FNB continues to drive entrepreneurship growth

04 November 2021 – As FNB celebrates two years since launching First Business Zero (FBZ) and Fundaba, two ground-breaking offerings aimed at helping SMEs, the success and impact of these solutions is testament to the bank’s commitment to help develop and grow entrepreneurs.

More than 25 000 businesses are now on their First Business journey, benefiting from industry-leading features through the First Business Zero that enables them to focus on running and growing their businesses. Similarly, Fundaba (the bank’s digital app-based entrepreneurship learning programme) has seen over 192 000 aspiring and/or existing entrepreneurs use it to rapidly increase their business knowledge and skills to grow and improve their chances of business success.

These two solutions have demonstrated success in helping drive entrepreneurial activity by enabling these small and medium-sized businesses in South Africa to further tackle one of the major challenges the country currently faces: unemployment.

Jesse Weinberg, co-head of the SME Segment at FNB says, “When we first identified the critical need for basic business education amongst entrepreneurs, we responded by launching Fundaba alongside our First Business Zero in November 2019 to address this need. The unforeseen pandemic of COVID-19 caused huge impact to SMEs in SA, resulting in many businesses either going into survival mode or even closing their doors altogether. However, despite these difficulties posed by the lockdown (and perhaps even because of them) we have seen an increased interest and take-up of these solutions by new and existing entrepreneurs looking to enhance their business knowledge. Fundaba contains a huge variety of multimedia available for free including videos, podcasts, articles and downloadable business planning templates, available in five local languages.”

The importance of separating business from personal finances

One of the key questions arising around business finances continues to be the relevance of separating business finances from personal finances.

“Often when entrepreneurs start out as a sole proprietor, it is quite common for them to use their existing personal bank account to get paid. However, as time passes, this can lead to complications, particularly when it comes to accounting for their business transactions and ultimately tax considerations” says Weinberg.
Early discipline of separating business and personal finances can often mean better control over the business as it grows. The First Business Zero business account can be opened in just minutes via the FNB app with no need to visit a branch, and it has no monthly account fee which makes it perfect for entrepreneurs to use it as their initial bank account for their venture. A separate business account also helps to establish a strong business credit rating over time so that the business can apply for a business loan.

This account makes it easier for entrepreneurs to grow their businesses with key features including a free Business Call account for savings; an FNB Connect SIM to access monthly data, minutes and SMS rewards, and access to a QR Speedpoint® on the App for customers to pay. Businesses still pay no monthly account fee and get free, unlimited card swipes.

**Entrepreneurs keen to learn**

The name Fundaba comes from the joining of the two isiZulu words, “Fundl” and “Indaba”, which translates to “expert” and “discussion or the gathering of knowledge” respectively. This neatly describes the main objective behind Fundaba to educate and empower small business entrepreneurs to drive growth in the SME sector and ultimately tackle unemployment.

Although Fundaba initially started off as a guided learning journey, Weinberg says the format has now evolved empowering users to choose between a guided learning journey or a troubleshooting approach for answers to their business challenges.

For example, if you are struggling to read your income statement, you don’t have to go through the whole learning journey to get to that part of the content. You can just access it directly by navigating to the section on financial management,” he explains.

Collating data from Fundaba over the last year allowed FNB to identify popular topics that registered high engagement rates. These include:

- Writing your business plan and using a downloadable template
- Getting your business funding ready
- Identifying skills and gaps in your business
- Finding your USP (unique selling point) for your business or product
- Pricing your products.

To make the popular content even more accessible, the FNB Business Hub has launched a series of online Master Classes, which unpacks these topics with financial experts. These sessions are also available to FNB customers as webinars. “Importantly, the Master Classes are not just theoretical lessons, we looked at real-life cases of entrepreneurs or stories we’ve heard and mapped it back to show the link between the theory and how it can be realistically applied in a business,” Weinberg says.