



FOR PROFESSIONALS
SINCE 1941

SA ENGINEERS CONCERNED ABOUT SKILLS SHORTAGE

Media release:

18 June 2012: South Africa's engineering professionals remain very confident about the future of their profession, but one of the biggest concerns they face is the shortage of new skills, according to a quarterly survey conducted by PPS.

The survey, of nearly 800 South African engineers, found that the confidence level of respondents on whether the current skills shortage in their profession will be adequately addressed by the government in the short to medium term was just 40%.

According to Gerhard Joubert, Head of Group Marketing and Stakeholder Relations at PPS, the financial services provider focused on graduate professionals, the results of the survey are alarming. "The skills shortage in South Africa across a number of critical professions has been widely discussed and initiatives have been put in place to address the issue so it is concerning that engineers do not believe that these will be sufficient."

Last year the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) launched a national initiative to tackle the chronic shortage of engineering skills, in line with government's plan to develop 30 000 engineers by 2014. ECSA said currently one engineer services over 3 000 people in South Africa compared with 227 in Brazil and 543 in Malaysia.

One of the core concerns among engineers as to why the skills shortage remains difficult to resolve is on the standard of education in South Africa, with respondents giving a confidence level of just 41% on whether the current education system is providing the necessary skills for the creation of potential engineers.

Joubert says that while the survey reveals a number of challenges for the engineering profession, there was some positive news with engineers giving a confidence level of 84% on the future of their profession over the next five years.

On whether they would encourage their children to enter their profession, 74% of engineers surveyed said they would, the second highest figure among all seven professions surveyed.

"This survey suggests that while engineers do have a number of concerns about the future of their industry, in terms of whether they will be able to attract sufficient new graduates to keep up with demand; they remain extremely confident about the opportunities available to new entrants."

He notes that engineers also gave a confidence level of 76% on whether they will remain in South Africa for the foreseeable future. "This is a positive figure, as the majority of those surveyed are confident of remaining in the country. However, the fact that nearly a quarter are considering emigrating is a concern that needs to be addressed, particularly in light of the fact that the profession does face a shortage of skills."

Joubert says other results on more general issues also suggest reasons as to why some engineers may be considering emigrating. “Confidence on whether unemployment will improve over the next five years was just 41%, while confidence in the standard of education over the next five years was 44%.

Confidence in the future of the healthcare system over the next five years also scored badly with just 43%. 91% of respondents said they do not believe that the National Health Insurance initiative is the solution to fix the country's ailing health system.

“Engineers are a vital component to the South African economy and it is crucial that we take these results seriously to ensure we retain their key skills. As a result, it is important that Government looks at the issue of skills shortages and whether enough is being done to promote the profession among young South Africans,” concludes Joubert.

Other results from the survey

- Confidence that the Government can deliver on its proposed infrastructure spend was 48%
- Confidence that the status of their profession will improve was 55%
- Confidence that their profession can maintain ethical business standards was 71%
- Confidence in their ability to earn an income that keeps up with inflation was 73%
- Confidence in the economic outlook for South Africa over the next 12 months was 62%
- Confidence in the outlook for local equity / share markets was 63%
- Confidence in crime rates improving over the next five years was 43%

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Additional information:

PPS boasts in excess of 200,000 members who enjoy access to a comprehensive suite of financial and healthcare products that are specifically tailored to meet the needs of graduate professionals.

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