

Beyond funding: how strategic support and expert advice can take SA small businesses to the next level

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In South Africa's highly competitive small business environment, entrepreneurs need a substantial number of resources to get off the ground and achieve growth. While access to funding is one of these crucial resources, support in the form of expert advice and specialist technical assistance is just as essential. With access to the right kind of expertise, training and ongoing mentorship, small businesses have all the tools they need to be a success.



Kalinda Trading's Amelia du Preez

This is the opinion of local entrepreneur and owner of [Kalinda Trading](#), Amelia du Preez. Her business owns and runs a peanut processing factory that uses traditional methods to produce a range of products including Monkey Nut peanut butter sold by independent traders and brands. The company was founded in 2002 and is situated in Sunderland Ridge, Centurion.

Overcoming loss and lockdown

Shortly before the onset of the pandemic, Amelia du Preez reached out to specialist small and medium sized enterprises (SME) financier, Business Partners Limited, for a loan to fund the purchasing of property for the factory. During the final stage of having the loan approved, du Preez and her two siblings who were also co-founders unfortunately fell ill with Covid-19 and succumbed to the virus. Naturally, these personal losses compounded the commercial difficulties brought about by the disruption of lockdown regulations.

Over this period, du Preez was introduced to the [Business Partners Limited Technical Assistance](#) offering – a value-added service that provides business owners with integrated solutions that can cater to their commercial needs. The offering provides clients with access to a full suite of consulting, training, technical assistance and mentorship services, provided by a database of industry specialists, property brokers and management service providers.

The consultancy firm selected by du Preez from the Business Partners Limited database immediately set up a system to

help du Preez streamline her operations and structure her venture in a way that aligned with her approach and entrepreneurial profile. Part of this service involved equipping du Preez with the tools and knowledge she needed to bring a new level of agility to her business model and to make informed decisions. The expert consultants helped du Preez to systematize Kalinda's processes, review employee roles and responsibilities and improve the company's reporting structure.

The 'new normal' is so much better

Throughout the process, du Preez came to appreciate the importance of having the right systems and processes in place for her peanut butter production business. Business Partners Limited's Technical Assistance offering extends to all the support services businesses may need throughout their life cycle. This includes coaching, problem diagnosis, management functions like accounting and taxation, and turnaround solutions to revitalise the bottom line.

As du Preez explains: "Being successful as a small business owner in South Africa relies heavily on your ability to make quick decisions. Unlike our larger counterparts who may have more time on their side, we need the ability to make instant decisions that can ultimately be make-or-break moments for the business. During these times, having access to accurate, real-time data is essential – and that's what getting Technical Assistance has afforded us."

The impact of this added level of support has produced positive results post-pandemic, with du Preez reporting that managing her staff complement has become easier, with all team members having a clear understanding of what their responsibilities are.

In a company that relies heavily on the performance of its team, being able to manage human capital, prioritise employee wellbeing and train employees to perform at their best as individuals and as part of the collective, can be a game-changing factor. This is something that du Preez can attest to, having come through a turbulent period in her business journey as well as in her own personal capacity.

As a result of having Technical Assistance, Kalinda Trading managed to save 32 jobs during the Covid-19 period and has become a thriving business, employing a team of people who have grown within their roles. Du Preez has also been able to employ more staff and is eager to explore the new opportunities for growth and expansion that lie ahead. Soon we might see Kalinda products on the shelves of some of South Africa's favourite supermarkets.

Building bridges to fuel future growth

For Megan Dedekind, Area Manager at Business Partners Limited, seeing Kalinda Trading flourish as a small business has been a rewarding experience – one that stands a testament to what entrepreneurs can accomplish with finance coupled with the right kind of support. Furthermore, building capacity in businesses that can stimulate job creation, is a vital part of the bigger picture.

"We're confident that the offering we provide under our Technical Assistance product is able to answer the demand for upskilling and to fill some crucial knowledge gaps in areas such as financial management, reporting and staff training. This value-added service is available to all our existing clients and is charged at a zero-interest rate. Starting a business and putting it through its paces requires funding, but it also requires customised solutions that can be tailored on a case-by-case basis.

By structuring this service in this way, we have ensured that we can reach as many small business owners as possible and provide them with the mentorship, technical expertise and guidance they need to grow and sustain their businesses without incurring a heavy cost burden."

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