

Enabling a win-win plumbing career for unemployed youth

By Nedbank Insurance

Deciding how to direct supply-chain-development funds towards fundamentally changing lives, is a serious question being explored by short-term insurance companies in South Africa.

There are a variety of options in understanding funding, including and not limited to internal enterprise development models, offers from venture capitalists, educational institutions and specialised incubator programs.

One big question is – how to enable supply chain development that ensures direct economic empowerment that maintains the level of efficiency and effectiveness that policy holders want?

This article shares some of the themes emerging from the Nedbank Insurance supply chain development program in collaboration with industry experts. The focus is specifically on the relationship between unemployed youth and how to make it possible for them to establish a career in plumbing, and to enable SMEs hosting candidates to achieve value for their business.

This pilot programme tests a number of different factors to establish what really works for the collaborators in a new business model. It further focuses on the development of plumbers and includes the Institute of Plumbing South Africa (IOPSA) to align the technical requirements to the professional plumbing quality standard.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), 2016-2017 report, *Can Small Business Survive in South Africa?*, highlights that “three quarters of South African entrepreneurs are opportunity driven”. Considering that South Africa’s economy is based on high levels of competition and improving efficiencies, it is important that pilots with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) add value to these two areas of a SME’s business. Addressing these removes the barriers to securing a career for young and bright candidates, that would otherwise not be able to secure an employment opportunity (currently the unemployment rate is 27, 6% for quarter 1, 2019 according to Stats SA).

Taking the ‘pain points’ out that SME’s experience with new recruits was an important first-step of the programme. The pilot-design therefore ensured that the time-consuming tasks, such as finding Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) educated candidates and preparing them for the workplace, was established.

In addition, supporting SME’s to practically implement mentor-training and natural-mentoring structures in their businesses, was agreed as equally important by all partners on the programme, as approximately 70% of a plumbers training relies on the quality of the training experience in the workplace.

Nedbank Insurance partnered with the Institute of Plumbing South Africa (IOPSA), and plumbing service providers, as they shared the common goal of enabling young unemployed youth to qualify as professional plumbers with the relevant level of support required, education and workplace experience that is acceptable to policy holders, especially where these candidate explore starting their own businesses after qualifying.

SME’s have reported that the identification and workplace preparation of the candidates is an essential element going forward. “We can train on the work to be done, we cannot train on attitude and 90% of the opportunities an SME will encounter will directly relate to the attitude of the candidate”, says Lea Smith, president of IOPSA.

Ensuring that apprentices know how to work with mentors, and that the workplace mentors know how to support new recruits is also an essential element in achieving the workplace experience that counts for something. “We also needed to prepare our teams for a lady plumbing apprentice, especially someone who is highly motivated to learn and grow”, says Mr Simister, Green Planet Plumbing. Put simply by Brendan Reynolds, executive director IOPSA, “the industry is in desperate need of well-trained, work-ready plumbers and as a country we have a dire unemployment challenge. If we can marry these two criteria, we could really make a meaningful impact in employment for South Africa. “

At the heart of this pilot is the opportunity that opens up for candidates who go on a journey in qualifying as plumbers, with the additional benefit of igniting their business skills and entrepreneurial traits. Ms Loreal Raath, Nedbank Insurance, says, “the partnership is vital, we need to be building confidence with the youth and SME employers alike, this type of collaboration should become a natural way of building our service in the years to come.”

The collaboration team is inspired with the transparency and structure of the approach, and invite SME’s to get involved in making a difference to their business and in developing quality skilled tradesmen and woman.

It is important that the relevant Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) explore partnering in these pilots in an integrated and scale-able manner, and not only in the plumbing sector but also in developing for example, Loss Adjusters for the insurance sector.

This pilot programme would not have been possible without Nedbank Insurance enabling the independent facilitation of stakeholders. A big thanks to all involved stakeholders: Harambee, Green Planet Plumbing, Plumbing Johannesburg, the Institute of Plumbing South Africa (IOPSA), and programme facilitation Debbie Donaldson: because YOU’RE worth it!

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