

Five reasons why empowering employees to lead matters in South Africa

By [Dr Lee Kingma](#), issued by [Juta and Company](#)

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Across South Africa, many young men and women enter the working world with adequate qualifications to secure them a position but not to advance them professionally. They are largely bound by their limited experience and skills, and lack the tools necessary to develop and grow into the next generation of business leaders. But why is this important? Why should companies focus on empowering their employees?



The answer points not only to the development of businesses themselves but also to the means by which sustainable transformative change can be achieved in South Africa. Here's why employee empowerment matters.

Why should companies focus on empowering their employees to become strong leaders?



- **01. Business success vs. failure**
Empowered employees are motivated, confident and engaged. This energy is contagious and inspirational to others.
- **02. Agile, innovative culture**
Empowered employees offer emotional intelligence and fresh ideas, helping companies to compete in the global market.
- **03. Righting educational wrongs**
Empowered employees break the cycle of young, capable South Africans who haven't had the opportunity to study beyond matric.
- **04. Sustainable transformation**
Empowered employees challenge and dismantle the status quo, creating meaningful, long-lasting change in South Africa.
- **05. Making great leaders**
Empowered employees have the potential to become exceptional leaders who are authentic and courageous.

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1. It's the difference between business success and failure

Nurturing young staff members can be the very thing that tips a company from failure to success; failing to do so can cause the opposite. Employees who feel that their personal development is a priority for their employers are more motivated and confident. They feel engaged and imbued with a sense of belonging. And this energy is contagious: those who perform their work capably and are equipped with good leadership skills quickly inspire others.

2. It creates an agile, innovative culture

As a generalisation, young employees today are fairly cynical about the corporate machine. They're coming from a place of emotional intelligence, questioning hierarchies, critiquing their leaders and striving to restructure contemporary business models. Rather than resist these impulses, businesses should take them to heart: the result is often a company that is full of fresh ideas and sufficiently agile to compete in the global market.

As businesses across a range of industries become more technologically advanced, the need for emotional engagement and clear communication becomes even more acute. More than ever, we need to know how to interact with others and how to manage miscommunication and conflict. For this, we should look to young, empowered leaders.

3. It's a way of righting educational wrongs

Many South African employees in junior positions haven't had the opportunity to study beyond matric. They have gained work experience, are competent employees and have the desire and the potential to become great managers and leaders, but lack the resources and tools to do so. They are in need of workplace training, on-the-job learnerships that provide them with both the theoretical knowledge and practical experience necessary for them to achieve their goals.

An example of such a learnership is the Effective Leader programme recently launched by academic publisher Juta and Company and recognised training provider Media Works. Effective Leader is designed to help aspiring employees become great leaders and is a fully accredited National Certificate in General Management qualification that is ranked at NQF Level 5, which means it only requires a matric as a starting point.

4. It's a key component of sustainable transformation

By empowering South African employees to become leaders, businesses are helping to challenge and dismantle the status quo. Most of the participants involved in Effective Leader, for example, are non-white women. Although the course is by no means exclusionary, it is providing valuable skills to the people who need them the most. In this way, it helps to build their confidence so that they can contribute proactively to their working and personal lives, their communities and society at large.

Through Effective Leader, companies are also able to meet the government's mandate for change and transformation, fulfilling four elements of the BEE Scorecard: skills development, enterprise development, socio-economic development and preferential procurement.

5. It's a mechanism for making great leaders

There are many qualities that can be attributed to an exceptional leader, two of the most important of which are authenticity and courage. Being real and being able to lead from the heart, from a place of kindness, differentiate a great leader from the rest. Fortunately, these traits can largely be taught, provided they are accessibly communicated and that their benefits are clearly demonstrated. Programmes that empower employees are in a position to mould such leaders.

For employees to feel empowered, they need to be passionate, committed and determined. They need the support of their managers and employers. And they need the knowledge and tools supplied by programmes such as Effective Leader. The combined outcome of these efforts not only benefits businesses, it is also an ethical responsibility and a way of creating long-lasting and meaningful change.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Lee Kingma is a leadership and coaching executive and a facilitator of the Effective Leader learnership programme. Media Works in partnership with Juta and Company have launched Effective Leader, which is a SETA accredited National Certificate in General Management (NQF level 5) offered as a learnership. For more information about the Effective Leader programme visit [<https://juta.co.za/effectiveteacher>] or [www.mediaworks.co.za].

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