



## OVERCOMING ADVERSITY TOWARDS A SUCCESSFUL CAREER IN THE EXCITING TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR

**Electronics Technicians help design, develop, install, and repair electrical and electronic equipment. They are experts in the function and mechanics of complicated equipment, often using software and meters to diagnose malfunctions and complete repairs. Meet expert Electronics Technician, Tuhafeni Erastus, whose skill and determination to succeed in the area of transmitter electronics makes him a big asset to his employer, local telecommunications giant, MTC. This is his story.**

### CHALLENGING CHILDHOOD

People who grow up in poverty often have a tougher road ahead, than those who are well off from the get-go. But there's no reason why that road can't lead to success.

Born at Omestokonime village in Oshikoto , Tuhafeni Erastus' childhood proved challenging. His unemployed single mother had to relocate to Otjiwarongo in Otjozondjupa and kapana sales was the sole source of income to raise Tuhafeni and his three siblings. After he completed Grade 7 at the Orwetoveni Primary School, it was decided that Tuhafeni returns to the north and stay with his aunt.

"Although I was saddened by the fact that I was going to be separated from my mother and siblings, I actually looked forward relocating from an urban area to the village, because somehow, I thought, things were going to get better. Was I in for a surprise? Village life toughens you up. There was no electricity; we had to collect firewood and study by candlelight. But we made the best of our situation", he reminisces.

### TENACIOUS LEARNER

A wily and clever youngster, Tuhafeni gave it his all at the Onamahoka Combined School, where he completed Grade 10; and the Mwadikange Kaulinge Secondary, where he completed Grade 12. "I was the best in my class during my time at Onamahoka and I took this reputation to Mwadikange Kaulinge, where again I was the best learner in Grade 11 and 12. It wasn't easy, but looking back on my journey, I cannot but to thank the Almighty for carrying me through", he shares. Considering his academic achievements, Tuhafeni started harbouring dreams of becoming a lawyer. "To study law was the dream. And although I appreciated that my family would not necessarily

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**Tuhafeni Erastus**

**Eletronic Technician**

have the means to support me in further studies, I somehow refused to give up on this dream. Knowing that I was gifted and had determination in spades kept me going and I told myself that come what may, I'm going to rise above my circumstances and make something of my life", he explains. "I knew by then that I was destined for greater things and that performing well in school was my ticket", he adds.

## **TOUGH CITY LIFE**

Circumstances once again impacted on Tuhafeni's dreams when he made the journey to the capital, to pursue a tertiary education. Although the University of Namibia accepted his application to study law, his boyhood dream soon evaporated. "I stayed with a cousin in Okuryangava and considering that I could not afford taxis and would have to walk to classes, the distance to the UNAM campus, compared to that of the then Polytechnic of Namibia, pushed me to rather enroll for a course in Engineering, at the latter", he recalls.

The distance to campus soon took its toll on Tuhafeni. Often too tired and hungry to study, and once again having to deal with no electricity at home, he often had to resort to sleeping over in the hostel rooms of friends. The death of his mother compounded matters and the knowledge that he now was responsible for his three siblings weighed heavy on his mind. "I thought life was going to be good in the city. It was even worse. The very same issue of using candles to study and at times even using my phone flashlight", he notes.

Things improved slightly when Tuhafeni moved to stay with another cousin in Havana, who supported him with food and taxi money. However, just as things were starting to improve, job demands soon required his cousin to relocate to Oshikango in Ohangwena. Tuhafeni was close to giving up on his dream, when a church friend intervened and he ended up staying with a family in a flat in Windhoek North. "They were my guardian angels, my saving grace. From that point onwards, my results improved and my performance was on par. Now, I had electricity. I could take hot baths. I had regular meals", he explains.

## **A BURSARY**

Tuhafeni's confidence grew and his academic performance improved. Appreciating that good results would make it easier to land a bursary, he continued to give it his all. "I just made sure that I did not miss any of my classes; that all my assignments were well-researched and handed in on time; and of course, study, study and study", he shares. The

bursary applications came back one by one. And after several disappointments, MTC called in Tuhafeni for a bursary interview. "I told myself that this was my first shot and that I had to make it my best shot. So I prepared well, taking along everything; from my grade 1 awards to the latests academic records", Tuhafeni reminisces.

Appealing to the interview panel to take his circumstances into account, Tuhafeni made it clear that he would have no other choice but to abandon his studies, should he not be able to secure financial support. "I was very calm and sincere in my interaction. And I think that my appeal of not wanting to end up on the streets, and instead wanting to make a contribution to the development of my country and its people, struck a chord with them. Tuhafeni was awarded a bursary, which also secured him placement in the student hostel. "I was over the moon. My prayers were answered", he recalls.



## **WORLD OF WORK**

Tuhafeni worked harder than ever before. "The fear of failing a subject pushed me and kept me going. Failing wasn't an option as MTC could then withdraw their support. And that's exactly what I did. Excellent results, up until I graduated.", he says.

As a bursary holder, Tuhafeni also worked at MTC during holidays. His work ethic, positive attitude and eagerness to learn impressed his supervisors and upon graduation, the diligent Tuhafeni was offered a full-time job. "I'm truly a child of this company. I started at the bottom. This is where I earned my first paycheck and this is where I cut my teeth in the telecommunications network department. From transmissions, to radio, to optimisation. I've been exposed to all aspects of this work and have picked

up key skills and competencies that make me an asset to MTC”, he says. Today, MTC is reaping the rewards of its decision to invest in the future of a deserving student. The growing demand for jobs in the electronics engineering and service fields as the result of a recent proliferation of both consumer and industrial electronics products, especially in the key sector of telecommunications, allows Tuhafeni’s career to thrive. And he is cementing his reputation as a loyal, dedicated go-getter. “Every day brings new challenges.

Sometimes, the network goes off and you don’t really know what is wrong. I troubleshoot and identify the problem, pinpointing it on our big national network. Often, the problem requires that I leave my workstation and drive to the actual transmitter site with replacement parts and hardware, where I would then do installation and configuration”, Tuhafeni shares.



Despite his success and the challenges he had to overcome along the way, Tuhafeni continues to push himself in furthering his education. Currently enrolled for a Master’s degree in Electrical Engineering, specialising in Telecommunications at WITS University in South Africa, he appreciates that his story can inspire others to not give up on their dreams.

“The fast-growing telecommunications sector offers a wide array of opportunities. To venture into such career paths in this sector would be a wise decision. So, if someone wants to study telecommunications or venture into a career in telecommunications, I would say that’s the best way go for. Employment opportunities are abound and there is potential for you to become your own boss, and employ others”, he notes. “The telecommunications sector is evolving at a very fast pace. It is this evolution and the potential this sector holds that drive me in

pursuing further studies. You need to continuously develop yourself in this sector, or risk that your skill set will lose relevance. I’ll get my Masters degree, and thereafter, I want to enroll for doctoral studies. I want to venture into the telecommunications innovation and research space. I don’t see myself stopping anytime soon”, he adds.

## CAREER AMBASSADOR

Away from the demands of work and studies, Tuhafeni keeps humble in his social interactions, spending quality time with his fiancée, Anna and loved ones. “I often share my journey with others, because I believe that many can relate to it. Yes, there are many young students out there facing similar challenges as we speak. No money for food. No taxi or bus money to campus. No money for textbooks. My message to them is to never give up on your dreams. What you put in, is what you get out. I live by this credo. Keep on working hard. Keep on believing. Keep on praying”, he shares.

“My journey has been tough. But, God has put people on my path that helped me to push through and overcome adversity. My success is their success ,as well. Therefore, I can never allow my success to go to my head. Because, if I do, I might just lose my drive and them as friends. Anyway, it’s not the way I was brought up. I need to stay humble. As it is said in the Scriptures – the meek shall inherit the earth”, Tuhafeni concludes.

Tuhafeni Erastus – driven, focused and determined. A trailblazer who is embracing the potential of the thriving telecommunications sector. His story teaches us the true meaning of perseverance in the face of adversity. He is living his dream. He is living his passion!

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