



USB SBA: First intake's highs and hopes

USB's first intake of Small Business Academy participants recently completed their development programme. **Cherice Smith** speaks to some of the participants, sponsors and others.

The first cohort of 23 Small Business Academy (SBA) participants from Khayelitsha, Cape Town, started with their small business development programme in March 2013. Marietjie Wepener, deputy director: Business Development, Marketing and Communication at USB, says the participants' enthusiasm and tenacity to succeed exceeded all their expectations.

"The participants have just completed the final phase of their programme, namely the development and presentation of their business plans. They presented their plans in front of a full panel and the members were extremely excited about these presentations. The majority have passed the programme and will receive their certificates at a graduation ceremony at USB," says Wepener.

Says Edith Kennedy, manager: stakeholder relations at USB and manager of the SBA office: "Each participant was matched with a mentor from USB's alumni after a stringent selection process and training. The participants attended classes on campus and covered subjects like Business Essentials, Marketing and Finance. Each module had an assignment, which contributed towards the participants' business plans. They also attended several workshops."

The mentors are USB alumni who have completed a degree, postgraduate diploma or comprehensive certificate.

"These alumni are all in business themselves and have a vast set of skills and experience to use when guiding the SBA participants through business challenges. Mentors are invaluable in helping the small

business owners to develop their competencies and confidence."

Kennedy says a mentor and mentee team that has been working together really well is Mandisi Peter, who owns a DSTV agency and does DSTV installations in Khayelitsha, and his mentor, Amanda Maree, an MBA graduate and business owner of a company that focuses on HR support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Looking to the future, Wepener says they hope that one more big sponsor will come on board, which will allow the SBA to expand to Mitchell's Plain in 2014...

"Together, they looked at his customers and implemented a quality control system to get customer feedback to help improve the service at his shop. With guidance from his mentor, he was able to present a business plan to the committee of the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading in Khayelitsha programme to secure business premises in the newly built Harare Square Business Hub in Khayelitsha. The committee, consisting of a partnership between the City of Cape Town and the German Development Bank, KfW, was very impressed and granted him a lease for one of these shops. He can now conduct business in an environment that is safe and has proper building infrastructure, and he receives practical business support."

Even exchange students are getting involved in the mentoring process, says Kennedy.

"Maxwell Miselo, who owns a shuttle service, together with his mentor and two foreign exchange students from Germany and France, have been exploring a new feed of customers for his business. They have been able to finance another vehicle, which means that Maxwell's fleet and his revenue are growing."

Wepener says some of the lessons learnt from the first SBA intake include allowing for the unexpected personal challenges of the participants, which make it difficult for them to attend sessions or complete assignments on time.

"We have provided space at USB for the participants where they can access a computer and books. We are also considering presenting the training in the mornings only, because participants have to be at their businesses every day."

Looking to the future, Wepener says they hope that one more big sponsor will come on board, which will allow the SBA to expand to Mitchell's Plain in 2014 and which will effectively double the size of the group.

"Without the sponsors we could not have embarked on this initiative. The two large sponsors, ABSA and Distell Foundation, have been really supportive. They serve on the SBA steering committee and are always available to give advice and assist. These two companies both presented a workshop as part of the curriculum. We have just unveiled plaques in USB's main building for these sponsors, attesting to their role in the SBA over the next five years."

Vernon de Vries, director: Corporate Affairs at Distell Limited, says he is satisfied with the progress of the SBA programme.

"The Distell Foundation has skills development and job creation as two key

thrusts of its social investment strategy. We believe that the work of the SBA will ultimately focus on both of these. I see the SBA fulfilling its vision of expanding to other areas, such as Mitchell's Plain. Our funding agreement is for five years, so we will be a sponsor for a few years to come. Typically, we take a low-profile, supportive role, assisting on an ad hoc basis when called upon, and I see us continuing to do that. For example, apart from funding, we have assisted with liquor donations, speeches and publicity."

Bernie Berkowitz, regional head: Enterprise Development at Absa, says Absa Enterprise Development is committed to contributing towards the support of local entrepreneurs and enabling them to reach their true potential.

"The commitment of partnering with USB is not something we do to make us look good. It is at the heart of our business to go beyond banking and make the lives of our customers and clients much easier. The SBA programme is well organised and well presented. The feedback that we have received was phenomenal. This again reflects the world-class approach of USB to the programme and how they skilfully incorporated their world-class academic model into this programme that reflects a really unique academy which SMEs can only benefit from. I would like to see the programme expand to the greater Western Cape and we will be an active partner in growing this exciting initiative."

Application forms for 2014's intake will be distributed from late October 2013. For more information, go to www.usb.ac.za/sba.

PARTICIPANTS

HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED USB'S SMALL BUSINESS ACADEMY?



– Thobile Nduna, Black Pride Events and Promotions
It's all about open minds and original thinking. That's the way we approach each and every project.

"My idea when partaking in this programme was to get ideas on how I could grow my business and run it in a more savvy way. I walked out with more than I expected. I have learnt how to write up a business plan, present my business, get exposure, network and grow the business. I have also gained confidence to operate my business professionally. Compiling my company's business plan was a highlight."



– S'bongiseni Lolwana, Zabelde Creatives

Providing a platform for sustainable farming

"Because of the SBA I now look at business through a different lens. The most important lesson that I have learnt is the importance of networking and having a clear understanding of business finances. The mentor-mentee programme has enlightened me in terms of being shown the business ropes by Johan Wepener, one of the most experienced, humble and patient individuals in my field. I have remembered who I am and my academic capabilities have been recharged. I would be happy to have my MBA within the next three years."



– Thembi Tsotetsi, Kaltsha Glass

Glass anywhere, anytime

"USB's SBA has opened many doors for me in terms of networking and meeting with different people in various forums. It has also helped me to have a better understanding of how to manage my business. Teamwork with other participants has been a highlight because it doesn't end when we meet at USB – we share everything that will benefit each other in our businesses. The commitment, assistance and dedication that we've been getting from the facilitator, Edith Kennedy, have been phenomenal and the lecturers have been so helpful."

MBA RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT ON SBA

USB student, Marietjie Wehmeyer, focused her MBA research assignment on three aspects of the SBA programme, namely the selection of students, mentorship for students and the academic programme.

"I wanted to know more about how business is done in Khayelitsha. My focus was on the evaluation of the pilot programme – to create room for improvement and to focus on the positive areas that can be built upon."