

From unemployed to budding entrepreneur: practical skills ignite eThekweni man's small business

Hands-on training enabled Smiso Mbhele (42) from Pinetown in KwaZulu-Natal to start his own small business. In an economy where stable job opportunities are scarce, Mbhele struggled to make ends meet. This all changed when he joined [Taking Care of Business \(TCB\)](#), a non-profit social enterprise supported by the Shoprite Group.

In February 2024, after seeing the programme's impact on a friend's life, Mbhele joined TCB's Repair Programme, which equips unemployed people with the necessary skills and resources to start their own appliance repair businesses.

Although Mbhele initially fell just short of qualifying for the Repair Programme, his perseverance and determination made an impression on Melanie Carelse, Branch Manager of TCB in KwaZulu-Natal, and his unwavering will to succeed earned him a second chance.

With the staggering unemployment rate in South Africa, Mbhele hopes that his story will inspire others to believe in and build a better future for themselves and their families.

Annually over 60% of new jobs in the country are created by small and medium-sized enterprises. "Learning to run my own business is no small feat but learning new skills such as financial and business management skills is making it easier," explains Mbhele, who now offers a mobile repair service, servicing clients across Durban.

The programme also supports trainees with life-skills development and provides continuous coaching and mentorship to ensure their growth and success.

"My business has allowed me to provide for my family," he adds.

The Repair Programme has supported over 4 700 previously unemployed South Africans to start businesses since 2010, collectively generating over R190 million in profit.

Since the inception of its partnership with TCB in 2017, Shoprite and Checkers supermarkets have donated appliances valued at more than R24 million to assist beneficiaries to run their own businesses.

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