

# Just-in-time training can get youth working

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Following a month focussed on our youth, we are still left pondering the perilous state of their future and that of our country.



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The government's recent commitment to create an additional 2 million jobs over the next decade is simply not enough to resolve the youth unemployment crisis. Our numbers are worse than poor; 55% for those aged 15-24 are jobless. Our graduate unemployment rate of 31% is the worst in the world.

We can forgive the youth for being frustrated and angry.

We all know that our flat year-on-year GDP 'growth' for the first quarter of 2019 does not allow the economy to absorb the talented youth coming out of the education system, continuing to worsen the employment crisis. Also contributing to the problem is the fact that many workers are retiring later than they previously did, leaving less room for work opportunities across the employment chain.

The fourth industrial revolution further compounds this crisis. Entry level jobs, typically the steppingstone into work for young people, are more and more being automated away. This does not only apply to so-called blue-collar workers; the same phenomenon exists in the accounting and legal industries too.

## Nurturing the growing gig opportunity

On the flip side, technology has created the advent of gig opportunities; a way to work outside of traditional permanent employment. And while there are many concerns about legal rights, lack of career progression, stagnant pay and lack of benefits, we cannot ignore the opportunities created by gig work.

It's more predictable and reliable than casual labour, and many prefer the flexibility and sense of control it offers. Informal opportunities and self-employment will continue to be important ways in which young people sustain themselves while growing their skills, as large corporates continue to downsize.

Technology has also made it a lot easier for candidates and companies to connect given the advent of search, social media and online job boards. Leading companies are already using artificial intelligence to match skills and experience with jobs, in the process casting the net wider to find an appropriate candidate.

This trend will accelerate as the algorithms have more data flowing through them. Of course, in South Africa, we need to get more young people into this digital net which requires cheaper access to data.

Despite its pros and cons, we cannot ignore that fact that technology comes with an array of new work opportunities - jobs that didn't exist even five years ago, and that people are not yet trained for.

## **Creating an age of employment success**

Employers also have an obligation to create opportunities for smart, young graduates and school leavers. On-the-job learning is critical to success. It's disheartening and counter-productive to growth when organisations claim that they would love to employ first-time workers but are too busy to handhold them to success, so recruit experienced hires instead.

We are encouraged to see the opposite of this phenomena at some of our clients who see the benefit of bringing large numbers of inexperienced youth into their organisations and introducing interventions to get them productive in this evolving world of work.

We can't expect educational institutions and youth employment programmes to always be able to prepare students for the jobs that we don't yet know about. In the fast-evolving, tech-centric world in which we find ourselves, it's imperative to ensure that all teams are constantly trained on the new skills they need to succeed. Just-in-time training, including the use of micro-courses as workplace skills requirements change, will result in a nimbler and more capable workforce which leaves huge opportunities to train young people on new skills for new jobs too.

Think about it seriously and act accordingly.

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