

Johannesburg

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POWERING POSSIBILITIES - STARTING WITH THE SMALL THINGS

It can be argued that good governance starts within each individual who takes responsibility for their own actions; these actions will generally be based upon the values each individual attaches to their own set of personal beliefs. Naturally, our values may be strongly influenced by the 'collective' in which we exist. And so, in the case of a family, community or even a business environment, a leader -- be this of the human or even the animal species -- is expected to set the example for his subjects, setting an example of what is acceptable behavior and what is not. Let's call this the universal law for good governance such where there is an accepted understanding *that we do unto others as we would have had done to ourselves*.

Clearly then, it becomes imperative that our leaders, be they fathers of families, church leaders, school heads and even the CEOs of business, must lead by impeccable example through their own actions when they wish to see the change they espouse from their leadership positions.

Of course in South Africa, we have various examples of leaders, some better known and accepted by our society than others. One iconic and undisputed leader that springs to mind, and known all over the world is our very own Madiba -- our country's first democratically elected black president -- who set the stage for being the world's ultimate and finest leader, demonstrating his unwavering commitment and principles attached to ensuring that all the county's citizens, both black and white would be free. We agree; Nelson Mandela, Henry Ford, JP Getty, Eli Lilly and Bill Gates are some of the world's most recognised heroes who stood for freedom and democracy. Each one of them went to extraordinary lengths to prove their humanitarian points. Equally, Mother Theresa and Mahatma Ghandi were known worldwide for their compassion for the oppressed, poor, sick and needy.

"A hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove - but the world may be different, because I was important, in the life of a child."

Forest Witcraft

Each of these extraordinary people seem so far from our ordinary worlds; so when we are called to act for a humanitarian cause, we somehow demean ourselves to believing that our small contribution is trivial, particularly when comparing our actions to those of the greatest.

This need not be the case. Indeed, there are wonderful lessons we can draw from these people and that is of course the fact that it wasn't money that drove them in the first instance. No, not money, but indeed their hearts and compassion -- fueled of course by their commitment -- and knowing they had the ability to change tiny components, each day, one at a time. One kind gesture begets another, and in our universe, this compounds to massive change. History teaches us over and over again; people reflect the behavior of others. Collectively, their efforts were assisted by like minded people who surrounded them, all of whom had a similar desire to see change for the good of all. Said differently, and perhaps more attached to the days when old fashioned values may have stood for more; *unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno*, being the Latin phrase meaning, "one for all, all for one".

So in the context of these great people, the real question we should be asking ourselves, particularly at this time of year is; "can we make a difference on the plight of so many desperate people, being the poorest of poor? If so, how?" It really does start with the small things of course. A smile, or even a friendly gesture will go a long way. Let's face it, this is not difficult and costs us nothing to give a little warmth to those in need. Naturally, our inner consciousness may not allow this tiny gesture to actually be enough and perhaps a little more can be done to help those in need.

Sometimes an epiphany is found in the smallest of moments within our deep and collective thoughts, such as was the case with Exxaro's executive management. Aptly said, their company slogan "Powering Possibilities" was exemplified through one very simple decision not to have a year end function. The decision was instant, as it was unanimous. The Exxaro leader, Siphon Nkosi, and his team decided to donate their 2009 year-end party function monies -- beyond those monies already provided toward their annual CSI -- to a company who produce and provide impoverished school children in the rural communities with a Lapdesk.

Whilst the year-end function may have provided some of the executives a short-lived benefit, this team felt their end of year party money would be better used for the needy children of South Africa. Through Exxaro's 'small sacrifice', many children who are in desperate need of a decent writing surface, will receive a Lapdesk which will last them a few years; clearly out living the benefit of Exxaro's party. These Lapdesks will carry a personal message of hope and inspiration from each of the Exxaro directors.

CGF and The Lapdesk Company, together with all the children who will receive their Lapdesks next year when schools re-open, thank Exxaro for their kind and wonderful gesture. Equally, we also thank all our past supporters of the Lapdesks, each who on the collective basis are helping to provide impoverished children with a better chance for improved education and facilities. We salute you all.

About the Lapdesk

The Lapdesk Company has one simple objective: to eradicate classroom desk shortages affecting over 4 million South African schoolchildren by the year 2012. The Lapdesk dramatically improves the learning conditions of children who do not have access to a desk in their classrooms, and gives these children the opportunity to create a better life for themselves through improved academic performance.

The Lapdesk is a very simple, patented product and it is branded with the sponsor's logo, brand and unique message. It is made from highly durable and child-proof materials and a child can hold the Lapdesk against their body to then have an effective writing surface, be this when they may be sitting under a tree in the rural school, in a classroom without desk, or at home. The Lapdesk is given to the children to use at school and at home and therefore the Lapdesk effectively becomes a walking billboard, where it interacts with the youth, communities and family environments as it is carried and used between school and home on a daily basis.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu is the patron of the Lapdesk Company, and the company's work is underwritten by the relevant education authorities in South Africa as well as the National Education Portfolio Committee. The Lapdesk also has the backing and support of the Presidency of South Africa.

CGF Research Institute is a proud supporter of the Lapdesk Company, as well as an official value added reseller of their product. Both CGF and the Lapdesk Company are Proudly South African companies.

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