

Outsourcing skills to international destinations - could this be a solution to unprecedented unemployment rates?



South Africa's official unemployment rate reached an all-time high of 35,3% in the final quarter of 2021, and although it tapered off slightly to 34,5% in the first quarter of 2022, job seekers are still massively disheartened. Companies are understandably reluctant to employ new staff on a permanent basis, as they struggle with post-Covid economic instability and declining revenues. Yet people still need to earn a living in challenging times. Temporary employment contracts in other countries have the potential to alleviate the massive pressure of unemployment on our economy and outsourcing South African skills to international destinations could be a vital lifeline for many, giving them hope for the future as well as acting as a stepping-stone to regaining permanent employment in South Africa on their return.

A lifeline for businesses and job seekers alike

Some of the sectors that provide temporary and seasonal employment opportunities abroad for unskilled and semi-skilled resources include the agricultural and meat industries, as well as the retail, ship building and warehousing, logistics and distribution sectors. Often, such operations require not just a handful of workers, but thousands who must be brought on board for a fixed period of time. Faced with an unusually challenging scenario, South Africa currently has an excess of labour but no jobs, while other countries have an excess of jobs with no reliable labour force to call on. It can be tough for businesses in these sectors to find on short notice the workforce that they require to meet their targets in order to survive. This is where Temporary Employment Service (TES) providers can offer both businesses and job seekers a much-needed lifeline, addressing the quandary in such a way as to provide relief and benefit to

all involved.

Temporary placements abroad offer an effective, yet compassionate solution to both sides of the predicament. TES providers have strong relationships in the international recruitment space and are able to source job opportunities overseas for South Africans who would otherwise be sitting at home, stressed and unemployed. For businesses looking to fill labour vacancies, TES providers can rapidly source eligible workers, match them with overseas opportunities and bring the workers back home at the end of the contract term, making it a win-win for everyone.

Global opportunities with local economic benefits

As job seekers, South Africans have a solid reputation and an exceptional work ethic. The fact that we are incredibly hard workers makes us sought after in the international markets, particularly with businesses that have a global footprint. South Africans are also attractive as temporary resource solutions in most global locations, particularly the UK, given that most are fluent in English. Bringing in workers from other international locations usually involves a language barrier that can negatively impact productivity. Working conditions, labour laws and the health and safety regulations for overseas placements are much the same as they would be back home, which means that South African resources require less training and on-boarding, and they can start meeting productivity targets much faster. By being placed temporarily overseas, South Africans have the opportunity to earn a higher income, while boosting the economy back home through remittance, earning forex for the country.

Coming home with hope

Additionally, South Africans sent abroad in this manner are only able to enter other countries on temporary working visas. This means that when the contract is up, the visa expires, and workers must return to South Africa. But they don't come home empty handed. Such workers return having gained valuable international best practice process experience as well as important Intellectual Property (IP) from their overseas employers. This greatly enhances their employability once back in South Africa. As a result, this form of migrant labour should not be seen as a permanent relocation of South Africa's human resources, but rather a much-needed reprieve from dire unemployment circumstances at home, helping individuals and businesses alike to find creative solutions for survival in uncertain times.