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SAE4D geared to assist businesses with new BBBEE codes

The short reprieve South African businesses have been given before the revised Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) codes of good practice take effect, may not be long enough if they don't start working towards compliance now.

That's the view of Dr Jerry Gule, Chairman of South African Employers for Disability (SAE4D), who says that one of the key elements of the revised codes, which introduce more stringent compliance targets, is to encourage businesses to employ black people with disabilities.

"More than that, however, is that the codes are also designed to ensure that people with disabilities receive the training and skills development they need to empower to take their rightful place in the workplace as equal, productive and valued employees," he adds.

SAE4D, an employer organisation that is committed to addressing issues confronting the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace, is positioned to assist businesses to comply with both the spirit and the letter of the revised codes.

According to Dr Gule, while the codes were expected to take effect in October this year, it now appears that they will only kick in towards the middle of 2015.

The new codes are focused mainly on three Priority Elements: Ownership, Skills Development and Enterprise and Supplier development.

Failure to comply with the sub-minimum requirements of any of the priority elements will result in businesses automatically being penalised by being categorised at one BBBEE level lower than the level achieved by their overall scorecard rating.

However, the codes also provide enhanced recognition for certain categories of black people, including black people with disabilities.

“This means businesses can obtain additional points by employing black people with disabilities and then providing them with appropriate training” says Dr Gule.

The revised codes set a compliance target for the employment of black people with disabilities at two percent of all employees. Achieving this target will enable businesses to claim two of the 19 available points in a key element of the BBBEE scorecard – Management Control.

In addition, businesses that spend just 0.3 percent of their skills development expenditure budget on learning programmes for black employees with disabilities, will earn four of the 20 points available for this measurement category.

“However, businesses that seek to employ black people with disabilities simply to boost their BBBEE rating will be doing both their organisation – and their employees – a disservice. Indeed, there is a sound business case for employing people with disabilities. One also has to look at the human rights aspect for doing this. Besides people with disabilities are an untapped customer base, when companies empower them and they get fully integrated in the workplace, who knows what new customers they can attract,” he adds.

SAE4D members have found that generally, people with disabilities:

- are good, dependable employees who perform on par or better than their non-disabled peers;
- are loyal and less likely to job hop thus saving the business the costs of job turnover such as lost productivity and expenses related to recruitment and training;
- are an untapped resource of skills and talents. In addition to technical job skills, many people with disabilities – because of their own daily challenges – have a higher level of problem-solving skills than their non-disabled peers; and
- have insight into an overlooked and potentially lucrative market segment made up of people with disabilities and their families and friends.

“In addition, several studies around the world have shown that hiring people with disabilities actually increases workforce morale, possibly because it indicates to employees that they are working for a caring organisation. As a result, productivity

and employee loyalty increases – and the benefits of this cannot be underestimated,” Dr Gule concludes.

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