

# Having the right talent is key to SME growth

According to the National Development Plan (NDP) for 2030, it is projected that small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) will contribute 60-80% of South Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) and will unlock an estimated 90% of the 11-million expected new jobs. However, the impact of Covid-19 on the country's economy, small businesses and subsequently the employment rate has been catastrophic which may negatively impact the targets set by the NDP.



Source: [www.pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com)

Nora Dawud, founder and CEO at Black Pen Recruitment and Immigration Specialists says that despite this, it is important to note that South Africa is an entrepreneurial hub and that small businesses owners have the ability to turn this negative situation around and kickstart the country's financial state while growing the job market. "This can be attributed to SMEs' aptitude of finding innovative solutions to problems and their ability to implement at a much quicker pace than some larger corporates."

"It is vital that SMEs get the necessary support needed from the Government in order to survive and thrive," she adds. "However once businesses get off the ground, it is key for them to hire the best talent possible in order to continue to successfully grow their businesses."

## Teamwork makes the dream work

Talent is a core factor in the productivity and success of any company, and Dawud stresses the importance of making the right decisions when it comes to new hires. "A company is like a soccer team. In a match, it doesn't matter if one person performs well if the rest of the team does not contribute. Ultimately the whole team will lose."

She points out that it is vital to hire people that show a deep understanding of the company and what it does, and in doing so, act as support to the CEO who is essentially the captain of the team. “Small business owners often wear many hats, and they need to have the right employees who can also juggle multitudes of tasks in one role. By business owners having the ability to delegate work effectively allows them to focus on core areas of company growth.

“It is key for companies to hire an expert in different fields as this provides a diverse mindset and positive synergy within the company,” adds Dawud. “Small business owners should also consider hiring talent that shares the same values as the company, believes in its mission and more importantly who has the passion for the position on offer.”

## **Selecting key players**

Dawud says that to assess what roles new staff would be required to manage, business owners should start by mapping out an organogram. By doing so gives employers the ability to work out which roles need to be filled now, and how they can plan for the future.

However, as entrepreneurs do not have time nor money to waste, she stresses that it is crucial to find the best people from the start. “This is now more tricky than ever as the impact of Covid-19 has resulted in 2.2million jobs being shed in South Africa in the second quarter of 2020. As such, the job market has become saturated with job seekers, making it even more difficult for employers to find the right talent for the job.”

She points out that it is important to note that attitude can sometimes be more important than qualifications, and when possible hire a candidate with the right attitude that will add value to the business.

“It is advisable to seek the professional services of a recruitment agency when hiring as the process can become far more expensive when considering the costs associated with the appointment of the wrong person and their impact on the business,” explains Dawud. “Should employers find that the person hired not be appropriate for the role, it is critical to manage their performance from the start so that when the end of their probation period concludes, the employer will be in a position to legally terminate their employment.”

## **Supporting the team**

Dawud concludes by giving the following advice to entrepreneurs wishing to start a business in South Africa:

“Entrepreneurship is a school with an endless wealth of lessons to be learnt. It is a journey of failure, success, disappointment and accomplishment. While walking this path I try to remember that it is critical to be open to change when it comes to running my own business. As such, I encourage entrepreneurs to be open to reshaping their model, ideas or team if need be.”