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SAPICS Inspires Aspiring Young Supply Chain Professionals

This year's 5th annual Young Professional and Student Conference, hosted by SAPICS, The Professional Body for Supply Chain Management, was a resounding success, the organisers report.

Held recently in Johannesburg, it attracted up and coming supply chain talent from around the country. SAPICS president Kea Mpane says that several universities were invited to send students to the one-day conference, including the Universities of South Africa, Johannesburg and Pretoria, North-West University, and the Tshwane and Vaal Universities of Technology. *"The energy, enthusiasm and commitment of this year's attendees was inspiring,"* Mpane enthuses. Students from North West University started their bus journey at 2.30am to travel to the eagerly anticipated conference.

Mpane explains that the event is aimed at young professionals and students who want to gain insight into the supply chain profession from the conference's practical perspective. *"Because it is sometimes misunderstood and undervalued, the profession is not attracting the young, emerging talent that it needs. Events like this are vital to inform graduates and students of the opportunities that exist in this exciting and dynamic field, which is constantly evolving and leveraging new technologies."*

The young professionals who attended are currently working in related fields, in their first or second years of graduate programmes or learnerships.

The event's varied programme included speakers from diverse backgrounds who gave the young delegates career path guidance as well as insights into the supply chain management profession's many facets. Supply chain tools and methodologies such as Demand Driven Material Requirements Planning (DDMRP) were highlighted by speakers such as staunch SAPICS volunteer Liezl Smith.

In his presentation, internationally recognised supply chain guru Steven Melnyk addressed the emergence of the strategic leader. Melnyk is Professor of Supply Chain Management at Michigan State University in the United States. He highlighted how supply chains are transforming from tactical to strategic and noted that this new supply chain requires a supply chain leader with skills and orientations not currently found in many supply chain managers. He outlined what needs to change, and the traits that differentiate the supply chain leader of tomorrow from the supply chain manager of today.

Chantal Kading, managing director of The People Shop, shared her experience and expertise on how to achieve career success in today's fast paced, increasingly complex business world. *"In an AI (artificial intelligence) age, EI (emotional intelligence) is the foundation,"* she told the attending students and young professionals. Both Chantal Kading and Karen Pretorius, another speaker at the event, offered guidance on how they should represent their brand via social media, in their CV and at in-person interviews.

Personal experiences from individuals travelling the world with their supply chain knowledge were included in the programme. Grant Swanepoel, himself once a student who has been a member of SAPICS since University, shared his experiences and the opportunities his supply chain skillset has afforded him. Glenda Maitin, who owns her own supply chain consultancy and heads up the public health project for the Association for Supply Chain Management (ASCM) funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, talked about her career path to programme director of this exciting project, improving last mile delivery of medicines to the most needy in Africa. Martin Mvulane, a seasoned and well-respected supply chain professional with an extensive and successful career at companies such as Tiger Brands, SA Breweries and Unilever shared his experiences with the audience.

How jobs in supply chain will be affected by the Fourth Industrial Revolution was the topic of a presentation by Tony Sinton, CEO of Netstock, South Africa. *“The speed of current breakthroughs has no historical precedent,”* he told attendees, and stated that the breadth and depth of these changes herald the transformation of entire systems of supply, production, distribution, management, and governance.

Antoinette (Toni) Tebbutt thrilled and entertained with her popular presentation about her time as a contestant on the popular reality TV show Survivor South Africa.

SAPICS also used the event to raise funds for Tumelo Home for mentally disabled children, with donations received for supply chain books presented to the home.

“The SAPICS Young Professional and Student Conference has become an important fixture on the calendar of aspiring young supply chain professionals. We are proud to be helping to attract and develop a much-needed pipeline of talent to address the critical skills gap in the supply chain profession,” Mpane concludes.

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ABOUT SAPICS: <http://www.sapics.org>

Since its foundation in 1966, SAPICS, The Professional Body for Supply Chain Management, has become the leading provider of knowledge in supply chain management, production and operations in Southern Africa.

SAPICS builds operations management excellence in individuals and enterprises through superior education and training, internationally recognised certifications, comprehensive resources and a country-wide network of accomplished industry professionals. This network is ever expanding and now includes associates in other African countries. SAPICS is proud to represent APICS (the global end-to-end supply chain association) as its exclusive premier channel partner in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Established 40 years ago, the annual SAPICS Conference is the leading event in Africa for supply chain professionals.