

SA's unique talent pool lures expanding Canadian tech startup

 By [Shan Raddiffe](#)

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CostCertified, a Canadian tech startup that provides cost estimating software for the residential construction industry, is opening a base of operation in Cape Town, which aims to create at least 300 jobs for locals over the next two years.



Mike Bignold, founder and CEO of CostCertified

CEO and founder Mike Bignold explains that the software program was originally developed to assist project managers at his own contracting company with compiling cost estimates. However, he soon realised that the software had the potential to offer value to the construction industry at large.

Since its launch in 2021, CostCertified has received backing by tech incubator programme, Y-Combinator, and is tipped to become one of the fastest growing companies in North America. Having raised \$8.45m (R133m) during the seed round of funding, the company is now set for expansion.

Attitude first - skills can be taught

South Africans' charm and hospitable nature were major factors in the startup's selection of Cape Town as the locale for its first overseas headquarters.

"We chose South Africa as our next hub based on the calibre of talent we expect to find locally," says Bignold. "Besides [Cape Town] being one of the most beautiful cities in the world, South Africans are known for their awesome lively culture and vibe, versatility and, of course, the ability to hustle; there's an unrecognised talent pool here that we're keen to tap into."

The company is currently recruiting over 30 sales development and customer success representatives for its Mother City operation.

"Our hiring team is on the lookout for ambitious candidates who show resilience, agility, and a competitive entrepreneurial spirit to join our high-performance team. Our strategy is to hire for attitude first - skills can be taught," Bignold says.

As a significant number of entry-level and junior positions are available, applicants don't need to have a robust sales background or years of experience.

Equality and diversity

Considering South Africa's unemployment rate currently stands at 34.5% (Stats SA - Q1 2022), this hiring process is certainly welcome.

"We are so proud and excited to be able to contribute to making a dent in the unemployment rate. Our strategy involves hiring South Africans with no related experience or education; for previously disadvantaged but talented people, this presents an opportunity to accelerate their careers significantly," Bignold continues. "We value diversity and are an inclusive employer – we'll always encourage and welcome people of all backgrounds as we strive to come together with our ideas, experiences, perspectives, and unique identities to achieve great success."

War for talent

With over 60,000 people already employed in the business process outsourcing (BPO) sector in Cape Town, the city is a burgeoning call centre hub in Africa. Online retail behemoth Amazon is already snapping up South African customer service talent ahead of the construction of its headquarters in the coastal city's River Club development (currently on hold due to a [land dispute lawsuit](#)).

However, Bignold believes CostCertified offers something these giants aren't able to provide. "Unlike large established multinationals, we are still a startup where every single team member can, and must, have a massive impact on the trajectory of the business," he explains. "With our successful rapid growth strategy, the platform and opportunities for career development are endless and take place significantly faster. Larger corporates cannot offer that."

Skills training

Not only is CostCertified looking to supply jobs, but this is the chance for employees to learn and develop new skills.

"Startups are unique and offer an opportunity to build and diversify so many skills for young professionals. We provide everyone with the best tools and equipment for the job – as well as training on a variety of technologies, soft skills, and technical skills – like sales technique," says Bignold.

"We maintain a fast-paced, agile, high-performing culture, where employees learn to be resilient and, most importantly, how to wear many hats, which will be very marketable skills for their future. The rewards are infinite when you feel a part of the larger vision and directly see the impact you are making every day."

Long-term opportunities

With learning and development comes the possibility for promotion.

"Our philosophy is to grow employees into roles that suit them best, based on where they're excelling and the work they enjoy – even going so far as to create new and specific roles for them," encourages Bignold. "As a growth-focused company, we are always on the lookout for opportunities to promote and upskill."

Application process and tips

"Our success is driven by the ability to connect with our customers, and communication is key," Bignold advises those interested in applying for the [company's openings](#).

"We ask all of our potential candidates to provide a short video introducing themselves with their application. This enables the candidate to share a little about themselves and allows the hiring team to identify whether they would be a good fit. Additionally, any opportunity to provide tangible examples of skills or attributes listed on an application is always helpful, i.e., milestones, special projects, accomplishments, key performance indicators, etc. Answering questions before they are asked will always give candidates a competitive edge."

ABOUT SHAN RADCLIFFE

Shan Radcliffe is the editor of Bizcommunity HR, Education and Legal.

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