

# Vodacom honours small businesses at Supplier Development Conference

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Tech-network giant, Vodacom played host to local SMME suppliers and business partners at the launch of the inaugural Vodacom Innovator Trust Supplier Development Conference, honouring top achieving South African small businesses within the Vodacom supply chain.



The conference took place on Thursday, 18 May at VodaWorld, Midrand, in collaboration with the Innovator Trust who serve as the management and implementation partner for the Vodacom Innovator Trust Supplier Development (SD) programme.

With the first intake of SMME beneficiaries back in 2018, several initiatives ranging from health and safety training, access to markets support, POPIA training, FTTX equipment and training, FTTH sales training, a Wi-Fi installations initiative and most recently, a logistics initiative. One of the flagship programmes available to SMMEs is the iThuba sales and marketing initiative which aims to uplift the SMME's brand, providing them with necessary access to key marketing tools and encouraging the uptake of new digital technologies and platforms to allow them to thrive in an increasingly competitive and digital economy. To date, 147 SMMEs have been supported over a 2-year period through the SD programme.



Tashline Jooste, CEO at Innovator Trust



Lynda Marthinus, Vodacom Group head BBBEE and transformation

“On behalf of the Innovator Trust, it is an honour to be a part of this iconic event. The ICT small business industry is doing amazing things when it comes to innovation and technology, and Vodacom is one organisation who has walked the talk when it comes to SMME support and continues to pioneer the way forward to ensure that SMMEs develop into key contributors to the ICT sector and the South African economy at large,” commented Tashline Jooste, CEO of the Innovator Trust.

In addition to highlighting the strides taken by the Vodacom in their commitment to SMMEs, the conference also offered a

platform for stakeholders from both sides of the table to engage on the realities of supply chain management, where the opportunities lie and how, as a small business, one can capitalise on them.

The conference featured several industry leaders who delivered insightful keynote addresses throughout the programme. The list included representatives from Vodacom, Takalani Netshitenzhe, chief officer and executive director of external affairs for Vodacom South Africa, Lynda Marthinus, Vodacom Group head of B-BBEE and transformation, Rashmika Singh, executive head of IT and enterprise for Vodacom Supply Chain Management, and Ricardo Platt, Vodacom Payments managing executive who shared an exciting presentation on the unique offers from Vodacom tailored for the SMME market.



Mandisa Mpeko, supplier development manager at Innovator Trust



Keynote speaker, Musa Kalenga, CEO at Brave Group

Chief executive officer for The Brave Group and author, Musa Kalenga, was a guest speaker at the event and captivated the audience in his keynote on how SMMEs can experience exponential growth in business through sales and marketing.

Lazo Karapanagiotidis, IoT.nxt chief product and marketing officer and Takalani Mavhunga, chief financial officer of Nexio, both subsidiaries of Vodacom also featured as panelists on the programme discussing supply chain challenges, the effect of digital transformation on supply chain management and the importance of improving engagement with SMME suppliers.

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For SMMEs who have excelled in growing their businesses, showing an increase in revenue, size, and improvement in service delivery while on the SD programme, Vodacom showed acknowledgement with performance awards given to SMMEs across several categories. Each of the awards were also accompanied by cash prize grants towards the small businesses.

“On behalf of the Innovator Trust and the Vodacom Supplier Development programme, it is my hope that the essence of our commitment to SMMEs and the ICT sector is accurately received and today’s event results in even greater engagement, change and impact that will lead the way in the interest of the development of SMME suppliers in our country,” remarked Jooste.

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