

TES addresses diversity and inclusion challenges in a post-Covid world

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The past year has been incredibly challenging for employees for a multitude of reasons. Adapting to the Work From Home (WFH) normal, juggling this with home schooling, and facing salary cuts and lay-offs were a few of the issues faced. The greatest pressure has been felt by unskilled workers, the youth and women. Adding to these issues, there has also been an increase in discrimination around employees with health challenges or comorbidities. Temporary Employment Services (TES) providers are ideally positioned to help both employees and employers with addressing diversity and inclusion, and other challenges, in a post-Covid world.



Image source: Getty Images

The marginalised pushed further to the edge

The most detrimental effects of the pandemic on the workforce were felt by those who were already marginalised. The Stats SA Quarterly Labour Force Survey shows that the lower income brackets and less skilled workers, who are often from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, were at greatest risk of losing their jobs. Pregnant women and those with comorbidities were also treated differently and were at risk, particularly if they were unable to work from home.

However, while these issues were highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic, they were not caused by it. When it comes to diversity and inclusion, many businesses focus simply on physical disability, race and gender, without taking into account

other inclusivity elements such as religious beliefs, mental health challenges, gender identity and sexual orientation, among others. They are simply not catered for when planning for business needs.

This was highlighted by the Stats SA QLFS, which showed that, between September 2019 and September 2020 there was a decrease of 10% in the number of women in the workplace. Inflexible business practices and workplace cultures that do not encourage open engagement with employers marginalised women during the pandemic, to the point where they felt the need to exit the workforce to meet the needs of their families, rather than seeking an alternative. This inflexibility also marginalises Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning+ (LGBTQ+) and employees with mental health issues, who feel they cannot be open about their circumstances for fear of reprisal.

Flexibility is the future

The key to tackling these challenges and creating a workplace that is both diverse and inclusive, and one that appeals to the upcoming generation of employees who have very different needs, is flexibility. This is where a TES provider can step in and assist.

Businesses are always driven by the need to achieve operational excellence, but often employee engagement is lost in this drive. TES providers focus on the human resources component, which in turn actively contributes to operational excellence. TES providers allow organisations to focus on their core business, while they incorporate diversity and inclusivity, as well as focusing on employee wellness and fostering relationships with employees.

A TES provider creates an employee-focused value proposition that still supports the operational needs of the business. They will have the skills and expertise that their client - the business - needs, as well as the ability to develop and instil a culture where employees feel valued and heard. The flexible staffing model of a TES assists companies to retain the skills they need despite challenges and changing circumstances. In addition, they can match employees to positions that are suitable, not only from a skills perspective but also from the perspective of other areas of inclusivity.

TES providers help businesses cater to both diversity and inclusivity and facilitate a workplace that is accepting of vulnerable employees. They can create the right balance to match personal circumstances with operational needs, allocating employees to the most appropriate employer for all of their requirements, not just their skills.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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