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**Gordon Institute  
of Business Science**  
University of Pretoria



NYU STERN'S MELISSA SCHILLING & GIBS' ABDULLAH VERACHIA ON  
**WHAT MAKES AN INNOVATOR**

# INNOVATION

**ELON MUSK**  
THE DNA OF AN INNOVATOR

GIBS' DOROTHY NDLETYANA ON  
**NEW DIRECTIONS FOR  
BUSINESS SCHOOLS**

WHARTON'S KATY MILKMAN ON  
**CHOICE ARCHITECTURE**

**PLUS**  
GIBS GETS A NEW DEAN!

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## Dean's Note

BY PROFESSOR MORRIS MTHOMBENI, DEAN

# A Changing Tide

**Leaders must use all available tools to keep innovative collaboration alive and well during a time of rising nationalism.**



Professor Morris Mthombeni

Over the past three decades, digitisation, technology and innovation, which sprung from this global revolution, have fundamentally changed the world. Without many of these technological firsts, such as the digital learning platforms business schools like GIBS have been able to harness for remote learning, it would have been almost impossible to navigate a global pandemic in a complex and connected world.

Many of these innovations – from cell phone connectivity to broadband and data analytics – were born during a time of relative global peace. Using mathematical techniques to measure global deaths from war, [researchers from the University of York](#) in the UK determined that the world today is a far less dangerous place than it was 30 years ago in part “due to peace-keeping work by global organisations like the UN and increased collaboration and cooperation between nations”.

From a business perspective, this era of partnerships and idea-sharing has been critical to driving innovation. However, this picture recently began to change. From the ‘America First’ presidency of Donald Trump in the United States to the nationalist policies of leaders like Russia’s Vladimir Putin, Narendra Modi of India and Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, the Brexit vote in the UK, and the rise of far-right parties in Poland, France and Italy, we are seeing a clear [global move towards protectionism, xenophobia, isolationism and populism](#). South Africa and greater Africa are by no means immune from these troubling trends.

As the world devolves into a more nationalistic reality, it behoves us as business leaders and thinkers to ponder the connection between the rate and pace of innovation in recent decades and the enabling role of a relatively more peaceful and globally connected world. As politics and societies transform and become more inward-looking, what impact might this have on the pace and depth of innovation?

Certainly, more militaristic and closed societies can and do innovate, be it a modern-day Israel or a South Africa of old. They have to. But is this the sort of innovation that advances humanity as a whole? For instance, does the increasingly fractious tone in geo-politics turn the focus away from solving for humanity’s collective good and from important long-term ambition to solve for the Sustainable Development Goals? In all likelihood, it will, in the process, derail the critically important advances made at the bottom of the pyramid in recent decades. This will, of course, have widespread implications across society and business.

African institutions and business schools have an important role to play amidst these global shifts to facilitate an openness

to innovation, even while borders are hardening. Without a strategic and tempered view, the result of moving blindly down an alley of nationalism and deglobalisation will inevitably be increased inequality and exclusion. Without leaders capable of seeing the unfolding bigger picture and the implications of policy and strategic approach, business stands to be shaped by narrow-focused external pressures.

As America under Trump showed us, it is certainly possible to harness policy to reinforce a national and anti-global identity of innovation and economic nationalism. In this instance, [the US patent policy drove a protectionism import strategy and the use of trade sanctions](#) against countries like China. It relied on unilateral mechanisms and turned its back on collaboration and cooperation with other countries. Over and above these diplomatic implications, the approach also impacted consumer choice and pricing as domestic industries were subsidised to give them a competitive edge. This is not, however, conducive to meaningful and long-term innovative thinking.

Yes, innovation will still emerge in concentrated pockets in such an environment, as it will under authoritarian regimes, but high-velocity innovation has a far greater chance of flourishing in a democratic, open and inclusive setting.

While democratisation might not be statistically proven to result in higher rates of innovation, society is undoubtedly better off in a democratic setting. As [Professor Leizhen Zang of the Chinese Academy of Sciences](#) puts it: “While there is no direct link between democracy itself and innovation, this does not change the fact that democratic regimes have consistently proven to be more capable of acquiring the features that lead to the creation of patentable innovation than other types of regimes.”

In an era of high and firm borders, increased nationalism, growing national self-interest and the militarisation of society, it can be expected that geographically concentrated innovation will be the global reality in the years to come. This will contrast notably with the more democratic and collaborative sources of innovation we have witnessed during the evaporating era of peace and more porous borders.

There is, however, one potential gamechanger which could still break through these rising borders and encourage the sort of idea-sharing that fuels innovation: social media. While digital communication channels have been used in recent years to drive what research Professor Daniele Conversi calls ‘[long-distance nationalism](#)’, they also have the potential to maintain a democracy of ideas capable of cutting through the rising rhetoric. **GIBS**



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# GIBS Network

Our regular look at GIBS' events and guests

## GIBS Launches New HD Studio

Business schools have to adapt their teaching methods in a world gripped by rapid change. Today's students expect blended learning formats, including online and video. Leading the way, GIBS has unveiled a new state-of-the-art, high definition (HD) content studio at its campus in Illovo, boasting R3 million's worth of cutting-edge technology that allows for greater flexibility regarding teaching methodology. The student learning journey is enhanced by engaging business content and professional multimedia production.



### Digital learning solutions

As a leading business school, GIBS is always pushing the envelope to provide facilities that allow for the cultivation of world-class academic content and thought leadership. As part of its digital offering, GIBS committed in 2021 to building a new, larger video production studio with a digital set to improve the flexibility, quality, and output of video. The project was completed at the end of the year, with the first online academic content available in early January 2022. The studio features 400 LED panels combined to create a digital background capable of accepting up to four different input display videos, presentations and images in various configurations. It also has 13 high-powered overhead studio lights that illuminate the two sets available in the studio.

Although GIBS was already offering video content in its teaching, the onslaught of Covid-19 exacerbated matters. Suddenly, at the height of the pandemic, there was a greater need for online content and a greater appetite for online learning. We now have a larger production hub where videographers, editors, graphic and instructional designers, and editors collaborate with the marketing team to produce a world-class online product. One of the outcomes of this investment is that GIBS has developed 20 fully asynchronous business skills programmes for individuals and teams. Content produced in the new studio will enable GIBS to continue providing an outstanding business education, equipping students for our changing world.





# PSL and MultiChoice Launch Business Skills Programme for Players at GIBS

Despite their glamorous lifestyles and high salaries, soccer players have had a history of failing to navigate financial obstacles during their short careers. The press is often filled with stories of once-successful players now destitute. The lack of financial and business skills often renders some of the most talented players broke after retirement.

MultiChoice, the Premier Soccer League (PSL) and GIBS recently kicked off the PSL Player Transition Programme, a custom-made six-month course aimed at empowering soccer players with the right business and financial skills to help them find careers off the field after they retire. A total of 64 soccer players from the 16 PSL clubs enrolled in the first phase of the programme.

PSL chairman, Dr. Irvin Khoza, who opened the programme, advised players on the importance of using strategies off the field that have been learnt on the field,



and to be prepared for any eventuality. “After soccer careers come to an end, many professional players find themselves destitute due to lack of financial management knowledge.”

He emphasised that while soccer gave players a great head-start, life after a football career was just as important. “GIBS brings about the formal part that orientates the player through the singular lens of football and will be beneficial to the players.”

Khoza also added that with the programme’s backing, soccer players also had a greater chance of entering into administrative roles within the football fraternity.

The programme falls under GIBS’ customised programmes, designed in collaboration with organisations to co-create innovative learning solutions that will significantly improve individual and organisational performance.





## Unravelling the Mysteries – Beyond Bitcoin

Welcome to the world of decentralised finance and the end of banks. Welcome also to a world of serious complexity that is changing minute by minute. This book, *Beyond Bitcoin*, by Stephen Boykey Sidley and Simon Dingle, published first in February of this year and launched at the same time at GIBS, is almost certainly out-of-date.

As its title implies, in the beginning was Bitcoin, the cryptocurrency based on blockchain technology and invented in 2009 by someone or something called Satoshi Nakamoto. To this day, nobody really knows who Nakamoto is or was, but it's almost irrelevant because Bitcoin is a monolith, secure – mostly – and immutable.

But then along came another crypto called Ethereum, which turned out to be much more useful because developers could build things on it and around it.



Sidley and Dingle's book leads us into the jungle that has sprung up as a result and charts a way through the crypto undergrowth: "Liquidity pools and mining incentives and synthetic derivatives and AMMS and governance tokens are intrinsically opaque, an entirely new language from an alien planet."

*Beyond Bitcoin* is definitely a useful first guidebook for anyone interested in business, finance, or just consumer economics.



## African Bank – Quo Vadis?



African Bank's strategic realignment to include business banking and appeal to a broader customer base is part of its attempt to build a compelling investment proposition, enabling its return to the JSE by 2025.

Recently appointed CEO Kennedy Bungane's vision is to build a bank that offers a full remit of business and personal banking, is digitally enabled, customer-centric and diversified. "This is more than a bank; it is a movement," he told GIBS Dean Prof. Morris Mthombeni during a recent online forum.

In repositioning, African Bank will shift its focus toward new client segments and business banking to include black professionals and entrepreneurs. "We want to return to our original mandate and to the ethos of a heritage bank for the people, to reposition African Bank to be bold and audacious."

Creating a home for entrepreneurs involves solving for their success and building effective partnerships: "We are here to support entrepreneurs and build their capacity to take this country forward," Bungane said. **GIBS**



BY CARA BOUWER

# There's a New(ish) Dean in Town

A GIBS Forum was underway when Morris Mthombeni posed a question to recently appointed Eskom CEO, Brian Molefe. It was 2015 – well before Molefe had been publicly discredited – and the question centred on governance...





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Looking back on that moment, GIBS' freshly appointed dean recalls asking Molefe how he persuaded investors to "take you seriously, to believe that you as CEO take governance seriously given that your political principals demonstrate a healthy disregard for good governance". At that point, then-President Jacob Zuma's Nkandla upgrades dominated the news. Molefe, who was firmly in the Zuma camp, responded that this was nothing.

Mthombeni paused and directed the 150 attendees to note this answer and make up their own minds. "I wasn't disrespectful," he told *Acumen*, "but I couldn't let him get away with it."

**"I aspire to be an attuned leader..."**

Seven eventful years later, Mthombeni still believes in speaking truth to power and feels spaces to reflect truth back to power are vital for a functioning society and a relevant business school.

It is noteworthy that as Mthombeni begins his five-year term, he is not only a part of the leadership of institutions like the South African Business Schools Association's Deans and Directors forum and the Academy of International Business Deans Roundtable, but is also the United Nations (UN) Global Compact Local Network and the [UN Principles of Responsible Management Education \(PRME\) Global Chapter Council](#), which supports business schools in their quest to have a meaningful social impact. PRME not only focuses on embedding sustainable business thinking but also on creating relevant frameworks and processes for effective learning and responsible leadership development.

With a teaching and research footprint in strategy, leadership and corporate governance that spans greater Africa and the world, Mthombeni is well versed in the ethical decision-making tightrope and the daily challenge facing leaders. Consequently, he explains, "Every day I wake up and ask my maker that when faced with an ethical choice, it is an easy one for me." He actively supports this intention by living personal values centred on integrity and nurturing relationships built on trust and humility. These values align with GIBS' human-centric, quality and ethical underpinnings.

## Tuned in

Given this intersection of values, it is not surprising that Mthombeni is firmly focused on developing professional staff and academics. "My priority is accelerating talent transformation within GIBS," he explains, noting that GIBS cannot afford to

become complacent in a changing world. "I want to create the notion of exploring at the edge of habit and familiarity. Of not being too comfortable. It's about introducing elements of discomfort in what we are doing, so we innovate our way out of the discomfort."

This is a clear opportunity for the business school to simulate and model the very adaptive and agile leadership approaches companies should be using to navigate current complexities. But when it comes to labelling his own style, Mthombeni identifies with a term he borrows from respected South African businessman, Dr. Reuel Khoza: an attuned leader. In his 2012 book, [Attuned Leadership: African Humanism as Compass](#), Khoza describes the hallmarks of an attuned leader as "connectedness, compassion, empathy, integrity, humility, reasonableness and a determination to be effective".

"I aspire to be an attuned leader," explains Mthombeni, who notes that he already has "a sense of understanding of when I should lead and when I should follow, because followership is as important as leadership."

**"I don't think I'll ever do golf..."**

## A vision for our time

Mthombeni's vision for GIBS speaks to this attuned approach. While this is the start of a new, distinct phase in the school's history, he is keenly aware of building on the work of both Nick Binedell and Nicola Kleyn. "Nick was highly business-connected, then the pendulum swung to Nicola's much deeper academic approach," says Mthombeni, whose aim is not to swing the pendulum to the middle but rather forward. It's not about favouring or developing either of their approaches but rather incorporating both.

"I'm doubling down on what it means to be very deeply connected with the business world, with practice, and I'm doubling down on quality, impactful research," he says. "I'm also challenging the rules of Porter's strategy, so to speak." This reference to [Michael Porter's Generic Strategic model](#) talks to Mthombeni's view that a modern business school can be differentiated and have low-cost elements – it doesn't have to be an either/or choice.

"In a new worldview of networks and increasingly digital tools, you can drive a low-cost strategy and you can drive a highly differentiated strategy," he explains. "Therefore, you can drive a practitioner-connected strategy and drive a deeply research impactful strategy."



## At ease with the unusual

Growing up and living in what he calls an unconventional family, Mthombeni boasts a degree of comfort with the change currently reshaping the world. Yes, change does bother him at a human level of pain and anxiety, but “for my ability to operate, I’m not frightened by current conditions”.

Living in a world of multiple ages and contexts – both at school and at home as part of a large extended family – young Mthombeni soon learned the link between humour and curiosity and incorporated both traits. His curiosity makes it hard to switch off, but he does find escape in going for long walks in nature and playing the role of sous chef at home.

“I don’t think I’ll ever do golf. I did it once, and I don’t think that will happen again,” he laughs. “Although I could see myself picking up more social sports when I have more time.” His closing comment offers a glimpse of his deadpan sense of humour: “I’d be open to joining the GIBS soccer club. That is, if they think I could cut the mustard.”

## Time to ‘turbocharge’ engagement

With a PhD in corporate governance and strategy from the University of Pretoria, Morris Mthombeni has a unique perspective as both a student and faculty member. He believes there are many positives to being a student at GIBS. “It’s a very supportive space; very challenging, very demanding. There are many support structures around, but you don’t come here to coast – and that’s not for everyone,” he says.

He believes some areas could be improved from a student perspective. “From my experience, I think we can do more in demanding more from our supervisors and giving more supervisory support. Also, we can do more to create a deeper sense of community, community engagement and citizenship behaviour in our students. Because of the demands placed on students, sometimes that can get lost.”

Mthombeni also sees potential in engaging the extensive GIBS alumni more successfully and, in the process, creating a critically important and lifelong connection to learning. “It’s also about creating a space for our alumni to contribute,” he explains. “It’s not just about them coming to learn; it is about giving their time, resources, and networks.”

## “My priority is accelerating talent transformation within GIBS...”

### Vital statistics

On 1 April 2022, Professor Morris Mthombeni began a five-year term as the dean of GIBS. This followed a 20-month period during which he served as interim dean following the conclusion of Nicola Kleyn’s term in 2020. Having joined the business school in 2014, Mthombeni entered the role of GIBS’ executive director of Faculty in 2017.

In addition to holding a PhD from the University of Pretoria, an MBA from Manchester Business School and an LLB, B.Proc, B. Juris from the University of South Africa, Mthombeni came to the world of academia following two decades as an executive in the financial services industry. He continues to participate in financial services in a non-executive capacity. A former CEO at Momentum Investments and executive director at MMI Holdings Limited, Mthombeni also held leadership roles at Liberty Life and served on various boards in the FirstRand Group. The risk-reward approach inherent in the institutional investment space still colours how he gauges problems and solutions in South Africa and greater Africa.

Mthombeni recognises that it takes a special type of leadership in Africa to rise above the challenges and harness possibilities, but he remains optimistic without being naïve. “I think many business people in this country are actually pretty good at solving South African problems, and we are getting better at solving problems in the greater Africa region,” he says. “It’s time to stop complaining about our problems and rather lean into our problems. Lean in with great resourcefulness, a great deal of innovation and a great deal of determination.” **GIBS**



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## DR. DOROTHY NDLETYANA

Dr. Dorothy Ndletyana, a Fulbright Scholar, joined GIBS in 2017 and holds the position of senior lecturer. She leads the MPhil with a specialisation in change leadership. Her research, teaching and consulting interests span humane-centred leadership, human resource management, human behaviour and organisational development. Through Ndletyana Learning, a boutique consulting practice, Ndletyana offers a range of services to a niche client base, including organisational development and talent management, integral coaching and design, and the development and facilitation of deeply transformative interventions.



BY DR. DOROTHY NDLETYANA

# Management Education: Time for an Overhaul?

**Long before Covid-19, management education was crying out for a rethink, revision and innovation.**

As one of the fastest-growing higher education subsectors in Africa, business management education continues to be relevant in a post-pandemic world. This is despite global criticism of the industry following the great recession around issues such as [the proliferation of easier MBA programmes](#), dwindling relevance of existing curricula in a changing digital world, and the leadership deficits exposed after 2008.

To be fair, there was some tinkering around the edges before the 2020 global pandemic began, particularly around curriculum updates, but for the most part, management education institutions were caught wrong-footed by the SARS-Cov-2 outbreak. Nevertheless, Covid-19 has been revolutionary, cutting higher education off at the knees and forcing a rethink around the nature of education, pedagogy and educational spaces, the needs of students and relevance of programmes, and how learning should take place for optimum impact.

Among the areas that have come in for scrutiny is a widespread concern that the methods, designs and pedagogy being used are outdated, or at the very least that they favour particular schools and faculty. Another concern is that the existing model is both elitist and exclusionary. One of the worst criticisms is that Africa has mostly just copy-pasted the western model and offered that up to students under the guise of a good education. The colonial undertones of this model have been particularly problematic.

Faced with these structural inadequacies, alongside the physical constraints brought on by Covid-19, business education providers and business schools, in particular, have been forced to make some courageous changes over the past two years – changes we'd been too complacent to make before.

This new-found urgency is something we need to harness if deep-seated and valuable innovation is to take place across multiple levels.



## The proximity level

Last year, in the [Africa Journal of Management](#), a collaborative article written by academics from Egypt, South Africa and Canada interrogated the impact of the pandemic in the context of Africa's business management education. The authors argued that business schools should be aligning pedagogy to the worldview and experiences of students rather than just the businesses they serve. This would require far greater proximity to students.

There are two components to proximity that we need to consider. One is the psychosocial aspect, which relates to the meaning we attach to being in relationship to each other, where we belong and how we see ourselves. In management education, it requires us to rethink norms, rules and values. Working and learning from home led to isolation. So, how can we build greater opportunities for engagement and collaboration? We are required to show more flexibility, compassion, and empathy. The second is physical proximity – something Covid-19 well and truly messed up over the past few years. As a result of the pandemic, we are now being pushed to examine how teaching and humanity are impacted through digital means. In business education, we are being challenged to create physical closeness through the intelligent use of technology so that we can learn and work together, rather than separately and individually. The outcomes of doing so are more powerful.

## The colonial undertones of this model have been particularly problematic.

### The personal level: It's time for more humanity

In the classroom, a humanistic outlook should show compassion and empathy for students and their circumstances. It's an approach that hinges on appreciating the importance of well-being and factoring this into how we design more inclusive, flexible, appreciative, and encouraging educational offerings.

Psychological safety is an interesting aspect of this shift, which talks not only to mindfulness training, wellness programmes and mentorship but also to a fundamental power shift between students and institutions of higher learning and between employees and employers. In the same way companies are struggling to get employees back to the workplace, so too are business schools battling to get students back on campus. This exercise of personal autonomy is at the heart of this power dynamic.

## ...how can we build greater opportunities for engagement and collaboration?

Of course, a return to the campus is not where humanity in business education ends. In fact, it's only the beginning. Business schools must increasingly model how business leadership should look in the future by helping to develop the human capacities and human orientation that will increasingly be demanded of leaders in the future. It is no longer sufficient only to develop leaders cognitively; we need to grow 'head, heart and hands' – in other words, whole individuals who integrate their thoughts, feelings, body, relationships and connectedness practices. Only this type of disruption will instil in our technocrats and business leaders a sense of urgency to create workplaces of meaning and humanity that can withstand the onslaught of change, crisis and disruption.

The year-long GIBS MBA Applied Business Project, which asks MBAs to solve a social problem encompassed within the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, is a great example of how to embed humanity and empathy into future leaders, as well as an appreciation for the importance of social impact and sustainability thinking.







## The leadership level: More heart, less head

In an article published on the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) website, [Gregory Whitwell, Dean of the University of Sydney Business School](#), shared insights from the global alliance in management education (CEMS) report on [leadership in a post-pandemic world](#). The upshot was that Covid-19 had caused leaders to “question the status quo and rethink their business-as-usual assumptions”.

Among the skills gaining relevance and importance, Whitwell singled out openness, empathy, resilience, and the ability to communicate. Notably, the report showed that while core human skills were in demand, the 1,711 individuals interviewed from 71 countries placed slightly less importance on strategic vision (down from 73% pre-Covid to 68%) and technical skills (down to 7% from 13% previously). This demonstrates that we are living through a readjustment in our thinking where ‘head stuff’ is becoming less important while human skills are more important.

This may seem at odds with the technological direction the world is taking, but, as Whitwell puts it, “This change in priorities also reflects our very human tendency to achieve balance, particularly when our world has been so fundamentally disrupted.”

## The innovation level: It’s not just about tech

In a series of [articles produced by the OECD in 2021](#), which aimed to show how the pandemic would forever change the world, several business school deans were interviewed from as far afield as Nigeria, Mexico, China, Egypt and America. What came across strongly was the heightened digital transformation that had

taken place due to Covid-19 and the use of platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, and the seemingly overnight upskilling of faculty.

It is easy to get bogged down in tech talk when discussing the innovations in management education, but this is not the most far-reaching shift facing business institutions. If you want a clearer picture of how business education will continue to evolve, look no further than the spin-off of [micro-credentials and industry-related certifications](#). These are quick courses students can access via Coursera and LinkedIn Learning, for example. After eight, sixteen or sometimes twenty hours, a student can walk away with a certificate.

Universities are increasingly being challenged by this new, quick and user-friendly approach to learning. So much so that the Courseras of this world are now becoming legitimate competitors as people seek to upskill quickly and affordably.

To keep up, traditional business schools have to become as technologically slick as these agile competitors, building in the layers of flexibility that students now demand as part of their time management expectations. This requires essential new roles – such as the session producers who came on board at GIBS in April 2020 to help lecturers manage the online classroom – and will continue to require adaptation as lecturers now face a hybrid reality that straddles both live and digital students.

In 2021, a GIBS team headed by Hayley Pearson was listed among the finalists at the Business Education Innovation Awards by innovation learning hub LearnSpace in Paris for an exciting gamified-enabled learning programme to come out of GIBS, which aimed to impart knowledge and work-readiness skills



## ...the Courseras of this world are now becoming legitimate competitors...

to new graduates and early career professionals. What was particularly novel about the 'Differentiate' course was that it included a virtual internship where students could apply their newfound knowledge and skills by undertaking activities on the game-based platform.

### The ecosystem level: New partnerships and models

In the early days of the pandemic, [Professor Owen Hall from the Graziadio School of Business](#) in America wrote that leaning only on online programmes and slashing – sometimes up to 50% – pricing to try to compete with micro-credentials was not a viable, long-term solution for any business school. Instead, management education institutions needed to focus on being both economically viable and competitive.

Drawing on the work of the AACSB, Hall argued that “business schools should consider forming strategic global partnerships, which have the potential for improving operational efficiencies, thus resulting in a competitive advantage. These strategic partnerships can foster collaboration across many dimensions, including business schools, business entities, research associations, governments, and third-party providers.”

Indeed, the list of potential partnerships is endless and even includes collaboration through initiatives such as the Principles for Responsible Management Education, which holds member business schools to their commitment to champion responsible management education that embeds a sustainable, positive social impact into both teachings and research. This commitment also extends to how educators such as myself fulfil our role in helping to revisit old ways and transform our institutions into more relational, social and connected places of learning.

When you look at the levels of potential impact and innovation swirling around the management education space, it is fair to say that quality institutions of higher learning have the potential to look vastly different in the years to come. [GIBS](#)

## The big risk

The rapid shift to online teaching and digital learning was one of the most widely touted innovations to come out of the higher education space during Covid-19. Even as face-to-face teaching recommences across the world, this new facet of learning will remain with us, underpinned by new hardware and software technologies, and faculty and curricula that are increasingly in sync with both in-person and remote teaching.

There is, however, a big risk associated with this rapid digital transformation. Unless business schools are mindful, this shift could entrench inequality and undo opportunities for inclusion.

Early on in the pandemic, GIBS was working on the assumption that all of our students were employed, could afford data and were comfortable using digital platforms. We were wrong. Many students didn't have reliable connections and couldn't afford the added expense. Plus, we had to factor in the impact of loadshedding on connectivity. To ensure that the quality of education these students were receiving was not compromised, GIBS invited any student to come to campus and access free WiFi from the safety of their own vehicles. If they didn't have a car, we would arrange for a socially distanced workspace.

This lesson underlined the importance of understanding the individual context of the entire student body. Unless these needs and challenges are taken into account, all the technological bells and whistles in the world will not help people learn.



**Musk has  
roundly  
criticised  
business  
schools for  
stymieing  
innovation...**

BY CARA BOUWER

# Elon Musk

## The DNA of an Innovator

You don't have to be neurodiverse to be a great innovator...but it helps.

Elon Musk

In the well-thumbed MBA textbook, *The Global Business Environment*, author Janet Morrison, a former senior lecturer at Sunderland Business School in the UK, makes the following observation about innovators: "The successful innovator is not simply a person with a flair for coming up with a great idea. The innovator has a mixture of qualities, including knowledge and awareness of commercial opportunities – and perseverance."

What hasn't yet made it into mainstream business school publications is the

growing realisation that another ingredient is worthy of consideration: neurodiversity.

### Musk's creative muscle

Perhaps the most potent example of the power of neurodiversity to unlock creative genius is South Africa-born Elon Musk, a serial entrepreneur who has already imprinted his unique brand of innovation on sectors as diverse as online payments, electric car manufacturing and space travel.

Musk has been called the 21<sup>st</sup> century's Thomas Edison by the likes of CNBC – a reference to another prolific inventor who is believed to have been on the autism spectrum. As neurodiversity research has gained widespread acceptability, the characteristics of other famous innovators have been studied, adding to a growing list of possibly neurodiverse individuals responsible for some of history's best scientific advances. Albert Einstein. Marie Curie. Sir Isaac Newton. Nikola Tesla. Charles Darwin. Bill Gates. Steve Jobs.



In a 2015 article in *The Washington Post*, the paper's former editor of innovations, Matt McFarland, wrote, "While full-blown Asperger's Syndrome or autism hold back careers, a smaller dose of associated traits appears critical to hatching innovations that change the world."

McFarland drew heavily on the opinions of Peter Thiel, the billionaire investor, author and venture capitalist, who has been vocal about successful technology companies being founded by innovators who think outside the lines determined by society. In a 2015 discussion at George Mason University, Thiel said, "Many of the more successful entrepreneurs [in Silicon Valley] seem to be suffering from a mild form of Asperger's, where it's like you're missing the imitation, socialisation gene," he said, adding, "It happens to be a plus for innovation and creating great companies, but I think we always should turn this around as an incredible critique of our society. We need to ask, what is it about our society where those of us who do not suffer from Asperger's are at some massive disadvantage because we will be talked out of our interesting, original, creative ideas before they are even fully formed?"

## Conformity embeds comfort in the safe and conventional.

Conformity embeds comfort in the safe and conventional. The way to combat that, said Thiel, is to be "somewhat oblivious" to social pressures, which puts the current education system under scrutiny.

### Moving beyond the assembly line

Despite holding bachelor's degrees in science, physics, and economics, Musk has criticised business schools for stymieing innovation. These claims have been widely decried by executives and deans in the US. Musk has also lashed out at the current approach to education which regards people as "objects on an



## What is neurodiversity?

In 1998, Australian sociologist, Judy Singer, used the word 'neurodiversity' for the first time in her ground-breaking honours thesis. With that publication, Singer did more than coin a buzzword; she began a movement towards accepting how human minds don't always operate in the same way.

Her work – most recently outlined in her 2017 book, *NeuroDiversity: The Birth of an Idea* – postulated that many people live their lives on the so-called 'spectrum', battling to fit into the confines of social acceptability and the norms of human interaction.

Today, the term 'neurodiversity' is applied to those on the autism spectrum – a group

of neurodevelopmental disorders that impact how people communicate, learn, behave and socially interact – as well as those with conditions such as dyslexia, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

In 2021, Tesla and SpaceX founder, Elon Musk, disclosed that he had Asperger's Syndrome, a mild form of autism associated with reduced social skills and a preference for routine and systems, and often laser focus and creative thinking. "I'm pretty good at running human in emulation mode," Musk joked during his big reveal on *Saturday Night Live*.



assembly line". His vision to transform education is something as "close to a video game as possible", saying that if you can make it interactive and engaging, you can make education far more compelling and far easier. "You really want to disconnect the whole grade level thing from the subjects. Allow people to progress at the fastest pace they can, or are interested in, in each subject."

Creative engineer, designer and dyslexia advocate, Shawn Brown, also believes we need to transform how we teach children and, indeed, adults. Instead of relying on methods that require the regurgitation of long lists of information, facts and statistics, Brown speaks up for supporting neurodiversity learning.

"Neurodiverse traits can be really useful when it comes to solving problems and coming up with new ideas," Brown said during a 2017 Ted Talk. "Some of the most inventive individuals I encounter have dyslexia or some specific learning difference. And more often than not, these individuals have suffered with traditional education in some way."

Brown's message is that new educational models designed to support and encourage creative thinking would boost innovative output. This view has increasingly been taken up by the

likes of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which has produced insights into the limits of standardised testing and how personalised learning, class size, and professional learning networks can create a more neurodiverse educational experience.

Will this unlock the potential of generations of innovators?

A Cass Business School study by Julie Logan may offer some indication, noting that some 35% of entrepreneurs in the US and 19% in the UK self-identified as dyslexic, with many of these individuals demonstrating higher levels of risk-

taking, which translated to starting and owning more ventures than non-dyslexic entrepreneurs. Notably, one reason for the higher American figure was that "the identification, intervention and support for those with dyslexia in the UK started later than in the US and is still failing students". This reflection supports how a shift in education has the potential to unlock the DNA of would-be innovators and entrepreneurs like Musk.

As the Tesla founder noted recently at an Invest Hong Kong event, "Innovation comes from questioning the way things have been done before. And if in the education system you're taught not to do that, it will inhibit entrepreneurship."



IMAGE Getty Images

## Unpicking Elon Musk's innovative traits

Elon Musk has challenged Russian President Vladimir Putin to a duel over Ukraine. He's prophesied that artificial intelligence could one day rule humankind. He's tweeted himself on the wrong side of the US Securities and Exchange Commission over musings about taking Tesla private and decried public transport as 'painful'. His reputation for bluntness and, at times, inappropriate commentary is one of the reasons Musk topped the Top 50 CEOs on Twitter's list during the fourth quarter of 2021, according to the GlobalData analytics platform.

However, for students of entrepreneurship, there's another reason to follow Musk on social media: the near-daily insights into what makes a true innovator tick.

As a result, many Twitter users have come to their own conclusions about what makes Musk one of the most successful innovators of our time. Paul Graham (@paulg), a venture capitalist and entrepreneur best known for his Lisp programming language, recently tweeted, "Someone who knows Elon Musk well explained why he's so successful. It's simply that he's an engineering genius. I imagined it was because he was a good manager. Cars and rockets seemed so

different that I couldn't imagine someone being an expert in both. But, apparently, he is."

Other users have extolled his ability to create value by building vertical integration into all his businesses, his uncanny knack for creating products that appeal to the 'techies' and the average consumer, his energy and rationality, and his impressive ability to act and execute ideas.

For blogger Tim Urban, who has written extensively on the entrepreneur and his companies, Musk's success track record boils down to five ingredients:



## 1. He's smart and adept at spotting opportunities.

Musk saw the potential in electronic payments in the late 1990s, the upshot of which was PayPal. He recognised the potential in commercialising and disrupting interplanetary space travel, both for tourism and the potential colonisation of other planets, and founded SpaceX in 2002. He then turned his attention back to Earth and its problems, focusing on the electric vehicle and the need to inject fun and quality into this emerging space. He established Tesla Motors in 2003. OpenAI, a non-profit artificial intelligence research firm, joined Musk's stable in 2015. This was followed by Neuralink, which aims to enhance human abilities through technology, and, in 2016, tunnelling company The Boring Company followed. As CB Insights noted in a 2021 report, "His main projects take on almost every major industry and global problem conceivable and imagine a disruptive fundamental rewiring of that space or sector."

## 2. He's truly trying to do big things for the right reasons.

As part of SpaceX, Musk began to establish a network of 12,000 satellites in Earth's orbit, an ongoing project called Starlink. In February 2022, in response to a call for support from Ukraine, Musk

**"Some of the most inventive individuals I encounter have dyslexia or some specific learning difference..."**

tweeted that the Starlink service had been activated in the country and more terminals would come. The swift move kept Ukrainians connected, informed and able to guide drones to strike Russian military positions.

## 3. He works hard.

Musk's work ethic is legendary. In his book *All In: How Obsessive Leaders Achieve the Extraordinary*, Robert Bruce Shaw wrote, "When not in the office or on the plant floor, Musk is almost always accessible to his people. He tells them they should not hesitate to reach out to him when necessary, saying, 'I'm available 24/7 to help solve issues. Call me at 3:00 am on a Sunday morning. I don't care.'"

## 4. He's courageous enough to act.

In addition to mobilising Starlink, Musk's Tesla also offered users of EVs (of all makes) free charging in key Ukrainian cities and parts of neighbouring Poland, Hungary and Slovakia to enable those

fleeing the Russian invasion to escape by car. Tesla also offered free EV charging in affected areas during US hurricanes Irma and Florence in 2017 and 2018 and when California was engulfed in wildfires in 2018.

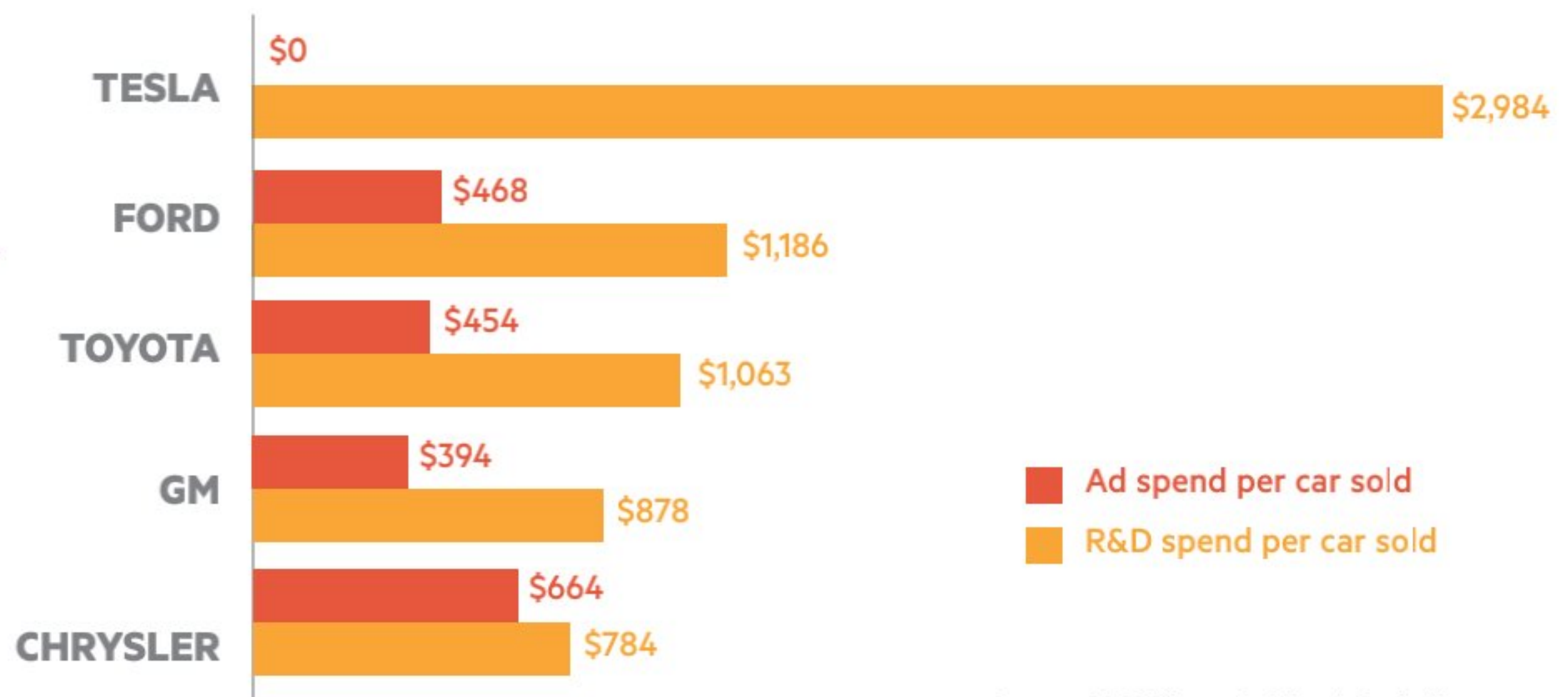
## 5. He does things his way, irrespective of social norms.

Conventional automotive makers spend considerable amounts advertising their marques. Not Tesla. Musk favours word of mouth as a marketing medium and rather ploughs funding into research and development.

To be like Musk, says Urban, you need to have a "magical ability to be sane and trust your reasoning over conventional wisdom". He adds, "The way he is on Twitter is not how you are supposed to be when you are a super-famous industry titan. You are supposed to just be silly on Twitter and do memes and get into little quibbles. He just does things his own way, regardless of what you are supposed to do."

## Tesla: Innovation Over Advertising?

Expenditure on advertising/research and development per car sold in 2020



Source: SEC filings via Visual Capitalist



BY TAMARA OBERHOLSTER

# What makes an innovator?

Is it something people are born with? Do serial innovators share common traits? Can innovation be taught?



Melissa A. Schilling

These are the sorts of questions that prompted [Melissa A. Schilling](#) to write *Quirky, The Remarkable Story of the Traits, Foibles, and Genius of Breakthrough Innovators Who Changed the World*. In this book, Schilling, the John Herzog Family professor of management and organisations at New York University's Stern School of Business, explores why some people are able to create serial innovations. She delves deeply into the lives of eight creative geniuses – Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin, Elon Musk, Dean Kamen, Nikola Tesla, Marie Curie, Thomas Edison, and Steve Jobs – to identify the traits and experiences that led them to become breakthrough innovators.

## What innovation is (and isn't)

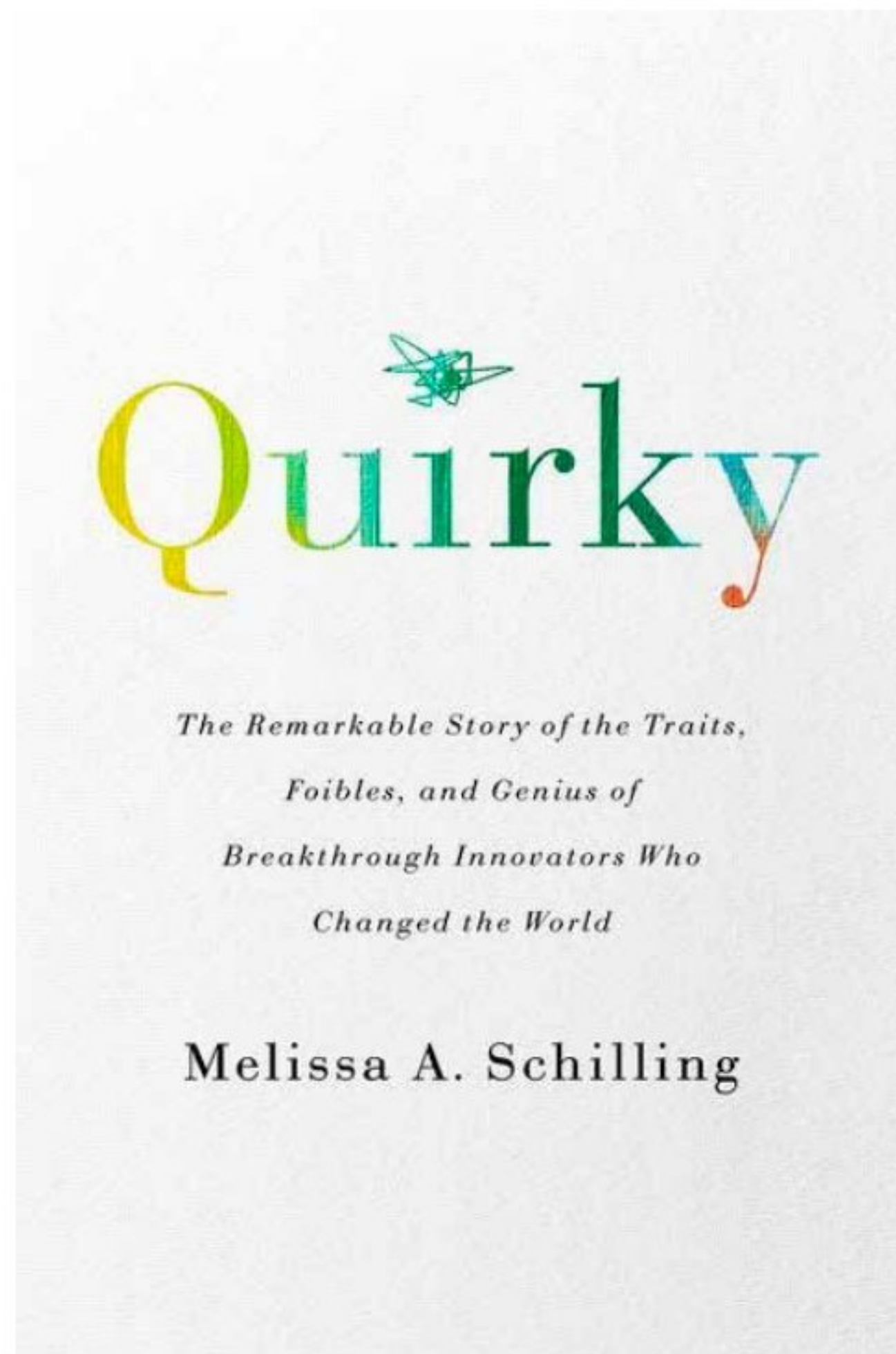
"I usually define innovation as the application of new ideas, methods or materials to useful purposes," Schilling says. "There are two key parts of this definition: 'new' and 'useful'. You will find almost any credible definition of innovation includes these two pieces. Note that it does not include words like 'business' or 'technology', as innovation can occur in any domain and does not have to be manifest in physical artefacts. New business models, school curricula or organisation designs are innovations just as much as new drugs, transportation devices, or software algorithms."

Speaker, advisor, practice strategist, innovator and GIBS faculty member, Abdullah Verachia, says he finds Azim Premji's thoughts on innovation useful (the Indian business entrepreneur who served as chairman of Wipro). "He said everyone thinks innovation is ideas," explains Verachia. "But Premji says that's not innovation – it's an ingredient. He says creativity is thinking new things, and innovation is about applying that creativity and doing new things. It's as much action as it is ideas, with as much implementation as it is design."

Verachia adds that while some people are great idea generators, others are better at synthesising an idea and still others at critiquing ideas or executing them. "These all play a role in the innovation pipeline," he says.

However, Schilling says one of the most pervasive myths of innovation is the belief that it's usually accelerated or improved through working in teams. "It just isn't this simple. A new idea must first be created in a person's mind. Sometimes that process is facilitated through interacting with others, but sometimes, interacting with others actually gets in the way. There may be other stages of innovation that more reliably benefit from group work (such as execution of an idea after it's been decided upon), but ideation itself often benefits from time spent alone, unfettered by the pressures or distractions of others. There has been a lot of work on this, and we understand pretty clearly why people need alone time to generate and elaborate their most creative ideas, and yet in organisations like businesses and schools, you will still see this blind faith put into brainstorming teams."





Quirky by Melissa A. Schilling

## Can you train for innovation?

The short answer: yes and no. In her book, Schilling notes that the people she profiled are in a league of their own that is beyond most people's level of play. Their innovative output was, to some extent, a result of innate traits coupled with situational advantages that were unique to them. Being a serial breakthrough innovator also comes at a cost. Schilling points out that Edison and Franklin abandoned their family for long periods; Curie largely left the raising of her children to her father-in-law, and neither Tesla nor Kamen ever married or had children. This is not the life many would choose. However, Schilling does believe that these innovators' stories yield valuable lessons for anyone wishing to promote innovation.

**...sometimes interacting with others actually gets in the way...**

"There are certain traits that can facilitate a person being innovative, but they do not always do so, especially not in isolation. For example, if someone is smart and motivated to innovate, having a tendency toward non-conformity or anti-authoritarianism could be really valuable because it can help

**...intelligence can be extremely valuable... but it does not guarantee innovation...**

the innovator resist the tendency of groups to bring everyone to some compromise position that is well understood but not particularly breakthrough. On the other hand, non-conformity in isolation from other valuable traits may have little effect (or even negative effects) on innovation," she says. "Similarly, intelligence can be extremely valuable to innovation, but it does not guarantee innovation because there are a lot of different paths an intelligent person can take, and many of those paths lead toward replicating or executing known solutions rather than creating better solutions."

Each of the traits discussed in Schilling's book has the potential to have a beneficial effect on innovation but work in combination, not in isolation. "Some of these traits are innate and give a person an innate advantage in their propensity or ability to innovate – high working memory combined with high self-efficacy and idealism, for example, is a pretty powerful combination," she says. "However, if you didn't get these traits innately, most of them are either trainable, or there are workarounds. For example, self-efficacy and idealism are certainly trainable, and while high working memory might not be trainable per se, you can learn to become more efficient in how you use your working memory, and you can learn to use external forms of memory (e.g., making extensive use of well-organised notes, for example)."

## Success in separation

Schilling tackles three main themes in her book: creativity and originality, effort and persistence, and situational advantage.

"One of the most surprising traits (to me at least) that the innovators had in common was their sense of 'separateness'. Nearly all of them felt socially detached or as if they didn't belong to the social worlds around them. They tended to work alone and socialised very infrequently," says Schilling. "Many were noted for being detached even from their family members. Sometimes this was because of something that happened to them (for example, when she was a child, Marie Curie became chronically depressed after her mother's death; Thomas Edison's mother pulled him out of grammar school after a teacher ridiculed him, and he was largely deaf).

For other people, 'separateness' seems to have been part of their innate personality. Separateness can give an innovator an advantage when it comes to working alone and generating non-conforming solutions. It also has disadvantages. For example, it can make it harder for an innovator to get the support they need or to get their ideas adopted. This again highlights that a trait doesn't usually work in isolation, and it's not always advantageous – it just has the potential to be."



In this regard, she says Covid-19 may have had benefits for innovation, both by causing more people to work on their own (and, hopefully, becoming more comfortable working on their own, which could lead to long-term effects) and by forcing people to break with some norms that might have prevented innovation.

## Fostering innovation within organisations

“There are many ways organisations can unleash the breakthrough innovation potential of their employees and even ways that parents can facilitate the breakthrough innovation of their children,” says Schilling. “One of the most powerful, in my opinion, is through helping individuals increase their self-efficacy – the sense that they can overcome all obstacles to achieve their goals. That makes people happier, more motivated, less daunted by risk, and more persistent in the face of failure. We could all benefit from more of that!”

Other strategies she suggests include challenging norms and paradigms, providing people with time alone, inspiring

## ...one of the most important characteristics of innovators is curiosity...

grand ambitions, helping people to “find the flow” (tapping into people’s intrinsic motivators), and increasing access to technological and intellectual resources.

Verachia says one of the most important characteristics of innovators is curiosity, which should extend beyond their field of work. This enables them to “connect the dots” between seemingly disparate ideas. “Can you learn curiosity? I definitely think you can spark curiosity in people,” he says. “For example, every single day at our family dinner table, I ask the question, ‘What have we learned different today?’”

## Five ways to foster innovation

Verachia shares his five-point strategy for cultivating innovation within organisations:

### 1. Seek out new experiences

We’re limited by our lived experiences. Expanding this experience by embracing new experiences can foster innovation, but it must be done intentionally.

### 2. Develop an appetite for risk

Not unfettered risk, but rather an ability to recognise that innovation requires change, which always carries risk.

### 3. Cultivate empathy

Innovative individuals step into the shoes of other individuals. In many cases, innovation is solving problems that are more than oneself.

### 4. Focus on finding patterns

Almost every innovation is not something new – it’s a new combination of existing resources, services, or capabilities. For example, Uber took geolocation technology and coupled it with big data, with cars that are unused and people willing to work in a gig economy environment.

### 5. Learn to collaborate

To move from a good idea to a real innovation, ideas must be executed, which usually requires buy-in and collaboration.

## Three mistakes to avoid

Verachia consults to companies looking to create a culture of innovation. He suggests avoiding these common pitfalls:

### 1. Innovation is not always addition:

“Everyone thinks innovation is adding things,” he says. “The success of Steve Jobs was that he was a subtractor. He took things away. In his second Apple stint, he took the product range from 15 to three. He took away the keypad, the USB and the CD-ROM and created the iPad.”

### 2. Don’t start with the physical space:

“Often companies want to start by building an innovation lab. But putting people in a room and saying, ‘In this room you must be innovative’ goes against the very grain that innovation should not be limited to the workplace, but that you should have a mindset of innovation across all of what you do.”

### 3. Make room for innovation:

Give people time to think and help them gain exposure to teams outside of the ones they work in. Reward and incentivise innovation. “The magic of organisations is in creating the fluidity for cross-cultural exchange. You can’t expect it to happen – you have to make it happen,” says Verachia. GIBS



BY GAYE CROSSLEY

# South African Light-bulb Moments

Inspiration and innovation can come in many ways. Sometimes it happens accidentally when you're tinkering in the tool shed. Sometimes it requires endless hours of experimentation until the Eureka moment strikes. While South Africa's most notable inventions have stemmed from all of these scenarios, they all have one thing in common: they fulfil a global need.

## 1950 – Q20

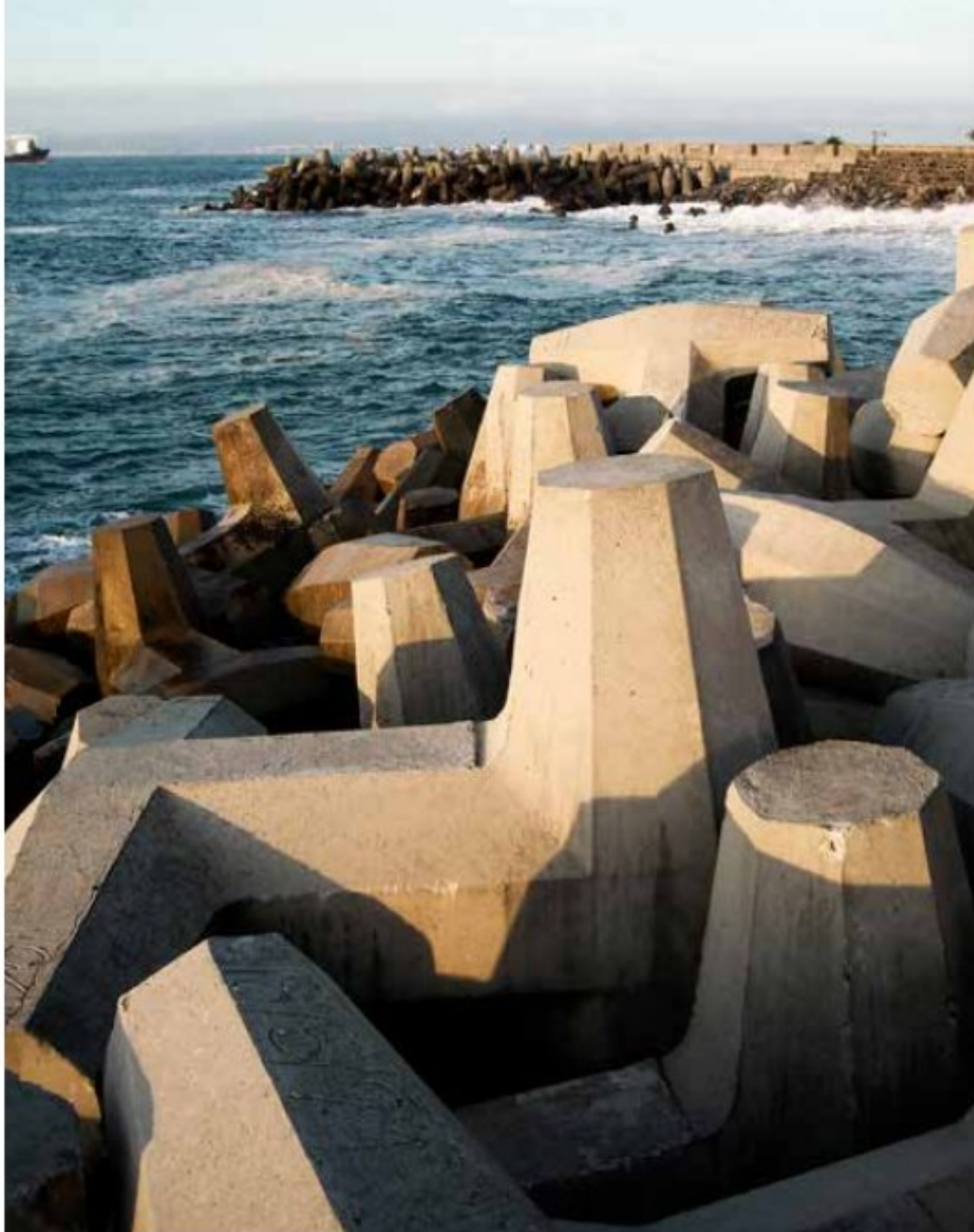
Q20 is a household name in South Africa. Why Q20? That's because it gives 20 answers to 20 questions. In 1950, Mr. Robertson – nobody knows his first name – was chatting to his neighbour about an amazing new liquid he had invented. It lubricated, kept rust at bay, silenced squeaky door hinges, and loosened seized rusted nuts and bolts, to list just a few of its uses. Since its initial invention, this South African favourite continues to set the standard for similar products worldwide. The product shot to fame locally because, at the time of its development, the first VW Beetles were being produced in Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape. The car, a firm favourite amongst students and young families, had one small design flaw: the distributor cap would get wet when it rained. However, due to its water repelling properties, Q20 became a staple accessory for Beetle owners all over the country. Q20 is now sold in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, the Indian sub-continent, the Far East and Australasia.



## The 1960s – Pratley Putty

The man behind Pratley Putty, South African engineer, George “Monty” Pratley, was a prolific inventor. In 1948, he created Pratley Engineering and focused on the mining industry. In 1950, Pratley invented and patented the first electrical delay explosives igniter. He invented Pratley Putty 10 years later with the help of chemist, Frank Robinson. Pratley Putty is an epoxy putty adhesive used to fill, seal, build up, and bond any hard or rigid surface. Pratley and Robinson came up with the formulation while working on a design for an electrical junction box. They realised they needed something to anchor the electrical terminals to the box, and Pratley Putty was born. Much stronger than its initial need, the product travelled to the moon on the Apollo XI mission in 1969 and was even used to stop a crack spreading on the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.





## 1963 – Dolos

A design often considered ahead of its time, dolosse (plural of dolos) are the huge concrete shapes that dissipate the force of waves found at the entrances to ports and harbours. They spread the energy of these waves to stop their erosive effect. The invention was initially attributed to the Port Elizabeth chief engineer, Eric Merrifield. While Merrifield was in charge of and signed off on the initial project, the design was, in fact, the brainchild of a draughtsman named Aubrey Kruger. One day, Merrifield chatted to Kruger about the possibility of designing a concrete structure that could protect the East London breakwater from the battering of the Indian Ocean waves. Kruger apparently raced home for lunch on his red Vespa, grabbed his wife's broomstick and cut three pieces off it. He then nailed the pieces together in an 'H' shape with one twisted leg. His inspiration came from the dubbeltjie thorn. It was only shortly before he died that Kruger was eventually recognised for his role in designing one of South Africa's most recognised inventions.

## 1965 – Retinal cryoprobe

The retinal cryoprobe was invented and commercialised in 1965 by biomedical engineer and ophthalmologist, Dr. Selig Percy Amoils at the Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto. Cryosurgery uses extreme cold to remove or destroy damaged or diseased tissue in a process called cryoablation. Amoils refined cryoextraction in cataract surgery by inventing the cryoprobe still widely used in ophthalmology and gynaecology practice today. Amoils' probe used carbon dioxide or nitrous oxide to cool the probe, and when it was time, it was reheated electrically. This invention changed how doctors approached cataracts and retinal surgery. As a result, Amoils was awarded the Queen's award for technological innovation in 1975, which afforded him global recognition for this development.



**COMPUTICKET**

## 1971 – Computicket

Computicket, the first online ticketing system globally, was the brainchild of Benoni theatre lover, Percy Tucker. When Tucker wanted to go to a show, he had to catch the train from Benoni to Johannesburg and then queue for hours at the Johannesburg Theatre. His first solution to this dilemma was to launch Show Service in 1954, a manual ticket office on Eloff Street. However, Tucker was still frustrated at the queues over the 17 years it was in operation. He needed something more accessible, especially for people who did not live in town. His idea was "to take the box office to the people". As he had no computer skills, he sought out international computer experts who could help him build a system. It took him six months to develop Computicket, which launched in 1971. Today, Computicket is still a leader in the global ticketing industry and caters for all ticket sales, even bus tickets, vouchers and classified adverts.



## 1974 – Kreepy Krauly

Tired of the tedious job of cleaning his swimming pool, hydraulics engineer, Ferdinand Chauvier, invented a machine that could do the job for him. Although it was the first commercially successful pool cleaner on the market, the Kreepy Krauly was not the first pool cleaner invented. In the 1960s, Johannesburg inventor, John Raugenheimer, produced the Pool Bug, which entered the market in 1972. It was an unreliable machine, but it did inspire future inventions. Helga Schneider, also a South African, then created the Pool Ranger in 1975, but it was Chauvier's design using the water pressure from the pool pump to create a suction for the pool cleaner, that won the day. His pressure-powered machine was able to clean pools automatically and efficiently. From its humble beginnings in Chauvier's home workshop in Springs, east of Johannesburg, by the time Chauvier died in 1985, the Kreepy Krauly was cleaning a million pools worldwide.





## 1992 – Speed Gun

During the 1990s, one of the biggest advances in ball sports came out – speed guns. Speed guns measure the speed and angle of the flight of objects like cricket and tennis balls. They were invented by Somerset West engineer, Henri Johnson, an ex-navy engineer. During his time in the navy, Johnson had developed radar technology that could read the speed of projectiles in flight. Johnson saw an opportunity to use this technology in sports. Together with the Electronic Development House (EDH) in Stellenbosch, he set about developing a speed gun that could be used to measure the speed and trajectory of a cricket ball. This invention was then improved, and the EDH Speedball, which used the Doppler radar system (a military technology) to measure the speed of a cricket ball in flight, was developed. Johnson further improved on this technology to develop the world's first 3D tennis serve speed measuring device and the Flightscope, a 3D golf ball tracker, both of which are used around the globe. In 2014, the Flightscope won a Stevie Award for Best Consumer Product.

## 1999 – CyberTracker

In 1990, Louis Liebenberg participated in a hunt with !Nate, a Kalahari Khoisan hunter. The Khoisan hunter-gatherers could no longer sustain their lifestyles as their hunting grounds were being fenced off, and the free movement of animals was inhibited, so !Nate asked Liebenberg to help them find jobs. In 1996, Liebenberg, realising these trackers could have a massive impact on conservation, teamed up with a computer science student. With the help of tracker Karel Benadie, they developed the CyberTracker user interface. Combining ancient tracking skills and modern-day science, conservationists can now track and protect vulnerable species from diseases and illegal hunting and poaching, gather rich field data around the migration, eating, and breeding habits of endangered species, and enable better wildlife management for Africa's national parks. Its uses are extended to farming, community forestry management, and global environmental monitoring.

## 2008 – The Wonderbag

Perhaps one of the simplest but highest-impact innovations to come out of South Africa is the Wonderbag, which allows people to slow-cook a meal without power. Shortly before the 2010 World Cup, South Africa experienced its first serious bout of loadshedding. Frustrated with not having certainty around meal preparation, inventor, Sara Collins, came up with the simple yet effective idea of creating an insulated bag for pots. Her idea was sparked by seeing the insulated Wonderbox that street vendors used. The design is made of polyester fabric and insulated with recycled polystyrene granules. Once the contents of a pot have come to a boil, the bag retains the heat and ensures the food continues to cook for up to eight hours. By 2018, over 1.5 million were in use across the globe and *Time Magazine* ranked it as one of its [Top 50 Genius Inventions](#).



## 2012 – Amoriguard

Venda-born MIT professor, Mulalo Doyoyo, had returned to South Africa on holiday in Midrand, Gauteng. The inventor and academic was trying to find a solution that could bind coal dust – a 'waste' product and environmental polluter – for reuse by Sasol. But it was not working. In pure frustration, Doyoyo kicked the bucket that contained the chemical solution he was working with. The liquid flew in all directions, with some of it spilling onto a log lying on the floor. The chemical in the bucket was not suitable for use in furnaces, but what Doyoyo discovered was that the liquid, bound to the log, did not flake or wash away. He took the log to paint specialists and what Doyoyo had inadvertently discovered was an eco-friendly, cost-effective, odourless paint. The paint is now being manufactured and sold under the name of Amoriguard A-Gain – a decorative paint based on processed wastes.

## 2013 – The world's first digital laser

University of KwaZulu-Natal PhD student Sandile Ngcobo's breakthrough experimental work resulted in the development of the world's first digital laser. Brought in to join a team of scientists at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research's National Laser Centre, Ngcobo's work resulted in the world's first digital laser. It took Ngcobo six months to perfect his design, which negated the need for expensive optics or other special mediating devices that shape and control the light being emitted by a laser. His invention allows lasers to change the shape of their light, which is a leap in laser technology and could be the forerunner of other cutting-edge laser technology for use in the medical field, communications, manufacturing, product development and household devices like remote controls and CD players. [GIBS](#)



**TONY CHRISTODOULOU**

*Tony Christodoulou is Vice President Global IT: Strategic Projects, American Tower Corporation and Adjunct Senior Lecturer, GIBS*

BY TONY CHRISTODOULOU

# Evading the Success Trap

**Most companies accept that innovation is essential to ensuring long-term sustainability, but most struggle with the practicalities of integrating innovation into their ‘business-as-usual’ mantra.**

One of the many paradoxes of business is that success exposes a company to the risk of ultimate irrelevance. Companies that are conscious of this risk avoid the success trap by integrating disruption or innovation into their business models. The trouble is that it is fiendishly difficult to do, and many fail to get it right. As always, understanding the problem is the first step in solving it.

It’s easy to see why success can act as a trap. While business success is typically built on the back of innovation, the reality is that when it all pays off, the focus shifts from thinking out of the box to creating an institution – the focus shifts to putting

in place the processes to maximise profits and minimise costs. Conceptually, the business’ mindset moves from how to get ahead to how to stay ahead. The two can seem mutually exclusive, especially if, as is almost inevitable, the company structures itself in traditional ways.

To cite one glaring example: the typical corporate structure of business units focused on meeting targets can work well in the short term, but it actually militates against innovation. This article aims to understand why that should be so and how to put a company into a stronger position to build innovation into its “business-as-usual” structure and mindset.



## ...one needs to understand how innovation works...

First, one needs to understand how innovation works. Then, based on this understanding, we can begin to extrapolate some principles for how a company could integrate innovation into the way it does things. At the same time, it will become clear how traditional ways of doing business are often inimical to the development of innovations.

### Workplace design

[Steven Johnson's TED Talk](#) insight about the English coffee-house as the epitome of a space that nurtures design suggests how inhospitable to innovation the industrial design of many workplaces is. By contrast, the “cool” workplace of the archetypal technology company, with its chill rooms and campus atmosphere, starts to make more sense. Such companies depend par excellence on fostering innovation.

But for more conventional companies, all is not lost – Johnson cites the work of researcher Kevin Dunbar, who filmed how work was done in several science labs around the world. On analysing the videos, he found that the most important ideas did not emerge from the classic lab environment. Almost all of the breakthrough ideas emanated from the weekly lab conferences. Everybody got together to share their latest findings and thoughts – often, it was sharing mistakes or frustrations that sparked the innovative thought. Johnson calls this environment in which different people from different backgrounds and interests come together to share what they are doing during a “liquid network”.

So it might not be necessary to spring for acid-green beanbags and a ping-pong table – the good old-fashioned conference table with everybody around it regularly will work just as well. It's all about creating a semi-chaotic environment that allows people to see how seemingly disparate things could collide and create that spark of something new.

### Organisational design

Equally important is organisational design. The typical organisational design tends to create silos (business units, functions like marketing, sales or IT), making it very hard to create the kind of physical environment, as described above, in which a wide variety of ideas, data, and interests can fruitfully collide. The silos (inadvertently) created by typical organisational designs also prevent people from seeing the company as a whole. Useful insight comes from Dr. Russell Ackoff, an organisational theorist: “In any system, when one improves the performance of the parts taken separately, the performance of the whole does not necessarily improve and frequently gets worse.”

Great innovations in marketing, for example, do not necessarily translate into innovation that makes the company more competitive or serves its customers better. One should never forget that most of the important business processes are horizontal, and that way of thinking needs to permeate the organisational design.

## ...it might not be necessary to spring for acid-green beanbags and a ping-pong table...





## ...success can act as a trap...

It's no exaggeration that this problem of silos and the negative impact they have on all aspects of a company's performance, not just its ability to innovate, is one of the perennial business challenges. The often-heard desire for as flat a corporate structure as possible is essentially a wish to solve the silo problem.

One way to encourage employees to see the company as a whole, as a codependent and interdependent system, could be to look at how performance is measured. Too often, performance measures mirror the organisational silos or the crude bottom line, but careful design could link them to common goals and objectives. This approach could nudge people to think about running the business better and how to change it for future relevance.

### Corporate culture

Culture is a notoriously slippery concept and difficult to change, but it is a potent force in any organisation. A company that wants to integrate innovation into its DNA certainly needs to take steps to promote a culture of reinvention. As discussed in the previous point, rethinking how performance is measured will lay the groundwork.

Another important foundation for a culture of reinvention would be to change how failure is viewed. As Steven Johnson argued, it is often when people discuss their failures with colleagues that connections are made that spark innovation. One of the things that people have always noticed about the business culture in the United States, compared with that in the United Kingdom or South Africa, is the diametrically opposed way that failure is viewed. Typically, in the United States, failure is seen as a learning experience that makes entrepreneurs better able to succeed; here, it is something to be swept under the carpet. In the corporate environment, in particular, failure is very much a dirty word. In contrast, in the United States, it can be seen as identifying an individual prepared to try new things. (I suppose the quantum of failures would be important!)

### Talent

Every corporate website you ever read references its people as being its greatest asset. It's a cliché because it's true, but at the same time, talent is only an asset if it's the right sort of talent and tapped into effectively. A company that recognises the importance of innovation needs to know what an innovative individual looks like and how to attract and retain them. This may involve rethinking job criteria and even role descriptions.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is in full swing, and, despite all the scare stories about how the robots are going to

take all our jobs, it will be a very people-driven one. The 4IR is right from the Johnson innovation playbook: technologies that have been around for some time are now being combined in new ways to do entirely different things. Data – vast amounts of it – lie at the heart of the 4IR, and in a sense, the vast data lakes being created resemble nothing so much as the coffee-shop environment in which different worlds collide, sometimes to great effect.

A final point about talent for innovation... In the wake of the pandemic, we are in the throes of a workplace revolution of sorts. The Great Resignation is seeing talented, skilled people grasping the opportunity to reinvent how work is done, inevitably leading to less hierarchical, more distributed organisations which, paradoxically perhaps, may actually promote the “everybody around the same (virtual) table” ethos simply because they break down geographical barriers – a virtual liquid network. In any event, innovation-friendly companies need to understand what this new workforce wants and how to use the new work style to promote innovation.

### Leadership

Leaders, including the board, play an outsize role in any organisation, particularly when developing and deepening a culture of innovation. The board must lead the way by ensuring that the strategy has customer-centric innovation at its centre and that the company's performance metrics drive the right behaviour and thinking. On a practical level, this means broadening the focus beyond “the numbers”; EBITDA and the bottom line are insufficient when it comes to sustainability, and innovation is key to sustainability.

The CEO and their exco have to have the courage and grit to avoid being caught in the success trap – it's the executives who are associated with the company's existing success, and it will take both courage and vision to push beyond that. As for the rest of the company's employees, a lot of this will be driven by the corporate culture and, specifically, how success is measured and rewarded.

To conclude: only companies that learn how to innovate and continuously drive a mindset for constant reinvention will succeed over the long term. To make innovation central to how they operate is thus imperative, but few get it right.

**Culture is a notoriously slippery concept...**



## Getting to grips with innovation

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Innovation is defined as “a new method, idea, product etc.” – it is the “etc.” that is important. It could be anything. Innovations can be radical (the internal combustion engine redefining what transport was all about) or incremental in nature (for example, applying process excellence to your existing value chain). Incremental innovations are normally easier to adopt into the existing business than radical ones, as the latter requires a total rethink of the business model.

Kodak’s woes, let us never forget, came not from the lack of innovation – it invented the digital technology that later revolutionised the camera offering. It failed to understand how to adapt to the innovation it had created, electing rather to sideline the innovation to protect its existing analogue photography business, which made up the majority of its revenue at the time.

Innovation theory argues that all innovation proceeds in an S-curve: as an innovation matures, its profits rise, but that’s just when the company needs to ensure it has new offerings in place to capture new profit opportunities as the maturing innovation’s profits decline. Kodak’s inability to jump the S-curve to the next big thing shows exactly how to fluff it.

Let’s take a deeper look at creating innovation. Steven Johnson’s *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation* offers useful insights. He argues against the cliché of a lone genius experiencing a thunder flash of inspiration; in his view, innovation is a much more complex and messy process that often takes place over extended periods and is accompanied by the right enabling environment.

Famously, Johnson puts forward the 18th-century coffee house as the archetype for the kind of environment that sparked innovation. These coffee houses, he says, were places where people who would not ordinarily meet

would come together to drink coffee and talk – about as unlike a Starbucks as you could imagine. But, memorably, he says, they were where ideas could have sex.

A second point he makes is that innovations often incubate over time. He cites the example of Darwin, who already “had” the idea of natural selection several years before he wrote *On the origin of species* – he just wasn’t ready to articulate it. Johnson calls this the “slow hunch”. Innovation can be slow to gestate, not suited to the quarteritis that plagues the corporate world.

A third important point about innovation is that it often emerges when two or more ideas connect. This, he says, is an argument against patents or, at least, patenting too soon. The open platform mindset is more conducive to innovation: “Chance favours the connected mind”.

A final point: innovations can be ordered up in response to a particular problem, provided one takes an innovative approach. For example, Africa’s high infant mortality could potentially be halved if premature babies could be kept warm in incubators. But high-tech Western incubators are ruinously expensive and require sophisticated support that is not available in most African hospitals. The solution: an incubator that used components from an average vehicle – a battery, a headlight and so on – could be maintained using skills and parts that were readily available across the continent. This points to an important principle in innovation for commercial gain: it must start and end with a profound understanding of the potential clients and what their needs and capabilities are.

The common idea that innovation and advanced technology are joined at the hip thus turns out to be, if not actually erroneous, then incomplete. GIBS



BY DENISE MHLANGA

# Inside SA's Business and Innovation Incubators

**Despite economic challenges and limited resources, innovation remains a key element in building sustainable businesses.**

Innovation – the art of creating something new or doing things differently to make life easier – has been around for ages.

Well-known innovators have one thing in common: they see the world differently, and want to simplify life, work and play.

In 1876, Alexander Bell invented the telephone. Since then, we've had more or less continuous innovation in the communications sphere and now have mobile devices.

Jeff Bezos founded Amazon.com, a company that has revolutionised e-commerce. Shopping online is a button away from your mobile phone.

Today, innovation is seen as a differentiator in many sectors of the economy. Big and small businesses are also doing their part to uplift communities to become economically sustainable.

Some of these innovations aren't as big as inventing the telephone, but they do have a social and economic impact on the lives of ordinary people.

## The rise of innovation and incubator hubs

In South Africa, as in many parts of the world, the public and private sectors have designed hubs to help nurture innovators by providing resources they wouldn't have accessed otherwise. Some hubs focus solely on research to help drive innovation forward, while others make money by bringing value-added products or



Allon Raiz

**...innovation is seen as a differentiator in many sectors of the economy...**

ideas to the market. Ultimately, the goal is to find solutions to everyday problems.

Despite challenges such as low economic growth, infrastructure constraints and access to capital, many entrepreneurs thrive thanks to innovation/incubator hubs.

Described as Africa's most successful business incubator, Raizcorp is a profit-making incubator that has been sustainable for 22 years. It focuses on developing, training and accelerating entrepreneurs and also helps governments and developmental agencies set up entrepreneurial infrastructure at country level, says CEO, Allon Raiz.

Raizcorp programmes last anywhere from four weeks to three years and are run by a dedicated full-time team of guides and mentors. The programmes provide extensive entrepreneurial learning and mentorship in strategy, finance, sales, marketing and personal development.



Some programmes offer additional benefits such as back-office support, bookkeeping, the use of incubator infrastructure, specialists and access to markets for their products and services.

In partnership with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, Galelo Africa and Companies Creating Change (C3), the MultiChoice Group has established the MultiChoice Innovation Fund (MIF) accessed through the Accelerator Programme.

“It aims to connect entrepreneurs in sectors including HealthTech, FinTech, EduTech, circular economy and the creative industries with global investors to unlock business opportunities,” says Collen Dlamini, executive head for corporate affairs at MultiChoice.

He says the programme attracted 168 applicants; 40 were chosen to present, and 20 were then selected to participate in the programme, which started in September 2021. These also included five from the MIF portfolio, with only six shortlisted as finalists that went on to pitch to an international investor panel.

Participants had to attend 26 hours of intensive virtual boot camp training on business fundamentals with exposure to expansion and capital raising opportunities. This was followed by a live pitch day to industry experts and investors.



Collen Dlamini

## Access to funding is one of the biggest challenges...

MultiChoice allocated over R37 million in assisting the SMMEs with grants, loans, business support and resources, says Dlamini.

“The programme is a launching ground for SMMEs with great growth potential, and MultiChoice identifies these entrepreneurs backing them up through investments to be an instigator to attract even more opportunities for the entrepreneurs,” says Dlamini.

Mining group, Anglo American, established Zimele in 1989 to support small businesses in various communities, with more than 3,700 receiving support.

“Our hubs focus on supporting SMMEs and the youth through up-front mentorship followed by funding opportunities,” says Larisha Naidoo, head of Zimele at Anglo American.

Naidoo says that apart from the limited funding resources within their host communities, access to markets and technical ability to deliver on contracts are the main challenges facing entrepreneurs and small businesses.

To this end, Zimele has partnered with various institutions, including the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) for finance-related learning, Tjeka TVET College to build technical capabilities and Caliba to help entrepreneurs and businesses, to better understand the tender processes involved in the awarding of work contracts.

### Funding

Access to funding is one of the biggest challenges facing entrepreneurs and innovators, hindering the growth and development of small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in South Africa.

Naidoo says that of the 3,700 businesses that have been supported by Zimele, a third of those were assisted between 2018 and now. From 2018, Zimele’s loan funding reached R319 million, and in 2021 alone, this amount was R131 million.

The programme is aimed at suppliers who provide goods and services to the group’s mining operations, such as contractors and sub-contractors, transportation operators and personnel services.

She explains that this budget is in line with the needs of the Anglo American business divisions, including Kumba Iron Ore, Anglo





Larisha Naidoo

Platinum and De Beers. The funds are administered on their behalf. To qualify for loan funding, businesses must also be based in communities where Anglo American's operations are located.

Apart from the loan funding programme, Zimele offers business coaching, mentoring and access to markets through the Supplier Development Programme, Enterprise Development Programme and Youth Development Programme.

"These programmes aim to ensure that these businesses are economically viable and with the potential to create sustainable jobs in our host communities," says Naidoo.

She says that for the last three years, Zimele has been implementing a workforce readiness programme for youth, thus enhancing young people's chances of being employed while boosting their entrepreneurial development.

Zimele has partnered with Reach Summit to offer tailored, sector-specific skills development programmes to youth training programmes. These will target the tourism and hospitality, and retail sectors – two sectors that are high in demand for jobs.

Raizcorp does not provide funding to entrepreneurs on its incubation programmes, although it does assist with funding

## ...the SMME sector has a critical role in creating jobs...

from its curated capital division, Partner Elite. The company looks to partner with businesses that can scale. In turn, they will support these businesses with access to markets, capital, and mentorship in business operations and talent management.

"From experience, entrepreneurs who have participated in any of our programmes are more likely to receive funding from banks and other funders," says Raiz. He adds that a big proportion of the incubator's income is derived from the dividends and fees paid by successful entrepreneurs in Partner Elite.

### Attracting global capital

In January 2022, the MultiChoice Accelerator Programme selected six SMMEs to pitch their innovative ideas to the global start-up investment community as part of its World Expo participation in Dubai.

Selected companies include EM Guidance (digital healthcare platform), Lightbulb (management systems provider for virtual learning and training), Swypa (township consumer delivery service), Whoosh (payment technologies provider), Wetility (hybrid solar solutions provider) and IT Thynk (information and communications technology services and gaming technologies provider).

"MultiChoice has invested R52 million made up of grants, resources, and business support towards the shortlisted companies ahead of their final pitch to the global investor panel," points out Dlamini, who explains that participating in the World Expo challenged entrepreneurs to step out of their comfort zones, and think out of the box.

They had to dig deep to prove their business cases, explain the local context, and showcase commercial viability. This exercise also provided MultiChoice with valuable insights into what needed to change or be added to current training offerings, like thinking about global business as a local village.

### Are innovation and business hubs effective?

Dlamini believes the MultiChoice Accelerator Programme is effective because the company understands that the SMME sector has a critical role in creating jobs in South Africa. With high unemployment rates in the country, MultiChoice wanted to make a difference. Creating a platform for up-and-coming South African entrepreneurs to raise more capital for their businesses led to unlocking much-needed employment opportunities for others.



“Collaborations and partnerships within the private sector and the government are essential in building programmes that develop skills and enable entrepreneurs and businesses to access capital from a wider pool of key networks,” says Dlamini.

Already, entrepreneurs are confident in approaching capital raising pitches and follow-up with some of the investors. They’ve also established a network of other entrepreneurs to share knowledge and key learnings.

“This is just the beginning for entrepreneurs to move and grow their businesses further,” says Dlamini, adding that the ongoing MultiChoice Innovation Fund programme has recently opened for applications. “We will continue to actively look for strategic partnerships and opportunities to support South African entrepreneurs and small businesses.”

### **Success starts with solid businesses**

Raiz says successful businesses are what make an incubator successful, and should enable entrepreneurs to grow profitable, sustainable businesses that thrive over the long term.

“Incubators should never encourage any form of dependency. Thus, a one-size-fits-all approach to business development cannot work.”

He says highly skilled, experienced and dedicated teams with a shared passion for helping entrepreneurs succeed will help guide entrepreneurs on their journey.

Raizcorp uses a rigorous selection process to choose the right staff and the right entrepreneurs who are willing to go the extra mile to succeed. Furthermore, successful incubators should encourage entrepreneurs to become part of their broader entrepreneurial network and mutual support system.

“At Raizcorp, we strongly believe that only for-profit organisations can authentically support entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial businesses to become profitable and sustainable,” says Raiz.

Considering the number of entrepreneurs and jobs created through Zimele, Naidoo says the programme is successful and effective in achieving its goals.

In November 2021, Zimele won the Youth Focus Award and the Impact Award at the 4th Absa Business Day Supplier Development Awards. Zimele was also runner-up in the Overall Winner category.

“This recognition is a testament to our commitment to building thriving, inclusive and healthy communities through our youth, supplier and enterprise development work and the impact that these efforts have on beneficiaries,” says Naidoo.

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

### **Growth opportunities within innovation and business hubs**

#### **Focus on youth:**

Together with 3M, our youth development programme ran innovation boot camps equipping young people with creative thinking, innovation tools and ways to assist them in unlocking existing economic opportunities in and around their communities. The feedback has been positive, and we believe these interventions go a long way in keeping youth out of trouble and contributing meaningfully to their communities and economy with the right guidance.

– Larisha Naidoo, head of Zimele at Anglo American

#### **Corporate venturing:**

When corporates incubate ideas and new business opportunities internally, this has huge potential to accelerate the work being done by innovation and business hubs. For example, Discovery and OUTsurance were supported, incubated and funded through the Rand Merchant Bank group and set up within their infrastructure. Raizcorp supports corporates in the execution of corporate venturing.

– Allon Raiz, Raizcorp CEO

#### **Unearthing and nurturing talent:**

Our programme enabled us to tap into entrepreneurs with vast potential but in need of coaching and funding. The rigorous process of showcasing entrepreneurs to international investors has been a learning experience; hence we’ve elevated the programme support tools for global agility.

– Collen Dlamini, executive head for corporate affairs at MultiChoice Group



## Raizcorp - Quick stats

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- In the past 22 years, Raizcorp has acted as a venture capitalist and invested in approximately 40 businesses in its curated capital division, Partner Elite.
- Nearly 13,500 businesses have graduated from the full incubation programmes.
- Around 10,000 have participated in other entrepreneurial programmes.
- Over 500 businesses are given support on current business programmes at any given time.

## Zimele - Quick stats

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- Since launching its revised strategy in 2018, Zimele has disbursed R319 million in loans to entrepreneurs and small businesses with a 96% loan repayment rate.
- Jobs supported: 10,363
- Youths placed into direct jobs: 277
- Training sessions completed: 672
- Mentorships completed: 19,049
- Supplier, enterprise and youth beneficiaries in Zimele programmes: 2,715
- Percentage of participants who are women: 48%
- Youth account for 45% of the enterprise and supplier development programmes.
- R21 million in government relief funds were facilitated as part of the Covid-19 relief resulting in the survival of 98% of businesses.



Vincent Maposa

## MultiChoice Accelerator Programme success story

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Founder and CEO at Wetility, Vincent Maposa, who is also an engineer, uses technology and innovation to find innovative energy solutions. Wetility is a rooftop solar PV technology company that uses the sun to generate power, creating optimal capacity for freehold homes, sectional title properties and commercial buildings.

Maposa started the company in 2019 in response to the energy crisis in the country. It began as a tech-enabled solar energy company to empower people and businesses to efficiently solve their electricity needs. Wetility manufactures and sells solar panels, solar energy storage and software electricity management systems.

They joined the programme with a high potential pipeline but without the financial muscle to execute. However, through the MultiChoice Innovation Fund's R13.5 million investment, Wetility has unlocked its sales pipeline and attracted international investor interest.

Dlamini says the company's fast expansion is a reminder that MultiChoice has the platform to tip businesses over into great successes. GIBS





BY NINA PEARSE

# Want to Innovate? Start by Developing Creativity

Picture the scene... The monitor screen flickers and glows. Faces peer out of little video rectangles. It is the sixth virtual meeting of the day. Eighteen pairs of eyes stare wearily at Lebo's section of the digital vista as he implores his team: "We need to find another way, people. Our old model is simply not working anymore. Let's have your ideas. Think out of the box here. C'mon everyone."

Tired eyes blink silently back at him. Sighs are breathed. Tony scratches her head and thinks, "Um..."

## We have been missing a key step in the innovation game

Being called upon to come up with innovative ideas in the middle of a working day can be like dashing into a running race with no training and no warmup. Have you ever seen a dad pull a hamstring at the parents' 'fun race' at school athletics? It's the same principle. Insufficient training meets lack of preparation. Add a competitive streak and some pressure from onlookers, and boom, you could be limping for two weeks.

The same thing is happening with the drive for innovation. The pressure is on to adapt and innovate at speed. Employees are being called upon to create new solutions and reinvent their ways of working. The internet is awash with discussions about open innovation, big data analytics, prototyping, innovation management software, and other innovative practices. But, as important as these practices are, the source and starting point for innovation is creativity.

**"Without creativity, there is no innovation."**

*- Carmela Ward*

## So, what distinguishes creativity from innovation?

Creativity is largely underdeveloped and misunderstood. The word itself was coined as recently as 1875, and studies of the concept only really kicked off in the late 1950s.

Although there is no one definition for creativity, it is widely acknowledged in business and academic fields that, **'Creativity is the use of imagination to produce something novel and useful'**.



Innovation takes creativity and commercialises it. Thus, a useful definition for innovation coined by Dr. Amy Climer is: 'Innovation is creativity with economic gain'. Think of innovation as *creativity in a suit*. Creativity is an essential ingredient in the innovation process but does not, by itself, constitute innovation.

**“Of all the gifts we have as humans, the one that stands out, giant-like above all the rest, is our ability to be creative. It is responsible for all the progress we enjoy today.”**

**- Sidney Parnes**

### **Creativity to innovation is like physical fitness to a game of rugby**

A helpful analogy, I find, is to think about creativity and innovation in terms of a game of rugby. Creativity is like physical fitness in a game of rugby. Innovation is how you play the game on the field. Innovation is your game plan, your player allocation, and your playbook.

You can have the best coach and the best strategy in the world, but you will not win the game with physically unfit players. The fitness of each player enables them to run and perform the rugby moves you give them. Similarly, the creative fitness of each person in your organisation enables them to observe, think, and contribute to your innovation process.

No rugby coach worth his salt would put a player into a match without the necessary fitness training. Yet, leaders everywhere send their people into the marketplace without the necessary creative intelligence fitness.

**“You can’t be a creative thinker if you’re not stimulating your mind, just as you can’t be an Olympic athlete if you don’t train regularly.”**

**- Sir Ken Robinson**

## **Three things you should know about creativity**

### **1. CREATIVITY IS PERSONAL**

Fitness is a personal thing. It involves your body, mind, time, sleep, and what you eat. Though the coach may guide you, it's up to each player to achieve and maintain peak physical fitness.

In the same way, creativity is a personal thing. So our creative practices should start at home. These involve our morning routines, our exercise regimes (because this affects blood flow to our brains), how we design our work schedule, how we set out our home office, and our relationship with digital media.

If employers want a creatively fit workforce, each person should commit to developing their creativity.

### **2. CREATIVITY STARTS WITH A CREATIVE MINDSET**

Creativity begins in our minds. Unfortunately, one of the biggest barriers to creativity is that people do not see themselves as creative. If I don't believe I have a creative bone in my body, it vastly limits my potential to innovate at work.

At Creativity Wake-Up, we begin our learning experiences by waking people up to the power of their creative intelligence. To do this, we use psychology and business research, neuroscience, history, modern philosophy, and personal experience. We find that a paradigm shift occurs in our minds once we understand that our brains can change, we get new brain matter every day, and we can increase our creative intelligence.

### **3. THERE IS NO QUICK HACK**

We love our hacks these days. Everyone is looking for a quick fix. I'm sorry to say there is no quick fix to creativity. Just like getting physically fit requires ongoing work, so, too, developing your creative intelligence requires commitment and effort. However, I can personally attest that it is a pursuit that reaps exponential rewards.

## **A culture of innovation starts with individual creativity**

The Canadian research university, Regina, conducted a global innovation study collecting data from 437 companies across 11 industries in 27 countries. Professor Grant Alexander Wilson concludes that, of all the innovation strategies and tools, the development of an innovation-focused culture is the necessary first step. He says, “We found that highly innovative people were better at implementing all the innovation practices. We also found that, across industries, companies with strong innovation cultures outperformed their counterparts without a similar culture.”

Their number one managerial tip is that all executives should seek to create an innovation-focused culture. Since culture is shaped by the beliefs, values, and behaviours of every individual in the group, an innovation-focused culture will be driven by individual creativity.

So, creativity drives innovation.

How, then, can I develop my creativity? Glad you asked.



**“Belief in your creative capacity lies at the heart of innovation.”**

*- Thomas Kelley*

## First steps to developing your creativity...

Start with the proverbial ‘man in the mirror’

As a leader in your organisation, you should be among the first to work on your own creativity. Assess your leadership impact from a creativity perspective.

Ask yourself:

- How creative am I currently? (Remember, this is not fixed but rather an assessment of your creativity at a point in time.)
- How does my creativity show up in my leadership?
- Am I promoting or squashing creativity in those around me?
- Am I role modelling creative thinking?
- Review your own recent work. What was the most creative moment you had recently, and what made it happen that way?

Take one step in each of the four core competencies for creative expression, as described by Robert Epstein, a senior research psychologist at the American Institute for Behavioural Research and Technology. These core creative competencies are capturing, surrounding, challenging, and broadening.

**Capture your ideas intentionally.** Start noticing ideas that come to you and be deliberate about making a voice note on your phone, taking a photo, scribbling a note in a special ideas pocket notebook – whatever works for you. The simple activation of your imagination to start noticing these ideas will generate new thoughts and ideas.

**Surround yourself with new stimuli.** For example, move furniture around your home office, schedule some thinking work at a library or in a garden, set up a coffee meeting with someone very different from you, put up new pictures or quotes to inspire you, get a scent diffuser for your desk, plan a trip to a new place.

## References

“3 ways for businesses to fuel innovation and drive performance” Prof. Grant Alexander Wilson, 17 January 2022, The Conversation Africa, Inc.  
“The decade of innovation: from benchmarking to execution” C. Brooke Dobni, Mark Klassen, Journal of Business Strategy, 4 January 2021

**“The more interesting and diverse the things and the people around you, the more interesting your own ideas become.”**

*- Robert Epstein*

**Challenge yourself by setting a goal** to solve a problem within a limited time or with limited resources. For example, in a TED talk, Verity Price, then Toastmasters World Public Speaking Champion, described how the constraints of the water crisis in Cape Town unleashed huge creativity in her. She went on to develop her creativity further with personal challenges such as achieving outcomes with severe budget restrictions.

**Broaden the neural networks in your brain** and thus your creativity by learning new things outside your regular scope of life. Read diverse books. Author Ann Morgan set herself the challenge of reading a book from every country in the world in a year. Listen to podcasts. Let your curiosity lead you to try podcasts you’ve never considered before. Invest in a course. Talk to us at Creativity Wake-Up about courses for individuals and teams. Talk to people who you think are very creative. Don’t be shy – often, what makes a great creative is a willingness to share ideas.

In conclusion, there are no shortcuts, and there is no quick ‘hack’, but whatever you do, get started!

**“It turns out that creativity isn’t some rare gift to be enjoyed by the lucky few – it’s a natural part of human thinking and behaviour. In too many of us, it gets blocked. But it can be unblocked. And unblocking that creative spark can have far-reaching implications for yourself, your organisation, and your community.”**

*- Tom Kelley* GIBS





## TERRY BEHAN

Terry Behan is the executive head of design at Nedbank, adjunct faculty at GIBS and a fellow of the Aspen Global Leadership Network. He assists established enterprises use design to disrupt and differentiate their business in the market. He has global and emerging market experience, having actively worked in over 15 markets.

BY TAMARA OBERHOLSTER

# Non-technological Innovation

**'Innovation' is not code for 'new technology', although that's what many of us default to when we think of it. But non-technological innovation can be just as – if not more – valuable.**



Peloton Treadmill

“Innovation is the production of something that is useful, that will help to improve the lives of people,” says Terry Behan, GIBS faculty and executive head of design at Nedbank. “That might be a product, a service, or even a feature. Innovation at the moment, and certainly in South Africa, is very focused on this idea of changing the product – making a better ‘thing’. Sometimes that’s not the real problem to solve. Sometimes innovation needs to come into the business model – in other words, how you take that product to market.”

**...design is a toolkit that helps bring innovation to life...**

He gives the example of Peloton, the company selling stationary bicycles for home exercise, which disrupted the market by focusing on the end-user experience. “They realised it’s lonely just cycling by yourself at home and shifted into the content space,” he explains. Peloton launched Internet-connected stationary bicycles (and later treadmills) that enable subscribers to remotely participate in classes with other Peloton members via streaming media. As a result, they moved from an exercise equipment company to a media company, with minimum changes to the core product, resulting in a 10-fold increase in company valuation.

Another example Behan uses is Hilti, the tool manufacturer. In the early 2000s, the company pivoted its business model from product-focused to service focused. Whereas the company had previously sold tools, it moved to offer product-as-a-service. The physical product (the Hilti tool) didn’t change, but the way it was consumed in the market did. Instead of buying the tool to



create the hole in the wall, customers were buying the ability to create the hole in the wall. This, says Behan, was a simple change to the business model that saw Hilti thrive and grow when the construction industry was experiencing a rapid decline following the 2009 crash.

“You can’t just build a good product nowadays. Chances are, it’s already been done, or there are many viable competitors. You must not just innovate on product; you also have to innovate on the business model first to grasp the imagination of the market, and also to really provide your consumers with something different to what they’ve had before,” says Behan. “We can apply that to social innovation, too.”

He is currently grappling with these challenges in his own social impact work with his start-up, [Ayara](#), which aims to provide 100 million students with the necessary foundational skills to thrive in the future irrespective of their economic circumstances.

“The core problem we’re trying to solve is that our educational system was designed in the 1860s to take people out of the agrarian era into the industrial era, which it did successfully. But it really isn’t fit for purpose anymore. The skills of the future are based on something called the ‘four Cs’: communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity,” he says. “Our results tell us we have built a great product, but now we need to solve the business model, which we have not successfully done yet. That’s what innovation is: a combination of a good product packaged in a good business model that gives you some chance at scale and market.”

Behan teaches this framework at GIBS within the executive and MBA programmes. “We get the MBA students to use Ayara in their design innovation segments of their programme. They are tasked with solving one of the SDGs by applying a very simple design process and some business model innovation as well.”

## Coupled with empathy, innovation requires excellence.

He believes design is a toolkit that helps bring innovation to life and runs the same exercise with high school students. He says they tend to develop a wider range of possible solutions quicker than most MBA students, as they are unencumbered by some of the biases of mid-career professionals.

### SDGs as a starting point

Behan suggests that cultivating innovation requires two ingredients: empathy and excellence.

“It’s not about simply empathising with the individual, but about looking into society with empathy and asking, ‘Where are the greatest needs?’ And the best framework for that that I’ve seen is the Sustainable Development Goals,” says Behan. “They provide granular levels of detail and a very clear opportunity to innovate or point you in the right direction where opportunity space exists. There’s a US\$2.3 trillion investment gap in the SDGs in emerging markets every year. That tells us that it’s worth investing in solving these problems – it’s commercially viable. It will create a sustainable economy in the longer term, and that’s really worth exploring. You can’t be a successful company in an unsuccessful society.”

Coupled with empathy, innovation requires excellence. “You need a good solid design toolkit to be able to go and solve particular problems,” says Behan. “And we provide that in partnership with GIBS for free through Ayara to anybody who wants it anywhere in the world.”

Behan’s plea to organisations is to recognise the opportunity that the SDGs offer, specifically, from an African perspective. “For example, the median age across the African continent is approximately 17. Consequently, about half a billion people are 17 or younger. Now think about it this way: half a billion uneducated people is a huge problem. Half a billion educated people, on the other hand, is a massive opportunity for growth. We need to frame up the opportunity in such binary terms to see where the problem space is, and thus where opportunities for innovation exist.”



IMAGE Hilti

Hilti TE 500-22 cordless demolition hammer



## EXAMPLES OF NON-TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

### Wood you look at that!



The Paper Manufacturers Association of South Africa (PAMSA), its members and its university partners are exploring the commercial potential of a range of products from the pulping and papermaking process, maximising product yield from each and every tree harvested and supporting a circular economy.

Jane Molony, PAMSA executive director, explains that commercially farmed trees are essentially crops planted and replanted in rotations, with only about 9% of the total tree count being harvested in any given year. “This means that there are always trees growing, at different stages of maturity, and these trees are all absorbing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and storing the carbon,” she says. “With trees capturing more carbon from the atmosphere than any other biome, they offer a means to mitigate the impact of climate change.”

The forest and forest product sector invests significantly in lignocellulosic research and innovation (using lignin and cellulose from wood). Dissolving wood pulp is a purified cellulose pulp suitable for subsequent chemical conversion into various products. Cellulose — the most common biopolymer on earth — is the structural component of the cell walls of plants. Dissolving wood pulp can be spun into textile fibres for viscose production, cast into a film or regenerated into a sponge, providing a renewable alternative to fossil fuel-based plastics and synthetics.

With its highly versatile properties, cellulose can also be used to make surgical gels and screens on electronic devices or act as a food-safe emulsifier in low-fat yoghurts and cheese. Microcrystalline cellulose is a component in pharmaceuticals, acting as a carrier for active ingredients and used in confection.

Lignin, the glue that holds wood and plant fibres together, is also promising. Removed during the pulping process when manufacturing fine paper to prevent yellowing with age, some 50 million tonnes are produced worldwide each year.



Lignosulphonates are currently used in mining and road maintenance as a dust suppressant and added to ready-mix concrete to improve the flow of concrete and reduce the water required without compromising on strength.

Lignin is currently being investigated as a multi-functional and renewable alternative to petroleum-derived styrene plastics and foams.





**Half a billion educated people is a massive opportunity for growth.**

## Innovation, pegged

Increda-Peg, designed to be affordable, durable and multi-functional, is a simple but effective local product innovation. Unlike conventional modern laundry pegs with a spring that often pops out of place, the Increda-Peg is a single piece of recycled plastic with a smart design for pull-on and twist-off functionality.

The peg slips onto the washing line and locks into place. While it was designed primarily for hanging washing to dry, it can be used in other applications where you'd use a conventional peg, such as sealing bags or clipping items together. Customers have also been putting it to use to hang scarves or belts from wire coat-hangers or camping lanterns from guy ropes, among other things.

With an extra hook in the front, the Increda-Peg allows users to hang an additional item from the peg while in use, which helps to expand the amount of laundry one can hang from the line.

Originally, the company was selling the pegs only at weekend markets, but now offers an online shop with nationwide delivery.



## Skinnovation?

Non-surgical aesthetic treatments have come a long way since the dermal fillers of the 1980s and 1990s, which comprised syringes filled with bovine-derived collagen. In the early 2000s, the first hyaluronic acid filler was introduced to the market – Restylane, made by Galderma – hailed as an innovation in cosmetic injectables.

Today, second only to neurotoxin injectables (such as Botox, Dysport, Jeuveau, and Xeomin), dermal fillers are one of the most popular non-surgical procedures globally. In 2020 alone, neurotoxins and fillers accounted for 7.8 million procedures performed (4.4 million for neurotoxins and 3.4 million for fillers), according to the 2020 *Plastic Surgery Statistics Report* by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

Since first launching Restylane, Galderma has gone on to develop two different hyaluronic acid fillers – Sculptra and Restylane Skinboosters.

Restylane Skinboosters use a new and innovative method to improve skin hydration from within. According to Galderma, they tap into the natural ability of hyaluronic acid to bind water molecules and thereby lock moisture within the skin.

Sculptra, which officially launched in South Africa in March 2022, is a collagen stimulator that Galderma says gradually replaces collagen lost to ageing. It is an injectable poly-L-lactic acid approved by the FDA. Unlike other fillers, results are not immediate, but the treatment lasts up to three years. **GIBS**



BY WENDY DU PLESSIS

# Economic Insight 2022: Power, Production and People

South Africa's economic woes require problem-solving on multiple fronts. While the easing of many Covid-19 restrictions and a recent commodities boom may have provided a slight reprieve, underlying structural problems persist.

Do dire levels of unemployment, inequality, and continued energy constraints mean the country is on the road to nowhere, or are there accessible opportunities that offer a glimmer of hope?

## The economic landscape

"The relationship between business and the economy is inextricably intertwined. A country's economic growth drives company performance," GIBS faculty and investment specialist at Genera Capital, Professor Adrian Saville, told the GIBS Economic Insight Conference 2022.



Professor Adrian Saville

## SLIDE 1 - The Macroeconomic Context & Business

The relationship between business and the economy is inextricably intertwined: a country's economic growth drives company performance.



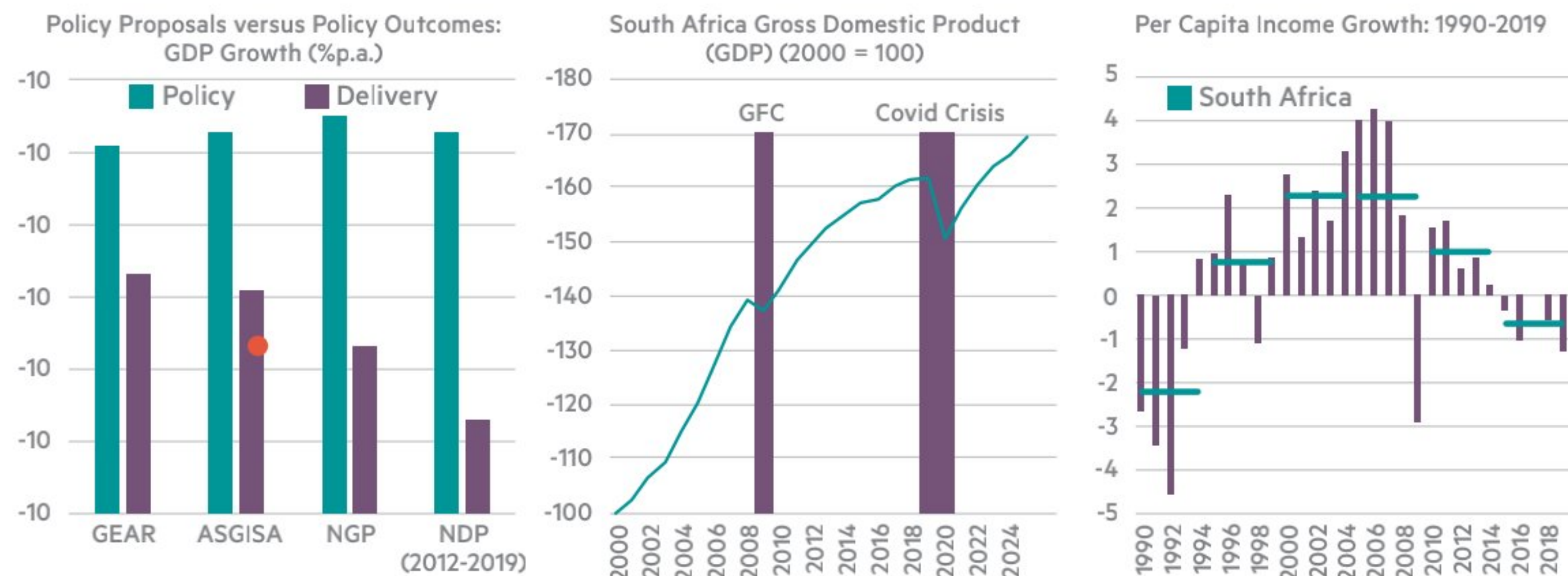


As a small, open economy, South Africa's economic performance remains closely linked to global commodity price fluctuations. While the last two years of buoyant prices have provided a tailwind, he explained that they hadn't changed South Africa's economic fundamentals.

**We are big on telling a story but very weak on delivery.**

## SLIDE 2 - Policy Promises & Delayed Delivery

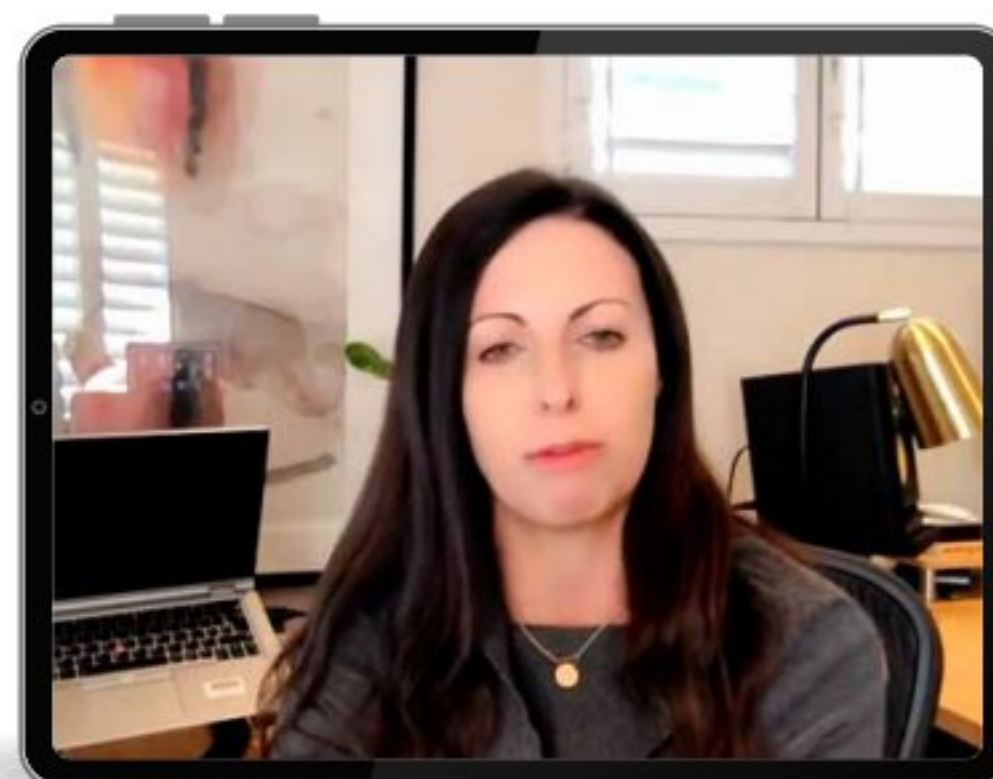
South Africa's per capita income is the same today as in 2010, suggesting the country has banked a lost decade.



The country's per capita income is the same today as in 2010, suggesting it had "banked a lost decade".

"We don't have a compelling investment proposition. We are big on telling a story but very weak on delivery. The difference between policy promises and delivery has gotten wider and wider. In the absence of getting to grips with the issues, we can expect more of the same, more stuttering and moving sideways," Saville said.

Managing director and South Africa economist at Citi Research, Gina Schoeman, said protracted industrial action, state capture and increased political uncertainty had undermined the country's reputation as an appealing investment destination. She explained that South Africa has a new GDP equilibrium of between one and two percent, as our inefficiencies have started to lead to lower



Gina Schoeman

growth. "Economic, political and social issues are below the surface, while global events continue to whip us around."

Per capita growth and business confidence are important gauges of a country's well-being, both of which are floundering. "Security of energy and electricity would create a huge difference in confidence and investment," she added.

## Power

With so much at stake, is it possible to industrialise South Africa to revive the once robust manufacturing sector, tourism, agriculture, and other large contributors to GDP? Can the government and regulators create a conducive environment, expediting the removal of barriers that inhibit business confidence and stall investment and growth?

Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Environmental Affairs, Barbara Creecy, said that moving the economy toward sustainable



Barbara Creecy



energy sources represented a climate investment opportunity in the energy shift towards renewables and self-generation.

With most countries committing to net-zero emissions by 2050, South Africa is faced with transition risk, as 80% of our energy is generated from coal.

“We have to invest in low carbon technology to ensure our goods and services are produced in a low carbon environment. We require financial support and technological expertise to make sure workers are upskilled and reskilled for these new industries,” said Creecy.

“There are many complex problems we need to solve simultaneously,” Mandy Rambharos, general manager of Eskom’s Just Energy Transition, said. “We must invest in our competitive advantages and move the country forward.”

The utility’s mid to long-term goal is to invest in renewables and transition to clean energy while dealing with current generational problems. This would entail shutting down coal plants and replacing them with cleaner, cheaper, renewable technology.

Thomas Garner, chairman of the South African Independent Power Producers Association, expressed frustration at South Africa’s slow advancement towards renewable energy and said many developers were ready to implement solutions immediately: “Minister Mantashe is the biggest obstacle in the transition of South Africa to renewables. It is all about vested interests. Government is divided, and policy is changed on an ad hoc basis,” Garner said.

Dean of the Natural and Agricultural Sciences faculty at the University of Pretoria, Professor Barend Erasmus, expressed the need for rapid and deep emission cuts. He said climate change would bring pre-existing vulnerabilities to the fore, such as water scarcity. “There is a closing window of opportunity. We cannot miss it; the consequences would be too dire.”



Philippa Rodseth



Professor Justin Barnes



Mandy Rambharos



Professor Barend Erasmus

**Minister Mantashe is the biggest obstacle in the transition of South Africa to renewables.**

## Production

Philippa Rodseth, executive director of The Manufacturing Circle, explained that manufacturing could be an excellent growth driver due to its high job and value creation multipliers.

“Manufacturing allows for skills development and revenue from exports. South Africa can’t become a wasteland of imports. We must grow our pockets of excellence.”

However, she suggested that instead of implementing a localisation policy, South Africa should increase local demand through procurement policies to create a virtuous demand cycle.

Professor Justin Barnes, executive director of the Toyota Wessels Institute for Manufacturing Studies (TWIMS), said South Africa was less industrialised today than in the 1990s. Manufacturing, he said, accounts for less than 12% of the South African economy, as opposed to 22% in the 1990s. He added that the South African manufacturing sector had more employees in 1969 than it does today.



One mechanism for encouraging private sector investment is through the creation of Special Economic Zones, or SEZs. These zones, along with the fast-tracking of infrastructure projects, could incentivise the private sector to invest in the economy, argued Dr Kgosientsho Ramokgopa, head of investment and infrastructure in the Office of the Presidency.

Chief economist at the Development Bank of Southern Africa, Zeph Nhleko, added that economic growth and job creation were the main goals of SEZ creation. He suggested using state-owned enterprises as implementing agents to fast-track infrastructure spending.

Abundant opportunities exist for accelerating economic growth in the once-robust sectors of manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, and mining. However, these industries are currently stymied by power limitations, rigid regulatory frameworks and a lack of policy coherence and capability.

## Business must put more money and talent into lobbying government.



Zeph Nhleko



Paul Makube



Henk Langenhoven



Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa

## SECTOR REVIEW

### Agriculture

Paul Makube, senior agricultural economist, FNB Business, said infrastructure such as roads and rail were critical to the agriculture industry to ensure produce and commodities destined for export markets could reach the ports. “We have to be versatile and able to respond to shocks in external markets,” he said.

### Mining and minerals

Henk Langenhoven, chief economist of the Minerals Council South Africa, said the domestic cost pressures underlying mining, including energy, transport and fuel prices, continued to rise. “We are experiencing a commodity windfall at present, but we don’t have a pipeline in terms of productive capacity and are at risk of declining prices.”

### Tourism

CEO of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, said tourism thrives when government departments critical to tourism are functional. He singled out Home Affairs, the Department of Transport and the Department of Health. “We don’t seem to be able to solve problems fast enough to enable us to be globally competitive. We must do away with regulations that have been put in place that are stopping growth and act as a regulatory burden.”



Professor Nick Binedell, founding Dean of GIBS and strategy professor, argued the actual dynamism of the local economy lay in its different sectors. He explained how the Public-Private Growth Initiative, a national project which brings together leaders from business and government, has been expanded to include 23 sectors. Fueled and funded by the private sector, the domestic investment project aimed to propel South Africa onto a higher growth trajectory.

“The relationships and goodwill [between business and government] are there,” Binedell said. He encouraged business leaders to develop a profound understanding of their industry or ecosystem: “You have to develop an understanding of what the blockages are and what can be done to open these up in partnership with government.”

## People

The relationship-building between the public and private sectors remains important to building the economy. Binedell argued: “We can’t afford a slow [policy] response. Business must put more money and talent into lobbying government. It is a major bureaucratic problem that government works in silos. I don’t think there is a sufficient level of urgency and slow rule-making leads to a loss of jobs.”

“There are major skills challenges in the public sector with limited capacity to grapple with the key challenges facing the economy,” Barnes said.



Professor Nick Binedell

The private sector needs to be a change partner in the economy, as reform cannot be government-led. However, abundant opportunities exist if regulatory bottlenecks can be cleared and an appropriate sense of urgency is generated.

Barnes concluded: “The potential is there, provided that we deal with the critical issues. The future of the South African economy depends on solving the power issue with a robust energy plan for the country and dealing with the toxic political situation that is crippling our ability to take advantage of available opportunities.”

## POLITICAL OUTLOOK

- We have exceptionally high levels of unemployment and unacceptable levels of crime and corruption at all levels of government. The bubble has burst, and South Africans are looking at alternative options.
  - The ANC must get its house in order, or it must get voted out in 2024.
- Dr. Ismail Vadi, GIBS adjunct faculty, former MEC for Roads and Transport, Gauteng
- We are failing so dismally to realise all our potential and its advantages. We are in deep trouble as a country.
  - Countries in trouble need citizens that step up and don’t retreat. We must realise that our problems are structural. Business needs its own vision of how to reform South Africa and how to grow our way out of poverty.

- Ann Bernstein, Executive Director, Centre for Development and Enterprise

## FIVE IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reform must be private sector-led. Business must put more money and talent into lobbying government.
2. Abundant opportunities exist if regulatory bottlenecks can be cleared and an appropriate sense of urgency is generated.
3. Investment in low carbon technology in the form of clean energy and renewables will ensure goods and services are produced in a low carbon environment.
4. Manufacturing can be an excellent growth driver due to its high job and value creation multipliers. Manufacturing allows for skills development and revenue from exports.
5. Special Economic Zones and the fast-tracking of infrastructure projects could incentivise the private sector to invest in the economy. **GIBS**



**ANGELIQUE MARE**

Angelique is a senior blended learning solutions manager in the corporate education department at GIBS. She has over 12-years of corporate learning and development experience in the finance industry, specialising in the design, development, and delivery of learning programmes. Mare boasts a decade of leadership development experience at GIBS, having designed and delivered several successful leadership development programmes across leadership levels and disciplines for leading organisations in the mining, banking, IT and telecommunications, and FMCG sectors.

**GILLIAN CROSS**

As the associate director for innovation and partnerships, Cross leads a team that initiates new partnerships, products, services, business models and ways of configuring value that differentiate GIBS in the markets in which they operate. With over 30 years of experience in designing engaging ways to develop world-class leaders from pre-manager to C-suite, her strengths lie in her ability to lead and inspire multi-functional teams to design and deliver the best possible result.

**MAXINE JAFFIT**

During her 30-year career, Jaffit has consulted to organisations in South Africa, the US, from Investec Bank, Discovery and Nando's Worldwide and Google. Her work focuses on unlocking human and organisational potential to navigate complexity and build more open, resilient, and wise organisations. As faculty at GIBS, she teaches and supervises students on the MBA and the PDBA. In her coaching practice, Jaffit employs an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to unleash leadership potential and achieve optimum positive, sustainable change.

**BY CARA BOUWER**

# Innovation in a Time of Burnout

Galvanising a workforce to be productive – let alone innovative – during times of mental exhaustion and disengagement is hard enough, but doing so long term and through the continuous uncertainty of a global pandemic takes things to another level.





## ...more employees are voicing their concerns and needs regarding mental health and overall well-being...



As humankind faces year three of the Covid-19 pandemic, the corporate world is awash with disconnection, depression, depletion, and exhaustion resulting from the sustained pressures of remote working alongside job losses, economic hardships, fear, uncertainty, and the loss of friends and family. This has led to rising cases of burnout, so much so that management consultancy, Gallup, predicts the next global crisis will be a [mental health pandemic](#).

The fallout of a stressed and depleted workforce has already yielded a very clear trend, one McKinsey & Company dubbed '[the Great Resignation](#)'. Fuelled by a shift in priorities and work-life expectations, and in some cases, the emotional exhaustion of coping through the pandemic, the Great Resignation is currently translating into record numbers of workers either [quitting their jobs or actively looking for new opportunities](#). This trend was particularly noticeable among employees under the age of 40, the

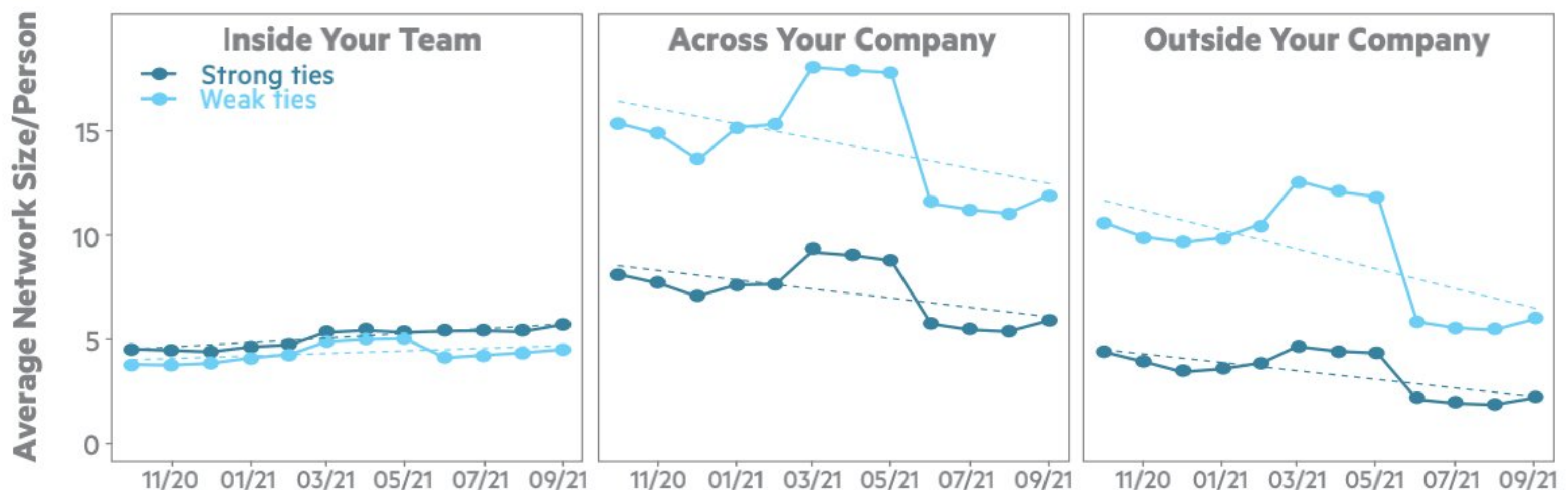
so-called millennials, whose careers had already been hurt by the 2008 global financial crisis.

The Great Resignation comes with several implications for businesses, not least of which is a tendency to overwork the employees who remain and, amidst a remote or hybrid work reality, a propensity for workers to communicate less and less outside their immediate teams. A 2021 article published in the journal [Nature Human Behaviour](#), which explored the impact of remote work on internal ties within Microsoft, pointed to less collaboration, poorer information transfer and the potential to affect productivity and innovation in the long term.

This type of disengagement and overwork fuels a cycle of burnout, which feeds the Great Resignation trend. In the process, one of the essential ingredients for corporate innovation and creativity becomes collateral damage with potentially disastrous long-term implications for companies and industries.

### Strong and weak ties by type of relationship over time

The development of the number of ties varies according to the type and strength of the relationship



Source: [Time is Inc.](#)



## The essential ingredients for innovation

Maxine Jaffit, the founder of Maxine Jaffit & Associates, a consultancy, and faculty member at GIBS, outlines three essential drivers that work together to create the innovation and change secret sauce. They are:

- **Societal pressure and emerging norms**, which unlock new playgrounds for innovation.
- **Rapid technological disruption**, which is currently swirling all around us in the digital economy.
- **Employee value propositions**, which drive employee engagement and help maintain the psychological contract with employers that encompasses ambitions, obligations, and expectations.

Of course, successful companies incorporate other considerations into their innovative management frameworks, such as training and processes, designing spaces to encourage collaboration and innovative thinking, monitoring and setting up innovation teams, ensuring a conducive organisational culture, and embedding diversity. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Jaffit's trio of drivers spurred considerable change within companies worldwide as organisations pivoted out of necessity to adapt to the pandemic and the changing realities of work.

The question now, especially with the employee engagement leg wobbling, is if companies can maintain innovation once the pandemic is over?

## ...disengagement and overwork, in turn, fuels a cycle of burnout...

Gillian Cross, associate director of innovation and partnerships at GIBS, says it is important not to confuse the innovation that happened during the Covid-19 pandemic as more than just a pivot. Of course, that does not mean that lessons learned around embedding innovation and developing agility, or democratising corporate culture, cannot be actively incorporated into a new future-focused approach rather than reverting to old ways.

Another aspect that needs incorporating in the future aligns with that all-important employee engagement driver: coordinated leadership and organisational accountability for issues such as pandemic fatigue and burnout. This increasingly important facet of management will, in the future, require an openness to providing better health support to employees and a deeper appreciation that the positive impact of doing so will support the sustainable development of the organisation.



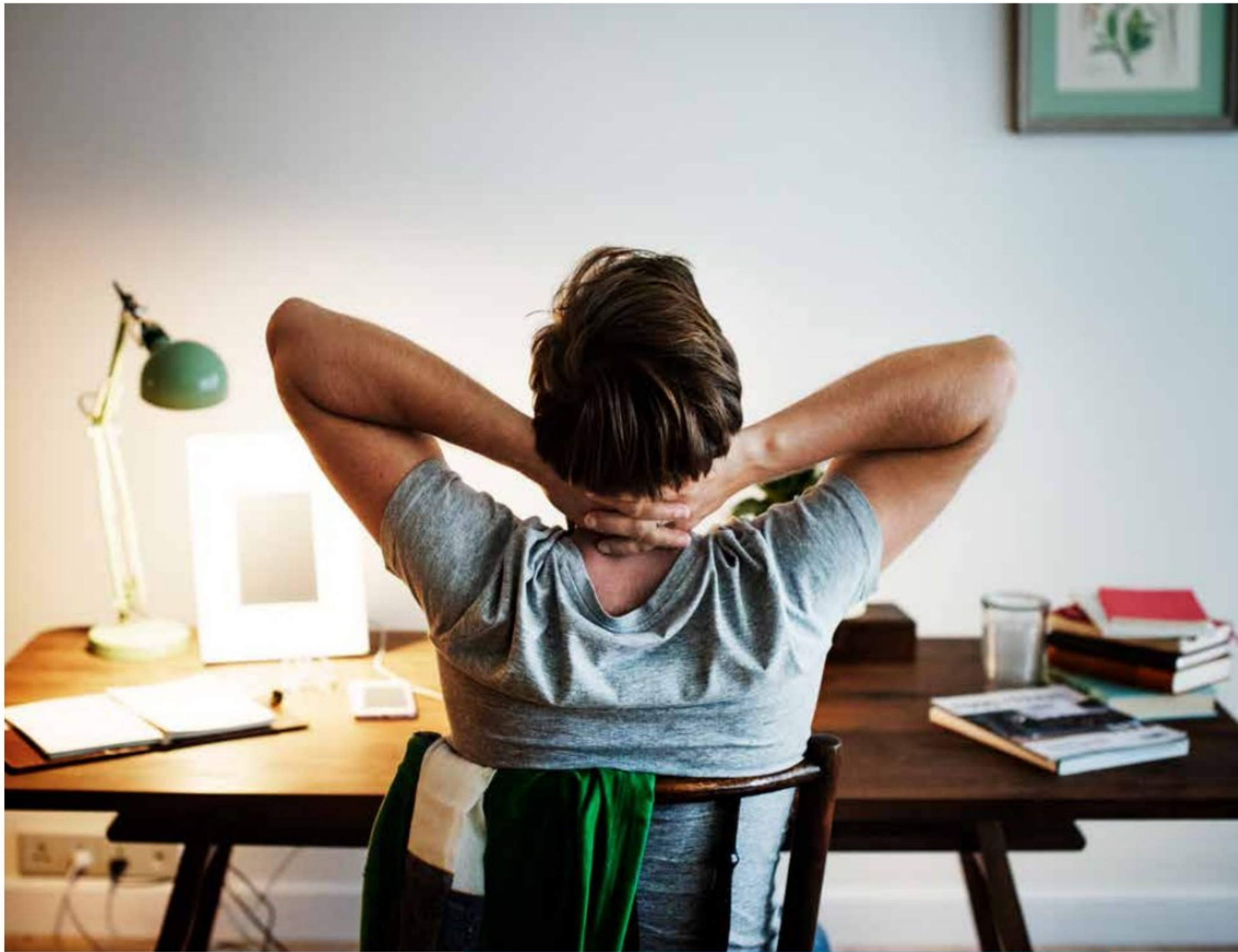
Naomi Osaka, French Open in 2021

## Mental health and well-being: the next frontier

Until recently, mental health did not feature as an essential component in driving innovation, but post-Covid, it certainly will be.

Jaffit says the pandemic has brought into stark focus “the absence of care and concern for mental well-being globally”. One only has to consider the response to tennis player [Naomi Osaka's withdrawal from the French Open in 2021](#) and her disclosure that she had “long bouts of depression”, or swimmer Michael Phelps' battle against anxiety and depression, and Olympic gymnast Simone Biles' withdrawal from events at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics to appreciate how divided responses are to issues of mental health. Covid-19 brought these concerns into the mainstream.





This is evidenced by the rise in mental health start-ups. “There are now [seven documented mental health unicorns](#) in the tech sector,” says Jaffit, compared to just two in 2020. These include Genoa (telepsychiatry), Lyra Health (telehealth), Calm (mindfulness and meditation) and Talkspace (teletherapy).

“The downstream impact is that more employees are voicing their concerns and needs around mental health and overall well-being,” says Jaffit. “Around the world, the human has come to the fore.”

This, in turn, requires a different approach to management – one that is empathetic, adaptive and able to cope with the newfound flexibility and wellness needs of employees. Changing the way businesses lead and operate might also be the missing ingredient for stoking innovation both during and after a global crisis.

## Insights into innovating through pandemic burnout

Throughout 2020 and 2021, the GIBS corporate education team saw their clients battling but also embracing the change and innovation required of them. Recognising the pressure that back-to-back online meetings were having on staff, one of GIBS’ financial services clients started ‘step-down Wednesdays’ whereby no meetings were allowed and the day was allocated to learning.

## WHAT IS BURNOUT?

Dating back to the 1970s, when American psychologist, Herbert Freudenberger, coined the term ‘burnout’ to describe the significant stress faced by the likes of doctors, nurses and caregivers, burnout has recently taken on widespread work-related overtones.

Typically, burnout is said to encompass [symptoms](#) such as emotional exhaustion, fatigue, frustration, cynicism, numbness, listlessness, and reduced creativity.

From January 2022, the third year of the Covid-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization’s International Classification of Diseases (11th revision) included burnout for the first time as an occupational phenomenon “resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed”.



With another client, what started as an intervention to roll out healthy teamwork practices turned into a larger intervention around organisational culture. This was a company that accepted weekend work, late-night calls and 24/7 availability. Had they not changed, any attempt to embed healthy human processes and the psychological safety employees need to openly express opinions and collaborate freely and effectively would have failed.

“I think psychological safety is intrinsically important to innovation,” stresses Cross. “After all, if you’re coming up with good ideas and trying to innovate, but your culture is very risk-averse and doesn’t support that, you will shut down.”

With clients like Aspen Pharmacare and Anglo American, the GIBS corporate education team has already moved from content design to experience design and from providing content to curating content, explains Angelique Mare, senior manager of learning design. This, in itself, is a radical departure from previous interventions and one that fosters interaction and collaboration.

“With Aspen, we’ve worked with faculty to create programmes that we can reuse,” explains Mare, highlighting the use of pre-recorded video content which is a more effective use of both faculty and delegate time as it allows delegates to work through the content at their own pace within set timeframes. This approach also ensures that real-time sessions with GIBS experts are more in-depth and practically orientated. “It’s in these conversations that we’ve seen the biggest value,” says Mare, adding that peer-to-peer engagements are also essential as they give participants the opportunity to hear, share and learn from one another. This creates a foundation for innovation and creative collaboration.

GIBS has also actively innovated in line with client needs and taken cognisance of a desire for shorter interventions, more deliberate insights from faculty members, and more time spent on the practical application of theory, explains Mare. As the team learns, it tests new approaches and incorporates these changes and learnings in future programmes.

Similarly, the GIBS Fellowship Friday gatherings, which were inspired by Cross at the start of the pandemic, continue to provide a safe space for GIBS clients – many of whom hold human capital portfolios – to come together and make sense of many issues they were dealing with during the pandemic through a mixture of peer input and expert advice.

## ...psychological safety is intrinsically important to innovation...

Jaffit, whose area of practice is in adaptive systems, particularly in the area of adaptive change or mindset change, ran a three-part adaptive leadership series together with her Australia-based colleague, Terri Soller, as part of Fellowship Friday. The intention behind the series was to offer guidance on how to collaborate and how workflows have changed in a digital, physically distanced world. The insights gained from this interactive process ultimately led to the creation of the GIBS Creating Healthy, Hybrid Work Practices programme. Mare explains that the guide helps companies embrace the importance of “surviving and thriving” in complex systems by embracing “experimenting and experimentation”. After all, the road to innovative output is pathed with the ongoing testing and tweaking of ideas and inventions.

This essential part of the innovation process simply cannot be achieved with a fixed and unyielding mindset, stresses Jaffit, adding that the one thing that the pandemic did was “make fearful people even more fearful, even fearful to try anything”, and this inevitably puts the brakes on innovation.

Fortunately, the tools for dealing with complexity are readily available to all, says Jaffit. “My doctoral research is on adaptive resilience, and I asked why certain companies transformed in the year of Covid-19 and what it is about certain organisations that they have this innate capacity not only to bounce back – which is resilience – but to bounce forward, to transform, and redefine themselves.”

She adds: “My hypothesis is that organisations with this capacity constitute resilience in how they talk and how they make sense. And they are not so attached to their identity that they are not willing to actually redefine who they are. Their history isn’t stronger than the present.”

And, in the process of redefining themselves, they keep the drivers of innovation alive.



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## BURNOUT AND THE BOSS

If the role of managers and leaders is changing, so, too, must the approach to management education, says Gillian Cross.

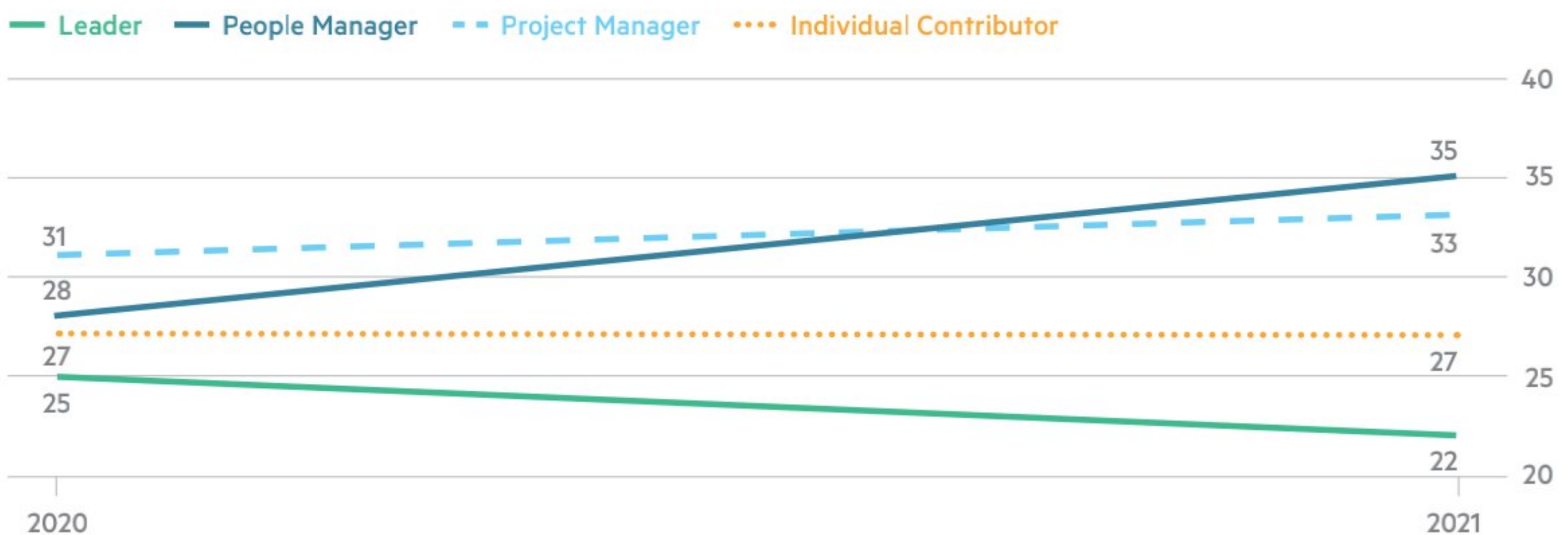
Drawing on Gartner forecasts, Cross notes that “the boss won’t be missed” in the future world of work. “According to Gartner, less than 50% of employees believe their manager can lead their team to success in the future, mostly due to their lack of management skills in a remote or hybrid environment. By 2024, 30% of corporate teams would be without a boss, Gartner forecasts. So what we’re moving towards is peer-based collaboration and management,” says Cross.

Drawing on insights she and Cross gained by researching tech companies in the US, Maxine Jaffit adds: “In the future, there will be a need for managers, but their role is changing from a traditional role. Managers are becoming curators of learning and experiences for their people. So, everything we’ve taught and everything we’ve been learning is no longer useful.”

Given these radical shifts, it’s hardly surprising that managers are among the worst affected when it comes to burnout. Gallup surveys show that in 2021 burnout increased notably among managers.

### Burnout Increased Significantly for Managers in 2021

& of full-time employees who report being burned out very often or always



Source: [Gallup](#)

Part of the burnout and stress for managers worldwide stems from a deep knowing that what they are doing is no longer enough for the organisation, its new ways of working and the needs of employees, explains Jaffit.

“Managers want to keep their jobs and be relevant, and they want to move up this so-called ladder, but the rungs have changed,” she says. **GIBS**





## PROFESSOR KATY MILKMAN

Behavioural scientist, Katy Milkman, is a professor at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and holds a secondary appointment at Penn's Perelman School of Medicine. She hosts Charles Schwab's popular behavioural economics podcast, *Choiceology*, and is the former president of the International Society for Judgment and Decision Making. Milkman co-founded and is now co-director of the Behavior Change for Good Initiative, a research centre that promotes the science of lasting behaviour change and whose work is featured on *Freakonomics Radio*. She has worked with numerous organisations on how to spur positive change, including Google, the U.S. Department of Defense, Walmart and Morningstar.

BY MALCOLM REES

# The Architects of Choice



**People are not perfectly rational thinking machines – wherever we have a choice, we have bias. Careful attention to the architecture that frames decisions can help people achieve their long-term financial goals, says behavioural scientist, Professor Katy Milkman.**

Much of the field of behavioural economics concerns “enumerating all of the very many ways in which we, as humans, are imperfect decision-makers,” says Milkman, speaking at the Discovery [Retirement Summit](#), a live hybrid event boasting a line-up of global retirement and behavioural change experts. “And absolutely both financial advisors and clients fit into the category of humans and, therefore, are biased in many ways.”

How cognitive biases and heuristics distort people’s judgment when thinking about financial data has been the subject of flourishing research since the pioneering work of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, who, in 1979, developed the prospect theory.

“I’m sort of a few generations later, and I have the approach of focusing on how we can patch the holes in judgment to help



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improve the choices people make,” says Milkman, a professor at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and author of the book, [How to Change](#).

Milkman introduced delegates at the Discovery Summit to the idea of choice architecture and how it can help people make better retirement choices.

“I don’t want to understate the quality of the human mind; it’s pretty extraordinary. But for many, many years, economists modelled humans as if we were perfect decision-makers,” she says. The truth is, “we’re decent decision-makers, but we make predictable errors.”

Milkman’s work rests on the premise that everywhere choices are made, they’re being shaped by the environment. This could be, for example, on a website, in a form, or in conversation. “We have to present options to people in some way, and when we do that, we shape their decisions, for better or for worse,” she adds.

This is true for just about everything, from healthy eating to savings decisions.

“Once we recognise that and recognise that people are imperfect decision-makers, then we might want to think carefully about how to architect decision environments to help them make better choices that will lead to improved outcomes in the long run,” she argues.

To achieve this, Milkman introduced several research concepts that are shown to have an often surprising influence on people’s decision-making outcomes.

**“we’re decent decision-makers, but we make predictable errors.”**

“Probably the most important insight from the entire field of behavioural science for savings decisions is the importance of setting wise defaults,” says Milkman.

The default effect is the concept that people will tend to accept the default option in a given choice environment – think ‘select here if you *do not* want to receive communication about promotions and product updates’ from a given service provider.

**“...the feeling of being scrutinised and judged by others.”**

An example of this pointed to by Milkman shows that simply by making “opting in” for a retirement fund offered by an employer the default option can dramatically improve participation rates. In [one seminal study](#), this difference was as high as 86% when the default was ‘opt-in’ compared to 49% when employees needed to actively select to opt-in.

“One factor which drives this is that you presume that’s what’s recommended,” says Milkman. “It also suggests that everyone else is doing it,” which relates to the power of social norms – another heuristic which is the tendency for people to make choices when they perceive others are doing it – “and it’s the path of least resistance.”

When combined with the framing effect, where people assume the default to be ‘their right’ or the ‘norm’, these influences result in the default effect having a potentially dramatic impact on choice outcomes.

Another critical concept introduced by Milkman is the importance of prompting people to plan and setting timely reminders, which work best when they have a fresh start moment, such as on their birthday or in the new year.

This involves “getting people to think about the date and time when they will make changes in their lives” and has been shown to be a really powerful tool we can use to help people make better decisions.

“If you have a detailed, concrete plan that involves a cue, like a date and time when you’re going to do something, that serves as a trigger in memory that makes it less likely you will completely forget,” she explains.

This can also be particularly powerful when creating accountability, which, says Milkman, comes from the feeling of being scrutinised and judged by others.

“People aren’t perfect: we make mistakes, and this is really the key finding from decades of behavioural science research. As a result of that, choice architecture matters – the way we design decision environments is critically important and we can improve people’s decisions,” she concluded. **GIBS**



# 7 African Innovators to Watch in 2022

From culinary and cultural innovation to engineering feats across healthcare, agriculture and waste management, these trailblazers answer problems with solutions.

## What is an innovator?

The dictionary defines an innovator as someone who introduces changes and new ideas. Amidst the swirl of technological changes, it is easy to get bogged down in the idea of innovation being the preserve of digital platforms or machine creations. Not so. Innovators span industries, healthcare, music, social media and supply chains. They challenge the status quo, spot new opportunities and turn great ideas into new products, methods and businesses. They are the pioneers.



Ivorian entrepreneur, Noël N'Guessan, demonstrates the use of his biowaste innovation, Kubeko.

## 1 Kombo Ekra Noël N'Guessan Kubeko – Transforming waste into valuable by-products

N'Guessan, an Ivorian entrepreneur, has two waste management innovations to his name: Smart-T, a financial exchange service that farmers can use to make money from biowaste, and Kubeko, a biowaste innovation for small-scale West African farmers.

A chemical engineer by training, N'Guessan and his team designed and patented Kubeko as a low-cost processing solution for farmers. Kubeko is both a composter and a biodigester that enhances the natural fermentation of agricultural waste to produce both solid and liquid bio-fertiliser. Biogas for use in cooking is another important result. The

intention behind the innovation is two-fold: to help farmers and their families create additional income and provide a viable solution to waste disposal in a country where some 30 million tonnes of waste are disposed of each year.

During an [interview in February 2022](#), N'Guessan said, “It’s a productive tool. Yes, you have to protect the environment, sure, but it needs to be bankable; otherwise scalability is always limited.”

In 2021, N'Guessan won the Royal Academy of Engineering’s Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation.



## 2 Ani Vallabhaneni, David Auerbach, Lindsay Stradley, Nathan Cooke and Joel Veenstra Sanergy – A circular sanitation solution

The founders of Sanergy arrived at the idea to design and roll out high-quality, low-cost and no-water sanitation facilities for informal African settlements during their time at MIT in the US. Three of the founders – Vallabhaneni, Stradley and Auerbach – had lived in Nairobi, Kenya, for years and brought their knowledge of the growing sanitation problem facing urban slums on the continent to the drawing board. Their solution was both environmentally and socially innovative.

Sanergy's Fresh Life Toilets provide a means of community involvement through the purchase and operation of the sanitation facilities on a franchise basis, creating jobs and opportunities on the ground and supported by education.

In addition, the company's waste disposal strategy taps into a sustainable circular economy model to solve both the sanitation infrastructure problem and the dumping of untreated waste into the environment. Waste from slums is collected daily and transported to a central [Sanergy organics recycling factory](#) in Kenya, where black soldier fly larvae convert the waste into an organic fertiliser called Evergrow and insect protein for animal feed and biomass briquettes.

Winner of the Food Planet Prize in 2020, Sanergy was named among the finalists of the inaugural Earthshot Prize in 2021.



Sanergy has installed nearly 5,000 Fresh Life Toilets in the Kenyan cities of Nairobi and Kisumu.



Sanergy co-founders David Auerbach, Lindsay Stradley and Ani Vallabhaneni.

## 3 Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen Michelin-star chef and culinary innovator

When it comes to innovation in the culinary space, South Africa's first Michelin-star chef is already renowned for [blending local farm-style cooking with fine French dining](#) at his restaurants JAN in Nice, France, and Klein JAN in the Kalahari.

From his glossy *'Jan the JOURNAL'* cookbook, replete with recipes and exquisite photo essays, to his effective use of social media, Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen's imprint on South African cuisine is already notable. His latest venture, the online [JAN Innovation Academy](#), was born out of the Covid-19 lockdowns with the motivation of creating something online and sharing skills at the core. The academy features video lessons, learning material and virtual mentorship to upskill people in the restaurant business.

Speaking to *Acumen*, Van der Westhuizen explained: "It's only in its starting phase, with many courses rolling out in the next few months. Our team of chefs and media crew push limits at the innovation studio to produce content based on a strong backbone. Our heritage gives us direction and with this comes so many incredible new ideas, which are innovative and creative. The combination of the two is essential."

As for other projects on the horizon, for now, Van der Westhuizen is fully focused on the academy and Klein JAN, which opened in 2021. "These two are really fresh projects that need care and devotion," he says. "I have also learned that we don't always have to have something new on the agenda."

IMAGE Supplied



Chef Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen





Chef Selassie Atadika's new African cuisine creates experiences where culture, community and cuisine intersect.



Midunu's renowned handcrafted chocolate truffles.

## 4 Selassie Atadika Advocate for 'new African cuisine'

Selassie Atadika is a founding member of Trio Toque, the first nomadic restaurant in Dakar, Senegal, which offers a multi-course menu crafted by chefs committed to sharing unique African tastes using top-quality, locally-sourced foods. Atadika, who connected with the pop-up restaurant idea while studying at the Culinary Institute of America, is an advocate for what she terms 'new African cuisine'.

Atadika's own food enterprise, Midunu, also follows the nomadic tradition and offers a private dining experience in Accra, Ghana, her home country. She describes Midunu as a culinary lifestyle company that creates experiences where culture, community and cuisine intersect. She strives to foster a greater

understanding of culinary culture among people across Africa.

Like Trio Toque, Midunu uses local, seasonal and often underutilised ingredients such as traditional grains and proteins, with an ever-present eye on supporting biodiversity and sustainability. The company curates white-linen nomadic events, private dining, retail and lifestyle products, and boasts a bespoke event space. Atadika's nomadic dinners, in particular, have come to achieve worldwide acclaim, as have Midunu's renowned handcrafted chocolate truffles.

Atadika won the 2021 La Liste New Destination Champion Award for raising awareness of Africa as a gastronomic destination.

## 5 Olugbenga Olufemi Olubanjo Reeddi – Making electricity affordable and accessible in energy-poor communities

Like Sanergy, Reeddi Capsules was shortlisted for the inaugural The Earthshot Prize. The buzz around the high-profile awards in late 2021 and being shortlisted for the Royal Academy of Engineering's Africa Prize put founder, [Olugbenga Olubanjo](#), and Reeddi firmly on the radar.

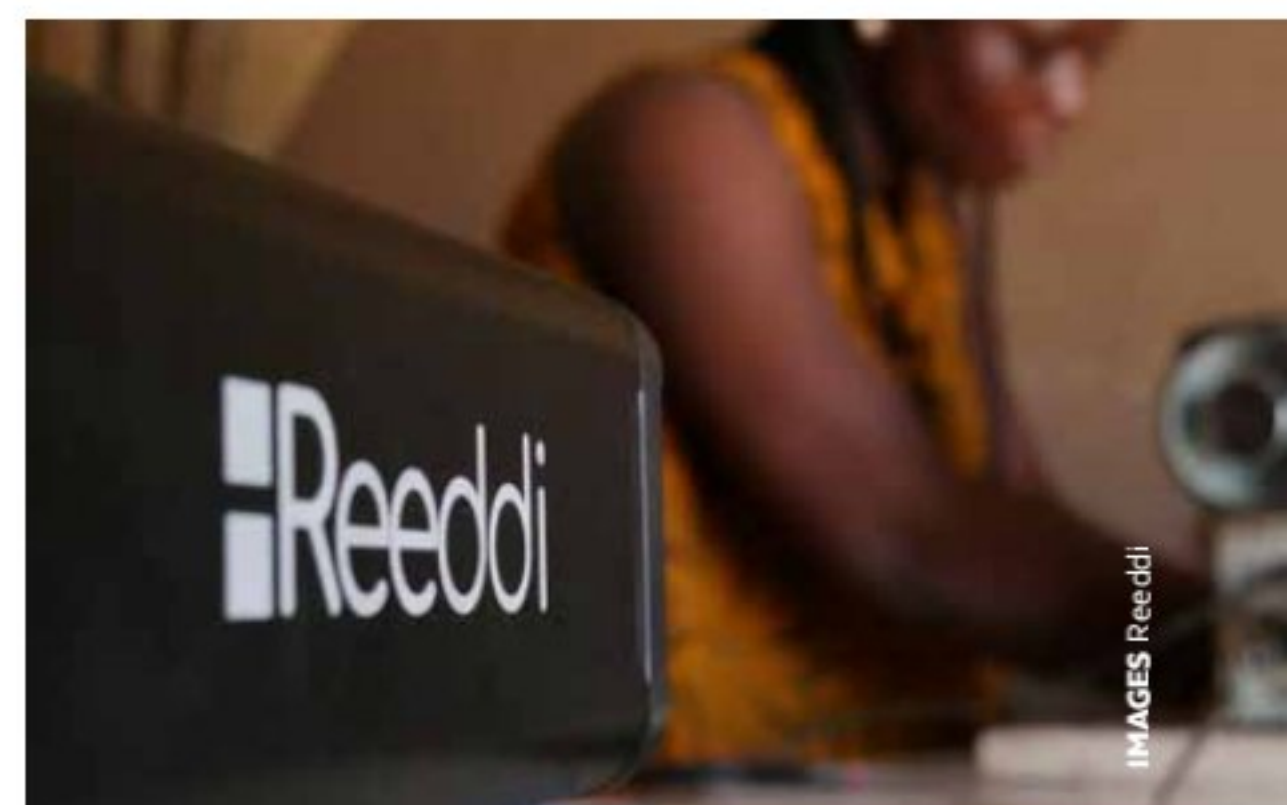
According to the [Royal Academy](#), "Reeddi capsules contain lithium-ion cells, improved by a proprietary battery optimisation algorithm to extend the lifespan of the capsule from two to four years, an increase from 500 to more than 1,200 charge cycles."

According to Canada-based Olubanjo, using Reeddi capsules saves his customers 30% of their usual energy expenses in Nigeria. While the capsules are currently charged at central locations, Olubanjo plans to create solar-powered charging stations closer to the communities he serves to enable his users to recharge their capsules themselves.

In addition to the Reeddi Capsules, Olubanjo's company is active in the home solar system and diesel generator space.



Reeddi founder, Olugbenga Olufemi Olubanjo.



A tailor uses the Reeddi Capsule to power her electricity-powered sewing machine.



## 6 Dr. Julius Mubiru

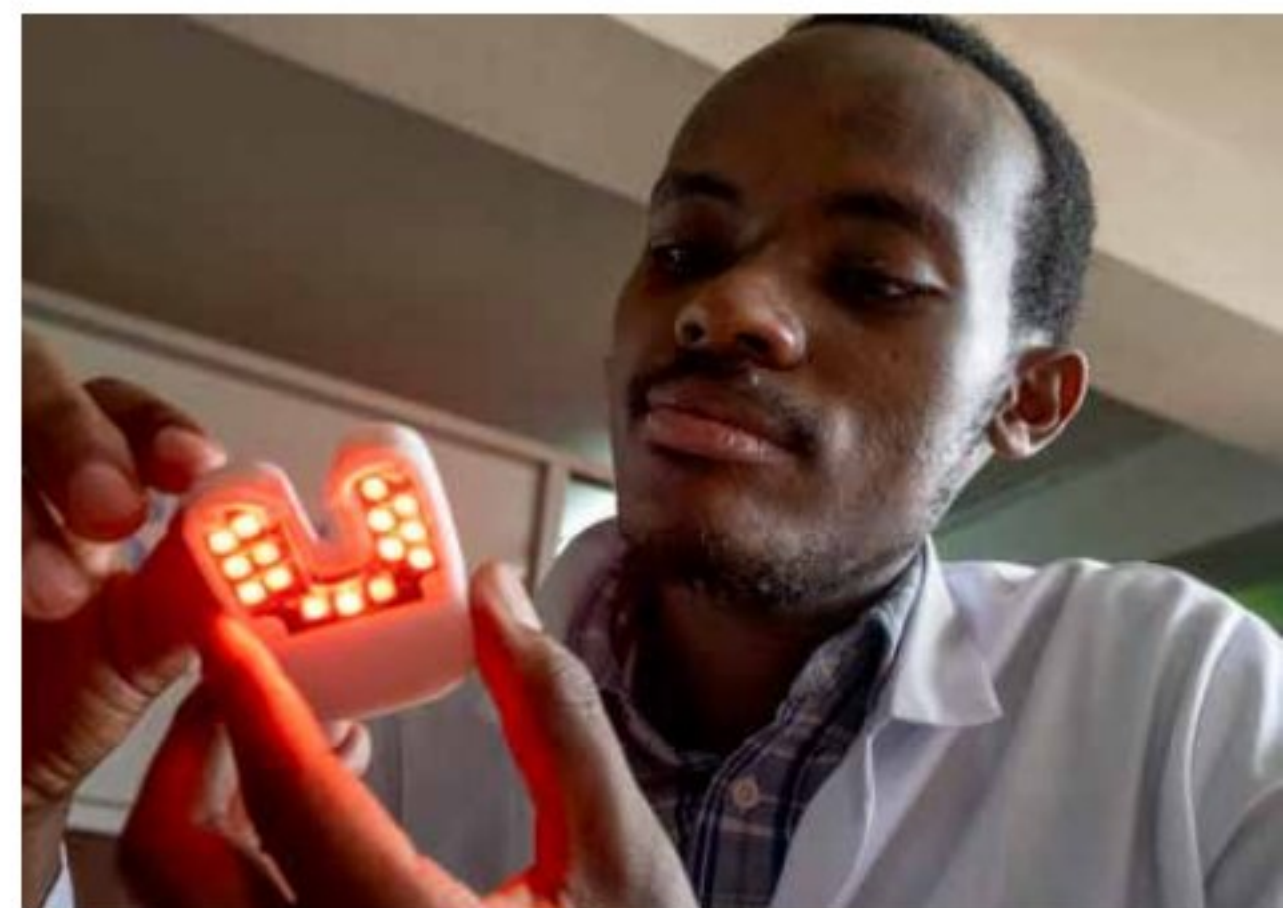
### Better vein visualisation for African children

Dr. Julius Mubiru, co-founder of the A-Lite Vein Locator, spotted a challenge in treating children in clinics and hospitals across Africa. It remains difficult to insert a drip or draw blood from collapsed veins or veins that are hardly visible. The solution was a simple device that helped medical staff by highlighting veins, particularly those of dark-skinned people and children.

When passed over a hand, the A-Lite Vein Locator uses a red light that reflects everything except the veins since the deoxy-haemoglobin in the red blood cells absorbs the light. This creates a shadow effect, which maps out the veins in the body.

Shortlisted for the 2022 Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation, Dr. Mubiru explains the motivation behind the innovation to [Innovate Uganda](#): “Nobody likes needles. However, vein visibility is not just an issue of comfort. We would like to see far more of what is called ‘first-needle successes’, where the vein is found on the first try, saving medical staff time, sparing children unnecessary trauma, and getting medicine to those who need it as quickly as possible.”

According to the [Royal Academy](#), “The next step in the device’s development is to conduct clinical trials to confirm efficacy and safety, and measure its impact in a medical setting.”



Dr. Julius Mubiru, co-founder of the A-Lite Vein Locator, demonstrates the use of the device on a young patient.

## 7 Conrad Tankou

### Early health detection and treatment

Cameroonian Conrad Tankou, a medical doctor and CEO of Global Innovation and Creativity Space (GIC Space), won the 2021 Africa Young Innovators for Health Award. During a discussion with a French news programme, *Télésud*, he explained how working in communities highlighted the risk of cervical and breast cancer among women, particularly those in rural areas. Without fast detection, many of these women had a higher risk of death, which was compounded by the lack of cancer specialists in Cameroon. So, Tankou created GICMED, a combination of five technologies to remotely screen and diagnose these two common cancers affecting women in Africa.

The GICMED technology comprises a telemedicine platform, a digital microscopy system run via a smartphone, a smart speculum device, a fine-needle aspirate biopsy device, and e-learning and training information, all of which can be used in poorly serviced rural areas to ensure faster and more valid diagnoses.

Tankou’s ambition is to ensure GICMED’s availability across Cameroon in the coming years and then expand across sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, the company says it is currently leveraging its innovations to target “many more diseases and unmet needs” in the developing world.

## Also on the radar...

### Getnet Assefa

The founder of iCog Labs in Ethiopia, Assefa, launched his country’s first artificial intelligence lab in Addis Ababa in 2013. The lab was involved in programming Sophia the [humanoid robot](#) that was granted Saudi Arabian citizenship in 2017.

### Miishe Addy

Started by Addy and Solomon Torgbor in 2018, Jetstream Africa is a Ghanaian company that enables businesses to control cross-border supply chains in Africa. According to [Techcrunch](#), “It aggregates private sector logistics providers at African ports and borders, and brings them online.”

### Farah Emara

A business-to-business agri-supply chain platform, FreshSource recently closed a [seven-figure US dollar seed funding round](#). This sets the platform up well to achieve founders Farah and Omar Emara’s ambitions to become the biggest fresh food distributor in the Middle East and North Africa. The business was started in 2019.

### John Amanam

A sculptor and prosthetic artist from Nigeria, Amanam founded Immortal Cosmetic Art after observing the lack of realistic prostheses for people with darker skin tones. “You rarely find people with black skin prosthetics,” he told [Reuters](#). “I want this need to be met within Africa.” GIBS





BY TAMARA OBERHOLSTER

# Beyond Cool

Founded in 2003, Beyond Wireless, now known as Beyond, was one of South Africa's first IoT companies before IoT was a recognised term. Today, the company is the world's leading vaccine cold chain monitoring service provider, with technology deployed in 112 countries and customers, including UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Committee for the Red Cross, and the Pan American Health Organization.

"We use the internet to remotely monitor and control key and strategic assets," explains Ian Lester, founder of [Beyond](#). The company aims to improve human health and quality of life and secure humanity's future by leveraging the power and reach of the Internet of Things (IoT).

Beyond's first big break came when it got the South African National Blood Service (SANBS) contract to monitor the fridge temperature, power and door status of every emergency blood bank fridge.

The WHO picked up on Beyond's work for SANBS and contracted the company for a vaccine fridge monitoring project in Senegal as part of Project Optimize – a five-year collaboration between the WHO and PATH (the global non-profit organisation working to improve public health) focused on identifying ways to

optimise immunisation supply chains to decrease global vaccination wastage, which the WHO estimates at 50%.

"The Senegal project was a roaring success, and that put us on the WHO Performance, Quality and Safety (PQS) list," says Lester. "That got us on the UNICEF catalogue. Fast forward to today, and we have deployments in 112 countries, which is still mind-blowing for me. We're a tiny team of around 20 people. It's been a whirlwind."

## Positioned for problem-solving

Beyond was perfectly positioned to assist with vaccine cold chain monitoring for COVID-19 as cold chains were exponentially expanded for new vaccine rollouts.

"What the world has realised through pain and suffering (quite literally) is that you can't chase a pandemic," says Lester. "You have to get ahead of it. In many discussions around vaccine equity, I think some frustration was misplaced. Even if the world wanted to give their vaccines away, you can't give them away to countries that don't have a cold chain to carry them. I think everybody now realises you have to build that capacity out in advance of the next pandemic. Because it's not a case of if another pandemic happens, it's when."

As Beyond has grown, its technology has changed substantially, becoming faster and more cost-effective. But Lester believes the secret to the company's success is deeper.



“One of the distinct advantages that we have as an African business is that unlike our European and American competitors, who don’t understand the realities of making technology work in the developing world, for us, it’s intuitive,” he says. “We assume the problem is the default setting and anything better than that is a bonus, whereas they start with an assumption that the world is perfect, and anything less than that is a problem. Necessity truly is the mother of invention.”

Lester is quick to admit that timing and luck have played a big role in Beyond’s success but believes another key factor is having a powerful vision serviced by technology, rather than the other way round, where technology is the product.

“Innovation is a shovel when you’ve got to dig a hole if you were doing it with your hands before,” he says. “Innovation is less about the technology we use than being tuned into the challenges facing humanity. Innovation is about how we ensure our kids and their children are going to live on a better planet than this one is now. Applying Moore’s law, which says processing power doubles every 18 months, we don’t have to worry about ‘can technology do it?’ We know it can. The question is how we use it to solve some of these problems.”

**Innovation is about how we ensure our kids and their children are going to live on a better planet than this one is now. .**

An example of Beyond’s innovation in action is its capability of deploying its technology into remote regions. Through partnerships, Beyond has access to 4,400 trained technicians in 190 countries and can have a technician on-site anywhere in the world within 48 hours.

A recent innovation is the company’s deal with UK-based fridge manufacturer,

Dulas, to supply fridges with Beyond’s technology pre-installed. These “Beyond Ready” fridges are plug-and-play devices, meaning ministries of health pay a single fee for a vaccine fridge and no longer have to worry about installation separately. This cuts down on lead times and costs. Dulas expects to sell between 3,000 and 5,000 units a year. Beyond hopes to sign more OEM contracts to become the “Intel inside” of cold chain monitoring equipment.

### The next challenge

Lester says that while there’s still room to expand on opportunities in Beyond’s vaccine cold chain niche, the vision is broader.

“The reality is that climate change will impact humanity in many ways, not only as far as global temperatures are concerned, but also what that means for human health and food security. As a business, we have this competitive capability to measure things in remote places. And we believe air quality should be one of those things. Roughly six million people died from Covid-19 in the last two years. Poor air quality has, for decades, killed seven million people every year. We’re now building air monitoring into our suite of technology so that we can provide that data using the same technology and platform. We’re essentially democratising data and making it available to communities, governments, and industry so that they can make informed decisions.”

While industry is responsible for most air pollution, Lester says that poor communities tend to suffer

**We’re essentially democratising data.**

disproportionately from air quality-related health challenges because they burn wood, coal and even plastics for heat and cooking.

Beyond is planning a pilot project with a company that supplies solar cooking devices to these communities. The cookers will be supplied free and include a built-in Beyond IoT device to monitor air quality changes. Companies can purchase carbon credits from the cooker supplier based on the change in carbon emissions realised through the adoption of these cooker units.

Beyond is also investigating beehive monitoring projects to assist with managing the populations of these insects, which are vital for pollination and, therefore, agriculture and food security.

“We’ve got to start thinking differently about the next 30 years because unless we start to make some serious changes as industry and as business leaders, we’re going to paint ourselves into a horrible corner that will be difficult to get out of,” says Lester.

“Leadership is one thing, but it must be attached to stewardship. Leadership is finite. Stewardship ensures that when you leave, you pass something better on to the next leader who will continue that vision and drive it in the future.” **GIBS**





# Keeping an Eye on NFTs



**IMAGE WORLDART**

The technology behind NFTs has mostly been applied to creative endeavours such as art, photos, audio and video. As a result, it has disrupted how creators create, with a growing number working solely on virtual projects. It's also disrupted how money is made.



## Catching up with technology

Bonhams' decision to offer Mandela's work in a digital format meant that many copies of each picture could be sold. Of the five Madiba drawings, *The Harbour* registered the fewest editions at 21, while 57 editions of a piece called *The Window* were sold. Bonhams has closed its sale, but all the pieces are now available on secondary marketplaces. They are all retailing for higher than the original price of US\$699. At one time, *The Lighthouse* had an asking price of US\$2,500, while *The Harbour* registered a listing for US\$15,000. If it sells at this price, *The Harbour* would have earned more than 2,000% profit!

These astronomical figures are not rare when it comes to NFT transactions. Over the past decade, the industry has been boosted by celebrity participation, such as sporting icon, Shaquille O'Neal, who raised US\$2 million for charity through the sale of unique NFTs. Co-founder and former CEO of Twitter, Jack Dorsey, sold his first-ever tweet as an NFT for US\$2.9 million dollars, while NSA whistleblower, Edward Snowden, sold an NFT that showed a digitally composed image of his face for US\$5.4 million.

Global brands are also giving legitimacy to the once-fringe sector. For example, sportswear company, Nike, has patented Cryptokick, which is a system that uses NFTs to verify the authenticity of physical sneakers and give a virtual version of the shoe to the buyer.

Rather than be left behind by this disruption, art galleries are choosing to embrace and leverage it.

## ...bidding on these platforms is still quite complicated for newcomers.

In South Africa, WORLDART, a Cape Town-based gallery, was the first local institution to offer an NFT artwork. This history-making item was a GIF called *Da bomb* by internationally renowned artist, Norman O'Flynn. The NFT was accompanied by the original portrait on plexiglass. Gallery owner, Charl Bezuidenhout, says it was a milestone transaction for his business, for O'Flynn, who will earn royalties whenever his artwork is resold, and for the buyer. "Acquiring this artwork by Norman O'Flynn presents a unique opportunity for collectors to own an entry in the blockchain itself."

*Da bomb* went on auction in April 2021 and sold in Ethereum for an equivalent of US\$3,500. Bezuidenhout says it was an insightful process for the gallery. "We learnt a lot about the process and found the biggest challenge to be the fact that bidding on these platforms is still quite complicated for newcomers. But it's something we expect to get easier as more people set themselves up with crypto wallets."

Globally, the NFT industry is growing as companies find applications for NFTs to supplement their primary product

## NFTs are susceptible to becoming the preserve of the wealthy few...

### Game of numbers

There are big bitcoins at play for NFT artists and collectors. Here are the five highest selling NFT works.

- **US\$91.8 million:** Merge is a single digital artwork that was sold as separate pieces or tokens. Each one cost US\$575. Available only between 2 and 4 December 2021, sales of Merge established artist, Pak, as the highest-selling NFT creator.
- **US\$69.3 million:** Everydays: the First 5000 Days is a digital work of art created by Mike Winkelmann, aka Beeple. This digital mosaic of 5,000 images was the first NFT artwork listed by the renowned auction house, Christie's. It was purchased by Metapurse, a group investing in digital art.
- **US\$52.8 million:** A joint creation with WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange, and digital artist, Pak, Clock displays a digital counter of the days Assange has spent in prison. It was bought by a blockchain-based activist collective to support his legal bills.
- **US\$28.9 million:** HUMAN ONE is a 3D video sculpture by Beeple. It was auctioned at Christie's with a corresponding dynamic NFT. The auction lasted just over three minutes, with the work secured by an online bidder in Switzerland.
- **US\$23.7 million:** CryptoPunk #5822 is by an unknown creator. It first sold for US\$1,641, with that buyer holding onto the piece for nearly five years. The NFT was then purchased at the new record-breaking price by Deepak Thapliyal, the CEO of the blockchain company, Chain.

offering. The film production company, Warner Bros., has, for example, released a collection of 91,000 limited-edition NFTs from their movie *Space Jam: A New Legacy*. The NFTs included the characters of Bugs Bunny and Tweety, and the pic's star, basketball player LeBron James. They ranged in price from US\$3 to upwards of US\$10,000.

### New solutions required

Most NFT artworks are not reliant on the appraisal and approval of celebrities or art galleries for status. This allows unknown artists to sell their work for prices that buyers are willing to pay rather than the amount deemed fitting by a curator. This decentralisation and democratisation serve creators well.

It does, however, pose limitations for buyers who can be easily priced out of the purchasing market. Having conventional market



**“It’s not a market;  
it’s a casino...”**

economics come into play in this way means that NFTs are susceptible to becoming the preserve of the wealthy few.

With buying and selling taking place only online, NFTs allow for complete anonymity. This can protect artists from gender, race, age and other prejudices, but it also means that individuals can create online pseudonyms that are near impossible to crack or uncover. As a result, digital assets are left vulnerable to price-fixing, stockpiling, tax evasion and potentially even money laundering.

NFTs do also have a limitation unique to their technological concept. When individuals buy an NFT, they’re not purchasing the tangible artwork. None of the people who bought a Mandela artwork received a canvas that they could hang in their home or office. Instead, their acquisition was a link to a website with a picture of the piece and information about its history, such as previous owners and past selling prices. If the businesses behind these websites and marketplaces ever fold, the likelihood is that the domain names could also disappear, making it challenging to buy, sell or verify any artwork listed on those platforms.

Dan Olson, a documentarian who offers media and cultural analysis on his YouTube channel, *Folding Ideas*, sees much cause for concern about NFTs. With millions of views recorded since its release in January 2022, one of his most popular videos is

*Line Goes Up - The Problem With NFTs*. He shares issues with the technology, including security gaps of blockchains and the self-serving hype of NFTs. Olson describes cryptocurrency and NFTs as a ‘Greater Fool’ scam. “The whole thing operates by buying worthless assets believing that you will later be able to sell them to a bigger fool,” he says in his video. Early adopters benefit the most, and consequently, to maximise their benefits, they try to hype up NFTs. “None of this is about the art at all, but about the speculative value – not what it’s worth to you, but what it will potentially be worth in the future to someone else,” he posits. “It’s not a market; it’s a casino, gambling on the receipt for an image or video that’s otherwise infinitely digitally replicable. The thing itself is immaterial as long as it can make a line go up.”

From artwork to event tickets to experiences, line graphs associated with the NFT industry are certainly heading upward. New ways of using NFTs have boosted the industry, which according to a blockchain data company, Chainalysis, reached an unprecedented figure of US\$41 billion in value by the end of 2021.

This is likely to increase still further throughout 2022. Time will tell whether the cartoon apes, video clips and GIFs that are popular in NFT art will continue to garner interest or if they will one day be rendered valueless by a newer and more virtually dazzling innovation.

## Memorable moments in the early NFT industry



### May 2014

Quantum, the first known version of NFT, was called a monetised graphic. It was created by Kevin McCoy and Anil Das and was sold for US\$4 during a live demonstration at a conference in New York City.



### October 2015

Minted and demonstrated at DEVCON 1 in London, Etheria is billed as the first NFT project. It is a 33x33 map with 457 tiles representing virtual land that can be bought, sold and built on. Etheria’s name likely reflects that it was created three months after the launch of the Ethereum blockchain.



### May 2017

Featuring multiple sets of 30 unique cards, Curio Cards were developed by three artists. They profile artwork of 7 different creators and are considered the first NFT collection on the Ethereum blockchain.



### January 2018

A metaverse world called Decentraland was born. The 3D virtual reality concept is the first-ever virtual world owned by its users. It allows for activities such as playing games and purchasing and developing land. **GIBS**



**...today's innovator  
is tomorrow's  
establishment  
monolith.**

BY JAMES VAN DEN HEEVER



The Sneaker Shack

# Innovation: The Fuel that Drives the Success of Any Entrepreneur

**Innovation and entrepreneurship are often regarded as two sides of the same coin, but the differences between the two are illuminating.**

People tend to equate entrepreneurs with innovation, and for a very good reason – innovation is important for entrepreneurship. But the two are distinct: innovators come up with a unique solution or idea, but it is the entrepreneur who turns that innovation into a revenue stream that hopefully, in turn, supports more innovation. Without the entrepreneur, the innovation is just a nice concept, and without the innovation, the entrepreneur is just another businessman.

GIBS Professor Kerrin Myres has a long history of studying entrepreneurship and is herself an entrepreneur. She

argues that innovation is fundamental to successful entrepreneurship and that one must distinguish between survivalist entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs who are wealth creators and have a long-term vision.

For the latter, innovation is vital to differentiate the business and carve out a niche. “Innovation is particularly important during start-up because that’s how the new player sets themselves apart and combats what I call ‘the liability of newness’ – consumers tend to stick with what they know,” she says.

This may seem obvious, but it’s hard to pull off. Most entrepreneurs start businesses in sectors where they have some experience and are, by default, programmed to reproduce what they already know in their new business. For example, many of the new businesses in South Africa each year are in the retail sector, but a vanishingly small number of them are innovative in any real sense, so relatively few of them are sustainable.

An equally large number of new “entrepreneurial” businesses are franchises, adds GIBS faculty member and strategist, Abdullah Verachia.



## ...a lot of commercially successful innovation results from recombining existing elements in new ways...

Strictly speaking, franchisees are not entrepreneurial, he says – it's the franchisor that is the entrepreneur. The franchisees are bound to simply "follow the recipe", though in some cases, mechanisms exist for individual franchisees to feed innovative ideas up the food chain.

Professor Myres puts her finger on one of the key challenges relating to innovation: the need to keep innovating. After all, today's innovator is tomorrow's establishment monolith.

Large businesses find it hard to balance the imperative to improve and defend the current business model with the need to innovate to remain relevant to customers. But while they must contend with the inevitable complacency that comes with success, they at least have resources to devote to innovation.

By contrast, the entrepreneurial business that used innovation to gain traction in the market faces the challenge of an overworked founder fulfilling too many roles and a lack of resources overall. It is easy for innovation to fall through the cracks, although a lack of focus on innovation is a significant risk for SMEs as innovations can be copied easily enough and are frequently poached and perfected by larger corporates. All the small-scale entrepreneur has is the agility and entrepreneurial flair to generate new innovations to keep constantly differentiating their offering.

### What is innovation?

One of the key challenges relating to innovation is a pervasive misunderstanding about what it is. For many, innovation equates to something – a product or a piece of technology – that is new (one might call this the seduction of glamour). Innovation often is, of course,

as Apple's ritual unveilings of its new devices testify, but it need not be, Verachia points out.

Innovation could be something relatively small or recombining existing components in a new way. Airbnb is an example of the latter – a highly innovative way of using existing infrastructure. Innovation might be a new way of marketing or a new business model. Covid-19 and its associated lockdowns spawned many innovations relating to business models: large corporates "pivoted" (to use the sanctified verb) their business models to accommodate remote working while start-ups offering well-being, counselling, baking classes, online yoga and so on ad infinitum sprang up.

Indeed, it seems as though a lot of commercially successful innovation results from recombining existing elements in new ways.

In the end, Myres and Verachia agree that innovation in the commercial sense is only successful if it delivers value to the customer that they cannot obtain elsewhere.

Let's look at some South African entrepreneurs who have used innovation in different ways to create new niches for themselves. Two of them operate in what must be one of the most crowded sectors – the sneaker market – which is largely the preserve of massive brands like Nike and Adidas. Sneakers are expensive and de rigueur in youthful circles. A brand seems to operate as a social marker analogous to Jimmy Choo shoes or a Land Rover Discovery in different market sectors. In other words, a tough market to break into. However, local company, Bathu, seems to have succeeded. Founder Theo Baloyi, an accountant, understood that sneakers were essentially aspirational, but he also

## Recipe for entrepreneurial success

Based on her experience with entrepreneurs and innovation, Professor Myres says there are two key steps entrepreneurs must take to stay ahead:

### Become ambidextrous.

Put effort and systems in place to sense changes in your market while focusing on keeping the lights on. This is particularly true in the technology space, but the principle holds in all sectors.

### Be customer-centric.

Innovation is not something to be pursued for its own sake; in commerce, at least, it must be relevant to the customer. And when the innovation is created, maintain customer focus by marketing the benefits and not the innovation itself.



noted that no sneaker brand captured the distinct culture of urban Africa. Simple and logical, like all good ideas seem when you hear them.

Bathu's success demonstrates the point about customer-focused innovation. Of course, behind that is all the necessary business of design, manufacturing, and marketing, but the innovation stems from an unperceived market need. But an innovation like this is very vulnerable to competition from me-too brands. So to maintain momentum, it will need to continue innovating.

The crowded sneaker market is the locus of another South African innovation. Sneaker Shack – “South Africa's most trusted sneaker laundry” – seems to have created a classic aftermarket where, to this writer, at least, one had not previously existed. It's easy to see the unique selling proposition once it's spelt out: sneakers represent a significant investment and are more than just footwear. Therefore, despite frequent use, sneakers need to be kept in tip-top condition to lengthen their life and communicate the right message. Sneaker Shack provides a professional cleaning service that meets those needs.

Fixxr is another homegrown entrepreneurial start-up. The brainchild of co-founders Bayabulela Jolobe, Curtis Young and Mawethu Soga, Fixxr is essentially a platform that links car owners with mechanics who can perform services and effect repairs on the client's premises. It's a time-saver, but it also provides a way of finding the service one needs at the right price.

Jolobe says Fixxr is acutely aware of the need to keep on innovating. The core team schedules formal innovation sessions to consider problems that need solutions and develop new revenue streams. A platform like Fixxr is particularly suited to incremental innovations, and so it could

thus be easier for it to innovate than a manufacturer like Bathu.

This kind of systematic approach to innovation is strongly advocated by Peter F. Drucker in his seminal, *'The Discipline of Innovation'*.

Innovation, says Jolobe, is about doing things better. It has become a way of thinking for him so that everywhere he goes, he is thinking about what improvements could be made. “You need to keep things moving in the right direction. Business owners must be committed to being better, not perfect,” he says. He adds that getting input from customers is vital in this ongoing process of improvement.

Another entrepreneurial innovator is OneCart, which operates in the online grocery shopping and delivery space, a hugely crowded marketplace thanks to Covid-19, and is currently dominated in South Africa by Checkers. The latter's unique selling proposition is the speed of delivery, as reflected in its name – Sixty60 – but is confined to one retailer. OneCart addresses the gap to cater to clients who want goods from various stores. As in the case of Fixxr, one can postulate that innovations will be relatively easy to implement on the application once they are formulated.

Finally, in the fintech sector, Ukheshe began as a way to allow those without access to banking to participate in the economy. After multiple innovations, it now offers an application programming interface, Eclipse, that can be deployed within four to twelve weeks. It clients access a range of services from customer management to digital wallets, payment gateways, card issuing, card acceptance, bank integration, authentication, Know Your Customer (KYC), QR code acceptance/payments and numerous other capabilities.



FIXXR co-founder, Bayabulela Jolobe

“We live, eat and breathe innovation – it keeps our Eclipse API in touch with what our customers need or want to provide to their customers. The key to our success is we don't try to replicate something that has been done before, but we look for a gap and see how we can improve and solve this problem in a new and exciting way,” says Ukheshe CFO, Mike Smits.

Perhaps the key message is that innovation is essential when starting a business and throughout its life cycle. In the end, the entrepreneur is in the same boat as the corporate giant, and both must find ways to keep the flow of commercial innovations, or they risk decline. **GIBS**

**...the core team schedules formal innovation sessions to consider problems that need solutions...**



**DR. THERESA ONAJI-BENSON**

*Dr. Theresa Onaji-Benson is faculty at GIBS. She is passionate about developing business in Africa, with interests in non-market strategies, ethics, partnerships and how firms sustainably influence their business environment. Her management work spans the Centres for Business Ethics and African Management and Markets.*



BY DR. THERESA ONAJI-BENSON, WITH NORMA YOUNG

# Addressing Gender-based Violence Through Emotional and Financial Empowerment

A collaborative initiative aims to give women safe spaces to talk about their experiences and work towards brighter futures.





In ways that range from subliminal to direct, many girls are taught from a young age that there are aspects of the female experience that must be hidden. From the covert purchasing of menstrual products to prescripts around how much of a woman's body may be exposed to double standards around the classification of promiscuity, many lived experiences of women are shrouded in secrecy and shame.

This suppression can create a sense of isolation instead of solidarity. It can also set a precedent that, just like women shouldn't talk about premenstrual fatigue or food cravings, they shouldn't tell anyone about the first time a partner slaps them. Nor the tenth time. Nor when they are regularly assaulted. And not even when they have been raped.

## Into the light of day

Creating the space for women to talk freely about their lives and experiences is the primary objective of the We-Dare (Women's Equality: Digital Access and Rights to Expression) network, led by Nottingham Business School in the UK. As a key member of the network since its inception, the GIBS Centre for Business Ethics has been part of the collaboration of academic institutions and NGO partners since it was launched in 2020.

We-Dare designs opportunities for multi-dimensional conversations on topics such as socio-economics and gender-based violence to encourage women's dignity, end period poverty and foster skills empowerment.

From 22 November to 2 December 2021, We-Dare ran the first pilot programme. Sponsored by Hollard and Nando's, it engaged with 100 women in the Wattville community of Benoni in Gauteng. By convening women around sewing workshops, the programme taught them how to sew their own reusable sanitary pads to overcome period poverty and create options to earn an income by selling the pads.

Reproductive health issues were also discussed. During these exchanges, experiences that many women dealt with in private were given a rare spotlight. One of the older participants shared how it was the first time she was learning about menopause. Another younger participant revealed that discussing how emotions are affected by the menstrual cycle gave her surprising insight that other women had had experiences similar to hers. She hadn't known that other women also felt tearier, overwhelmed or irascible around the time of their period. Bringing these normal and widespread experiences into the broad light of day showed her that there wasn't anything specifically wrong with her.

This uncovering of shared experiences can eliminate feelings of isolation, but it can also bolster female dignity. Through creating psychological support for the fact that the female experience deserves respect, women can then extend this sense of innate value to expectations around how their partners should treat them. By cultivating their internal significance and worth, women can require their partners to recognise this inherent dignity.

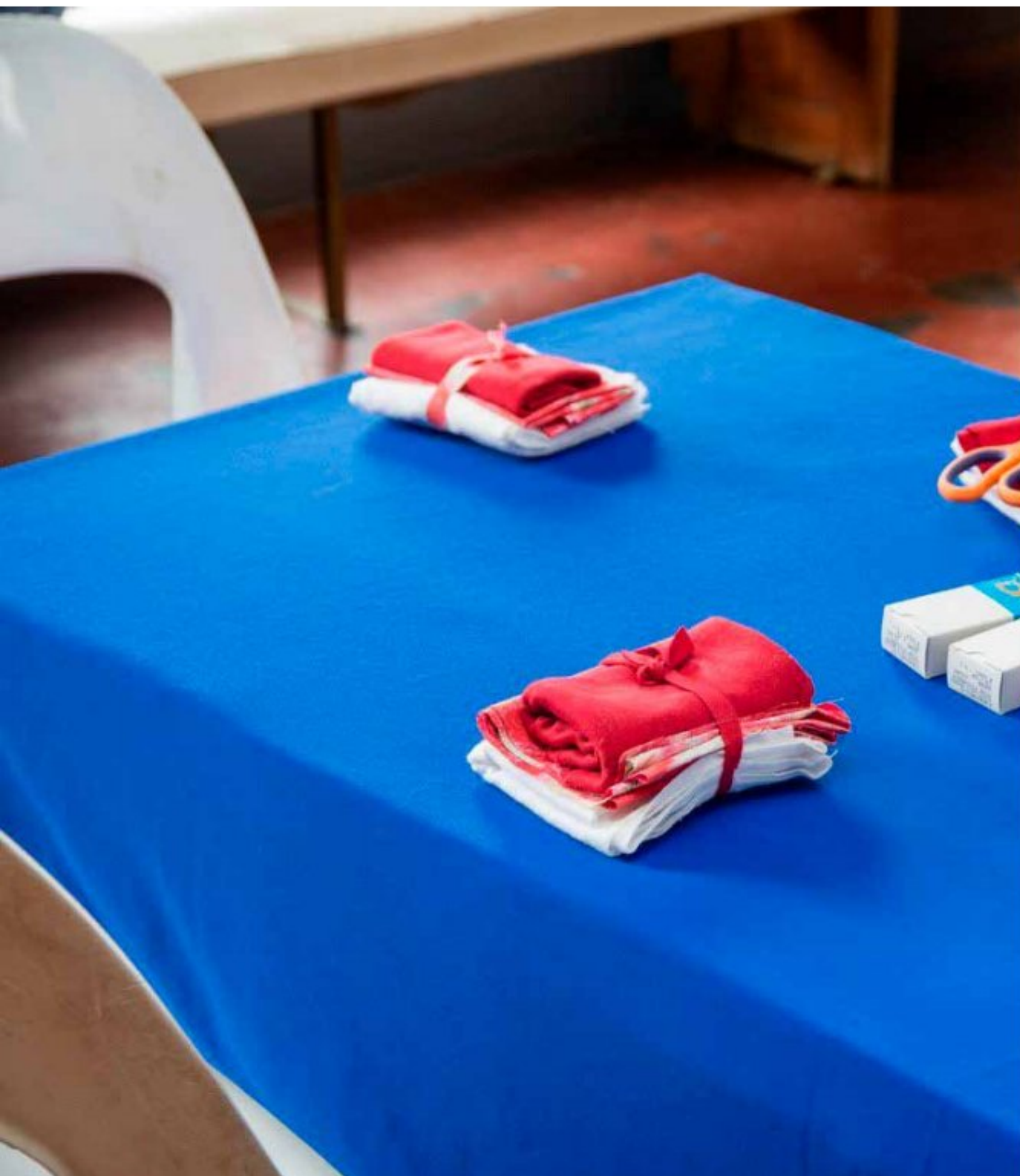


## Combating gender-based violence will require many hands, brains and pockets on deck.

### Veiled violence

South Africa's gender-based violence rate is one of the highest globally. According to the World Health Organisation, femicide is five times higher in South Africa than the global average. In June 2020, while updating the nation on Covid-19 measures, President Cyril Ramaphosa referred to the numerous reports of abuse, rape and murder of women as 'a second pandemic'. He mentioned that no fewer than 21 women and children had been murdered over the two preceding weeks. Mentioning some of them by name, he stated that gender-based violence should be considered just as serious as Covid-19.

The harrowing minutes during which he spoke the names of victims such as Tshegofatso Pule, Altecia Kortjie and Nwabisa Mgwandela were significant. However, for the women whose names are nationally known, many are not. Statistics found in



## HOW CORPORATES CAN PLAY A PART IN COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

### EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK

Introduced in 2014, the Employment Equity Act (EEA) mandates that where the same work is performed, an employer must afford the same salary to workers irrespective of race, gender, pregnancy or marital status. For women, this is significant because, according to the Inequality Trends in South Africa report, the largest contributor to overall income inequality came from the labour market at 74.2%. Published in 2019, the report revealed that female workers earned approximately 30% less, on average, than male workers. This disparity is consequential as the most recent South African Demographic and Health Survey found that the prevalence of physical and sexual violence decreased with the wealth quintile. Their research revealed that 37% of women in the lowest wealth quintile had experienced sexual or physical violence, while only 16% of women in the highest wealth quintile had dealt with such assaults. Therefore, paying women fairly could reduce their vulnerability to gender-based violence.

### CORPORATE CULTURE REFLECTING REAL LIFE

While incidences of gender-based violence often take place outside of the office environment, it's a matter that is pertinent to the workplace. Perpetrators and victims of violence are likely to be amongst the staff cohort, and therefore, the topic should be addressed in line with the values and workplace culture companies espouse. Private sector offerings could include workshops with trained gender-based violence counsellors and cultural awareness forums that equip men to prevent and eradicate gender-based violence. Legal education is another important way companies can contribute. Recently, the South African government introduced three new gender-based violence bills: the Criminal and Related Matters Bill, the Domestic Violence Amendment Bill, and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Bill. Organisations can hold seminars to educate all staff on how these bills can help women.

### SPONSORSHIP THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Originally, the first phase of the We-Dare initiative aimed to build a network of organisations and companies working in the area of gender-based violence. The second phase would then focus on researching various projects and programmes to glean insight into the causes and solutions for gender-based violence. However, because of Covid-19, the initial funders pulled out. By April 2021, it was evident that the second phase would no longer be viable without financial support. As a result, the We-Dare group had to figure out a new plan, which was to scale down and work in smaller communities rather than build a big network of partners. With hopes to run more programmes around South Africa and eventually in other countries such as Nigeria, We-Dare needs corporate sponsors. Each programme focuses on a specific community and offers tailor-made interventions to match the corporate brand and interests with the community's needs. To get involved as a We-Dare partner, contact Dr. Theresa Onaji-Benson by email: [onajit@gibs.co.za](mailto:onajit@gibs.co.za).



## We-Dare needs corporate sponsors.

police reports and demographic studies are incomplete because of the latent limitations of data collection and because victims often do not report abuse.

Reversing this widespread reluctance to report instances of violence was one of the goals of the pilot programme run by We-Dare. The two-day workshop included forums for women to talk about abuse. They were given the safe space to tell their stories, receive support and trauma counselling and access digital resources that could help combat gender-based violence.

In addition to education around gender bias, human rights and patriarchal culture, participants were also provided access to mobile data and knowledge on using digital resources such as WhatsApp for entrepreneurial skills development. There was also financial literacy provision through We-Dare's corporate partner, Hollard.

### Rays of hope and change

Having completed the pilot programme, We-Dare aims to rollout similar workshops in Johannesburg and the Western Cape. With the root causes of gender-based violence being multivarious, the measures to eradicate it similarly need to be numerous. NGOs and organisations such as the We-Dare network need the partnership of corporate South Africa.

Companies cannot exist purely to make a profit. Because they exist in communities, they must be connected to their communities. This can be through partnerships in which they give back to those in need and work to help create a more just and safe society. When the private sector is proactive about addressing issues plaguing humanity, everybody stands to benefit.

Combating gender-based violence will require many hands, brains and pockets on deck. It will require the participation of all of society. On paper, the metrics for measuring the We-Dare pilot programme show that it was successful. However, the credit for positive outcomes isn't just to the GIBS Centre for Business Ethics and other partners. It belongs to the women who participated and then passed on what they had learnt. Feedback from the women who attended the pilot was positive, but the real measure of impact was confirmed by their initiative to extend the network even further by sharing what they had learnt with others. This meant that the original geographic scope of Wattville was expanded through a ripple effect to three or four other neighbouring communities.

Through government, business and civil society working in concert, this reach can spread nationwide and then across the African continent. It can lead to a global society where women use their voices to speak of what has happened to them and communicate who they are.

## THE COST OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

South Africa's high rate of gender-based violence harms the economy. Here are numbers worth noting:

### R28.4 BILLION

The minimum approximate cost of gender-based violence in South Africa. A study by KPMG and Sonke Gender Justice found that in 2012-2013, gender-based violence cost between 0.9% and 1.3% of GDP.

### HALF A MILLION

This is the number of RDP houses that could have been built with money spent on gender-based violence related expenses.

### THREE

There are three major types of costs that the KPMG study explored:

- Direct costs, such as the expenses of medical services for the victim.
- Indirect or intangible costs, such as pain, fear and suffering.
- Opportunity costs, or costs foregone when the circumstances of violence limit a victim's options for employment.

### 72.8%

This is the percentage of gender-based violence victims employed in either the formal or informal sector. These victims are likely to have increased absenteeism from work and can be less productive when they are at work because of depression, PTSD and anxiety.

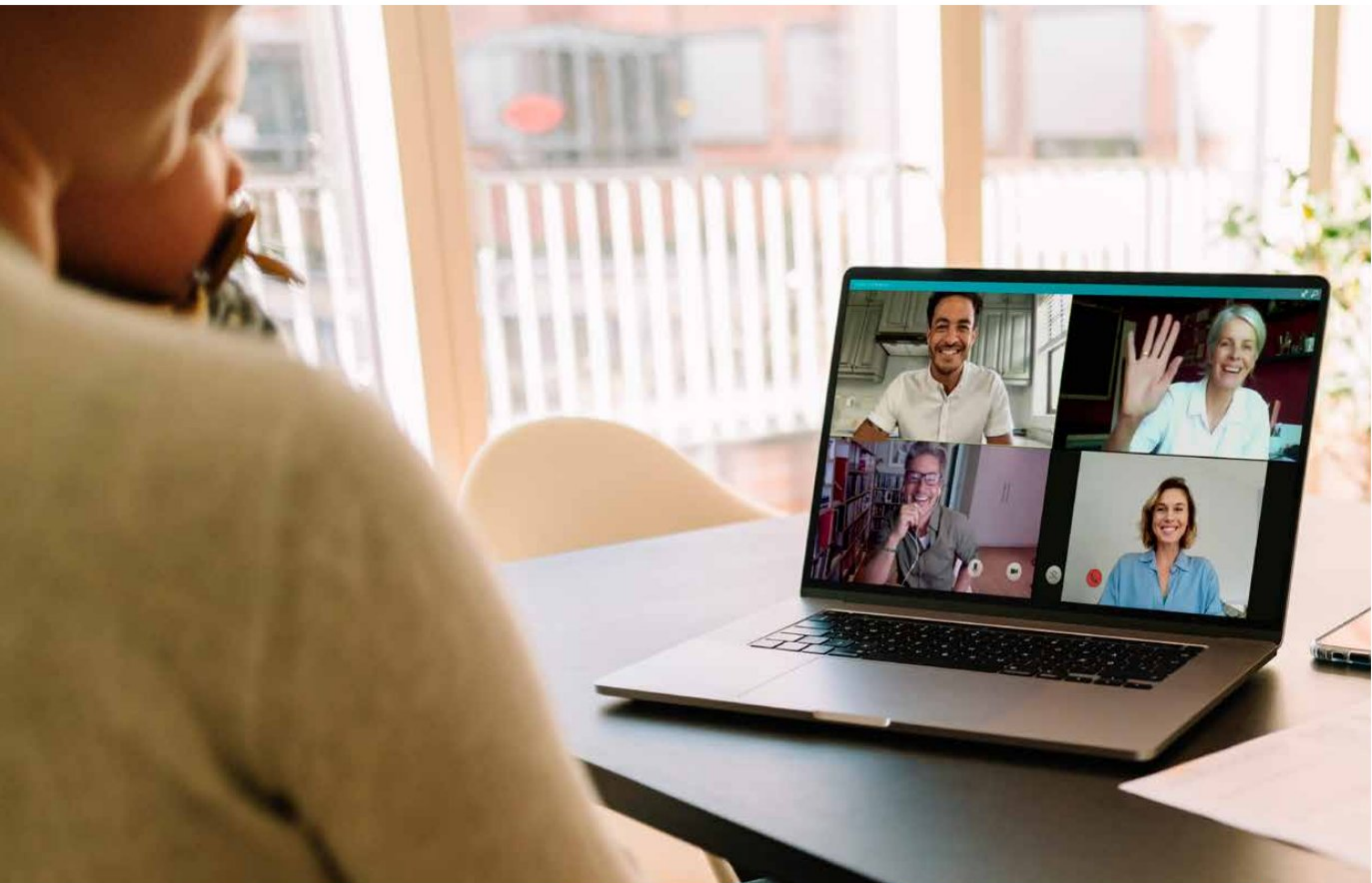
### R2 BILLION

This is what gender-based violence is estimated to cost the business sector. GIBS



**ABDULLAH VERACHIA**

*Abdullah Verachia has been recognised as a leading speaker, disruptor, strategist and thought leader on competitiveness and the interplay between strategy and disruptive innovation. Abdullah heads up The Strategists – a leading strategy consulting firm that helps organisations craft competitive future strategies. Abdullah also serves as faculty and programme director for the Harvard Business School Senior Executive Programme for Africa at GIBS.*



BY ABDULLAH VERACHIA

# Disrupt. Evolve. Repeat.

Disruption shouldn't be a dirty word – it's just part of the human condition. The only solution is to adapt, pivot and step from the now into the next. But how do you do that when the future world of work is changing before your eyes?



## ...we all need to spend more time making sense of the world.

In a changing world, we all need to adapt as human beings and as part of the greater social and business ecosystem.

The '[Great Resignation](#)' unfolding in markets like the US and Europe is testament to a worldwide cognitive rewiring around how we view work and well-being. The policy shifts in markets like Portugal, Bermuda and Georgia, which allow for easier issuance of [remote working visas for digital nomads](#), are notable changes at a country level. These are just two shifts that were sparked by the Covid-19 pandemic. Others will follow to disrupt individuals, businesses, and countries – the key is to watch for the signs.

### The macro factors

Rather than sitting on the sidelines and longing for the past as these shifts emerge, I advocate for taking an active interest in the macro factors.

Dr. Donald Sull, a global expert on strategy and execution in challenging markets, says that we all need to spend more time making sense of the world amidst the current cauldron of change. He argues, however, that many leaders aren't comfortable with sensemaking since it requires them to leave the comfort of their limited, lived experience to think beyond their sector or business and appreciate the global picture. This requires the intellectual humility to accept that we don't have all the answers, and the curiosity to experiment.

The sensemaking Sull talks about also requires leaders – and individuals across all levels of society – to take a more active interest in events unfolding around us. It means interrogating the implications of the new-found 'cold war' between China and Russia, and the West, represented by America and parts of Western Europe. It means paying attention to issues like the

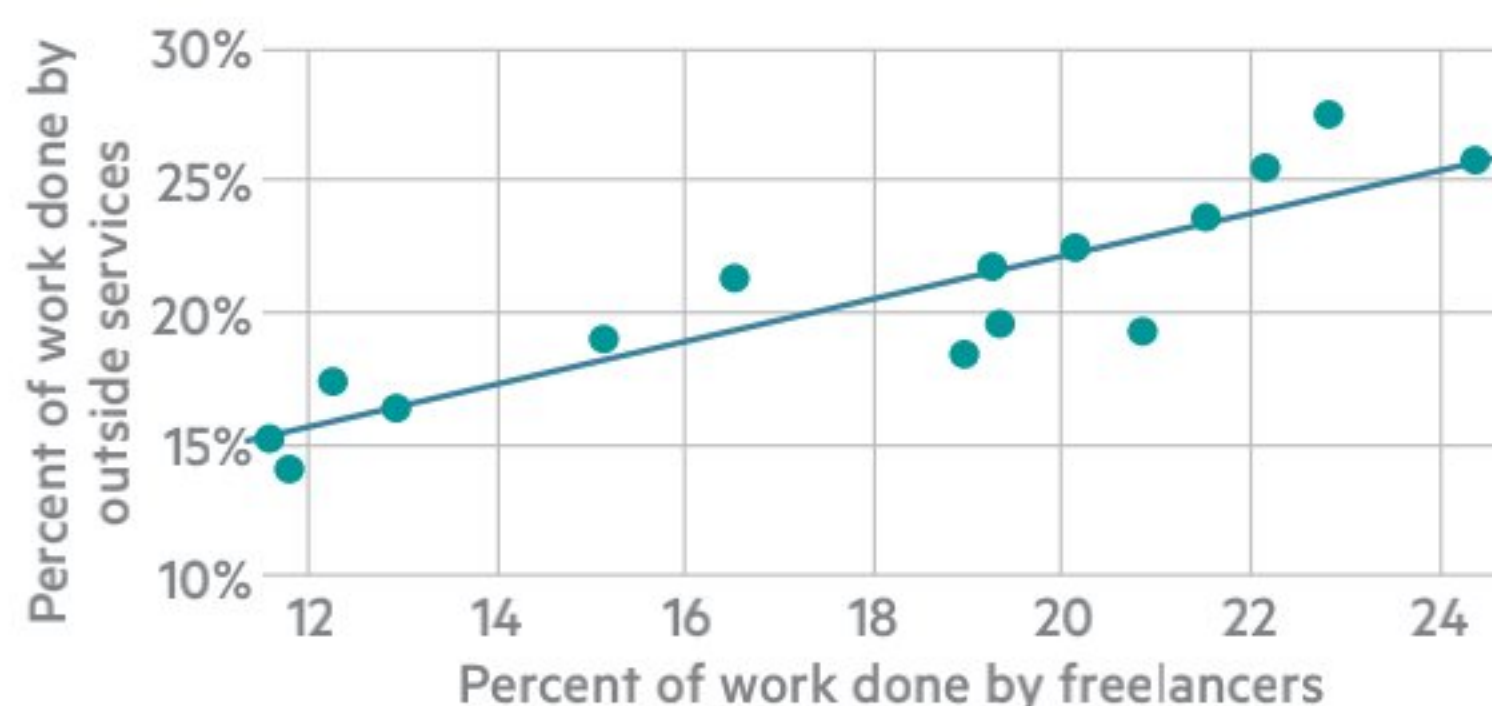
Russian invasion of Ukraine, and considering the consequential impact on a market like South Africa in terms of fuel costs, grain imports and coal exports, as well as the ability of average citizens to pay their bills.

Macro factors matter, and right now, three shifts matter significantly since they hold huge potential for ongoing disruption:

- Political shifts, such as changing global alliances that have the potential to shift the direction of the world either positively or negatively over the next 30 years.
- Economic changes, like uneven world growth and emerging fault lines around access and inclusion for large segments of the world's population.
- Cognitive rewiring, which is a Covid-driven change in how human beings think and do things, alongside a mass adoption of new ways of working, connecting and playing.

These macro disruptions filter down through the global system to a meso level, impacting grassroots organisations, businesses and communities. Right now, for instance, the intersection of a technological revolution, global macro changes and the change inherent in a multi-generational workforce is introducing a strange (and exciting) new way of working.

### Share of work done by outside service freelancers by work area







## The rate of change will demand constant upskilling and learning...

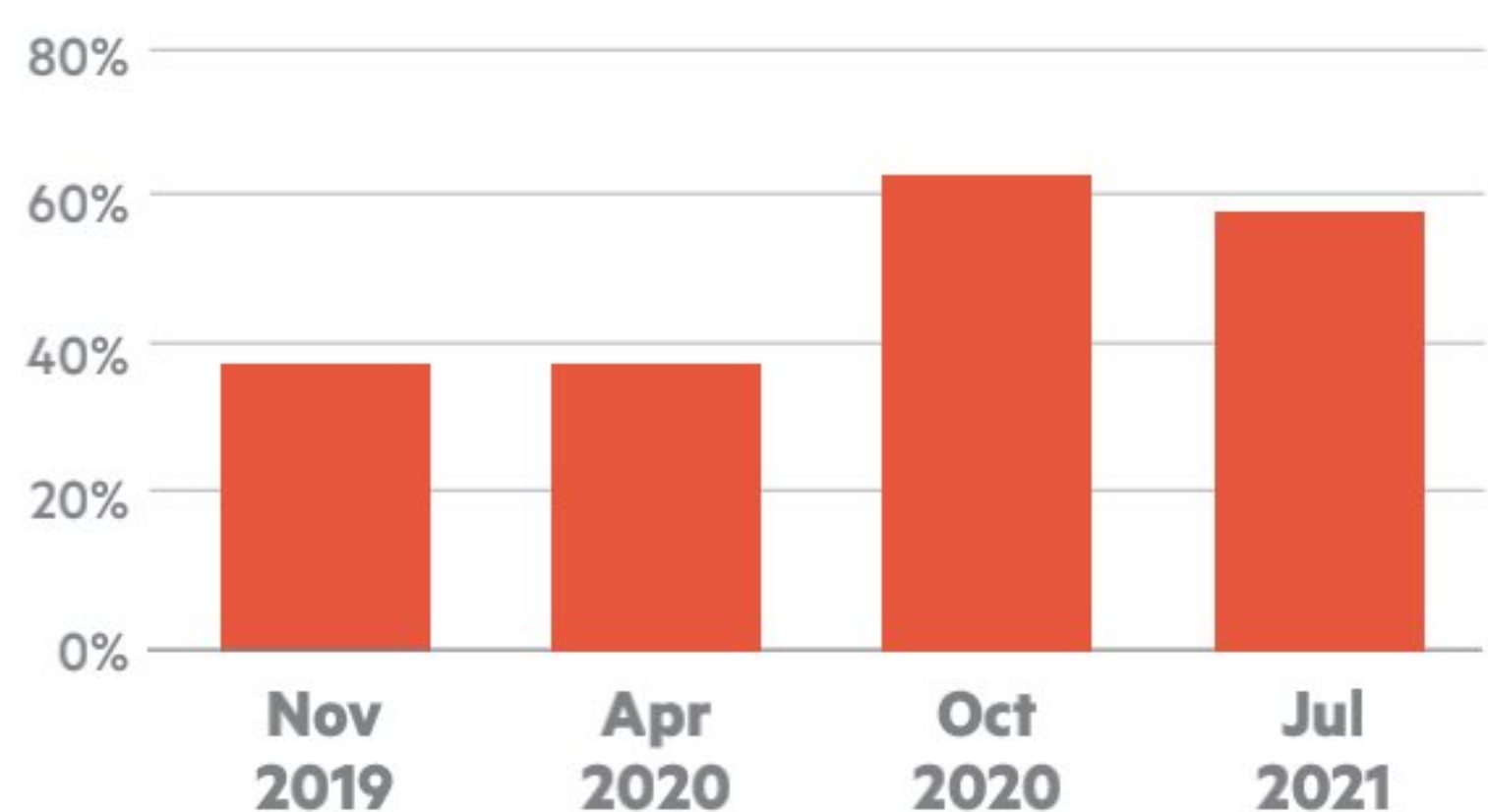
### The work disruptors

Of the workplace shifts finding their place in this new reality are nine points that I believe warrant particular attention because they will alter the entire ecosystem in the long term:

- **The rise of purpose-driven organisations** – With more employees looking for personal meaning and younger generations fuelled by a desire to make a difference, working for organisations driven by purpose will elicit more commitment and passion for its people.
- **The importance of lifelong growth** – No longer can individuals get a degree (or a few) and then relax into a job for life. Instead, the rate of change will demand constant upskilling and learning, some of which can be facilitated by companies and much of which requires personal interest and commitment.
- **Impacts on the future of leadership** – The leadership model can, and must, change. Top-down dictates will no longer wash with a curious and demanding public, so leaders must align themselves with purpose and live this in how they lead, mentor, and advance the careers of others.
- **A move beyond organisational charts** – The organogram of old is dead, unable to survive the notable shifts in leadership requirements. So, businesses need to think beyond these charts and create a more fluid model.

- **Rethinking the talent pipeline** – The skills needs of companies are changing amidst digital shifts and the changing needs of more agile, remote-working organisations. This will affect the [type of people businesses need to recruit and their talent models](#).
- **Reimagining the office** – The interplay between remote work and a physical office is touted as the '[combo culture](#)'. Getting the balance right will be organisationally specific, but it will require tweaks to corporate culture and employee development models in all instances.
- **Careful attention to minding the gap** – Combo culture corporate shifts have the potential to lift skilled knowledge workers up, but it can also sideline sections of the workforce who choose to remain remote workers (such as working mothers) as well as create cliques that close the door to [diversity and inclusion](#).
- **Greater focus on wellness** – Covid-19 highlighted how healthy behaviours benefit both individuals and organisations, driving a rise in wellness programmes worldwide and demand from employees for greater wellness support. This will accelerate into the future.
- **New definitions of success** – For too long, the definition of corporate success has hinged on wealth accumulation, power, and prestige. However, post Covid, human beings also define success around personal fulfilment and time spent with friends and family. Great talent will fall through the cracks if organisations fail to recognise this.

### Expected share of remote workers fully remote in five years





These nine points must also be read with the understanding that [the composition of the new global workforce is changing](#) as contingent workers, freelancers and gig economy operators find greater demand for their services. This fits in with the nature of an on-demand economy and business models that see the value in bringing experts in for specific projects rather than having full-time specialists available to them 24/7. This new model will require notable changes to how organisations structure themselves, their working arrangements, and policies and procedures. In addition, as employees increasingly have the option to work remotely or on a hybrid basis, this will also impact how organisations deal with training and development or seek to stimulate innovation.

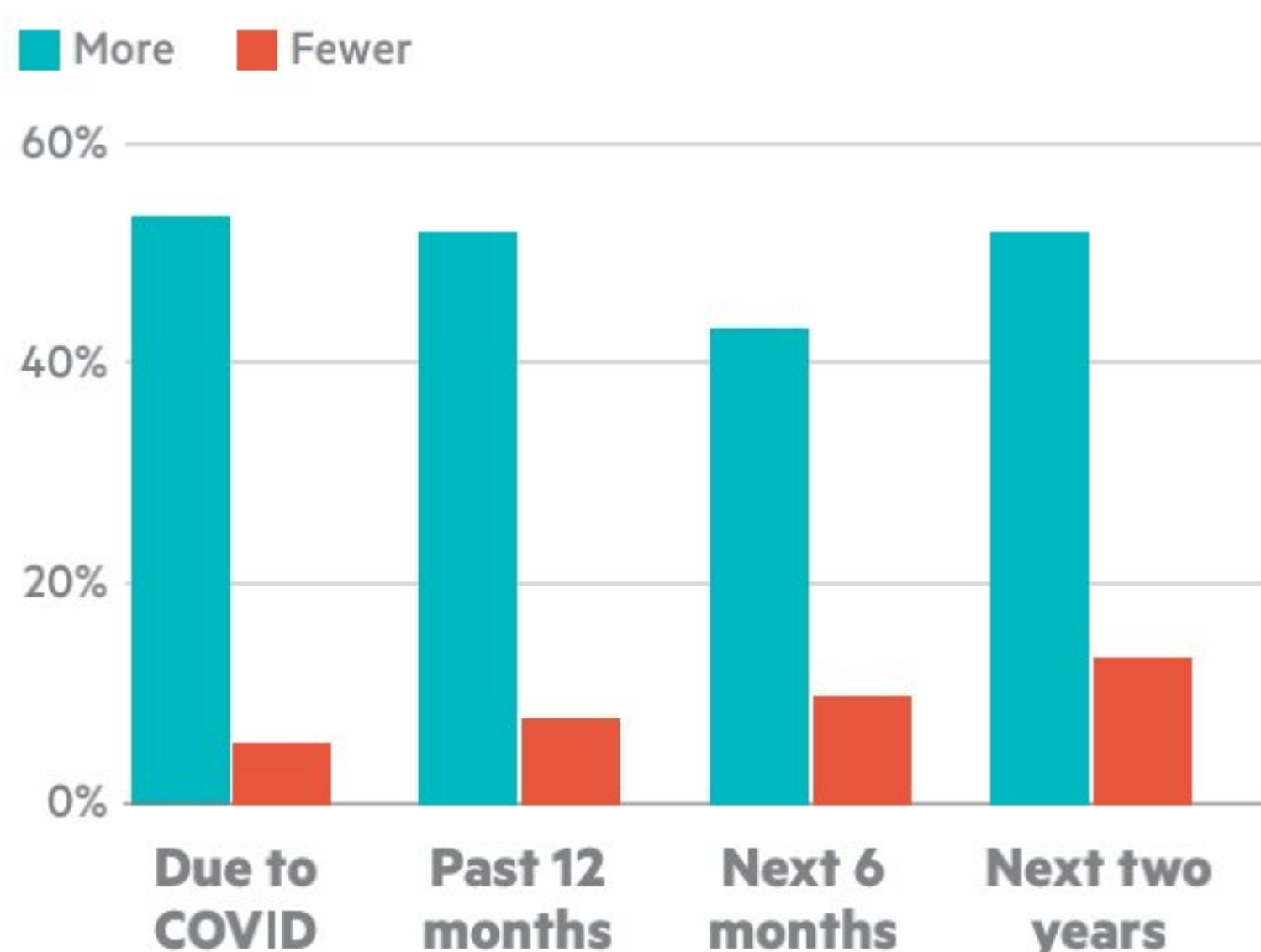
This is a profound shift, with researchers projecting that the number of [fully remote workers in the US will rise](#) from 12.3% before Covid-19 to 27.7% in the next five years. Likewise, partially remote workers are projected to rise to 20.4% from 8.9%. Many sectors in South Africa mirror this transition.

In such an environment, the bold will survive by changing and innovating and seeking new opportunities. Others, however, risk falling by the wayside if they stick rigidly to the past.

The influential thinker and author, Peter Drucker, puts it beautifully: “A time of turbulence is a dangerous time, but its greatest danger is a temptation to deny reality.”

In other words, the turbulence isn't the problem, but applying yesterday's logic to the solution is.

### How remote freelancer use has changed



## THE ANTI-DISRUPTION TOOLKIT

We live in a frightening, headline-driven society that fuels a perception that the challenges around us are insurmountable. This doesn't have to be the way.

For any organisation, big or small, the superpowers of the next 10 years hinge on people and people management. Since skills that cannot be automated will become increasingly valuable, evolving in step with disruption and uncertainty lies in focusing on these four areas:

- Hone your organisation's ability to empower, attract and retain talent by becoming people-centric and attune to the mood within your business.
- Develop an appreciation for innate human agility. Humans are incredibly adaptable to change, so when you move with clarity and intent, your people will follow.
- Accept that there is no normal, new, or otherwise.
- Normalise the need for reflection time during which individuals can think, plan and rest. Support this by creating space – and organisational acceptance – for slowing down, contemplating the bigger picture, and applying creative thinking that unlocks potential opportunities. **GIBS**





BY DION CHANG

# The 4-day Workweek:

## Utopian Dream or Re-thinking Productivity?

The 4-day workweek (4DWW) has moved quickly from an idea that was considered wishful thinking by workforces around the world to forward-thinking companies implementing the concept. Now, countries are adopting the concept as a government policy. Why are countries worldwide ditching the 40-hour, 5-day workweek?



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## ...shifting to a 4DWW: it's more challenging than you think...

It was a small but significant moment, but I remember it well. It was a Thursday night when I deleted my repeat alarm for Friday mornings. In October last year, I implemented a 4DWW for my own company.

At first, a 4DWW was only a theory as there is always an omnipresent to-do list as the owner of a company. At best, I could claim a Friday afternoon, but I reconciled that working a four-and-a-half-day week was better than a 6-day week.

Now, months later, taking a full Friday off is becoming easier and finally feels like a significant lifestyle change. And therein lies the complexity of shifting to a 4DWW: it's more challenging than you think (on both sides of the employment contract), and it is a gradual and holistic shift away from an entrenched concept of what 'work' is and why we do it.

### The case for a shorter workweek

For some bizarre reason, the corporate world, globally, still follows the guidelines of the American Public Contracts Act of 1936, which cemented the 40-hour workweek (negotiated by unions in the late 19th century) and the 5-day workweek (pioneered by Ford motors in the 1920s). It remained the template for the 20th-century office worker. Why we still apply something designed for factory workers a century ago to digital workers in the 21st century is the question.

A 2014 Stanford University study found that working 35 hours per week is the tipping point before productivity declines. Meanwhile, experts suggest we should only be working six hours per day, especially if we are tethered to a computer screen. Your energy cannot be sustained for eight hours. Screen fatigue – and its cousin, Zoom fatigue – is real.

A decade-long study on Swedish workers found that reduced working hours positively affected restorative sleep, stress, memory, negative emotions, and exhaustion. The knock-on benefits for employers are obvious.

## Redefining productivity

A skewed notion of 'productivity' clouds the debate around a 4DWW. Knee-jerk reactions to the 4DWW policy are based on the deluded notion that if workers clock in and out at a prescribed time, that time spent (under the watchful gaze of a helicopter manager) will be productive.

Two years of working from home has effectively decoupled 'work' from 'place of work'. It is time to discard a century-old template of workforce management. Outcomes are a better measure than productivity in the work anywhere/work anytime era we are migrating to.

For example, instead of a digital marketer publishing a specified number of blog posts a week, isn't it preferable to have a goal to increase web traffic by a certain percentage and within a specific timeframe?

## A global movement: countries that have embarked on a 4DWW

### ICELAND

Iceland was the pioneer. Between 2015 and 2019, 2,500 government workers had their traditional 40-hour workweek reduced to either 35 or 36 hours, with the same pay. The trials were made across various types of workplaces: preschools, offices, social service providers, and hospitals.

### SPAIN

In March last year, the Spanish government announced a 4DWW trial consisting of a 32-hour workweek for three years without any cut in workers' pay.

### SCOTLAND

In September 2021, Scotland joined the movement. Their trial aimed to reduce hours by 20% while productivity will be measured in output per week so that pay can remain the same.

### THE UAE

From 1 January this year, the UAE slashed its official workweek to four-and-a-half days. No trials, just immediate implementation.

### BELGIUM

In February this year, Belgium embarked on a 4DWW. Employees, however, need to maintain a 38-hour working week, meaning that they would have to work longer for each of the four days to get an additional day off.

However, the new labour accord also introduced the right to disconnect after working hours, similar to the 'right to rest' ruling in Spain, banning bosses from contacting employees outside of working hours.



## Trust becomes pivotal.

### Companies trialling with governments observing

Some countries, not yet bold enough to implement a 4DWW as government policy, nevertheless support companies that want to embark on a trial and are watching closely from the sidelines.

#### IRELAND

In January this year, 20 companies in Ireland signed up for a 6-month pilot to trial a 4DWW with no loss in pay.

#### NEW ZEALAND

In 2020, New Zealand's prime minister suggested employers consider a 4-day working week and other flexible working options. Unilever New Zealand started a year-long 4-day workweek trial later that year, but the staff at Perpetual Guardian have been [working four days](#) a week since 2018.

#### JAPAN

In June 2021, the [Japanese government](#) launched an initiative for companies to trial a 4DWW. Panasonic accepted, as did Microsoft Japan, which had already initiated the 'Work-Life Choice Challenge' in 2019, where the company gave its employees a variety of flexible work options.

#### AMERICA AND CANADA

In April this year, 35 companies will undergo a 6-month trial organised by non-profit [4 Day Week Global](#) (a global foundation that funds research into 4DWWs and the future of work and workplace wellbeing). Nearly 2,000 employees will be receiving a paid day off weekly during the trial.

#### BRITAIN

In June this year, 3,000 workers at 60 UK companies will start a 6-month 4DWW trial – one of the world's largest trials – facilitated by 4 Day Week Global in partnership with Think Tank, Autonomy, the 4 Day Week UK Campaign, and researchers at Cambridge and Oxford Universities, as well as Boston College.

### Missing the point

**INDIA:** The Indian government is considering [a shorter workweek](#), but employees would have to meet a minimum of 48 work hours per week, i.e., 12 hours a day. If implemented, the employees would also face a reduction in take-home salary with a higher Provident Fund.

### The other extreme: Arup's 7-day week

It's not as crazy as it sounds. A new working concept – Work Unbound – was launched in October 2021 by Arup, which allows all of its 6,000 employees in the UK to spread their core work hours over seven days rather than between Monday and Friday.

The policy was implemented in 2019 after a three-month trial in the company's offices in Queensland, Australia, and Liverpool in the UK. They discovered that 35% of the workforce chose to do some weekend work.

[Stakester](#), an online skills-based competition platform for gamers in America, has also adopted this 'work anytime' policy.

### What a 4DWW feels like: lessons learnt at Flux Trends

It is not simply a policy switch but a radical change in mindset and that adjustment takes time, not just logistically but reassessing deeply entrenched notions of work and reward.

A rigid 4DWW will not work for every company, but many templates are being tested. Some companies give every alternate Friday off; some simply reduce daily working hours but keep to a 5-day workweek, while others allow different teams to choose a day off in the week to maintain workflow. Some companies start very tentatively by simply implementing a no-meeting day on Fridays. Baby steps are still steps.

The point is not how you approach a 4DWW but rather what you imagine the future of work to be. The pandemic has fast-tracked the need for corporate introspection in terms of HR, and that introspection should be taking place in every C-suite because this inflection point hinges on a very different style of leadership and management. For me, this is framing innovation as a mindset rather than an entity.

For Arup to adjust to their Work Unbound concept, coordinating teams meant that people had to adapt to the idea that they were sharing their movements rather than being monitored. Trust becomes pivotal. And if you don't trust your workforce, you've hired the wrong people.

Dion Chang is the founder of Flux Trends  
For more trends, visit: [www.fluxtrends.com](http://www.fluxtrends.com)



# The Business of Motoring

Looking for a family SUV? Here are two great options...



## OUTSIDE

My wife may, at times, describes me as moody, and she's not always wrong. And depending on my mood at the time, when I see a Pajero Sport on the road, I alternately love or pity its appearance. The rear lets it down, I feel, being out of proportion and too heavy for the rest of the car, not helped by the oversized rear lights. Other than that, it's all good, with the 18-inch alloys giving the vehicle solid, stylish standing on the road and complementing the modern profile. The Aspire model is only available in Jet Black or White Diamond, the

latter set apart by the two-tone black roof. The Aspire spec also means black roof rails and a black front grille.



## INSIDE

It's hard to believe this all stems from a bakkie: with seven seats clad in black leather, an 8-inch touchscreen audio system with

Bluetooth, dual-zone climate control with a duct for the second row of seats, loads of USB sockets and multi-function steering wheel. There's also driving assistance in the form of rear park distance control with a camera. A big plus in terms of practicality is that the rear row of seats folds flat into the floor, unlike those of some competitors. This gives more usable luggage space, while the middle row of seats can be split 60/40 and can tumble forward to give added luggage flexibility. Safety is addressed by seven airbags, Isofix, stability and traction control, ABS braking with electronic brakeforce distribution, and an emergency brake assist system. It also has trailer stability assist and hill start assist.

## THE DRIVE

This is the aspect of the Pajero Sport where it probably holds its biggest advantage over rivals. Yes, the engine is "only" a 2.4-litre turbodiesel, and there are bigger engines available in all of the competitors, but that doesn't tell the whole story. Producing 133kW of power and 430Nm of torque, the Sport has enough torquey gumption to be eminently drivable without living up to the 'Sport' in its name. And because of the smaller engine capacity, fuel consumption is better, with realistic averages of 8.1 litres/100km.

The 8-speed automatic gearbox is standard across the range, and it makes the most of the available torque to deliver smooth performance around town and good fuel economy. It's the real reason why the Pajero Sport feels more powerful than it is, and also why it is a nicer car to drive within the city limits than its rivals.

In terms of comfort, the suspension delivers a ride that you don't really notice, which is what you want from a car – you don't want to notice it being hard or soft – you want it to be an afterthought.

## FINAL WORD

If there is one word that perfectly fits the Pajero Sport, it is 'underrated' because there is absolutely no way that it should be outsold some 20 to 1 by the Fortuner. Buying a Mitsubishi isn't a risky choice either because this is a brand renowned for its build quality.

Leftfield value:

## Mitsubishi Pajero Sport 2.4 DI-DC 4x2 AT Aspire

### WHAT IS IT?

First, the sad news: the Mitsubishi Pajero has been discontinued globally. This means that the Pajero Sport is now at the top of the Mitsubishi SUV pile. It is built on the excellent Mitsubishi Triton platform and is a well-equipped seven-seat all-rounder.



### WHY THIS?

SUVs based on bakkies are big sellers in South Africa, most notably the Toyota Fortuner and the Ford Everest. The Isuzu mu-X and Mitsubishi Pajero Sport are two other options that, for some reason, just don't sell well, despite both being brilliant vehicles. The Pajero Sport, in particular, offers great value, which we're all looking for these days!

### GO GET IT

The Pajero Sport Aspire 4x2 is priced at R674,995, while the 4x4 version adds R50,000 to the price tag. The Pajero Sport comes standard with a 3-year/100,000km warranty, a 5-year/90,000km service plan and 5-year/unlimited mileage roadside assistance. Service intervals are set at 10,000km.





## A bit of a belter: Hyundai Tucson

### WHAT IS IT?

Tucson, ix35, Tucson – I'm not sure why Hyundai flip-flopped on the name here in South Africa, but it's the Korean company's mid-size SUV, recently replaced with an entirely new model that is better (and better looking) than ever before.



### WHY THIS?

Value for money is one thing, but attractiveness for money is even better, and, at the moment, the Tucson delivers the best attractiveness for money. This is the biggest leap that Hyundai has made in terms of styling, and beneath the stylish exterior is a car eminently practical and full of features.

### GO GET IT

The new Tucson is priced from R519,900 up to R699,900, with the sweet spot in terms of pricing, probably the mid-range 2.0 petrol Executive at R569,900. Don't forget Hyundai's 6-year/90,000km service plan, 7-year/200,000km warranty and 7-years/150,000km roadside assistance.

### OUTSIDE

The design is mostly about the lights, both front and rear. When you see the Tucson with the front lights off, the car seems to have a massive grille that stretches from side to side. But when the lights flicker on, the design is illuminated, and you realise how cleverly and impactfully the LED light clusters have been incorporated into the styling. The large fog lights accentuate the lights above them by being bold and angular. Similarly, the taillights are design elements as much as they are practical necessities, with more than a passing resemblance to those of modern Peugeots – some of my favourite designs on the road today. A bold chrome strip on the profile is another touch of class to the overall appearance.



### INSIDE

The cabin doesn't have the same daring look as the exterior, but that's fine – it is well appointed and very comfortable. Instead of pushing the boundaries in terms of styling, Hyundai has made it incredibly ergonomically successful with everything in the right place and materials high in perceived quality.

For passengers and luggage, the cabin is more spacious than before, and there is a myriad of features, including a 10.25-inch touchscreen from which everything is controlled. One thing I really liked is the diffused air feature of the three-zone climate control – you can choose to have the air-con diffused through more air vents so that the car cools down quickly without a torrent of cold air blowing into your face.

### THE DRIVE

There are two engine options: the 2-litre petrol (115kW/192Nm/8.9L/100km) and the 2-litre turbodiesel (137kW/416Nm/7.9L/100km). As the figures suggest, the diesel is the one to go for, especially since it uses an 8-speed auto gearbox instead of the 6-speed auto in the petrol models. All models are front-wheel-drive only, with no all-wheel-drive models on offer.

When on the road, it is noticeable how quiet and polished the drive is, while the steering is sharp enough to be enjoyable and the ride quality on the verge of outstanding. It is a car that you will enjoy driving in all situations, from the commute to a road trip in the Karoo.

### FINAL WORD

It must be one of the best-looking SUVs out there, but it's also much more than that: it's spacious, drives well, is very quiet from the inside, has loads of features that you'll actually use, and is pretty good value. It'll also stand out amongst others that it can be compared to. **GIBS**



# Techno for Business

## Samsung S22 Ultra

Samsung's best of the best in one!

Price: R28,000

Samsung recently unveiled its latest flagship devices as part of the S22 range <https://www.samsung.com/za/smartphones/galaxy-s22-ultra/>. Their top-of-the-range S22 Ultra is, without doubt, the best Samsung mobile device ever built. But, if you're looking for a compact smartphone, it isn't small. The 6.8-inch device with the Dynamic AMOLED 2X display, weighing 229g, is Samsung's brightest display. Featuring a 120Hz refresh rate, it will make watching videos and playing games incredibly smooth.

The astonishing part of this device is the processing power it packs through its 8th generation Snapdragon chip. But it is the camera on this device that makes it stand out. Aficionados will appreciate the various lenses on the S22 Ultra. It has a 12MP camera with an ultra-wide lens, a 108 MP camera with

a wide lens, two 10MP cameras with telephoto lenses with 100x optical zoom and a 40MP front camera. Now, I know that is quite a mouthful, but to pack all those camera features in a device this size is a technological feat. The photographs and rich colours are breathtaking. Samsung has also introduced a 'nightography' feature whereby the phone uses built-in AI, processing power and software to produce exceptional photography shots and videos at night.

If you are a Note fan, you will be pleased to know that the S22 Ultra is the new flagship device that will incorporate the latest S-Pen to allow users to make notes on their screen and draw. In addition, the 5,000mAh battery is more than sufficient to give you a full day on your phone. The S22 Ultra is a fantastic device that will satisfy Samsung's most die-hard fans.



## Apple 14

The perfect all-round MacBook Pro

Priced from R38,80

When Apple first announced their new silicon M1 chip in 2020, it was the beginning of a new era for the world's largest company. The performance and energy efficiency of the new chip range is nothing short of phenomenal. Apple continued to build on this chip architecture when they added the new M1 Pro or M1 Max chips to their 14-inch and 16-inch MacBook Pros a few months ago. The device's performance is lightning fast!

It is the 14-inch MacBook Pro <https://www.istore.co.za/macbook-pro-14-inch-m1-pro> that I want to draw your attention to. In my view, it is the most perfect all-round MacBook that has yet been built. The jump from 13 inches to 14 inches is subtle. Still, the new MacBook Pro has an even thinner bezel around the liquid retina display that delivers a ProMotion 120Hz refresh rate, making everything smoother. Some are calling this the best screen ever on a laptop.

The machine itself has also been redesigned. The ports now include a MagSafe 3 port, three Thunderbolt 4 ports, one HDMI port and an SDXC card slot, making it easy to transfer photos and videos from SD cards.

Is this overkill for a business machine? Not at all. In fact, I would categorise this MacBook as the perfect business machine for the executive. The new 1080p webcam significantly enhances video quality for virtual calls, and the new studio-quality microphones deliver a professional look and feel. The battery life has also been significantly improved with up to 17 hours of usage! It is not a cheap device, though. Once you start configuring and adding additional RAM and storage memory, you can easily pass the R60,000 mark. Nevertheless, it is a primary business tool, and the value that one gets from using it makes the money spent more palatable.





# Jabra Elite 7 Pro

Take your virtual calls to a different quality of audio

Price: R4,000

It gets frustrating when you're on a virtual call and someone doesn't have a great microphone. Your sound should be one of the most critical aspects of the new remote working era. Unfortunately, not all notebooks and phones have great microphones, and this is why one should look at investing in a good pair of wireless earbuds. Jabra has been doing this for a very long time, and the technology they have developed over the years puts them into the premium sound category. The new

Jabra Elite 7 Pro <https://circuitcity.co.za/jabra-2/> works with an app to deliver excellent sound performance. They are the perfect all-day wireless earphones with 8-hour battery life and an additional 22 hours in the charge case. The sound quality is very good, and there is also active noise cancelling for noisy environments. With its two built-in microphones, the Jabra Elite 7 Pro is a great value wireless earbud.

# iRobot Roomba s9+

The Rolls Royce of robot vacuums

Price: R23,000

In December, I had a chance to use the iRobot Roomba s9+. I loved telling people at dinner parties that I was testing a R23,000 vacuum cleaner. The responses were priceless!

So, what makes a R23,000 vacuum cleaner so special, and at this price, shouldn't it do the dishes as well?

I remember first seeing these robot vacuum cleaners many years ago at an international tech show. My first reaction was that these robots could surely not do as thorough a job as a traditional manual cleaner.

The iRobot company is an interesting one. Founded in 1990 by three members of MIT's Artificial Intelligence Lab, the company has sold more than 30 million units. Their technology has even been used by bomb disposal units.

As you can tell, the iRobot Roomba s9+ <https://irobot.co.za/product/irobot-roomba-s9-plus/> has a long pedigree. It is packed with sensors and their PerfectEdge technology, and an advanced 3D sensor will clean your house perfectly without you having to do a thing. Once you download the app, the vacuum maps your entire home. Through the app, you choose when to clean, which rooms to clean, and what suction level. There is a reason why they are number 1 in the



world. The build quality and product result are flawless. This particular robot also docks into their Clean Base Automatic Dirt Disposal, which allows it to vacuum for weeks without emptying anything. If you are inclined to speak to your vacuum, Alexa will respond to all your voice commands. Oh, and if you have pets and allergies, this thing is an absolute dream. For an additional R10,000, you can add the iRobot Braava Jet Robot Mop, which mops the floors when the s9+ is done. **GIBS**



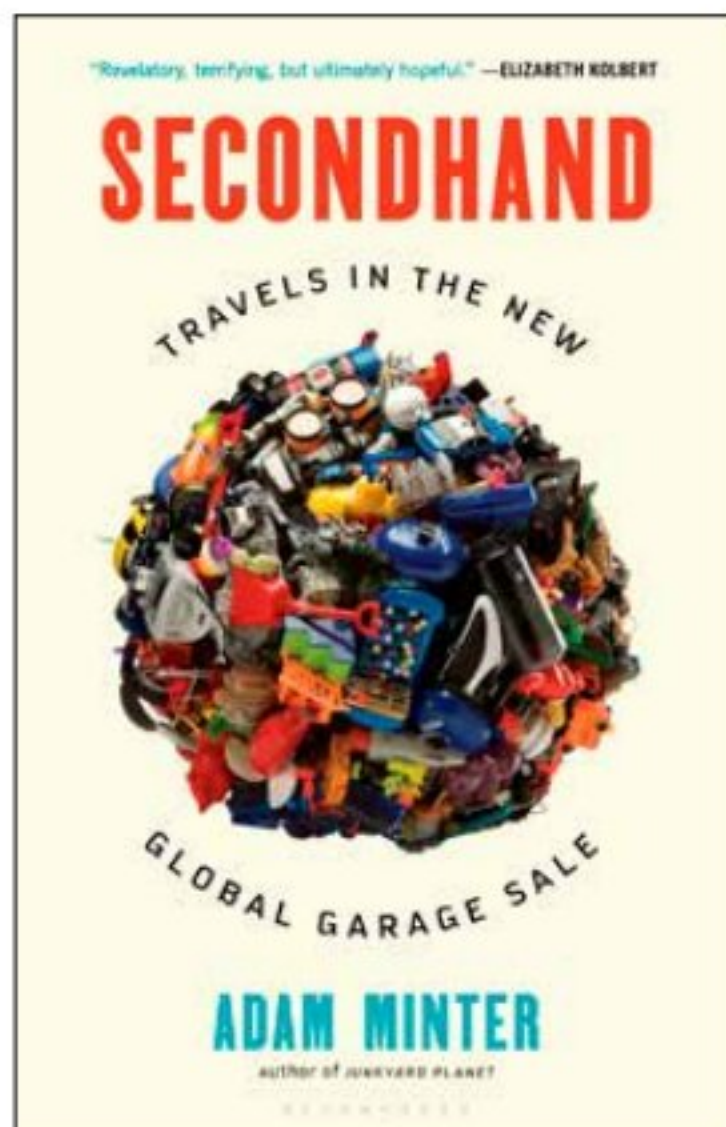
# Books

## Secondhand Travels in the New Global Garage Sale

**Adam Minter**

**Bloomsbury – R890.00**

Some animals and birds hoard, but that's usually their way of storing food for future use. Human beings, on the other hand, hoard because we just can't get rid of unused or unwanted stuff. As Adam Minter reports in the preface to *Secondhand*, "one 2006 study of Los Angeles middle-class homes found that 90%



of garage space is now used to store stuff, not automobiles." Look at any South African city and you'll see one obvious growth phenomenon: storage units. Almost all of them will be filled to the brim with stuff that we need to dump but just can't bring ourselves to do.

And if we do, finally, get Mari Kondo's organising methodology and decide only to keep the things that bring us joy, what happens to all the rest?

That was the question Minter, a Bloomberg journalist, set out to explore. Where do all those unwanted dining-room tables and chairs go when Mum and Dad head to the care home? Or the unwanted computers that still work, sort of, but have been left in a cupboard because you've upgraded? What about the mountains of clothing discarded every year? Is it all recycled, or does it just end up in a landfill?

Travelling extensively between America, Mexico, Japan, India, Ghana and Malaysia, where he lives, Minter tracked all manner of objects, from second-hand cars to vintage boomboxes. For many of the people he encountered or interviewed along the way, the word 'recycle' actually means 'reuse'. For example, did you know that the word 'shoddy' comes from the coarse fabric produced when reusing wool? According to Minter, second-hand wool can't be used for anything other than producing more wool and is used

in "low-cost blankets and other garments marketed to the poor and - significantly - the military."

From its origins in the Victorian mills of northern England via Prato in Italy, the bulk of the world's shoddy is now produced in a town called Panipat in India. But that seems unlikely to last because musty-smelling, rough shoddy is being fast replaced by cheaper, lighter and much smoother Chinese-produced polar fleece. So what's going to happen to the world's discarded woollens in the future remains to be seen.

Books, magazines, porcelain ornaments, old board games, used children's car seats – if you have owned any kind of object or device, the chances are that Minter has seen it moving from place to place on an endless value chain. It is ever-decreasing in value, yes, but almost always moving from you to someone who can reuse it.

Used computers and gadgets like smartphones and TVs are of deep interest, with millions being sold by specialist dealers in America to West Africa. Ghana, in particular, has hundreds of repair shops that can take your old Dell, Fujitsu or IBM laptop and turn it into something that's almost as good as new. Minter watches a master technician restore a 25-year-old tube TV to working order. The cost of the repair is about US\$5, or R75; maybe a dollar or two more if parts are needed. Second-hand cars, too – the Ghanaians are expert restorers.

This brings us to ask some questions. Why is it so difficult to repair a smartphone? Why can't I replace the battery in my iPad? Why would the warranty on my new car be voided if I took it to an unapproved dealer?

One of Minter's conclusions is that right-to-repair laws need to change radically if we are to avoid contributing more to the ever-growing mountains of stuff. *Secondhand* is a fascinating read, with some deep insight into businesses that I had never even imagined existed. And yes, as I write this and look around my office, there's absolutely no doubt – I really do have too much stuff!



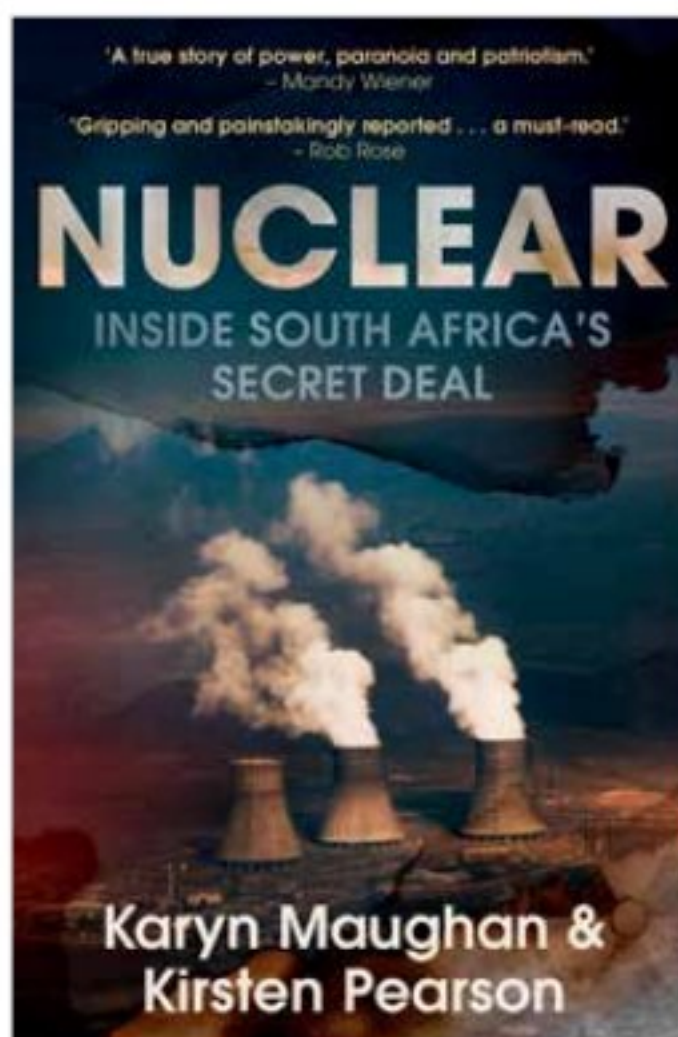
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## Nuclear Inside South Africa's Secret Deal

**Karyn Maughan and Kirsten Pearson**

**Tafelberg – R320.00**

As I write this review, Russian armour and troops regroup in southern and eastern Ukraine for an all-out assault on the Donbas region of that severely bloodied country. Russia's long-serving dictator, Vladimir Putin, has declared peace negotiations 'dead'. It's a chilling



backdrop against which to read one of the most penetrating exposés yet of the deep corruption at the heart of the ruling ANC.

Investigative journalist, Karyn Maughan, and colleague, Kirsten Pearson, a former National Treasury insider, lay bare what can only be described as a plot

by former President Jacob Zuma and his ally, Putin, to sell South Africa some 9.6GW of nuclear power. Had it taken place, the cost would have been around R1 trillion, and South Africa would have been left bankrupt.

At the heart of their investigation is Zuma's obsession with the Russians, believing them to be first-rate allies. It is to the Kremlin Zuma turns when – apparently – he was poisoned by one of his wives. After receiving treatment in Moscow, Zuma comes home and starts driving the nuclear deal. The fact that nobody has ever delivered proof of the poisoning and, as we see later in the book, the use of corrupt officials like Brian Molefe and Anoj Singh at Eskom, along with the egregious Gupta clan, lead to suspicions that perhaps money, and not poison, was his central motivator.

*Nuclear* is yet another fine addition to the increasingly long canon of investigations into the ANC's deviousness, crookery and dishonesty. It's also worth noting that had Maughan and Pearson undertaken a similar piece of work inside Putin's Russia, they would either now be dead or in jail.

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## Uncommon Wealth Britain and the Aftermath of Empire

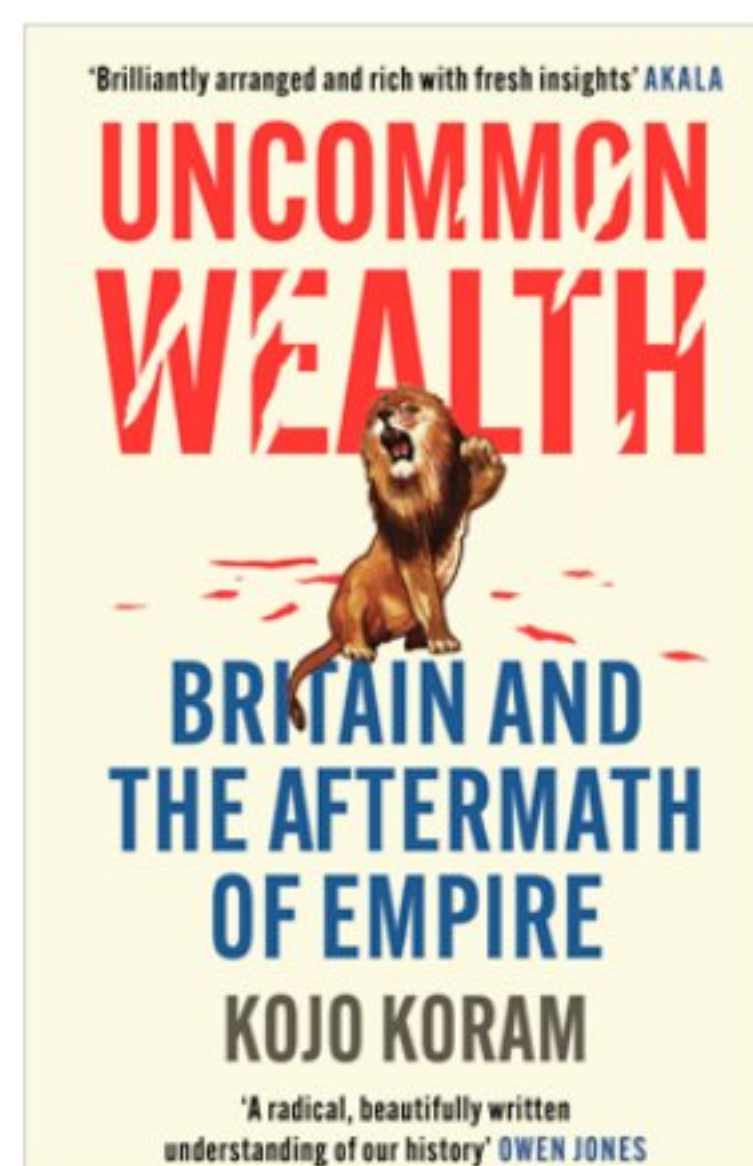
**Kojo Koram**

**John Murray – R355.00**

Although I was born in Johannesburg, my parents were British and, aged nine, I was sent "home" to school in England. The late 1960s was a time when being British still meant that you had "won first prize in the game of life", to use the hackneyed phrase and the British Empire, although crumbling rapidly, was still widely

considered to have been a 'Good Thing'. South Africa, of course, had been part of that empire for some 200 years or more, only severing its ties in 1961 when it left the Commonwealth. (We rejoined in June 1994, after liberation, but I think it's fair to say that nobody now thinks of the Commonwealth as representing the British Empire.)

Throw forward to today, and whether or not the British Empire was a 'Good Thing' is very much an open question. Kojo Koram, who teaches at the School of Law at Birkbeck



College, University of London, applies a scalpel to it in his new book. His name alone will tell you that he is of Ghanaian heritage; the British Empire seen through the eyes of a black African is a very different proposition to the one I was fed while "home" at school.

But slavery is only one part of his dissection of the Empire and the structures that remain in place, even though it is supposedly no more. Koram's approach is one well-known to business journalists: follow the money. Why is it, he asks, that three of the world's most secretive yet effective offshore tax havens are still British? The British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands and Bermuda are all in the Caribbean, yet none has opened for full independence. How come so much dodgy money sloshes about in the City of London? (Did someone say 'Russian oligarchs'?) What role is played by debt in Britain's former colonies, and why are so many still so poor? Has Britain even attempted to reckon with the legacy of its colonial past, or is it just trying to pretend that it didn't really happen and it's time to move on?

Given South Africa's role in that colonial past, its impact on the structure of our society and the deep-seated problems with which we are, as a nation, trying to grapple, *Uncommon Wealth* is important reading. **GIBS**



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