

The spirit of leadership

This Mandela Day, the Centre for Coaching at the GSB partnered with Lead SA to facilitate free, one-on-one coaching sessions for people who wanted to grow their leadership skills. Here's what the key players had to say.



THE ORGANISERS

Janine Everson and Craig O'Flaherty, directors of the Centre for Coaching at the GSB

Coaching can play a key role in developing emerging leaders. Leadership is a lonely role. When you are chosen to lead, everyone around you is telling you what they think you want to hear.

The one thing that leaders are not getting is true, honest feedback. We hoped this initiative would help future leaders ask pertinent questions, like, what am I really doing well? And, more importantly, what am I not doing and how can I do this better? Coaching focuses on what you have to start doing differently and how you deal with different issues. It is about deep listening, which is very powerful. People sit and listen to each other and start thinking differently about the issues they are facing. When you feel listened to and heard, you can really put something out there.

Mandela's leadership legacy teaches us that there is power in recognising another person's humanity. He connected with people. That's the power of leadership and coaching too, you connect to one human being at a time, so that you are not just a symbol that deals with tasks or roles. Coaching shows leaders the power of connection and what that does to people.



THE COACH

Leslie Rance, Head of Corporate Regulatory Affairs at British American Tobacco

I decided to participate in this initiative because Nelson Mandela was a phenomenal leader and he left us a tremendous legacy, and a big part of that legacy is a free and democratic society. I think, as he said in the speech that he gave in Hyde Park in 2008, "It's all in your hands now" – he meant all of that. And I felt compelled to honour him on Mandela Day. To give a little of myself to try and help pick up from where he left off and lead South Africa.

I believe that coaching is a valuable tool. We are all capable in a number of respects, but there are some things we are not capable of. Mandela was phenomenal, but even he walked alongside a number of other people. In the same way, there is a lot that emerging leaders can do by themselves, but they too need some support. That's the role that we were there to provide, it was to walk alongside young leaders. Together we can do phenomenal things. As I shared with a coachee in the session, Mandela led people that needed to trust and be trusted. Trust can be defined in three ideas: sincerity - do we all have the best interests of South Africa at heart? Capability and competency – do we have the ability and skills to make this a better country?



THE COACHEE

Jacqui Setoaba, Director at CMD Projects

I heard about the Lead SA coaching initiative on the radio and thought attending the coaching sessions on Nelson Mandela Day would be a great opportunity for me to fine tune my leadership skills. Who would not want to learn about modelling the leadership principles of a charismatic leader like Nelson Mandela?

The coaching session didn't give me a 'failure proof' recipe on leadership success, but it allowed me to reflect on my leadership abilities and character by considering how my life's journey thus far influences the way I do and interpret things. I have a better understanding now of how I can go about building on my current skills and leading with greater confidence.

There is an opportunity for us as young people to move away from situations that make us dependent on others and start finding and developing ways that can sustainably improve our circumstances. I aspire very much to see the next generation of young people dealing with things themselves and leaving a legacy that will empower people to move from where they are and into a space beyond what we can even imagine.

