

It's another resounding YES from Epiroc to youth empowerment!

Echoing a passionate belief in skills development and job creation for South Africa's youth, Epiroc, a mining equipment and technology specialist, has taken a decision to once again support the merited YES4Youth (Youth Employment Services) Programme. "We are proud to be part of this inspirational initiative that provides interns with an ideal platform to gain hands-on experience in the workplace and further develop their skillsets," comments Kathryn Coetzer, Regional Communications Manager for Epiroc South Africa.

Many young graduates, eager to start their working careers, are finding it extremely difficult to secure a job in today's tough economic and high unemployment climate that is being further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. "The youth plays a critical role in shaping our country and economy and they must therefore be afforded every opportunity to gain valuable skills which they can take forward into meaningful careers," says Coetzer. "We're always on the lookout for new and exciting ways to engage with talented people and build our employer brand in South Africa. YES4Youth is a great mechanism to help us do that. It gives us an ideal opportunity to play an active role in addressing the socio-economic challenge of high unemployment in South Africa by providing work experience to some of our country's youth over a 12-month period which we believe will make it easier for them to find permanent employment."

YES is a not-for-profit business-led collaboration with Government and labour that provides for and institutes Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) with the objective of creating one million work opportunities for the youth in South Africa.

In 2019 Epiroc engaged with 33 unemployed matriculants, TVET learners as well as university graduates who were placed across a variety of functions within the company's HR, Communications, Finance, Sales and Supply Chain departments. Coetzer notes that while there is no guarantee of placement at the end of the YES Programme, three of their Supply Chain learners were offered permanent positions with Epiroc's Regional Distribution Centre. "However, we experienced a high turnover with the university graduates, a handful leaving for permanent positions within the mining industry. We trust that we made a positive impact during their time with us and that they will hold Epiroc top-of-mind as they grow within the industry and even become future Epiroc customers."

In selecting the most suitable interns for the 12-month Programme, Epiroc followed the strict YES criteria which dictate that the unemployed candidates should be passionate and talented previously disadvantaged South African citizens aged between 18 – 35 years. Discussing some of the Programme's challenges, Coetzer notes that they find the initial interview process to be really difficult. "Youth are expected to sell themselves as the top candidate but they have limited career experience and grades are not necessarily a good predictor of workplace success. To overcome this hurdle we steer our interviews in a different direction, giving the candidates an opportunity to engage in other activities where they can showcase their communication, leadership and problem-solving skills."

This year Epiroc will provide 60 unemployed youth with opportunities ranging from formal participation in YES4Youth to a structured Learnership or Apprenticeship Programme. “By the end of July we had already signed on 40 interns placed in our HR, Finance, Parts & Service, Sales & Marketing departments with the majority working ‘virtually’ with their teams at head office,” explains Coetzer. “We also actively sought out talent in the Kuruman area and we are very excited to now have a young woman on board for the next 12 months to assist with building relationships with and marketing our products to mining customers in the area.” The smartly structured YES internship gives interns the opportunity to gain both practical and theoretical knowledge, depending on their allocated roles within Epiroc. Coetzer points out that in addition to learning about the business world, the selected YES interns also earn a stipend. Epiroc will encourage those 2020 interns who excel at their tasks to apply for vacancies within the company.

Coetzer who actively recruits youth for Apprenticeships, YES Placements, and Learnerships, shares a few tips to assist candidates when applying for a permanent job. “Some of the more common mistakes we see include not forwarding a motivational letter to accompany a CV application, especially when it has been listed as a minimum requirement, spelling mistakes, and parents forwarding an application on their child’s behalf. We also strongly advise against spamming or copying multiple recruiters on a single email when forwarding their CV and then having to ask when a recruiter calls for which internship it is.” Avoiding these, Coetzer advises, can make all the difference between an application being successful or unsuccessful.

Candidates must also bear in mind that recruiters often have to build a shortlist from scanning hundreds of CVs to check for minimum requirements. “Personally I try to identify a sense of a candidate’s personality in their CV or application and it is so refreshing to find a CV where some thought and effort has gone into expressing one’s personal brand through a photo (not a selfie please!) of the candidate, a well written introduction or a really well executed elevator pitch,” continues Coetzer. “This year we actively stalked youth on LinkedIn and I cannot stress enough the advantage those candidates with a well-structured profile on this platform have.”

Programmes like YES4Youth and other B-BBEE Skills Development initiatives better enable Epiroc to actively participate in the communities within which the company operates. “They also provide us with a pool of passionate people who understand our business and our culture, to recruit from,” adds Coetzer. The Yes4Youth presents a win-win scenario as the programme not only empowers interns through unparalleled work experience but also delivers benefits to companies who embrace and invest in this initiative including qualifying companies for discretionary grants. In successfully implementing the programme Epiroc has advanced a B-BBEE level and is now proudly a B-BBEE Level 2 Contributor.

“We look forward to working with all our interns and we encourage them to make the most of this opportunity and learn as much as they can about the working world. We are confident that we will provide them with the perfect springboard to launch successful job applications and careers,” concludes Coetzer.

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Epiroc is a leading productivity partner for the mining, infrastructure and natural resources industries. With cutting-edge technology, Epiroc develops and produces innovative drill rigs, rock excavation and construction equipment, and provides world-class service and consumables. The company was founded in Stockholm, Sweden, and has passionate people supporting and collaborating with customers in more than 150 countries. Learn more at www.epiroc.com.

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