

AMI launches Virtual Campus project

The African Management Initiative (AMI) have announced the launch of their Virtual Campus project. This free online management portal will provide African managers with access to tools, templates and peer mentorship, supporting the development of management skills for entrepreneurship and employability.



The University of Cape Town, Gordon Institute of Business Studies (GIBS), Lagos Business School and the United States International University in Nairobi, Kenya (USIU) have all committed to partnering with AMI in the delivery of Virtual Campus to managers across Africa.

"Good management is the missing link in the African growth story today," says Jonathan Cook, chairman of AMI. "Africa is the next frontier for opportunity and private sector investment. However, for the private sector to realise its potential, we urgently need more good managers on the continent who will guide the process and make things happen. AMI has identified this 'missing link', and is making it our responsibility to provide learning hubs across Africa that will help develop the skills of managers necessary to grow successful and healthy institutions,".

What the Virtual Campus offers

At the core of the Virtual Campus system is a database of more than 300 traditional business concepts, with subjects such as finance, entrepreneurship, managing yourself and human resource management. Each component is explained, and practical case studies are offered to illustrate how the concepts can be applied successfully. The learners are then encouraged to apply these concepts in their own work context. This enables them to learn by doing, giving the candidates scope to reflect on the process and develop it to adhere to their needs in the workplace. The Virtual Campus can be accessed at www.africanmanagers.org.

In 2012, AMI partnered with the UCT Graduate School of Business to make Virtual Campus a reality in South Africa - the platform was dubbed "GSB Hluma". This partnership has allowed for the launch of a new online learning platform to up skill and empower African managers to run successful businesses in extremely challenging contexts.

Walter Baets, director of the GSB and the lead developer on the project, said that Africa is a continent that is going through a growth spurt and is brimming with talent, but is tragically short of the skills to support this. The initiative, and the GSB platform, is based on one key, very simple premise - that of learning by doing.

Founding the AMI initiative, participating organisations have shown their collaboration to overcome the problem of ineffective management. These organisations include:

- Association of African Business Schools (AABS) - a representative of the leading business schools in Africa
- Global Business School Network (GBSN) - an international non-profit network of leading business schools concerned with all aspects of business and management education
- Lundin Foundation - a Lundin arm that invests in high potential small and medium sized businesses across Africa
- Tony Elumelu Foundation - an Africa-based and African-funded not-for-profit institution dedicated to the promotion of excellence in business leadership across Africa.

With the support from these organisations, AMI has been able to build their strategy and develop crucial steps to overcome the 'missing link' of management in Africa.

AMI director, Rebecca Harrison, said, "AMI membership has grown rapidly since its launch early last year - highlighting the huge need for this kind of initiative on the continent. We are building a community of African managers committed to personal effectiveness and accountability. Our partners and the development of our flagship Virtual Campus, GSB Hluma, will play a big role in helping us achieve this."

Entrepreneurs wanting to access GSB Hluma must first sign up to AMI, which is free and can be accessed at www.africanmanagers.org/join-ami. In the coming months the GSB will be investigating additional partners to help roll out the initiative. AMI is also looking for additional content partners to expand its library of free resources for African managers.

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