

the companies surveyed expressed reservations about their ability to address these issues in the short-to-medium term, the report found, adding that it was clear that change, investment and focus were required if companies in South Africa want to effectively compete both as employers of choice and as competitive businesses in a human-resource-constrained market.

The most dominant theme from the Leadership Development Survey, was that leadership was linked to providing direction, achieving goals and getting results. The second dominant theme was that leadership was still defined by the hierarchical positions of people in the organisation and linked to levels—the old notion of “bosses”.

In response to this need and the imperative to create a new generation of leaders, not bosses, Leadership Development Programmes are seeing an upswing in popularity. Locally, the increase in the number of sponsored MBAs and Leadership Development programmes at the business schools are an indication of the long term investment, and then there are also shorter workshops, and 3–5 day courses, offered either in-house or at tertiary institutions.

Globally, some interesting approaches are emerging.

- ENDOGENOUS RESOURCING is premised on the idea that leaders are empowered to unlock the hidden strengths of their teams. Power and decision-making are transitioned from being the sole responsibility of the leader, to the responsibility of the wider team.
- MULTIPLIERS OR THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT is a style of leadership which seeks to harness the wisdom, insight, knowledge and strength of the broader team. By leveraging

that, the entire team becomes stronger and more powerful. It points to specific styles and behaviours that either multiply or diminish behaviour of others.

- USTAINABLE MANAGEMENT moves from control-and-command style to a more democratic style of leadership.

Genesis of the leadership revolution

This change in our approach to leadership became necessary as a result of the vastly different context in which we find ourselves in 2015. The world has changed so radically, and so much more is expected of leaders who need to be able to juggle several different generations working together, as well as the demands for not only technical expertise, but also mastery of the long-neglected, now so highly prized ‘soft-skills’.

To reduce the gap between the ideal of ‘optimal’ leadership and the reality of scarcity and lack that exists across the board in all sectors, an entire industry of leadership development programmes and courses has been born. And it is growing because there is a real belief and understanding now that real leaders are not simply dropped on this Earth, with innate qualities which automatically reveal them as the anointed few.

Instead, leaders are created just as any high-performance athlete, artist and professional is created—through hard work, dedication and training. As with these top performers in their respective fields, leaders may be born with an underlying talent, but unless this talent is honed and trained and enabled with the correct tools, its potential will never be realised. For those born with leadership qualities, if they don’t become self-aware to know what specifically it



is that they do or need to do to make them great leaders, theirs will be a missed opportunity to either cultivate their own leadership or replicate it in others.

Conclusion

It has been proven beyond any doubt that great leadership is the key variable for individual and organisational success. It is not merely about shareholder return and value, but about realising the individual potential and opportunity of all in our society. It is in everyone’s interest that there develops a greater understanding around leadership, and that we cultivate and work on leadership as a developmental skill.

If we can transition from understanding a leader to be the smartest person in the room, the one with all the answers and the brightest ideas, to the one who is able to leverage the capacity of a team, we will be creating a new momentum on a micro and macro scale. Ultimately, the really good news in a country where not a day goes by without the dearth of our leadership capacity being bemoaned, is that leaders can be developed. An entire industry has been created to do just that, and to provide those with the potential with the skills and tools to make a real difference. ▲

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