

Grow your business network to increase revenue

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Many successful entrepreneurs and business owners have spoken about how personal connections and a business network contributed to the success of their companies.

Katlego Maphai, co-founder of the startup Yoco, met his co-founders and other connections at university. Entrepreneurs like Emmanuel Bonoko [use live workshops](#) to "inspire and support young black and emerging entrepreneurs". These workshops expose the entrepreneurs to success stories of others and provide access to information and networks.

The problem with some networks

Traditional ways to grow your network include attending networking events, joining business meetups or local organisations, engaging in relevant Facebook groups and Twitter chats.

These days, online communities have become useful for individuals because it saves you time travelling to meet new people in person. However, most online communities don't have the necessary expertise that freelancers, new founders, and business owners might need: to address their specific business challenges.

There are two online platforms that makes sure that entrepreneurs and business owners not only become part of a digital community that they can possibly find their new co-founders, but also hosts experts that specifically mentor entrepreneurs and business owners on challenges like access to funding, setting up business proposals for funding, getting access to markets, and so much more.

The platforms:

[Startwise](#) is a virtual, on-demand consulting platform where small business owners can connect with experts to obtain mentoring and coaching. They have the option to browse experts according to their field or area of expertise to connect with them on-demand for a scheduled consultation. They can make use of the Startwise Forum to foster collaboration, share knowledge, and support within the entrepreneurial community.

[Founders.co.za](#) is a membership community for entrepreneurs, founders and CEOs of startups, to connect with like-minded entrepreneurs and learn to scale and grow their businesses while cultivating a much-needed sense of community.

Community equals support, it can increase revenue

A survey by [Real State of Entrepreneurship in South Africa](#) showed that 36% of entrepreneurs surveyed listed lack of business support as a reason for previous business failure. The same survey revealed 33% of entrepreneurs that had been in business for more than two years attributed cultivating strong personal networks to their success.

Statistics like these prove the importance of collaboration and highlight the need for self-starters, entrepreneurs and small business owners to find like-minded individuals to work with.

Therefore, digital communities like **Founders.co.za** and **Startwise** have become increasingly important within the entrepreneurial realm.

Growing their network through these avenues can put entrepreneurs and business owners in contact with a wide array of people but these methods do not guarantee that the people they make connections with have the right attributes to form a viable community.

Why entrepreneurs and business owners business communities like these:

1. Community breeds **collaboration** and growth as business owners can find the missing element of their projects within a group of like-minded individuals.
2. A community can act as a **sounding board** to bounce ideas off. Entrepreneurs can run ideas by friends and family but a professional can give expert advice.
3. Communities can assist in keeping business owners **accountable**, this is especially true for entrepreneurs who struggle with self-discipline.
4. Entrepreneurs can get **expert advice** from those with more experience in the field while sharing frustrations and having concerns validated.

Velly Bosega, founder of multiple businesses including the online resources platform for small business owners, SME South Africa, Startwise and Founders.co.za, says that the platforms would provide small business owners and freelancers the opportunity to make connections and collaborate.

“It will be a way for them to share useful knowledge with each other, generate ideas, find solutions to challenges and achieve common goals for their business.”

Founders.co.za will offer small, monthly group sessions for its community members, which includes a series of masterclasses that provides business skills training, and entrepreneurs can be part of strategic discussions.

[Get on the waitlist to be notified of the Founders' launch.](#)



More about SME South Africa

The SME South Africa is a one-stop-shop for business owners that not only gives the latest business news and [industry trends](#), it also provides multiple [business guides](#) with information that can help small businesses thrive.

“We also want to help small businesses find more funding options which is why the [SME South Africa funding page](#) was created,” says Bosega.

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