

Survey indicates skills shortage in communications industry is growing

After its launch of the VMA African Communications Survey in February 2015, VMA Group Africa has again surveyed 386 senior communication practitioners from 251 different companies for its February 2016 survey.



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This survey was conducted in partnership with the Public Relations Society of Southern Africa (PRISA) and the Africa Region of the International Association of Business Communicators' (IABC). Approximately 8% of respondents were from Ghana, Nigeria, Botswana, Kenya and Nairobi.

The new study suggests that downward pressure on budgets and a shortage of skills in the industry are having a major impact on the communications industry in South Africa. Added to this, fewer growth opportunities and a reduction in training budgets are making it harder to source and retain top talent.

Growth sentiment reduces by 500%

In the group's 2015 survey, 61% of communicators felt positive about company growth and expansion but by February 2016, that figure had declined to only 13% - a reduction of nearly 500% in that growth sentiment. More than a quarter of communicators in South Africa also say the skills shortage in the sector coupled with downward pressure on budgets make up two of the top challenges they will face in the next two years.

Daniel Munslow, principal consultant South Africa states, "Overall, there has been a drastic decline in optimism across the industry. This is reflected by a perceived lack of growth opportunities, however, the group's research has shown that there is a shift to improve skills among communicators, especially on strategic thinking and business acumen. This is likely the result of mounting pressure on communication professionals by senior leadership demanding better measurement and sound returns on reputation management activities."

From a talent management perspective, human resources departments should take cognisance that the number one reason for employees leaving both agency and corporate environments is career development. “What is intriguing is our research has shown that 51% of respondents have had their training budgets cut, despite this being the number one factor that could influence employee retention,” concludes Munslow.

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