

**SAGEA
TOOLKIT
SERIES**



|| Why you need an early
|| Talent Programme

Why you need an early Talent Programme

“By 2030, there will be a shortage of 85.2 million skilled workers globally, costing nearly \$8.5 trillion in lost revenue opportunities.”¹

“Identifying in-demand skills and providing access to employment will be the solution to the skills revolution and, as leaders, helping people upskill and futureproof themselves will be the defining challenge of our time.”²

Build? Buy? Borrow? Or ‘bot?

These are the options businesses face when it comes to overcoming skills shortages both now and in the future. But which is the best approach for your business? Buying talent is an expensive option, borrowing talent is temporary, AI and robots are real, but they won't resolve all skill shortages and will require new skills to thrive and be sustainable anyway. So, why not build your own talent through the introduction of an early talent programme? There are many compelling reasons that make this an attractive option to consider.



Why young talent?

There are numerous benefits to organisations that build their own talent from the bottom up. Here they are:

- ✔ **Enhances your employer brand** – earning a reputation as an employer of choice in the early talent space will go a long way to enhancing your employer brand and positioning your organisation as one that is making a difference in the community.
- ✔ **Competitive advantage** – the early bird catches the worm! Identifying and snapping up young people with potential prevents your competition from getting to them first. Early talent programmes are a great way to identify future managers and leaders who you can groom to fulfil future requirements.
- ✔ **Increased adaptability and agility** – young talent are eager to learn and will be willing to work hard to prove themselves. They are more adaptable, agile, and better equipped to respond to sudden change. Early talent present as a “blank canvas” in the workplace and adapt to change more readily than experienced hires.
- ✔ **Quick learners** – they've just come from a learning environment and are sponge-like when it comes to learning, growth and development.
- ✔ **Fresh outlook, new ideas and innovation** – younger people will bring a fresh perspective to your organisation, they may have great ideas for new innovations that will greatly benefit your business and your customer-base.
- ✔ **More affordable than experienced hires** – this goes without saying. Whilst we do not advocate under-paying young talent, an entry-level salary is lower than that of an experienced hire. The median entry-level salary in the 2023 SAGEA Employer Benchmarking study was R245 000 per annum.
- ✔ **Multitasking, energy and enthusiasm** – used to information overload and multitasking, young talent will have the energy and drive to take on challenging assignments and see them through to completion.
- ✔ **Increased diversity, equity and inclusion** – GenZ, entering the workplace now, is the most diverse generation we have seen! Not only are they diverse, but they have embraced inclusivity and can lead by example. Bringing in young talent will help to mix things up in terms of your organisation's demographic.
- ✔ **Comfortable with technology** – Being digital natives, young people embrace technology.

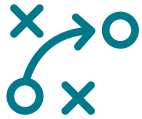
¹ Quote by Brendan McAravey, Regional Director, Sub-Saharan Africa, Citrix networking and analytics solutions company. *Engineering News and Mining Weekly*, 21-27 Feb 2020

² Quote by Lyndy van den Barselaar, MD, ManpowerGroup South Africa. *Engineering News and Mining Weekly*, 21-27 Feb 2020



Getting it right

The benefits speak for themselves but if you are going to introduce a graduate programme you need to embrace best practice to really reap the benefits. These are the things you need to get right:



01 A well thought out strategy – clearly define why you want to introduce a grad programme and be clear on the how. Are you starting a programme to grow future leaders, to increase diversity and equity or for other reasons? Refer to our toolkit guide on “How to plan your talent pipeline”.



02 Dedicated Resources – Don't try to do things in half measures! Ensure that you have dedicated resources behind your young talent programme. According to SAGEA's 2023 Employer Benchmark, the median number of staff working on graduate recruitment was 2.0 full-time equivalents (FTEs), with 1.0 FTE working on graduate development.



03 A Committed Budget – Ensure that you have agreement to a proper budget before you embark on an Early Talent programme. Remember, you need to budget for your talent attraction and selection costs, as well as the costs of bringing your young talent into the business. And, in the second year of your programme you incur these costs again, whilst still carrying the cost of the Young Talent that joined you in Year One. Getting your budget right will mean there are no surprises down the line.



04 How will you create and support a positive and inclusive culture? For young talent to thrive in your organisation, the culture must be one that embraces them, is inclusive, supports development and fosters collaboration.



05 Leadership-Driven – without the commitment of your organisations leadership you are on a hiding to nothing. Your young-talent programme must be supported from the top and leadership must be prepared to engage with and mentor graduates.



06 Be Prepared – prepare the organisation and teams who will interact with your early career talent. Can you provide training for your line managers to ensure that they know how best to interact with, manage, develop and engage your young talent?



07 Challenging and meaningful assignments – you are not hiring young talent to do the photocopying and make the coffee! Graduates want to learn, grow and develop through stimulating and challenging work. Give careful thought to the assignments and roles you will give to young talent – and how they will progress in the organisation.



08 Purpose and Flexibility – these are both important to young talent. How can you foster a sense of purpose in the work that they will be doing? Hybrid work arrangements do offer greater flexibility, and this will be important – but achieving the right balance between tech and touch for early talent requires time in the office to learn and integrate.



09 Consider rotations – whilst young talent programmes do not have to include rotations, evidence suggests that there is a correlation between rotational programmes and retention. Rotations do, however, require careful planning and, again, commitment from line managers throughout the business.



10 Training and Development – According to the SAGEA 2023 Candidate Insights study, 90% of graduates will consider the training and development offered by a potential employer before deciding to apply and 61% will be influenced by training and development opportunities when deciding to stay with an employer. Your training and development proposition for young talent needs to be clear, well-communicated and brilliantly executed.



11 Engage for retention – feeling engaged, feeling valued and knowing they are making a difference to the organisation and community are critical if you want to retain young talent. Having frequent meaningful conversations about performance and career development is what graduates want and need.



12 Complete the cycle – implementing a young talent programme requires commitment to a full cycle from attraction through to selection, development and measurement. To see what the graduate recruitment lifecycle looks like, click here.



13 Measure, Measure, Measure! – it is critical that you measure the success of your programme and share this information within the business. Depending on the business case for your programme, you will measure different things. To learn more about measurement, refer to our Toolkit on how to measure the return on investment in an early talent programme.



14 Start small and grow from there – having highlighted the numerous benefits of implementing a young talent programme, you must do so for the right reasons and do so properly. You need to ensure that the organisation has the mindset and resources to do this properly. BUT you don't have to start big, you can start with just a handful of graduates and grow your programme from there.



Review and evaluate

Once you have a successful programme up and running you will need to continually review and evaluate the business case for maintaining a programme. You may need to adjust your young talent numbers from one year to the next, but growing your own talent will remain imperative as long as scarce skill shortages remain on the agenda.

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