

More opportunities to enter job-generating tourism industry

South Africa has one the [worst unemployment rates in the world](#), however, the tourism sector contributes significantly to employment, supporting [one in 10 jobs worldwide](#) and one in 22 locally - representing 4.5% of the [total workforce](#).



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With South Africa being a top tourist destination, we need to be giving more people opportunities to enter this job-generating industry by equipping them with relevant skills, according to Sigal Geva, group human capital and social responsibility manager at Premier Hotels & Resorts and managing director of Academic College - South Africa.

"We believe that investing in training and development is a guarantee for future success. Recently, we launched our management development programme aimed at enabling unemployed candidates from within local communities surrounding each of our properties to become employable through education. Candidates with a grade 12 or equivalent qualification and who show leadership ability, along with stress tolerance, use of initiative and sound decision-making, communication and interpersonal skills, are selected to take part. The programme comprises both theoretical and hands-on accelerated training in all areas of hotel management to provide participants with the foundation for a career in the hospitality industry. I guess you can say it's our way of paying it forward."

The value of learnerships

Geva believes that the country's unemployment crisis, particularly amongst the youth, can be attributed to a failure by the education system to adequately prepare young people for the world of work, coupled with a lack of work experience.

"Learnerships, however, help to tackle both."

Learnerships incorporate theoretical and practical training which enable learners to obtain a nationally-recognised qualification, gain work experience and develop skills relevant to their chosen industry.

Through Academic College - South Africa, learners obtain classroom training in areas such as accommodation services, hospitality reception, food and beverage services and professional cookery, and are able to put what they have learnt into practice at all Premier Hotels & Resorts' properties nationwide. They also receive a monthly stipend for the duration of their training. "A large number of learners who have successfully completed their studies go on to become employed by the Premier Hotels & Resorts group," adds Geva.

"As members of the tourism sector, we have an obligation to help combat the unemployment crisis by enabling South Africans to gain the skills and experience they need to be part of the working world."

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