

## DRIVING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Social entrepreneur funds work with young people by providing services to big business.

**B**uhle Dlamini studied analytical chemistry at the Durban University of Technology, where he also had the chance to get involved in youth work. That's how he discovered where his passion lay. He joined the Salvation Army and travelled extensively with its youth development team, eventually taking on the role of national director for youth work.

In 2002, he became a founding member of Heartlines, an NGO that drives values-based change in South African society. A year later, he founded Young & Able, a business and personal development consultancy that offers professional speaking, training and mentorship services. "Our aim is to activate individual and organisational potential," says Dlamini. "Initially we focused only on young people, but as the business evolved we realised we needed to target the corporate sector in order to fund the work we wanted to do with young entrepreneurs. Today, our revenue comes from the people development services we provide for large companies."

### Filling a gap

Dlamini says the challenge is that the young people who need the type of support his organisation offers are usually not in a position to finance their own development. That's why he offers seminars, workshops and individual coaching at a vastly more affordable rate than other organisations in this sector. To give you an idea, it costs around R150 to attend one of Dlamini's seminars.

"In 2005, I started a blog called [youngentrepreneur.com](http://youngentrepreneur.com) so that I could reach larger numbers of people. It grew quickly and it was clear to me that people wanted information and guidance. They need access to finance too, but my role is to provide motivation and support."

That initial blog morphed into [motivated.co.za](http://motivated.co.za), a hub of articles and information on motivation, productivity and self-improvement.

The website and the seminars are aimed at entrepreneurs in the start-up phase, many of whom are still employed and developing their ideas. Those who are ready to take the next step sign up with Dlamini as their coach. "We had a young guy who was employed as a photographer. He attended one of our seminars, got inspired and started asking us questions. A few months later he and a partner launched their own photography business. Today they have several blue chip companies as clients."

Dlamini is adamant that entrepreneurs need to be mentored. "It's important to have someone to bounce ideas off and to challenge you. Entrepreneurs often know the 'what' of their business, but seldom the 'how'. That's what mentorship addresses. It helps to provide direction, and encourages people to let go of ideas that do not work." Dlamini also makes use of Heartlines' Mentors for Good initiative, which has more than 4 000 mentors nationwide, all of whom are professionals who want to give something back to society.

### Leaving a legacy

Like many South Africans, he sees entrepreneurship as the answer to many of the country's problems, but he's also painfully aware of the fact that people who have never worked find it difficult to start a business because they have no experience in any industry. That's why he advises budding entrepreneurs to gain work experience before they try to launch a business. "If they can't find work, we suggest volunteering, or starting something small in their own community. It's critical to learn the skill of going out there, saying this is what I do, being able to sell yourself, and have someone buy your services."

It's something he knows from experience. As a scholar, he delivered newspapers and worked as a gardener to pay for his transport to school. "I challenge youngsters who have never had a job to start by doing something small. That's how you develop the ability to create opportunities." Dlamini believes that legacy is key to business success. "I started this business by myself, but I knew I had to bring others on board who complemented my skills. That's how you build a business that grows beyond just you, so that you can eventually work yourself out of a job." □



### YOUNG & ABLE

Player: Buhle Dlamini

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Contact:

[www.youngable.com](http://www.youngable.com)