

Seven sought-after engineering skills

By [Bellah Nxumalo](#)

16 May 2016

There is a strong South African demand for engineering candidates with seven skills topping the list. Many employers are prepared to take candidates straight off the graduate line and investing in these employees early on to grow their fresh new skills within the parameters of their organisations' specific processes.



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Other positions, such as those involving sales engineers, not only demand the right technical qualifications, but also long-term tenures with companies (job hopping every six to 12 months here is a major red flag) and just the right balance between candidates' people personalities and their go-getter, target-smashing sales personas.

Seven sought skills

1. Black engineers with experience working on the national energy grid (these engineers are being actively pursued in the country's booming renewable energy sector).
2. ECSA-registered substation and transformer designers with seven to 10 years' experience.
3. Sales engineers with three to seven years' experience and a proven sales track record selling in the automation, drives and factory automation industries. The most successful candidates here are those who demonstrate excellent client liaison abilities, are target driven and are willing to travel extensively.
4. Embedded software development engineer graduates who completed their B-Eng (Electronic Studies) with a minimum 75% average.
5. Automation engineers – both graduates seeking to pursue this career path and experienced professionals. Graduates must have excellent academic results in their B-Eng studies or National Diploma/B.Tech degree (final-year project in automation), while experienced professionals must have three to five years' experience in the programming of PLCs and SCADA systems. Many more years' experience (eight to 10) can make these engineers 'too expensive' for employers and therefore less marketable. Familiarity with more than one control systems brand is a big plus.
6. Application engineers with more than five years' experience working with drives, and offering solutions for the mining, oil and gas industries.
7. Engineers with Government Certificate of Competency (mines and works) (GCC) are currently more marketable than engineers with GCC for factories. However, first-time passes for these credentials offers a significant advantage.

Naturally, being in-demand skills also means these are mostly scarce skills. Employers are acutely aware of this, and have adopted appealing retention strategies to ensure once they have attracted these skills, they are able to successfully retain them too.

This has left a significant dearth of skills in some areas, like embedded software engineers, where candidates are often snapped up at varsity level before they even reach the open market.

It is for these reasons that passionate engineering students should focus their studies on those areas where there is the most demand, and that young engineering professionals with some experience in these sectors should aim to gain the minimum experience necessary before moving on in order to grow their careers.

Experienced professionals, who meet the grade and are looking to change employers, are in the pound seats. Working with a specialist recruitment agency at this time can help them make the best possible career move; one that capitalises on these coveted skills for maximum professional success.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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