

Create something others want to copy

By Leigh Andrews

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While forward-thinking businesses are all about innovation, many are getting it wrong in their business strategy for one simple reason. That's the wake-up call from Fred de Villiers, innovation and creativity activist and 'rainmaker' behind the South African Innovation Summit's #Ignite! session, taking place at 3pm on Friday.

De Villiers thinks in a few years' time we'll look back and laugh at how much time we spent defining the term 'business innovation' and making the concept part of how we do business.

Until then though, it's forming a crucial part of forward-thinking brands' business strategy.



De Villiers innovating.

De Villiers predicts that it's going to become such an important part of a sustainable and forward-looking company to be agile, ready-to-change, adaptable and not afraid to fail, so business will either have it and flourish or not and go down. He says it's an attitude though and it starts with people – that's where a lot of businesses get it wrong. They think changing systems and processes is all it takes to "make innovation happen", while neglecting the attitude or culture. Innovation is inherently human.

That's not to say all South African businesses are on the wrong footing, though. De Villiers says that we have so many examples of local stuff and culture that's so unique and the world loves it. He says, "Copy if you have to make a start, but very quickly get to a point where you ask how you can create something that others want to copy. Don't be afraid to look at your roots, your situation, your uniqueness." That's where

you'll make a difference.

Welcome to the age of authentic representation

Sharing an example of this, De Villiers says he has always loved kulula, because while they haven't re-invented the travel or airplane industry, "they just brought in a bit of friendly service, clever marketing and wittiness." He's also just recently seen the #likeagirl campaign and loves that. Going forward, De Villiers says, "We're moving more and more to an authentic representation of everything, whether it be marketing, business or leadership, because the global village that we live in knows that dictator-style leadership is not sustainable and that nobody can be as skinny as Kate Moss! Innovation has played a big role in that realness we crave and the world needs."

For more from De Villiers and other 'innovation firestarters', don't miss Ignite! taking place at 3pm on Friday, 23 September, as the SABC Education Innovation Summit comes to a close. Tickets cost R295, but you can still [click here](#) for our 2-for-1 special offer if you've not already registered to attend...

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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