

Paddle. Catch a wave. Stand. Surf. (Part 1)

 By Loyiso "The Victor" Twala

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Wow. What an experience!



Surf's up for Loyiso while participating in the LeaderSurf programme.

Knowing Mzansi's history, who would've thought that a young black boy from South Africa would end up over 12,000 kms away from Soweto in a place that no one seems to really know. They kinda know, but not really. When mentioned, I'd get responses like, Nica-who? Nica-what? Nica-where?

I'm just as bad because it's a place that was made known to me by the recent popular series, *Narcos*. The president Daniel Ortega had ties to Pablo Escobar. So scandalous. That sparked its own ignorant thoughts. What if I get planted as a drug mule on my way there? Worse yet, what if I get human trafficked? I replayed every episode of *Border Control* that I'd ever seen. But, I digress.

Yes. A young black boy all the way in Nicaragua. To me, that was a whole new idea. The idea of this same young boy all the way in Nicaragua, surfing too? It blew my mind. I'd been to the coastal cities of Durban and Cape Town and I'd swam there, but never surfed. I think sport, and immediately, I think of soccer.

Why do you look nervous?

Adding to this whole thing was the realisation that Nicaragua is a Spanish-speaking nation. The most Spanish I've ever been is supporting FC Barcelona. Hail Messi!

All of this probably explains why, when joint Joburg chief creative officer Ahmed Tilley told me about this opportunity, he said, “Why do you look nervous?”

The only thing that was familiar to me on this whole trip was the concept leadership. I’ve studied it before, formally during my post-graduate studies and informally during pastoral teachings at church. So, the question on my mind now was, “What is [LeaderSurf](#)?”

I arrived in Nicaragua just after 10pm and took a 2-hour drive to my accommodation. This is after connecting in Amsterdam and Panama. Once the leadership training began, I was in for quite a ride. Excuse the pun.

My days were filled with four key components: leadership session, business challenge, surfing, and sunset reflections. These made up the 12-hour day we had learning about leadership in very practical ways.

The leadership sessions were quite insightful. We spent time discussing different ideas around leadership, such as the importance of self-awareness as a leader, the difference between leading and managing, completing a leadership development profile that gives insight on one’s own leadership style, understanding resilience, and emotional intelligence.

Everyone is a leader

I learned that everyone is a leader, but not everyone is an adequate leader for the current circumstance. And also, that the more self-aware one is, the better they are a leader when their time comes.

The surfing was important to take part in. Everyone had the option to opt out of actually surfing, but no one did. I guess it was far too much fun for that to happen. The qualified surfing instructor duo would spend time explaining how to surf and the kind of understanding the surfer must have of the ocean that day. Because, when that is correct, one can catch waves and make it back home in good shape. The analogies drawn to practical leadership were quite profound.

Before surfing, the surfer always takes the time to understand where he/she will enter the surf. The next thing to understand is where, how and when to catch the wave that’ll make for a rewarding surf. In getting this right, the surfer must know where the current is and the channel. This helps them understand what the easiest way is to paddle into the ocean, to position themselves best for the swell/white wave that is on the way.

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ABOUT LOYISO "THE VICTOR" TWALA

Loyiso "The Victor" Twala is a Creative Director at FCB Joburg. He was identified by the agency as a young leader with an important role to play in the agency's future, and sent to LeaderSurf to help forge additional leadership skills.

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