

# Unleashing transformational corporate leadership in South Africa

By [Naseem Kathrada](#), issued by [Regent Business School](#)

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At Regent Business School, our mission is to enrich learning experiences and provide valuable educational opportunities that enhance our students' journey with us. As part of our ongoing commitment to improvement, we seek to continuously engage with our students, enhance our offerings and introduce fresh ideas and subjects for discussion. With this commitment in mind, Naseem Kathrada from Regent Business School hosted a discussion with Sung Yoon, the former CEO and president of Samsung Africa, and best-selling author of *The Samsung Man's Path to Success*. The discussion inspired Kathrada to explore the realm of transformational corporate leadership in South Africa. With insights drawn from Yoon's extensive corporate leadership experience, this text sheds light on the motivations, challenges, and strategies that drive successful leaders and examines the key takeaways from the webinar, reflecting on their potential impact on South Africa's corporate landscape.



Naseem Kathrada, director of human capital at Regent Business School

It is important to have a clear understanding of what transformational leadership is before we explore the topic. By definition, it is a leadership style that goes beyond traditional management practices which involves inspiring and motivating followers to achieve their full potential, challenging the status quo, and driving meaningful change within the organisation. Transformational leaders lead by example, displaying authenticity, vision, and empathy. They empower their teams, encouraging them to take ownership of their work and promoting personal and professional growth.

## Personal motivation and the power of resilience

During the webinar, Sung Yoon emphasised the significance of personal motivation as a driving force behind success. His commitment to Samsung for over three decades showcased a remarkable journey of growth, both for himself and the company. Drawing parallels between corporate leadership and leading a national sports team, Yoon emphasised the daily challenges and responsibilities that come

with transformative leadership.

In a country like South Africa, where diversity and adversity shape the corporate landscape, the power of personal motivation cannot be underestimated. Leaders must find meaning and purpose in their work, aligning their goals with those of their organisations and the wider society. This sense of purpose fuels resilience and determination, enabling leaders to navigate through obstacles and inspire their teams.

## The role of support networks and mentors

Yoon attributes much of his success to the presence of supportive networks and mentors throughout his career. He spoke passionately about the positive influence of his father, who instilled in him a resilient and positive mindset from a young age which he did his utmost to emulate to his own children. Seeking guidance from senior mentors played a crucial role in shaping his decisions and leadership style.

In our country, where historical imbalances and social inequalities persist, cultivating supportive networks and mentorship programmes becomes imperative for nurturing transformational leaders. Establishing platforms for experienced leaders to guide and inspire emerging talent can bridge the gap between generations and create a network of support that transcends traditional hierarchies. Through these networks, aspiring leaders can learn from the experiences of others and gain invaluable insights that accelerate their personal and professional growth.

## Empowering leadership journeys

The webinar's impact extends beyond the event itself. The insights gained from Sung Yoon's experiences and the lessons shared in his book can inspire a new generation of leaders in South Africa. By embracing transformational leadership principles, individuals can drive innovation, inclusivity, and sustainable growth within their organisations. They can become catalysts for positive change, addressing societal challenges and contributing to the overall progress of the nation, and have the potential to shape the landscape of corporate leadership in South Africa, empowering individuals to become catalysts for transformative change. By embracing transformational principles and strategies, leaders can create a brighter future, one where inclusive growth and innovation flourish, and where South Africa stands at the forefront of transformative leadership on the global stage.

## Lessons on incorporating effective transformational leadership in African businesses

In the context of business in Africa, effective transformational leadership can drive sustainable growth and positive social impact. By embracing this leadership style, businesses can create environments that foster innovation, collaboration, and ethical practices. Transformational leaders in Africa have the opportunity to address unique challenges, such as poverty, inequality, and environmental sustainability, through their business endeavours.

**Embrace local context:** Effective transformational leadership in Africa requires an understanding and appreciation of the local context. Leaders should be sensitive to the cultural, social, and economic dynamics of the region in which they operate. By acknowledging and respecting local customs and traditions, leaders can build trust and establish meaningful connections with employees, customers, and stakeholders.

**Empower and develop local talent:** Transformational leaders should prioritise the development and empowerment of local talent. By investing in training, mentorship, and skill-building initiatives, leaders can unlock the potential of individuals and contribute to the growth of the local workforce. This approach not only benefits the organisation but also helps uplift communities and contributes to long-term sustainable development.

**Foster collaboration and partnerships:** Transformational leaders recognise the value of collaboration and partnerships in driving business success. They actively seek opportunities to collaborate with local businesses, NGOs, government agencies, and community organisations. By forming strategic alliances, leaders can leverage collective expertise, resources, and networks to address complex challenges and drive positive change.

**Embrace innovation and adaptability:** Transformational leaders understand the importance of innovation and adaptability in the dynamic African business landscape. They encourage a culture of creativity and experimentation, promoting a mindset that embraces change and adapts to evolving market conditions. By encouraging innovation and supporting entrepreneurial thinking, leaders can foster a culture of continuous improvement and resilience.

**Lead with integrity and ethics:** Transformational leaders in Africa must demonstrate high ethical standards and integrity. They prioritise transparency, fairness, and accountability in their business practices. By setting a strong ethical example, leaders can inspire trust among stakeholders, enhance the organisation's reputation, and contribute to the overall growth and stability of the business environment.

In the context of South Africa, where economic growth and social development are ongoing challenges, the availability of such resources can play a significant role in inspiring and equipping aspiring leaders. By sharing their stories, insights, and strategies for success, experienced leaders can empower others to embrace transformational leadership and drive positive change within their own organisations and communities.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Naseem Kathrada is an accomplished professional serving as the director of human capital at Regent Business School. With over 30 years of experience in leading private and corporate companies, Naseem brings a wealth of expertise to his role. Before joining RBS, he dedicated five years to specialising in leadership development and talent

management. Throughout his career, Naseem has excelled in various domains, including human resources, HR consulting, strategic planning, and organisational development. His extensive background has shaped him into an exceptional leader, driven by a desire to empower aspiring leaders and managers to unlock their full potential. He holds a Master of Business Administration with a focus in industrial and organisational psychology, which he earned from the Graduate School Of Business at the University of Durban Westville. Additionally, he obtained a BA (Hons) in Industrial Organisational Psychology from University of Cape Town.

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