How upskilling employees can help SA corporates in the future

The latest report from the World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs* estimates that by 2020, more than a third of the desired core skill sets needed by most occupations will be comprised of skills that are not yet considered crucial to the job today.

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The report highlights that social skills, such as persuasion, emotional intelligence and teaching others, will be in higher demand across industries, than narrow technical skills. These include skills such as programming or equipment operation, in essence, technical skills will need to be supplemented with strong social and collaboration skills.

It is therefore imperative that South African organisations allow their employees to continuously upskill themselves with these rare skills to help them stay relevant within their organisation and industry.

"There is a considerable need within various sectors in South Africa for professionals to upskill. Not only will this benefit organisations, because they have a workforce which is highly skilled, but it will undoubtedly benefit the professional, by helping that individual get promoted or diversify into an entirely new position in an organisation," says Franco Human, director of Pearson Professional at Pearson South Africa.

However, Human explains that because of demanding work schedules and the importance of having a personal life, professionals are finding it difficult to complete courses, because they simply don't have the time to give it the attention it deserves.

Online courses are usually the answer and a great way for professionals to upskill. However, Human warns that an online course is sometimes demanding on your time depending on the level of the course, and some professionals need motivation or an incentive in order to complete them.

E-learning and more conventional methods

In order to truly make inroads into the serious lack of skills and ensure that professionals follow through and complete their courses, a combination of e-learning and more conventional methods is needed.

"With typical e-learning courses, we find that many students had high interest in starting the courses, but with the hustle and bustle of modern life, many failed to complete courses in the past. However, by combining e-learning, online networking, online student advisors and face-to-face sessions, this will help increase the number of people who will actually complete their course. Some people find it easier to complete courses when they have someone to help and advise them through it. We find that this works best to motivate our learners," explains Human.

To help narrow the gap for South African professionals, a new innovative project called Pearson Professional was launched. Pearson Professional combines both state-of-the-art e-learning modules with trusted face-to-face learning sessions. Pearson Professional's face to face training is specifically positioned within the Skills Education Training Authorities (SETA) range and utilises continued professional development (CPD) points and looks at the many scarce skills in South Africa.

"We looked at what these skills are and what programming and training are required to upskill South Africans in these skills. Some of these skills include information technology (IT), ethical hacking, cyber security, data analyses, soft skills, presentation and training skills," adds Human.