

Mercedes-Benz puts innovation on the road with student, startup competition

Mercedes-Benz South Africa (MBSA), the LaunchLab and Startup Autobahn have launched the MBSA Innovation Challenge which calls on students and professionals (as a first stream) and existing startups (as a second stream) to pitch their innovative ideas around a set of challenges, tailor-made to advanced manufacturing and benchmark sales and marketing topics, as identified by MBSA.



The challenge spans various topics - ranging from big data and machine learning for manufacturing, the digitisation of logistics and production, app-based solutions for the evaluation of the condition of pre-owned vehicles, chatbot solutions for manufacturing learning and more.

Information session precedes submission

An information seminar will be hosted on 31 August 2017 from 11am at the Nedbank Stellenbosch University LaunchLab premises in Stellenbosch. The link to the information seminar will also be available on <http://mb4.me/MBSAInnovationChallenge>.

Immediately after the information seminar, the submission phase will open, where participants can submit a video online or pitch in front of a camera at various participating campuses until the end of September. A shortlist of candidates/teams in both streams will then be notified and entered into the second phase of the process where their ideas will be polished and benefit from access to MBSA, Daimler AG and Startup Autobahn expert role-players. In November, the shortlisted groups will then have the opportunity to present their ideas to MBSA decision makers.

Win incubation support/supplier development

At the end of the process, successful participants from the first stream, students and professionals, stand the chance to win incubation support for their innovative ideas. The successful participants from the second stream, the existing startup companies, stand a chance to get their share of R600 000 for supplier development, international exposure and the possibility to become a supplier for MBSA's global parent company, Daimler.

Partners offer major support

MBSA, as part of the global Daimler network, a company with a track record in innovation and pioneering spirit of over a century, offers successful participants access to expert input and guidance without parallel.

The LaunchLab is an innovative, mixed-use business incubator, based at Stellenbosch University in the Western Cape, which is currently building a network of university campus-based incubators in Africa to help develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem that accelerates entrepreneurs to a new level.

The third partner, Startup Autobahn, is a global innovation platform, co-founded by Daimler, with locations in Germany, Singapore and China, that connects startups with corporates in the mobility and production industry.

Supporting youth development

“MBSA has partnered with the LaunchLab as part of its continuing efforts to contribute to youth development, the economic growth and sustainability of the country as a whole. The areas that the challenge is focusing on are key to our continued growth and success, as we operate in a highly competitive space,” says Andreas Engling, CEO and executive director manufacturing, Mercedes-Benz South Africa.

“The LaunchLab is excited to have joined with MBSA and Startup Autobahn on the Mercedes-Benz South Africa Innovation Challenge. This is another example of a well-known multinational seeing the value of engaging with the startup ecosystem and we are pleased to be able to facilitate the interaction between these two groups to leverage the strengths of both, for mutual benefit. This is an awesome opportunity for our local entrepreneurs,” says Philip Marais, CEO of the LaunchLab.

“We are excited to get in touch with promising tech startups from the region. With the platform Startup Autobahn, we can support them and further shape the future of mobility and production,” says Anke Kleinschmits, VP Group Research & Sustainability, Daimler AG.

Throughout the challenge, progress and news will be shared online and on social media platforms, utilising the hashtag #MBSAInnovationChallenge.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>