



Responsive and responsible **LEADERSHIP**

World leaders that converged at the World Economic Forum held at Davos, Switzerland from 17 – 20 January 2017 explored this theme in relation to the direction that the global economy is beginning to be shaped as evidenced by the Brexit vote and the unprecedented election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States of America.

Researchers who predicted that the world has entered an era of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity were spot on, but not to the extent that left the world confounded and perplexed when the Brexit vote and 2016 US election results were announced. Both these events were dramatic in their extent and scale and other world leaders have not stopped mulling over them and considering their response – hence the theme adopted by the World Economic Forum for its conference this year.

These events have confirmed that the world we live in has become even more unpredictable, requiring a huge paradigm

shift from individuals, society, business and governments. This paradigm shift will include amongst others:

- the creation of a culture of learning across nations
- the ability to adapt to and leverage change at individual, societal and organisational levels
- the fostering of a culture of creativity, joint-problem solving, collaboration and open communication

The debates and conversations that took place at the World Economic Forum conference highlighted the significance of responsive and responsible leadership.

This type of leadership can be seen in the following instances:

- Where government and business collaborate to expedite change. The #feesmustfall campaign provided such an opportunity for all stakeholders in South Africa
- Where academic institutions and business implement innovative, experiential and

- project-based educational approaches
- Where academic institutions and business collaborate to integrate theory and work-based training opportunities designed along the principles of the apprenticeship systems
- Where government and business collaborate on shaping labour market policies that will contribute to the attraction and retention of talent, in particular those falling within the scarce skills category.

Nedlac, Business Unity South Africa, Black Business Council and similar organisations are well placed to start focusing their attention on the development and refinement of progressive labour market policies that will contribute to the country's competitiveness and the driving of transformation beyond compliance.

In addition, responsive and responsible leaders need to focus their attention on ensuring that blockages to human capital development are identified and removed, starting from early childhood development to tertiary education. The South African Human Resource Development (HRDC) chaired by the Deputy President of the Country, Cyril Ramaphosa plays a critical role in this regard. All sectors of the economy are represented at this Council, including business, government, academics, unions, professional bodies, NGO's, etc.

Critical to understanding and preparing all and sundry for this unpredictable future is the embedding of a culture of life-long.

As most of these changes will impact on people, HR has a unique role to play. This will involve guiding organisations in making important business decisions impacting on people, anticipating and mitigating risks.

The high profile cases where decisions regarding people were found wanting are the Marikana wage strike and the death of 94 mental health patients in the Gauteng province. These are examples that demonstrate on reflection a lack of responsive and responsible leadership. To avoid such incidents repeating themselves, it is of critical importance that HR implements programmes that will increase the capabilities of line management to elevate individual and organisational performance to exceptional levels on a sustainable basis within a culture of human rights - embracing the concept of ubuntu.

Finally it should be noted that in a world of increased volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, (VUCA), people management issues will matter more than ever!

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Rre Elijah Litheko
IPM CEO