

SA has abundant talent... but it needs nurturing

STAFF WRITER

THOUGH there is recognition that South Africa's workplace is filled with talented people – who, with the right training and mentoring, can become great leaders – more needs to be done at an organisational and governmental level to enable and support the ongoing identification and development of talent.

This was one of the themes that came out of the 2013 ArcelorMittal Rising Star Summit held in Johannesburg at the end of last year.

According to Laura Barker, director of the summit, the event creates a vital platform to connect young, talented people and role-players in our management industry, to increase talent pools.

"It is well reported that the lack of skills in the local workplace is an obstacle to business growth, yet often there are talented people, with the capacity for success, who are simply overlooked in a company, because the right structures aren't in place to recognise and develop them further."

She adds the summit also promotes the discussion of ideas and generates mechanisms to enable ongoing identification, recognition and development of the country's

critical organisational asset.

The recent "Two decades of freedom: what South Africa is doing and what now needs to be done" report by the Goldman Sachs Group highlights that the country has available the people, the capital, the talent and the tools.

Terrence Harrison, group manager talent: learning and development and resourcing at ArcelorMittal South Africa, who formed part of the panel discussion, raised the issue of whose responsibility it should be to care about retention and development.

"Whose job it is to enhance skills and develop talent remains a key question. At some point in our lives, we either needed, or will need, assistance in our development. This development can only happen, though, when experienced people are willing and able to lend themselves to those needs to bring about that growth," says Harrison.

"It also takes commitment from talented people to have the confidence in their abilities and the commitment to develop their talent through existing development opportunities and organisations.

"Unfortunately we have gone through a dip where many skilled people have left the country, which



MOUTH-WATERING DISPLAYS: The Cape Town Design Indaba draws large crowds every year. The event gives a platform to showcase local skills.
PICTURE: LEON LESTRADE

means that if we need a particular skill, we often have to look elsewhere to fill the position.

"We now need to start rebuilding and holding on to our talented and skilled people, and the way to do this is with continued development and learning," he says.

According to Logan Pillay, another speaker at the event and head of the Engineering Excellence Academy at Eskom, there is immeasurable value in mentorship and skills transfer, and in developing and retaining talent. Pillay pointed to research which showed that 26 percent of our knowledge and understanding comes from pre-

work learning, 24 percent of our understanding happens when we are taught the theory and 50 percent of our ability to master the work comes during the experience and practical phases.

"Our current models show that companies are spending 10 percent of their budget on pre-work learning, 85 percent on education and only 5 percent in the actual practical training. This therefore shows that we are putting our efforts in the wrong places," said Pillay.

He adds that a mentor, someone who guides, helps, develops and challenges individuals, is key for practical training.

"The most holistic approach for companies is to develop talent in line with natural abilities. A mentor should develop people in the area of their talent, so it's essential that mentors must be aware of the natural talent to move the protégé to the next level."

The summit also announced the opening of the entries for the 2014 Rising Star Awards, an annual platform which aim to recognise, celebrate and connect young, talented people who have a capacity for achievement and success and who contribute in an inspirational manner to the future of our nation.

● Visit www.risingstar.co.za.