

Recruitment rivalry: Reasons startups are winning the race

By [Megan Prosser](#)

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Headcount growth within South African startups has grown by 20% in the past 12-months, with more predicted as 50% of South Africa's most-experienced professionals vow to make their next move to a startup.



Source: [Pexels](#)

The survey findings, from recruiter Robert Walters and follow on from a 'record-breaking' year for African startups raising over \$4bn where South Africa and Nigeria led the way.

With calls for labor laws to be made more flexible to help aid the growth of small businesses in the region which currently represents over 60% of new job vacancies. The World Bank has billed startups as "the biggest job creating opportunity in South Africa."

As the battle for the best and most experienced professional's wages on. Megan Prosser shares her thoughts on why startups are slowly but surely attracting the best talent away from big corporates.



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1. The career accelerator

With relatively flat structures and hands-on founders and CEOs, new starters can find themselves lining up into the senior leadership team from day one.

By taking on several different responsibilities, working closely with senior members of the team, startup environments enable you to prove your worth early on and given that any output typically has a direct impact on the business.

Unlike within corporate structures, leaders will be able to clearly see your involvement in a project's initial stages through to completion and as a result, the rate of advancement at startups tends to be much faster.

2. Scale-up mentality

Startups are designed to have high growth potential and so it is not surprising to see that on average decisions are processed four times quicker in a startup than within a large firm (250+).

The changing and fast-paced nature of a startup will keep employees on their toes, encouraging them to develop new skills as they go and push boundaries beyond the initial job description.

Working for a startup, you will understand how the whole company works and develop commercial acumen not expected of you when sitting lower down in corporate structures. Some startup leaders argue that these on-the-job business lessons are in fact better than an MBA.

Our survey found that 33% of professionals are leaving their corporate jobs in order to 'try something new,' with a further 15% looking to reskill.



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3. Change agent culture

Being a startup team member comes with great responsibilities. No matter what your title is, your work will make an impact on the company's growth, success, so in turn this will make you feel like the job you are doing has an actual purpose and this is a huge motivation.

In fact, a third of professionals (34%) state that the reason they move to a startup is for challenging, interesting work with many stating that the skills they adopt in self-management and task prioritisation then crossover into their personal life.

Working for a fast-growth startup can be an intense experience, so you will inevitably become more proactive and ambitious outside of work too. You will be constantly thinking about how to improve things, be more aware of problems, how to solve them, become more open to new cultures and ways of thinking. You will also learn to love challenges and even look for them.

4. True team spirit

Almost half of professionals (42%) state that the most important value when looking for a future workplace is 'colleagues', culture that inspire them to do their best and that is why the company culture at startups is something to be valued.

Due to their smaller size, startups tend to foster a close-knit, collaborative environment and encourages people to help where they can on tasks outside of their original remit.

You will be surrounded by highly hardworking, talented and ambitious people willing to do the impossible. There is a huge motivation to learn from others, contribute with your own knowledge and experience.

Startups often favour a fluid-structure over rigid corporate inspired hierarchy, enabling open discussion and cooperation between all team members. It is not surprising then to hear that 30% of professionals state that the most appealing thing about a startup is the open and effective management structure.



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5. Diversity in every sense of the word

Startups have a core focus of finding the very best talent who can help achieve their ambitious goals, and as a result, remove any sort of socio-economic or geographical barriers in order to find their stars.

As a result, within a startup, it is not surprising to come across all kinds of co-workers, from all kinds of nationalities, backgrounds, ideologies and due to the small nature of the teams. There will naturally be ample cross-over working with colleagues with different skill sets or working styles. This strong multicultural environment can open your mind beyond work and tasks. It also leads employees to have a global vision.

And diversity doesn't just rest with the people, it is safe to say that almost no two days are the same within a startup. Typically, most members of the team have to juggle many hats and take on duties outside of their specific role to contribute to the success of the wider business.

This diversity of tasks helps you to develop new skills very quickly, added to that you will often be learning directly from the founder of the company and/or senior employees.

This is an invaluable opportunity when you are in the early stages of your career. Not only will this keep you stimulated in your day-to-day role but it will also give you the opportunity to find out what you are most interested in and discover what you are best at.

6. Putting the 'I' in innovation

Startups are different from traditional businesses primarily because they are grounded in disruptive innovation and created to address a perceived 'problem' in the market.

Joining a startup means adopting an 'out of the box' mindset, an ability to think on your feet, get creative with smaller budgets and fewer resources. Autonomy is not considered a perk within a startup but a given in fact, it is the reason why 28% of professionals leave a corporate job to join a newly established business.

However, it is not all 'small-time', in order to aid your creativity you will find yourself learning, using the most modern

innovative tools, platforms on a daily basis, whilst shaky to start off with, you will soon start to embrace and speak the 'startup language' in no time.



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7. Exit strategy

Many startups have an 'exit strategy' in mind, which means you will be working towards an ambitious deadline right from the get-go.

Growth targets will be ambitious but if achieved by the team then they stand to cash in from significant rounds of funding as shares are often offered as part of job packages as a way of competing with corporate pay.

At a startup, your hard work can pay back sometimes 10 times the amount you would get in yearly corporate bonuses within five to seven years of joining a fast-growth startup. The key here is to join a business whose product and vision you will truly believe in.

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