career-wise. I was wrong. As much as I knew that the guidance of a right mentor is important if one aims to reach the stars, not only in a working environment, but in all aspects of life, I took that for granted. I lost my “mojo” completely. Subconsciously I was very much aware that I was becoming stagnant. I did not like that, but I did little if nothing to reach out to my mentors’ wisdom for further career and personal guidance. Little did I know that when one progresses and advances further in life, qualifications, experience, and personality traits are not enough to *hitch one’s wagon to the star*.

I made lots of mistakes along the way. I got equally frustrated when I could not secure new career growth opportunities. My career became stagnant and boring. That burning desire to reach the stars often came with self-doubts. I stopped dreaming big and aiming high. My ambitions were floating on thin ice. Surprisingly, I was much aware that the absence of setting ambitious goals and the lack of a right mentor to challenge, did not aid my growth and pushed me further, so reaching for the stars became utterly impossible.

I’m my own critique, and equally so my own enemy. I tend to believe that I did a lot better in my young adulthood days than currently. As a young girl, I had that burning fire to achieve my goals. Once I reached these goals, I redefined my goals and my aspirations to achieve more and greater things. I had dreams but those became just that, “dreams.” My right brain wanted to continue the drive to reach for the stars, but mediocrity would often find its way to pull me down and instil self-doubt. I became complacent, at times I got scared of learning further and set more ambitious goals. For the better part of my career as a senior manager, I knew I needed to step up, but I was reluctant to take that bold step of reaching out to my destiny connectors to help guide and shape my future.

Fortunately, the mentors that I had in my past life, whom I irresponsibly chose to neglect, and who could have played a much bigger role in fine-tuning and shaping my life, never gave up on me. They still believe in my potential but without my desire to step up and take control of my destiny, growth in all aspects of my life will be utterly impossible. I'm grateful for that second chance. I'm even more grateful for my mentors who unselfishly continue to invest their time and energy to walk this path with me. I'm grateful for this opportunity that enabled me to evaluate my career journey to date, be my own critique, and act and share my lessons with those in need. Personally, I regard this learning curve as a steppingstone in the right direction of my future.

I may not be now where I wanted myself to be 15 years ago, but I am liberated. I finally found the courage to re-prioritise my life and using every opportunity I get to tap into my mentors' wisdom as I enter this new chapter of my life. I boldly left my eight to five highly remunerating job in May 2021, after 23 years of serving various South African based industries, in search for my new purpose and reason for being. I made it a point to consult my destiny connectors prior to taking that bold scary step. I knew it was a risky decision, but it had to be done. During my mini break from the corporate environment, I decided to pursue my calling. I am now a proudly founder and CEO of Fabuloux Skin and Body Aesthetics, a journey that has been exciting and equally nerve wrecking. I continue to tap into the wisdom of my various mentors for guidance, encouragement, and teaching.

Getting it Right

Most of you will attest to the fact that identifying a perfect mentor can be challenging. Maybe you even formed part of mentorship programmes in your previous careers, where mentees, regarded as "high-flyers" get paired with mentors, with an expectation that mentors will influence their protégé's personal development and career growth. I've even crossed paths with some of my colleagues and peers that were fortunate enough to graduate and proceed to what we famously call "blue-eyed" boys or girls. I've watched the so-called "blue-eyed" people in action and wondered for a moment, "How did they get here?" There's nothing pretty much special about them. I could do better, had I been given the chance. In fact, I consider myself a lot smarter and more hardworking than most "blue-eyed" people, if I may say so and give myself some credit. But I noticed that all of them have one thing in common: They are pretty good with playing "corporate politics" and are well networked.

The “blue-eyed” girls and boys appear to have realised at an early stage of their careers that surrounding themselves with destiny connectors is key to opening doors that they would find difficult to open on their own.

I further had the opportunity to listen to my mentors’ stories on their journeys, how they made it, what it took to get them there and how they made use of their networks to expand their growths. All of them have mentioned names of influential people, some of which I’ve never heard, but interestingly all those people had a hand holding them in their journeys and influenced, if not shaped, their success. I would listen attentively, get inspired and fascinated by their stories. I would leave our sessions hyped up, ready to face the world and aim for the stars. Somehow that ambition would fall flat along the way and disappear with time.

I would often reflect to understand reasons why I haven’t utilised my networks and destiny connectors fully. I mean, I was truly blessed to have been hand-picked by the “big shots,” but I didn’t make use of that opportunity to my advantage. I certainly needed to do some soul searching. I realised that I did not know any better, although I considered myself smart. I somehow lacked the skills to exercise access to utilise my influential network circles. Even though I consciously made a decision not to fully rely on my mentors, and at times I ran away and shut those doors completely, the key question still remains, “Did I fully understand the role of destiny connectors? Could it be that my upbringing has dominating the lack thereof?” I bet you’ll say NO, and yes, you are right. I did not. I always had a perception that I’ll rely on my own strengths, experiences, and qualifications and regard those “blue-eyed” girls and boys as people who didn’t have that “I-can” attitude, but rather relied on other people to pave their way. I certainly didn’t want to be classified as such – a spoon-fed girl.

A big part of my upbringing largely influenced my thoughts and actions. Mind you, I learned from an early age to hunt for my prey. I learned to persevere by relying on my strengths to survive the unimaginable hardships. I rose from humble beginnings. I am the first grandchild to go to university. I secured decent jobs with attractive remunerations. I upgraded my family’s and my own poor lifestyle to a wealthy one envied by many. I am the first in my family to get a UK MBA qualification, and I am a role model to the young generation. I often get requests to mentor. My successes are noticed by strangers. All that I achieved on my own, I can still do that on my own – o boy, how wrong was I! As I look at my own history and circumstances that contributed to me being where I am at this point, I realise that on my own I could not have possibly succeeded to be where I am today.

As I reflect on my journey to date, I now know and am fully aware that my destiny connectors had an important role to play and continues to influence my personal and career growth. What is really key going forward, is how I change my mindset and perception that clinging on and constantly reaching out to suck my mentors' wisdom is not a bad idea, and that utilising my destiny connectors fully and effectively does not equate to "licking ass" either, but a key enabler for my reaching the stars.

Not everyone gets the opportunity to be hand-picked by the most influential people, but I blew my chances. I have now been granted a second chance to do it right, going forward. What I need to emphasise though, is that without personal reflection to acknowledge past mistakes and rectify them, without self-awareness, personal growth is impossible. I know I have what it takes to hitch my wagon to the stars. All the mentors whom I met in my professional life noticed that special gift. All I need to do now is to "stop holding back" and take advantage of the hand that they are extending to me.

It's never too late. That fire within me is still burning, stronger than before. I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a reason and when the time is right, I will take advantage of the opportunities presented to unleash my full potential. It was not by chance that Mike chose this specific topic for me to write and dedicate it to myself. As I mentioned previously, Mike has seen me in action. His choice of this topic was largely influenced by his interaction with me at my last corporate role. I feel more blessed that I had to reflect on my past, and that I could be critical and frank about how I have approached my life, personally and career-wise, to date. This process presents a new opportunity for me to challenge myself even further.

I hope that my personal experiences will help you to not make the same mistakes that I made, and further flag out some tips that will help you to search for or be chosen by the perfect mentor. What is key in this chapter, is that personal growth cannot happen unless one acknowledges their areas of improvement and past mistakes, learn from them, and address them by taking actions. It is not worth the effort to aim for the stars if you are not ready to challenge yourself and be challenged to aim high. Personal mastery is a process – it's a journey. It requires resilience, perseverance, determination, and the willingness to try and fail and try again. Master your own craft: People who master their own craft know that good is not good enough – they strive for greatness. If you match these traits with the right mentor, the world becomes your oyster.

A perfect mentor will push you to the limit. A perfect mentor will push you to set ambitious goals that you thought you would never achieve or never thought about. A perfect mentor will challenge you to clean up and get rid of those bad habits that interfere with your journey to success. A perfect mentor will inspire you with their greatness. Remember, the mentor’s role is to share their experiences and guide you to make informed decisions. Some may even help you to navigate certain doors that you were unable to open. However, the “doing” part remains your responsibility. Finally, credibility is key – always deliver what you promised. If you don’t have credibility, don’t bother to waste the precious time of destiny connectors – your aim to reach the stars will just remain a dream.

As from today, I will lead my life and not let life lead me. I have tried to achieve the next level of my career trajectory, not building internal networks and playing office politics, but have realised that it was not meant for me. I am now implementing a changed strategy because as the saying goes, stupidity is doing something the same way, over and over again, expecting different results.

I vowed and committed myself to do my utmost best, try different strategies and do well. I’m now on my re-defined journey to unleash my greatness, my potential, to transform myself and transform the life of others, to bring hope to the hopeless. That is my calling – my re-defined journey aimed to “hitch my own wagon to the stars!”

*As Isaac Newton proved from the third law of motion –
for every action, there’s an equal and opposite reaction.*



PRISCILLA KGAOGELO PHOLOTHO was born in Tlhabane Township, Rustenburg, North-West Province. She is the first grandchild, raised by her late single mother, Joyce Pholotho and grandparents. Growing up under humbling beginnings, this experience groomed Priscilla to be very modest about her hardships and successes. Her independent, result-oriented, determinant, assertive, self-starter, resilience and optimistic traits are to name a few some of the attributes behind her remarkable achievements.

Priscilla is the founder and CEO of Fabuloux Skin and Body Aesthetic Clinic, an opportunity she persuaded to fulfil her calling. She holds a BS.C (Hons) in Microbiology from the University of Limpopo, an M.Sc (Engineering) in Water and Environmental Management from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and an MBA Degree from Henley, UK. She has 23-years working experience in Environmental Management, Stakeholder Management, Sustainable Development, Transformation, Government Relations, Community Development, and Regulatory issues. She served in various Boards and Committees pertaining to her role in companies she worked for.

Being raised under unimaginable hardships, she strongly believes that by empowering the disadvantaged communities to be self-sufficient is key towards achieving an improved economy, particularly in the townships and rural areas. Community development matters are close to her heart, a passion she discovered during her M.Sc thesis when she initiated a recycling project to informal settlements residents of Kwa-Zulu Natal Province of South Africa. Given the high unemployment and poverty levels in the historical disadvantaged communities, Priscilla continues to support the disadvantaged local communities through a number of initiatives, mentors young professionals, with an emphasize on empowering young girls in particular. She hopes to grow her business further and open up more opportunities for aspiring young girls from disadvantaged communities.

She is passionate about capacitating small medium enterprises (SMEs) with the necessary skills and capabilities to market and grow their businesses, and strongly believes that part of the solution to address poverty and unemployment rates is through unleashing opportunities for SMEs and enabling them to participate in South Africa's mainstream economy.

The Importance of Purpose and Personal Vision
in Leadership:
A Conversation with the Next Generation of
South African Leaders – the Meaning and Essence
of Leadership

Msizi Khoza

*Each generation must, out of relative obscurity,
discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it.*
- Frantz Fanon

A lot has been written about the characteristics of good leadership. Indeed, even a cursory internet search will reveal many books, blogs, and TED talks on the topic. However, in many instances these materials are frequently disconnected from our lived realities and consequently often prove useless as a practical guide for any measurable improvement.

The insatiable demand for leadership studies and self-help guides is a natural consequence of the frequent failure of leadership across the government, politics, business, and non-profit spheres. Though the estimates vary, there is a growing consensus that, especially among young people, progressively fewer people trust their leaders. In addition, research from the Conference Board finds that, globally, job satisfaction is at all-time lows and the tenure of chief executives is decreasing at an accelerated rate since 2008. Other survey research points to the undeniable fact that organisations mark their own leadership development efforts with a big F for FAILED.

It seems increasingly clear to me that there is a dearth of good leadership across our society. Crucially the situation does not seem to be improving. Despite their many shortcomings, some books and essays do provide useful guides on how to be a more effective leader. In my experience, these are often personal accounts and reflections drawn from many years of experience in corporate boardrooms and high-stakes meetings with customers, suppliers, regulators, and other stakeholders. Whilst I would never claim to have such a

vast experience myself, I have been privileged enough to work for and alongside many senior leaders across the corporate, public policy, academia, and public office environments.

This short essay is a personal reflection of what I have found to be these leaders' most defining characteristics and the value that they derived from understanding their own personal drivers to guide and steer them through momentous decisions in contentious and fraught environments.

Unearthing the Value of a Deep Sense of Personal Mission

Long before my birth and in a far-away world, just before the Great Depression, one Frantz Fanon was born in the small Caribbean island of Martinique. Despite the unremarkable surroundings of his birth town and country, Fanon would later emerge as one of the most influential thinkers and philosophers of the modern age. When he penned his seminal work, *The wretched of the earth* in 1961, much of Africa was in the final battles of its struggle for independence from erstwhile colonial masters, and through his writings, he made observations that would inspire a generation of freedom fighters and activists to agitate for change. Perhaps his most impactful insight was that, in his analysis, “[e]very generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it.”

And with that one searing insight, from Monrovia to Maputo, Cairo to the Cape Verde Islands, and from Atteridgeville to Accra, many a young freedom fighter bellowed out Fanon's observations in rallies and mass meetings, as an affirmation that theirs was a just struggle. So why does one start here? It is actually fairly simple. Every person with full agency must, if they are to lead their lives to the fullest, have an idea of what their personal mission is. Of course, it is not always possible, nor desirable to undergo this process of self-discovery in an environment which, as Fanon guides, is self-contained and relatively obscure, but it is critical to understand your personal mission. It is the one thing that remains intact, when everything around you feels unfamiliar and foreign. It is the one constant in an ever-changing world.

A Superhuman Effort to be Human

Given the sweep of their lives, the scope of their accomplishments, and the adoration and celebrity-like status that leaders rightly enjoy, pertaining to the most effective leaders that I have worked with, many make a conscious and superhuman effort to be human. They shun largess and hordes of aides fretting

after them. They are practical and have an evolved sense of understanding of the complexity of their dilemmas and choices.

An essay marking the 500th anniversary of Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, echoes the words in that historical text, that sometimes it is necessary to do bad things to achieve good results. It is not surprising then that some of the most successful and effective leaders are pragmatists – willing to do that which is necessary to achieve important goals, forever testing their ideas and beliefs against the hard surface of circumstances and history. While this may sound contradictory, where these leaders set themselves apart is that they are unyielding on core principles, beliefs, and ideas.

During South Africa's negotiation for a democratic dispensation and new constitutional order, one of the leading negotiators of the key party would at the end of every session sprint out of the conference centre in the outskirts of Johannesburg, hastily climb into his car and drive to debrief the then leader of the African National Congress, Nelson Mandela. As he recalls the experience in his memoirs, Mac Maharaj says that, after debriefing Mandela on the key points and highlights, Mandela would ask two questions: *How does this take us towards non-racial democratic elections? How does not doing this or reaching sufficient consensus move us away from that goal?* What is clear from this is that on the key issues and on his core belief – that the negotiation should not be derailed by side-shows and other *non sequiturs* – Mandela was unyielding.

For instance, I supported the Group CEO of a big local bank and headed her office during the most difficult and momentous period in the bank's history. We had been acquired by a large European bank a decade before, and after a strategic repositioning, they decided to exit their emerging market presence. The Group CEO selected a small sub-set of her executive team to lead "separation" negotiations with the erstwhile controlling shareholder. In many a meeting in which I was present, I was struck by how she, above all else, was practical and never allowed herself to veer from what she considered as the critical points on the negotiation. She steered the group through a complex series of engagements with regulators from 12 African countries, without whose support the deal would scupper. I was struck, not by her grasp of the technical content, which was excellent as one would expect, but by her softer skills – her ability to read a room and pitch her messages at the right level and with the appropriate tone.

In the ensuing months, she led the group through an intense and intrusive year-long strategic review to rethink the group's future after the sell-down. She was clear that the review would be grounded in a bullet-proof fact base of our

historical performance and competitive landscape, as with any other, and for it to gain real traction it would need to be owned by the entire organisation.

I have been involved in, designed, and been through several strategic reviews in my life – at a large East African telecoms player, an African gold mining giant, a large South African retailer, and even a Dubai recreational and amusement park operator – but none generated the level of enthusiasm and widespread support as this one. From bank tellers and branch que marshals to the colleagues running the models that determine the impairments, all of them knew the strategy alike. Following a rousing endorsement of that strategy, I watched intently as she iteratively processed the operating model implications and changes that she would have to make.

Following a long day of board sub-committee meetings, I walked in with a file of decisions that she had to make and remarks she had to edit. With the weight of certainly what felt like the world on her shoulders, she said: “Sometimes, leading is very lonely.” At that moment, it struck me just how difficult those few months following the approval of a new five-year group strategy by the board had been. An organisation of 40,000 plus people spread across 12 different countries was waiting in tense expectation for what would come next, not to mention the colleagues who were her direct reports. She consulted and confided with selected members of our board, a kitchen cabinet of trusted aides and when it was time for her to communicate her decisions, she did it with aplomb – in-person, directly and finely balanced (clear and concise and equally empathetic).

To say that not everyone was happy is a given. This hardly ever happens in massive corporate shakeups. However, the manner in which she was able to keep everyone onside and ultimately supportive of the new strategy and operating model, despite their individual circumstances, was a masterclass attempt in leading through difficult and fraught moments.

Years later, she told me that when it was unclear how much ructions and blow back this might cause, she always drew strength from her personal convictions and drivers – that she was merely a steward with a limited time in the exalted CEO chair and that she had a special responsibility to ensure that she left the firm in a better place than where she had found it – and that if the price of that conviction means losing close friends and colleagues, so be it.

At a different point in my career, I worked in the Presidency at perhaps the most contested but creative moment in the history of our country. To his credit, three years earlier, the President had established the National Planning

Commission and populated it with some of the best thinkers and experts in the country across every field from medicine to water and agriculture, from economics and finance to policing. These commissioners had spent three years diagnosing our challenges and designing a suite of recommendations and a 20-year blueprint for socio-economic development. The debates around economic policy in particular were intense and strident, with very senior public policy and political actors rejecting key policy platforms outright.

The pressure to kowtow was intense and unending, threatening at times to derail the adoption of the 2030 National Development Plan in its entirety. At a senior staffers meeting, the then Minister in the Presidency responsible for the NPC, said that no matter what happens and no matter what the political implications are, he stood by the recommendations of the secretariat. He told us that he believed deeply that the recommendations were underpinned by evidence and data and validated by the best available expert-level thinking in the country and globally. The importance of that assurance and “aerial cover” allowed us, the “foot soldiers” to confidently canvas our policy recommendations to the rest of the government bureaucracy and planning machinery.

I recall this story because sometimes leaders misunderstand the impact of even the smallest of gestures – that a five-minute affirmation delivered with the strongest of conviction to a team withering in public criticism can do a world of good and open a door that previously appeared closed. Years later, the former Minister would tell me that he didn’t agonise over that decision because years earlier, when he was an anti-apartheid activist, he had decided that he would dedicate his life and bring all his skills and energy to bear in the service of the people of South Africa and that this was always his driving force. Then, when it was time to make the difficult choices and we looked to him for guidance, he would not dwell in blame or wallow in dreamy idealism. The tough calls and decisions he would make, not only determined the direction of the nation, but revealed the character of the man and the strength of his personal convictions.

On reflection, I draw several important leadership lessons and qualities from these selected experiences:

- ◆ *Optimism*: Personally, I have never come across any person who is inspired and energised by pessimists and doomsayers. The leaders whom I have worked with who were the most effective were ones that were from my point of view, pragmatic optimists.
- ◆ *Courage*: To lead is never easy and without conflict. It is easy for leaders to try to be all things to all people and be averse of conflict. However, that

would be the very antithesis of leadership. It takes courage to do the right thing and to do it all the time. In the business setting, risk taking is the very foundation of any commercial enterprise. This is true for acquisitions and divestitures, investments, capital allocation, and innovation breakthroughs. Without courage, there is no business and certainly no leadership.

- ◆ *Focus and determination:* Where and how you spend your time is critical. This is true whether you're leading a JSE Top 40 company or your family. Deciding and communicating, clearly and often, where they spend most of their time, energy, and attention is critical for any leader. Without that clarity, there will undoubtedly be drift and with drift inaction and unmet expectations.
- ◆ *Decisiveness:* There is a subtle difference between being undecided and being indecisive. The most effective leaders I have worked with, have had one strong trait that stands *primus inter pares*, deciding with speed and conviction. Whilst good leaders seek a diversity of opinions and triangulate the truth from different sources, they do not allow the undecided to become indecision. They understand that chronic indecision is not only counterproductive and inefficient, but it is also deeply corrosive and detrimental to the morale.
- ◆ *Curiosity:* A constant yearning for new knowledge enables the discovery of new ideas and the deepening of one's understanding of their environment, and the marketplace and its changing dynamics. Curiosity is the mother of innovation.
- ◆ *Fairness and empathy:* As much as no one is inspired by pessimists, equally no one can innovate and feel value-additive in an environment permeated by fear. Treating everyone, no matter how low they may be in the organisational hierarchy, with the same level of respect, is essential to creating a "smell of the place" That is welcoming and embraces all people alike.
- ◆ *Thoughtfulness and balance:* This is an often underrated quality of good leaders. It is basically the process of seeking data and opinion, triangulation, and churning through different scenarios and potential outcomes so that any opinion offered, or decision rendered is not only more credible but also likely to be correct. Where great leaders separate themselves from the good leaders is that whilst they value consideration, they do not do this at the expense of the energy and confidence that flows from "deciding with speed and conviction," as I have intimated above.
- ◆ *Authenticity:* Great leaders are honest. They do not fake anything. They openly admit it when they do not know something. They tell the truth. They are comfortable in their own skins and so they never pretend to be

someone or something that they are not, and as a by-product, they gain respect and trust.

- ◆ *A relentless pursuit of excellence and reliable delivery:* Great leaders insist on the pursuit of excellence and perfection – but not at all costs! The most prolific leaders I have come to work with ingrain a strict refusal to accept mediocrity or excuses for why something was not done or why it is not up to the standard and quality expected. This often means telling teams to stay up all night, or for them to work around the clock to find alternatives and workarounds for missing inputs and doing revisions.
- ◆ *Uncompromising integrity:* In a world in which crass materialism rules the roost, leaders must insist on absolute and uncompromising integrity. Nothing is more important to the success of any organisation than the integrity of its people and products.

The most important ingredient, the *sine qua non*, of all these qualities is a deep and abiding sense of one's personal mission.



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Previously, Msizi was Chief of Staff to the Absa Group CEO. He provided daily strategic support to the CEO, supporting her in driving strategy execution, managing Group priorities and deepening relationships with key external stakeholders.

Msizi also worked at Ethos Private Equity, where he supported portfolio company executives in developing & refining strategic objectives as well as identify operational, commercial and financial levers to unlock growth.

Prior to that, Khoza worked as a consultant for global management consultancy, A.T. Kearney, where he advised C-Level executives of some of Africa's leading companies and governments. He was also seconded to the secretariat of the National Planning Commission, where he drove the recommendations for South Africa's economic infrastructure as part of the NDP.

Msizi began his career as a control engineer at Hatch & Associates where he designed control and instrumentation software for clients in the mining and mineral processing sectors.

Msizi's MEng thesis, entitled "Economic modelling using computational intelligence techniques", produced three peer-reviewed journal papers and was presented at international conferences of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE).

Msizi holds an MEng (Electrical) from the University of Johannesburg (2011-2012), a postgraduate Diploma (Leadership) from the Thabo Mbeki Leadership Institute (2011-2012) and BSc Eng (Computer Engineering) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (2007 – 2010).

Msizi is a World Economic Forum Global Shaper and featured on the 2012 edition of the Mail & Guardian Top 200 Young South Africans

Outside his work commitments, Msizi is married with one child. In his spare time, beyond connecting with family and friends, Msizi is an avid reader and enjoys a good round of golf.

The Union of Leadership and Management in the Role of a CEO

Althea Discala

The goal of this chapter is to outline leadership and management considerations in the role of a chief executive officer (CEO). It aims to unpack the differences and similarities between management and leadership. It will also serve to discover whether CEOs are managers or leaders or both. Is a manager a leader or is a leader a manager? According to Ward, these terms are often interchangeably used in describing CEOs. Top managers can also be referred to as the “leaders” of the organisation¹.

As there is a vast amount of research on both leadership and management, this chapter will just broadly define leadership and management. It will also explore specific forms of leadership styles that I believe to be paramount, based on my experience. The visionary, authentic, and servant leadership styles will be discussed in further detail. This chapter also aims to unpack whether CEOs are required to have these leadership attributes.

The responsibilities of a CEO’s role will be described. The CEO is the highest ranked manager and executive of the company. Their ultimate responsibility is to manage and lead the organisation. The scope of the chapter is limited to leadership and management responsibilities of this executive. The CEO reports to the chairman of the board of directors and is finally accountable to the board of directors. Ultimately, the responsibility and accountability for the company’s affairs lie with the CEO. Various stakeholders of the company will also be explored and discussed.

A CEO is expected by these stakeholders to not only be a good manager but also a good leader. These expectations require a CEO to self-reflect and be aware of their leadership and management styles. Self-awareness, in my view is a critical skill to develop as a CEO. It is a continuous journey. I have had to self-reflect on both my management and leadership styles. However, before I embark on that, I need to broadly define leadership and management.

Leadership is exhibited when a person guides and motivates a group of individuals in achieving a common goal. John Maxwell defines leadership as the

“ability to influence or guide others.” Leadership is therefore an ability to inspire others to achieve a common goal or vision. Management on the other hand, is overseeing the operations and day to day functions of the organisation. Therefore, management confirms the controlling and execution of operational functions to ensure that the objectives, vision, and strategy of the organisation are met. It is more practical than leadership and focuses more on execution. It ensures that processes are put in place and people are organised to get things done.

Now that we have broadly defined leadership and management, let’s unpack two leadership styles which I as a CEO attest to and try to live by: These are the visionary and authentic leadership styles.

A visionary leader is a leader who inspires others through vision and who helps others to see how they can contribute and work together in the achievement of that vision.² Visionary leaders look at the future and have a vision for their organisation and for themselves as leaders. I believe that one needs to have a personal vision and a vision for their company in order to be a successful leader. One needs to know where they are going before they can embark on any journey. A vision ensures that the company, the leader, and the management team are focused on the right things.

Visionary leaders have a strong determination to achieve the goals that have been set. They are strong willed and never give up. From what I have noticed of visionary leaders is that they have a strong character, and they believe in themselves. They know what they stand for and believe in their vision. A visionary leader takes active steps to accomplish the vision and to turn their vision into reality. I strive to be a visionary leader and believe that without vision it is difficult to accomplish anything. Examples of visionary leaders who have inspired me are Nelson Mandela, Oprah Winfrey, and Bishop TD Jakes. Visionaries are always focused on their vision and the end goal by inspiring, motivating, and encouraging others. Winston Churchill said that “a nation will find it very hard to look up to the leaders who are keeping their ears to the ground.”

Why is having a vision so important? It sets direction and keeps the company focused on what its purpose is. A vision should be clear, written down, simple to understand, and easy to communicate. In my opinion, CEOs must be able to display visionary leadership. They need to have a clear vision for the company in order to direct the company and its employees towards the achievement of its vision and goals. Creating and implementing the company or organisation’s vision and mission is one of the responsibilities of a CEO. There

is a difference, however, in vision when viewing it from a management or a leadership perspective.

Creating the vision is leadership and implementing the vision is management. Leadership focuses on what must happen and what direction to take, whereas management ensures that the direction is executed. Leaders provide guidance as to what direction the company should go and provide direction to managers and employees. Leaders create a plan and managers execute the plan. A CEO therefore must display leadership and management capabilities in ensuring that the company's vision is created and implemented. A CEO's role encompasses both initiating the plan and ensuring that the plan gets executed. Vision requires specific objectives to be set which will assist in the accomplishment of the vision. This is normally referred to as the company's strategy.

The strategy of a company refers to the path that the company needs to take to achieve its vision. The CEO, together with the board of directors set the vision and strategy for the company, including the following:

- ◆ Industries in which the company wants to operate, accompanied by reasons (financial and otherwise) for selecting these industries.
- ◆ Short-term and long-term results that it wants to achieve.
- ◆ The relevance of the company in the country and the economy.
- ◆ The impact that it wishes to make in the world and in the community in which it operates.

Goals and objectives, as well as key performance indicators are usually set, which must align to the vision and strategy. The role of the CEO is to ensure that the vision and strategy is communicated to employees who must implement that vision and strategy. A visionary CEO who has inspired me and has been able to execute on this is Alan Mullaly, the previous CEO of Ford Company. He was a visionary in bringing the company back to profitability (after it had been loss making), by focusing on teamwork, culture change, and positivity. A combination of leadership and management skills was necessary to achieve this. As we have discussed vision as it relates to a leader, let's unpack the concept of management as it relates to accomplishing an organisation's vision.

Management is about controlling and reviewing results against objectives that have been set. It focuses on structure, routine, and processes to ensure that the vision is achieved. Management is about the present, whereas leadership is about the future. Management focuses on allocating scarce resources to achieve a desired result. It is about effectiveness and efficiency in processes and

structures to achieve the organisational goals. In my view, a good CEO must have the ability to lead and manage. Leadership means assisting with creating the company's vision and management by ensuring that the vision is carried out and managed. In order to do this, the right people need to be in the right positions to carry out this vision, which brings me to my next point on people.

Drucker states that “nothing requires as much hard work as ‘people decisions’.” Selecting and managing people is the role of a CEO and requires both leadership and management capabilities. Selection requires choosing the right people that fit into the culture of the organisation and that can do the job. Once the right people are selected, a CEO needs to manage and lead these people.

I have learnt in my role as a leader and a CEO that managing and developing people are probably two of the most important responsibilities of a leader, if not the most important ones. It is arguably the most challenging to be both a manager of people and to inspire others to reach their full potential. The reason for this, I believe is that sometimes specialists become managers and leaders because they are good at what they do, but then lack the training to be an effective leader and manager. That is why I believe being a leader is a continuous journey and one which is developed through experience and training.

As stated, leadership is about inspiring people to achieve a common goal. The ability to inspire and develop people is a characteristic of a good leader. Ensuring that people become the best version of themselves is a continual journey. Leaders inspire others by developing, training, and communicating the vision with their employees. I believe that a CEO needs to continually work on this.

A CEO needs to have the ability to manage and develop people. I have discovered that I must find a balance between being operational (a manager) and being strategic (a leader). Managers must manage people to ensure that the company's objectives are met. Leaders must also think long-term and ensure that people are not only operationally managed but are also groomed for the long-term success and progress of the organisation. People management is therefore a managerial responsibility. People development is a leadership trait. Leadership empowers people whereas management imposes authority.³

I have always believed in empowering people. I try to encourage others to be the best version of themselves and to excel in what they do. I have learnt that empowering and inspiring people is one of the most important aspects of leadership and is a continual journey. I believe that people need to feel

that they matter and that their contributions and efforts matter. In my view, everyone in the organisation needs to feel that they are adding value and that they make a difference. People need to know and feel that the work they are doing is meaningful and impactful, and that it contributes to the overall success of the organisation. A good leader needs to bring the best out of their people and create an environment where the people can thrive and give the best of themselves to the organisation.

A good leader motivates and encourages their staff during times of difficulty. Motivation is key to working together in the achievement of a common goal. Take care of your good people and incentivise them to be better and to grow, is my view. A leader inspires, empowers, and develops people, while a manager ensures that people are equipped to fulfil the company's goals. A good CEO needs to deliver on both and balance the two. As Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft said, "As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others." In order to do this effectively, I believe it should come from a place of authenticity.

What does it mean to be an authentic leader? An authentic leader is one who is true to themselves. It literally means to be authentic. Authentic leaders believe in living out their values and ethics.⁴ Being authentic as a leader, builds credibility and trust. In my view, relationships with the company's stakeholders need to be built on trust and credibility which requires authenticity. One can learn from, shadow, and emulate good leaders. However, I believe that to be a successful leader, one needs to be authentic.

An authentic leader knows who they are and has a great self-awareness. As an authentic leader, one focuses on one's strengths and is aware of one's weaknesses. Authentic leaders believe in themselves and their abilities and use their strengths to make a difference and an impact in the organisations and businesses that they manage and lead. Authentic leaders are emotionally intelligent and can lead from the heart and the mind. I believe that the power of emotional intelligence is grossly underestimated in management and leadership in the workplace. I have found that the ability to use both "head" and "heart" is what makes a meaningful, long lasting and impactful business relationship.

Authentic leaders lead with vision and they strive for excellence and professionalism in everything that they do. As a CEO, I believe that an environment and culture of openness, authenticity, and trust should be built within an organisation. The best thing that a leader can do is to be the best version of themselves and create a culture for others to do the same. Authentic

leaders are guided by what is right and fair for all stakeholders. They realise that they are there to serve the company and its stakeholders.

Great leaders and CEOs realise that they are serving others. They are serving the founders of the company, the board of directors, the staff that they work for, their customers, their suppliers, and business partners. Good CEOs need to realise that even though they are in control and in charge of the company, they are responsible and accountable to the shareholders, board of directors, customers, suppliers, and employees of the organisation. They therefore must communicate effectively in order to manage these stakeholders.

A CEO needs to be able to communicate effectively with both internal and external stakeholders. It is important that the CEO ensures that there are open lines of communication in the organisation. Communication in an organisation is essential and builds relationships, trust, and authenticity with key stakeholders. A key role of a CEO is managing relationships with stakeholders of the company. In my view, people sometimes underestimate the importance of relationships in a business. Relationships are built on the foundations and principles of trust, respect, authenticity, mutual values, and value alignment.

The CEO is put in a position of trust in the company and with that trust comes a responsibility of serving others and performing duties with the utmost care and diligence. The CEO should have an attitude and heart of wanting to serve and do what is right for the company. A CEO should serve with compassion and have regard for the community in which it operates. I have realised that I need to work with and develop those around me for the overall good of the company, its shareholders, and all its stakeholders. A CEO should focus on *people, planet, and profit*. It is about being a socially responsible leader and manager.

A last thought to the reader of this chapter: I believe there is a union between leadership and management in the role of a CEO. A CEO is not only the highest ranked manager in the organisation but is also the leader of the organisation. An effective and good CEO in my view requires both leadership and management skills. The roles of a manager and a leader are intertwined and can therefore not be separated when it comes to a CEO. It's up to each CEO to decipher for themselves what kind of a leader and manager they want to be.

I have shared my thoughts on what has worked for me and what I find valuable when it comes to leadership. Having vision is by far the most paramount as it sets the direction for the leader and the organisation. The importance of being authentic and building trust should not be underestimated when conducting business, and has assisted me in building sustainable and meaningful

relationships. Being yourself and being the best version of yourself whilst operating within a certain set of standards and ethics are what will set you apart from the rest.

For me, realising that as CEO, my role is to serve the company and its stakeholders, and in order to do this, I must constantly grow in my role and self-reflect on my daily leadership and management. The role of the CEO is therefore not a stagnant one, but an ongoing journey of development and impact.

I would like to thank you for reading this chapter. Hopefully it has been of value. I would like to close with a quote by Michael Jordan, former NBA player who said, “Earn your leadership every day.”

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- 4 George 2006.



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Leading with the Heart and Mind

Justin Platjes

At the time of writing, I am 29 years old and it is some 27 years into a democratic South Africa. In a democratic society with substantial mineral wealth, the youth, which includes myself, have a lot to look forward to...don't we?...so, what could possibly go wrong?

As the youth, we find ourselves in a country where even the most basic services cannot be delivered in a consistent and reliable manner. The lack of reliable electricity, which is the backbone of an economy, is just one example. A myriad of state-owned enterprises is in a critical condition – a consequence of leadership with a vision of self-enrichment, which the broader society would not buy into. Stripping state owned enterprises of taxpayers' money for individual gain, also known as corruption, is no different to the apartheid government, who has stripped the black population of their basic rights. The same is true for the private sector: It's not hard to dig up a handful of articles evidencing this behaviour. Beyond corruption, there have been cases of companies in the private sector that have window-dressed businesses to achieve social (including broad-based black economic empowerment) and environmental objectives. As a nation, we need to focus on becoming more conscious of the severity of this short-term mindset, which in my view is not sustainable. This will require a change in the mindset of both the current and future leaders.

There is a myriad of leadership styles such as democratic, *laissez faire*, authoritarian, and spiritual. Leadership is the act of leading a group of people or an organisation, and a key measurement of leadership is the ability to motivate and inspire other people. A CEO is a leader by virtue of their title – this does not imply that their employees follow them. One could argue that Adolf Hitler was a leader. However, the outcomes of his leadership were clearly malicious. I largely make two bold assumptions in writing: 1) Proper leadership results in a leader having followers, and 2) leadership should focus on positive outcomes. To improve our social conditions in South Africa and to potentially prosper as a country, our leadership requires a paradigm shift where maximising the benefit for all stakeholders is at least on par with profitability and shareholder

returns. This paradigm shift requires leaders to go beyond what is required by laws and codes.

There is a fundamental difference between complying to and proactively setting a vision. As an example, a mining company may provide training as is required in terms of the Mine Health and Safety Act. Contrast this to a mining company that has set a “zero-injury” or “every life matters” vision for the company, where each person is responsible for the life of the others. In the first scenario, it is a matter of compliance, in the second there is an understanding among all, that a part of their daily mission is the safety of the next miner. This transcendence or shift in paradigm requires a mindset that is underpinned with dignity, respect, and care for every human being involved in the process of achieving an objective. This altered mindset could be achieved through spirituality. Spirituality provides one with a deeper consciousness and self-awareness which is fuelled less by the ego and more by a sense of purpose to create value for all stakeholders.

Spirituality allows for a feeling of interconnectedness with a wider, deeper, and richer whole, and adds perspective to our limited situation.¹ Spirituality refers to the inner world, but has grave consequences on how one behaves in the real world. Spirituality impacts the way in which we view the world and our connectedness to each other, and promotes one’s likelihood of participating in behaviour conducive to pro-social behaviour, and to strive for justice (Samul 2020). To illustrate the idea of spirituality, I refer to a book titled, *The power of now*, by Eckharte Tolle. He explains that it is critical for us to observe our own mind. At first glance, I thought this was ludicrous. However, I tried it once and began to understand the true power of being able to objectively evaluate my thoughts and actions. The idea is premised on what we know as the ego, which he describes as our self-image rather than our true self. The ego drives a lot of what we do, how we think, and how we react.

To reach an unconscious state, which is driven by the ego, Tolle argues that we have allowed our egos to hijack our minds. For example, if someone gets a promotion and you do not, or you find out that a friend earns more than you do – what are the thoughts that flow through your mind? How does this make you feel? If you are not aware of your thoughts during these situations, you will be surprised at just how much of an impact these thoughts can have on your perception of yourself. Speaking from personal experience, I can comfortably state that in the scenarios above it is likely that you may think less of yourself for a moment, or you may judge the other person. In reality, the fact that the person

earns more than you, has got nothing to do with your true self, being your values and principles. However, the thought may be entertained by your ego.

Tolle speaks about observing the mind. In the above scenario, you should take a step back and observe your mind. It may not be the scenario above, but whenever you feel that your ego is threatened or that you may react negatively, whether physically or emotionally, take a moment to step back and observe the thoughts running through your mind. Don't judge the thoughts running through your mind – just listen. You will notice that you are possibly feeling quite silly about the whole situation and often find that it has nothing to do with you as a person, but that it is rather something impacting your ego (which is defined by material possessions or the self-image that you have created in your mind). Breaking free of one's mind is powerful, as it allows us to realise just how much we allow our minds to control us, not realising that we are in fact in control – if we want to be. Once you have realised that you are in control of your mind and not the other way around, it is quite empowering. You could respond, rather than react. Being in this position will allow you to lead yourself and others in a controlled manner. Being spiritual, with no necessary reference to religion, creates a deeper sense of connectedness with yourself and with those around you. Thus, a spiritual leader is connected with others and considers others in their vision, and they are carrying out that vision.

Louis Fry, in his book, *Maximizing the triple bottom line*, mentions that spiritual leadership comprises mainly of three characteristics, namely vision, faith, and altruistic love. A spiritual leader requires a certain level of personal spirituality, which underpins their vision, faith, and altruistic love. The vision is fashioned by the leader and adopted by those who are happy to embody it. Faith or hope in the vision is determined by the leader's belief in the achievability of the vision. Altruistic love and values promote a sense of mutual respect and care among each other.² Put simply, a leader that is spiritually grounded, creates a vision, which certain people buy into. These people can be employees, fellow members of an organisation, fund, or agency. The vision and faith in the vision resonate with followers and create a sense of purpose. This sense of purpose is their calling and allows them to feel like they are making a difference in the world. Altruistic love is a sense of harmony created through mutual respect, care, and appreciation for others. As a spiritually grounded leader, the leader has the ability to let go of the ego and understand that the vision is bigger than an individual and that all followers are just as important as the leader. This type of leader will be one who works for his employees, not *vice versa*. This approach leads to inspired followers who feel that they can change the world, that they

are a part of a force where they are respected as human beings, and that they belong. At this juncture, it is important to note that the way in which I have described this leadership is in the context of an organisation. However, personal leadership, leading oneself, is driven off the same principles.

Nelson Mandela had a vision of equality and justice. This vision was not created by him but was a vision that was shared by the majority of black South Africans, being the greater part of the South Africa population. I am of the view that his faith and belief in the achievability of the vision is what made him different. This faith and belief were the underpin to his personal leadership, as he created and reinforced his own belief in this vision. Further, he practised altruistic love, where each step of his struggle focused on the cause or vision, which he knew was bigger than himself. This is where the characteristics above of vision, faith, and altruistic love apply to an individual. The altruistic values that Mandela had for himself, eventually formed part of the organisation to which he belonged – the ANC. The ANC then became the ruling party of the country and in essence, Mandela's altruistic values became that of the country. The majority of people of the country then bought into his vision, which gave them a sense of purpose or calling, while the values gave them a feeling of belonging or membership. I therefore think that it is possible for an individual with strong personal leadership characteristics to change the vision of an organisation and even a country.

Any individual in South Africa that truly believes in their vision, backed by pro-social values, has the ability to change an organisation. The individual begins with personal leadership and those values are transferred to followers. I firmly believe that today there are many future leaders within the youth who are ambitious enough to create massive change. Once influential enough, they would then have the ability to drive these values in organisations, whether public or private. Enough young leaders of this nature, coming through the ranks in future could ensure that South Africa does not slip into a state that would not make us proud. Could you imagine a South Africa where there are 100 Mandelas? Picture a South Africa where each province and each municipality has a Mandela. With that being said, I see a massive opportunity for the youth, myself included, to create the future South Africa that we want.

Personal leadership requires an underlying passion. I find it very hard to imagine that one can have a vision that one believes is attainable without having a passion or motivation driving them to achieve it. For example, if your vision is to create a cleaner environment in South Africa, but you are not passionate about the development of renewables, attending conferences on global warming, etc.,

the chances are 1) you do not truly believe in your vision, and 2) obstacles along your journey are more likely to uproot your belief in the vision. Mandela was exposed to racism and discrimination by an apartheid government, which fuelled his passion for politics and law. His belief in his vision for freedom and equality was underpinned by his passion. He famously said that the passion for the cause has to be bigger than the bitterness and shame of failure (Freiberg & Freiberg 2018). Starting small in his prison cell, he used his legal knowhow and political diplomacy to fight for the rights of his fellow prisoners, even going on a hunger strike to ensure there was at least one vegetable in every meal. Every step forward was testing, for little reward, but was always a part of the bigger picture. At an individual level it is key to focus on finding this passion.

A situation can be defined as a set of circumstances or a state of affairs in which one finds oneself. When you are in a situation, there are various permutations of emotions that can be triggered, while the depth of that feeling can vary. For a situation to have an impact on you, it has to “strike a chord” or evoke an emotional reaction. When we experience this emotional reaction, our memories are stimulated by similarities and our brain is typically trying to make connections. Often the connections and patterns which are created, are out of our control. Racism provokes a negative emotional reaction in black people. An innocent statement by a white person today, may evoke a strong emotional reaction from a black person, especially if they grew up in the apartheid era. This is a function of the connections that the brain makes, linking this statement to a memory of being asked for their identity document in a white area in the 1970s. This is an example of dissonance or a lack of harmony.

On the flip side, there are situations that will evoke a positive reaction, known as resonance. Whether a situation creates resonance or dissonance, is less important. What is important is that it creates an emotional reaction. Herein lies the beginning of passion. Being aware of situations that evoke an emotional response can lead you to finding a new passion. When I was studying at the University of Cape Town, the class had a presentation to deliver for a marketing course. I was unprepared and had not done a presentation for quite some time. I walked up to the podium to do my presentation. The first minute went okay as I largely read off the page. When I looked up, I noticed that all the people had this confused façade on their faces. The more I tried to explain, the more confused they looked; the more nervous I got, the worse my explanations became. The moral of the story is that this presentation scared me so much that I developed a fear of public speaking. To rectify this problem, I went to Toastmasters – a public speaking training forum. After six months, I became so confident that I started

to launch my own club at the auditing firm where I worked. The next thing I knew, I was training partners of my audit firm, as well as senior employees at other firms, despite being a trainee – all in the space of a year. Being aware of what scares and motivates you is crucial, as a single situation can change your life. I developed a passion for public speaking from a fear, so much so that I considered changing my career. Consciously seeking an emotional connection, while being adventurous will go a long way in discovering a new passion.

I now have a passion for finance. However, my vision is for every South African to have access to basic rights, having a roof over their head, running water, access to food, and education. Despite all my “advice” above, why on earth do I find myself in a banking job, if my vision is for the basic rights of each South African? First, let me say that in this field, you can make decent money. Coming from a humble background, I had to ensure my own financial security. However, with that being said, my strong view is that the pace at which basic rights are being delivered in South Africa, is hampered by corruption – corruption in both the public and private space, but more specifically in state owned enterprises. Corruption has exacerbated South Africa’s debt levels. Higher levels of debt for our country means that a larger portion of our state revenue has to be allocated to servicing debt, therefore less money for investment in basic services.

Banking is the backbone of the economy in many respects, taking deposits from individuals and corporates and redeploying it in all sectors to stimulate growth in the economy. In the same vein, the treasury is just a bigger “bank,” borrowing money and collecting taxes to redeploy into the economy. Understanding where money comes from, the cost of money, and how to effectively and efficiency allocate that money for optimal returns for all stakeholder, in my view is crucial in achieving my objective. I see an opportunity to assist both the private and public sector in managing the resources of the country more effectively, deploying the capital in an effective manner where needed most, like education, infrastructure, and healthcare. Through proactive and consistent efforts of meditation, reading on the topic of spirituality and engaging with those in need, I am finding ever more purpose in what I am doing. I am going through a transcendence, where I realise that my day-to-day work is not primarily for my personal gain, but rather a contribution to society. I now constantly question how I am adding value to all stakeholders in everything that I do. I now do feel that I have purpose, that my work has meaning, and that my contribution is and will become ever more significant.

Once you have an underlying passion, driving faith in your vision, it is wise to find a mentor or mentors who can put it all to the test. The manner in

which an esteemed mentor tests your vision, is through rigorous debate and promoting actions. I have been fortunate that in my career I have crossed paths with many of South Africa's well-respected C-suit executives, many a time being a part of discussions of "what keeps them up at night" and assisting in brainstorming solutions for these issues. More recently, I have had the privilege of meeting Michael Solomon Teke, the current CEO of Seriti Resources. On my very first one-on-one chat with him, he asked me, "Who is Justin in 2030 and what do you see and how does it make you feel?" The answer is far less relevant than the question – simple questions coming from a place one could only consider altruistic. He asked simple but deep questions such as, "Who is Justin?", "Why do you want to help people?", "Do you like money?", "Can you deliver?", and "Are you tough?" He has pushed my thinking to a level that I have never experienced before, making me question everything about my vision for myself and my contribution to society. By challenging my views and the reasons for my every move, he can very quickly decipher what I am passionate about and the intentions behind my plans. Subtly, he pushes me in a direction where he believes there is meaning for me.

I personally believe that my relationship with Mike Teke is really successful because we resonate in similar ways over various topics. However, he has walked many of the paths that I speak of and purposely allows me to walk some of them, only to realise it's a dead end. The manner in which this is done, is crucial: It is through doing, not only thinking. When we brainstorm ideas, he will almost immediately throw me into the situation. As a simple example, I have mentioned the idea that I want to be involved in foundations that assist schools and universities, as part of my broader vision to promote equality. The next week I found myself in the township at a school doing a motivational talk for junior school kids and their teachers. Mike Teke said that it would be a five to ten minute chat to the kids. With this in mind, I thought it would be quite a simple task. When I arrived, I found my name on the agenda as "motivational speaker" and the slot was for 20 to 30 minutes! I rose to the challenge and managed to inspire the kids and teachers. The natural high that I felt immediately afterwards, confirmed my passion for helping those less fortunate and has reinforced my belief that this is something worth fighting for. The smiles on the faces of the kids and parents have given me more joy and hope than any award, money, or recognition that I have received in my life. My ambition and vision have certainly grown from there and the tasks are proving to be more and more challenging. Through this process I am building courage and my vision is becoming more

real, day by day. If you want to put your vision and underlying passion to the test, find someone that has been there.

In my view, South Africa has to become a better place than that in which I was born. Equality and the rights to basic needs must be bolstered. The youth of South Africa, those with visions for a better future, have to take action. This action should be driven by personal initiative, which is driven by the desire to improve the lives of others. The desire and passion for this will be kindled through a greater consciousness and spirituality, where one is connected with people and their needs. The actions that are taken, must exhibit an unquestionable drive to achieve one's outcomes whilst promoting one's values. Any person or organisation coming into contact with a force of this magnitude, will adopt the values and drive the mission forward. I believe that our conscious youth will do what is right for our country and lead it in the right direction, and I am excited to be an active participant in that journey.

Key Lessons

- ◆ **Key lesson 1:** Embrace spirituality – become connected with others.
- ◆ **Key lesson 2:** Find your passion – one needs resilience.
- ◆ **Key lesson 3:** Never doubt your ability to achieve your vision.

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Currently, Justin works in Investment Banking at Rand Merchant Bank where he primarily looks after Ultra High Net Worth individuals, providing advisory, funding and structuring solutions. Prior to joining RMB, Justin worked in Mergers & Acquisitions and gained experience in this field at both, through his experience at Standard Bank and PwC. He completed his articles at PwC focusing on Financial Services.

At PwC, he launched the Toastmasters club in an attempt to improve employees' public speaking skills.

He has a Post Graduate Diploma in Accounting from the University of Cape Town and has completed CFA level II.

He would like to encourage the youth to be more confident, assume leadership positions wherever possible and help them understand that everyone has a role to play in creating a better future. He believes that through mentorship and guidance, previously disadvantaged individuals can feel empowered and assume positions of leadership. These positions of leadership lead to better outcomes, whether it is leading a household, community or large corporation. He would like to embark on this journey through a foundation of his own, which will leverage off his skills and networks built to date.

The Right Leadership Style

Fanele Mnguni

Leadership is defined as an influential relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes and outcomes that reflect shared purposes. It involves people in a relationship, influence, change, a shared purpose, and taking personal responsibility to make things happen. The people who are followers usually follow someone that is worthy of being followed. Maxwell argued that if you can't influence people, then they will not follow you. Daft states that followers are an important part of the leadership process, and all leaders are sometimes followers as well. Good leaders know how to follow, as they set an example for others.

Under normal circumstances, a leader has followers, and a leader can be a follower of their own leadership. As human beings, we all start from the bottom where we are not leaders. We initially struggle to find out who we are, what we want to be, and what we wish to do in life. This is against the background of the famous quote by Vince Lombardi, "Leaders aren't born, they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work." As time goes by, we then attempt to find some sense of belonging, by trying to answer some of the initial "struggle" questions. I remember as a child, I've always been disoriented, going where the wind blows, without any sense of purpose and understanding. I suppose at that time I was merely a follower, led by anything in front of me that was deemed to be cool. When I reached high school, I began to understand that life has a purpose and that we are all born with one. I then started to identify elements of life in other people that resonated with me in terms of purpose. Initially, it was a range of different elements from different people e.g., from basic human charisma to materialistic things such as cars. I then realised that it takes hard work for one to be in possession of some of these elements.

As time went by, my interest in certain people that I looked up to, grew even bigger. I started to understand the path that those people followed to get to where they are in life. I then realised that it took training and development for them to reach their milestones. As life progresses, we all identify things in people that influence us to do better, and given enough resonance, we simply follow them. That is the true demonstration of being a follower of your own

leadership. You actually lead yourself and therefore, when it comes to a leader-follower relationship, you are no different than your followers.

As an average black child born in the 80s, I grew up in a household where we were 15 people living in a four bedroomed house. I remember this because while my mother was dishing up, I used to count all the plates, hoping that mine would be the one with the biggest piece of meat. We lived under my grandfather's roof – he had the privilege to get the biggest piece of meat. At the time we didn't see any overcrowding issues as we had no reference to the opposite. As a child I was always troubled and curious. I was never comfortable with superficial knowledge and always needed to understand the nuts and bolts of things around me, which often got me in trouble. If it was not me breaking my few minutes old toys, it was me breaking my grandfather's TV or radio, which didn't sit well with him, and ended up with me getting a hiding. But that did not stop me. I remember my grandfather was so tired of me meddling in his unused stuff in the garage, that he ended up putting some of it out of my reach, like his old car door that he put on top of the roof, hoping that I would not get to it. Guess where I was found thereafter? Stuck on top of the roof because the door that I used to climb up was suddenly closed by my aunt who wanted me to be caught red handed.

At the age of four we were already allowed to go and play on our own in the streets and expected to return home before the sun sets. I remember one day when my curiosity got the better of me. I started raising all sorts of questions about the sun. It was round about 16:00 in the dusty street called Mkhabela Street and the sun was already south. I started making up all sorts of stories to my friends about the delicious food that is found in the sun – “cheese” To be more specific. The next thing I knew, we were on the main road called Kgaswane Street, which is diagonal to Mkhabela Street, facing south and on our way to the sun. At the end of Kgaswane Street we turned right into Nkosi Street, then turned left into Job Maseko Street, where we were once again facing the sun. Yes, it was me, Fanele Mnguni, leading the young tribe like Noah when his ark had just sailed off.

As we were walking in Job Maseko Street, hungry like lions, it started getting dark. The sun was still light in that orangish colour as we were approaching Thema Road which is the last diagonal street before you exit Kwa-Thema. The dream of getting into our destination was getting more and more real and we were excited and longing for a delicious cheesy meal from the sun. I, on the other hand as the captain of the ship, had to keep my team motivated that our destination is near, as some of my teammates were starting to look worried. I

believed that the sun was actually behind the manufacturing buildings, called BCM which was about 800 meters from where we were in Job Maseko Street. Then all of a sudden, we heard a yelling voice calling one of my friends' name and when we looked, it was his grandmother shouting from the back of the taxi telling us to go back home. The funny thing is, the taxi did not stop and that yelling was not enough to change our minds, as we were too hungry and eager to get to the sun. The next thing I know as we were wondering which direction to take after hitting a T-junction in Thema Road, my mother sprang out from my grandfather's car and threw us all in the back seat. What I recall from that point onwards is that we were all crying in the car, as she managed to hit us all with her Hang Ten shoe. To this day, I still don't know how she managed to do all of that. I mean, about eight kids in the back of the car, plus one angry adult giving each kid a hiding. I ended up getting more blows than everyone else, not because someone ratted me out, but because it was my mother who was giving the hidings.

At the age of five I started school in Zamani Primary School because of a teacher who was a relative of ours. In those days, schools were known to be effective in instilling discipline in children. So, my parents couldn't help themselves but to hand me over as I was too curious and naughty at home. I was placed in the same class with my old mate from the sunny days called Thando *aka* Nandos. Nandos' mother used to work at Chicken Licken back in the days when Joe Mafela was still the ambassador advertising delicious famous chicken meals such as Taxi Two. Nandos' mother made us quite popular at school with teachers as each time they sent us to buy them Chicken Licken, we would bring an extra piece of chicken. I was good with the directions back from the good old sunny days and Nandos had the keys to the extra piece of chicken, so we were a good team. Now and then when returning from Chicken Licken, we used to open the food and steal the small crumbs on the side. This continued to happen until the day that Nandos and I were too hungry to eat just the crumbs. As we were eating the crumbs as usual, I decided to pinch off a bit of crispy chicken skin from one of the chicken pieces. Nandos followed, then the next thing I know it became quite evident that someone had obviously tampered with the chicken. Then Nandos and I immediately came up with a plan. We decided to peel the entire skin off on all chicken pieces so that they all look the same. At the time Chicken Licken was famous for its spicy, crispy, delicious chicken skin which Nandos and I decided to help ourselves to. When we finally got to school and delivered the meal to the teacher, the look on her face when she opened her meal is something

that I will never forget in my life. Of course, the cooking oil on our mouths was a giveaway and that was the end of our Chicken Licken journey days.

The days of being naughty carried on for a while. If it was not me and Nandos stopping a minibus taxi on the main road and then running straight back home, it was me and Nandos putting sharp objects on the road to test the strength of the coal truck tyres. Of course, this always resulted in a hefty price tag for our parents and for us – just a hiding. As time went by, we advanced to another level of being naughty. I suppose we were becoming good at it. Then one of my relatives, upon hearing about my troubles, advised my parents to do a traditional ceremony to formally request the person whom I was named after to pass on his name to me. My second name is Phillip, so the guy that I have been named after was Phillip and he was a bishop. Bishop Phillip passed on before I was born. My parents then organised the traditional ceremony during the December school holidays where a sheep was slaughtered, and I was taken to the grave where Bishop Phillip was buried. I remember very well when we were at the grave – it was my grandparents, my mother, and a few elders and me.

While we were all kneeling around the grave, one of the elders started talking to the grave, calling Bishop Phillip's name as if he was standing right in front of us. He started with an apology for using his name without his permission, followed by the request to pass on his name to me. The whole ordeal was funny to me as I kept wondering if the guy called Phillip Bell whose name appeared when the TV show called *The bold and the beautiful* started, went through the same ordeal. Then, when we were going back home, I started to feel bad, as if I had done something terribly wrong. My friend Nandos was nowhere to be found even when we returned from the graveyard. With my friends not being around, I was stuck at home during the course of the ceremony with my relatives reprimanding me. I found myself bored and listening for the sake of listening as some relatives found the whole thing funny as well. I remember asking and comparing myself to another street play buddy of mine, named Sunday. Sunday lived a couple of houses from mine and boy!!! He was a thief of note. He used to steal a lot of money from his parents and buy everyone just about anything they wanted. I was naughty and curious, but I was never a thief. That is one thing that I was never curious about and had no interest in.

The traditional ceremony then came to an end, as my relatives (for the last time) took turns in reprimanding me, telling me that this ceremony should not happen again. Come to think of it now, none of them actually made time to sit with me and ask me what the reasons behind my behaviour were. I suppose during those days parenting was different from what it is today, especially when

it comes to disciplining a child. After the ceremony, things got slightly better. I was reminded now and then about the ceremony, whenever I started doing things that seemed like trouble. Schools eventually opened and on the first day I got the biggest surprise of my life. Nandos and I were not in the same class anymore. I suspect that someone requested that we be separated. I was doing Standard 5 which is now called Grade 7 – the last year of primary school. I then started making new friends in the new class. I met a guy named Nhlanhla Sibanyoni. Nhlanhla was shorter than I was, very aggressive and a boxer. I don't know how we clicked, as fighting was not a part of who I am. Nhlanhla then invited me to his boxing training session and when I got there, I immediately fell in love with the sport. In that first training session, I inquired about joining the club and the coach told me that I needed to pay five rands to join and become a member. At the time the only money I used to get was 50 cents a day for lunch during school days. Of course, my parents declined giving me the money upfront and I had no choice but to save the only income I had. It took me two long weeks to save for the joining fee. During these lengthy two weeks I was like a kid who was given a taste of candy for the first time and was now longing for the next one. Eventually I managed to save the required five rands joining fee which was made up of a lot of coins. I remember this well because I used to count that money every single day. It was a Friday when I eventually handed my joining fee to the coach. He just took it without counting it and welcomed me as a new member. There was no consent form or any documentation that was required upfront at the time, and the coach did not seem to care to know my name. In our training club, Friday was a sparring day. In sparring it is recommended to always use gloves, a mouth guard, as well as a head and groin guard.

The only equipment that the club provided to us was the worn-out boxing gloves that only served the purpose of protecting the fist-bone, rather than any body part of the opponent. The gloves were so old and had accumulated so much sweat, that we thought that the coach poured vinegar on it to keep it clean. The only comfortable training clothes that I had at the time were my winter pyjamas – light long sleeve T-shirt and pencil pants – without shoes. The training facility was a school classroom of which we had to move desks and chairs to the side to make space for training. Here I was on my first day of boxing, wearing pyjamas with slippery socks of which most teammates found very funny. My first boxing opponent was younger than I was and he happened to be the coach's son. Though we were all young, he was more experienced than I was. He took full advantage of that and introduced me to boxing in a hard way. At some point he knocked me so hard that I fell on top of the desks and chairs.

My first few boxing days were a mess, but I remember, after my first sparring session, I realised that, by sparring with that young boy, I had found myself a benchmark. I then started mimicking everything my first opponent used to do in training sessions, from running to jumping exercises and push-ups. Then eventually I started getting better, and the coach started calling me by my name instead of “you.” When I got to the point where I could do almost everything that my first opponent could do, I requested a second sparring session with my first opponent. The coach refused and gave me a stronger opponent who was my age. My second opponent was slightly taller and much bigger than I was when it comes to body mass and weight. Here I was again, a skinny boy facing a giant. I kept telling myself before the fight started that if I lose, it’s not going to be by knock-out to the desks and chairs again. I was stronger and this would prove how much punch I could take. During the first few minutes of the fight, he just chased me around aggressively, while I made mistakes. I took a few strong punches from him, though. Then suddenly I started to retaliate with a punch to his stomach that I had given all my strength. The next thing I knew, he paused for a moment before he started screaming and holding his waist, and then falling to the floor.

On that day the coach had brought a friend to our training session and they were talking without paying attention to the sparring fights. However, all of a sudden there was silence and they were both staring at me. At that moment I thought that once again I was in deep trouble. It felt like I had done something wrong, but then everybody started clapping their hands. That moment marked the first achievement of my life. On that day when I returned home, I couldn’t obviously share the good news with my parents as I was never given permission to participate in boxing. However, my mother said something that I will never forget. While looking at me all proud and wondering with a bit of a smile on her face, she said in Zulu, *Kukhona okushintshile ngawe kulamalanga, ngiyabonga* which means in English: “There’s something different about you. Whatever it is, thank you.” At the time I did not want to ask any question, fearing that she might find out about me boxing. I started getting less and less in trouble both at home and in school. I started ignoring things like toys and electrical appliances. However, now and then I would find myself examining some old broken electrical appliances at home. When it comes to clothes, I started opting for more sports clothes rather than formal clothes (which we used to call “Jewish”), which pathetically made us look like adults that were going to work. I started being more reserved, cleaner, and neater. When it came to someone picking

a fight with me, I usually avoided it as I was aware how much skill and power I had.

I suppose martial arts movies such as kick-boxing played a vital role in influencing me. I genuinely believed that I had the same strength as Jean Claude van Damme. Whenever I found myself in a fight, I would justify it by picturing myself as Van Damme being forced to fight back Tompo. I had finally found something that made sense in terms of using my time wisely and that felt good. Boxing finally won the battle of keeping me away from trouble unlike the traditional ceremony. Academically, I was not bad either. I was excelling in Maths quite well, to a point where I used to get the highest results in the class without practising it at home. My primary school Maths teacher was Mr Ndala who came from the Ndebele ethnic tribe. Ndebele people till this day are known to be strict and very business minded. Most Ndebele households that were privileged enough to have a car in those days, had a bakkie with bunk chairs at the back. The bakkie was used as both a business and family car. I enjoyed Mr Ndala's Maths classes as he used to give us a lot of details that were easy for me to grasp. He also had a lot in common with my grandfather who was also Ndebele and therefore kind of made it easy for me to understand his personality.

I fell in love with Maths so much that I started slugging behind on my other subjects. To this day I don't know how I made it in primary school without repeating a grade. I don't recall ever doing any homework nor studying for the exams. It was so bad that I never even realised that it was exam time. I would just rock up at school unprepared and do whatever it was I'm told to do and write as much as I can remember. At the time there was never a need to change as nothing concerning my unpreparedness for school was ever brought to my parents' attention. Whenever teachers found out that I did not do any homework, it would just be a hiding and that's it. That was also the case for about 80 percent of the class. We were just not motivated by education.

I then went to a school called Springs Boys High School, which is a multi-racial school. This was at the time when Mandela just got out of prison, and we were amongst the first few black people who were allowed to enrol in the school. As black people, even when we were placed in different grades, we were forced to know each other because of the racism and bullying that we often experienced. Racism did not bother me that much, especially the pushing and shoving when we were changing classes. My boxing background made it feel whenever we were pushed, it was just poking a lion with a broom stick. We could not really describe our situation when we escalated it to the teachers, as

English was not our first language, and all our teachers were white. Most black boys that were from the black primary schools used to excel in subjects like Mathematics, Physical Sciences, and Accounting. The rest of the subjects such as Geography, Biology, and History were challenging. We really found it difficult to read Afrikaans. The book we were supposed to read and understand, was *Die kind*. I managed to get hold of the Zulu version of that book called “Ingane” (“the child”). I shared the book with my black mates, and we all understood the content of the book and were confident. However, come test time we all struggled to provide answers because we could not understand the questions. I remember we were so bad at Afrikaans that during a comprehension test, we used to answer the questions by looking for the long Afrikaans word from the question that matches to the story or passage, and then just write the whole entire paragraph or three sentences. We made up of the sentence before the matching words, the sentence with the matching word, and the sentence thereafter.

Then it came to Afrikaans first paper exam where we were usually given a few titles to choose and compile a letter. We always knew that one of the options was going to be “Die vakansie” which is “The holiday” in English. We all chose the same title and used similar words to describe our experiences and we all got more or less the same results.

Whenever there was an altercation between a white and black boy, we would all stand around the black boy and do nothing, just like a herd of zebras while the lion has its way and does as it pleases. I remember how one black boy was eventually celebrated after he retaliated by just pushing the white boy back, after receiving a myriad of punches on his face. When it came to me, I avoided any retaliation or eye contact with the white boys. However, there was a time when we were at the school’s Valentine’s Ball which catered for boys and girls. I was outside the venue and one senior white boy, in the absence of the teachers, started pushing me around to impress his girlfriend. I first tried to ignore him and walked away but he blocked me and continued hailing racial insults at me, while his friends and girlfriends were laughing. Then suddenly, I lost my temper and punched him hard in the face and he fell down. He got up and we started fighting. Of course, the zebra herd joined in just to witness the fight. I remember beating him so hard that there was suddenly silence among his friends. His friends then stopped the fight as a way of trying to save him from the embarrassment. I recall one of his friends saying after the fight in Afrikaans, *Jeere, die laaitie het jou goed gebliks*m* which translated into English means, “This young boy just gave you a good hiding.” Then my black friends started celebrating and cheering me up about something that I did not really feel

good about. I was worried that I had hurt the guy quite badly as being violent is not part of who I am. Fortunately enough, the boy did not report the fight to the school or to his parents.

Some guys at school then started giving me ridiculous names like “Tyson” of which again I was not pleased and ignored them until they stopped. Academically, I was doing well. As usual I came on top of the class when it came to Mathematics. Then Grade 8 exam time came along. We used the same tactics that we had practiced for English and Afrikaans. However, when we got the results, most of us got the shock of our lives when we realised that we had failed and therefore had to repeat the grade. To get promoted to the next grade, both first and second language, which were English and Afrikaans were mandatory to be passed. My mother still remembers this day, when the Grade 8 final report contained two red circles around English and Afrikaans, a distinction for Mathematics with a big “Fail” at the bottom. She was obviously disappointed that I had to repeat a grade, but for the first time she did not give me a hiding for being or doing something that was wrong. At the beginning of my second year in Boys High, some of my friends who made it to the next grade and who predominately came from the model C primary schools stopped hanging out with us. New freshers came along, and I met a few new friends. I started paying more attention in English and Afrikaans, to a point where I requested help from my grandparents and some friendly white boys who were quite fluent in Afrikaans. Some of the new freshers that came from the model C schools helped out as well. Then, before I knew it, it was final exam time. As years went by, more and more black boys were accepted into the school and things started to change as far as bullying is concerned. The friends that I met when I repeated Grade 8 and the ones that I repeated with remained my friends till the end of high school. We are still friends till this day, and I will save my experiences with them for another version of this book.

After my Matric year, I decided to pursue a career in Information Technology (IT). How I got to IT is both a funny and a sad story. When I started varsity, I was initially registered for medicine at Wits in Johannesburg. During the first few days of my first semester, I realised that I was not getting the results that I was used to getting at school. Don’t get me wrong – I was not failing. It’s just that my results were not as good as they used to be. I remember how I used to study five to six hours straight on a daily basis while most the other students were partying. I used to get between 50 and 60 percent while the class average was between 65 and 80 percent. The fact that I was below class average got me very concerned. Then I started to doubt myself when one of the lecturers shared

the drop-out statistics. I realised that I could be part of those drop-out statistics. I remember consulting with one of the lecturers where I was told that medicine is predominately about chemistry, which is the subject that I was not good at in high school. I remember back in the days that there was a subject called General Science which was made up of physics and chemistry. I was much stronger in physics than chemistry.

After realising that I was doing a course that was not for me, I enquired further with other lecturers to get a second opinion and I was told that chemistry forms a substantial part of medicine, with biology being just a static environment where chemistry operates. Mathematics on the other hand could potentially help me with logical thinking but was not offered as a subject in medicine. I remember that the one lecturer even went as far as using flu as an example, saying that it's a virus that comes in different forms at different times, predominately caused by different chemical combinations, which then require the right chemicals to suppress the symptoms.

The session with this lecturer left me feeling distorted, confused, and disappointed in myself about my career decision. I then decided to go and seek career counselling. During my counselling session, I was advised to take the psychometric test. I took it the next day. The results came back recommending engineering as a career more aligned to my *persona*. After receiving the bad news, I was more distorted and confused and didn't know what to do. Then, as I was sitting on the stairs outside the building, a friend of mine who was passing by, asked me to accompany him to Pretoria to go and write his entrance exam for IT. When we reached Pretoria Technikon, I decided to walk with him to the lecture halls to check out the institution. As I was sitting outside the lecture hall, minding my own business, an old lady suddenly showed up from nowhere and said to me in all annoyance, "Sir, did you know that the test has already started? I am not going to give extra time just because you decided to sit outside. Please get inside and write your test." Then I figured, okay IT, here I come. I went inside and wrote the exam. All of a sudden, I was accepted to do IT which is also an engineering field in its own right.

While I was barely surviving financially as a full-time student in Pretoria Technikon, something worse happened. My mother got retrenched and the following month my grandfather went on retirement. I remember at that time my mother received a pension pay-out of about R40,000 which was not enough, considering that she didn't have much of her own stuff. My grandfather, even though he worked for a longer time than my mother, also had a lot of responsibilities to fully commit his last pension money to. He bought himself a

car and reinvested most of his pension money to get an investment interest of about R2,000 a month. Upon realising that my financial situation was getting worse, I hopped into the taxi back home to make a deal with my grandfather. At that time, my grandfather had two vehicles, a bakkie and a normal sedan. My deal was that he had to give me his bakkie so that I could try earning a living at school. I made the deal even sweeter by informing him that my student loan application has been approved – therefore he did not need to worry about my class fees and accommodation. Then out of the excitement, he agreed to the deal and gave me his bakkie.

The first client I got was someone who wanted to move her furniture from one apartment to the other. I started pasting stickers on trees around the Pretoria CBD with a message that said, “Need to move? Call 073 xxx xxxx.” As the furniture moving business went on, I got another opportunity to transport children to a nearby nursery school. I was making enough money to support myself and my mother and sister back home. I remember that I used to send her R1,000 every month. To survive varsity life with my circumstances, I had to forget about participating in parties or any social events such as freshers bash and the like. The only times that I could visit home were a few weekends when I was not busy, or during the December holidays. As time went by, I started making new friends who were permanent residents in Pretoria.

During the Easter holidays, when everybody had gone home, I met a guy named Jay Makgopela. Jay was not a student, but an entrepreneur and a resident in Pretoria who used to sell computers to the students. Jay and I struck a deal: Whenever I brought a student to him to buy a computer, I would get a commission. Jay used to buy computer components and assemble the computer himself, and then sell it. He was not only selling computers but also things like construction material and cars. He did not have a car or a driver’s licence, and often asked me to drive him around when he was doing his deals. I then realised that Jay was a general reseller. He had good connections with sellers and buyers. He did not keep stock of anything and the only asset he had was a contact list in his outdated diary. He carried a lot of cash with him, and often spent it on buying something that he would resell for a better price on the same day.

I was truly inspired by him and eventually asked him to show me the ropes on some of his business dealings. He advised me to start by selling computers as I was already working with him and studying IT at the same time. He advised me to register a business as a supplier. I followed his advice and started selling computers. He was not too concerned about me taking some of his customers, in fact he was doing so well thereafter that he ended up buying himself a car and

asked me to teach him how to drive. Jay and I made so much money that I ended up buying myself a house through a bond while I was a student. I remember one day there was a computer shop that was closing down and selling everything at a low price. Just a few shops away, a new Cash Crusaders shop had just opened. Jay and I took stuff from the closing computer shop and sold it to the Cash Crusaders. I remember how we used to take turns to make sure that the computer shop owner does not see where we are selling his stuff. We made a fortune with each item.

While life was good in Pretoria business wise, academically things were also good. Jay and I had a lot in common when it came to our backgrounds, and we were both responsible people. When it was time for me to attend class or study, there was no excuse. It went good until something tragic happened. While visiting home for a weekend, my bakkie got stolen in Kwa-Thema. I had no insurance or enough money to buy another one, but only a debt commitment to pay my bond. During that weekend a total of six bakkies were stolen from the same township. I then arranged with my childhood friend, Sihle Kunene who was also attending Pretoria Technikon to help me out with his bakkie. We agreed, and then he started wanting to get more involved in the business rather than hiring out his bakkie to me. In this way he became my business partner.

At that time, Jay had already advanced into the construction business and was hard to find. Sihle and I worked together, selling computers, transporting children, and moving furniture. We made decent money and ended hiring other students to help out. As time went by, we started getting smarter by charging our clients based on distance and the required assistance. For *ad hoc* transportation we had a separate price for the bakkie that comes with the driver at five rands per kilometre and there was a price for a “van boy” – a student that used to assist in carrying customer goods. We used the same method for computers that we sold and that needed to be delivered. However, for the nursery school children we charged per child.

Business was good. Therefore, I decided to buy a bigger bakkie on credit as Sihle’s bakkie was becoming too small for some of the big jobs. In those days I worked my butt off. I remember there was a time during my exam period that a lady approached us to move her stuff to another flat quite urgently. She was moving from the eleventh floor of some building and lifts were not working. Everybody was busy with the exams and there was no van boy to assist – so it was only Sihle and I. That night we worked until 04:00 in the morning. I was scheduled to write an exam that morning at 08:30. I arrived in my room round about 04:30, took a shower, and then went straight into the books to do my final

preparations. That's how focused and disciplined we were. Our mission was based on a quote from Arthur Ashe who said, "Start where you are, use what you have and do what you can."

As far as qualifications are concerned, throughout my tertiary days and afterwards I accumulated the following qualifications: A Master's degree in IT, Information Technology Infrastructure Library certification, Microsoft Business Intelligence certification, Post Graduate Diploma in Business Administration from GIBS, The Open Group Architecture Framework certification, and recently Amazon Web Service Cloud certification.

Throughout my school days I have met different types of people of which some contributed positively towards my life, while others did not. I recently came across an article which describes three kinds of people who were first identified and stated by the supporters and founders of democracy in ancient Greece. For the Greeks – the nation who, in many ways gave us the modern civil world, the first kind of people in any given society were the idiots. According to the Greeks, an idiot is not necessarily someone who is mentally deficient, it is rather someone who is totally private, self-centred, and selfish. The idiot is always looking for personal gain and interest. They do not have a personal public philosophy, and no knowledge, skills, character, or virtue to be able to live and contribute in society and community. The idiot is always focused on their personal pleasures and treasure. The Greeks said that the idiot was just an upgraded barbarian.

The second kind of person in any given society, according to the Greeks, is the tribe person. A tribe person does not necessarily mean that this person belongs to a certain tribe, but rather a person with a tribalistic mentality. The tribe people are the people who cannot think beyond their small tribe or group. For the tribe people, their only religion and ultimate religion is to their tribe. Their tribe is their god and the religion is tribalism. The tribe people are always afraid of things that are different and alien to them. They are always suspicious and fearful. They deal with difficult and different people with intimidation, force, and violence. The best example of a tribe person is a warrior because tribe people are a war making people.

The third classification, according to the Greeks, is the citizen. They regarded the citizen as someone who has the knowledge and skills to lead a public life. The citizen is a person who can live a life of civility. They recognise that they are members of the commonwealth and thus strive for the common good. They always understand their rights and responsibilities in society. They

will sometimes fight for their rights, but always with the awareness and respect for the interests of others (neighbours, the smallest of minorities, as well as their worst enemy). These citizens, according to the Greeks, make up a civilised society because citizens settle their differences with civility. They therefore produce a civilised society that truly lives up to the meaning of the name “society.” Society literally means friendship and friendliness.

Those are the threefold distinctions that the Greeks had. We may not all come from the same background and upbringing, but life always gives us an opportunity to make a choice. A truly great leader is someone that genuinely cares about society.

I read an interesting analogy in the book, *Just ask leadership* by Cohen (2009), with this sudden move of CBDs being replaced by malls in townships. At first, I was only concerned about the businesses that are negatively impacted by this sudden move e.g., minibus taxis that heavily rely on transporting people between CBDs and townships, and surrounding spaza shops within townships. However, then I realised that this is just the tip of the iceberg.

I have now been through almost all the township malls in Gauteng, and I found out that most of them have liquor stores while none of them has any bookshops. What does that mean in terms of our society supply and demand? Is there more need for booze than for books? Vance (2015) mentions that education stimulates the desire and ability of what you already are. Someone once ironically stated that when it comes to liquor, when one is intoxicated, you start to see the person they really are. The world is moving fast. Alcohol has done more damage than good, irrespective of how many people are hired by the liquor companies.

Some people believe that others are responsible for causing their visions to fail. Maybe their parents could not afford to send them to varsity. Maybe the environment that they grew up in, did not have people who were successful in life. However, we are all responsible for where we are going. I once came across a saying, *When you are born poor it is not your fault but when you die poor it is your fault*. Everyone is at least capable of self-management. Everyone is capable of doing good in our society, while collectively we are all capable of lifting our society up. Having more liquor shops than bookshops, calls for a serious crisis.

This is how potential problem solvers pray: “Dear God, South Africa has got one of the best infrastructures in Africa. South Africa has the potential to combine all African countries into one so that they could take advantage of what you have blessed them with. South Africa has the power to turn Africa around,

however, South Africa has its own challenges. South Africa lacks good leadership. Our future generation is drowning in alcohol and drugs, while some of those that have been elected to lead, are only in it for personal gain. Dear Lord, please baptise me with fresh ideas so that I can solve some of these problems? Take me to the right partners to make it happen? Thank you, Lord.”

God will download creative ideas into our minds when we change our thinking and prayer patterns. We need to stop looking for shortcuts to the top and start looking for challenges that we can solve for humanity. Kloppers mentions that “[g]ood mining companies create unique, encompassing value in their communities. Profits are immensely important to investors, and the tax on profits similarly to governments; however, to the communities that they operate in, mining companies deliver far, far more. Profits are only what is left over for the investor: after jobs have been created, training done, community infrastructure established, industrial nodes incubated, workers, suppliers and contractors paid, and they in turn having paid their own taxes. Yet the current public debate is almost always about royalties and taxes, and not about overall benefits.”

One of the many examples that I got from Mike Teke was that “he kicks down doors” To get opportunities. He does not wait for them to come to him, but he plans and approaches them in a hard way. When I once inquired from him, obviously with my practical thinking, Mike told me, “Fanele, I also meet people that seem like giants to me and sometimes I get nervous before meeting them. I would be misleading you if I were to tell you exactly what to say. However, when you get there after kicking that door open, you’d better know exactly what you want. Most of the leaders that I have met, are concerned about society, and always looking for better ways to elevate people from poverty. I think the biggest problem is that people expect to be handed over money rather than opportunities. People rather opt for the fruit than for the seed.” Legere mentions that “it’s kind of fun at my age to go back and talk to business-school people. I tell them, ‘I can summarize everything you need to know to lead a major corporation. Are you prepared to write this down?’ And then they all get ready. I tell them I can summarize how I succeed as a leader: Listen to your employees, listen to your customers, shut the f*** up, and do what they tell you.”

Throughout my life I have dealt with different kinds of people. I have engaged in new challenging activities such as boxing that changed my life for good. I have led, been blamed, and took the most punishment. I have fallen before and had no choice but to change, get up, and move on.

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The Politics of Leadership

Banzi Giyose

Introduction

This chapter discusses the various aspects of politics in leadership and applies certain aspects and personal experiences/observations that the writer has previously been exposed to. The chapter first looks at the general aspect of politics, leadership, and the corporate organisation with reference to politics in leadership. The topic will have various observations and aspects that the writer has been exposed to within an organisation, in business, and in politics. The topic further looks at the writer's personal experiences/observations and tactics in manoeuvring up the corporate ladder to reaching top leadership/executive positions in the business environment. Furthermore, this chapter takes a closer look at politics in the business fraternity, along with various observations, tactics, and to a greater degree, perceived requirements in ensuring sound relationships with industry stakeholders, regulatory authorities, cross border relationships, and networks that enable building a business across several geographic locations.

Corporate Politics in Leadership

“Corporate or workplace politics is the process and behaviour in human interactions involving power and authority within an organisation, in business and the greater society. It is the use of power and social networking within an organization to achieve changes that benefit the organization or individuals within it.” I further define “politics in leadership” as the ability to manoeuvre in an office, business, or social environment in order to advance, enhance, and improve your career, power, and recognition.

The following quotes are applicable here: “You are known by the company you keep” and “Birds of a feather flock together,” meaning people who have similar interests, ideas, or characteristics tend to seek out and/or associate with one another. If the association is with people who have a high level of authority, power, and desires, a person is ultimately influenced to possess similar aspirations, attributes, and characteristics. If an individual has aspirations of becoming a person or organisation that belongs to a certain social status and

value system, the best possible *modus operandi* will be characterised by actions, traits, and a value system that would yield that envisioned future.

Corporate politics involves possessing certain traits, attributes, and skills with a clear objective to gain power, authority, and an advantage in advancing one's objectives. To this end, we've seen people belonging to certain groups within an organisation, to organising closed-net social gatherings, functions, and extra-mural activities, and very often this would be referred to as "the boys' or elite club." From a group perspective, this is where office plans, growth plans, and certain upcoming organisational plans are often discussed informally and executed. This involves individuals that are "cherry-picked" To fill certain job vacancy positions, often times, contrary to work experience, strengths, and expertise, but due to key relationships with the hierarchy of an organisation.

Being street smart is mostly the ultimate requirement, referring to an individual that possesses the ability and skills to manoeuvre up the corporate ladder and yield great success without being exposed or nurtured in the "traditional" way of having to attend private schools and astute universities. There is an informal saying referring to "growing up in the streets or township." Here, a person possesses the innate ability and courage that often surpasses the basic understanding of approaching life because corporate politics is simply put into practice by trial and error with limited or no fear to lead from the front. Not only your background or lack of resources will fuel you, but also your courage to beat all odds to not just be part of a corporate group but to lead from the front. So, what are the basic principles and requirements which are needed in order to fit into a group of people for the advancement of your career, corporate goals, and leadership? Below are some fundamental traits and characteristics that can assist an individual in moving up the corporate ladder:

The innate hunger to succeed within an organisation

This trait is the fundamental requirement to advance your aspirations within an organisation because this will direct and guide you in light of your personal decisions when it comes to your affiliation to certain kinds of people or groups. You will have to associate with a group of people that are above your pay grade and influence, people that can offer advice, guidance, and more often speak on your behalf on platforms that you may otherwise not be able to be expose to or have direct access to. This may include the company CEO or directors that can provide mentorships and guidance to becoming the person you envision to be in the future.

Being teachable

You will need to be willing to be trained, nurtured, and coached every step of the way. In this process of mentoring, you build rapport with top management and clearly communicate your career aspirations, voicing out your weaknesses or developmental areas, and seeking guidance and positive criticism as a way of mentorship. This will not only create a better relationship with your mentor/s but it will also open up a path of wisdom and understanding in dealing with different life experiences. You will become their project to polish, refine, and nurture, which comes with a sense of fulfillment when a mentor/s see their mentee becoming the best version of themselves. Very often, the willingness to provide guidance, support, and coaching from senior peers comes naturally and a senior or top management individual will share past experiences with reference to challenges, obstacles, and solutions that they've encountered. You will need people that will advocate on your behalf, and you will have to be in close proximity with those people, almost at all times in respect of building a professional relationship with. You can focus on middle management or top management, at board or executive committee level, to amass a lot of advantages for your career. It is human nature and comes naturally to mentor people that actively seek guidance from people that have achieved success within an organisation. A mentor can also be in the position to provide a recommendation for your career advancement because they can communicate your progress and often take personal responsibility/credit/criticism for you, due to the close proximity and relationship you have with them. Furthermore, similar to a group of people in a corporate, if they identify with you, it's very easy to put forward your name for advancement. However, I wouldn't only rely on a group of people. Circumstances have taught me that, although I belong to a group of colleagues, within that same group of like-minded people, competition may subtly exist.

Be attentive and honest

This is where I believe you make or break your development within an organisation. If you are vague and inconsistent with your intentions, nothing will really progress. My personal experience while I was working at the Masimong Group in Johannesburg as an executive and then later moved up to serve as director for several of its underlying investment firms, the period taught me to be as transparent as possible with those who provide guidance, leadership, and nurturing, otherwise you lose credibility. I reported to the investment committee and board of directors, and that taught me that it is always best

to be upfront about your weaknesses and where you are in your personal life. In addition, being transparent, helped me in yielding rapport and empowered my mentor to focus on specific skills that needed development. Be attentive, simply put, attention to detail is paramount, otherwise you appear clumsy. It is important to remember that mentors have their own lives and aspirations, so you have to be easy to work on and to work with.

Being consistent and persistent

The corporate ladder is often a lengthy process to advancing to the top, much like success. It's a process and not an event. You encounter difficulties and complexities that require mental toughness. Your close networks will experience emotional turmoil at times, but it is very important to focus on "keeping the main thing, the main thing." Focus on the bigger picture or the ultimate goal because that's what drives persistence. Even when there are phases of slow development, be consistent and continue to put the various puzzle pieces together. This will help you to become committed. Nothing beats commitment and staying the cause, no matter what. We often learn through difficult times, like a surfer who becomes great by learning to surf through aggressive and difficult waves, or a sports athlete that trains over a long period of time, under severe conditions in preparation for competition. It will take hard work, commitment, and embracing the tough conditions as a process of becoming what you intend to be.

The Corporate Gang

The corporate gang is a group or network of like-minded people within the same industry or related industries. This can range from colleagues from the same organisation or different organisation/s that are within the same sector to enable dialogue on similar workplace experiences, new ideas, and observations. For instance, the financial services sector may have a network of investment bankers, analysts, stockbrokers, and traders that frequently socialise with each other via social platforms, group chats, and planned social functions. These are great platforms that will help you to keep abreast of current industry trends. I have encountered experiences where being part of these groups also helps when it comes to the sharing of information about new career opportunities, and the sharing of ideas, strategies, and tactics in respect of specific issues. This platform helps you keeping updated on related matters within a sector or inter-related sectors.

Politics in Business Leadership

Politics in business leadership in this context refers to the manoeuvring through the journey of business in order to be in the leading pack within the business world. To get this point across, the *Success Owner Blog* states it very clearly in the example below:

I told my son, "You will marry the girl I choose."
He said, "NO!" I told him, "She is Bill Gates' daughter."
He said, "OK."
I called Bill Gates and said, "I want your daughter to marry my son."
Bill Gates said, "NO." I told Bill Gates,
My son is the CEO of World Bank."
Bill Gates said, "OK."
I called the President of World Bank and asked him to make my son the CEO.
He said, "NO."
I told him, "My son is Bill Gates' son-in-law."
He said, "OK."
This is exactly how politics works.

The example above depicts what business politics is all about, the zest to possess power and authority to enable you to get your desired outcome. This is done in such a smart and calculated way that all three circumstances complement each other, and ultimately everyone wins and places the future on this small group of people in a strong position for collaboration, and ultimately benefit from one another. Another example is that of relationships among, what the South African market refers to as the "Stellenbosch Mafia" or a better term "the billionaires' club" in the South African context. Du Toit (2019:108-145) describes the club of billionaires, in respect of networks and boardroom membership, alliances, and family connections, as follows: "It is about some of the richest people in the South African society. A group of white Afrikaner businessmen who are believed to be influencing the South African government and steer its economic policy. They have several things in common, they are all men, they are all white and they all have a close association with the town of Stellenbosch in the Western Cape." Stellenbosch is a "small town about 50km outside of Cape Town... nestled against vineyards and blue mountains that stretch to the sky." In this little town, some of South Africa's wealthiest individuals are residing, all male, all Afrikaners, and all ultra-wealthy. Johann Rupert, Jannie Mouton, Markus Jooste, and Christo Weise, to name a few, form part of this group of men. Dr Anton Rupert is on the top of the list and is a product of his era, born in a time of political tumult when Afrikaners were starting to embark on the apartheid

project, driven by the fanning of nationalist sentiment in the first decades after the South African War. He “took advantage of the environment created by the ascendancy of Afrikaner politicians in the 1930s and 1940s to build a multi-billion-rand empire (Rembrandt Group)” and ultimately was perceived to have led the group that is now referred to as the Stellenbosch Mafia. His business empire grew and his interests expanded beyond South Africa’s borders – a classic case of using domestic networks to entrench and strengthen Rembrandt’s footprint across various international jurisdictions. With relationships spanning from the years that he worked at Chase Manhattan Bank, New York City, in the mid-1970s to powerful and influential people such as David Rockefeller, an American bank chairman and CEO of Chase Manhattan Corporation, to South African presidents and ministers of his time, his equity interests and influence in Rand Merchant Bank and First Rand Limited were always expanded. He was well entrenched and strong in respect of his networks.

Politics in business and leadership requires a person to be relentless in pursuit of their objectives, street smart and courageous in character, in order to handle the complexities of building a firm at a regional, national, and global level. Here we look at various tools, tactics, and a *modus operandi* to using politics or tactics to advance your business objectives. This goes from originating and securing business deals, to managing politics within governments that have an impact on your business, to having the appropriate political affiliations and industry networks. At some point in your career and business journey, you will be required to sharpen and master your ability to source, secure, and nurture relationships – networks that will assist you and the business you lead to gain power and authority over your peers. Below I have listed and provided some of the in-depth observations, approaches, and strategies that I believe play a significant role beyond having the right product and service in the market.

Cross-border relationships become the focal aspect or ultimate level of networks to managing and building your firm. It starts by focusing on building a business in a niche market, as well as the various relationships and networks that can enable your business to maintain or remain in the top of the minds of its target clients. This section further looks at political networks that will assist your firm’s growth, business links, government networks for any niche opportunity, and cross-border networks in order to expand your firm’s footprint internationally. The next section provides and elaborates further on the focus areas of politics in business.

Networks and Relationships with your Target Clients

Relationships with the company's board of directors, shareholders, and key management

Board of directors and shareholders

What has become very apparent to me over the past few years is that, having a close relationship with shareholders of a target company deemed to be your top client or customer, is crucial. This level of authority is where you first advocate for your business objective, from pitching an ideal business opportunity where you get to understand the firms' strategy, its plans, and processes, gaining insight to its sector focus, funding appetite, funding mandates, and how much funding allocation towards the target service or business opportunity you intend to present for the committee and board approval. At this relationship level, you get to establish and understand each significant shareholder's affinity to a certain business opportunity, funding appetite, and emphasis on the strategic nature, in respect of any opportunity that will be presented. You will also ensure that the opportunity/investment memorandum that you present, would be accepted and approved. If all goes well, your first stage of success in business politics from a corporate perspective has been achieved. The next phase of operationalising such approvals is referred to key management for further analysis in respect of the flow of funds and budget forecasts and allocation. Let's look at a classic example of a relationship between Christo Wiese and Whitey Basson. Wiese as a majority and key shareholder of Pep Stores and the Shoprite group, has many direct relations with big businesses, dating back to the early 1970s. Basson was born in the Western Cape and studied at Stellenbosch University and was approached by Renier van Rooyen, the cousin of Wiese, to be the financial director of Pep Stores since 1974, to later serve on the board till 2004. He retired from the Shoprite group in 2016 at the age of 70 years. This is an approximate serving period of 45 years that he had in both Pep Stores and the Shoprite group. I make specific mention to this time period, solely to demonstrate a classic example of an exercise of corporate politics, in this case, the strong relationship between Wiese and Basson that saw Basson retiring much later in the Shoprite group, irrespective of industry norms, where the retirement age is pegged at 60 years, with compulsory retirement at the age of 65. This speaks to a very strong allegiance between the two men, backed by superior leadership and good performance by Basson. This enabled Basson to defer his retirement as CEO to the age of 70 years. Another example is that of Jannie Mouton and his son, Piet Mouton, that assumed the role of CEO for the PSG group, as well as being

the director for various investee companies under the PSG group. There's no doubt in that the son was groomed to eventually take over the reins from his father, from a succession planning point of view. This suggests that the son would be guided from a young age, from the studies he enrolled for at university in respect of Mathematics to enable him to assume the duties of leading the PSG group. Furthermore, let's look at how it was engineered over a long period of time, perhaps from the exposure to finance and Mathematics at Stellenbosch University, where Jannie Mouton's network of associates attended university to groom them for being exposed to leading a business on a daily basis in order to prepare the way for Piet Mouton to take over the reins in leading the financial organisation.

It is a different case when several mergers and acquisitions, divestments, and management buyouts are carried out by individuals that occupied board seats at large corporations and went on to purchase or unbundle non-core assets to effectively establish new business operations. That can only happen when an individual or group of like-minded people within an organisation consolidate their skills, expertise, experiences, and networks with other board members in multi-national firms in order to secure such opportunities. Examples would be that of Anglo-American Plc that was spun out of gold assets into Anglo Gold in 2004, Optimum Coal Holdings that was spun out of BHP Billiton to its former executives, to gold assets and shafts that were spun out into African Rainbow Minerals, to name a few. This is evident of a clear finesse of corporate politics, utilising networks and relationships to secure and advance your objectives.

Key management

This level of authority in a firm mostly involves the people that run the firm's daily operations. These people within an organisation often procure services, expertise, and products from third parties. At this level, every person and level of authority is important in order to advance your objectives. Corporate politics kicks in again and each layer of authority and emphasis is normally at the top management, such as the CEO that executes all approvals taken at board level, legal personnel for contracting, and the finance division in respect of budget allocations. Furthermore, this layer of authority has influence on the approval of any investment proposal that has been put forward for discussion and adoption because the board will enquire on the status for cash reserves, as well as the opinion of key management.

Key management is often responsible for ensuring new business proposals from a part of the board packs for discussion and adoption. If there's no rapport,

support, and strong relations with this layer of authority, an investment proposal doesn't even make it for credit and/or board consideration. After this layer, we look at the operational layer – the contract manager/s that would deal with your contract/project on an ongoing basis. The finance personnel handle the loading of invoices and releasing of payments. This layer is the cornerstone for ensuring that your own business' financial affairs run smoothly. The awareness of such aspects will only assist in strengthening your relationship with key personnel, where these people eventually develop an affinity towards your firm and very often go the extra mile in situations where there could be unanticipated delays.

Political and government networks

If you want to manage or operate a medium-to-large organisation, you must have aspirations to position your business to control various sectors of the economy. Sound government relationships play a key role in advancing your business objectives. I think it is important to be closely associated with key stakeholders in government departments that would impact your business. This starts at ministerial relationships, where sound relations with various ministries play a critical role in growing any business. This area of relationships can be developed by either rendering advisory support at no cost, by forming part of advisory committees and task teams on certain aspects that affect the state and government. This does not only add value to knowledge building but also assists your firm to keep a top-of-mind awareness in cases where foreign/international companies may have interests in partnerships in order to penetrate a country's economy. Your firm may yield partnerships and commercial relationships due to the proximity to these government institutions.

The second tier of emphasis in respect of government is the second layer of command, authority, and power. Here we refer to the director generals within government intuitions. At least in South Africa, this layer of authority is where you find people who execute policies and regulations in order to keep abreast with current and future affairs. This layer of authority executes policies and mandates. In this phase, you are gaining and developing a series of relationships that will assist in information gathering, while getting exposed to other industry experts. Additionally, if you intend to operate your organisation in other countries, having relations with the ministry, specifically the ambassadors and top government personnel, does foster an easier entry channel in other countries. First, providing a formal framework and trade relation with other countries, offers a person a sense of comfort in deploying investment into these countries for your firm. In South Africa's case, over the past decade, the country

and government have been bullish in respect of Black Economic Empowerment, in order to enable black entrants or historically disadvantaged South Africans (HDSA) to own equity interests in medium-to-large organisations. Possessing strong networks may have proven to hold much impact in advancing that vision, and I would think that having strong ties and close relationships, coupled with the required expertise, experience, and financial ability, positioned many HDSA individuals or groups in order to benefit from such policies.

The “cigar gang”

The term “cigar gang” refers to individuals or groups where one would get classified information of what is talked about in the market or on the “streets.” The cigar gang name does not necessarily mean or require one to have an affinity to cigar smoking. Here, it happens very often that certain subject points that you wouldn’t normally hear about in a corporate or professional environment, are informally discussed over “cigar” lounges or the like. Furthermore, such links or networks are associated with a smaller intimate group of people who are very strong in possessing power and authority over various other platforms and have political and social links with governments and financial institutions, to name but a few. This layer of relationship becomes important in playing the politics because you start to figure out which group of people is “calling the shots” within government circles, financial sectors, and political circles linked to business circles. Such circles are small, yet very effective and can cause much needed force and impact into getting your desired results.

Professional and industrial network

Professional and industry related networks relate to professional bodies found within various sectors. “Professional bodies are critical in corporate politics in respect of improving one’s practical standards as well as ethics and behaviour.” Such an industrial body exists to encourage fair access, whether social, gender, or race based, and discourages discrimination. Such affiliations also constitute a network of people. In South Africa and mostly all over the world, there are many professional bodies that predominantly cover all sectors of disciplines in the economy, like engineering, specifically the engineering science, accounting, management, business management, and mining. These professional bodies are also broken down into commodity focused professional bodies, such as property, energy, advertising, built industry, and medicine, etc. These bodies will often have their own social gatherings and seminars to stimulate collective dialogue on certain issues that impact and affect a specific discipline in order to keep abreast of innovation, technological advancement, and best practice. The professional

industrial platforms further act as a tool or medium for career advancement. Many firms use professional bodies or networks to source candidates to fill employment opportunities, board memberships, industrial interviews, and commentaries. These platforms may include television interviews such as Bloomberg and market commentary, which can be used to further advertise the global sectorial community.

Cross-border networks

Cross-border networks are personal or organisational business relationships outside your normal country's jurisdiction. This involves having key relationships with individuals and organisations that are strong in other countries, which is often linked to trade relations with these countries. For instance, South Africa has cross-border trade relations with many countries on the African continent and internationally. This fosters and enables business relations to businesses of the other countries that would be administered at a ministerial, ambassadorship, and diplomatic level. Sound cross-border relations may assist a firm, wishing to have satellite offices or business operations and an offshore presence, from a micro level perspective, having such a network may assist in career advancements and enable collaboration in respect of deals or transactions. At a macro level, it can position a firm to penetrate and have a strong presence in other countries, linked to gaining access to international financial institutions that may also have a widespread geographical presence in other countries. Look at examples such as Europe, the USA, and England, to name a few. We may further strengthen relationships with banking and advisory institutions to enable stock exchange listings. Those links may assist in carrying out the required industrial procedures and requirements much quicker and more effectively, from a perspective of understanding a specific jurisdiction. Examples of such organisations are Morgan Stanley in the USA, and HSBC in Asian markets.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed various aspects of politics in leadership and offered observations, experiences, and comments that can assist an individual or organisation who is aspiring to gain power and authority in an organisation or a business, at a micro and macro level. As alluded above, there are many aspects to politics in leadership which are interrelated in application. One can't just focus on one while entirely ignoring or avoiding the other. The application of such aspects is dependent on what stage or level of development each reader or organisation may be at. However, I think it is critical to first establish the

objectives that an individual or organisation has and then further to map out the missing gaps that can be applied. Corporate politics and tactics are a key aspect in our daily professional and business lives. Harnessed and mastered properly over time, it can deliver great results.

This chapter is very generic. Further research needs to be done on the key concepts being referred to in this chapter, specifically politics, leadership, and corporate organisations.

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He was CEO at Good Earth Power, a Middle-East-Oman based conglomerate, responsible for establishing power generation, worked at Ipreo as an analyst, a Canadian-based capital markets firm covering US Financials in 2008.

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Best Led Organisations

Andries Nkabinde

Best led organisations are those whose leaders have a clear vision, people who know what needs to be done in order for the organisation to achieve its set objectives. Many organisations that are led by people who are elected or appointed on merit, fail because the person who was elected on the grounds of some kind of popularity, does not match the necessary requirements for a value adding leader.

A good leader is someone who is able to plan for the future, has a clear long-term overview of how to achieve their constructed vision and is backed up by measurable targets that build up to the long-term plan. Whilst best leaders will focus on achieving stated objectives, they become more successful as times go by, and are very creative in resolving the challenges which they come across in their journey to success. As best leaders are innovative by nature, they also inculcate the culture of innovation among their subordinates. Good leaders are always open to new ideas that propel the organisation to greater heights. Below, a few characteristics of good leaders are indicated.

Integrity

*Integrity is making sure that the things you say
and the things you do are in alignment.*

- Katrina Mayer

Best leaders are leaders with integrity, leaders who are able to find a perfect balance between personal ambitions and aspirations on the one hand, and the interest of the organisation on the other. Leaders should be individuals who are not easily swayed by populist talks that do not contribute to the greater good of the organisation.

People of integrity are those who are able to reflect and accept where they have erred and move on. A good leader does not necessarily need to be loved by everyone but should be trusted to deliver on their promises. They should be honest, reliable, transparent, and self-respecting, respecting their

work and themselves as well as respecting the people they are working with and the work environment. A leader of integrity is one who does not easily change his or her plan depending on who they speak to, but will always stick to what they believe in. That trait on its own can be regarded as a product of a critical thinking process.

Set Targets

Goals help you channel your energy into action.

- Les Brown

Best led organisations always have clear set targets that are not influenced by emotion or populism, but concrete realities prevalent within that given scenario. Organisations are able to plan for the short, medium, and long term, and to set targets that are simple, measurable, achievable, realistic, time conscious, and value adding with greater input. Organisations should be able to set targets that are informed by the changing nature of the subject matter at hand. It is important to note that these organisations speak both to the government and business sector. Best led organisations may not necessarily be perfect, but in the greater scheme of things, set targets are achieved. An example of such a best led country which has managed to reform its challenges into opportunities, is Singapore, which has clear set targets as to how it wants to develop itself.

Sound Leadership Skills

*Good leadership consists of showing average people
how to do the work of superior people.*

- John Rockefeller

Organisations that are successful are those that are led by people with sober mindsets, not those that indicate right and then turn left. Politicians that will promise a corruption free, developmental state, with equal opportunities for everyone, should be elected and in return should end up doing exactly what they have promised.

Sound leadership skills require from someone who is bold and sternly decisive enough to appoint or deploy people with necessary skills other than friendship and politically connected accomplices. It requires someone who doesn't waiver in what they firmly and strongly believe in. A sound leader is

capable of equally motivating their team and creating a conducive environment for them to innovate, as well as making their job easier by means of clear and sustainable goals and value adding.

A person who is highly disciplined and ensures that the same discipline becomes part of the culture of the organisation, from top management to the lower level employees, must respect time, comply to deadlines, and always go an extra mile on designated projects. This person should be capable of managing their personal ambitions and greed.

Singapore as an Example of a Best Led Organisation

The task of the leaders must be to provide or create for them a strong framework within which they can learn, work hard, be productive and be rewarded accordingly. And this is not easy to achieve.

- Lee Kuan Yew

Between 1950 and 1960, Singapore was a typical third world country like the countries in Africa. It was a drug infested country where its youth was addicted to drugs, with no prospect of a bright future. However, through sound leadership from people like Lee Kuan Yew and his team, they were able to turn the fate of Singapore around. Crime and all other related activities were the order of the day. Its GDP was extremely low, with the standard of living below minimum. There was hopelessness, as it was written off as a poverty-stricken country with inadequate healthcare facilities.

With no ablution facilities and proper infrastructure for the nation to live in and work, there was no sense of patriotism, trust, and confidence for the people. Protests and gang related violence were the day-to-day highlights. There was no self-respect from the people, as they did not respect themselves enough to even care for the environment in which they were living, as well as their fellow community members. Pollution had also posed a threat due to constant littering by the citizens. There was absolutely no common vision for the country as a whole and no commitment and involvement of the people in the running of the country.

In the 1970s, Singapore, a tiny island, started turning things around. The first thing that the people of Singapore did correctly was to elect a leader whom they could trust and have confidence in as a country. The leadership managed to rally the country around a common shared vision. That same leadership understood the current challenges that they were faced with and the future

needs of the country. Leading a community whose spirit of patriotism was at an all-time high, there was also a spirit of commitment and involvement of the people in all spheres of the decision-making process.

Self- Respect

If you want to be respected by others, the great thing is to respect yourself.

Only by that, only by self-respect will you compel others to respect you.

- Fyodor Dostoyevsky

The level of self-respect among and within the people of Singapore was very high, to such an extent that minimal things like littering was outlawed by the people, being respected by their environment. Drug trafficking and drug abuse almost disappeared off the face of the country. Gangsterism was a thing of the past. Singapore managed to turn its fortune from a third world country into a first world country.

The history of Singapore brings to light how outstanding leadership can change the course of a whole country. Below are some of the attributes of Singapore as a best led organisation:

- ◆ *Meritocracy*: Leaders were elected on merit, and leaders in turn appointed civil servants on merit, not because of nepotism or ideological preferences. They head hunted the best brains that the country could ever produce, to run the country. Leaders were aware of the challenges of the country and its future needs. The leadership showed their dedication of commitment to improve the plight of the people, to motivate the nation to fully support the new movement to a better country.
- ◆ *Pragmatism*: The appointment of people was not based on ideology, friendship, or family relations, but on whether the appointed could do the required job. No specific policy was followed, as they adopted those things that worked for them.
- ◆ *Honesty*: The country was led by people who were honest, who dealt with corruption fearlessly, starting from the top, which boosted the confidence of the public.



ANDRIES NKABINDE was born in Kwa Thema. He joined the liberation movement at a very young age and has participated in the liberation from Cosas student movement actively as a young person. He has held the following roles or positions:

- ◆ Ex- Political Prisoner;
- ◆ Community Activists/ Leader;
- ◆ Convener of zero-hour committee responsible for celebrating luminaries in Kwa-Thema, honoring heroes and heroines of our struggle;
- ◆ BA graduate;
- ◆ Customer Relations Manager at Kwa-Thema Customer Center in the City of Ekurhuleni; and
- ◆ Aspiring Entrepreneur.

Credibility and Thought Leadership

Mpumelelo Mdhlahla

Introduction to Thought Leadership

*A fool has to say something.
A wise person has something to say.
- African proverb*

One of the greatest truths in life is that the biggest impact you can have is not in the volume of your contribution but in the QUALITY of the contribution that you make. Whether you are giving input at a tense family meeting, coming up with a game plan for your local football team, or leading an executive team at a multi-national global company, your contribution must be of value. You must be trusted and recognised, so that your opinion could have an impact on the decision to be made. However, most of all, you must be credible. Credibility is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as “the quality of being trusted or believed in.” This is the basis of ‘thought leadership.’

The term ‘thought leader’ is a manufactured term, therefore the definitions are not as exact, but there is one commonality: It is a person or company from whom employees, stakeholders, customers, the media, and even competitors seek to obtain knowledge and insight. The thought leader is the ‘go-to’ person, the individual that must be consulted before making a big decision, the final authority that is the final ‘sounding board’ before executing the project.

Thought leadership is providing valuable insight into an industry or sector that will drive constructive direction to your stakeholders. Thought leadership is not making populist statements or simply speaking at rallies or events. It is about adding value and providing expert insight that will move the industry or sector in a positive direction.

My Personal Career Journey

Before I go into the specifics of being a thought leader, let me take you on my personal career journey, so that you have context and understand the path that I have taken to reach this point.

Originally, my passion was marketing. I was always intrigued by the creation and sale of products and services on a mass scale, that can meet the wants and needs of the public. I studied a tertiary commerce qualification majoring in Marketing. Thereafter I worked in several multi-disciplinary agencies before working at Coca-Cola for several years as a marketing manager.

Thereafter I saw a gap in the market to start my own communications agency which I have called my 'best failure.' During this time, my interest was spiked by an article that I read on the then Obama administration. The article relayed that this administration was setting aside \$2.5billion for investment in renewable energy in Africa over the next 20 years.

The 'light bulb' went off.

I realised through extensive reading that the global shift was moving towards diversification from fossil fuels. My focus was torn between trying to make my agency work and this newly ignited passion of learning about the energy transition. I absorbed information, ravenously seeking opportunities to converse and speak to anyone involved in the sector.

At this time, due to the electricity supply challenges in South Africa, Eskom and the Department of Energy and Mineral Resources embarked on a large-scale procurement programme to buy energy from independent power producers of energy. This programme was handled holistically by the Independent Power Producer Office. In 2014, an opportunity to tender for advisory service at the Independent Power Producers Office emerged and believing it was a 'long shot,' my partner and I tendered. We were successfully appointed lead advisers and so my journey began. I was thrown in the deep end. The day that we got the call from the Department of Energy and Mineral Resources, I decided to wind up my marketing agency.

So there I was, an advisor with limited work experience in a highly specialised sector tasked with giving direction to 'technocrats' with decades of experience and academic expertise in a pivotal sector for South Africa. After completing my assignment at this office, I was head hunted and joined the renewable energy trading company POWERX. This company buys and sells power from the independent power producers, so my involvement in the sector remained consistent, just dealing with a slightly different set of stakeholders.

Since then, I have grown to become a public speaker, lecturer, and media commentator on the energy sector, not just in South Africa, but internationally as well. I previously lectured at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) and I also advised the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). Furthermore, I served as a panellist at forums such as POWER Africa and African Utilities Week.

Now I have taken up a new challenge, having been tapped by Volkswagen South Africa to create and head up their Energy Programmes division for Sub-Saharan Africa. My task is to decarbonise the entire product value chain for the manufacturing of vehicles for several countries (including South Africa).

So how does a former marketer for Coca-Cola turn their career 180 degrees to gain prominence and become a thought leader in a sector that they were not academically trained for? It was not because I was the smartest or the most connected, I was simply willing to take the risk of rejection to achieve my goal.

For example, when I was trying to form a partnership with GIBS, I had to send several e-mails and chase up several people for months before they invited me to speak. Before my first TV/radio interview, I sent over 62 e-mails and made over 43 phone calls to different national and regional radio stations. I was rejected countless times, even told that I was wasting my time, before I secured my first interview. It is all part of the process. You must become comfortable with rejection and know that you will fail far more than you succeed.

It is not a path for the faint-hearted, but well worth the journey. This is what I will expand on in the remaining part of this chapter: What are the key focus areas on your path to thought leadership?

The Best Time is Now

The biggest failure we have as humans is procrastination. It is not laziness or a lack of intelligence, it is the inability to act immediately and accept that you may fail in the process. There is never going to be the ‘right time’ – the stars will not ‘align.’ You just have to make an imperfect decision and know that you will learn on the way. The people who succeed in any business/profession/sport are not the smartest, fittest, or the ones with the best networks, it is the people who show up every day. Whether they feel like it or not, those who become thought leaders in their field have an obsessive need to constantly learn and enrich themselves in terms of knowledge in their industry. They do not wait for the ‘right time’ to register for a seminar, they do it anyway. They do not wait

for the ‘right time’ to take that speaking engagement, they do it anyway. What will separate you from others in your field is your urgency to act and deliver on what is asked of you. Do not obsess over perfection of your output, focus on the volume and frequency.

When I decided that I would become a thought leader, I did not even have an academic qualification for it. I was not a scientist or engineer. I just knew what the goal was, and I started on the path. I acted immediately with full knowledge that I could fail. I knew I was not as smart or as educated as my peers were in this field, but I acted quicker and took bigger risks.

Did I fail and do I still fail? Of course, yes, but failure brings the equivalent seed of success. The most successful people have failed more than they have succeeded. However, because they were willing to fail, their success ended up overshadowing their failures. Warren Buffet only became a billionaire when he was already 60 years old. Jack Ma of Alibaba could not even get a job at KFC. When Howard Schultz, founder of Starbucks originally tabled the idea, 217 out of 247 potential investors declined his proposal. JK Rowling, the author of the Harry Potter series of books, was in a one-bedroom apartment, living off welfare when she wrote the books. She only became wealthy when the series of books was adapted into a movie franchise.

Read and Keep on Reading

The respected and revered author, Malcolm Gladwell popularised the theory of 10,000 hours to become successful. The basis for his theory is that it takes 10,000 hours of intense focus on a particular skill to become successful. If you look at a typical calendar year, there are in total 8,760 hours, based on a 24-hour cycle. So, if you focus on training and dedicate yourself 10 hours a day, it would take you four years to reach the 10,000 hours mark, based on working every single day of the year. The basic premise is that it takes time and dedication to become successful. It is therefore important to immerse yourself in a sector in order to become a thought leader. It is important to literally become a “sponge” and absorb as much information as possible.

We are now in the information age where you can source information literally anywhere from your phone or laptop. Therefore, consume as much information as possible. Become obsessed with learning everything that there is to know about your industry. You must become irrational in your thirst for knowledge.

On my path to becoming a thought leader in my industry, I read excessively. I read in the morning before exercising, I read between meetings at work, I read whilst eating my lunch, I read at home at night, and I read on weekends. It never stops and you will not always feel like it, but it must be done.

It's Smart to be Dumb

Judge a person by their questions rather than their answers.

- Voltaire

In your goal to become a respected thought leader, be willing to humble yourself in order to gain knowledge. Pride will not help you. In fact, it will leave you ignorant and disadvantaged. Do not be worried about other people's opinions of you, it does not matter. In fact, my experience is that they will respect you more for having the courage to ask the mundane questions in order to learn.

In my early days of being involved in the energy sector, I used my professional and personal networks to seek out mentors in the sector who would be willing to spend time with me. I would meet them with specific questions, and they would provide me with frank feedback. It may cost you a cup of coffee or lunch, but the knowledge you gain will be priceless.

It is a practice that I still employ today and continue to implement throughout my career. I believe it is imperative to always be humble and willing to learn.

Stay Uncomfortable

Becoming a leader in any sector or profession is not a comfortable process. You must continue to grow and develop your knowledge of the industry and challenge yourself to experience discomfort in order to learn. Steve Harvey, the famous comedian has often said, "You will fail in your comfort zone." What he means is that you will deprive yourself of the ability to test your limits and exceed it if you stay where it is comfortable. Similarly, in thought leadership you must be willing to put yourself in situations where your knowledge and expertise will be tested.

For example, in the past few years, I made a deliberate point to actively contact media houses (e.g., radio and TV) and offer my services to provide expert opinion in the field of energy. I submitted opinion articles to several newspapers, proactively asking them to publish my work. This was extremely humbling. Some media houses ignored me, others hung up on me when I

called, others were just plain rude and said that they don't know me. Whilst the rejection was painful, it is part of the process. You must develop a 'thick skin' and continue to push on.

After countless attempts and submissions, the 'tide' started to turn. Soon the media houses contacted me and asked to interview me, then the newspapers started to publish my work, and then I was invited to speak at business seminars and events. Now, I experience even more difficult levels of discomfort, but that's what I thrive for. I know that on the other side of discomfort, I will be better equipped to achieve the goals that I have set for myself.

Crab in a Bucket

There is a widely known human behavioural concept called 'crab in a bucket' syndrome. This is founded on the behavioural fact that when there are many crabs in a bucket or closed area, when one tries to climb out, the others will hold it back. Similarly, within a community or organisation of people, there will always be people who aim to develop themselves to move up and add greater value. The other members of that community will do everything possible to prevent these driven individuals from progressing and becoming successful. This is the parallel behaviour likened to the crabs in a bucket.

On your path to becoming a thought leader or person of significance in your industry, you will be met with resistance from those who question your intentions/abilities with questions like, 'Why don't we see you anymore?' 'Why are you reading so much?' 'You are so boring these days!' and 'Why do you work so hard?' These will be comments that you will be sure to get from your family, friends, and colleagues. In fact, if your behaviour is not noticed by those closest to you, then the changes you are making are not that significant.

Time is the most limited resource we have, and the more time you spend expanding your knowledge, the less time you will have for other activities, such as socialising, hobbies, relaxing, and partying. These are inevitable sacrifices that you will have to make. There are no shortcuts, and I guarantee that you will not make everyone happy. The best solution to mitigate the pain of such a transition is frankness and honesty with your family and friends. Whether they are supportive or not, be candid and explain that as you are embarking on this path of self-development, you will not be able to spend time with them anymore.

In my own life, people have questioned my complete change in career:

"But you are a marketer! What do you know about energy?"
"Who does he think he is, ridiculous!"

“He won’t last.”

“Selling windmills and solar panels, what kind of work is that?”

“Stupid, leaving Coca-Cola for this?”

These are actually words that I have heard from those close to me, as well as from total strangers. Do these words hurt? Of course they do. However, I didn’t change my plans because of it. These words fuel my resolve and spur me on. Every successful individual or company was ridiculed initially. They were laughed at, criticised, and derided for their convictions. Nonetheless, they proceeded and now they are admired by the same people who used to laugh at them.

So, do not be afraid to be the crab that tries to climb out. You cannot become a thought leader in your field while stuck in the ‘bucket.’

Criticism is your Friend

This theme is quite like the previous theme, but it focuses specifically on dealing with criticism, whether baseless or indeed founded on constructive intentions. Criticism is part of becoming a leader in any organisation or industry. The moment that you put your ‘hand up’ and voice an opinion, not everyone will agree with you.

Leaders will be criticised more than they are celebrated. That is the cost of leadership. When developing and building yourself into a thought leader, you will be criticised by your peers in the industry, you will be criticised by your own family and friends. The last people that you expect to criticise you will do so, often behind your back, and it will be painful. However, that pain builds your resilience. It is a necessarily part of the growth process.

*There is only one way to avoid criticism,
do nothing, say nothing and be nothing.*
- Aristotle

Therefore, if you are *not* being criticised in one form or the other, you need to question what value you are adding to the space in which you are operating. What impact are you making? Becoming a thought leader is a path of constantly being second-guessed, your opinion derided, and your credentials questioned. That is the burden of criticism, and you should wear it with pride.

Birds of a Feather

In order to become a thought leader, you also need to change your environment. Jim Rohn once said, “We are the average of the five people we spend the most time with.” This is premised on the fact that we are a product of our environment, and those people whom we chose to spend time with, will in fact shape our opinions, thinking, and inevitably the actions that we take.

Steve Harvey refers to this concept in his uniquely comical way, when he said, “If you have nine friends and they are all broke, you will be the tenth one. If you have five friends who are all drunkards, you will be the next alcoholic.”

Therefore, to become a thought leader, you must aim to surround yourself with ‘like-minded’ people from the same sector. Go to industry events, join associations and seminars. Immerse yourself in environments where you can learn and absorb knowledge. It will be uncomfortable and awkward talking to people, but it is the only way to expand your network and build your personal profile and confidence. However, it is important to be very definitive about the direction which you take. Do not become ‘wallpaper.’ When you attend a seminar or speak at an event, you must always ask yourself three important questions:

- ◆ Why am I participating at this event?
- ◆ What will I learn from participating at this event?
- ◆ What value will I add to this event?

If you cannot answer these questions positively, then do not attend under any circumstances. Only attend if you can answer these questions with confidence. In this way, not only do you develop yourself, but you will also become a credible and reliable thought leader.

Stand on the Shoulders of Giants

The saying, “Two heads are better than one,” could not be truer. On the path to becoming a thought leader in your field, you will need to lean on mentors who have far more experience than you do. This is where mentorship becomes so vital. The textbook definition of ‘mentorship’ is the guidance which is provided by an experienced person in a company or educational institution. I would expand this definition to include any person who has extensive experience in your chosen field.

Entrepreneurs who have started companies will have far more insight than those who have simply worked within existing companies. You will need a mentor(s) to guide you and provide you with candidness, as well as the necessary

feedback that will help you to develop and grow. Typically, you do not want to engage a mentor who is on the same career level as you. You want to choose a mentor who is way ahead of you, someone that epitomises exactly where you see yourself in the next 10 or 20 years.

Take the time to think of leaders in your sector whom you would like to interact with and make a concerted effort to track them down. Find out which associations they belong to, where they attend events, maybe even identify what their hobbies are. Once you know where they are, be deliberate in finding a way to physically meet them. If it means spending money to gain access, then do it.

Do not be afraid to use your existing family and friends to meet them. They will not reprimand you for leveraging your network, in fact, they will respect you more for it. I will give you an example. In my own case, I identified a mentor that I wanted to guide me and help me on my journey. I spoke to a relative of mine who ensured that I would be invited to an event where he would be present. It took me six months to set-up, but I finally met him. Now I am glad to say that he has been my mentor for several years, and I am glad I made the effort. At this point, you must put all pride aside.

Don't care about what people think of you? Do not worry about being rejected.

Remember the worst thing that anyone can say is NO. Once you accept that fact, you will feel more confident and less afraid to approach total strangers.

Ideally you would want to have at least three to four mentors in your network. These are individuals whom you will aim to spend at least 30 minutes with, every two months, exchanging ideas and seeking guidance. These individuals are very busy, so you need to ensure that you come to them prepared with questions. Draft questions that you believe will enhance knowledge in your field and enable you to become a thought leader. I advise no more than four questions per session. In this way, you will get a more comprehensive response per question and thereby greater context and input.

Each One Teach One

*Just remember you can't climb the ladder of success
with your hands in your pockets.
- Arnold Schwarzenegger*

On your path to becoming a thought leader, always make sure that you take the time to help others on their journey. Once you begin to gain a certain level of prominence, those who are younger or more inexperienced than you, will come to you for advice. Take it as a compliment and make time to assist them. The fact that somebody comes to you for advice, means that they aspire to reach and exceed your level of success regardless of where you see yourself.

Whether it is a meeting by chance at an event, or you become a mentor for someone whom you know well, do not underestimate the power of helping others. However, you must set-up some “ground rules” To ensure that you do not exhaust too much of your time mentoring others, at the expense of meeting your own goals. Look at the following points of good advice:

- ◆ Be precious with your time. Do not tolerate tardiness. If someone asks to meet you and they make you wait 30 minutes, never engage with them again. Time is more precious than money. It cannot be replaced, therefore demand punctuality.
- ◆ Always request questions in advance. The person/s you meet with must send you their questions in advance of your engagement. This will allow you time to review and apply your mind prior to the meeting. In this way, you can provide constructive input in the shortest possible time.
- ◆ Try to work with groups and not individuals. To maximise the number of people you are assisting, try to coordinate group meetings. This will not only enable you to mentor multiple people in one session, but they will also learn from each other and find opportunities to help one another. However, try to keep the groups small – less than six. In this way, each person should have ample opportunity to ask for advice and receive counsel.
- ◆ Don't try to be all things to everyone. You are being consulted because you are considered an expert, but you can't possibly know everything. Where you are queried on an area where you can't assist, be honest and acknowledge it. However, try to point the person in the right direction. Whether you refer them to someone else or send them a link to a website, any assistance will be valuable.
- ◆ Don't mix business with pleasure. Regardless of your status, whether married or single, do not become romantically involved with those your mentor. It will create a conflict of interest that you will not be able to manage. If you sense something like this, you are conflicted.

Enjoy the Ride

Tony Robbins, the world-famous author and motivational speaker has always stressed that it is not about reaching the destination, but who you become in the process. The human being is the ultimate adaptable creature, and you will not know your limits until you are tested. However, in being tested, you adapt and grow to perform at the level that you need to become a thought leader.

Becoming a thought leader in your industry, is a journey with no end, as you will discover. There will always be more developments in your industry. In fact, in the age we are living in now, it will only accelerate. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is upon us, meaning that regardless of the sector you are involved in, trends will change at an exponential rate. That is why, as a thought leader and expert you should always stay abreast of changes by constantly consuming information.

Make a point of it to constantly read daily online papers and business publications and find leaders in your industry to engage with on a regular basis. In fact, you will find that the more you interact with your peers in the industry, the more you will find yourself becoming involved with converging industries.

Google, for example had one aim, and that was to organise the world's information. In the process of achieving that goal, they have diversified into driverless cars, artificial intelligence, and numerous other areas. However, their anchor strategy remains: They remain focused on organising information.

The people whom you meet in the process will influence your life. Some of the impacts will be positive, while others will be negative, but either way you will learn from the process.



MPUMELELO MDHLADHLA is a prominent executive in the energy sector.

He was Senior Adviser to the Independent Power Producer Office for several years supporting the implementation of over 80 energy projects totaling more than \$15billion in investment

In addition he was requested by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) to adjudicate the awarding of over \$100M in funding for small-scale energy projects.

As an expert in his field GIBS (Gordon Institute of Business) have invited him to guest lecture at the school as well as speak at international conferences.

Furthermore he is often requested to provide media commentary on the energy sector. As such he has regularly appeared on radio, TV and print publications providing insight as to the direction of the sector.

Previously he lead commercial operations at POWERX, the only renewable energy trader in South Africa. In this role he grew the business exponentially increasing revenue by 30% annualized over his tenure and diversifying the customer base to include large industrial and commercial companies

Now he has been appointed Head – Energy Programmes at Volkswagen Southern Africa responsible for leading the energy transition at the automotive manufacturer.

In this role he is responsible for South Africa as well as several markets across East & West Africa

In support of the drive to create meaningful black participation in the energy sector he is also a lead member of the Black Energy Professionals Association (BEPA).

As part of Mike Teke's mentorship program he is excited to support this book project.

God and Leadership

Nina Christina Greyling

Jesus said to his disciples, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you” (Mt 17:20). The obvious question that flows from this powerful statement is, “Faith in what/whom?” So often leaders rely solely on their own abilities or those of their teams, and therefore, the moment that leaders do not achieve their targets or goals, they are disappointed in their own or their teams’ abilities. The result is that some leaders then retreat to statements such as, “Perhaps I am not good enough” or, “I should have made a better judgement call.” The worst part is that often when leaders face their own flaws or disappointments, they either “blame-shift” or spend their energy on envisaging scenarios of “could have” and “should have.” Eventually, these types of leaders start feeling anxious and exhausted, especially if they have to take extremely difficult decisions on a day-to-day basis which could have massive implications for the company and its employees.

What would happen if leaders would learn how to trust in someone who possesses much greater capabilities and abilities than they have? What if leaders can condition their minds and their hearts to put their faith in an almighty, all-powerful God? And then to trust that God will work out all things for the good (Rm 8:28)? The moment that leaders accept that they themselves can’t, but that God can do all things through them, that is the moment that their lives change completely.

When leaders put their faith in God and no longer in themselves and their abilities, they relieve themselves from the burdens of anxiety as well as the need to try and control the potential outcomes of the challenges that they are facing. When leaders submit their plans to the Lord and they put their faith in him, they enable him to do exceedingly abundantly more than what they have asked or thought, according to his power that works in them as human beings (Eph 3:20). However, in order for them to be able to tap into this infinite source of wisdom, power, and knowledge, leaders need to teach their hearts and minds to have faith in God. It is only when leaders put their trust and faith in God that

nothing will be impossible for them to achieve because an unlimited source of power, wisdom, and knowledge becomes accessible to them.

It is written in the Bible that God has set the end from the beginning (Is 46:10). This means that humans have no control over the course of their lives, but that an all-powerful living God has. It is also written in Proverbs 16:9 that “a man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.” How much easier would life not be if leaders can rest in the knowledge that God has it all planned out and that they should only walk in His plans? Our job is simply to try and stay in his planned path. It is written in Jeremiah 29:11 that “I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” What this verse points to is that God has a good plan for people and that he desires for us to be prosperous. He has no favourites (Rm 2:12). He also wants us to be successful. He wants us to live a life in abundance (Jn 10:10). However, most people don’t think so. They think that they have to earn his love and favour. God has blessings in store for other people, but not for them.

The Bible teaches us that God is love (1 Jn 4:8). What is love? Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 that “love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. *Love never fails.*” Love never fails. . . . What does that mean? It means that, despite the fact that humans fail, God, who is love, never fails. His love for us never fails. Nowhere in the Bible is it suggested that Jesus, who is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15; Jn 1:18; 14:9.), turned anyone away who asked Him for help. However, for some reason we think that the moment that we ask God something, He won’t listen to us because we don’t deserve his love and we are not worthy of His love.

In Galatians 5:4 we read, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt* to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace,” and in Ephesians 2:8 it is written that “for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” It is clear that the love and favour of God is not something that people can earn, but it is given as a gift from God.

In his book, *12 Rules for life*, Jordan Peterson writes that “the successful among us delay gratification.” What he is effectively saying is that successful people have taught themselves not to lose faith and hope when they don’t see their desired breakthroughs immediately, but to be patient and continue working

towards the goal. The sooner people accept that breakthroughs sometimes take time and immense effort, the easier it becomes to keep hope in the midst of the inevitable challenges which one faces in achieving one's goals. Also, the sooner people accept that life is extremely difficult, and one needs to be tough and resilient to be successful, the less likely they would be to become disheartened and discouraged when their plans go south. Nowhere is it reflected in the Bible that life will be effortless and straightforward. In fact, Jesus said that in this world His followers "will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). It is also noted that when we pass through "the waters", God will be with us and when we pass through the fire, we will not be burned (Is 43:2). This is a clear indication that challenges and difficulties are part of life and when you do not have faith in yourself and in your own abilities, it becomes increasingly difficult not to start becoming overwhelmed, scared, and sometimes also very lonely. Feelings of restlessness and pressure could also result in unsound and damaging decision making, which in turn could have a destructive or undesirable impact on the business or the team.

Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, is a perfect example of this. In the well-known scene where Jesus walked to his disciples on the sea, His disciples were terrified because they initially thought that He was a ghost. Peter knew that if it really was Jesus who was walking towards them, He would be able to walk to Him on the water. Jesus said to him, "Come," and he then "got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!'" (cf. Mt 14:22-33). Jesus then reached out his hand and caught him and said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Mt 14:31). There are a couple of lessons to be learnt here.

First, leaders should look at the storm, but should not focus on it. In other words, one should not blithely ignore the troubles which one faces, but not become consumed by them. The only way of not focusing on the storm itself, is to replace it with something else and to focus on the replacement. Leaders should replace focusing on the storm with focusing on Jesus because he is the only one that enables us to walk on water. He is the one that provides us with the capability to do the impossible: to walk on the water. Would Peter walk on water by himself? Never. He would not even have examined whether he can walk on water – but something in him knew that if it truly was Jesus walking towards them, he would have been able to walk on the water. Sometimes leaders aim to achieve a goal which they set for themselves, but when they face a storm in the middle of the process, they become scared. They then either throw in the

towel or whinge about the issue as opposed to simply focusing on Jesus, who is the ultimate answer to the problem which they are facing and also the source of their salvation.

Second, fear keeps leaders from arriving at the place where they are called to be. The moment that they fear that something will happen, it usually does. It is uncanny and almost as if one draws the feared outcome on ourselves. We read in Job 3:25 that Job said, “The thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me.” In this regard, the Bible gives a clear instruction that we should be careful what we think because our life is shaped by our thoughts (Pr 4:23). There is also that famous quote, “You become what you think you are.” The moment that Peter became scared of the storm, he began to sink. Something bad happened. It is also written in the Bible that “there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment” (1 Jn 4:18).

As mentioned earlier, God is love and the moment that the love of God fills a person’s heart and mind, fear is quenched and there is no room for anxiety and nervousness. A practical example of this Bible verse is when a person is too afraid to invest an amount of money or to expand their business. What is the price that they will pay? In other words, what is the punishment that they will have to suffer – perhaps missing the opportunity of becoming the largest producer of coal in South Africa? Or perhaps missing the opportunity of becoming the Chief Executive Officer of a listed company because the moment that they had to stand up for righteousness in the company, they were too afraid what other people might think of them. They become a slave of fear. Fear holds leaders back from achieving their goals. Peter’s goal was to walk to Jesus, but as soon as he became scared, he sank and failed. When leaders put their trust in God and not in their own abilities, they don’t limit themselves and the impossible becomes possible. Walking on water becomes an option for them.

Finally, what did Jesus do when Peter became terrified and fearful? Despite the fact that Peter lost his faith in Him, Jesus still reached out and saved him. He gave him His hand and pulled him up out of the water. However, the opposite is also relevant. What would it mean for Peter if he had not lost faith? He would have felt invincible. He would have aimed higher the next time around because he knew that miracles happen when he puts his faith in God. His relationship with God would also have grown because he would have gained the experience of knowing that God never fails. Again, despite the fact that Peter lost his faith in God, God still loved him, because the love of God never fails. It does not rest upon reciprocity but is a gift from Him who never changes

(Jas 1:17). It is also only when leaders endure the adverse and unfavourable times that they develop strength of character, and character in turn strengthens their confidence in the hope of salvation (Rm 5:4). When leaders don't live a life by sight, but by faith, they tend to press through these difficult times. They become the successful people that Jordan Peterson writes about. They are those who put their trust in God and when they run, they don't grow weary because they know that God will strengthen them in their weakness (2 Cor 12:9). His grace is sufficient for them.

Leaders are people who have to be mentally strong and emotionally stable. They have to take challenging and sensitive decisions that involve millions of rands on an everyday basis, which in turn could also have direct individual effects, such as potentially depriving a family of its sole source of income. If leaders really understand that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives inside of them (Eph 1:19-20) and that they also have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16), they will not be anxious or lose hope, because they rely on a source that is not limited to human power and ability. They will also be able to take the right decisions because they are able to tap into God's infinite wisdom and knowledge which are freely available to them. Leaders will also rest in the fact that even if they make misjudgements or miscalculations, God will turn those decisions for the good (Rm 8:28). Leaders will also be likely to achieve their goals, despite the fact that they take time and effort because they live by faith and not by sight. They know that even when they go through deep waters, God is always with them (Ps 23:4).



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The Theory and Practice of Leadership: An Experiential and Reflexive Perspective in the Context of Professional Development

Sizwe Phakathi

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the theory and practice of leadership. Leadership is not merely about what is prescribed in the literature, but also in practice. There are various theories of leadership. I seek to test the theories of leadership with what I have personally experienced in the organisations that I have worked for. To achieve this, the chapter reflects on my interactions with senior colleagues in leadership roles. The leadership and styles theories are used as the framework for the discussion and arguments being made in this chapter. The intention is not to provide a detailed discussion of each of these leadership theories, but to understand the evolution of theoretical debates and research on leadership.

It is not the intention of this chapter to provide a comprehensive review of various theoretical debates on the types of leadership. What I intend to do is to reflect on two types of leadership theories and its application in an organisational context. These are transformational and transactional leadership theories. Ultimately, the key questions that this chapter wants to respond to are the following: Do transformational and transactional leadership styles work independently of or complement each other? Which of these leadership styles is most influential in producing the most impactful results on people and organisational performance?

I am familiar with these types of leadership from a work experience point of view, having been supervised, mentored, coached, supported, empowered, and challenged by different leaders during my working life. I respond to the three questions posed in the introductory section of this chapter through three case studies of real-life personal and organisational experiences to illustrate the impact that transformational leadership has had on my professional development and organisations I worked for. The case studies include the experiences of the transformational leadership style of Prof Dee at the University of the

Witwatersrand, followed by Jimmy, the shift-boss in a gold mining workplace whose transformational leadership style generated positive team performance outcomes, and the significance of transformational leadership in the Minerals Council's CEO-led initiative aimed at improving occupational health and safety in the mining industry.

Leadership and Styles Theories

The review of extant literature reveals multiple theories, definitions, classifications, and explanations of leadership. There are numerous organisational and social research studies on leadership styles and behaviours. Khan, Nawaz, and Khan identify seven leadership and styles theories. These theories of leadership and styles are the "Great Man" Theory, trait theory, process leadership theory, style and behavioural theory, transactional leadership theory, transformational leadership theory, and *laissez-faire* leadership theory.

The "Great Man" Theory

The origins of this theory can be traced to Thomas Carlyle in 1847, who claimed that leaders were born rather than made. This theory was referred to as the "Great Man" Theory on the notion that only men who displayed heroic traits became great leaders. The views of this theory were subsequently followed by notions of a great leader who dictatorially led an organisation with brilliance and farsightedness to the detriment of organisational democracy. The "Great Man" Theory proved flawed in the later years as in the case of disgraced leaders such as Hitler and Napoleon. The theory lost credibility as it was heavily challenged and criticised. This gave rise to the theory that focused on certain traits of leadership to address the shortcomings of the "Great Man" Theory.¹

Trait Theory

The trait theory debunked the notion that leaders were born rather than made. It maintained the premise that there were certain traits or attributes that differentiated leaders from non-leaders. The proponents of this theory argued that intellectual, physical, and personality traits distinguished who were leaders and who were followers.² This theory was, however, not devoid of limitations. One of the criticisms levelled against this theory was that it failed to pinpoint traits that were common among effective leaders. One research study conducted in the 1940s among military leaders and non-military leaders discovered that certain traits of leadership developed over a particular period of time.³ The

trait theory was also criticised for not specifying whether leadership traits were genetic and acquired over time.

Contingency Theory

This theory is based on the premise that no leadership style is fit for all situations. The contingency theory puts emphasis on the situation and context in which leadership is applied. It argues that the effectiveness of leadership depends on a number of factors such as the quality and situation of the followers. There is no single or universal way to lead. There are internal and external organisational situations that require the leader to adapt for effective leadership. It is argued that it is not only the leader that changes organisational dynamics, but employees also change within the organisation. This theory posits that the leadership style that proves effective in a certain environment may not be effective in a different organisational setting of employees. The situational theorists asserted that although contingency theorists largely focused on the leader in a leader-subordinate relationship, the maturity level of subordinates played an important role in determining the quality of the relationship.⁴ Situational theories later became useful in understanding work group norms and team performance dynamics in organisations.⁵

Style and Behaviour Theory

This theory recognises certain leadership skills that enable effective leadership. There is no one-size-fits-all. Every individual has a peculiar style of leadership that works for them. In the same vein as the contingency (situational) theory, this theory argues that there is no leadership that can be effective in all situations. Yukl identifies three leadership styles that have different impacts and outcomes on employees. These are the democratic, autocratic, and *laissez-faire* leaders. Leaders could fit in any of these categories, while employees would react differently depending on the type of leadership style. Yukl discovered that democratic leaders tended to involve subordinates' views before making decisions. This style of leading people consequently elicited positive employee performance outcomes characterised by heightened levels of job satisfaction, creativity, motivation, enthusiasm, and energy, regardless of the presence and absence of the leader. On the contrary, autocratic leaders were found to be obsessed with output targets and took decisions without involving subordinates, whereas *laissez-faire* leaders were found to be suitable in leading a group of highly skilled and motivated employees with an excellence track record of performance, allowed subordinates to take decisions, and provided no-real leadership.⁶

Process Leadership Theory

This theory gained popularity in the 1990s and focuses on the following types of leadership: Servant leadership, learning organisations, principal-centred leadership, and charismatic leadership. The focus of servant leadership is on serving the welfare of the followers. Servant leaders need to be servants themselves in championing a course of action that improves the wellbeing of their followers. Servant leadership is concerned with what people (the followers) are lacking, and how their “have-nots” and anxieties could be addressed. Servant leadership leaders in learning organisations, on the other hand, rally people behind the vision, which is considered to be greater than everybody in the organisation. They are the stewards of the vision of the organisation.⁷

Transactional Theory

The late 1970s and early 1980s signalled a shift in what leadership constituted. This period saw the views on the making of leadership focusing on the exchanges between followers and leaders. The literature refers to this as leader-member exchange, that largely focuses on the quality of the relationship between leaders and subordinates.⁸ Transactional leadership is described as one that is based on certain types of concessions between leaders and followers to achieve a certain organisational goal.⁹ It is the type of leadership that is centred on contingent reward to reinforce active and positive exchange between leaders and followers. This implies that leaders reward followers for a job well down in achieving the agreed upon targets and objectives. In return, followers exchange their behaviours through increased performances.¹⁰ This affords the leader an opportunity to focus on fixing errors and avoiding delaying in decision making. This is known as management-by-exceptions which can either be active or passive transactions, based on the timing of the leaders’ involvement in the affairs of the followers. For instance, the active form of management-by-exception occurs when the leaders timeously and proactively intervene in the monitoring of the performance of followers.¹¹ Some studies have found deficiencies with transactional leadership, the quality of the leaders’ actions, and relationships with the followers.¹²

Transformational Theory

This theory distinguishes itself from the rest of the old and contemporary theories of leadership. At the centre of transformational theory is “the involvement of the followers in the processes or activities related to personal factor towards the organisation and a course that will yield certain superior social dividend”.¹³

It is argued that transformational leaders raise the motivation and morality of both the followers and the leader. Its premise is that transformational leaders' interactions with followers are based on common values, beliefs, and goals. This in turn influences the performance and the achievements of the goal. In transformational leadership, the leaders and followers relegate their self-interests for the benefit of the group.¹⁴ Transformational leaders create a vision and secure the commitment of followers to realise the vision.¹⁵

Transactional Leadership Style

In line with the transactional theory discussed above, the transactional leadership style concentrates on contractual agreements as the main motivating instrument for the desired behaviour between leaders and followers. This style of leadership makes use of an extrinsic reward system to entice the followers' motivation in the achievement of work group and organisational goals. As noted above, another feature of this leadership style is management-by-exception which can be passive or active. When the style is active, the transactional leader leads in such a way that the followers are trusted that they will execute the task fully to the expected work standards. Conversely, when the transactional leadership style is passive, the leader does not intervene in the followers' performance until something wrong happens.¹⁶ This transactional style of leadership has been criticised for retarding creativity and stifling employee job satisfaction. In the transactional type of relationship, the leader and followers focus only on what has been agreed upon and defined by rules. The leader and followers follow the script to precision. They would not go an extra mile regardless of the performance bottlenecks that are encountered, if such challenges were not defined in the contract. Transactional leadership style is best suited in "environments, especially technological intensive, with high degrees of precision, technical expertise and time constraints. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, is best applied in human-intensive environments where the focus is on influencing followers through motivation and respecting their emotions on the basis of common goals, beliefs, and values".¹⁷

Transformational Leadership Style

The transformational leadership style is associated with positive outcomes at individual, work group, and organisational levels. It is argued that leaders with a transformational style achieve more superior outcomes than autocratic leaders. It is argued that transformational leaders take their relationship with followers seriously to fulfil "their needs for empowerment, achievement, enhanced

self-efficacy and personal growth”.¹⁸ Transformational leaders have the ability to rally followers behind the achievement of organisational goals instead of personal interests. There are four attributes that characterise leaders with a transformational style: Idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised considerations. Through idealised influence, transformational leaders show great concern for the resolution of the needs of followers and embrace shared risk-taking.¹⁹ In this case, transformational leaders are able to manage and resolve conflicts in a manner that does not derail the achievement of the common goal. The idealised influence attribute creates vision and purpose that gives followers a sense of direction through regular communication and leading by examples in the achievement of the mission and goals of the company.²⁰ Khan *et al.* point out that an idealised influence entails “role-modelling, articulation and value creation, providing sense of purpose, meaning, self-esteem, self-determination, emotional control and confidence in followers.”

The inspirational motivation attribute focuses on the consciousness of the followers, aligning them with the goals, vision, and mission of the company. The focus is on ensuring the sustainability of the organisation rather than the personality of the leader. The job of the leader is to ensure that the followers become the best that they could be to the greatness of the organisation and its members.²¹

Transformational leaders that possess the intellectual stimulation attribute, stimulate followers to be creative and resilient when faced with challenges. Khan *et al.* state that this attribute entails mentoring, coaching, and morale building strengths. Transformational leaders with this approach involve themselves in the work to intellectually stimulate their workers. Khan *et al.* summarises the key ingredients of intellectual stimulation to include “rationality, creativity, consensus-decision making, coaching, supporting, challenging and involvement.”

The individualised consideration attribute places emphasis on the contribution of individuals to the attainment of organisational goals, vision, and mission. Through this approach, leaders recognise the needs of workers and development areas in which they need to empower the uniqueness of individuals.²² In a nutshell, the key elements of the individualised consideration are “reassurance, caring for and coaching of individuals and open consultation”.²³

Transformational and Transactional Leadership in Practice

The preceding section provided a discussion on the theories of leadership and styles. The litmus test for any type of leadership is the style in which it is applied and the impact that it has on people and organisations.

The case of Prof Dee – Personal Encounters of and Reflections on Transformational and Transaction Leadership

In this section, I relate transformational and transactional leadership styles to my own experiences of leadership in the context of the workplace. Since I started my professional career, I have interacted with leaders who largely displayed transformational rather than transactional qualities of leadership. As in the case of Jimmy, the mining production supervisor, referred to in the preceding section, these leaders exhibit a human-centred approach to leading others in the organisation. My first formal employment was at a university where I was appointed as a research officer working on mining related research projects. My immediate manager was previously the supervisor for my post-graduate studies.

Prof Dee not only took interest in the job that had to be done but cared so much that he created a working environment that brought the best out in me. He cared so much to know about my personal goals and what field of research I was pursuing as a young aspiring researcher. This mattered a great deal to him. It is this type of leadership that deepened my research interests in the mining workplace related research studies. Under his supervision, coaching, support, and mentoring, I passed my Master's degree with distinction. Under his supervision, I later published my first academic article in the peer reviewed *Journal of Workplace Learning*. The title of the journal article is *Self-directed work teams in a post-apartheid gold mine: Perspectives from the rock-face.* Upon publication, this article was voted by the editors of the journal as the most outstanding paper among papers published in the 2003 volume of the journal. I was thrilled to receive the Emerald Literati Award for Excellence at the Lord's cricket ground in England.

The impact of Prof Dee's leadership was transformational and impactful on my personal and professional development. He did not only see in me a student that would just assist him in churning academic papers that would solely boost his academic profile in the world of academia. He saw in me an aspiring young researcher that had a potential to make an immense contribution to the production of knowledge on workplace change processes in a post-apartheid mining industry. It was therefore not surprising when I secured a

Commonwealth scholarship to pursue my doctoral studies at the University of Oxford in England.

Prof Dee was a leader that displayed qualities of idealised influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation noted by Khan *et al.* Prof Dee inspired each student as a role model that stimulated others intellectually, to achieve academic excellence against the odds. He cared much about not only supervising students to pass their research degrees, but also to make a difference when they join the world of work for their organisations and the country. This, however, does not mean that the transactional part of leadership was not important in my working relationship with him. It was still important that I achieved the targets associated with working at a university setting, where “publish or perish” is a make or break if one is to be taken seriously in the academic ranks.

I published my first academic article that exceeded our expectations by winning the Emerald Literati Award of Excellence in London. This proved not to be the last award of this sort. While at Oxford, one article that I wrote from my ethnographic doctoral research in a South African gold mine won the inaugural Ngo Future of Work prize. The title of this article is *Getting on and getting by underground: Gold miners' informal working practice of making a plan (Planisa)*. I later published this article in the *Journal of Organizational Ethnography* in 2013.²⁴ Guess what? This article was voted the most outstanding article by the editors of the 2013 volume of this journal. I was presented with the Literati Award of Excellence for the second time for two different journal articles published from my Master's and Doctoral studies. This is one of the examples that shows the massive impact that transformational leaders can have on people and organisations. In the case of Prof Dee, his transformational leadership mostly contributed to the remarkable results of building the next generation of researchers and scholars, particularly from the previously disadvantaged communities. In 2018, after numerous hours spent in my study room, balancing writing and the demands of full-time employment in a non-academic setting, I successfully turned my Doctoral thesis into a book published by Emerald Publishing in England. The title of the book is *Production, safety and teamwork in a deep-level mining workplace: Perspectives from the rock-face*.²⁵ These remarkable scholarly achievements did not only benefit the university at which Prof Dee and I were employed. It also benefited the productivity of the country insofar as knowledge production, research, and development are concerned. I argue that in practice, leadership is much more impactful in delivering the desired results

if it is human-centred and transformational, rather than when it is preceded by a transactional type of leadership.

The case of Jimmy, the Frontline Supervisor in the Mine

During my Doctoral research process in a deep-level mining workplace, there were two frontline supervisors that I interacted with, which adopted two different leadership styles in how they supervised the day-to-day running of the production process at the rock-face down the mine. These two frontline supervisors or shift-bosses as they are called in South African mines, Jimmy and Lee, oversaw the extraction of the gold-bearing ore in similar working conditions with similar profiles of the mining teams. However, they achieved different team performance results at the end of the month. This boiled down to the different styles in which these two front-line supervisors led the different members of their mining teams.

Jimmy enjoyed a great deal of success with his charges in the achievement of team performance goals. His mining teams outperformed many work teams in the mine in terms of production and safety performance results. When I spoke to his frontline mining team members, they attributed their success to the leadership style of their supervisor. Jimmy's transformational leadership style enabled him to develop a reciprocal working relationship with his crews, based on the values of respect, trust, and teamwork. The members of Jimmy's mining team spoke highly of him, as somebody who cared for them more as human beings than putting production targets first. Jimmy's human-centred leadership style was based on the spirit of *ubuntu* (humanness).

The concept of *ubuntu* means that a person is a person because of other people. In isiZulu or isiXhosa, *umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu* refers to personhood, human dignity, and interconnectedness.²⁶ It is therefore not surprising that many leaders refer to people as their greatest asset of their organisations. Great leaders of all walks of life do not take people for granted as they know that they are what they are because of people. They are not shy to base their success on the relationship that they built with people to achieve impactful results. This is what Jimmy demonstrated in his mining workplace.

Down the mine, Jimmy's frontline mining teams were super teams in the mine as they always went an extra mile in achieving the organisational and team performance goals. They always performed beyond expectations as they surpassed monthly production calls and achieved a superior safety performance. I observed that unlike other frontline teams, Jimmy's teams enjoyed team

cohesion, respect, and trust among each other. They covered each other very well in their day-to-day execution of production tasks, even if one members of the team was absent due to an emergency at home. Jimmy's frontline mining teams always enjoyed safe production bonuses, unlike other teams in the mine, as they worked as a cohesive unit under a transformational leader.

Conversely, the performance and working relationships of Lee's frontline mining teams were plagued by a lack of teamwork and conflict between members due to the instability of the team. Lee's frontline teams were not as cohesive as Jimmy's teams. I observed that there was a lot of grumbling and dissatisfaction with management and supervision within Lee's teams. There was no reciprocal type of relationship between the leadership style of Lee and his crews. The working relations were largely transaction, focusing more on attaining production targets through authoritarian supervisory styles. This leadership style did not bring the best out in Lee's frontline teams. Jimmy's transformational leadership style paid dividends for him and his teams, whereas Lee's transactional leadership style was not as outstanding as the team and organisational performance results in Jimmy's case.

Focusing on people alone is not good enough in leadership. A great leader is one that also focuses on results. There needs to be a balance. Jimmy, the frontline supervisor, seemed to have kept this balance very well compared to Lee. Jimmy was able to reconcile the demands of balancing people management, cost management, and production management in a manner that paid dividends for himself as a leader, his charges, and the company. Lee struggled to do so. It can therefore be argued that the tale of Jimmy and Lee highlights what separates leaders from managers. Jimmy displayed to a large extent the qualities of being a leader, whereas Lee demonstrated the qualities of being a manager. What is so unique about great leaders? What is so unique about them is that they take people along with them in what they seek to achieve – their vision.

The case of Mining CEO-led Strategy on Occupational Health and Safety

In this section, I reflect on another practical experience of transformational leadership in the mining industry. In 2019, following a spike in the number of occupational fatalities in 2017 and 2018, the Minerals Council member-CEOs reflected deeply on this disturbing safety performance trend in the South African mining sector. They reckoned at the time that occupational health and safety performance reflected the quality of their leadership. For this reason,

they agreed that they needed an introspection of their leadership and its impact on occupational health and safety. The workshop was held on 25 January 2019.

It was at this workshop that I witnessed the significance of transformational leadership among the industry's CEOs. The CEOs agreed that they needed to be visible to and engaging with frontline mine employees if they were to improve occupational health and safety performances in their mining operations. The CEOs' heartfelt deliberations indicated that their leadership styles and behaviour needed not only to be transactional but also transformational if they were to ensure healthier, safer, and more sustainable mining industry. The CEOs agreed that their leadership needed to be transformative and heartfelt from the top to the frontline employees at the rock-face.

The Minerals Council's CEOs' heartfelt conversations were not just a "talk shop," but culminated into a transformative strategy that was called the *Khumbul'ekhaya* CEO-led health and safety strategy. *Khumbul'ekhaya* is a Nguni word for "remember home." *Khumbul'ekhaya* served as a rallying cry for the achievement of transformational health and safety leadership from the CEO to the worker at the rock-face. The *Khumbul'ekhaya* strategy highlighted the importance of connecting the workplace safety to homes and communities of mine employees.

The CEO-led *Khumbul'ekhaya* strategy marked a significant step change and paradigm shift in the achievement of the zero harm goal in the mining industry. The CEOs affirmed that health and safety outcomes were influenced by a set of multiple factors. This affirmation advocated for a multi-pronged and holistic strategy to deal with the various social and technical system factors contributing to the occurrence of fatal accidents in the mining industry. The CEOs admitted that what gave them sleepless nights in creating value for shareholders was no longer tons of ore, but also health and safety, environmental, social, and governance issues. Health and safety are part and parcel of gaining a social licence to operate, as well as an acceptance by the mining communities. Transactional leadership styles are no longer adequate for the sustainable development of the mining industry if it is not complemented by transformational leadership based on shared value principles. In practice, transformational leadership embodies caring, inclusiveness, empowerment, and prosperity for all stakeholders associated with the mining company.

The launch of the *Khumbul'ekhaya* strategy in October 2019 was accompanied by the commencement of *Khumbul'ekhaya* health and safety days. This is a health and safety campaign that forms part of the Minerals Council's

annual National Day of Safety and Health in Mining. I coordinated the launch of the CEO-led *Khumbul'ekhaya* and hosting of *Khumbul'ekhaya* health and safety days in a manner that demonstrated transformational leadership for tripartite leaders from organised business, government, and organised labour. These leaders put aside their differences, as what mattered most with the *Khumbul'ekhaya* initiative was saving lives more than merely extracting minerals.

During the hosting of the *Khumbul'ekhaya* health and safety days, transformational leadership from the CEOs and their executive teams came to the fore. Transactional leadership took a backseat, as production was halted in order to meaningfully engage with mine employees on health and safety in mines and beyond the mine gates. Various CEOs engaged in meaningful transformative conversations with groups of employees on the importance of safe production. In 2019, while recognising that one fatality is one too many and much still needed to be done to realise the industry's goal of zero harm, the industry recorded 51 fatalities, the lowest number of fatalities ever recorded in the history of the mining industry. It has been shown that mining operations that are led by leaders who embrace visible-felt transformational leadership styles tend to be safer, more productive, and more profitable. When compared to the 1993 figure of 615 fatalities, the industry reduced the number of fatalities by 92%. This is a significant reduction that can be attributed to a plethora of industrial initiatives, including the transformation of the culture of health and safety in the mining industry.

In line with the leadership literature, leaders who put transformational leadership principles at the centre of their leadership are more likely to engineer a sustainable safety culture than leaders who solely rely on the transactional leadership style, aimed at achieving production and financial targets, regardless of the state of mind and hearts of employees. Leadership commitment is one of the critical factors that determines the success of any safety culture transformation programme. Transformational leadership remains a crucial leadership attribute for the achievement of a safer and healthier mining industry. The Minerals Council's CEOs' Heartfelt Conversations and *Khumbul'ekhaya* strategy are just the beginning of the journey for transformational health and safety leadership. All workplace leaders, from the top to the bottom of the organisational hierarchy, need to blend transactional leadership with transformational leadership. This is especially important in a transforming mining industry with a changing workforce profile of women and millennials.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined and discussed the theory and practice of leadership. The various leadership and style theories were reviewed to understand the evolution of leadership over the years. The theories of leadership served as a framework for the discussion and arguments made in this chapter. To understand leadership in practice, the chapter focused on transformational and transactional leadership to highlight the application of these styles of leadership in practice. I reflected my own personal and work experiences to ascertain which of these leadership styles generated superior outcomes on my professional development and on the organisations where I worked. The reflection highlighted that transformational leaders are much more capable to create long-lasting working relationships that lead to sustainable and impactful organisational outcomes.

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Endnotes

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26 cf. Mangaliso 2001.



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Discovering the Leader in You

Mbali Mkhonto

Defining Leadership

What is leadership? According to Dwight Eisenhower, it is “the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.” The ability to carry your vision effectively is based on the number of practical actions that you must take as a leader. These skills are very important to motivate, educate, enthuse, and build your team. Your success in leadership will depend on the motivation that you provide to your team and will result in them working with you to realise your set vision. The more credible you are as a leader, the more people have confidence in you, thereby allowing you to influence their lives. However, the less credible you are, the quicker you lose your position of influence in their lives.

*Leadership is being bold enough to have vision and humble enough
to recognize achieving it will take the efforts of many people –
people who are most fulfilled when they share their gifts and talents,
rather than just work.*

Leaders create that culture, serve that greater good and let others soar.

- Kathy Heasley, the founder and president of Heasley & Partners

Leadership Attributes

Every leader must have a certain amount of leadership abilities. Think of leaders in your organisation and you will come to realize that they possess certain unique qualities that make them extraordinary. The following attributes are non-negotiable as you empower yourself to be a leader:

- ◆ *Discipline:* Great leaders have had to master the act of discipline. As you begin to take leadership responsibility, take responsibility of your action and the outcomes that you would like to see. Discipline means that you are actively engage in doing all you can to remain grounded in your values and principles.

- ◆ *Plan and execute:* Most people think that success is luck and not hard work. Today we live in a world where mediocrity is celebrated. People often want to see results without planning. Execution is important in closing the gap between planning and success. Success is all about planning and after you put the plan into action. Great leaders succeed because they understand that it is about planning and achieving one thing and gradually move to the next step of life. In my book, *Own your success: Overcome Life's Challenges and Fulfil your Purpose* I wrote extensively about the importance of planning. Accordingly, I have explored four guidelines to effective planning:
 - *Daily plan:* A leader must have a plan for the day and see it through by the end of each day. You have to get the results that you planned for. If something comes to mind that is not part of your plan and will require you to deviate from your plan, refrain from doing so unless it is critically important. As leader, prioritise your tasks for the day, completing the most important ones.
 - *Weekly plan:* A leader must make good use of the week. There are seven days in a week. As a leader, your weekly plan should be formulated accordingly. The results that you achieve on a weekly basis should be the combination of your daily plans. This means that you must add together the successful completion of your daily plans to measure a full week's achievements.
 - *Monthly plan/achievement:* The monthly achievement plan is a result of your dedication and commitment to your daily and weekly plan. This is a very important step for you as leader as it will guide you to either revise or review your strategic objectives.
 - *Yearly achievement:* Many leaders either have a three-year or a five-year plan for a turnaround strategy. Have you ever wondered why, in many instances some of them do not achieve anything? This is because most leaders are good at talking about a vision but bad in keeping track with the vision. Yearly achievements are important in the growth of your organisation and your long-term vision. It provides you with a clear sense of whether your organisation is focus on doing what is right or not. It gives a true assessment to help you to think better and quicker. With the assessment of your yearly achievements, you can track whether your system is working or needs some improvements. It presents an opportunity to bring about change to the organisational structure.
 - *Risk taking:* People are always comfortable with the normal way of doing things. A Chinese proverb states, "Man who says, 'it cannot be

done' should not interrupt man who is doing it." Taking a risk is one of the key attributes to leadership. Take a risk or nothing will get done in your comfort zone.

- *Be willing to learn:* No matter how much you learn from the past, it will never tell you all you need to know about the present and the future. One has come to realise that the greatest lesson about leadership is the willingness to learn. Willingness to learn as a leader does not reduce you to anything other than making you to grow each day. When your followers wish to provide some suggestions, encourage them to stretch their thinking and give them an opportunity to try new things and acquire new skills. Leadership is a two-way process with which you impart knowledge with authority and your followers receive it with a positive mind of growing your vision, thereby allowing their suggestions to carry value.

Leaders must know their Direction

Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.

- Warren Bennis

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Every great institution is the lengthened shadow of a single [person]." This means that the attitude of the leader in the organisation will determine the direction of the organisation. When God set a vision in your heart, he will always guide you with the direction to navigate the journey. When you are chosen as a leader, it means that you are the one who must see much more than anyone else does. You have to see further than everyone following you. A common societal mistake about leadership is that people often turn to imagine leadership for a position that comes with power and authority to command. A true sense of leadership is much more than that. As a leader you must be at liberty to practically provide direction from time to time. Will Rogers, a newspaper columnist and social commentator, once said, "People's minds are changed through observation and not argument." Every great leader of a great institution has built their business with a clear sense of direction and a higher level of moral authority. A leader constantly demonstrates a higher standard than their followers. We cannot lead anyone further than we have been ourselves. This means that you cannot lead others without being able to translate your vision into a reality.

In 2009 we embarked on a journey to establish a construction company. We developed a 10-year plan that was to be reviewed every three years. As the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of the organisation, I knew that our plan was only achievable if we had self-discipline, inner trust, and the motivation to be resilient in all situations. I shared our long-term vision with the team. Our main goal was to become one of the most competitive and credible organisations in the construction industry. As the year progressed, I began to realise that I needed much more knowledge and experience to guide the organisation to the realisation of our 10-year plan. Our ambition was not that impossible. We only needed much more knowledge to get our direction right. I have come to realise that the higher you want to get, the more you need leadership capabilities.

It was during one of our vision reviews that as a CEO I took a decision to embark on my MBA (Master of Business Administration). I had to take this decision with a clear understanding that for us as an organisation to get to where we want to be, we could not be satisfied with the things as they were, and the amount of information I had in running the business. I knew that the organisation was not going to grow to the level of our ten-year plan if there was a resistance to change. All organisations that are successful today have done so with growth and change.

Change is Leadership

Adapt or die

There is nothing extremely difficult than introducing change in the organisation that is custom to a certain way of doing things. Resistance to change is what has killed many organisations. The CEO of Nokia emotionally had this to say about the fall of their very competitive organisation at the time, “We did not do anything wrong but somehow, we lost.” In the 1940s, the Swiss watch was known as the best quality watch in the world. Almost 80 percent of the watches which were sold in the world, were made in Switzerland. In the late 50s, the digital watch was presented to the leaders of the Swiss watch company. Unfortunately, they rejected the new idea because they were convinced that they had the best watch in the whole world. The man who developed the digital watch decided to sell the idea to Seiko. Today, at least 80 percent of the watches are digital.

This story represents what happens when leaders refuse change. As we navigate our way to the new life of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, we have, in our respective organisations to adapt or die. The new world of economy requires us to always evolve. A credible leader must encourage change and growth.

One of the most required skills for change is the knowledge about change. You cannot change unless you know how to change. You will not know how to change unless you increase the amount of your understanding of things. The use of technology has changed some of the traditional ways of doing business. Change is not only important, it is convenient. The world continuously changes: What was new yesterday is history today. The 2010 model car has depreciated today because there are now cars with a newer shape. The value of what was once the most respected phone company, Nokia, has been replaced by other brands, such as Apple and Samsung. A leader has to keep up with the times and embrace change. When we as leaders allow change to take place, our minds begin to open, thereby creating the space for new things. A leader does not sit and wonder what has caused a downfall in their business. They look for new ways to improve it.

Life is about constant change and we all need it in our lives. In order for an institution to succeed, one first needs to know the current state of its affairs. What worked perfectly 10 years ago, may not work today, not because it is no longer the same formula, but because times have changed, and things are changing.

Change will create doubts in you

Anything unusual creates a sense of displeasure. Change in your organisation means moving from the traditional way of doing things to a place that was never experienced. Change in your academic life means learning in a new way by doing research. Change in your workplace means not being satisfied by coming to work at 08:00 and knocking off at 17:00, and not being satisfied with the way things are. What is often not known is that the fear of the unknown is what must make this experience exciting and not bitter. Elbert Hubbard, an American writer, publisher, artist, and philosopher, once said that “the biggest mistake a person can make is to be afraid of making a mistake.” Change requires you to put in some extra effort. It is much better to adapt early to change than to follow the crowd to the place of the unknown. As leader of your organisation, you should be able to talk your followers and subordinates through the process, as this will afford them an opportunity to understand the vision of the organisation and how to fit in. It is your responsibility as a leader to never allow them to be in the dark about the change.

When your organisation goes through change, bear in mind that both success and failure will occur in the process, allowing the process to work for you. It is a learning journey after all. When you develop new ideas, one of

two things will happen: It will either work or it won't work. The leader of the organisation has the obligation to outline the advantages and the disadvantages of change and communicate it to the followers. The change must be in line with the goals of the organisation and must make sense to the followers who are responsible for carrying out the vision. A manager in the organisation will find it easy to execute the change initiated by the leader if such change means growth to their career in the organisation. When you lead your executive or those who follow your vision, explain to them what change means for their personal development. Allow the vision of the organisation to complement their own growth.

Change will always be there

*If you do not change direction,
you may end up where you are heading.*

- Lao Tzu

In 2019, when COVID unceremoniously hit the whole world, all the leaders were left with only one choice, and that was to accept change and adapt fast. Business leaders were coerced by the conditions to move from the contact business meetings, university leaders were forced to change their way of conducting classes to online learning, presidents of countries were persuaded to conduct their state meetings online, and churches started to conduct their services through the use of technology. Before 2019, nobody would have predicted such change, but it was time.

Positive Thinking is Leadership

Leadership requires passion

Our passion to what is our calling as leaders is what makes us great leaders, but without a good sense of passion we will never reach our full potential. Have you ever thought what makes people to be good leaders with vision, while other leaders don't have vision? What motivates us to win, is passion. Discovering the leader within you has a lot to do with how passionate you are about what you do. Today we have government officials in positions of responsibility without any passion, only driven by their selfish interests. We have entrepreneurs with no vision for their organisation and generated ideas, but who are only profit driven, which means that their business would never be sustainable. Position and self-

gain have now replaced responsibilities. It is no longer about your ability to do the work, as passion is no longer a prerequisite for leadership.

We have long forgotten that a leader's attitude is observed by their followers more quickly than their actions. In South Africa, most of our state-owned enterprises are collapsing because leaders with no passion and the knowledge to do the work are appointed. Today the role of the chairman of the board has been reduced to comradeship appointments. People are getting the position without having the responsibilities. The true sense of being a compatriot is long gone. The future is not considered. Their oaths of office are only a ceremony and a procedure that must be done.

The greatest day in your life and mine is when we as leaders must take full responsibility for our actions. It is when we consciously accept positions of power out of passion to serve and lead. That is the day that we truly rise to the occasion and build the country for better. I am daring you fellow South Africans to remember that the future of our children is dependent on the decisions that we take today. Do not assume any position of responsibility if you cannot execute it in a fair and transparent manner. If you are not passionate about your vision, it is not worth pursuing it because you will surely fail. Those who succeed in the race are those who go the extra mile. Passion should be the force that helps you to unleash your leadership potential. You cannot lead others if you are not willing to sometimes take a risk, and you cannot take risks if you do not have passion as your driving force. To be a leader, you need to follow your vision, believe in yourself, and be a passionate and dedicated person.

Leadership requires optimism

I wish I could spend much more time on this topic because it is another cornerstone that requires a clear understanding. When you are called a leader, it means that you are distinguished from other people. It does not mean that you must act out of character, it just means that much is expected from you as the humble person you should be. It means that you have a responsibility of a higher standard in the society. Optimism precedes great achievements. Leadership comes with a lot of challenges. The bigger your vision, the bigger the challenges you will have to deal with. The level of your success in leadership will depend on how far you think you can go when you are stagnating and dealing with challenges. Every team needs a leader who is optimistic to give a vision its direction. A team without optimism is purposeless. Many times, when challenges overwhelm us, we tend to take a shortcut.

A leader has to work extra hard to be far ahead of the others. A leader also needs to have an optimistic attitude, even when surrounded by difficulties. Optimism brings fire to the vision in the organisation. As a leader, your followers will always copy your attitude, especially when you have to take decisive actions in the mist of challenges. When a leader feels weak, they must never make it known to their team. You must stay strong, even when you feel like giving in, remembering that you carry the hopes and ambitions of the organisation.

Are you a Good Leader of your Organisation?

The common mistake that most leaders make is to confuse leadership and fear. You confidently give instruction to your followers, and you mistakenly take their silence to advise or respond as your good leadership. While a respectful relationship between a leader and the followers should be maintained and well defined, a good leader cannot use fear to lead the organisation. The real leader holds the power and not the fear. Many organisations are today collapsing in the hands of dictatorship ruling by fear and supressing good ideas that would have otherwise contributed to the growth of the organisation. Margaret Thatcher once said, "*Being in power is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you are not.*" A leader does not have to intimidate and dictate in the sharing of their vision.

The reason why we currently have so many conflicts between leaders and their followers is because most leaders are allowing fear to direct their vision. You demand that people are supposed to follow because you are the leader. People might be polite to you out of fear, but they may not follow a vision that does not represent their aspirations. As an inexperienced young leader, I walked in the boardroom with my staff members with the mindset being the boss who knows it all. As I chaired the meeting, I noticed something: I was talking to myself and everyone else was just listening without giving their full attention. It was when the implementation failed and I had to seek other opinions, that I realised that people would listen attentively, not necessarily because of the amount of truth in the information shared, but because of the attitude of your leadership style.

Everyone can be a Leader

Character, courage, and consistence

Character is one of the three common things that define a great leader. When a leader shows good character, it makes trust easy and possible. I am grateful

to have been surrounded by leaders who epitomise a consistency of character Dr Reuel Khoza is a leading example. He lives according to his values every day. He never makes a commitment unless he could keep up with it. I am blessed to have such a man as my mentor – a credible leader whose achievements speak for themselves. A man who constantly reminds us that we can be good leaders and South Africa as a country can gain much out of such leadership. He is a man of stature. John Morley once said, “[N]o man can climb out beyond the limitation of his own character.” This means that if you want to be a great leader, mould your character, work on being and not on having because once you have achieved this, you can still have what you get out of being a good leader.

Courage is another attribute you should develop to be a great leader, Growing up in a disadvantaged family, as a young man I have always known that I had a strong courage in me. I had courage to make mistakes and admitting it, I had courage to speak before a crowd, but I knew I had to keep on practising over and over again until I was courageous enough. So many people’s ability to lead is lost in fearing what others will say. Courage is the ability to do what is right in spite of opposition.

Consistency: When you are a leader and your followers do not know what to expect from you, then you are not a good leader. Maintaining a consistent character is what build leadership. Unfortunately, choosing leadership means that even the days that you don’t feel like talking, you have to maintain a consistent character. Even when you feel you are exhausted, you have to stay in the game and be counted and even when the road seems so far, you have to remain in the journey to lead the vision. You have to be consistent.

We are all born with leadership potentials, yet only some of us grow into leaders. Those who succeed in becoming leaders, learn to develop the leadership skills with which they were born. Common sense tells us that there are both good leaders and bad leaders in life. If what you do, influences other people in a positive way, then you are a good leader. If your actions influence others in a negative way, you are most probably a bad leader. The greatest example of a bad leader is a gangster. Gangsters rule by fear and they encourage members of the gang to live in a way that is disrespectful and harmful to others. Solutions to problems are usually found through violence. When you talk about a good leader, however, the life of Nelson Mandela emerges as a wonderful example. His leadership has influenced many people to do good, live positive lives, and face difficult challenges.

What makes you an Extra-Ordinary Leader?

Do not be afraid to get your hands dirty

In order to push people down, you have to go down with them. Under excellent leadership, a challenge is easily solved when a leader practises a hands-on approach to run the organisation. A hands-on leader will be able to see a challenge long before it can build up into something undesirable. A good leader will always use their hands-on approach to access the situation and make a determination. A hands-on leader saves much time solving problems because they spend time working against the occurrence of any problem. But what happens when a leader does not get involved?

You have to solve more problems

If you fail as leader to make time to understand the day-to-day running of your organisation, you will have to make time when crisis takes a centre stage.

When you tell a person to do something that they don't know how to do

If you cannot demonstrate to your followers how you like things done, they will not know exactly how you like things done, creating a serious amount of confusion in the task execution. While you cannot always be present on the ground, it is important to demonstrate how you like things done.

When I first joined the construction industry, I had a lot to learn in a short space of time. One of the most difficult things about being an entrepreneur is that you rely on others to do things well. You therefore need to be excellent in your execution. It is important to give reasons as to why you must be the one to be given the business. My first lesson of the construction business was not as good as I would have wished it to be. I almost lost my reputation. You cannot delegate your work to others before they know exactly what they are supposed to do. When you delegate your work to others, you also give them the license to either boost your reputation or destroy it. Therefore, take note of the following two prerequisites:

- ◆ **Raise other leaders to lead:** People cannot give to others what they do not possess themselves. As credible leader, you should articulate your vision well to your followers. If so, then delegation would not be a problem. In the process of delegating work to others, you give your followers two opportunities: They can improve their own skills, as well as assume greater responsibility. A leader is the one who sees value in developing others to

lead. Every great leader makes it their immediate priority to develop other leaders. As a leader, what you want is not for others to feel, as it is your personal vision. Yes, you have a goal to achieve, but you need others to do well. Once you understand the law of reproducing well, you will greatly appreciate the importance of developing others to lead. How your leadership is valued, will solely depend on how many leaders you are producing to be there when you are not around, to take over when you are gone, to captain the ship when you physical get tired.

- ◆ **Create your own leadership drive:** Have you ever wondered why some leaders make other leaders to fail, while they are constantly achieving great things? It is easy to identify what creates a failure or success in leaders. Growing up as an ambitious person, I had a piece of paper that was stuck on the wall of my small bedroom, bearing the words, “I am born poor but I will rise.” The small piece of paper was noticeable enough that anyone coming into my room could read it. Often people would ask me questions, such as, “What makes you think that you will rise?” To these people the fact of succeeding seemed totally impossible because they looked at my condition and concluded that it was impossible. When people tell you about the failure of generations, it can be very discouraging. Those were hard times for me. I had to believe in my own words and act on them. I knew that others did not understand me, believing that I was crazy. As a leader, you become great when you begin to practise your own personal motto for success. We have before us a power to command things to work in our favour. Creating your own leadership drive is a constant reminder that you have nothing else but to achieve victory because without victory there is no survival. Have you ever wondered why in a soccer team the one who is selected to captain the team has to be strong in character? You cannot win without a good captain. A good leader is required to build a unit of vision which is to win. “Unfortunately, this cannot happen spontaneously. The good players don’t come together on their own to deliver good results. They require a leader who can drive the motto down to every team member.

Leadership requires true assessment of the self

Be true to yourself. The best advice I ever got was, “Until you become real about your own character, nothing will work much to your advantage.” Success comes to us when we get in touch with who we really are and the environment around us. When I was a child, I always looked up to certain community builders who

were devoted and committed to raising leaders through teaching and learning. Although I did not attend a very prestigious school in the country, I was blessed enough to be taught by passionate teachers who valued and respected their jobs. As I witnessed their passion, I became convinced that I wanted to become a teacher in my community. Later, on becoming an adult, I realised that although imitation is the best form of admiration, you must decide on your own set vision.

Whatever you may think of the characters of the employees in your organisation, think much more about your own character. What cannot shape you will break you and what cannot build you will destroy you. What you produce as a leader is not determined by what you want. It is determining by who you are and how you are leading the people.

Decision-Taking is Leadership

A credible leader must be decisive. One of the key attributes in the leadership is decisiveness. According to Ferdinand Fournies in his book, *Coaching for improved work performance*, there are three common reasons why people do not perform to the best of their ability:

They do not know what they are supposed to do

It is common sense that in order to lead others, you should have travelled the same road, otherwise you will be leading your followers astray. When people decide to follow a leader, they first make an observation of the amount of knowledge the leader possesses and what their vision is. It does not take long for them to determine if the leader knows what they are doing or not. Arming yourself with an understanding of your area of leadership is more important than coercing yourself into leading. People can only follow you if they realise that you are a strong leader. According to Clarence Randall, “*The leader must know, must know he know, and must be able to make it abundantly clear to those around him that he knows*”.

They fear to be decisive

Many failures in organisations are caused by leaders who are not decisive enough. These are leaders who make a small issue to grow to a bigger issue by not solving the problem. Failure is not always the result of certain actions being taken. Sometimes it is due to people staying stagnant when they should be taking action. I am certain that some of us can relate to this. When the year begins, we make plans which we intend to achieve by the end of the year. Then, due to our

indecisiveness, we end up having to postpone the same plans to the following year, making it impossible for us to get any further in life. Being decisive, helps you to keep up with your new resolutions by setting a right goal with a right attitude. If you want to further your studies, do not find excuses as to why you should wait. Go and register! If you have been delaying your new business venture, stop delaying the process and just do it. Time is precious and its value needs to be appreciated. The same is true about leadership: Take decisions when you must and deal with the outcomes. *The only way to experience an explosive level of growth is to do the math, leader's math.* Bryant McGill avers, "*The world is starving for original and decisive leadership.*" All successful decision-making begins with a willingness to make decisions. A leader has to be bold when it comes to making decisions, and it must always be made in the best interest of the institution or business. As a leader, you are always expected to give clear directions.

Failure to appreciate growth

So far we have extensively if not adequately emphasised the importance of growth as one of the leadership requirements. If you as a leader can learn the principle of constantly stretching yourself and never settling for less than what you want, then you will see the fullness of your leadership abilities. I do not know about you, but I just cannot settle for being an average leader. What contributes to failure to appreciate growth? The attitude of knowing everything! A leader who claims to know it all has reached a ceiling or a wall. They just cannot grow more than their current position. They cannot see further than the existing vision. They cannot think outside the existing box. Their life is now done and they are on their way to destruction. Leaders who claim to know and understand it all are often the leaders with a blind spot.

Comfort Zone

A comfort zone is a place where most dreams, hopes, and ambitions are gradually dying. As a leader, you have no business leading people if you are stuck in your comfort zone. You must be able to move yourself to the place of discomfort, where uncomfortable decisions are taken for growth. Your courage may not be the only asset to make you a great leader, but without a good one you will never reach your full leadership potential. You cannot grow unless you change.

Leadership is Influence

Leadership is the ability to guide others without force into a direction or decision that leaves them still feeling empowered and accomplished.

- Lisa Cash Hanson, the CEO of Snuggwugg

It is important to understand that, whether you contribute to something or not, you still have an influence on other people's lives. Leadership is much more about influence. It has less to do with the title associated with the leader but everything to do with the work to be done. A leader of an organisation must have a sense of taking full responsibility for their attitudes and their actions. When a leader at the top carries a great positive attitude with them, those who are following them will find it easy to follow in their footsteps. Leadership is all about influence and when the leader does not know their assignment, it becomes extremely difficult to execute the task. One way or the other, as leaders we will always look back and reflect about those who have influenced us along our path, either to education, academic, or health living. There are two genuine successful South African businesspersons who have immensely contributed to the person of leadership that I am. First, Dr Reuel Khoza is a distinguished South African thought leader and a businessperson who instilled leadership values in me that have somehow shaped my direction to leading with purpose. Second, Mike Teke is a successful South African businessperson who is my mentor and who has always pushed me to go beyond the ordinary. I have learnt from these two great men that the best way to be effective in leadership is to know the ability of how to influence.

An effective leader does not command his followers to do the work, he brings inspiration and encouragement for them to lead and be part of the set vision. It is rather unfortunate that the term "leadership" has been abused both in the private and the public sector. Current leaders are choosing to be feared instead of being respected. They are choosing to lead with ignorance and arrogance because they lack real vision. Psychologists have proven that most individuals have an influence on more than 10,000 people in an average lifetime. This means that if you remain quiet, you are denying more than 10,000 people around you the opportunity of receiving your special gifts.

As you continue to read this great book with great thinkers, I wish to challenge you to revise your leadership approach. If your organisation is not following your set goals, those who are following you will take a different

direction. It is on this point that you need to recheck your way of leadership. Make everyone part of the team with well-defined assigned tasks.

How do you make everyone part of the vision?

Treat every team member equally – one common mistake that CEOs and leaders of the organisation make, is to assume that having favourites in the organisation will add value to the delegation of responsibilities. While this may be true in many cases, it leads to team members sabotaging one another. It is important to identify each team member's strengths and weaknesses and treat them all equally.

Build trust with your team members – trust is what builds a successful organisation. There is no suggestion or idea that can be implemented if trust is minimal. As a leader, you have an obligation to instil trust in the organisation as you lead your team members towards discovering the vision of the organisation. In order for your team to trust you and the amount of work expected from them, they have to know why they have to take the risk. If they trust you, taking a risk becomes natural.

Give meaning to your vision – the term “leader” means a lot of things. One common definition of leadership is that as leader you have to show others the direction that they should take. Before you anticipate your followers to take your direction, you will have to understand why you are doing something. During my MBA course work, under the subject “Strategy,” we learned much about the strategy of the organisation. The process of strategising involves the planning process, execution, and implementation. I find this process very much aligned with leadership because of the following: *In the planning phase*, the CEO of the organisation, together with the executives in the organisation are involved in the brainstorming about the vision and mission of the organisation. This is the phase where everything begins – what needs to be done, how it needs to be done, and by when it should be done. Once the strategy has been set in motion by the top management, *the implementation phase* begins. In this phase, those who are expected to carry the work, are made aware of their roles and responsibilities. This means that if the leadership has set the direction that needs to be taken by the organisation, the top management must know why they are doing it.

In the execution phase, the team that is involved, is tasked by bringing the strategy to its outcomes. More often than not, most strategies do not succeed during execution because of the disconnection between the top management and those in the middle or the lower level management of the organisation.

A leader at the top must know what they are doing and communicate to those who are at the lower level of execution. A good strategy does not mean successful implementation, unless there is leadership.

Leadership is Productivity

Because leadership is about prosperity in the execution of one's vision, you have to be productive. As a leader, your team must witness both a positive attitude and an excellent execution of your plans from you. You need to show enthusiasm towards your work and keep increasing your level of commitment to your vision. This means that you have to develop a passion to do today what you did yesterday, but better. If you approach your work with decency, you will be productive.

A good Leader does not Procrastinate

A leader becomes a real leader in the organisation when they begin to execute a vision. A Leader takes action and is solution focused. Success in leadership is not just an accidental series of events, it is a choice. It is about choosing a way of life that matters. Every leader's potential is determined by the level of decision-making and the time they take to do so. Being a leader means setting an example. Your followers will only be motivated to execute your direction with no delays when you make them see the importance of not procrastinating.

When you become a leader, you lose the right to think only about yourself.

- Gerald Brooks

When a good leader takes a decision at the right moment, good things do happen in the organisation. The correct action from a leader often brings success to the organisation. Leadership means that the leader should not delay their actions.



ROBBIE MBALI MKHONTO was born on 04 January 1985 in the former Transvaal (now Mpumalanga) in a remote village called Welverdiend under the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, raised by his mother a figure of great inspiration to him.

After he matriculated he furthered his studies at the University of Johannesburg where he completed a National Diploma: Banking, followed by a BA: Development Studies, a BA Honours (majoring in Public Management) with the University of South Africa and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) at the University of South Africa on the topic (the effects of servant leadership on the effective management of small and medium enterprises. In 2014 he was elected as the first black President of the University of Johannesburg Convocation, marking a cathartic era for his love for education and academia.

In leadership and business, Mkhonto set up a construction company and is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Romba Construction and Projects. Mkhonto is also the founding member and President of MK visionary, an organization that prides itself with providing economic and social solution to South African organizations, government organizations and private sectors. He is also involved in the management of Mbalehle Mining Investments. He is also an active director of the Paul Mashatile Foundation, whose patron is the current Treasurer-General of the ANC, Paul Mashatile.

