

# Skills training academy creates opportunities for Western Cape's unemployed youth

EduPower Skills Academy has opened the doors of its new Cape Town campus. According to managing director, Rajan Naidoo, the new Cape Town campus has been established to meet the demand for high-quality skills development in the region.



Source: Supplied

The launch of the Athlone-based Academy is a milestone for the business and one that is welcomed by the company's Western Cape clients.

"Through our Academies in Durban and Johannesburg, we have refined a training model that not only benefits our clients by facilitating high-quality learnerships, we also deliver life-changing skills development for South Africa's unemployed youth off which they are able to build sustainable careers," says Naidoo.

Committed to making a difference for those who need it the most, EduPower's skills development model focuses on providing opportunities for both able-bodied learners as well as People with Disabilities. Over the past eight years, the company has been instrumental in changing the lives of hundreds of unemployed youth who would otherwise have never been able to access the job market. These opportunities will now accelerate with the introduction of the Cape Town campus.

"We chose the Athlone location as it is a central hub in the Western Cape and easily accessible for our learners. It is also large enough so that both the training and work experience required for our learnerships sit under one roof," explains Naidoo.

## Developing skills

Located in an area of Athlone that is being transformed into a BPO and Tech Hub, EduPower's ground floor campus

features a state-of-the-art training centre; accommodating up to 2,000 learners, it offers classroom training supported by hands-on learning in the Academy's custom-built contact centre.

"One of the key growth sectors in South Africa is Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) so we focus our work experience on upskilling our learners to meet the needs of this industry. While we offer a number of different learnerships, our model is based on delivering structured experiential on-the-job learning opportunities through which our youth can develop the career skills most in demand by today's employers," says Naidoo.

## Focus areas

From day one of their learnerships, the academy's learners are deeply immersed in the contact centre world, developing practical and relevant skills, says Naidoo. A learnership requires 10 hours of evidence-based work experience for every credit of the qualification being completed so working a regular workweek, EduPower's learners gain this experience by dialling live campaigns, not simulations.

"From surveys to lead generation campaigns to sales and so much more, our learners get real experience that develops both their abilities and their confidence. The result is a proven model that provides invaluable experience for young people who struggle to access the labour market and bridges them successfully into call centre agents," says Naidoo.

The success that EduPower's learners have enjoyed in securing long-term employment in contact centres after completing their qualifications has been part of the motivation for the Academy to expand to the Western Cape, says Rajan. Cape Town is fast becoming the call centre nucleus on the continent and the sector currently employs more than 60,000 people. In fact, over the past five years, the regional BPO industry has created 35,000 additional job opportunities to service the international community."

"Our learnerships will, therefore, not only meet our client's skills development requirements, with such a large BPO market, our learners will have the skills required to ensure that upon completion of their qualification, they will be able to secure jobs and build sustainable careers. And at the end of the day, that's why we do what we do."

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