

Impact Sourcing – the power to tackle crushing youth unemployment and halt South Africa’s ticking time bomb

Impact Sourcing provides a desperately needed social compact for South African businesses to tackle youth unemployment

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Trent Lockstone - CEO of The Impact Sourcing Institute of South Africa

unemployment statistics are wrenching, with the recent news of unemployment soaring to just shy of 35%, and to almost 47% if you look at the expanded definition – this includes South Africans who have simply given up looking for a job. [Youth unemployment](#) is even more horrifying at almost 67%. It means that across our entire population of employable citizens, 1 in 3 is unemployed. When it comes to our youth, 2 out of 3 are unemployed – and range from those classified as NEETs - Not in Education, Employment, or Training – to those who have graduated with tertiary qualifications and still cannot secure employment.

“Whether you are a leader of a large multinational, or the founder of an SME, these statistics should have us all

focusing on finding a sustainable solution to what is potentially a cataclysmic disaster in wait for our country, our economy and social order. One such solution that is making headway in very sustainable ways and has huge potential to address unemployment affecting youth and people living with disabilities is [Impact Sourcing](#). Also known as socially responsible sourcing, it is a meaningful and impactful way for businesses to train and employ large numbers of lower skilled workers and those with no previous work experience – a huge percentage of our youth population – getting them into the economy and job market – and then creating viable pathways to further learning and training for career progression,” explains Trent Lockstone, CEO of The [Impact Sourcing Institute](#) of South Africa, a member of Alefbet Holdings.

“Many businesses, and specifically those in sunrise industries like South Africa’s Global Business Services (also known as Business Process Outsourcing) sector, are making a profound difference in disadvantaged communities through ‘impact sourcing’, by recruiting, training and employing

socio-economically disadvantaged and disabled individuals as principal workers in their business process outsourcing centres. Without this intervention, many very capable, willing and talented people would be lost to the job market, and in essence to society, by not having access to the economy. When you consider the growth trajectory of South Africa's GBS sector, which according to McKinsey's South Africa Big Five report, could grow to over 775,000 jobs by 2030, with two-thirds of these in the service of overseas markets, the potential for impact sourcing is significant," says Trent.

The Impact Sourcing Institute's model is designed to bridge the gap between companies wanting to make a difference but lack the dedicated expertise and know-how of creating a structured work and learning environment for entry level or disabled employees, and the young people who are desperate to work, but struggle to access the labour market. The model bridges the gap between social imperatives and strategic business objectives, addressing all the challenging practicalities that lie in-between in addressing youth employment through impact sourcing.

As just one example, one of South Africa's largest steel producers recently renewed their commitment to funding disabled and disadvantaged young learners through a learnership programme which culminates in a formal qualification. 100 candidates were impact sourced through the Impact Sourcing Institute and put through a rigorous training and mentorship programme, which besides their formal training as contact centre agents, also includes workplace readiness and life skills coaching.

"We achieved a 100% completion rate at the end of 2021, and every candidate has been placed in permanent employment through our network of business partners and contact centres who support impact sourcing as a strategic business imperative. Based on the success of this programme, the steel producer has increased the intake to 250 learners in the 2022 financial year," explains Trent.

When you consider the trajectory for our country if we do not meaningfully address our structural unemployment challenges, it becomes clear why impact sourcing has to be a top priority for every business, regardless of size. Every business should be looking at the impact it can make on our human and social capital – in a country where we have an abundance of talented, willing and able people looking to work and contribute if given an opportunity.



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"All businesses have a unique opportunity through impact sourcing to empower youth and people living with a disability to improve their living conditions, shape meaningful careers and lift themselves and their families out of a cycle of perpetual hardship. Not only is it a sustainable means to economic growth, but businesses get to support a programme with outputs that align with the UN's sustainable development goals. At the same time, they are developing a skilled workforce for long-term employment, they get to fully maximise the benefits of their BBBEE scorecards in terms of skills development and they get to fundamentally reshape societal outcomes for the better," concludes Trent.

Trent Lockstone

Impact Sourcing Institute of South Africa

+27110190019 ext.

info@impactsourcinginstitute.org

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