

Creative industries are key to opening new jobs for SA youth

South Africa's marketing and advertising industry faces a shortage of a number of key skills, especially in the digital space. Yet, the country has a large pool of jobless young people hungry for employment opportunities.

That means there is an excellent opportunity for South Africa's marketing and advertising sector to help itself and the broader economy by investing in skills development for the youth, says Diane Charton, managing director of the Red & Yellow School.



Diane Charton

Social instability

Around 50% of South Africans aged between 15 and 24 are unemployed - the third highest unemployment rate in young people according to the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Risk 2014 report. Sadly, the older the unemployed youth get, without finding employment, the less likely they are to find jobs, says Charton. "This is a crisis for South Africa because it contributes towards social instability," she says. "It is also a tragic waste of human potential - one of the biggest potential assets we have in our young country."

Charton says that the cost of training and education is the major barrier to entry into the marketing and advertising world for many talented young people. What's more, people from poor backgrounds usually need to bring in income to help support their families, which means that they are unable to dedicate themselves for years to full-time unpaid studies.

As a result, the industry suffers a shortage of quality entry-level skills, while many young South Africans struggle to find work. "It is in our interests as an industry to help change this picture," says Charton.

She adds that the advertising and marketing industry has an opportunity to create the next generation of skilled, eager and ambitious minds by investing in youth development. In addition to creating the human capital they need to grow, they can also gain practical benefits such as the youth employment tax incentive by doing so.

Equipping students with skills

For its part, Red & Yellow recently launched the Red & Yellow Springboard Marketing Institute (RYSMI) to help address the challenge. The Institute aims to grow the industry's skills base by giving young South Africans from previously disadvantaged backgrounds an opportunity to develop the skills they need to participate in the sector. In addition, the Institute aims to help an industry that is often criticised for its slow pace of transformation to become more representative.

The learnership offers young students the opportunity to complete RYSMI's National Certificate of Advertising, which is accredited as a Level 5 qualification in the National Qualification Framework (NQF).

The National Certificate of Advertising comprises of six months of structured classroom learning with the Institute and six months of on-the-job training with an employer in the industry. Charton says that there is a heavy emphasis in the course on equipping students with practical skills that they can take into the workplace.

"We believe that it is important for the students and their potential employers that they can enter the workforce and be productive right away. It means that the students who came through the course can start earning income as soon as they find a placement."



New Red & Yellow Springboard students eagerly attending lectures

Since this article, 50 students from diverse backgrounds have signed their contracts at the Red & Yellow Springboard Marketing Institute (RYSMI), as a means to starting their learnerships. This is also set to mark the first step forward towards changing and diversifying the local marketing and advertising industry.

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