

Textile industry survivor shares strategy

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How to hire and fire

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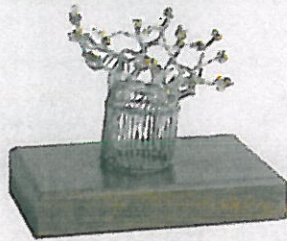
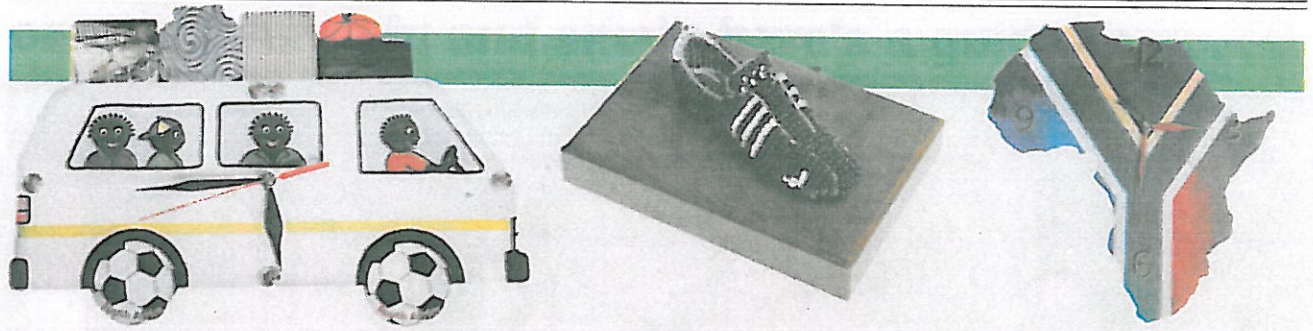
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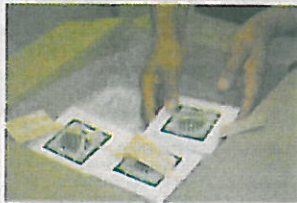
## HOPE FLOATS



THE TRUE VALUE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP — Pages 8 and 9



Of the 700 people the organisation has trained, about 82% remain financially productive



LOCAL COLOUR: Some of the souvenirs and corporate gifts made by the students of The Hope Factory  
Pictures: KATHERINE MUICK-MERE

# The gifts of HOPE

Would-be entrepreneurs are taught basic skills — but also how to value themselves, writes **Margaret Harris**

**N**ONKUMBULO Ngqinqmbi and Matsidiso Bobi dreamed of opening a shop in which they could sell their products — but it takes a lot more than a shared vision to start a business.

Luckily for them, an organisation called The Hope Factory (THF), that develops and supports the dreams of entrepreneurs, was ready to help.

Liz Zamboni founded The Hope Factory nine years ago, with a dream of her own: to improve the quality of life of people from previously disadvantaged communities.

As its CEO she has seen it transformed from a company with a turnover of R12 000 in its first year to a turnover of more than R6-million — and has seen its trainees triumph.

#### ABOVE BOARD

To give the factory a firm foundation, the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants manages the section 21 non-profit organisation. And the institute also gives THF advice and guidance on finances and governance.

Knowing that its money matters are under control, THF can get on with its core business: providing life skills and mentoring people to become and remain economically productive.

Of the 700 people the organisation has trained, about 82% remain financially productive.

Liz says: "We offer a holistic development model that not only trains people in essential

life, business and technical skills, like sewing, but also places value on the person. The aim... is to show people that they have value and to help them realise their value. We help them articulate their dreams and assist them by putting practical plans into place to achieve their goals."

Thanks to THF, Nonkumbulo and Matsidiso learnt sewing and business skills — training which, they believe, put them on the road to success.

"The Hope Factory has helped us a lot, giving us small-business and pattern-making skills as well as basic finance knowledge."

They now make personalised aprons and scatter cushions to order — and the quality of their work means that word of mouth is their best marketing tool. However, they have also put up

posters in local shops to spread their reach. Now they are working on a proposal to sew graduation gowns for creches and preschools.

#### A BOX OF HOPE

An example of how THF works is the hope box project, where workshop participants were asked to make their own. Says Liz: "The aim with creating a hope box is for these people to visualise and put their dreams into perspective. It's not enough to provide the skills; people also need to be empowered as part of personal development."

THF does not stop supporting its trainees when the courses come to an end.

The factory remains in contact with graduates for five years, providing business mentorship, advice and personal development skills.

"We have wonderful examples of people who have come out of the training programme at The Hope Factory and who have continued their personal and economical growth," says Liz. Take Craig Alexander.

From childhood Craig has dreamt of being a fashion designer — and now he is well on his way.

"My (aim is) high, and negative energies don't work for me," says Craig.

"I attribute my sewing skills to The Hope Factory and want to send the people who work for me to attend the training programme there."

Today he has two employees. The factory recently held an Entrepreneurs Day in Port Elizabeth recently.

Local entrepreneurs who have been through THF's training and had qualified for an investment into their entrepreneurial ventures, were presented with various items that would help their businesses.

Vuyiswa Dikana received a stove. She has set up Liyanqobu Trading with her sister, and together they bake muffins, scones and cakes to sell in their community.

The life of an entrepreneur is not for everyone, and Liz says only about 10% to 15% of graduates become entrepreneurs. The others are not forgotten, however. "We make sure the people who don't become entrepreneurs find formal employment and some remain employed in the corporate gift production facility at The Hope Factory," she says.

## Some successes

- Five THF graduates from New Brighton township outside Port Elizabeth have started a shop where they sell their own crafts — clothes and jewellery that feature their own prints and designs. EzamaXhosa in Port Elizabeth is so popular it is battling to keep up with its orders.
- Bongivi Magongo has shown her work at the Sanlam Fashion Week's Fusion Project and the Eastern Cape Fashion Week. Her business, Imma, uses crochet to create accessories. She has travelled to, among other places, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Namibia and New York with her work. She sees crocheting as being limitless: "If I can start with crocheting a circle, there are many possibilities," she says.



**ENGINE ROOM:** Would-be entrepreneurs learn creative and financial skills at The Hope Factory, the brainchild of Elizabeth Zamboni (below)

Pictures: KATHERINE MUICK-MERE

## Banking on SA talent

NEDBANK believes in The Hope Factory (THF) — so much so that it provided R400 000 in funding in 2008 and R500 000 in 2009, as well as additional training and support to its graduates.

Nirmala Reddy, senior manager of enterprise development at Nedbank Business Banking, says that while each THF graduate is special, one in particular stood out.

Simnikiwe Zamisa lost both his parents to HIV and was, along with his siblings, dependent on his grandmother.

Says Nirmala: "With no other skills and little motivation, he applied to participate in The Hope

Factory programme.

"This gave Simnikiwe an opportunity to turn his life around and become the breadwinner in the family. Simnikiwe is an inspiration and a symbol of hope and courage."

The financial institution is impressed by the quality of training that THF provides, says Nirmala.

"The training helps with the understanding of what the key drivers are for a sustainable business.

"The Hope Factory model offers a sensible balance across the provision of technical skills and training in business competencies together with coaching and mentoring.

"The success rate of placing entrepreneurs in their own businesses and within the formal sector has been consistent."

### PACE YOURSELF

Nirmala says she believes the pace of the training also makes a difference: graduates are trained at a realistic rate so they leave the factory "equipped with the necessary skills and acumen".

But Nedbank also believes in what the graduates produce, so merchandise they make is displayed at the bank's offices.

"We also host open days, showcasing The Hope Factory and, where possible,

provide links and opportunities for procurement with other clients, stakeholders and role players," says Nirmala.

It is not just Nedbank that has recognised the value of THF. Along with endorsements from the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants and the Department of Labour, The Hope Factory has won several awards.

They include The Argus Angel of the City award in 2004; the Old Mutual/SABC2/Sowetan Community Builder of the Year in 2005; and was a runner-up in the Southern African Social Entrepreneur of the year in 2009.



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