

# Celebrating women in the ICT sector

Issued by [Rosebank College](#)

14 Dec 2022

The past two years have seen growth in digital transactions with the increase in online shopping and online learning. With this came an increase in cybercrime. Trend Micro's Biannual Cyber Security Report finds that South Africa ranks in the Top 30 countries most vulnerable to malware attacks, making it a playground for cyber security criminals. With every challenge comes the opportunity to provide a solution. This has created increased demand for IT related professionals and an increase in budget related to cyber security for most companies. This presents more opportunities for individuals with an accredited IT related qualification.



IT as an industry is booming. There are various career opportunities and opportunities to earn well. Kwando Sithole, a Durbanite, who studied the IIE Diploma in Information Technology Management at IIE Rosebank College Durban, a leading Brand of The Independent Institute of Education (The IIE), is hoping to reap some of these rewards while contributing to this sector.

Sithole has always had an interest in solving problems. She started by fixing faulty gadgets at home and the more she did that, the more her purpose and career goal became clear. After completing her Diploma in IT, Sithole joined BET Software's graduate programme in February 2022 and has not looked back since. Sithole has taken the role by the horns and her colleagues and employer are finding her contribution to the organisation immeasurable. Sithole's colleague, Lindi Mpanza, described Sithole as a team player, efficient and always ready to take the lead whenever an opportunity presents itself. "She is a pleasure to work with and we are happy that she is a part of our team." Sithole proves that at times attitude and the willingness to learn can be just as good as experience.

We caught up with Sithole to learn more about her experience in the world of work since she started.

## How did you find out about the BET graduate programme?

I can remember that Thursday like it was yesterday. I was home in Richards Bay when one of my lecturers shared the news of the opportunity on a class WhatsApp group. I took a chance. That's what I believe in, you have to make the first

step towards your dream career. I applied as soon as I received the text, and my application was successful. I have not looked back since then.

### **What is the best part about being a woman in the tech industry?**

The IT sector is predominately male, and I believe I bring a different dynamic as a woman and that adds value. I also believe that my presence in this industry can inspire other young women, to also study IT or start a business in IT. I enjoy what I do, but I also want to contribute to reshaping the industry and empowering businesses and people.

### **What projects are you involved with at BET Software?**

BET Software keeps it interesting; I can innovate and test my skills. One project I really enjoyed was the BET Tank Challenge. This was an internal project that looked to push boundaries and help with innovation in the organisation, by finding ways of doing new things and the same things better.

In this project we had to propose a solution to better the deployment process for developers in the organisation – to improve efficiencies and save time. My role in the project was to test the functionality of BET Software's web application and find opportunities for improvements.

### **What has been your career defining moment that you are most proud of since you joined BET Software in February 2022?**

I don't have a defining moment the experience has been amazing and through this journey I have found my niche in IT. I have discovered that I am most interested in UI/UX Design. This is an area that I would love to learn more about and refine my skills.

### **Who has been your biggest advocate/mentor in the workplace and why?**

Lindile Mpanza has been my biggest advocate because she has held my hand from day one. This has given me a sense of comfort seeing as this is my first job. It is not just about the work at hand, she has advised me on all aspects of the world of work, highlighting the importance of self-care in order to bring my best self to work.

### **What do you think we should be doing more of to encourage more girls to consider the technology industry?**

We should be intentionally introducing girls to the industry earlier, starting from primary school and continuing through to their tertiary years.

### **What advice would you give to young women who are considering to study IT?**

I studied an IIE Diploma in Information Technology Management, completed it in record time and graduated in 2022. I came first in that qualification, in other words I graduated Cum Laude. My advice to young women is to put in the work to prove yourself. This in turn helps you, and others, take you seriously. It is essential to be taken seriously for your ideas to be considered and to make an impact. It is all in how you present yourself and rise up from challenges.

### **What role do you think male team members can play to best support their female peers/colleagues in the tech world, taking into consideration that this is one of many fields that are male dominated?**

They can show support and be our allies. The goal is to get the job done well, in record time and have a happy client. Males can show that they trust that women can get the job done as well as they can. It is also essential for males to celebrate women who are doing a great job and do so publicly – this helps to level the playing field and change stereotypes.

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