

Why you shouldn't look down your nose at telesales work

According to recent data compiled by Gumtree, sales and telemarketing jobs offer the best opportunity for employment in South Africa with twice as many positions available online in the sector than the next biggest which is construction and skilled trade.



Image source: Gallo/Getty

With around 60 million registered mobile phones in the country, Gumtree's Estelle Nagel says it's unsurprising that telemarketing is a massive and growing business: "It fits the way South Africans are living their lives – on the go and on their phones."

Nagel says that while working in telesales has negative perceptions for many, "Like every type of work, there are good employers and bad ones, and the harder and smarter you work, the better you'll do." The industry is usually commission-based and most companies provide training, and scripts to work from, but Nagel advises applicants to build a good CV demonstrating excellent communication abilities (including a confident voice), a positive mindset, plenty of energy, and the ability to master product knowledge.

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"In a tough economic environment, telesales work can be invaluable either as a first step on the income ladder, a stopgap or to start building a career in sales. Some positions allow you to work from home which can be extremely useful for anyone with very young children. It's well worth understanding that good sales skills are a precious asset for most companies – on the phone, in the field, or behind a counter – so gaining experience and developing your confidence can take you places."

Nagel also notes that the global call centre industry, which demands a similar skill-set to telesales, is one of the few sectors that is currently booming in SA (with growth reported at over 20% annually for the past four years) as it capitalises on South African English language skills, an optimal time zone and a weak rand.

“It’s estimated that the call centre sector employs as many as 40,000 people in the country and there’s talk of a Brexit dividend from an increase in demand from the UK. The industry now offers a genuine career path for many people,” says Nagel.

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