

Making the auditing profession attractive to Gen Z

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The auditing profession is evolving to attract Gen Z talent, showcasing diverse career paths, a strong focus on continuous learning, and a commitment to developing future-oriented skills. These strategies address the challenges of competing with emerging STEM careers and the outdated perception of auditing being dull and theoretical.



Universities and firms are prioritising the development of critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills alongside traditional technical expertise. To cater to the evolving needs of younger generations, modern firms are adopting flexible work arrangements. The profession is embracing technology and innovation to drive efficiency, attracting tech-savvy individuals in the process. Global career opportunities, including international assignments, remain a major draw for young professionals.

Robert Zwane, executive director for learning, development and national imperatives at the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (Saica), explains that to understand the role of universities in sustaining the audit profession's appeal, it's vital to look at the entire educational ecosystem, from basic through to higher education and professional training.

“Universities need to proactively attract the right students, which goes beyond merely waiting for applications. It involves active engagement with communities and potential students. For instance, one university in KZN didn't wait for students; it reached out to local schools, offered extra lessons, and positively changed students' views about higher education. Initiatives like these are vital to draw in diverse and talented individuals.”

Zwane emphasised that pedagogical methods in universities must evolve. “Traditional teaching techniques are outdated. We need to innovate in education, bringing in technology and aligning academic content with real-world professional demands. Theoretical knowledge isn't enough; students require practical skills and understanding that mirror the realities of the auditing world.”

Crucially, stakeholders, including firms, regulators, and universities, are collaborating to ensure the profession's continued relevance and appeal. This united front underscores the importance of attracting Gen Z to the auditing profession and the efforts being made to achieve that goal.

Zwane further notes that guest lecturers and insights from practicing auditors can diminish the gap between theory and practice. This can alter the misconception that auditing is dull or too theoretical, showcasing the field's dynamic nature instead.

“Universities bear the responsibility of presenting relatable role models to students,” he says. “They need to see themselves reflected in their educators and the professionals they meet. This representation promotes engagement and maintains interest. They also need to promote active learning over passive knowledge consumption. Interactive education is more effective, engaging, and equips students better for their future careers in a world that’s constantly evolving.”

To make the profession appeal to Gen Z, we need to be innovative, and exciting while seen as a lead and preferred profession to them. We want to keep the new generation eager to join us and uphold our values. We have started looking at ways to include potential members as early as possible while they are still learners in high school.

There are several initiatives that we are embarking on including assisting to improve the mathematics results of learners. This is a joint corroborative approach between Saica and high schools. As part of our member-engaging strategies, some of our focus to attract Gen Z talent include fostering a culture of learning and development, embracing innovation, and diversity.

Saica is recognised as one of the world’s leading accounting institutes, and a critical player in South Africa’s development journey and in empowering Gen Z. For further information on some of our initiatives please visit the Saica website: www.saica.org.za/initiatives.

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