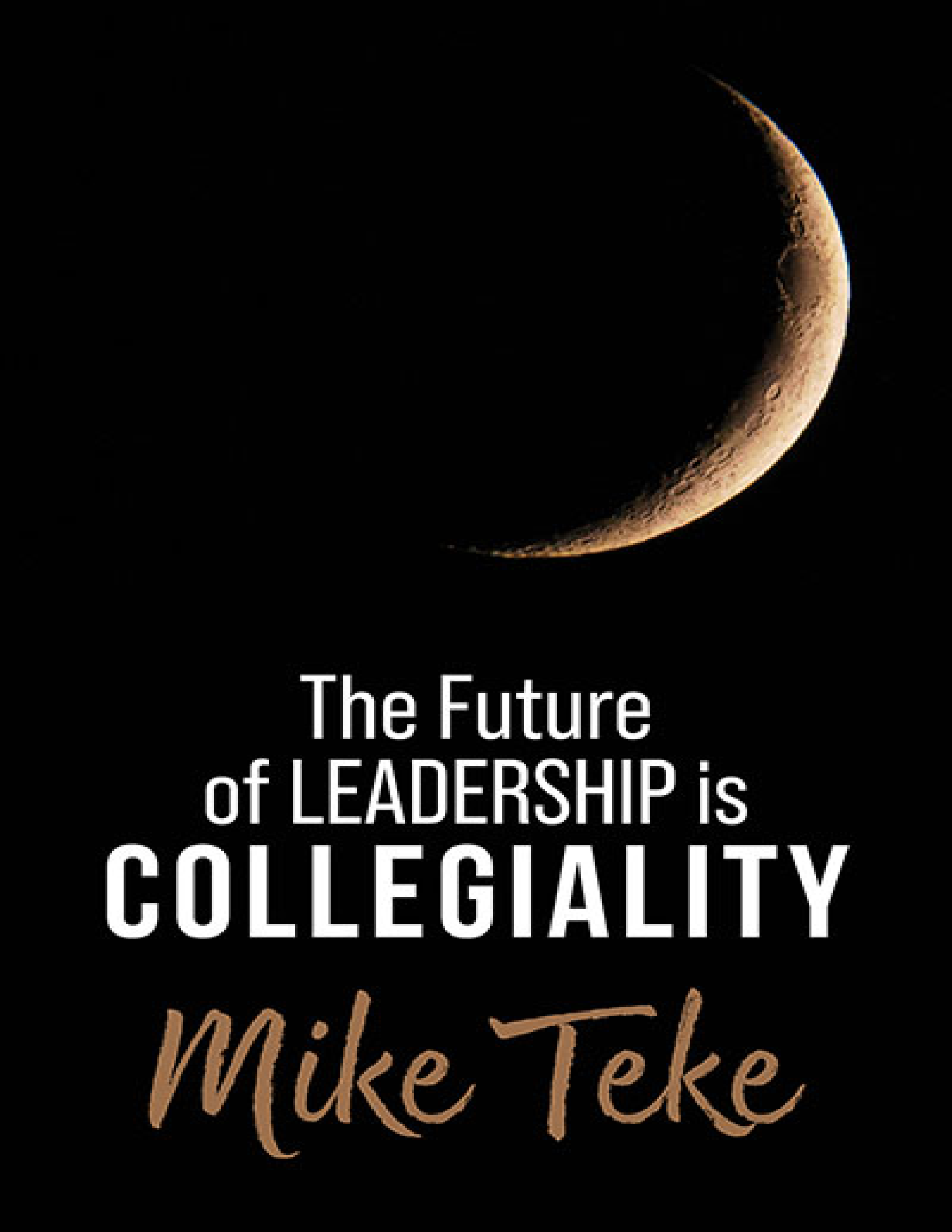
The Future
of LEADERSHIP is
COLLEGIALITY
Mike Teke

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To Sandi, Boikanyo and Tshiamo …
We are still going to enjoy this journey together!

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FOREWORD

I FIRST MET MIKE AS a young human resources executive all the way back in 2000. The mining industry that we both worked in was one in which some of the most notable struggles for improvement in working conditions had taken place, and indeed leaders in the labour movement from this sector parlayed their skills into leadership positions in the new South Africa.

The situation that we found ourselves in was not an uncomplex one – the rise of China as a massive natural resources consumer was just starting. However, simultaneous opportunities and threats emanating from this rise in consumption existed for the product of the facility at which I met Mike. The threat in this case was primarily concerned with the fact that, as China entered the consumption market, it also entered the metallurgical processing market. And China was competitive – very competitive – whereas the facility we worked at definitely was not.

While the situation facing the facility was not unique, only a year later it had moved from being uncompetitive to competitive which *was* very unique. Most often, uncompetitive facilities just remained so, and then slowly died an undignified death. A major factor in the response of this particular installation was Mike and his approach, even at a young age, to solve problems.

During a career that meant, at times, managing more than 150 000 people walking through the company doors every day, one meets many people. My style of seeing things as close to the proverbial coal face as possible meant that I met more people than most. When I met Mike and saw how he led the restructuring of the workforce against a backdrop where such restructuring was very difficult, I was, in one word, impressed.

Leading a large organisation and meeting many other leaders over the ensuing years gave me plenty of opportunities to reflect on what made a good leader. What was most bewildering was that, when I looked at the people I met and tried to distil the common characteristics of those who were successful, it proved to be troublesome. Among those I admired for their leadership, there were both introverted leaders and extroverted leaders. There were those at the front of the battlefield, waving the flag – and there were others who seemed to say, 'there go the people, I had better keep up with them.' There were agreeable ones, and I dare say some disagreeable ones. They came from all backgrounds and nations, colours, and creeds.

During this time, I also saw and learned that leadership based on the cult of personality was doomed to eventual failure. During this period Jack Welch was the hero of the realm – until he was not. Ultimately, short-termism and not caring for people was not the way to build lasting value and achieve positive community impact.

So – what then *was* that common factor that defined leadership? As I searched for personal impact, I wished that I could distil this out, and I looked ever more closely. Eventually I concluded that a combination of authenticity and attention to the individual was present wherever I looked for success.

Fast forward two decades. After our initial contact, I had kept in touch with Mike on a regular basis. I knew from the start that he had those rare qualities that would turn him into a leader and builder of businesses. To be fair I did not know then that his drive and skill set would lead to the building of Seriti Resources and beyond. However, I knew that if I watched closely, I would see success, and I hoped to learn more. I was not disappointed in that expectation.

During the years we talked many times: sometimes about markets, sometimes about family and mostly about companies and leadership. And

throughout this process, Mike, with his unique insight and skill set, grew an ever-expanding, high-performance company. My admiration grew and I looked ever closer. I learned.

While Mike was clearly a good dealmaker, this was not the part that impressed me most. The way in which the company that he owns and leads was being constructed, to be both ‘good’ and successful, was the defining characteristic. As my examination became ever closer, it was clear that Mike was building for the long term, and that he was building to benefit both the employees of the company and the society in which it operated.

It was therefore not a big surprise when Mike shared the manuscript of this book with me. In keeping with his approach to benefit others, he made this effort despite many competing calls on his time. Sharing his experience both as manager and owner was just part of what he wanted to contribute to society.

As I kept reading and rereading Mike’s message of ‘respect for the individual’ in his book, many of the disparate strands of leadership that I had been pondering all those years were being pulled together for me.

I have every expectation that the book that you are about to read will educate and inspire you at the same time. I know that it did for me.

DR MARIUS KLOPPERS
Former CEO of BHP Billiton

Introduction

COLLEGIALITY, INGRATIATION, FRATERNITY AND SELF-RESPECT

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK is to focus on leadership and relationships. Leaders thrive on healthy relationships: relationships with those they lead, as well as with others who have an interest in the organisation.

Among others I also look at what harms leadership relationships and the growth, development and progressiveness of a leader. Such influences spread harm to the entire organisation led by the specific person.

Importantly, leaders could be either male or female – but for simplicity's sake, when I refer in this book to a leader simply as 'he', it would include 'she'. The plural 'they' would include both genders.

When I refer to 'organisations' here, the discussions of the concept are confined mainly to business – but the principles and lessons that I discuss in some detail will benefit organisations beyond pure 'business'.

When I talk about 'harm', it means that organisations may be harmed in many ways. This could include lack of leadership direction, lack of strategy, lack of motivation among employees, lack of trust, as well as a toxic work environment and plain poor performance. 'Poor performance' may, among others, be the result of bad decisions made by individuals, committees or boards.

Having worked in the private sector for more than twenty years and having developed from being a junior employee to becoming a senior employee, director of businesses and ultimately chief executive officer (CEO), I have gathered experience, observed leaders perform in different

roles and have also become a leader entrusted with very influential positions.

Today, as CEO, director of several businesses, entrepreneur, and chairman of various organisations and businesses, I can understand the evolution of relationships among different people and leaders in an organisation. I have learnt to decipher those relationships that are dangerous and harmful for the growth and progress of the organisation. I also understand how to develop mechanisms to prevent such relationships from evolving, permeating all structures in the business – and ultimately destroying the business or other organisation.

In this book I explore four key behaviours. Three of these behaviours – collegiality, fraternising and ingratiation – are those that can also cause harm and prevent the fourth behaviour being achieved. This fourth behaviour is the desirable behaviour or state, namely self-respect – and it is essential for healthy leadership to thrive and make a business successful.

First, some dictionary definitions of the key terms, followed by more detailed descriptions of the terms as I see them:

BEHAVIOUR 1: COLLEGIALITY

The ability to relax, cooperate, or be part of a collective and being dependable in a friendly manner. The Macmillan Dictionary refers to it as 'the quality of being relaxed, friendly, and cooperative, as is typical among a group of close colleagues.'

Whilst collegiality can work, it may also cause harm. It is well and good to relax and cooperate as a leader and ensure that you create a spirit of collegiality with those you lead – but it may also slow processes and decision-making when the leader continues to be collegial through the soliciting of opinions. Thus, the freedom from decision-making that defines

this management style doesn't always have a positive outcome: it may also lead to conflict and disagreements, as mentioned by Andra Picincu in *The Disadvantages of Collegial Management*[1] (2019).

Because collegiality slows things down, it takes away the leader's motivation in terms of urgency and progress. Imagine starting a project that is critical to the business and that needs to be executed and delivered urgently, but most of the time the leader has to solicit the opinions of those who report directly to them. This will invariably lead to a broad range of ideas and opinions being offered, while the selection of the right way to go could be tedious and may take a very long time.

Leaders who prefer to act in a collegial manner regularly, must therefore understand that they are opening avenues for lots of opinions: employees believe (often rightly so) that their opinions are important for consideration to resolve issues. If their opinions are rejected or not desirable, it could lead to demotivation and anger, which is harmful to the business. Significantly, although this does not mean that leaders should always be autocratic and force decisions on the people and organisations they lead, it does mean that firm and resolute decision-making is paramount.

BEHAVIOUR 2: FRATERNISATION

The Cambridge Dictionary refers to it as 'the action of meeting someone socially, especially someone who belongs to an opposing army or team or has a different social position.'

'Fraternization in the workplace is a broad topic. Defined as associating or mingling with others in a friendly or brotherly way, it most commonly means relationships, romantic or otherwise, between people who occupy different levels of authority or power. This generally means a boss and an employee in the workplace, or a teacher and a student. Fraternization can

jeopardize the integrity of the official relationship among people, and many organizations develop policies to discourage it.' (Dale Marshall, *Examples of Fraternization in the Workplace*[2], writing for *The Nest*)

There is thus a social aspect to fraternisation. Becoming friends or friendly with your employees is not wrong at all for a leader and indeed it can be beneficial to be friendly with employees and people reporting directly to them. However, it does carry with it many risks and could ultimately impact decision-making and the strategic direction of the organisation.

It is important to define clearly how far 'friendliness' goes or should go. Notably the kind of relationship that compromises the effectiveness of a leader are those that go beyond friendship and develop into romantic affairs.

BEHAVIOUR 3: INGRATIATION

According to Vacabulary.com, it is 'the act of gaining acceptance or affection for yourself by persuasive and subtle blandishments.'

Here is a useful discussion of the situation in the workplace: 'Ingratiation is defined as the use of certain positive behaviours such as flattery, doing favours or conforming to another's opinion to get someone else to like you. This behaviour is especially common when employees interact with a supervisor because of the latter's status and control over important work resources, including job assignments, responsibilities, pay and promotions … While social influence behaviours like ingratiation are thought of as a dyadic phenomenon (that is, involving two people – the ingratiator and the ingratiated), these behaviours are actually embedded in a much more complex and dynamic work environment, which includes many other people.' (Trevor Foulk, *Scientists prove that sucking up to your boss actually works*, 2016[3])

The impression created in conversations about ingratiation is often that only subordinates or lower-level employees are the ones who suck up to their bosses. This is, however, not true, for leaders also initiate this behaviour, and bosses seek favour with their employees. This can happen easily when a leader heads up a strong and powerful team of confident and highly-regarded individuals. It can also occur when a leader has their own personal issues like low confidence levels, poor self-esteem or simply 'being weak'. When such leaders are over-anxious to curry favour with people reporting to them, the ingratiation is bad for business.

A clear example of ingratiation was observed by several journalists, among them Elliot Hannon who wrote the following for *Slate.com* on 28 June 2019 in an article titled *Here Are The Latest Soul-Crushing Things Trump Said While Ingratiating Himself With Vladimir Putin*: 'US President Donald Trump met with Russian President, Vladimir Putin at the G20 conference in Osaka, Japan, and this was the first meeting after the Mueller report dropped, which among many, many other things, confirmed a "sweeping and systematic" effort by the Russians to disrupt the 2016 elections. As usual, Trump put on a weird, ingratiating performance in front of the Russian President. Why was he not serious about reprimanding Russia about their meddling in the 2016 elections? When asked specifically about confronting Putin regarding election meddling, Trump mocked the premise, play-scolding the Russian President.'[4]

In my view, this was bad leadership practice and a terrible lesson, if this was indeed correctly reported.

BEHAVIOUR (STATE) 4: SELF-RESPECT

Oxford Languages calls this 'pride and confidence in oneself; a feeling that one is behaving with honour and dignity.' Cambridge Advanced Learner's

Dictionary defines it as 'A feeling of respect for yourself that shows that you value yourself.'

'Following from the interpersonal respect literature, it is logical to conceptualise self-respect as an attitude of respect for oneself, that is, a positive evaluation of oneself as valuable and deserving of respect, and therefore a specific self-evaluation, as opposed to a generalised attitude of favourableness or unfavourableness towards the self as a whole, i.e. global self-esteem.' (Rosenberg et. al, 1995, quoted by Claudine Clucas in *Understanding self-respect and its relationship to self-esteem*, 2019[5])

It is lovely to be respected seriously and authentically. The best state is self-respect, where one can look in the mirror with pride and say that there are things in this world I will not do at all or engage in.

- *WHERE DID THIS BEHAVIOUR-ORIENTED APPROACH START?*

I was inspired to write about these four leadership behaviours when I attended a quarterly meeting with employee leaders from the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). One of the employee leaders raised an important topic related to safety, since our business had just faced difficult safety issues. He asserted that one of the reasons for these safety issues was poor leadership. When I enquired about the nature of the poor leadership and invited him to delve deeper, he responded that most of the leaders at a specific mine spent their time fraternising and engaging in ingratiating behaviour towards one another. A low level of respect and self-respect had become prevalent and led to poor discipline. This employee leader's view was that colleagues started to take advantage of one another's authority. This was harmful to individual performance and culminated in poor organisational performance.

When I enquired what he thought the solution was, the view was that fraternising and ingratiating behaviour tend to be confused with collegiality

– which was thought of as good behaviour, unlike the other two. The immediate solution offered by this union leader was for me to 'break the leadership at the mine'. I disagreed with this solution, as I preferred to confront the situation and educate the leaders in the entire business through training, development, mentoring and coaching.

Amplifying the views about collegiality, one cannot ignore the stance adopted by Max Weber, the German Sociologist who espoused the theory of collegiality and bureaucracy. Sean Peek's article, *The Management Theory of Max Weber*[6], in Business.com (2020) he argues that the bureaucratic management theory claims it will increase your business's efficiency. Peek mentions several characteristics of a bureaucracy and advocates for 'work-appropriate relationships' only. Weber did not condone any type of personal relationship in the workplace. He supported the notion that all work relationships are bound by rules and regulations. There should be no small talk, collaboration or sharing of ideas. Work is work, it isn't a social outing.[7] In today's world, Weber would be criticised for being too prescriptive, destroying morale, demotivating employees and taking the fun out of the world of work. I argue that he fully appreciated the pitfalls that come with fraternising and ingratiation, which at times go beyond the boundaries of civility and professionalism. I do touch on civility and incivility later in the book.

I am reminded also of an article regarding orchestras and collegiality – *The Maestro: Benevolent dictator or collegial facilitator?* in *Notes from the Podium* (2020)[8] – that states 'Ivan Hewett recently defended the image of the "tyrannical male maestro" against a perceived inclination by orchestral managers to book conductors they hope will be more collegial, collaborative and unthreatening.'[9] I too also liken an orchestral conductor to a leader in business with several key players. The conductor ensures that good music is produced in a collaborative, relaxed and collegial

environment. The article also describes types of conductors of an orchestra and how they achieve results. Although I have never played in an orchestra or conducted one, I am nevertheless inclined to believe that collegial conductors do get the best out of their musicians. The description of a collegial facilitator is one where the experience on stage is that of collegiality, and one where the leader promotes relaxation, cheerfulness and harmony in a less threatening environment.

- *THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING FIRST*

Finally, I hope also to inspire others to be first. The first to smile. The first to initiate a conversation. The first to admit a mistake. The first to listen. The first to compliment someone. The first to admit when you're wrong. The first to laugh at yourself. The first to apologise. And the first to forgive. I was inspired to add this by the words of Nathan French: 'Do the world a favour, go out of your way, and BE first. You will be amazed at how the world responds.'

I hope this book inspires you as a leader to be the first to embrace collegiality in the way you lead and direct your business. From my own experience, I can attest that a collegial approach also has the advantage that it spills over from one's business activities into your personal and family life.

Chapter 1
COLLEGIALITY AND LEADERSHIP

In this chapter, there are some general remarks, followed by case studies and stories from real-life leadership situations. These examples illustrate the effects of collegiality and leadership. A number of leaders I know well have responded to some of my specific questions about the topic, and I include some of their views.

At the end of the chapter, there are also some thoughts on mentorship and on wartime/peacetime leaders.

A CEO OF A LISTED business tells a story of frustration when he attended a board meeting where a serious decision had to be made. The CEO of the undertaking started to solicit ideas from board members regarding this decision and the directors decided to pass the responsibility back to the CEO, as they believed that it was the CEO who had to provide direction regarding that decision.

The CEO argued the reason for his approach as being collegial. The members of the board felt that he was abdicating responsibility.

Does being collegial mean that one is abdicating responsibility?

Every year, boards and executive recruiters spend countless hours in the search for a perfect CEO – someone who is visionary yet well grounded, courageous yet prudent, confident yet modest, firm yet flexible and tough yet compassionate. Gary Hamel with Bill Breen, in their 2007 book *The Future of Management*[10] argue that the trouble is that there aren't many people who possess a full measure of these admirable and seemingly paradoxical qualities. The original architects of democracy recognised this fact and compensated for it by creating political processes that leverage the everyday genius of 'ordinary' citizens. The real challenge, then, isn't to hire or grow great leaders, but to build companies that can thrive with less than perfect leaders.

If you ever found yourself in a job interview with Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors, you'd be faced with a zinger of a question: actually, three questions in one. She'd ask: 'What three adjectives would your peers use to describe you? What three adjectives would your boss use to describe you? And what three adjectives would those working for you use to describe you?'

In her article *What GM's Mary Barra asks in job interviews*[11], Judith Humphrey says the first question looks at self-awareness, the second question at integrity and the third question looks at collegiality.

Focusing on collegiality, soft skills – including people skills – are more critical than ever, so think about it: would the adjectives you've identified define good people skills? Suppose your boss says you're 'reclusive', 'focused', and 'reliable', it would not really relate to people skills, although they may apply to work skills. If a leadership role came up, you might not be in the running. On the other hand, if you believe your boss, your colleagues, and your team would say you're 'empathetic,' 'supportive,' and 'inspiring,' you'd have a good crack at a leadership role because those qualities are associated with collegiality.

Members of the popular business press on both sides of the Atlantic are infatuated with chief executive officers who have drunk from the holy grail of heroic leadership, say Erika Herb, Keith Leslie, and Colin Price in their article *Teamwork at the Top*, (McKinsey Quarterly, 2001[12]).

'To be sure, a single person can make a difference, but even such heroic CEOs as General Electric's Jack Welch emphasize the power of team leadership in action. As Welch himself said, "We've developed an incredibly talented team of people running our major businesses, and, perhaps more important, there's a healthy sense of collegiality, mutual trust, and respect for performance that pervades this organization."'

I will return often to the future of leadership around collegiality in this book. There will be some examples of leaders known to be tough and ruthless, and who take no prisoners. However, are these the qualities sought after today? I believe the world has moved on to a phase where we now appreciate collegiality. In my view the current generation of successful leaders will not be seen as heroes who dominate the boardroom with

ruthlessness, but as heroes who can combine collegiality with fast and decisive decision-making and collaborative teamwork.

COLLEGIALITY WILL PROMOTE CIVILITY

The 2010 article *The Cost of Bad Behavior: How Incivility Is Damaging Your Business and What to Do about It*[13] began with the following paragraph: 'Evidence of growing incivility is all around us, from road rage to presidential hecklers. Business in the USA also has an incivility problem. According to authors, Christine Pearson and Christine Porath, workplace incivility is at the top of the list of economic drains on American business. The problem is getting worse. Their research shows, for example, that in 1998, 25 per cent of the workforce they polled had been treated rudely at least once a week. By 2005, that number had risen to almost 50 per cent.' Authors Pearson and Porath define incivility as 'the exchange of seemingly inconsequential, inconsiderate words and deeds that violate conventional norms of workplace conduct' and note that incivility is a subjective phenomenon that ultimately comes down to how a given action makes a person feel.

The manifestations of incivility that Pearson and Porath cite include 'failing to return telephone calls or respond to e-mails; checking e-mail during meetings; not listening; withholding information; talking down to others; taking credit for the efforts of others; shutting someone out of a network or team; belittling the efforts of others; passing blame for mistakes; spreading rumours about colleagues; and setting others up for failure.'

My book focuses on creating an understanding among employees and bosses. Throughout I caution that out-of-control fraternisation or ingratiating behaviour can create challenges. One of these challenges relates to friendships losing boundaries and leading to incivility – intentionally or unintentionally.

The aim should be behaviour that is collegial in our approach to work. This means creating a relaxed atmosphere, striving to be cheerful at all times, refining our communication to create a friendly and high-performance culture, and ensuring that respect is at the core of behaviours.

I believe that the tonic to remedy incivility is to encourage, practice and train – if necessary – all managers and employees in collegiality.

LEADERSHIP IN MINING AND COLLEGIALITY

When Mark Cutifani, the now retired CEO of Anglo American, mentioned to me that he had visited the Vatican to meet Ghanaian-born Cardinal Turkson, I was drawn to this fact as I wanted to understand his approach and the reasons for his visit.

Their conversation had 'focused on how mining can engage better with the communities it touches. Cutifani is all too aware these communities bear the brunt of the industry. But he also wanted help in understanding how to deal with the various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) lobbying for African local communities against the industry,' Philippa Anderson says in *Unearthing Wisdom – Insights from 20 Mining Leaders*.[14]

She then quotes Cutifani as saying: 'It was a start. We listened to Cardinal Turkson's view. I sense that as miners we can be arrogant and miss things … We have to understand how to engage in a conversation that makes us part of the solution and not part of the problem.'

Mark's point is valid in that it moves us from the mindset that miners are tough and ruthless people who don't have the patience to deal with those topics – including community issues – that may in the past have been viewed as minutiae or soft issues. Today, community issues are central to our agenda, and to us as leaders. This also implies our attitudes must change. We have to embrace empathy, collegiality and collaboration, while

sharing a shared agenda of growth, development, progressiveness and advancement of humanity.

I fell in love with the mining industry when I joined Bayer, the German multinational, in 1994. They owned two mining operations in South Africa. Vergenoeg Mining Company (VMC as we used to call it) in the Rust de Winter area outside Pretoria mined fluorspar. The second operation was the Rustenburg Chrome Mine (RCM), based in the Mooinooi area near Rustenburg.

When I went underground at Rustenburg Chrome Mine in 1994, I loved what I experienced and soon realised that employees working underground have their own way of doing things. The miners have a spirit of camaraderie that is second to none and they understand the intricacies of how their operations work. They also speak their own language, *Fanakalo*, which is not really an appealing tongue, as it consists of a mix of several languages. It was meant to simplify the communication among the different language groups who worked together, but is viewed differently by different people. There are people who love Fanakalo, since it is unique to a certain group of people, and there are those who hate it, as it is viewed as an oppressive language associated with the dark history of the past in South Africa.

Over the years, the industry has faced issues resulting from discriminatory practices, among others, and many things needed to be rectified. When I started working in the mines, old ways like living in hostels, eating communally in dining halls and specific diets were still normal practice. I realised that one had to be strong and, in Fanakalo, one had to be a ‘madoda’, instead of the proper Zulu word, ‘indoda’. Miners, shift bosses, mine captains, mine managers and general managers have upheld the mindset that one has to be strong, take no prisoners, suffer no fools, and ‘just be stern’. Very few leaders in the mining industry believed

in collegiality in those years, as you would have been perceived as weak. The best way was to be tough. There were exceptions of course, and there were leaders who were collegial and still achieved great results in a smart way.

Over the years, the old strict mindset changed, with a new generation of leaders emerging and starting to achieve great results through teamwork, collegiality and being empathetic. The new smart leaders are collegial in their approach with their executive teams, and in their interactions with their employees and trade unions. They are also collegial in approaching stakeholder issues, including community-related matters. This collegiality is not fraternising or ingratiating, but a clear demonstration of the new agenda that includes environmental, social and governance (ESG) matters. As ESG is such a serious issue and deserves a chapter on its own, I will outline my views on it later in this book.

I believe I may refer to myself as a leader in the mining industry. I interact with many mining leaders at operational (mine), middle management, executive and board levels. I was recognised by the mining industry by being elected to the highest role in the industry as President of the Chamber of Mines of South Africa (now known as Minerals Council South Africa) for several terms, as well as being bestowed the Brigadier Stokes Memorial award in 2018 by the South African Institute of Metallurgy. I remain eternally grateful for these awards.

What has changed from my first days in the industry in 1994 until now?

To me it feels, as Pope Francis outlined in his book with Dr Austen Ivereigh, *Let Us Dream: The path to a better future* (2020)[15]: ‘Many words in the business world suggest the fraternal purpose of economic activity we must now re-establish: “company”, for example, comes from sharing bread together, while “corporation” means integration into the body. Business isn’t just a private enterprise; it should serve the “common” good. Common

comes from the Latin *cum-munus* – *cum* means together, while *munus* has the meaning of a service given as a gift or out of a sense of duty. Our work has both an individual and a common dimension. It is a source of personal growth as well as being key to restoring the dignity of our people.'

A few decades ago, the world of business spent a lot of resources in the form of money, time and human resources to understand the world of employee/labour relations when the trade union movement became stronger and stronger in South Africa and indeed the entire world. As the world moved on towards new approaches, community involvement and engagement gained prominence.

In today's mining industry, we have communities that are keen to understand what the industry does, how they can integrate themselves into the mining value chain and how they can assist mining to grow with them as an essential part of that growth. It is therefore imperative that today's developing leadership appreciates collegiality as the way leading them into the future. The leaders of the future must appreciate that community engagement is not about steamrolling decisions at the expense of communities, but about involving these communities. They must also embrace collegiality to avoid conflicts that can harm the business reputationally and in other ways, such as operational disruptions and destruction of trust. Communities and the mining industry should strengthen their relationships through collegiality – thus also proactively guarding against disruptive forces that could harm both parties.

AN INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLE OF THE COLLEGIAL LEADER

In an article, *New Microsoft CEO's collegial style sparks hope*[16], AP Business writer Ryan Nakashima highlights several points about Satya Nadella.

Nadella once held an impromptu townhall webcast which interrupted business meetings between Microsoft employees and outside business partners at the executive briefing centre in Redmond, Washington. Hours earlier, he had been named only the third leader in the company history. When the webcast was over, he didn't want to hog the limelight.

'If you have to get back to (a meeting) because its more interesting or important, please …,' Nadella said as the townhall transitioned into a light reception.

This gesture was just one example of Nadella's calming, collegial style, which stands in stark contrast to the blustery, passionate, rally-the-troops approach employed by Microsoft's previous CEO, Steve Balmer.

I fully agree with experts on leadership that the change in tone was a necessary cultural shift for a mature company transitioning into new businesses, while letting go of past successes and missed opportunities. Today, one looks back at a business that listed in 1986 at $21 a share and at today's successful business led by the capable Mr Satya Nadella. He showed humility, made no noise and exhibited collegiality – but he was seriously effective and successful. Being collegial is not a sign of weakness.

CASE STUDIES FROM MY OWN CAREER

Several leaders with whom I have worked, met or read about have demonstrated exceptional collegiality in their leadership styles. On the other hand, I have also come across instances where collegiality is quietly discouraged as a weak form of leadership.

Below I concentrate on a few case studies of leaders who understand or understood collegiality, and some of their own insights, prompted by my questions, described in some detail.

The late Theophilus Vusi Debese's legacy

My first year in the world of employment was in the teaching profession, and not business. I started at Kenneth Masekela High School in 1990 as a teacher and watched different individuals managing their different departments. The late Mr Theophilus Vusumuzi Debese was the school principal, and I can distinctly remember this great leader as someone who got things done.

He was never an autocrat, despot or bully. Tall and jovial, yet serious at the same time, Mr Debese was quick to denounce those who did not live up to his high standards. When there was a staff meeting, he would clearly articulate an issue and spend some minutes soliciting views and opinions from the staff members. Staff members would deliberate on the matter, since the principal had opened an avenue for opinions to be discussed before a decision could be made. As a young man who deeply respected Mr Debese, I did not worry about the speed at which decisions were made in the school environment. After all, as a school it was not a commercial entity where the profit motive was paramount. Today I realise that Mr Debese did not concern himself about the speed of arriving at a decision, but rather the quality of the decision. He was humorous and we felt very comfortable around him. I do not remember a moment or time when he became abrupt and forced his way on any decision, and I also do not remember any moment when he would be rude and forced us to make a decision.

Yet, the impression should not be created from his management style that decision-making should be slow at a school or any non-profit making organisation. The point I am making about Mr Debese is that he was collegial and very effective. He led a great institution; hence Kenneth Masekela was a great school.

During those days apartheid was still rife and strong, and townships enjoyed sport in an interesting way. Wednesdays between 13:00 and 19:00 were reserved mostly for sport. This included soccer matches, netball

matches and, in several schools where the level of sophistication was high, softball. I remember that Kenneth Masekela had a great soccer team coached by Mr Rubin Nzima. Other teachers like the late Mr Rio Xaba assisted occasionally, but Mr Nzima was the main man. Some matches were tough – especially between Kenneth Masekela and Tlakula High School. Occasionally during halftime we watched Mr Debese taking over from Mr Nzima to lead the coaching. This did not mean Mr Debese did not respect Mr Nzima or that he was a bully, he just wanted us to win. Whilst he embraced collegiality, I cannot imagine him asking for permission from Mr Nzima. This was collegiality in practice. 'Kenneth Masekela must fight to win – and I can add value.' That was Mr Debese's view, I presume.

Collegiality worked well for Mr Debese and guaranteed success for him as an effective leader. He had a great sense of pride and dignity. Because collegiality can be misleading when the leader appears friendly and cooperative, some team members can become disrespectful and do not pull their weight. Yet, Mr Debese had a way of motivating people towards high performance. He also had a way of reprimanding without making people uncomfortable or cause unnecessary ructions.

Nosipho Damasane and Alan Waller of Richards Bay Coal Terminal (RBCT)

My second hands-on experience of leadership was at the Richards Bay Coal Terminal (RBCT) – an organisation for which I served as chairman, and also as non-executive director until my resignation on 31 December 2022. The current chairman, Nosipho Damasane, was CEO under my chairmanship. She demonstrated exactly what was required at RBCT at the time: collegiality to win the hearts and minds of the entire population of RBCT. And she delivered the goods. The current CEO of RBCT, Alan Waller, has done extremely well with the same flair and collegiality, and has delivered results consistently

I was part of the team that selected Nosipho Damasane as CEO of RBCT in 2012 and she was the right and successful appointee. She excelled in her role by first ensuring that she aligned the entire workforce of the terminal to the strategy she was going to drive; that of making the terminal the best performing terminal globally – and comparatively-speaking it was up there with the best. She initiated a programme similar to the *Undercover Boss* TV programme and went in disguise to visit employees to understand their environment and issues. This worked extremely well for the operation. She was also instrumental in initiating the '*Imbizo* concept' where all employees converged and discussed company results and company issues. She even invited me as chairman of the board to attend these monthly sessions. Nosipho's power of collegiality and working with the board to create harmony was amazing.

When I asked Nosipho if her management team made decisions through collegiality or if she forced decisions, this is what she said: 'What has moved the needle for me as a leader is the sense of building a team first. This requires walking the talk, which has in my view translated to trust. I recognise that every team member has something to contribute and therefore our collective contributions make everyone want to do more. Much as I give guidance to the team – and there are instances where decision-making must come from the top – there is that effort to make everyone understand and buy in to why this particular decision has to be made. More often than not, because trust has been built as the anchor, the team supports those exceptional views. I also promote debate, and I have a saying that "being the leader does not make the cleverest person in the room". So, collegiality is important in building my teams.'

Does collegiality slow decision-making? Her response was as follows: 'It depends on the culture of the organisation. If you have an autocratic style of leadership, where fear is at the core of your leadership style, collegiality

turns to decision-making by consensus. This is not an effective way of building inclusive decision-making. On the other end where the culture is solid and your team members trust the process and they trust you as a leader, decision-making is not a challenge and it does not steal time, as the team is not wasting that time watching their backs. I really put value in spending time with every new Exco member to get to know them better (their strengths and their weaknesses), while giving them time to learn mine, as we work as a team. There is value in this approach, and it makes it easy to reach tough decisions.'

My third question to Nosipho related to fraternising with her direct reports: 'I would not call it fraternising. I respect all our personal spaces; I make the effort to get to know their families by inviting them for a dinner with their spouses once in a while. In this way they know that I care enough to spend social time with them. I also use family days to get the kids to come and spend time with their parents at work. For example, I would occasionally cook dinner and invite the executive committee (Exco), or invite Exco and the unions to dinner at a restaurant. Again, these initiatives build trust. What has worked for me is not to cherry pick. If there is dinner, the whole Exco is invited. This helps to eliminate perceptions of favouritism and unnecessary corridor talk. It is important that boundaries are not crossed to the point where you can no longer be the leader, or your Exco look up to you because of certain behaviours. So the principle of dignity and respect is crucial as well in terms of fraternising with your teams.'

The fourth question related to whether she was aware of any of her leaders fraternising with their people and whether she cares about that. She said: 'People react and lead their lives differently, I have witnessed leaders who socialise with their teams to levels where it is difficult to earn the respect of the people … in my view this type of leader loses respect. What

people talk about in the corridors can create chaos for the teams. In the past I have seen this kind of behaviour and yes, I do care about it as it derails the productivity of the business. Once you lose respect from your teams, it is not easy to regain it.'

When I enquired about ingratiation, this was Nosipho's response: 'In my view ingratiation is a big "No!" at work between managers and their teams. This is when the boundaries get crossed. I do not subscribe to it and am not a supporter of this kind of leadership. I have witnessed it happening. It just does not end well to have blurred lines between peers, or boss and personal assistants … An example of this would be teams where the leaders' only friends are their teams' members, and therefore they do everything with the teams socially, yet expect respect at work.'

She added: 'In the business I have led, I have not witnessed or been affected by my team in terms of ingratiation, but I have witnessed it in my early years in leadership. It just never really ends well. It creates divisions in teams.'

When Nosipho was about to complete her tenure as CEO, she formalised the discussion with me (as Chairman at the time) and the board regarding her wish to move on. We collegially agreed to a smooth succession plan and handover, with Alan Waller taking over from her as CEO and Nosipho taking over the Chairman role from me.

Today, the stability, progress and high-performance culture of the Richards Bay Coal Terminal is a result of these moves and I am still a non-executive director on the board with responsibility of chairing the remuneration committee. Alan Waller has a technically and strategically strong team at executive level and a supportive and competent board with all the statutory and non-statutory committees in place. When I engaged Alan regarding collegiality and its impact on his team and progress, he stated that they are a small team at executive level and they definitely make

decisions through collegiality. In terms of collegiality delaying decision-making Alan said ‘I certainly do not believe collegiality slows down decisions. On the contrary, it probably speeds up the overall process. The decision is one part; the implementation is another big part. We all have blind spots, and through sharing of ideas and decision-making we often avoid unintended negative consequences. The true upside is that collegiality in decision-making ensures collective buy-in and therefore implementation is far more effective, as the decision is owned by all.’

Alan reflected on fraternising and ingratiating with his team: ‘My view of my style is not to fraternise with my direct reports or staff. We are a close team who know a lot about each other and each other’s families. However, none of us socialise with one another. We are colleagues with a mutual respect for each other.’

He continued: ‘I definitely do not ingratiate with my team or other RBCT team members. I am a strong believer in openly recognising individuals’ strengths and acknowledging good performance. However, the purpose is to motivate growth and continuous improvement. I strive to have a motivated team that wants to be at RBCT and are proud of the terminal and what they have achieved. Recognition is given where it is due, not for the purpose of winning favour or pleasing an individual. You could also be seen to be inconsistent in your leadership style, thereby confusing your team and others.’

He added: ‘Based on my experience with my team I have not experienced any leaders ingratiating with others. My experience is that ingratiating is dangerous territory, as you may be perceived to have favourites, while making performance management when required very difficult.’

Alan Waller and the RBCT team are continuing to deliver great results and Nosipho still chairs the board.

Peter Armitage, CEO of Anchor Capital

The next leader is Peter Armitage, CEO of Anchor Capital. He built a powerful business with a great promise for the future, and I believe he is not a ‘mad individual looking to deliver using some heroics’, but achieves through simple collegiality. Peter gets the best out of his team in a decent manner and he is recording great successes in terms of business growth and financial results.

He is a multiple award-winning investment manager who founded Anchor Capital and listed the company on the Alternative Exchange of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in 2014. It was delisted in 2020. Peter is capable, strong-willed and super intelligent and we became good friends (no fraternising or ingratiation, just great friends). From a professional point of view, learning from Peter has been immensely fulfilling. When guidance is sought regarding the direction the world is headed in business, economics and finance, Peter is the ‘go-to guy’.

Peter was detailed in his response regarding collegiality: ‘We absolutely make decisions through collegiality. The team has to buy into decisions and ultimately they are the ones who must implement what is decided. There is, however, a balance between the two. While everybody must be involved in reaching a decision, “decisions by committee” can also be dangerous – if you try and keep everybody happy, often the company does not land up making brave decisions. And often the loudest voice is not the smartest voice. I place a lot of emphasis on ensuring that the smartest voices are heard and are encouraged to contribute. So, everybody must be heard and then a final decision must be made by the person responsible. It is then worthwhile spending more time with dissenting voices to ensure that you have their buy-in and they understand the final decision.’

His views on fraternising were as follows: ‘Fraternising is a fine line. The positive element is forming a friendship and building a close and transparent relationship, which I consider very positive. The negative side is

getting too close to somebody where that relationship is detrimental to the business. If leaders respond to sycophantic fraternisation, this will not be conducive to a positive culture.'

He added: 'The most important thing is for co-workers to understand the business relationship and for the boundaries to be clear. At Anchor we always strive for honesty, openness and transparency. People should not be offended by straight-talking and criticism in the interests of the business. I clearly remember a meeting where the business leader in question was asking a friend to leave the business. He started the meeting by stating: "We are friends and if we are real friends, it will survive the outcome of this meeting. However, this meeting is in my capacity as the leader of this division and in that capacity, we have issues." The end result was the employee leaving, but the friendship remained.'

Peter also mentioned that 'when I worked at a bank in a former job, a lot of romantic relationships formed, and collectively these were not good for the business.'

Yet, he also related the following: 'I dealt with a businessman who ran a big industrial company, but had subsequently retired. He proudly told me he had never had one of his thousands of employees around to his house. I was aware that the culture of his business was considered cold and unsupportive. It is unnatural not to form friendship bonds with people you are with for long periods, and we prefer to encourage friendship and collegiality, within clear boundaries.'

Peter elaborated: 'People spend the majority of their working hours in the workplace and relationships of different kinds will inevitably form. We trust our people and if the culture of the business is clearly described and if the leaders lead by example, people in our business generally manage their relationships well. I have on occasion stated my opinion to leaders on relationships and the need for a professional culture. It is art to achieve the

right culture and get people to live the culture. It is important for leaders to have soft skills.'

In terms of the issue of ingratiation, he said: 'Ingratiation implies sycophantic behaviour towards somebody who is your senior in an organisation, although it can be the other way round, depending on somebody's agenda. I have always been very clear about stamping out politics in a business and if political behaviour works for somebody's career prospects that can result in a very toxic culture. In my experience generally only a few people exhibit this behaviour, and it gets stamped out very quickly. This behaviour tends to come from a certain personality type, and we try and identify this in the hiring process. Because it tends to be inherent in somebody's personality, it is particularly hard to deal with. If you hire right, this will never be a problem. I try and lead by example on this and I would like to feel this is the opposite of my personality type.'

Peter is leading a competent team across the Anchor business and it's a great place to work.

Mpumi Madisa, CEO of Bidvest

Mpumi Madisa was appointed CEO of Bidvest on 1 October 2020. I interacted with her before she became CEO and because I knew about her competence, I strongly believed that she was the right person to take over from Lindsay Ralphs, who had done a great job at Bidvest. Mpumi proved during her journey through the ranks that she is tenacious and keen to deliver great results. Expectations were very high for her to take Bidvest to the next level and she prepared herself well for her journey. She is a very collegial CEO who is nevertheless tough and makes the right decisions: someone dispelling the myth that collegiality slows decision-making.

In terms of her own executive team, and whether they made decisions through collegiality, Mpumi responded: 'Our decision-making is underpinned by a shared vision, shared goals and shared values. As an Exco

team we operate on a principle that “your failure is my failure” and equally “your success is my success”. The lens through which we view each other’s portfolios – and are therefore vested in each other’s success – contributes to an inherent culture of cooperation, collaboration and partnership. No decision is ever put to a vote. As an Exco team we do not always agree, and differing views are encouraged, but these are not raised in a destructive manner. Calm and respectful persuasion, tabling of firm fact-based views and constructive discussion, with the aim of identifying the most optimal solution, is our way of working.’

Does she believe collegiality slows down the decision-making process and hinders progress in her business? ‘No, I don’t believe collegiality slows down decision-making. Remember that collegiality does not imply 100% consensus. In fact, our Exco makes decisions quickly, with immediate implementation of those decisions. Whilst there is an element of analysis and fact checking in our decision-making process, we don’t over-analyse, and we do not get into analysis paralysis.’

Whilst I know Mpumi to be a serious operator, I asked her if she fraternised with direct reports or anyone else in her business. She said: ‘We have a family culture in our organisation, where everyone knows their peers’ partners, children and, in some instances, even grandchildren and grandparents. I would even say that we probably have a brotherly/sisterly type culture in the way we relate to each other. Having said that, everyone knows that there is a line that cannot and should not be crossed. In any leadership role – in fact even if you are not leading a team – fraternising is an absolute NO. The workplace is no place for fraternising. To what end? In the workplace, principles of mutual respect including respecting each other’s boundaries, is the professional way of engagement.’

Mpumi reflected on leaders in her business who fraternise and whether she cared about that. ‘Yes, in our business, I am aware of leaders who

fraternised. They no longer work for the organisation! We have a zero tolerance for fraternising, especially when you are a leader, because this behaviour is overlaid by a power imbalance with your subordinate and these actions in the workplace always end badly.'

On ingratiation with her direct reports or staff or anyone else in her business, Mpumi said: 'No, I don't. Finding ways of gaining favour and pleasing people in the workplace is not the road to success. There's no substitute for hard work, discipline, excellence and delivering results – that's what breeds success!'

Regarding leaders in her business who ingratiate, she said she was aware of some who do. 'The problem with leaders who are ingratiating is that this behaviour distracts them from focusing on delivering results. What these leaders misunderstand is that no matter how much they flatter and try to please, they will ultimately be judged on their results. High performers in the workplace don't need to find other ways to please, their results speak for themselves. This tendency of flattering can also be inherent in leaders who try to distract management from an objective performance assessment. As they incorrectly overcompensate with these unprofessional behaviours, they forget to lead … These leaders don't last in our high-performance environment.'

Tshilidzi Marwala, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg (UJ)

Tshilidzi Marwala is a collegial leader without any ego. He was driven to achieve great things for the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and the results can attest to that. I reflected on the time I was first approached to join the council of the university back in 2013. I became the Chairperson of the Council of UJ at the same time as Tshilidzi was taking over as Vice-Chancellor and Rector in 2018. When Tshilidzi took on that role, UJ was ranked twelfth in Africa by QS World University rankings. By 2022 UJ was

ranked second in Africa behind the University of Cape Town. This achievement alone speaks volumes.

Tshilidzi is a very dynamic portrayal of great collegial leadership. He comes across as relaxed, but there is also a level of intensity that resonates with my own style of leadership. His work at UJ did not go unnoticed internationally either. He has been appointed as the next Rector of the United Nations University (UNU) for a five-year term from March 2023. In his role of UNU Rector, Prof Marwala will hold the rank of Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I wrote as follows in an article in the *Mail & Guardian*[17] after the news became known: 'He recognised the importance of the collective as a necessary ingredient for success. He recognised that the task needed more hands on deck. Tshilidzi worked well with the council, the executive leadership group, the management executive committee, senate, and all other critical internal and external key role players. He made things easier by being deeply collegial.'

His reactions to my probing about the nature of collegiality were exactly according to what I have come to experience of his leadership. When asked if his executive committee/management team make decisions through collegiality or whether he forced decisions, he responded: 'It is imperative that we make decisions through collegiality. The diverse backgrounds and opinions of my Exco/management team ensure that we make well-thought-out and pertinent decisions that speak to the diverse backgrounds of our staff and student body. My leadership style is not to impose my opinions on my colleagues but to ensure that we have extensive discussions when making decisions so that all our bases are covered. A collegial approach assumes that my team has a common purpose and emphasises the process of discussion to make decisions based on a shared understanding of the

mandate of the university as well as our strategic objectives … (however), whenever there is a deadlock, I make an executive decision.'

Does collegiality have a slow-down effect? 'While collegiality in the decision-making process certainly takes longer than unilateral decisions, it has far more benefits for the business – in this case the university. It certainly does not hinder progress but rather encourages it. I am reminded of the words of JW Little who wrote in 1990 that "the reason to pursue the study and practice of collegiality is that, presumably, something is gained when teachers work together, and something is lost when they do not.[18]" The diversity amongst our Exco, which I must emphasise is across gender, class and race lines, ensures that we make the best decisions for the business.'

Tshilidzi stated that 'fraternisation has a negative connotation, which emphasises that one forms a friendship when one should not. I certainly view many of my staff and those who report to me as friends, but this does not impact my leadership style as I approach decisions about the business with impartiality and in the best interests of the organisation.'

To underline his stated views, one of my colleagues who often drives with me to meetings at the university once commented that he finds Tshilidzi not easy to fraternise with, make friends with or engage in small talk. This is true – yet he is a most jovial human being and I am sure that his public speaking engagements are well understood.

Tshilidzi is jovial but predictably tough. His response about whether leaders at the university fraternise and whether he cares about it was brief: 'This becomes an issue once friendships – as I will reframe fraternisation in this context – impact relationships with staff, and decisions are not made in the best interests of the business.'

On ingratiating with his direct reports or others, he answered: 'Ingratiation has a negative connotation, which implies that flattery was

used in order to achieve an outcome. While this is an unacceptable practice at the university, there is certainly scope for positive as well as negative feedback through appropriate channels, such as the performance management systems and report back sessions.'

He added: 'If we are using the dictionary definition of ingratiation, which is "to gain favour or favourable acceptance for by deliberate effort", then I am not aware of any such practice [at the university]. If practices such as this were to come to my attention, this would certainly be a cause for concern.'

Douglas Gain

Douglas Gain is a co-founding member of Masimong Group and the chairperson of the group's investment committee. Doug is a breath of fresh air and deeply committed to creating success in everything he touches. We were introduced to one another by his brother Peter and Tom Borman and it became the start of a long journey. Doug was instrumental in leading and driving the due diligence exercise when we were planning to acquire Optimum Coal from BHP Billiton (Billiton Energy Coal of South Africa or BECSA) and then he became the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Optimum when we took over the business with me as Chief Executive Officer(CEO).

Doug is a sponge: quick in absorbing information about any subject that may come from any discipline in business and beyond – ending up being able to share that information with any audience as if he were the professional in that field. Secondly, Doug is also a honey badger: driven, hungry and wanting great results for the business and the greater good. We have worked together for the past 17 years, and I fully trust this proud leader who wants to associate with excellence. He is also a great husband and father to his family.

When asked if his management team made decisions through collegiality, his honest and quick response was: ‘Given that one of our current business imperatives is “speed”, collegiality is somewhat discouraged in my function. Once we have agreed a clear functional strategy and roles and responsibilities are clear, I try to give my direct reports a true sense of empowerment to make calls and decisions within their function. I encourage them, when they are not sure, to simply ask me. I typically respond quickly, to the best of my knowledge, conscience and ability, and this gives them clarity and enables speed – which serves to “share the responsibility” for a tough call. It is not collegiate, it is not a committee, but rather two people making a decision (often a difficult one) and moving forward.’

Doug added: ‘A critical factor to instil is to ensure that your direct reports are not afraid to make calls and risk making honest mistakes. With speed comes errors from time to time. This is part of the territory and a critical part of empowerment. You can’t be afraid of making honest mistakes. I often tell my direct reports that I have their backs - especially when an honest mistake is made. We have built a deep sense of professional loyalty within my team – something which I believe is very empowering for everyone.’

In terms of collegiality slowing down decision-making, he explained that, although well intended, collegiality can often slow down decisions. He added: ‘Large business environments generally risk becoming less functional through committees which ultimately, in my view, disempower. Committees are very much a double-edged sword: useful for info sharing, but often a place for people to hide. Decisions are invariably slower, and responsibility diluted. My direct reports are responsible for various business development initiatives, large and small. We deal with small initiatives on a day-to-day basis, whilst large initiatives generally require higher approvals.

We move as fast as we can. If we needed to wait for a committee to vet and challenge all our decisions, it would be slow and disempowering.'

Doug is a great achiever – academically as a smart chartered accountant, and in sport (specifically in cricket). He does not fraternise with his direct reports or other staff. 'I have coffee connects and constant interactions, but fraternising and ingratiating ultimately serve to undercut the balance of responsibility and accountability when times get tough and difficult decisions, notably regarding people, may need to be made. Although well intended, ingratiation may indeed risk a leader's independence when it comes to handling discipline issues down the line. It is quite possible to have an excellent, open and respectful working relationship without fraternising. It does not really serve to strengthen relationships, and furthermore serves silently to undercut relationships with those team members not being fraternised with – thus creating a silent factionalism.'

He added: 'I'm fortunate to have a family and a strong set of friends outside of the business, where I prefer to invest my social time … I am not really aware of leaders in our business who fraternise. I have, however, seen this work badly in other businesses, where leaders who fraternise (for the sake of ego and self-importance) create a pseudo popularity which ultimately serves to undercut their gravitas and independence when things get tough … If I saw a peer leader ingratiating, I would gently caution against it.'

Doug also purposefully does not ingratiate with his team or other staff members. 'I connect often – mostly professionally – and I try to bring a consistent message, theme and constant enthusiasm to the team. I need to improve remembering everyone's names (the most powerful tool), especially junior staff. Covid-19 has disconnected us and I am conscious of needing to do this more.'

In terms of other leaders in his business who ingratiate, Doug responded: ‘No, I am not aware of others that specifically ingratiate, but I do know that it happens.’

Finally, he said: ‘We have acquired businesses with inherently toxic cultures and our strategy has been to change the functional and mine leadership in these businesses in order to inculcate a new culture. Such initiatives remain work in progress, with our current challenge being our mid-level management.’

Mary Bomela, CEO of Mineworkers Investment Company (MIC)

Mary Bomela, the Chief Executive Officer of the Mineworkers Investment Company (MIC), is a strong and competent leader who has successfully led the growth of the company to become as formidable as it is today. She has impressed me with her approach to investment and she executes all the company’s transactions as leader of a team of professionals. I was keen to understand how she handled her team in terms of collegiality, fraternising and ingratiation.

‘Our Exco definitely makes decisions through collegiality. I have a team of astute investment professionals who have knowledge and views that are important inputs for our decision-making. Forcing decisions on them would definitely not work, and it is not something that I believe in. I believe the strength and success of a leader lie in the team that they surround themselves with: good leaders surround themselves with the best people to enhance their decision-making, because no one person can know it all and many minds will always be better than one. I believe collegiality brings together the people that you work with, and gets buy-in because they know they are part of the decision-making process. However, that said, there are times when one needs to make the final decision as a leader – especially when there are many divergent views or when time is of the essence.’

In her opinion, collegiality ‘could slow down decision-making when there are too many divergent views. For example, we were considering an investment opportunity that was very attractive and during the due diligence, we picked up an issue that could potentially pose a reputational risk for us as an investor in the future. The challenge was that half the team felt that the potential financial returns were too good to give up and that we could try to mitigate the reputational matters. The other half felt the reputational risks were too great. So, we kept going in circles. The impasse was solved by going back to our core values and reminding the team of what we stand for.’

In terms of fraternising with her direct reports or staff, or anyone else in her business, Mary’s response was: ‘In general, as a leader I believe that one needs to be friendly and approachable for your team to be able to approach you with their ideas and problems. That said, my relationship with the team is that of a professional. One could argue that I have built friendships with my immediate team members. For example, I would attend a special birthday party or wedding – but we are not friends on social media, nor do we hang out outside working hours. The friendships that we have built come from years of working together and building an understanding of one another’s characters.’

Mary says: ‘The business is run in a collegial manner because the vision and objectives are clearly set out and the team know where we are headed. Individual KPIs also help to ensure that each person knows their responsibilities and what is expected of them.’

Whether she knew about leaders who fraternise and cared about it, Mary said: ‘Yes, if it is in our business, then I always highlight the risks – but if they decide that it works for them, then I will let it be as long as I know that it does not impede decision-making in the business or lead to favouritism.’

Does she ingratiate with her direct reports or anyone else in her business? ‘In general no. However, there are circumstances that sometimes require one to get closer to your team members than usual. For instance, in a previous role, one of my team members attempted suicide because of depression. It was necessary for me to understand very personal issues and intervene. I took on a motherly and counselling role to help the person through a dark phase. I reached out to the person’s psychiatrist to facilitate admission into a psychiatric hospital. A challenge then presented for me on the person’s return to work: the expectation that we could condone poor work performance because one understood the relevant personal issues. A leader needs to have empathy. However, boundaries are important to ensure that the members of the team remain clear about the business objectives and the expectations of what they need to deliver. It is also important that a leader shows no favouritism, and that one always remains objective in decision-making.’

Do leaders in her business ingratiate? Mary responded: ‘Not in our business. But if that would be the case, then I would definitely call it out because it has the potential to get into the way of objective decision-making.’

Chris Welthagen, Brittany Seabrook and John Ehlers, RMB

I also discussed issues relating to collegiality, fraternisation and ingratiating with the Family Office Group (FOGS) team of Rand Merchant Bank (RMB). I spoke with Chris Welthagen, Brittany Seabrook and John Ehlers.

Does their Exco/management team make decisions through collegiality, or do they force decisions? They responded that RMB went through a journey where initially decision-making was done swiftly by a smaller group of people. However, this was on a ‘bottom-up’ basis: the people driving the underlying businesses have material autonomy to make the decisions versus the ‘top-down’ approach. This model did have extensive

success, but also resulted in some questionable decision-making. The process could benefit from wider consultation etc. This has now gone nearly completely the other way to a more ‘collegiate’ style of decision-making which does have greater benefits of collective wisdom, but also has certain flaws such as slow turnaround times/indecisiveness, and also of people (in the information chain, or from underlying businesses) being involved in decisions where they cannot really add value appropriately.

‘From the FOGS perspective, we have actively worked to change the approach above to one which is “collegiate” but with a small group of key decision makers which have the sufficient breadth of experience, gravitas (i.e. “not easily influenced/swayed”) and collective alignment in outcome to make these decisions. There is robust debate – but with the underpin of a “collegiate” approach of looking at decisions which are “net positive” for FOGS and the wider RMB. At times this requires some trade-offs/compromises.’

In terms of whether collegiality slowed down the decision-making process, they responded: ‘We have seen this come into RMB over the last few years as the business had become far more corporatised, with slow and misaligned decision-making resulting in inertia and many parts of the business losing their competitive market edge and averaging down to their competitors. This, however, may not be a function of “collegiality” but rather misaligned interest/incentives which then hinder a “collegiate” approach.’

They added: ‘We have found that, within the FOGS business (which we have looked to style to be akin to our FOGS clients’ businesses), a “collegiate” approach has not slowed down decision-making. What is key is to have a small group of experienced and aligned partners with the appropriate trust and respect to challenge one another, but also move quickly on decisions with the mindset of achieving a net positive outcome.’

The team said they did not fraternise with their direct reports or anyone else in their business. ‘In terms of RMB as a whole, this is an issue in certain areas and one can see the negative impacts of this in terms of how those businesses are perceived and actually perform … It is deeply discouraged in FOGS, as we believe it can result in compromised decision-making, perceptual favouritism and similar issues or concerns. We do have team/work functions to continue to help build the day-to-day culture, but we strongly encourage that this is done in a respectful manner which also does not compromise current difficult discussions or decisions in the future – both factual and perceptual ones.’

Considering that banks have different divisions, I enquired if they were aware of leaders in the RMB business as a whole who fraternise. ‘Yes, we do see this in certain business units and even across certain business units … Yes, I do care about it as it sets the completely wrong tone for a culture in the organisation, but it is something we do call out if it could negatively impact our business. I would however say it’s far less pronounced at RMB than what I have seen at the other banks.’

This team does not ingratiate with their direct reports or staff or anyone else in their business: ‘This is not tolerated in the FOGS business. Leadership setting the tone and calling this out ensures it does not fester into a “back-slapping” type of environment which results in a lack of introspection to actively improve and grow, and to continuously adapt to make the business better. Not having the difficult discussions is disrespectful to the people involved across the team, including the leadership, as this then holds back growth and improvement.’

They added that they knew about various forms of ingratiation generally. They stated that ingratiation is ‘bothersome, as it holds back or limits introspection, growth and improvement. It then becomes a self-fulfilling

prophecy for politics, non-performance-based outcomes etc. and leadership gets weaker all the time. It essentially becomes the culture.'

Brittany Seabrook said on this topic: 'I think you need to differentiate between ingratiation with intent and ingratiation that is done without intent to achieve a certain outcome. The latter is an authentic experience where someone ingratiates themselves with others – not on purpose, but rather because of how they behave in the normal course of life and their nature. I have found that I do ingratiate myself with others as a result of always trying to make sure I see things from their perspective and not just my own. By doing this, I gain an understanding of their objectives and incorporate that into the overall thinking (where possible). Within the organisation I think there is a mixed approach to this: those who don't do it at all; those who do it with intent to achieve something for themselves; and those who achieve it without intent, but rather because of their nature. I would like to believe that over time there has been a trend away from purposeful ingratiation. Most people see through this and don't trust it.'

She also commented on fraternisation: 'I personally don't fraternise with clients or colleagues. There are a few reasons for this, but mainly it is driven by the importance I place on keeping a professional boundary. This is not a boundary with respect to being your authentic self in interactions, but rather a boundary relating to the nature and topic of one's engagements. A professional relationship should not be overly skewed by biases, and I feel like fraternisation puts this at risk. Having a professional boundary provides safety in doing what is best for the business – and a team, as opposed to what is best for the one-on-one relationship. I also don't fraternise, as I don't believe it should ever be added to a client relationship and would rather allocate time to the underlying job at hand and my family. I do think that fraternisation happens in the organisation, among both colleagues and clients. When it happens amongst colleagues, it creates a

perception of favouritism – especially if it happens up and down a reporting line. And I presume that this is why it happens with clients as well, because it is done with the intent of trying to become that client's "favourite" banker. This should be earned by constant delivery of that client's needs and not a result of fraternisation.'

One big lesson Brittany shared is to create a proper balance between collegiality and being overly collegial: 'Collegiality is something that one needs to be very carefully balanced. I think there is a downside to leaning too far towards one end or the other, i.e. not being collegial at all or being too collegial. Not being collegial at all will create a team and a business that is isolated from the rest of the organisation. This would be a shame, as any team within the bank can benefit to some extent from knowledge and experience that sits within other pockets. Being too collegiate puts at risk the decision-making in the best interests of the business. Within our organisation I think we fall on the side of not being collegiate enough. I do, however, feel we are moving in the direction of being more balanced. I don't think the organisation will ever pivot to being too collegial – nor do I think it should, as a healthy balance should, in my view, be the target.'

John Ehlers added two important takeaways: firstly, that people should be themselves and feel comfortable, and secondly, that managers should have aligned principles and visions, yet the freedom to be themselves, have open debates and share views: 'Processes around decision-making are often determined by the culture set by the leader or leadership of an organisation. They are also determined by the degree to which people are allowed to be themselves and feel comfortable to be who they are and speak up if something is bothering them. Processes are then also predicated on the alignment upfront that people have on the vision of the business, as inherent conflict or misalignment on this will determine process, and then often whose voice carries the day.'

He concluded: ‘I think if you have the basic principles right, the decisions can become more collective as one starts in a strategically-aligned process on strategy and principle.’

IN SUMMARY

In conclusion: some thoughts on the leaders mentioned and who influenced my thinking on the topic of this book.

Although I have never met Satya Nadella, he was included early in this chapter because I agree with experts on leadership that the change in tone at an important company like Microsoft was necessary and beneficial.

Theophilus Vusumuzi Debese was in a league of his own as a leader. I benefited immensely from his guidance as my school principal and later as my boss when I became a teacher. May his soul rest in peace in eternity.

The views I uphold and motivated me to write this book, were strengthened by the responses I received from Nosipho, Alan, Peter, Mpumi, Tshilidzi, Doug, Mary, as well as the team of Chris, Brittany and John at Rand Merchant Bank. Another critical reason for me to select these individuals is that, as self-respecting human beings, they are keen to create success and leave lasting legacies. At the end of the day I strongly believe that we need to promote collegiality for a harmonious world where results are delivered in a less stressful manner.

Leadership, Collegiality and Mentorship

I include some thoughts on mentorship, as I believe this is one of those amazing processes that may be underutilised and underestimated, yet also one that talented young people could rely on for part of their growth and development into the future..

Whilst qualifications can make 30% of your growth and development, as well as assist you to access the profession or role you wish to pursue, another 30% will be your experience, while another 30% is your drive and attitude. The remaining 10% is mentoring.

All of these components need attention as they may trip you up if they are not suitably attended to. The percentages mentioned are not scientific or empirical, but based on my own experiences.

Two case studies

Here are two interesting cases from my own experience of mentoring young people:

- A young professional engineer who decided to resign from a formal job or formal employment to pursue an interesting consulting journey ended up becoming extremely successful in his journey of building his consulting business. However, his restlessness in life is purely personal. He spends his time concerning himself about family matters and sought guidance from me on how to deal with these issues. His concern is not that these matters are distractions while he builds his business, but he wants his family to be strong and stable into the future as he grows his business as well. His level of maturity is astounding in this approach. If he were someone different, he would just focus on his business and grow it successfully but neglect his family. He is adamant about building a strong work, family, and life balance. Mentoring this young man is deeply rewarding.
- A young professional became restless in the corporate environment because although progressing well academically with strong solid qualifications, these were not aligned with what was encountered in their role at work. This individual was to resign from their role and build a business from start: ‘Nothing would stop me!’ In our sessions together we considered finding either another role elsewhere (where the individual’s capabilities could be appreciated), or exploring a daunting entrepreneurial journey. Lastly, we looked at staying in the current role, while remaining unhappy and miserable. During such sessions, one’s eyes are opened to different options. It is important to find a discussion partner who is really listening, and such discussions enrich the journey to the final decision. The person in question ultimately decided to leave the corporate environment and is today running their own business – with an attitude which I believe will take their business places! Mentorship sessions are exciting when you meet and mentor a young individual who is a proper firebrand – someone you immediately recognise as ‘the next big thing’ in whatever path they will choose in life. If this person chooses to be a

corporate professional, they'll most likely end up being a CEO or a powerful executive. If choosing to be an entrepreneur, the result will be great. This person asks me serious questions about the value of life, the meaning of life and how they will be remembered one day when they have departed this world. At times, during some of our appointments, I am tempted to request permission to record our conversations.

All in all, I have learnt to be a good listener compared to ten years ago when I started mentoring young people. I have come to appreciate that to build this world to be a better place, the world needs powerful leadership that fosters a deep work ethic, strong family values, a balanced family life of good health, love and stability, deep spirituality, coupled with emotional intelligence, as well as harmony with other people, the environment, social and governance or (P)ESG, which I will discuss in more detail later in this book.

These goals will only be achieved if, as mentors, we start telling the story of collegiality and straight talking – not the old story of ruthlessness, cold-heartedness and egotism. I would love my mentorship programme (which is not as formalised as the normal school) to produce leaders of the new world and embrace collegiality to promote harmony in the world.

Peacetime and Wartime leaders

A big debate these days relates to whether leaders are peacetime or wartime leaders. Historically, there have been leaders who would love to be called wartime leaders compared to being peacetime leaders.

You're lucky that I ain't the president
'Cause I'll push the fuckin' button and get it over wit
Fuck all that waitin' and procrastinatin'
And all that goddamn negotiating'
— Bushwick Bill, *Fuck a War* song lyrics

Tom Hagen: *Mike, why am I out?*
Michael Corleone: *You're not a wartime consigliere. Things may get tough with the move we're trying*.
— Scene from the movie *The Godfather*

Ben Horowitz quotes the following in his article *Peacetime CEO/Wartime CEO*[19]:
'Peacetime in business means those times when a company has a large advantage vs. the competition in its core market, and its market is growing. In times of peace, the company can focus on expanding the market and reinforcing the company's strengths.

'In wartime, a company is fending off an imminent existential threat. Such a threat can come from a wide range of sources including competition, dramatic macroeconomic change, market change, supply chain change, and so forth. The great wartime CEO Andy Grove marvellously describes the forces that can take a company from peacetime to wartime in his book Only the Paranoid Survive*.*

'A classic peacetime mission is Google's effort to make the Internet faster. Google's position in the search market is so dominant that they determined that anything that makes the Internet faster accrues to their benefit as it enables users to do more searches. As the clear market leader, they focus more on expanding the market than dealing with their search competitors. In contrast, a classic wartime mission was Andy Grove's drive to get out of the memory business in the mid 1980s due to an irrepressible threat from the Japanese semiconductor companies. In this mission, the competitive threat – which could have bankrupted the company – was so great that Intel had to exit its core business, which employed 80% of its staff.

'In my personal experience, I was a peacetime CEO for about 9 months, then a wartime CEO for the next 7 years. My greatest management discovery through that transition was that peacetime and wartime require radically different management styles.'
Ben Horowitz continues in his article to ask the question: Can a CEO be both?

'Can a CEO build the skill sets to lead in both peacetime and wartime? One could easily argue that I failed as a peacetime CEO, but succeeded as a wartime one. John Chambers had a great run as peacetime CEO of Cisco, but has struggled as Cisco has moved into war with Juniper, HP, and a range of new competitors. Steve Jobs, who employs a classical wartime management style, removed himself as CEO of Apple in the 1980s during their longest period of peace before coming back to Apple for a spectacular run more than a decade later during their most intense war period.

'I believe that the answer is yes, but it's hard.'

Andrew Hill wrote about the topic earlier in 2022 in an opinion piece in *The Financial Times*.[20] He argued that CEOs dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic in completely different ways. Some companies had to delay the departure of some of their CEOs as this was an unprecedented crisis. Among others Hill quoted Donald Trump as saying: 'This is a war … A number of people have said it … and I feel it, actually: I'm a wartime president.'

However, Hill also quoted President Emmanuel Macron of France in relation to Covid-19: 'I don't know if we are at the beginning or the middle of this crisis – no one knows. There is lots of uncertainty and that should make us very humble.'

In the article mentioned as well as elsewhere[21], Ben Horowitz discusses differences between peacetime and wartime leaders and a few of these examples are noted below:

- Peacetime CEO thinks of the competition as other ships in a big ocean that may never engage. Wartime CEO thinks the competition is sneaking into her house and trying to kidnap her children.
- Peacetime CEO aims to expand the market. Wartime CEO aims to win the market.
- Peacetime CEO strives to tolerate deviations from the plan when coupled with effort and creativity. Wartime CEO is completely intolerant.
- Peacetime CEO does not raise her voice. Wartime CEO rarely speaks in a normal tone.
- Peacetime CEO works to minimize conflict. Wartime CEO heightens the contradictions.
- Peacetime CEO strives for broad based buy in. Wartime CEO neither indulges consensus building nor tolerates disagreements.
- Peacetime CEO sets big, hairy audacious goals. Wartime CEO is too busy fighting the enemy to read management books written by consultants who have never managed a fruit stand.
- Peacetime CEO trains her employees to ensure satisfaction and career development. Wartime CEO trains her employees so they don't get their ass shot off in the battle.
- Peacetime CEO has rules like 'we're going to exit all businesses where we're not number 1 or 2.' Wartime CEO often has no businesses that are number 1 or 2 and therefore does not have the luxury of following that rule.

Whether a leader is a ‘wartime’ or a ‘peacetime’ CEO, collegiality can suit both types. My experience as CEO and leader during Covid-19 was that these were unprecedented times. There was no textbook to refer to on how to deal with this pandemic. One had to remain tough, resolute, focused and at the same time had to remain empathetic and listen to what was happening to our colleagues at work, as they commute from home to work and back, and also at home. We were all at war against a disruptive pandemic and collegiality prevailed. We listened, we empathised, we supported and were also supported. This affected internal systems and processes and supply chain processes outside of the business. Leaders have to adapt collegiality and be prepared that the future may present us another crisis as existential as Covid-19.

Chapter 2

COLLEGIALITY AND LEADERSHIP

In this chapter I focus on employees and their bosses dealing with collegiality and my views on the subject. I highlight several issues that people in the workplace face as they navigate the road of collegiality as the new way of the future.

HAVING SPENT MOST OF MY career in the mining industry, my experience is that young people like myself experienced an interesting form of leadership among a mix of possibilities. The leadership style which was overtly or covertly promoted was that to be successful one had to be tough, carry a ruthless streak and take no prisoners. There were even individuals amongst us who imitated how these ruthless and tough leaders spoke, walked and dressed, because we had to be like them in many respects. This, in a way, guaranteed your path to career success.

The individuals who favoured this kind of leadership style were not keen on being empathetic, understanding and collegial, as it would have made them look weak. The language used, even today, is still rough and meant to reflect power, ego, and 'manliness'. Most mining people used – and some still do – the traditional swear words learnt from their leaders. It should not be like that. The new generation of leadership gets things done with pure empathy and collegiality. They create a relaxed environment which is driven by high performance and speedy decision-making.

When I joined Implats as HR Executive in 2005, Keith Rumble was the CEO. He is a very astute leader and in my view, also tough yet collegial in his approach.

Weeks before I formally started at the company, I took on board some advice from a leader who had operated in the platinum industry in different roles. I wished to understand the inner workings of the industry, since I was coming from the coal sector. I particularly wanted to understand the industrial relations environment, the emerging community issues and the general activities of the trade unions in these areas.

He suggested that I meet with a seasoned HR professional who understood the platinum industry deeply, as well as specific geographic

areas where the mines were located, including the Rustenburg and Steelpoort areas. The advice I received then was exactly what I did not expect: the professional suggested that I go to these areas over weekends and visit several influential and powerful individuals at their homes. My rejection of this suggestion was based purely on my concern that I was going to end up fraternising and ingratiating with these individuals – which would have blurred the lines of communication and authority.

I ended up concluding that I would start my new role without the visits and that, when facing challenging times, I would rely on my ability to be collegial in resolving matters rather than depend on friendships that would ultimately compromise me. This was not easy, and I remember that I was criticised for being inaccessible to some extent. However, I was effective in my role. I did not allow any of the so-called influential individuals to get close to me at all. What could have happened is that these powerful individuals would have volunteered the information I needed – but at the same time they would have expected that I return the favour in some shape or form.

EMPLOYEES AS COLLEAGUES AND COLLEGIALITY

In the book *The Mafia Manager: A Guide to the Corporate Machiavelli*, edited by someone simply known as 'V' (1996)[22], it states on p. 31: 'The problem with friends is their candour. They'll betray you eventually, if you let them, and they'll tell you to your face why: "It's nothing personal, just business." They'll always assert their paramount loyalty to money and power with the same line: "Nothing personal, just business."'

This may come across as a negative in terms of the word 'friends'! It is what the world continues to experience. I made a conscious decision early in my corporate career not to fraternise or ingratiate with anyone, or make friends who would be dictating how I operated and lived my life. My *modus*

operandi is my *modus operandi*, period. I am up early, and I ensure that my assignments are executed diligently and with decency. I have endured criticism from some of my colleagues about why, as a boss, I still arrived at my office very early in the morning, and they wished to understand why I did that. I never responded to that question, as I did not owe anyone an explanation.

Whilst I do not discourage friendships, I encourage vigilance regarding friendships that lead to the fraternising and ingratiation that blur boundaries of professionalism and personal life. One of you will be the boss one day with the others reporting to him or her. You might then have to make decisions that are unpopular – decisions that may create discomfort for your friends.

However, despite taking that approach early in my career, I did not discover the true power of collegiality then, as I was busy copying leadership styles that were guaranteeing strength, power, ruthlessness, and dominance. I was told that I should not show weakness and should not smile at everything and anything. Just like many other employees, I misunderstood and frowned at collegiality, and it was not right. Collegiality makes us respected and noble in our approach to work and life in general. Even the most complex and difficult matters are resolved in a relaxed environment that fosters collaboration and cooperation. That does not make us any weaker.

Think of a performance discussion between yourself and your boss, or if you are the boss, between yourself and a direct report. As a boss, do you start this conversation with friendly discussions or do you immediately talk about the issues at hand, namely the performance at work? Does this create a tense environment for both of you – and if yes, do you not care about that atmosphere?

It is important to ensure that a performance conversation happens in a non-threatening atmosphere when everyone is relaxed, and that one can review critical performance issues with the aim of arriving at the desired outcome: is there progress and are results being achieved? Fraternising and ingratiation can easily derail these important conversations, and all concerned should guard against this. There is obviously a feeling of comfort in talking about friendly issues rather than hard business issues that require results. Yet, for us as leaders, hard issues that create discomfort always do require our attention and have to be addressed during performance reviews.

When reflecting on the matter that collegiality does not make us weak, I am reminded that the reason why we choose to look and act strong and ruthless is because that is what we were taught, or sold to us as dogma.

In contrast, imagine yourself as a manager or as a boss crying tears in front of your colleagues, direct reports or just anyone in your business? It may feel awkward, difficult or embarrassing: but truthfully, there is nothing wrong about it. For instance, there was the disappointing split between John Sculley, the CEO of Apple, who was recruited by Steve Jobs to run Apple. Walter Isaacson writes in his 2011 biography *Steve Jobs*[23] that he wept when Steve Jobs asked him to resign. 'I think you really lost your stride,' Jobs told him. 'You were really great the first year, and everything went wonderful. But something happened.'

Then, with Sculley surviving and receiving the support of the board, he got rid of Steve Jobs. It was 28 May 1985 when Sculley walked into Steve Jobs' office. Isaacson recalls the conversation in his book: 'He talked to the board, he said, and had its support. He wanted Jobs out … Jobs realised there was no appeal, no way to warp the reality. He broke down in tears and started making phone calls.'

Another high-powered individual who has cried on several occasions is the former President of the United States of America, President Barack

Obama. ‘President Obama has had an emotional ride through his final campaign, and the emotion spilled over Wednesday when he momentarily cried while addressing his Chicago campaign staffers,’ wrote David Nakamura in *The Washington Post* in 2012.[24]

There is nothing wrong with leaders who cry. This is no sign of weakness. Equally, being collegial as colleagues – relaxed and cheerful yet driving an intense high-performance culture – is the way to go. Indeed, among colleagues, collegiality is the future.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND COLLEGIALITY

When we receive letters of appointment for a new role, a promotion or remuneration increases, there is often a clause that advises us to keep the information contained in such letters confidential. The expectation is that all concerned will heed this clause and thus ensure harmony in the business by not unduly sharing sensitive information. A challenge arises when the culture of fraternising and ingratiation is deeply embedded, and the boundaries are not respected or known by everyone.

Colleagues who fraternise and ingratiate tend to forget what is confidential, and conversations can lead to disclosures of matters that should not be discussed or disclosed at all.

I do not believe that businesses should be managed like the secret service, but it is imperative for everyone to understand that some information remains confidential and should not be discussed openly. This is not confined to internal documents or human resources-related documents, but also, for instance, to communication with customers, suppliers, financial institutions, and even regulatory bodies. Some issues of confidentiality are enforced by law.

My belief is that a business that promotes collegiality will find it easy to instil the understanding in the business – without threats or any policing –

that confidentiality is critical and must be respected by everyone. Colleagues could, in a collegial manner, advise other colleagues about confidentiality – something that creates civility and harmony around dealing with sensitive matters in the business.

SMART AND NOT-SO-SMART BOSSES

As said before: remember that you will be the boss one day!

Smart bosses are the ones who become bosses and deeply understand and appreciate the roles assigned to them. They are either insiders who have been walking a long journey within the business, or people recruited and interviewed for the jobs.

If they are smart, they would use the interview to find out more about the purpose of the business, why it exists and its future prospects. Beyond that, they would wish to understand what the owners wish to achieve with the business or what lies in its future. Besides that, smart people would not start fraternising or ingratiating to curry favour. Whether they are insiders (long-serving employees) or outsiders (CEOs or other leaders brought in from outside), it is proper to not fraternise and ingratiate. You are now the boss. A smart boss will look for opportunities to create a workplace where productivity, growth, enlightenment and harmony prevail, and this state can only be achieved in a collegial environment.

Reflecting on a smart boss who used collegiality to his advantage, Robert Iger at Disney comes to mind. In *The Ride of a Lifetime* (2019)[25], the book that outlined his life at Disney, Bob relates how he was in the middle of the storm that brewed for a long time between his boss Michael Eisner and Roy Disney (joined by his lawyer, Stanley Gold). Roy Disney was the nephew of Walt Disney and had his sights on getting rid of Michael at every opportunity and did not believe that Robert Iger was the right successor to Michael.

Robert Iger was on a great journey and one of the first issues he grappled with when he started as CEO at Disney was to resolve the Roy Disney matter. The word used here was 'rapprochement' – a word that the Oxford dictionary defines simply as 'an establishment or resumption of harmonious relations (especially in international affairs).'

How does this word relate to collegiality? I would state that these two words achieve the same result or effect. They eliminate belligerence. Robert was collegial in his approach to resolving the Roy Disney matter. During the Eisner-Roy Disney dispute, Robert contacted Michael Eisner, who was not happy that Robert was offering Roy an olive branch but who did acknowledge that they had to make peace with him. Robert could have easily ignored Michael Eisner and considered him history.

Robert moved to the next step. Via his lawyer Stanley, Robert offered Roy an emeritus role on the board. He would also invite him to film premieres and theme park openings and special company events, although he wouldn't attend board meetings. 'I'd also give him a small consulting fee and an office on the lot so he could come and go and call Disney his home again. In exchange, there would be no lawsuit, no public proclamation of victory, and more airing of criticisms.' (*The Ride of a Lifetime*, p.119, 2019)

Robert Iger dealt with the Steve Jobs situation in a similar manner. Walter Isaacson writes in the book *Steve Jobs*[26], that 'Jobs was usually disciplined in not making public the strong opinions that he shared with friends around his Palo Alto kitchen table. But this time he did not hold back. In a conference call with reporters, he said that while Pixar was producing hits, Disney animation was making "embarrassing duds". He scoffed at Eisner's notion that Disney made any creative contribution to the Pixar films: "The truth is there has been little creative collaboration with Disney for years. You can compare the creative quality of our films with the creative quality of Disney's last three films and judge each company's creative ability

yourselves.” In addition to building a better creative team, Jobs had pulled off the remarkable feat of building a brand that was now as big a draw for moviegoers as Disney’s. “We think the Pixar brand is now the most powerful and trusted brand in animation.” When Jobs called to give him a heads up, Roy Disney replied, “When the wicked witch is dead, we’ll be together again.” ’

What becomes clear from Robert Iger’s approach? It was clear for him that the relationship between Michael Eisner as CEO of Disney and Roy Disney and Steve Jobs was damaged, and he needed to do something about it.

What would have happened if Robert decided to develop a completely different relationship with Roy? Continue with the animosity from where Michael Eisner left off? This would not have been a great start to an influential CEO role like Disney.

Robert Iger resolved a very sensitive matter which I believe could have become a headache for a long time for Disney. He could have become a self-centred egotist and start a fight with Roy Disney to perpetuate the situation that his boss Michael Eisner was facing. However, he was smart enough to take the conversation to a higher level. He was collegial and achieved great results which ensured that he could then focus on what was important to the Disney company and the brand.

I believe the manner in which Robert managed the Roy Disney situation and also dealt with issues related to Steve Jobs and Pixar when he started as CEO of Disney, could be viewed as genial. However, in truth, it’s simply about being respectful, collegial and getting things done. ‘Collegiality is not a weakness, it’s a tonic against toxicity!’

Whilst we come across smart bosses, we do come across not-so-smart bosses who remain belligerent and angry. Things are often resolved through

conflict. The lessons from Robert Iger are good for those bosses who are not smart enough, but pick fights all over the place.

Other than picking fights, the best example of not-so-smart bosses is Steve Easterbrook, who was fired by McDonald's in 2020 for having inappropriate relationships with employees.

'McDonald's claws back $105 million from fired CEO Easterbrook, accused of hiding relationships from board' was the headline[27] of an article by Amelia Lucas on 16 December 2021. A lawsuit against Steve Easterbrook led to the company reclaiming $105m from Easterbrook for having lied during an internal probe into his misconduct.

'During my tenure as CEO, I failed at times to uphold McDonald's values and fulfil certain of my responsibilities as a leader of the company,' Easterbrook said in a statement. 'I apologize to my former co-workers, the board, and the company's franchisees and suppliers for doing so.'

He was a not-so-smart boss!

In his case, fraternising and ingratiation led down a path of having affairs with employees.

I keep asking myself where Easterbrook is today. Whatever he is doing, I somehow think that, ironically, people who made his mistakes could be good mentors and educate young, up-and-coming leaders regarding ways to avoid missteps in one's professional life.

EMPLOYEES, BOSSES, ETHICS AND MORALITY

On my journey to promote the power of collegiality, I am linking collegiality to many facets of life. One of those is ethics and morality.

Both employees and bosses should consider the fact that the power of adopting a collegial approach to ethics and morality is a powerful one. In my view, a leader who has high ethical and moral standards, is a leader who

is comfortable to say ‘No!’ Of course, this is not easy and the ‘No!’ response often does come with huge discomfort.

A leader should be able to judge between what is right and what is wrong.

One of my personal approaches as a leader is to ensure that, when individuals or organisations request financial assistance from our family foundation or from me personally, and if I agree to assist, I always inform them that I will only assist if the financial assistance is directly paid into a bank account. Why do I do that? I wish to ensure that the parties to the transaction – donor and beneficiary – should have a record in case questions arise. I believe in ethics and morality and when the beneficiary insists on cash, I decline. I have developed the ability to be collegial, relaxed and cheerful, yet to be able to say ‘No!’

I once wished to find out from a senior financial professional with a CA qualification why they got involved in something unethical. The response from this individual was that they assisted because they could not say no to their boss. Had this individual been skilled in being relaxed, cheerful, decent and collegial about this matter, they might have comfortably told their boss that they would not perform the unethical act.

How many times do we come across individuals with decent ethical and moral standing being thrust into unethical and immoral acts by those they fraternise and ingratiate with? Incidentally, I fully understand that there are times in life when the ability to say no is not there at all, since the person exposed to an extraordinarily difficult position has limited options. Take the example of employees who depend on keeping their jobs, with lots of personal responsibilities. With their livelihoods depending on their jobs, it may be possible that an unethical boss who is aware of such a situation could take advantage of these employees.

‘*Beware the person who stabs you and then tells the world they’re the one who’s bleeding,*’ is an often-quoted remark of Jill Blakeway. Employees and

bosses who are trapped by fraternising and ingratiating behaviour tend to be the ones who often get caught in the web of backstabbing and other unethical behaviour, or questionable moral behaviour. In contrast, the collegiality model and stance says, ‘I remain your colleague or boss, and will act as collegial as possible, but will not tolerate wrongful acts and in case I am dragged into any wrongful acts, willingly and wittingly, I will say NO!’

THE DARWINIAN APPROACH AND COLLEGIALITY

The History.com editors summarised *Social Darwinism* as follows:

‘Social Darwinism is a loose set of ideologies that emerged in the late 1800s in which Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection was used to justify certain political, social, or economic views. Social Darwinists believe in “survival of the fittest” – the idea that certain people become powerful in society because they are innately better. Social Darwinism has been used to justify imperialism, racism, eugenics and social inequality at various times over the past century and a half.

‘Yet in an attempt to convey his scientific ideas to the British public, Darwin borrowed popular concepts, including “survival of the fittest,” from sociologist Herbert Spencer and “struggle for existence” from economist Thomas Malthus, who had earlier written about how human societies evolve over time.

‘Unlike Darwin, Spencer believed that people could genetically pass learned qualities, such as frugality and morality, on to their children. Spencer opposed any laws that helped workers, the poor, and those he deemed genetically weak. Such laws, he argued, would go against the evolution of civilization by delaying the extinction of the “unfit.”’[28]

As mentioned before, when leaders adopt certain leadership styles and behaviours, they either have studied these formally at business school or

university or attended programmes where these are taught as part of a curriculum. Alternatively, they may have emulated their seniors' behaviour as they work with them on a day-to-day basis.

In other instances, leadership behaviours and traits are 'genetic' or 'evolved'. Therefore, collegiality could be viewed as a way, or behaviour, or style that could be adopted as a new way of confronting and dealing with strategic, tactical and operational matters in our lives. The generation that adopts collegiality is the generation that must recognise the need to change and evolve into better leaders. If we are strong and fit to lead as collegial leaders, we will become better, and we will earn our self-respect.

Whilst I do not agree with Herbert Spencer on not helping the workers, the poor and those deemed unfit or genetically weak, I agree with his view of genetically passed-on learned qualities. Regarding 'survival of the fittest' as defined in the History.com quote, this stance has been adopted by some business leaders – those who inculcated in us the belief that the world of business is 'survival of the fittest' and to succeed we had to be 'strong and not show weakness'. The big word or operating word is 'ruthlessness'.

In contrast, my own stance is that to be strong and survive in the corporate jungle, we have to be relaxed, cheerful, calm, deeply collegial and productive in approaching difficult tasks and issues. If we do that, I believe the probability is that we will reduce our stress levels and not destroy our health. Note that I am using the word 'probability' here, because I am not a medical doctor and cannot positively confirm that indeed stress is caused by being tough, ruthless, noisy and temperamental.

COLLEGIALITY AND GENDER

Men and women have existed together for as long as there have been humans, and we must deal together with issues related to gender.

In the world of business, men have historically controlled the world of business. They were the dominant gender in terms of operating and leading businesses and employing others. In today's world, things look different. For instance, Mary Barra is the CEO of General Motors. With the automotive industry traditionally very masculine in nature, her appointment shows appreciation for the fact that women often bring something 'different' to the table. To quote Pope Francis in his 2020 book *Let Us Dream: The path to a better future*[29] co-authored with Austen Ivereigh: 'I take for granted, of course, that qualified women should have equal access to leadership, equivalent salaries, and other opportunities; that right has been one of the great social gains of modern times. But it may be worth asking if there are other ways of allowing women's perspectives to challenge existing assumptions. This is something that has concerned me in Rome: how better to integrate the presence and sensibility of women into the Vatican's decision-making processes.'

The Pope says in his book that he has appointed some women because of their qualifications but also because of the belief that women in general are better administrators than men: 'To describe women as "housewives" is often considered demeaning, and sometimes it is used as such. But in Spanish, *ama de casa* ("the mistress of the house") carries the meaning of the Greek *oikos* and *nomos*, from where we get the word "economics": the art of household management. Managing households is no small feat; you have to do many different things at once, reconciling different interests, being flexible, and having a kind of canniness. Housewives have to speak three languages at the same time: that of the mind, that of the heart and that of the hands.'

Collegiality should certainly not be frowned upon as a sign of weakness, but rather an amazing strength and a sign of collaboration: getting things

done without drama. I may be generalising, but I do strongly believe that women have an innate sense of collegiality as one of their strengths.

COLLEGIALITY AND DIVERSITY

Closely related to the issue of gender is that of diversity. The velocity of world evolution is amazing, and it is not a simple matter to keep up to date with everything happening around us. New acronyms appear to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people.

Post 1994, South Africa experienced the promulgation of several relevant laws, including the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998. It refers to several grounds on which discrimination occurred or remain: race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language and birth.

The world of business has always been characterised by diversity. As business leaders it is important to be well informed about diversity, be aware of diversity, respect diversity, and generally appreciate that the world itself is diverse. To substantially reduce or eradicate discrimination, I believe collegiality must prevail. Issues of diversity, inclusivity, equality and collegiality should be dealt with and addressed collectively – without fraternising or ingratiating behaviour.

WORKING AT THE COALFACE

Having worked in the mining industry since 1994, I enjoy working with mining people at the coalface – literally at the coalface. If I could do it daily, I would. I also admire those leaders who were trained as mining engineers, rock engineers, geologists, surveyors, metallurgists and other professionals. When I visit the mines, whether open-cast or underground

mines, I feel that I am in the ‘zone’, I am in ‘flow’ and those visits are the kind of experience Bruce Lee described when he said ‘Be water, my friend.’ (The Japanese Ikigai concept is discussed in more detail in the book *Ikigai*[30].)

During my visits to the mines, I would be dressed in underground personal protection equipment (PPE) and stand in the middle of the cage, lift, or employee carriers to the underground area. There, I listen to conversations on a variety of topics, from sport to shaft conditions or health and safety issues. As chief executive, I would be asked interesting questions by some of the employees. Some questions are personal, and others are business-related or general. I don’t mind.

When the lift stops at the bottom of the shaft, the ambience is ‘my kind of space’. I would notice good environmental management with good airflow, as well as the camaraderie of the workers looking forward to a great shift. These teams are collegial and nontoxic. I then watch conversations becoming serious as business (health and safety, tonnages, costs and people) issues become the focus of the conversation. No one fraternises or ingratiates, it’s all about work. When the shift starts, shift bosses and leaders drive home key safety messages. Thereafter production starts in a collegial manner.

Are there no toxic environments in the mining industry? In truth, I have come across toxicity, but it is generally dealt with effectively, as it can compromise lives. Have I not come across situations where employees fraternise or ingratiate at the mines? I have, and it is good if it’s not disruptive to the production and safety processes at the mines. My point is that employees have learnt over the years to maintain a balance in terms of their relationships, so as not to degenerate into something that is bad for the business.

I believe it is important to have a deep understanding of what relationships can do to the day-to-day operation of a business. There should be a good balance between being friendly and collegial, while not crossing the barriers of respect through fraternising and ingratiation. Whilst employees should respect their bosses and their colleagues, bosses must equally be respectful of their employees and understand how to relate to subordinates when listening to them, speaking with them, and guiding them. There is a fine balance to be mastered.

COLLEAGUES ARE NOT ENEMIES: NO NEED FOR FIGHT-OR-FLIGHT MODE ALL THE TIME!

With the promotion and drive towards collegiality being core to my discussions in this book, I should also make the point that the workplace environment should not be such that it encourages people to be in a 'fight-or-flight mode' at all times.

Employees should not experience the workplace as one where they are constantly fearful of the bosses or their colleagues. Colleagues should not feel that they are in meetings where there are enemies due to power play, career fights or just plain jealousy.

At the same time, bosses and employees cannot be fraternising or ingratiating at the expense of performance in the business.

There should be a balance. I believe it is imperative to promote collegiality as a way to eliminate animosity between bosses and their direct reports and among colleagues, as well as functional or cross-functional teams. Collegiality will support a relaxed and cheerful environment free of stress and fight-or-flight modes.

Ultimately the future of work is not about fear or favour: it is about everyone in the business enjoying what they do in a productive and high-performance way.

THE AMYGDALA AND THE WORLD OF WORK

In relation to the fight-or-flight response and the way that people react to one another in the workplace, let me add some thoughts about the amygdala.

'The amygdaloid region of the brain (i.e. the amygdala) is a complex structure involved in a wide range of normal behavioural functions and psychiatric conditions. Not so long ago it was an obscure region of the brain that attracted relatively little scientific interest. Today it is one of the most heavily studied brain areas, and practically a household word.[31]' This according to Dr Joseph E LeDoux of the Center for Neural Science, NYU, in 2008.

I do believe that the amygdala influences how we behave in different circumstances and how we make decisions. In the article *Amygdala Hijack and the Fight or Flight Response*[32] Arlin Cuncic wrote in 2021: 'Have you ever lost control of your emotions and did something in the heat of the moment that you later regretted? Perhaps you've "lost it" or blown up at someone – your partner or child, work colleague, or perhaps the driver of another car – to such a degree that later, you realized was uncalled for. If your answer is yes, then you've probably been hijacked by your amygdala.'

Years earlier (2014), Joanna Barsh and Johanne Lavoie wrote in the article in the McKinsey Quarterly, *Lead At Your Best*[33], as follows: 'We all face challenges at work: impossible deadlines, missed budgets, angry customers, sharp-elbowed colleagues, unreasonable bosses. When the upset caused by any of these experiences threatens something at stake for you, you are likely to suffer an "amygdala hijack" – that moment when your brain sends cortisol and adrenaline coursing through your body to help you defend yourself. You may lash out in anger, walk out on your colleagues, or simply stop in your tracks.' The authors also suggest five ways of dealing

with such situations: find your strengths; practice the pause; forge trust; choose your questions wisely; make time to recover.

I propose to add to those suggestions that a collegial way of doing things helps with the recognition of situations similar to those described above.

Instead of that ‘fight, flight, or freeze’ reaction, what if you could pause, reflect, and then manage – creatively and effectively? This clearly relates to the concept of collegiality.

ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS/SESSIONS

When one leads people, you develop preferences on how to work with managers down the chain of command. Some leaders prefer only to meet their direct reports in management or executive meetings, while others arrange annual meetings in each direct report’s diary and talk to them formally, recording every detail. Others do it on an informally-timed basis as and when they wish to discuss particular matters, while still keeping a watchful eye on things. There are also those who have no *modus operandi* and simply fly by the seat of their pants.

Throughout my corporate journey I met all these types of leaders. All of them have their specific preferences and approaches. My own preference is to be informal and to be able to chat as and when necessary, and not wait for a formal appointment at a certain time of the month. I often irritated my bosses by asking for meetings or providing updates to them consistently.

Some one-on-one sessions became threatening, as bosses would read the riot act to their direct reports and talk tough. Some swear a lot and others deliberately create fear.

Yet there are also those bosses who are smart, who create a relaxed ambience for their direct reports, use proper and appropriate language, and are cheerful and deeply collegial, while nevertheless demanding high performance, intensity, and proper delivery of results. This is the generation

of leadership that will thrive into the future and is the way to go. Direct reports look forward to these one-on-one conversations with their bosses and no one in the organisation walks around in fear of one-on-ones that are meant to scold and not nurture.

The challenge is for leaders to change the terrible behaviour of threats, bad language, and a toxic attitude, to one where they are being collegial. I believe your direct reports – as individuals as well as a team – will find their natural flow in the process.

What flow am I referring to? In his book *Talent is Overrated*[34], Geoff Colvin writes, among others, about the University of Chicago psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who described 'flow' as a state in which a person is so totally involved in a task that time slows down, enjoyment is heightened, and the task seems effortless. 'This "high" is achieved when the challenge just matches the person's skills; if it's too easy the experience is boring, too hard and it's frustrating. As people master tasks, they must seek greater challenges and match them with higher level skills in order to keep experiencing flow.'

In this sense, I believe that effective one-on-one sessions with your direct reports will definitely assist your direct reports to easily find their 'flow' if those sessions are collegially handled. The view that bosses will always make life difficult for their direct reports is not correct.

At the same time, it is important that all concerned understand that one-on-one sessions are not sessions for fraternising, ingratiating or raising gripes, but to strengthen the culture of collegiality.

RESIGNATIONS

I have witnessed employees who have been very unprofessional in tendering their resignations, as well as bosses and businesses who have refused to accept resignations from employees. Sometimes, people in the

business become vindictive towards the employee and treat them badly. In some cases, the entire discussion turns toxic.

When an employee tenders their resignation, the business will decide – based on many factors – if the employee should be released without any discussion, whether it will refuse to accept the resignation based on the concern that the employee is a great performer (and the business cannot afford to lose them), or discuss the matter in more detail.

Indeed, fraternisation and ingratiating behaviour also play a role here. Some employees may struggle to take the step to resign as they feel that they have fraternised or ingratiated with their colleagues and their bosses to such an extent that they 'cannot be brave and submit their resignation letter'.

I believe that if an employee resigns because he or she has a great opportunity to explore elsewhere, the business and the person concerned must be collegial about the conversation.

This also means that employees should be collaborative in their engagements with their bosses and colleagues in the process of their resignation and avoid being vindictive – because, not least, they will need relationships developed over the years as they grow and traverse their careers. The business must be collegial as well in accepting a resignation from an employee and ensure that the exit is handled in a collaborative manner where everyone is professional about the separation.

IT'S ABOUT MINDSETS AND PARADIGMS

To sum up the thoughts in this chapter: we come from different worlds that shape us to behave in different ways as we grow up and join the world of work. Because of our different backgrounds, we may understand or misunderstand the way the world works and how things fit together. As we grow up, we often see only the activities around our immediate world, and

we tend to believe that is how the world functions generally. We get trapped in mindsets and paradigms.

Having been raised in KwaThema, I was exposed to men and women who went to work using buses, bicycles and cars, or who walked to and from work. I believed the world of work ended there. My experience was different from that of a child who is raised in an environment where those who go to work are fetched in a big truck organised by their employer in the mornings, and the same truck will be back to drop off these employees late in the afternoon. There are other environments where people drive themselves to work in their own cars, join lift clubs or are chauffeured in big expensive cars to their workplaces.

My late uncle Simon and my cousin Fanyana cycled to work every day, and as a child I thought it was interesting and attractive. I imagined myself one day having my own bicycle and doing something similar. Only later in my life did I realise that there were many other forms of commuting to work, but I also realised cycling to work had the additional benefits of keeping them very fit – the exercise being ultimately good for their health.

When I started my career as a teacher, some drove nice cars. But it was only when I started my first job in the private sector at Elida Pond's (a Unilever company) that the executives and managers were driving beautiful top-of-the-range cars. This was a completely different world from the one I witnessed as a child.

This is the same with relationships. We become accustomed to certain types of relationships with our families and friends. These relationships are fraternal to a large extent and sometimes include ingratiation. We tend to believe that things will turn out the same when we relate to our bosses and colleagues. If those relationships are not managed properly we end up in compromising situations.

My point is that, as private individuals, we can fraternise and ingratiate with our families and friends. Yet, when we arrive at work, we need to realise that the environment is different, and collegiality must prevail.

Therefore, I hold the view that we need to be able to examine the paradigms that may have trapped us and step back from any relationship we develop, especially at work. We should ensure that we clearly understand what this relationship does for us? Where does it lead our lives? Is it mutual and authentic? Is it sustainable and does not compromise us as we grow and advance in life, generally and in our careers?

Another paradigm that may trap us – due to what we sometimes observe in the world of work early in our careers – is believing that to be successful we must be tough, ruthless and, to some extent, arrogant (often confused with assertiveness). In contrast to that mindset, being collegial works wonders. It’s a new way of doing things and getting people to deliver great performance in a relaxed, yet intense and productive environment.

Chapter 3

COLLEGIALITY AND LEADERSHIP

This chapter reflects on the nature of boards of directors for different kinds of organisations and the beneficial effects of a collegial approach by board members. I also briefly consider issues of board member recruitment, activist shareholders and the pitfalls of dysfunctional boards.

RECENTLY, I READ A GREAT article in *Business Day*[35] in which Johann Rupert, the Chairman of Richemont, responded to Bluebell Capital Partners, an activist shareholder, about board representation and appointments at Richemont. Among others, he states that ‘our board may be slower and more conservative than others. But its openness and collegiality are exactly its advantage. I will not be blackmailed.’

His point is valid that, whilst Richemont’s board has to be seen to be fast and agile to achieve quick results and make quick decisions, it delivers by being slower and collegial. Again, this emphasises my point that collegiality is the future.

Personally, I have travelled a great journey in business. My own career blossomed in corporate South Africa from being an ordinary employee to becoming a manager and ultimately CEO.

In the process, I have been blessed to be appointed as director on the boards of several organisations. I have been on boards where the chairman is powerful to the benefit of the organisation, sat on boards where the chairman is weak to the detriment of the organisation and, sadly, also boards where the chairman is a burden to the organisation with no clue of his or her role.

Every member of a management board brings along a different set of skills and behaviours, which could be beneficial. However, if not well managed, these could be detrimental to the operation of the board and threaten the future direction of the business.

The key to the success of a board often lies in the approach of the CEO. Some boards are controlled fully by the CEO. In such cases the CEO may be so powerful that the chairman will almost always defer to the CEO. In some cases, a powerful CEO may have recommended the appointment of

the board chairman – and to some extent such a chairman is effectively at the mercy of the powerful CEO. In the composition of the board, it is important to attract the type of director who wishes to serve the organisation: the kind of director who first concerns him or herself about understanding why the organisation exists. They would be interested in the organisation's purpose and what value they could deliver rather than concerning themselves with the perks and benefits related to the role. I have come across directors who openly spend their lives looking for ways to maximise their earnings, and their lives are about being full-time board members.

In this book the focus is on the importance of how collegiality can make a board function professionally and to the benefit of the business, and to highlight the destructive nature of fraternising and ingratiation at the expense of collegiality. When a chairman chooses who they want on the boards they chair, rather than allowing a nominations committee to perform its duties, then the risk of friends being appointed to the board is high and the power of fraternising and ingratiation takes over – ultimately leading to a badly-run board, a terrible board culture and poor decision-making that ultimately compromise the business and its future growth prospects.

Here is some wisdom from *Collegial style management: Governance by those who know*: 'It is often said that democracy is the worst system of government – except for all those other forms that have been tried. Yet, few would propose running a company by throwing questions out to everyone and simply going with the majority. An autocracy may not be the best way to run a company either – even when the single leader on top seems fair and competent. History is full of negative examples of personality cults degenerating into some sort of oppression or tyranny, or at the very least, a narrow-minded management.

‘Halfway between the two extremes is a form of governance known as collegial-style management (*dirección colegiada* in Spanish). It brings together the advantages of democratic systems (e.g. participation, plurality and a search for the common good) with the advantages of a more autocratic leadership (e.g. efficiency, decision-making agility and effectiveness).

‘What’s more, collegial-style management encourages the representation of varying points of view, including the opinions held by a minority. Thus, strictly speaking, it is more of an aristocratic than a democratic system, with stewardship by a select group.’[36]

Warren Buffett once commented: ‘We would have given up 2 billion cases a year of Coca-Cola to get something like 400 million cases a year of Gatorade?’ This happened when Coca-Cola was bidding for Quaker Oats in 2000 when it made an offer of $15.75 billion all-stock bid for the company. All that Coca-Cola wanted was the Quaker Oats Gatorade sports drink, which would have given it dominance in the sports drink field. At that time, Berkshire Hathaway owned 200 million shares in Coca-Cola and Warren Buffet was unhappy with the board of Coca-Cola making such an offer for this company. The meeting took five hours and the then CEO of Coca-Cola, Douglas Daft, was overruled. Management guru and business writer Ram Charan calls this an honest disagreement, which it was.

Another example highlighted by Ram Charan is that of an automotive company board, where the board and the CEO argued about the cutting of a dividend during difficult times. The CEO wished to preserve the dividend and the finance committee board chairman wished to cut the dividend. The CEO argued the point that shareholders would panic when they experienced a cut in dividend, and ultimately he prevailed. The finance committee chairman ultimately apologised and complimented the CEO for his persistence.

The point Ram Charan makes about the two cases is that some boards try to satisfy one person and create a two-tier board, where board presentations are 'tuned' to the needs of one misaligned board member – something which leads to a waste of time. Charan refers to the culture of directorship, which I fully agree with. He argues that collegiality and harmony are important, and the universe of independent directors is small. Board members don't want to offend a fellow director. They want to be respectful of each other.[37]

When Ram Charan refers to a two-tier board[38] he is hitting the nail on the head. When I worked in a business that had a powerful non-executive director who controlled the chairman of the board, I observed something that became a lesson I never forgot. The chief operating officer (COO), who had been appointed three months earlier before his first board presentation, told me about his plan a month before the board meeting. The plan involved him flying to the home of this powerful non-executive director to go and sensitise him about what he was planning to present to the board. In my naivete, I wanted to know why that trip, as I did not understand the boardroom dynamics that this COO did understand and was anticipating. The COO was aware that the non-executive director was stronger than the chairman of the board and that he was capable of swaying the board to his own preferred decisions. At the time this was interesting to me, as I had not been exposed to such board dynamics. The truth is that years later the particular business missed a lot of great opportunities. It was hamstrung by this too-powerful board member to the detriment of the company. For some reason, everyone was intimidated by this one director, and it became counterproductive for the business and its future.

Jim Collins wrote the foreword of the 2013 book *Dream Big* by Cristiane Correa that focused on the building of the business empire of the three Brazilians.[39] Collins mentions that in the two decades he knew the three

Brazilian entrepreneurs Jorge Paulo Lemann, Carlos Alberto Sicupira and Marcel Herrmann Telles, he had learned much from them and he shared the ten top lessons he learnt from those experiences. However, for the purposes of this section of my book, the focus is on his lesson number 9 (*Strong and disciplined board of directors can be a powerful strategic asset):* 'When the Brazilians and the Belgians came together to merge into the biggest beer company in the world, people wondered how these two cultures could coexist. Yet they became a unified whole. How did this happen? It happened because everyone involved had one goal: to do what's best to make a great and enduring company. They all embrace the Dream-People-Culture philosophy and navigated the financial crisis of 2008-09 as a completely unified group. In the United States, most boards are benign, and the power resides primarily with the chief executive; boards tend to only become significant when it comes time to replace a failing CEO. The AB InBev board, however, is the primary power centre of the company. It exemplifies that boards can play a central role in setting Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAGs), developing strategy, sustaining culture, seizing opportunities and leading through tumultuous times. Without such a strong and unified board, AB InBev would not have come through the 2008-09 challenges as strong as it did (and perhaps even not at all). The AB InBev board pays constant attention to its own culture, disciplines, and vibrancy, with as much fanatic attention as building and preserving the management culture of the company. Most important, it makes decisions and allocates capital for *long-term* shareholder value, measured in multiple decades, not in terms of quarterly moments. If more boards behaved this way, we would have better performing enterprises and lasting companies.'

The collegial functioning of boards is critical for not only the survival of the business but for its long-term sustainability as well. What is a strong board meant to do? A strong board is meant to have nurturing conversations

that are hard and tough but build the business to be strong. There are businesses that are consistent performers delivering value satisfactory to the shareholders and other stakeholders, but do not shoot the lights out. This kind of business is led by a CEO who maintains what exists and is not keen to explore opportunities to diversify and grow, and if the shareholders are just happy with that status quo, then it is fine. The board will be inclined to avoid difficult subjects like growth opportunities, stretching the balance sheet in terms of gearing and seeking ways to make the business deliver more to benefit the shareholders. Then there are businesses like AB InBev that are in a perpetual mode of growing and continuing to seek opportunities to diversify, grow and control market share, and such businesses will have CEOs who exactly fit into that agenda. Hence Carlos Britto was a proper fit at AB InBev. This board gets involved in tough conversations and is strong as per the Jim Collins approach.

But what about a board being disciplined? Firstly, the board must consist of directors who are diverse – from skills, business background, gender and outlook points of view. Secondly, the board must be aligned in their approach to advancing the key purpose of its existence. Thirdly, the board must take due care that – for each of their decisions – they are thinking of the business and its future, and not their own self-interests. Lastly, it is critical that members of the board know and understand their fiduciary responsibilities and exercise those with diligence and professionalism.

PRIVATE COMPANY BOARDS

I have operated on unlisted boards and have experienced that it is important to drive governance as robustly as possible, as there is an imperative to follow codes like the King Codes, the requirements of the Companies Act, and pure professionalism to deliver success for the business.

What are the King Codes? As per the explanation of the Institute of Directors South Africa (IoDSA), the King Committee on Corporate Governance in South Africa was formed in 1992 at the instance of the IoDSA in South Africa, following a decision reached at an IoDSA Council meeting on 18 July 1992, where it was agreed that there was a need for a committee to consider and address corporate governance for South Africa. It resolved that former Judge Mervyn King be approached to chair the committee. The King Committee's role is to fulfil a thought leadership role, promote and advance standards of corporate governance for South Africa for the benefit of the country and its people, and to endeavour to influence corporate governance developments internationally.

Whilst we adhere firstly to legislation and rule of law with private boards, we still have to ensure that directors remain progressive, commit to the growth and future of business, ensure that the business is thriving, and are keen to leave a lasting legacy. There are directors on some private boards who are intentionally or unintentionally keen to make things difficult for the business and the board through their obstructive nature.

Some directors of private company boards believe that since it's a private business not governed by listing rules and requirements, they may relax in their manner of operating. They may at times not pull their weight. In the same article from IESEinsight.com, *Collegial style management: Governance by those who know*[40], the main contributions of a collegial management style are highlighted as those that encourage different perspectives, impartiality, critical judgement, diversity (and dissent), legitimacy and institutional awareness. Some private companies prefer to remain private as they are either controlled by a close-knit set of shareholders who do not wish to be in the public eye through a listing, or it may be a family business that is run and controlled by a family office. The directors may develop some level of closeness with one another that could

be to the detriment of the business and its shareholders. This intimacy cannot or should not be allowed to degenerate to fraternising and ingratiation. Collegiality must prevail to foster cooperation and collaboration for the board and the business.

LISTED COMPANY BOARDS

The same categories of executive and non-executive directors exist for both private and public company boards. What is key for any board to function properly is the appointment of competent directors who will understand their role, understand the strategic direction of the business and why it exists, appreciate that they are on these boards for a purpose higher than their remuneration or compensation.

Whilst there is some freedom in the case of a private company board to get away with appointing members who are not competent or experienced, the listed space carries with it the burden of having to cast the net a bit wider, since shareholders and investors are watching how the business operates and who gets appointed on its board.

I have observed directors who have vested interests, who waste time in dealing with matters that are irrelevant to the business they are tasked to steward, who harbour grudges and spend time fraternising and ingratiating instead of being dependable, collegial and adding value to the business.

Sometimes additional training or mentoring may be the answer. Fortunately, organisations like IoDSA and business schools assist to equip directors and future directors with the relevant skills to be effective board members.

FAMILY OFFICES

In general, businesses managed by family offices are subject to the same rules and regulations of governance as any other business. A wrong impression should not exist that because a business is owned and managed by a family, they would be left alone to do as they please. Most family office-run businesses have boards as well. Those boards are often populated not only by members of the family, but also by professionals from outside the family.

Where the founder is still part of the business and is a dominant individual, they are bound to want to operate, be active on the board and even stay on as chairman for as long as they are interested, healthy and still wish to grow their business and build a legacy.

I believe that, as for other forms of business, the key for success at family office-run businesses is to treat everyone, whether part of the family or not, with collegiality.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS

In my earlier remarks I noted that core to the structure, operation and performance of the board of any organisation is the right people as members.

Therefore, the nomination committee of the board is significant. It has the responsibility to source, select and decide on the appointment of directors and these decisions should not be compromised by fraternising and ingratiation. There cannot be a time where other members of the board have the freedom to influence the committee to select people merely on the basis that they ‘happen to be friends of those recommending them’.

Obviously, there are exceptions and great talent does coincide with friendships. Yet, appointments cannot become a ‘free for all’. The chairman of the committee and its members have an important responsibility to ensure that proper selection processes are followed. They cannot be

manipulated by anyone to select or appoint candidates who have not come through the proper channels.

Despite criticism that the nominations committees of some boards are too bureaucratic, this is preferable to being influenced by powerful members of the board, prominent shareholders or other stakeholders. Members of the nominations committee need not be either ‘nice people’ or ‘ruthless and tough people’. All they need to be is collegial and to deliver their decisions about appointments as speedily as possible.

Boards with competent and capable directors will operate comfortably and deliver on their mandate. An effective board should, in my view, be strongly collegial in its approach to deliver good and well-supported decisions effectively and efficiently. The composition of such a board is the responsibility of a well-run nominations committee.

ACTIVIST SHAREHOLDERS

Shareholders come in different packages. There are shareholders who invest in a company to be part of the growth of the business and create future legacies. Some shareholders take equity positions in companies to identify with the company, participate in its growth trajectory and reap the benefits of capital growth and dividends. Some shareholders who want to have it all and more beyond that, become shareholder activists.

When one thinks of shareholder activists, Carl Celian Icahn comes to mind. His much-publicised letters and communication with Tim Cook of Apple about share buybacks and the most recent fight with McDonald’s regarding their environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) commitments, are a few examples of how a shareholder activist can shake the world of listed businesses.

Shareholder activists closely watch the performance of directors on listed boards and in most cases, they watch their remuneration, tenure as members

of the board and their general activities as directors. Carl Icahn has been quoted as saying: ‘Some people study artificial intelligence. Me, I make money studying natural stupidity.’

‘Ackman defines himself as an “activist investor”, looking for large companies with great potential, but with financial problems, which he solves in such a way that the stock price rises and getting the value appreciation gains from these shares … In December 2012, he made public a report accusing Herbalife of having and promoting a pyramid scheme, in addition to offering products that do not deliver what they promise in terms of dietary supplementation, defrauding their partners and disappointing their consumers.’ (*Bill Ackman’s biography: What is his investment style?*[41] by Edgar Mondragón Tenorio, BBVA, 2021)

In South Africa we have Mr Theo Botha, who I deeply respect for his tenacity, prowess and capacity to follow through on many issues related to shareholder activism. While there are a number of other prominent local activists such as Chris Logan, Theo Botha stands out. Suzette Viviers of Stellenbosch University wrote in an article in the Journal of Economic and Financial Sciences titled *Individual shareholder activism in South Africa: The case of Theo Botha*[42] that he is driven to be a shareholder activist to hold directors and managers accountable, to protect the interests of other (typically minority) shareholders, to stimulate public debate and to expose unwarranted agency costs. ‘Document analysis and an in-depth interview conducted with Botha revealed that he not only has a clear goal, but is also very passionate about achieving his goal. Botha prepares meticulously before engaging companies across the economic spectrum. In addition to possessing normative power, Botha also exhibits individual, pragmatic and societal legitimacy. His assertiveness, persistence and willingness to apply his own resources significantly contribute to his prominence as a corporate watchdog. Shareholder activists who wish to become more salient

(irrespective of their size) could learn from Botha's experiences over the past decade,' Viviers stated.

Of course, the *modi operandi* of activists like Carl Icahn, Bill Ackman and Theo Botha differ. While Carl Icahn and Bill Ackman make lots of money out their activism, Theo does not speculate much with share prices to make bucketloads of money. When Anchor Capital was listed, I met with Theo and still hold his approach in high regard. He was collegial in communicating his messages across to us as directors and shareholders. At annual general meetings he maintained collegiality whilst articulating his expectations very well.

I raise the matter of shareholder activism because if boards operated openly and transparently with a depth of collegiality, there would be less of a need for activists to act with suspicion and investigate the board. Yet, the well-prepared and knowledgeable shareholder activists keep boards of directors on their toes. Their work encourages board members to be competent and deliver – and to focus on their governance and fiduciary responsibilities.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It is true that no right-thinking investor wants a weak, dysfunctional, and indecisive board. At the same time, investors do not want to lose value or a well-managed business because of a dysfunctional board full of egotists who are unproductive, belligerent, and merely concerned about lining their bottomless pockets.

Any board of a business will be dysfunctional without collegiality. At the same time – if and when possible – boards of companies need to be wary of appointing weak chairpersons who easily fraternise and ingratiate with other board members. Such behaviour makes boundaries of performance

blurry, leading to dysfunction. Chairpersons of boards should invest their time in building and fostering collegiality by ensuring the following:

- Encouraging dialogues as openly as possible within proper time limits.
- Guarding against dominant personalities taking control of the debates or the board itself. They become bullies.
- Discouraging lobbying and understand that the board will inevitably at times deal with hard things, requiring hard conversations and hard decisions and outcomes.
- Remembering why the board exists and understanding the business that this board serves. Board evaluations must be constructed to probe, among other things, whether directors are still aligned to the mission and purpose of the business, its shareholders and the other stakeholders.
- Striving to recruit the right people with the right skills. The independence and assertiveness of the nominations committee of the board is critical to ensure that the right candidates to the board are recruited and selected.

All members of the board must serve with a commitment to integrity, act in the interests of the company, strive to understand the reason why the business exists and ensure that no matter how hard or difficult the decision, they will be counted on to be dependable.

Boards must be collegial, and arguments must be proper, highly spirited, productive, and focused on the issues at hand. Every board member should be able collegially to call out other members if they step out of line. This must happen within strong imaginary guardrails against fraternising and ingratiation.

Two issues mentioned in the blog quoted in the box deserve particular attention, namely ‘getting along well’ and ‘strong, independent director’:

- ‘Getting along well’ should not imply that directors are friends who fraternise or ingratiate at the expense of the common purpose of the business. It means directors can get along well with collegiality at the centre and respect each other deeply – but have differing views and can engage in healthy debates in the interest of the business.
- ‘Strong, independent directors’ should not be read to refer to wild, mad, pen-waving lunatics running rogue in board meetings while looking for eyes to poke or drink the blood of enemies. Strong, independent directors are competent individuals who drive the common purpose of the business but act with collegiality and cheerfulness, while delivering clear messages without emotional tirades.

To accompany the thoughts expressed in this chapter, here are two extracts from useful publications:

PwC 2019 Annual Corporate Directors Survey[43]

‘Collegiality on corporate boards is highly valued. When thinking about their next board member, directors often focus on finding the candidate who will “fit in” with their board culture. And given the low turnover rates, board composition remains largely static over time. But this sense of collegiality, while it may improve some aspects of board service, comes at a cost. When boards feel like a cohesive team, they are reluctant to break up the group. A director who may not be contributing as much to the board, or whose skill set is no longer relevant, is less likely to be encouraged to step down. The board’s performance may be suffering as a result. The challenge is in finding the right place for collegiality while keeping the focus on board effectiveness. To begin to address the problem, directors can:

- Ensure that the board’s lead director and committee chairs have the gravitas and character required to challenge board members to do their best, to solicit and respect dissenting views, and to be willing to be honest with underperforming directors.
- Include questions in the board’s self-assessment process that will uncover whether directors feel they have the ability to speak up in meetings, and whether they feel the tone of the boardroom ever inhibits frankness.
- Encourage diversity on the board. Directors with diverse backgrounds often bring diverse viewpoints to the discussion, and can help to shine light on potential blind spots for the board.

‘Collegiality has a place in the boardroom, to be sure, but it is every board member’s responsibility to ensure that it doesn’t stand in the way of board effectiveness.’

The Activist Investor Blog

The blog post '*Collegiality is Overrated*' appeared in the Activist Investor Blog on Tuesday May 25, 2010.[44]

'Oh the endless words that extol the virtues of a board of directors that gets along well. But, at what cost, to the business and its investors?

'So, I give you Marty Lipton, as staunch an advocate, among many others, for such cordial relations:

'The second most important yet often underemphasized consideration is collegiality. A balkanized board is a dysfunctional board; a board works best when it works as a unified whole, without camps or factions and without internal divisions. Strong, independent directors are essential to proper board functioning, but so too are elusive qualities such as collegiality, sense of common purpose, energy, industry knowledge, business sense and trust. Diversity of views and backgrounds can also enhance boardroom discussions.

'Of course, investors probably don't routinely need open battle among numerous warring factions in a boardroom. Civility counts for something. But, for what?

'Not to pick on him, since one could cite many other similar observers (but why not given how he staunchly and blithely defends management at every turn), let's unpack Lipton's assertions just a little, with its loaded words and one-sided concepts.

- *For example, does a board really work best as a unified whole, without camps, factions, or divisions? If the board only seeks to support management unquestioningly, well then of course directors should agree with each other.*
- *Why can't a board have strong, independent directors and common purpose, energy, industry knowledge, and trust?*
- *"Diversity of views and backgrounds can also enhance boardroom discussions", but how does diversity differ from "camps or factions"? Do we want variety, or not?*

'A previous post discussed how directors might comply with internal policies concerning confidential board deliberations. A duly-elected director that confronts policies restricting his or her communication (with investors, media, etc.) has no legal obligation to follow such policies, outside of specific laws pertaining to trade secrets, employment matters, and insider trading.

'This director might comply only to get along better with directors, say to promote "collegiality". We know of one director that did just this, at the specific expense of investors. The director feared a good shunning, and exclusion from the informal, collegial discussions that characterize this and many other boards.

'No right-thinking investor wants a board that works this way - punishing a director that favors independent thinking over getting along, and valuing collegiality over debate

over how best to represent investor interests. Given the choice between collegiality and spirited discussion, smart investors will take the latter every time.'

Chapter 4

COLLEGIALITY AND LEADERSHIP

This chapter looks at various factors that contribute to collegial behaviour – or where collegiality can help to avoid professional and personal issues affecting individuals, their families and their workplace.

IT'S SUNDAY AFTERNOON. AS A diligent leader, you look at the schedule for the coming week. In the schedule, there are meetings to look forward to with eagerness and enthusiasm, and there are those meetings you do not look forward to attending.

Generally, the meetings where one knows that there will be civility and collegiality are the ones one looks forward to, while those meetings where toxicity brews are often also the ones where unnecessary bickering and belligerence prevail. Egos at such meetings are abundant and nothing much is achieved. If something is achieved, it's often with difficulty and pain.

However, if you try to be collegial, you will realise that you achieve lots of progress and delivery. The question I often ask myself is whether some people wake up in the morning to be negative, vindictive, and obstructive whilst others wake up wishing to put a smile on everyone's face? Why are some people optimistic about life and others pessimistic? Is there a way of developing a global culture that can keep the world happy, or is happiness just too boring?

My mission in life and with this book is to win a few hearts and minds regarding the way we conduct business into the future. The future is about collegiality, which promotes collaboration and cooperation amongst different stakeholders without the damaging effects that fraternising and ingratiating behaviour can have.

A HEALTHY ORGANISATION

As leaders we must concern ourselves with the health of the organisation we lead: much as we concern ourselves with our own health. Most of us employed by an organisation spend most of our waking hours at work and it cannot be healthy if the environment is toxic. A toxic environment is one

where employees are not in touch with the *raison d'etre* of the organisation and don't understand the way the organisation works. It is where leaders are aloof and do not communicate with everyone effectively, where meetings and conversations are based on threats, belligerence and dishonesty, and where the dominant style of leading is beyond *laissez-faire* and promotes fraternising and ingratiation.

A healthy organisation cannot be an environment that employees liken to a 'tumble dryer'. Employees must want to be at work; they must want to be involved and be part of results.

This is not only about the interests of the organisation. The interests of the employees lie at the core. Much as we as individuals schedule appointments to visit our medical doctors for health checks regularly, we must also concern ourselves with the health of the organisation.

The big question is whether employees want to be in this organisation and whether they wish to spend their days following the routines related to this organisation? Are the leaders of this organisation creating an environment conducive for healthy debates, healthy engagement and healthy decisions delivered through collegiality?

For me, a healthy organisation is the one where collegiality thrives and there is high productivity – one where everyone is part of the same story and narrative.

The concept used by politicians and businesspeople to communicate and referred to as the 'townhall', is a mechanism used among others when the leadership of a business addresses employees on the performance of the business, its health and its future. The most important part of these 'townhalls' is the interaction between employees and leadership and the encouragement to ask questions related to the business. These questions could include any or all of specific/situational issues, business-related matters and broader topics, as long as they are meant to clarify issues,

create alignment and inform employees. If all concerned have a collegial attitude, all will benefit out of such interactions.

TOXICITY DESTROYING COLLEGIALITY

As often stated in this book, I believe that an organisation that promotes collegiality is also one where employees thrive and excel in their performance and deliverables. Collegiality promotes healthy dialogue and exchange of ideas, fosters the freedom to innovate and eradicates toxicity.

In the article *Why some work environments breed toxic cultures*[45] for the BBC, Katie Bishop quotes Janine Yancey, the CEO of Emtrain as arguing that 'organisations where leaders understand the implications of their power, and where there are strong norms of behaviour, tend to be the least toxic. This has to be more than just a written policy – it's a cultural thing where people know to act a certain way and everyone ascribes to that.'

In November 2021, Activision Blizzards employees staged a walkout after reports that chief executive Bobby Kotick had long been aware of harassment allegations. The state of California sued the video game company after employees complained of a 'fratboy' culture, including unequal pay, promoting men over women and widespread sexual harassment. Just a few months earlier, the CEO of Scottish brewer and pub chain Brewdog was forced to respond to an open letter accusing the beer company of 'toxic attitudes' and a 'culture of fear'.

Due to the fact 'workplace toxicity' is a complex concept to define, it can also be difficult to identify an environment where toxicity is commonplace – one that can make it tough for people being interviewed for a job at that workplace to know what they're stepping into. Yancey recommends that one should dig deep into cultural norms during a job interview: 'Ask about norms of behaviour, what the leadership is like and whether they have coaching and training, and how the organisation set tones of communication

… if the company representative has no good answers to these questions, then that might not be the best sign.'

In my view, a collegial environment free of fraternising and ingratiation can encourage employees to be comfortable and speak up against negative activity that leads to toxicity. This is an important issue, since toxicity can lead to the destruction of careers and lives.

Simon Sinek wrote in his book *Start with Why: How great leaders inspire everyone to take action*[46] about the case of Continental Airlines: 'To say that most of the company's employees were embarrassed to work there was an understatement. It was no secret that the employees felt mistreated. And if a company mistreats their people, just watch how the employees treat their customers. Mud rolls down a hill, and if you're the one standing at the bottom, you get hit with the full brunt. In a company, that's usually the customer. Throughout the 1980s, this was life at Continental Airlines – the worst airline in the industry.'

Why was it the worst airline in the industry? 'I could see Continental's biggest problem the second I walked in the door in February 1994,' Gordon Bethune wrote in *From Worst to First: Behind the Scenes of Continental's Remarkable Comeback*[47]. 'It was a crummy place to work.' Employees were surly to customers and one another, and ashamed of their company. 'And you can't have a good product without people who like coming to work. It just can't be done,' Bethune said. Herb Kelleher, the head of Southwest Airlines for twenty years, was considered a heretic for stating that it is a company's responsibility to look after the employees first. Happy employees ensure happy customers, he opined. And happy customers ensure happy shareholders – in that order.

Fortunately, Gordon Bethune shared the 'heretic' belief of Kelleher – and he was successful at turning around Continental Airlines. During the first

year he took over the bankrupt business, it made $250m and was soon ranked as one of the best companies to work for in America.

Gordon Bethune's turnaround of Continental Airlines was the result of simply changing one of the things that matter in life and should equally matter to a leader: trust. To arrive at a workplace with the executive floor locked all the time, cameras everywhere and security on that floor, is a recipe for disaster. Bethune immediately introduced an open-door policy and made himself accessible. Whilst he also introduced many other changes, I believe being accessible made Gordon Bethune a collegial human being and leader. I believe the greatest lesson for leaders is to keep a watchful eye on practices in the workplace that may lead to toxicity and make the workplace the wrong one to join.

Relating the Bethune history, Sinek makes a great point in his book: 'Trust is a feeling, not a rational experience.'

Be collegial. It will go a long way. It eradicates toxicity.

EGOS

Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter wrote in *Ego is the Enemy of Good Leadership*[48] about Cees 't Hart's first day as CEO of the Carlsberg Group, the global brewery and beverage company. 'He was given a key card by his assistant. The card locked out all the other floors for the elevator so that he could go directly to his corner office on the 20th floor. And with its picture windows, his office offered a stunning view of Copenhagen. These were the perks of his new position: ones that spoke to his power and importance within the company.'

They continue: 'Cees spent the next two months acclimating to his new responsibilities. But during those two months, he noticed that he saw very few people throughout the day. Since the elevator didn't stop at other floors and only a select group of executives worked on the 20th floor, he rarely

interacted with other Carlsberg employees. Cees decided to switch from his corner office on the 20th floor to an empty desk in an open-floor plan on a lower floor.'

Why did Cees do this? Hougaard and Carter quote his answer: 'If I don't meet people, I won't get to know what they think. And if I don't have a finger on the pulse of the organization, I can't lead effectively.'

Now look at a different example: In his 2011 book on Steve Jobs, Walter Isaacson wrote that, when Jobs realised that a division of Airborne Express wasn't delivering spare parts quickly enough, he ordered an Apple manager to break the contract. When the manager protested that doing so could lead to a lawsuit, Jobs replied: 'Just tell them if they fuck with us, they'll never get another fucking dime from this company, ever.' The manager quit, there was a lawsuit, and it took a year to resolve. 'My stock options would be worth $10 million had I stayed,' the manager said, 'but I knew I couldn't have stood it – and he'd have fired me anyway.' (*Steve Jobs*, Walter Isaacson[49])

I confess that I too can be arrogant at times, and I can feel that my ego does threaten to take over. However, what has assisted me to control this instinct over the years is finding myself among great bosses who taught me to guard against it.

I have indeed on many occasions taken the stance similar to that of Steve Jobs as outlined above, but great men like Mr Philip Hechter (General Manager of Samancor Manganese from 1999 to 2004 and Chief Operating Officer later), highlighted this in me and warned me that this could weaken my strong leadership capabilities. I therefore watch this tendency very closely. Philip might be amused to read that I clearly remember how I sat in his office in Meyerton and asked him to elaborate why he thought arrogance and my ego may trip me up if I am not careful. This towering figure, who spoke straight and never minced his words, warned me that although I was

an excellent young man who ‘could see around the corners’, that skill should not be overused at my own peril. And I should not gloat about it. If I used it properly, it would take me far. (He used to address me as ‘young man’ and told me ‘You will go places!’)

When asked to elaborate further, he clarified that he had noticed several things I had raised in meetings, and later some of my predictions had materialised. He said I was bold in raising these issues to show confidence in my stance. Today, I watch out for such behaviour in myself. I must admit I do still make mistakes and learn. But most importantly, the deep admiration and respect I have always had for Philip, and which will continue into the future, related to the fact that he took risks with a young black man who could have become upset by the feedback and taken it badly. Among others, I could have accused him of being racist – but Philip is none of that. He is a genuine leader and gentleman.

As leaders, we tend to believe and think we know everything. One of our mistakes is not listening to our direct reports and others. We fail to pay attention to their guidance and believe we will permanently be in the ‘telling mode’. Then we become surprised when we realise all our direct reports are behaving just like zombies.

The better expectation is that our direct reports should find us accessible, and understand that we will be constructively challenged by them with good suggestions and views. They should know that we will remain collegial towards them and expect them to behave in a similar manner towards us. Although fraternising and ingratiation do make you weak as a boss, collegiality with our direct reports does not have that effect. Indeed, it strengthens us.

POWER DRESSING: SUITS AND TIES

I observed my colleagues at management level imitating the dress code of the executive team and the CEO at one of the businesses I worked. Without fail, the CEO always dressed in white shirts. The only time when he dressed down a bit would be on a Friday when he wore a suit, white shirt and no tie, but on the other days of the week it was suit, white shirt and a tie. Managers followed his example and there was also a conversation about wearing a vest under the white shirt: this was a trend and had some 'meaning' at the time.

The reason why I refer to the dress code issue is that the entire package for a successful career as I observed it during my formation years as manager included being tough, showing aggression, using rough language with lots of swearing, and dressing the way the big boys dressed.

However, in terms of being a successful manager, things change, and the dress code will among others depend on circumstances. Importantly, although it is true that being professionally dressed and presentable is part of the package, I believe that the 'feathers do not make the man' as a manager. It is not how you dress today or in the future that makes the difference. I believe the future is to be relaxed, cheerful, well mannered, emotionally intelligent and balanced, high-performance driven and collegial. But don't lose the intensity.

What is, however, important, is that it is contradictory to be professionally dressed or power-dressed and then use rough language and be impolite.

THE CULTURE OF THE ORGANISATION

'Culture, as the saying goes, eats strategy for breakfast. It's our stake in the ground; it's what makes meaning of work. Leaders are rightly obsessed with culture. Founders ask how they can protect their companies' cultural values as they grow.' (*Measure What Matters*, John Doerr, 2018[50])

I have consistently tried to not sit at my desk from 8:00 to 16:00. Although this is not motivated by the need to move around to stay healthy or get some form of exercise, I do walk about and talk to people. We talk about business, life in general and I sometimes end up talking to employees about their personal lives.

We get to know each other without fraternising and ingratiating. These conversations have guardrails. We don't cross certain boundaries, and keeping to that requirement is a skill. It does feel collegial and heart-warming, and I hold to my side of the bargain by being honourable. Employees hold to their side and stay respectful to the business they work for. Yet, I still make mistakes and pass employees in a corridor without greeting them at times. Despite such mistakes, I strive to drive a culture of collegiality and 'knowing each other'.

I have also consistently heeded the power of simplicity: I make things simple for everyone to understand and execute with ease. When our business, Seriti, expanded its coal operations by acquiring South African Energy Coal (SAEC) from South32 on 1 June 2021, an issue arose that a lot of people might take for granted or regard as trivial. It related to access to the different mines of South32.

Every mine of the three acquired – Khutala, Klipspruit, and Middelburg Mining Services (MMS) – had its own access system and card, and this made it a bit difficult to control access and understand the clocking time for each employee. This created a-free-for-all environment regarding access. This was rectified according to the Seriti way of doing things, which means one access card is used across all operations and controlled by a robust time management system.

Meetings must be simple to chair, lead and manage. I find that conversations conducted in a collegial manner make decision-making

easier. This reduces the stress levels caused by difficult and belligerent people and their toxic conversations.

Another company cultural issue relates to intensity. I love intensity and driving things intensely. I became aware a long time ago that ‘bad news travels fast, good news travels slow.’ Ben Horowitz stated in 2014 in his book *The Hard Thing About Hard Things*[51]: ‘If you investigate companies that have failed, you will find that many employees knew about the fatal issues long before those issues killed the company. If the employee knew about the deadly problem, why didn’t they say something? Too often the answer is that the company culture discouraged the spread of bad news, so the knowledge lay dormant until it was too late to act.’

The level of intensity in our business assists us in collegially coming to terms with tough conversations about hard things. The culture that we are slowly inculcating for everyone is to understand that, without being aggressive, fraternising or ingratiating behaviour, we will collegially sit around the table and discuss tough issues that could be fatal for the business. Conversations in meetings, no matter how hard things become, should be collegial, take everyone along and ensure that everyone associates with the decision – not only as part of the collective, but as a willing participant and contributor to the conversation.

I love consistency even though it is tough to be consistent. I believe that the culture of the organisation where the leader strives to be consistent in the way they conduct business, will contribute towards making employees productive and wanting to be at work, or around the leader. If one leads and chairs meetings with consistency, there is an element of predictability regarding the atmosphere of the meeting, and the nature of conversations. A collegial and cooperative ambiance will prevail when decisions become predictably consistent.

EFFECTS ON THE FAMILY

We are all different. Most of us spend at least half our working day at work, although many go home earlier or later. However many hours we are at work, the effects of the working day follow us home.

If one works somewhere where you do not trust the business environment, do not get along with people in the business, where every meeting becomes stressful and leaves you with chest pains, where people spend their time idling and gossiping, and most of all, where productivity rates are low and the business is losing money, this would be an unhealthy work environment.

What does such an environment do to your family life? Probably when you arrive home, even your pets will run away from you!

On the other hand, a healthy work environment would allow you to thrive. Of course, a collegial approach would make a big difference if this is the norm at your place of business. In addition, your own personal approach would also have to be one that is collegial.

To be collegial and work with everyone as harmoniously as possible, you would endeavour to contribute to a positive work environment by spreading optimistic messages and contributing to positive activities, among others. A collegial manager is one who is also able to curb negative habits and negative attitudes among staff, because gossiping and spreading negativity, not striving to align with the vision and mission of the business, being disruptive at every opportunity and making life difficult for everyone in the business are behaviours that are detrimental to the business as a whole.

How does this affect family life? Collegial behaviour, where you are part of a good story or project at work, will make you arrive at home happier and more content. It will contribute towards spending your after-work hours being peaceful and happy. Healthy relationships at work will mean you have good stories about work to tell your family, and they will be more

likely to gain a positive view of your world of work. If you spend time in a toxic work environment where things such as fighting, gossiping, being unproductive and getting negative feedback from your boss are part of the norm, you are bound to be negative about your work environment. Your family will also have negative views about your business. In short, collegiality at work and the harmony it brings will follow you home.

A DOSE OF ADRENALIN

‘“My name is Mike and I’m a workaholic ... And I am not alone.”’ Thus starts a 2013 article titled *Break the Adrenaline Addiction and Stop Workaholism before it Starts*[52] by Mike Thomas.

He continues: ‘A wise former manager of mine once gave me a valuable piece of advice … He told me to “beware the adrenaline addiction!” ’

Mike Thomas comments in his article: ‘Essentially, when work gets to frantic levels of stress, speed, and excitement, then we learn to survive … and even to thrive, on the adrenaline rush that comes with it. This “drugged up” state becomes the norm, and we can become “adrenaline junkies”. Even though we know that it is self-destructive, it has become a habit … and one that is hard to break. Eventually, though, something has to give and we find ourselves needing to slow down. Whether it is because health issues start to arise, work performance starts to suffer, or family life begins to erode, we discover the need to take a step back to get our priorities in order and get the place of work in our lives back under control.

‘And while, on the surface, this sounds like a very straightforward decision to make, it does not account for the powerful and lingering effects of the adrenaline addiction. There will be a period of “withdrawal” that occurs, and even as we consciously want to slow down, we find ourselves looking for a “quick fix” – a crisis or late-night presentation that we can throw ourselves into so as to get the rush to which we have become so

accustomed. And this effect is not exclusive to individuals. Whole organizations can get so accustomed to operating in an almost out-of-control crisis mode that when it is rightfully time to pull out of the crisis, it is extremely difficult to do so. Organizations often continue running in a frenetic, tactical pace long after the crisis has passed, because slowing down and becoming strategic is unnatural and even painful. This "adrenaline effect" is very real, and the accompanying "withdrawal" needs to be expected and overcome.'

I agree with what Thomas wrote and believe that being collegial, relaxed and cheerful does not equate to laziness and unproductiveness, but helps one to achieve results in a completely different way. Speed and undue hastiness in driving the achievement of plans and goals is to nobody's advantage.

STRESS AND BURNOUT!

Possibly related to the previous issue of the adrenalin rush could be the silent killer of stress and burnout. During my annual medical check-ups, one of the standard questions relates to my stress levels. How do I deal with those and do I care about it?

It does worry me that, whatever our day-to-day activities – at work, with family or during leisure hours – stress follows us everywhere. It definitely requires our attention.

'Burnout is a very appropriate and descriptive term where human beings become victims of excessive energy exerted, and temperature generated. It causes friction, ignition and burns, which then devour people and their most noble intentions. It reduces such excessive people to nothing – to aches. They are no more. This burnt residue pollutes the pasture,' wrote Johann Coetzee in 2021 in his book *It's About Time*.[53]

Coetzee asks: ‘How does one reach the correct temperature and not over combust? The answer is simple; *you don’t go too close to the fire*!’

During the better part of my career spent working in human resources, several executives have told me about their journeys in the world of business as they attempted to build successful careers. These journeys can be exciting for some, treacherous for others and downright disasters for another. During these career journeys, some of these individuals ‘get too close to the fire’.

One person told me about his aspirations to become an executive and ultimately the CEO of a company. After a promise was made that he was in line for the big job, he found himself starting work at 6:00 and arriving home in the evening for dinner at 19:00. He then jumped on his home computer to respond to emails after dinner – all in aid of ensuring that he did not disappoint those at the top of the company and also to ensure that his family would be proud of him. Those at the top were less concerned about his exertion and its effects on himself and his family than being concerned that he was overstretching himself. This was a typical case of someone who ‘went too close to the fire.’

Another powerful individual was appointed to a very senior role in a very big business where the energy levels were high. The person was excited about taking this role and – somewhat to my concern – also planned to move house to be closer to the business. The new senior manager was energised, ready and keen to reach the promise of big things. However, within two years in the role, a health scare meant a reduction in work tempo. One of the regrets mentioned to me then was of failing health which had destabilised the entire family. Experience has shown that a big role in a big business with the rewards of a big bank balance, should not lead to a whole family suffering because a senior manager becomes financially wealthy but enjoys poor health.

Sadly, once I even listened to the sad story of a retired executive being stressed and not well. He went as far as saying that, if his mental state deteriorated to a state of dementia, he would leave the country and go to where euthanasia is legal …

I believe that many individuals whose approach to opportunities to build careers include being bold, tough, arrogant and even Machiavellian, do become superstars and grow in their careers. However, then the stress levels and burnout take over. In their own destruction, they destroy others.

I also believe it is advisable, when offered a great career opportunity, to deliberately seek coaching, mentoring and proper guidance regarding collegiality. Learn to be relaxed and cheerful in your approach to a great career, concern yourself about being healthy, and always empathetic while still delivering sterling high performance.

All of this is in the own interest of managers, but also in the interest of their families and the interest of the business. A serious balance is necessary.

Tomorrow's executive is a collegial executive who has learnt to deal with the stress that comes with any powerful job. Coping mechanisms often mean teamwork by the manager, his family and the people who coach and mentor them.

TO CONCLUDE: COLLEGIALITY AND HEALTH

I wish to live beyond the age of 100 and I believe 'I have figured it all out'. However, I am not a medical doctor, and I am not God.

I have realised that what we eat ultimately plays an important role in our continued health. Complementing our food intake, the right levels of activity seem to be the way to go. Effectively, one needs to exercise properly, and balance that with good eating habits.

I also believe that avoiding stress and burnout by learning the correct basic behaviours and habits are part of collegiality.

As I reflect on collegiality and health, I believe employees will thrive in the workplace from a health and wellness perspective if there is some connection among them: not fraternising or ingratiation, but just 'being connected'. Knowing one another and about one another in a dignified and respectful manner is important. Underlining my approach, a 2019 article from the Australian Institute of Health and Safety titled *Heavy workloads impacting collegial connections & workplace mental health*[54], says the following about collegial connections:

'Organisations need to do more to ensure workplaces where colleagues feel connected, according to a recent research report, which found that this is an important element in improving workplace psychological safety. The 2019 Australian Workplace Psychological Safety Survey, which was conducted by R U OK?, took in 1 093 Australian employees and found that 23 per cent do not currently do any activities to connect them with colleagues.

'One of the biggest barriers found was not having time due to workload.

'R U OK? said this is concerning, considering leading suicidologist Dr Thomas Joiner's work, which describes a lack of connection (or lack of belonging) as one of the three forces at play in someone at risk of suicide.

'Kevin Figueiredo, GM Safety, Health and Wellbeing for Woolworths, recently spoke at R U OK?'s annual conversational leadership event about the mental health training Woolworths is currently rolling out nationwide.

' "As Australia's largest employer, the mental health of our team members is our number one safety, health and wellbeing priority," said Figueiredo. "In the past 12 months we have introduced new mental health programs and trained 16,000 team members across the group with the skills and knowledge to help peers showing signs of mental health issues. We

recognise mental health is not just an issue for our teams but also friends and families, and we are committed to continuing to support innovative programs like R U OK? to keep these important conversations going.” ’

I quote this article, as it mentioned two complex subjects regarding health and wellness, namely mental health and suicide. Whilst my assertion is not scientific, I believe it is not easy to notice if employees are facing mental wellness issues, or are suicidal. Yet I believe collegiality can assist in noticing these issues – and in handling them when observed.

Chapter 5

THE ROLE OF COLLEGIALITY IN BUILDING AND ACQUIRING A BUSINESS

Clever and brainy? Emotionally intelligent? Ruthlessness? What are those? Find the balance! These thoughts are at the background of this chapter. It examines how successful entrepreneurs can be clever and brainy, while also possessing a high level of emotional intelligence to help them execute and deliver results with a deep bias towards collegiality.

HOW DO YOU ARRIVE AT conclusions such as ‘to be a successful entrepreneur, you need to be clever and brainy, have superior emotional intelligence or be ruthless’?

This chapter looks at acquiring balance to support collegial behaviour.

Rhymer Rigby wrote in *28 Business Thinkers Who Changed the World*[55]: ‘But you can be a game changer and be well balanced. For every Sam Walton, there are people who have achieved huge success and do seem to be genuinely happy. Richard Branson is forever moving on to the next thing, yet his drive seem to be bound up in a kind of permanent cheerfulness – and others ranging from Warren Buffett to the Google pair seem pretty happy with their lot. Nor do you have to treat people badly. Certainly, there are those like Facebook’s Zuckerberg who seem to leave a trail of the aggrieved, but what of Tim-Berners Lee and Anita Roddick? They are widely held up as nice well-balanced individuals, content with their lives. Even Bill Gates, for all his detractors, decided to become the biggest philanthropist in history. Human beings should not enforce respect on others but earn it.’

ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY – ACCIDENTAL OR DELIBERATE

I do my best to be mentally active. Other than the day-to-day activities related to my work and businesses, I participate in book reviews at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), where I am the Chairman of Council.

One of the books I reviewed in 2022 is *Ikigai, The Japanese secret to a long and happy life*[56] by Hector Garcia and Francesc Miralles. In the prologue of the book the authors ask several big questions: ‘What is the meaning of life?’ ‘Is the point just to live longer, or should I seek a higher

purpose?' 'Why do some people know what they want and have a passion for life, while others languish in confusion?'

These questions are a global challenge for all the 8 billion people in the world. In general, people concern themselves about finding something professionally that will be enjoyable, fulfilling and provide a living for the individual – or they look for a job that would be enjoyable and provide for themselves. Some people become entrepreneurs.

In a world with so much unemployment, South Africa is hovering at an unemployment rate of around 35%. Especially among the youth, entrepreneurship is gaining prominence, as people wish to find their Ikigai or purpose by starting their own businesses. I have encountered people who deliberately went on a journey to start their own businesses and become entrepreneurs without having worked for anyone. I have also encountered individuals who have accidentally found themselves in situations where an opportunity arose by accident, and they took it and became successful. Accidental entrepreneurs are those who never planned to be entrepreneurs, but were thrust into it by accident.

I have come across several people who were retrenched from their roles. As we all know, one cannot plan to be retrenched. When people are retrenched or laid off, they must find means to make a living and continue life. If they cannot find employment, they have no choice but to start some form of business – and if they are in the right place at the right time, and their ideas work, they could become successful. Some accidental entrepreneurs have come across an idea that turned out to be a commercial winner and developed the idea into a big, thriving business.

For instance, think of what Phil Knight achieved with the development and building of the Nike brand. Phil Knight's entrepreneurial story started when he convinced his father to lend him cash to import Onitsuka Tigers from Japan, as well as through his partnership with Bill Bowerman. Was

this accidental or not? I believe it was not. I think he had a deliberate plan and fully understood what he was getting himself into.

‘Remember how we talked, Dad? How I said I want to see the world? The Himalayas? The Pyramids? The Dead Seas, Dad? The Dead Sea? Well, haha, I am also thinking of stopping off in Japan, Dad. Remember my Crazy Idea? Japanese running shoes. Right? It could be huge, Dad. Huge.’ (*Shoe Dog*, Phil Knight[57]) I regard Knight as a collegial individual considering that, when his coach, Bill Bowerman, wished to join him on his venture to sell running shoes, the meeting was cordial and their agreement was handled well.

There is great fulfilment in starting a tough journey and traversing that journey with tenacity and resilience.

COLLEGIAL ENTREPRENEURS

Being collegial does not mean you are weak or docile. In Chapter 8 of Richard Branson’s book *Screw it, Let’s do it. Lessons in life*[58] he writes about having respect, which in my view equates to being collegial. He refers to his discovery of Phil Collins, who was driving a taxi.

‘Be polite and respectful. Do the right thing. Keep your good name. Be fair in your dealings. In the early days of Virgin Music, I talked to some Japanese businessmen. They we very polite to a young man in sweater and jeans who had no money. They taught me how important it was to always keep eyes and ears open and to be polite. They say that you never know who might hear or see you. People talk. Gossip has a habit of getting back to those you gossip about. I have come across this myself. One time I had to go to a meeting. I was late. I grabbed some papers and jumped into a taxi. On the way, the driver got very chatty. He said, “Ói, I know you. You are that, Dick Branson. You’ve got a record label.” “Yes, that’s right,” I said. “Well, ain’t it my lucky day. Fancy having Branson in my cab.” I hoped he

might shut up so I could read my papers for the meeting, but he went on. He told me he might be a cabby by day, but he was also a drummer in a band. He asked if I'd like to hear his demo tape. My heart sank. People were always playing tapes to me in the hopes they would be discovered. But I didn't want to be rude. "That would be lovely," I said. "No, you look tired. Tell you what, my mom lives around the corner. She'd love to meet you. Let's drop in and have a quick cup of tea." "No, I'm late …" I started to say. "I insist, Guv. A cup of tea's what you need." "Thank you," I said, weakly. Just as we reached the house, the driver put on his tape. I heard the words over the speakers. "I can feel it, coming in the air tonight …" He jumped out of the front seat and held the door open for me. The cab driver was Phil Collins, laughing like mad. When I made the Rebel Billionaire, I copied the idea from Phil.' (*Screw it, Let's do it*, Richard Branson, 2006)

I believe had he been rude, disrespectful or lacked collegiality, Branson would not have discovered the singer. This statement might seem to be a bit far-fetched, but it does demonstrate my point that even hardnosed entrepreneurs must have a collegial nature.

It may be true that most entrepreneurs are hardnosed people whose desire is results at any cost, but there is also an empathetic and collegial side that assists many of them to make things happen.

From entrepreneurship to partnership is but a small jump.

Many entrepreneurs travelled the lonely journey of entrepreneurship on their own but there are many examples where partnerships were created and made sense for the entrepreneurs or founders.

One could refer to Peter Armitage, the CEO of Anchor, whom I mentioned in Chapter 1. He is known as an investment professional, but for me the most striking was his entrepreneurial journey in building Anchor Capital. He was not arrogant about his story and what he was about to embark upon and build – but it was the level of collegiality I experienced

when he invited me to join his business as a shareholder that impressed me most. He was obviously not alone.

The power of partnership has been well known for a long time in the history of innovation, regardless of the industry. Many partnerships have become cultural icons known by the name on the door: Ben and Jerry, Hewlett and Packard, Harley and Davidson, Wells and Fargo, Procter and Gamble.

Warren Buffett said in reference to a conversation with Bill Gates in 1998 that he was in complete agreement about the importance of picking people: 'I've had a partner like that, Charlie Munger, for a lot of years, and it does for me exactly what Bill is talking about.' (*How I Built This*,[59] Guy Raz). My point is that if one accommodates partners in their business ventures, they are welcoming of collegiality. I also believe that they may be friends but can also differentiate between being collegial and fraternising or ingratiating.

In South Africa, a great story of partnership and collegiality is that of First Rand and Rand Merchant Bank being built by three powerful entrepreneurs and a fourth partner who was not that well known. Laurie Dippenaar, GT Ferreira and Paul Harris are all headstrong individuals who built the First Rand empire and agreed on lots of issues. Without that agreement, their business empire would not have seen the light of day. This, in my view, was the ability of each individual to be collegial in their approach to issues. When referring to headstrong individuals, one is inclined to believe that egos are bigger than issues at hand. However, I believe that being collegial makes headstrong people accommodate different points of view and accept that there is a need for common ground.

To illustrate the above, here's an extract from Bruce Whitfield's 2020 book, *The Upside of Down*[60]. He had a 'conversation with Laurie Dippenaar and asked: "How, as one of the three co-founders of the R450bn banking

and insurance giant First Rand, did the relationship between three headstrong, capable, independent-minded individuals function? Few people can make partnerships work. It has to be more difficult when there are three people who need to collaborate to achieve the best possible outcome for their shared project.”

‘ “Facts,” he said.

‘ “Elaborate,” I countered.

‘ “We only ever debated the merits of a decision based on facts, and whoever argued the facts best carried the day. If you have the facts that you base your decision on to make your case, it’s far more effective than just being the smooth-talking salesman. You can analyse and never get to a decision. There is no such thing as the perfect decision. You have to get the best minds around the table [and then] make your decision.” ’

The example of the Brazilian trio Jorge Paulo Lemann, Carlos Alberto Sicupira and Marcel Herrmann Telles (among others they control Anheuser-Busch InBev and retailer Lojas Americanas and developer Sao Carlos in Brazil) is similar to that of the First Rand trio in South Africa. Jorge Gerdau Johannpeter, chairman of the board of directors of the steelmaker Gerdau from southern Brazil, who has known them since the 1980s, said the three quickly saw that working together would be a formula for success: ‘Each one has a different profile, but they recognize that this is one of the triumvirate’s strengths … They would probably not have gone so far as they have on their own,’ wrote Cristeane Correa in 2013 in *Dream Big*[61].

Their closeness was founded on a series of common values, according to Correa. ‘A conversation with Lemann, Telles and Sicupira will always have the same reference points. The three believe that to be a winner, a company has to recruit good people, preserve meritocracy and share the success amongst the best performers. They all appreciate simplicity and have no time for hierarchy. They are more concerned about building long-lasting

companies than about appearing on the lists of the world's richest entrepreneurs. The three of them may have different management styles, though. A former Garantia partner who keeps in touch with the Brazilian trio says that Sicupira is "hard", Telles is "soft" and Lemann is "soft, soft, soft" – but despite these differences, their speeches are virtually the same.'

Indeed, they have been collegial in their approach to building their businesses. 'The trust between them is such that they wrote a shareholders agreement at the beginning of the 2000s – mainly to preserve future relations among their heirs,' wrote Correa.

I believe it is useful to link the words 'collegiality' and 'trust', as I believe that the more collegial people become in their interactions, the more they trust each other.

BEING A MAVERICK IN THE WORLD OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

What is a maverick? Simple: an independent-minded person.

In the world of entrepreneurship I regard Richard Branson as a maverick for three reasons: firstly, he named his company, which is now a conglomerate, 'Virgin'. Surely, mentioning such a word in certain circles raises eyebrows. Secondly, as a British person he started an airline, yet in 2008 started using the slogan 'No way, BA'. Thirdly, Branson has taken on several titans in different industries and even the mighty Coca-Cola was not spared. He developed Virgin Cola, and even though it was not successful, the mere fact of taking that bold step, makes him a maverick.

Should mavericks be tough, arrogant, ruthless and take no nonsense? Not really. Mavericks are the right people to change things to operate differently. Mavericks are the ones to step up to my crusade of changing the behaviour in meetings and boardrooms to begin to deliver and execute effectively and efficiently through collegiality, versus the use of an iron fist characterised by ruthlessness and a no-nonsense attitude. As stated before, I

believe it is important to remain tough, be ruthless and take no nonsense in the interests of the business – but to remain as cordial as possible and support harmonious relationships that will positively influence the future of humanity.

Many individuals have walked away from great jobs and careers where they were paid extremely well, enjoyed great power, and were elevated to great heights. They then decided to start something new. They are the mavericks who have to be applauded. In the South African context, I think of Dr Taddy Blecher, an actuarial scientist who started CIDA City Campus and other ventures. I regard him as a maverick who left a lucrative career to start a successful entrepreneurial journey.

COLLEGIALITY, ENTREPRENEURS AND FINANCING BUSINESSES

Entrepreneurs who are worth their salt spend a lot of their time seeking opportunities to grow their business interests and they do this by being acquisitive or by growing their own businesses organically.

When they are not seeking opportunities to grow their businesses, they spend their time looking for opportunities to make what they already own super-efficient and creating more value for their businesses.

To make these things happen the entrepreneur either funds such initiatives from their personal resources, or they go out to look for funders or institutions to assist them with funding. Discussions of this nature require respect, good manners, non-arrogant approaches and deep collegiality. A funder wishes to have the confidence that they are funding or backing someone credible, respectful, and self-respecting. They want someone collegial with whom to collaborate and cooperate in the future. Funders want to know that the entrepreneur is honourable even when things become difficult and that they would not at any stage become belligerent.

Some entrepreneurs, or those who purport to be entrepreneurs, may disagree and say that to succeed in this world they need to be aggressive, ill-mannered, egotistic, and always be in fighting mood. In my experience and in all my dealings with every partner, stakeholder, banks and others, I have tried to be respectful and honourable.

Would I enter into a business relationship without a shareholder agreement? No! In the business world of today, that is the formal way to communicate and to regulate a relationship amongst shareholders, especially where money is involved.

Yet, whilst I accept that shareholder agreements are good instruments to regulate relationships between and among shareholders, I still believe that the most honourable thing is to have a relationship beyond a shareholder agreement. The piece of paper can exist, but the most honourable thing must be the handshake and the honourable, collegial intentions that the handshake represents.

ENTREPRENEURIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND HAVING A GOOD (OR BAD) NAME

For long-lasting relationships to flourish in the world of entrepreneurship, one must develop trust in partners, and enough confidence in partners to believe that you mutually look after one another's interest. Yet, ingratiating behaviour and failure to draw the line when it comes to serious business, weakens any such relationship. Be friendly and collegial, but draw the line regarding flippancy.

Frederick E Allen, writing for *Forbes* on 30 March 2011[62] refers to a passage in the book *Idea Man: A Memoir by the Co-founder of Microsoft* by Paul Allen[63]. He 'overheard Bill Gates, the other co-founder, discuss with Steve Ballmer, now the company's chief executive, how they could reduce Allen's share in the company by issuing themselves stock options. Hearing

this, Allen charged into the room and broke up the conversation. Later Gates and Ballmer backed down and apologized. “I had helped start the company and was still an active member of management, though limited by my illness, and now my partner and my colleague were scheming to rip me off. It was mercenary opportunism, plain and simple.” ’

The point here is that entrepreneurs are tough people and drive the hard bargain, but that does not mean they need to be dishonest, dishonourable and plain bad. Entrepreneurs must be collegial in their approach and break the mindset created about their tough stances. My experience is that the partnerships I am forging in the entrepreneurial space are collegial, healthy, and mutual. The key for me is to find a balance through collegiality, cooperation and collaboration, and to remain cheerful in an environment that demands robust discussions, hard bargaining, and effective decisions. Who wants to spend their life in the world of belligerence, hostility, and hate?

Whilst we refer to entrepreneurs as game changers, the world is changing very fast as well. One way in which it has changed is to embrace a different managerial mindset than the hardnosed one of earlier times to become much more collegial.

I have not met Rupert Murdoch, the man who built an impressive media empire. But some have heard people state that, ‘he’s a figure who inspires strong feelings – many loathe him.’ In his last interview with Melvyn Bragg, the then terminally-ill British playwright Dennis Potter memorably said, ‘I will call my cancer Rupert.’[64] Alan Bennett refused an honorary degree from Oxford because of its links to Murdoch, while the satirical magazine *Private Eye* routinely pillories him as the ‘dirty digger’[65].

No entrepreneur in this world would like to hear such negative opinions about themselves. Therefore, collegiality shall prevail.

DIFFERENT ENTREPRENEURS HAVE DIFFERENT ATTITUDES

I close this chapter by referring to two interesting experiences on my entrepreneurial journey.

The first was when three executives showed up at our offices in Hyde Park, Johannesburg, and boldly introduced themselves to me. I was the CEO and the conversation started with some light pleasantries to which I did not really relate. The executives then got to the point. ‘We are here to introduce ourselves as the new owners of the company and we wish to engage with you and your team about who we are, what we do and how we see the way forward and the future.’ Today I reflect on that encounter and think that the three individuals were confident and a bit arrogant, although jovial about their gameplan. Why did they not show up in one car, rather than arriving in three big cars? Why was the conversation not collegial, but instead became a bit aggressive? I was not intimidated at all, but I still wonder about their attitude. Should individuals who call themselves game changers, mavericks or entrepreneurs really act like that?

The second experience related to our participation in a transaction that involved several suitors or bidders. The meetings took place at a neutral venue at different allotted times between the sellers of the asset and us as suitors or bidders at the time. These meetings were well managed and properly coordinated logistically to avoid the suitors or bidders meeting each other in corridors. Yet, an undesirable encounter happened when we as bidders encountered one of the other groups of bidders when they were just departing. The conversation was not in good taste as there was a lot of sarcastic diatribe from both sides. It was indeed disappointing and today I reflect on why we would get involved in an unnecessary fracas? It was a waste of energy and time, and reflected badly on both parties from a reputational point of view.

The biggest lesson for me in this last encounter was that, no matter what the transaction is all about and no matter the complexity of the journey as you work on the transaction, one should remain collegial. However hard it may seem, it is important to remain an astute negotiator with a collegial attitude. After all, even if one is relaxed, cheerful, and collegial it is still possible to carry Theodore Roosevelt's proverbial 'big stick'.

Chapter 6

COLLEGIALITY AND NOT OVERLY COLLEGIAL

This chapter addresses the difference between being collegial and overly collegial: there is a thin line between the two, yet it does exist.

‘AN OVERLY COLLEGIAL CULTURE CAN create a vacuum of information. In an effort to be liked, leaders might wait until a problem becomes insurmountable before communicating. This type of culture also tends to value niceness over holding people accountable, which is detrimental to meeting organisational strategic goals. It can also lead to decision-making inertia where consensus is constantly pursued. This then leads to zero change and a clingy attitude toward the status quo. A lack of provoking ideas and the inability to bring diverse perspectives to the surface can also slow innovation to a crawl. Finally, productivity could plummet and you may face the loss of your high performing staff (while low performers continue their tenure unchallenged),’ wrote Sindhu Kutty in *The Dangers of an Overly Collegial Culture*[66].

‘Some skeptics might argue that an all-too-often excess in collegiality prevents us from getting to the bottom of bad behavior and fixing responsibility. But, that is a failure of enforcement, not a failure of ethics, which is a set of guidelines for behavior,’ argues Michael J Kuhar in *Collegial Ethics: What, Why and How*[67].

Effective leadership includes communicating honestly (about both risks and benefits), driving accountability (creating action plans and taking responsibility), and bravery around decision-making (choosing a path responsibly with the data available at the time).

Changing an overly collegial culture takes time and tenacity. Try the following strategies to start the required cultural change toward an 'on purpose' or 'results-driven' culture:

1. Set expectations across the executive team around using meetings as 'safe zones' to hold one another accountable. Ask the tough questions and provide candid feedback.
2. Ensure executives hold the 'safe zone' conversations as sacred. It is critical to ensure that conversations during these meetings do not become hallway gossip; all executives have to commit to showing a united front to the rest of the organization. This helps alleviate any initial anxiety or pressure felt from the change.
3. Call out 'violations' of the 'safe zone' expectations openly. If you find that meetings are leaning toward driving consensus again, call out the action and help steer the conversation to more critical thinking by asking pertinent questions. In other words, be the devil's advocate.
4. Offer training so that each executive better understands their own behaviors and approaches to conflict (e.g. DiSC assessments), so they have the tools to navigate healthy conflict when the executive team gets together.
5. Create shared responsibility for certain strategic goals. Cross-pollination and striving to have more than one executive work on an initiative can help make the change in a subset of the executive team, which will permeate in the long run.

An overly collegial culture can be a significant factor in your organization's downfall if left unaddressed. There is no easy path to learning how to engage in healthy conflict; you have to start and reinforce desired behaviors. That being said, leadership effectiveness can be learned, so try out these strategies and see if you can turn over a new leaf and build a results-driven, growth-focused culture.

Forbes Business Council – The Dangers of an Overly Collegial Culture[68] by Sindhu Kutty, Member of the Forbes Business Council, 2021

OVERLY COLLEGIAL – A MISUNDERSTOOD CONCEPT

Silicon Valley entrepreneur Ben Horowitz dedicates a chapter in his 2014 book, *The Hard Thing About Hard Things: Building a Business When There Are No Easy Answers*[69] to 'demoting a loyal friend'.

My first question when I read this was: 'Damn! Why would you employ or hire your friend in the first place?'

This is like walking on a tightrope or traversing a fine line. When leading a team of executives, or as a manager of teams of employees – no matter how big or small – it is imperative to understand that although fraternising and ingratiation are dangerous, it does not imply that people should not have friends. The key is to drive the new world of collegiality. We should manage all issues in the world of business – whether hard or not-so-hard issues – in a spirit of cooperation. This simply means being collegial, but not overly collegial.

For instance, the Monday morning meeting or traditional executive meeting will often start with an exchange of pleasantries. This is not a problem at all if it does not mean the entire time allocated to the meeting is spent on these pleasantries. The leader must have inculcated the culture of collegiality for everyone to understand that business time is business time, and that time for pleasantries, flippancy, jokes and minutiae is limited.

Yet, in the process of creating this approach, the leader is not expected to raise their voice and reprimand executives. My advice to leaders is to ensure that you set the tone on how time is managed, how respect forms part of the culture, and how everyone may be relaxed – yet share the intensity to deliver high performance. The leader should show the way to ensure that critical commitments are not negotiable and are delivered upon in a collegial manner, without being overly collegial.

POWERFUL LESSONS ABOUT COLLEGIALITY

Being collegial without the detrimental effects of overly collegial behaviour takes work and time. Here are some hints and tips that may be useful to create a great workplace for yourself and others: one that you and the employees of your organisation will happily experience every workday. Ensure that you give attention to the following:

- *Ear to the ground*

A CEO who worked under the non-executive chairman who was the previous CEO, tells the story that this non-executive chairman had the habit of showing up at any time at the office without any appointment. He no longer had an office in the business, but made it his business to irritate others (unintentionally) just by showing up. He would not visit any specific individual in the business but walked in and wandered about. He happened to know everything that was happening and was up to date with the issues of the business.

The CEO did not know how to manage this dilemma and turned this issue into a positive by being collegial. Instead of discussing this with the non-executive chairman and asking him to leave and not just show up without an appointment, he took a collegial stance in a personal discussion. He focused on finding out how the non-executive chairman knew about the current issues in the business and why he continued to bother himself about the day-to-day issues. The response from the non-executive chairman was that he merely had his ear to the ground. Instead of the CEO getting upset, he became relaxed, cordial, and cooperative and requested the chairman to impart some of his wisdom by teaching him about how to have his ear to the ground. This attitude excited the chairman, who felt useful that the business leadership was taking him seriously, and that he had not become irrelevant. They started formalising these conversations and making proper appointments to just ‘shoot the breeze’, but actually, the meetings were for the CEO to learn. The CEO could have handled this clumsily and created a lot of damage. Instead, he was deeply collegial.

In the role as chairman I too have made it my business to know about issues that matter in the business and to avoid reacting to things that are brewing and not good for the health of the business. I too have my ear to the ground.

- *Walk the workplace*

As mentioned earlier, I dislike being confined to my desk. I love to keep fit and walking does assist me to be and stay fit. By walking the workplace regularly, it assists me in getting to know our colleagues in the business, getting to know more about their families and getting to understand what motivates them. It's about getting closer to them and also to create an understanding that, as a CEO, you are as human as they are, with the same sensitivities and desires. Like any other employee, you wish to live a normal life and find meaning in life. You are no enigma. I believe the discussions while walking the workplace are not being overly collegial, but rather part of genuine collegiality.

- *Stay aloof at your own peril*

Why is the office of the CEO and his/her executives almost always the last floor at the top of the building? It is often said, 'it's tough at the top, but the view is beautiful.' I believe it is important to be careful not to keep yourself as a leader far away from the people in the business. It is critical to stay close to employees and to be part of the conversations – indeed also part of the camaraderie and the 'happenings' in the organisation.

A leader or CEO who is aloof will be forced to rely on hearsay, 'broken telephones', and the rumour mill. No one will ever open up to you as CEO if you don't open up to them. Remember Gordon Bethune, the CEO of Continental Airlines mentioned in Chapter 4? According to Sinek in *From Worst to First: Behind the Scenes of Continental's Remarkable Comeback*[70], 'prior to Bethune's arrival, the twentieth floor of the company's headquarters, the executive floor, was off limits to most people. The executive suites were locked. Only those with a rank of senior vice president or higher were permitted to visit. Key cards were required to get onto the floor, security cameras were ubiquitous and armed guards roamed the floor to eliminate any doubt that security was no joke.'

I strongly believe that one should avoid that kind of situation, because it exemplifies aloofness and does not contribute to a collegial atmosphere. I have experienced that open plan systems or policies are the future. Be visible and accessible – and remain collegial without steering past the limits and becoming overly collegial. It is about finding the right balance.

- *The organisation is part of the bigger world*

The level of thinking required of the CEO or business leader is to understand and appreciate that the organisation they lead is part of the bigger world. This bigger world contains a diverse range of stakeholders and issues that need constant attention, yet are not constant in themselves.

Take the sector I know best: historically, the mining industry has operated reasonably peacefully, with their communities minding their own business. However, over the years and as the world evolved, communities have recognised that they must be part of the 'bigger game'. They wish to participate in the growth and development of the mineral endowments of the country and be part of the material benefits the country and business are experiencing.

The phenomenon of the expanding nature of stakeholder groups of every industry is gaining momentum globally, and leaders must embrace collegiality in opening up to the world by clearly articulating the *raison d'etre* of their organisations, as well as their strategies, plans and visions for the future. These become clear and well understood if the leadership of the business is deliberate in their communication and are collegial rather than being belligerent and negative.

The key here is to develop a way to integrate the needs of the different stakeholders in such a way that it does not create instability in the day-to-day operation of the business and its future growth. Collegial discussions that do not degenerate into brinkmanship, instability and disrespect are necessary.

Again, it is important to be collegial without overstepping the mark.

- *Surround yourself with the right people*

Imagine boarding a commercial flight with other passengers and taking your assigned seat in the plane and then the captain and his/her officers inform you that it's their first flight and this is a long-haul flight. What goes on in your head? What do you do? Something tells you that these are not the right people flying this plane.

It is imperative to surround yourself with the right people when you lead and run an ambitious business keen to grow and be formidable into the future. These are the people whose hearts are in the right place, who are keen to put their shoulder to the wheel and willing to sweat for the greater good of the business and all its stakeholders.

How do you find these people? Advertisements in different forms attract different types of people: different types of people have different successes and challenges, while every person has his or her own issues and would be successful or fail at times. Interviews can be one-on-one or in panels. Psychometric tests do assist, although at times they do fail.

All of these processes (on their own or as a combination) are meant to assist in the selection of what we call the 'right people for our business(es)'. Businesses become successful when they are led and run by the right individuals.

Importantly, it is the responsibility of the business to start being collegial and look at candidates through that lens to find the right people.

NOT OVERLY COLLEGIAL

'Do not be overly collegial.'

The question is, where do you draw the line? It's about being relaxed and trusting your competence. It is about not being aggressive towards anyone

and ensuring that your emotional intelligence is working and your reactions are properly in check.

I am a proponent of strong leadership – but certainly not of dictatorship. Teaching yourself not to be overly collegial can become complex, especially if you have a long way to go and learn how to be collegial in your approach as manager. This ‘long way to go’ relates to behaviours learnt from managers who did not believe in collegiality and who wanted their direct reports or followers to be tough and ruthless: people who speak aggressively or roughly towards their own direct reports.

The path towards being collegial without leaning in the ‘other direction’ of being overly collegial, is not an easy one either.

It is important to find the balance.

Find the balance in ensuring that you are relaxed with your subject matter and alert intellectually. Stay healthy and eat well and ultimately seek professional guidance regarding the things that trigger the type of behaviour you don’t need in your arsenal as manager and your life generally.

Chapter 7

COLLEGIALITY AND NOT OVERLY COLLEGIAL

I explain my concept of (P)ESG in this chapter. Possibly academics may read this chapter in detail and comment on my views and their usefulness.

AS STATED OFTEN, I BELIEVE the future of leadership in our world depends on collegiality. Isaac Hayes' song *If We Ever Needed Peace* (1978) starts with these lyrics:

The world as we know it today
Is in a pretty terrible fix
And we're responsible
It's up to us to try and start making changes for the better
For the future, for the children
If we ever needed peace, brotherhood and love
God knows we need it now, right now.

I first worked in the world of business as a junior officer (to be specific, as a training officer), then went on to climb the ladder to managerial roles and directorships. Ultimately I became Chief Executive Officer of Seriti Resources Holdings (Pty) Ltd, Executive Chairman and controlling shareholder of Masimong Group Holdings and chairman of several other boards. This means that I have experienced quite a number of events. One could say I am in the queue for a T-shirt: I cannot say I have seen it all, but I certainly have seen a lot ...

From my own experience in managerial roles, I feel qualified to state that, for the world to be a better place for the next generations, we need to fix a number of things. We certainly want to leave the world in better shape. Among others, we need to start exploring new ways of communicating with each other to find each other, understand each other and find lasting solutions together.

The conversations that dominate every boardroom discussion and every board meeting agenda today relates in some way to Environment, Social

and Governance (ESG) matters. In my view one should expand this idea and refer to it as (People), Environment, Social and Governance – (P)ESG.

Starting with the (natural) environment, I believe we are all responsible to ensure that nature must be respected, and this can only happen once we realise that we need nature more that nature needs us. As a coal mining CEO, it concerns me deeply that we all find ourselves in a situation where most of the world is still dependent on fossil fuels. We must not waste time and energy (intended pun), by arguing about the impact fossil fuels have on our natural environment and how this must stop at some stage.

A collegial approach is necessary to transition from fossil fuel dependency to a world where reliable and dependable energy is generated through clean forms of energy. There is a need to sit around the table and collaborate on ways and means to find initiatives that are going to assist the world find solutions to preserve all that nature has gifted us.

We also need to find ways to preserve our water resources, while land must be looked after and be utilised responsibly to produce food for the world population. The air that we breathe must be as clean and pure as possible; the seas surrounding the land areas must be cleaned up and then preserved through clean management practices. We must look aggressively at abandoning all the wrong practices that are bad for the environment.

I believe that being collegial will deliver this. I wish at some stage to be able to have a collegial conversation with those who wish to understand the journey of coal miners towards closing coal mines. The brash and aggressive conversations taking place in different environments between those who want a quick transition to clean energy and those who don’t see the necessity, should stop. The conversation should be collegial amongst all citizens of the world regarding a responsible and proper transition from fossil fuels to clean energy. This can be achieved if all of us share the same purpose, direction and vision for Earth.

The social environment the world operates in is precarious. War ravages countries: notably today we are seeing how the social fabric of the Ukrainian people is being destroyed by war. Our world is also experiencing other dangerous phenomena that are destroying societies: famine caused by drought, different forms of abuse, racial and ethnic malpractices meant to demean societies, and pure avarice. There is a need for us to engage in conversations to eradicate the anger and bitterness in which global society gets caught up. The leadership of the world's countries and all the citizens of the world must engage in collegiality-driven, but tough and hard conversations that will lead to 'lancing the boil' on most of the subjects that the world is grappling with.

For instance, the world is today limping along while there are people like the Rohingya people, yet we keep quiet.

Do we know who the Rohingya people are? In 2020 Pope Francis said the following about the Rohingya people: 'I have a particular affection for the Rohingya people. The Rohingya are the most persecuted group on earth right now; insofar as I can, I try to be close to them. They are not Catholics or Christians, but they are our brothers and sisters, a poor people kicked from all sides who don't know where to turn. Right now, in Bangladesh there are thousands of them in refugee camps with Covid-19 running riot. Imagine what happens when the virus hits a refugee camp. It's an injustice that cries to the heavens. I met the Rohingya in 2017 in Dhaka: they are good people, people who want to work and take care of their children yet who are not allowed to, an entire population cornered and corralled. But what especially moves me is Bangladesh's fraternal generosity to them. It's a poor, densely populated nation; yet they opened their doors to 600 000 people. Their prime minister at the time told me how the Bangladeshis give up a meal each day so the Rohingya can eat. When last year in Abu Dhabi, I was given an award – it was a significant sum – I had it sent straight to the

Rohingya: a recognition of Muslims by other Muslims.' (*Let Us Dream*[71] by Francis and Ivereigh)

Social tranquillity and peace will only be achieved through collegiality and generosity like that shown by Pope Francis. Brinkmanship is destructive. As a miner, operating in an evolving social environment and within increasingly aware communities, I know that the industry is part of the makeup of the social environment that we wish to harmonise. The mining industry must be collegial in prioritising social issues affecting our important stakeholders and neighbours. We must sit at the table and listen to the needs and desires of society. Then we should address those needs and desires and ultimately deliver the peace and stability that the communities can embrace for the future. A collegial approach will deliver hope for the future of our world.

Governance is the backbone of the business world, and indeed it is the backbone of any environment where anything transactional happens. It is time that the world engages in collegial conversations to deal with avarice, dishonesty and greed. The world of business has faced challenges regarding governance for a long time, and many boards are plagued by these challenges. It is imperative that we as business people are collegial in our approaches, look one another in the eyes and strengthen the world of corporate governance.

Yet, it is important to note that governance goes wider than organisational governance and pertains to countries, regional and international affairs. Imagine the governance-related conversations in the world happening in a collegial manner! If we can take that approach, it could possibly take us a step closer to a peaceful world where we aim to eradicate war, famine and all the evil things that plague humanity.

THE 'P' OF (P)ESG AND COLLEGIALITY

An approach that considers (P)ESG is the future. Why?

Our natural environment has been tampered with by people. It has been condemned, paralysed, poisoned, and destroyed by people. It did not destroy itself. Think of yourself taking a stroll next to the beach and you notice that there is oil blanketing the blue ocean. To what do you attribute this? Think of the plastic objects strewn all over the place next to the beach. Much of the plastic ends up in the sea. What caused this plastic waste to land in what should be pristine areas? People are responsible for these activities and therefore it is people's responsibility to deal with these environmental challenges and collegially develop strategies and plans to address these environmental issues.

It is also people who have tampered with social issues and who caused the challenges the world faces today. It is people who invented the military weapons that have in the past destroyed, and at present still destroy – and will, into the future, continue to destroy society and social systems. Think of the social disruptions that are taking place in Ukraine because of the Russian invasion? Social structures are destroyed, and people are at the centre of the decisions that deliver these devastating results.

People are tampering with social structures by engaging in practices that are discriminatory, disruptive and just plain negative. An example of this relates to displacing people from their natural environments for the sake of commercial initiative. There are arguments globally that famine is caused by natural phenomena and people may have nothing to do with this. We cannot rule out the possibility of having displaced people from one area to another, where the new environment is in fact uninhabitable. The reality is that smart people have managed to navigate their way around natural phenomena – and in the process have caused famine. After all, there are countries where rainfall is not abundant, but those countries are strong and surviving. Their people are not at risk of famine now and into the future.

Demagogues are people. They are also the ones who disrupt the social harmony.

I believe that people who run businesses must be collegial, put away their egos and engage with relevant issues to make society better.

It is people who make governance and professional decisions. Some are respectable and authentic, yet in the same breath one could also mention those people who make governance poor, undesirable and non-compliant.

The dream for most businesses that are professionally led and run is to employ people who will act in the interest of the business and its growth, as well as for the greater good. They should be people with integrity and strong ethical standing, and their practices should be beyond reproach. The challenge is to find these people out there. At the same time, businesses recruit people believing that they are the right ones. However, some then turn out to be unethical and reckless: people who do not act in the interests of the business.

It is imperative that governance is driven aggressively in the world of business. Businesses are investing in technologies to manage governance. Many or most businesses run programmes like hotlines where people in the business and outside – suppliers, clients and other stakeholders – can report unethical and questionable conduct. Businesses also employ professional investigators to watch over people as they perform their roles. These measures are necessary, but some do erode trust when people realise that they are in place.

Almost all business sectors globally have embraced ESG and accepted that it is part of the future, and the way businesses will function. In the introductory statement of the 2020 *Stewardship Report*[72] of UK company Dundas Global Investors, Managing Partner Russell Hogan says: ‘Our ambition is to be consistent. To invest in the best sustainable businesses. To deliver excellent returns for clients. The wider ESG movement is a valuable

support in achieving our goals as our clients and their consultants continue to ask meaningful and pertinent questions about the ESG impacts of investments.'

Our coal mining business has also embraced ESG. We believe this is critical and necessary for all businesses. We have embraced the direction the world is taking regarding the move away from fossil fuels. We embrace this process in the understanding that a responsible and just transition will be adopted by the entire world to ensure that no one or no part of our globe is impacted negatively by the transition to renewable energies.

Our business produced a detailed report on ESG to demonstrate commitment, strengthen transparency and build trust that the future will be different. The future will be cleaner forms of energy which will exist side by side with fossil fuels until these new forms of energy become sustainable. To refer again to the Dundas Global *Stewardship Report*, it mentions that Dundas held an 'ESG away day' with full participation of all team members. Over the course of the day, they covered the history of ESG investing and current ESG strategy definitions, as well as industry trends including assets and flows, ESG in financial performance, ESG in fiduciary duty and sustainable investing best practice.

The investment research methodology of Dundas uses a collegial approach which demands that all eyes have assessed and interrogated the financial data of a company prior to investing in it. Anomalies, outlying data and inaccuracies are examined and queried with the businesses data providers. Where questions remain, Dundas goes back to company's source documents – its own financial reports – to clarify.

CONCLUSION: THE(P)ESG ECOSYSTEM

A great corporate citizen is the one who will be collegial in approaching the people, environment, social and governance as a coherent ecosystem.

As a good corporate citizen, one would think about the business of today, making it work and delivering value into the future, while also being prepared to consider the future and preserving the environment for the next generations.

Whilst operating in the fossil fuel industry, I am prepared to accept the criticism relating to what fossil fuels do to the environment and the impact of coal mining – both positively and negatively – on the environment, society and its broader structures, individual health and wellness, as well as the atmosphere.

However, there is also a need to ensure that the transition from fossil fuels to new clean energy generation is properly and responsibly managed. People develop ideas and concepts. People make and implement plans and people are making decisions that have a lasting effect on the environment, society, and governance.

Thus, I believe the (P) of (P)ESG to be of the utmost importance.

Chapter 8

COLLEGIALITY AND NOT OVERLY COLLEGIAL

Excellence in management is vital for sports teams – but also for the management of businesses. This chapter looks at some of the elements of working together in teams while promoting a mindset of collegiality.

DURING THE EARLY STAGES OF my career, I believed that I had to shine as an individual and that I had to make sure that I was noticed for what I was capable of. I thought all deliverables were based on an individual's effort and teams did not matter at all. Boy, was I wrong!

At the time, I had this impression that when one goes to the stage to collect the 'prize', you do it as an individual, and that the sweet taste of any success was based on individual prowess, thinking and capabilities – therefore, one could enjoy it alone.

Even before that, I played very good soccer as a little boy and thought one day I would make lots of money and become a popular soccer star. This was based on my individual skills and individual wishes. Today, as a grown up, I feel it necessary to write this book, because perhaps my level of maturity has grown enough and my ability to decipher complex life issues has increased to the point that I can confidently mentor and coach young talent. I believe I 'got the T-shirt'.

In the process of reaching this point in my career, I have discovered that teams are amazing structures to deliver on plans to achieve a purpose and create value. Teams are amazing instruments or structures to nurture talent, while team members develop one another and look out for each other. I believe in the power of teams – but they must indeed be teams in the truest sense of the word. In the words of Howard Schultz, 'success is best when it's shared.'

I am a Liverpool Football Club supporter. I loved Liverpool from the days of Ian Rush, Steve McManaman, John Barnes, Bruce Grobbelaar and 'King Kenny' (Kenny Dalglish). I suffered for years, with most of my friends who support this great team, when our rivals under the astute management of Sir Alex Ferguson ruled the football kingdom. The arrival

of Jürgen Klopp has led to a great revival which saw the team winning the Premier League, the Champions League and more. I have watched the team that Jürgen Klopp assembled and have marvelled at their playing skills, their mesmerising attack formations and their classical dominant football possession. However, one thing worried me during this time, and I am thankful that the team found a solution to this worry of mine.

Indeed, this solution to my concern created itself: magic! I always doubted the attitude of Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah. I watched these two, and saw that, despite the great success they delivered, they were not great at working together as a pair. This was detrimental to the Liverpool team. I believe Jürgen Klopp, the great 'man manager', was smart in managing the dynamic between the two during the years he managed Mane and Salah. The way Klopp did that, provided the magic.

'We both give everything we have to help the team win. Maybe we're competing to show who is the best, and this is normal in any team and a legitimate right for any player, but in the end, we serve the team,' said Salah in an interview shortly before Mane left to join Bayern Munich.[73]

I believe that teams are strong if members value and practice collegiality, while not confusing collegiality with fraternising or ingratiating.

'Collegiality is sharing of harmonious, mutual and respectful companionship between colleagues and teamwork occurs as a by-product of this symbiotic association. Well-respected and esteemed leaders have advised collegiality to be a litmus test for teamwork. The signature trademark of collegiality is nothing but respectful behavior and attitude towards each other in a work setup,' said Sarita Kandari in *Promoting Collegiality to Drive Teamwork: Think of the Detriment!*[74]

Leaders of teams that are collegial or have satisfactorily achieved collegiality in their teams, have a bigger responsibility of guarding against fraternising or ingratiation among team members, because it could erode the

essence of collegiality and progress. They also must ensure that the team delivers on its obligations: collegiality should not exist at the expense of performance. What is the point of being a deeply collegial team which is characterised by harmony and no conflict, but that performs poorly?

This thought leads to the question of how a team can achieve collegiality, yet remain loyal to the cause.

LOYALTY

Almost all leaders want to develop or establish a team consisting one hundred per cent of loyalists and no dissenters. Yet, it is more important to have loyalists who genuinely tell the truth and are loyal to the bigger purpose, than to have loyalists who do not tell the truth and only pretend to be loyal to the purpose.

Loyalty is great and welcome as long as it is authentic. The members of teams that drive collegiality and collaboration are bound to tell one another the truth as comfortably as possible and promote loyalty to each other and their common purpose. Beyond that, they must be able to caution each other regarding the fraternising or ingratiation that may slowly creep into the team.

It was disheartening to read the book, *The Man Who Broke Capitalism*[75] by David Gelles, as I had developed my career reading lots of books and following the progress of many CEOs. One of those was Jack Welch. I believed that emulating what Welch practiced would make me a great leader and I would achieve success just as he did. However, Gelles describes Welch as having been ‘quick witted, and coiled with energy,’ a ‘cursing, kinetic tornado of a man,’ who ‘wore jeans and rolled up shirt sleeves whenever he could get away with it.’ And also – no surprise – as ‘a jerk, heavy on yelling and short on empathy.’ The book reflects on Jack

Welch as a leader who did not practice collegiality and did not believe in loyalty.

In an interview with Welch, '*GE's legendary CEO Jack Welch on people management*[76] he said: The idea that business is softer today than it was 25 years ago is silly and foolish … An open culture where debating issues is part of a winning culture. Being soft doesn't get you the right answer.'

To be fair, in the same interview, Welch said: 'Everybody has to gain the respect of their organizations. Everyone has to demonstrate human decency. That hasn't changed. The idea that you've got more minorities, broader gender? That just means you have to treat people well no matter who they are. You can't be a jerk with men, women, or anybody.'

Make of Welch what you want: I believe that loyalty, collegiality, and being relaxed and cheerful will not make a leader weak, meek and unsuccessful. I believe that the future leader is going to treat employees collegially but demand high performance and high productivity. There is nothing wrong with demanding results, but this cannot be done in an environment where people are treated like jerks, or being called names like 'Bozo' or the like.

TRUTH, CONSCIENCE AND COLLEGIALITY

I strongly believe that collegial teams must have members who are both truthful and have a conscience.

According to a 19th Century legend quoted widely on the internet, 'The Truth and the Lie meet one day. The Lie says to the Truth: "It's a marvellous day today!" The Truth looks up to the skies and sighs, for the day was really beautiful. They spend a lot of time together, ultimately arriving beside a well. The Lie tells the Truth: "The water is very nice, let's take a bath together!" The Truth, once again suspicious, tests the water and discovers that it indeed is very nice. They undress and start bathing.

Suddenly, the Lie comes out of the water, puts on the clothes of the Truth and runs away. The furious Truth comes out of the well and runs everywhere to find the Lie and to get her clothes back. The World, seeing the Truth naked, turns its gaze away, with contempt and rage. The poor Truth returns to the well and disappears forever, hiding there in its shame. Since then, the Lie travels around the world, dressed as the Truth, satisfying the needs of society, because the world, in any case, harbours no wish at all to meet the naked Truth.'

How does this story fit into this book about collegiality and this chapter about teams, teamwork, and collegiality?

One day I participated in a conversation in someone's office when a senior employee mentioned to me that one of the members in their department had a serious problem. I enquired about this serious problem, which turned out to be related to this team member being unhygienic: the individual did not wash properly and went to work not looking clean, with an odour that was not desirable for other team members. The challenge for the other team members was that they were unable to tell this member the truth, because of the risk of offending their colleague. However, this led to cheap gossip against this individual, to him being ostracised, and finally to him noticing that things had changed. It was suddenly becoming unpleasant for him to go to work at all. How could this be resolved?

However difficult this may be, a team must be able to 'lance the boil' of such situations in the interests of looking after one another – and this must be done in a collegial manner. The trick for any team is to develop the skills to be able to tell the truth to one another – including about their persons – in as collegial a manner as possible. If this becomes the norm, the world will begin to be a better place.

The best analogy of holding on to the truth and not disclosing it, or having a conversation about it until it causes terrible damage, is like having

a serious decaying tooth in your mouth and delaying visiting the dentist to have the problem treated. If you delay, your mouth feels uncomfortable, chewing is difficult, talking becomes problematic and at worst, you develop extreme halitosis. What should you do? Should you take a painkiller every night to sleep well, but wake up in the morning with the same tooth in its place and your pain back with a vengeance? Or do you take the more drastic and temporarily painful step to visiting your dentist to have the tooth extracted?

That is also how one deals with telling the truth! In a team set-up, just tell the naked truth. Even though the truth may be temporarily hurtful for all, and the specific team member in particular, the team will soon find healing and life will return to normal. The 'dentist's chair' is often not as bad as it may sound – and being truthful is part of being collegial.

Because the future is about collegiality, we also need to train young leaders to embrace collegiality, but not mediocrity.

As to the second requirement for team members: what is the meaning of conscience? Oxford Languages defines it as 'a person's moral sense of right and wrong, viewed as acting as a guide to one's behaviour.'

Bearing in mind that teams are complex entities and composed of dynamic members who behave differently, and who have different backgrounds, different attitudes and different outlooks on life, teams must work together for a common purpose. Each member of the team must have a deep moral sense of right and wrong – and be able to notice things that are right and be prepared to call out those things that are wrong (not those who merely appear to be wrong). It is unhealthy for team members to observe one of them doing something wrong and turning a blind eye in the name of harmony. It is an undesirable state. Teams that are driven by collegiality and a high-performance culture consist of members with a conscience. Much as team members should have the enthusiasm to complement and congratulate

each other when they do right, they must have the same enthusiasm when they correct or advise each other when they do wrong.

Collegial teams will thrive as long as they do not forget the purpose of the team and the goals that have to be attained. The final measure of how successful the team will be is not only how collegial or harmoniously they get along, but the high-performance culture they drive to deliver results. Whereas team members must be able to tell the truth and have a conscience to belong to a well-functioning team, it is imperative that the leader of the team treats every team member with respect, is able to tell the truth and has the conscience to distinguish between right and wrong.

BROTHER OR SISTER'S KEEPER

Recognising that one of your team members is facing challenges, or needs assistance or support, is very important. It encourages you to take steps to assist that team member to ensure that they are successful. A team benefits from the success of its members.

Be a 'brother or sister's keeper'. There are rewards to achieving this state.

Being a brother or sister's keeper implies that we need to be collegial and assist each other for the benefit of the team. What is the incentive of assisting each other or becoming your brother or sister's keeper? The first big incentive is that you may be remembered or known as a noble and larger-than-life personality who acted with collegiality and created a legacy.

The second incentive is that, when you too become a boss or team leader of the team, you will know how to act. Because you will expect all your team members to be successful, being a brother or sister's keeper ensures that everyone in the team is deeply collegial in the interest of the business or purpose – and everyone becomes willing to carry their own weight and to assist others.

I have often participated in succession discussions when future placements are deliberated. One question that often gets asked is whether the potential candidate or incumbent is a good team player and can lead a team in future. Thus, on the negative side, being uncooperative and unnecessarily belligerent is a waste of time and energy – and you could be throwing away a great future.

LASTLY…

Perhaps the biggest lesson to take away from this chapter on teams, teamwork and collegiality is that collegiality means leaders should strive to create a relaxed atmosphere where debate is fruitful and targeted: one that is productive without being time-consuming, and where a high-performance culture is inculcated. A collegial and cheerful atmosphere is one where all members are proud to be part of the team. In such teams, fraternisation and ingratiation are closely monitored and do not deteriorate to toxicity. For us to venture into the future as better leaders, we must find a healthy balance and strive towards productive, collaborative collegiality.

Chapter 9

COLLEGIALITY AND NOT OVERLY COLLEGIAL

The title of this chapter says it all: self-respecting leadership is the key to a rewarding career and a lasting legacy.

THOSE BUSINESS MANAGERS WHO WILL retire one day and take life easy, don't wish to retire as pariahs. They wish to retire and be celebrated as great leaders who have led successful businesses and organisations by those they met during their careers, interacted with and influenced. I cannot imagine that there are people who deliberately wish to be remembered as awful, disgusting and despicable human beings – unless something is not right with their mindset.

The future will not be shaped by Adolf Hitler, Gaius Caligula or Jack Welch. The future is going to be shaped by a new generation of leader who has different attributes: attributes which may have been shunned worldwide by many scholars and businesspeople in the past. Yet, I believe those are the exact attributes we must embrace and implement into the future.

A self-respecting leader will create a safe and relaxed space for his entire team and organisation by ensuring that communication is simple, direct and nurturing rather than breaking people and demotivating them. Furthermore, a self-respecting leader will thrive through collegiality, and ensure that meetings are non-threatening, well-structured and cordial, but driven by effective and efficient decision-making and a high-performance culture.

TOUGH, RUTHLESS AND ARROGANT LEADERS

As mentioned earlier in the book, I observed how, in the past – perhaps 20 to 30 years ago – there was the emergence of tough, ruthless and arrogant leaders who ensured that they intimidated their teams and provided the kind of feedback that broke employees' confidence and self-esteem. To be promoted, one had to demonstrate strong personal tendencies of swearing, shouting at people, demanding respect, and be prepared to hire and fire at will.

Those leaders have no place in today's environment.

Let me take you through a journey looking at three leaders who were tough, ruthless, and arrogant. Unfortunately all three of these executives were male:

- The starting time at this head office was 08:00 and this CEO used to arrive at the office at around 07:45. He would drive his sports car into the first parking in the underground parking of the building in the centre of town. If it happened that he got delayed due to traffic at the entrance, caused legitimately by the archaic access system of his own business, this CEO would throw his toys out of the cot in spectacular fashion.

  But other things also irritated him: if it was not the irritation of the traffic at the entrance, it was about the trivial matter of not receiving his newspaper on his desk.

  The main thing to notice about this person was his poor communication skills that lacked collegiality. He bragged about his very short meetings, during which he made his executive team listen to him talking about himself for almost 60% of the time.

  The things that upset this CEO can be perceived as small things, but my view is the same as that of Warren Buffett, who says: 'If you let yourself be undisciplined on the small things, you will probably be undisciplined on the larger things as well.' (*The Tao of Warren Buffett*[77] by Mary Buffett and David Clark, 2008)

  While getting upset by what may be perceived as small things, in the bigger scheme of things those failings reflect an undisciplined environment. Secondly, this CEO's arrogance in the way he treated people when walking from the parking to his office was astonishing. He never greeted anyone except those close to him. Lastly, spending an inordinate time talking about yourself shows a high level of

arrogance. To him I would say: ‘Your team attends your meetings to contribute to the future of the business and not to listen to you. Be collegial Mr CEO!’

- The second case is of an operational General Manager who was considered so ‘tough’ that, by merely walking into the boardroom for a formal meeting, all members of his management would stand. They would then take their seats after he had sat down. I am still wondering what would have happened, had he walked into the boardroom one day and found all of his management team sitting down, waiting for him!

  He never understood collegiality. He talked down to his direct reports. Even on subjects about which he was no expert, he never respected his experts at the operational level. Instead of chairing meetings collegially, creating a relaxed environment and listening to his team talking about their areas of expertise, he would spend entire meetings chastising his team. To him I say: ‘This is plain wrong, Mr GM. Learn to use a collegial approach today!’

- Thirdly, there was a Managing Director who was known for walking about all the time in the business because he hated communicating by telephone or cellphone. He would spend his day visiting service departments in different buildings and would harass them about being slow and not providing the service he demanded.

  Ironically, all the departments he harassed were delivering value for the business. He never paused to appreciate what they delivered. Instead, he spent his entire day chastising them rudely for things that could easily be delivered. To him I say: ‘Results are much easier to achieve if you adopt a collegial approach, Mr MD!’

HEARTS AND MINDS

Theodore Roosevelt has been quoted as saying: ‘If you’ve got them by the balls, their hearts and minds will follow.’

This statement contains a lot of aggression. For me, winning the hearts and minds of those you lead must not come with any form of aggression.

When starting to practice the art of being collegial and encouraging employees to be part of your journey, the aim should be to have relaxed, cheerful, high-performance individuals who operate under less stress and have minimal health issues. Part of your aim would be to provide a great workplace within which people can thrive.

Employees must be willing to be rational in their approaches, be clinical and strive towards a deep sense of accomplishment – but ensure that their emotional intelligence always remains part of the process of achieving those aims. Where employees – and especially leaders – are unsure about their emotional intelligence capabilities, it is imperative that the business proactively assists in equipping them through relevant programmes and training.

It is all about winning the hearts and minds of stakeholders; especially employees, since we spend most of our time with them and achieve our successes through their efforts to satisfy the needs of other stakeholders.

‘The psychological contract that traditionally bound employees to their employers has been fraying. Many of today’s workers, having experienced the pain of the economic downturn and large-scale layoffs, no longer feel as much loyalty and commitment to their organizations as they did even a decade ago. Job hopping has been described as the “new normal”, and millennials are expected to hold 15 to 20 positions over the course of their working lives,’ according to Tessa Basford and Bill Schaninger writing about *Winning hearts and minds in the 21st century*[78] for McKinsey.

‘Meanwhile, middle management – the executives who traditionally act as a conduit for communication from the top to the bottom of companies –

has been hollowed out. So perhaps it’s no surprise that in the face of these two trends, leaders struggle to get their employees to embrace big change programs. Rather than adapt to the demands of an organizational transformation, employees are more likely to resist passively, undermining the effort and spreading that contagion throughout the organization. Or they might simply decide that such a transformation isn’t worth the risk and look for their next opportunity elsewhere,’ they continue.

‘To counter these problems, it’s more important than ever for companies in transition to invest time and effort in changing the mindsets and behavior of the workforce. Almost 15 years ago, we introduced the idea that four key actions could work together to support such initiatives: fostering understanding and conviction, reinforcing change through formal mechanisms, developing talent and skills, and modelling the new roles.’

Although their article is seven years old, it is still relevant in terms of ensuring that employees follow the leader towards positivity and the achievement of great results in a relaxed, cheerful and collegial environment.

In addition, it is important to remember that, if a leader fraternises or ingratiates, they will win some ‘hearts and minds’, but these may be different ‘hearts and minds’ from the desirable ones! If the leaders are collegial in sharing their plans and strategies, they are guaranteed to have followers who would commit their hearts and minds to the journey and the future of the business.

Chapter 10

COLLEGIALITY AND NOT OVERLY COLLEGIAL

This chapter concentrates on how collegial leaders will conduct themselves in the future, and discusses the transactional analysis (TA) and Johari window theories. Also included are eight relevant scenarios that could be adopted by leaders who want to practice collegiality as the core of their management styles.

AT THIS POINT IN MY career, I look back on all I have experienced since I started out as schoolteacher in 1990. I have watched how different types of leaders lead their different teams, and how colleagues in a team behave in different ways. I have watched great successes and great disasters. I have also done introspection regarding my own role, behaviour and performance as a leader.

As I reflect on and share these reflections with readers, I believe that the clear way of the future is a loud call to be collegial and therefore deliver great results, growth and performance. This idea is summarised by Debra Mooney, David Burns and Scott Chadwick in *Collegial Leadership: Deepening Collaborative Processes to Advance Mission and Outcomes*[79]: 'Effective collegial leaders need to be able to successfully build and maintain long-term relationships with individuals who often are from very different backgrounds and objectives.'

'YOUR STAKE IN THE GROUND!'

I wrote this book for young and old leaders who aspire to be better leaders, deliver great results and leave great legacies to last forever. It is my dream to see young leaders, as well as mature and experienced leaders, put their stakes in the ground and clearly outline their future journeys and achievements, so that the people they lead will participate confidently in their journeys. While the message is conveyed by the leader as 'putting his stake on the ground,' this must be delivered in a relaxed, harmonious, confident and collegial manner to ensure that no one amongst those being led is threatened or feels maligned by the message and the plans for the future. Self-respecting leaders will stand courageously before those they lead and outline the principles that they stand for, the reasons why they

believe in those principles, as well as their plans to ensure that their messages are disseminated accurately across the organisation without any distortions – and importantly, how all of this will be sustained.

‘LET’S DO THIS!’

‘Hard things are hard,’ Barack Obama said. He had this message on his desk in the Oval Office at the White House. The respected American business writer Ben Horowitz also titled his 2014 book *The Hard Thing About Hard Things*[80].

Indeed, there are no easy answers to the questions about building a business. It is not all that different from the journey we all travel through life as human beings: we face challenges, problems and many other kinds of life encounters – things to be dealt with if one wants to live life to the fullest. Some things we handle instantly and with ease, while we procrastinate dealing with other matters, including some immensely difficult life issues. Many different events take place as life moves on, and as a result humanity sees and experiences progress. The challenge is to simplify complexity.

As I stated earlier, this book was inspired by my meetings with leaders of employee organisations. At that time I already asserted that the best manner in which we could interact in business and other organisations in general, is to be as collegial as possible and thereby achieve what we all desire. Collegiality will also assist humanity to deal with the hard things that we encounter daily.

This is a departure from the traditional way in which leadership was moulded. There were different schools of thought. One was that for leaders to be effective, feared (unnecessary) and respected, they needed to be tough and use specific language that would instil fear and intimidate. As the saying goes, the idea was to make people ‘toe the line’ versus creating a

harmonious environment – one that is healthy and cheerful, but supports high performance and productivity, and is therefore deeply collegial. As the new way for leadership, collegiality should nurture the new future and assist to ensure that humanity thrives.

‘The further you are from conflict, the simpler it is to explain. Just ask Mike Martin, a former British army soldier in Afghanistan who is now a London lecturer in war studies. His experiences in the field and in academia are “unsatisfyingly discordant”, he says, as the reasons given for conflict by armchair experts fail to chime with those he witnessed first-hand. When he got to know people in the Taliban, he discovered their motivation for fighting was less to do with ideology or politics and more to do with upholding family honour or experiencing the exhilaration of conflict. Martin, whose ideas have crystallised in the book *Why We Fight* published by Hurst, argues that we need to look beyond politics, culture and psychology to war’s “biological underpinnings” in order to understand it. Humans fight to achieve status and belonging,” he says. “They do so because, in evolutionary terms, these are the surest routes to survival and increased reproduction.” ’(*Is fighting in our genes? A biological theory of warfare*[81] by Joe Humphreys, 2018)

This extract from Joe Humphreys’ article resonates with my view that we are not born to be violent or to be aggressive and fight all the time. It is not in our genes to be thinking of being violent and creating fear to achieve status and belonging.

As previously mentioned, I was raised in a business environment where the intimidating way was encouraged. As young up-and-coming leaders, we believed and embraced the intimidating way of leadership which, to a great extent, delivered great results – but under stressful conditions. A number of employees were traumatised and some never mentioned their stress and

trauma. If they had, they would have been viewed as weak leaders – something with which no one wished to be associated.

The nurturing way, which is not new at all but has not been spoken about much, is about the future and not the way of the past. Below is a comparison of the two:

THE INTIMIDATING WAY (OLD)	**THE NURTURING WAY (THE FUTURE)**
Instil fear in people	Create a relaxed and nurturing environment
Create an environment where people 'toe the line'	Create an environment where professionalism prevails
Be aggressive in resolving matters	Be firm but remain cordial
Use strong language (abusive at times)	Use a nurturing language that instils confidence
Victimise people	Encourage participation
Meetings resemble a 'tumble dryer' with 'blurry, forced results'	Meetings are collegial – but results and decision-oriented

I am one of the leaders on the journey transitioning to the new way – the nurturing way, which I believe is the way of the future. Over the years I have been aggressive in my ambition to achieve results and have never entertained mediocrity in my career. What I see as the future way has been the inspiration for me to write this book.

In my view the future way is one that creates a nurturing environment where employees look forward to going to work – one where they encounter a high-performance yet enjoyable culture, and can freely participate in meetings without any threats, abuse or browbeating. However,

they would also understand that decisions will be made swiftly and accept those as high-quality decisions.

THE TWO THEORIES: TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS (TA) AND THE JOHARI WINDOW

I often suggest two useful theories (also known as psychological assessments) – the Transactional Analysis theory and the Johari window theory – as being useful tools.

Having spent a large part of my career in the human resources function and having had the opportunity to implement processes, systems and theories that assisted employees to develop, I have been intensely exposed to these theories during my career. Although I do not claim to be an expert in either, they have helped me to be a better communicator. I believe in the future they will still benefit me in terms of being more collegial, while still maintaining my mental sharpness, remaining focused on the achievement of my organisational and personal goals, driving a high performance culture and delivering clear decisions.

Transactional Analysis

Transaction Analysis (TA) was developed by Eric Berne, a Canadian psychiatrist and psychoanalyst during the 1960s. It has been used extensively in different businesses, organisations and by many professions and professionals.

‘Transactional Analysis is a system of psychology for understanding human behaviour, changing human behaviour and predicting human behaviour,’ said Eric Berne. He also said: ‘We’re all born princes, and the civilizing process turns us into frogs.’ These two quotations carry deep messages for leaders who wish to transition from being ‘frogs’ and return to being ‘princes’ and adopt TA through learning about it. There is value in its applicability, and internalising its concepts could make leaders better

communicators who will also become more collegial and develop awareness and alertness when they start to veer towards undesirable fraternising and ingratiation.

Berne repeatedly observed that people change throughout a conversation. These shifts are not only verbal but also involve facial expressions, body language and other non-verbal changes. He refers to these changes as different ego states. Our entire personality consists of three ego states that are the foundation of all transactions: parent, adult and child. Together these ego states explain the thoughts, feelings and behaviours exhibited by a person at any given time.

We communicate with others from a particular ego state, and we continuously move from one ego state to another. Our behaviour, thoughts and feelings change according to the ego state we occupy. As Berne explained: 'In any given individual, a certain set of behaviour patterns corresponds to one state of mind, while another set is related to a different … attitude, often inconsistent with the first.' (*The Rediscovery of Me* by Holly Hartley[82])

I believe that, as leaders who aspire to master collegiality, we need to understand human behaviour and how it changes. Ideally, we should develop the ability not only to understand changing human behaviour, but also to predict it.

Johari window

Developed in 1955 by researchers Joseph Lust and Harrison Ingham, the Johari window is a psychological assessment tool designed to be used in a group setting to identify how individuals in a group perceive one another. The tool is used to answer the question, 'How do we see ourselves, and is this different from how others see us?' Like many other psychological assessment tools, the Johari window is a stepping stone towards developing

leadership communications and improving the emotional intelligence within an organisation.

Using the Johari window is simple. Individuals describe themselves by using words from a list of adjectives, and are in turn described by others. The use of common adjectives and descriptive words relating to character traits (and the absence of others), creates opportunities for dialogue and change. Results are grouped into four different boxes:

- **Open**. Adjectives that both participants have selected are placed into this box. For example, if the subject describes themselves as trustworthy and the group members also describe the subject as trustworthy, that is an openly-held belief about an individual's personality. He or she does not have to work terribly hard to convince others about their trustworthiness.
- **Hidden**. Adjectives which are selected by the individual but not by any of their peers are placed into this category. The box is aptly named, because it contains the traits which are known to the individual but seemingly hidden from the group. It is incumbent upon the individual to change the way he or she is perceived if he or she wishes to do so.
- **Blind Spot**. The adjectives placed here are those that are only perceived by the group, and not by the individual. Again, this category is appropriately named because the individual is blind to how he or she is perceived by others.
- **Unknown**. In this category, adjectives placed here are not selected by the individual or the group. This may be because the adjective is not appropriate to describe the individual, or else neither the individual nor the group has been made aware of the existence of these traits. The potential to be described by any adjective in the unknown category remains open.

Depending on the results of the Johari window, individuals may need to adjust their communication styles and behavioural choices to convey more effectively the things they want others to know about them, or the things they want to change outright. This may be a steep learning curve, but the lessons are worth pursuing.

You may want to consider the benefits of conducting a Johari window assessment at your next team-building opportunity: it can be a fun and highly rewarding exercise that could benefit all participants (refer to *The Benefits of the Johari Window Model* in *Executive Velocity* by Beth Armknecht Miller[83]).

The Johari window can be used to expose people to what they need to work on and improve their communication styles and behaviours, thus making them better people who will be collegial (yet not overly collegial) and aware of the risk of introducing fraternising and ingratiating into their communication styles and behaviours: these are to be discarded and eradicated.

The two theories of TA and the Johari window converge when it comes to our behaviour as leaders: leaders have one-on-one sessions with their direct reports; leaders have formal meetings with their executive and management teams. Leaders also chair and address townhall sessions and speak to different stakeholders on a myriad of subjects. Our behaviours during and beyond these exchanges are of prime importance. How are we perceived by all these different audiences? Are we aggressive? Are we frogs? What are the responses of the different audiences? Do we achieve the outcomes we desire? If not, why?

The Eight Scenarios

Below are eight scenarios to consider. Leaders and potential leaders could take away the key questions posed for each scenario. Where relevant, it may be advisable to seek assistance or guidance to effect the necessary improvements in your business.

We all wish to first find our Ikigai (or that which gives us purpose), then find ways and means to achieve longevity whilst still enjoying life. Although we do not like the thought of being on our deathbeds (as will inevitably happen), we do not want to look back at that time and regret that we were irresponsible with our lives, unkind to one another and ourselves, or added stress to ourselves with the wrong activities and behaviours. We do not want to recall that we practiced the wrong leadership lessons of ruthlessness without purpose, used wrong language, inflicted constant worries and 'chest pains' on ourselves, or were downright disrespectful to others.

1. Are you in that permanent 'tumble dryer'?

Next time you see a tumble dryer operate, step back and watch how it moves. Think of yourself inside it. You hear the sound of the machine, and if there are clothing items with buttons or other hard objects, you hear them clicking against the glass of the dryer.

Do you ever feel that way in your daily role and routine? Is it right? Are you planning to do anything about it? Is it impacting your health, lifestyle, and family? Working in a collegial environment will change this, as the mood will be more relaxing, cheerful and productive. You will not see yourself inside the 'tumble dryer'. Of course, the world's 'daredevils' will tell you that the 'tumble dryer' effect is good for their adrenalin. However, if you find yourself in a tumble dryer situation, or a scenario like this, do something about it. Seek guidance to change the situation or move on to something else. As a leader, you have the capability and capacity to stop the tumble dryer by changing to collegiality.

2. Are you running on a 'hamster wheel'?

A great friend of mine is experienced in the world of business, and I respect him for his achievements, as well as what he has achieved generally in life. I mention him because he calls me a 'blue-arsed fly'. He says I am always in a frenzy of activity and busy with something.

I believe my life is well organised from a diary point of view and I am in this frenzy to make things happen because I enjoy it. What helps me in this approach is my ability to focus all the time. I believe I have the end goal in mind and do my best not to waiver on the journey to the goal. I concern myself with my health and my well-being and I do my best to eat well and exercise. I believe I embrace collegiality whilst guarding against fraternising and ingratiating. Yet I may seem to be a 'hamster on a wheel'.

Is that 'hamster wheel' typical of your daily routine? Are you planning to get off the wheel or are you unable to do so? If it is within your power or responsibility, slow the wheel down and while you do this, ensure everything is approached collegially. You may

also have to seek the help of professionals in achieving this. If you are a leader, develop collegiality. You may discover that the wheel no longer causes you pain. Perhaps create the state of slowing down first – and then try to get off the wheel.

3. Is it a 'roller coaster ride'?

How many times do we come across people saying their life is a roller coaster ride? Do you find that your career in general or current work life is like being on a roller coaster, and if yes, is it enjoyable or just an uncomfortable headache?

It is difficult to bring predictability to our daily routine and often life has its ups and downs – hence the unpredictability. As Stromae would say, 'I do not want the things I do to be easy and predictable. I want them to be real.' If your career or role at work is a roller coaster ride and it's not comfortable, make a plan to find new ways to perform your role. The fast roller coaster might not be great for your health and general life. Do something about it. Be collegial in approaching ways in which you can smooth out the ride of your work life to be less like a roller coaster.

4. Are you on a 'merry-go-round'?

Children enjoy a merry-go-round and when I was growing up in the township, there were no playing facilities. Then some clever businesspeople visited the township and installed some of these play parks, including merry-go-rounds. We children had fun playing on those, even though the machines simply went round and round.

Yet, a merry-go-round image is perhaps not ideal for a work situation. Does your work environment feel like you are going round in circles in a meaningless manner, or is your working life meaningful? What would you like to change? Does it anger you to see what is happening to you? It is not necessary to fight about changing things, like children on a merry-go-round may do. It is unnecessary to become belligerent if you believe you are on that perpetual machine going in circles. Think about it in a collegial way and you could find a cheerful way to get off the merry-go-round.

5. Are you in the 'swamp with pigs'?

When you wake up in the morning and think of your unbearable workplace, it is not a good feeling at all. The workplace may be unbearable because of the behaviour of colleagues or bosses who treat one another with disrespect, abuse, or uncaring attitudes. The environment deteriorates as everyone keeps quiet and people are not keen to confront the problem and it begins to feel like one is 'in the swamp with pigs'.

Pigs enjoy the swamp as they belong there. But in the workplace, it is undesirable to liken colleagues and bosses to pigs. Critical reasons for the workplace to become a swamp include undesirable relationships that have existed over a period of time between and among colleagues and bosses. These relationships may be the result of fraternising and ingratiating behaviours, and they have festered to become a swamp.

To resolve these issues, change this workplace and make it a better environment that is harmonious, cheerful and relaxed, with everyone respecting one another with positive attitudes. The ideal would be for everyone to begin communicating collegially, adopting collegial attitudes and committing to being collegial throughout all their interactions. The role of leaders and CEOs in particular would be vital to start this journey.

6. Are you on the 'treadmill without shoelaces'?

Imagine yourself running on a treadmill with shoelaces that are not tied properly. Will you be able to run properly? Will you be able to walk steadily?

Every employee wakes up and looks forward to going to their workplace knowing that it is a relaxed and cheerful environment, but where the level of intensity in delivering high performance is non-negotiable.

Leaders should be able to create an environment where each employee is on their 'treadmill' with their shoelaces tied properly, so that their shoes are under control and they can enjoy the run on the treadmill together with their colleagues. Collegial approaches are the key to such an environment.

7. Is your development 'monkey see, monkey do'?

Our lives are driven by growth and development and when we stop growing and developing, it's the day when our lives tend to lose meaning. At the same time, we grow up watching those older than us, or those ahead of us doing things in a particular manner. We tend to copy or emulate these things and habits. It is the world of 'monkey see, monkey do'.

In the workplace, we watch our colleagues and our leaders doing things in a specific manner and behaving in a specific manner. We emulate most of these behaviours without, in many cases, asking what they are doing and why they do what they do.

Over the years we may have watched our leaders behaving in a ruthless, tough and, at times, uncouth manner. We copied their styles because we believed they were doing the right things to guarantee success and great results. Yet we never paused to ask why they were doing what they were doing and whether it was right to emulate their behaviours.

I believe it is now time to start emulating those who practice collegiality and follow in their footsteps. We need to emulate leaders who are relaxed and well composed under even the most stressful circumstances, yet intense in delivering high performance results. It sounds and feels a bit like a tall order to find leaders who practice this. However, self-respecting leaders will do their best to emulate the behaviours that exemplify collegiality.

8. Are you lying on a 'hammock'?

Some workplaces are simply great. The people who work there are probably thriving due to the effects of collegiality.

Employees in such a place feel that their work environment is like ‘lying on a hammock.’ They are comfortable. There is cheerfulness around them and no one speaks to them in a rude way. They respect and appreciate their leaders.

The idea for the leaders in such organisations would be to entrench collegiality in the workplace to the benefit of everyone – and to spread the lessons of collegial behaviour beyond their own business so that more employees in more situations can feel as though they are ‘lying on a hammock’.

I believe that following a philosophy of collegiality and acting upon it means that, as a leader, you will leave a lasting legacy for generations.

OBG (OH! BE GRATEFUL)

I am grateful to these individuals, because when I reached out to them, they did not hesitate to allocate time and write something as a contribution to this book. When this book hits the shelves, we will ensure that all proceeds are allocated to initiatives meant to make humanity better.

- The late Theophilus Vusi Debese: Your legacy lives on. There was a reason you called us ‘Mazambane’. RIP.
- Nosipho Damasane: Always willing to assist.
- Alan Waller: Behind that smile is a real hard worker.
- Peter Armitage: You have the touch of an investment genius.
- Mpumi Madisa: Bidvest is a beast, and you are meant to unleash its lasting potential.
- Tshilidzi Marwala: The bright son of Alpheus. You are meant to change the world and humanity for the better.
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- Mary Bomela: The Mineworkers Investment Company is in great hands.
- Chris Welthagen: I am watching – and we will talk when you are 50 years old. I believe the best is yet to come.
- Brittany Seabrook: Diligent, dependable and always keen to make other people’s lives better.
- John Ehlers: You lead but you don’t hog the limelight.
- Sandi Teke: Damn! You are patient! Love you to eternity.
- Boikanyo and Tshiamo: I am watching. The future beckons.

ABOUT MIKE TEKE

Michael Solomon (known as Mike) Teke was born and grew up in KwaThema, Springs.

Mike obtained BA (Ed), B Ed (University of the North), and BA (Hons) (University of Johannesburg) degrees and an MBA (Unisa-Open University). He taught from 1990 to 1991 at Kenneth Masekela High School, where he completed his high school education, and then served in various human resources roles at Unilever, Bayer, Impala Platinum and BHP Billiton before becoming one of the founding members of Optimum Coal, where he was also appointed CEO.

He became the Vice President of the Chamber of Mines in 2011 and President from 2013 until 2017. He was also appointed as Chairman of the Richards Bay Coal Terminal in 2012, but stepped down in 2016 to become Non-Executive Director of the Board and Chairman of the Remuneration Committee.

Today Mike is the CEO of Seriti Resources Holdings (Pty) Ltd, the company which he co-founded in 2018 and which has since grown to become one of South Africa's largest coal mining companies – a major exporter of thermal coal. He is also Executive Chairman and controlling shareholder of Masimong Group Holdings, a diversified investment company. In addition, Mike serves as Non-Executive Chairman of Rolfes and of the Anchor Group. He is also the founder and main shareholder of Lady Dorothea Investments, and is a board member of DNI.

Importantly, his leadership achievements were recognised when he became Chairperson of Council at the University of Johannesburg (UJ).

Mike is married to Sandile, and they have two children: Boikanyo (son) and Tshiamo (daughter). He says: 'I was raised by my grandmother,

Dorothy Teke, as my mother died when I was a kid and I have never met my father. My commitment is to be a great father to Boikanyo and Tshiamo and a loving husband to Sandile. I cherish that thought!’

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