

The B-BBEE Skills Development Scorecard: 10 top tips

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Skills development is a priority element to comply with B-BBEE. This means that if you don't achieve at least 40% of the targets in the Skills Development Scorecard, you'll automatically drop one B-BBEE level.



Fundamentally, the Skills Development Scorecard measures a business's total training expenditure on black people as a percentage of its annual payroll – 'black' meaning African, Coloured and Indian. In other words, it measures the investment the business makes in training and developing the black workforce, both internally (employees) and externally.

And the investment required is significant. The exact percentage depends on the applicable B-BBEE Scorecard, but those on the Generic Scorecard must spend 6% of their annual payroll on training (and we'll focus on these businesses in this article).

So, how do you effectively train your employees on the skills they need, while simultaneously obtaining maximum points on the Skills Development Scorecard? Here are 10 top tips on doing just that.

1. Take a strategic approach

A business's ability to reach its objectives is directly linked to the skills at its disposal. No matter how lofty your ideals or how well considered your plans, they're worth less than the paper they're written on unless you have capable people to bring them to life. Skills development is therefore a key component of strategic planning as it ensures competent talent to meet current and future business needs.

Unfortunately, many businesses consider skills development only once a year when they compile their WSP and ATR. In addition to the fact that true learning and development seldom occur in neat 12-month intervals, combining skills development with regulatory requirements risks relegating the former to a matter of compliance.

Of course, in an ideal world your WSP and ATR should themselves be strategic documents, but if you're not there yet, start by regarding skills development planning as a strategic focus area that requires at least a three-year view. This means forgetting compliance for a moment and considering where your business is, where it wants to be, and the role of knowledge, skills and behaviours in this journey.

2. Link skills development to personal development

B-BBEE requirements impact multiple business functions, and as a result compliance is usually managed by the executive team. This approach is sensible, but make sure the HR Department 'owns' the skills development component.

Executive management can provide the targets (the what) but HR must compile the roadmap (the how). This is because skills development planning should integrate seamlessly with personal development planning.

For example, imagine an employee who has been earmarked for a supervisory position. To develop the skills required for this position, the manager recommends leadership training and mentoring, and indicates this in the employee's Individual Development Plan (IDP). HR is responsible for reviewing these recommendations and, where possible, aligning them with skills development priorities – such as to award bursaries or put employees on a learnership.

“ 100% alignment won't always be possible, but it should be business needs that drive skills development, not the Scorecard. ”

3. Do a skills audit

If your IDPs aren't up to date (or if you don't currently have them), consider doing a company-wide skills audit prior to skills development planning. By comparing the skills you have with the skills you need, you might identify gaps that can be addressed through priority skills development interventions such as learnerships, internships and apprenticeships.

A skills audit may also enable you to identify some common skills gaps across the organisation, such as management or leadership skills. If you can find a single learning intervention that addresses these skills, you may be able to effectively negotiate prices with the selected training provider. In addition, employees who are on the same training programme can help one another implement what they learn in the workplace, which boosts impact.

4. Recruit with purpose

Whether you're training employees or unemployed learners, it's important to ensure that you recruit the right learner for the right intervention.

For example, face-to-face learnerships may not be suitable for managers, since they need to be available on site to solve problems and make decisions. An online or blended intervention may be a better choice in this instance. Similarly, it may not be a great idea for an employee with only a cursory interest in business management to enrol in an MBA – a short course may be more appropriate.

When it comes to unemployed learners, the current unemployment levels in South Africa suggest that you have your pick of candidates. But to get maximum bang for your skills development buck, you should see the training of unemployed learners as the training of your potential employee pool. After all, a candidate who has gone through an appropriate vetting process, and then completes business-relevant training, is more likely to add value to your business.

5. Include people with disabilities

You stand to gain an additional four points on the Scorecard by training people with disabilities. If you have employees with disabilities, they should obviously be earmarked for training as a first step. However, if there's a requirement that you train a larger number of people with disabilities, remember that they can be unemployed.

Your business can recruit, vet, train and monitor unemployed learners with disabilities, or you can outsource this function to a reputable business. If this process is managed carefully and with purpose, you may be able to get the four points and meet your employment equity targets by appointing people with disabilities who – thanks to your training intervention – are now suitably qualified.

6. Train to employ

The Scorecard requires businesses to spend 5% of their payroll on learnerships, internships and apprenticeships (for six points). If all these learners are gainfully employed, you get an additional five bonus points.

Two things are important here. First, these learners don't need to be employed in your business; they can be employed in any business in your industry. So, if you're unable to employ all learners, stay in touch with them to track how many find work in the industry.

Second, the bonus points on the Scorecard are awarded according to the percentage of learners employed, so you don't need to employ all learners to get points. For example, if you train 10 learners and employ all 10, you'll get the full five bonus points. But if you train 10 and employ only two, you'll still get one point.

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7. Consider internships

In the skills development landscape, internships include learning programmes that are linked to the competencies identified by a professional body. They're accredited by the professional body, and can lead to professional registration or licensing.

Internships have many business benefits. They can be customised to your business's exact needs, and can be relevant to both new and experienced employees. [Click here](#) for our article on internships and their benefits.

8. Include short courses

Not all short courses count towards points on the Scorecard, but generally those that provide continuous professional development (CPD) training do – so-called 'Category E' training on the Scorecard's Learning Programme Matrix.

Category E short courses offer quick and easy access to specific skills or competencies required in the world of work. For example, short courses on advanced topics may be particularly relevant for senior managers. Those requiring specific skills – such as Excel, negotiation or conflict management skills – may benefit from a one- or two-hour crash course. And courses covering business fundamentals could be included in your onboarding or induction process.

“ Imagine if your onboarding programme was recognised as Category E! Stop imagining and talk to eStudy – we know what to do. ”

9. Ensure engagement

Recruiting the right learner for the right training intervention is an important first step, but you need to ensure that engagement levels remain high. (Of course, you could simply pay for the intervention and move on to claiming your Scorecard points, but that's an enormous waste of money.)

Make sure to evaluate the quality of training providers and the training intervention through formal and informal check-ins with learners. Better yet, ask managers to attend the same training and then mentor or coach others. Training should be part of the fabric of your business, not an afterthought to reach compliance targets.

10. Measure and evaluate

The ultimate aim of training should be to add value to your business, not just get points on the Scorecard. To make sure you're deriving this value, you need to know exactly what return you're getting from your investment in training.

For example, how many learners completed the training? What did they learn? How has it changed their behaviour? What are the next steps?

This information must be gathered throughout and after the training intervention, and must be used to inform your skills development planning going forward.

“ Deriving real business benefits from the Skills Development Scorecard is challenging but achievable. And if you take the correct strategic approach, you’ll be able to drive learning and development in your business, while simultaneously claiming maximum points on the Scorecard. ”

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