

Female entrepreneurship a major catalyst for economic growth – Enterprising Women Programme



When Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) released its quarterly figures on employment in August 2012, it was far from rosy. According to the statistics the ranks of the unemployed increased by a staggering 100 000 people to reach 4.6 million. This translates to an official unemployment rate of 25.2%. With this seemingly grim forecast in mind, Entrepreneurial Development Professional – Leonie Greyling, is of the opinion that entrepreneurship can make a significant difference to not only the unemployment rate but also the improvement of South Africa's economic growth prospects.

Leading by example

As a female entrepreneur herself, Leonie is currently assisting the Enterprise Development Centre (EDC) on the Vaal Triangle Campus in developing incubation capacity to strengthen the campus's ability to produce graduates, including female graduates, to find employment - including self-employment, in the labour market. "Female entrepreneurial activity has been proven to be a major catalyst in triggering economic growth in developing countries, such as South Africa," says Leonie and adds that compared to their male counterparts and the rest of the world there is still much room for improvement.

While all entrepreneurs are confronted with challenges on their journey to success, women often have different challenges than their male counterparts, such as a greater demand on their time; resources and energy as a result of family pressures. According to Leonie the misconception that all female entrepreneurial ventures stem from so-called hobbies (such as craftwork; needlework or baking) negatively impacts the way in which female entrepreneurs are viewed and relevant market research disproves this fallacy. In much the same way it is also, according to Leonie, not true that all entrepreneurial ventures need a lot of start-up capital and infrastructure development to take

off. “Money should be viewed as a mere facilitator to business success rather than the primary requisite.”

According to Leonie a big paradigm shift needs to take place within the basic education sphere to enhance and encourage entrepreneurship among the young. “It is easier to nurture a spirit of entrepreneurship from a young age than to acquire entrepreneurial skills at a later stage in life,” explains Leonie whilst stating that children represent the “ultimate entrepreneurial culture” since they are more creative and free-thinking; less inclined to fear the unknown and more willing to take risks.

* Leonie is the founder and Managing Director of Aequis Consulting and specialises in business and technology incubation advisory services, enterprise development programme design and optimisation, female-focused entrepreneurship support programme design and organisational performance enhancement and capacity building.

Enterprising Women Programme

Enterprising Women Programme is an eight month programme geared to provide business support services to women who wish to establish their own businesses. Participants are taken through a programme to explore ideas, develop a business model and putting the wheels in motion to initiate the business. Participants become part of a peer network of women embarking on an entrepreneurial journey, where they can share experiences and learn from one another and other successful female entrepreneurs by being exposed to structured learning through workshops and group-centred learning.

During the eight month programme the participants are guided through various stages of entrepreneurial readiness such as idea to concept; business model generation and market research. For more information about the EDC or the Enterprising Women Programme contact the bhive EDC +27 16 9103393 or bhive@nwu.ac.za * The EDC is situated within the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Information Technology.

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