Zander's possibility model

CORE: *Model urges people 'to live in possibility'*

GEOFF CANDY

I DIDN'T really expect to be singing the *Ode to Joy* in German on Friday but, with Ben Zander, anything is possible.

I also didn't expect all 1-500 people in attendance to remain captivated for the whole four-hour session but, once again, with Zander anything is possible.

The seminar entitled "The Art of Possibility" was one of 97 engagements Zander and his partner Roz Zander, have squeezed into a 21-day trip to the country to try, as they say it, "to spread the model of possibility thinking as far as possible."

It is a model for leadership developed by the two during their respective roles as the conductor of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and a family therapist and one that seeks to build people up and get them to a point where they are their most productive.

It is a role at odds with the type of hierarchical leadership that has served humanity for so long but, also a model that has been exciting a number of highly influential people – so much so that the World Economic Forum has asked Zander to open next year's event because, he says, "People are excited by possibility and are looking for a new way of doing things because the old model just does not work any longer."

Snip

However, getting to that point is going to be hard, especially for SA where the old ways have been entrenched for long and often underlined by trauma.

And, it is a model the Zanders believe can help SA succeed.

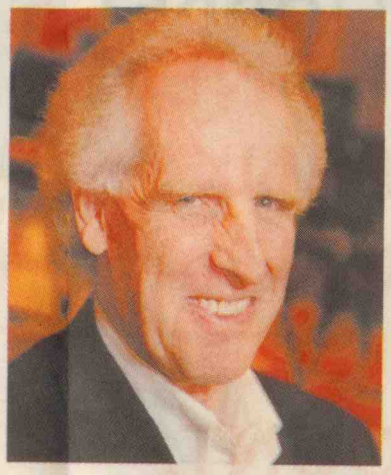
Indeed, it is the possibility of helping SA succeed that appeals to Zanders because they consider the SA project to be too important to the world to allow it to fail.

"The whole world is watching SA and wants it to succeed," Zander says.

But, while the model provides practical ways to engage with people in order to help them "live in possibility", such as giving everyone an A and, as a leader not taking oneself too seriously, the problem comes in sustaining these practices once the four hour talk is over.

Speaking to *Moneyweb* ahead of the event, Zander explains that, just like any other way of thinking, possibility requires a lot of practices that need to be repeated through repetition and adds, This is not easy stuff, you have to work hard at possibility, it is a rigorous discipline, people forget that they think it's just good feelings. But to keep in possibility rather than falling into the downward spiral of blame which is easy because we do that automatically is very difficult."

So, how does one go about it, particularly in SA? For Zander, who was at pains to point out that he was not here to tell South Africans how to do things, but merely to expose a model, business too has a very big role to play in the transformation.



BEN ZANDER

"Big business's role is tremendously important, these are the formative corporations. They have enormous power and wealth and they influence people tremendously. If you can get those companies to rethink the way they act, taking care of the environment, treat each other well – it can have an enormous effect throughout the country."

Indeed, Zander believes the next 30 years will be the most exciting in humanity's history and that companies will have to start employing tools like possibility if they are to cope with the changes.

"The hierarchical system has been enormously affected by the Internet, many of the barriers between people are breaking down and the result is that people in all parts of the organisation are having a voice and having affect."

This development is wonderful, but it comes with added responsibility for the leader: "In such a situation there has to be a strong vision to keep everybody aligned and moving in the direction together otherwise you get anarchy. And, the leader has to still be the one who establishes the vision and the direction for the organisation but, if you have that and then you get all the opinions and the input and the feedback it's great. I think it's a very exciting new era."

– *geoff@moneyweb.co.za.*

Material supplied may be used for internal review, analysis or research only.
Any editing, reproduction, public showing or public display is forbidden, and may violate copyright laws.