

SABLE Accelerator launched to tap SA brainpower

PALO ALTO, US: South Africa's untapped brains trust and knowledge network of expatriate assets around the world will soon be activated to help the country be more competitive in realising a better return on innovation and entrepreneurship across both the private and public sectors.

The new initiative, operating from California's Silicon Valley, launched this week in association with a number of prominent South African private and public sector partners. Dubbed The SABLE Accelerator (South African Business Link to Experts), the business affinity network features an illustrious board of advisors and academic faculty of South African born loyalists.

The SABLE Accelerator has been formed by three Global South Africans living in Silicon Valley and London and features a core consulting team of influential South African expatriates holding senior positions at international technology, life science and agri-business companies; consulting and professional service firms; venture capital and private equity funds; as well as research and academic institutions, including the new venture spawning ground of Stanford University in Palo Alto, California.

The international partnership group (LLC) is dedicated to helping South African entrepreneurs, new venture start-ups, academic institutions and companies commercialise technology innovations, promote and protect intellectual property, fund new business concepts, finance growth, as well as expand into global markets.

Tapping into SA's amazing talent pool



"We are building a trusted knowledge network of well-placed and highly connected Global South Africans (GSAs) who can make a meaningful difference to the country's brand image and competitive position in world markets," noted Donovan Neale-May, one of the co-founders and managing partners, during a trip to South Africa. Neale-May runs a global marketing consultancy and is executive director of the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) Council, a worldwide membership group of 6000 corporate marketers controlling more than US\$300bn in aggregated annual marketing spend. He is a graduate of Rhodes University and serves on the university's board of governors.

"There is an amazing South African talent pool offshore that is eager and motivated to give back and contribute to socio-economic development in their country of origin," added Nils Flaaten, CEO of WESGRO, The Western Cape Destination Marketing, Investment and Trade Promotion Agency. Flaaten has joined the board of SABLE and will collaborate closely with its founding members and expert network worldwide. He noted that countries like India, Taiwan, Australia and Israel were highly advanced in forming expatriate support networks to fund and promote new venture starts and South Africa needed to mobilise its resource base as well.

Potential investors

SABLE members have already referred potential investors to the Western Cape agency and many of its early meetings and consultations have been with technology ventures based in Cape Town and surrounding areas. In addition, academics from the technology transfer and innovation offices of both UCT and Stellenbosch serve on the faculty of The SABLE Accelerator. Other South African universities represented include Rhodes University and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

Earlier this year, SABLE members met separately in Silicon Valley with National Planning Minister Trevor Manuel and Deputy Minister of International Cooperation and Relations Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim. The meetings were hosted by South

African academics at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business in Palo Alto. This included the Dean, Garth Saloner, and the Professor of Finance, Jonathan Berk.

The core group of SABLE founders and consultants is based in Silicon Valley, the world's premier destination for new venture formation, incubation, funding, accelerated growth, liquidity and technology partnering, or licensing. These individuals, all born, schooled or raised in South Africa, are based in the US and offer a wide range of capabilities and professional competencies for helping commercialise, license, market, distribute and gain adoption of technology solutions and research breakthroughs worldwide.

Forming an elite online community

A big part of the SABLE value proposition is the formation of an elite online community of expert Global South Africans (GSA) who possess knowledge, expertise, influence and access abroad. SABLE is using a customised version of the MentorCloud SaaS platform to enable GSAs to import their LinkedIn profiles, present their credentials, and specify whether they wish to consult, mentor, coach, speak, lecture, invest, or serve on a board. They will also be able to provide pro bono coaching and mentoring services, extend their professional networks, as well as monetise their time and expertise.

South African-based "Innovators" will also be able to register and post information about their intellectual property or new business models at the SableNetwork.com web site with the aim of furthering links to Experts and sources of funding and business development support worldwide. They will also be able to search for compatible and relevant global experts to help them take their IP or business models to market, as well as provide advice, coaching, mentoring and introductions.



About SABLE

The SABLE Accelerator (South African Business Link to Experts) aims to further South Africa's economic interests through global knowledge transfer and the growth of a trusted expert network of expatriate South Africans willing to contribute back to their country of birth through coaching mentoring, consulting, advising, teaching, training, funding or donating. SABLE consultants, advisors and academic faculty include a wide range of successful business leaders, international domain experts, educators, venture capitalists, consultants, authors, professional service providers, government representatives, advertising and marketing gurus, trade and commerce experts, as well as non-profit innovators.

More information is available at www.sablenetwork.com.

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