

**PERFORMANTA****PRESS RELEASE****Security Needs Skills!**

**Johannesburg, 24 January 2022:** As we celebrate International Day of Education on 24 January, we must promote skills that enable Africa's digital future. Yet such skills remain an acute challenge: more than half of companies globally report they cannot find all the skilled people they hope to hire, according to Statista surveys. It's no less crucial in South Africa – late last year, Remchannel revealed that 69% of local companies struggle to attract or retain skilled employees.

Skills shortages are particularly important for cybersecurity. As we become more connected, criminals can undermine our progress. People won't embrace the advantages of digital if they don't feel safe. This is why cybersecurity company, Performanta, pursues education and skills development as part of its business strategy, and supports ground breaking skills-development NGOs such as Infinite Family.

**Helping secure the world**

Cybersecurity represents an extraordinary advantage for South Africans. As a nation with staggering unemployment numbers, yet also a large and eager youthful population, promoting cybersecurity skills and careers helps develop a generation of professionals who can establish Africa as a leading digital economy.

"Demand is constantly growing for more people with cybersecurity skills," says Chereen Godwin, Chief People Officer for Performanta. "We see it as strategically important to invest in skills development in this space not only as a way to give back to the communities we work with but to help grow this important sector. It's critical for our industry that more learners are introduced to the cybersecurity world and see how those skills can shape their careers and take them places."

To help bring that message to more learners, Performanta supports Infinite Family, an NGO that brings valuable, online, live mentorship right into learners' communities via its LaunchPad computer labs.

"Infinite Family complements our vision. It uses webcams to connect learners with mentors who provide advice and guidance during some of the learners' most crucial years. Infinite Family helps teens and young adults in South Africa develop the grit, perspective and ambition to go further than they ever thought possible," says Godwin.

**Showing young adults what is possible**

Today, using webcams to connect learners and mentors isn't unusual. But Infinite Family pioneered this approach 19 years ago when its founder, Amy Stokes, and her husband visited South Africa to adopt a baby boy.



They gained more than a child - they met a nation of children with so much potential yet were held back by the spectres of historical injustices, dangerous townships, and families devastated by HIV/AIDs across the country. Stokes saw an opportunity to use webcams and close that gap.

"Kids can't just walk away from the situation that they were born into," says Stokes. "The birth lottery dramatically affects all of your life opportunities. And the birth lottery often gives South Africa's children the raw end of the deal multiple times in a row. The parent, guardian or caretaker is doing everything they can just to keep food on the table and everybody healthy so we use webcam technology to bring experiences and expertise from around the world into kids' lives not only to teach them but to motivate and inspire them."

"Our teenage years are one of the most crucial periods for our success," says Stokes. "It's a foundational time where we discover our place in the world and where our independence can take us. But teens' physiology – the development of their brains and bodies - compels them to flex their independence before they have the long-term perspective to avoid bad short-term choices such as dropping out of school, teenage pregnancy, or picking up destructive habits such as substance abuse. The impact of these choices grows by magnitudes in communities where opportunities are virtually non-existent and children are bombarded by toxic stress," says Stokes.

### **The difference of an education**

According to Statistics SA, the average monthly income of a secondary school dropout is only R2,600 per month. Someone who completes Matric/grade 12 can expect at least four times as much and over eight times if they achieve a tertiary qualification such as a bachelor's degree.

But the odds are stacked against many South African children. A lack of access to responsible mentors for sounding boards and advice is a significant barrier for their futures.

Infinite Family virtually connects teens and young adults in South Africa with mentors in 18 countries. It trains the mentors and applies several measures to monitor the students' progress continually. The NGO's programmes cover life and professional skills, as well as educational elements. Infinite Family will soon be launching an online University and is also planning to launch a virtual Matric Finishing program to help people who prematurely abandoned their high school careers.

"It's incredible what regular repeated access to someone with advice and perspective, even just once a week, can do for someone as they develop into an adult," says Stokes. "It's great to work with Performanta because they take such a forward-looking and high impact approach with their educational investments. They are on the leading-edge in supporting the full menu of resources that teens need to become successful adults in the digital future."

### **From mentorship to security skills**

Performanta is a proud corporate sponsor of Infinite Family. As a BEE level-1 multinational company, it actively pursues development and educational strategies. In addition to financial

support, Performanta aims to expand Infinite Family's mentor network through its employees and partners.

This collaboration is part of a broader spectrum of activities at Performanta, including internal learnerships, bursaries and mentorships aimed at tertiary-level students. Partnering with Infinite Family expands that scope to secondary school learners.

"Education and skills development are crucial parts of our business strategy. The need for more skilled cybersecurity professionals is immense. It benefits us as a company that we can create awareness from young ages about cybersecurity, because there's very little awareness out there on topics such as career paths. We need more people to want to go into this industry so we actively develop partnerships such as the one with Infinite Family, as well as individuals - especially new entrants into the marketplace," says Godwin.

Individuals pursuing a cybersecurity career can contact Performanta at [www.performanta.com](http://www.performanta.com) to learn more, and anyone interested in supporting Infinite Family as a mentor or sponsor can reach them at [www.infinitefamily.org](http://www.infinitefamily.org).

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## **ABOUT PERFORMANTA**

Performanta was founded in 2010 and has over 150 staff worldwide, including former CIOs/CISOs from large enterprises. It has a global footprint with a team of 80 analysts working in two SOCs, helping to secure customers across 50 countries, from offices in the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, South Africa and the USA. Performanta offers a consultative approach to people, process and technology, focusing on security projects in line with adversarial, accidental and environmental business risk. With a holistic cybersecurity view, we understand the modus operandi of the perpetrator and accordingly build an intelligent defence mechanism to make customer environments less susceptible to attacks.

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### **About Infinite Family**

Infinite Family is a worldwide, online, live mentoring organization that motivates black South African teens to transform their lives by creating opportunities through choices, actions and hard work during high school. With comprehensive training and real-time support, our volunteer mentors, living in South Africa and 17 other countries develop their mentees'

strengths in: education, career preparation, technology literacy, life skills and communication. By helping them learn to manage the toxic stress of growing up surrounded by extreme violence and poverty, Video Mentors help their mentees build resilience, resourcefulness and responsibility as they work toward economic stability and self-reliance. Since 2013, ninety-seven percent (97%) of our mentored 12th grade students have qualified to become First Generation advanced education students vs. 60% of their non-mentored peers. To date, over 1,100 teens and pre-teens have benefitted from almost 40,000 hours of video mentorship lasting up to 10 years per student.

Infinite Family works in partnership with corporations, schools and community-based organisations. Long-time corporate partners include: Adobe, BT, Clarix Technologies, Dimension Data, Holiday Inn Sandton, Performanta and Pick n Pay.

Founder Amy Stokes was a 2011 CNN Top Ten Hero.

For more information, please visit: [www.infinitefamily.org](http://www.infinitefamily.org)