

Oliver to invest over R2m in upskilling talent in 3 years

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Inside digital agency Oliver is set to invest over R2m in upskilling local talent within the next three years. This follows a successful sponsored learnership partnership with Red and Yellow School of Advertising that stems back from 2019 and other in-house upskilling initiatives.



“Our business is people – without people we have no business,” says Paul van den Berg, chief executive for Middle East and Africa. “These resources are people with goals, dreams and aspirations, so it is critical for us to ensure we are able to attract, retain and develop the best people in our markets.”

He continues: “We are a learning organisation and in a Web3 post-info age, if you’re not learning you are expiring. It’s with this in mind that we are committed to both aggressive and transformative change as well as investing in our staff with accredited training and development – fully company sponsored. We have already spent over R1.5m on upskilling our talent over the past three years with Red and Yellow School of Advertising and other learner-based initiatives.”

He adds that Oliver is committed to change and upskilling talent: “We need to ensure our people are as agile and future-proof as they can be in our rapidly transforming and easily disrupted industry,” he says. “This both protects them and their future careers while also giving our clients the most cutting-edge talent, technology and teamwork.”

Sarisha Govender, head of human resources at Oliver says: “We can proudly say that we have a number of people from Red & Yellow that have completed their two-year digital marketing learnership courses this year and have been absorbed into permanent positions.”

“People are our greatest asset, and we go the extra mile to attain talent that has potential and experience while continuously striving to provide our employees with a culture of learning in order for them to be upskilled and afford them with future opportunities,” explains Govender. “This not only enables growth and development and results in experienced, skilled and well-rounded employees, but also people who feel valued and cared for by Oliver.”

“We currently have a 90% employee retention, which is backed by our Peakon App that tracks employee satisfaction,” she says.

Govender adds that investment into talent has a direct correlation with the growth of the company, client service and

offerings, as well as the increase in staff retention. “We focus on having the best skills on offer to our clients in order to provide the most innovative service offerings on the market,” she says.

On why investment into people is important for transformation, Dimakatso Mathe, the newly appointed head of transformation at Oliver says: “If we invest in our people we are automatically investing in the future of our organisation.”

Mathe says that Oliver offers mentoring programmes, inclusive leadership training, apprenticeships, coaching and much more: “By investing in our talent and equipping all our people with the tools, support and insights they need, it will ensure that we can close the gender gap in senior leadership roles and also ensure that we can promote those from underrepresented ethnic groups into senior roles across the business.”

She explains that people from diversified backgrounds bring unique skills enabling this growth. “Through various initiatives, including our unemployed bursary programme, talent bursary programme, graduate internship programme, enterprise and supplier development programme we have a huge impact not only on our BBBEE status but have supported the career development of hundreds of staff members.”

“Our healthy diverse talent coming from unique backgrounds with different skills and knowledge provides Oliver with creative and innovative ideas that both win awards, is effective for clients and brands and brings in new business all the time,” Mathe adds. “We have a dedicated talent department that ensures we have personalised candidate experience throughout the recruitment journey and our employee value proposition ensures we have a smooth journey right from recruitment to when employees move on.”

“We are overtly embracing diversity and are actively seeking out the exceptional talent that resides in our rich, culturally and ethnically diverse country,” continues van den Berg. “Inside intelligence is about having talent on the inside that understands what’s happening on the outside – we recruit with this in mind.”

“We look for self-motivated people who we also feel we would like to hang out with, because if you don’t feel that chemistry in your initial interview with us, it is unlikely to change when we are working together,” he adds. “We firmly believe that our client’s full target market demographic deserves to be fully represented by the creative and strategic digital teams working on the brands that are selling to them - this means as a creative digital agency we need to lead with transformation.”

He continues: “In addition to accredited training that our people have access to, we also leverage our global client knowledge base allowing our South African talent to train on the same systems, processes, and technology as our international counterparts. Based on our intimate knowledge of some of our global clients like Unilever, Adidas, Diageo, Bayer, Ford, Apple and Google and their digital transformation journey – we can upskill our staff with real world knowledge outside of the classroom.

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