

5 Lessons from an entrepreneur

By [Athabile Jojo](#)

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Athabile Jojo, CEO of Diversity Empowerment, shares lessons his team have learnt about keeping a business afloat in a difficult economy.



Athabile Jojo, CEO of Diversity Empowerment

Since the establishment of my company in 2014, the only constant has been change. Over the years, we have needed to pivot a number of times, while remaining true to our vision and purpose of helping companies to connect with communities and facilitating relationships that lead to the empowerment of previously disadvantaged people.

This year, in particular, the business has evolved a great deal. Here are a few of the lessons my team and I have learnt about keeping a business afloat in a difficult economy:

1. Don't be afraid to evolve

When refining our service offering to align with our vision, we had to let go of some of our longstanding clients. It is never easy to part ways with clients, but we took some tough decisions for the future of the business.

We see change as inevitable and try to drive change rather than respond to it. And from that philosophy, we can find numerous opportunities even in a difficult market.

2. A purpose will guide your business through difficult times

When we are surrounded by changes in regulation, customer behaviour, technology and the business climate, we need to have a vision and a purpose. Everything we do is about people and changing people's lives through

empowerment and transformation. As everything else changes, our business is grounded in that vision.

3. Surround yourself with the right people

The biggest lesson that I have learnt this year is the importance of having the right team around me. People over strategy always for me. How you lead and collaborate with people is more important to find solutions. I also invested time in self-improvement to communicate better with my team.

4. Focus on solving problems

As an entrepreneur, you take charge of your destiny and our country needs more entrepreneurs – independently minded people who are not waiting on government or big business to provide them with a living. The most successful entrepreneurs are focused on solving problems for their prospects and customers. And helping other people to solve problems is a great way to become happier and more self-reliant yourself.

5. Looking ahead to 2020

We have spent a lot of time reflecting on the recent success of the Springboks in the Rugby World Cup and Zozibini Tunzi taking the Miss Universe crown. The country is united for once because we feel like we are winners. I hope we can win more in 2020 and that we achieve this by coming together to make our country a leader in business and innovation.

If we work together to solve the many social and economic challenges we face, we could lead the world in fields such as financial inclusion, green technology and agriculture.

Entrepreneurs in South Africa are the heartbeat of our economy and we need to keep fighting to make a meaningful impact and play our role in the growth of our economy. My hope is that entrepreneurs will get a bigger voice and bigger platforms to contribute towards the success of our country over the year to come.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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