

Skills Development breeding successful companies

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As the mid-point of the first quarter of 2014 fast approaches, many companies are re-evaluating their strategic plans and wondering whether their targets set for the New Year are attainable. With a focus on Skills Development, and an emphasis on a more strategic use of workplace skills programmes, businesses can ensure that their employees and managers are equipped with the necessary skills required to reach those targets.

“The purpose of Skills Development is not only to give staff members a piece of paper to ensure that they have been taught certain skills, but also to ensure that they are able to complete the tasks required of them competently and efficiently,” believes Gizelle McIntyre, director of The Institute of People Development (IPD), an accredited Skills Development centre based in Carlswald, Midrand. “It is essential that real-world experience is incorporated through Skills Development.”

McIntyre’s career spans 17 years of learning and development, consulting and management development and she runs IPD with a passion for up-skilling the nation, helping others to reach their full potential. IPD has been tasked with implementing Skills Development programmes at various large corporations and government departments since 2002 and has witnessed these organisations and their employees richly benefit as a result.

A year-long plan was designed and implemented to handle diversity management training for 180 senior managers and executives at the South African Revenue Service’s (SARS) large business centre. The purpose of the training was to implement tools and teach techniques to facilitate open and honest discussions regarding issues of diversity. According to McIntyre, “The newfound skills enabled employees and managers alike to deal with the real issues at hand, rather than perceived issues which creep in when no open dialogue is forthcoming.”

At Assmang Chrome Mine, a Level 4 ETD Qualification was offered, with all 19 participants successfully qualifying. “When we first started, although there was no negativity the delegates were somewhat apprehensive as many of them had no prior experience with post matric studies; the fact that all 19 have now applied for a Level 5 qualification is testament to the fact that, despite their misgivings about the training, they appreciated the knowledge and skills acquired as they have seen the benefit of these skills applied into their everyday work functions,” confirms McIntyre. The training included technical application of methodology and tools.

A Needs Analysis and Skills Planning project is ongoing at Eskom on a national level. This training is focussing on Skills Development and Needs Analysis for managers, to enable successful succession planning and the management of scarce and critical skills. While 130 candidates began the course, the number has now been increased to 180. Needs Analysis was also a focus for 23 ETD practitioners that embarked on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) training at First National Bank, in its home loans division. The RPL gap training took the practitioners to a Level 5 qualification over a period of six months.

BHP Billiton places particular emphasis on up-skilling special needs candidates. As a result, IPD was contracted to provide five special needs learners with the NQF Level 4 General Management qualification, making use of an innovative RPL and gap training model. "The project will be completed at the end of April and the candidates are doing very well," says McIntyre.

When businesses are willing to focus on real training that has synergy with their strategic intent and that will benefit employees - rather than sending candidates on any random training courses that are available in order to attain Skills Development points - a true impact can be made on the organisation's functionality. Employees that feel valued enough to be sent on job specific training will endeavour to benefit their companies, providing return on investment that reaches further than the BEE scorecard.