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CEO Thought Leadership Dialogue: A Journey into Courageous Leadership with Woolworths Inclusive Justice Initiative

For our 5th CEO Thought Leadership Dialogue, we partnered with member company Woolworths, to explore the role of Courageous Leadership in Driving Transformation. In this important dialogue with **Zyda Rylands (Woolworths Foods CEO)**, **Chantal Butler (People Director for Woolworths SA)** and **Zinzi Mgolodela (Director of Corporate Affairs, Woolworths SA)**, we were taken on an inspiring journey through Woolworths Inclusive Justice Initiative (IJI). This included understanding how the journey began, Woolworths' approach to addressing systemic inequality in tangible ways and the importance of evolving and accelerating efforts to make a sustainable, meaningful difference for people and communities – “doing good as we do business.” If you missed this important dialogue, you can listen to the recording [here](#).

The National Business Initiative's (NBI) **Transformation Blueprint** outlines some of the key levers in driving systemic change within organisations by creating inclusive workplaces where employees have a deep sense of belonging. A critical aspect is leadership. In particular, leadership that is committed, courageous and empathetic. These qualities were evident in our panel who have been driving change within Woolworths for many years and recognised the need to be bold and deliberate.

Why was this Dialogue on Woolworths IJI Journey Important?

The Inclusive Justice Initiative aims to build Woolworths into an organisation that not only embraces equity and inclusion to achieve transformation and justice, but uses its influence and reach to help build a society where

exclusion and inequity are systemically addressed. As the driving force behind Woolworths' IJI journey, our panel of three audacious leaders helped to articulate how a process such as this is about deep listening, learning, action and that the lessons are as important as the destination. The Executive team detailed how the IJI journey is just that, a journey where they are likely to have wins and losses, emphasising the importance of constant reflection and learning, another capability identified in the NBI's Transformation Blueprint.

There were several key aspects that stood out from this discussion, but a key take-home message was the holistic and inclusive approach that Woolworths has applied in order to really understand how to meaningfully disrupt exclusionary structures. This required Woolworths to really immerse themselves in what is important to their workforce, gain a deep understanding of societal issues, and then to use their values as a way to define their IJI vision of *Inspiring Inclusive Growth for all their People*.

The complex nuances of this unique journey to inclusion provided a groundbreaking offering to our audience that helped to shed light on what "Woolworths' Good Business Journey" means in reality. In particular, how this journey has not been defined by them, but rather that as the journey has unfolded, it has actually come to define them, ensuring a positive impact at the core of who they are and how they do business.

Other key insights from the conversation included:

- The value in experiential and immersion processes to deepen empathy and understanding in leadership.
- The importance of prioritising transformation and ensuring leadership buy-in at all levels.
- The need to integrate transformation and inclusion strategies into the business with clear measures and targets.
- The benefit of being vulnerable in reflecting on the journey, accepting feedback and learning.

NBI's Social Transformation Work and Future CEO Dialogues

The NBI's CEO Thought Leadership dialogues serves as a fundamental lever to drive transformation by shaping the narrative around a cohesive and transformed society. As part of the NBI's Social Transformation work, this pathway seeks to ensure that private sector leadership contributes to fundamentally changing our society by dealing with inequality, inequity, and exclusion, as these are crucial to driving long-term inclusive economic growth and social stability.

Central to this work is the private sector's ability is to build and enhance a representative and diverse workforce, supported by inclusive organisational cultures. In turn, this unlocks innovation and efficiencies that improve business performance while growing and sustaining our economy.

We view the dialogue's representatives as a group of bold, courageous, and transformative executives who commit to personally engaging with peers on transformation issues whilst supporting the implementation of transformation approaches within their organisations. Join us and be a part of our next CEO Dialogue.

If you would like to be part of one of our future CEO Thought Leadership Dialogues, or if you would like more information on our Social Transformation work, please contact:

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If you would like to listen to the Woolworth's CEO Thought Leadership Dialogue, you can access the recording [here](#)



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