

## How companies can use learnerships effectively

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING NEWS

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According to Richard Rayne, CEO of iLearn, companies that are obliged by law to contribute to the country's Skills Development Fund (SDF) through paying the mandatory skills development levy will find a number of important benefits if they include learnerships in their annual Workplace Skills Plan (WSP).

A learnership is a work-based learning programme directly related to an occupation or field work that leads to an accredited NQF qualification. They are managed by the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). Businesses looking to undertake skills development either for their own talent pipeline or to contribute towards education in this country can enter into learnership agreements with their current employers or with unemployed candidates.

“Considering how skills development has become such an important aspect of the B-BBEE scorecard, companies can use learnerships effectively, not just for talent development and management, but also to boost their B-BEE levels,” Rayne points out. Skills development is now a priority element of the B-BBEE scorecard providing companies with opportunities to earn 20 vital points. A business that fails to achieve a 40% minimum threshold of those skills development points is penalised on their rating.

Rayne explains: “You can claim eight points if you invest 6% of your payroll on training Black people. That used to be 3%. If you engage 2.5% of your employees in learnerships and internships you can earn four points; and then gain another four points if 2.5% of your workforce is made up of Black unemployed learners. Then there’s an additional five points to be claimed if you are able to employ those unemployed learners at the end of their learnerships programme. So, it’s really important to invest wisely in relevant and quality learnerships that result in the development of specific skills to the level that would be an advantage to your company.”

Rayne founded iLearn 15 years ago, and today it offers a wide range of innovative and leading corporate learning solutions that span the ONSITE instructor-led, ONLINE and blended learning methodologies. “We are excited at the way that learnerships help to build an effective workforce and connect learning to actual career paths. In these times, when both talent management and B-BBEE levels are so crucial to business, you have a fantastic opportunity through learnerships to groom unemployed people for potential recruitment within your organisation.”

Investing in learnerships also provides companies with opportunities to capitalise on various reimbursements, grants and tax rebates. For instance, employers who pay the skills development

levy to SARS, who are registered with their SETA and submit their WSP and Annual Training Report each year, do qualify for further reimbursements on their SDL spend which can be used towards the cost of the training.

These benefits aside, the core purpose of learnerships is, of course, to ensure that the business is empowered by a relevant skills base over the long term. "The unique advantage of learnerships is that they are work-based and delivered onsite in a company's environment," concludes Rayne.

"They can, therefore, be specifically and strategically designed, and then embedded within the context of your organisation's talent development objectives and goals." Learnerships are typically implemented over a 12-month period with the learners attending an average of three days of training each month in addition to completing their assessments.

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