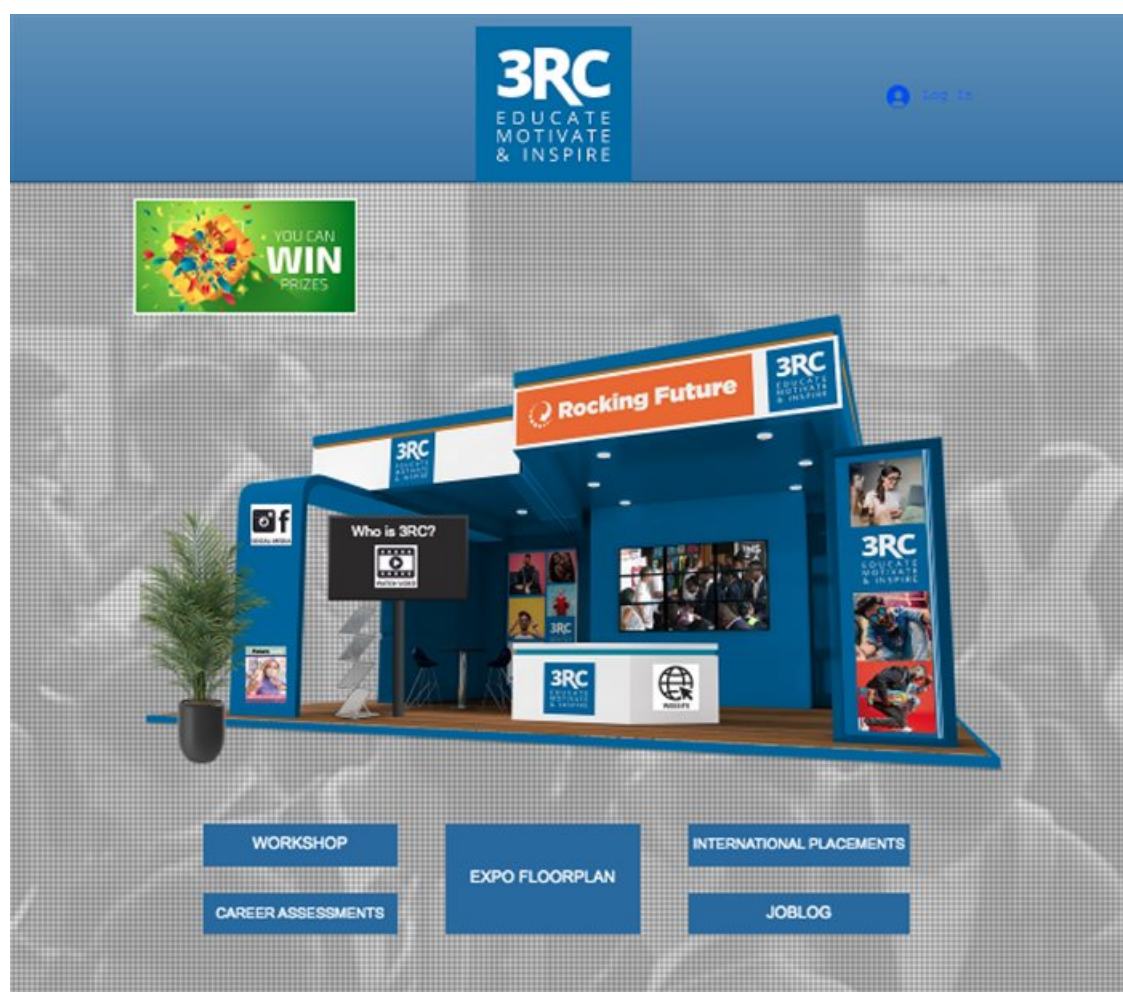


Online Career Expo levels the playing field for students around SA

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For over 20 years, 3RC has pioneered tertiary education awareness at a high school level through their Rocking Future Career Expos. Over the years, they have worked diligently to expose Grade 12 students in South Africa to more study choices, career options, the various philosophies of success, and many of the leading private colleges in the country. But then Covid-19 struck, and the company had to quickly pivot if they were going to continue with their motto to Educate, Motivate, and Inspire the youth of South Africa.



Similar to many businesses operating in a face-to face environment, 3RC found that it was unable to continue to provide its service in the same format. And yet, students would still be wondering what to do with their futures and trying to figure it out on their own. Perhaps even more anxiously, given the uncertainty around what the future holds in a world irrevocably altered by the pandemic.

Not wanting to leave these students with the misconception that their only options are state university or to simply dive into the workforce from an unqualified position, 3RC decided to do things differently. Quickly recognising the uptake and increasing familiarity of online schooling during 2020, 3RC transitioned from hosting live shows only to adding a 2D experience in the form of their "[Rocking Future Virtual Career Expo](#)" format.

Reaching a new generation

This virtual change to the company's operations demonstrated the crucial need for an innovative online student platform so

that whether you live in Johannesburg or on a farm in the Northern Cape, you can access vital information about your future – without having to leave the house.

Confirmation that 3RC was on the right track was evidenced by the 7,000 online registrations captured within just a few weeks of launching. In retrospect, this is unsurprising, given the pressing need for online solutions intentionally aimed at teenagers. This age group is notorious for what older generations perceive as possessing limited attention spans, but in actual fact are people who have grown up with technology and need to be reached in ways that specifically engage them, facilitate how they interact in a digital world, and is available when they want it.

Through this unique combination of live and virtual expos, 3RC is able to more effectively reach this age group and expose them to study options outside a traditional state university degree – a route that is more frequently encouraged by teachers, parents, and guardians. The need for more awareness around private study options is sorely needed, particularly when you consider that university dropout rates in South Africa are incredibly high, with 50-60% of first year students dropping out. While this occurs for a variety of reasons, it can't be ignored that there are some students who feel that traditional university and the ensuing coursework isn't suitable for them. Perhaps these students would have been better served seeking out an alternative tertiary option in the private sector.

Levelled the playing field for all students

Previously, 3RC was only able to reach schools in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Cape. Now, 3RC can use its virtual platform to reach students in all nine provinces, including schools in far to reach places. Additionally, the introduction of virtual expos has enabled 3RC to tap into the homeschooling communities who would otherwise not have been exposed to the live shows. In particular, there was a significant uptake of students from Impaq and Think Digital Academy.

Crucially, there was also an uptake in the number of schools catering to special needs children interacting with the platform. Many of these students suffer from either social anxieties or learning disabilities, or both. However, in this virtual environment they have been able to take the tour at their own pace, without the expectation of talking to strangers to learn more. This has opened up a whole new world of opportunities for these students to discover what and where they would like to study.

Essentially, by introducing virtual shows, 3RC has subsequently broadened its reach into all provinces, effectively levelling the playing field for those students who fall outside the company's live show catchment areas.

New data to inform a rich future for all students

Since engaging with students in the 2D expo format, 3RC has collected data-rich insights which has enabled the company to identify and adapt its offering to more accurately meet the needs of students as they change and grow.

For example, the data gathered shows that the top five career choices for those 7,000 students who have used 3RC's innovative platform over the past 18 months are, in order, Business Management (11%), Medicine & Science (8.4%), Engineering & Technology (6.5%), Law (6.2%), and Counselling & Psychology (5.6%). It was also found that Teaching & Coaching has jumped from 0.2% in 2020 to 3% in 2021, which is one of the most significant leaps seen over this past year.

Another keen insight has been the the interest demonstrated by students falling outside of the expected age groups. For example, the company noted that students as young as Grade 8, have started indicating their interest in exploring their future education and career options. Additionally, the over 18s, even those out of school, are eager to try further themselves and want to know more about their options.

It was also seen that there are differences in the choices and interests expressed by students over 18 years of age, who completed the questionnaires online, without their parents' influence. The data collected revealed that these students were less likely to pick traditional careers, like medicine, engineering, accounting or finance, and tended to be more open to sharing details and were more creative in expressing their vocational interests.

This isn't to say that state university is the wrong choice – not at all. But these insights highlight the crucial need for

students to be aware of all their options in both the state and private sectors so that they can make the best choice for their circumstances and desires.

This is what 3RC sets out to achieve and does so by incorporating education and performance, bringing together marketers, social investors, and educators to provide the youth of South Africa with the information they need to make informed decisions about their future through both these live and virtual educational expos.

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