

Biggest SAE4D breakfast workshop—an enormous success

Almost 100 delegates attended the latest highly successful South African Employers for Disability (SAE4D) breakfast workshop hosted by The University of Pretoria on 27 June 2014. The theme of the event was **“Enabling Employers to Comply with the newly revised BBBEE codes and Employment Equity”**.

The main speakers were Ms Janeez Hafizulla, Deputy Director, BEE Unit, Department of Trade and Industry, Professor Juan Bornman, Director, Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication at the University of Pretoria, and Ms Luthando Kekana, Senior Communications Specialist at Airports Company of South Africa.

Ms Hafizulla provided an extremely useful overview of the way in which BBBEE is changing and developing. She then took delegates through the new scorecard, explaining how this was designed to encourage businesses to employ people with disabilities and showing how businesses could benefit by employing certain categories of people with disabilities.

Ms Kekana, who uses a wheelchair, based her talk on her own experiences in entering the workforce and the obstacles she faced while making her way up the corporate ladder. She mentioned how one company, that had expressed great interest in employing a person with a disability, had been unable to interview her in their usual interview room because their building was inaccessible. Needless to say, she chose not to work there. “Any company wanting to employ people with a disability should look at the person first then their disability, not the other way around.” she added.

Prof. Bornman pointed out that people with disabilities constitute the world’s largest minority group. There are about 650 million people with disabilities worldwide.

Some forms of disability may appear to be worse than others, but that should not be a barrier to employment as was demonstrated by two speakers – both of whom are non-verbal.

One, Dr Civil Mills (39), is a medical doctor who, after a serious motor accident, developed “locked-in syndrome”. This means he is unable to speak, walk or use his

arms. Despite this, Dr Mills is employed as a consultant by businesses seeking advice on integrating people with disabilities into the workplace.

He demonstrated the power of technology in enabling people with severe disabilities by using a text-to-speech device to type and then deliver his talk.

Prof Bornman ended the workshop with an interactive quiz aimed at making delegates more aware of the needs and challenges faced by people with disabilities in the workplace. This was to change the perspective about people with disabilities.

Ends.