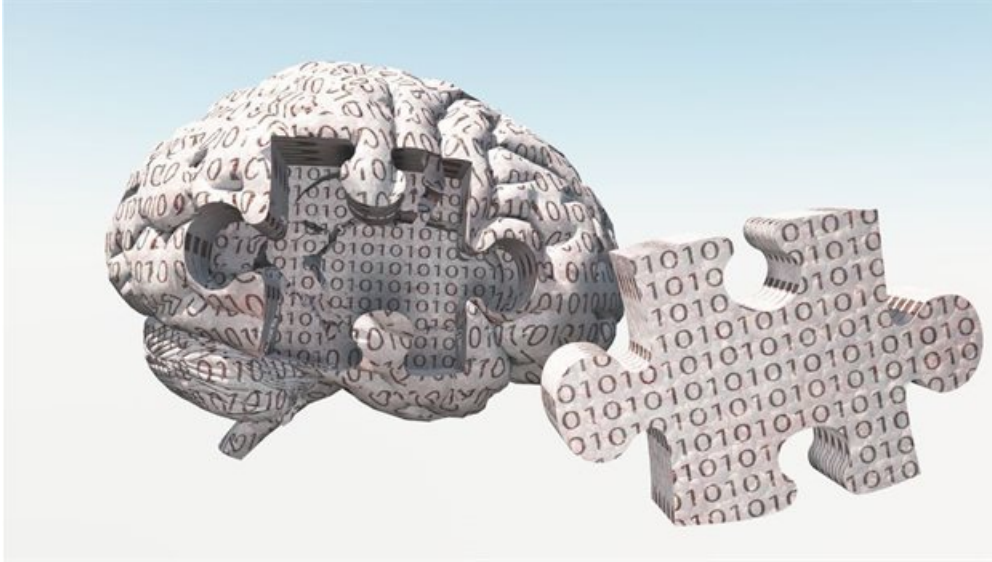


Skills shortage: Why expats should be part of the solution

The last few years have seen many South Africans seeking greener pastures, leaving companies with a great shortage in highly skilled labour. However, those who have left can be instrumental in eliminating the skills gaps in the country.



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Leana de Beer, chief operating officer of crowdfunding platform Feenix, believes that this is having a negative impact, not only on the South African economy, but also on the number of skilled workers remaining in the country.

“Close to 70 skilled people, along with up to five extremely wealthy South Africans, are [reportedly](#) leaving on a daily basis, which is quite disturbing. Such a mass exodus means that the country is losing millions, if not billions, in potential revenue, as well as a large chunk of its pool of highly-skilled labour force.”

De Beer is confident that South African expatriates can play a role in patching the hole they created by leaving.

“Those who have taken their skills to another country due to a need for better living conditions or more attractive salaries should be encouraged to pay it forward,” she suggests.

“This can be achieved by contributing towards access to education,” she adds.

Solutions to the shortfall

The [2019 Critical Skills Survey](#) revealed that those most under pressure in terms of skills shortages include the information and technology, engineering, finance, and health sectors. Top South African consultants are either being snatched up by companies abroad or being promoted to higher positions in foreign offices within multinational organisations.

The current economic and political climate which is leading to retrenchments and juniorisation are likely reasons senior professionals choose to further their careers overseas. This leads to major gaps in development of young staff members, a lack of mentorship in the workplace and overall inexperienced staff.

While this brain drain paints quite a grim picture, it leaves room for creative and innovative solutions in the quest for proper skills development, succession plans and suitable working conditions, which will encourage skilled workers to stay in the country.

“We need to look at the positives in order to progress,” de Beer says.

“The new gaps could be an opportunity for growth, but companies need to ensure that proper succession plans are in place in order to mitigate the risk of staff emigrating.”

She sees skills transfer and education as an effective solution.

“This will definitely bridge the gap when it comes to the necessary skills and should reduce the unemployment rate and play a role in bolstering the economy. Skilled workers should also initiate exchange programmes, so that younger talented people can be exposed to the latest developments in various industries, on an international level,” de Beer concludes.

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