



dB Audio promotes diversity

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Posted on September 23, 2019

Sarah Rushton-Read visited Mediatech 2019 . She met up with the team at dB Audio, and we are very grateful for this wonderful story, as featured on LSi on Line. Thanks Sarah!

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**DB AUDIO PROMOTES DIVERSITY**

dB Audio, Namibia is a technical event management and support business offering wet and dry hire of sound, lighting, staging, video, LED displays, rigging, set design, power and distro. What's noteworthy about the company is the strong set of business values it is built upon.

dB Audio was founded in 2004 by David Benade and Manuel Jacobs, with Ernst Steynberg joining as a partner the following year. Benade explains: "dB Audio determined to be an inclusive business, where any Namibian, regardless of age, gender, race, tribe, religious or sexual orientation, who has a passion for the technical live events industry, can earn a living and create a positive future. One of our biggest challenges has been finding qualified and experienced technicians, engineers and designers locally. As a result, we provide on-the-job training and peer-to-peer education including internships, formal training courses, sometimes facilitated by international industry professionals."

Today, most staff members have gained formal qualifications, ranging from basic occupational health and safety certificates, to specialised sound training and advanced rigging and work at height diplomas. I met four such staff members at the DWR central hub . . .

Human Capital officer Laimi Thomas said: "My role is to ensure that every employee can access learning and professional development. I started in 2015 as a graduate intern, then became an admin assistant and in 2018 I became Human Capital Officer. I've also gained a certificate for project management from the University of Stellenbosch. What's brilliant is dB Audio actively promotes people from within the business and the tech support departments are intentionally almost entirely staffed and managed by women, with the intention of normalising women's presence in the industry."

Laimi added that most of the women in tech support started working for the company as cleaners. "Every year, dB Audio opens up new tech support roles for women. Today, sound, lighting and AV tech supports are all women; the only department that is male is staging. Many of the tech support women are now also training to fit up and operate on-site."

"It's important to have this kind of public representation in the industry," says Laimi. "By showing people that women can do these jobs, we increase employment opportunities for everyone. This industry is still seen as a male industry: men's toys not ladies'



toys. We are changing that!"

Karaa Kakero began working for dB Audio as a housekeeper in 2015 but was fascinated by the technical side of the business. "I eventually got a position as trainee support technician in the audio department. I'm still learning, but it's fantastic to work for a company that is so passionate about education and staff development. Everyone who works here can learn everything from basic English language to technical skills and qualifications. As well as audio, I've trained in rigging and health and safety. As a woman, it's not always easy, but I am pushing hard. Ultimately, I am hoping to become a front of house sound engineer."

Similarly, project manager Char-Anne Husselmann started at dB Audio as a receptionist: "I wanted to get into production co-ordination, so I looked out for an opportunity and learned everything that was on offer. I enjoyed going on site and meeting clients, I wanted to understand how entertainment structures and systems worked, so I moved from project co-ordination to project management. I've been with the company for six years now and I've been a project manager for three years. I love it!"

Maria Nakanyala, who started as assistant technician, now a warehouse technician managing the tech department, says: "I've been working for the company for seven years. It's important to have women in these jobs. We've proved we can be versatile and that we can do any job a man can. These days we're not seen as 'the women' in the company, we are just part of the team. The more women that do these jobs the less weird it seems. This is as it should be!"

◀ [www.dbaudio.com.na](http://www.dbaudio.com.na)