



**Bethusile Mafumana**  
Founder, Betana Software  
Development & Digital Solutions

### Building Her Own Table

From accounting to technology and entrepreneurship, Bethusile Mafumana's journey shows what can happen when skills, opportunity and determination come together.

When Digital Council Africa introduced Bethusile Mafumana, founder of Gqeberha-based digital solutions studio **Betana**, as part of our Women's Day campaign, one sentence captured the determination behind her entrepreneurial journey:

***"I got tired of waiting for a seat at the table, so I built my own table."***

But behind that statement is a journey that has been anything but straightforward.

Originally from Mthatha, Bethusile completed a BCom in Accounting before beginning her career in corporate and call-centre environments. Entrepre-

neurship was already calling, however, and after trying her hand at several ventures she experienced setbacks that temporarily knocked her confidence.

**Technology ultimately opened a different path.** Bethusile returned to university to study computer science and became involved with **Umuzi**, where exposure to freelancing and professional development helped rebuild her belief that entrepreneurship could work for her. Today, she is completing her honours degree while building Betana and working part-time at Umuzi — giving back to the organisation she credits with helping change the way she saw herself and what was possible.

We spoke to Bethusile about building a technology business from Gqeberha, the role of digital infrastructure in creating opportunity, and what she has learnt as a woman entrepreneur finding her place in South Africa's digital economy.

#### **Q What inspired you to start your own business?**

**I got tired of waiting for a seat at the table, so I built my own table.** I've always had an entrepreneurial streak. Even before Betana, I tried a few businesses. Some worked for a while, others failed spectacularly. After one particularly difficult setback, I went back into corporate and convinced myself that maybe entrepreneurship wasn't for me.

But the itch never really left. Through Umuzi, I started freelancing and slowly rebuilt my confidence. I realised I didn't need to have everything figured out to start again. Betana grew from that — wanting to create something of my own, but this time with more experience, structure and intention behind it.

#### **Q What role did Umuzi play in helping prepare you to start and grow your business?**

Umuzi didn't just teach me skills, it connected me to people and opportunities that made starting Betana feel possible, not reckless.

After my earlier businesses failed, I had lost a lot of confidence in myself as an entrepreneur. Umuzi wasn't where I learned to code, but through freelancing and soft skills development, it rebuilt my belief that I could operate as an independent professional.

It also exposed me to networks, mentorship and ways of thinking about business that I hadn't had access to before. That combination of skills, people and confidence played a big role in me deciding to try entrepreneurship again, this time with Betana.

**Q Betana is no longer a one-woman show. What has building a team taught you about leadership?**

**That leadership is less about having all the answers and more about creating enough structure for other people to do their best work.**

I've had to learn how to communicate expectations clearly, delegate without micromanaging and trust people with things I used to carry alone. I've also learned that the team will sometimes see solutions I wouldn't have thought of, and that's the point. Building Betana beyond myself has forced me to become more intentional about processes, culture and accountability.

**Q How has being based in Gqeberha shaped the way you operate?**

Being outside a major business hub means you don't get handed proximity to big clients or investors — you have to build credibility from further away. But it's also forced us to think digitally from day one. We don't rely on geography to find clients or deliver work. Our systems, communication and service have to be strong enough that where we're based becomes irrelevant. There's also something meaningful about building a serious tech business from Gqeberha. It proves that opportunity doesn't have to be concentrated in Johannesburg or Cape Town.

**Q What opportunities do reliable connectivity and digital infrastructure create for businesses outside South Africa's major cities?**

**It's levelled the playing field entirely.**

With reliable connectivity, a business in Gqeberha can pitch to a client in Johannesburg, Cape Town or even internationally without relocating. You can hire remotely, access global tools, learn new skills and deliver work from anywhere. For entrepreneurs outside major centres, digital infrastructure turns geography from a limitation into just a location. Without it, talent stays locked out of opportunities simply because of where they live.

**Q You've spoken about being underestimated in the room. Can you share an experience that shaped how you approach those situations?**

Early on, I had a client who openly questioned whether I could handle a technical project and eventually chose a male developer instead. A few months later, that same client came back praising a platform they'd seen online, not realising I'd built it.

That moment stuck with me. Not because I needed the validation, but because it confirmed something I'd already suspected: **sometimes the doubt has nothing to do with your ability.** Now, I don't waste energy trying to convince people who have already decided what I'm capable of. I let the work speak, and I focus on the clients and rooms that recognise value without needing me to prove it twice.

**Q What would you like funders, corporates and policymakers to understand about women building businesses in technology?**

**That women aren't asking for easier standards. We're asking for equal access to the starting line.** A lot of women-led businesses are building with less capital, smaller networks and fewer second chances. By the time we get into the room, we've often already had to prove more just to be there. The opportunity isn't about lowering the bar. It's about removing the extra barriers that have nothing to do with whether the business is viable or the founder is capable.

## Creating pathways from skills to opportunity

Bethusile's journey also highlights the role that skills development, professional experience and access to networks can play in opening pathways into South Africa's digital economy.

**Umuzi** creates learning-to-earning pathways across a number of growth sectors. Its digital programmes develop skills in areas including software development, data science, data engineering and UX/UI design, with training aligned to real market needs.

**The Collective X** is a not-for-profit coordinating intermediary working to strengthen South Africa's digital skills pipeline by better aligning skills development with employer demand. Its work includes innovative financing, work-integrated learning and broader ecosystem collaboration aimed at creating pathways into meaningful digital work.

Through her own experience with Umuzi, supported by The Collective X, Bethusile found something that proved particularly important in her journey: the confidence, professional skills and networks that helped her see entrepreneurship as a possibility again.