

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Still Skills Stressed

Mobile giant keeps foot on skills development accelerator

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DESPITE the current global economic downturn, the telecommunications industry is holding up well, and remains on a firm growth footing, avers South African mobile firm MTN's MD, **Tim Lowry**.

He says that there are now both exciting opportunities and daunting challenges, the most pressing

of which is the ability to attract employees with the necessary high-end skills to grow MTN's business further.

"It is these very skills that we seek that are in desperate short supply, and the demand for suitably qualified people is high. For this reason, MTN has taken it upon itself to go out and proactively find the graduates who are

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equipped with these specialist skills," he says.

MTN has invested R15-million in a skills development programme, which will officially be launched in February this year and aims to facilitate job creation, skills development and the upskilling of young graduates entering the telecommunications sector. The initial investment of R15-million will be spent over a two-year period.

It will identify 83 prospective graduates for the first year in the fields of engineering, finance, logistics and information technology, the 'core' fields for the MTN group. The graduates will be managed not only by the human resources department, but also by MTN's line managers.

The bursary programme will target 30 of the top high school achievers who are entering a tertiary institution to further studies in the fields of engineering and finance.

Lowry stresses that the responsibility of investing in skills development is not that of government alone, but that both the private and public sectors must play a significant role in human resource development.

He envisages that, through such investments, MTN will not face a skills challenge in the next ten years. South Africa could still be reeling from a skills shortage in the next ten years, if the necessary steps are not taken. Executive



TIM LOWRY

Both the public and private sectors should play a significant role in human resource development

research firm Landelahni Business Leaders has forecast that the skills shortage could last for at least the next decade.

"This is not just an investment for MTN, as we are confident that our investment in the future of our youth will be for the betterment of South Africa and the continent," concludes Lowry.