

A Career in Insurance Telesales – More Than Meets the Eye for Class of 2015

As the excitement of achieving a matric pass after 12 years of schooling subsides, the class of 2015 now faces the harsh reality of South Africa's faltering economic growth. Employment statistics show that less than four out of every 10 of the 801 688 learners who registered to write the 2015 National Senior Certificate are likely to secure employment. This means just under 500 000 youths from the class of 2015 will join the swelling ranks of South Africa's 26% unemployment rate. Among the youth specifically, SA's unemployment sits at a debilitating 63%.

But amid this gloomy outlook, South Africa's growing insurance telesales industry provides a real opportunity for young people to make their mark in the world of work. It's an avenue that rewards the hard working and consistent, provides invaluable skills training in the areas of sales, marketing and insurance, and there is real opportunity for career progression. It's also an industry in high demand of skilled people, an industry willing to invest in training and development of committed individuals to get them from new and inexperienced, to professional mastery level.

This is according to Albert Theyse, Head of Sales at O'Keeffe & Swartz, an outbound call centre specialising in the sale of simple insurance products. O'Keeffe & Swartz (OKS) sells up to 60 000 insurance policies every month on behalf of clients using direct marketing methods. In 2015 they employed and trained 567 young South Africans in insurance telesales.

"It's easy to be blindsided by negativity. Many job seekers believe there is only opportunity in traditional work roles dominated by candidates with seemingly more desirable subjects such as maths and science. For young people with a Grade 12 (Matric) certificate who have a real passion for performance, resilience and good listening skills, outbound call centres provide solid work experience. In addition, it provides further specialised education and training and the opportunity to write their own pay checks every month. This is an industry where value is placed on aptitude and attitude, rather than formal tertiary qualifications, which for many young South Africans remain painfully out of reach," adds Albert.

"While it may be true that few people would describe a call centre position as their 'dream job', many of the reasons that sit behind the occupational stigma are outdated. Granted, it's an industry with a high turnover of staff as many see it as a stepping stone. Secondly, sales is a tough task master, so sales consultants who find they aren't cut out for the job usually do so very quickly. However, people who do well in this kind of environment and are motivated by the pressure, thrive - and so do their careers. Sales consultants who stay focused and motivated typically get promoted from within - between Oct 2014 and Sep 2015, O'Keeffe & Swartz promoted 23 sales consultants to sales manager positions. There is a wonderful opportunity to start and grow your career in a call centre and for the right candidate, a career in outbound sales call centre has a great deal to offer," adds Albert.

A growing industry in South Africa

The outbound call centre industry is also seeing considerable growth on the back of South Africa's burgeoning bancassurance (the sale of insurance products through banks) sector. Despite being a relatively new player in the insurance space, bancassurance is rapidly growing as customers make an easier association between their banking provider and taking additional risk products such as funeral policies, debt protection, hospital plans and personal accident and disability benefits.

According to the RGA 2014 Bancassurance survey, outbound call centres are the primary sales channel and in fact, external sales forces for bancassurance products grew 369% between 2011 and 2013. Of the respondents in the survey, 78% plan on increasing their bancassurance distribution to increase sales with multi-channel strategies dominated by call centres. This can only be positive for call centres, job creation and employment prospects for young South Africans.

"Typically for most of our sales consultants it's their first exposure to the working world. Once they have made it through the initial assessments, they undergo a month of intensive training that covers sales techniques, product and compliance training and finally, testing of their newly acquired skills before they make their first sales call. We are very proud to have many talented people who started out at the rock face as sales consultants, got promoted to sales management positions, and have been with the business for many years. Currently, each and every member of our 50 strong sales management team started their career at O'Keeffe and Swartz as outbound telesales consultants."

"We know that for the 500 000 matriculants in the class of 2015 who may not find employment in traditional work roles, South Africa's call centres could be the answer to a better life, gainful employment and a solid career path with further training opportunities," concludes Albert .

For more information go to www.oks.co.za