

SMME advice from a successful SMME

Small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) around the world drive the economy, yet they often lack advice pertinent to their small business model. Dr Sibongiseni Tunzelana, a successful business owner, shares some of her experiences in starting and eventually operating a successful business to give aspirant owners of SMMEs local insights on getting started.



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In 2011, Tunzelana, together with Matsepo Matloporo Africa, founded Flavalite Innovations, an ICT service provider, specialising in innovative ICT services and focusing specifically on digital innovation, digital analytics, cyber security, e-ticketing and e-commerce.

Having proved its potential in the local ICT space, the company was welcomed into the Innovator Trust Enterprise Development Programme.

Tunzelana says, “Since joining the Innovator Trust’s Enterprise Development Programme, the company has received guidance and mentorship which has been instrumental in improving the profile of the company. Through this process, we have improved our sales presentations, refined our sales pitches and been linked with corporate buyers. This has created valuable investor leads and business opportunities. In addition, the company has continued the development of skills and capabilities which have allowed us to streamline and optimise business operations.”

Five planning tips for SMME business owners

1. How to choose a business incubator - “It’s a great advantage to your fledgling business to find a mentoring partner that fits the profile of your particular business. This results in more informed business decisions.”

- The [Small Business Connect](#) website lists a number of business incubators in South Africa.
- Useful information about the South African business start-up ecosystem is available on [Ventureburn](#).
- The Innovator Trust also partners with Kulea, Shanduka Black Umbrellas, Raizcorp and GIBS, among others.

2. Do your research - SMME owners should be aware of the legal compliance requirements, which guide the operation of businesses in South Africa:

- Registration of companies, co-operatives and intellectual property rights (trade marks, patents, designs and copyright) and the required maintenance;
- Compliance with relevant legislation;
- Monitoring compliance;
- BBBEE Affidavits; and
- Tax clearance certificates

Information sources for documentation, business processes and legislation affecting SMMEs include:

- [The Department of Trade and Industry](#)
- [SME toolkit](#)
- [Understanding BEE](#)
- [Labour Law](#)
- [Companies and Intellectual Property Commission](#)

3. Get the right partner on your side - The following companies and organisations offer support for SMMEs, from tailor made services and solutions to training and skills development.

- [NSBC](#)
- [SEFA](#)
- [SEDA](#)
- [NEF](#)

4. Networking - “For small business owners in particular, the importance of networking cannot be emphasised enough. The following events, groups and forums suit the ICT business.”

- [AfriCom](#)
- [Innovation Summit](#)
- [The Institute of Information Technology Professionals South Africa](#)
- [Smart Procurement](#)

5. Mobile presence and cyber attacks - A mobile presence is extremely important to small businesses, especially with increased mobile access to the internet in South Africa. With this, of course comes the increased risk of cyber attacks. “As businesses, big and small migrate data to the cloud; financial data, customer details, and other sensitive information becomes an opportunity for cyber criminals.”

Poor security and a lack of awareness and training can leave SMMEs ill-prepared for attacks, making them "easy pickings" for cyber criminals. To avoid this:

- Secure your data – and don't forget about your customers;
- Control access, but don't overdo it; and
- Stay up to date with current trends around connection, and safety issues.

“As an SMME, you need to engage with the right organisations and individuals, to help you steer towards the right direction. My experiences and views on the challenges and benefits of being an entrepreneur in the South African financial ecosystem, guide and inform every decision I make for my business. The rules of the ‘game’ are changing daily, and the successful SMMEs are not the most pedantic, they’re the ones who are willing to throw out the rule book and go against their theoretical knowledge when a new or a better way of doing something comes about,” she concludes.

For more information, go to www.innovatortrust.co.za.

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