

# Good attitude is a must for this job

## SARAH-JANE BOSCH

OVER the past six years, BPeSA Western Cape has helped to create hundreds of jobs in the call centre industry through its learnership programme.

The nine call centre companies that form part of the programme are Direct Axis, Woolworths Financial Services, ADT, G326, MBD, Nimble, Sell Direct, Quest and Kelly.

These companies work closely with BPeSA to provide job opportunities for students once they have completed the programme.

"Since its inception in 2004, we have constantly tweaked the programme's structure to ensure that students have the necessary skills to succeed in their chosen company once they complete the programme," says BPeSA's talent development project manager, Noha Essop.

The learnership runs over a 12-month period and starts with the host companies selecting learners who have been handpicked by BPeSA. The learners undergo 15-20 days of classroom training and three days of computer training.

After they have completed the initial training phase, they join their host companies, which build on the training they have already received. While working with the host companies they receive training in the relevant company systems, products and procedures.

"This is a great initiative to give new entrants access into the contact centre industry and although the learnerships require careful



**LENDING AN EAR:** BPeSA's learnership programme is generating job skills and opportunities for unemployed young people.

managing, we believe building an appropriate bridging process has increased the learnership success rate," says Natalie Warner, training manager at Direct Axis.

Warner says 96 percent of the learners who join Direct Axis choose to stay on afterwards, and a number of them have advanced to team leader positions.

Andre Joseph, human resources manager of Woolworths Financial Services, says the learnership programme is a great opportunity to provide skills and experience to unemployed youth and in the process contribute to community upliftment. It also helps develop a pipeline of talent for the companies and the industry as a whole.

"The BPeSA learnership provides a good platform for learners, making their transition into our

company smooth. I would recommend that more businesses follow suit, and become host companies," says Warner.

"Every year thousands of learners finish matric, but are unable to study further. Learners with just a basic matric struggle to find work when they leave school. BPeSA Western Cape wants to fill that gap and provide long-term job opportunities in an exciting and dynamic industry," Essop says.

Siviwe Mqoqi, team leader at MBD Solutions, joined BPeSA's learnership programme in 2008.

"I came across the programme by chance, but very soon realised it was the ideal place for me. The course was fantastic and gave me the training needed to succeed in the workplace," says Mqoqi, who joined MBD in November 2008, and

progressed to team leader after only two months.

"I started out as an agent out on the floor, but quickly worked my way up. The learnership laid a perfect platform for me and taught me important skills which I have used ever since.

"If it wasn't for this learnership I would never have got where I am today, so thank you BPeSA Western Cape and MBD for giving me this chance."

Anthea Martin, a call centre agent at Direct Axis, is completing the learnership programme.

"Things have gone really well since I joined my host company in January, and I recently became a permanent staff member. If wasn't for this learnership I would not be working in this industry," says Martin.

Interim chief executive of BPeSA Western Cape Fagri Semaar says the contact centre industry is a key job provider in the Western Cape.

"It is the ideal vehicle to provide job opportunities and in the process reduce unemployment and drive social development. We need to focus on growing this successful programme even further, by getting more companies on board as well as bringing more learners through our doors," says Semaar.

"The minimum requirement for the Learnership Programme is matric and, most important, a good attitude," says Essop.

● Contact the learner liaison officer, Luleka Javu, at [admin1@bpe-sawesterncape.co.za](mailto:admin1@bpe-sawesterncape.co.za) or 021 630 1500.