



merSETA

MANUFACTURING, ENGINEERING
AND RELATED SERVICES SETA

merSETA: PRESS RELEASE

Attention: Business Editors; Education and Training Editors; Labour Editors

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Headline: Driving meaningful upliftment of People with Disabilities

It was James Keller who once said a candle loses nothing by lighting another candle. This was the case when Volkswagen South Africa, the merSETA, Shangri-La Community Development Project and Training Excellence joined hands in equipping disabled people with certificates in Business Administration NQF Level 3. It all culminated in a graduation ceremony which took place at Emperors Palace, Johannesburg, recently at which 58 people with disabilities graduated in business administration.

This learnership combined quality training in a classroom environment with work experience within the Volkswagen and Audi dealer network and internal departments at Volkswagen South Africa.

“We applaud the Dealer Principals and mentors at our dealerships, as well as the managers and the mentors at our Volkswagen Group South Africa head office, who did an outstanding job in terms of providing on-the-job guidance and coaching for our 2011 learners”, commented Volkswagen Group Training Academy Quality Manager, Ms Terri Russell.

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Strong partnership and team work have enabled this learnership to grow from humble beginnings in 2009 to an industry benchmark in 2012.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony, VWSA Quality Manager Ms Terri Russell commended all the stakeholders involved in the project for overcoming the challenges to bring the project to a successful conclusion.

The long standing relationship between Volkswagen Group South Africa, the merSETA and two key service providers: Shangri-La Community Development Project and Training Excellence, has enabled this learnership for people with disabilities to grow from strength to strength over a four year period.

The focus has shifted providing an opportunity for People with Disabilities to gain a qualification to finding opportunities for their employment from 2011 successful candidates, a total of 27 learners (41% of the total group) gained employment. This figure must be viewed in the context that unemployed and face significant barriers when trying to obtain employment opportunities. Factors that have enabled the success of this learnership include:

- A stringent recruitment and assessment process
- Professional project management by a dedicated team of people who have expertise in dealing with the unique issues facing this group of learners
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- A dedicated team of trainers, assessors and moderators who are prepared to go the extra mile to ensure that all learners who complete the year gain their qualification
- Sufficient resources to ensure a quality output (people and money)
- Daily management EQ and work readiness
- A targeted developing EQ and work readiness
- A targeted approach to ensuring that the qualification meets the demands and needs of the workplace.



Amongst the graduate, was Mr Heiron Joseph, a quadriplegic who was recruited by Volkswagen Group South Africa for a learnership in 2011. Mr Joseph had a diving accident and broke his neck when he hit a sandbank. An accident like that can change your life in an instant, but it is your attitude and the support that you receive that can turn a potential tragedy into a success story.

“Everyday it’s a challenge, when I wake up in the morning I’ve got to motivate myself. I’ve decided that nothing is going to get me under. I just need to focus and carry on with life”, says Joseph. Joseph is just one of 58 dedicated individuals who overcame personal challenges to achieve a Certificate in Business Administration in 2011.

Volkswagen Group South Africa has continued its commitment to training and employing people with disabilities – contracting another 50 learners from 1 February 2012 on an NQF level 4 Business Administration Learnership.

Delivering a keynote address at the graduation ceremony of the 2011 Learners with Disabilities, merSETA CEO Dr Raymond Patel said empowering the less-abled is a venture worthy of the highest praise.

“It is noteworthy that Volkswagen Group South Africa has chosen to continue its training initiatives in spite of the recession. But it is the focus on the less-abled that warrants accolades for Volkswagen Group South Africa”, elaborated Dr Patel.

Dr Patel pointed out that many companies believe that the obstacles for people living with disabilities are too large to surmount. “But today is proof that the reverse is true. Last year, Volkswagen Group South Africa went out of its way to train the less-abled. And today’s graduates prove that the company’s efforts were not once-off”.

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Dr Patel reiterated the importance of making graduations ceremonies a norm in championing skills development for all.

N.B. Photographs are available on request.

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