

HR under the **spotlight** in South Africa 2015

South Africa's leaders have to grapple with the challenges of today.

By Francois Wilbers

Today, a sense of well-being, self-worth and being part of a winning environment is a dream most South Africans share. South Africa's political, social and economic environment has created stern challenges for leaders and HR professionals as the country's efficiency levels, leadership conviction, skills development and value systems come under close, and often harsh, scrutiny.

Not surprisingly, organisations — large or small — face exactly the same issues as South Africa (Pty) Ltd. What lessons can be learnt? How is HR adapting to the challenges of South Africa 2015?

There are four challenges HR must face.

Challenge

1

Efficiency: Organisations re-design

Given the dismal growth over the last years coupled with unrealistic wage demands and the debilitating impact of strikes, there is a distinct increase in consulting assignments which address organisation re-design, as leaders look to improve productivity by examining the way that they do business. In addition, there is a new urgency amongst organisations aiming to become less dependent on labour, eliminating duplication of functions and improving processes and procedures.

Challenge

2

Training: Prioritise implementation skills

An examination of tender bulletins over the past eighteen months reveals that more than 70 percent of the tenders relate to training, mostly in the formal sector. While skills development is essential for future economic growth and sustainable employment, one must add that development is essential for improved service delivery simply to maintain our standards and to live up to expectations of the citizens of South Africa.

Having been involved in competency assessments for over 20 years in both the private and public sectors, I believe that implementation skills need to be prioritised.

It is pointless only focusing on future challenges, whilst deteriorating service delivery erodes the base that we need in terms of infrastructure to support development and economic growth.

Challenge

3

Leadership: Strong leaders don't emerge overnight

The need for strong leadership is high on the agenda of HR management challenges. Daily, we read about (and experience) the inability of many state owned enterprises to deliver on their mandates. Following the acclaim and admiration of the Mandela leadership era, there are many disillusioned South Africans today as the realisation dawns that political freedom and economic freedom are not necessarily obvious bed partners.