

Signa Group leads the way in revolutionary methods of elevating and empowering others

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Janine Piper, director of innovation at Signa Group, shares insights into how the company has aligned its work to the UN Sustainable Development Goals to address socio-economic challenges, and is inspiring and uplifting people and businesses in order to effect significant and meaningful impact for a better future.

1. Tell us a bit about your role at Signa Group?

I am considered the 'mother' of the company. My role is director of innovation and allows me to apply creative corporate entrepreneurship. This involves the definition of new solutions, evaluating opportunities for impact and new processes or products within the 14 diverse Signa related member entities.

2. Signa Group has aligned its work to the UN Sustainable Development Goals to address socio-economic challenges – how do these goals fit in with Signa's vision, mission, values, and purpose?

Signa Group and entities have the collective objective to make a sustainable impact on the future of South Africa and Africa through offering solutions to socio economic challenges. This is summarised in our slogan of 'Preparing Africa for a working future' which encompasses multiple levels. The organisation is anchored by values that sound unrelated to business, but at its core is the foundation of sustainability – love and trust in persona, stakeholder relationships and economic future of Africa. Enthusiasm to make a sustainable impact. Grace, giving and gratitude as core principles to our approach to deliver purposeful results through massive action. Quite a mouthful but fully integrated in our culture and approach to business.



Janine Piper, director of innovation at Signa Group

3. What meaningful and impactful strategies is Signa Group implementing to achieve its UN-aligned goals?

The specific UN Sustainable Development Goals Signa Group aligns to are related to: No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Quality Education, Decent work and Economic Growth, Industry Innovation and Infrastructure, Reduce Inequalities, Sustainable Communities and Cities, Partnership for Goals.

This covers a very wide spectrum of general socio-economic challenges which Signa Group member entities address through supporting organisations with various solutions, including economic transformation and equality through B-BBEE support. This impacts around 300 corporate clients per annum; a wide variety of quality educational, sponsorship and bursary solutions that lead to employment or self-employment in academic and artisan fields, which train and empower around 2,000 students per annum, job creation and employment facilitation through a YES programme to around 300 candidates per annum; investment funding solutions to small businesses for development; infrastructure and technology development, and a personal safety portable solution through an app that links to a network of security companies.

In quantifying the impact, 100% of activities throughout the group of 14 member entities can be linked to an outcome aligned to the UN SDG. We are focused and excited about expanding our impact and reach on an ongoing basis.

4. How is Signa Group achieving its key focus of elevating and empowering individuals and businesses?

Signa Group is achieving its purpose of elevating and empowering individuals and businesses by consciously impacting

Impact thinking in everything we do.

One should never make the mistake to think of impact as theoretical business practices. What we are speaking about are students and employees who are people with families, living their life and taking responsibility for looking after their families. It is about individuals able to reach their full potential because of the right training or support; businesses that can sustain their employees and serve their clients well. Impacting in the true sense of making a difference in someone else's life.

Another factor is the protection of the environment to preserve it for future nations to be able to do the same. It is the culmination of humanity in action with all the challenges and opportunities of the moment, and being able to support individuals and businesses to serve their purpose effectively. Keeping that focus is what enables a purposeful business.

5. How is Signa Group offering businesses the opportunities they need to drive positive change in their communities?

Our partnerships with clients include that we evaluate their training or enterprise and supplier initiatives to ensure that it offers a secondary benefit to themselves or their client base. Examples of this are:

- Identifying skills required and aligning learnership programmes with that resource requirement. This involves recruiting and training in line with the resource need which enables the workplace to host potential employees before a final appointment of the most suitable candidates is made.
- Deployment of skills in remote areas where localisation is important or contractually required. Similar scenarios apply in the deployment of YES candidates where we have clients that year-on-year recruit a number of full-time employees by first offering them the opportunity of participating in a YES programme.
- Training of a group of suppliers in a specific industry which is funded by a client through enterprise development funds to establish quality standards in their service delivery. This has a secondary benefit to the sponsoring company on the quality that is delivered by their suppliers to themselves.
- Identification and growth of small black businesses that act as redistributors of our client which enables a transformation of the franchisees of the sponsoring company.

All of these projects impact people and businesses, which secures a future for themselves and economic activation within South Africa.

6. What steps is Signa Group taking to create the envisioned world in which people and communities can benefit from long-term, inclusive, sustainable economic growth, social development, and decent work for all?

Signa Group is actively pursuing projects that will lead to economic activation of marginalised communities or people. 75% of our students are disabled students and 100% of our students come from underprivileged families. Our innovation is visible in these projects, like a fund-raising initiative with the Ndebele nation to establish training centres in remote areas.

We have been running Signa Trust for the past 10 years, which is a registered NPO that invests in tertiary education of black ladies who have the potential to become market leaders in the industries they are studying. We sponsor full bursary programmes that cover all expenses from education to accommodation and stipends. In all our learning businesses, our training is measured in its result of employment or self-employment for our candidates, with the firm belief from Signa that education without the right result only leads to hopelessness.

We are in the process of registering a private tertiary educational institution with the hope to make tertiary education affordable and accessible to all. Signa Group member entities wish to make a positive impact in the future of South Africa and Africa. True to our slogan we wish to 'Prepare Africa for a working future'.

7. What advice do you have for companies who would like to achieve the same goals?

We promote an approach of micro decisions for macro impact. Our advice to companies who would like to do purposeful business would be to simply include a measure for positive impact in every business decision. It is essential for any

business to be profitable in order to be sustainable; however, it is core to understand how every action from corporate communication, sustainable HR practices, services and product definition can be linked to positive impact. Once one realises you are part of a tribe wanting to change business and the environment for the better, business overall becomes a happier place. Our recruitment focuses on people who are driving personal positive purposes, so we actively surround ourselves with people that share the same values and vision of Signa. Our clients are recognised in our Power of One project where we highlight the economic or personal impact their projects had on either individuals, other businesses, or communities. We publish a comprehensive record of these feel-good-true-life and business stories on our website and make it available for corporate sustainability reporting of our clients.

8. How can companies partner with Signa Group or get involved with the initiatives you've mentioned?

We wish to invite associates, related businesses, like-minded people, potential clients, and impact groups to contact us through our website www.signa.co.za, to register as members, whereafter our teams will be in contact to provide the necessary information for involvement in the area of interest.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>