

Johnson Controls addresses HVAC skills shortage with learnership programme

With the goal of developing technical skills within the heating, ventilation, and air condition (HVAC) industry, Johnson Controls has rolled out a human capacity development and empowerment programme through a local learnership initiative. 25 learners have been onboarded with its first intake.



Archibald Makatini, GM at Johnson Controls Building Efficiency Africa

The learnership offers an opportunity for young people in underprivileged communities to gain HVAC skills, which in turn increases the skills pool and promotes diversity in the industry. The programme, driven by Archibald Makatini, GM at Johnson Controls Building Efficiency Africa, focuses on skills development that assists the learners to build a foundation for them to pursue a career in the HVAC industry.

Comprehensive curriculum

The curriculum consists of modules that focus on oral communication, interpretation of information from text, analysis of shape and dimensional space, mathematical investigation and monitoring of financial aspects, project initiation and the management thereof, administration processes and project documentation management, among others. It comprises a theoretical and practical component where each learner is matched with a mentor – coined as the 'buddy system'. In the last month of the learnership programme, the learners receive certification.

The learnership comprises two streams: The first is the Open Trade Training Centre (OTTC) programme where learners go to college for five weeks in total over the year and complete the rest of the programme with practical work at Johnson Controls. Upon completion, they will receive a diploma in working with ammonia. The second stream is called The Learning Organisation (TLO), an annual course where the learners attend class for 30% of their work time and then spend the remaining 70% in a practical role. Upon completion, they receive an NQF4/Diploma qualification in Business Administration or an NQF5/Diploma in Generic Management. With its second intake, Johnson Controls aims to train their learners on technical sales.



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Better positioned for employment

The challenge many matriculants from underprivileged communities face is the lack of funds required to further their studies. As such, studying towards a certain career becomes particularly difficult, which results in fewer opportunities for them to find employment. Once completed, the learners will be equipped to uplift themselves by being better positioned for employment in the HVAC industry.

“Moreover, there is potential for permanent employment when the programme is completed, either with Johnson Controls or the candidate can apply to another HVAC-focused company. Their certification ensures that the graduates are ‘shovel ready’ for any job opportunities that they seek,” says Makatini.

“The programme is enabling us to address inequality, the lack of diversity and technical skills within the HVAC industry, particularly with our youth. The learnership will also help in lowering the high unemployment rate in SA,” Makatini adds.



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Wide range of opportunities

The learnership programme also enables the learners to identify and pursue other areas within the HVAC industry, such as HR, logistics, warehousing, sales and more. The learnership curriculum looks at the learners’ aptitude and personality and, based on this, Johnson Controls can align this, along with their interests, to different fields in HVAC. This allows them to move into other areas of business once they have the basic technical foundation of HVAC.

Furthermore, Johnson Controls plan to feed this local learnership programme into their international sales academy where permanently employed staff, including graduates of the learnership programme that have been employed permanently by the company, can further develop their skills, taking them to the next level of experience within the HVAC industry.

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