

Professor Shirley Zinn, Managing Executive of Nedbank, says the transformation of leadership is one of the key areas to ensure sustainable growth in the South African business landscape.

Leadership

Transformation Crucial

by Ronel Nel



Prof Shirley ZINN, Managing Executive:
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“Everybody has to transform the way they think and work and more so leaders in society and the workplace, as the New Economy signifies a whole new approach towards achieving success,” she says.

Shirley adds that authenticity at the crux of leadership in the New Economy is. Besides remaining true to yourself, she believes that for as long as you can think you are good, you are never going to be great.

“But one cannot look at leadership on an isolated base. One has to consider that we have to look at businesses from a holistic perspective, as you cannot be saving the world if an organisation is not thriving. Leaders have to ensure that a business gets each level right. We

require an integrated, almost liberatory leader who allows every person in his or her team to be the best they can be,” she emphasises.

Shirley believes it is not about the actual person, but the series of principles that the person stands for. “Any leader has certain leadership components, but not all, depending on their audience. People inspire people – whether good or bad – and have an impact on other people,” she adds.

“Leadership legislation ensures minimum compliance to the Companies Act, as well as various acts governing control. This has necessitated a new leadership paradigm that breaks away from the ‘command and control’ fear-based approach. The new leadership has to take diversity into account and build a cohesive unit in order to survive,” Shirley adds.

Shirley is adamant that the transformation of leadership must also include more women. According to her, research has shown that companies with sufficient female representation in management generally outperform those companies where that is not the case. She believes that women leaders are more caring, inclusive of all people, nurturing and intuitive. “At the end it is the smart business thing to do,” she says.

“One thing that I learnt from Nelson Mandela is that transformation needs to be about harmony and equal opportunity for all, and not only numbers. It must include respect and a set of values,” she stresses.

She says that at Nedbank they are consciously focusing on equipping their managers to understand leadership better, as she believes strongly in the saying ‘People join great organisations, but leave lousy managers’.

Shirley values a commitment to delivery. “Ultimately, we all have a role to fulfil or a job to complete. Their commitment to finishing what they set out to do and to really ‘Make Things Happen’ often determines the success of a leader,” she adds.

She remarks that she realises after the economic downturn some people doubt whether banks can be trusted. “The only way banks can prove their worth to the public is based on the quality of leadership and values,” she concludes. □