

From street corners to productive people, cell phone technology helps create employment.

Employer led training, aligned with new investment and targeted government support, opens a path to employment for the youth.

In a nutshell: What if there was a way to provide valuable market research to companies in a way that also creates income for the unemployed? The Business Trust's Shared Growth Challenge Fund has provided development funding to Mobenzi, a project that has the potential to pay people to do translation or undertake research on basic cell phones.

Background: With some 4,3million people unemployed it's a sight that all too many of us are familiar with: beggars at robots asking for change. Yet for Mark Fowles, one of the founders and partners of web and mobile software solutions company Clyral, it got him thinking. He noticed one of the beggars using a cell phone. Mark wondered if there couldn't be a commercial service that unemployed people could offer via their cell phones and earn some income in the process.

"We started by looking at our country's horrific unemployment rate as an opportunity, not only to make a difference socially, but also to create a valuable business. The driving idea was that there must be certain types of business problems that South African people could solve using their cell phones as tools. To prove the concept, we started building the software and the result was Mobenzi. Agents can



Mobenzi Agents in Kwa Zulu Natal

do the tasks in their spare time, using their own phones, without the need for transport. And on the other side of the coin, Mobenzi is providing exciting opportunities for businesses in need of real human input,' said Mark Fowles.

What is Mobenzi and how does it work?

Certain business problems require human intelligence and cannot be automated by a computer program. Millions of people that live in poverty have time available and are capable of solving these kinds of problems. Mobile phones are widespread in Africa and are well suited for supporting the completion of simple forms.

Mobenzi collates large amounts of data, about different brands on social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. This data is broken down and sent via SMSs to agents (largely unemployed young people in rural areas) to analyse these small pieces of data in very simple steps and submit their analysis back via a sms. They may, for example, be asked to indicate whether the sentiments expressed about a particular brand are positive or

negative, and why. Agents are paid for each piece of data they correctly submit via an e-wallet, which allows them to withdraw cash from ATMs even if they don't have a bank account. The value of the payment varies depending on the type of task completed.

The Business Trust's involvement

Clyral has been able to develop and test the Mobenzi software as a result of a grant from the Business Trust's Shared Growth Challenge Fund. This social venture capital fund provides the use of one-off grants to private companies to support commercially viable 'pro-poor' innovation, and provide profitable ways of improving market participation of the poor. The Fund seeks to improve the alignment between the core business strategies of private companies and their development outcomes.

What is the impact?

Whilst still in the pilot stage, Mobenzi is already having a significant impact on the 50 young people who have been earning an income through the pilot.

Student Trevor Ngcobo said being a Mobenzi agent enables him to study and still work at his own leisure. *"I never have to worry about transport problems, being late for work or not having time to attend college. I can make money, study and even do my Mobenzi tasks in a taxi on my way to lectures. It's helped me in more ways than I thought when I first started"*.

Golden Mahove, Project Manager of the Shared Growth Challenge Fund at the Business Trust says "When we looked at this project, we were encouraged by the innovative use of something that most poor unemployed youth have - a cellphone - and turning it into an income earning asset and getting unemployed youth participating in markets."

The Shared Growth Challenge Fund is part of a portfolio of Business Trust programmes that are working to make markets more inclusive of the poor. Mobenzi is one of the 11 projects awarded funding by the Business Trust's Shared Growth Challenge Fund. For more information on the fund, visit www.sgcf.co.za or email kirsten@sgcf.co.za

For more information on Mobenzi visit www.mobenzi.com

For more information on the Business Trust, visit www.btrust.org.za

.....

Tel: 011 612 2000 | Fax: 086 504 1768 | Web www.btrust.org.za | Email info@btrust.org.za