

NISSAN TO BOOST SMALL BUSINESSES

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The Nissan production plant in Rosslyn is in the process of developing and introducing an Incubation Centre to assist small black-owned businesses. The idea is to support black economic empowerment to allow these companies to get into the automotive supply chain.

Speaking at the plant, Nissan Group of Africa managing director Mike Whitfield said this was in line with their policy of sustainable job creation and skills development. "Along with the government that has been incredibly supportive of the motor industry, we have provided opportunities for people from previously disadvantaged communities while also investing in original equipment manufacturers and other entrepreneurs in this sector."

In an environment where there is a critical shortage of engineers, Nissan has a Graduate Development Plan with various universities to fill the gap. "These results have been very promising because qualified engineers with valuable hands-on experience are being produced," said Whitfield.

In addition to investing in education, Nissan is in the process of rebuilding the plant and will shut down for six weeks at the end of the year. "We are going to be merging the two production lines into one," he said.

In so doing the plant will be one of only two production lines in the world that are able to produce vehicles with a monocoque and ladder chassis. "We've invested almost R200 million to ramp up production and will be able to produce a car almost every two minutes and with the training we have been doing, quality control will be world class," he said.

Whitfield added that their focus would definitely be on Africa. "Africa is the new motoring frontier, with a very low growth forecast for South Africa, we are perfectly situated to get a foothold and expand into Africa with our range of vehicles. We may even be looking at the Middle East in the future."

