

Job safety and security is top priority for employees - survey

Universum SA released the findings of its annual rankings survey on Friday, 7 June 2019, to reveal "[SA's Most Attractive Employers 2019](#)". This year, nearly 23,000 working professionals and over 45,000 students participated in the survey to share their opinions and views on career goals and ideal employers.



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It is clear that the tough economic, political and social landscape has had a major impact, with both target groups prioritising security and stability from employers. "Security in this case does not mean an environment where they are wanting a job for life," says Universum SA country manager, Keshia Serage. "This group of nearly 70,000 South Africans were asking themselves whether the employers they work for have what it takes to survive the current tough economic conditions." This points to why South African banks have captured the attention of local business talent to become the industry of choice, followed by the accounting, auditing, and financial services industries.

SA's Most Attractive Employers 2019 - student choices

- **Business/Commerce:** SA Reserve Bank
- **Humanities/Liberal Arts/Education:** DHET
- **Law:** Constitutional Court
- **Natural sciences:** CSIR
- **Sciences:** Dept of Health
- **Engineering/Technology:** Sasol

To view the Top 10 in each category, see: [Universum South Africa 2019 rankings](#).

SA companies have a retention problem

Over half of young South African professionals are unhappy in their jobs and are looking to change employers within the next 12 months. "From the nearly 20,000 professionals that responded to our survey, we see satisfaction levels are sitting at an average of 6 out of 10," warns Serage. This speaks to a greater need and focus on how employers engage with talent. On average, employees change jobs within the first two years of employment. "The implications of this are that the

employer carries the training and development costs to the benefit of other organisations,” explains Serage.

It is evident from the study that business and commerce students rank the need to be entrepreneurial, innovative or creative at work, at top of the list of important attributes, followed by the need for job security, and wanting to be a leader or manager of people. These attributes overtake the desire to have an international career – perhaps good news for corporates, when there’s evidence of more and more professionals emigrating than ever before – particularly young black professionals.

With stability high on the list of needs, it is crucial that South African employers prove their mettle, otherwise we will experience further talent seep to countries that are perceived as being more stable. “It goes without saying that employers need to manage their relevance and attractiveness to talent,” says Serage. “It is critical for employers to ensure that their employer brands clearly articulate what they stand for and what talent can expect in their employer- employee relationship.”

How does SA stack up against its global counterparts?

In as much as the economic challenges might be pushing talent’s focus on international opportunities, the migration trends are more global because both employers and talent globally are showing an interest in international opportunities. It has become an advantage for talent to have “international experience”.

Universum’s 2019 survey reveals that while working for an international organisation is attractive to South Africans, so too is working for a national organisation and to an extent, also working in the public sector. Competition for the right talent continues to be intense. “The space is getting interesting, with growing student interest in working for start-ups or starting their own businesses, more so than students globally,” says Serage.

We are also increasingly catching up with our global counterparts when looking at employment choices. South African talent used to have a smaller number of employers in their consideration basket compared to their average global counterparts. South Africans used to consider about 13-15 employers on average, while the global average was 25. “In the past two years, we have seen this number increasing to 20 employers,” says Serage.

What is SA’s talent looking for in employers?

Even though there is great talk about the different generations overall, we have seen that all of the different generations have some shared preferences when it comes to their careers. Universum SA has found that they are all looking for professional training and development, leadership opportunities, inspiring leadership, and ethics in the workplace. Generation Z (those born between 1995 – 2010) have a sharper focus on earnings, while millennials have a higher focus on leaders that will support their development.

Universum SA advises that employers look at talent attraction, engagement and retention challenges more strategically. The recruitment world has, in the past, forced talent to view employment as a job instead of a part of life. “Most communication used to be around the roles and the employer’s industry,” says Serage. Talent now looks beyond the role. What is the work

environment like? What are the job characteristics? What is the advancement potential? If these can't be answered, it has a significant effect on mobility from job to job, country to country with a concerning impact on the already stretched economy.

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