Our South Africa of the mid to late 2010’s is generally acknowledged to be experiencing a crisis of leadership. For some time now, we have been confronted daily with examples of organisational failures in all spheres of the economy and in many institutions of our society, which are often rooted in our fractured past, but must be dealt with in the present and future though strong and effective leadership which, unfortunately, is largely lacking. Our reputation as a nation is under threat and the repercussions are felt financially and socially by everyone in the country.

The leadership crisis has to be looked at also as a moral crisis, because sometimes we can see strong leadership, but coming from a poor moral base which does not place morals, ethics and good governance at the forefront. The results are scandals, corruption and damage to people.

Our young democracy cannot afford such leadership shortcomings if we are to solve our national development problems, which manifest largely as unemployment, inequality and poverty, and if we are to get ourselves onto an economic growth path which will benefit all South Africans.

We have pockets of excellent leadership across all spheres of the economy, individuals who deliver valuable results and role model good moral leadership. However, these pockets do not spread their positive influence as much as we would hope they would, and as a result thereof, we do not achieve a critical mass of good leadership.

Even good leaders will agree that the role and task of leadership is complex in modern times. A volatile and increasingly uncertain business environment, a lack of economic growth, uncertainty, increased compliance requirements, business and political scandals, rapid change, technological advancement, disruptive technologies, globalisation and a myriad of other factors complicate the role of leaders. It is at this turning point, that brings the crux of leadership to the forefront. The call is for formidable leaders who can take the bold step to transformation, change and making the difference that counts.

“A startling 86% of respondents to the Survey on the Global Agenda agree that we have a leadership crisis in the world today. Why would they say this? Perhaps because the international community has largely failed to address any major global issue in recent years. It has failed to deal with global warming, then barely dealt with the failure of the global economy, which has caused such severe problems in North America and Europe. Meanwhile violence has been left to fester in the Middle East, the region our Survey showed is most affected by, and concerned about this problem. So why are we suffering such a lack of leadership?”

We have witnessed leadership in many forms and faces, and through ages and generations. As individuals we strive to be leaders in our fields, domains and lives, however we all look towards what differentiates a good leader from a great leader. Every day, we witness examples of more lacking leadership, than actual inspiring leadership at its best. Is the world lacking in excellent leadership? Why?

Not so long ago South Africa was embraced by a leader that inspired the world with vision, forgiveness and humility. An individual who became iconic because he believed in the people of a country, and understood the compassion needed to heal a wounded country. A leader known for transforming a country from oppression to democracy, a leader with sound ethical reasoning, a leader whose style and approach cannot be replicated. The leader is our beloved former President, Nelson Mandela...our Madiba.

Madiba was the epitome of sound leadership. A leader with heart and sound reasoning, that didn’t change a few people, but a whole country. The amazing attributes of Madiba has inspired the world, and this South African has become a global example of leadership.

“If there ever was a time to embrace ethical leadership, stop spinning, stop manipulating, stop relaying on our supporters or sympathisers to do wrong knowing that our own doing will be covered up in some way, that time is now.”

Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng
Source: http://ewn.co.za/2016/04/11/Time-to-embrace-ethical-leadership-is-now

Why is sound leadership important?

We have witnessed leadership in many forms and faces, and through ages and generations. As individuals we strive to be leaders in our fields, domains and lives, however we all look towards what differentiates a good leader from a great leader. Every day, we witness examples of more lacking leadership, than actual inspiring leadership at its best. Is the world lacking in excellent leadership? Why?

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“A leader...is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind.”

-Nelson Mandela

www.greenleaf.org
So why is sound leadership important? Without a doubt, it is important because sound leadership not only leads people, but grows, transforms and develops more leaders. Sound leadership incorporates all the aspects of excellent leadership that creates solutions, resolves challenges, not only at an organisational level, but at a societal, country and global level.

South Africa has seen the devastating effects of not having sound leadership. The impact has left the economy in “junk status”, the media and news are riddled with issues of corruption, abuse of power, mismanagement of tax payer’s money and state capture. The period 2015-2017 has presented us with several cases of poor leadership in government, the private sector and non-profit organisations.

Some of the reported cases in the media are as follows:

- State Owned Enterprises becoming financially compromised, thereby increasing the state’s risk of debt defaults on its contingent liabilities and thus investment ratings agencies downgrading the country;
- Companies in several major sectors of the economy such as construction charged with collusion and anti-competitive behaviour;
- Ongoing violent protests at universities and in several towns throughout the country;
- Several schools achieving a 0% pass rate in the matric examination, attributed to poor leadership by principals.

Some of the possible causes of leadership failures are as follows (SABPP, 2017):

- People with functional knowledge or technical expertise move into leadership positions without leadership training or skills;
- Different and divergent perspectives and definitions of leadership with the result that different leaders try different approaches, some of them failing in practice;
- Managers attempting to apply management theories from overseas without adapting them to the South African context;
- A lack of leadership vision and strategy, and many execution gaps;
- Poor decision-making skills by leaders resulting in disillusioned followers;
- Ineffective and outdated leadership and management practices frustrating employees and customers;
- A lack of accountability and responsibility;
- Poor governance and ethics;
- Inadequate leadership development inside and across organisations;
- Managers often do not have the right qualifications and/or the right leadership skills to take their organisations and people forward;
- Chasing short-term targets at the expense of long-term sustainability and social relevance in the broader society.

The results of poor leadership are manifold and include, amongst other things (SABPP, 2017):

- Waste of resources and disengaged workforces;
- Inability to perform or compete internationally on key benchmarks;
- Inability to build and sustain high performance organisation cultures;
- No or poor corporate citizenship;
- Slow progress in implementing the National Development Plan (NDP);
- Poor service delivery;
- The perpetuation of a “business as usual” approach by not making any difference to the country’s big problems: Education, Inequality, Unemployment, Poverty, Health and Crime;
- Many lost opportunities to resolve South Africa’s problems as a result of the inability of leaders to form and build effective public-private partnerships.
According to the article "Why Black Friday will be a dark day for South Africa", the ratings agencies have consistently warned about South Africa’s path to junk, highlighting:

- Domestic political uncertainty and social tensions, which weaken the commitment to economic and fiscal reform;
- High public debt levels – leaving little space to respond to shocks;
- The potential for destabilizing political events remains – particularly the ANC’s elective conference;
- High levels of unemployment;
- Low growth;
- Unchecked government spending, particularly related to state-owned companies – in terms of guarantees and bailouts;
- Threats to the independence of the Reserve Bank.


South Africa is in need of a response to create sound leadership. Sound leadership that will display ethics, fairness, good judgment, strong vision and innovation. But this leadership should encompass compassion, humility and a heart that leads people with a "sound" mind.
The response to the leadership crisis: The South African Leadership Standard

It is one thing to comment on the leadership problems we face, it’s another thing to do something about it. South Africa understands the need for leadership to take the reigns and move away from corruption, unethical practice and the lack accountability for decisions made. Leadership needed a standard of practice that is applicable within organisations, society and country. A standard that can form the basis of driving and cultivating leadership for present and future generations.

“For the purposes of this Standard, we consider that ‘anyone with influence’ should be considered to be a leader, no matter his or her level in the organisation and no matter what type of organisation, whether Parliament, government, public sector, private sector or an NGO. Sometimes, therefore, a leader has structural authority over a team of people and sometimes a leader is a subject matter expert or internal consultant who influences people across the organisation and possibly represents the organisation externally. Someone who operates as a self-employed consultant would also have a leadership role within his or her sphere of professional work.

The ‘influence’ may be such that it can be exercised directly or relatively directly. Thus, for example, shareholders of a company who are passive investors would not be considered to be leaders for the purposes of this Standard. Once a shareholder takes on an active role, either through active influence or pressure on the Board, or by becoming a Board member or taking on an executive role, then such shareholders would be exercising a leadership role.

For the purposes of the Standard, the sphere of influence is one which extends outside our own role as a private citizen who has influence within circles of family, friends or neighbours. However, many of the concepts contained in the Standard could usefully be incorporated into those more private roles to enhance the quality of leadership within those roles.

The Standard refers frequently to ‘employees’, who are essentially the followers of leaders in a formal organisation. However, it is important to note that the leaders themselves, at all levels, are employees also.”

In developing this unique leadership journey, an opportunity is created to reach a common understanding of the demands of leadership which can serve two important functions [SABPP,2017]:

- To present to leaders in simple terms what is expected of them; and
- To form the basis from which to understand current failures of leadership in many sectors.

Within an organisation, especially those with multiple sites, inconsistencies in leadership and people management practices occur. The problem is further exacerbated by the fact that leaders at different levels have different levels of competence. The different philosophies of universities, business schools and other learning providers contribute to the problem, given the fact that some institutions’ management and leadership curriculums are dominated by traditional management approaches developed during the previous century, while current and future demands require a different leadership paradigm and competence. The result is that students exiting these institutions come from different academic backgrounds based on vastly different schools of thought. In many cases, these students have to be retrained according to the needs of the organisation, and some companies even go as far to create their own corporate universities to train their own leaders.

The enormous body of research and academic writing on the topic of leadership illustrates how complex the concept of leadership can be. However, most people taking on leadership roles would like to know in simple terms what is expected of them and how they can continuously improve their leadership skills.

Poor leadership is holding back the development of the South Africa we want to see, so the SABPP, Talent Talks and Wits have committed to bring forth action and lead with a standard of excellence in leadership. The effects of poor leadership can be seen across society [SABPP,2017]:

1. Private companies are limiting their own profits by not leveraging the role of leadership in driving performance, others are simply maximising profits at the expense of key stakeholders such as employees, customers and society at large;
2. Public service organisations and government departments in all three spheres of government are under-performing when it comes to service delivery and ethics, as a result of ineffective leadership;
3. Non-profit organisations are stagnating, limiting their own growth or moving backwards, due to a lack of leadership in crafting better strategies and execution plans.

The SABPP Leadership Standard is the response to the leadership crisis, because it creates a structure that defines, creates vision and the road map to drive leadership. It gives a response that can neutralise the damage of poor leadership, and create a paradigm shift that exalts the call for leadership to step up.
Research and academic writing on the topic of leadership illustrates how complex the concept of leadership can be. However, most people taking on leadership roles would like to know in simple terms what is expected of them and how they can continuously improve their leadership skills.

Part of the complexity of the concept of leadership is a debate on the emphasis between “being” and “doing” as individual leaders. The “being” is around personal or self-mastery, around being authentic with your followers, around paying full attention to their needs. Whereas the “doing” is often seen as carrying out the management tasks that the leader is expected to do.

The intention with this South African Leadership Standard is to provide one simple framework against which organisations and individual leaders can reflect on their leadership. Each leadership model taught and applied by different universities, business schools, consultants, psychologists and learning providers can be mapped to this standard. It is not the intention of the SABPP to insist that there is only one model of leadership, the complexity of the topic clearly shows that this is not realistic.

The way in which the Leadership Standard is framed concentrates on four parts, which will enable a consistent application of different leadership models. We believe that through this framework, the “being” is translated into visible outcomes, some of which depend on “doing” and others on the relationships created by “being”. These parts are (SABPP, 2017):

1. A Leadership Framework depicting different dimensions which need to be considered. For each of the five core elements within this Framework, three sections have been elaborated.

2. Outcome Statement. This explains what should be a visible outcome of leadership in this element. An example of the outcome statement found with the South African Leadership Standard:

   “The collective leadership of the organisation sends a strong, simple message of the chosen future for the organisation which clearly conveys a purpose which inspires stakeholders and enables the organisation to find its way through uncertainties as they unfold in the future, presenting new opportunities and threats. Individual leaders live this message and make it real for their teams, showing them the line of sight between the vision and their work.”

3. Fundamental Requirements for Good Practice. These are a set of clear and simple indicators which will form the building blocks for achieving the Outcome Statement. An example of fundamental requirements can be displayed in the South African Leadership Standard, “Instilling Vision”:

South African Leadership Standard www.sabpp.co.za

South African Leadership Standard www.sabpp.co.za
The vision is appropriate to the organisation’s South African context and will contribute to the national vision as stated in the Constitution: “to achieve a better quality of life for all citizens and to free the potential of each person.” The need for job creation and alleviation of poverty and inequality is front of mind in deciding on the organisation’s chosen future. The vision demonstrates the active citizenship of the organisation.

The vision is enduring but flexible to changing circumstances. The vision is active in bridging the present and the future.

The vision is ethical, realistic and practical and clearly shows how the organisation and its leaders will contribute positively to sustainability of all six capitals of the International Integrated Reporting Framework (financial, manufactured, intellectual, human, social and natural).

The process of defining the vision is collaborative, including as many stakeholder groupings as is appropriate so that a comprehensive range of risks is considered, and differing interests of stakeholders are taken into account and balanced.

The vision is widely and regularly communicated, and stakeholders are helped to understand the context and application of the vision.

4. Key Questions. These are a set of questions which any organisation or individual leader needs to reflect on and arrive at an answer which suits the specific context of the organisation or individual leader. An example of fundamental requirements can be displayed in the South African Leadership Standard, “Instilling Vision”:

- What is the most effective collaboration process with stakeholders to ensure positive relationships and engagement with the vision?
- Have we checked that our organisation culture will support the vision and if it is not aligned, what will we do about it?
- What are the best ways to convey the message of the vision to stakeholders?
- How will we know that everyone in the organisation is aligned in working towards the vision?
- How will we keep the vision alive and inspiring for our people?

These four parts are crucial in unpacking the dimensions within the context that it is used. The standard itself was developed to create solutions to leadership challenges, and leave no excuses for leadership to respond to crisis.
The Leadership Standard was drawn up by South Africans in response to a crisis in leadership in South Africa. However, it is likely that the content of the Leadership Standard would apply in many other different situations. A similar consultative process would be needed in another country to ensure applicability and stakeholder involvement.

The approach was inclusive and open to hear and understand what the need for leadership was. The three partners in this project, the SABPP, Talent Talks and Wits Enterprise, adopted the consultative and co-creating methodology used previously by the SABPP when it formulated the HR Management Standards. A high-profile event was organised for September 14th, 2017 at which interested individuals from a wide range of South African organisations (private, public and non-profit) came together to consider and discuss what the content should be for the Leadership Standard. The product of the group discussions at this event is presented as an initial "first edition" which is to form the basis of wide consultation across South Africa. The Standard was then launched on the 26th October 2017.

The standard encourages many beneficial aspects of leadership, and leadership credibility, that are important to display the type of leadership needed to put South Africa back on the roadmap to success. It is crucial to understand the need of leadership from a macro to micro level of understanding. The core of leadership is always inertly driven from a personal level, and the formulation of the standard incorporated a room full of leaders; bold and dynamic to understand, analyse and generate input into the standard. The SABPP exemplifies leadership in its own right, to take the "lead" in creating the Leadership Standard for South Africa. This is a market leader in standardising the leadership formulae that is adaptable to any environment, simplified to promote implementation, and innovative in its content to create leadership or better still, inspire it.

"Inspiring day! Leadership must be the norm and not the exception.”
Portia Heynes, Group Manager Learning & Development, Sun International and attendee at the Leadership Standard launch on the 26th October 2017.

"A well organised event on such a crucial topic. Thank you SABPP for creating the environment for us to talk, discuss and debate the topic of leadership and how we can impact the standards of the future of leadership.”
Sharmila Govind, Director at Success Human Solutions and attendee at the Leadership Standard journey on the 14th September 2017.

"33% of executive’s time is spent responding to crises or problems.” The Creative Group, July 2005
Source: https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/81998
HR and Leadership

HR finds itself at the heart of leadership as it is the custodian driving leadership development, the leadership ladder, the leadership competency and the leaders themselves. It is a huge risk to be a custodian of leadership, if HR has not defined their own leadership. Also, HR has to “lead” by example, should they take on the responsibility of leadership. HR leadership is power in itself and can define many avenues of leadership within the organisation. Leadership, can be seen as the talent that drives the business vision and anchors itself as the compass of the organisation, however the leadership in HR should also form part of the talent that drives the business vision.

Here are some tips to assist HR in becoming “the leader in your space that drives the business vision”:

- Know the business plan. By understanding that HR does not work in a silo of the business, but enables the business strategy with a skilled and competent workforce.
- Change the words. Instead of accepting that HR is a “support”, add “strategic”. Become strategic and the support function will fall in place.
- Talent audit yourself as HR. It’s imperative that you understand your strengths and weaknesses, but more so your unique talent in HR.
- Know the trends and innovate. Innovate your thoughts, processes and programmes by understanding the change in employee, employer and business needs.
- Evolve the HR function. In the article “The evolving Employee”, it is mentioned that since the employee is evolving in their needs and expectations, therefore HR needs to evolve and respond to those needs. Business evolution + Employee evolution = TALENT EVOLUTION = HR EVOLUTION
- Measure success and ROI. Everything we do in HR must have a measurement and must make business sense. Ensure your strategy aligns to outputs that drives business success.
- New game + New rules = new skills & competencies. HR is a leader in talent, and the standard in talent acquisition, selection, benchmarking has changed. The adapt, evolve and survive mode is in action at present. HR needs to drive business by recognising the multi-skills and potential in their talent, and map those individuals to business outputs. Employees sits with many skills and competencies that need a platform to thrive.
- Learning becomes digital, adaptive and accessible. Embrace technology as an enabler and a leader in the workplace. Your talent already is learning and growing their knowledge base with it.
- Leadership at all levels. Recognise leadership at all levels. Most of the structures in organisations still have

very hierarchical or flat structures, hence making leadership something from a top – down level. The power of HR leadership is that it can recognise leadership at all levels and measure through outputs.

By using the Leadership Standard framework, HR can support leaders to:

- Start leadership conversations with their leadership teams.
- Recruit the talent that supports the company vision.
- Equip leaders with skills and competencies to instil vision and influence their employers through excellent and ethical leadership approach.
- Deliver results that create value and create culture of high value performance.
- Living the values through conduct, behaviour and culture. HR must ensure that the values are lived throughout the organisation and enable the platforms for it. One of those platforms is the leader him/herself. HR must ensure that leadership lives the values and sets the example for others to follow.
- Influencing people is a key part of leadership as it creates trust, buy-in and respect.
- Reflecting for improvement, as defined in the standard “has a clear purpose: to improve self-awareness through new insights to assist with self-correction, continuous improvement of results and development of self and others. These insights are communicated openly and honestly with stakeholders”. In truth lessons that are learnt, create the best growth for organisations. To be honest and reflect for the purpose of improvement shows courage, best interest of the people and the company, and leadership in its true light.

HR and leadership have a close relationship in setting the standard, the pathway and the criteria for excellent leadership, and therefore plays a pivotal role in getting leadership to be developed to the highest level of integrity and value.
“The cultivation of leaders with exceptional character and skills is critical to Africa’s development. Africa’s development partners should recognize that it is too late to teach someone who occupies a high position in government how to lead during side talks at global events. They should also bear in mind that there has to be alignment between the sense of identity of the leader and that of the followers for leadership to work.

Incompetence in leadership in most African countries is not only the problem of people who occupy positions in government; it is a reflection of the leadership culture. We’ve had different leaders with the same results for decades. The power distance that exists between leaders in government and citizens is also reflected in organizations and families. In such a structure, leaders don’t serve; they are served, because occupying leadership positions make leaders superior and unaccountable to the people they lead. Africa needs leadership development systems, and it is incumbent on development partners and global leaders to understand how cultural differences affect these.”

Source: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/05/africa-doesn-t-need-charity-it-needs-good-leadership/
What is Leadership to you?

To understand leadership, is to understand the level of leadership found within yourself. Leadership is personal as it differs from each one’s need, understanding and reflection of what makes a good leader. Are we unrealistic to want a leader that displays and has excellent leadership qualities? Is it too much to ask for a leader of a country to put the needs of the people first, and act with a code of leadership that is fair and just.

Are we too reaching to expect leaders in society to exude the qualities of a leader that creates more solutions and platforms for success, rather than more challenges? Is it too much to expect leaders within organisations to act with integrity and exalt excellent leadership qualities, that motivate and inspire their workforce?

To be honest, all the above is not unrealistic or reaching. Leadership has existed from the onset of humanity, and it has grown and developed its power to influence, lead, create vision and create the trust of those who follow it. In the same line, humanity has witnessed leadership grow in power that it destructive as well [Adolph Hitler and his initiation of World War II or the Apartheid Era of South Africa]. Leadership should not be destructive anymore, but a force of good improving organisations and societies.

With the Leadership Standard available, there is hope to respond to the crisis and a basis to encourage leadership to take its rightful place and resolve the challenges of the people. It is a big responsibility; however it is backed by others who believe in the power of excellent leadership that make a wealth of a difference.

As individuals in our own right, we possess the ability to be leaders in our own sphere of influence. The changing environments have proved that collectively we are a powerful force of leadership, and we have the power to choose the leaders and communicate our expectations of them. The SABPP Leadership Standard can assist in ensuring that leadership has direction and vision to lead leaders. It by far a long-awaited step, to direct the greatness of leadership. It is a step worth taking, and ensuring that many follows. Take the step and define and apply leadership with the South African Leadership Standard at your organisation.

To download the full Leadership Standard, go to: www.sabpp.co.za or read another 50 articles on Twitter: @SABPP1 #LeadershipStandard
This Fact Sheet was compiled by:
Lathasha Subban: SABPP Head: Knowledge and Innovation.

The contribution and facilitation by Dr Penny Abbott in the development of the leadership standard is acknowledged. The full list of almost 100 participants during the leadership standard development process is acknowledged in the original document available on www.sabpp.co.za

Visit our Website at www.sabpp.co.za for the list of previous Fact Sheets
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