

African Women in Supply Chain Association launches

The African Women in Supply Chain Association (AWISCA) launches this week to bolster South Africa's supply chain skills through functional mentorship and coaching, and to address the numerous technical and practical issues that continue to hinder the country's supply chain industry. It also aims to create better industry balance between the country's universities, businesses, professionals, women and entrepreneurs.



Lebogang Letsaolo

“Every industry in South Africa today is driven by the supply chain,” says AWISCA founder and Sincpoint executive director, Lebogang Letsoalo. “Without an effective supply chain, we cannot be competitive in the future. To build an industry and thriving economy requires that we build key skills and competencies.”

Barloworld Logistics' 2016 [Supply Chain Foresight survey](#) revealed the lack of skills is a leading concern for many business leaders in South Africa. Furthermore, it indicates only 39% of companies have an effective response to address the skills shortage. The availability of appropriate skills ranked 5th in the top five concerns for businesses in South Africa, while 49% of respondents said staff training and development requires more focus.

“Through the formation of an intelligence hub, supported by mentors and coaches, we will improve decision-making in the industry and produce highly competent personnel equipped with the appropriate academic and technical know-how to move South Africa forward,” adds Letsoalo.

Comprehensive buy-in

Having started its journey in 2015, AWISCA has worked to get comprehensive industry buy-in. Current partners include Smart Procurement World, CIPS (Chartered Institute of Supply Chain), SAPICS, CILT, the Institute of Marketing Management, University of Johannesburg, UNISA, the Wits Business School, the Cross Border Road Transport Agency, National Treasury and the University of Pretoria.

AWISCA is further supported by the Department of Transport (through the National Transport Forum) TALSA (Transport & Logistics Students of South Africa), and the Youth Chamber of Shipping in Africa.

Currently based in Johannesburg, the association's intention is to create satellite offices in all nine provinces in South Africa, where various launch events will be held in the course of 2017.

"We want to drive industry collaboration and help form public-private partnerships to change our skills landscape. Universities will be integrated to address South Africa's supply chain capacity and skills gaps in a more practical way.

"We will be in discussions with cargo owners, transporters and supply chain consulting firms to pledge support and attract mentor companies that will develop entrepreneurial skills in the supply chain."

Chapters to address scope of industry

AWISCA has formed several chapters to deal with the scope of the supply chain industry, each with a different mandate, be it workplace readiness, the facilitation of functional mentorship or uplifting skills and technical competencies.

The student chapter, headed by SASTaLC CEO, Yayeri Kisaame, is one of four chapters that include women, entrepreneurs and professionals already employed in the sector.

The entrepreneur chapter seeks to promote professional networking, knowledge transfer, coaching and mentorship. Skills development will be in line with the recommendations of the World Economic Forum for Africa, as well as the objectives of the country's own National Development Plan (NDP).

"What we are doing is creating a focused approach that is fit-for-purpose. The supply chain industry requires a balance of soft skills, technical abilities and enhanced decision-making. Focus will also be given to women. The supply chain in South Africa is still male-dominated, and its workforce is ageing," concludes Letsoalo.

AWISCA recently attended the KZN Smart Procurement Indaba where it introduced its concept. It also presented at SAPICS 2017 and will attend the National Transport Forum on 28 June, before being officially launched on 29 June.

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