

Sumitomo Rubber SA launches accredited training to drive success of township entrepreneurs

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Following the success of the Dunlop Container project, established in 2012 to drive sustainable township entrepreneurship and promote safety on the road, Sumitomo Rubber SA (SRSA), manufacturer of the Dunlop brand, is helping dealers take their businesses to the next level. SRSA - already the only tyre manufacturing company with a township and rural area enterprise development programme - has now developed accredited training programmes funded by MERSETA and Sumitomo Rubber Industries (SRI).



Dunlop's Enterprise Development dealers can now apply to send their employees for training in one of four focus areas: technical skills, occupational health and safety, business acumen, and sales and customer care. SRSA will select candidates from the applications for the fully funded training.

SRSA CEO, Lubin Ozoux, says: "We are committed to helping our dealers to grow and develop their businesses from entry level enterprises serving the man-in-the-street, to businesses that can support the taxi industry, as well as government departments serving township and rural communities, thus creating more job opportunities."

He adds: "We have created jobs and transferred skills where they are most needed. With unemployment statistics sitting at around 35% and close to 75% of that being young people in rural areas and in the townships, our enterprise development initiatives have been well supported by government."

Funders of SRSA's initiatives include the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), Ithala Bank, the Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA), the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), as well as various private sector organisations. Business supporters include National Treasury and the Department of Small Business Development among others.

"The success of these initiatives is reflected in the numbers. We now have the credibility through a national footprint of over 80 branded Dunlop Container stores employing around 400 people and believe the time is right to accelerate the programme to the next level," says Ozoux.

“Government is empowering SMMEs to tender for contracts through its procurement processes. Government is also one of South Africa’s largest consumers of tyres. For this reason, SRSA Business Development is working in parallel with government to transform and empower the township tyre fitment centres,” Ozoux adds.

SRSA’s sustainable township entrepreneurship model starts with transforming an informal tyre business, trading out of a shipping container, into a Dunlop branded tyre fitment centre, with marketing support, training and mentorship provided by SRSA.



Their ‘Business in a Box’ is a plug and play solution for a tyre fitment centre. The owner purchases the unit from SRSA. SRSA delivers a Dunlop branded container that is fitted with equipment, including retail software, start-up stock and point-of-sale. He is now equipped to provide a professional service needed by every car owner, and to offer top-quality products under a recognised and trusted brand. All he needs to do is connect to the electricity and start trading.

Apart from supporting entrepreneurship and sustaining jobs, the transformation of informal businesses into Dunlop fitment centres has also helped counter the use of dangerous second-hand tyres through training and education on tyre safety.

“But this was only the first milestone on the road to success,” Ozoux explains. “Ultimately, we want to have the largest footprint of sustainable branded Dunlop stores that cater for the tyre fitment requirements of the township and rural areas of South Africa. Firstly, we would like to convert more independent retailers to Dunlop fitment centres. We also want to meet the needs of the taxi industry by introducing Dunlop containerised fitment centres at taxi ranks. Lastly, we envisage upgrading top performing containerised fitment centres into Dunlop Express and Dunlop Zones in the townships and introducing Mobile Fitment Centres to support government departments serving townships and rural areas throughout South Africa.

“Our vision is to support entrepreneurs to stake their claim to these opportunities by upskilling their employees and providing reliable products at affordable prices that enable them to compete for taxi and government business.

“Making sure that our township entrepreneurs and their employees are trained for success is currently our priority. We are encouraging them to identify employees for the four training programmes on offer, which are designed to enable these employees to take on key roles within the expanded businesses.

“Laying this solid foundation makes good business sense as we strive to multiply the impact of our entrepreneurs on South African society,” Ozoux concludes.

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