

Multi-million rand partnership to accelerate innovation in Africa

A multi-million rand partnership to accelerate sustainable innovation in Africa has been formed between the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB) and MTN.

The collaboration aims to combine the action learning and research strengths of the GSB with MTN's technological expertise and resources to help create mobile apps and educational, medical and economic empowerment programmes and promote entrepreneurship and small business growth.



Reaching further

MTN will invest R15m over the next three years in the MTN Solution Space, an innovation hub at the UCT GSB. The partnership is built on a solid platform of shared values of integrity, leadership, learning and a commitment to innovation with real-world impact.

"Each partner has complementary expertise and skills, so together, their impact on African innovation will be greater and the solutions emerging as a result of their collaboration will reach further," said Professor Walter Baets, director of the UCT GSB. "We are delighted that MTN has decided to make a commitment of this kind. It is an investment in solutions for Africa, by Africa, in Africa."

Sarah-Anne Arnold, manager of the MTN Solution Space said the partnership represents a symbiotic and purposeful venture into the future. "MTN already has an extensive footprint in Africa and the GSB has a strong representation of African students at the business school, combined with a reputation for research and academic excellence. So we are combining our strengths for a common purpose - finding solutions to the biggest challenges facing our continent."

Helping start-ups

The MTN Solution Space has already had successes in helping start-ups gain a foothold in the business world. It is home to social innovators such as former UCT GSB MPhil student Francois Petousis who founded Lumkani, a proactive, early-warning fire detection system designed for shack dwellers. The concept won the People's Choice Award at the 2014 Global Social Venture Competition (GSVC) and scooped second place in two separate categories at South Africa's innovation summit.



Professor Baets said partnerships like these enable innovation that can make a difference to communities, adding value on many different levels, while helping to establish new ventures that contribute to economic growth. He said that as a founding sponsor of the MTN Solution Space, MTN understands that innovation is essential for achieving competitive advantage in today's high-pressure business environment.

"The UCT GSB is dedicated to developing a new paradigm for learning and research with an emphasis on building African solutions and innovations. In collaboration with MTN, we will be able to create better outcomes. Our combined networks - civil society partners, industry experts, policy makers and practitioners - create a collaborative innovation landscape like no other," concludes Baets.