

What lies beneath the mask for recruitment in 2021?

What started as one event for the recruitment community to use as a sounding board to gauge what people were doing during "survival mode", turned into a five-series community webinar discussion aptly called *Collaborate to Navigate*. Subject matter specialists, Celeste Sirin (Employer Branding SA), Jane Moors (Outerbox Thinking) and Vanessa Raath (The Talent Hunter) rallied together in offering input, advice and support in their respective areas of specialities.



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Sirin confirms that: “The rollercoaster ride of change and uncertainty continues. However, it has not been altogether doom and gloom, as it allowed both internal recruiters and recruitment agencies the opportunity to re-imagine and re-engineer their business models, to address the massive shift in the labour industry. Like many industries, we witnessed many companies leveraging off technology to continue business in the virtual environment. This offered renewed innovation, growth and reach into international markets.”

On Friday, 27 November, the group closed the year with *Collaborate to Navigate – What lies beneath the Mask* where they reflected on what they learnt, what they would consider leaving behind and what their predictions for 2021 would be.

Three vital questions were positioned:

1. 2020 in review – what did we learn?

Shift from traditional to value-added service offering

At the onset of Covid, the recruitment industry was turned upside down. Conventional recruitment mindsets had to shift to becoming far more creative, especially with clients finding it difficult to understand what added value and innovation they were receiving. The need for external recruiters to shift from a 360-degree full-cycle recruitment offering soon became apparent, with them realising that breaking down the entire value chain and monetising their service each step of the way would possibly be a better solution. The agile and smart recruiters that quickly realised the need to re-engineer their business models were the ones that have managed to successfully stay afloat.

Endless fee negotiations

The timeless challenge of external recruiters having to push back on companies wanting to negotiate placement fees was further fuelled by the pandemic economic climate. Community stakeholders encouraged recruiters not to negotiate or reduce their fees to rock bottom, taking away from their service offering, but rather to set up payment plans/terms. Reduction and negotiation of placement fees has a knock on effect for the entire recruitment industry and this compromises every stakeholder having to justify their placement fees each time they sit in front of a client.

Shift to virtual recruitment world

The entire industry had to learn, adapt and shift quickly; leveraging technology platforms, (Zoom, Cisco, Teams and the like) to facilitate interviews, meetings and deliver on what were once face-to-face, hiring, on-boarding and training processes.



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Recruitment advisors

The role of both internal and external recruiters shifted to one of consulting and advisory, where companies valued their partners “walking the unknown road with them”. It was interesting to note how certain companies rose above the pandemic, determined to progress on their initiatives that they set out to implement pre-Covid.

Recruitment and branding

The gradual convergence of recruitment and branding has accelerated. With employees being central to all organisations, marketing and communications departments shifted their focus towards the well-being of employees and now gradually, the attraction of candidates. The ongoing need for marketing and communications departments to team up with HR and talent acquisition teams to have a one-brand unified approach persists. Employer branding and personal branding will become a key focus area in 2021, as people continue to remain central to the recovery and success of every organisation.

2. What practices are we leaving behind in 2020?

Control over trust

Global recruiter sentiments confirm that Covid accelerated the move from a behaviour of control to one of trust i.e. the need for leaders to trust employees working remotely versus the need for constant monitoring. Building trust is a big shift for many leaders and this needs to happen in order to recognise success.

Career development - a dual responsibility

Career development used to be the sole responsibility of companies. We have seen a shift in individuals taking dual accountability for their self-development and upskilling. Many research studies have reported that continuous learning is a focus area for companies, employees, and prospective candidates alike.

Diversity and inclusion

Diversity and inclusion is here to stay and will remain a strong focus area. The South African recruitment industry is familiar with diversity and inclusion and is, in fact, ahead of its global recruiting and sourcing counterparts. Diversity and inclusion is expected to become a hot topic and focus area for many companies globally in 2021.



Image source: Getty Images

Self-underrepresentation of recruiter and talent acquisition teams

Recruiters and talent acquisition specialists must stop undervaluing and underrepresenting themselves and their service as experts. They need to start empowering themselves to start competently consulting into business. External recruitment agencies need to shift their pricing model beyond only being remunerated upon the candidate having successfully worked at the organisation for a one to three month probation period.

Recruiters must move to a global mind shift

As the recruitment industry becomes global and borderless, recruiters must consider recruiting internationally. Our virtual environment has seen many skilled individuals offering their experience and knowledge to other countries. This is a new way of thinking and working, but many talented South African specialists have already begun breaking down these barriers.

3. What does 2021 hold for the recruitment industry?

Whilst we are still navigating through uncharted waters, recruiters and SMMEs within the recruitment industry have

to remain positive, agile and ready for the unexpected. On a positive note, recruitment is picking up.

We are still, however, faced with an imbalance of unemployed, unskilled individuals versus the massive technical and specialist skills shortage. There is concern this will be exacerbated by international companies luring our local limited skilled talent to work for them remotely, from South Africa. This does not bode well for SA companies seeking to recruit local talent for their critical high-demand roles. On the other hand, feeding revenue into the SA economy is positive.



Image source: Getty Images

With our increasing unemployment rate, recruiters and talent acquisition specialists need to be prepared for a slew of candidate responses. Technology can assist to certain degree, however human interaction/engagement is still very necessary. The candidate experience is critical to not only the employer brand, but to many companies' corporate brands. External stakeholders do not make a distinction when touching a brand, as either a consumer or candidate. Their experience ultimately affects the entire corporate brand and company reputation. Recruiters are becoming increasingly responsible for brands.

The pandemic has brought about a new way of thinking for candidates. Across most generations, people are seeking purpose, ability to make a meaningful contribution to their employer, a balanced lifestyle, flexibility and aligned values. Passive candidates are not always quick to move and will weigh up intangible benefits over and above the pay check before they decide to shift.

The global talent market place has never been as diverse as it is now. The "alternative workforce" is becoming mainstream and consists of contractors, freelance, gig, and crowd workers. We have seen an upsurge of new generation talent platforms to support the on-demand workforce. The workplace as we know it is fast-changing – and we need to realise that

“ *“The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence—it is to act with yesterday’s logic. — Peter Drucker* ”

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