

The power of mentorship in skills development

 By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

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In light of #YouthMonth, we had a chat with Engen's Paul Leask and Savtec's Hennie Richter about the Engen Engine Restoration Challenge 2017 (EERC) and how it impacts the youth of South Africa.

■ ***Tell us a bit more about the Engen Engine Restoration Challenge 2017.***

Paul Leask: In addition to promoting skills development amongst the youth, the competition fosters a culture of teamwork and excellence.

Hennie Richter: This is the second competition of this nature. The competition itself starts with youngsters (juniors up to 18 and seniors up to 35) competing by restoring a stationary engine of at least 30 years old, but usually older. The first round takes place in the various clubs nationwide.



Before



After

The winners in the two groups, as well as the runners-up in each club's competition, will in the final round compete against the best in the country. In the final round theoretically, 44 of the best restorers in the country will come together where their engines, as well as their communication skills, will be weighed.

■ ***Elaborate on how Engen, along with Savtec, embraces the opportunity to transfer and develop mechanical skills through the mentorship elements of the competition.***

Richter: In a competition of this nature participants are not formally trained to do what they need to do. Training is about modern technology, while to compete in the EERC, they need to understand vintage technology, as it were, and that knowledge is the domain of older people, the mentors. This competition has to draw on that knowledge, and it is in the interest of the mentor that the transfer really takes place.

■ ***Why, in your opinion, is the transfer of skills and knowledge to the youth - especially in this industry - essential to the future sustainability of the country?***

Leask: Engen's most recognisable CSI and social investment initiatives are educational in focus. This is deliberate because this is how we build the capability of this nation. The impact on lives and life chances are immeasurable. Engen's focus and support are to impact and empower the youth of our country.



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Richter: Nearly everybody knows that technical skills are indispensable for our country to move ahead. Savtec and Engen realise that not all technical skills can be focused on the modern machinery because in a country like ours, we need to use "old" technology, and while Savtec is a conservation organisation at heart that focuses on "old" technology, competitors get accustomed to being creative to solve a variety of problems to reach a goal.

■ ***Is there enough support for youth development and skills training in this sector in South Africa? How can we improve and who needs to come to the party?***

Richter: Problem-solving is one of the most important creative skills any person can possess. As long as the training of technical skills to a certain extent goes mainly about the modern process – to get things done (substitute the broken part with a new one) in the shortest time in order to make as much money as possible – real development of the trainee is lacking.

Technical training must include a substantial amount of personal development to really equip the trainee for a future in which his survival depends on the individual's adaptability. This educational precondition must be fulfilled by the developers of the syllabus for technical trainees.

Even the completion of the workbook successfully compels the participant to stick to management skills.

To take a 50 years old stationary engine and restore it where the competitor is usually thrown on his/her own resources to find or manufacture certain parts, will with no doubt end in the development of the participant on completing the project successfully. And not even if he/she does not come out tops

▀ **What does Youth Month mean to you and your team?**

Richter: Apart from introducing the youth to Savtec's activities in order to enhance our membership, Savtec as a conservation organisation strives to introduce the youth to the history and an appreciation of technological development.

This knowledge cultivates a balanced personality – the past has also a place in my understanding of life, not only the present and the future.

Savtec and Engen's requirements that the participants shall develop their technical, management and communication skills for sure lead to a responsible, developed citizen.

Not forgetting the past, in Youth Month the individual's future must be also in question. Through the EERC, Engen and Savtec want to equip the participating youth for the future.



Entries open for Engen Engine Restoration Challenge 2017

6 May 2017



▀ **The Youth of South Africa...**

Leask: ...plays a central role in Engen's extensive social investment, sponsorship and transformation initiatives. Engen is dedicated to positively engaging and contributing to the self-sustainability of young South Africans.

Richter: ...needs opportunities, as well as support. The EERC is developed to create both. Apart from being an organisation on the "mechanical side" of the spectrum of activities for the youth, we know that success can contribute hugely to the self-esteem of a youngster. We want youngsters to experience success. The restoration of a vintage stationary engine is merely the vehicle.

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out [Passing Stories](#)). She is also the editor of [Go & Travel](#), a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work [here](#) and [here](#). Contact Ilse through her website [here](#).

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