

QUICK BRIEF 2021

NBI
National Business Initiative



19 November 2021

CEO Dialogues: Nation Building in the Time of a Crisis | How Deliberate & Conscious Leadership is Driving the Social State of the Nation

The **National Business Initiative's (NBI) CEO Thought Leadership Dialogue Series** is an influential virtual platform for engaging business leaders, with the aim of finding viable solutions to complex problems. In particular, we explore the challenges and opportunities, lessons and best practice essential to South Africa's economic recovery post pandemic and the need for ongoing transformation within our workplaces, all whilst focusing on the imperative of strengthening the role of business in society.

Our CEO, Joanne Yawitch, recently hosted an insightful and reflective conversation with **Shell Country Chair, Hloniphizwe Mtolo**, exploring ***How Deliberate & Conscious Leadership is Driving the Social State of the Nation***. This CEO Thought Leadership Dialogue aimed to provide insights and understand how to manage and lead during a crisis, underlined by deliberate and conscious leadership, including how this contributes to governance and nation building.

The conversation explored Hloniphizwe Mtolo's leadership approach in a multi-national organisation and how this influences and contributes to the role of business in broader society. Joanne explored Hloniphizwe's view on nation building and his firm belief that dealing with our most urgent challenges, such as transformation and youth unemployment, are critical for South Africa. Hloniphizwe shared his first-hand experience of navigating untransformed and structurally inequitable corporate workplaces, which has fueled his commitment to driving change, while exemplifying conscious leadership.

The conversation addressed the real and practical role that business can play in nation building, which includes creating an enabling environment for SMEs by dismantling barriers to market entry, which many SMEs experience in relation to accessing corporate supply chains. A further aspect of the discussion was the critical importance of creating opportunities for young people, and the importance of celebrating and harnessing the diversity and innovation this unlocks.

Hloniphizwe shared how Shell's transformation agenda is defined by the steps and progress they have made, and in his view, it importantly articulates how Shell addresses power, inequity and shared accountability. Accountability is critical, especially in being a leading company and leading by example. Hloniphizwe articulated that Shell cannot operate in isolation and has a duty to all its stakeholders in contributing to nation rebuilding, creating a stable and sustainable economy and society. Throughout the existence of its operations in the South Africa, Shell has tried to match its business activities with a commitment to the country and our society. Shell has certainly proven to be an organisation driven by its history of service, values and ethics.

In closing the CEO Dialogue with Shell, our Head of Social Transformation (Gugu McLaren-Ushewokunze) shared the NBI's aim of understanding and addressing the barriers that prevent systemic change. In particular, a focal area for the NBI is enabling systemic change through conscious leadership in business in order to address social challenges.

Key insights that emerged in the conversation include:

- The importance of understanding and addressing the systemic and structural barriers that exist and the role of Business in dismantling them;
- The pivotal role of conscious leadership in driving systemic change;
- Creating and enabling organisational cultures that can change attitudes;
- The need for business leaders to be deliberate in their role of creating and supporting interventions and initiatives that contribute to transformation and equity.

Bold and conscious leadership requires understanding, empathy and acknowledging exclusionary systems all while taking deliberate action to drive change. Organisational and leadership objectives should be focused on ensuring all sectors of society play a role in:

- Advancing organisational, human rights and equality in the workplace.
- Addressing exclusion, inequity and inequality.
- Building social cohesion, and
- Encouraging the healing of individuals and communities.

Call to Action:

The NBI calls on CEOs to prioritise Nation Building, by deliberately constructing initiatives and structuring programmes to develop innovative leadership and drive transformation, through business commitments. These commitments must be driven by the realisation that participation and the transfer of ideas can be used to develop democratic institutions that promote economic and social welfare.

To find out more about the NBI's CEO Thought Leadership Dialogues, please contact: Bridgette Mdangayi (Programme Manager Social Transformation) at BridgetteM@nbi.org.za



Copyright © 2021 NBI, All rights reserved.

The National Business Initiative (NBI) is an independent and voluntary coalition of South African and multinational businesses launched in 1995 by the then President, Nelson Mandela.

NBI Website: www.nbi.org.za

Email: info@nbi.org.za

The National Business Initiative (NBI) respects your right to privacy, if you do not wish to receive any further news updates from the NBI, please click **UNSUBSCRIBE** and your name will be removed from the mailing list.