EXCLUSIVE!

THE STORY BEHIND THE SOUTH AFRICAN ACTOR’S BILL

JACK DEVNARAIN
I can recall a time in the 6th grade when I decided to sell cupcakes to make extra cash. Essentially, this was my mom’s idea and the idea came from needing extra pocket money for when we have sports meetings at schools and maybe wanting to go to the movies with friends on some weekends.

My mom was, and still is, the most generous person I know – I can never recall asking her for something and getting a solid “no”. So, when recreation suddenly became an “important” aspect in my life – I quickly realised that it’s a little selfish of me to expect a woman who’s single handedly raising three children to worry about a 12-year-old making a big fuss about urgently needing pocket money. She supplied the cupcakes and gave me advice – “with the profits you make, buy more, be smart and do not spend your money – and you will see how saving money can make your life easier.”

I grasped the advice and went according to the plan. I’d like to make it clear that the cupcakes were a hit, so much that there were teachers who heard some pupils raving about them. I do remember being reminded by one of the stricter teachers that it’s against school policy to sell on school premises without the permission of the headmaster/seniors.

But guess what, I sold them anyway. As a tiny little entrepreneur, I took my first risk and decided to be low-key about my selling strategy.
I would approach pupils on the school playgrounds when they were high on happiness, because breaktime equals happiness! The playground became my “go-to” place, and my regulars were loyal to me so I never had to remind them to “keep it on the DL”.

Needless to say, I never got caught. I made so much money from these cupcakes you would die from laughter. I didn't have a value proposition, the cupcakes sold themselves because they were fresh and unbelievably delicious. And if my memory serves me correct, I bought them from a retail shop and they were quite pricey. My markup wasn’t too painful but it wasn’t child’s play either.

I was blessed with the gift of persuasion, which made it easy for me to convince my buyers. No one was allowed to buy anything from the school tuck-shop until first break, and here I was, aptly seated to serve you the best icing you've ever tasted in your life. And show me any primary-schooler who doesn't have a love for cupcakes, with the exception of those strange people who just don't seem to like sugar/desserts.

In this issue, I would like you to meet a few entrepreneurs, leaders and trailblazers who have boldly owned the space in which they operate in. So essentially, risk-takers. The cupcake story is a comical retrospect and a good success story in equal measure. Yes, they're just cupcakes, yes I didn't turnover thousands, yes, the primary goal was to get pocket money and to save a bit of what’s left of it, however, looking back now, I just remembered that it subconsciously taught me that risk-taking is inherent in entrepreneurship. If you aren't prepared to take risks, it's simple really – you have no business being an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurship is fundamentally linked to risk-taking. You'll need to invest some of your personal capital into a growing business, in most cases.

You'll stake your reputation on an unproven idea. You'll sacrifice a steady paycheck for the first several months to a year, again, in most cases. And from there, every decision you make carries some small risk.

Additionally, it's important to remember that the risks will come with many challenges. Your lead generation strategy might fail, your new approach might anger one of your best clients, and so on.

Above all, it's important to know that accepting risk as a part of the deal is really what entrepreneurship is about.

And while we're here to honour trailblazers and risk-takers, the startupAFRICA team would like to honour Jack Denvarain, South African actor and chairman of South African Guild of Actors (SAGA), as well as his team.

South Africa has produced an astounding number of stars over its lifetime, from musicians, poets, actors and fine artists amongst many others. But there has always been contention over protection and fair use of their work. To illustrate this; in comparison to their American and European counterparts, the South African creative community has never once been afforded the chance of receiving royalties from their work, especially when there is repeated use of their work.

As the chairman of SAGA, Jack has a mandate from SAGA members, to campaign for the groundbreaking reforms proposed by the Bills. Essentially, his duty entails developing and executing strategies that promote the actor's perspective within the performance industry and in the media generally. Without spoiling it for you, I am excited for you to see how these trailblazers are making waves in the media space by lobbying the DTI and the government to hear them out.

Happy reading!

[Signature]
The South African Actor’s Bill, An Actor’s Cry to the President

By Baradi Moletsane

Over the past few years, there has been an outcry from the South African creative community, over the lack of a strong legal framework that oversees and moderates the allocation of creatives’ (ranging from actors, filmmakers, writers, photographers to fine artists, activists and academia among others) royalties for the work they have undertaken; both locally and abroad. This is inclusive of the protection and fair use of creative work through Bills such as the Copyright Amendment Bill and Performers Protection Amendment Bill.

Alas, many of South Africa’s esteemed artists still, to this day, suffer – due to the systematic and colonial regulations which, not only leave them disempowered but also open to various exploits.

““We have had no feedback from the office of the President at all. ””
The South African law fails to protect their rights and take care of their financial well-being in a form of established and statutory regulatory structures in order to ensure sustained growth of this industry and community.

In an effort to understand the artists’ plight, I met up with Jack Devnarain, Nontando Tusi and Carlynn de Waal – Smit in order to unpack what the Bills entail.

Initially, I had picked up the conversation about the Bills on social media – after noticing that the plight was aimed at getting the attention of government, particularly the President. In doing research, more so focusing on the media coverage that the campaign has garnered, I realised that there were also a number of people (even those in the creative space), who seemed to reject the stance of the Bills. It was then that I made a conscious effort to learn more about it. I reached out to Jack, who invited me to join Nontando, Carlynn and himself.

Leading this discussion was Jack, who, of course is a veteran actor, a professional speaker and the chairperson of South African Guild of Actors (SAGA), supported by Carlynn, who is one of the founding members of SAGA and the current National Secretary at the organisation; as well as Nontando, a policy fellow at ReCreate, which is an organisation that advocates for the advancement of the Copyright Amendment Bill and

Copyright Amendment Bill

The creative economy is desperate for reform and transformation

The trio managed to broaden my perspective on a number of issues regarding the Bills, and suddenly, it was then that I realised that this fight was bigger than the people who are involved in it, and that those involved were investing so much of their efforts to heighten the cry – I then asked: “Since the campaign has kicked off, have you received any feedback from the President and the DTI?”
Jack: The DTI remains strongly in favour of the adoption of the Bills. They are confident that their proposals are an accurate reflection of the exhaustive consultation process that led to the drafting of the amendments. However, we have had no feedback from the office of the President at all.

Carlynn: SAGA has made various submissions through the process of the Bills to Portfolio committee etc. I have to mention though, that we have had incredible support from international experts who deal with performers and have assisted us to lobby for actors’ rights that will change the landscape of our industry for the better.

Nontando: As a policy fellow, my primary role is one of a social justice advocate. This entails writing opinion pieces on the Bills for media publications, as well as taking part in radio and TV interviews where the Bills are the topic of discussion. As an extension of this, I also arrange meetings with prominent and influential people in order to generate support and backing for the Bills. A big part also involves an education aspect whereby we arrange workshops and roundtable sessions which allow us to discuss the Bills and why they should be supported. My main objective is to ensure that the voice of stakeholders who the Bills represents is adequately heard and that they are given a platform to raise their support, issues and concerns.

Through their responses, it was clear that the process of revising the Bills was not only lengthy but quite laborious and required strategic efforts to ensure the representation of all stakeholders within the creative community.

Additionally, during an interview with eNCA on the Copyright Amendment Bill, Jack strongly argued and reiterated the need to have regulatory framework that provides fundamental rights such as collective bargaining which would allow recognition of actors as workers that can negotiate rates for their trade and be fairly treated like workers in other industries who are protected by Labour Laws and who enjoy Collective Bargaining rights.

To support this statement, Carlynn mentioned that SAGA had made numerous submissions into the process of this Bill to the Parliamentary portfolio committee where the organisation was met with overwhelming support from international experts that solely deal with performers, and have been assisting in the lobbying for actors’ rights to encourage modification of the industry’s regulatory landscape.

Further engagements with the trio lead me to ask more questions as the gravity of the Bills and the dire need for transformative action dawned on me. I asked Jack the next question and what followed were his remarks.

“We arrange workshops and roundtable sessions which allow us to discuss the Bills”

Any message you have for those (especially actors and people within the creative industry) who are trying hard to resist the Bills?

“The creative economy is desperate for reform and transformation. Our industry lacks any meaningful protection, either by Collective Bargaining rights, or through a modern statutory framework. The Bills represent the difference between a system of exploitation rooted in the apartheid economy and a system of reforms that will bring our industry in line with progressive global industry standards.”

He then ended off by saying: “Please don’t stand in the way of transformation!”

Ultimately, it is evident that South African performers have worked and fought incredibly hard for decades in order to highlight the unfair exploitation that artists suffer. Jack made it clear that if they fail to get the attention of the legislators now, it’s highly unlikely we will witness the transformation of this sector in our lifetime.
THE DIRECTOR

ROLL: 3
SCENE: 7A
TAKE: 8

DIRECTOR: Henley Christopher
CAMERA: Emily

DATE: 05-26-2018
CRYSTAL CHIGBU IS RESTORING HOPE TO CHILD AMPUTEES

BY CHIDINMA ANYA

01

CRYSTAL CHIGBU
Founder and Executive Director of The IREDE Foundation

02

OPERATIONS
The IREDE Foundation was founded in 2012, Nigeria

03

PERSONAL LIFE
Married to Zubby Chigbu and they are blessed with two kids
Crystal Chigbu, is the founder and Executive Director of The IREDE Foundation, a not for profit dedicated to the advocacy for child amputees founded in 2012.

After Beulah Chigbu was born with a congenital limb infection and her parents were told that they had to amputate her leg, her mother, Crystal Chigbu, vowed to provide a solution to children in similar situations – and that's how The IREDE Foundation was formed.

The Irede Foundation provides prosthetic limbs and other forms of support to underprivileged amputees between the ages of 0 and 18 – with over 115 prosthetic limbs (and counting) provided to various child amputees across the length and breadth of Nigeria.

The Foundation started precisely on 23 August 2012, however, the plan began in June 2012. Today, most of the funds come from friends and kind-hearted people from all over the world who go out of their way to donate in order to see children fulfilling their dreams in life.

It can be a lot of work for a team rendering voluntary and selfless service to see a child become great in life.

The IREDE foundation has championed its advocacy for child amputees by leading the “Out on a limb” awareness walk, annually across over 20 locations worldwide to educate people about amputation.

Out on a Limb, is an initiative of The IREDE Foundation born out of the urgent and continuous need to educate the society on the demand for better management of limb loss and differences, fracture management and social integration for children as well as people living with limb loss.

Crystal also has a contagious love for people, and is driven by a strong desire to bring out the best in everyone she meets. She is married to Zubby Chigbu and they are blessed with two kids- Beulah and Eden Chigbu.
Great Podcasts to Get You Started on Your Personal Development Journey

By Chidinma Anya

Starting your self-development journey can get very overwhelming. That's because there are so many podcasts and after listening, you feel like you have so much packed in your head that you can't implement anything. I felt that way when I was beginning my journey and I want to share with you a few podcasts and tips to help you feel less overwhelmed when starting your self-development journey.
Oprah Winfrey

Master Class Podcast

At the beginning of this podcast, Oprah advised that we should "use your life as a class" which is all about the idea that life isn't a failure but a lesson so basically use your life as a masterclass to grow and be better. She brings on guests that shares their stories and all that their life's journey entails. This podcast is available on Castbox.

Lewis Howes

School of Greatness

This is a podcast by Lewis Howes and it is an interview style podcast. He brings on successful people but not popular people. You see why this is unique? They come on the show and talk about their stories with regards to their fields. So there are versatile interviewees with career paths ranging from health, entrepreneurship, media, etc

Tony Robbins

A-MAZ-ING queens

This isn't a podcast but a YouTube channel. Tony's channel is A-MAZ-ING queens, I can't stress that enough. His content delivery is top notch and actionable. After watching his videos, you would definitely get the push to stand up and do the work. He also teaches us about the formula for happiness and how to match your life conditions with your blueprint. This channel is highly recommendable.

Guy Raz

How we built this

This is a podcast by Guy Raz that is specially for entrepreneurs but so many other people can benefit from it. It usually features women who have been able to build empires and still grow other aspects of their lives. This podcast gives a full view into the life of an entrepreneur. The beauty about this podcast is the fact that women in various fields have been interviewed and that you can always find people you can relate with career wise so all you have to do is pick lessons. This podcast is available on Castbox

Brian Tracy

Success Channel

This is another YouTube channel where Brian Tracy gives very actionable steps. His videos are very good for beginners because he always gives points. He really champions the movement on self discipline. He believes that most successful people have that one trait.

Remember that what you surround yourself with is what helps you grow. Find the podcasts you can relate with: interview podcasts or speech podcasts. After you have found that podcast you can relate with, resonate with it and act on it.
MEET THE POWERHOUSE, MODUPE ODELE

Modupe Odele who goes by the popular Twitter & Instagram pseudonym, @mochievous is as witty as her name suggests. However, her feature in this month’s issue couldn’t be more apt as her wit is only one of many fantastic characteristics she possesses. Another noteworthy element about the brilliant lawyer, is the manner in which she has taken ownership of her career and business ventures.

When I think of Mo, the infamous, somewhat proverbial phrase: ‘a seat at the table’, comes to mind. However, Mo didn’t sit at this table, nor did she ask to be invited. She ventured out to source the wood and create her own furniture (both chairs and table) and proceeded to invite others to dine with her. She took control of the entire supply chain seeing to it that it was executed end-to-end. This is the image many will agree they have of her.

The practicing lawyer and entrepreneur continues to redefine what it means to be a millennial woman thriving in this century through her work with social enterprise, ‘Scale my hustle’ where she empowers other entrepreneurs like herself to learn how to monetize their skills, increase their revenue and invest their earnings.

By Moyo Jolaolu
Her achievements are numerous and bold; she made the move from Nigeria to the United States after getting accepted into an Ivy League law school, Columbia Law School where her publications are still being cited by law students to proceeding in fashion, to start her own law firm some months back.

Never been one to join the fray, her voice and intellect have earned her invitations to speak and moderate various global panels and forums organised by leading bodies such as World Bank, African Fintech Summit, International Monetary Fund, to name a few. From the looks of it, the world is in on her greatness too.

**Who is Moe Odele?**

I think the most interesting about me is my family. I grew up in a multicultural and multi-religious household and I have 10 siblings. My mom is an Igbo Catholic woman who grew up in Kaduna and my dad a Yoruba Muslim man who grew up in Lagos.

Maybe not a big deal now as intermarriages are a lot more common but 40 years ago when they met, Nigeria was even more divided across religious and ethnic lines especially as the country was freshly recovering from the Civil War so it was a big deal then.

Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa are spoken in my household and I grew up as much a Muslim as I did a Christian. I love my family a lot and although I am biased, I think I have the best family in the world.

**We’d like to know what your 15 second elevator pitch sounds like...**

“Hello, My name is Moe. It is a pleasure to meet you. I am a corporate attorney and business consultant with almost a decade of experience in 5 continents helping companies scale across borders. I would love to keep in touch to explore possible areas of collaboration.”

**How does a lawyer living and working in Nigeria, go from a typical 9-5 here to dominating the global space as you have done?**

I’m not sure about dominating the global space but yes, I have made a conscious effort to build an international career. I loved living and working in Nigeria but I also knew there was more – there had to be. So I literally googled “Best law schools in the world”, applied to the top 6 or so. Got some admissions and picked Columbia Law School.

Columbia was instrumental to my international career growth because while I was there, I had the opportunity to do some pretty cool work. One thing I am most proud of is being part of a team that helped redraft a United Nations Protocol on Unlawful Killings with some of the best forensic experts in the world.

That document is now an official United Nations document and it is being used by governments and Superior Courts of Record all over the world. I have a google alert set up and my heart leaps for joy every time I get a notification that it has been referenced by a court of law.

When I graduated, I was awarded three post graduate fellowships and one of the fellowships allowed me to work in the Law School for a bit. I ended up publishing three different high-level papers with various departments of the school and I remember one of our briefs was submitted to the UK Parliament.

All of these provided me with a good basis to propel and grow my career.

**You currently live in the US and have founded your very own law firm. Tell us about this journey.**

At this moment, I live in many places (hahaha) and the law firm is international as we have partners in London, Lagos, Nairobi, South Africa, Washington DC and New York.
This one is emotional for me because it is still the early days. But yes, even I called myself crazy but I knew in my heart that it was time. I was scared – I still am but we must do things afraid right?

Yes, I have a plan B, C to Z. The reason I have alternative plans is because I believe something with my whole heart “optionality is currency”. When I decided to do this, the words of a friend were what encouraged me. She said “what is your worst-case scenario? It doesn’t work out, and you dust your resume and go look for a job.”

And honestly, when I thought about it, it made sense. I didn't want to be an accidental entrepreneur. I wanted to be a deliberate one. I am not doing this because there is nothing else to do, I am doing this because I want to build one an amazing legal practice that is globally competitive.

**Scale my hustle is an entrepreneur platform which you created, it’s well followed and you’ve initiated key conversations. What prompted your start?**

Scale my hustle is a passion project and I am amazed at the growth in less than a year. The story behind this is simple, I have been an attorney who has helped startups raise early-stage financing for a long time now and I noticed that many entrepreneurs on the continent needed assess to resources to properly structure their businesses. Without proper structure, scale is much more difficult. A lot of our businesses remain tiny businesses because of this reason.

So Scale My Hustle is a social enterprise that provides entrepreneurs with quality resources to properly structure and grow their businesses. We host regular webinars on topics ranging from Marketing to Becoming Investment Ready and the reviews have been amazing. This is probably one of the most fulfilling things I have ever done in my life. We constantly get love notes from entrepreneurs in Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria ... it is simply amazing and I have an incredibly team supporting me.

Asides our strong social media presence, we also have an active offline community and have hosted meetups in 5 cities around the world. We hope to host more going forward. And we have an intimate support community called Scale Exclusive which is open to entrepreneurs for payment of a nominal yearly subscription fee all our community members find this support extremely rewarding as entrepreneurship is very lonely journey.
You often share your wins on Twitter, why is it important that women share their victories as opposed to playing them down?

This is a very interesting question because I share only a tiny fraction of my wins publicly. However, as a society, we are still deeply uncomfortable with women speaking up and I am proud to be one of those badly-behaved women who are pushing back on that. That is why it is important that we keep speaking up.

For instance, recently, I came across a random “Social media awards” going on and people were asked to nominate key opinion leaders in different categories. I do not care for these things, but I noticed something interesting, the nominations were overwhelmingly male, when in fact there are so many women who are thought leaders on social media in key areas from finance, to entrepreneurship to politics.

The world as it is does not like listening to women and when they can no longer ignore you, they call you “pushy”, “proud”, “loud” but we must all keep speaking up.

You ran a women’s day campaign where you encouraged women to share tips and tricks for negotiating and earning better. Do you find that women are more sentimental negotiators and how do you propose we get better at this life skill?

Yes the campaign was called #SheEarnsMore and we intend to do it in March of every year going forward.

Following the shared tips, we held 6 free workshops during the month focused on helping women become better negotiators. Our total attendee list was over 2000 women and I was super proud of that. I remain grateful to all the women who shared their tips and tricks.

Women are used to doing a lot of unpaid labor because it is expected of us, and many women have internalized this expectation and it often translates to the workplace. There are various studies on how women take up thankless volunteer tasks at the workplace. These tasks are usually tasks that are ‘non-promotable’ and do not contribute to performance evaluation or even career advancement.

We take it up because it is usually expected of us. I also believe that this also makes us feel a little more gratitude when we are being paid for stuff when in reality, we are simply getting what we deserve. This feeling again translates to how we negotiate.

I recently interviewed two people for a role and the male candidate was still a student with no experience while the female candidate was a graduate with some working experience in that field. We offered the same thing and the male candidate negotiated for higher. The woman didn’t negotiate at all.

Anecdotally, HR managers have told me that female candidates are less likely to negotiate their pay while male candidate negotiate all the time.

Negotiation is a skill that can be learned, and you get better the more negotiations you do. We are constantly negotiating in life and being unaware that you are in a negotiation is dangerous. So, it is best to be aware of the dynamic so you can navigate it better.

I recommend watching YouTube videos on negotiation. Also, one trick I have is ask my male colleagues how much they would charge for a service and then use it as a guide during negotiations. I’ll also say this “anything you think you deserve, ask for at least double that all the time”.

You’ve done so much in so little time, what changed, at what point did the switch go off where you started to strive to take ownership?

I’m not sure if I ever had an “aha moment”, I think I have always taken ownership. As a teenager I launched a magazine with some of my friends. I remember walking into the corporate headquarters of Guaranty Trust Bank in Lagos with a two-paged proposal asking them to be corporate sponsors.
They ended up cutting us a check, but I think it was more because they were impressed by the audacity. Some of our other partners were the Nigerian Tourism and Development Corporation and even the Lagos State Government.

These days, I am not nearly as bold as I used to be, but my older self is constantly inspired by my younger self. A few years ago, at the height of the insurgency in the Northeast, I packed my bags (without telling anyone) and went to Yola with a couple of people I had never met in person until I arrived at the airport, to document the plight of Internally Displaced Persons in the state.

When I got back, I organized various fundraisers to send emergency relief materials to the camps, I did this for four years and I am still in touch with some of the camp coordinators. I think as we get older, we generally get more risk averse but from time to time, I draw strength from younger me. She was super cool.

**You've competed on an international scale, would you say Africans are more talented than we give ourselves credit for? If yes, how do we dismiss this myth and begin to open ourselves up to global opportunities?**

I think Africans know just how talented we are. We are resourceful, hardworking, creative and simply amazing. It is the world that needs to open itself to us.

There are so many issues that limit the ability of Africans to compete globally - even things like mobility (visas etc), misconceptions and biases etc.

I have lived in three different continents and it is the same everywhere. Africans fighting for recognition, conferences on Africa being led by non-Africans … our voices and opinions not being valued or listened to.

By 2070 the bulk of the world's working population will be in Africa so the world better start paying serious attention.

In your journey so far, what would you say is the greatest obstacle of self that you've had to battle and how have you been able to?

I lost my dad just as I was growing into a woman. This was super hard as he was my hero and sounding board career wise. I was just a student when he passed, this left a big gap and I struggled a lot with coming into my own self.

It may sound weird but the way I overcame it is by having conversations with him. Whenever I am at a crossroads, I imagine having a conversation with my dad. We talk every day.

It is the most hilarious thing, but it has been my coping mechanism for about a decade now and it helped me come into the last stage of grief – acceptance.

Mo’s insatiable appetite for success and creating long lasting impact will have us talking about her for a long time to come, as we take a cue from her.

Follow her journey on Twitter via @mochievous as she spills some rare gems that will be beneficial to your entrepreneurship journey.
DO YOU DREAM OF STARTING YOUR OWN BUSINESS OR EXPANDING YOUR EXISTING BUSINESS?

Sell on South Africa’s online marketplace bidorbuy.co.za!

You have nothing to lose. It is free to list products for sale on bidorbuy. And you stand to gain so much.

Sell on bidorbuy and watch your dreams come true!

bidorbuy.co.za
From Pain to Profit: The First 1'000 Days

As told to Dylan Kohlstadt, CEO and founder of Shift One Digital

Jan Badenhorst, CEO of the national distance learning institution, Skills Academy, credits the lessons his previously failed business endeavours taught him, as the catalyst to his success.

Jan shares Round 1, 2 and 3 of his career and experience with us, detailing the highs, the lows and the lessons from a career spent in distance learning, and how success can lead to failure, and failure can lead to success.

ROUND 1: INTEC: Starting a career in distance learning

Jan started his career in 1992 at distance-learning college, Intec, which at the time was growing rapidly through its “build through buying business” approach; combined with a focus on Marketing, Sales and Product Development. The owners kept some of the new brands, such as Damelin Correspondence College and Lyceum, as stand-alone brands, and shut down others (e.g. Rapid Results College) while continuing to expand the now multiple-brand distance-learning provider (under the group name “International Colleges Group” or ICG) until it was bought by Educor in 1997.
Intec remained the primary distance learning business within the Educor group, and Jan was part of the team managing the newly acquired distance-learning companies and brands. As a result, the team grappled with the issue of how to make sense of running multiple distance-learning brands and applying what had worked for one brand, to many.

At the time Jan was a mid-level manager but gained valuable insights into the pros and cons of managing multiple brands of varied sizes.

“What I learnt about managing multiple brands during this time, is that it is natural to focus your energy on the bigger brands, and neglect your smaller brands,” says Jan. “Often making a small impact through an established brand is sometimes worth more money than making a significant impact in a small business.”

“I experienced first-hand the benefits of having one team run more than one business, but I also the conflicts and unresolvable issues that can often occur with multiple brands.”

Jan elaborates on which strategies can be successfully copied from a larger educational business and implemented into smaller brands' and which cannot.

1. Copy and paste what is working
   Take the courses, developed study material and successful advertising strategies that worked for the larger brand and implement them within the smaller institutions.

2. Share core suppliers and assets
   Share suppliers for multiple brands to bring down costs. For example, use one accreditation department and one printing supplier across all the businesses. And develop study material to use across all the brands. However, you should not share resources to the point where you remove the independence of each brand to grow as quickly as it can.

3. Market size and perspective
   Through buying up of competitor businesses, you get a different perspective of the actual market size and the potential of a market. People often underestimate the size of the market in which they operate.

   “Back then I learnt an important lesson about the education industry, which was that if you look at any classroom education business, you can find a distance learning student for every classroom student,” says Jan.

   “It may be a rough rule of thumb, but it’s a way to deal with people’s natural inclination to underestimate markets. If a classroom college has 1 000 students, then it means there are an additional 1 000 potential distance learning students.”

   “There are very few people in South Africa who genuinely understand the size of the market and the pent-up demand for education.

   And even fewer who have the conviction to risk their own money to pursue their belief about the market size.”

4. The team has time constraints
   The team often focuses more on one brand over others. For example, employees may spend more of their time on the smaller less established brands and neglect the larger brand or vice versa. Resolving this conflict is a key challenge.

5. Employee brand loyalty issues
   One of the biggest negatives of running a company that consists of many similar brands that share central services is that the employees of the onboarded businesses are loyal to their original brands and are living the values of the original brands.
Jan decided to base his business on satisfying the three things that he had identified that made distance learning students the most unhappy. Using this knowledge, he created a company that’s sole objective was to excel in those three identified areas.

Below are the three areas he identified as the biggest concern for distance learning students and how he planned to overcome these issues in his newly created institution, College SA.

AREA 1: The problem - Being held hostage by credit agreements

Many customers felt trapped by financial agreements that they had to pay regardless of whether they continued studying or not and would be blacklisted for not paying for programmes they were no longer a part of.

A good example of this is ABSA which was put together through the merging of many smaller banking brands such as Volkskas, Permanent Bank and United. It took ABSA decades to move employee loyalty and culture from the onboarded brands to the single leading brand of ABSA.

6. Independent teams to drive growth
“It’s important for each company to have its own CEO or, at the very least, their own marketing manager to focus on and drive the vision for each brand,” says Jan. “This strategy makes it possible to grow multiple businesses without neglecting any of them. Cannibalisation must be encouraged, rather than feared,” Jan concludes.

ROUND 2: College SA
Fast forward 16 years at Intec, Jan Badenhorst decided to start his own distance learning business by using the money he had inherited from his father’s passing, he founded College SA (SA College of Home Study Pty. Ltd.) on 1 October 2007 – Initially in partnership with the Curro School Group.
The solution - Pay-as-you learn

College SA instituted a pay-as-you-study model, there were no contracts or credit agreements and if students’ circumstances changed, they could stop their studies at any time and would not be held liable to pay for the rest of the course if they weren’t taking part.

“At College SA if a student signed up for a twelve-month course and finished in nine months, they would only pay for the nine months they’d studied and receive their certificate. At other institutions, students would be held hostage financially, even if the student finished the course in nine months, they would not receive their certificate until all twelve months had been paid, even though they had already completed the course,” says Jan.

AREA 2: The problem - Delivery issues: where are my books?

Study materials and assignments between the distance learning institution and students could take up to three weeks each away; this was an immensely time-consuming frustration for students and created great unhappiness. “The increasingly bad postal service students received from the Post Office only further added to their already negative experience. In the end, they were paying to wait; instead of paying to study.”

The solution – Couriered to your door

The goal here was to enable students to study better, faster and for less money and therefore we decided to courier study materials directly to the students. So, instead of them waiting three weeks for their books they received them in just three days.

AREA 3: The problem – Lack of support
Many distance learning students complained that the only time they would hear from the institution was when they had to pay. There was no pro-active student support or guidance, and as a result, students would often feel overwhelmed and give up on their studies, as they did not know where to turn for the support they required.

The solution – Creating a support network
The distance learning student needs help, and they often are not even aware of the kind of help they need. Through College SA, Jan wanted to create a distance learning college that not only provided the courses and study materials students needed but the guidance and support they required.

“From phone calls to emails to online study groups like ‘Together We Pass.’ College SA wouldn’t just call for money; we’d call students to help them study. We tried to provide students with proactive service, and it all tied together. If College SA could not provide its students with the motivation and service to keep them studying, we would not make money. If we could not keep them studying, they did not have to pay us.”

Despite the negative predictions from many who believed that this business model wouldn’t work, College SA grew from strength-to-strength and quickly became a disruptor in the distance learning space.

“When you think your customers are crooks, you start acting like an insurance company, expecting everyone to defraud you,” says Jan. “We treated our customers like trusted partners, and they responded accordingly.”

Customers signed up quickly, and the college grew swiftly, so swiftly in fact, that it outgrew its operational and financial systems, which meant that the student accounting system sent out incorrect statements, leading on non-payment and cashflow problems. Jan sold shares in a desperate effort to keep the company afloat, until he had sold enough shares for him to be fired (the major shareholders lost their “trust” in him) from his start-up, in true Steve Job’s fashion.
ROUND 3: Skills Academy

After College SA fired him, Jan started on a clean slate. He had spent eight years with the college and now had the opportunity to create the business he wanted to; fixing the issues that needed fixing and making sure that he built a scalable business that wouldn’t fall into the same traps as College SA.

Lesson One: The bigger the business, the harder it is to change.

Losing a business and starting fresh, is easier than fixing a big broken business. You now have the opportunity to build it robust, from the start.

“Look at the big banks, their systems are held together with string and tape, they can’t change anything without risking bringing everything down,” says Jan. “When your business fails you have a chance to get rid of legacy systems and processes and build something right from the ground up.”

Lesson Two: Partner with someone who compliments your skills

Jan met Tabitha Bailey, founder of Together we Pass while working at College SA. They quickly identified that they made a great team, with Tabitha gifted in operations, systems, processes and people management, and Jan skilled in marketing, advertising and startups, the two of them built a great business, right from the start.

“It’s difficult to build a big thing alone.”

Lesson Three:
It's incredibly expensive to start a new academy, and we suffered for the first three years. Jan paid a very high price, financially, emotionally and relationally.

“Fortunately, I’m someone who can manage fear better than others, fear of going bankrupt and losing everything,” says Jan. “I am blessed with being obstinate and having a low fear of risk. I am blessed with a great partner in Tabitha because we are both forgiving, encouraging, supportive and never negative at the same time.

It took roughly 1,000 days for the new startup, Skills Academy, to move from barely breaking even to financially secure. Three years after starting out, they are in the position where he and Tabitha can retire from the business and leave it in the capable hands of their strong team, to further grow and improve the business. His job is done.

“I failed at Intec, I failed at College SA, and I took all of those lessons and applied them to Skills Academy, I leveraged what I had learned to build a brand that would work.

“Now I can focus on growing multiple brands,” says Jan. “That’s my passion, and that’s what I know, growing startups in distance learning.”
Are the human rights of children really that important? Yes, if we want our children to become the next generation of economically active South African citizens, we need to understand that their capacity to be the best they can be starts first through the acceptance and recognition of their human rights.

March was Human Rights Month with the 21st a recognised public holiday commemorating the sacrifices made by South Africans in the struggle for democracy. Not only acknowledged in SA, people around the world are constantly talking about human rights and there is a day specifically earmarked by the United Nations (UN) to celebrate just this – International Human Rights Day is on December 10th every year.
But why are human rights so important? I'm sure that many will agree, we live in difficult times; and because of this, human rights guarantee people their basic needs, freedom and protection against abuse so that they can take full advantage of opportunities for a better life. For young people this includes their right to association with both parents, human identity, as well as the basic needs for physical protection, food, universal state-paid education, health care, freedom from discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, disability, colour, ethnicity etc; being physically, mentally and emotionally free from abuse, care and nurturing.

Chapter 2 of South Africa’s Constitution includes the highly comprehensive and inclusive Bill of Rights, arguably one of the most progressive in the world today, and yet we are not without stumbling blocks to fulfilling all the aspects set out within it. As such, many NGO's across the country work with government and the private sector to assist the Bill of Rights come to fruition for all South Africans.

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) reports in their 2016/2017 Trend Analysis that “in the five-year period from 2011/2012 – 2015/2016 human rights complaints and enquiries rose from 8,149 to 9,238. The highest number of human rights' violations reported to the Commission was in the category of equality where between 2014/15 and 2015/16 equality complaints jumped from 493 to 749, representing an increase of 34%. In addition, socio-economic rights have consistently been in the top five complaints reported to the Commission, and between 2015/16 and 2016/17 increased drastically from 428 to 631 - an increase of more than 30%”. More significantly, “when these complaints (631) are taken together with other socio-economic rights' complaints relating to housing (297) and education (289), the total number of socio-economic rights complaints (1,217) exceeds equality complaints (705)".

Commission, and between 2015/16 and 2016/17 increased drastically from 428 to 631 - an increase of more than 30%”. More significantly, “when these complaints (631) are taken together with other socio-economic rights' complaints relating to housing (297) and education (289), the total number of socio-economic rights complaints (1,217) exceeds equality complaints (705)".
Our Bill of Rights stipulates the everyone has the right to life, the right to equality before the law, the right to have their dignity respected and protected, the right to freedom and security, the right to freedom of religion and opinion, the right –to a basic education, the right –to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being, and the right to have access to –health care services, sufficient food and water; and social security.

More importantly for us at Afrika Tikkun are the rights of children, the most vulnerable of our society: every child has the right –to family or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care; to basic nutrition, education, shelter, health care services and social services; to be protected from maltreatment, neglect or abuse; and to be protected from exploitative labour practices; to freedom and security.

Do you see how that word ‘freedom’ keeps popping up? Possibly more so than adults, children need freedom. The guarantee of security, a stable environment and care enables children the freedom to learn, play and grow as individuals, which in turn encourages problem solving, self-reliant, capable and responsible adults. The freedom to express themselves and have opinions inspires confidence and a positive sense of self.

That said, in the 2017 Child Gauge by the Children's Institute of the University of Cape Town  it was reported that one in three children will experience sexual or physical abuse before the age of eighteen. And more recently, Parliament heard from the Minister of Police, Bheki Cele, that 99% of children in South Africa have experienced or witnessed violence, and that 41% of all reported rape cases in the last three years have been of children.

Further, the 2018 Child Gauge notes that South Africa has very high rates of child poverty. “In 2017, 65% of children lived below the upper-bound poverty line… and 36% of children were below the food poverty line, meaning that they were not getting enough nutrition”.
They talk about “glaring racial disparities in income poverty: while 72% of African children lived in poor households in 2017, 45% of Coloured children were defined as poor, only 2% of White children lived below this poverty line.”

In terms of employment, education and training – according to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey for Q2 of 2018 released by Statistics South Africa, “Of the 20,2 million young people in South Africa aged 15-34 years in the second quarter of 2018, 39,3% were not in employment, education or training (NEET) – an increase by 0,4 of a percentage point compared to the second quarter of 2017. The NEET rate increased for black African males and white males… The female NEET rate was higher than that of their male counterparts for all population groups.”

This is not freedom for the children of our nation… who we say are our future and the hope of the nation. Afrika Tikkun is one of a network of organisations working to make SA a better place, protecting the rights of children and young people, and lending support to enable them develop into young adults with the education, skills and value based attitude that gives them the ability to access the economy in real time.

We aim to economically empower young people through our Cradle to Career 360” model from early childhood development through to job placement and beyond. Moreover, we offer outreach and support services to children of all ages with programmes such as nutrition and food security, health care, gender-based violence and child abuse programmes, family support and an empowerment programme for children and families living with disabilities.

At our five centres of excellence in Gauteng and Western Cape we have over 12,000 registered young people every year who each receive a comprehensive set of services designed to propel them into success, and we provide additional services to over 10,000 beneficiaries on ad-hoc interventions.

In 2018, 2,102 vulnerable families received psycho-social support; 2,206 received primary healthcare services; 659 families of children with disability were supported; 1,381,572 meals were served; 2,143 food parcels were distributed to families in need; 941 kilograms of food was harvested from vegetable gardens; and we handled 57 child protection cases. We also advocate for the rights of women and children, freedom of speech, empowerment and child protection throughout the year with campaigns such as Memeza Bazokuzwa.

All of this in an effort for the children of South Africa to be productive citizens of the future. If we want the country to grow, we have to acknowledge the human rights of all its inhabitants and work together to ensure their safety, freedom, economic advancement and well-being. It takes a village to raise a child.
CDI Growth Fund opens for new round of applications

A NEW APPLICATION ROUND HAS OPENED FOR THE R12.8MILLION CDI GROWTH FUND TO BOOST SME GROWTH AND JOB CREATION.

The CDI Growth Fund is a grant fund specifically for growing South African small businesses who need a cash injection to scale up further and create jobs. Since its launch in 2017, it has already contracted with 38 SMEs, who have collectively created over 160 jobs.

The CDI Growth Fund is managed by CDI Capital, which was incorporated as a subsidiary of the Craft and Design Institute (CDI) in 2016 to catalyse funding for SMEs. The funding has been enabled through contributions by the National Treasury’s Jobs Fund, the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), and the Western Cape Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDAT). The Fund is in the second year of a five-year disbursement period. One of the current Fund recipients is Pesto Princess, a Cape Town-based SME that produces locally-made pesto sauces, pastes and soups using only natural ingredients and an environmental consciousness.

CEO Lesley Grimbeek says that the grant funding they received has had a tremendous impact on their growing business.

“We have seen really rapid growth in the past four years, and in the next two years we are determined to have a facility four times the size of what we currently have, creating between 250 and 300 jobs and bringing our amazing product right across South Africa.”
It’s been a pleasure working with the CDI’s Growth Fund, and it has been very exciting to see the impact it has made in such a short time. We have been able to purchase equipment that we could not have afforded otherwise, and through this we have been able to create more jobs. To date, we have created ten new jobs in the factory, and we have the intention of at least another 12 to 13 new positions by the end of the year,” said Grimbeek.

The CDI Growth Fund is open to South African-owned businesses who operate within South Africa, who are at least one year old with turnover or assets above R1m.

Each applicant must demonstrate their year on year growth and/or the potential for sufficient growth and must be tax compliant. Applicants also need to match 20% of the grant contribution of the Fund through a cash contribution to achieve agreed objectives. Importantly, the business must be able to create new jobs.

SMEs that meet the criteria for funding, can apply online, and are taken through a diligent process of selection and support, whereby successful applicants contract for a three-year intervention and disbursement plan, performance managed by quarterly reporting, oversight and inspection, bespoke mentorship, and business development support.

According to Ryan Rode, project coordinator for CDI Capital, the Fund is ahead of its key deliverable, namely, the creation of permanent jobs through participating SMEs.

“The CDI Growth Fund is very specific in its focus – we are looking for SMEs who are about to employ new staff to meet growing demand and who need the capital to expand their operations. The funding is a grant and it is not paid back to the Fund; and can help to leverage additional funding and de-risk loans. It’s a fantastic opportunity for a growing South African business that is needing to employ new staff.”

The deadline for applications is 12 July 2019.

For more information and to apply, visit www.cdicapital.co.za/GrowthFund
Entrepreneurship is often touted as the silver bullet for Africa’s youth employment challenge. If we can strengthen small businesses, they will create jobs, and more young people will find dignified work. Simple, right?

The problem is that most entrepreneurship training is failing. That doesn’t mean we should give up on small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). But it does mean a different approach is required. At African Management Initiative (AMI), we are passionate about empowering entrepreneurs to build their businesses and create jobs. We are equally passionate about disrupting the current “training workshop” paradigm.
SMEs have the potential to lift millions in Africa out of poverty and are central to the growth and development of the continent. Over the past few years, entrepreneurship training programmes have mushroomed across Africa to help SMEs address challenges such as financial education, business training, and access to finance.

The problem is that many of these programmes simply don’t work. Evaluations have shown that classroom-based training has very limited impact on actual business outcomes—entrepreneurs who take traditional training programmes don’t seem to perform any better in terms of revenue growth, productivity, profitability, business survival, or job creation, than those who don’t.

Given the cost of delivery, and the opportunity cost for entrepreneurs spending time in class instead of running their businesses, this is not good enough. But where does that leave us? Is there a model that can deliver impact for entrepreneurs in terms of business growth and job creation at a price point that is viable at scale? We think so.

Recent academic research suggests that business growth stems not from improving the individual competencies of entrepreneurs, but from embedding good management practices into the business itself. Academics from Stanford and MIT have found strong correlations between a list of core management practices and firm productivity, profitability, sales growth and survival. They have tested this thesis with a range of organizations—from large companies in Western countries to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and others.

This insight has powerful implications for the way we support emerging market SMEs. At AMI, we have responded by flipping the traditional entrepreneurship training model on its head to provide a new practice-based approach that delivers real results.

In collaboration with researchers from MIT, AMI has identified 24 simple but effective business practices that are based on the research cited above, and adjusted for local relevance, and are centred around five core business pillars—Strategy, Customers, Money, Operations and People.

We then help entrepreneurs identify which management practices they are currently missing and help them to plug those gaps by providing simple, practical tools, along with the right support and accountability.

For example, we still help entrepreneurs manage their cash flow, but instead of teaching them how to manage cashflow through a series of workshop presentations, we provide them with a simple cash-flow management tool and hold them accountable for using it in their business every month, with support from their peers.

It’s a small shift in approach, but a powerful one. It is also relatively light touch and cost-effective at scale.

We have identified four key components for implementing a practice-based approach that works.

**Business diagnostic:** Instead of forcing all entrepreneurs through the same one-size-fits-all curriculum, we invite each entrepreneur to create their own roadmap for success.

We do this through a structured diagnostic survey, which helps teams select four core practices that they believe are most critical to the success of their business.

This creates buy-in from the start and increases the likelihood that business owners will adopt new habits.
**Tools:** Instead of content-heavy, theory-based learning, we focus on providing entrepreneurs and their teams with the simple tools they need to develop good business habits. These tools can be accessed, downloaded and used online (web or mobile) anytime, anywhere from our easy-to-use platform and are adaptable to any business. They focus on basic business habits such as tracking stock, keeping good financial records, regularly surveying customers, and planning for the future.

**Peers:** Adults learn best when interacting with peers, and entrepreneurs tend to be particularly social. So, we have embedded peer learning into the heart of our programming. Participants are grouped into small support groups called ‘pods’, where they hold each other accountable for implementing their chosen practices. Well-structured peer learning drives down the cost of programme delivery without sacrificing impact, while also helping entrepreneurs expand their networks.

**Metrics:** Many SMEs simply do not know what is happening in their businesses, and so don’t know where to focus their energies. It is compulsory for participants of our programmes to track core business metrics every month. Not only does this help us monitor our own impact, but it gives entrepreneurs visibility into core business drivers, and introduces them to the critical habit of measuring success and making data-based decisions.

The good news is that the practice-based approach is working. Our sample size is still small, but on average, revenue in 2018 increased as much as 60% and profit increased 45%, with slight variations depending on the specific cohort.

Participants in all programmes using the practice-based approach are reporting tangible business improvements, with 75% of businesses of one programme securing seed financing.

The approach has been tested with both urban and rural SMEs and has yielded results in both settings and across multiple sectors.

We are conducting a Randomised Control Trial with a team at MIT in 2019-20 to more rigorously test the impact and deepen our understanding of why and how this approach works.

Entrepreneurship will continue to be a way out of poverty for millions of people in Africa, both for business owners themselves and those they employ.

We need solutions for supporting them that are scalable and have tangible business impact. The practice-based approach provides a promising way forward.
WHY ENTREPRENEURS ARE THE KEY TO UNLOCKING SA’S GROWTH POTENTIAL

It’s no secret that South Africa has faced difficult financial times in the past few years. With an overall unemployment rate of 27.2 percent and over half of all eligible youth struggling to find work, there is certainly cause for alarm and a need for sustainable solutions.

“The fact that government recognises the link between entrepreneurship and economic growth, and has put in place a number of measures to encourage and empower small to medium business owners is definitely a positive step,” says Shevon Lurie, Managing Director at Vega (a brand of the Independent Institute of Education – The IIE).

In the recent national budget speech, it was announced that R3.2 billion would be allocated to a small business and innovation fund, while a further R481.6 million would be contributed to supporting small businesses through an incubation programme.

At last year’s Jobs Summit, corporate South Africa even signed on to lend a hand, with key players in the financial sector agreeing to invest R100bn over five years into black-owned industrial enterprises.
However, nurturing a culture of entrepreneurship needs to start at grassroots level to ensure its sustainability. In fact, the reason why most start-ups fail within their first year of operation is because entrepreneurs aren’t equipped to deal with the many challenges that come with establishing a business. So, why not start exposing young people to the world of entrepreneurship before they enter into it?

“Exposure to the idea of entrepreneurship at tertiary education level is essential, so that those who are meant to move the world forward by leading new enterprises are able to discover that in themselves,” says Eben Keun, Chief Brand Architect at Breinstorm Brand Architects, based in Rosebank, Johannesburg.

Keun runs Breinstorm with fellow co-founder, Ilan Green, having established the business 18 years ago from an old server room at Vega and counts JoJo Tanks, South African Mint and Business and Arts South Africa among his regular clients. Keun and Green were among the first intake of students when the school opened its doors in 1999, and acknowledge that, even after graduating 21 years ago, that they will always be part of the Vega fold.

“We started Breinstorm with the approach of adding value to the world by applying our newly found prowess for growing brands we believed in and that fascinated us,” says Keun. “This seemed to be lacking at the bigger agencies in that time, where design seemed to be practiced as a very decorative affair devoid of real strategy or any desire to enhance the world in any way.”

According to Keun, the experience he gained during his studies – and particularly at an institution that was modelled on equipping young people to find their purpose – were invaluable and shaped his approach to becoming a successful entrepreneur. “They cultivated a sense of opportunity that felt rather limitless,” he says. “Vega ignited a fascination for navigating the unknown in us.”

Considering Keun’s and so many other South African entrepreneurs’ success stories, there’s clearly a great deal of value in higher education institutions including the basics of business in their curriculums and exposing students to the world of entrepreneurship through interactive programmes.

Programmes like the Vega Brand Challenge, which sees students team up to tackle real-life briefs from real-life clients, for example, provide an opportunity to gain insight into what it’s like to work in an agency environment. This affords them the insight they need into the world of work, and is especially useful for those hoping to start their own creative agencies and businesses.

“Breeding a culture of entrepreneurship in South Africa starts in the classroom, in lecture theatres and on campus,” says Lurie. “The country needs more graduates who are ready for the challenges involved in running a business before they decide to take the big leap into entrepreneurship.”

For more information on qualifications and programmes designed with future trailblazers in mind, as well as IIE qualifications available to study at Vega, visit www.vegaschool.com.
Black on Black: Changing the face of leadership in South Africa

“WE are dealing with a myth that leadership and executive coaching is ‘not a Black thing’; that the concept is Western and therefore has no value in South Africa. I’m here to remind Black people that bettering ourselves for leadership positions is what we have done since time began.”

So says Leadership/Executive Coach and Facilitator Brian Mhlanga, who notes that there cannot be true leadership here until individuals see themselves as one important part of the whole. “African frameworks of coaching and leadership development differ from those created on other continents because of who we inherently are,” Mhlanga says.

Speaking as a man who has studied Sociology, Business Ethics, project management and an MBA in Finance and is now completing his second Masters in Management (MM) with Wits Business School, Mhlanga asserts that Black men are in a position to combine phenomenal cultural lessons with global work ethics to become leaders.

Mhlanga believes that too many confuse politicians with leaders, largely because politicians likely “get more air time”. “My work in leadership development is successful because people across all sectors are starting to see that there is a difference between a politician or business manager and a leader.

“Some managers have a vision but are unable to empower their colleagues to reach their own potential. A real leader trusts staff members to be self-directing and productive. They’ll call you in if you’re not and see how they can facilitate better conditions for your progress.

“Those who are afraid of creating successful staff members are not leaders. Yet. They could be, if completely open to an intense program of change that requires following guidance in their mental and spiritual conditioning,” he says.
**Acknowledging personal defects to master leadership**

Highlighting Black leaders like Martin Luther King Jnr, Oprah Winfrey, Barack Obama, Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, among others, Mhlanga says: “Not one of these exceptional people had an easy time growing up. All of them understood and experienced the daily devastation of racism. But each of them rose to greatness by having one characteristic in common: Conviction.”

Each knew, he adds, that they were working for the benefit of the whole and not just themselves every time they stood up to racism. “These are the examples we need to set our sights on and follow. My job as a leadership coach and facilitator is to have you look at the painful parts of your own character, where you lacked conviction or gave in to society’s insistence that you weren’t good enough; and assist you in creating a new story of striving, in addition to embracing your higher self, which acts as your inner GPS.

“To quote our late President Mandela: ‘As I have said, the first thing is, to be honest with yourself. You can never have an impact on society if you have not changed yourself. Great peacemakers are all people of integrity, of honesty, but humility’.

“Coaching is supporting someone to discover their untapped potential in order to achieve success,” Mhlanga notes.

**Growth of coaching in South Africa**

According to Mhlanga, coaching business and political leaders is a rapidly growing sector in South Africa, but he is one of a few people qualified and held to account by his qualifications. “There are many ‘life coaches’ who likely do a good job of helping people or giving advice. Business and leadership coaching is about having the experience needed to discuss financial issues when coaching at a banking institution, and understanding business.”

Mhlanga notes that the University of Stellenbosch and Wits University are the only two institutions offering a degree at postgraduate level in South Africa.

**Why it is about colour?**

Currently working with Black men in a variety of industries and positions, Mhlanga highlights that dealing with the hard issues – ethics, courage to make decisions, conviction and empowering others – is what everyone who wants to be a leader will have to deal with when working with him.

“I adapt my approach to suit the individual, but the outcome must be a productive member of a growing number of business and community leaders in South Africa. Younger men, for example, look for instant gratification and are pressurised by social media; while older men have to overcome the damage apartheid has left with them.

“What levels the playing fields for both is a willingness, to be honest with themselves and to take direction.”

Setting yourself up as a Black executive coach who works primarily with Black people will draw commentary, and Mhlanga has had his share. “Black people globally still find they have to work twice as hard to be considered half as good as their non-Black counterparts,” he says.

“From my training, I know this comes from low emotional quotient (EQ), as it is not possible to empathise with a Black unless you are a Black person. Are social structures biased against people of colour? Yes, they are. Is the world always going to be a place where people of colour experience racism? Yes - white privilege is real and global.

“However, it’s what I do with this knowledge that can make my life exceptional or not,” Mhlanga says. “This is why South Africa is fertile soil for hatred or change; and it’s not an outrage that will bring realistic, sustainable change. It is leaders who want to serve the people who have the power. It’s my purpose to make them see that.
At Distinguished Tailoring, we pride ourselves in creating bespoke handmade suits which are impeccably cut and mastered by perfectionists.