

Resilience and creativity to expand amidst the Covid-19 pandemic

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Small business owner shares his journey and flexibility during the 2020 economic battle in business.



Anoty Africa's co-owner, Mr Vhutshilo Nemutshili

"Leaders become great not because of their power but because of their ability to empower others." - John Maxwell

In an online interview with Anoty Africa's co-owner, Mr Vhutshilo Nemutshili, he shared this wonderful quote by Maxwell speaking about leadership and the power of shared knowledge. As we follow his entrepreneurial journey we recognise his resilient efforts to rise above the current crisis and still come up with fresh ideas to do business. We also get to see how he leaned on other expertise to increase his own knowledge during this time as well as his ability to share skills with others, even creating new jobs within the online shopping industry.

Anoty Africa is a 100% youth black-owned company founded in 2018 by Vhutshilo Nemutshili and his friend, Mphofore Calvin Molaba. Mr Nemutshili is a current participant on the *Transnet Pipelines Enterprise Development Programme for Entrepreneurs with Disability* (2018-2020) with its core focus to develop 10 entrepreneurs (five JHB and five KZN) through an Enterprise Development (ED) customised programme. The programme's implementation partner, The Hope Factory, aims to assist start-up entrepreneurs that result in mobilising economic activity for unemployed black South African citizens (as defined by the B-BBEE codes).

Anoty Africa is an up-and-coming online wholesaler offering convenient online shopping for office consumable goods, health and hygiene products, printer supply, office stationery and furniture as well as PPE work-suits. They are currently also selling specific health and hygiene products in line with the Covid-19 needs which was an expansion of their existing service offering. Products such as hand sanitiser, home test kits, masks and more are available online through Anoty Africa.

Mr Nemutshili says, “It became natural for us to expand on our hygiene products range during this Covid-19 pandemic to meet our clients' demand. It was inevitable to include all the Covid-19 supplies as the demand grew significantly.” He adds that, “We had to also play a role to protect and help our country's labour forces to stay safe and win the fight against the current global nightmare.”

For many SMMEs in South Africa this year, it has been an ongoing plague of unknown outcomes and loss. For many in sectors that still cannot fully function, it has been a frustrating and devastating season for which we can only hang on to hope. Anoty Africa were able to rise above the current state of crisis and create some small victories. “The pandemic has proven to be a test to many SMMEs. An evaluation process for SMME financial status and creativeness. Luckily Anoty Africa, as both a tech-savvy entity and general supplier of hygiene and office supply products, was able to benefit by acquiring new clientele,” says Mr Nemutshili.

We asked Mr Nemutshili to share a little about his experience on the current ED programme through Transnet. “The Transnet programme has proven to be beneficial both to my company's growth and personal growth... So far it has taught me different ways to become a successful entrepreneur, including reliability, having integrity, nurturing my leadership skills and ensuring that I'm a law-abiding entrepreneur,” says Mr Nemutshili. Since being on the programme Anoty Africa is now a registered entity that complies with many professional bodies, including SARS, COIDA, CIPC and B-BBEE.

Anoty Africa has managed to see positive impact during the past few months, including a turnover of over R200,000 for April despite the lockdown, which is a great increase on monthly turnover since 2019. They have also recently acquired new clientele and business for e-procurement systems and in addition have been able to create four new jobs, namely two new drivers and two new suppliers.

Kenlin Stride, current Programme Manager of The Hope Factory and Transnet's Enterprise Development programme, says, “Corporate funded programmes such as these are critical to the rejuvenation of our economy in its current state. With the devastating and long-lasting effect of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is clear now more than ever that SMMEs will be vital in the re-stimulation of the South African economy. We need these SMMEs to be supported and succeed to allow for sustainable employment for the youth and our long-term well-being as a nation. Transnet Pipelines SOC recognises this need and is one of those pioneers that is leading the pack in ploughing back into the development of SMMEs and more especially shining a light on black-owned businesses and more especially entrepreneurs living with disabilities.”

In closing, Mr Nemutshili shares about providing opportunities to uplift each other during this time. “We were able to provide other small business with opportunities to share in Anoty profits and client services. We've outsourced most of our products to uplift other small business. Thus we create a chain of partners that help each other to grow.” His last few words for fellow small businesses were to encourage joint partnerships or sharing of knowledge to create powerful opportunities.

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