

GIBB implements ‘new blood’ strategies in securing engineers future

The country's skills shortages are well-documented particularly in the engineering sector where a shortage of engineers, technicians and technologists hamper the achievement of development goals.

Taking positive steps to address this crucial issue is consulting engineers, GIBB, initiated a three-pronged approach to promote engineering as a career whilst developing initiatives to mentor and encourage those who have already embarked on this worthwhile pursuit.

Maphuti Mathega, a draughtsman in the Traffic and Transportation sector was given the support and opportunity to study by the firm. Today, Mathega participates in the firm's mentorship and *Generation G* initiatives, its involvement with the Consulting Engineers of South Africa (CESA) sponsored Job Shadow Day and Young Engineers Forum (YPF).

Skills development is at the heart of what GIBB represents - as someone who came from one of GIBB's mentorship programmes, Mathega knew first-hand the value that mentorship can play in developing young engineers.

“Since I've come from a technical school background, it was much easier for me to adapt to a technical field. I first heard about GIBB when I studied Draughting and Multi-Disciplinary Drawing Office Practice at the African Academy where GIBB was one of the supporting firms to the institution. I was impressed by their attitude of engaging with and investing in the future of students and after a series of tests and multiple interviews, I was elated to join the GIBB family,” said Mathega.

During his three-month probation at GIBB, Mathega made use of every opportunity to ensure that his ideas and skills added value to the firm. Six years down the line, Mathega is still committed and now imparts skills and knowledge as a mentor through the *Generation G* Programme.

Generation G is a group that represents employees under the age of 35 who are destined to take over the leadership mantle and become the experienced engineers of the firm.

“As this group represents more than 60% of our technical resources, the emphasis is to encourage knowledge sharing and mentorship, using the experience and skills of our senior staff to inspire their younger colleagues in achieving professional status whilst developing their technical capabilities and peripheral skills. Support and sponsorship initiatives particularly to school learners, is positively encouraged by *Generation G*,” explained Mathega.

One such involvement with schools is the annual CESA sponsored Job Shadow Day initiative which serves as a call to action for consulting firms to engage with scholars in highlighting engineering as a career of choice.

“In the past, we like many other consultants, have allocated a day where learners from a local school are invited to our offices to see what we do, often culminating in a visit to a local site to see hands-on engineering in progress.

Whilst worthwhile, we found that this wasn't enough to retain interest and this year, we decided to do more to create an all-inclusive programme, which gave students a well-rounded experience,” said Mathega.

Previously, scholars were selected based on their excellent mathematics and science results. This year, GIBB gave Grades 9, 10 and 11 learners a project assignment that required students to suggest solutions to improve their communities.

To make this initiative a success, continuous guidance was provided by *Generation G* engineers, who gave their time to provide hands-on assistance for four weeks. Mathega is also part of the CESA Young Professionals Forum (YPF) which consists of young professionals who are passionate about the engineering industry.

These professionals are also interested in ensuring the sustainability and promotion of the profession by addressing issues such as the rapid growing construction industry, huge age gap between experienced senior engineers and junior developing engineers, and migration of qualified young professions to other industries.

Mathega plays an active role in Corporate Social Investment (CSI) activities at GIBB. “Being part of GIBB Corporate Social Investment is one of the biggest highlights in my working experience thus far and I believe more is yet to be achieved. I strongly believe that the upcoming generation should get first-hand knowledge of the professional working environment which will give them an idea about the path they should follow.”

Further, Mathega added that at the moment, the GIBB CSI team are conveying the message through its Job Shadow activities held every year. “Some students matriculate with excellent results, but often end up not having a solid career due to the lack of job shadowing skills, hence our focus is on the young minds who will build tomorrow's future,” concluded Mathega.