

Leadership

The spark that ignites leadership

While being a guest panellist at the recent *Old Mutual Tomorrow's Leaders Convention 2015* I was asked a common question; "are leaders born as leaders or do they become leaders?" I believe the latter, because a leader can arise from insignificance and obscurity simply because a spark was ignited in his or her mind. A life-changing experience, or simply the acquisition of new knowledge, can ignite a passion that will give the individual the drive and motivation to effect a change in their environment. They become mobilised and create a network of like-minded people. In my mind, leadership is not so much about delegating or controlling people, but being able to recognise what unique gift and talent each and every person has to offer and to unite people towards a common goal with passion and purpose.

Good leaders are authentic and humble individuals who know their strengths and weaknesses and can motivate people to take on responsibility. When people can be convinced of the value of their contribution, they are more likely to want to identify with their work. I believe, inherently, we all have the capacity and indeed, capability, to be leaders. Leadership is a choice.

A key thread I've witnessed in the many meetings and interviews I've had with some of South Africa's great leaders is that they have the gift of infecting others with their passion and vision in a way that compels ordinary people to get involved and be part of the journey.

Leaders must be held accountable, legally and ethically. As a director for Accountability Now (www.accountabilitynow.org) I see the need for strong leadership in South Africa. Without it, our businesses and economy will suffer and, in turn, every South African.

What I enjoyed at the Old Mutual Tomorrow's Leaders Convention 2015 were the interactions I had with young people. I was inspired by their almost unanimous sentiment of: "it's up to us; we can't rely on failing systems. We need to take stock and take control." The emergence of new leaders is here ... and I am thoroughly encouraged!

Foreword



BRAAM MALHERBE
Extreme adventurer, conservationist, youth developer, motivational speaker, TV presenter and author of the best seller *The Great Run*, his account of running the Great Wall of China.