

Considering taking on an intern?

More than 150,000 graduates from higher education institutions are likely to want join the workforce in 2015 so it's that time of year when business owners and HR departments get more internship requests.



There are also already around 600,000 graduates who are unemployed. Most do not yet have any work experience and businesses of all sizes are being called upon to help ease the youth unemployment crisis by offering internships.

South Africans who study believe that they are more likely to find work. This may be so, but there's a desperate need to alleviate youth unemployment, particularly for those who have a tertiary education. South Africa has the third highest unemployment rate in the world for people aged 15 to 24, according to the 2014 World Economic Forum Global Risk report. Estimates of unemployment for under 35s have put the figure at close to 70%.

Due to high youth unemployment, Internfit.co.za, a national website dedicated to matching employers and interns is appealing to all South African businesses to consider taking on interns. Traditionally corporates have been the main employer of interns. They have structured programmes which help to maximise the experience for the intern, and to meet the long term HR requirements for the company. Small and medium sized businesses can also benefit however.

The Employment Tax Incentive gives employers an incentive to employ young people aged between 18 and 29 by offering a subsidy of up to 50%. The intern needs to be South African citizen aged between 18-29, earning R6000 or less.

Says David Feinberg, founder of Internfit.co.za, "Any size company can benefit from interns because they are able to handpick future talent, train and retain young talent and future industry leaders. Interns help to ease work load, they are extremely cost effective and in South Africa you can get up to 50% of the intern's salary as a tax incentive."

Internship positions may be paid or unpaid. Sometimes an employer offers only an allowance for food and/or travel which

is around R2 000 - R3 000. Those that are paid are offered in the region of R8,000 to R10,000 for more specialised qualifications. The amount paid and whether to pay depends on sectors and what the intern has studied.

Feinberg continues, "According to studies that Internfit has conducted and international statistics, an intern who has gone through a structured programme and been nurtured has more than a 70% chance of being retained and becoming a full time employee. The experience gained for the intern is invaluable whether they are offered a full time position or not. It is a win-win situation - businesses are able to get more done at a lower cost, while giving graduates the opportunity to get practical experience."

Internfit.co.za was started by university students who saw the difficulties of securing an internship. The site now has 6000 students and graduates available for positions. They include IT, Marketing, Finance/Accounts, Graphic Design and various other qualifications. All interns have tertiary education.

Bidvest companies, Ashburton Investments, Discovery, Liberty Life and many smaller companies including startups have successfully used the service. 90% of internships listed on the site are filled successfully.

An internship is a way that a final year student or a recent graduate can gain work experience and learn to implement what he or she has studied. Internships run for a set period of time.

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