

10 themes to guide the youth as they enter the workforce

Issued by [Coronation](#)

15 Jun 2023

Coronation CEO, Anton Pillay, says the next generation will help turn the economy around - but it takes commitment and creativity to do so.



Anton Pillay, CEO at Coronation

In a welcome Youth Month tradition, Coronation CEO Anton Pillay spends quality time with learners to impart valuable life and career advice ahead of their journeys into adulthood and the world of work. This year, Pillay visited the Grade 10 and 11 learners from Christel House (educational NGO) in Ottery, as well as students from various university investment societies interested in pursuing a career similar to Pillay's.

Pillay focused on the critical skills required to excel despite South Africa's alarming youth unemployment rate, the prevailing environment of economic uncertainty and the likely impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the future of work.



Coronation CEO Anton Fillay spent time with high school learners from Christel House in Ottery this Youth Month to impart some life and career advice ahead of their journeys into adulthood. Fillay's top advice included encouraging young people to find their purpose in life by doing good in society and to cultivate a mindset of seeking opportunity in adversity. Picture credit: Jurie Senekal



YOUTHADVICE: Coronation CEO Anton Pillay spent time with a diverse group of students from various universities this Youth Month to impart some life and career advice ahead of their journeys into adulthood. Pillay's top advice included encouraging young people to find their purpose in life by doing good in society and to cultivate a mindset of seeking opportunity in adversity instead of focusing on their limitations. Picture credit: Jurie Senekal

Here are Pillay's 10 key themes the youth should consider as they head into the workforce:

1. If you are privileged with an education, use it for good, and you will find your purpose

In a country where 78% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning and where the youth unemployment rate is more than 60%, you are in a fortunate position to complete matric with a solid education. A university degree offers you a higher chance of employment, but it is no guarantee of success. You need to think smart, not only about what you want to achieve in your own life but also how you can contribute to the betterment of society. If you can focus on excelling with the opportunities you were given, you will find your purpose and live a more fulfilled life.

2. Use of technology to the benefit of your career and society

Technology advances such as big data and artificial intelligence are undergoing an exponential evolution at the

moment, and in the careers of tomorrow, it will be important to have a grasp of these technologies. It is safe to say that graduates should be upskilled to use AI in their roles. It is also important to distinguish how good actors and bad actors are able to use AI differently, and to make a commitment to, one day in your career if you are going to use AI, use AI ethically and responsibly in line with the United Nations' AI for Good principles. However, it is a very complex topic set to disrupt many industries. The aim should be to enhance efficiencies and boost performance alongside human capital.

It is safe to say that graduates should be upskilled to use AI in their roles. While much has been written about it displacing people, the financial services arena is all about talent, diversity and culture, and talent recruitment and retention will always be a core differentiator.

3. Hone your critical thinking

The World Economic Forum calls critical thinking the top scarce skill of this decade, despite it being vital for career advancement in the 21st century. Critical thinking is the ability to use reason and logic to analyse and assess situations and problems to make informed decisions. Don't just take everything at face value or believe what you are told. Learn to think and solve for yourself. The key word here is probability – you must critically assess how probable any supposed fact might be and find real evidence instead of relying on opinions, gossip or conspiracy theories.

4. Embrace creative thinking

Embracing your creativity does not necessarily mean artistic creativity. One can also use creative thinking to solve hard problems in business and society. Creativity is the foundation of innovation and to developing something new. It's the ability to find new solutions for existing issues. The key is to always look for possibility in every challenging situation.

5. Remember collaboration is at the heart of any economic endeavour

Sometimes you have to put in the hard yards on your own, and it can be tough, but self-motivation and self-management are key. However, please remember, you don't always have to go it on your own, all of the time. Teamwork and being open to diverse viewpoints are essential for achieving success in business.

6. Learn to communicate clearly

Less is more. Regardless of the career you ultimately pursue, you will discover that communicating clearly results in more successful outcomes. Every email you write, every presentation you deliver, every report you write, every difficult conversation you have with colleagues or managers, you will do better if you use less words, chosen wisely, and that are very clear in their meaning. As Winston Churchill famously said, it takes more time and effort to be short and to the point, but it is always more effective. Also remember, there are verbal and nonverbal skills, and body language is also very important to master.

7. Be entrepreneurial

Entrepreneurial thinking is not just for people who start new businesses – it's for anyone in business. It's a mental attitude essential for navigating change and success. Always think abundantly in terms of the opportunities you can explore and create for yourself and others. The one thing you can do to empower yourself is to walk through every open door, work hard and participate in life and the opportunities it presents you. You never know who you are going to meet, or what is around the next corner. But if you are prepared through consistent hard work, you'll be ready for the curveballs that life may throw at you.

8. Expect curveballs

The world is in a state of 'permacrisis' where one crisis seems to roll into the next one and it's therefore easy for the youth to feel hard done by. Remember that all young people in every century of history faced a multitude of crises. It's part of the human experience. It just feels more amplified now because we have the internet and social media. This is not something to feel defeated by. Remember, crisis always brings opportunity. If you expect curveballs, and remain optimistic, you will find your way.

9. Take good care of yourself

Don't expect others to do your self-care for you. This is something you must cultivate for yourself. Try to cultivate healthy habits from as early on as possible, including eating healthy, getting regular exercise, resting, alone time and community engagement, taking care of your mental health, and maintaining good hygiene, even digital hygiene. Start with the small things, like keeping your room tidy and your clothes, hair and teeth clean – small positive habits will translate into bigger positive effects in your life over time. Take personal responsibility for your self-care.

10. Don't let the high unemployment rate daunt you

This is a time in your life where you get to set the scene and choose your direction. Your voice counts. Yes, South Africa's unemployment rate is staggering, but remember, you always have options. If you don't see options, you can create it – if you can't find a job, start a business solving a problem you see in the world. Surround yourself with people who support you, who also lean into the future, and who challenge you to be the best you can be. Don't hang out with people who limit you, as they will keep you stuck.

It doesn't matter if you haven't figured out what you want from your life and career yet – the most important thing is lean into your opportunities, talents and skills that are needed out there. No-one can rob you of your future if you create your own opportunities. Be the rising tide that lifts others up too.

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