



# Elevate

Transform yourself; grow your business

## COACHING PARTNERS FOR SUCCESS

The Blades intake was one of the first programmes run by the HP Business Institute (HPBI), which saw partners undergoing rigorous training to ensure that they understood the ins and outs of what it takes to effectively sell, market and support sophisticated blade servers to existing and new customers. The objectives being to help them grow their organisations and move up the value chain to do business that is more profitable and more sustainable.

Upon partners' mastery of the theory, the HPBI introduced the Close the Deal Mentoring (CTDM) phase to blades partners from the first and second intakes. As the name implies, CTDM was intended to work with all partners and help them close "real life" blades opportunities. Each partner was assigned a business coach from ActionCOACH to work with over the duration of the programme.

A three month initiative, CTDM required the participants to put what they have learnt from their technical and theoretical training into practice and go out into the market and sell blade servers to new customers, while being under the watchful eye of and receiving invaluable guidance and mentorship from an accredited and certified business coach.

A lead generation campaign was run in parallel to the coaching sessions, whereby the HPBI supplied each partner and his coach with qualified blades opportunities. The partner-coach team then assessed and acted on each opportunity they received – with great success!

The HPBI is centred on growing and upskilling small and medium IT enterprises (SMEs) to become successful and sustainable businesses. Combining theoretical training and an initiative such as CTDM, the HPBI is able to impart upon business owners and employees the 'softer' skills involved in running a business successfully and growing the business as markets evolve, thereby ensuring their longevity and sustainability.

Globally, business coaching is becoming a major trend with the aim of assisting smaller companies to become successful businesses with clear goals and growth opportunities.

Nereejh Ramlakhan, a certified business coach from ActionCOACH, participated in CTDM and acted as a coach for Seth Consulting, an HPBI partner. Ramlakhan says SMEs are generally a key focus for business coaching, citing the importance of their success in contributing to the country's economic wellbeing. According to him the majority of a country's economic growth, be it a developed or developing nation, stems from the SME sector.

He likens business coaching to coaching a sports team. "Like sports coaching, we as business coaches are looking at how we can assist business owners to bring all aspects of their business – such as marketing, sales and other support functions – together, like the players in a soccer team, to function as a whole and be a successful participant in the IT sector and triumph as a match winner."



Neerejh Ramlakhan with Seth Galetuke, owner of Seth Consulting.

## HP gives an additional boost to education

HP South Africa has successfully qualified in the 2009 social investment grant initiative for universities and secondary schools, known as the HP Innovation in Education Grant Initiative. Almost 90 universities and secondary schools from 19 countries submitted their project proposals online. The HP Innovation in Education Grants, worth around \$100,000 each, were awarded to six local academic institutions. The grants were awarded to those institutions that displayed the best integration of technology in teaching and learning and also fostered innovation in learning.

The recipients of the 2009 grants are: Bokamoso Science and Technology; Education Centre, Polokwane; Esayidi FET Public College, Port Shepstone; Mnambithi FET College, Ladysmith; Osizweni Education and Development Centre, Secunda; University of Fort Hare, Alice; and University of the Western Cape, Belville.

As part of the grant, each institution will receive a mobile technology solution consisting of PCs, printers and access points as well as a cash donation. These institutions will also be invited to join a global network of educators to share ideas and best practices on online learning, virtual worlds and simulation ideas.

(continued from front page)

Ramlakhan explains that within the coaching process communication between the SME and the potential customer is extremely important. He says that through extensive role-playing exercises he helps the partners to effectively deal with especially difficult customers. "Through communication and role-playing SMEs, such as those that are part of the HPBI, are taught to understand a customer's requirements and needs and then sell solutions according to those needs.

"Ultimately we strive to skill business owners to effectively delegate business functions to their teams, giving the organisation the ability to run effectively when the owner is away," Ramlakhan adds.

**"If you think you know it all, you don't. Business coaching has taught me so much I never knew and my business is doing well because of it."**

Seth Galetuke, owner of Seth Consulting, says, "I have always been technical, but the coaching gave me insight into running a more effective business, especially concerning processes and procedures, and turned my business around."

Over and above selling blades within the context of CTDM, Galetuka got extra business from one of the leads provided by the HPBI. "The coaching helped me as a small business maximise my opportunities," he exclaims.

His advice to other small businesses is: "If you think you know it all, you don't. Business coaching has taught me so much I never knew and my business is doing well because of it."

Partners' commitment to the HPBI and in particular the CTDM phase of the blades training programme has been evidenced in the sterling results achieved. Unfortunately data privacy laws preclude the HPBI from revealing specifics around deals, however, the return on this programme has been significant and partners have managed to collectively secure blades opportunities valued at millions of Rands.

## Breeding winning businesses

Wikipedia defines business incubators as programmes designed to accelerate the successful development of entrepreneurial companies through an array of business support resources and services, its network of contacts.

The general consensus is that on successful completion of a business incubation programme, start-up companies or small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are more likely to have a sustainable future and remain in business for the long term. The HP Business Institute (HPBI) runs two successful incubation programmes; through SoftstartBTI and Ledibogo to assist South African entrepreneurs and SME business owners to run and grow their businesses successfully, not only providing technology focused assistance, but also business management and soft skills training.

SoftstartBTI supports high potential ICT businesses entrepreneur through mentoring and coaching, access to networks, plug-and-play offices and shared resources, while the Ledibogo programme teaches entrepreneurs how to effectively run a business in the IT sector through business and skills training, product workshops and business forums.

According to Lalane Janse van Rensburg, enterprise development manager at SoftstartBTI business incubators create the ideal environment for an entrepreneur to succeed in. The SoftstartBTI programme entails a three phased process. "Firstly there is the concept phase where we aim to shape an optimal business and technological approach based on a first-cut assessment of the strategic environment," Janse van Rensburg says.

Phase two deals with development where the focus is on feasibility, development and go-to-market strategies. "Here we aim to develop the first resources that will be required to enter the market and introduce the product in anticipation of a full-scale launch," she explains.

The final phase deals with the commercial aspect of the business where focus is placed on expanding the depth and breadth of the businesses and to exploit current profitable market opportunities.

Janse van Rensburg believes that the single most important advantage of becoming part of an incubator is that entrepreneurs become part of a like-minded community.

Wandie Mdletshe, an entrepreneur who participated in on of the HPBI's incubation programmes, says the programme widened his organisation's scope and expectations of the local ICT market. "The programme helped us grow our market offering, making it easier to produce products and services outside of what we normally offered," he says.

He notes that a clear benefit from this programme is the high level relationship that his organisation has established with HP, without having to start from the ground up. "We were almost immediately seen as a partner," he adds. Mdletshe recommends other SMEs to partake in such incubation programmes, citing not only cost benefits in terms of training and obtaining technical certification, but also because it forces smaller companies to think broader than just their immediate surrounds when it comes to business sustainability and customer service.

## Partner Profiles

### HP is South Africa's Top IT Brand

HP was recently named South Africa's Top IT Brand in the Laptop and Computer Category of the 2009 *Sunday Times Top Brands Survey*. HP scooped the top spot in the business category, trailed by Apple in second place and Dell in third position.

In addition to this prestigious accolade, HP has also managed to increase its market leadership position in South Africa. According to the IDC EMEA PC Tracker Report, HP held 25.8% of the local PC market in Q209.

### HPBI launches with second group of Techie 101 learners

On 3 August 2009, the HP Business Institute launched with its second group of Techie 101 learners. Techie 101 is a 12-month IT learnership that combines theoretical training with practical workplace experience.

A total of 64 learners were placed with a pool of 16 HP partners and will undergo their theoretical and practical training modules over the next 12 months. Successful candidates from this group will graduate from the programme in July 2010.

In 2010, the HPBI will be looking to roll the Techie 101 programme out nationally, focusing initially on major urban centres. If you would like more information on Techie, we would love to hear from you. Send an email to [hpbi@netpartnering.co.za](mailto:hpbi@netpartnering.co.za) and tell us about your query.

The HPBI would not be the success that it is without the support of HP's partners! In this issue of Elevate, we place the spotlight on some of the partners that are providing invaluable workplace experience for learners on the Techie 101 learnership. Here's what they had to say ...

#### ■ CSS Tirisano

**Name:** Kola Gunguluza.

**Designation:** CEO.

**How long have you been an HP partner?** Since 1998.

**Why did you decide to join the HP Business Institute programme?** CSS has been involved with our own student development programme for the last 10 years. When approached by HP it made sense to expand our student programme, while assisting HP to reach their own objectives.

**I believe skills development is important because ...** it gives CSS the opportunity to invest back into the community.

**What do you believe to be the biggest benefit that programmes such as the HPBI brings to learners?** Learners are exposed to different technologies and have the opportunity to gain valuable practical experience within a formal business environment.

**What are your organisation's future plans for skills development?** We will definitely continue with the programme and hopefully be able to increase the number of learners we accommodate.

**Would you recommend the HPBI programme to other partners?** Yes.

#### ■ iVolve Technologies

**Name:** Petro Plotz

**Designation:** Business Development Director

**How long have you been an HP partner?** Since the inception of the programme in November 2003, in total six years and the latter being a Gold partner.

**Why did you decide to join the HP Business Institute programme?** Challenges to secure trained technical skills, not to mentioned brand specific, is the order of the day! As a newly appointed HP ASP, it made business sense to support the HP Business Institute programme and in the process strengthen our HP technical team.

**I believe skills development is important because ...** Having a skill to enable you to better yourself should not only be for the select few, but rather for the masses. Assisting aspiring young learners that are prepared to help themselves is such a fulfilling experience that should not be missed.

**What do you believe to be the biggest benefit that programmes such as the HPBI brings to learners?** The combination of business experience and training simultaneously is an opportunity that is rarely available. The HPBI assisted learners with much needed life skills, whilst giving them an opportunity to venture into the IT industry.

**What are your organisation's future plans for skills development?** As a company we would always partner with HP, and where possible support the programme, even if we are not in a position to offer full time employment at the end of the initial training programme. We strongly believe that upliftment is critical in all aspects of the working environment. Giving learners a platform to experience and learn in a live surrounding is critical for future growth and skilled technical staff.

**Would you recommend the HPBI programme to other partners?** Absolutely! Not only can this enhance your business and technical team, it enhances the industry as a whole.

#### ■ PC Palace

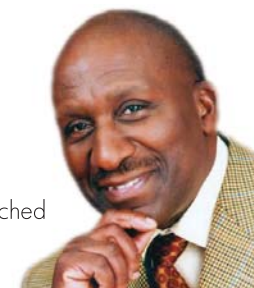
**Name:** Riaan Rhind

**Designation:** Managing Member

**How long have you been an HP partner?** Since 1995

**Why did you decide to join the HP Business Institute programme?** For the last 2 years, we have battled to find well profiled junior personnel to employ. Out of an average of 50 applicants our company could employ about 4 that were suitable for our environment. This was a time consuming and frustrating process. The HPBI provided us with the opportunity to select pre-screened applicants with the correct profiles, who are then skilled in a practical

continued on page 4 \*



(continued from page 3)

work environment at the partner and technically trained at HP. This has saved us precious time to focus on what we do best, sell HP!

**I believe skills development is important because ...** if we do not skill our youth, they will become unemployed and unmotivated individuals. South African IT businesses need to invest in these youngsters to create an IT environment where we can draw from a pool of skilled employees to enable sustainable growth in our businesses.

**What do you believe to be the biggest benefit that programmes such as the HPBI brings to learners?** In today's economic climate, where unemployment is extremely high, the HPBI provides young, ambitious learners who do not have the resources to fund their own tertiary education an opportunity to be placed in a working environment and do technical training at no cost to themselves. If these learners want to start their own IT businesses in future, they will have the right skills to do so.

**What are your organisation's future plans for skills development?** Our firm has had a skills transfer plan in place since 1995. We have had numerous failures, but also huge successes as some of our previous applicants are now successful IT employed at large corporates. We will continue to provide an environment where junior technicians and sales people can be trained and make a living in the IT environment.

**Would you recommend the HPBI programme to other partners?** Definitely, if partners are willing to donate their time and a minimal fee to uplift these applicants, the whole IT industry will benefit tremendously within the next 5 to 10 years.

#### ■ Webcom Technologies

**Name:** Glaudina Meyer.

**Designation:** HR Manager

**How long have you been an HP partner?** Since 2007.

**Why did you decide to join the HP Business Institute programme?**

The HPBI provides the perfect opportunity for Partners to fulfil their social responsibility towards the community they do business in, by taking on previously disadvantaged individuals (PDIs) and train and develop them at a fraction of the cost involved in running a Learnership programme. The Partner also does not have to manage the logistics involved in running a Learnership successfully, HPBI does it all!

**I believe skills development is important because ...**

It is imperative for any organisation competing in the global market to develop the skills of their human resources, in order to remain competitive. Furthermore, skills development specifically through the implementation of Learnerships within any organisation, assists new entrants to the labour market to acquire critical skills and related work experience. Skills development within an organisation is also critical to accelerated Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment and Employment Equity.



**What do you believe to be the biggest benefit that programmes such as the HPBI brings to learners?** The HPBI Learnership programmes provide the Learners with the opportunity to acquire a scarce skill, as identified by the ISETT-SETA and gain experience in a structured work place under the guidance of an experienced and qualified person, whilst studying towards a nationally recognised qualification. In the event that the Learner has successfully completed his/her qualification and has added value to the Partner's business during the duration of the Learnership, the learner has a good chance to be offered permanent employment by the Partner.

**What are your organisation's future plans for skills development?** We will continue supporting the HPBI programme as part of our overall Skills Development imperative. The Learners from previous intakes have been offered permanent positions and form part of the company's succession plan. Individual development plans, which form part of our workplace skills plan, have also been drawn up in consultation with these Learners and are being addressed by making use of external Training Providers.

**Would you recommend the HPBI programme to other partners?** Definitely. Being part of the HPBI initiative not only holds major benefits for the partners such as tax incentives, improved BEE ratings and increased skills in the workplace, but also provides excellent networking opportunities with other HP Partners.

#### ■ Digital Planet

**Name:** Omesh Govender.

**Designation:** Managing Director.

**How long have you been an HP partner?** 10 years

**Why did you decide to join the HP Business Institute programme?** It was an opportunity for us to be part of a programme that is focused on strengthening South Africa's ICT sector.

**I believe skills development is important because ...**

it will lead to an improved workforce and therefore more successful businesses.

**What do you believe to be the biggest benefit that programmes such as the HPBI brings to learners?** The programme has a training curriculum that provides both theory and on-the-job experience. This combination is vital when the learners enter the marketplace.

**What are your organisation's future plans for skills development?** The Techie101 programme is definitely part of our future plans. We believe that the people in our organisation make our business successful. Therefore, investment in their development is a priority.

**Would you recommend the HPBI programme to other partners?** Yes, most certainly. The programme has attracted learners that are dedicated and hardworking, and they have made a noteworthy contribution in our business.



## Important date and upcoming events

In this section of *Elevate*, we share important dates of upcoming events and launches. Mark them in your calendar today!

- Techie 101 Learner Feedback Session: 2 October 2009
- Techie 101 Learner Year-end function: November 2009
- Enterprise Programmes Graduation: December 2009

## Comments, views and suggestions

We would love to hear your comments, views and suggestions. To share your thoughts, or to request more information about the HP Business Institute, send an email to [hpbi@netpartnering.co.za](mailto:hpbi@netpartnering.co.za) or visit us on the web – [www.hp.co.za/hpbi](http://www.hp.co.za/hpbi)