

TRUST: The Heart and Soul of Enduring Leadership in our constantly changing world.

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Madam Chairperson, distinguished guest, members of the South African Institute of Health Care Managers, ladies and gentlemen. It is indeed a great honour to be invited to give the opening address of this distinguish conference. I will like to begin by quoting Juvenal a Roman poet and satirist who live between 55AD and 127AD. Juvenal in his *Satire X* once said that, “*Orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano*” which means that “it is to be prayed that the mind be sound in a sound body.” Today this saying is popularised as “a healthy mind in a healthy body.”

Madam Chairperson, only a healthy body can produce or sustain a healthy mind. Without a healthy mind the consequences are obvious. It thus points to the unsung role healthcare professionals here in South Africa and around the world play in our daily lives. Yet, when all is said and done, this indispensable role that healthcare professionals play in the well-being of nations is lost in detail and translation. **Madam Chairperson**, This must change!

But I am here today to talk to you about trust and leadership. I think this ties in well with the theme of this conference, **Leading Together: Adopt, Adapt and Apply**. This is because we cannot lead together if we do not trust each other and in our leaders. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus in their book *Leaders* hold the view that “trust is the emotional glue that binds followers and leaders together. The accumulation of trust is a measure of the legitimacy of leadership. It cannot be mandated or purchased, it must be earned.” I am sure that no one here in this audience will follow a leader they don’t trust. Yet, the sad fact is that our fast-paced, constantly changing, dog-eat-dog world of today is full of leaders who subscribe to the dictum that, “the end justifies the means.” Most of these leaders are willing to lie, cheat and steal if this leads them to the end they seek. Whether it is in business or politics, the examples of such leadership are numerous. How can we forget that lies on the part of some world leaders that the late Saddam Hussein had Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), led the “Coalition of the Willing” to go to war in Iraq? How can we forget that the betrayal of trust and the engagement in “Voodoo accounting” by the leadership of Enron, Worldcom, Barrings, Arthur Andersen and Global Crossing to mention just a few led to their collapse? Many people lost their life-savings and livelihoods with the collapse of these companies because their leadership were economical with the truth.

Madam Chairperson, we cannot, and should not and ought not accept leaders who have no integrity. For trust is derived from a person’s proven integrity which entails accountability, predictability and reliability. The risk of following a leader without integrity is just too high.

But what are some of the essential ingredients that define trust or a leader we should trust and follow? First, trustworthy leaders have integrity. Karl Eller, in his book, *Integrity Is All You've Got* said, "you trust a person of integrity because his or her character remains whole, despite pressure. This is a together person who doesn't fake credentials or keep two sets of books. He doesn't blame others for his mistakes or steal credit for their work. She never goes back on a deal: her handshake matches the tightest contract drawn up by the fanciest law firm in town."

Madam chairperson, if we do not believe in a leader's integrity, how can we believe or accept their message? How can we believe or trust in a leader who speaks from both sides of his mouth? How can we believe in a leader whose tongue is as slippery as a slope? Above all, how can we lead together, where there is no trust?

The other essential ingredient that defines trust in a leader is competence. It is basically whether a leader has the know-how, the requisite capabilities and abilities to perform a given task or to be able to uphold whatever promises they make. Simply put, it is about being genuine not a phonie. **Madam Chairperson**, who amongst us will like to follow a leader that is a phonie? That is why trust is the lifeblood of all human relations, but more so, it is the cornerstone of any enduring leadership in our increasing synthetic, fast-paced world of today.

Madam chairperson, consistency is another essential ingredient that determines whether a leader can be trusted or not. Basically, it is whether a leader "walks the talk" each and every time, in tough or in good times. Our world today is full of leaders who can "talk the talk" but when it comes to delivering, they are found wanting. You can easily identify these kinds of leaders because they constantly "flip-flop" in their talk, denying saying things that they have said and usually suffer from "selective amnesia." I firmly believe that leaders who are trusted do not "flip-flop." They usually mull over issues before taking a decisive stand and when they do, they make their positions clear. The late Martin Luther King Jr., an American Civil Rights leader once said that, "the ultimate measure of a man (or woman) is not where he or she stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he or she stands at times of challenge and controversy." We are all aware of leaders who will deny knowing you at a drop of a hat when the going gets tough; or leaders who will tell you to "do the right thing" but turn around and "do what is right." "Doing what is right" **Madam Chairperson** is relative, selective and dodgy. When these "shifty" leaders are caught red-handed, they may say something like this, "I smoked but I did not inhale."

Madam Chairperson, the last essential ingredient that I want to share with the audience is that of loyalty. Loyalty as used in this speech represents a two-way street. The first is the loyalty of the leader to their followers or constituency. The second is the loyalty of the followers or constituents to their leader. The late John Gardner, a former U.S. secretary of education and Welfare in Lyndon Johnson's administration once said, "a loyal constituency is won when the people, consciously or unconsciously, judge the leader to be capable of solving their problems and meeting their needs." This is because they trust that the leader will deliver or have delivered on his or her promise. At the heart of loyalty according to Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President of the U.S., is "the absolute principle of self-sacrifice." A leader who is willing to sacrifice his all for his or her followers is rewarded with loyalty and abundant trust.

Madam Chairperson, members of the South African Institute of Healthcare managers, ladies and gentlemen. I will like to end my speech by saying that the heart and soul of any enduring leadership is trust. Without trust according to John Harold “words become the hollow sound of a wooden gong.” Indeed, without trust in a leader, their words are nothing but the hollow sounds of a wooden gong. In these fast changing times in our world today, those of us who are in leadership positions could only endeavour our followers to follow us if they trust us and they will only trust us if we are leaders who are credible and “walk the talk.” As we endeavour to lead together, adopt, adapt and apply, trust in everything we do as leaders should be our watch-word for it is indeed the heart and soul of enduring leadership in our constantly changing world of today. I wish you a fruitful and successful conference and will now leave you with a Native American blessing from the Apache Indian tribe. This is dedicated to all of you, leaders your people can trust: **“may the sun bring you new energy by the day, may the moon softly restore you by night, may the rain wash away your worries, may the breeze blow new strength into your being, may you walk gently through the world and know its beauty all the days of your life.”**

Thank you very much.

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