

A trend to innovative staffing

THE skills challenge in SA is far from over and calls for a more innovative approach to recruitment. Organisations need to think more broadly about core competencies rather than screening by the number of years in an industry or job, says Sandra Burmeister, CEO of Landelahn Business Leaders.

"Many skills are transferable between sectors; it is less costly to induct into a particular sector than to train from scratch. This is already evident in financial services, which has more engineering graduates than the engineering sector.

"Leadership skills, too, are similar whether you're running a mining house or a project — they require the same core competencies."

There are some technical skills one does require to work in certain industries, says Burmeister, and it is useful to have some sort of evaluation against which of these skills are transferable.

Another way in which companies can address skills shortages is by drawing on returning South Africans who have been working abroad.

"Not all South Africans who work abroad leave SA for good. Everywhere in the world young, ambitious professionals have a natural desire to work on offshore assignments.

"Now we have large numbers of returning South Africans because countries need to look after their own skills base and aren't renewing work permits. These people bring with them a level of experience and perspective that is valuable to business."

Kay Vittee, CEO of Quest Flexible Staffing Solutions, says the socio-economic situation lends itself towards



SANDRA BURMEISTER ... transferable skills.

flexible staffing.

"The trend is to retain a core of permanent staff, while using flexible staff to manage peak work-loads, staffing up and down in line with business demands. This model not only facili-

tates optimal staffing efficiencies, but allows both employers and employees to identify key performance areas and employment goals, and skill themselves accordingly to keep the organisation upwardly mobile.

"In the current climate, companies who employ flexible staff are better able to scale down in response to adverse business conditions."

Vittee says the key to managing commercial and economic risks is to substitute fixed costs with variable costs. Even when business conditions improve, companies should continue to apply a staffing solution that can respond rapidly in all circumstances.

"Work/life balance is one of the top priorities for today's emerging workforce. The latest statistics from this generation reveal that more than 92% of local employees would leave their job for greater flexibility."

Gayleen Baxter, COO of Kelly, says many professionals and technical people are taking the flexible option.

"The face of flexible staffing has changed immensely since its introduction about 39 years ago. Businesses are now using it as part of a competitive workforce management strategy to top up their bottom line and to reduce the complications that come with hiring and firing."

There has been an underlying concern that flexible staff are less committed and less satisfied than permanent staff. Baxter argues that while this may have been true 20-plus years ago, the industry has evolved.

"Flexible workers receive more benefits than ever before, which helps to drive employee satisfaction," she says.

