

From AI to 5IR: Engineering a sustainable African future with Katlego Malatji

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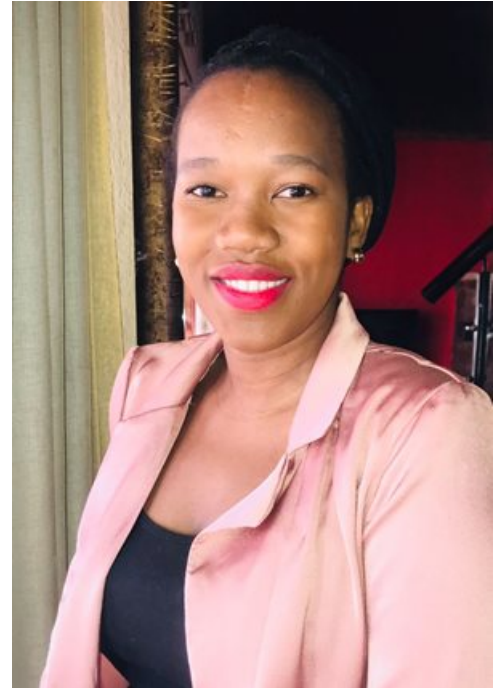
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Katlego Malatji, a visionary engineer and the driving force behind [ProjectOne Engineering](#), exemplifies the brilliance of African women in maths, science and innovating in the engineering space. Her journey with the [Innovator Trust](#) inspires pioneering African entrepreneurs who tackle unique African problems head-on with the solutions they create on home soil.

A foundation in engineering and innovation

Malatji's passion for engineering was nurtured from a young age by her father and teachers, who recognised her aptitude for mathematics and science. Immersing herself in the limitless engineering world, she knew it was her calling, so much so that she braved uncharted territory to pursue thrilling projects involving autonomous vehicles and passing legislation regarding artificial intelligence in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Working on cutting-edge projects involving autonomous driving and AI profoundly impacted her perspective. Malatji laments being unable to put her expertise to use in South Africa due to a lack of infrastructure and priority. Being at the forefront of game-changing technology opened her eyes to the true potential of AI in solving real-world problems. While working on a groundbreaking BREXIT project in the UK, her vision of enterprising in South Africa through engineering was concretised. "I had to return to South Africa and implement my learnings here," highlights Malatji. With this in mind, Malatji launched [ProjectOne Engineering](#).



Katlego Malatji, founder of ProjectOne Engineering

Challenges and triumphs as a young entrepreneur

Industrial engineering seems to be Malatji's calling, and establishing a start-up in this sector is precisely what she did upon her return to South Africa. [ProjectOne Engineering](#), under Malatji's leadership, incorporates design and systems thinking to prioritise resource efficiency and waste reduction while ensuring that production and operation environments are digitally ready. "In simple terms, our company helps factories make their production processes more efficient using technology and machines. These solutions range from machine selection to robotics, PLCs, camera or visual quality control, inventory management systems, ERP, MRP, QMS, material handling equipment automation and more, which all form part of manufacturing automation."

Yet, Malatji faced scepticism due to her age. "Despite this challenge, I'm fortunate to collaborate with businesses who believe my accelerated experience speaks for itself. As Oprah Winfrey advises, I will turn my wounds into wisdom to propel the business forward and create change for all of Africa." Navigating the entrepreneurial landscape has been challenging and rewarding.

Breaking boundaries with mentorship and collaboration

With the [Innovator Trust](#), enabled by [Vodacom](#), supporting her endeavours in the ICT sector, Malatji found an invaluable partner in her pursuit. The Innovator Trust's guidance and recognition of her strengths amplified her path to success. Her accolades include being nominated for Forbes 30 Under 30, winning Global Start-up Awards SA for Women in Tech, and being a nominee for the Southern African Global Start-up Awards: Diversity Role Model. All this recognition has reinforced Malatji's desire to lead South Africa into the 5th Industrial Revolution (5IR).

Building a legacy through 5IR while solving African problems

Malatji highlights they can use industrial engineering and manufacturing expertise to optimise African manufacturing and revive the sector. "We have the opportunity to leverage AI in fostering a sustainable African continent that efficiently manages its valuable mineral resources and drives the production of essential end products demanded globally. We merge traditional manufacturing engineering with ICT to help local manufacturers reduce operational and unit costs to gain a competitive advantage."

In her pursuit, she advocates for women to play a central role in shaping this tech-driven future. "Through our involvement as women, we proactively create a more inclusive and innovative world where diverse perspectives thrive, including ours." One woman who constantly demonstrates self-empowerment is her mother. "My mother is an enigma whose life reminds me to maximise every opportunity."

Beyond her business goals, she strives to inspire and create opportunities for future generations, ensuring they can confidently reach for the stars. In the face of challenges and barriers, Katlego Malatji and [ProjectOne Engineering](#) embody passion, resilience, and unwavering innovation. Her noteworthy journey reminds us that with determination and belief in our abilities, we can all contribute to a better world and engineer a brighter future for Africa.

Visit the [ProjectOne Engineering](#) company website for more information on the products and services available: www.projectone.co.za.

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The Innovator Trust

The Innovator Trust was created to support the growth of small black-owned Information and Communications Technology (ICT) businesses in South Africa. Our programmes facilitate training that develops their skills as business owners.

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