

NEDAs winner ZHAC Construction offers advice on business growth, embracing opportunities

Maintenance and construction company ZHAC Construction was a recent winner in this year's National Enterprise Development Awards (NEDAs). The awards recognise and celebrate the achievements of entrepreneurs who are part of the Black Umbrellas' business incubation programme and highlight the dedication that goes into ensuring that black-owned businesses are sustainable, profitable and that they create much-needed job opportunities.



Faheem Harris, MD of ZHAC Construction

Expressing his excitement about winning the award, which recognises the hard work he has put in to his business, Faheem Harris, MD of ZHAC Construction, said: "Nationally, Black Umbrellas have nine business incubators, consisting of 220 businesses, and being awarded the first position for best Black Umbrellas' Ambassador in 2020 is a great achievement for our business."

Harris has an architectural, engineering and business administration background and started ZHAC Construction with his business partner Zubeida Hendricks, a chartered accountant, in 2009, when he saw a gap in the maintenance market. "When starting the business, I saw a decline in building contracts, but I noticed a big market for the maintenance of existing buildings and that's where we placed our focus. As such, we started working for corporate clients such as Standard Bank Insurance, who is still one of our clients to date. Due to our belief in the importance of providing clients with quality and good service delivery, we were able to grow and we managed to win Standard Bank Retail, Santam, I&J and UCT - currently our biggest clients," he explained.



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MBAWC Entrepreneurship for Contractors Development Programme

Harris also attributes his business growth to the lessons he learnt in the Entrepreneurship for Contractors Development Programme offered by the Master Builders' Association Western Cape (MBAWC) in partnership with the University of the Western Cape's Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation last year.

The programme is offered free of charge for sub-contractors and small contractors registered with the Building Industry Bargaining Council (BIBC) and the MBAWC in the Western Cape and covers key elements affecting a business's success, such as pricing and claims, health and safety, project management, construction costs, contracts, the building industry wage system and collective bargaining, among other key areas.

"These lessons also really prepared us to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic as we learnt business survival measures and were able to implement them over the last couple of months," he adds.

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Capitalising on upcoming opportunities

Looking to the future, Harris says that his business is ready to capitalise on the upcoming opportunities in the sector in 2021, including those offered by the national rollout of infrastructure projects which forms part of the South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan.

To assist other business owners in the construction industry to grow their businesses after a tough year and to take advantage of these opportunities, Harris outlines the following pointers:

- **Maintain good quality:** Business owners should always make sure that they are the best at what they do to stay competitive and differentiate themselves from other players out there. This can be done by upskilling yourself through learnership programmes.
- **Transparency and compliance:** This is very important in every sphere of running a business as no one wants to do business with a non-compliant company. It is also crucial for businesses to operate in a transparent manner to ensure trust between the client and the firm. As such, it is best to register with the BIBC and MBAWC when operating a construction company in the Western Cape.
- **Get a mentor:** It is also important that if you do not know something as a business owner, go to somebody who does and ask for advice. "Having a business mentor as an entrepreneur is always vital for business growth and it has helped me a lot over the years."

"Following the announcement of the upcoming infrastructure projects in South Africa, now is the time for those in the industry to grab the bull by the horns, tap into their entrepreneurial skills and prepare themselves for a year of opportunity in 2021," concludes Harris.

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