

Libstar on the lookout for innovative food businesses to incubate

South African JSE-listed food producer Libstar is on the hunt for well-established, food-focused small businesses to partner with through its new Libstar Nova division.



Umatie, Libstar Nova's first acquisition. Source: Supplied

Libstar Nova is the company's incubator project, committed to working alongside entrepreneurs to help nurture the businesses they built and scale them at an accelerated pace.

Bringing top talent into the Libstar fold

Johan Greeff, chief growth officer for Libstar, says, “Libstar Nova takes us back to the roots of how we were originally founded. By partnering with local entrepreneurs, we can move into adjacent categories, explore new innovations, and access core capabilities and talent. Most importantly, we can leverage all our resources and expertise to be a real catalyst for growth for South African small businesses. That’s our aim. We want these businesses to fly. That’s what sets Libstar Nova apart and gets to the heart of what our family is all about.”



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28 Mar 2022



Greeff says that targeting innovative entrepreneurs brings top talent into the Libstar fold. “Our entrepreneurial value is to innovate boldly and work tirelessly. By seeking people who have already built successful ventures, we typically find

individuals whose values and tenacity match our own. As a business with a family philosophy, we're also after family-run ventures. Umatie ticks both boxes."

Umatie acquisition

The division's first acquisition, which occurred this year, is that of Umatie, a South African family-focused baby and children food brand.

Umatie was founded by two sisters, Anna Olivier and Judi de Jongh, in 2012. When De Jongh was little, she couldn't pronounce 'tamatie', so she'd ask her mom for an 'umatie' – hence the name. When Olivier's first baby started solids, Olivier delighted in making her special dishes to try. Seeing how much her baby loved the food, Olivier and De Jongh decided to share these tasty meals with other babies.

Leaning on their shared passion for good food, the sisters birthed the Umatie brand, which aims to make weaning effortless and help busy parents 'buy' back time to spend with their families.



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On the Libstar acquisition, Olivier adds, "Just as little ones need food to grow and reach their full potential, so do businesses. Umatie has big dreams, and with the support of Libstar Nova, the sky is the limit for our Umatie baby! We remain fully immersed in running all aspects of the business and are excited about the backing from Libstar Nova to assist with this growth. We look forward to making our brand accessible to many more South African households."

With Libstar's might behind it, De Jongh says the sisters are aiming to grow Umatie's retail footprint and add exciting new baby and kid products to the mix. The brand will expand at scale but will stay true to its roots. Olivier says, "We have painstakingly ensured that we have a reliable, quality product before taking the next step to scale and expand. We believe that if you do something, you should do it well! This has also contributed to Umatie being very much loved by our customers."

Libstar has acquired a majority share in Umatie and will partner with Olivier and De Jongh. Greeff adds, "We invest for the long-term. We're not just adding capital. We are partnering with entrepreneurs on the journey."



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Greeff concludes that Libstar is looking for other established ventures (between R15 to R50m per annum turnover) to partner with. Its mission is to support local entrepreneurs that share its values and passion for great food. “If that’s you, we’d love to chat! Libstar Nova gets to back to our roots and encapsulates our groups’ purpose – to enrich people’s daily lives. By investing in local businesses, we give back to the country on multiple levels in a way that makes sound business sense.”

He adds that Nova has many exciting acquisitions lined up, with particular focus in the health and localised supply arenas. “Watch this space!”

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