

T-Systems interns head to Germany

Three T-Systems interns, recruited from various tertiary education institutions as well as the ICT Academy, will be heading off to Darmstadt, in the Bundesland of Hesse in Germany, as part of the Konrad Reiss International Exchange Programme.



L to R: Muzi Mini, Malena van der Westhuizen, Lindelwa Mini and Ndivhuho Budeli

This exchange programme gives the interns a chance to integrate into the Deutsche Telekom (T-Systems' parent company) workforce in Germany, as well as experience the life and culture of the country.

"This internship exchange programme, now sponsored by T-Systems, began with a bequest from the family of late T-Systems CEO Konrad Reiss, who entrusted T-Systems in South with a substantial donation for student development. Mr Reiss was passionate about South Africa and the development of our youth, and the inter-country job exchange process is an excellent way to honour his memory. It exposes both employees and students to a number of divisions, disciplines and real-world experiences in a foreign country, and helps them to grow personally and professionally," explains Malena van der Westhuizen, head of Academies and Internships at T-Systems in South Africa.

Any T-Systems intern is eligible to apply for the exchange programme, provided they meet certain criteria. These include their willingness and ability to complete their assigned tasks within the company. Interested interns must then write a motivational letter as well as obtain a recommendation from their manager. From this stage a short list of candidates are selected to move on to the next round of applications, where they are tasked with solving a business problem relevant to the T-Systems organisation. Of more than 50 interested applicants, 13 were selected to form part of this shortlist.

"One of the focus areas for 2014 is innovation, and we believe that our youth have a crucial role to play in driving innovation, both in T-Systems and our country. Prospective exchange students were asked to address innovation as an area of business focus as part of their application. We asked them to discuss how the youth can contribute to closing the generation gap in the business environment, as well as how diversity and a culture of performance can be embraced to encourage innovation within our organisation. Finally, we asked applicants to share an innovative idea of their own, whether

process, service, product, customer or behaviour-focused," says van der Westhuizen.

"The shortlisted interns then presented their ideas to a panel of judges from within T-Systems South Africa, and five were then selected to present to Exco. The team was so impressed with the quality of this year's presentations that a decision was made to send three interns to Germany, instead of the two we had allocated for this programme," she adds.

The selected interns, Muzi Mlimi, Lindelwa Mlimi and Ndivhuho Budeli, are matched to a position in the Darnstadt office along the lines of their skills and experience. Each intern is placed with a host family and is paid their usual salary as well as a living allowance. The interns gain valuable work experience, and also have events scheduled for them to help them experience and explore the culture of the country. Upon their return they will share their experiences with the rest of the interns.

"This internship exchange programme is highly valuable in that it not only offers work experience, but enables personal growth through experiencing different cultures. As part of our nation building programme, the internship exchange enables us to foster innovation in our youth and share our international heritage and knowledge with our own employees," van der Westhuizen concludes.

The trio will be leaving for Germany towards the end of October for a six-week period.

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