

# Things fall apart, the centre will not hold

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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The world has become unpredictable, unstable and the traditional ways of doing business are not holding up in this new world. Today's marketing leaders need to understand that it is their responsibility to shift business from its sole purpose of seeking profit to one where it acknowledges it is part of society and that its sustainability is tied to the societies it is part of.

Held on Thursday night at the Sandton Convention Centre, the 2017 Apex Awards addressed key issues around business with purpose head-on with keynote speaker, Enver Groenewald's address.

Groenewald, who amongst other portfolios, leads the media function for Unilever brands across sub-Saharan Africa told the audience that it is time for change that "the brands in this room exert huge power and influence in the hearts and minds of millions of South Africans."

Circumstances facing South Africa are tumultuous at best, tragic at worst, with critical issues demanding our attention, he says.



"A basket of essential food goods has increased in cost by 21% since December 2016. The poor in this country have paid more than three times the inflation rate for their essential foods. Food is 75% of the budget of the poor. But food is only getting more expensive. Added to this is a growing unemployment rate with the country's unemployment at the highest levels since 2003."

[Enver Groenewald](#)

In stark contrast to this is the findings of the Deloitte study on the pay packets of senior executives across the JSE's Top 100 companies. The report shows that the average senior executive earns an average daily pay of R69,000, he expanded. The finding was called 'grotesque' by a respected economist.

"The divide between the have and have-nots is only growing with essential goods set to become scarcer, for example water, and more expensive, for example food, housing and economic opportunities."

The result is inequality at its worst, and an unsustainable society that does not allow marketers to do what they are meant to do.

This brings us back to the purpose of business, he says. "The widely held view is that the sole purpose is to make money and to make as much as possible. This informs most corporations and how they deliver returns through short-term financial performance and share price.

"It forces companies to ignore the fact that they command huge resources that can influence the world for better and shape the lives of their employees and suppliers. Instead they focus only on the pursuit of profit."

Truly great companies do not do this. "They know that they are an intrinsic part of society and do what is moral, ethical, right and fair for society. They build people and build society," he says.

"They are purpose-led companies and never before have they been as important to our world," he adds. Studies show that companies that harness the power of purpose enjoy a definite advantage. They outperform their counterparts in share

price, their employees are more engaged and productive, and they are likely to stay. They also treat their suppliers better.

They give more but they receive so much more in return. It pays to care, deeply and widely.

“Purpose-led should not be confused with corporate social responsibility; we are agitating for a new way of doing business. It is a journey that we must take if we are to find the solutions to the many challenges of our society. Our future depends on it,” he concluded.



## #Apex2017: All that glitters and only one gold

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## ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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