

# Acknowledgment for direct-selling initiative

In acknowledgment of the highly successful direct sales industry, the University of Johannesburg (UJ) has ventured into an active partnership with the Direct Selling Association of South Africa (DSA), an internationally recognised organisation and member of the World Federation of Direct Selling Associations (WFDSA), with the aim of raising the profile of entrepreneurial skills to winning heights.

Direct selling is a dynamic, vibrant, rapidly expanding channel of distribution providing individuals around the world with an opportunity to earn income and build a business of their own; it has yet to reach its full potential in South Africa.

## Developing tomorrow's entrepreneurs

The DSA has joined hands with the university in developing tomorrow's entrepreneurs by teaching students to sustain themselves through a stimulating development initiative. The objective is to equip students in the higher education environment with the practical skills and experience they need to create an income, to develop an entrepreneurial attitude and to start their own business – whether in direct selling or another sector of commerce.

In celebration of this partnership, the university co-hosted a special function with the DSA yesterday, Wednesday, 9 May 2007, to launch the expansion of this DSA-UJ internationally award-winning initiative and to celebrate the achievements of the students that participated last year. On his first visit to SA, in support of this initiative, the secretary general of the WFDSA, Neil Offen, delivered the keynote address at the function.

## Earning while learning

Marius Wait, project coordinator and lecturer in personal selling and sales management within the UJ's Faculty of Business Management, says that this initiative addresses the principle of empowering people to create and manage their own business, adding that "the students basically earn while they learn."

"The initiative requires students to sign up with two non-competing companies to work with for a period of eight months. This period is used for product training and business days where students place and receive orders. Students must reach a specific sales target in order to pass the relevant subject module," says Wait, adding that the long-term vision of the DSA-UJ initiative is to implement the programme throughout South Africa and Africa over the next 10 years.

Companies participating in the DSA-UJ initiative this year are: Avroy Shlain Cosmetics (skin care, personal care, fragrances and cosmetics), Table Charm (tableware, home textiles), Tupperware SA (housewares), Impumelelo Genovese (home textiles and housewares), and Avon (skin care, personal care, fragrances and cosmetics).

## Passing without writing exams

“This project is a component of the national diploma programmes that are designed to be more practical and specialist orientated than degree courses. The project is also in line with Government’s policy of outcomes based education – where textbook knowledge is tested in the real-life environment. Passing a subject and being able to obtain a distinction, without writing an exam, also excites the students. This project provides the students with a unique opportunity to earn marks as they sell and earn monetary rebates on the product sales. The opportunities for students derived from this initiative are therefore enormous.”

The DSA steers the project from an industry perspective and works together with the DSA member companies to make the initiative a success. Caroline Tointon, project coordinator for the DSA, says it has taken two years to perfect the blueprint of the initiative, which is now ready to be rolled out to other higher education institutions throughout SA.

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