

Workshop17 supporting African tech and innovation

The V&A Waterfront's Workshop17, a multi-use innovation hub designed to showcase and enable solutions to South African and African opportunities, is set to lift the veil on African tech and innovation.

Workshop17 was born of the desire to support start-ups and experienced companies, profit and non-profit entities, and big and small initiatives, in their efforts to create a better future. It will be managed on behalf of the V&A Waterfront by OPEN, a co-working space operator and a partner in the initiative.

Housed on the upper level of the Watershed, the newly launched Workshop17 is home to over 130 tenants so far. These resident member businesses, start-ups and freelancers will all share a collaborative working environment as they work to develop their businesses, products and ideas in the long-term. With the fastest internet available, eight fully-equipped meeting, teaching and function rooms, and 'creative spaces' for idea generation, creative brainstorming, and relaxing, the Workshop17 space has been carefully designed to accommodate its vision of collaboration and modern working.



David Green

"Given the V&A Waterfront's location and diverse visitorship, the Workshop17 platform will provide small entities with the best opportunities," said David Green, CEO of the V&A Waterfront. Workshop17 has been designed to facilitate a community of talented, passionate and diverse people learning and working together to create new solutions to big and small problems, and will allow interaction between the public, entrepreneurs, innovators and designers, as well as between disciplines, sectors and cultures in its endeavours.

This new innovation hub will have a strong technology and entrepreneurial focus, which is clearly demonstrated among the partners on board for the initiative. Nigerian-born, US-based Julius Akinyemi is a founding member of the Advisory Board of Workshop17, bringing both passion for and experience in entrepreneurship to Workshop17. Based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the United States and the former global director of emerging technologies for PepsiCo Inc., Akinyemi will also be the hub's first entrepreneur in residence.

The space itself is home to a coding academy and a growing number of small businesses, many of whom are tech-orientated, all focused on supporting its community of diverse members and associated companies.



Workshop17 - Julius Akinyemi in the W17 space

Accelerating technology at Workshop17

The V&A Waterfront has made a strategic decision to support the creation of a tech cluster within Workshop17 to accelerate innovative products that will capitalise on the market opportunities. It also creates a platform to promote the success and rapid growth of local tech start-ups that often go unnoticed by the media. mLab, Silicon Cape and codeX are key residents of Workshop17, specifically chosen by the V&A Waterfront because their programmes create a highly inclusive, innovative and productive environment, with a focus on growing existing and new technology businesses and creating new skills in the field of technology, all for positive social and economic impact.

"The Waterfront's support enables us to provide a free platform for emerging coders and entrepreneurs who are often excluded from the buzzing tech ecosystem purely because they are based in townships and lower income communities" said Derrick Kotze, CEO of mLab Southern Africa. With financial support of the V&A Waterfront, this technology cluster will work to promote and build an entrepreneurial and tech ecosystem in Cape Town and ensure access to Workshop17 for talented, emerging coders and entrepreneurs. It will function as complementary to other Workshop17 events and community activities.

A disruptive platform

Being successful at innovation is not only about knowledge, it is about having the passion and the dedication to see an idea succeed, whatever the obstacles. Workshop17 will provide a supportive community to focus on developing both people and their businesses.

"Workshop17 is both inspirational and aspirational for our coders who are just kicking off their careers in tech. Every day, they have the opportunity to interact with all the other the talented innovators who work there and pass through, and participate in events and programmes of a world class tech hub. We could not be better situated to grow Africa's digital leaders of tomorrow," said Elizabeth Gould, CEO and co-founder of codeX.

The Workshop17 team will curate and manage a programme of talks, lectures, workshops, and educational programmes that will concentrate on fostering innovation among entrepreneurs. Workshop17 will give entrepreneurs more access to initiatives such as the Silicon Cape Initiative, a non-profit, community-owned and -driven movement that aims to improve the provincial environment to create more and better startups and increase entrepreneurs' access to capital.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>