

# Continuous learning essential yet lacking in South African organisations

Building techniques to cultivate a culture of continuous learning and growing professional development is of national importance for South African employers but only 28% are helping employees build these skills.



According to the Deloitte 2017 Human Capital Trends Report, which delves into the top human capital trends for South Africa, as well as globally, careers and learning shot to second place on the importance list. The research finds that globally, 83% of executives have identified learning and development (L&D) as vital. In addition, increasingly, more organisations are starting to help employees with 'always-on' L&D to plug the critical skills gap that exists in various sectors and to help employees grow and thrive in the workplace.

However, the report indicates that only 28% of South African employers say they're helping employees build skills, roughly 30% of organisations say they do not have clear paths within their organisation, while 16% say they use short-term assignments as part of career development. Moreover, while locally, 81% of executives rated career and learning as important, only 58% described their organisation as prepared, which rates the country 'not ready', when it comes to how employers manage careers and deliver learning and development.

To boost the country's readiness score, employers need to become digitally savvy in an evolving digital world. According to the data, companies are 'moving to overhaul their career models and L&D infrastructure for the digital age'.

The report adds, 'Learning technology is changing rapidly. Traditional learning management systems are being complemented with and replaced by a wide range of new technologies for content creation, delivery, video distribution and mobile use'.

Richard Rayne, CEO of iLearn, which offers a range of learnerships, short courses and digital learning solutions, describes the report's results as "refreshing."

"We are pleased that more employers have acknowledged that learning and development in the workplace is fundamental and key to growing any organisation. Nevertheless, there is more to be done. Now that we've acknowledged what we need, we need to start enforcing what we know."

## **Addressing critical skills gap**

As a direct result of the critical skills gap that exist in various industries, South African employers are encouraged to accelerate their staff development process and produce a culture of employees who are knowledgeable and informed.

"Learnerships produce capable and efficient employees and more South African employers should encourage L&D in the workplace to boost the level of skills in the organisation."

A learnership is a vocational and educational training programme that links structured learning and work experience in order to obtain a registered qualification. It combines theory and workplace practice into a qualification registered with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

"Empowering and developing employees through NQF-accredited learning programmes is one way of boosting the level of skills in an organisation and it is a two-pronged process, when employees upskill, organisations grow and this will help take our country forward, which is exactly what we need.

"Since skills development has become such an important aspect of the B-BBEE scorecard, companies can use learnerships not only for talent development but also to boost B-BBEE levels as well. The advantages are endless and the good news is it's a very cost-effective, yet highly beneficial option," concludes Rayne.

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