

SA a magnet for top global performers

South Africa is doing much better in the international image stakes than policymakers think - creating significant potential for a sustained boost to national growth prospects.



Annelize van Rensburg

The positive perspective comes from Sandton-based Talent Africa, a leading provider of integrated talent solutions and leadership development interventions.

The firm receives an average of 10 unsolicited enquiries a month from international executives looking for a posting to South Africa, said Talent Africa director Annelize van Rensburg.

Interest is not only high among up-and-coming managers and professionals from Western Europe - where business growth has stalled. Nationals from the USA, where economic recovery is under way, are also looking to put Africa experience on their CVs.

Talent Africa has strong US connections as it is the select South Africa and sub-Sahara Africa alliance of Los Angeles-based Korn Ferry, the world's largest executive search company.

Foreign recruitment a challenge

In all cases, South Africa is the preferred career posting.

Van Rensburg noted: "Unfortunately, South African red tape and restrictions on foreign recruitment create a challenge. However, our talent acquisition activities extend Africa-wide. Therefore, we can sometimes re-direct the focus to other African countries.

"This is a pity from a South African perspective as these candidates have impressive skills and strong CVs. They have the

potential to drive considerable growth - within a company or within a country."

One factor behind pro-SA sentiment is the changed perception of Africa as a whole. Sub-Saharan Africa is increasingly regarded as a place of opportunity, offering good career prospects.

"Executive experience inside Africa looks good on the CV," she added. "This view comes over strongly because working in another continent implies personal agility and the capacity to apply global business knowledge and best practices locally."

"Many large companies in the States and Europe look for evidence that a manager can manage diversity and adjust to a different culture.

"Top performers therefore improve their career prospects on their return to their home countries if they can put a tick in the Africa 'box'."

Interest in South Africa is especially high from executives with young families as our best schools are highly regarded in some offshore jurisdictions.

The Africa focus was also assisted by expansion of the African footprint by many South African companies and growing investment in sub-Saharan jurisdictions by multinationals.

Talent Africa had recently placed international executives into top jobs in multinationals in Zambia, Tanzania and neighbouring Mozambique.

Said Van Rensburg: "There's no shortage of top candidates and less reluctance to relocate to Africa. Our continent now attracts top talent from far and wide.

"Some years ago, French-speaking executives focused purely on Francophone Africa. Not any more. Good quality candidates from France, Belgium and Switzerland are also interested in top jobs in English-speaking Africa.

"Positive 'Africa Rising' perspectives create opportunities for our region - and our country - to reverse the brain drain. Hopefully, policymakers looking to drive higher growth and job creation will spot the opportunity and pursue it vigorously."

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