

Telecom talent: Navigating the need for speed and specialisation

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The telecommunications industry undergoes rapid evolution, with skills highly sought after worldwide. This poses a challenge for telecommunications companies, who must not only identify but also attract the right talent.



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Internal upskilling is critical to keep pace, but this can only be achieved with the right people in place. Hiring the best candidates, who match the skills required for the industry, and are then also able to pass their knowledge on down through your organisation, has become essential for telecommunications companies that do not wish to be left behind. To do this, you need the right recruitment partner – a specialist with the understanding and experience of the client market, the candidate market and the economic climate, to map, attract and land the best talent.

Constant and rapid evolution

The telecommunications space is a highly niche market – it is incredibly specialised and critical to so many elements of modern life, frequently forming the backbone of a business. For example, cloud-based productivity solutions require network connectivity and access to fibre, while mobile phones are integral for both business and personal reasons. In this fast-paced environment, becoming a global player means you need to have the skills across various platforms, from 5G to satellite and beyond, to meet your message to market. In an industry that is all about speed and efficiency, the better the skills you can identify and hire, the more competitive you are.

However, this is often easier said than done, particularly for organisations that maintain their hiring processes in-house. The reality is that, while excellent candidates want to work for the best companies, they will not necessarily knock on their doors. Finding the best candidates is far more intricate than putting out a job specification and then sifting through CVs. When skills are highly specialised and much in demand, it is necessary to actively recruit the right people for the job, while aligning with the market and their expectations in terms of salary, benefits and so on.

A specialist partner

In-house human resources talent managers may not have the knowledge of the market dynamic, market related salaries

and retention policies they need to find and attract the skills required. Talent is not just about budget, but about long-term benefit and a broader understanding of the needs within the business, from meeting current requirements to catering for future growth.



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Partnering with a specialist in telecommunications recruitment means working with a company that is actively working to find the exact skills you need, with the platforms and strategies in place to attract the talent, along with the expertise to ensure appropriate placements. Recruitment specialists have spent years developing the methodologies, networks, platforms, and knowledge they need, and have the history and understanding of where the telecommunications industry has come from. They are also constantly growing their knowledge base and developing as the industry changes, to keep pace with rapid evolution. This is instrumental in identifying relevant candidates.

Internal mentorship and training down

In the final quarter of 2023, Statista reported South Africa's unemployment rate at a striking 32.1%, placing it among the highest worldwide. Despite this alarming statistic, businesses are facing a significant hurdle: the shortage of individuals with the required technical expertise, especially in the specialised field of telecommunications. The 2021 ICT JCSE-IITPSA Skills Survey shed light on this issue, revealing nearly 10,000 vacant positions within South Africa's ICT sector. This indicates a substantial lack of technical skills to fulfil business needs. Adding to the complexity, the 2022 report highlighted a growing trend among South African companies turning to overseas recruitment to bridge this skills gap. This highlights the need for internal mentorship and training down.

Our President acknowledges the skills gap we face in the telecommunications sector, but introducing the so-called 'digital nomad' visa is not the solution. What we are realising here is the lack of training and mentoring, and this comes down to hiring the best candidates. We do not need overseas skills to teach local talent, but we do need to promote and encourage the concepts of mentorship and training down.

It is imperative to understand the broader narrative and how one job speaks to another, where the positions fit and align. This means you can hire the candidates and empower them to pass these skills on while they grow their own skill sets as technology evolves. Understanding the bigger picture is key.

Expect excellence

The culture of your recruitment agency plays a pivotal role – mediocre recruiters will source mediocre candidates, while those that strive for excellence will deliver. A forward-looking view is vital – telecommunications is a global industry that is

constantly shifting, and if you are not innovative, fast, and agile enough you will fall by the wayside. Supporting this agility and innovation comes down to the people you hire. And partnering with a recruitment partner that understand the industry, skills and speed at which development is accelerated, will have a far-reaching impact on telecommunication companies.

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