

New advocates given a career boost

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Assisting with the development of newly qualified advocates is the mandate of LexisNexis South Africa's annual Advocate Advancement Programme (AAP). This year, 52 advocates from previously disadvantaged backgrounds were sponsored with technology and legal resources as well as in-depth training to help them kick-start their legal careers.

AAP, previously known as the Enterprise Development programme, is approved by the General Council of the Bar of South Africa (GCB) and has benefited 171 recipients over the past four years with a total investment by LexisNexis of over R8.9m.

LexisNexis CEO, Billy Last, said the programme was founded on the company's global purpose of advancing the Rule of Law and aimed at facilitating the transformation of the legal profession.

"The AAP is a significant aspect of our annual corporate social responsibility efforts as it promotes and fosters entrepreneurship among young advocates including a number of women and advocates from the smaller Bars in South Africa," he said. "Prior to the programme's inception in 2012, we recognised that young advocates from previously disadvantaged backgrounds required support from the industry. As the leader in legal content and solutions, LexisNexis is in an ideal position to champion the advancement of advocates at entry level," he said.

Furthermore, the sponsorship assists new advocates by reducing their start-up costs. This year each package is valued at over R56,000 and includes 12 months of free platinum access to the MyLexisNexis online research tool, a laptop and a 12 month 3G data contract, including sim and modem. LexisNexis has also hosted practical training workshops with the aim of enabling the recipients to use the tools easily and efficiently in their practice of the law.

Every year, recipients are selected from a pool of previously disadvantaged candidates. Recipients must be South African citizens, excel academically, and must be newly admitted members of the Bar and attached to a chamber of advocates.

One such recipient is Sibongile Mpochna, a mother who hails from Mpumalanga and graduated with an LLB from the University of Zululand. She worked for 10 years to support her family and went on to complete her articles in Mtubatuba. She thereafter relocated to Durban and joined the Bar as a pupil. "This sponsorship will benefit my work by helping me build my confidence, especially when preparing for a case. Access to this resource means that one doesn't carry the fear of thinking that you might cite outdated cases. It really relieves you of a burden," she said. "Having done pupillage for a whole year without any income, it is a dream to have access to this meaningful resource, especially for a mother. I am very grateful to be a recipient and I want to thank LexisNexis for helping me kick-start my practice."

Fellow recipient, Cecily-Ann Daniels, was born and raised in the Cape Flats. Through hard work and dedication, she qualified as an advocate in 2012. "The sponsorship has gone a long way to firstly, alleviate the financial pressure and stress associated with setting up my practice and secondly, it has assisted in making my practice run more efficiently as I have the benefit of having an online research tool and the supporting infrastructure at my fingertips," she said.



LexisNexis Commercial Director Thabo Molefe and some of the Durban AAP recipients

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Pretoria AAP recipients

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Daniels added that the sponsorship from LexisNexis indicated that private organisations were serious about transformation. “The tools have provided us with a springboard to ensure that we fairly compete with our colleagues at the Bar.”

In addition to the Advocate Advancement Programme, LexisNexis has partnerships in place with NGOs including ProBono.Org, which partners with private legal professionals who volunteer their time and expertise to provide pro bono legal services to the poor, as well as the Women’s Legal Centre, the National Freedom Network, Umgeni Community Empowerment Centre, Open Door Crisis Centre and others. The company hosted its inaugural LexisNexis Rule of Law Champion Award in 2015, which is aimed at celebrating and acknowledging significant members of the South African legal fraternity who have led efforts to advance the rule of law and strengthen civil society. Recipients of the inaugural awards included Judge Dennis Davis as the Dept. of Justice Champion and Nic Swart, Chief Executive Officer of the Law Society of South Africa, as the Industry Champion.

For more information on LexisNexis research solutions, visit <http://www.lexisnexis.co.za/>. For highlights and updates from the Advocate Advancement Programme handover sessions, visit LexisNexis South Africa’s Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/LexisNexisSA/>

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South African investment firm, Tsiya Group, chaired by Fani Titi, acquired a minority interest in the company in July 2012. In November 2015 LexisNexis South Africa’s acquisition of Korbitec (Pty) Ltd established the company as the leader in conveyancing solutions in the South African legal market, as well as expanded its reach to other spheres and stakeholders within the property transfer process.

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