

Crying need for professional accountants

Oct 14 2013 10:46 Fin24

Cape Town - South Africa needs 20 000 additional professional accountants to meet current market demand, said Navin Lalsab, accreditation, compliance and development executive of the South African Institute of Professional Accountants (Saipa).

The number will increase steadily in the coming years if training efforts are not accelerated.

"Accounting skills are the backbone of the economy and are particularly crucial in South Africa, which will rely increasingly on small businesses to grow the economy and create employment," said Lalsab.

"Without proficient accounting services and support, many small businesses fold within their first few years."

Complex tax requirements and legislation such as the new Companies Act put added pressure on the financial functions of small businesses, most of which operate with minimal resources, said Lalsab.

In the light of the shortage of accountants, Saipa is urging accounting firms and government departments to apply to become accredited training centres. This, said Saipa, would increase the pool of trainees with the potential to become professionals and earn affiliation with a professional body.

"Graduates have the qualifications, but need to achieve professional status if they are to be relevant in commerce and industry," said Lalsab.

"This is done through on-the-job training or articles and passing an exam set by a professional organisation."

Currently there are around 860 accredited training centres countrywide, which train 1 200 students a year at National Qualifications Framework level 8.

"This is totally inadequate. All accounting firms have the potential to be accredited if they have the delivery infrastructure, resources and commitment to deliver training to Saipa standards," said Lalsab.

"Accreditation allows firms to train for their internal requirements and to boost the skills levels of the industry, which enhances professionalism and is beneficial to all practitioners."

In addition, becoming an accredited centre gives access to subsidies and grants from the Financial and Accounting Sector Education and Training Authority.