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**SAGEA Employer Benchmark –  
Maximising your advantages!**

# SAGEA Employer Benchmark – Maximising your advantages!

A Forbes article entitled, “*What’s your data really worth?*” suggests that data is the lifeblood of business, but that many organizations battle to know how to use the data they have gathered. There is ample evidence to suggest the value of interrogating data correctly – from bottom-line savings to increased performance and vastly improved decision-making, data can literally be used to turn a business around.

SAGEA has amassed over **ten years’ worth of Employer Benchmarking data** which is shared annually with our members. How can you be sure that you are using this data to maximum advantage?

There is much value to be derived from our Employer Benchmarking insights. We have outlined, below a summary of the information we think you should be paying attention to – and how you should be interrogating and using the data to **enhance your young talent strategy and performance.**



## Overview of what the employer benchmark covers

The employer benchmark provides rich information about the graduate employment landscape among leading South African graduate employers. Information includes the following:

- ✓ Graduate demand per function, including insight into areas where there are potential skills shortages.
- ✓ You will be able to get an understanding of graduate starting salaries – the median as well as what is being paid at both the high and low ends of the scale as well as benefits being offered to graduates.
- ✓ Our report highlights how employers are promoting their graduate opportunities, how much they spend in doing so and what promotions are regarded as being effective.
- ✓ Insight is provided into which universities employers are targeting and the median number of universities targeted.
- ✓ What are the latest trends when it comes to application and selection processes used by employers, how much do these processes cost and how long does it take to get graduates from the application stage to signing an employment offer?
- ✓ You will gain insight into optimal staffing structures for graduate recruitment and development.
- ✓ The key challenges facing employers in the young talent attraction and employment space are highlighted.



## Using the data to interrogate your strategy

To get the best possible mileage out of this report employers should be doing the following:



It is important that you evaluate the benchmarks against your aspirational position as a graduate employer in your sector against where you are currently at. Do you want to maintain your current position and/or move positions? We highly recommend that you perform what we call a **robot analysis**. Those areas where you feel you are exactly where you want to be or are even ahead, you would mark as **green**, where you are close to your target, but not quite there, mark as **orange**. Where you feel you are falling short and need to make significant improvement, would be marked as **red**.



Employers should use the information in the report to **interrogate the data** they submitted and benchmark their investment in graduate recruitment as well as their offering against other employers in their sector.



Take time to assess what is working well for your business – **identify your strengths and weaknesses** in the graduate market and question if there is anything you could change, going forward.



Share and **present highlights** from the research with key role players in your business.



Present key highlights to your HR/Talent team and use the opportunity to **brainstorm future strategies**.



If your company did not participate in the research – **take careful note** of the kind of information employers are asked to provide so that you can have the information ready to participate next year!



All **SAGEA members will have access to the key highlights** from the research, irrespective of whether they shared data, and these will be of great value in helping you to benchmark your programme against other employers. What are the median measures and how do your programme measures compare to these? What does this mean for your programme?



Use the information from the above-mentioned comparison to **re-evaluate the business case** for your graduate recruitment programme and why you are doing what you do.



If your business has experienced graduate skills shortages and/or has not been able to meet equity targets, think about whether there are **alternative pipeline initiatives** you should be considering.



**Review** the length of your graduate programme against your overall programme **objectives**.



## Graduate vacancies

Below, is a more detailed outline of what we believe you should be interrogating in the report, by chapter.



A detailed **breakdown of graduate vacancies, by job function**, is provided. This information gives an overall sense of the graduate employment market among leading graduate recruiters.

Review what and where the **biggest competition** for graduates is? Are you targeting graduates that many other employers are also targeting, or are there very few competitors in your area? How does this impact your **attraction strategy**?



Analyse which **vacancies employers** are battling to fill and why?



If there is **stiff competition** or if there are shortfalls in the areas you are targeting, do you need to **alter your approach**? For example, do you need to **start** identifying potential talent earlier and **build** relationships with students over time so that you are top of mind when they are applying for graduate jobs?



## Starting salaries

This chapter provides projected starting salaries across industries and by business function or career area – allowing for meaningful comparisons to be made.



**Median salaries** are calculated, and information is provided on the upper and lower salary quartiles by job function.



**Plot the starting salary** you are paying to graduates against both the median and upper or lower quartiles in your sector – what does this reveal? Are you in the position you want to be in? Is there potential for you to **create an advantage** by paying differently?



Information is shared about other benefits being offered to graduates such as **study leave, performance bonuses and relocation allowances**. What benefits are you offering? Are these in line with others in your industry and, again, is this an area where you can potentially create a **competitive advantage**?



The report also provides an indication of **salary levels** for the following year – again, where do you want to position your graduate salaries?



## Graduate recruitment marketing

This chapter provides valuable information about the size of and how employers are spending their graduate recruitment marketing budgets.

You will get a good sense of what media are being used by employers, what proportion of their spend is allocated to different media and which media are regarded as being effective. How does the data you are seeing in the report compare to the media you are using and your own success rates? Do you need to make some changes?



Where do employers have an online presence and what have they found to be effective? Again, how does this compare to your online presence? Are their media you should consider adding to or subtracting from your mix?



Social media are ubiquitous – but which media work the best and what should you be using the different media for? Evaluate what you are doing against the feedback you see in the report. NOTE, we have an excellent toolkit available to assist you with appropriately targeting your digital media – [click here to read more](#).



Insight is provided into how many and which universities employers are targeting and why. Also evaluate which Institutions fewer employers are targeting and whether there is a potential opportunity for your business to target different institutions and establish your employer brand among students you may not previously have considered?



Feedback is provided on the quality of support received from Careers Services at our Higher Education Institutions. Are there any surprises here? Perhaps there are HEI's you have not previously considered targeting but who are doing an excellent job of supporting employers?



## Recruitment and selection

This chapter of the report addresses the different recruitment and selection methods utilised by employers and provides an indication of the duration of different processes as well as the success rates of candidates at the different stages of these processes. There is also a valuable benchmark showing these aspects across different industries. So, how does your process compare and what might this mean for the candidate experience your applicants are having?

✔ **Evaluate the different success rates for your industry** – what is the offer acceptance rate? What percentage of graduates are reneging on offers in your industry? How can you mitigate for this in your process? Do you need to make extra offers?

✔ **Information is provided on median staffing levels for graduate recruitment and development.** Although we don't always know how many graduates this is based on, we DO know the median number of graduates across the data provided. So, what does this mean and how do your staffing levels compare to the medians? Is your team over or under-staffed?

✔ **This chapter also addresses the key areas employers are focusing on in their graduate recruitment strategy** – for example, ethnic diversity versus reducing costs. What are your key focus areas? Are they in line with others or are there some areas you might have overlooked or need to re-think?

✔ **Insight is provided in terms of the different assessment methods being used** – what methods are you using and how does your process compare? Are there any new or emerging trends in assessment that you need to be considering?

✔ **An extremely useful measure provided in this chapter is that of the average cost per joiner** – and this is shown per industry. If you are managing to bring in the quality of graduates you want and your cost per joiner is lower than the industry median you should highlight this to your executive team! If your costs are higher, you should be asking why? There might be good reasons for this but if not, how can you get costs down without negatively impacting your employer brand?

✔ **Valuable information is provided in terms of which Higher Education Institutions graduates are being sourced from.** When you look at the numbers per Institution, are there any surprises? If numbers are high from Institutions you are not targeting, could you be missing a trick?



## Graduate Programmes

The final chapter of the report details why employers invest in graduate programmes, how many start dates they offer, whether they offer rotational programmes or international opportunities and whether or not equity targets have been met.



Think about these measures and how your programme stacks up. Have you considered offering rotations and could this give your programme a competitive advantage? What might this look like in your business?



Not all businesses can offer international opportunities, but perhaps there are ways you can collaborate with some of your suppliers or partners to offer international exposure? And in our new world, this can all happen online at low cost!



A valuable nugget is provided in the form of average equity targets by industry. How do your targets compare? Are you above or below the average and is this where you need to or want to be?



An analysis is provided of the number of employers offering full time versus fixed term contract positions for graduates. What does your business offer? We know from our Candidate Insights study that job security is of great importance to graduates – can you convert your offers to full time versus fixed term and could this, potentially, make your offers more attractive to young talent?



Lastly, evaluate the challenges other graduate recruiters have highlighted, compared to yours. Are your challenges the same or different? What could this mean for your strategy going forward?



## In conclusion

There is a lot more to the SAGEA Employer Benchmark than meets the eye! Properly used, the information should give you some valuable clues as to what you are doing well and where you can make improvements. And there is no question that sharing this kind of data within your business will reinforce the good work you are doing and help you to justify why you might need extra resources in some areas to be more effective. **So, don't let the report gather dust, use it to your advantage!**

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Employers Association



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