

10 lessons in leadership that 2021 taught us

2021 may have challenged us beyond what we thought possible, but, with creativity, innovation and collaboration, it presented opportunities for leaders to grow and thrive. That was the idea that underpinned the second instalment in the series of Sanlam Financial Confidence webinars. Theesan Moodley, event host and General Manager at SanlamConnect, Jurie Strydom, Chief Executive Officer at Sanlam Life and Savings and Khanyi Nzukuma, Chief Executive Officer at Glacier by Sanlam, shared their thoughts on what it means to be a leader in this industry right now.

Spotting opportunities and anticipating the future – 10 lessons from our leaders

1. Leadership and partnership at a time of rapid change means embracing the changes and embarking on unknown paths. Identifying partnerships that inspire positive action is a big step towards thriving as a leader.
2. The job of a leader is to anticipate the future at a time of rapid change. In our business, we advise people on their finances; anticipating the future is part of what we do. Even in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, the markets were looking forward and anticipating recovery.
3. Anticipating the future also means being resilient when you sometimes get it wrong. We thought the pandemic would last around 18 months, but we couldn't have anticipated its real duration, its speed, and the pace of systemic responses. So, we guessed its duration correctly, but underestimated its severity – the chronic illness and the death toll.
4. Looking forward, we know that the South African economy is resilient, so we are seeing growth. What was unexpected, though, was the impact on personal income at different levels, but South Africa has emerged stronger than we thought.
5. Understand the unknowns as well as the unknown unknowns as they emerge, to redirect your strategy. The question we must ask ourselves frequently is: How will you position your business in this moving scenario?
6. Sanlam's vision is to create an environment for a prosperous, healthy South Africa. The savings culture is still in development in South Africa – we help to create that.
7. COVID-19 accelerated the adoption of technology for many people. Technology adoption is an area that we are advancing – especially in the realm of advice. Blending technology with

in-person financial planning is the future for us, so we're building on the progress we've made over the past few years.

8. Education is at the heart of our CSI strategy, and even more so during the pandemic, when we saw an opportunity to pivot away from bricks and mortar to education with technology as its base. Our partnership with UCT's online school is an exciting development. We also have a responsibility towards education in our core business. Through our intermediary base, which is thousands strong, people look to Sanlam for sound financial and investment information, which we have positioned ourselves to provide through a host of channels.
9. 'Holistic advice' means creating adviser frameworks that encompass retirement planning, savings, insurance, healthcare and personal risk management. We are positioned to provide turnkey financial solutions for our clients, and we are embracing the opportunities in new markets, and new ways to engage with intermediaries and clients.
10. People are adaptable, in more ways than we expected them to be. Lockdown means that most of our employees have been working from home for almost 20 months. Overnight, our business operations were championed from their homes. COVID-19 taught us that people are extremely resilient. It also showed us that trust is the bedrock of relationships with our clients, intermediaries and employees. Trust fosters honest, authentic conversations, and everyone is given the space to grow. As a result, despite the dramatic change and in some instances, loss of family and friends, our people proved their mettle every day, servicing our stakeholders via digital channels as effectively as if they were sitting across from them.

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Glacier Financial Solutions (Pty) Ltd.

A member of the Sanlam Group

Private Bag X5 | Tyger Valley 7536 | Email client.services@glacier.co.za | Tel +27 21 917 9002 / 0860 452 364 | Fax +27 21 947 9210 | Web www.glacier.co.za | Reg No 1999/025360/07

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Private Bag X8 | Tyger Valley 7536 | Tel +27 21 950 2600 | Fax +27 21 950 2126 | Web www.smmi.com | *Reg No 2002/030939/07
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