

Why 'Stop the NYDA' is worse than the NYDA

 By [Mongezi Mlati](#)

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On Sunday evening, I saw a tweet by Ramon Thomas saying "Watching [@VusiSpeaker](#) on [#Interface](#), on SABC3, talking about the 'Stop the NYDA' campaign". I had heard of the campaign before so I tuned in expecting an interesting debate. Within 15 minutes, I realised that our dependence on funding isn't completely "entrepreneurial".

The background

The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) was established after a merger between Umsobomvu Youth Fund (UYF) and the National Youth Commission. Both organisations were facing closure because of their ineffectiveness in changing the state of youth business in South Africa. On *Interface*, the CEO of NYDA, Steven Ngubeni, commented that they had inherited legacy issues from both organisations when they merged. From this alone, you can tell how easy it is to attack this organisation.

I'll admit there is no love lost between me and the NYDA. In fact, in my opinion, we don't need another youth funding organisation making assumptions about what businesses really need, while entrepreneurs are actually out there changing the world.

Vusi Thembekwayo, a motivational speaker and entrepreneur, is heading up the 'Stop the NYDA' campaign. His heart is in the right-ish place. Where I find this campaign flawed is in its moaning nature which has little impact, apart from the odd 100 comments on an update, 1 000 Facebook page 'likes' later.

Five reasons why this campaign is a waste of time

Social media is useful as an enabler of movements, for self-coordination, and giving a voice to those who, pre-Web 2.0, would have gone unheard. We are, now more than ever, able to self-organise behind more causes and rally the masses for common interest.

In the case of 'Stop the NYDA' campaign, it is simply another platform for people to complain about the lack of service and the irrelevance of NYDA as an organisation, without encouraging action which could effect actual change.

1. It's just another tired campaign

Every now and then a campaign comes up which is supposed to incite a positive change in the status quo. Many of them fall flat, become tired and don't really go anywhere. They become just another place to moan and gripe about the current situation from the safety of one's laptop. They're calling for tales of woe rather than encouraging the community to find workable solutions.

The fact that even *they* call it a campaign makes it clear that someone down line expects to get some or other credit or recognition, where it possibly isn't due.

What I heard Thembekwayo say on *Interface* was that, as an institution, the NYDA needs to be reviewed. There is nothing new behind this call, we've heard it all before - where is the action?

2. It's missing the point and an opportunity to create actual positive change

As an entrepreneur, Thembekwayo, I think, understands that the R5000 average with which NYDA funds entrepreneurs does not make a sustainable business. I doubt that it's meant to - this is but one of many flaws of the sinking ship, known to us as NYDA.

So what does make a sustainable business? Mentoring, coaching, skills development and proving new business models - most of which NYDA won't fund.

Why doesn't the 'Stop the NYDA' campaign help enlighten young South African entrepreneurs freeing them from their current dependence on funding from institutions such as the NYDA?

If 50% of the 1 176 people who 'like' the 'Stop The NYDA' Facebook page are entrepreneurs themselves, then they already have a community of over 500 people who can engage in peer-to-peer coaching and mentoring. That will go a long way towards building youth entrepreneurship.

3. The campaign is not self-organising for change - it's doing it simply to complain

Why is the campaign wasting entrepreneurial resources which could be better used to help young entrepreneurs with some of the solutions mentioned earlier?

Rather than self-organising for another 'government agency bashing session', why not encourage those 1 176 people following the campaign to have meaningful dialogue and host seminars where solutions are found rather than rehashing history?

It's about leading by example - create something effective - that will show NYDA what it should be doing.

4. Armchair activism

With all the platforms available to us today, it's easy to become an armchair activist. Surf the web long enough and you'll see how comfortable we've all become typing away about things that need to change in our immediate environment.

While we're happy to talk about things online to raise awareness, it's all too easy to sit back and wait for change to happen.

Youth businesses in South Africa, and across the continent for that matter, will not be altered by the many complaints that we post on a Facebook page. Should anyone be listening and want to change the NYDA model? How does the 'Stop the NYDA' (and other similar campaigns) propose they do it?

5. The campaign's answers include creating a venture capital model

One of the remedies Thembekwayo suggested was that NYDA should review its current model and operate as Venture Capitalists (VCs) do. Now, *most* VCs fund businesses in specific industries, where they fund fewer businesses than a

typical government agency would.

VCs wouldn't, for instance, fund someone who wants to buy a fish and chips franchise - which the NYDA is more likely to do. Government agencies, like banks, are risk averse and would rarely (or never) give capital for a business of which the growth and development is not certain. VCs thrive on high risk and high return startups that scale quickly and can be acquired for more than the initial investment.

Most 'wanna-preneurs' assert that if there was more funding, they would be more likely to start businesses. In my view, entrepreneurs build organisations in the most unfavourable conditions and that is where they thrive. We still teach people about business plans when we should encourage young people to be better at experimenting with innovative business models.

Youth businesses are suffering while we're all waffling

Thembekwayo, you were a far better speaker than the NYDA CEO - but you already know this. The campaign is a good idea, but I would like to see it coordinate the masses to actually build businesses and not just complain that some government agency isn't doing its job. We are well within our rights to hold them accountable, but in the meantime youth businesses are suffering while we waffle away about what should be happening.

ABOUT MONGEZI MTATI

Mongezi Mati founded WordStart to help companies generate buzz around their products and services among South African influencers. He is passionate about helping brands to connect the dots from social media, digital data and human interactions outside the web. Mtati is also digital analyst, a speaker and a contributor on some of South Africa's leading platforms.

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