



Phone: +27 (0)21 528 3420

Fax: +27 (0)21 552 2848

Website: www.bulksms.com

4th Floor South Lobby
Boulevard Place Heron Crescent
Century City 7441 South Africa

PRESS RELEASE

BULKSMS.COM

7 September 2010

SMS goes back to school

Nelson Mandela said: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." While South Africa might still be trying to overcome many of its educational challenges, organisations such as the Siyakhula Education Foundation (SEF) have taken matters into their own hands and are working in disadvantaged areas to raise education levels.

Amongst other initiatives, SEF runs an adult computer literacy programme as well as an academic support programme for learners in grades ten to 12. When Andrew Barrett, the co-ordinator, looked at how best to keep in touch with students, learners and volunteers, SMS was the obvious choice.

"Cell phones have made such in-roads in South Africa and Africa that even the poorest township resident has access to a cell phone, even if they don't own one personally, and knows how to SMS," said Barrett. "SMS is a vital tool for sharing information, motivating our learners, and helping them feel part of a community, all of which contributes to the great success rates we are seeing."

As a non-profit organisation, SEF benefits from BulkSMS.com's special rates for NPOs. This, combined with the ease-of-use of the mobile messaging provider's desktop messaging service, ensured Barrett was sold on using BulkSMS.com as a provider when he set the service up.

"One of the major benefits of the service is the affordability of BulkSMS.com. We are an organisation reliant on donations and therefore every cent counts. We can stay in contact with both our core team and our beneficiaries and the cost-effective nature of the service means we can direct our spending where it is needed most," said Barrett.

Siyakhula, which means "We are growing", is SEF's adult education course that provides affordable and accessible computer literacy training for previously disadvantaged people to improve their job prospects. SMS is used to inform students about upcoming course dates, changes to schedules, results, graduation dates and job vacancies.

As a result of the regular SMS communication, students have expressed that they enjoy a sense of belonging and encouragement. In the school's programme, the attendance records and reminders have helped build a strong work ethic that has resulted in a 95% matric pass rate, with 60% of the learners going on to study further.

Barrett says he has become adept at conveying detailed information within SMS's 160 character limit. "We've got pretty good at using SMS shorthand, which all the kids understand anyway!" he said.

His plans for the SMS service include taking advantage of the two-way messaging and having the learners SMS their matric results to SEF for their records.

SEF's use of the BulkSMS.com service received special mention in the BulkSMS Messaging Awards earlier this year. "SEF has been particularly clever in pushing SMS's communication abilities to convey the



maximum amount of information quickly, cost-effectively and with great results. This is also an excellent example of how SMS works to communicate effectively with different groups of people,” said Dr. Pieter Streicher, BulkSMS.com managing director.