

Challenger Type - The Missionary

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Changing communities through an ambitious, relentless cause

In an environment that indexes high on unemployment, poor education, gangsterism and drug abuse, hope can be hard to come by. For many, that's the reality of living in the Cape Flats in South Africa's Western Cape.

RLabs – short for Reconstructed Living Labs – is a social enterprise that's embedded in this community. Through RLabs, people can create and live out opportunities for a better, brighter future. 'How' is entirely driven by RLabs' inspirational purpose of Making Hope Contagious.

An authentic, single-minded purpose

Making Hope Contagious is not simply a catchy advertising line or vacuous brand purpose that RLabs sticks at the end of their name. It is a deeply personal endeavour; something lived authentically and actively by everyone working there. That's because their stories and backgrounds are the very kind that were perceived as hopeless at some point. It has now become a personal mission for each member of the organisation to create the hope that will change that narrative for others.



RLabs is a definitive example of a Missionary challenger type, seeking to change something in the world that is unfair or broken.

Driven by solely by its belief in its cause, RLabs is not constrained by a certain way of doing things. The business is the mission, and the mission is the business.

Adaptation for impact

By stretching across different ways of thinking and working, RLabs is steadily creating a groundswell around empowering people, reconstructing lives, and inspiring hope. The enterprise has already **impacted 15 million people across 23**

different countries and has a bold ambition to positively influence the lives of **two billion people by 2030**.



RLabs participates in and leads a number of activities that drive this ambition:

RLabs Academy includes RLabsU, RLabs Youth, the GROW Leadership Academy, a skills accelerator, RLabs Women, NextGen, a MOOC in collaboration with UCT and Coursera, and NaspersLabs. Though these programmes focus on different targets, the idea behind them all is to provide underserved communities with access to education and training that develops new skills and unlocks economic opportunity for participants.

InnoVIA, RLabs' innovation incubator, has been designed to provide participants with the tools, mentorship, business development facilities and advice to conceptualise, scope, develop and launch new products – despite a lack of experience. Within the incubator, there is also the RLabs EXA (Accelerator) programme to help start-ups scale up with the goal to create high-impact enterprises that generate jobs and stimulate the economy.

RLabs' SME Boost programme offers enterprise development support to micro and small businesses through skills development, training and mentorship with the intent to start and grow new enterprises.

RLabs' **Innovation Lab** partners with organisations to develop solutions to drive social change and solve immediate social challenges. These are run inside the community.

A way forward

To make their resources and facilities available – and continue to Make Hope Contagious – RLabs has had to become self-funded. Their funding has come from the introduction of research, consulting, and start-up venture operations services to a variety of public and private sector organisations. These services leverage the skills taught through the RLabs Academy to provide the same to businesses interested in areas such as social impact, skills development, supply chain transformation, and product development. RLabs' self-funding operations have seen them working with partners such as BBC, Media24, Naspers, UNWomen, Unicef, DFID, Mozilla, Facebook and Nedbank.



Partnerships such as these are key to scaling the RLabs ambition – particularly those with large corporates who have the resources and operational capacity to stretch. Importantly though, RLabs only partners with like-minded organisations who share in its cause to transform communities for the better.



So how do you start a movement as a Missionary?

- Establish and live a single-minded mission, based on a drive to change something in the world that seems unfair or broken
- Make your mission specific, ambitious, and measurable
- Take action and show impact that makes this mission tangible and credible – wear your purpose on your sleeve, and avoid communicating it as a marketing story or CSI target
- Take a clear point of view that gets people fired up to overturn an injustice, generating a groundswell around your cause
- Build momentum first on a local level, but also partner with other organisations and individuals that believe in the same cause and can give it scale
- Powerful, unrelenting storytelling is your strongest communications tool; traditional advertising is not necessary or even effective here

Overthrow II, by **eatbigfish** & PHD, explores 10 of the most powerful strategies and mindsets used by today's challengers to disrupt their markets. Get your copy of the book at [overthrow2.com](https://www.overthrow2.com). Find out what challenger type of Challenger you or your business is. Take the quiz: <https://www.overthrow2.com/challengertype/>

Live more challenger!

eatbigfish is a strategic brand consultancy whose unique focus is challenger thinking and behaviour. Our expertise is grounded in The Challenger Project – our study of how Challenger Brands succeed by doing more with less.

We act as catalysts rather than consultants and, through our collaborative approach, we provide inspiration and frameworks that enable 'would be' challengers to deliver breakthrough solutions for their teams and brand.



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