

New CSI initiative empowers young women in marketing sector

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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A new initiative focusing on empowering young women entering the marketing sector with on the job skills has been launched in Gauteng. The initiative, Phakama Women's Academy, is a corporate social investment (CSI) programme from VWV, the brand experience agency.

The guest speaker, Cheryl Carolus, an Independent Non-Executive Director for Gold Fields and well-known anti-apartheid activist. She congratulated VWV for launching the programme, which she said would contribute to the company and the industry's future positively because it encouraged diversity. She also congratulated the successful programme candidates.

The first 26 candidates were selected out of a number of applicants from the three participating schools, the University of Johannesburg (UJ), Vega and the AAA School of Advertising. The candidates are either second or third year or honours students in marketing courses at one of the participating schools.

The applicants were put through a rigorous selection process that included a written application from which a short list of candidates was compiled. An interview screening process followed. All the applicants had to comply with the VWV determined transformation criteria.

The programme consists of seven modules over six months that will develop the skills and confidence of the young women. They include CV development, developing your personal brand, interviewing and presentation skills, stress and time management and personal finance.

Mentoring

An important component of the programme is mentoring. Each candidate has a mentor, who is an expert in the marketing and related industries, assigned to her. A programme mentor, Sandra Gordon, Founder & Director of Stone Soup, says: "it is important to keep young women in the industry and one way to achieve this is to assist in their development. Teaching them life skills is also very important."

SIMONSAYS communications MD, Melanie Stevens, another mentor, says it is women need to share when they have learnt in their careers. "We need to pass on these skills to young women so they get a head start. Until now I do not think there is a programme that provides these types of skills for young women."

Sam Gabriel, Owner and MD Logic, also a mentor, says the programme is necessary if there is to be change in the workplace for women. "South Africa has been a democracy for 20 years and while some progress has been made, there is still much to be done. This programme is a step in the right direction and will prepare these young women for the business world and this will assist in changing the workplace for women."

Ready to change their lives

The candidates are ready to change their lives as well as the lives of other women. Said Legato Mahlatjje, a second-year corporate communications student at UJ: "I want to empower other black women and give back. This is what I stand for." Also studying corporate communications at UJ, second-year student, Ziyanda Mgengo expressed the same sentiments. "There is a lack of women at boardroom level and senior management positions. I want to get there while helping other women to get there. I am looking forward to the programme and translating the skills I learn into the workplace."

The programme is very close to CEO of the VWV Group Koo Govender's heart as she has always been passionate about women's issues. "Today I feel, like I gave birth to my child," she said at the launch. She explained that the name, Phakama means to rise in Zulu and Xhosa but its meaning goes further than that. "It also means that the young women can rise up and through them they can uplift another generation of young women. We can do it together."

The logo of the programme is a high heel stiletto, which Govender explains is also significant, and not only because all women love shoes! "It is our power heels but the shoes also signify walking in other women's shoes. Women can be judgemental but we should not be."

She expressed the hope that two additional programmes will be launched in 2015.

The programme officially kicks off on 8 August.

Students and mentors

1. *Zandile Baloyi*, who will be mentored by Santa Smith, the General Marketing Manager at Avis
2. *Nomonde Maroga*, who will be mentored by Joni Peddie, the Managing Partner at Energy-for-Resilience
3. *Sisinyane Sihlali*, who will be mentored by Colleen Larsen, the Founder and Chief Executive Office, at Business Engage Association NPC
4. *Zaza Williams*, who will be mentored by Fahmeeda Cassim-Surtee, the Sales and Marketing Director at DSTV Media Sales
5. *Shannon Sandilands*, who will be mentored by Heather Harington, the Human Resources Director, at Estee Lauder
6. *Amukelani Hlabano*, who will be mentored by Melissa Storey, the Executive Head: Strategy, Development and Marketing, at First Car Rental
7. *Precious Kibe*, who will be mentored by Sandra Gordon, Chief Executive Officer and Founder at Stone Soup
8. *Mahadi Lesiamo*, who will be mentored by Samantha Gabriel, the Managing Director, at Logic and Tribe
9. *Pachida Mabisi*, who will be mentored by Boniswa Pezisa Network, the Group Managing Director, at Network BBDO
10. *Lerato Mahlatjie*, who will be mentored by Lucille Jacobs, Business Owner and the Rand Show Manager at SA Shows
11. *Itumeleng Makoro*, who will be mentored by Vilashni Vandayar, the Marketing manager at SAB
12. *Nomfundo Mchunu*, who will be mentored by Melanie Stevens, the Managing Director at SIMONSAYS Communications
13. *Ziyanda Mgengo*, who will be mentored by Liz Ferrett, the Marketing and Cosmetics Executive at Stuttafords
14. *Tebogo Phaho*, who will be mentored by Caroline Pretorius, the Group Creative Director at VWV Group
15. *Kefilwe Sethibe*, who will be mentored by Gina Read, the Managing Director at Cloud9Golf Events Services
16. *Maria Sorota*, who will be mentored by Gizelle Williams, Psychologist and Coach at The Luminary
17. *Gugulethu Duma*, who will be mentored by Fiona McDonald, the Change Management and Communication Consultant at Fiona McDonald Associates
18. *Shannon Gahagan*, who will be mentored by Kerry Evans, the Brand General Manager at Estee Lauder
19. *Sanele Khumalo*, who will be mentored by Sue Fox, the Managing Director at Estee Lauder
20. *Amogelang Mokonoto*, who will be mentored by Kalene Lang, the Human Resources Director at Ethos Private Equity
21. *Ayandiswa Msutuv*, who will be mentored by Nadine Walsh, the Director at Kaelo Academy
22. *Jessica Ndlovu* who will be mentored by Andrea Quayle, the General Manager: Castle Lite at SAB
23. *Shaun Lerato Nkosi*, who will be mentored by Sunel Pretorius, the Communication and OD Superintendent at Samancor Chrome
24. *Carolyn Purdy*, who will be mentored by Kershnee Govender, the Corporate Affairs Director at M-Net
25. *Phemelo Segoe*, who will be mentored by Renchia Droganis, the Chief Executive Officer at Africology
26. *Phano Ramoeketsi*, who will be mentored by Grace del Fava, the Head: Marketing Manager at Sanlam.



The Phakama Women's Academy inaugural Class of 2014. Absent: Zaza Williams Gugu Duma @Shannon Sandilands @Nomonde Maroga. (Image extracted from the [Phakama Women's Academy Facebook page](#))

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ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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