

► **Bracher:** A lot of guys do that to get the money they want. They'll come to you and say they've had an offer to see if you can match it – and we end up overpaying. And the non-solicitation clauses we have in place are with our clients. If you have a R10 million contract in place, you don't want to put that at risk just for one person.

Van Jaarsveld: The current cycle is supply-driven – and that will change. The suppliers of the resource are in command. When it does change, a lot of contractors may decide they want to be permanent employees. We don't know what a downturn in the economy may do. If our selling rates increase up to a certain point, then the inflow of foreign resources will be big enough. We've already seen that in a number of different markets: European, South American and Australian people are prepared to come here because the rate there is lower than here. The system will work itself out over time.

Ives: I hear a lot of negativity towards internships and skilling. I would be concerned if I was government because there are a lot of mechanisms in place: the SETAs, money back on the salary bills, the BEE Scorecard with which we all have to comply. I presume people are spending money on their own channels, but you can and we have to spend the money anyway. We need to decide how we can de-risk this for ourselves. We don't have much of a choice – we need to invest because it's right for our country. How can we make this all more tangible?



Teryl Schroenn, Accsys

“The problem is that contracts aren't worth the paper they're written on.”

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McHugh: To give you an example, we [ran] an internship [programme] about three years ago to put 40 guys through SAP skills training. At the end of the programme, we had three guys left. Yes, we tried and went through the governmental avenues, but the bottom line is we benefited the economy as a whole, but we didn't see any return. Those guys were all snapped up. It was great for the economy, but not great for us as an organisation.

Bracher: After running an internship [programme] for two years, I came to the conclusion that it was cheaper for me to go out there and pay the fees to employ somebody for two years. That's the easier option, but for the industry, it's a bad thing. Plus, a lot of the senior guys get annoyed that

they have taken time to train juniors, and then within six months, they're gone.

Brainstorm: What about government's role? How could it make things better?

Randles: The SETAs aren't working. They need tons of grease and lubrication to get them moving at any decent speed. There are horror stories of people waiting years for things to get signed off and the barriers to entry are high for smaller companies. There are thousands of IT companies in the country, but some are only two- or three-man shows. I think the more initiatives, the merrier, but the incentives should be there, and they should be simple and easy, with quick comeback.

Petersen: Government should put things in place to protect the people doing training investment. The Constitution says everyone has a right to a job, but no one points out that people are stealing time and training from companies; the law needs to be tightened up.

Schroenn: I don't know that we need any new laws, but we could certainly do with enforcement of the ones we have. Increased mobility and ►



Should you train people to leave?

According to Ivor Rimmer, managing director of Bateleur Resourcing, finding the right skills in the South African IT industry is an ongoing challenge, primarily because the demand is constantly changing.

“South Africa's chronic skills shortage exists on two levels,” he says. “Finding the skills you need when you need them is the first aspect. Secondly, companies need good black skills, which are always in short supply.”

It's much less about the certificates behind your name than an enquiring mind, willing attitude and the ability to learn and adapt.

“A client-centric culture and understanding of customer requirements is more critical than the latest trendy qualification. In theory, it's all very well to ensure you have the right skills on board to meet the challenges of the future, but in practice, it's preferable to have flexible staff with the experience, attitude and talent to adapt to changing customer needs.”

Rimmer believes it's impossible to have all the right skills in place all the time. As soon as a company has finished training its staff in one area, something new is on the market. Some professionals have an affinity for learning new technologies and skills, and those are the people to look out for.

“The main reason people change jobs is because they believe their skills are stagnating and they need to expand their horizons. By keeping them at the forefront of their fields, so that they could work anywhere, they will probably stay with you because they can achieve their objectives.”