

ARTISAN AIMS TO PLOUGH BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY

By Geozann Matthysen



» Leon Nortje, Machine Builder Technician at Filkraft in Paarl, Western Cape.

“When surrounded by great mentors, who significantly help shape one’s career, extending the same helping hand to others is a reasonable thing to do.”

This is according to Leon Nortje, a Machine Builder Technician at Filkraft in Paarl, explaining how he was able to ease into his apprenticeship training through guidance from the older generation of artisans he worked with.

“I was trained by great minds, who not only possessed a lot of experience but were patient enough to share their wisdom with young and aspiring artisans like myself,” explains Nortje.

Alongside making sure that he grabs every opportunity that will grow his career, he plans to mentor other aspiring artisans so that they can also build successful careers. “Launching a career can be difficult sometimes, especially if one does not have support. It was not always easy for me, especially because I had to leave behind my family, who have been my support system throughout,” Nortje says.

Having completed his matric in 2016, majoring in Mechanical Engineering, Mathematics, Physical Science and Engineering Graphics and Design (EGD), Nortje went on to pursue a fitting and turning apprenticeship at HG Molenaar in Paarl, funded by the merSETA. He completed the training and is now permanently employed.

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SUCCESS STORIES

The ambitious Nortje explains how his passion for working with hands led him to this career path. He enjoys his work, which challenges him to think “out of the box”, analyse and find solutions for any problems he may encounter.

“My work entails building packaging and labelling machinery from scratch. Once the building process is complete, I do installation and perform maintenance on the machines when required. This is exciting but also challenging, which makes me look forward to doing it every day because it gives me an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills I acquired through my apprenticeship,” says Nortje.

He explains that it was through this apprenticeship that he was able to put his theoretical learning into practice. This is where he learnt the importance of skills transfer and made it a point to take note of every detail while observing how his

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colleagues and mentors executed their work.

“I closely watched and listened to my superiors and other colleagues, ensured that I learned from them and practised what I learnt so that I could become knowledgeable. If it was not for the mentorship of the older generation of artisans I worked

with, I would not be where I am today,” he says.

Danie Beyers, Director at Filkraft, commends Nortje for his excellent work. “He is an energetic worker, meticulous in the jobs he does and never leaves work incomplete,” says Beyers.

Nortje also explains that his father, who is also an artisan, greatly influenced his career choice. Growing up in Vredenburg, Nortje explains that he used to assist him with his work. This made him realise his passion for working with his hands. Years later, he still enjoys working with his hands and this changed his life for the better, as it gave him an opportunity to build a successful career.

“I see myself building a bright future at Filkraft, especially with the support of my managers and colleagues, who always encourage me to perform optimally,” he concludes.



» Nortje building the seal-section of the filling machine.



» A complete “magnetic clutch”.



» Magnetic clutches for the seal-section of the filling machine.