

The reality of future proofing

 By [Bongani Chinkanda](#)

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Future proofing is quickly becoming a buzzword, much like the year 2000 was in the 70s and 80s. When it is spoken about, audiences look excited and intrigued but I fear that they are excited from a distance, as future proofing is not a conversation that we are having today about something we need to act on tomorrow.



Bongani Chinkanda, CEO, HDI Youth Consultancy.

I believe in not only immersing ourselves in culture but in helping my clients locate themselves in that same culture. The rate at which the world around us is changing should be daunting to those who still believe that things will go on as they have in the past. They will not. There is a generation that has grown up with walkmans and now stream their music.

The speed of change

All of it happened in half a lifetime and at a speed that was unprecedented. The speed of change is forcing us to adapt

quickly at every turn. Failing to do so means not being a part of the movement of the future. For example, those who missed the social media train speak of Twitter as a concept when it is actually a reality, virtual but tangible as everything else that is real.

If your brand or business is not fully present as these changes happen, as the audiences that were the babies of the 90s and 2000s become your future consumer, logic says that you will be obsolete. This is especially true in Africa where the population is young. That means the future is young and if you are not tapped into that market, their culture and their rules of engagement, you will be a relic of the past.

As some people start waking up to the idea that they have to actively future-proof their business, it is important for us all to remember that it is not an easy once-off task. Like any parent who has ever childproofed a house will tell you, the work never ends. What a 2-year-old needs, is not the same as what a 3-year-olds and the same goes for future proofing.

We must strive to evolve

The tips and tricks of 2016 may not be fully relevant in 2018, let alone 2020. We must strive to evolve, strive to innovate, strive to create solutions and ways of being, that has never been done before - and the way to that is through disruption.

Younger audiences insist on progressiveness, they will not tolerate a lack of diversity and don't even think of trying to engage them when you're not being authentic. This reality affects us all, from businesses and brands to parents and peers.

How we chart the way forward will require skills and actions that we might not be accustomed to yet. It can seem intimidating but with the willingness to be coachable, the future is looking bright. This is especially true for those of us who have stepped over the youth barrier.

This new way of thinking and living is great but imagine its potency when coupled with the experience we've accumulated over the years. Neither the youth nor the need to future-proof that they are forcing us to think about, are our enemies; they are simply the fuel to push us to greater heights.

ABOUT BONGANI CHINKANDA

After completing his studies at Rhodes University, Bongani started his career at Unilever, where his passion for marketing was revealed. After years in trade and shopper marketing for companies including BP, Kraft Foods and Kimberly Clark, Bongani founded Dzuwa Media in 2008. Dzuwa served as a BTL activations agency servicing clients in Malawi, Zimbabwe and SA markets. In 2016, the company merged with Stretch Marketing, now Elevator.
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