

## HL: Helping unemployed accounting graduates to realize their dreams

“The fact that there are 200 000 unemployed graduates in South Africa, confirms that there is a skills gap between the skills levels of graduates leaving tertiary institutions, and the skills levels that employers are looking for from prospective employees. By equipping unemployed graduates who already have Finance and Accounting degrees and Diplomas, with work-readiness skills, Fasset has been able to improve the employment prospects of hundreds of candidates, while at the same time, helping to address skills needs within the Finance, Accounting, Management Consulting and Other Financial Services sector,” says Fasset, CEO, Cheryl James.

Fasset has allocated more than R260m to Development Projects. “Work Readiness Projects constitute the lion’s share of Fasset’s Development Projects. The high placement rate on completion confirms that there is a dire need for such projects. It is not surprising that Guarantee Trust Corporate Support Services (GTCSS), who delivers the Fasset-funded Bonani Work Readiness Programme, often refers to themselves as a work-readiness company. The firm recruits good unemployed accounting graduates, places them onto an intensive five-month work readiness programme and then finds employers, who are willing to provide these learners with sustainable employment and sign them onto SAIPA or SAICA learnerships,” James explains. Fasset has funded 2 830 learners on the programme. Placement rates of around 90% have been achieved,” James informs.

James says it is very gratifying for the Fasset team, together with training providers to be able to make a tangible difference in the lives of hundreds of unemployed graduates through the Work Readiness Programme.

“Radichaba Malapane, a candidate on the first Fasset-funded Bonani Work Readiness Programme is one of hundreds of learner success stories. Malapane grasped the opportunity that the programme provided with both hands and as a result, has achieved his dream of becoming a Chartered Accountant,” James explains.

Radichaba Malapane, who completed his B Com degree in 2003, wanted to become a Chartered Accountant, but in addition to being unable to afford the fees for further postgraduate study, he could not afford to pay the outstanding fees for the degree he had just completed. “The university withheld my degree. The consequences were disastrous. I was unable to continue with my studies. I was also unable to find a job in my chosen field of Accounting and Finance, since I could not provide proof that I had obtained a B Com degree. I was frustrated and unemployed,” Malapane recalls.

Fortunately, Malapane applied and was accepted onto the Bonani Work Readiness Programme. “I started the programme with a very positive mental attitude. This was an opportunity to make a fresh new start in life. I was excited by the prospect of learning work-related skills, which would assist me to find employment in my area of interest,” he explains.

On completion, Malapane accepted a position at Sprigg Abbott Incorporated, an Accounting and Auditing firm based in Milnerton in the Western Cape. “It is through this company that I have become the person that I am today. The directors were extremely understanding and supportive and were willing to assist me wherever possible. They went so far as to stand surety for me enabling me to obtain funding from ABSA bank. This enabled me to release my undergraduate degree from UCT,” he reveals.

Sprigg Abbott Incorporated also provided him with a short-term loan, allowing him to enroll for a B Com Honours degree through the University of KwaZulu-Natal. “I obtained my CTA. In addition, the firm also rewarded me for academic achievements in monetary terms. This played a pivotal role in keeping me motivated and encouraged me. Although

I have since moved to another company, I will always be grateful to Sprigg Abbott Incorporated for everything they have done for me,” he informs. Malapane is currently employed as a Senior Account Executive by Khula Enterprise Finance Limited, an Independent Agency of the Department of Trade and Industry. “My gross monthly earnings are more than the annual salary I received when I first started articles. I love my new role, which involves dealing with clients, colleagues and identifying new business opportunities within the SME environment,” he explains. Malapane urges learners on Fasset-funded Work Readiness Programmes to: “take every opportunity that comes your way very seriously. Never underestimate small beginnings. Use your gifts and talents to the best of your ability and never be afraid to apply yourself fully. Life is too short to squander opportunities. You may live to regret the chances you have not taken, but you can never regret the chances that you have taken,” he concludes.

*(Fasset is the Seta for Finance, Accounting, Management Consulting and Other Financial Services).*