

Meeting the need for multi-skilled workers in SA

By [Mamiki Matlawe](#)

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Temporary employment opportunities are on the rise in South Africa, and with many global enterprises seeking to outsource certain business processes, the South African labour market is becoming increasingly attractive. While many local businesses also have a need for certain skills, that need is not 'full time'. As a result, temporary employment is being utilised to meet global needs and plug local skill gaps.



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This type of working relationship is beneficial to both the enterprise and the individual; and multi-skilled workers have a competitive advantage if they can perform more than one function at a company. Organisations benefit from being able to fill multiple posts with one multi-skilled individual, while the worker stands to earn significantly more than someone who can only fill a single temporary post.

Where can businesses find the skills they need, without hiring in-house full time? Temporary employment service (TES) providers can help enterprises meet their short-term labour requirements, while assisting skilled individuals to find multiple fixed-term working opportunities.

Adapting to the times

Permanent jobs are becoming progressively scarce and as economic conditions continue to tighten, as a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, few businesses are in a position to hire employees on a permanent basis. This is not a new trend, however, as Statistics South Africa's

employment figures indicate that temporary employment numbers rose to [3.9 million from 2.6 million](#) between 2017-2018, through choice and necessity. In the second quarter of 2020, the South African economy shed [2.2 million jobs](#), a devastating effect of the pandemic. [17%](#) of the workforce (2.4 million) were classified as 'self-employed', which includes employers, freelance workers and those providing help in a household without pay.

Now, as we become accustomed to working under new conditions and vaccination programmes are rolled out across the country, enterprises are looking to move beyond survival mode and explore their options for growth. Gaining a competitive edge demands innovation and speed but developing fully employed workers can be expensive and time-consuming. Tight budgets and tight production timelines mean that businesses have limited options when it comes to bringing in the skills they need. This is where partnering with TES providers can give them an advantage.



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Making more skills accessible

Access to a database of pre-screened candidates means that TES providers can easily match candidates to fixed-duration job opportunities. Temporary placements can tap into experienced workers that already have the necessary skillsets, while allowing businesses to maintain their permanent core team. In addition to sourcing exactly the right skills, TES providers can reduce wasted time. For example, it takes 2.7 days at most to hire a freelancer through a talent marketplace, while it

can take a minimum of 34 days using traditional recruitment methods which impacts negatively on operational performance as this post goes unfilled for so long. Such a lengthy process is counter-productive in today's fast-paced business environment where agility and flexibility are critical. For specialised skills or once-off projects, by utilising a TES provider, it is possible for businesses to fill more than one post with a single multi-skilled worker within days. This allows businesses to tap directly into the benefit of flexible workers and their skills can be rapidly integrated into the project to reduce wasted time.

The rise of the unicorn: the multi-skilled worker

While there has been a massive decrease in sectors like hospitality, other industries are booming, and job seekers need to assess and update their skillsets accordingly. Financial services, technology, marketing and customer service industries are on the rise, despite a significant reduction in brick-and-mortar offices in response to work-from-home (WFH) conditions. However, businesses aren't just looking to bring in a single worker to fulfil a single function - they want one person who can wear multiple hats, known as a 'unicorn' worker. Essentially, TES providers can help businesses to source the 'unicorn' skillsets they require, while offering workers the opportunity to further expand their skillsets (and their marketability) in other industries and verticals, making it a win-win for everyone.

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