

A future-proof business strategy that encourages social change

Throughout Africa, businesses are adopting the Creating Shared Value (CSV) business model to ensure that society benefits while business profits.



Image by 123RF

The concept, first shared with business leaders and marketers by Harvard Business School's Prof Michael Porter in 2006, is gaining momentum and picking up traction – but not quickly and forcefully enough. For too long, companies have relied on CSR and CSI programmes to balance their focus on maximising profits. Shared Value is now challenging the status quo.

The first [Africa Shared Value Summit](#) will raise awareness and advocate for the strategic implementation of the Shared Value business model, which brings about social change while positively impacting profit. Companies who create Shared Value do so through the normal operation of their businesses; it is not an (often short-term) add-on limited by budget, but rather a future-proof business strategy for long-term gain.

There are corporates that are currently taking the lead in changing the face of capitalist business practice, but it is the social innovators who are really embracing the practice and reaping the rewards – financially and societally.

The summit's keynote speaker will be Marc Pfitzer, managing director of FSG, one of the world's leading consultancies focusing on social change strategy and creating business models and strategies that lead to social impact.

Speaking on the growth of Shared Value, Pfitzer is optimistic that business is starting to catch on: “If you look at the spread of the concept, and you look at the continued emergence of new companies who say ‘we’ve got a built-in purpose in our strategy’, it’s not just a communication-based tagline, it’s really about making different choices in our strategy. We keep on getting new companies coming into the fold, so the underlining movement is happening and is spreading all over the world.”

Pfitzer’s expertise spans numerous subjects, including Shared Value, collective impact, agricultural development, impact measurement, and the mechanics of collaboration. His influential articles “*Innovating for Shared Value*” and “*The Ecosystem of Shared Value*” were published in the Harvard Business Review in 2013 and 2016 respectively.

Another speaker highlight is Barry Swartzberg, group executive director responsible for international strategy at Discovery. Other high-profile speakers include Sanda Ojiambo, head of corporate responsibility at Safaricom, who will share her experience in multi-sectoral policy and development work throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, and Maria Cristina Papetti, head of sustainability projects and practice sharing at Enel Holdings, who will speak on sustainability, renewable energy growth, and social equality.

The summit will also feature Shared Value trailblazers like Dr Sara Saeed, winner of the UNICEF Global Goal Campaigner Award 2016, who will share insights into the doctHERS project in Pakistan.

Other participants include: Michelle Constant (CEO, BASA); Gordon Cook (activist, Stir4Change); Zaakira Mahomed (founder, Happy with a Purpose and Mina Cup), David Blyth (CEO, Yellowwood); Claire Reed (CIO, Reel Gardening); Genevieve Leveille (Co-Founder, 0TenTic8); Cecilia Kinuthia-Njenga (UNEP head, South Africa); and Thomas van Viegen (EY associate director: climate change and sustainability services).

Embracing CSV is the key to long-term sustainability, enabling businesses to survive and thrive in a changing business climate. Shift Social Development, the team of women behind the Summit headed by Tiekie Barnard, aims to create an annual platform where Shared Value practitioners can share their stories and influence businesses and brands in the creation of Shared Value, thus embodying the Shift Social Development mantra of profit with purpose.

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