

Don't wait for customers, create them

 By [Bogosi Mtshegwa](#)

6 Jan 2020

The concept of sustainability is a huge one, and can be quite tricky, and perhaps difficult to execute. More often than not; a focus on sustainability from a business point of view requires a change in operation and how its leaders think about almost everything. This requires one to let go of the old, and adopt the new.



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I love this definition of sustainability from Wikipedia:

“ *The ability to exist constantly... the capacity for the biosphere and human civilization to co-exist.* ”

The above definition involuntarily links to the concept of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL/3BL); “...which posits that instead of one bottom line, there should be three: profit, people, and the planet.” (Investopedia, May 3, 2019).

Based on the above, sustainability is about finding the perfect balance between taking and giving. The planet and people should not suffer at the expense of profit accumulation; all of these need to co-exist harmoniously. With the same breath; profits cannot suffer at the expense of trying to save the planet or people. Let me explain:

If the only thing you want to do is to save people or the planet and not be profitable, you can run an NGO or NPO. Even then, NGOs survive on donations, and so who is going to fund them? A business needs to be profitable in order to be sustainable, so that it can add value to society by creating jobs, thereby contributing to the growth of the economy, creating financially active citizens.



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Nielsen 9 Dec 2015



Doing good genuinely (DGG)

But I'd like to focus on a particular topic that I think is very important. Social investment by brands. Corporate Social Investment/Responsibility (CSI/R) has literally run its course of 'relevance and impact' as a concept. I also don't think that CSI is approached with the genuineness that it deserves. Make no mistake, many companies spend a lot of money giving back and doing good for people and the environment, and there are certainly many people who benefit from these efforts.

For many; CSI is a grudge and reluctant must-do tick-box, that is mostly executed by demotivated staff as an afterthought. I believe that social investment needs a new lens.



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Doing Good Genuinely (DGG) is the new CSI.

The people's point of view

CSI is naturally from a corporate's point of view, and therefore the new lens needs us to look at efforts or initiatives from the people's point of view. Usually, there's little time invested in establishing or discerning what's needed by people.

Helping through the people's lens enables you to do good genuinely.

There's no budget for that

People are in so much need, and there's a lot that can be done, and yet, brands never seem to have the budget to help. The #KFCProposal revealed one thing, and that is the fact that if brands really wanted to help; they could assert themselves positively, and invest in people.

“ Mzansi please help us find this beautiful couple, re batla ho ba blesser 💎💎 DM us any leads, there might be a Finger Lickin' Good surprise in it for you too. Batho ba Vaal re thuseng! We love love 💎💎❤️ [#KFCProposal](#)

pic.twitter.com/6bj89dtj4j— KFC South Africa (@KFCSA) [November 7, 2019](#) ”

This is the exact reason why AKA decided to organise the #FeesForAllMegaConcert. He has been giving away his money to help students get through their studies, and therefore the concert proves that his actions are genuine and not for clout or relevance.

The only reason that most brands jumped onto the #KFCProposal bandwagon was out of FOMO; missing out on being perceived as relevant and “doing good”. The risk of not participating was actually greater than the cost of pledging.

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Above, I defined suitability as the act of finding the perfect balance between taking and giving. Our economy is not growing, people find it difficult to find jobs and corporates are constantly retrenching, and yet, brands expect to penetrate new markets and grow their profits. This makes no sense. Brands are not stimulating or planting investment seeds into people, and yet, they eagerly wait to harvest when people become financially active.

Banks for example; all expect people to bank with them, and yet more and more people are losing their jobs. This basically means that the bankable pool is getting smaller and smaller. My assumption is that the majority of people who have opened TymeBank accounts for example (congratulations to them for reaching 1 million accounts), are already banked. If they all switch to TymeBank, that will not be an indicator of growth in the economy, it'll just mean that the bigger market is still the same if not smaller, and the only difference is that market share will shift from other banks to TymeBank.



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27 Mar 2019



What if; what if banks, or any brand, instead of doing traditional advertising; they stimulated the economy by investing in people so that they can be economically active through the production of value, and the quid pro quo is that those who have been helped get to bank or do business with those who helped them? What if, instead of always trying to fish from the same pond, brands started creating new ponds?

ABOUT BOGOSI MOTSHEGWA

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