

# The Accenture Innovation Conference 2015

Speaker Notes

A large, thick, orange arrow pointing to the right, positioned behind the text "High performance. Delivered.".

High performance. Delivered.





# William Mzimba

Chief Executive, Accenture in South Africa

In a hard-hitting opening keynote address at Accenture's inaugural Innovation Conference 2015, William wasted no time in calling for a revolution, saying a significant collective effort was needed to pull South Africa back from impending economic ruin (joblessness, inequality and socio-political instability).

In reference to the conference theme, Dare to Disrupt, he noted that in a technology-enabled global village it comes down to disrupting the opposition or being disrupted. Only if incumbents innovate can they ensure that they are not unseated by new entrants.

William urged colleagues and delegates to embrace the digital age, rethink business models, provision the necessary infrastructure and to think, speak and facilitate innovation at every turn.

"South Africa faces a collaboration imperative," he noted. "We must leverage the new borderless platforms to harness the collective inputs of stakeholder communities beyond our corporate siloes and borders, and so step up innovation."

South Africa will be judged by its inputs as well as its outputs, he added. While there is a fair bit of criticism of inputs (from entrepreneurial education and training to access to capital), the country's biggest shortfall is in its outputs – an inability to commercialise our inventions.

Closing off with a rousing call to action, William directly addressed government, big and small business and institutions of learning to join an innovation movement to overcome these challenges, which he christened #innovment. "Speak it, tweet it, live it, do it—at every opportunity, until it becomes part of our societal fabric," he told the stirred-up audience.



# Mpho Parks Tau

Executive Mayor, City of Johannesburg

Parks, a sought-after speaker at high-level gatherings for his engaging delivery and incisive themes, surprised the colloquium with an architectural reading of innovation, as a pursuit concentrated in and around cities.

With a triad of resources feeding into progress – capital (business), institutions (education and R&D) and infrastructure (ICT, transport, electricity and water) – the implication is that the design of cities is of paramount importance to the efficiency of a nation's innovation engines.

This insight illuminates the social and economic crime of apartheid as few others can: Like all cities and towns in South Africa, Johannesburg was demarcated along arbitrary lines during apartheid, for the sole purpose of segregating its inhabitants. This necessitated duplication of some basic services (e.g. transport and water)

while withholding access to others (electricity). The most insidious effect, however, was to deny some groups access to opportunity due to their enforced remoteness from urban concentrations of learning (learning centres of excellence), business (employment and training) and communication (Internet and telephony).

To right these past wrongs and simultaneously provide more than just basic services, the City of Johannesburg is creating 'corridors of access,' with the Bus Rapid Transfer system as its backbone project to bring opportunity closer to citizens. In addition, it is embarking on a wealth of infrastructural, incubation, energy, waste management and recycling projects, mostly in partnership with industry, NGOs and institutions.



# Ludwick Marishane

SA's youngest patent holder and inventor of DryBath™

Ludwick used the Accenture Innovation Conference 2015 podium to tackle the issue of squandered innovation, something he hopes to help remediate.

His earliest dream was to be a scientist, but a problem-solving mind inevitably drove him to entrepreneurial activities instead. After a series of failed teenage inventions (a biofuel replacement for petrol, 'healthy' cigarettes and a mobile dictionary), a lazy friend tipped him off to a need for water-less bathing. So it came that, at a very young age (grade 11), he hit upon his killer idea – DryBath™, a water-less bath gel.

But Ludwick explained that none of his early ventures were wasted effort – they taught him powerful lessons about funding, commercialisation and understanding business models. It wasn't, for instance, until he figured out the Western application for DryBath™ that

he understood its full commercial potential. He also realised then that the time had come to license it to a company with the scale to maximise its market impact, and to move on to other, more personal ambitions, including imparting what he'd learned to others less fortunate than himself.

True waste, he said, is where the products of entrepreneurial effort never see the light of day, because someone dropped the ball. "Someone told me South Africa suffered an invention surplus but an entrepreneurial deficit. Innovation is either stifled or overlooked in business, while entrepreneurs often lack the tools or life skills to bring them to fruition."

Since DryBath™, Ludwick has been helping individuals and companies overcome the entrepreneurial deficit in a number of ways. One is by mentoring previously disadvantaged students – essentially an outsourcing programme that helps institutions and employers unlock ideas and potential, while boosting individual careers.



## Lisa Bodell

The CEO & founder of futurethink, author of *Kill the Company: End the Status Quo, Start an Innovation Revolution*, United States

Lisa set out to convince delegates that, in order to survive in a fast-changing world, they should kill their companies – or at least the qualities in them that are hostile to innovation.

Lisa's earliest experience of the inept way in which organisations treat innovation was also her rudest – she was dismissed from an ad agency's creative team "for having ideas outside my job description." It was both crazy and typical of many organisations, and demonstrated a clear need to break down prevailing mind-sets, she said.

So Lisa assembled a consulting team of leading innovation and ideation experts. Soon, however, it became clear to her that the experts were just as impervious to change as some clients, leading her to theorise extensively about killing companies.

Why kill the company? For the sake of innovation-led growth, as everyone knows. But not just any innovations, she cautioned. "We must develop an eye for inventions that are not only possible but probable, and moreover desirable," she said.

And what exactly does killing the company entail? "Figure out what your weak points are and get rid of them," she added. These include 'stupid rules, unproductive processes, unsustainable strategies and other corporate deadwood standing in the way of innovation. Cut them out and turn this knowledge and agility against your competitors.

Another tip: Always become, never just be. The race is to know the end game, or at least the next trick, and to get there first. Study the talent complement that can take you there. Know your next competitors. You may be running your race against competitors you didn't even acknowledge. Who knew oil companies and pharmaceuticals would both be gunning for bio-scientists?



# Sebastian Thrun

Vice president of Google, Google Glass inventor, Udacity founder & Stanford University professor, Germany

Another prolific ideas-man and corporate revolutionary, Sebastian Thrun regaled audiences with the many innovative adventures that have allowed him to carve out a career in sharing inventions and intellectual property.

As head of Google X, the casual, non-conformist Stanford professor has been involved in Internet balloons, the first driverless car, Google Streetview, drone delivery in Australia, indoor GPS in the US, and the world's smallest computer atop a contact lens.

But his most progressive achievements have been social. A recurring theme of Sebastian's inventions is that they're either done for free or given away, or else have some other social significance. So, for instance, he took his Stanford course online one fine day – for free. Ultimately, it grew to 160 000 registrants – 10

times the total Stanford student population – and forced a re-design of the campus course and value proposition.

Emboldened by his success, he set out to make higher education even more accessible with a new company called Udacity – whose objective is to “destroy the tradition of the big clunky university degree” with smaller modules that can aid professionals' development with just-in-time skills that continually repurpose them for a changing job market. And that makes eminent sense for South Africa with its huge skills deficit.

What are his lessons for entrepreneurs, other than that you can make a business out of giving it away? “It is possible and necessary to take the

moon shots when you dream about change,” he said in closing. “I think of innovation as a mountain. You can only climb by having a clear, shared, unwavering objective. You have to build a small and preferably insulated team of people, with total autonomy. You will make the most progress by implementing a rapid build-test-fail cycle. If you fail, pivot to find a new route if you must, just not a different mountain.”



## Greg Brandeau

Former executive vice president & chief technology officer at The Walt Disney Studios; senior vice president of technology at Pixar; & co-author of *The Collective Genius*, United States

Greg, the co-author of *Collective Genius*, addressed the Accenture Innovation Conference audience on creating and sustaining an innovative culture, and unlocking the collective genius of their organisations.

Highlighting the remarkable early successes of the Pixar Group after Steve Jobs had bought it from George Lucas (five successive blockbuster hits including *The Incredibles*, *Finding Nemo* and *Toy Story*), Greg told an indulgently smiling audience that they were “really just making it up.” Yes, he said, those were great stories and people want to watch great yarns that are well spun, but Pixar essentially “didn’t really know what it was doing.”

The question, then, isn’t so much how it made such awesome movies, but how they kept it up. What goes into repeatable smash hit

innovation? The answer, he said, is in creating creative tension between individual and collective genius – a safe place for ideas to germinate countered by the steel-tempering heat of robust collective scrutiny.

This requires creating the right innovative culture. “You have to maintain a difficult paradox of unleashing individual talent while preserving a collective identity; supporting creativity while encouraging confrontation; and brushing up on what skills will be required in three years’ time while delivering results today,” he summed up.

Essentially, it would seem to come down to marrying an entrepreneurial mind-set to a corporate one. It’s about allowing improvisation where no playbook exists while leveraging corporate structures where they do exist.



# Clayton Christensen

Kim B. Clark professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School and author of *The Innovator's Dilemma*, United States

Clayton delivered a brilliant analysis of the reasons behind the increasingly long tails of the nine US recessions since World War 2 – from six months for the first one to 70 for the last one in 2008 – and in doing so imparted illuminating lessons for innovation, growth and job creation.

The common denominator, as it turned out, was the failure of corporations to invest in market-creating innovations, despite the negligible cost of capital in the US. Since nearly all growth is created by innovation that spawns entirely new industries or value chains, capital investment strategies targeting short-term efficiency-enhancing and product-improving innovations have been hurting the global economy. Instead of creating jobs, they aim to do the very opposite (efficiency innovations) or at most do nothing to create new economic activity.

The problem, he said, was world-wide. In Japan,

market-creating inventions like Honda's mass-market motorcycle (the Cub), Toyota's equally democratic Corona, and the two-dollar Sony Walkman haven't been matched by anything since the 1980s (other than perhaps the Nintendo Wii, in his view).

And while close-to-zero-cost capital is not an African issue, the withering touch of the wrong kind of innovation applies equally here, Clayton continued. Don't, for example, invest disproportionately in resource-based industries. By their very nature, they chase efficiencies – including job elimination.

Where, then, are the opportunities? "Look beyond consumption data to non-consumption," Clayton explained. "Why are MBA registrations declining? Why is so little English spoken in Brazil? If it were made affordable and accessible, would that change? Sure."



# Patrick H Gaspard

U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa

Congratulating Accenture on its speaker programme, the US ambassador cautioned that real innovation doesn't exist in gatherings between the elite, but rather "at the point where desperation meets opportunity."

Urging South Africa's government, business and civil sectors to take opportunity to townships and rural areas, he said it is vital to engage in a "transformative way about power" with the dispossessed and youth. "All that matters for innovation to take place is to work with people in a way that they can understand it is not their role to be different but to take us forward. As for us, we must get out of their way."

Outlining the main features of the United States' sustained recovery from the 2007 global economic collapse, Patrick said South Africa would do well to craft similar policies that incentivise private sector R&D, more efficient

state and local finance and better access to private capital. This could help the country stage a similar recovery and allow it to create jobs, tackle complex challenges and achieve its developmental goals.

More immediate measures accompanying an innovation-friendly policy framework have, in the case of the US, included stabilisation funds to promote market liquidity, loans to key employment sectors, extended employment protection, infrastructure spending and quantitative easing.

Further alongside these, the US has had success with investments in transformative technologies and assets. In this regard, programmes have included health, energy, broadband, smart grid, transportation, education and worker retraining. In South Africa, Patrick said, opportunities exist

for initiatives around creating more bandwidth, providing better intellectual property protection, establishing training centres around innovation hubs, optimising trade efficiencies, lowering trade barriers and investing in infrastructure improvement. On behalf of the US government, he extended an invitation to all sectors of South African society to make use of the US's many cooperative tools and programmes in the country.

## About Accenture

We are one of the world's leading organisations providing management consulting, technology and outsourcing services, with approximately 319,000 employees; offices and operations in more than 200 cities in 56 countries; and net revenues of \$30.0 billion for fiscal 2014.

Our four growth platforms—Accenture Strategy, Accenture Digital, Accenture Technology, Accenture Operations—are the innovation engines through which we build world-class skills and capabilities; develop knowledge capital; and create, acquire and manage key assets central to the development of integrated services and solutions for our clients.

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