

Payroll innovation creates new career opportunities for youth

Traditionally payroll has been perceived as the dull domain of those in dull clothing immersed in numbers from dusk to dawn. However, like many industries today, payroll has been disrupted by technology and transformed by innovation, changing career paths and creating new opportunities.

In this digital era, software has stepped in to hold the reins of the numbers while payroll professionals find the patterns, manage the people and stand at the front line of company culture. It has become a career perfectly suited to young people with curiosity and mathematical capability.

“Payroll is a terrific career for young people looking for an opportunity that challenges their people skills, their mathematical talents and their ability to think outside the box,” says Cathie Webb, Executive, South African Payroll Association (SAPA). “Payroll is the largest cost that the company carries every month and those who work in this area become a strategic part of the business. They are fundamental to how the business operates.”

Not only has payroll changed thanks to technology, but it has evolved in its relevance to the organisation. It demands a savvy mind and the ability to unlock important insights – perfect for young and agile minds and those who are hungry to grow as individuals and in their careers.

“Payroll has also undergone changes in its structure,” adds Webb. “Now there is career progression from junior to mid-level to senior, dependent on the size of company you work for. In addition, there are recognised payroll qualifications at NQF Levels 4 and 5 as well as a BCom – strong business qualifications that can stand anyone in good stead across multiple areas of the organisation.”

Proactive payroll pays off

For young people just leaving school and looking to expand their horizons and explore different opportunities, there are also a variety of leadership programmes available. These provide school leavers with the ability to learn payroll practice while earning money over a two to three-year period.

“We are starting to see a lot of younger people choose this career today,” says Webb. “Payroll can be seen as the “shop front” of the company to its employees - it gives you the ability to impact how people feel about the business they work for.”

Payroll plays a powerful role in engaging with people and building a company’s reputation. Usually, if people are unhappy, it is payroll that’s the first to find out and can be the first to make a difference in their lives. Payroll is the department that sees evidence of the litmus test of how people appreciate and feel appreciated by, their company. Add into this the advancements of technology and the variability of industry, and payroll is easily one of the more dynamic careers available today.

“You are part of the creative team that works at building how people perceive the company they work for, and the benefits provided by the company,” concludes Webb. “And, because every company needs someone to run their payroll, you can choose to work across a multitude of different industries. Payroll in a bank compared with a graphic design company or an architectural firm will be as varied and as exciting as the industry you choose. Payroll has become a really interesting career choice for the youth of today as it offers rich growth and plenty of opportunities.”

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