

# Composites Training Academy promoting SA industry's ability globally

*Laying foundation for skills development to ensure workforce that produces high-value products*

SIX years on and the Cape-Town based Composites Training Academy (CTA) is achieving many of its founding objectives – among them to convert the hands-on knowledge and expertise of skilled professionals in the African composites industry into economic value.

Established in 2010, the CTA is raising the awareness of commercial opportunities in the rapidly expanding composites market and developing skills as an essential ingredient and building block for individuals and organizations to become both locally and globally competitive in the polymeric composites sector.

“Laying a foundation for skills development will ensure a workforce that produces high-value products at consistent standards,” said Oliver Dawson, founder and COO of the CTA.

## Key relationships developed with manufacturing industry

“We have developed key relationships within local and international manufacturing and material supply companies to further enhance our ability to deliver world-class training programmes, knowledge transfer projects, global secondment opportunities as well as technology development projects,” he added.

Since beginning his career in 1994, Dawson has gained extensive experience in production as well as project management, along with moulding and technical experience across various application sectors.

He is passionate about promoting SA's composite manufacturing ability throughout the rest of Africa, and ultimately, globally.

“The composites industry in South Africa has really been ‘up against it’ for the last 10 years. Global financial pressures along with the rand and oil prices, have seen significant price pressures across the sector; this in combination with a lack of focused skills interventions and industry cohesion, has turned what should be a booming manufacturing sector, into one that’s under severe pressure,” explained Dawson.

“Our saving grace is that composites is still one of the fastest growing manufacturing sectors globally. We are



mobilizing behind some fantastic initiatives spearheaded by the Department of Science and Technology and the Department of Trade and Industry, in close cooperation with the private sector. If we continue in this vein, the future looks good - difficult, but good! We can't sit by, and watch the rest of the BRICS countries take advantage of the opportunities this sector offers and be left behind, it would be madness!” he added.

## CTA restructure and expansion

Dawson said that earlier this year a restructuring of the CTA took place in which Maryam Kriel was appointed as National Training Manager. She comes with a wealth of learning as well as operations management experience, which encompasses disability training.

Janene Dawson, who recently left British American Tobacco after a 13-year career in finance and marketing, has also joined the team to focus on the strategic aspects going forward.

“To have these kind of skills onboard a small business like ours is fantastic and we are looking forward to the value they will add in the short to medium term. A key objective of the CTA is to focus on developing a ‘recipe’ for the

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sector, one that that takes into account current status as well as the gaps, what's required to stabilize and then ultimately grow individual businesses,” Dawson explained.

“Key to creating this recipe is to go into industry, stabilizing current production lines from a quality, cost and schedule perspective and then to assist in establishing new production lines and export opportunities,” said Dawson.

At the Economic Policy Dialogue on The Role of Technology Commercialisation in Industrialisation, hosted earlier this year by the DTI in Pretoria, Dr Kjelt van Rijswijk, technical director of the Composites Group, highlighted the importance of collaboration and synergy within government entities and among the public, academia, research institutions and business sectors.

He added that R&D, skills development and industrialization efforts should be coordinated in order to activate and strengthen value chains, and that industrial clusters with representation of stakeholders along value chains is an internationally proven coordination mechanism.

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