

## UMBHALO NEWSLETTER

### gtz ESDS Programme

September 2009/No 7

#### LEARNERSHIP – THE ROUTE TO EMPLOYABILITY

When it comes finally to deliver services to the learners Werner Heitmann always was passionate about the development of the Learnership Training System – a combination of structured learning at an institutional training provider, such as FET Colleges, and workplace – based learning at companies. Recent tracer studies of Learnership learners done by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) and GTZ clearly provide evidence that Learnerships leads to employability that helps learners to generate income and to leave the poverty trap.

HERE ARE SOME VOICES FROM THE FIELD...

#### BRIEF BACKGROUND OF NMC

The NMC Group is one of the largest privately owned companies in South Africa. The Group is made up of companies that operate in the Construction Industry, namely Brink & Heath Civils, NMC Laser Levell Floors and Limelight Fenestration. The engine that drives the group is made up of the construction (building and civil), the plant and yard, property developments, central services and the corporate centre.

The company is driven by the belief that people are critical to the success of a service organization, especially in construction. The divisions are held together by a coaching culture that espouses personal development and growth whilst embracing the group's vision of "The Greatest Little Construction Company".



**Anna Boonzaier** is the NMC training officer. She began working for NMC in January 2007. Anna is responsible for skills development within the company. She is currently overseeing 11 employees who are on carpentry learnerships.

#### 1. As an employer why did you decide to offer learnerships?

Learnerships are needed to develop artisans in the company. They are also a great avenue for individuals to take to advance their careers even if they do not have Grade 12. It is a vehicle to up-skill more workers in their careers.

#### 2. Would you recommend learnerships to students as a sound way to find entry in the world of work and achieve employment?

YES! Especially if the learnership is linked to trade. In construction, we are always looking for qualified artisans.

#### 3. From your experience: what are the 3 key factors for the success of a learnership?

- A learner must have a genuine interest in the field covered e.g. carpentry.
- Continuous support and communication between the company, learner and training provider.

- Ensuring that the learner gets the relevant practice on site.

**4. What challenges do businesses need to get prepared for when they get involved in learnerships?**

- Not all learners move at the same pace
- Not all learners will complete the learnership
- You must demand progress reports from Training Providers
- It can become challenging to manage the learners

**5. Any personal success stories that keep you going?**

Many. There have been many cases of employees who moved up in the company as a result of a learnership. We take on learners every year and there are always stars who came out and become Leading Hands and eventually site managers.

**6. Any other comments:**

There is a perception amongst younger students/school kids who consider learnerships as less important education than tertiary education. This perception must be changed if we wish to continue to develop artisans.



**Kaizer Lali** began working for NMC in 2002, and soon became a senior supervisor in charge of a team on site. In 2007, Kaizer indicated that he wanted to learn a trade to further his career development. Kaizer completed his construction carpentry learnership in Feb 2009. He is currently working as a carpenter on a warehouse facility in Cape Town.

**1. Having matric you would have had many options. Why did you decide to do a learnership?**

Firstly I am a person who likes to do work practically. If this job will come to an end, I want to have something that would carry me throughout my career. My vision is to have a small business that my family and community would benefit from.

**2. Given today: Would you do it again?**

Yes, especially now when the country is facing an economic situation with job losses and price increases.

**3. What was mainly responsible for the success of the learnership?**

Focus, dedication and commitment

**4. What would you recommend to future learners?**

My recommendation to them is that they must take this opportunity with both hands. Learning is not easy and it is a long process. The time we face needs someone who has an open mind.

**5. Any other comments:**

I want to thank NMC especially the Training Department for giving me an opportunity to do a learnership. I am proud of what I am doing at our site.



**Andile Makele** was employed in NMC in 2006 as a scaffolder. Through an interview process it was discovered that Andile wanted to become a carpenter and he subsequently began a carpentry learnership in 2008. Andile completed his learnership in May this year. Andile is currently working as a carpenter on a shopping mall development in Stellenbosch.

**1. It is said that learnerships improve employment and career perspectives/prospects:**

**True or false? Why?**

True, because you can achieve goals and you can get jobs easy and you can be a leader at work because of that learnership.

**2. Do you see any challenges with regards to learnerships?**

No, it was an enjoyable learnership.

**3. What was mainly responsible for the success of your learnership?**

My dedication, and I want to learn.

**4. What would you recommend to future learners?**

To tell them that a learnership is important because it takes you from darkness and brings more knowledge and experience in your career.

**Building Masters – “Best Master Student 2008” award.**

The study “Implementing efficient and effective learners in the construction industry” was performed by Claudia Mummmenthey as a Master Thesis for acquiring a MComm (HRM). Both examiners perceived the thesis as an exceptional and impressively executed study – within a highly significant and relevant research filed for South Africa:

“The candidate’s choice of topic has to be applauded for its relevance and possible practical significance. I fully agree with the candidate’s statement that the learnership system has amazing potential to address the critical skills shortage and reduce unemployment that would ultimately lead to overall future growth in South Africa. The importance of a comprehensive research study such as this can not be overstated. I am particularly impressed with the clear and systematic presentation of the research objectives of the study and the fact that she actively tries to address them throughout. The strength of the study lies in the recommendations, given the nature of the topic.”

**Anna Boonzaier, Kaizer Lali and Andile Makele assisted Claudia with her thesis.**