

Business case for employing youth



By [Brian Eagar](#)

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In South Africa, June is celebrated as Youth Month, and South Africa is fortunate to have a youthful nation. However, recent unemployment statistics pertaining to young people is cause for concern. Approximately 60% of young people in South Africa are currently unemployed, which is alarming. This paints a dire picture for our youth, especially since many of them also believe that they are not being fairly compensated for their efforts and would rather not work at all if this lack of appreciation for their contribution continues.



Towerstone CEO, Brian Eagar

This concern, however, is not isolated to South Africa. The CIPD, the UK's professional body for HR and people development, has previously warned employers that they need to become more involved in developing young people if they are to contribute to reversing the youth unemployment trend. According to their research, the majority of employers (71%) believe they can play a role in reducing youth unemployment. However, a quarter of employers have not hired anyone aged 16-24 over the past few years – regardless of whether they have a college degree or not – and only about 56% plan to do so in the coming years.

“Employing youth has clear benefits to business and society, but there is some work to be done in encouraging and supporting more employers to take on and develop young people,” said CIPD CEO, Peter Chase.

Aside from business sustainability, hiring young people is crucial for the sustainability of our society.

Today's workforce boasts the largest number of people from different generations working together in history, resulting in thriving and diverse work environments. Gen Z (born from 1996 onwards) are the most recent entrants on the scene, but negative stereotypes often deter employers from investing in these progressive and entrepreneurial individuals. However, it is estimated that the number of Gen Z employees will triple by 2030, which means that enticing them is critical to the survival of your organisation. The millennial and Gen Z generations have a strong desire to make a difference in the world, which is why it is so vital to harness their energy.

As young people grow older, they acquire new skills and abilities that enable them to be more flexible and open to learning new things; to be more inventive, energetic, and optimistic. But to accomplish this, we must believe in them and provide them with opportunities to flourish and grow.

Hiring and investing in young people contributes to a more experienced and skilled workforce that continues to grow in value over time. This helps to avoid future shortages of experienced and skilled employees.

The following are typical advantages:

- They are digital natives: They have a wealth of unique insights and ideas because they grew up during a period when businesses were increasingly moving to digital.
- They are passionate and motivated to make positive changes within their workspaces and the world around them.
- This diverse group represents your future potential clients and customers: smaller businesses hire them because they know that it can help them secure future growth and give them a competitive advantage.
- They have unique skills, attitudes, and motivations: A significant number of young people have project ideas with great potential, and while businesses have not yet been able to put a number on it, the investment will pay off and have a positive effect on a multitude of people and industries due to the selfless nature of young people in the workplace.
- They are always looking for ways to improve their workflows and are not hesitant to question superiors about why certain practices are always followed. Management should use this as an opportunity to learn more about their employees and their needs, and they should view these questions as opportunities to improve their businesses.
- It is cost-effective: The earlier an employer invests in employee training and development, the less time and money needs to be spent on training and upskilling new employees who come in with different ways of working tailored to the businesses from which they come. Employers have the opportunity to fine-tune the skills of their younger employees to the benefit of their businesses, which contributes to increased productivity and general happiness in the workplace since employees feel they can make a meaningful contribution.

However, to truly harness these benefits and secure the loyalty of the next generation of workers, you must be intentional about creating an environment in which they can thrive. They are especially eager to contribute to the development of an engaging organisational culture, and we must take advantage of this opportunity.

In conclusion, today's youth will be the labour force of the future and money earners of tomorrow, and it is our responsibility as leaders to contribute towards the long-term sustainability of our businesses and the societies in which we operate. Talent and workforce planning are critical components of this, which appears to be overlooked by many leaders from the earlier generation.

ABOUT BRIAN EAGAR

Brian Eagar is the founder and group CEO of TowerStone. From being voted as the naughtiest kid most likely to fail at school, Eagar found success in the information and technology sector as a young sales and marketing executive, culminating in an executive sales and strategy role for one of the Siemens businesses based in Germany. On his return to South Africa, his passion to inspire leadership led to the creation of TowerStone Leadership Centre in 2006.

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