

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP



26: Building from the ground up: A conversation with Thabiso Mabogoane

Episode Notes

Thank you for joining *Take Your Lead Podcast*!

In this episode Mzwandile Magagula will be speaking Thabiso Mabogoane, a philanthropist at heart, trailblazer, one of the early influencers before social media, a voice of reason to a lot of business leaders and entrepreneurs, a speaker, father and husband and an all round incredible leader.

Having grown up during the apartheid era, when asked by his grade one teacher what he wanted to be when he grows up, he replied “a white person that drives an ambulance”.

The ambulance part made sense because it sums up his life, he’s always been one to land a helping hand, but he grew up believing that everything that good and beautiful was always deemed to come from the white community.

Been exposed to segregation at a young age, he’s always thought that there must be something better out there, that’s why it’s always been his quest and intention to wake up in the morning and try to expose himself to as much as he can.

Growing up as a black person meant that ones aspiration was to get a good education so that you can become a teacher, nurse, lawyer and if you’re lucky enough, a doctor, so he wanted to be a doctor so that he could break away from the poverty that was underlining most of the black spaces.

With both of his parents as teachers, he figured he wouldn’t survive on a teachers salary especially because of the limitations it came with, and he felt there was more to life than having to choose between a house and a car or a house and a wedding which were the realities of earning a teachers salary.



What Caused Him To Break Out Of The Norm Of The Day?

He knew he had to be very daring, and he's always been a bit of a maverick.

It's always been that spirit of wanting to do more, trying something different.

You find inspiration in the most awkward and small places, and sometimes, no matter how awkward or irrelevant, it's those settings that bring about a bright idea.

“There is more to life than just walking the normal path.”

~ Thabiso Mabogoane

The Importance of Exposure

It always comes with the idea of wanting to do better.

One thing that's fascinating about the human species is that we're given the ability to evolve and to grow.

A father's highest point is a son's entry point, if you think you've reached your maximum, your children will surprise you, but it comes when you wake up in the morning with the idea that you want to give them a little bit more of what you had.

There's a thin line between spoiling your kids and exposing them.

If we could just wake up every morning with the same laughter, I'm sure we can all live in a better world and that is the laughter of knowing that today you have a new day where you know very well that you could be somewhere you're never been before, learn something you've never learned before.

Exposure also means having a teachable spirit, making sure you're learning everyday, everywhere and from every interaction, try and grab something from it.

Where Do You Start If You Want To Be A Better Leader?

There are a few principles that govern our world, there are a few things that cannot be changed and if followed through properly, they form the basis of what should have been every person's inheritance.



We're all leaders in our own spaces, *but what makes a great leader is somebody who is able to serve.*

I've never met somebody who's great who's never walked the distance.

You can't prophesy what you don't possess, what makes you a great leader is for you to walk a certain path and realise that you can't do this on your own and then walk back and try and gather a crowd with the attitude of saying, not only are you going to take them where you want to go, but you're going to empower them, you're going to caution them and be the person that serves as a warning because there's no point in them making the same mistakes that you did.

Leadership is saying you're not great but in your weakness, let someone else be great.

Learn to speak about your failures.

Why It's Important For A Leader To Connect With People That They Lead

People are people and it doesn't matter where you find yourself in the world, people have the same struggles, fears, joys and the same sort of ideas.

We could be coming from different spaces, different parts of the country, but ultimately, we're moved by the same things.

The ultimate attitude to want to survive, to want to strive, to want to do better and walk away from what makes us uncomfortable and keeping it real and making sure that you stay grounded on reality.

Having the right attitude has allowed him to turn around and let his stammering work for him.

How Has Failure Shaped Your Life In Your Journey Of Leadership And All That You Do?

The moment you begin to accept that you are bound to fail...knowing is half the truth, if you know that you're probably going to fail, in trying to do something and you can overcome that alone, that's already a plus.



We don't speak about failure because we're brought up in a way where we give so much credit to success yet we've never really paid attention to the underlying, lifting point of success which is failure.

People will tell you that they've failed a whole lot more than they've succeeded.

We live a very interesting and challenging life and when you walk in understanding and you say even if you fail, the secret is not to stop, just keep walking.

Success is very visible and very shiny and very glamorous but the failure part of it is the opposite because we like shiny things, we like the spotlight.

We need to pay attention to the hidden aspects of it all, for every successful story, there's always a sacrifice, toiling and hard work and disappointment and everything that comes with it and that's why we don't teach our children.

"Have a budget for failure."

~ Thabiso Mabogoane

The Importance Of Entrepreneurship

He got into entrepreneurship with the idea of wanting to create something that is more sustainable.

He felt if he was going to make a difference, he had to tap into a market that is predominantly not black and that's how he got into the mining space.

He started small but he was able to build his own credibility.

What's killing this generation is the instant gratification attitude, everything is instant that we even think that success has the same formula, we want to get rich and we want to get rich now.

We're not enjoying the journey as much as we want to enjoy the destination, people are chasing after the night life, the cars and houses, but fail to understand that if there's one thing you can't buy in business it's credibility.



“Credibility comes with years of toiling and working.”

You're allocated a certain amount of hours towards a certain craft and once you've reached those hours, by default success is your portion, it's like you're a master and you've paid all of your dues.

There's nothing like a new business idea, we take what we have, what already exists and we improve and make it better.

If we can do that, what stops us from making ourselves better as well?

The better doesn't come overnight, it comes over studying, observing, asking questions, failure. There's got to be that effort, you need to remove certain things to make space for certain things.

If you want to succeed, there's a certain level of investment that you're going to make towards that success, it's got to be a cautious decision.

Greatest Lessons Learnt As An Entrepreneur

Love for people, the respect that you give to people, it's more about who you are than what you do.

Watch the people on your way up because on your way back you're probably going to need the very same people.

People are very important, people are above everything else, people are above the equipment and assets.

Learn how to evolve, times change and change is one of the hardest things, especially when you're doing well.

God created time to introduce the issues of seasons, and time opens a door for a new season and closes the door for an old season.

Attitude is the one thing that's important in anything that you do in life and we don't speak about it as much as we did ten years ago.

'Changing the World, One Individual at a time.'



It's important for any person in any walk of life not just to reduce yourself to a season.

If you're going to be a singer, it make sense to acquire another skill, if you're going to be a doctor, it makes sense for you to acquire a different skill.

There are things that you get naturally and you need to use the time that you have to develop the things that you don't know.

If the natural things don't work for you, you still have the things that you've learned along the way, just to keep the momentum going.

It's not necessarily what you're doing that matters, it's the fact that you're doing something at any given point.

You don't want to stop for anything, whether you know what you're doing or not, but you need to keep at it.

“The harder I practice, the luckier I get.”

~Gary Player

What Would You Say To Your Younger Self?

I've always believed in the balance between failure and success.

It might not make sense now but at a later stage when it all comes together, it gives you a “oh wow” moment.

The one thing I would have done differently n the beginning is to invest in the conventional way because, in our quest of wanting to find new ideas, in our quest of wanting to be better, in our quest to chase the next big thing, we forget the fundamentals what makes a business, you won't take money from a working business to fund an idea, but you'll take money from your own idea to fund an idea.

He's stifled his existing business and collapsed some of them wanting to speed uptake process of growth in what he thought was the next big thing.



Leadership is..

Serving.

We live to serve, we try to understand and learn to serve better, we try to give to allow our serving to be better, we to create an atmosphere for us to serve better, leadership is serving.

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