

THE DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE OF RECRUITMENT IN AFRICA.

Africa is often cited as one of the fastest growing, and most promising, markets in the world, but this excitement often overlooks the unique challenges and complexities of doing business across the continent.

At Precision Recruitment International, with over a decade of experience across offices in seven different African countries, when we compare our experience with some external sources (from surveys to statistics) we can identify how we align with the nuances of African business, particularly within recruitment. Not only do we find that our experiences resonate with the information found, but we can also identify three key insights worth considering when embarking on recruiting in the region.



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1. IN AFRICA, CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING


Recruiting in Africa requires a deep understanding of each country's diverse contexts and economy. Each African country's economies, industries, and labour needs vary significantly, making it essential to tailor recruitment strategies accordingly. Considering Harvard Business School categorises African economies into different groups such as oil-producing, transitional, and pre-transitional economies, there must be an understanding that a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be successful.[1]

We have first-hand experience with this reality when considering the varying nature of the top three industries that PRI recruits for in each of our offices, such as oil and gas being a major player in Angola, while construction is a key sector in South Africa. Fast Moving Consumer Goods is a significant industry in Zambia, with financial services being a crucial sector in Zimbabwe, and NGOs being a major industry in Mozambique. Addressing talent needs in Africa thus requires a deep understanding of local factors, including cultural nuances, language barriers, unique educational systems, and economic composition.[2]

Even though this diverse range of industry composition is important to consider and take note of, could the

same not be said of most other regions? But even more importantly, is there any single factor that differentiates the market African recruitment operates in from the rest of the world?

There are indeed many commonalities when focusing on the region but one, in particular, bears on the world of recruitment. When paying attention to the labour markets of these various countries and their economies a distinctive feature of sub-Saharan Africa emerges. Employment in this



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part of the world does not follow traditional forms found elsewhere in that approximately 86% of all employment in sub-Saharan Africa is accounted for by the informal economy.[3] This reality has widespread consequences beyond just the labour market. For example, within the retail industry, informal retail makes up 68% of the market,[4] and as such is a contributing factor to why 95% of all consumer payments in Africa are still made in cash.[3] It is thus paramount to not only understand the role of the informal economy in the region's markets and labour dynamics when embarking on a search for talent. But also how this part of the economy runs parallel to and intersects with the various sectors that make up their formal economies.

In other words, knowing the nature of these economies and how they function results in a unique understanding of the talent and skills needed by those who want to successfully grow on the continent. As such we believe that an aspect to consider for recruitment

services, and for those looking to recruit, is partnering with an agency with an established presence on the ground. There is no substitute for experience in a specific market as this allows tapping into established local networks and leveraging knowledge to identify and attract the best candidates for clients.

2. RECRUITMENT NEEDS **AFROCENTRIC** **SOLUTIONS**

Thanks to our constant interaction with potential candidates, we have witnessed, a new generation of employees emerge who prioritise mental health, value inclusivity, and diversity in the workplace. This generation recognises that individuals bring their whole selves to work and that a healthy and supportive work environment is essential for overall well-being. This is supported by a recent survey conducted by LinkedIn which found that 80% of participants consider inclusivity a crucial factor in

both the workplace and potential employment.[5] A focus on a work environment that prioritises mental health also dominates the shifting expectations of an increasingly younger workforce. A Newport Institute project found that as many as 82% of people experience mental health issues in one way or another related to the workplace.[6]

PRI recognises the significance of addressing this growing trend in the industry for both our clients and candidates. For us, it is crucial to look for solutions from within our environment and understand the importance of utilising the tools at our disposal. As a result, we have found that tapping into our existing philosophies of humanness such as Ubuntu and Hunhu, as practiced by Africans in most parts of the continent in various forms, has become a crucial point of departure for us.[7]

Inspired by our context, we have always aimed to deliver a service that puts people first and strive to create a human-centric approach to recruitment that focuses on well-being and inclusion. To be able to do this, we realised early on that recruitment is merely the first step in the process of being a trusted people partner to our clients. As such we believe recruitment needs to be part of a holistic approach to Human Resource Management and have continuously been expanding our services. Some of these offerings, such



as organisational development and designing fully rounded HR strategies, help mitigate some of the risks to mental health such as discrimination and exclusion; unclear job role; and organisational culture that enables negative behaviors in the workplace . [8]

By applying this truly integrated approach inspired by philosophies of humanness to Human Resource Management, recruitment can initiate a process geared towards understanding that a person exists as a component of a cooperative society and that being a person means having a dialogical relationship with others within that community.[9] We have found that this approach, as an Afrocentric solution, helps both sides of the recruitment process to remedy some of the contemporary issues related to the

workplace. This is not to say that such an approach can serve as a quick fix for the very real challenges faced by our workforce, but it can assist in establishing practices that have the potential to develop a more inclusive and accommodating environment for employees and clients to reach their full potential.

3. SOCIAL MEDIA TAKES CENTER STAGE

Social media is rapidly becoming a critical tool for businesses in Africa. This is no surprise when considering internet penetration on the continent, with two regions standing out for having internet penetration rates that exceed the global average. As of January 2022, Southern Africa and Northern Africa had recorded a penetration share of 66% and 63%, respectively, among their populations. [10] We, as PRI, have devoted increasing time to our social media presence and content. As a result we are witnessing an increasing share of our market engage with us through our various platforms, three of which are part of the platforms dominating the landscape in Africa (Facebook, Instagram & LinkedIn).[11]

According to a recent study, we are not alone as 74% of businesses in general in Africa indicated that social media has grown in importance in their



business operations.[12] This is because social media platforms provide businesses with a cost-effective and efficient way to reach their target audience, engage with customers, and build their brand. Moreover, social media has become a crucial recruitment tool for businesses in Africa. A study found that 73% of job seekers between the ages of 18 and 34 found their last job through social media.[13] This highlights the growing importance of social media in the job market, as businesses are increasingly using these platforms to advertise job vacancies and attract top talent. We can speak from experience when we state that in the current talent market, it has become clear that online attention is currency.

Choosing the right HR consultancy firm can make a significant difference in an organisation's HR operations. While world-class expertise is essential, understanding the local dynamics and culture is equally important. This is where a local HR consultancy firm can play a vital role. By engaging with a local firm with world-class expertise, clients can benefit from a nuanced understanding of the local market, labor laws, and cultural norms. In short, to be successful in the HR space in Africa one needs to be as dynamic as the region itself.

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