

The Knowledge Trust to host Education and Career Expo on WhatsApp

The global pandemic has disrupted all aspects of life, and across the world, people have relied heavily and ever-increasingly on technology and digital tools to strive for continuity in education, work, and relationships.

However, in South Africa, many children and youth cannot afford the latest laptops and reliable internet connection they need to pivot effectively to online school or progress in their tertiary education and early career development.



Source: Supplied

According to Stats SA, the overall unemployment rate in the country increased to 43.2% in the first quarter of 2021, and under the expanded definition, the youth unemployment rate for those aged 15 to 24 years stood at a staggering 74.7%.

Accessible education

This had led to The Knowledge Trust's recent announcement that it will be hosting the world's first Education and Career Expo event entirely on the WhatsApp platform. "We quickly realized that we had to connect with and deliver to our members through platforms they can afford and that they are able to use every day," says Jaryd Raizon, country manager of The Knowledge Trust in South Africa.

"With a 99% penetration amongst young South Africans, WhatsApp is the obvious platform to use, and so, our challenge has been how to redesign and rebuild services and courses, and now our events so that they work effectively for our members and partners on WhatsApp."

The Knowledge Trust is a network that connects over 400,000 young South Africans and 450 commercial partners in the effort to provide education and training, internships and work opportunities. Their mission over the pandemic years has demanded a different kind of innovation and creative problem-solving.

The Knowledge Trust has so far launched a WhatsApp recruitment and interview bot for employers, released WhatsApp nano-courses in partnership with Sacap (South African College of Applied Psychology) and TSIBA business school, as well as a host of other innovative engagement and learning tools including a WhatsApp CV Builder tool.

Raizon says: "Since launching the recruitment bot six months ago, over 10 million messages have been exchanged by more than 100,000 youth in the processing of hundreds of thousands of applications and interviews. Thousands of young people are being placed into jobs and skills programmes despite the severe disruptions of the pandemic.

"When we gave our members the option, 87% of them surveyed chose to apply for jobs, learnerships and bursaries on WhatsApp rather than our website, because it was cheaper and more convenient."

Education affordability

The hosting of the upcoming Career Expo on WhatsApp opens up the event to the vast numbers of unemployed youth who have little to no access to career guidance, career development opportunities and even the basic marketing and recruitment information provided by tertiary educational institutions online.

While conventional virtual events are widely regarded as 'accessible', the realities of South Africa's exorbitant data costs and the tech infrastructure you need to attend are still a significant barrier to entry. By contrast, apart from the ubiquitous use of WhatsApp amongst young South Africans, 89% of those surveyed by The Knowledge Trust say that they can afford WhatsApp-specific data bundles.

Ninety-seven percent say they would use WhatsApp to complete online courses and apply for jobs. Even prior to its launch, The Knowledge Trust Career Expo via WhatsApp has already notched up more than 8,000 early registrations.

Raizon concludes: "With the launch of the Career Expo on WhatsApp, and our other engagements on the platform, The Knowledge Trust is ushering a new era in the way that education institutions and employers can connect with South Africa's curious and promising young talent. It's important that we understand where our young people are at, what their roadblocks are and use their preferred and most accessible platforms to more easily inform and educate, connect and engage."

Registration for The Knowledge Trust Career Expo via [WhatsApp](#) is free and available at 084 030 9432.

To exhibit or participate in the WhatsApp Expo, email: expo@knowledgetrust.org.