

Mthatha legal eagles set to soar through transformation programmes

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Eight historically disadvantaged Mthatha legal professionals have been recognised and rewarded with tools to grow their legal practices, while at the same time advancing transformation of the legal sector.

Representing two spheres of the legal industry that are heavily reliant on one another, the four Mthatha advocates and four attorneys were honoured at a consultative workshop at the Garden Court Mthatha on Friday, 27 May. The event was hosted by Attorney Development Fund in partnership with LexisNexis South Africa – a leading provider of content and technology solutions for the legal, professional and academic sectors – and Korbitec – developers of market-leading desktop software, online products and data solutions for all spheres of the South African property industry.

The eight candidates are the latest beneficiaries of LexisNexis South Africa's Advocate Advancement Programme and its new Attorney Advancement Programme, both of which aim to foster and promote entrepreneurship among previously disadvantaged, newly qualified legal professionals by reducing the financial burden on them as they establish new legal practices.

LexisNexis South Africa's Commercial director, Thabo Molefe, said: "This is a start of great things to come and our way of ensuring that independent, Black legal professionals are able to level the playing field. Starting a legal practice requires a big investment into technology and superior legal research tools. Through these programmes we are hoping to lighten the load for PDI legal professionals and thereby advancing the Rule of Law, in line with our company's underlying global purpose."



Left to right: Simphiwe Patric Pata of Tiya Pata Attorneys, Mackenzie Mukanzi of the Attorneys Development Fund, Mr Ganga of Q.T. Gcanga and Associates, Odwa Nyembezi and Zuko Tshutshane of Z. Tshutshune Attorneys. Pata, Ganga and Tshutshune are among four Mthatha attorney firms to receive sponsored technology and legal research tools from LexisNexis and its subsidiary, Korbitec.

Advancement

At the workshop, LexisNexis honoured Mthatha advocates Mzamo Swana, Zuko Badli, Zandile Ndesi and Lungelwa Mncotsho-Boya, as the 2016 LexisNexis Advocate Advancement beneficiaries from the Mthatha branch of the Eastern Cape Society of Advocates. They each received sponsorships valued at over R56 000, which include 12 months of free platinum access to the MyLexisNexis online legal research tool, a laptop and a 12 month 3G data contract, including sim card and modem. Through a programme endorsed by the General Council of the Bar of South Africa the four advocates are among 52 nationally this year – and more than 174 nationally since the programme was started in 2012 – who have received such sponsorships at a combined value of over R9 million in the past four years.

As of this year PDI attorneys are being given the same opportunity, through the Attorney Advancement Programme, a new partnership launched at the consultative workshop by LexisNexis, its division Korbitec and the Attorney Development Fund. Three attorney firms – Lesley-ann Raunel Brauns of Lesley-Ann Brauns & Associates Inc, Zuko Tshutshane of Z. Tshutshune Attorneys and Zinedile Monde Tiya and Simphiwe Patric Pata of Tiya Pata Attorneys – received the same package valued at over R56 000. A fourth attorney – Mr Ganga of Q.T Gcanga and Associates received a package sponsored by Korbitec which includes 12 months of free platinum access to the MyLexisNexis online research tool, and a 12 month 3G data contract, including sim card and modem.

Molefe explained: "One of our recently released reports, which looked at the landscape of independent law in South Africa across 160 small law firms, found that black-owned law firms were generally positive about their outlook and were receptive to contributing to the industry. They advised that there had been an increase of work from civil clients and big corporates.

However many pointed out that the legal field remained a largely white landscape with the concept of ‘Black only on paper’, and that the environment was not always conducive to the growth of the black lawyer,” explained Molefe.



Left to right: Advocates Mzamo Swana, Lungelwa Mncotsho-Boya and Zuko Badi are three of the four 2016 LexisNexis Advocate Advancement beneficiaries from the Mthatha branch of the Eastern Cape Society of Advocates.

“As a leader in the field of legal content and solutions, LexisNexis is aware of our role. Our advancement programmes hold remarkable value and are designed to drive transformation by ensuring that previously disadvantaged lawyers and law firms are given an equal opportunity for growth and success,” he said.

The workshop further served as a networking session and a platform to outline the various programmes within the region which are assisting previously

disadvantaged local advocates and attorneys to develop themselves.

In addition to the Advocate and Attorney Advancement Programmes, LexisNexis has partnerships in place with NGOs including ProBono.Org, which partners with private legal professionals who volunteer their time and expertise to provide pro bono legal services to the poor, as well as the Women’s Legal Centre, the National Freedom Network, Umgeni Community Empowerment Centre, the Salvation Army and others. The company hosted its inaugural LexisNexis Rule of Law Champion Award in 2015, which is aimed at celebrating and acknowledging significant members of the South African legal fraternity who have led efforts to advance the rule of law and strengthen civil society. Recipients of the inaugural awards included Judge Dennis Davis as the Dept. of Justice Champion and Nic Swart, Chief Executive Officer of the Law Society of South Africa, as the Industry Champion.

For more information on LexisNexis research solutions, visit <http://www.lexisnexis.co.za/>. For highlights and updates from the Advocate Advancement Programme handover sessions, visit LexisNexis South Africa’s Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/LexisNexisSA/>.

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South African investment firm, Tsiya Group, chaired by Fani Titi, acquired a minority interest in the company in July 2012. In November 2015 LexisNexis South Africa’s acquisition of Korbitec (Pty) Ltd established the company as the leader in conveyancing solutions in the South African legal market, as well as expanded its reach to other spheres and stakeholders within the property transfer process.

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