

Working together works

BY NABELAH FREDERICKS

COLLABORATING with a network of 100 companies has helped the Cape Innovation and Technology Initiative's (Citi) skills development arm to train 500 students at a cost of R50 000 per person since 2011.

Citi was founded in 1998 as a non-profit organisation by the IT industry and is supported by the Western Cape Government and the City of Cape Town. The initiative aims to develop Cape Town as a global hub for innovation and technology.

Alethea van Wyk, the head of the initiative's skills development programme CapaCiti, says that the IT skills the programme was started in 2011 in a bid to create training courses to address the region's IT skills shortage.

"I joined the team about three years ago when the initiative was in its early stages. A lot of work has been done to fine tune our operational model since then," she says.

The programme, she points out, has proved so successful that Citi has been able to place nearly all those students that participate on training courses, which typically runs for six to 12 months.

"The underlying reason for our high placement rate is our emphasis on meeting real industry needs through our



Alethea van Wyk heads up Citi's skills development department, CapaCiti.

training programmes, which are entirely demand-led," says Van Wyk, adding that Citi taps into the experiences of its wide network of companies to develop programmes.

CapaCiti for example recently piloted a .net certification programme, upskilling unemployed national diploma graduates through a six-month training programme. One

company offered internships to 16 of the 20 students just a month into the training programme.

Certain programmes are run entirely based on companies' commitments to



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SOCIAL entrepreneurs have a new platform to learn about successful social enterprises.

This follows the launch of Talking Social Enterprise, an online "talk network", hosted at 7.30pm on a Wednesday evening of each month.

It aims to stimulate debate amongst social enterprise entrepreneurs and is hosted on the Google Hangouts platform.

- To listen to the show, sign-up by registering via www.TalkingSocialEnterprise.net.

Collaborate with businesses and give them real value

BY MARCUS COETZEE

SOCIAL enterprises collaborate with businesses. Instead of seeing them as a source of funding, they see them as valuable business partners.

This is the ninth principle in our Think like a Social Enterprise series.

Non-profit organisations (NPOs) traditionally see businesses as a source of corporate social investment (CSI) funding. Many feel that businesses have a moral and compliance obligation to fund them.

The common misconception is that business should stay out of social issues, instead they should give more funds to NPOs already operating in these areas. Unfortunately, this attitude creates dependency where the business is the provider and the NPO the dependent. It also restricts NPOs to a limited pool of funding.

It is much better to see businesses as valuable and equal partners. Successful social entrepreneurs understand this. They pitch deals to businesses which make good business sense. They offer real value to businesses and get more than a



Marcus Coetzee

secure the inputs they need. For example, R-Labs is a technology incubator based in Bridgetown also doing research, entrepreneurial support and community development. R-Labs has worked with local entrepreneurs to conduct research for businesses on the experiences and attitudes of the youth in South Africa.

Social enterprises can help businesses improve demand. U-Turn is a social enterprise that works with street people in South Africa. U-Turn is also a sales force (a department that is responsible for selling services and products) implementation partner. This means that it makes money by helping NPOs access and setup the free sales force system. In return it helps build the sales force brand and the demand for its products.

They can help businesses comply with standards and regulations. For example, Fetola is a social enterprise dedicated to promoting entrepreneurship in South Africa. Fetola has established an enterprise development fund for businesses to invest in and get enterprise development points in return. Fetola also helps businesses nurture entrepreneurs in its

supply chain and earn further BEE points.

A social enterprise can help businesses to improve their surroundings. Cape Town Partnership works to create a healthy, vibrant and inclusive city for future generations – a city that is also good for business. This purpose, combined with its track record, makes it worthwhile for businesses to fund and collaborate with them.

They can help businesses run responsibly and honour their social and environmental responsibilities. For example, the Heart and Stroke Foundation strives to reduce the incidence of heart disease and strokes in South Africa. It also sells a Heart Mark certification to retailers and restaurants that want to serve heart-friendly food and show that they care.

These are just some of the strategies that can be used to partner with businesses.

It is better to enter into a mutually beneficial relationship with a business than to see it as source of funding. This will unlock a far greater and more stable pool of funds for your enterprise.

- Marcus Coetzee is a strategist specialising in social enterprises.

take on interns prior to the programme even starting. Currently, CapaCiti works with all four of the city's universities as well as with other training providers to offer IT training to students who do not always have an IT background or qualification.

Van Wyk says this proves that one can be re-skilled to enter a career in this industry without necessary having an undergraduate IT qualification.

She says the organisation's courses are available to interested parties through bursaries that cover fees for the duration of the training. Apart from equipping students with the actual skills to do the job, the organisation also helps students to develop professional skills to adequately prepare them to navigate the world of work and pre-empt certain expectations that may come with a work environment.

"We find that the biggest challenge to many students is that they are not familiar with the work environment and we therefore view work-readiness training that sets our students up for ongoing professional development as equally important as the technical training," says Van Wyk.

She adds that up to 98% of CapaCiti graduates remain in employment four years after completing their training. A number have also started their own businesses and have returned to offer support to current students through a graduate-initiated mentorship programme.

Citi also runs other initiatives, including the Barn in Woodstock and the recently launched Khayelitsha Barn.