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CodeJam reaches final stage

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Gijima, one of South Africa's leading information and communication technology (ICT) companies, has recently partnered with key industry giants to launch a new ground-breaking initiative, namely Code Jam. The initiative will equip young people with the skills needed to make a living from the legacy they create in the long-term.

CODEJAM MOBILE APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT COMPETITION FINALS TO HELD THIS WEEK

Code Jam 2012 is the brainchild of Gijima and the University of the Western Cape (UWC). Other partners MTN, Core Group (Value Added Distributer of Apple in Southern Africa) and Immedia have come on board to offer their support and endorsement of this initiative. Its intention is to afford young and talented South Africans the opportunity to become world-class mobile application developers and entrepreneurs. They will co-own the intellectual property (IP) relating to their applications and will receive business training and mentorship on how best to make a living from their intellectual property while also contributing to the development of South Africa's IP.

South Africa's high youth unemployment rate is well-documented. Of the country's 42% unemployed, a concerning 77% are young South Africans between the ages of 17-25, many of them graduates who are unable to find employment. Adding to the problem is the high failure rate of start-up businesses, many of them youth-owned. Factors contributing to this include lack of experience, misalignment between skills taught and skills required, and poor work readiness. Lack of support structures and mentorship are also major barriers.

Code Jam 2012 aims to address these challenges and provide a thoroughly mapped and holistic approach to entrepreneurship development.

Its objectives are clear:

·   To revive youth employment through the identification and training of young people with passion and potential

·   Improving the country's technology-based skills pool, particularly in the area of mobile technology

·   Produce well-rounded entrepreneurs who have a higher chance to succeed and build sustainable businesses

·   Identifying top talent for potential employment,

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· Develop IP that has been built by Africans for Africans

"Our objectives and those of our valued partners are to expose young people to a new world of opportunities and help them create legacies for themselves. Mobile application development is the new frontier in mobile technology today, driven by the popularity of products like iPhone and iPad," says RJ Spaandonk, Core Group Executive Director.

"The intention of Code-Jam 2012 is to produce well-rounded high calibre entrepreneurs who are ready to participate meaningfully in the growth of the economy, through the development of cutting edge mobile applications. The initiative also gives Gijima the opportunity to showcase what our young people are capable of."

For now, the programme will focus on the Western Cape. Participants will compete against each other to have their app dev ideas handpicked for development and commercialisation. Participants comprise of students from tertiary institutions in the region, notably University of the Western Cape, the University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The applications that get chosen at the end of the competition will be developed and sold through Gijima's Application Store and associated Ecosystems. Proceeds will go to all parties involved, particularly the youth who created the apps.

To make sure every stakeholder benefits from the initiative, Gijima will be assisting the UWC to build a fully-equipped state-of-the-art Apple computer laboratory which will be accessible to all students. This ensures that even those who were not selected for the programme will benefit thereafter.

Gijima Managing Executive Tony De Sousa says the focus is on creating a long-term sustainable solution.

"We want to ensure that our young people receive the skills, develop passion for what they do well and get the access to tools and the mentoring they need to take advantage of the opportunities availed to them. This is by making sure that 'graduates' of the programme are work-ready at the end of their training and development," says De Sousa.

Entrants recently attended a two day (13 - 14 April) user experience (UX) workshop as well as a basic introduction to mobile development (20 – 21 April), conducted by training partner, Immedia, one of the most well-established app dev agencies in the country. Those in attendance received first-hand training on user experience, design and development from industry experts.

Immedia CEO, Anice Hassim, believes that initiatives such as Code Jam opens up much of our undiscovered talent to the new opportunities that app dev presents.

"This post-PC revolution is Africa's opportunity to change our circumstances, because of the simple fact that all you need to create an app is a computer, a network connection and someone to teach you. Building an app requires people with all types of skills, not just coding and graphic design, but also thinkers, entrepreneurs, and those with business savvy," says Hassim.

Finalists of the competition will receive exclusive branded Code-Jam apparel. Two winners will be chosen in each of the four categories: Consumer App Winners, SME App Winners, Education App Winners and Enterprise App Winners. Winners will receive Apple products such as iPhones, iPods, iPads and MacBook laptops.

The winning teams will also be considered for internship programmes with Gijima and partners. The finals will be held on 11 and 12 May 2012.

Gijima