

Leading education, training and development

Londiwe Mthembu is the Managing Director of the Abcon Group Foundation, and the Chairperson of SAPOA's Education, Training and Development Committee

Londiwe Mthembu, the MD of the Abcon Group Foundation, is a town planner by profession, and has a master's degree in the discipline. She's been involved in spatial planning and transformation at the City of Johannesburg, but moved to Mogale City so she could "plan less and implement more". During her work with township regeneration and social infrastructure, she recognised she needed to up-skill in business and project management, so she completed a postgraduate degree in business administration through Wits

Business School. The exposure to business, finance and entrepreneurship courses, together with the opportunities that Abland presents as a big property developer, brought a new passion for enterprise development.

This has resulted in a major focus on the growth of Abheka Investments, a black-owned private equity investment company, which distributes 100% of its profits to the Abcon Group Foundation and seeks to touch on one of the top agendas of our time: contributing towards the economic growth of South Africa through empowering small businesses. Abheka Investments is an enterprise development custodian, supporting small black businesses that will eventually become suppliers to Abland. The support involves access to markets, capital and loan requirements, financial record-keeping, technical and business development support, and mentorship.

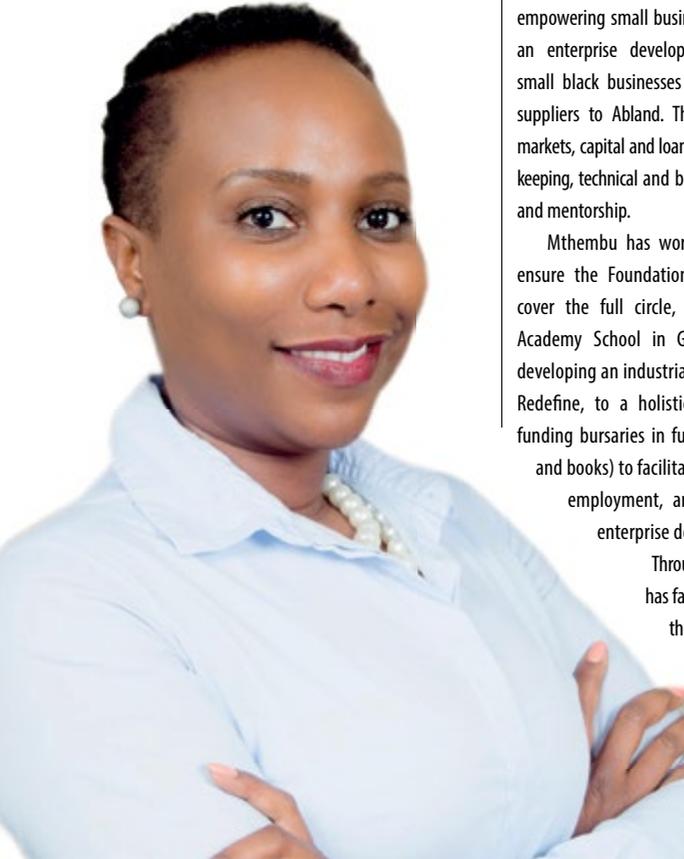
Mthembu has worked to "close the loop" and ensure the Foundation assists its beneficiaries to cover the full circle, from supporting the Hawk Academy School in Germiston, where Abland is developing an industrial precinct in partnership with Redefine, to a holistic focus on education, from funding bursaries in full (including accommodation and books) to facilitating internships and access to employment, and providing a platform for enterprise development.

Through this vehicle, the Foundation has facilitated, funded and supported the establishment of a landscaping firm, which now has more than 50 full-time employees. "We are currently supporting two small businesses – an aluminium and window-glazing

company, Bontle Aluminium, and a tenant installation company, Winners of Success," says Mthembu. "To start, we partner these businesses with experienced, well-established Abland suppliers to ensure further skills transfer and high quality of services. Abheka Investments commits to and measures the annual growth of these businesses in turnover and in the number of jobs created."

Mthembu believes that if black businesses are supported and integrated into the economy, and jobs are created, this will drive transformation solutions in the industry. "If you empower one black person, you are feeding a number of households," she says. "We cannot deny the cultural and moral obligation black people feel towards their family, colloquially known as 'black tax'. It's a cultural need to manage and protect our social reputation and status by not leaving our family behind to suffer. We start seeing these patterns even in the SAPOA Bursary students: while they are studying, they have to get part-time jobs to support their family. For these reasons, I'm determined to become an advocate for transformation in my corner, through the platforms provided to me via the Abcon Group Foundation and Abheka Investments."

Mthembu is the Chairperson of the Education, Training and Development Committee at SAPOA. Her proudest moments come when students complete their degrees and there is a 100% absorption rate from the industry. 🌱



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"You, the parent, are your child's first teacher and his best teacher. It's an awesome responsibility, but one that brings immeasurable rewards."

Jacquie McTaggart