

ZONEBEAT

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CISCO EDGE: FOSTERING INNOVATION & DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP



The East London Industrial Development Zone SOC Ltd Science and Technology Park (ELIDZ STP) has warmly welcomed Cisco, a global leader in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and networking.

In a bid to develop and expand skills, create employment opportunities for South African nationals (particularly for the Eastern Cape youth) as well as fostering access to markets for Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) in the ICT space, Cisco joined forces with the ELIDZ STP to engineer lasting solutions.

The partnership forms part of the STP's drive to coordinate skills development and training opportunities for youth in the region.

According to STP: Operations Manager, Ludwe Macingwane, the world leader in ICT brings onto the table high technology infrastructure coupled with a wealth of experience in advancement of ICT skills.

"We have signed a three a year partnership agreement with Cisco – a move which will see us expand our service to the greater Eastern Cape Province."

Cisco opened its first EDGE Centre in South Africa in 2018. EDGE stands for Experience, Design, GTM (Go to Market) and Earn. The objective is to share business knowledge, help develop small and medium businesses in the digital age, speed up their entry to market and, as a result, create new jobs for the local economy.

The EDGE Centres function as incubators, they provide small and medium businesses with state-of-the-art Cisco communication and collaboration technology, alongside training and enablement programs. They specialise in topics that are relevant to the local economy, such as smart ports, Internet of Things (IoT) in agriculture and smart cities. As an added service, small and medium businesses are able to connect with global Cisco experts, who can support them with developing business ideas and concepts.

At the STP, Cisco will be:

- **Running an incubation programme for ICT SMMEs**
- **Collaborating with research and development units at EC universities**
- **Supporting the improvement and pertinence of scholarly projects by students.**

"Cisco is committed to support the digitisation of Africa's communities, businesses, and governments through initiatives for skills and talent development, innovation and job creation. Building onto this, the three-year partnership is also aimed at ensuring that regional SMMEs get onto the platform to utilize Cisco technologies available at the centre to improve their chances of getting work, hone their ideas and enhance their skillset," said General Manager at Cisco South Africa, Garsen Naidu.

At an appropriate time, the two entities will issue more details on the recruitment process.

MSC NAVIGATES THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Rosario Russo, Brand Manager: Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC), located within the East London Industrial Zone SOC Ltd (ELIDZ) speaks to us on how they have been able to navigate their way through the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 and subsequent restrictions aimed at curbing the calamity associated with the virus saw an unprecedented interruption to ordinary citizen's daily lives – on both personal and professional fronts with the economy taking a huge knock.

Companies in South Africa had to be strict to ensure adherence to COVID-19 preventive measures put in place on 27 March 2020, when

the President of the Republic, Cyril Ramaphosa, declared a nationwide lockdown in an effort to curtail the spread of the virus in the country.

The preventive measures placed most national and international logistics companies in a place of despair, but for some organisation's like MSC, a world-leader in container shipping, operations have been smooth sailing.

According to Russo, the company is an essential services provider and as such has had to exert itself to ensure that it delivers to its customers so that essential goods could be distributed to and from the country with minimal business disruptions, with the continuity assisting with the depot decongestion.

“Despite the fact that there were fears of contracting COVID-19 among the workers, we did all that we could to allay fears and feelings of dread,” mentioned Russo.

He added that, in a bid to ensure workers safety, MSC continuously carries out a COVID-19 wellness programme aimed at creating awareness and curbing the spread of the virus on site. This includes providing employees with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), ensuring that protective measures are adhered to on site, as well as frequent COVID-19 examinations for employees at no costs to them.

Russo also stated that the company has been fortunate that it has not had to lay off workers due to the effects of the pandemic.

“Our organisational culture is premised on family values and we have had to try to sincerely rearrange our technique so that the MSC family would proceed with its operations unhindered,” he said.

Furthermore, the company’s operations have been cushioned by the location of a number of its associate clients within the Zone. This has then allowed for an uninterrupted supply of service to the Zone’s investors and tenants. This has demonstrated to be beneficial for MSC, and therefore necessitated the need to renew their tenancy agreement within the ELIDZ for a further 10 years.

“There may be uncertainties about where the country is headed in terms of the virus at the moment, but what we know is that as long as we are within the Zone, the future looks promising for us,” Russo concluded.



SPDD TO DRIVE A TEXTILE PROGRAMME AT THE STP

The East London Industrial Development Zone SOC Ltd (ELIDZ) Science and Technology Park (STP) continues its mission to partner with growth inspired emerging and micro-sized businesses in a bid to ensure that a wealth of knowledge and skill is cultivated for the region’s benefit.

The first STP in the country to be attached to a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) welcomed a clothing and textile incubator - Schubart Park Design and Development (SPDD).

SPDD, a black female-owned business has moved its operations to the ELIDZ STP to spearhead the growth and revival of the textile industry in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality Region.

According to the company’s founder Siyanda Sebe, SPDD was conceptualised and started operations from a garage in 2008.

“When I started with this initiative I was based in Gauteng, Pretoria. My love and passion for clothes precedes me, when I was still at school, I sold second-hand vintage clothing items at markets on Sundays.”

Sebe added that at the time of starting her business venture, she endeavoured to assist likeminded individuals with their own similar start-ups as she harboured hopes that her act of kindness would lead to more interest and subsequent investments onto her initiative.

This vibrant and driven lady pursued this venture for a number of years from the comfort of her garage before relocating to then Port Elizabeth, now Gqeberha, with the intention of furthering her studies in Clothing Production and Marketing Management from Port Elizabeth Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College and Damelin – respectively.

Sebe completed her studies in 2015 and decided to journey on to Cape Town where she officially opened a fashion studio. This growth in her business brought about teething challenges such as capacitating the studio with a team that understands the company's vision.

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“Like any other emerging business, some of these challenges which include recruitment and retainment of employees became too great for my start-up; as such these forced us to, once more, to relocate our business from Cape Town to East London in 2019.”
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It was during her move to East London that Sebe got to learn about the STP and its services.

“The choice of moving into the ELIDZ was accelerated by the reality of growth and the fact that the previous space we occupied was prone to theft and burglary. The STP, not only creates suitable working physical spaces for businesses but also has an innovative range of features and benefits offered to us such as 24/7 security access and CCTV cameras. Moreover, the mandate of the STP speaks to us.”

Speaking on the event of SPDD move into the precinct, STP Operations Manager, Ludwe Macingwane, said the Science and Technology Park is excited at the opportunity of contributing towards the development of the textile industry which was once a very strong industry in our province.

“The products and services offered by SPDD offer growth opportunities for start-ups and individuals that yearn to learn more about the industry and want to align their business with the needs of the market. These are some of our strategic imperatives that guide our support services,” said Macingwane.

Macingwane added that the future of the partnership between the two entities promised to bear more fruits for likeminded businesses who seek to use STP platform to catapult themselves in terms of training and skills development.

A photograph of a textile factory with rolls of fabric and a paper tag with text. The background shows a factory floor with several large rolls of fabric in various colors (yellow, orange, red) and patterns (solid, floral, geometric). A white paper tag with a metal ring at the top is hanging in the foreground, partially obscuring the fabric rolls. The tag has a quote written on it in a blue, handwritten-style font.

“The products and services offered by SPDD offer growth opportunities for start-ups and individuals that yearn to learn more...”

GROWING THE REGIONAL AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR

MORE THAN
600
MANUFACTURING
& SERVICE **JOBS**
TO BE CREATED

R2.5
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WORTH OF INVESTMENT
INTO THE EASTERN CAPE



Despite a turbulent 2020, characterised by major economic setbacks, the East London Industrial Development Zone's SOC Ltd (ELIDZ) Automotive Sector remains resilient. Currently, the sector is settling in eight new automotive suppliers within the Automotive Supplier Park. The abovementioned investments will inject more than **R2.5 billion (bn) into the Eastern Cape Province's economy.**

These modern purpose-built manufacturing facilities, in which more than **R1.3bn was invested in infrastructure**, occupy just more than seven hectares of land and are set to manufacture a variety of components to support the fast-growing regional Automotive Sector. Set to be fully operational in the second quarter of 2021, the new facilities will create more than **600 manufacturing and service jobs for the local communities.** Despite this growth, the ELIDZ continues to set its sights on populating the remaining vacant land and are pursuant to increasing its geographical footprint in the Buffalo City as it looks to expanding the borders of the Zone.

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