

Providing professional business advice to SMEs, all under one umbrella

 By [Shan Raddiffe](#)

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Innovation presents itself in many different forms - whether it's a physical product or perhaps something a little less tangible, like an app or a service - but they all hold one thing in common: it makes life a little bit easier. The newly launched First Business Wellness Association forms part of the latter, and aims to make life for SMEs a little easier by offering access to a network of necessary business services they may not otherwise be able to afford.



Neil Smith, FBW chairman

This Innovation Month, I chatted to creative thinker, brand strategist and chairperson of First Business Wellness, Neil Smith about the initiative and his view of offering small and medium-sized business owners the opportunity to fast track sustainable growth.

Tell us about First Business Wellness...

Why First Business Wellness?

The First Business Wellness Association was formed with a view to fulfilling the critical need for an all-inclusive holistic service offering to the small and medium-sized business sector (SME). The Association's vision is to enable SMEs achieve sustainable growth through the expertise of seasoned professionals across all business disciplines, primarily in the core areas of branding, strategy, finance, legal, public relations, technology and entrepreneurial funding.

Why Small and Medium Enterprises?

The magnitude of how small and medium businesses (SMEs) contribute to the South African economy is generally undervalued. The Banking Association of South Africa affirmed in a recent report that SMEs have been identified as productive drivers of inclusive economic growth in South Africa; providing employment to about 60% of the labour force. Their total economic output accounts for roughly 34% of GDP. South Africa has between 5.5 and 6 million SME business owners. These entrepreneurs are the warriors on the ground, tenaciously turning the wheels of economic growth. First Business Wellness is their gateway to sustainable growth.

Vision

First Business Wellness is passionate about enabling small and medium sized enterprises achieve sustainable growth by offering an all-inclusive holistic and affordable service through the expertise of seasoned professionals across all business disciplines.

What have been the driving factors behind the association's creation?

Professionals and experts operate in silos

Most professionals and expertise are not available, accessible and affordable to small and medium enterprises and operate

in silo environments. A brand strategist, lawyer, accountant, PR and others focus on their areas of expertise and can not advise business owners on other critical success factors.

Incubators

Most business incubators are trying to prepare entrepreneurs for business by offering training programmes in all the basic business aspects such as administration, legal issues, accounting, marketing, it etc. This is often overwhelming for the entrepreneur and they simply won't be able to wear all hats and be competitive in the marketplace.

The big questions entrepreneurs ask

"Why can't I focus on what I am really good at and have access to all the professionals and expertise addressing all the critical business success factors of my business?"



FIRST

BUSINESS WELLNESS

Imagine being surrounded by the best minds in all the core business disciplines . . . *what are the chances that your business won't fly?*



We offer business owners a complimentary Wellness Check Up on all the critical business success factors.

■ ***What has been the initial reaction to the initiative?***

What experts have to say about First Business Wellness

Brian Kantor is a pre-eminent economist. He is an investment strategist and economist at Investec Wealth and Investment and Professor Emeritus at UCT. He regularly writes on the South African and global economy.

"The initiative First Business Wellness (FBW) demonstrates beneficent market forces in action. They are the actions of a risk taking and highly innovative new enterprise. South Africa needs more of both risk taking and innovation if it is to prosper. Should FBW work out as so carefully planned it will help deliver a more productive South African business sector. One that will promote not only the well-being of the owners of a business but that of its employees, suppliers

and customers - and with improved profitability and incomes - higher tax revenues for the State. This is what all successful businesses achieve.

"FBW, should it succeed, will then rely on its reputation for delivering benefits as promised to its clients. It will be also offer an assurance of quality. Sustaining reputations by maintaining quality are essential for business success. Competition in the market place secures such outcomes. Government regulation or intervention is not required to such important purposes and is best avoided. South Africans should have a much better appreciation of why successful businesses left free to act can promote a broad public interest and offer the only known way to eliminate poverty. My book Get South Africa Growing promotes these ideas of which First Business Wellness is a living example of innovative business. I wish them every success."

Ben Durandt - Turnaround corporate specialist - (CA) (SAICA). He serves on the board of the Turnaround Managers Association SA, is a member of the Institute of Directors SA and the Insolvent Practitioners SA, and has 25 years experience at KPMG.

"First Business Wellness has created a vigorous platform for entrepreneurs to forge viable financial pathways towards becoming real contenders in a highly competitive business environment."

Anton Rautenbach (Executive Financial Advisor, DL Sure)

"With so many investment "scams" in the past combined with an unhealthy economy, it becomes very difficult to fund new business ideas. The First Business Wellness offering is, in my opinion, definitely a step in the right direction and is ideally positioned to offer attractive investment opportunities."

Philip Pla [Partner Adams & Adams, Bsc (Mech Eng), BProc(SA)]

"The First Business Wellness platform will provide essential multi-disciplinary support to entrepreneurs, allowing them to lay a solid foundation to unlock the true potential of their business."

What SMEs think of First Business Wellness

Hannelize Mouton [Marketing and Communications Executive, Cloof Wine Estate]

"A truly holistic and innovative approach to align your business units using a group of professional, each an expert in their specific fields, operating as one system."

Annie Carter [CEO Photo Cushion On-line Business]

"I felt overwhelmed by the many unanswered questions about my fast growing business. I was paralysed by it all, and had no idea where to go and who to see for the right advice. First Business Wellness is 'Day Spa' for my business. The 'All in one Package Deal'."

Anja Dedekind [Managing Director Solucare Cleaning Detergents]

"After completing the First Business Wellness Check Up complimentary survey with one of your consultants, we have been able to identify all the critical success factors for our business in minutes."

"As an entrepreneurial enterprise, we have many challenges to face in a highly competitive market. We do not have the manpower or knowledge to invest in all the aspects of our business that needs attention. First Business Wellness offers a great opportunity to get affordable access to certified professionals whom we can trust."

📌 Tell us a little about the seminars - what people can expect and how they can get involved?

Our seminars will be offering a multi-disciplinary platform of all the critical business success factors. Each success factor will be represented by a First Business Wellness member company specialising in their area of expertise. The professionals and experts will engage with the audience (invited small and medium size business owners), address the core areas of success factors and offer follow up assessment sessions to offer guidance and affordable plans for implementation.

Vega School of Brand Leadership support the FBW initiative and made their schools available in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria and Durban available for our seminars and workshops.

We welcome all organisations and institutions that share our vision to support us and collaborate where possible to create an awareness of our initiative. Financial institutions could support us by referring entrepreneurs to the FBW association for guidance.

One of the many FBW areas of concern is funding readiness and we believe that our unique holistic approach of Risk Management does not only address the borrowing risk aspect, but also address the exponential growth aspects of potential borrowers.

▣ ***Where do you hope to grow First Business Wellness from here?***

We hope to create a higher level of awareness amongst all stakeholders including large corporates, professionals and experts in the South African economy, that we should not only look at entrepreneurs and SMEs as risk factors, but rather focus on the opportunities of how to manage great initiatives holistically.

FBW hope to play a meaningful role in the South African economy by offering the SME sector exactly what they need for sustainability and exponential growth!

Please visit our website www.businesswellness.co.za

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ABOUT SHAN RADCLIFFE

Shan Radcliffe is the editor of Bizcommunity HR, Education and Legal.

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