

CASE STUDY

Creating opportunities through access to affordable mobile data

Njabulo Maphumulo is a budding entrepreneur who has worked hard to expand his information and communications technology business, Mobit. His ambition is to transform people's lives by building a network that allows people to access information affordably.

"Once people have information, they can innovate. They can grow, and that's transformation," says Maphumulo.

The start-up was born after Maphumulo realised that residents of his local Hambanathi township in Tongaat were far removed from the digital world. He wants to see everyone in Hambanathi connected to the digital world and opportunities, which he believes will also build their dignity and self-worth.

Maphumulo said Tongaat Hulett's assistance since 2018 has been invaluable as it enabled his business to grow its capacity. "The main reason I sought assistance from the start was to get access to fibre internet as that would enable the business to provide faster internet access," said Maphumulo. Tongaat Hulett also provided non-financial support by giving Maphumulo's business access to one of the towers which connects the Tongaat area to the fibre source in Ballito.

Tongaat Hulett funded the material needed to make the mobile network tower which Maphumulo designed. Then, helped by locals, he welded the tower together in the Hambanathi before using a wheelbarrow to carry the tower and cement to the Tongaat Hulett premises where he installed the tower.



Since receiving financial assistance from Tongaat Hulett, the business has been able to sustain and add new customers. Maphumulo said that the business has also grown in terms of service quality. "This has meant that we can retain existing customers. The current and future plan is to reinvest revenue back into the business by purchasing new hardware and establish new sites in other areas."

Maphumulo has been working with local spaza shops as distribution channels for the data bundles. He does not have a fixed number of customers since the service is prepaid and not contract based but he is currently operating at capacity and in the next three to five years Maphumulo wants to have many more active users on the network, targeting 100 000 active users every month.

"During school holidays, through the assistance of PROTEC, I was placed in an electronics repair shop which was in line with my love for technology says Maphumulo". This helped propel him to starting his business many years later.

PROTEC is a national non-profit organisation that runs excellence programme for learners from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds that have aptitude in maths and science. The Tongaat branch provides support to 91 students from Hambanathi, Magwaveni and Tongaat Central in KZN. Tongaat Hulett is one of PROTEC Tongaat's main sponsors.

PROTEC is now one of Maphumulo's clients. From the financial support received from Tongaat Hulett, network hardware was purchased and installed at PROTEC and an uncapped internet is now provided to the NPO.

While Maphumulo has not yet achieved all his dreams, he is taking all the necessary steps to reach them. His advice to up and coming entrepreneurs is to have a vision and to action it every day, no matter how long it takes.