

the question exposes an important distinction between power and civilisation.

well as Ethiopia's long-standing imperial tradition, developed systems of governance, di-

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Economic growth runs on more than capital and infrastructure. It runs on social capital, the networks of trust, influence, and collaboration that shape how decisions are made and opportunities are distributed. As businesses and governments push for inclusive growth, the real question is how effectively we are investing in and leveraging the social capital.

Over the years, I have come to believe that the greatest asset any organisation possesses is social capital. Unlike financial capital, social capital cannot be injected overnight. It is earned through consistency, transparency, and integrity. It grows when commitments are honoured and when decisions reflect long-term thinking.

Within organisations, culture forms the foundation of social capital. Policies and systems provide structure, but culture determines whether people feel valued and accountable. Teams that believe in a shared purpose respond to challenges with creativity and ownership. That commitment creates a sense of belonging and turns workplaces into communities where people invest in each other's success.

Inclusive cultures are equally important. When women and men are given equal opportunity to contribute and lead, organisations benefit from broader perspectives and stronger decision making.

Today, automation and Artificial Intelligence dominate boardroom discussions. These tools are transforming how we work. Yet the power of human relationships remains a key driver of performance. Leadership now extends far beyond office walls and factory gates. It reaches farmers, distributors, retailers, partners, and communities whose livelihoods intersect with business success.

I was reminded of this during a visit to east-

Social capital: The real currency of leadership

At the core of lasting success lies a simple truth. People create value.



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Leadership



ern Uganda, where I met a farmer who had improved his yields through better practices. What stayed with me was the pride in his voice as he spoke about paying school fees and improving his home. When businesses strengthen communities, they strengthen themselves.

Public trust in business is increasingly tied to how companies impact communities around them. People increasingly expect companies to contribute meaningfully to the societies in which they operate. In Uganda's private sector, this responsibility is reflected in employment, skills development, agricultural partnerships, and tax contributions that support national priorities.

In the beverage industry alone, thousands of livelihoods are supported across farming, logistics, retail, and hospitality. This ecosystem relies on responsible leadership. It requires investment in local sourcing, environmental stewardship, and responsible consumption

standards that protect consumers and communities.

Social capital shapes how organisations navigate both opportunity and crisis. Leaders who invest in relationships build credibility. Their influence comes from trust rather than authority. When trust exists, teams stay engaged and stakeholders remain patient during difficult periods.

In a fast-changing economic environment, social capital also provides stability. Trust reduces friction. Shared purpose strengthens resilience. These qualities allow organisations to grow sustainably even during uncertainty.

Leadership therefore must look beyond quarterly performance. Targets and metrics remain important. Their true value appears when they create real change. A young person gains employable skills. A supplier secures reliable income. A community gains access to clean water.

Another responsibility deserves attention. Women must continue to support women. Across boardrooms, factories, farms, and supply chains, women are contributing to economic progress every day. Their leadership strengthens organisations. Businesses must therefore create environments where women can grow, lead, and support one another.

Social capital is visible in loyalty, collaboration, and pride. At the core of lasting success lies a simple truth. People create value.

The writer is the managing director of Uganda Breweries Limited

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