

LexisNexis supports new advocates with startup

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Each year, newly qualified advocates from previously disadvantaged backgrounds are selected for a lucrative startup sponsorship from LexisNexis South Africa as part of the company's Advocate Advancement Programme (AAP). The programme has benefited around 200 recipients since inception five years ago, representing a total investment of over R10 million from LexisNexis.

This year, 25 recipients received technology support to the value of R72,000 each, including a laptop, 12 months' worth of 3G internet access and a Diamond Package subscription to the comprehensive online legal research solution, Lexis® Library.

In addition, LexisNexis extended the sponsorship to 14 Johannesburg Bar juniors, who now have access to the Lexis Library Diamond package and two new computers, which were set up at the chamber.

The AAP is endorsed by the General Council of the Bar of South Africa (GCB). Billy Last, CEO of LexisNexis South Africa said the purpose of the programme was to encourage, develop and support up and coming legal practitioners.

"We aim to drive transformation by offering a helping hand to newly qualified advocates who hail from previously disadvantaged communities, as the cost of starting up practice is not within reach for many. As an organisation, LexisNexis believes that it is our responsibility to uphold the rule of law and make a positive impact to our society. It is with programmes like the AAP that we are able to fulfill our objectives," he said.

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.

Gauteng's Rhoda Sempe is a 39-year-old single mother of two and the only member of her immediate family to have completed a tertiary qualification. She said she was enjoying practicing as an advocate and despite the challenges, she would not change it for anything. As one of the recipients, Sempe said she was thankful to LexisNexis for the on-the-go access to research that is made available through the sponsorship.

Port Elizabeth recipient, 25-year-old Awonke Desi said she was passionate about law and felt privileged to have been selected. "LexisNexis had been the best thing in my life since varsity, but to also have that access in practice is wonderful. One of my favourite things is being able to download a case at the click of my mouse, and also being able to view the judgment history," she said.

"The sponsorship has assisted me in being able to always have internet and LexisNexis access even in court. It has assisted me in researching efficiently and even quicker, especially for trial preparation. It has definitely equipped me with the research skills that a good legal practitioner needs and this will assist my career."

In addition to the Advocate Advancement Programme, LexisNexis has a similar initiative called the Attorney Advancement Programme, which is endorsed by the Attorneys Fidelity Fund. LexisNexis also 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, the Salvation Army 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.

For more information on LexisNexis research solutions, visit <http://www.lexisnexis.co.za/> or find the latest updates at <https://www.facebook.com/LexisNexisSA/>.

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In South Africa LexisNexis® has been assisting companies and professionals to remain abreast of changing legislation and shifts in the regulatory environment for over 80 years, using leading-edge technology, tools and online solutions. South African investment firm, Tsiya Group, chaired by Fani Titi, acquired a minority interest in the company in July 2012.

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