

*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 Mafoyané 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.

