

Brand Madiba and the lessons you can apply in your business

 By [Anton Ressel](#)

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The recent global attention, prayers and support for Madiba as he battled with health problems only served to cement what we already knew - seldom has any public figure been so loved, by so many and for so long.

In fact, I would go so far as to say that he has been *the* icon of our time, a man whose popularity and persona has transcended every political spectrum, cultural affiliation, ideological standpoint and racial demographic - in short, just about everybody loves the man, and rightly so. Brand Madiba is a powerful, visible, revered and unifying symbol of the triumph of the human spirit, and chances are that this will only continue to grow long after he is gone.

Imagine if your business and your brand could generate even a fraction of the goodwill that surrounds the greatest statesman of our time. While the legacy Madiba leaves will, one hopes, serve to inspire future generations of leaders and nation builders, there are some poignant lessons to be learned from his example in a business context as well - let's explore some of these.

Be Humble

While no one can deny that Madiba is a larger-than-life personality, one of the core traits he has exhibited throughout his career has been a tendency to let others shine, and avoid taking all the credit for the feats he accomplished. "It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory... You take the front line when there is danger. Then people will appreciate your leadership." From a business perspective, it is important to always keep your feet on the ground, share successes with your team, and be genuinely grateful towards your customers and funders - they will appreciate such an attitude, and reward it accordingly.

Be Inclusive

When opportunities arise that you may not have capacity to benefit from, or are not in your field, do you make a point of sharing them with your networks, customers or even competitors? The truth is, in business and in life an inclusive and collaborative approach trumps a narrow, paranoid and petty one every time. "If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner."

Be Courageous

Being an entrepreneur or running a small business is not for the faint of heart. No matter how great your product or service may be, there will be times when your cash flow is non-existent and month end looms, or when you stand at the crossroads of taking a risk or playing it safe, unable to make a decision. It is at times like these when you will feel tempted to take the safe option, to walk away or give up, but before you do you may want to consider these words: "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."

Be Patient

As someone who languished in prison for nearly a third of his life, and then emerged ready to serve his country and devoid of any bitterness or desire for retribution, one of the core traits we can learn from Madiba is surely that of patience. In my experience, people who rush to get things done, turn up the pressure to close a deal or leap at any opportunity that presents itself, seldom make it for the long haul. While we all dream of being an overnight success, in business it is usually

those with patience and staying power who make it to the top, one step at a time, and stay there. "In my country we go to prison first and then become President."

Be Resilient

The final lesson we can learn from the great man is about resilience. This differs from courage in a sense that resilience is the ability to pick yourself up, dust yourself off and try again when things do not go your way. Everyone has failures and challenges in business and in life, it is how we respond to these challenges and stay focused on the end goal that defines us and sets us on the path to success or ruin. "There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountaintop of our desires."

By the time you read this, Madiba may well no longer be with us, horrible though that thought is. What will always remain, however, is his legacy and the lessons we can all learn from him in a personal and business context.

ABOUT ANTON RESSEL

Anton Ressel is an experienced business development consultant, mentor and SME specialist. He is the Senior consultant at ED and CSI specialist agency Fetola (www.fetola.co.za), a winning mentor on the SAB Kickstart Entrepreneur Competition, and a published author across multiple publications. His passion is helping small businesses become big ones. Follow @antonres on Twitter.

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