

Do or die for transformation

 By [Shawn Theunissen](#)

10 Jan 2017

In 1994, South Africa's first democratic election truly set us on the path to transformation. Yet, 23 years later, there's not much progress to report.



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Stats SA shows the number of skilled workers – managers, professionals, technicians – increased meaningfully across all ages of white, indian and coloured South Africans from 1994 to 2014. Yet, gains for black Africans were small. In fact, there are fewer skilled black people between the ages 25 to 34 than there were 20 years ago.

It is little wonder 2016 started with a big racial bang and continued to be fraught with racial tension. The heat is on to accelerate transformation, with a growing number of pressure points becoming bigger drivers for change. This sets the scene for what we can expect in 2017.

Telling real stories

Businesses will be keen to demonstrate their commitment and contribution by showcasing their transformation stories, sharing where they come from, their progress and their future goals. The test will be whether it is true transformational change or just showcasing for compliance sake.

The rise of intentional leadership

It is widely accepted that South Africa suffers from a leadership deficit – in its public and private sectors. Sadly, the past two decades have had little impact on changing our society and we face a massive skills shortage in the future. Overall, figures for executive transformation are poor. By prioritising the development of skilled future leaders their companies benefit, as does the country. There can be no real change without real leadership. 2017 is the year for leaders to look beyond scorecards and make brave commitments. Intentional leadership can shift transformation patterns from incremental to exponential and ensure good headway in the grooming of our future leaders.

More funding

One response to transformational pressure is to give it a more intense focus. This results in the broader accessibility of funding for transformation, especially for high-impact programmes that are able to demonstrate real economic and sustainable transformation.

It is, however, tough out there. In a slow-growth economy there are fewer business opportunities, thus fewer openings for new skills and emerging businesses and limited prospects for transformation. Initiatives need to be highly targeted to achieve their desired change.

Getting gatvol

On the other hand, faced with mounting tension and the poor results of the past two decades, you may see some corporates throwing in the towel, either resorting to BEE box-ticking or, worse, giving up altogether.

A bigger focus on enterprise development

Enterprise development is one of the biggest gainers of the increased drive for transformation. Gearing up black businesses to become active players in the economy delivers real transformational development, with added benefits including skills and leadership development. The ability to compete and access market opportunities has exponential future advantages. At Property Point, we don't see small businesses, we see the future for our industry. Nurturing them to become strong, viable companies benefits our entire sector. With nearly a decade in enterprise development, we've produced major transformation gains for the industry.

Open conversations

Transformation has long been at the top of agendas, but it's clear the conversations that should accompany it aren't taking place, at least not fully. When transformation works, it works for everyone. When it doesn't work, it fuels tension. The time has come to stop being defensive and instead have frank conversations about transformation.

Collaboration

More and more businesses are setting aside rivalry with their competitors to work together towards the same end-goal of transformation. By sharing platforms with proven track records of driving transformation forward they are having bigger impacts - individually and collectively.

Less stick, more carrots

So far, the 'stick' approach to transformation hasn't delivered the goods. Incentives would go a long way to spur businesses to keep their eyes on the prize of real transformation.

ABOUT SHAWN THEUNISSEN

Shawn Theunissen is head of Property Point and head of CSR and Transformation at Growthpoint Properties.
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