



The many complexities that come with running a business often necessitate logistical support. We highlight companies that provide transport, legal and financial resources and services for entrepreneurs

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WORKING FOR YOU

In an ever-changing business landscape, logistical innovations are happening constantly. Whether you're looking for technological tools to manage your fleet, ways to streamline your accounting processes, information about business legalities or just good, old-fashioned business advice, there are numerous options available.

TRANSPORT

Fleet management is potentially one of the trickiest logistical challenges facing entrepreneurs. According to figures released by the Southern African Vehicle Rental & Leasing Association and the National Association of Automobile

Manufacturers of SA, our country's corporate fleet market was estimated at 1,2 million vehicles in June 2014, with 600 000 of these subject to some form of external management, whether through leases, rentals or vehicle maintenance, reports *Automotive Fleet* magazine.

With evolving technology comes increased innovation, enabling SMEs to take a more active role in fleet management with the help of online support. One example is the MTN Fleet Management Solution for SMEs. This allows business-owners to use their cellphones to track, monitor and assess their fleets, offering solutions that include tracking vehicles and managing financing,

maintenance, drivers, customer records, speed, fuel, health and safety.

"There are two schools of thought when it comes to fleet management services for the SME and start-up entrepreneur," says Jeremy Potgieter, Group Manager for M2M (Machine-to-Machine) and IoT (Internet of Things) at the MTN Group. "The first maintains that entrepreneurs should focus on delivering the core service or product which they understand and have taken to market. Utilising external fleet management, much like utilising cloud-based offerings, allows them to maintain this focus and not detract from their core business. It also drives long-term reduction in costs and overheads.

“The second school believes that keeping things in-house allows the SME to maintain control and take a ‘hands-on’ approach towards monitoring the use of its assets. It also allows them to customise services for specific requirements,” he explains. “At MTN, the customer benefits most from a medium between the two. We deliver an outsourced model which is both customisable by and accessible to the entrepreneur, allowing them to focus on their core business. By receiving all the required support and monitoring services, as well as monthly reporting statistics which highlight rogue/good driving behaviour, the SME can plan for the future and mitigate risks.”

LEGAL SERVICES

For entrepreneurs, finding yourself in legal hot water can be a nightmare. While companies may choose to bring risk and compliance expertise in-house, it’s often advantageous to outsource legal services. A passionate entrepreneur herself, Minikazi Mtati co-founded Johannesburg-based Mtati-Magangane Compliance Solutions (specialising in legal, risk and compliance) with friend and former colleague Neli Magangane in 2014. “We discovered a niche market of SMMEs which couldn’t afford in-house legal and compliance departments. As such, they’d operate running the risk of non-compliance with various legislation,” she explains. “We decided to offer a different approach to compliance.

“It’s common for entrepreneurs not to make a profit in the first year, when you’re just working to keep your doors open,” she continues. “For that reason, it’s advisable to outsource most functions that are beyond your expertise.” Mtati says that outsourcing legal and compliance services offers you the following advantages:

- You’re able to focus on your bottom line/core business.
- Having proper contracts and agreements protects the business, as the expectations of all parties involved are documented. It also ensures that a certain level of service is maintained and advises you on how to deal with negative situations.
- Having proper compliance policies and processes in place ensures the smooth running of the business. You’ll be kept

updated on all regulatory changes that affect your particular industry. Remember, non-compliance may result in hefty fines.

Leaving legal issues to chance can sabotage your business, adds Graeme Wilson, founder and CEO of Cape Town-based law firm Whipping the Cat. “Because entrepreneurs assume lawyers are expensive, inaccessible and apt to over-complicate things, they take a chance and either do nothing or rely on the advice of ‘a friend of a friend’ who has a degree from the university of Google,” he says. “By outsourcing legal services, the business opens up a channel of communication to draw on as much or as little legal support as is needed, as well as on a wealth of experience.”

Aware that many are deterred by the high costs of legal firms, Wilson ensures that Whipping the Cat provides a full spectrum of commercial law services at a fixed rate. “The hourly rate can pit the interests of the lawyer against those of the client,” says Wilson. “By doing away with the hourly rate and working for pre-agreed fixed fees, or a monthly retainer, we’ve introduced price certainty to the legal market.”

FINANCE

While hiring a financial director may be viable for some entrepreneurs, others lack the budget to pay the high salary the position often demands, finding outsourced financial functioning to be more cost-effective. “In most cases, business-owners are receiving far more value when outsourcing, as the cost is often less and they have access to professionals with advanced tax, accounting and business knowledge if and when the need arises,” says Real Time Accounting (RTA) MD Colin Timmis.

As in the transport sector, technological innovations have simplified financial processes for entrepreneurs. A case in point is RTA, which is the first South African accounting practice to take advantage of the tools offered by Xero, an award-winning software accounting solution for SMEs. “When we found Xero, we realised there was a massive change taking place internationally in the way SME accounting was being done by using tools like Xero, which give business-

owners more access to and visibility of their business performance,” explains Timmis. “South African businesses have had little to choose from in the past 20 years in terms of accounting software and entrepreneurs are often excluded from the financials of their companies because of software that’s designed for accountants, not business-owners. By choosing Xero, RTA offers SMEs a truly unique sales proposition.” Like Whipping the Cat, the company offers agreements at a set monthly rate for all accounting, bookkeeping and statutory services. It also caters for clients throughout the country. “We only work on Xero, which means we’re connected to our customer and we’re both working on the same set of accounts in real time, from any device, anywhere in the world.”

Another countrywide accounting provider for entrepreneurs is the Business Accounting Network (BAN) franchise group, founded in 1999 by its current CEO, Monique Sharland. She set up a unique franchised network of mostly ex-auditing firm accountants and bookkeepers who are now business-owners themselves, offering big-firm expertise at small-firm rates. “BAN provides more than just accounting, tax, company secretarial and payroll services for SME business-owners: it also offers them effective financial management and business guidance, ensuring that they receive the information and advice they need to sustain their business,” says Sharland. **D**

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