

Internships Can Make A Dent In South Africa's Unemployment Rate, Says Otel

Internships are effective public private sector partnerships that have the potential to make a huge dent in South Africa's youth unemployment which is currently at 38.2%, according to Stats SA.

That's according to Independent telecoms firm Otel Communications which believes government can lead the country's investment in internship programmes through proper funding, while prospective interns choose study paths like ICT that will equip them with valuable skills the country needs, and business provides platforms for young people to hone these skills in dynamic working environments.

"There are at least several hundred thousand active large corporations and SMEs in South Africa that are capable of mentoring and ultimately hiring at least one intern each year. That amounts to a massive potential dent in unemployment in one fell swoop," says Otel CEO, Rad Jankovic.

Mr Jankovic is a passionate believer in internships as a poverty-reduction tool and last year revamped the company's internship programme in consultation with MICT Seta (Media, Information, Communication & Technology Sector Education and Training Authority). The latter facilitates quality skills development at all levels in the MICT sector in partnership with leading sector firms like Otel.

"Internships are crucial to the country because they increase the value of new entrants in the marketplace while providing them with a sustainable income as they gain that all-important coalface business experience," said Mr Jankovic.

Otel has been so impressed with the results of its internship programme, and its current crop of interns, that it has offered full time employment to all seven participants. The interns were sourced from South Africa's leading tertiary institutions and placed on an accelerated learning path within various company departments including support, marketing, development and technical. They performed so admirably, and beyond expectations, that Otel has committed to upping the programme to 10 new interns over the coming 12 months.

"Success is important to us so we made sure we set our Otel interns up for success - and succeed they did," commented Otel CEO, Rad Jankovic. "We're very proud of the potential that exists within this country and we're thrilled to have taken some of that phenomenal young potential on board," he said.

Mr Jankovic explained that each intern was assigned a clear project to complete during their tenure along with a mentor who worked closely with each intern over the entire year.

"We identified proper measurements for success and encouraged growth and innovation from our interns throughout the programme. The goal was to prepare our interns for success beyond their one-year internships and we believe we've achieved on that front," says Mr Jankovic.

On the rationale for the intern programme, Mr Jankovic said: "Our carrier-grade VoIP services now extend over 250 000 km of fibre. We need the right people to take us well over the quarter million kilometre mark and we believe our internship programme will connect us with the best available talent. In addition to the benefits for Otel, we love the fact that we're helping more talented young South Africans make a positive contribution to the national fiscus.

“Our goal is to one day be named as one of South Africa’s best employers and we always have that objective in mind,” says Mr Jankovic. The company is working closely with MICT Seta on the further development of its internship programme.

Otel began its corporate life more than a decade ago as an alternative telecoms provider specialising in VoIP. VoIP is a communications solution where voice travels across the same network and in the same way as data.

Anyone currently studying a qualification relevant to the MICT industry, at any local tertiary institution, can email hr@otel.co.za or visit www.otel.co.za to register their interest in the 2019 Otel Communications intern programme.