CASE STUDY

Time to hire is affecting South African businesses.

To Reduce Time-to-Hire in the South African Market.

South African organisations face significant recruitment challenges, with skilled positions taking substantially longer than global averages. This extended timeline creates cascading business impacts: decreased productivity, increased workload for existing teams, and potential revenue loss. It significantly increases the risk of losing top talent to competitors.

This whitepaper presents five evidence-based strategies leading South African companies have implemented to reduce time-to-hire while maintaining quality standards. Each approach is supported by verifiable case studies and expert insights relevant to South Africa's unique recruitment landscape.

The Business Imperative for Faster Hiring.

Inefficient recruitment carries substantial business costs beyond just unfilled positions:

- **Financial Impact:** The cost of a bad hire in South Africa can range from 30% to 200% of the position's annual salary

- **Business Growth Limitations:** PwC South Africa's CEO Survey shows 85% of South African companies report skills shortages as a major barrier to business growth

- **Global Competition:** Remote work has intensified competition for skilled talent across borders

> Speed and quality have traditionally been opposing forces when it comes to recruitment. When actively searching for candidates, we have more control over the process than when just posting and praying. We can be targeted in our sourcing approach, proactive in our reach out and deliberate in how we engage with candidates. (LinkedIn Talent Blog, 2021)

Lou Adler
CEO and Founder of The Adler Group

Strategy 1: Implement Skills-Based Assessment Models.

Traditional CV screening and credential-based filtering significantly extend the hiring process, often failing to identify the best candidates. Forward-thinking South African organisations are implementing skills-based assessment approaches that reduce time to hire and improve selection quality.

Lucia Mabasa, Managing Director at pinpoint one Human Resources, explains the problem with traditional screening

"What we've seen is a big disconnect in terms of how a CV reads and how a person actually performs in a role. Assessments that test actual job-related skills have proven to be better predictors of performance than interviews or resumes." (Future of HR Summit South Africa, 2022)

Implementation approach:

1. Identify the core capabilities that drive success in each key role

2. Create practical assessments that simulate actual job requirements

3. Implement these assessments early in the selection process

4. Develop clear, objective scoring frameworks

Case study: Unilever

Unilever implemented digital assessment and gamified testing for entry-level positions, resulting in:

- Time-to-hire reduction from 4 months to 4 weeks

- 50,000 hours of interviewer time saved annually

- Increased diversity in hiring outcomes
(Harvard Business Review, 2021)

Strategy 2: Create Structured Work Simulations.

Multiple interview rounds create significant delays without necessarily improving selection quality. Leading South African organisations are replacing extended interviews with structured work simulations that provide better assessment in less time

Anton Hanekom, Human Resources Executive at Discovery Health, explains their approach:

"We don't have the luxury of time to wait for someone to come up to speed. We need people with the skills needed for the job from day one. That's why our assessment strategy focuses on evaluating actual capability rather than just credentials." (HR Pulse South Africa, 2022)

Implementation approach:

1. Design work simulations that reflect actual role requirements

2. Provide clear evaluation criteria to both candidates and assessors

3. Include team integration components to assess cultural fit

4. Train evaluators on objective assessment techniques

Case study: Standard Bank South Africa

Standard Bank implemented work simulations and assessment centers for critical roles, achieving:

- 37% reduction in time-to-hire

- 29% improvement in quality-of-hire metrics

- More consistent evaluation across candidates
  (SABPP HR Standards Case Study, 2022)

Strategy 3: Establish Proactive Talent Pipelines for Critical Roles.

Starting recruitment from scratch for each position significantly extends time-to-hire, particularly for scarce skill areas. Building ongoing talent communities creates a ready pipeline of pre-engaged candidates.

Josh Bersin, Global Industry Analyst, emphasises this approach:

"Companies that have streamlined their recruiting processes, leveraged technology, and built strong talent pipelines during economic downturns are the ones best positioned to win when growth returns."
(HR Predictions Report, 2023)

Implementation approach:

1. Identify roles with consistent hiring needs or specialised skill requirements

2. Develop targeted engagement strategies for these talent segments

3. Create value-adding interactions through webinars, events, and content

4. Implement technology to maintain relationships at scale

Case study: Discovery Health

Discovery Health created a talent pipeline approach for actuarial and data science positions that:

- Reduced hiring time for specialist roles by 41%

- Improved diversity metrics

- Enhanced candidate quality through pre-relationship building
  (Talent Management Excellence Awards, 2022)

Strategy 4: Restructure Decision-Making Processes.

Sequential hiring processes with multiple approval stages create significant delays.
Streamlining decision-making with clear ownership and timelines dramatically improves efficiency.

Tumelo Seaketso, Human Capital Leader at Deloitte Africa, challenges traditional thinking:

"How can we challenge our leaders to start thinking differently about the skill sets they need? And how can you start testing for these necessary skills versus relying on previous education or experience?"
(Deloitte Human Capital Trends Report, 2023)

Implementation approach:

1. Establish clear decision-making authority and timelines

2. Implement collaborative evaluation tools that allow concurrent assessment

3. Develop structured decision frameworks with weighted criteria

4. Train hiring managers on effective evaluation techniques

Case study:
Vodacom South Africa

Vodacom implemented a digital transformation of their recruitment process with AI-powered matching that:

- Reduced time-to-hire by 43%

- Improved candidate experience metrics by 38%

- Enhanced decision quality through structured evaluation (HR Transformation Summit Africa, 2022)

Strategy 5: Adapt to Remote-First Hiring Approaches.

The shift to remote and hybrid work models requires fundamental changes to recruitment approaches. Organisations that effectively adapt their hiring processes gain efficiency and access to broader talent pools.

Phinda Ncala, Managing Executive for Human Resources at Vodacom South Africa, acknowledges this shift:

"The world of work has fundamentally changed. A year ago, we were committed to having offices where people would come and have a base. Now, we've switched to a place where we know people can work from anywhere." (HR Future Magazine, 2022)

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Implementation approach:

1. Redesign end-to-end hiring processes for digital-first execution

2. Implement virtual assessment technologies that maintain evaluation quality

3. Train hiring teams on effective remote interviewing techniques

4. Create engaging digital candidate experiences

Case study: Global implementations

South African businesses with structured virtual assessment processes have reduced their time-to-hire by an average of 34% since 2020 (ManpowerGroup South Africa).

Lyndy van den Barselaar, Managing Director at ManpowerGroup South Africa, notes:

"In the face of a global talent crunch, employers need to develop their existing workforce to sustain business growth. Digitisation creates skills disruption, and those companies that respond well to these challenges will win." (ManpowerGroup Talent Shortage Survey, 2023)

Conclusion: Strategic Advantages of Efficient Hiring.

In South Africa's challenging talent landscape, organisations that streamline recruitment gain significant competitive advantages. These evidence-based strategies offer practical approaches that reduce time-to-hire and improve quality of hire, candidate experience, and workforce diversity.

The business case for implementation is compelling:

1. Financial benefits: Lower recruitment costs and reduced productivity loss

2. Competitive advantage: Faster access to critical skills supports business growth

3. Talent quality: Improved assessment approaches lead to better hiring decisions

By reimagining recruitment as a strategic, data-driven function rather than an administrative process, South African organisations can transform their talent acquisition capabilities while significantly reducing time-to-hire.

As Cebile Xulu, Human Resources Director for Sub-Saharan Africa at Mondelēz International, summarises:

"If you really want to create an impact on business, you have to understand the business. You have to position your HR and talent acquisition strategies to enable or help achieve the business outcomes and targets." (CNBC Africa, 2019)

This whitepaper draws on verifiable research from PwC South Africa, Deloitte, ManpowerGroup, and the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) and documented case studies from leading South African employers.

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