

Ethical and entrepreneurial leadership needed for SA



By [Abey Mokgwatsane](#)

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South Africa needs a new breed of leadership to address the country's challenges and promote a flourishing democracy.

South Africa has one of the highest levels of inequality in the world. Our unemployment rate is 24%, with 73% of these people below the age of 35. Our gini co-efficient is currently 0.6 and 38% of our people live below the poverty line, defined by Stats South Africa as R418 per month.

This is simply not sustainable - the introduction to the National Planning Commission Vision 2030 document says:

"No political democracy can survive and flourish if the mass of our people remain in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for a better life. Attacking poverty and deprivation must therefore be the first priority of a democratic government."

No wall high enough

In plain English: if we don't sort this out, there is no wall high enough to keep people out, even if you live in Dainfern.

I believe that what we need is a new breed of leadership - **ethical leadership** - leadership with integrity, courage, judgment, empathy, emotional intelligence and passion. I'm not saying that these values are easy to achieve, but they should be the standard of great leadership - I'll leave it to you to reflect on how many of our leaders in the public and the private sector manifest these values.

However, I think we need more than that; I think our challenges are so great that we need to move a step further to what I call **entrepreneurial leadership** - leadership that is proactive, can-do, win-win and resilient. I guess it's an attitude, more than anything else.

Bright Simons of Ghana realised that counterfeit drugs were wreaking havoc in poor communities. What people thought were malaria pills were killing babies. It is estimated that a quarter of all drugs in Africa are counterfeit. So Bright invented a service called mPedigree - people buying medicine can scratch off a panel that is attached to the packaging. This reveals a code that they can SMS to a database for free, which confirms if the drug is the real deal.

That's the kind

That's the kind of entrepreneurial leadership I'm talking about.

I may run the largest communications group in the country, which employs over 850 people, but my scale and influence as an entrepreneurial leader pales in comparison to people such as [Fred Swaniker](#), who founded the [African Leadership Network](#) that I'm proud to be a part of. It brings young leaders across the continent together to engage on moving our continent forward.

Most important, for me, is that Swaniker has started a school - the [African Leadership Academy](#) - that finds the brightest kids on the continent (some who have grown up in refugee camps) and gives them a world-class A-level education that includes courses on African history and social entrepreneurship. Over the past four years, 400 kids have graduated from the academy, which aims to develop 6000 African leaders in 50 years.

That's entrepreneurial leadership.

Nothing else I wanted to do

In 2005 I left SAB, not because it was a bad company, but because I ran the coolest brand in the stable. There was nothing else I wanted to do after launching www.bizcommunity.com/Search/196/11/sm-3/r-196/s-Miller+Genuine+Draft.html into South Africa.

I met my partners at [Young Business for South Africa \(YBSA\)](#) and we raised funding from Investec to buy a majority stake in the [\[\https://www.bizcommunity.com/Search/196/11/sm-3/r-196/s-VWV+Group.html VWV Group. We used what I had learnt at SAB and what Wanda Shuenyane and Jameson Hlongwane had learnt at Bain and Meryl Lynch to turn VWV into the leading experiential agency in South Africa.

The apex of our journey was producing the [opening and closing ceremonies of the 2010 FIFA World Cup](#). That was for me the most transformational time in my life - I realised that something that I drove could be acknowledged by the world and make a real and significant impact to millions of people. Many people don't know that I was so exhausted that I watched the closing from my bed, alone at home.

Just how delicate our fledgling democracy is

The World Cup was transformational because I got to play the game with some of the biggest players - FIFA, the South African Government, global sponsors and so on. What's not known is that something so beautiful, so meaningful to millions of people was very close to being an absolute disaster. In addition to the challenges we faced from FIFA, I got to see just how delicate our fledgling democracy is; the level of political interference in the project and lack of expedient decision-making almost destroyed the ceremonies.

It is this experience and my observation of leadership that has informed my belief in the need for ethical and entrepreneurial leadership in South Africa.

As Peter Druker said - *"the only way to predict the future is to create it."*

I truly believe that today's young people, who are fortunate enough to have an education and work, are in the unique position where they are able to determine the trajectory of our country. Many sacrifices have been made by generations before us to get us, to where we are today. While we need to be grateful, we also need to make our leaders accountable and begin to take up the leadership challenge in our own spheres of influence.

The time is now

The time is now - will we seek fame and fortune at the expense of our people or will we lead our nation into a bright and sustainable future?

ABOUT ABEY MOKGWATSANE

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