

The local youth employment engine that can

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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Since 2011, Lulaway, the brainchild of Jake Willis and Errol Freeman, has placed 30,000 young South Africans in jobs, facilitated the distribution of over R150m in internship funding, and established over 200 network partner job centres nationwide. The local youth employment engine receives over 10,000 job applications every month.



Image source: [Facebook](#)

Initially developed to make entry-level jobs more accessible to the youth, Lulaway has expanded its services to address the needs of job seekers in the South African context, bridging the gap between job seekers, employers and the public sector in impactful ways. At its job centres, located within local communities, Lulaway's tech platform allows youth to access jobs at little or no cost, while its work-readiness training provides young people with skills to secure and retain jobs.

We interviewed Lulaway marketing director and cofounder Errol Freeman to find out more about the organisation's history, the solutions Lulaway offers in addressing SA's unemployment challenge, and the benefits of having more youth join the workforce.

Give us the backstory behind Lulaway and its mission.

Freeman: Lulaway was founded in 2011 when we saw a gap in the market in how entry-level jobs were accessed. Starting out as an online portal connecting entry-level employers and job seekers, Lulaway soon realised that youth unemployment needs a holistic solution which addresses its root causes.

With this understanding, the Lulaway mission is to drive systemic change in the way young people access and retain jobs in South Africa. Driven by this mission, Lulaway evolved into a youth employment engine which drives high-impact job creation solutions for young people. Lulaway aims to address the inefficient labour market for entry-level job seekers, and by doing so increasing employment opportunities for youth. It is underpinned by a state-of-the-art tech platform, a national network of physical job centres and a deep understanding of the barriers to employment and how to address them effectively and on a large scale.



Errol Freeman, marketing director and cofounder, Lulaway

What are the main barriers to employment for South Africa's youth?

Barriers to employment occur because of socioeconomic, historical, geographical and cultural factors:

- **Costs of job seeking:** Many job seekers live far from metropolitan areas and cannot afford the transport costs required to search for jobs.
- **Lack of centralised access to jobs:** Job opportunities are not accessible in a centralised location. Job seekers rely on word-of-mouth, personal connections and chance to find vacancies. Many are excluded even if they have the right skills but do not know that jobs are available.
- **Expectation gap:** Young people are aspirational and aim for what they believe to be "good" jobs. In this economy, starting out at the bottom and working your way upwards is often the best way to get your foot in the door, but many are unwilling to do this as they are holding out for a better job.

The numbers are staggering - 3.3 million (32.4%) out of 10.3 million young people aged 15-24, are not in employment, education or training. What are some of the solutions Lulaway would offer to government and the private

sector?

Lulaway's solutions revolve around job access, training and placement interventions. These offerings address the gaps at each stage of the job-seeking cycle: increasing job access, efficient job matching and relevant training.

We firstly increase job access by providing ways for job seekers to register on our platform within their local communities. We also offer government and the private sector a professional and effective way to connect jobs seekers with employment opportunities, driving job placements. We provide world-class work-readiness training to equip young people with the skills to succeed in the workplace. Our funded internship programmes are extremely well-received and sought after by employers. Through these programmes, we match available funding with employers, creating jobs which employers would otherwise not have been willing or able to fund themselves.

What are the potential benefits for South Africa in having more of its youth join the workforce?

Having more young people in the workforce is critical to the current and future economy. Young people are the future of South Africa, and their economic inclusion means the sustainability of the country. Young people bring unique value to the workforce.

For a company to have a long-term future, it needs a robust progression plan while relies on young people to be trained and knowledgeable in the operations.

Where young people are qualified, they may bring more up-to-date skills and education into the organisation. Young people's understanding of technology and social media can uniquely contribute to an organisation's growth.

For the economy, more youth in the workforce means increased spending power to be injected back into the economy translating into economic growth. It means less people reliant on social grants, and a generation of productive income-producing adults who can support their families and contribute to their communities.



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What are some of the services offered to job seekers and companies that differentiate Lulaway from other similar organisations?

Lulaway is unique in that it offers large-scale job access and job creation across the country to youth, without demanding further vocational training. Lulaway specialises in maximising the skills which do exist and connecting them with available vacancies. While skills development is critical to job creation, there exists at any given time hundreds of unfilled vacancies. The right candidates are simply unable to efficiently identify these opportunities.

Our job-finding ecosystem allows for job seekers and job opportunities to be facilitated by a fair and highly efficient process. Our technology is built specifically for the South African entry-level job seeker market, and can easily recruit and screen hundreds of job seekers within short periods of time. Furthermore, our experience in running funded internship programmes is unmatched – to date we have managed over 5,000 internship placements and facilitated the distribution of over R150m to these young beneficiaries.

■ ***How do entry-level job seekers sign on - what's their first step in finding work through Lulaway?***

There are two ways to register on the Lulaway database. You can register online for free by clicking [here](#). Alternatively, you can register at a nearby job centre. You can find the nearest job centre [here](#). Lulaway can be contacted on 0101409510, www.lulaway.co.za or dial *120*5852#.

■ ***What are the long-term goals for Lulaway?***

Our long-term goal is the creation of a centralised labour market exchange that will create the foundations for fair employment. Systemic change is possible where labour market efficiencies is driven and funded by all stakeholders.

The ideal central labour market exchange combines a centralised tech platform which has mass reach and caters specifically for this market. If all job seekers and entry-level vacancies are viewable, we can move towards a fair and efficient labour market. When this reaches critical mass, and vacancies are filled quickly, efficiently and fairly, socioeconomic transformation is possible and sustainable.

For more on Lulaway, go to www.lulaway.co.za.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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