

How newly available broadcast spectrum is creating employment opportunities



By [Natashia Barnabas](#)

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In March 2022, the Department of Communications, through Icasa, began auctioning off available spectrum to bidders, largely telecoms corporations. This auction netted more than R14bn for the national fiscus and will hasten the roll-out of critical digital connectivity across the country while creating numerous job opportunities, particularly within the media and film industry.



Image source: Getty Images

Once the digital migration is complete, broadcasters will be in a better position to transmit a multitude of channels which will open up more investment in the film and TV industry. This will stimulate a demand for a flexible workforce and this growth shift in the dynamics of the industry will require temporary staffing solutions across the sector. Partnering with a temporary employment services (TES) provider will help media companies to reach their targets and meet their deadlines, while the TES will manage the entire working relationship and securing the well-being of all involved in the booming gig economy.

Driving growth across multiple industries

Having last allocated spectrum more than a decade ago, the conclusion of the auction of high-demand spectrum for mobile telecommunications is a significant milestone in our national reform agenda. This will drive growth in the economy, modernising and transforming key network industries such as broadcasting, energy, telecommunications, transport, and water provision.

Not only will the telecoms and broadcasting industry benefit from this spectrum allocation, but many ancillary industries will be positively impacted, this includes news and publishing directly, as well as the performing arts and live events industries. These in turn influence a greater scope of industries, including video games, advertising, and printing industries. This will result in an increased demand for skills to fuel growing industries, everything from journalists to dancers, agents to photographers, special effects technicians to cinematographers, make-up artists and all the necessary logistics, technical

and support crews.



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Labour-intensive preparation ahead

In order to prepare for the anticipated boom in these areas, companies will need to plan ahead and start researching business models that will be necessary in order to manage this increase in labour, including legislation that is applicable and enforceable for each category of labour. Companies will need to identify potential challenges in contracts of employment, which can get tricky, especially when navigating the correct terms and conditions applicable to each type of contract relationship. Additionally, to attract foreign investment, it will be necessary for players large and small to comply with internationally accepted industry standards.

Complex, changing legislative conditions

Given that these are all intensive, human-oriented businesses highly regulated by labour laws, it can quickly become complex, particularly where categories such as children, the disabled and the elderly are employed. Further complicating the situation is the fact that there have been several legislative updates, including the Protection of Personal Information Act (PoPIA), as well as amendments that relate to children's rights, occupational health and safety measures, national minimum wage, the promotion of equality and prevention of unfair discrimination, sexual harassment, freedom of expression and social diversity and inclusion.

In South Africa, we have the Performers Protection Act 1967 which sought to provide for the protection of performances of literary, musical, and artistic works, but it has not been updated with the introduction of modern technology and the latest labour developments, as mentioned above, which most likely have a direct impact on the industry.



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Currently the proposed Copyright and Performers Protection Amendment Bills have been referred to the National Assembly for re-consideration. These Bills are aimed at promoting the economic interests of creators of works while accommodating changing technology. Future development will also need to take place to close the gap between the old version of the Acts and the latest developments in various legislation. To minimise such complexities, broadcast and media companies should

look to partnering with a reputable and experienced TES provider for their human resource requirements, as well as to ensure compliance, and promote business continuity.

Renewed focus on core business

These sectors would benefit from the flexible staffing model that makes it possible to source, manage and provide the labour and skills necessary for fixed duration projects. An established, reputable TES provider will be instrumental in scaling up and down on resources (both skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled) as the requirements change according to project demands.

Traditionally performers, artists, and various other categories of workers in the industry, have had few employment safeguards, such as income protection, pension entitlements and leave concessions. By engaging with TES providers, such individuals could rise above the status of freelancer or contractor, becoming instead a fixed term employee and gaining the rights and protections that come with employment according to relevant legislation. A TES can also assist the employee in negotiating their terms and conditions of their contract of employment.

While the experienced TES provider focuses on all aspects of staffing, from recruitment to payroll, industrial relations, human resources, financial service offerings, insurance offerings, training, and healthcare, this will give media and broadcast companies the breathing space to focus on their core business of educating, entertaining and informing the nation.

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