

MTN and UCT GSB form multimillion-rand partnership to boost innovation

The MTN Group and the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB) have partnered to boost sustainable innovation in Africa. The multinational mobile telecommunications company will invest R15 million over the next three years in its Solution Space, an innovation hub at the business school.

The partnership is built on a solid platform of shared values of integrity, leadership, learning and a commitment to innovation with real-world impact.



Image credit: <http://www.gsb.uct.ac.za/>

"Each partner has complementary expertise and skills, so together, their impact on African innovation will be greater, and the solutions emerging as a result of their collaboration will reach further," said Professor Walter Baets, Director of the UCT GSB.

"We are delighted that MTN has decided to make a commitment of this kind. It is an investment in solutions for Africa, by Africa, in Africa," Baets said.

The collaboration will combine the action-learning and research strengths of the UCT GSB with MTN's technological expertise and resources to create, amongst others, mobile apps and programmes for educational, medical and economic empowerment, as well as to promote entrepreneurship and small business growth.

Leading the delivery of a bold new digital world

Paul Norman, Chief Human Resources and Corporate Affairs Officer: MTN Group said: "As Africa's leading telecommunications brand, MTN is committed to leading the delivery of a bold new digital world, a world where technological development and mobile integration allow for new possibilities, not just for our own customers, but for people and communities across Africa."

Sarah-Anne Arnold, Manager of the MTN Solution Space said the partnership represents a truly symbiotic and purposeful venture into the future.

"MTN already has an extensive footprint in Africa and the GSB has a strong representation of African students at the business school, combined with a reputation for research and academic excellence. So we are combining our strengths for a common purpose - finding solutions to the biggest challenges facing our continent," she said.

Norman added, "We foresee Africa's brightest and most innovative minds collaborating to find new solutions that grow from test environments into new markets. We look forward to elevating the profile of cutting-edge African innovators and entrepreneurs."

The MTN Solution Space has already had successes in helping startups gain a foothold in the business world. It is home to social innovators like former UCT GSB MPhil student Francois Petousis who founded Lumkani, a proactive, early-warning fire detection system designed for shack dwellers. The concept won the People's Choice Award at the 2014 Global Social Venture Competition (GSVC) and scooped second place in two separate categories at South Africa's innovation summit.

Prof Baets said partnerships like these enable real innovation that can make a difference to communities, adding value on many different levels, while helping to establish new ventures that contribute to economic growth. He said as a founding sponsor of the MTN Solution Space, MTN understands that innovation is essential for achieving competitive advantage in today's high-pressure business environment.

"The UCT GSB is dedicated to developing a new paradigm for learning and research with an emphasis on building African solutions and innovations. In collaboration with MTN we will be able to create better outcomes. Our combined networks - civil society partners, industry experts, policy makers and practitioners - create a collaborative innovation landscape like no other," Prof Baets said.

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