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# **Evolving Your Leadership**

*A Development Programme for Emerging Leaders*

## **Executive Summary**

Evolving Your Leadership is a six-month development programme for emerging leaders that integrates text-based seminar dialogue with individual coaching. Rather than delivering competency frameworks, it develops leadership as a way of being—building capacity for cross-domain thinking, self-knowledge, and strategic agency.

Participants engage directly with primary texts spanning business strategy, African philosophy, and literature: Rumelt on strategy, Achebe on storytelling and power, Wangari Maathai on systems change, Okri on imagination, Drucker on effectiveness. Five three-hour facilitated seminars use these readings as ground for debate and collective inquiry. Three individual coaching sessions translate seminar insights to each leader's specific context and challenges.

The programme synthesises traditions usually kept separate—Harvard case studies alongside Nobel laureates, the Springboks' transformation next to Capitec's disruption. The outcome: leaders who think across domains, know themselves better, and operate with greater agency. Eight participants per cohort, R55,000 per person.

## **The Challenge**

Middle managers face a particular bind. They have demonstrated enough capability to be promoted, but the skills that got them here will not get them there. Technical excellence becomes insufficient. The work becomes leading others, shaping context, influencing without authority, thinking strategically while executing tactically.

Most leadership development programmes respond with competency frameworks and skill-building workshops. These have their place. But they miss something essential: leadership is not primarily a set of techniques. It is a way of being in the world, of seeing situations, of understanding oneself and others, of holding complexity without being paralysed by it.

Evolving Your Leadership takes a different approach. It combines text-based dialogue with individual coaching to develop leaders who can think across domains, operate with self-knowledge, and shape the organisations they will one day lead.

## **The Method**

The programme is built on a conviction: leaders develop not by being told what to think, but by wrestling with ideas that matter, together.

Participants read primary texts before each session: not summaries, not case studies about the texts, but the texts themselves. Achebe on leadership and storytelling. Rumelt on good strategy. Wangari Maathai on persistence and systems change. Iger on turnaround. These are works that reward serious engagement and yield different insights on each encounter.

The session itself is facilitated inquiry. I do not lecture or present. I ask questions that open the text: What is the author actually claiming? Where do you agree, and where does your experience diverge? What does this illuminate about your own situation? Participants discover insights through debate and dialogue. They are forced to listen to each other, to contend with perspectives unlike their own, to articulate positions and have them challenged.

This method has a long lineage in leadership development. It works because it treats participants as thinking adults capable of grappling with complex ideas. And something else happens in the process: people who have debated Okri's claims about imagination or argued over what Erasmus actually did to rebuild the Springboks develop a shared vocabulary, a common set of reference points, a way of thinking together that persists long after the programme ends.

## **The Design**

The programme runs over six months and operates on two tracks simultaneously.

**Track One: The Seminar.** A cohort of 8-12 emerging leaders meets five times over the programme for three-hour facilitated sessions. Each session is anchored in carefully selected readings that participants engage with in advance. The session is dialogue and inquiry: people thinking out loud together, testing ideas against each other's experience, building understanding that none could reach alone.

The reading list integrates traditions that are usually kept separate. Business strategy sits alongside African philosophy. Harvard case studies share space with Nobel laureates in literature. Participants encounter Rumelt on strategy and Ben Okri on imagination, the Springboks' leadership transformation and Capitec's scaling, Toni Morrison on seeing clearly and Peter Drucker on effectiveness. This synthesis, drawing on six years of research published as the Strategy, Soul & Self newsletter, creates the kind of cross-domain thinking that distinguishes exceptional leaders.

**Track Two: Individual Coaching.** Each participant receives three 90-minute individual coaching sessions distributed across the programme. These sessions apply the seminar learning to each leader's specific context: their demonstrated strengths, their limiting patterns, their strategic challenges, their developmental edges.

The individual sessions use the methodology I have developed over six years of coaching senior executives. We map the conditions under which you operate at your best. We identify the patterns that limit you. We translate insight into concrete action: specific commitments with timelines, not vague intentions.

## The Sessions

**Session 1: Strategy from First Principles.** Most strategy discussions devolve into budget negotiations. This session returns to foundational questions: What is strategy actually for? Where will we play and how will we win? Readings include Rumelt on the kernel of good strategy, and case material on Capitec's disruption of South African retail banking and James Mwangi's building of Equity Bank across East Africa.

**Session 2: Leading in Uncertainty.** How leaders navigate complexity when the map does not match the territory. The centrepiece is the Springboks' transformation under Rassie Erasmus and Siya Kolisi: how a divided team became world champions by rebuilding trust, embracing diversity as strength, and holding both tactical excellence and human connection. Complementary readings draw on Mandela's crisis leadership and corporate turnarounds that required reimagining rather than optimising.

**Session 3: Being Human in Leadership.** Leadership effectiveness begins with how we inhabit our own lives. Readings include Wangari Maathai on persistence and the long arc of change, Ben Okri on imagination as a leadership discipline, and Stephen Grosz on how people actually change. The premise: better humans make better leaders. The session examines meaning, character, attention, and presence as foundations for everything else.

**Session 4: Building and Shaping Culture.** Culture is what happens when leaders are not in the room. This session examines how exceptional organisations build cultures that sustain excellence across generations and transitions. Readings include Achebe on the relationship between stories and power, material on Pixar's creative culture and how the Springboks rebuilt team identity, and David Sengeh's work on innovation emerging from constraint in Sierra Leone.

**Session 5: Executive Effectiveness.** Business momentum makes us reactive. We get caught in process and forget outcomes. Readings include Drucker on effectiveness, and contemporary work on time, energy, and attention. The session is both conceptual and immediately practical: participants leave with specific changes to implement.

## What Changes

**They think differently.** Exposure to diverse frameworks and traditions breaks habitual patterns. Leaders who have wrestled with Okri on imagination and Rumelt on strategy start asking different questions, seeing situations through multiple lenses, finding paths through complexity that were previously invisible.

**They know themselves better.** The individual coaching surfaces where they excel and what limits them. This self-knowledge becomes foundation for deliberate development rather than accidental growth.

**They see each other differently.** When people meet as learners grappling with hard questions rather than as functions defending positions, something shifts. They discover how colleagues think, what they care about, where their judgment comes from. These discoveries persist.

**They become learners.** The programme ignites curiosity that outlasts the sessions. Participants discover authors they will return to, questions they will keep exploring, a habit of reading and reflection that compounds over time. They leave with expanded knowledge, but more importantly with the disposition and discipline to keep expanding it.

**They operate with greater agency.** The central insight of the programme: when you step in with intention, you create results. Participants learn to author their situations rather than merely react to them.

## The Investment

**Time:** Five seminar sessions (3 hours each) plus three individual coaching sessions (90 minutes each) over six months. Readings require approximately 2-3 hours before each seminar.

**Fee:** R55,000 per participant (ex VAT). Cohort size: 8 participants. Can be run within a single division or across divisions.

## Why This Matters

Evolving Your Leadership integrates what is usually separated. The seminars build capacity for cross-domain thinking through direct engagement with texts that matter. It creates the space for wrestling with best practice, approaches, case study experiences and, together, developing shared language and tools of understanding.

The individual coaching ensures the learning translates to each participant's actual situation. The reading list is distinctive: where else would emerging leaders encounter Rumelt and Achebe, the Springboks and Capitec, Drucker and Okri in the same programme?

The leaders in your organisation today will shape it tomorrow. This programme prepares them for that responsibility.

—

**Karl Gostner**

Executive Coach

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