

How to stand out from other Gen Y and Gen Z candidates in a crowded job market

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Whether you're a young professional who is actively looking for a new job or simply curious to know what opportunities are out there, you are probably keen to grow in your career. It can be hard, however, to find a job that allows you to grow professionally and personally - especially when recruiters and job boards make you feel like you're just another number.



The unemployment rate in South Africa in the first quarter of 2022 was 63.9% in the 15–24 age bracket, and 42.1% for those aged 25–34 years. There is some good news for Mzansi's youth, however. The unemployment rate among graduates aged 15–24 years has declined from 40.3% to 32.6% in the first quarter of 2022 versus the same period in 2021. So, while the competition is fierce, there are still opportunities out there.

When you apply for a job, one of the main aims is to differentiate yourself from other candidates. Getting noticed by recruiters and employers using online recruitment platforms is crucial when you're applying for roles in a crowded job market. Thankfully, there are some simple steps you can take to get the attention you deserve and make yourself stand out from the pack.

1. Register on a specialist online recruitment platform

Recruiters and employers spend a huge amount of time on specialist recruitment platforms searching for quality candidates, and they're constantly looking at online profiles. By registering on the platform, you make your details visible to them and put yourself in the running for opportunities.

"The more complete your profile is – with honest and accurate information – the better chance you have of being shortlisted and matched to suitable roles," says Wiebka Cooper, head of sales and operations at CareerJunction. "Our system is designed to allow recruiters to filter candidates based on their online profile and to search for keywords in their uploaded CV."

Although having to break your CV into individual fields when creating your profile and then being asked to upload your CV too can be irritating, doing this enables the smart matching technology of a specialist recruitment platform to match your skills and experience to the right roles and help recruiters find the right person for the right job. You must complete all the required fields *and* upload your CV so that the system can search your CV for keywords that might not be in your online profile and increase your chances of being shortlisted for the right role.

2. Make your profile memorable

Investing the time in creating a great profile is well worth the effort, as it allows technology to do what it does best – match you to a suitable job vacancy and/or allow recruiters to find you online. You can also select the type of job you'd be

interested in applying for to receive job alerts by email. This way, you'll be the first to know when opportunities in your preferred job sector become available.

Make your profile stand out above others by listing your soft skills as well as your hard skills – fill out as much information as possible in detail. Don't be shy to share your unique selling point ... what you know you could confidently bring to the role and what makes you the best person for the position. Did you achieve distinctions in your tertiary education? Have you overseen and led a massively successful project? Have you been involved in any community upliftment initiatives? Reflecting on your skills and work experience as well as your personality traits and passions can help you identify your unique selling point.

"It's a good idea for candidates to share examples of their soft skills, such as accountability, communication skills, leadership, and teamwork because this gives recruiters a good idea of whether they would fit into the company's culture. The CareerJunction online recruitment platform allows recruiters to work through a list of skills – including soft skills if these have been included in the skills list or CV by the candidate. This helps them to identify and filter the most relevant and appropriate for the vacancy, and view the CVs of candidates who match them," says Cooper.

3. Avoid wasting time – only apply for the jobs you really want

There are two common mistakes that jobseekers make in the quest to secure a new position. One is to apply for dozens of jobs simultaneously, and the other is to apply for several different jobs at one organisation.

Applying for too many jobs may give the impression that you're either not focused or not particularly interested in a specific role. This will put recruiters off, especially when they see that you've applied for multiple jobs which may require varying skill sets. There's also the risk that the recruitment platform's matching technology might not identify you as being a suitable candidate for a particular role as your profile hasn't been tailored to a specific job ad. This is why candidates who apply for several jobs at once seldom hear back from recruiters.

It is not advisable to apply for several jobs at the same organisation, as recruiters may think you are desperate and will settle for any job – and possibly leave as soon as the right one does become available. This could also lead to you eventually being offered a package that is less than you deserve. In the worst-case scenario, it could result in the recruiter simply deciding not to shortlist you for an interview. Recruiters want candidates who demonstrate enthusiasm for a particular job because this is a good sign that they won't leave the company as soon as another opportunity arises.

Market yourself as a high performer through the words you use to express your experience and accomplishments. You should also upload your CV in a good layout that tells a logical story of the value you have added in your roles and how you have grown in your career over time because online systems use the information in your profile as well as crawl for keywords in your uploaded CV.

4. Make sure your profile, CV and cover letter meet the specific requirements of the job

If you're applying for multiple jobs at the same time, chances are you are not taking the time to tailor your cover letter to the specific requirements of each job. Your chances of successfully landing a new job will be much higher if you take the time to research the company and make sure that your initial introduction meets the criteria identified in the job advert.

Be sure to include details about who you are, why you're ideal for the vacant position, what you can bring to the role that the others perhaps couldn't and what you're aiming for in your career right now. Mention specific experience relevant to the role you're applying for and include as many relevant facts as possible in your CV. How many colleagues in your team were positively affected by your work? By what percentage did you exceed your goals? Quantifying your achievements will impress the recruiter as it will give them a clearer idea of the value you have to offer. Read our [blog](#) on how to write a good cover letter.

5. If you get an interview, prepare for it

During the interview, there are several common things that recruiters look for in a candidate: confidence and a positive attitude, good communication skills, the ability to recount real-life examples to demonstrate answers, enthusiasm about the

advertised position, asking the interviewer thoughtful questions about the role and the company, showing a solid understanding of the job requirements, and being an active listener.

Whether you have a face-to-face interview or a virtual one, dress to impress. Do your research beforehand to get some idea of the company dress code and cultural vibe. When you meet the interviewer, introduce yourself by making eye contact, smiling, and stating your first and last name.

Mirroring certain gestures and attitudes of your interviewer can help to create a stronger connection between you and the person interviewing you. For example, if they are lively and expressive when they speak, try to demonstrate the same level of enthusiasm. If they are quiet and serious, on the other hand, tone your own energy down a little. At the end of the day, recruiters are most impressed by candidates who seem genuinely interested in the company and role they are applying for – candidates who have done their research and can sell themselves based on that information.

Are you ready to embrace your true potential?

At CareerJunction, we aren't just focused on today and tomorrow. We are there for the long-term. We understand that as a Gen Y or Gen Z candidate you may be finding the job market hard now. We value individuals with valuable skills and we're passionate about helping job seekers find roles where they're valued.

We take the challenge of matching people and jobs very seriously. Using our years of experience, an understanding of the business and jobseeker, and personalised and insightful data, we can make a match that simply works. Here's to finding the right fit. Where beliefs and values align. Where skills enhance businesses, and businesses value skills. Visit www.careerjunction.co.za to create your profile or search and apply for available jobs. You can also download the free CareerJunction mobile app to search and apply for roles 24/7, wherever you are.

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