

MiNDSPACE

ISSUE 1

ENRICH YOUR THINKING

2021

Four experts suggest how we could rethink education to reach all and teach all

Ways brands can rebuild credibility and regain trust now that customers' priorities have shifted

How redefining employee rewards can help employers and workers

LOOKING FOR A REBOOT?

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very day since we first went into lockdown last year, I have thought of the words of the Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh: 'It is not impermanence that makes us suffer. What makes us suffer is wanting things to be permanent when they are not. We need to learn to appreciate the value of impermanence.'

Now that Covid has proven that nothing is cast in stone and that it is possible to do things differently, the important thing now is not to return helter-skelter to the way things were, but to remember what exactly we were forced to reassess, re-evaluate and reset, and why.

why, on page 8, we asked four people who work in the field what can, should and has to change in our schools and universities.

Access to equal education has been a burning socio-economic and political question in our country. Even during lockdown, South Africans continued to take to the streets to vent their frustration about matters such as service delivery, employment and, yes, education. There were altogether 511 protests in the 126 days between 27 March and 31 July 2020. That's more than four a day. On page 12, Jen Thorpe unpacks the way we protest as well as the new protest culture playing out in our streets and online.

With the first quarter of 2021 under the belt, it's good to remember that much as we might be champing at the bit to move forward, life can only be understood backwards. Therefore we look at the relationship between leadership and trust (page 18), company culture (page 24) and what South Africa needs to take us into the future (page 30).

In one of James Norbury's Big Panda & Tiny Dragon drawings, Big Panda asks his friend which is more important, the journey or the destination. To which

Tiny Dragon replies: 'The company.' I look forward to navigating the new way of doing in your company.

Happy reading!

Gugu-Lisa Zwane-Johnson
 Editor



Whether it's education, health and wellbeing or the environment, 2020 opened our eyes to what is not working as it should for everyone. What drives business, for instance. After first looking at what 'the new consumer' wants from brands (page 20), we question Milton Friedman's declaration that greed on page 41. Or education. Which is



OLD MUTUAL

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Keneilwe Kwanaite

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Contributors



JEN THORPE
Story on page 12

You've worked to promote gender equality and combat gender-based violence for your entire career. What put you on this path?

'It began with the feminist literature I discovered at university, and a gang-rape that occurred in my second year. It seemed to me then, as it still does now, that we cannot say we are a country that supports gender equality if women face the constant threat of sexual violence.'

Do you think #MeToo accomplished anything?

'It was vital in that it showed how rape is the result of the normalisation of a system of women's economic and political disempowerment, which is maintained through actions ranging from sexist jokes to violent assault.'

Do you think any good will come from Covid-19?

'I don't think any "good" will come from it because it has exacerbated social and economic inequality. What it has done that could be used for good is made clear the unequal burden of care women face.'



THATO BELANG
Story on page 18

Where does your interest in business leadership and processes come from?

'I spent many years working in corporate and engaging with leaders across various organisations. I learnt that leadership is something very practical, as it shows up in business, in our communities and in our families. The principles remain the same throughout.'

After 15 years in this field, what still surprises you about South African businesses?

'What most surprises me is that the challenges are the same across businesses and yet there still is no collaboration in coming up with solutions.'

What do you hope will change for the better after the pandemic?

'I hope for transformation in the business world, especially with the opportunities brought about by the increased use of technology. I hope for a more human approach in addressing some of the obstacles that prevent small businesses from growing and contributing significantly to the economy.'



SOLLY MOENG
Story on page 20

What does being vice president of the World Communication Forum Association (WCFA) entail?

'The WCFA brings together media, communications and PR professionals to learn from one another. As one of three vice presidents, I help to develop programmes and lead the Association, especially in its African growth.'

From Lebowa High in Soweto to Davos is a long way. What drives you?

'I guess it's curiosity about what's on the other side of the fence and a passion for life. Importantly, in terms of Africa, I believe we're playing below our brand potential and that we can do a whole lot better.'

Which of the roles you've had has taught you the most?

'Being SA Tourism Marketing Manager and Country Manager in Canada and the US provided me with all the good, the bad and the ugly of my professional trajectory and, importantly, a fascination with brand reputation management.'



BABAR DHARANI
Story on page 26

What has growing up in Kenya meant for you?

'It was an experience to be surrounded by stunning, African nature and strong, African cultures. Kenya gave me a heavenly childhood and instilled a love for Africa in me, and a dependence on ecopsychological factors for my personal well-being.'

Why the interest in well-being at work specifically?

'My interest in happiness began in pursuit of personal happiness in life. However, the shift towards researching happiness at work was facilitated by medical and mental health issues I faced while working in stressful corporate environments. Despite being physically fit, I had an ischaemic stroke at 33 and opted for a demotion when I changed jobs. Fortunately, or unfortunately, I quickly rose to a CFO position, but it became increasingly apparent that there is no link between my successes and personal happiness. The last straw was when I hit depression, upon which I decided to research what I was told about success and happiness going hand in hand and completed a PhD on the topic.'

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

On our radar

IDEAS WATCH



AN APP THAT'S LIKE AN ACCOUNTANT FOR SMMEs

When Old Mutual realised that a considerable number of the users of 22seven, their personal budgeting app, were small businesses and freelancers using it to keep track of their business finances, it prompted them to do just that – create a similar app for SMMEs. Launched in November last year, 22seven business therefore helps small-businesses owners to track their inflows and outflows, create and monitor quotes, and get paid faster through professional and easy invoicing. Best of all, it's 100% free to use. Sign up at business.22seven.com

SOUTH AFRICA'S NEW RETIREMENT-FUND RULES MADE EASY

If you or your staff belong to a retirement fund, then you will know that South Africa's Taxation Laws Amendment Act (TLAA) changed on 1 March this year, especially for provident funds. To help you to communicate this to your team, Old Mutual Corporate created easy-to-follow videos in Setswana, isiXhosa, isiZulu, English and Afrikaans, as well as a downloadable FAQ on their website.



A DIFFERENT KIND OF BROKEN by Donna Ogunnaike (Narrative Landscape)

Donna Ogunnaike is an energy-law expert, poet, writer and theatre practitioner based in Lagos, Nigeria. We had invited her to contribute to this issue of MiNDSPACE, writing on her journey from The Gambia, through Senegal to Rwanda for the Edinburgh International Book Festival's Outriders programme. When the End SARS protests against police brutality in Nigeria broke out followed by a violent response by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), she was unable to complete it. *A Different Kind of Broken* is her debut book of poetry published that was seven years in the making.

To read 'Lost and found', two African writers' accounts of their journeys to the continent, turn to page 38.



Q&A with Justin Cohen, author of *Winning with Relationships*

You provide 21 laws of influence in your book. After a year of social distancing, do they still apply? 'We are physically, not socially, distanced. Online or offline, our relationships have the single most important impact on our success and happiness. However, because relating online provides shorter interactions with fewer non-verbal cues, we need to be even more conscious about doing the things that build rather than break relationships.'

You write: 'There is no such thing as success without successful relationships.' Is that only true for business? 'Having worked in the corporate sector for the past 20 years, it is very clear to me that great personal and business relationships require many of the same social skills: listening, appreciation, positive expectations, forgiveness, and giving and receiving constructive feedback. Much of what it takes to win at home is what it takes to win at work.'

Is there really room for relationships in the cut-throat world of commerce? 'One of the biggest predictors of business success is culture. A Harvard study found that a strong culture increases net income 765% over 10 years. The companies I've worked with that have the best cultures have people who love what they do, love who they do it with and love who they do it for. But love doesn't just happen. You have to create it.'

PHOTOS: GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES, UNSPLASH AND SUPPLIED

#enrichyourthinking

HEARD ON THE OLD MUTUAL CORPORATE RESOURCE HUB

'I make sure that I employ people who are far better in lots of areas than I am. What's the point of hiring someone who is exactly like me?'
– Uyandiswa CEO Amanda Dambuza on the power of people

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DO YOU OWN A STARTUP OR HAVE A SIDE HUSTLE?

Read *Nine Yards*, a brand-new magazine for small-business owners, to find out how other entrepreneurs did it, what their obstacles are and expert advice for moving forward.

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Book list

NEW COUNTERPARTS TO OLD FAVOURITES



If you liked... *Atomic Habits*
Tiny Habits by BJ Fogg (Ebury Publishing)

As we live through the sequel to 2020's real-life disaster movie, it's worth thinking about the small changes all of us will have to make. Making small, easy changes instead of stressing about big ones that you should be making, BJ Fogg argues, can change everything.

If you liked... *How to Win Friends and Influence People*

Winning with Relationships by Justin Cohen (Burnet Media)

Even if you don't apply all of Justin Cohen's 21 laws of influence in life, business and love, it's worthwhile taking note of them as we learn to build and maintain relationships from a Covid-appropriate distance.



If you liked... *Enlightenment Now*
A Human's Guide to Machine Intelligence by Kartik Hosanagar (Viking Press)

Kartik Hosanagar takes an eye-wide-open look at AI, balancing examples of where it went wrong (a Microsoft chatbot that rapidly developed an aggressive personality) with the possibilities it offers. As the subtitle – How Algorithms Are Shaping Our Lives and How We Can Stay in Control – indicates, he also sets out how we could avoid becoming puppets to algorithms.

thoughtSPACE

Essential reading and
current discussions

We ask the experts
how education can be
changed for the better.
p8

Protest has moved
from the streets
to tweets, but is it
any different?
p12

'A rural child is
not less clever
than their urban
counterparts. Our
job is to create
the enabling
conditions for
them to do well.'

– Craig McNeil,
Director, Axium Education

PHOTO: GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES



School's out

THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS NECESSARY NATIONAL LOCKDOWNS WILL BE FELT FOR YEARS TO COME – NOWHERE MORE SO THAN IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION. WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT ABOUT HOW AND WHERE TEACHING IS DELIVERED AND RECEIVED? AND IS IT TIME TO THROW OUT OLD MODELS OF CLASSROOM LEARNING?

By Mark van Dijk



FOR THE CLASS OF 2020, the year was unlike any other.

National and regional lockdowns forced millions of learners and students out of the classroom, and into their homes where learning happened remotely if at all. Events they'd been looking forward to (winter sports season, matric dance, last day of school) and events they'd been dreading (a double history lesson after second break) were erased from the school timetable as the reality hit home of life in a global pandemic.

The impact was harder on some than on others. A landmark report published in September 2020 by EdTech Hub and eLearning Africa surveyed 1 649 educators and ICT professional across 52 African countries. When asked which learners would be most educationally disadvantaged by Covid, 44% pointed to those from rural communities; 28% to low-income communities; and 8% to those with special educational needs. Some 12% simply shrugged and said everybody would be equally affected.

The crisis in education is a particularly nasty side effect of the latest coronavirus, and its lingering impact will be felt for years to come. The class

of 2020, after all, will make up a large percentage of the workforce in 2025.

In May of the same year, Old Mutual came together to think about how it could influence the post-Covid 'new normal' and leave a lasting legacy.

'The feedback from employees was unanimous: focus on education,' says Old Mutual Limited CEO Iain Williamson. 'As a result, we launched an ambitious project to create Africa's biggest digital classroom, harnessing technology to bring learners, teachers, entrepreneurs and all other interested stakeholders together to create a platform of shared learning and shared value to create a valuable resource for the continent.'

The EdTech Hub/ eLearning Africa survey also asked respondents to predict the most significant long-term educational effect of the Covid-19 pandemic in their country. The difference between the ones who said it would damage education systems (19%) and the ones who said it would bring new opportunities (15%) wasn't at all vast.

The experts we spoke to had similar reactions. Craig Paxton runs Axiom Education based in the rural village of Zithulele in South Africa's Eastern Cape. Vivian Onano works with learners and educators in Kenya. Fergus Sampson works at Curro, a group of private schools that enjoyed a relatively seamless transition to digital learning. Nic Spaull is an education researcher at Stellenbosch University. All four have their concerns about what has happened in education. All four remain optimistic about the future.



INTERVENTIONS HAVE TO COVER ALL BASES

Craig Paxton, Director, Axiom Education

‘HISTORICALLY, SOUTH AFRICA’S rural areas have been neglected and continue to be neglected, and are disadvantaged compared to most urban areas. But viewing things through that deficit lens is entirely incorrect. Our experience is that rural life offers kids so much that kids can’t get in a city – whether it’s the strong social fabric or the quite remarkable commitment we see in students there. A rural child is not less clever than their urban counterparts. In fact, we tend to find more resilience, more focus and more drive in rural learners. Our job is to create the enabling conditions for them to do well.

Technology solutions in and of themselves are not the answer. Many times we’ve seen tablets or laptops delivered to a rural school to just sit there without being used. We need to be more thoughtful about introducing technology. Education theorists tell us that if you’re going to change anything to do with teachers, students or content, you have to address the other two as

well. If you’re going to shift the way teaching happens to a tablet, you have to also enable teachers to deliver that, and empower students to make that change.

‘It’s also important to have a structured programme of intervention. To use the tablet-based initiative as an example, there are lots of strong learning platforms, such as Siyavula for high-school maths and science and Reading Eggs for early literacy. Hardware is one aspect, the platform is another, but the third piece – which we think is really important – is the social facilitators. Axiom employs young people from the community and provides them with training, coaching and support to make sure that they engage kids well and that they monitor their use of the learning technology. We also ensure that there is embeddedness in the school. It’s all very well to have an additional programme, but how does it fit into the existing school timetable? How does it connect with the learning that’s already taking place? All those pieces have to be thought about.’



WE FACE A LOST GENERATION

Vivian Onano from Kenya is Founder/Director at Leading Light Initiative, and Youth Adviser at the Global Education Monitoring Report, UNESCO

‘THIS PANDEMIC IS EXPOSING the inequalities that have always existed in the education system. When the pandemic erupted a year ago, schools across the continent had to close and students had to adapt to distance learning. But what does distance learning mean to a student or a teacher who has never had access to connectivity, or who has never seen a smartphone or a laptop?

‘I’m an advocate of continuous teacher development. If we’d had it in place, our teachers would have been equipped with the right skills, and would have known how to adjust to something like this. Some of our teachers were not prepared to handle distance learning – not because they can’t, but because they hadn’t been trained or given the tools to do so.

‘In our current systems, learning comes to a halt if the teacher is not there. We need to move to a competency-based curriculum, where students can learn on their own and learn by doing. That’s

going to be important as we develop hybrid national curricula. In a competency-based curriculum, the teacher will not play the same role that they are playing currently. It doesn’t mean that teachers will no longer be important. They will still be there to give instruction, but much of the work will be done by the students teaching themselves. This is possible through distance learning.

‘I fear that we may lose a whole generation as a result of this pandemic if we do not prioritise education, especially for girls. In Kenya, schoolgirls are provided with sanitary towels at school, but now that they are not at school, there’s nobody to give them sanitary towels. There are girls who are selling their bodies to buy sanitary towels and in the process, some fall pregnant. How do you make sure those girls go back to school? We’ve made progress in recent years when it comes to girls’ education, but this pandemic may take us right back to where we were.’



ONLINE LEARNING WILL BENEFIT THE POOR

Fergus Sampson, Business Manager: Curro

‘SCHOOLS HAVE HAD TO THINK on their feet. The lockdown brought an accelerated grab for digital tools and at-home tuition. That was the major switch in how things are done. The mindset switch will follow, but hasn’t happened yet with regard to organised learning. As an independent group of schools, Curro is fortunate in that we had already started to dabble in digital transformation before the pandemic. It therefore wasn’t an enormous leap for us.

‘When any sophisticated technology is put to use and made widely available, the ones who always benefit are the working class and the less fortunate. Take cellphones, for instance. They have dramatically improved the lives of South Africa’s underprivileged and working class. I remember the days when people had to stand in line at payphones during lunchtime to call their families or at stores’ accounts departments because they couldn’t call from work.

‘The unfolding evolution in online delivery is going to make for better education from a content point of

view, because you will have access to the best information and the best presenters in the world. You will be able to have one or two experts talking to potentially millions of kids. Plus it will be cheaper.

‘The pace, the timing, the quality, the illustration of it can all be comfortably manipulated online to suit not only the South African child in general but also the individual child. For years, society has ignored the reality of children who learn differently and often misdiagnosed them, called them slow or learning-disabled, and put them on medication just to have them fit in with the norm. With online education, that is no longer necessary. Each child can find their rhythm and learn according to their capabilities and their pace.

‘A transition to online promises to truly democratise education and learning so that every child can find their place in the learning environment and learn productively. I’ve already seen modules that analyse how a child learns, and structure the curriculum accordingly. That is magical.’



SHOULD WE CUSTOMISE CURRICULA?

Nic Spaull, Senior Researcher at the Stellenbosch University Research on Socio-Economic Policy group

‘EDUCATION HAS BEEN severely disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. There are things in the education system that we weren’t doing that we probably should have and which Covid may have pushed us into doing. They include distance-learning training and technology training for teachers, and fixing schools’ physical infrastructure.

‘Site-based schools and universities are great equalisers. Whether you come from a shack or a mansion, coming together at the same site at school or university is a bit of a leveller. When we do away with that and learners or students are at home, their circumstances to a far greater extent determine what’s available to them.

‘In terms of possible opportunities, many people believe that there’s too much in the curriculum across all grades. Because of that, teachers (in no-fee schools in particular) end up feeling like they don’t need to cover everything, because it’s an impossible task to begin with. When you have a 300-page

curriculum document listing all the things you have to do for a Grade 2 child, teachers tend to let themselves off the hook by saying that it’s just not possible to do everything.

‘It may therefore be an opportunity, in this Covid context, to implement a core curriculum and assessment policy, that is, a core part of the curriculum that’s non-negotiable and that every single learner has to achieve.

‘For the longest time, we’ve been saying that everyone has to follow the exact same curriculum, but a process of delineating what is at the core and what is on the periphery may be enduringly useful. No-one wants to implement a differentiated curriculum, because of obvious parallels to the apartheid system. But I think there’s space to recognise that if a Grade 5 learner can’t read, the teacher should, in that specific case, focus on teaching them to read, rather than whatever happens to be in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement document for Grade 5.’ **■**

ILLUSTRATION: GALLO IMAGES/GETTY. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

Protest culture –


the good, the bad and the cancelled



WHETHER ON THE STREETS OR IN TWEETS, PROTESTORS AND ACTIVISTS AROUND THE WORLD HAVE TAKEN UP THE FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, THE ENVIRONMENT AND DEMOCRACY. SOUTH AFRICA, WITH ITS LONG HISTORY OF PROTEST, IS NO EXCEPTION.
By Jen Thorpe

THE WAY WE FEEL, think and see the world is increasingly shaped by the messages that we receive from social media. This, in turn, is influenced by big business and powerful algorithms on these platforms that determine what we see, and when we see it. Our attention, and with it the information we are likely to receive and the opinions we are likely to draw, is often sold to the highest bidders. This is important, because it affects our ability to evaluate objective reality and make decisions that are based on access to

evidence rather than things we've seen on the internet. Neil deGrasse Tyson, a world-renowned astrophysicist and author, reminds us that there is more than one 'type' of truth. He explains, 'Objective truths are established by evidence. Personal truths by faith. Political truths by incessant repetition.' In his MasterClass class on scientific thinking and communication, he elaborates on this idea. 'In a free country you can have whatever personal truth you want as long as it doesn't constrain the freedom of others.' But both personal and political

 Jen Thorpe is a feminist writer based in Cape Town. Her first novel, *The Peculiars*, was longlisted for the Etisalat Prize for Literature (2016) and the Sunday Times Barry Ronge Fiction Prize (2017). Her second novel, *The Fall*, was published in July 2020 and is set during one week of the #FeesMustFall protests in Cape Town.

truths can distort our ability to interpret reality if they come into conflict with an objective truth.

SOUTH AFRICA AND PROTEST
Protest is something that many people hold personal truths about, and which is viewed in different ways depending on the political truth of the time. At its origin, 'protest' means 'to assert publicly'. But what is the objective truth of protest in South Africa? As of 2018 South Africa is, according to the World Bank, the most unequal country in the world with the gap between rich

The question to ask ourselves is whether we want people to see that they are wrong and change their behaviour. Or do we just want them to feel guilty and terrible and never to say anything again?

and poor widening since 1994. Our contemporary and historic economic situation, inequality of access, segregation, poor governance and corruption mean that many people in the country still struggle to access basic services such as electricity and water, and many go hungry every day.

Unequal access to basic services is one of the main reasons behind protests in South Africa, according to Busisiwe Zasekhaya, project coordinator at the Right2Protest coalition. In 2018 alone, there were 237 protests just about municipal services. Policing, corruption and gender-based violence are common reasons for protests too. During the Covid-19 lockdown, protests related to hunger and food security occurred in many communities, despite the legal restrictions on movement. In 2020, a total of 511 protests were recorded by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) between 27 March 2020 and 31 July 2020, and, they say, the frequency of protests is increasing each year.

So, the evidence shows that protest is a common mechanism used in South Africa to try and change a situation or to hold someone to account for a failure to do their job or deliver on their promises. 'In most cases, protest is a last resort that is used when groups have followed all appropriate channels and have not had a change in their circumstances or have not been heard by the relevant officials,' says Zasekhaya.

The Right2Protest coalition was formed to protect South Africans' legal right to protest, which is entrenched in Section 17 of the Constitution. Public protest is regulated by the Regulations

on Gatherings Act (Act 205 of 1993) and there are clear guidelines for what constitutes a legal protest. These same regulations do not apply online.

Zasekhaya explains that despite legal protections, there are many stumbling blocks that make it difficult, if not impossible to hold legal, long-lasting protests like those seen in Hong Kong, Bangkok and, more recently, Myanmar. One of the main inhibiting factors is the expense involved. 'Public protests require resources like food, water and transport – and public transport is not always reliable,' Zasekhaya explains.

However, South Africa has seen its share of long-lasting public protests like #FeesMustFall, Marikana and current student protests against historic debt, all of which indicated that protestors are often at risk of violence and death for speaking truth to power, among other harms. 'Many tactics are used by the state or affected parties, like mines or companies, to intimidate people who want to protest. Pre-emptive arrests, legal interdicts and surveillance of activists are all happening in South Africa.

How your protest is treated and policed depends on who you are and where you are. This also determines whether or not you are likely to get shot at,' says Zasekhaya. 'In some cases there is also the challenge that those who must apply the law around applications for protest do not know what the law is,' she adds.

So, the objective truth is that protest in South Africa is a constitutional right, but it is not a right that all South Africans have equal access to, and it comes with real risks.

FROM THE STREETS TO OUR SCREENS: THE LINKS BETWEEN OFFLINE AND ONLINE PROTEST

Yet, as a recent ISS article suggests, although South Africans may have given up on democratic processes like elections (as evidenced by the low turnout in 2019), 'they haven't given up on voicing their frustration'.

Perhaps this is why online protests have become so popular around the world. They do away with the expense of transport, the duty of arranging marshals and the danger of violence. They allow people to voice their frustration without having to take to the streets. They also have the potential to increase the reach of a protest, or to amplify its message. An online protest can mobilise supporters from around the world and increase awareness of a cause. If there should then be an offline protest at a later stage, more people will participate and support it – in real life or online. We saw this with the worldwide support for #BlackLivesMatter protests in the wake of the murder of George Floyd in May 2020.

This doesn't mean that participating in online protests is equally accessible to all or without risk, Zasekhaya points out: 'Online protests aren't regulated in the same way as in-person protests, and data is expensive.' Although smartphone penetration in South Africa is over 90%, our data is among the most expensive in Africa. Although many people have a phone that can access the internet, they therefore may not actually be able to afford to use it.

Still, when social media has been used for online protests, they've

had powerful impact. As with protests where ordinary citizens are able to hold elected officials accountable, social media allows ordinary social-media users to contact brands and public figures and hold them accountable for their messages and their actions.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF ONLINE PROTEST?

Taking protesting online also means that everyone is at risk of being cancelled. Wikipedia defines cancel culture as 'the practice of withdrawing support for (or "cancelling") public figures and companies after they have done or said something considered objectionable or offensive'. Cancelling is often an economic step – refusing to support a brand or company or public figure by no longer buying their products or watching their films – but it can also be performed by calling people out, in other words, by naming and shaming.

In South Africa, online protests around racist Tresemmé advertisements on the Clicks website led to the removal of the brand's products from stores around the country. It also led to the destruction of property at many Clicks stores, the harassment of Clicks staff and violence – all directed at Clicks, when the source of the advertisement was, in fact, Unilever.

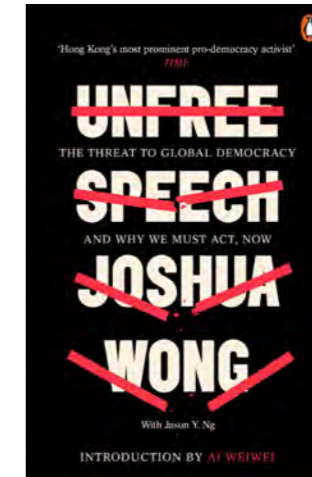
Globally, recent examples include the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements. Both started online and both resulted in powerful men being publicly shamed and held accountable in court. Naming and shaming can thus be an effective tool when there is agreement or evidence that a wrong has been committed. But what happens when

someone's words have been misinterpreted? Is there any room online for making a mistake? Can you shame someone into changing their mind?

Author and addictions counsellor Desiree-Anne Martin thinks not. 'Shame is a barrier to interpersonal connection and connection is vital in order to undergo any significant, sustainable change,' she says. She is not alone in thinking this. In her 2020 essay in *Living While Feminist*, Tiffany Kagure Mugo writes, 'I have seen people use public platforms for conversations and confrontation that could have happened behind closed doors. In privacy, those conversations could have allowed for both parties to grow ... Instead, in public... this does little but raise the profile of the person doing the calling out, while shaming the person being called out.' In addition, as author Jon Ronson points out, there can also be 'a disconnect between the severity of the crime and the gleeful savagery of the punishment'.

Cancel culture can be used to shame someone into silence and can serve as a public reminder for others not to express similar ideas. It rarely leaves room for dialogue, for an admission of guilt or growth, nor does it leave much room for nuance. Some have suggested that this online silencing goes so far as to become censorship by public opinion.

There are, of course, instances where someone is guilty of deliberately saying terrible things online, for instance things that constitute hate speech or are racist or sexist. Many times, such things are themselves said in order to silence another group. At the same time it is safe to



FOR YOUR READING LIST

Unfree Speech: The Threat to Global Democracy and Why We Must Act, Now
by Joshua Wong
(Penguin Random House South Africa)

At 14, Joshua Wong founded a group that protested Hong Kong's planned 'pro-Beijing' school curriculum and got the government to back down. At 17, he became the leader of Hong Kong's umbrella protests. Now 24, Joshua is a veteran of protests and activism, and this is his story in his own words, including letters written during various stints in prison.

assume that there are also cases where people have said things that were in poor taste, problematic or offensive without realising it or intending any harm.

The important question to ask ourselves as citizens and digital citizens is whether we want people to see that they are wrong and change their behaviour. Or do we just want them to feel guilty and terrible and never to say anything again?

Martin explains an important distinction between guilt and shame, and its effectiveness at changing behaviour. 'Guilt says "I made a mistake"; shame says, "I am a mistake."' When shaming tactics are used to attempt to bring about change, [what they are doing is] implying and reinforcing that the person in question is the problem; that they are morally deficient, devoid of any healthy or valuable traits, useless, hopeless. This punitive, judgmental approach underscores in the person that if they are "that bad" then what is the point of even trying to change?'

Shaming someone, then, can lead to the opposite of a change of opinion or behaviour. It can result in a person refusing to change, even when faced with evidence that their words or actions are harmful. It can close space for discussion, and cause someone to ignore objective truths in favour of personal ones.

To avoid the dangerous elements of cancel culture, we must be vigilant in ensuring that our online protest is actually aimed at changing behaviour. If it isn't, then we might just be part of the bullying and shaming culture that results in people continuing to behave badly. **M**

ILLUSTRATION: GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Trust, they say, is earned. What does that mean for employers?
p18

Consumers' changing values mean shifting loyalties, and brands have to take note.
p20

‘The era of “shareholder-focused” brand management is fast receding and being replaced by an era of broader “stakeholder-focused” brand engagement.’

– Solly Moeng, Africa Brand Summit convenor

WealthSPACE

Bold business insights
and strategies for success

ILLUSTRATION: GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

Leadership is a matter of trust

‘TRUST GIVES YOU THE PERMISSION TO GIVE PEOPLE DIRECTION, GET EVERYONE ALIGNED, AND GIVE THEM THE ENERGY TO GET THE JOB DONE.’ THESE WORDS BY FORMER CAMPBELL SOUP COMPANY CEO DOUGLAS CONANT ENCAPSULATES A CORNERSTONE OF SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP.

By *Thato Belang*

PRIOR TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, CEOs and other business leaders might have viewed trust as one of the shafts that drive the flywheel of performance. But the pandemic has significantly shifted our landscape, including how leaders engage with now remote teams, and has made trust a top-line agenda item.

This transition did not come without its challenges. The absence of face-to-face engagements and interaction requires a lot of trust by both employers and employees. Leaders have to trust their teams to continue providing customers with the best service and products, and with the same professionalism as they did when working in the office. Similarly, teams need to be able to trust their leaders to be transparent and to set clear and fair expectations. Leaders also have to be realistic about

the obstacles their teams are navigating. They need to be more empathetic.

TRUST IS A TWO-WAY STREET

As a coach, I believe in creating an environment that is enabling, empowering and inspiring, and that trust is needed if you are to create such an environment. In order to achieve this trust, research tells us that team members have to feel psychologically safe.

Teams feel psychologically safe when they share a belief and trust that there will not be any form of threat if they ask for help, seek and provide feedback, are vulnerable or voice their dissenting views. This is particularly important now as we are all navigating uncharted territory. Trust, as Douglas Conant, ex-Campbell Soup Company CEO, says, enables people to execute with excellence and produce extraordinary results. It ultimately

helps to build high-performing teams that are agile, collaborative, innovative and highly engaged.

Building this level of trust is an ongoing process that requires authenticity and empathy. It requires leaders to be open and transparent as part of actively nurturing trust. Establishing authentic relationships with co-workers creates an environment where everyone is inspired to do their best, because they know that they can rely and count on you as their leader. I have seen people make the mistake of thinking that being transactional and results-focused will get teams to perform. Sadly, this is not the case. On the contrary, the opposite may happen.



As a business leader, it is therefore part of your job to genuinely seek ways to connect with your team to be able to see things from their perspective. This creates the empathy needed to build trust. Being able to see things from their perspective helps to make team members feel cared for and supported. There is nothing as unsettling as a leader who does not care about their employees' well-being. Simple acts of kindness like randomly sending texts to check on

As a leader, it is part of your job to genuinely seek ways to connect with your team.

someone who is not well and openly celebrating their successes can go a long way towards building trust.

To this end, the pandemic has accelerated the much-required mindset shift to focus more on the 'human' in human resources. The changes Covid-19 brought has compelled many leaders to ask themselves: How do I re-evaluate my relationship with my team? Answering this question is an important step towards focusing on the humans that make up a team, understanding their context and how they personally are affected by the pandemic. It requires you to open up and show employees that you trust them. This will, in turn, encourage them to be more open and trustworthy.

IF YOU DON'T TRUST YOUR STAFF, NEITHER WILL YOUR CLIENTS

Clients and customers are on the receiving end of what happens internally in an organisation. If there is a lack of trust among the people in an organisation, it will extend to clients.

It is therefore everyone's responsibility to build a relationship of trust with the client. Moreover, we have to shift to task-based trust. To do this diligently, teams should ask themselves these questions: Are we keeping our word and following through? Are we consistent in our engagements with clients and in our service offering? Do we maintain processes our clients can trust? Do we always act with integrity when dealing with our clients? Are we truthful in handling their queries? The answers will be useful for bolstering client trust where it has been broken or building trust where none existed before.

As everyone navigates this time of chaos and confusion, it is important to get things right inside your organisation before it can translate into the client experience. This is the real value of trust. As Conant concluded: 'As you execute with excellence and deliver on your commitment, trust becomes easier to inspire, creating a flywheel of performance.' **M**



Thato Belang is an experienced management consultant and Programme Director at Duke Corporate Education. Through her business, Transforma Coaching, she provides clients with strategy development and business coaching.

ILLUSTRATION: GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

The era of impact branding is here

LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, most corporate brands were unprepared for the ravages wrought by Covid-19-related lockdowns on economies around the world. South Africa was in no better space than others when it all began to unravel. Our economy was already on its knees, downgraded to junk status by two of the big three global ratings agencies, S&P Global Ratings and Fitch Group, some three years before the advent of the pandemic.

A third, Moody's, joined them a month into the country's Level 5 lockdown when it too downgraded South Africa's sovereign credit rating to junk status. This followed almost three years of warnings to the country's leaders to get their act together by implementing economic reforms and presenting clear economic policies – buttressed by a stabler political outlook – in order to generate

BRANDS ARE USED TO COMPETING WITH OTHER BRANDS. THEN CAME COVID-19 AND ADVERTISING MESSAGES BECAME IRRELEVANT AND PRODUCT PUSHES SOUNDED TONE DEAF. FOR SAVVY MARKETERS, THIS WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW THAT THEY REALLY HAVE THEIR CLIENTS' AND CUSTOMERS' INTERESTS AT HEART.

By Solly Moeng

market confidence and attract investors.

In a rather sinister way, Covid-19 lockdowns turned out to be corporate levellers – or, perhaps, corporate wrecking balls – at a time when many small to medium brands did not have the kind of financial reserves needed to see them through an unknown number of months during which they would not be allowed to operate normally and generate adequate revenue to finance their overheads. Only those that were already set up to operate digitally and had the means to do so

away from traditional office set-ups managed to adapt quickly and remain liquid. Countless others failed, bringing with them widespread losses of income and jobs in the formal sector.

THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW BEGINNING

Much of what many brands were doing in the relatively early days, as they tried to emerge from the effects of hard Covid-19 lockdown, was driven more by desperation to survive than by the need to fully understand, embrace and integrate fast-changing

consumer tastes, sentiments and brand-engagement preferences. The truth is that the era of 'shareholder-focused' brand management is fast receding and being replaced by an era of 'broader stakeholder-focused' brand engagement that must also take into account the realisation of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The focus of these goals is necessarily a lot more complete, as they include issues such as social justice and environmental sustainability.

IT IS THE END OF ONE-WAY MESSAGING Impact branding, as the name suggests, means that brands must conduct themselves in ways that make a longer-lasting impact on all stakeholders. The most obvious such stakeholders are employees, customers, the broader communities in which they operate and the environment. It also indicates that brands should benchmark their impact in these areas against what has already been systematised and measured in the push for greater sustainability. They should no longer be driven solely by the hunger to grow and expand their footprint while they neglect the fundamental needs and rights of the markets they have already gained, or the communities that supply them with labour and other resources.

Only brands that appreciate the need for more impactful brand engagement stand a chance to leave far more lasting legacies after they cease to exist, should it come to that, than those driven only by the need to satisfy narrow shareholder interests.

Taking such a broader stakeholder approach also means that brand communication cannot consist of one-way messages. It will have to do a lot more to fully embrace the importance of consumer tastes, preferences and rights. This, in turn, requires investing in the collection of customer insights to guide all manner of brand engagements. Impact branding also implies that the relationship between brands and their stakeholders goes far beyond the exchange of products, services and



FOR YOUR READING LIST

Disruption Amplified: Reset. Rewire. Reimagine Everything by Abdullah Verachia (Tracey McDonald Publishers)

'I am aware that not everything I postulate might pan out,' writes Abdullah Verachia in the introduction to this book, which he wrote in the midst of the pandemic when nothing was certain. He therefore presents different scenarios for each chapter. Ultimately, though, his call is to use Covid-19, the greatest disruptor of all, to lay the foundation for a better future. Verachia is a strategist and futurist, and programme director for the Harvard/GIBS Senior Executive Programme for Africa.

cash to include sustainable environmental protection and community building in its broadest meaning, and its most measurable sense. Brands can no longer only be concerned about advancing shareholder value at the expense of broader stakeholder interests.

WHAT SMART BRANDS DID DURING HARD LOCKDOWN

Smart corporate brands around the world found impactful ways to remain in the minds of their customers, followers and the markets by leveraging their good names without pushing traditional offerings. Giorgio Armani made aprons for doctors; Gucci designed face masks; Ferrari developed much-needed medical respirators, and several airlines turned their planes into cargo transporters for Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) and other emergency supplies. DHL used its planes to provide the same kind of assistance. Some, like Old Mutual, announced publicly that their senior executives would take a pay cut and donate the money to the Solidarity Fund.

WHAT SMART BRANDS WILL DO NEXT

Moving further into what is popularly referred to as the new economy, brands that demonstrated a social conscience during hard lockdown have a head start for two reasons.

First, they remained top of mind, visible and in the minds of their stakeholders during a time when it seemed insensitive to push traditional products and services to consumers who were only concerned with surviving the pandemic and an uncertain economic future.

Secondly, they will be remembered for

having been there when the world needed them the most. Their brand equity will have been boosted, cushioning them with generous levels of consumer goodwill and market standing. Despite the second wave of Covid and talk of a third, there now is a glimmer of life after Covid. Such brands therefore must be smart and strategically measured in how they use the goodwill generated last year to buffer an emergence into heightened impact branding.

Few will deny that lockdowns around the world presented traditional brand communicators with a fine 'covidundrum' to deal with. But only those who would have had their ears on the ground and their eyes on new media consumption patterns during this period, and who managed to integrate digital while aligning their approach to fast-changing consumer preferences and sentiments, should have little to worry about.

In the end, winning brands are those that have mastered the art of moving from old markets to chart new paths into uncontested market space where old competitors would lose their relevance, the ones who can move on from fighting over contested demand to create and capture new demand, and who can break with old value/cost-trade-offs to pursue brand differentiation and low cost by integrating impact branding. **M**



Solly Moeng is a brand communications management expert and freelance columnist. He is the founder of DonValley Reputation Managers and The Africa Brand Summit, which he convenes annually, and developed the term impact branding together with Capital Communications in Budapest, Hungary.

Company culture is
like a Rubik's cube. All
the pieces have to fit.
p24

What stops people
from reaching their
full potential?
p26

'The reality is that,
when ignored,
organisational
culture is crafted
by osmosis rather
than design.'

– Leisha Naidoo, organisational
development strategist

YOURSPACE

Personal insights for
your life and your career

PHOTO: GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

Will your company culture pass the Covid test?

FOR YEARS, WE'VE EAGERLY AND A LITTLE ENVIOUSLY READ ABOUT COMPANIES THAT OFFER IN-HOUSE GYMS, CRÈCHES, COFFEE STATIONS – COMPLETE WITH BARISTAS – AND UNLIMITED PAID LEAVE. WHO WOULDN'T WANT THAT? UNTIL COVID-19 MADE MUCH OF IT IRRELEVANT.

By Leisha Naidoo

EVEN THOUGH IT CERTAINLY can be defined academically, corporate culture, as we know, is something that has to be experienced to be understood.

The reality is that, when ignored, organisational culture is crafted by osmosis rather than design. The danger that comes with this is best expressed by Peter Drucker's often quoted words: 'Culture eats strategy for breakfast'. Culture is indeed the secret sauce that keeps employees happy and a business productive and successful.

In this regard, the phrase 'ease and flow' has lately cropped up in many client conversations. Ease in interaction, flow in connection. Ease in prioritisation, flow in output. While it may be called 'ease', it is not easy. Ease

and flow are achieved by simplifying and decluttering complexities in your corporate culture. The most counterproductive of which are a rigid organisational hierarchy, culture of victimisation and lack of transparency. All three create friction, and where there's friction there can be no flow.

Similarly, it seems that each Covid-19 transition, such as remote working and connecting online, initially was met with fear and trepidation. Both these are emotions that too hamper ease and flow. There is no denying that we, as leaders, are going to have to shift up a skill set.

DECONSTRUCTING TO RECONSTRUCT

The organisations that have led the transitions and not just reacted to them, display VUCA leadership

that takes into account an environment that is more Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous – VUCA – than ever. The old way is simply no more.

Is there anything then in existing corporate cultures that can be carried forward to become integral in this time? Yes, but it has to be taken up several notches. This includes a value system that puts all the inspirational, motivational quotes on the posters on your walls into practice, trust in your team and yourself, especially now that pats on the back have been replaced by high-five emojis as we interact via screens; genuine care for employee well-being, greater diversity and inclusion in the way we think, work and interact online; and courage to accept mistakes and move forward.

Perhaps this is going to take a deconstruction of your organisational fibre to determine what truly creates that brand fibre, and it starts with the type of leaders in an organisation.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS WE NEED NOW

In 2018, when the world had no inkling of what was going to come our way in

2020, the World Economic Forum published a report that outlined the skills that would be most relevant in the workplace by 2030. At the top of their list are high cognitive skills (advanced literacy, critical thinking and complex information processing) followed by social and emotional skills (empathy, the ability to learn continuously and emotional resilience) and technological skills from basic to advanced. According to many, this last one, although third on the list, has shown the biggest proportional increase compared to the previous decade.

How interesting, then, that even in the midst of a global pandemic, these skills are more relevant than ever. If you had to be courageously candid, how would you rate on each? As leaders and employees, it is the sum of our parts that will create that integral fibre that upholds our organisational culture.

I would advocate that there is one more skill that will be vital. It is the age-old art of relationship building. As personal branding expert William Arruda wrote in *Forbes*: 'It's harder to connect on a human level with people when they exist in two dimensions

on your computer screen or mobile device. You need to work extra hard to make sure you're interacting in a way that allows you to build genuine, meaningful relationships.'

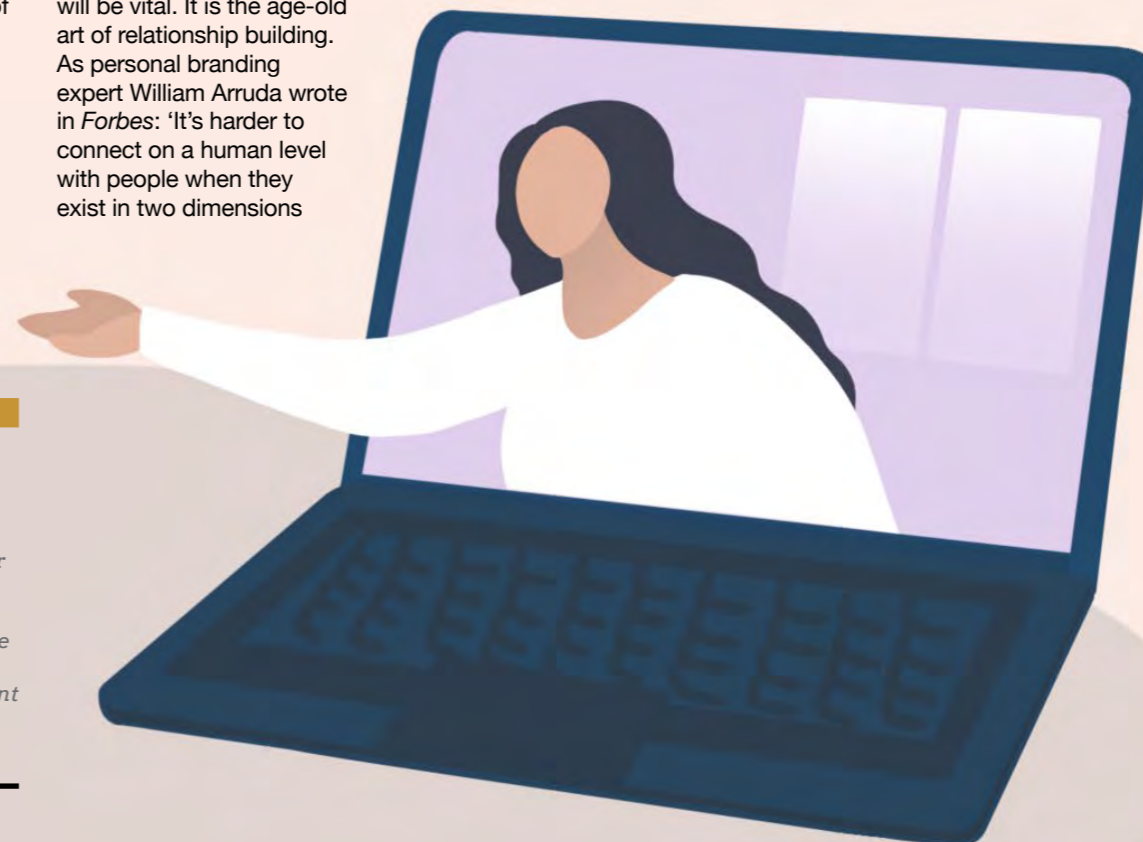
How do we do this when our building blocks, such as affirming body language, face-to-face conversation and (unscheduled) light-hearted banter, have been removed from the equation? Consider on-boarding employees online? Is your organisation ready?

Let's attempt to critically analyse how to build virtual relationships. The obvious pro is that we won't be limited by our geographic location but would have the world literally at our fingertips. Just because we can access someone, however, does not necessarily mean that we know how to relate to them. From stalwarts on the Sandton skyline to tech start-ups in savvy co-working spaces, this comes

down to trust. And trust, in turn, comes down to being transparent in who you are, showing up consistently, likeability and making a human connection. It comes down to credibility, which is achieved by doing what you say, and a social presence that affirms it.

Having said all the above, let's take a minute to celebrate just how far we have come. The resilience we have all shown, not just as a nation, but as a global village, has been nothing short of astounding. Please consider that a very sincere virtual pat on the back. 🙌

Turn to page 18 to read 'Leadership is a matter of trust' in which Thato Belang delves deeper into the trust relationship between employer and employee.



Leisha Naidoo is an organisational development strategist and the founder of Injabulo Learning and Development Solutions. Her areas of expertise are in graduate integration, performance management and building high-performing teams.

20 HABITS that break habits



PEPE MARAIS

FOR YOUR READING LIST

Growing Greatness: 20 Habits that Break Habits by Pepe Marais
(Tracey McDonald Publishers)

In this follow-up to *Growing Greatness*, the co-founder and owner of Joe Public United, takes a more personal approach and tells how he broke 20 self-limiting habits to be able to go further and higher, and to help others to do the same in the process.

something like, 'I would not get the job because the manager doesn't like me' or 'It's an affirmative action role. There's no point in applying.' While such limitations can exist, it is important to reflect whether you are using them as scapegoats to avoid internal concerns, such as low self-esteem. Should there really be such an external limitation, it has to be addressed. You could, for example, discuss relationship issues with the manager concerned – without bringing emotion into it – with the aim to iron out interpersonal conflict, or address affirmative-action policies and implications with your HR department. This will also help you to better understand external limitations that may exist and which cannot be changed.

PRACTISE INCLUSIVITY

Research has proven 'impostorism' to affect underrepresented or disadvantaged groups disproportionately. To overcome it requires leaders and senior team members to practise inclusivity by ensuring enough airtime for everyone in meetings, acknowledging everyone's contributions, supporting alternative views and engaging in socialisation and activities that include all team members.

Unlocking potential requires self-leadership as well as a leading hand from an inclusive leader. Learning to tap into the potential of others in your team and showing that you can optimise your colleagues' and team's performance can also help you to unlock your own potential. **M**

HUMANISE THE WORLD

A distorted perception of ourselves goes hand in hand with a distorted perception of others. To remedy this, the French Renaissance philosopher Michel de Montaigne famously stated: 'On the highest throne in the world, we are seated, still upon our behinds.' This is similar to imagining your audience as being naked to stop the jitters associated with public speaking. Both mental pictures allow us to identify the human elements of those in senior positions, such as their imperfections or a simple hangover that stopped them from being at their best, to soothe our anxieties about our own imperfections and help us feel worthy of top positions ourselves.

OVERCOME FEAR OF FAILURE

Despite being consciously aware of the fact that we cannot succeed without trying, it is not uncommon to be hesitant to try. Fear of failure that stems from a fear of the feelings of shame or embarrassment associated with failing is the main obstacle here. Even when the application process for a senior position is confidential, fear of failure can be debilitating. This is because shame and embarrassment are sentiments that lower our own self-esteem, whether others will know of our application or not.

Self-esteem has three foundational pillars: an assessment of our achievements compared to our same-sex parent, an assessment of our achievements compared to our peers, and whether the love we received as a

MANY TALENTED PEOPLE SHY AWAY

from top jobs and the opportunity to unlock their full potential. Worse, some are oblivious to their own potential and do not even aspire to such positions.

From a psychological point of view, these drawbacks are seeded in childhood. All of us, even those who will never admit to feelings of inferiority, had formative relationships that were founded on inferiority in childhood. For instance, because the parent-child relationship is fundamentally unequal, we learn to look up to our primary caregivers, which encourages a tendency to see ourselves as inferior. If someone is then bullied during early socialisation, or is constantly reminded of their limitations, it will exacerbate such feelings of inferiority and reinforce the belief that they are inferior to others.

Even when our potential is affirmed during childhood, for instance, by getting better marks than our classmates, it is still possible to grow up feeling that others are equally competent and that our achievements are undeserving or fraudulent. Many heroic figures, including Albert Einstein and Maya Angelou, felt like impostors when their astonishing work was recognised.

To curb such an 'inferiority complex' and overcome feelings of 'impostorism', and to ultimately progress to the top, is in itself hard work, but not impossible.



Babar Dharani is a senior lecturer in the Allan Gray Centre for Values-Based Leadership at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business, where his research focuses on well-being at work and the factors that contribute to it.

What stops talented people from reaching their full potential?

SINCE SENIOR POSITIONS HIGHER UP IN ORGANISATIONS PROVIDE BETTER OPPORTUNITIES TO SHOWCASE OUR POTENTIAL, AND BETTER REWARDS AND GREATER AUTONOMY, IT'S EASY TO TAKE THAT AS SUFFICIENT INCENTIVE TO ASPIRE TO SUCH POSITIONS. EXCEPT IT'S NOT.

By Babar Dharani



PHOTO: GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

Prabashini Moodley,
Old Mutual Corporate's
MD, shares her
expectations for 2021.
p30

Old Mutual
Corporate has a new
remuneration and
rewards service.
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We compare impact
investing and
prescribed assets.
p34

'Impact investing offers all the good that comes from attracting funds to projects that will contribute to South Africa's development, with none of the negative effects of prescribed assets.'

– Andrew Davison,
Old Mutual Corporate
Consultants Head of Advice

expertsSPACE
Old Mutual Corporate
views, news, insights
and advice

Welcome to the now world of work

THIS YEAR HAS ALREADY SHOWN THAT IT IS GOING TO FOLLOW UP LAST YEAR WITH MORE CHANGE AND DISRUPTION – AND OPPORTUNITY, IF YOU'RE PREPARED TO LOOK FOR IT.

By Prabashini Moodley

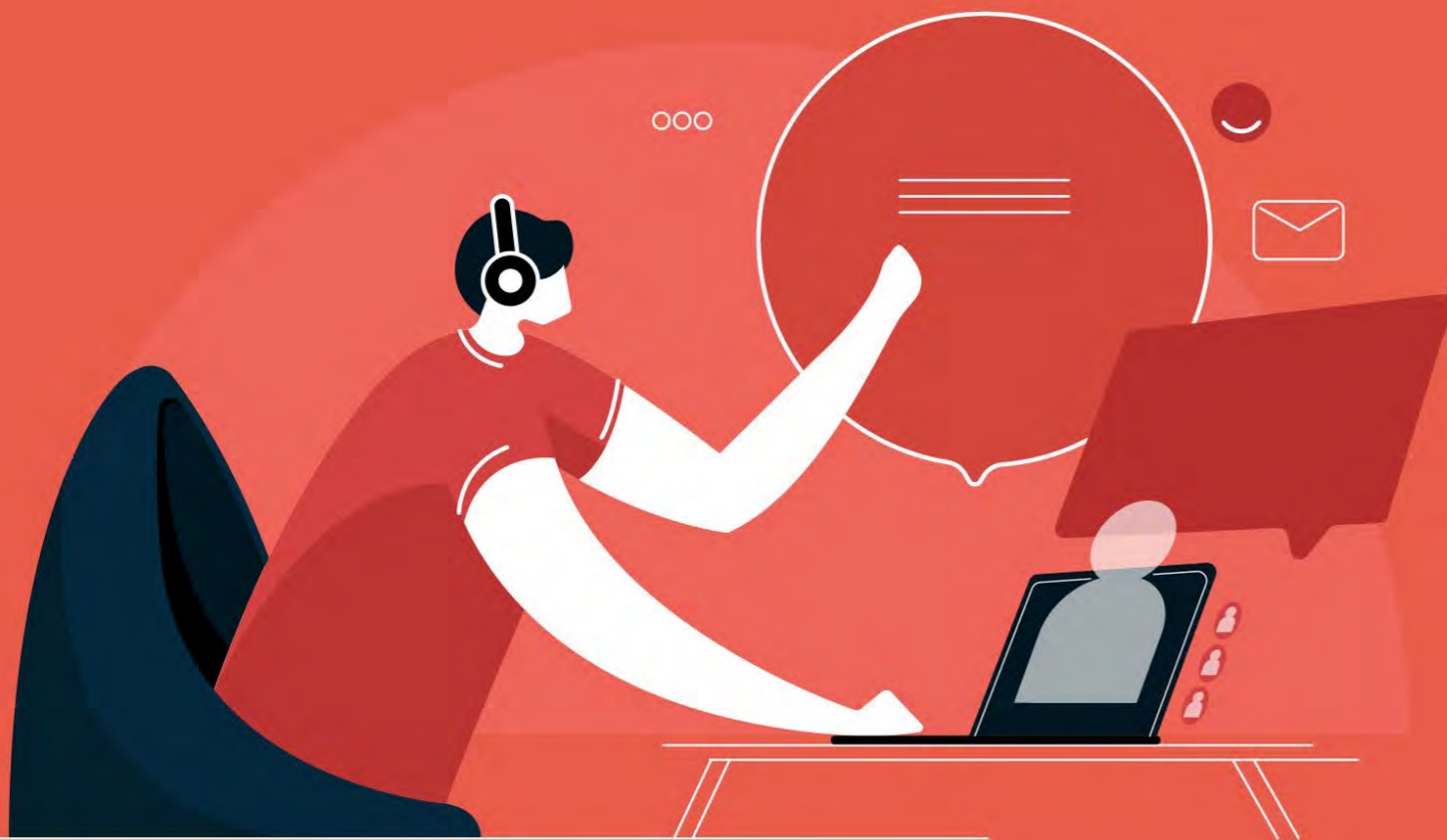


ILLUSTRATION: GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

WAS AT THE OLD Mutual SuperFund Summit in Durban when the news of South Africa's first confirmed case of Covid-19 broke. As I travelled home to Johannesburg that evening in early March 2020, there were two passengers on my flight who were wearing face masks. I remember thinking that they were overreacting. Within a month I was also wearing a mask, and it felt like the whole world had changed.

Covid-19 has brought massive disruption. What used to be referred to as the new world of work has become the now world of work. Like many businesses, Old Mutual Corporate had to adapt very quickly, moving from high-touch, face-to-face engagement with clients to suddenly working remotely and meeting in cyberspace. Many companies have since said that they are unlikely to return to 100% office-based work and we're relooking how we will engage with our clients. Some of them have already told us that they will be more than happy to continue working and meeting virtually.

WORK, BUT NOT AS WE KNEW IT Traditional employee benefits cater very well to permanently employed staff with a single employer. But the now world of work is going to accelerate gig work, contract work and working for several employers at the same time. At Old Mutual Corporate, we've been talking internally about our existing B2B2C model (business to business to client) that

is now becoming C2B2B, where the member is the decision-maker and the employer an intermediary in the relationship. As a result, the line between someone's employee benefits and their personal financial planning will blur, and we, as a financial institution, will have to look past those artificial boundaries.

Technology has also accelerated dramatically. There has been a lot of talk about the fourth industrial revolution the past few years, and the circumstances around Covid-19 have only accelerated digital adoption. Again, while digitisation was already part of our strategy, we're going to have to accelerate it even more.

Another disruption was the way South Africans see micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs). We've always known that SMMEs have different needs; now it's become more important than ever that we build solutions that work for them.

REGULATORY CHANGES TO KEEP AN EYE ON

We're expecting change to be a feature of 2021 as well. A handful of new retirement-fund regulations have come into effect, and it's important that employers and employees understand what they mean. The draft Conduct of Financial Institutions Act and the proposed National Social Security Fund both are on our radar too.

During the past year or two there has been much market noise around prescribed assets and potential changes to Regulation 28 of the

Pension Funds Act. In his Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement in October last year, Finance Minister Tito Mboweni confirmed that retirement-fund trustees 'are expected to put the interests of retirement-fund members first', reinforcing their fiduciary responsibilities and role in providing governance and oversight. This was a welcome confirmation as we believe that trustees and suitably skilled, competent investment advisers are best placed to make investment-related decisions on behalf of pension funds.

At the same time Minister Mboweni confirmed a review of Regulation 28 to enable more infrastructure investment. Even under the current Regulation 28, South African retirement funds are not maxed out in terms of what they can invest and it will be interesting to see whether a change in the regulation will drive a change in behaviour with regard to impact investment.

THE NEXT STEPS

The Covid crisis has provided a space for business, labour and government to speak very openly and frankly about issues. In South Africa there is now greater acknowledgment of what the state can and cannot deliver, and an understanding that if we're going to move forward constructively, we all need to work together.

Covid-19 has taught us a lot about human resilience. We've seen how, through moving quickly and adapting to change, it is possible to come

out stronger on the other side. Although disruptions can make some business models obsolete, they also create opportunities. The key to spotting them is an open mind and a growth mindset. In a country like South Africa, where there's so much that can be improved and so many young people who are unemployed, there's opportunity for huge innovation and growth. We just need to look for it. **M**



Prabashini Moodley took over as Managing Director of Old Mutual Corporate in November 2019. Before that she spent 18 years in the financial-services industry, which included a stint as Chief Financial Officer of the Old Mutual Mass and Foundation Cluster. Her diversified background has given her a deep understanding of changing customer expectations spurred by innovation and globalisation.

THE ACQUISITION OF REMCHANNEL PUT OLD MUTUAL CORPORATE CONSULTANTS IN AN EVEN BETTER POSITION TO HELP CLIENTS FULLY UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS.



Making employee rewards work for everyone

WRITER: MARK VAN DIJK. PHOTOS: GALLO IMAGES/GETTYIMAGES

THERE ARE, depending on which business textbook you read, seven forms of capital. Headlines and bottom lines tend to focus on financial capital, followed by a mix of social, political, natural, cultural and built capital. 'But,' says Malusi Ndlovu, Director of Large Enterprises at Old Mutual Corporate, 'the largest asset that most companies own – even though it never shows up on their balance sheet – is human capital.'

Human capital is the 'animating factor' of any business, he says. 'It's the people, and their skills, experience and know-how that allow those other capitals to produce something that customers want and which provides value for all stakeholders.'

The disruptive events of 2020 – from mass retrenchments to tighter outsourcing budgets and a shift to remote working – have put human capital under the spotlight. 'Even before Covid, a number of shifts were already making the management of human capital, especially from a remuneration and incentives and benefits perspective, even more complex,' says Ndlovu.

Against that backdrop, Old Mutual Corporate recently concluded a purchase agreement for PwC's Research Services, better known as Remchannel. The acquisition means Old Mutual Corporate Consultants' clients now have a single source of expertise and advice, covering both salary and long-term employee-benefits aspects. This includes employee-benefit consulting for employers and trustees of standalone

funds as well as general risk-benefit, communication and investment consulting.

'It's always been our ambition to develop that capability,' says Ndlovu. 'Remchannel is a market leader that has a 20-year track record and some of the most prestigious clients in South Africa from JSE-listed multinationals to medium-sized corporates, public and private-sector enterprises, even SMMEs. It's a great addition to our capabilities.'

TOTAL REWARDS

Remchannel provides job profiling and job-evaluation tools, remuneration benchmarking, remuneration data and salary surveys, as well as remuneration and rewards consulting to more than 700 clients in Africa in countries such as South Africa, Namibia, Kenya, Eswatini and Botswana. 'When you talk about Remchannel's online salary survey, you're really talking about benchmarking to establish external equity,' says Managing Director René Richter. 'Benchmarking, and the quantum of the cash and benefits employees receive, is, however, only one aspect of the total rewards statement. Benefits are often regarded as the "poor cousin" of rewards, simply because employees don't understand their value.'

The Remchannel platform provides clients with a holistic view of their remuneration and benefits offering. This helps them to design pay structures to manage reward effectively. 'It further allows clients to assess their position in the market while allowing employees to understand their benefits a little bit better,' Richter explains.

Such deeper insights will also help businesses to more fully understand the

'Even before Covid, a number of shifts were making managing human capital more complex.'

– Malusi Ndlovu, Director of Large Enterprises, Old Mutual Corporate

implications of the rapidly changing world of work. 'About two years ago we asked a number of South African C-suite and human-resources executives to name the most pressing human capital issues they had to resolve in order to be competitive over the next 10 years,' says Ndlovu. 'Two stood out: work-life balance, and automation and its impact on the workforce. As much as they were looming before Covid-19, the pandemic has forced us to reckon with them now, be it automation and digitisation of the workforce, or the move from working at the office to working from home to working from anywhere.'

THE NEXT QUESTIONS

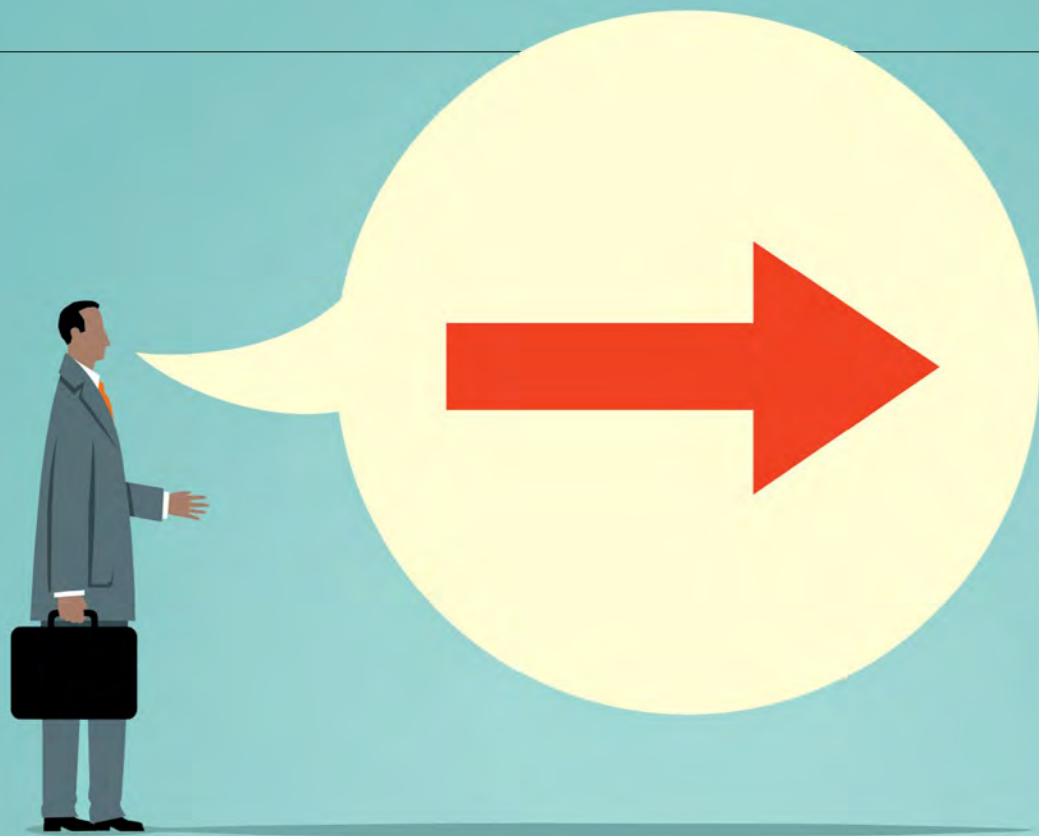
Ndlovu believes that the next set of questions will be around the types of skills required in the workplace. 'How do you do workforce planning?

What type of leaders do you need to manage a workforce that works from home? If someone is used to micromanaging their team and now has to oversee remote workers, what does that mean for management training? On top of that there are questions around the end of full-time, permanent employment and the growth of gig workers, temporary assignments and an augmented workforce of robots. All these trends have been pushed forward by the pandemic.'

Old Mutual Corporate Consultants want to help organisations to get the best from their people, and remuneration benefits and incentives are key to achieving it. 'You can't talk about benefits and incentives without talking about salaries, without talking about benchmarking, and without talking about profiling and measuring jobs.'

That, he says, is what makes Remchannel's contribution so important. 'As much as the long-term employee benefits of retirement funding, medical aid and so on are important in getting the best and the most from your staff, we would not be able to meet our clients' full organisational needs if we didn't also help them with such shorter-term aspects.' **M**

To receive regular updates on Old Mutual Corporate employee benefits and expert insights, subscribe to our **MINDSPACE** newsletter.



It's time to move on from the prescribed assets debate

INSTEAD OF A POSSIBLE REINTRODUCTION OF PRESCRIBED ASSETS, SOUTH AFRICA'S INVESTORS, POLICYMAKERS AND RETIREMENT FUNDS SHOULD CONSIDER THE POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF IMPACT INVESTING.

IN ANY COUNTRY, retirement savings are a valuable source of development funding. In South Africa, where the economy is strained, tax revenue is down and there's R1.5 trillion retirement savings waiting to be tapped, it seems only natural for the government to at least

consider allocating some of it to prescribed assets. But, says Andrew Davison, Head of Advice at Old Mutual Corporate Consultants, retirement-fund members are counting on those funds for their retirement. Why should they therefore run the risk of low returns, especially when there's a better option?

It's useful to understand first of all that the prescribed assets debate is not new in South Africa. 'In 1977 it became law that retirement funds had to invest nearly 80% of their assets in government bonds,' explains Davison. 'In 1988, however, the Jacobs Committee found that the policy was

doing a lot of damage and not producing the intended benefits, and the prescribed assets regime came to an end in 1989.'

THE RISKS THAT COME WITH PRESCRIBED ASSETS
The retirement-fund landscape has changed

significantly in the last seven decades and so have the risks associate with it: 'Back then, most retirement funds were defined-benefit funds, where the risk of underperformance was carried by the employer,' says Davison. 'Now most funds are defined-contribution funds, which means that it's the members who carry that risk.'

And those risks are significant.

'As soon as an asset becomes a prescribed asset and investors are forced to invest in it, its pricing is no longer determined by market forces,' Davison warns. 'That causes price distortions and reduced returns, even on assets that would otherwise have great investment potential.'

'What's more, because you're forced to hold certain assets, you can't resell them and when there are not enough sellers, it affects assets' liquidity. If pension funds are legally obliged to invest 80% of their assets in government bonds, they will have to be liquidated from somewhere – and a large part would come from the stock market.

'We're not suggesting that prescribed assets will come in at 80%, but even 20% will result in a substantial outflow from the stock market.'

That, Davison says, will crowd out foreign investors. 'As soon as prescribed assets are made law, all local investors will be forced into the bond market and pricing will be distorted,' he explains. 'Foreign investors will avoid such assets.'

Finally, he cautions that prescribed assets could put companies off providing retirement funds for staff. In fact, he says, it's happening already. 'Because of the noise around prescribed assets, many employers are concerned about starting a retirement fund

for employees. That's bad for the retirement industry, and it's bad for individual employees who probably won't have enough retirement savings when they reach retirement.'

ALL THE BENEFITS WITH NONE OF THE DOWNSIDE

In October 2020, in his Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement, Finance Minister Tito Mboweni said, 'Government has initiated a process to review Regulation 28 [of the Pension Funds Act] to make it easier for retirement funds to increase investment in infrastructure – should their board of trustees opt to do so. At all times, trustees are expected to put the interests of retirement-fund members first.'

Davison says he and his colleagues were encouraged by this. 'We think it signals support for impact investing, rather than the introduction

of prescribed assets. That's a significant shift, because while retirement savings are definitely a valuable source of funding for growing the economy, prescribed assets are categorically not the way to achieve it.

'Impact investing, instead, offers all of the good that comes from attracting funds into projects that will contribute to the development of South Africa without the negative effects of prescribed assets.'

This does not mean that impact investing comes without any challenges. Chief among them is the need for bankable projects that will deliver the returns retirement-fund members want. 'Public-private partnerships are also essential if we're going to unlock the full benefits of impact investing,' says Davison. 'Government can't do it on its own and the private sector can't do

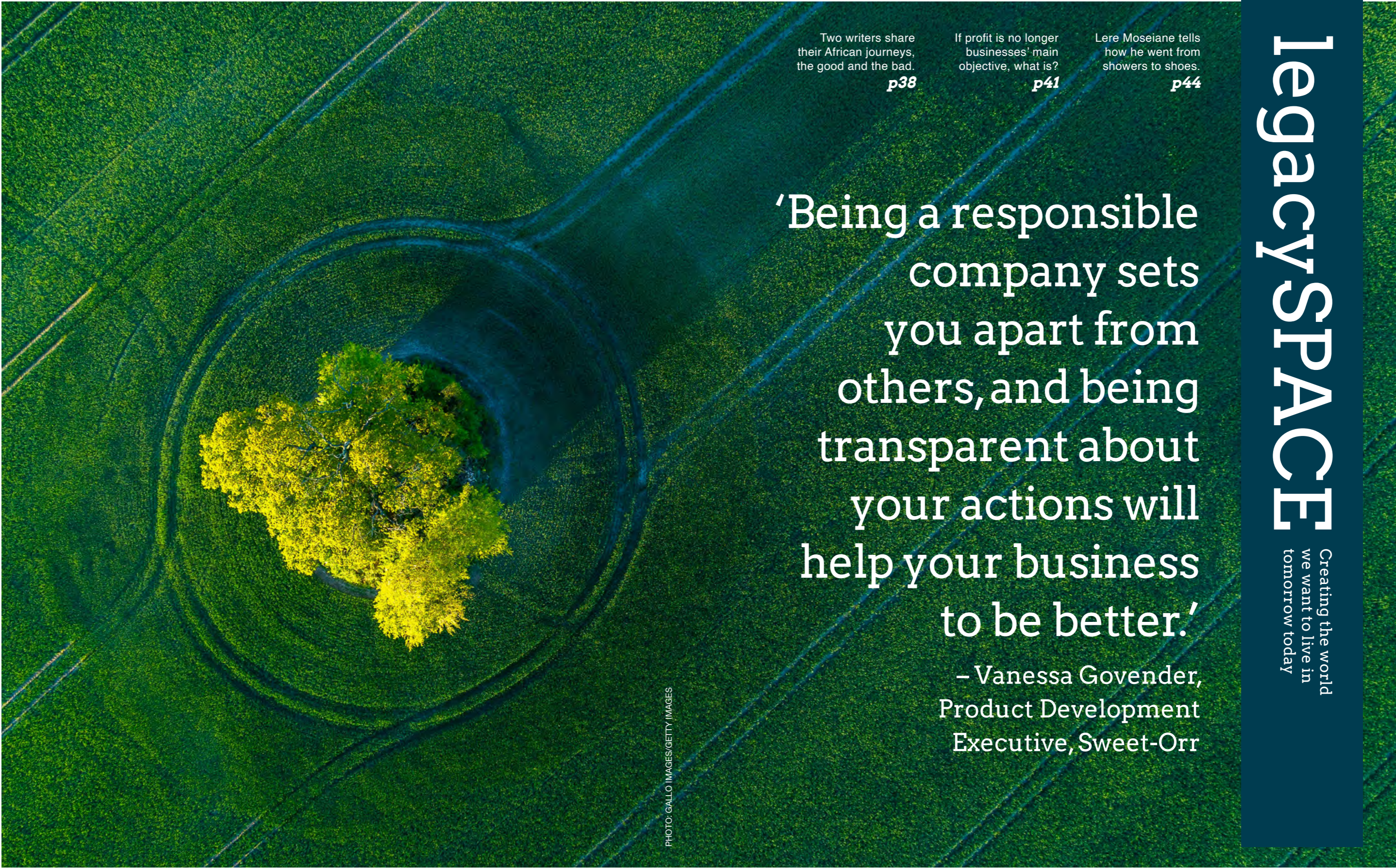
it on its own. We have to collaborate, and we need trust between the two parties if we are to get such projects off the ground.'

If everyone can get this right, investors will have many options, since impact investments come in many forms from green bonds and Sustainable Infrastructure Development Symposium projects to opportunities in private markets and the listed environment.

'Impact investing has a credible track record,' Davison concludes. 'Old Mutual is already investing in renewable energy (R34 billion), education (R2.3 billion) and transport infrastructure development (R20 billion). I don't think anyone can say that these sectors are not valuable investment destinations, which could help to rebuild our country after the crisis we experienced in 2020.' **M**



WRITER: MARK VAN DUJK. ILLUSTRATIONS: GALLO IMAGES/GETTYIMAGES



Two writers share their African journeys, the good and the bad.
p38

If profit is no longer businesses' main objective, what is?
p41

Lere Moseiane tells how he went from showers to shoes.
p44

'Being a responsible company sets you apart from others, and being transparent about your actions will help your business to be better.'

– Vanessa Govender,
Product Development
Executive, Sweet-Orr

PHOTO: GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

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Lost and found

AFTER THEY'D JOURNEYED THROUGH AFRICA FOR THE EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL'S OUTRIDERS PROGRAMME, WE ASKED TWO WRITERS TO WRITE ON THE EXPERIENCE – WHAT THEY'D UNCOVERED, DISCOVERED AND RECOVERED.



ABOUT OUTRIDERS

The Edinburgh International Book Festival's Outriders programme was started in 2019 when it supported 10 writers on journeys across the Americas. The goal is to contribute to our understanding of the world and provide new insights into contemporary geopolitical contexts. Last year, 10 writers journeyed to Africa and will each create a new work in response to their journey that will be presented at the 2021 festival.



Wanjiru Koinange

Wanjiru Koinange is a Kenyan writer, entrepreneur and the co-founder of Book Bunk, which restores Kenya's old public libraries and turns them into inclusive spaces of art, learning and community. Her debut novel, The Havoc of Choice (Book Bunk), is the story of Kavata, whose life and country come undone at the same time. Hers because her father, a corrupt politician, talks her husband into standing for office; her country's as a result of the 2007/2008 post-election violence.

Love and protests

By Wanjiru Koinange

LAST YEAR, I EMBARKED on a wistful research trip that sought to explore if and how Africans, young and old, were using the internet to find love and romance. I had a few theories based on my experiences in Nairobi where online dating is still widely regarded as a last resort for worried singles and hopeful divorcees.

I had a basic plan: get to a few cities (Banjul, Dakar, Saint-Louis, Lagos, Gaborone), download whatever dating app was the most popular there, swipe and see what unfolds.

The moments in between swiping I spent exploring the cities offline via bookshops, museums, libraries and in conversation. Each country delivered its own nugget of wisdom in regard to online.

In cities like Banjul with a smaller population, social media is where the magic happens. Direct messaging is likely to yield better results than any of the apps that are more often used by tourists and 'summer bunnies'. The online space in Dakar felt layered and complicated, more so to get by with little to no French or Wolof. In Lagos, abundance is the name of the game and for this reason I found little patience there for romance or for that delicious ambiguity of those first few encounters. Although I had felt that it would be the city I had the least in common with, my dating experiences there were unparalleled.

Now it's mid October. I am writing this after consuming hours and hours of footage of the #EndSARS protests in Lagos. Suddenly Nigeria feels like home. All I see on my timeline are the faces of the people who, like me, are

tired of being afraid of the people who are supposed to make them feel safest.

When I was in my early 20s, my sister and I had our home broken into and went to report the matter. It was my first encounter with a police station in Kenya and by the end of it, I was more afraid of the police than of potential burglars.

When I had arrived at the airport in Banjul at the start of my Outriders journey, the first time I felt anxious was when I was standing in front of the immigration officer. He was kind, so I became suspicious. He asked for my address and I was afraid that he may use it. When he handed my passport back to me, his phone number was inside it along with the insistence that I use it.

Whenever I get pulled over at a police check in Nairobi, I hope for the best and brace for the worst. I reach for my phone to dial my brother's number and try to remember what part of the traffic act forbids police officers from entering private vehicles. During the first few weeks of the Covid-19 lockdown in Nairobi, more people were killed by police enforcing the curfew than by the pandemic that led to the curfew.

Everyone I spoke to during my travels was essentially looking for the same things, be it on Facebook or Bumble. Love and companionship were often a means to feel seen, respected, accepted and safe. The well-being of the most vulnerable people in our countries is too often threatened by the very people who are supposed to protect it. And like many other things, we've grown to accept it. #EnoughIsEnough

Nadine Aisha Jassat

Award-winning writer and poet Nadine Aisha Jassat's work has been published and performed widely. Her family has roots in Zimbabwe and South Africa, and she lives and works in Scotland. Let Me Tell You This (404 Ink), her debut anthology, deals with racism, gender-based violence and the bonds between women.



Found, felt, home

By Nadine Aisha Jassat

WHEN READING THE INVITATION to write this piece, there were three words which jumped out from the brief: found, felt and home.

As a poet by nature and by profession (one of which involves stopping in my tracks to observe the light through the trees, the other spending hours trying to capture it in writing) these words each represent a mountain. Like the table-top guardian which watches over Cape Town, my relationship to what is found, what is felt, and what is home has at times felt clear, and at others clouded in fog which can come on at a moment's notice.

Travelling and writing can both amplify this shifting relationship, and my Outriders journey took me to Cape Town, from where my great-grandmother's people hailed, and Zimbabwe, where my father's family are from. I spent almost every summer there as a child,

and as an adult journeyed to Cape Town often to visit family. Returning to both as a writer, my mission was to find out about the matriarchs in my family.

I journeyed through places which are homes of heart, history and family, but also homes heavy with distance: visits separated by years, and longings communicated through phone calls. I cannot smell my aunt's cooking through a telephone, nor feel her touch. To see each other, requires a plane journey, money, visas. And home in Scotland, one I dearly love, still also contains the presence of an absence: the quiet in the place of her laugh.

And yet in February 2020, I stepped off a plane, notebook in hand, and there I was.

So, what did I find, and what did I feel, and what did I learn about home? I would need whole volumes to tell it all. Instead, I'll say that I learnt that some of

my most familiar areas in Cape Town, areas that I'd been called to through family or fate for years, were in fact areas that my ancestors had lived in over a hundred or more years ago. Found. Felt. Home. I'll tell you about praying side by side with my father in a mosque in Claremont, the peace there. Found. Felt. Home. I'll show you how I hugged my aunt tightly, feet firmly planted on the floor of the airport in Harare, inhaling her scent deeply as she said, 'Welcome home.' Lastly, I'll tell you that I learnt that these three words are all about connection. And, despite the challenges which were to come – countries closing borders due to Covid, returning early to the UK, the world being turned on its head – I was reminded as I journeyed that that connection was something I have always had and can never lose. It will only grow as I do. It is found and felt and home. **M**

COMPILED BY SIOBHAN CLARK AND ERLA RABE. PHOTOS: NADINE AISHA JASSAT AND SUPPLIED

Is greed still good?

IT'S HALF A CENTURY SINCE MILTON FRIEDMAN PUBLISHED HIS FAMOUS DOCTRINE THAT DEFINED PROFIT AS BUSINESS'S PRIME RESPONSIBILITY. HOW RIGHT, OR WRONG, WAS HE?

By Miriam Mannak



WHEN MILTON FRIEDMAN'S ARTICLE

'The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits' appeared in *The New York Times* on 30 September 1970, businesses around the world from small ventures to large corporations, rejoiced. They were, after all, in the throes of rising global competition, which was pushing them to increase turnover and profits, and to grow bigger and more powerful than their competitors, faster than ever.

To them, the theories of the American economist were more than appealing. First, they gave them 'permission' to do whatever they deemed necessary to grow their financials, even if it went against prevailing and emerging social and environmental convictions. According to Friedman, only people, not businesses, could have social responsibilities. Corporations' only social obligation, he wrote, was to make money, as this would fuel the economy and benefit people in the form of jobs and income. That is how businesses would change the world, making it a better place. Ethical and social issues should be left for individuals and the government to take care of.

Friedman's criticism of government regulations of the private sector was the cherry on top for many. He, after all, called for a system of laissez-faire economics. Meaning 'allowing to do' in French, this policy advocates for as little as possible government intervention in business and the economy.

Now that 50 plus years have elapsed, the question is, how relevant are his thoughts, ideas and visions?

THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO A FREE WORLD

Vanessa Govender, Product Development Executive at Sweet-Orr



'YES, BUSINESSES DO exist to make money, and this fuels the economy, increases profits for shareholders and helps to provide more jobs for more people. Particularly the latter is an essential private-sector task. Creating employment is good for people, but also for businesses. Those who work for you will, after all, align their focus with your corporate values while investing their time, energy and skills in helping your organisation to fulfil its mission and vision.

'I, however, believe the private sector's duty goes beyond that. Businesses have a vital role to play in helping to create an ethical society and equitable economy. This shouldn't be up

to the government and individuals only. Some of the ways businesses can help to achieve this, besides creating jobs and reducing unemployment, is to pay their staff fair wages, not to use child labour, and to procure their goods and services from suppliers with the same business values.

'The private sector can also contribute to a free world by providing safe and comfortable working environments for the people they employ and developing social upliftment and responsibility programmes for people living in their immediate surroundings. Being a responsible company is what sets you apart from others, and being transparent about your actions will help your business to be better and exercise integrity.'

This shouldn't be up



A HUMAN AT WORK IS A HUMAN WITH AN ETHICAL CODE AND A MORAL COMPASS

Jonathan Shapiro, CEO of LESCO Manufacturing

'FRIEDMAN IS SEPARATING the human element from businesses by assuming a human at work is a human without emotions. This notion is unrealistic. A human at work is a human with an ethical code and a moral compass.

'In terms of responsible businesses being a threat to the free world, as Friedman says, I feel companies that only focus on profit and don't follow an ethical code are a threat to the free world. While the private sector's role is indeed to make a profit and create employment, it is also there to help create a more ethical society and economy. It is possible to incorporate social and environmental, as well as profit, elements into your business plan and be successful. When starting a company in this day and age, you should first seek to answer two questions: what is the market you are serving, and what responsibility issues do you want to tackle?

'In line with that, we at LESCO understand who our market is and by employing physically challenged people, we have married profitability and purpose in a way that is sustainable.'

SURVIVING AND THRIVING BY GENERATING AND INCREASING INCOME CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED IN AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Onyi Nwaneri, CEO at Afrika Tikkun Services

'FRIEDMAN IS RIGHT that businesses are constructs that have the purpose of generating and increasing income through the provision of goods and services. Like him, I see companies as artificial people who act through corporate executives; individuals who have the strategic responsibility to do everything they can to enable their organisations to thrive and survive financially.

'However, surviving and thriving by generating and increasing income can only be achieved in an enabling environment. Once this environment ceases to exist due to, for instance, strikes, riots, high levels of crime, environmental hazards, such as climate change, and health pandemics leading to disastrous lockdowns, businesses' survival, and their profitability, come under threat. The proof lies in the current state of affairs in which companies around the world have closed and

are closing down because of their countries' respective Covid-19 lockdowns.

'Private businesses can help safeguard and boost their enabling environments through socially and environmentally responsible practices. Responsibility is not mutually exclusive to business interests and profits. I view it as a tool to advance a business's financial interests.

'Look at the growing global army of successful social enterprises, businesses that are using commercial strategies to maximise their financial gains while growing their social impact to create a freer world. This list is endless and includes Ashoka, the Grameen Bank, ME to WE and Babban Gona. All of them and many other ventures around the world demonstrate that one can build responsible and profitable businesses by providing sustainable solutions to social challenges.'



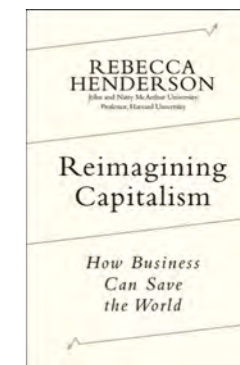
THE STATE'S TASK IS TO HELP CREATE AN ENABLING AND NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

Gail Sham, founder of Scoop Communications

'BUSINESSES ARE NOT philanthropic organisations, so in that sense, Friedman is right: they are there to make money to grow their footprint, increase their profits and hire more people. Sure, too many government regulations can stifle the private sector, notably smaller businesses that do not have the capacity or tools to deal with too much red tape.

'The state's task is to help create an enabling and nurturing environment for business, the economy, and the workforce, but so should the private sector. When company owners, managers and stakeholders don't take their responsibility in terms of climate change and social development seriously, they will have to face the music at some point.

'By not reducing their carbon footprint and overall environmental impact, companies – the largest contributors to climate change – are not only harming the planet, they are also hurting themselves. Climate change has vast repercussions for businesses. The proof lies in the stats: earlier this year, Munich Re said that extreme weather events in 2020 cost the world economy \$210 billion. That is not pocket change.'



FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF

Reimagining Capitalism: How Business can Save the World

by Rebecca Henderson (Penguin Random House South Africa)

Rebecca Henderson is a professor at Harvard who taught its popular Reimagining Capitalism: Business & the Big Problems course for years, but she is no naive tree hugger. She believes that purpose-driven companies can bring about much-needed change and her research has shown that those who do are more resilient in the face of competition and crises. *Reimagining Capitalism* was shortlisted for the FT & McKinsey 2020 Business Book of the Year award.



Miriam Mann is a senior sustainability

journalist and content producer specialising in the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals. She works for media outlets and organisations in South Africa and around the world.

THIS ARTICLE IS BASED ON 'A FREE MARKET MANIFESTO THAT CHANGED THE WORLD, RECONSIDERED' WHICH APPEARED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2020. ILLUSTRATION: C.J. BURTON/GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



I was always a determined young man at school,

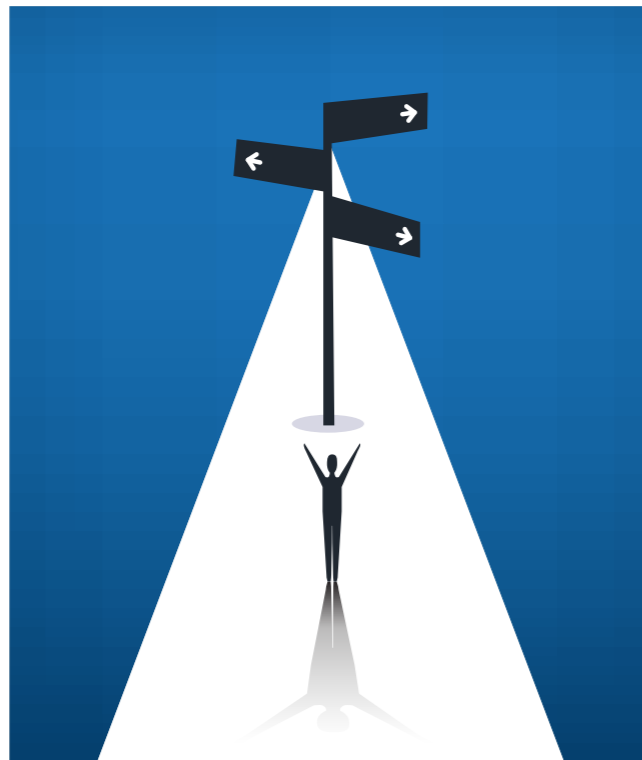
and when I got the idea that I wanted to be a pilot, I structured my entire education around it. I chose maths and science as my main subjects and when I was in standard 9 (Grade 11), I began job shadowing at the national air force. They allowed me to fly in their helicopters, which made me even more determined to one day fly planes myself. My family thought I was weird because I enjoyed science fiction and was a Star Trek fanatic.

Pedestrian matric results disqualified me from the air force and SAA's cadet scheme. So I repeated the year and this time received sterling results along with invitations to join UCT's Math & Science department, Cape Tech's information technology department and SAA's ground crew.

Naturally I joined SAA where I regularly flew with qualified pilots. Guess what? It gave me the same feeling I got from driving with my grandfather in one of his taxis or my dad in his bus. After five years at flight school, I left SAA.

HELLO TO THE START-UP LIFE

After learning the ropes in my family's livestock business, I started my first business supplying fresh chicken and eggs to Parliament and nearby restaurants. I lost all my savings and my family thought I was a loser – that is, until I changed tack to focus on a simple business



The decision that changed my life

SOMETIMES IT'S A SERIES OF DECISIONS RATHER THAN ONE LIFE-DEFINING MOMENT THAT CAN BE CIRCLED ON A CALENDAR THAT LEADS SOMEONE IN A CERTAIN DIRECTION, EVEN IF THAT DIRECTION IS MARKED BY A RANGE OF HIGH HIGHS AND LOW LOWS.

By *Lere Mosieane*



Lere Mosieane is the man behind Lere's Shoe Shine Business (shoeshine.co.za) at airports around the country. When Covid-19 grounded planes and closed airports, he began working on a new business idea. In this time, he also wrote 'Turning employees and customers into brand ambassadors' for our SMME magazine, Nine Yards.

idea and became the shoeshine guy. This time things went well and the business grew, but I still had an itch to scratch.

So, when I learnt that two-thirds of South Africans don't have hot water, I made up my mind to also become the shower guy. I spent two years wrangling Johannesburg's property-related red tape and the taxi association to get permission to build showers at the Soweto taxi rank. The community was keen and excited – until we opened our doors. Then we started to hear: How does one shower? I'm afraid to shower.

They started calling our showers Jacob showers, as Jacob Zuma was in the news for saying that he showered to avoid HIV/Aids.

Meanwhile, we were still waiting for Eskom to install power in our showers. We had an income of R5 000 a month and an operating cost of R55 000 while running off a generator. Yet I was in love with the project and kept on funding it from the shoeshine business.

A REALLY LUCKY BREAK

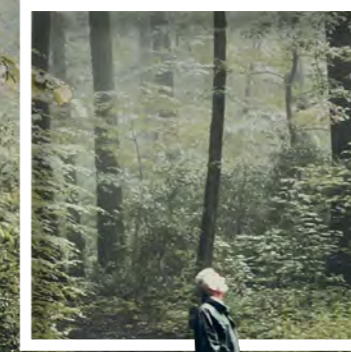
Then I got lucky. The generator broke just as I was about to go away for three weeks. We had to close our doors. I felt relief. We never reopened.

Lessons learnt: Market research is important, and businesses that want to change people's behaviour need deep pockets. Loving a business and its impact on a community should not overcome your sensibilities. Key partners (like Eskom, in my case) are not always swayed purely by social benefits. I also learnt that my stubborn nature can be my downfall, but I am determined to be an entrepreneur and build businesses that will fly. **M**

ILLUSTRATION: GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

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'Although disruptions can make some business models obsolete, they also create opportunities. The key to spotting them are an open mind and a growth mindset.'

— Prabashini Moodley, Managing Director:
Old Mutual Corporate