

Business

Match maid for your household

Fresh out of matric and without money to get a tertiary education Lindiwe Shibambo did not imagine that one day she would own a domestic worker agency, Maid4U.

Maid4U screens, trains and places reliable helpers as per specifications needed by the potential employer.

“We screen for suitable candidates and have an interview with the potential employer to find out a bit about their personality to make sure that we look for a domestic worker that they will have the right chemistry with,” says Shibambo.

This also includes a potential employer specifying what they need in a domestic worker, from the age group, skills and whether they are looking for a stay-in domestic worker or one who is open to travelling.

Shibambo says the idea of Maid4U was borne from her colleagues coincidentally approaching her for help in finding reliable domestic workers.

“I would do my best to find someone reliable and also explain to that person that I need them to be reliable and not disappoint me because it’s my reputation on the line since these were my colleagues I was referring them to.”

The maid matches turned out to be a success.

The domestic worker turned internal auditor refers to her personal life journey where her 18 months of domestic working experience enabled her to understand the challenges of the industry, while her own struggle in getting a reliable domestic worker increased her insights in this regard.

Today she tells the domestic workers Maid4U places not to look down on the domestic skills they have because every skill counts.

“I had no skills, but I could cook, iron clothes and clean the house and I used these skills to make a living and save up to start my tertiary education,” Shibambo explains.

The agency has various training modules to sharpen the skills of Maid4U domestic workers so they are the best helpers for the households they are placed in. The agency has prospects of opening up an accredited training centre for employers to send their domestic workers for various training.

Currently the agency has six employees, three offices in Pretoria North, Centurion and Rivonia and has managed to successfully place over 500 domestic workers into

employment.

They also register their domestic workers for the Unemployment Insurance Fund and take care of any legalities and paperwork for them.

Since Maid4U officially opening its doors in 2007 Shibambo had been juggling the agency with her full-time day job. The agency has also not been without its fair share of cash flow problems.

“Sometimes we would go for two to three months without a salary, but I was fortunate to have employees that understood, when all I could afford to give them at the time was enough money for their month’s groceries.

But the business has managed to survive and has shown great potential for growth.

In June of last year, Shibambo made the decision to resign from her job that offered a guaranteed salary to fully focus on the business as it went under business incubation with the Shanduka Black Umbrellas initiative.

A move she’s grateful she took as the business got the support it needed and became Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and tax compliant.

Shibambo opted not to get into unnecessary debt by investing her salary as seed capital to mobilise the business, waiting to rather get funding once the business was ready for expansion.

After receiving numerous calls to open Maid4U franchises in various provinces across the country, Shibambo is open to the idea of opening Maid4U branches in other provinces outside of Gauteng although she does not want to franchise the business. This will enable her to keep control of the quality of the services in the branches, she says.

The only thing standing between Maid4U expanding into various branches is obtaining the necessary funding.



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