

MICRO*Omega* Holdings' has established a Skills Development Academy to create skills in the information technology sector through Sebata, a wholly owned subsidiary company of MICRO*Omega*.

As an integrated technology solutions company, Sebata provides enterprise management systems and multidisciplinary professional services to public entities, parastatals, municipalities, provincial government and national government departments.

"Due to the technical nature of our products, Sebata initially focussed on offering product training to our clients. We have now grown our training side of the company into a Skills Development Academy comprising an internship programme, a skills programme, formal, accredited academic training and a learnership programme," explains Velazi Zaca – Training Manager of Sebata.

MICT SETA (Media, Information and Communication Technologies Sector Education Training Authority) is funding the internship programme and learnership programme and co-funding the skills programme with Sebata. Sebata is project managing all of the programmes and taking a vested interest in the success of the Skills Development Academy as a whole.

Jabu Sibeko, the Senior Manager for Learning Programmes at MICT SETA gives reasons for their funding: "The MICT SETA participates in learning programmes that lead to employment and new venture creation whilst at the same time engaging in programmes that assist in bridging the digital divide especially in rural areas. We believe that by funding learning programmes through companies that work in the media, information technology or communications sector, learners will develop the appropriate skills, receive relevant work experience and have a high chance of gaining employment in the sector. This not only fulfils MICT SETA's mandate, but benefits the relevant sectors by developing an information savvy society. "

Sebata's Skills Development Academy meets all of the MICT SETA criteria. The learnership programme in particular looks at bridging the digital divide in rural areas. "We decided to approach the Elundini Municipality and the Gariep Municipality - two of our municipal clients that are located in rural areas in the Eastern Cape - and recruit 104 learners that live within these districts. We targeted learners that had completed their matric but were unable to study further and could not find a job. The municipalities provided four training sites and each training site was equipped with computers and could accommodate 26 learners," adds Zaca.

Learners complete a SETA accredited End User Computing Course as well as important soft skills course that will empower learners to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required to operate confidently in a work environment. After the four months of training, the learners will spend eight months applying these skills within the various departments of the Gariep and Elundini Municipalities.

"This gives learners a recognized, balanced qualification and an opportunity gain work experience. Another positive is that the learnership programme develops skills that are not confined to a particular sector, meaning that a person who has this qualification is employable across different industries. This is a brilliant corporate social investment initiative that assists our municipal clients by developing the local communities around them," says Zaca.

The Skills Development Academy also has a year-long internship programme that is designed to give valuable work experience to twelve interns with different types of formal education (from a Diploma in Human Resources to a Degree in Economics). The interns have been placed across different divisions in Sebata where they will acquire the experience and skills that are needed to secure a job - with the most promising candidates receiving full time positions at Sebata.

Another initiative is a six month SETA accredited skills programme that is focussed on 54 internal staff members that work within various divisions of Sebata. "Our staff will study modules covering financial subjects like payroll, asset management and general ledgers as well as municipal accounting and reporting best practises. This will give them a theoretical understanding of the principals upon which many of Sebata's information technology solutions are developed. This in turn will give our staff the ability to deliver exceptional technical support to our clients. The skills programme will also include a module on project management as well as a course on soft skills such as appropriate communication in the work place and team work," adds Zaca.

Sebata has recently been accredited as the full training provider for the qualification – Certificate: Municipal Financial Management – by LG SETA (Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority) as well as a FASSET (Finance and Accounting Services Sector Education) accreditation to provide training for six unit standards. This brings Sebata's total training offer up to 27 training unit standards, with an intention to significantly expand their scope in the near future.

"In order for effective service delivery to take place, municipalities must be empowered with resources and skills. Sebata has placed an emphasis on training and development with a range of products and services that can assist public entities, parastatals, municipalities, provincial government and national government departments in attaining sustainable institutional performance," concludes Zaca.