

Modular building manufacturer addresses South Africa's skills deficit

The South African bill of rights states that, "Everyone has the right to a basic education, including an adult basic education." Education is essential for the transformation of South Africa's society, providing individuals with the knowledge required to bring about social, economic and political change. Despite this, South Africa still struggles from a skills deficit with current estimates suggesting that less than half of school starters will go on to complete Matric. To address this shortfall proactive businesses are implementing adult education programmes to bridge the skills gap from within.

One company that is setting the benchmark for employee development is Kwikspace Modular Buildings (Kwikspace). As part of their adult learning programme, Kwikspace offers employees who have not completed their basic education the opportunity to enrol in an Adult Education and Training (AET) Programme which provides training from National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level one to level four, which is the equivalent of a grade 4 to 10 level of schooling.

Comments Cynthia Kubheka, Human Resource Executive at Kwikspace: "Through our staff training programmes, we endeavour to provide our employees with the tools they need to reach their full potential. We have been blessed with a workforce that is eager to learn and this year we are proud to have 34 employees enrolled in our adult learning programme."

However, completing one's basic education is hardly the end of the road and the recent spate of university protests have brought the economic barriers to obtaining a higher education sharply into focus. Therefore, Kwikspace employees who have achieved a NQF level four or passed Matric are eligible to further supplement their education by taking part in a series of learnerships including project management, business administration and business management.

Adds Cynthia: "There is a high level of poverty among young people in South Africa, making it difficult for some to pursue secondary or tertiary education or training. Kwikspace's extended adult learning programme is an attempt to remove some of the barriers to obtaining a higher education and provide real opportunities for transformation.

Despite high levels of unemployment in the country, employers still often struggle to fill jobs. According to the 2016 Manpower South Africa Talent Shortage Survey, 34% of local employers are having difficulty filling jobs, citing lack of experience, lack of hard skills and a lack of available applicants as some of the reasons. This has led to local employers, such as Kwikspace, looking for solutions within their organisations and 86% claim to be training and developing existing employees in order to fill open positions.

Concludes Cynthia: "The benefit of developing employees is two-fold. Not only do you have a more skilled workforce but also a more engaged workforce, motivated by the prospect of upliftment and opportunities for success."

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