

The truth about talent acquisition in SA in the age of urgency

By [Christelle Hargroves](#)

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Our sense of urgency is rising. To keep up in a world of ChatGPT and groceries in under 60 minutes, we have to act fast.

Part of acting fast is hiring fast. But this isn't that simple.

When a company has a vacancy, there is a workload that needs to be done by someone but with skills shortages and high unemployment rates, the search for and screening of appropriate candidates can take months.

In the interim, either there is no one to fill the gap, or fellow team members are forced to step up and manage the pressure.

In some cases, this mounting pressure causes employees to resign, creating further vacancies and further pressure. Hiring fast often means hiring wrong, leaving companies back to where they started but with money lost.

Vacancies can result in low productivity, reduced competitiveness and higher staff turnovers.

According to South African Talent Acquisition Managers, there are 12 blockers to fast hiring:



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1. Skill shortages

According to a PwC survey, chief executives see the unavailability of skilled employees as the largest threat to their business.

Two factors impact this according to Businesstech. The first is expensive tertiary education and the second is low wages resulting in highly skilled workers leaving South African for international opportunities.

2. Job hopping

Low wages don't only impact highly skilled roles according to a South African talent manager of a retail chain. This company finds that its employees in lower skilled roles were leaving for as little as R100 to increase wages. This leaves them back to the recruiting process with attention taken away from finding highly skilled candidates.

3. Ineffective assessments

Talent managers advise that they have to be careful to hire correctly and with due diligence to ensure candidates actually have the skills they claim to have. If candidates are incorrectly assessed, both for skills and culture, companies and the candidates find themselves in a problematic situation.

4. Poor cultural fit

It's not enough for an employee to be skilled, they need to have the right attitude and cultural fit. This can be hard to

establish and it becomes harder when hiring internationally.

5. High volumes

On average, South African talent acquisitions teams are flooded with approximately 1,400 CVs per advertised vacancy. This number escalates to 20,000 CVs for roles like internships. What makes this harder is that these teams are usually small, under extreme pressure and struggling to find time in manager diaries to schedule interviews.



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6. Extreme costs

According to CareerAdvice.com, hiring one employee can range between R30,000 and R60,000. This excludes advertising costs and includes travel-related expenses, recruitment time, interview time and opportunity costs of managers spending time in interviews over value-driven items.

7. Race for top talent

What distinguishes one company from another is their talent. But finding talent is exceptionally difficult, particularly in the technology space. This takes time but with time comes the potential of losing talent. The top 10% of candidates are snapped up within the first 10 days.

Ninety-four percent of candidates say the hiring experience affects the decision. Talent managers not only need to find these candidates as they enter the market, but provide them with an outstanding interview process.

8. Lack of value time

Most talent managers complain that they spend too much time on admin and not enough time on value-driven tasks.

One talent manager explains that they spend hours acting like a call centre agent, trying to get candidates on a call to schedule a meeting or have a pre-interview.

When interviews finally take place, talent teams and hiring managers often realise cultural or skills fit is missing and they spend the rest of their time politely asking questions.

9. Lack of candidate visibility

Companies are prescriptive of what they want from a candidate but this often leaves promising candidates unseen because they are rejected by algorithms. Worse, companies are still leaning heavily on CVs as core screening criteria.

10. Insincere candidates

Many candidates aren't actually interested in the roles they interview for and some candidates say they would interview for roles they are not equipped to take. There are also cases of candidates that use interviews as a way of getting offers as bids for their ideal companies.

11. Remote hiring

Companies now need a way to hire candidates remotely. Assessing someone virtually can be difficult and talent managers are seeking virtual experiences that are as close to in-person as possible.

12. Inconsistent hiring processes

Talent managers complained of managers asking inappropriate and ineffective questions without following a consistent hiring process that is fair and allows for comparison.

Technology as the solution

Technology is enabling talent managers to overcome these hiring blockers and to hire urgently, with many new forms emerging.

The urgency to hire fast will only increase, especially as technology evolves and emerging skills are needed. In today's world, a sense of urgency is a competitive advantage. Finding ways to hire right and hire fast is what will put one company ahead of another.

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