

Beauties and the beasts face off in Regent Business School's 'shark tank' SMME competition

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Five self-employed beauticians are celebrating after winning Regent Business School's redHUB recent "shark tank" competition.



Simran Mathura, Mercy Rutendo Membe, Danielle Wakelin, Neo Patience Maboe and Naomi Natalie Thubisi were the ultimate survivors of the contest, and each won R10,000 they can use to start their own small business.

Hoosen Essof, operations manager: Gauteng at Regent Business School, said a "shark tank" format was chosen for the competition due to its familiarity, though the Regent one was not quite as harsh as the TV version. "We weren't as tough or critical as the TV show, but we thought the format lent itself to the occasion. We asked the judges not to be too tough or critical and to help raise the contestants' confidence. In the end, it was an all-round good learning experience for all of us."

Regent Business School, through the redHUB unit, ran the pilot programme for nine final-year students from the Face-to-Face Beauty and Makeup Academy. The aim of the practical "Starting Your Own Business" course was to give the students a thorough understanding of what is required to start and manage their own businesses. The CSI initiative invests in entrepreneurs to drive job creation, while providing skills to develop graduates to become employers rather than employees. "It was quite clear from the presentations and interactions with the ladies that some of them had the makings of being an employer rather than employee. Some were clearly 'I will do whatever it takes to make it a success' people, while others were 'we and us' people. Although one contestant was clearly more inclined towards training and empowering others in the beauty sector, all of them expressed a desire to own and manage their own businesses," said Essof.

The grittiness of the course was evident when the contestants pitched their ideas to the panel. "Some of the ladies were very nervous, yet they managed to do enough to talk their way through the pitch and the Q&A session. A few were very confident and wowed the judges and audience. However, they all benefited from getting the experience of what a 'real' pitch is like, and this will pay off when the time comes," said Essof.

The event may have been redHUB's first, but it was not just the entrepreneurs who benefited from it, as Essof said, "there was also a little learning for us".

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