

Bridging the gender gap in tech

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Koo Govender, CEO for Dentsu Aegis Network SA, explains how the local launch of the Female Foundry will help bridge the gap in gender parity.



How does the Dentsu Aegis Network aim to bridge the gap in gender parity?

Literacy rates in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are increasing year-on-year, but there is still a gender gap. The female literacy rate is 57% compared to 72% of males (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2017). This has a direct impact on the access to information that girls and women are privy to.

Female entrepreneurs in SSA are therefore looking for ways to acquire skill sets without having to overextend themselves financially. One of Dentsu Aegis Network's (DAN's) global Social Impact commitments is to promote female empowerment and leadership.

We plan to close the gender parity gap through the launch of our Female Foundry programme, which aims to empower female entrepreneurs with access to tools, training, connections and resources to build successful tech-enabled businesses.

Fortunately, at DAN, 69% of our employees are female. However, we still have a responsibility to our community to take an active stand in bridging the gap in gender parity.

What are the founding principles of this programme and what is the ultimate goal?

The Female Foundry was launched in 2016 by iProspect in Singapore, after research shed light on the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs, particularly in emerging markets. The programme aims to promote inclusion and diversity in business by providing mentorship, training and access to funding for female entrepreneurs. The ultimate goal is to empower, promote and equip them with the necessary tools, learnings and guidance to improve and sustain themselves in the entrepreneurial space.

What are some of the high-level skills that will be developed through the programme?

Based on our research, we have identified four categories of fundamental skills that will be used as focus areas for the

programme. Mentorship will assist in the understanding of the intricacies of business operation and management. Personal and business skills development will assist in packaging and mapping out their business ideas into a presentation format.

Networking for additional support will be the focus to address the lack of personal and business growth. Lastly, due to the lack of support structures, the programme will assist in setting short and long-term business goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timeous.

How will these skills and/or events assist the female-led businesses?

The programme and learnings will equip the female entrepreneurs with the high-level skills and guidance to give their businesses a boost in the market space. The three-day bootcamp courses and mentorship programme aims to propel their business forward.

Is there a cost to participating/applying?

There is no cost for participating and applying, which is one of the many reasons that make Female Foundry a fantastic opportunity. [Applications](#) are open currently open for the 2019 programme in South Africa. I encourage you all to follow our [Facebook page](#) and [website](#) for more details.

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