

Interning the tide of unemployment

 By [Shan Raddiffe](#)

16 Nov 2018

The graduate unemployment problem is an age-old, catch-22 situation: In order to get a job, you need experience, but the only way to get experience is to get a job. It's no wonder so many end up working retail and waiting tables to pay off their student loans, while struggling to take that first step along their chosen career path...



Jaryd Raizon, founder of Trusted Talent

Enter [Trusted Interns](#): a new online platform that acts as a conduit between the newly qualified and available work experience opportunities - built by executive search and headhunting company, Trusted Talent.

“One of the biggest pain points in running a business has always been talent. It’s not just about finding the right people but keeping them, growing them, empowering them,” said Jaryd Raizon, founder of Trusted Talent.

“*At the same time companies are not actively investing in the long term by hiring and educating the youth. They’re allocating their budgets towards ‘experienced individuals’, which is further perpetuating the unemployment problem.*” ”

As a big believer in Clem Sunter’s notion of an entrepreneurial revolution - where Sunter states the best way to generate 1-million jobs is to enable the launch and growth of 50,000 small businesses – Raizon has ensured this was factored into commercial strategy of the Trusted Interns initiative.

Here we chat more to Raizon about the birth of Trusted Interns and its bright future...

Tell us about Trusted Interns and how it all started?

Trusted Interns is an online marketplace that connects graduates and first-time job seekers with start-ups, corporates and agencies looking to onboard fresh talent.

It started as a partnership with the Red & Yellow Creative School of Business where they asked us to manage their graduate recruitment programme. We used this as an opportunity to understand the intricacies involved in effectively matching graduates with opportunities in the real world.

We learnt great lessons, but most importantly, we noticed how prevalent the problem of youth unemployment is. How broken the system is. How uneducated employers are when it comes to hiring youth with little-to-no experience. How ill-equipped the students are in finding their way from the tertiary world to the real world. It blew my mind, to be honest. I had no idea how bad the situation was (with a 52.5% youth unemployment rate, and near 28% graduate unemployment rate between the ages of 15-24).

“ So, basically this.... we gotta fix this. Wake up South Africa! You need a job to get experience. [#JobAdviceSA](#)
[pic.twitter.com/SUnz1D189j](#)— Trusted Interns (@TrustedInterns) [October 29, 2018](#) ”

We realised that we could only solve this problem at scale by removing friction with technology and making the system so efficient that we could charge stupidly low fees. And so the Trusted Interns platform was born.

📊 **How does the platform work?**

Think LinkedIn Jobs or Indeed, but for internships. Interns and employers create accounts (for free) and populate their profiles with their basic info.

For interns, this would be their name, photo, gender, DOB, where they live, willingness to relocate, will they accept cryptocurrency, etc. Then they need to create a very basic online CV. For many, this just includes adding their tertiary education information. There is also the option for them to add work experience, a portfolio, honours awards and a list of proficiencies or skills.

Once the interns have completed 80% of their profile, we approve their account, add them to the marketplace and they can start applying for internships.

For employers, it's much the same. They create their free accounts and add their company logo, description, location etc. (takes five minutes). They then load their internship opportunities and open themselves up for grads to start applying. We charge a flat fee for every intern hired. Good hiring decisions are made, no bank is broken and everyone is happy.

Funds generated from the Trusted Interns platform are reinvested into the development and roll-out of other career progression offerings which include the job preparation workshops, mentorship programmes and [The Bursary Lottery](#).



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19 Jul 2018



The cool part is that companies are encouraged to be proactive and not to sit and wait for grads to apply. We are trusting the concept of transparency and allowing them to view all graduate profiles and if they like what they see, to reach out and

invite them to engage.

■ ***What have been the driving factors behind its creation?***

The frustration of not being able to deliver on our clients' demand for interns; the lack of greater purpose associated with only assisting senior talent get better jobs; the realisation of how valuable an intern with no experience can be in a business; and the reality of how bad the youth unemployment situation is.

Our mission has always been to add value across the entire career progression lifecycle; this is just the first opportunity we've grabbed to do so for a much greater pool of talent and a much stronger focus on using technology.

■ ***What are some of the challenges you've faced getting started and how did you overcome them?***

This is our first attempt at solving the problem - it's a minimum viable product (MVP). As a result, we're facing new challenges every day, but to date, the biggest challenge has been educating grads that the platform exists and then getting the ones who sign up to complete their profiles. We'll only approve a profile once they've completed at least 80% of it. This ensures that employers can view a detailed picture of the graduate before shortlisting them or inviting them for an interview.

We're educating the students about the platform by delivering talks and soft-skills workshops at the colleges, and we're doing collaborative social media campaigns with the likes of Job Advice SA, I Need Someone Who... (jobs) and RecruitSharper.

To solve the issue of grads not completing their accounts, we've introduced Ted the Bot on the website (a chatbot that helps students along the process) and we also have a human online (almost) all day to help out. We've implemented in-journey 'instruction' messages and have made boatloads of minor UX fixes to improve the experience. Baby steps. There's still so much we can do.

■ ***What has been the initial reaction to the initiative?***

Incredibly positive - that's what keeps us going. We're hearing daily that this is something that South Africa so desperately needs, how people wished they had this when they were graduating, how the grads are so happy to finally have a single place to view internships and how we're providing some of the best grad options to clients, despite them undergoing their own recruitment efforts.

People from the industry have also reached out to say 'how can we get involved and help?' which is super encouraging.

■ ***What's at the top of your wish list for Trusted Interns?***

The short answer? That we are disciplined, smart and lucky enough to take off to the moon before hitting the end of the runway.

“ Grateful for this incredible week. 314 intern signups. 180 job applications. 21 interview requests. 7 new internships. 5 employer sign ups. 3 inspirational collaboration meetings and 1 offer letter sent off. Baby steps but that much closer. Upwards! 💎💎 — Trusted Interns (@TrustedInterns) [November 9, 2018](#) ”

More seriously, I'm confident that we can contribute greatly to solving the issues of youth unemployment, so that's not my wish. What we need is the right team with the right tech so that what we build is scalable and sustainable. I think we've proven the concept. The grads dig it and the beta clients are loving it; now we need to iterate and improve rapidly enough to keep up with the demand and our roadmap.

To do this properly, in a reasonable amount of time, you need a great team of partners, contributors and collaborators. We're grateful to everyone that has supported us on this journey thus far and hope to meet and engage with more forward-thinking individuals and organisations that are happy to help us along the way.

▣ **Where do you see the platform in five years?**

We'll be a tech-based but human-driven ecosystem that contributes to greater employability across the whole value chain. At the moment, we're only working with graduates who hold a post-matric qualification, but we're mindful that it all starts in the primary and secondary education phases.

In order to ensure that the youth of our country are employed 10 - 20 years from now, we need to go to the root of the problem and build up the pipelines of talent for future businesses. This goes far beyond graduate recruitment. It's raw education, unique skills development, mentoring, coaching, incubation programs, and and and... It's a long road and we look forward to journeying along it.

ABOUT SHAN RADCLIFFE

Shan Radcliffe is the editor of Bizcommunity HR, Education and Legal.

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