

Creative programmer learnership launched by Hellocomputer and Umuzi

FCB Africa's digital agency, Hellocomputer, has partnered with Umuzi to establish a creative programmer learnership so it can address the chronic shortage of programmers and drive transformation.



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Based on the premise that the closer the training environment matches that of future employers, the more likely its learners are to succeed and excel, Umuzi offers free one-year Learnerships that produce entry-level but high-calibre creative professionals.

Dire shortage of programmers

Hellocomputer managing director, Joey Khuvutlu and head of technology, Nick Bester, worked with Dibwe Kalangu and Niklas Peters of Umuzi to define the syllabus to prepare programmers for the creative industry.

“With technology driving innovation in all sectors, and increasingly so in the advertising and marketing sector, there’s a dire shortage of programmers, despite barriers to entry being low and two out of three developers/programmers being self-taught,” said Khuvutlu.

“This space has historically been white male orientated, which provides Hellocomputer with an ideal opportunity to make a difference in a way that goes beyond ticking boxes on a scorecard.

Gateway to take part in the job economy of the future

“Programming is, in a nutshell, a gateway for the previously disadvantaged to take part in the job economy of the future. The Umuzi model is ideal because learners get paid a monthly stipend, qualify with a National Certificate accredited by MICT Seta, and gain work experience at leading and established top employers. The learners are exposed to real-life work situations and environments while having the freedom to discover their creative identity and upskilling in critical thinking and technical skills.”

In addition to helping Umuzi create a highly-relevant Learnership syllabus, Hellocomputer kickstarted the programme with R250,000 in 2017 to fund the inaugural learnerships of the new programme. The programme has quickly grown to 30 young people on learnerships, supported by several employers.

“The product team is the cross-functional unit of production in today’s leading tech and creative companies. We’ve repositioned our learnership offering to prepare young people with the skills every product team needs: Coding, UX Design, UX Research, Product Management, and our newest learnership, Data Science. Essential to our model is that young people learn these skills on-the-job, in an integrated, product-oriented environment,” shares Umuzi’s managing director, Gilbert Pooley.

Holistic learnership framework

Hellocomputer has committed to fund more learnerships in the coming years and to rally more digital agencies to do the same.

“Hellocomputer works hard on transformation across all its departments and at all levels of management and leadership – the recent appointment of four women into senior positions in both Johannesburg and Cape Town offices is a testament to this. We do have a strong point of view on focusing our transformation investments and initiatives in programming and other technology disciplines.

“Umuzi’s holistic learnership framework is such a good fit on so many levels. Not only does it take into consideration the socio-economic realities faced by black youth, recruitment is done via social media with a focus on youth who have had to pause their tertiary education due to financial reasons.

“I’m so excited to see how far this can take us,” Khuvutlu said.

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