

Value of learning from peers when helping others

Published: 02 Nov 2017 7:00:00 AM South Africa Standard Time

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There has been a trend in corporate social investment (CSI) worth shouting about from the rooftops. That is the willingness to connect, share and help one another become smarter at addressing social challenges.

Connections happen in the formal context of participation in board and standing committees of industry forums. They also often happen informally following CSI conferences or as a by-product of participation in collaborative platforms. Often we think of the value of sharing our learning in monetary terms.

Management and funder resources are limited and there is increased pressure to get it right quickly, for business and society. What better way to cut your own learning curve and save costs than to look to lessons your peers learnt?

What is often underplayed is the human element, which speaks to the mandate of corporate social investors such as the MMI Foundation, the corporate social investment arm of financial services provider MMI Holdings. The MMI Foundation oversees the CSI investments of client-facing brands Metropolitan, Momentum, Multiply and Guardrisk. We are meant to ensure our efforts deliver the greatest of good for the vulnerable in society in a sustainable manner.

This means remaining teachable, recognising you don't have all the answers, listening to your peers and partners to make sure the best solution is put on the table.

You then have the responsibility to pay it forward and share your learning. If we don't, what is the human cost of ill-conceived, hastily designed programmes that are not infused with best practice? Could we say with conviction we are doing our best for those we seek to help? The MMI Foundation underwent a strategic shift to focus on youth employment since changing from the Metropolitan Foundation.

It was a time-consuming process involving much debate and research. The journey would have been more difficult if we did not have access to the learning of others. We hope to pay it forward before the end of the year by publishing the results of our research.

Within the last quarter, the MMI Foundation has been part of various sharing platforms; one of them is the Peer Learning Platform that Nation Builder is to launch. As a partner to the Forgood Online Volunteering platform, we get to share in the

collective wisdom of the client councils and we have partnered with Trialogue to share the learning of our consumer education programmes on their Knowledge Hub.

One of most important changes we made was to pull together portfolio managers of the various brands, removing duplication of efforts and becoming a learning-orientated team, pulling on one another's resources and evolving expertise. Because, sharing really is caring.