



HEALTHY PROFITS

Relying on a blend of mentorship, research and unbridled passion, Potso Mathekga launched Grapeseed Trading, manufacturing Maggie's Original Mageu and making a mark at wholesalers and corner shops across Gauteng

Having studied chemical engineering, Mathekga enjoyed a diverse corporate career spanning the mining and FMCG industries, but credits the exposure she gained to the food manufacturing industry during her stint as Production Manager at Nestlé Ice Cream as one of the primary reasons she considered pursuing an entrepreneurial career in this sphere. However, she knew it would require a lot more than just a sound business model to get her venture off the ground.

Armed with her grandmother Maggie's recipe for mageu, she recruited her husband, brother-in-law and grandmother to come on board in producing the energy-boosting, maize-based drink for retail. "Traditionally mageu's seen as a drink favoured by the very poor, or one suitable for very ill people who can't digest more substantial foodstuffs, but it's actually a healthy food drink that can also be a meal replacement. I wanted to change the misperceptions about it," she says.

In 2004, Mathekga and her grandmother made small batches of the drink and held tasting sessions to test the market. The positive feedback to it prompted them to look for suitable premises to kick-start the business. They started small by cashing in their investments and investing their savings in the venture.

Mathekga recalls how financially draining a start-up can be. "Manufacturing is a capital-intensive business. You have to push volumes in order to make profits and then reinvest those profits into the factory to subsidise the business," she explains. Fortunately, she was still employed when she first registered the business, so she was still receiving a steady income.

Grapeseed Trading has since grown considerably, signing up more than 100 new customers with a firm distribution and marketing strategy. Mathekga and her relations visited many corner and spaza shops to encourage them to put Maggie's Original Mageu on their shelves. They also regularly run in-store promotions and sponsor roadshows in townships to build the brand.

Having left her corporate job to focus on Grapeseed Trading, she hopes to expand the business into more provinces. She's also setting her sights on Maggie's Original Mageu penetrating the retail sector.



The Hope Factory is an enterprise development organisation focusing on the development and training of potential black entrepreneurs through one-on-one mentorship. Using investments from South African companies, it offers a variety of programmes that equip entrepreneurs with the skills to grow established businesses or start-ups.

Much of Mathekga's success comes from the mentorship she received from Hope Factory's Johannesburg Entrepreneurship and Support Programme. Busi Raphekwane worked as her mentor and helped her establish achievable goals for different areas of the business. She also attended workshops as part of the programme, some of which taught her about costing and finance. Mathekga says the knowledge she gained from the programme helped her increase her quarterly turnover by 32%. Visit: www.hopefactory.co.za