

Soweto Sewing Company benefits from exhibition industry generosity

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The Soweto Sewing Company has recently benefited from the generosity of the South African exhibition industry. Three exhibition organisers have given the Soweto Sewing Company free exhibition space, and Scan Display has provided them with a branded pop-up stand and counter.



The three organisers who sponsored the Soweto Sewing Company are: Specialised Exhibitions for Markex Jhb (in August); Wholesale & Retail Sector Education and Training Authority (W&T Seta) for the Soweto Festival Expo (in September); and Baba Indaba for their upcoming show in Sandton (in October).

The Soweto Sewing Company attracted the support largely because their story is so inspiring. The group began in 2008, in Braamfischerville on the outskirts of Soweto. The five founding members could not find employment, and so, using initiative in the face of adversity, they decided to create work for themselves in order to support their families.

A few of the women had sewing skills, which they shared with their colleagues and, working from home, they started to craft bags from beautiful African print fabrics. This entrepreneurial spirit has had the beneficial spin-offs of helping to uplift the community and providing positive role models.

A donation of two sewing machines, an over-locker, as well as a space to work in 2009, enabled the group to improve their production base and reach a wider market. They have now expanded their product range and at Markex showcased not only bags but clothing and accessories suitable for corporate gifts. At Soweto Festival Expo they featured household items such as tablecloths, placemats and coasters. New products, including baby bags and blankets, will be launched at the upcoming Baba Indaba.

Judith Thobakgale, who manages the Soweto Sewing Company, is delighted by the marketing opportunities the exhibitions have created for the enterprise. "We are very excited to have these opportunities to showcase our products and meet new clients. Our aim is to grow the Soweto Sewing Company into a self-reliant and profitable company, and these exhibitions are the stepping stones to help us achieve this dream," says Judith.

Judith adds: "We would like to thank our sponsors whole-heartedly, and will strive to impress them with what we can do."

W&R Seta's sponsorship package, which they offered to 200 SMME's including the Soweto Sewing Company, includes two compulsory workshops in business management. Judith has already attended these and hopefully this strategy will equip the group with the necessary skills to manifest long term benefits from the shows.

You can visit the Soweto Sewing Company stand at Baba Indaba, which runs from the 22 to 24 October 2010 at the Sandton Convention Centre.

For more information about the Soweto Sewing Company, visit www.sowetosew.co.za or contact Judith Thobakgale on +27 76 581 6398 or sales@sowetosew.co.za.

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