

Develop an effective climate change strategy with the UCT GSB

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With many of South Africa's major companies starting to recognise the risks and opportunities of climate change, the UCT Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB) has teamed up with leading sustainability advisor Jonathon Hanks to help organisations develop an effective climate change strategy.



The resulting Business and Climate Change programme will run at the UCT GSB this August and course director Hanks says it will help South African businesses to better understand the potential impacts that climate change will have on the business world and to assist them to develop and implement more effective strategic responses.

Said Hanks, "Until now, the business debate around climate change has been viewed largely in terms of risk management and value protection, with most companies seeing the issue as an unfortunate cost burden.

"While these concerns are well-founded, it is important for business to appreciate the exciting potential opportunities for value creation associated with climate change. Moving away from a carbon-intensive economy will open a lot of doors for adaptable, flexible and innovative businesses."

Hanks cited China's richest man in 2009, Wang Chuanfu, as an example of the enormous business opportunities that moving to a more sustainable economy can bring. Chuanfu is the founder of BYD - a company that is leading the way in helping to create a new generation of electric cars.

"Tomorrow's Bill Gates - like Chuanfu - will be someone who develops a new product or technology that helps us make the transition to a more resource efficient low-carbon economy," said Hanks.

Hanks, through his consultancy Incite Sustainability, has advised several major South African companies including Sasol, Anglo American, Pick 'n Pay and Engen, on matters relating to sustainability and climate change.

To those businesses that prefer to stay on a course of 'business-as-usual', however, Hanks offered a word of warning:

"Those companies that don't recognise the strategic benefits of moving proactively to a low-carbon economy will be compelled into action by legislation and other policy measures such as carbon taxes.

"South Africa has already made a global commitment to reducing its carbon emissions significantly beyond business-as-usual, so business can be sure that new legislation and taxes are on the cards. It is only a matter of time before they will need to comply and smart businesses are getting proactive to realise the business benefits ahead of their peers," said Hanks.

"And even if legislation does not soon come into play, the pressure from consumers and supply chains will inevitably lead companies to rethink their positioning on the matter," he cautioned.

Those companies that recognise that there are risks and opportunities and want to develop a strategy for dealing with climate change can sign up for the UCT GSB's three-day Business and Climate Change course this August.

Hanks said participants can expect to learn more about some of the latest science on climate change and, crucially, how climate change may impact on the southern African region in particular.

Delegates will be introduced to national and international policy developments relating to climate change and will consider the important implications for business according to these policy developments, as well as receive practical guidance on how to calculate and reduce an organisation's carbon footprint.

“The result will be a strategic and systemic understanding of how climate change itself and the resulting policy developments will likely affect South African businesses in the near future, and what measures they can implement to address and benefit from these developments right now,” said Hanks.

Business and Climate Change runs from 11-13 August 2010 through the UCT GSB's Executive Education unit. Contact Alison Siebritz on or SMS 'climate' to 31497 for more information. Standard rates apply.

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