

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So, I have got Andre Wissler here, I hope I am pronouncing that correctly from Mint Group who is willing to do an interview with us. So, Andre, just from my side, my research or the title of the research is the effects of immigration on small medium enterprises in South Africa. And then what I am to do is obviously discuss with business owners and guys in the small medium space, and see what some of the effects of this immigration might be on their businesses, and then link it back to brain drain theory. And obviously, I mean, I think most people are affray with the theory of brain drain, it is effectively just basically losing skills, and what effects that has on the small medium space. So, Andre, if you would not mind just giving us a quick sort of summary of Mint, and what your staff complement is made up of, and just if you would not mind commenting on really skilled, a skilled portion of your workforce. Do you have unskilled workforce or is everyone skilled? And how, what the breakup is?

INTERVIEWEE: Okay, so the one group is the partner, so we are a department of Microsoft ,so that Microsoft [unclear]. We yes, we have a staff compliment of about 140/150 people, we operate out of Johannesburg and Cape Town, we do have an office in the United States and we do [unclear] into Africa, and into Europe as well from South Africa predominantly. The skill set for people in our business are typically obviously from a management player, management team, an operational management team. The other key talent that we have in our business is developers, Microsoft developers in the business applicant space, and in the power up space which is part of the business application space. Then [unclear] architecture and solution architect, we also have deals in

consulting, so we do management consulting, and we also do [unclear] consulting contract project management that kind of stuff. So, that is kind of a broad set of skills which we have various other skills in our business, we have people are managing the counter offices if I can call it that.

5 INTERVIEWER: Hmm, hmm.

INTERVIEWEE: Basically, bookkeeping kind of skills I guess [unclear] there is not really anybody unskilled in our business.

INTERVIEWER: Ja.

10 INTERVIEWEE: So, I think that is kind of an overview of who we are and what we do.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And, Andre, have you guys experienced ... Or let me ask this question first, what is your staff turnover? What would you consider your staff turnover being, is it, do you have quite a high staff turnover or not really?

15 INTERVIEWEE: No, typically we try not to have a high staff turnover, and we typically do not except for immigration you know, that is, I will say sure if we had probably 10 in a year. I mean I am guessing now I would have to check.

INTERVIEWER: Ja, ja.

20 INTERVIEWEE: But I am guessing it is about where it sits and predominantly, I have got say over 100 people, 10 people will go and we will employ another 10 people so it is kind of a rotation, predominantly of those people that are leaving, well 50% of those will probably be immigrating.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

INTERVIEWEE: Ja.

INTERVIEWER: And, Andre, of those people immigrating ... I mean, obviously you have intermated that you try and retain, you know, because of your low staff turnover you obviously have strategies to retain skills.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

5 INTERVIEWER: Because or else you would have a high turnover generally, but you do not. So, you do have a strategy to retain skills. Is there anything that you guys could, you know, those that are immigrating, is there anything that you can do to stop them from immigrating or is it, are they taking more of a macro  
10 view on immigration? And they leaving for social issues, they do not agree with the politics, they are subject to crime or what, that sort of stuff. That they getting poached from international competitors of yours and following the money?

INTERVIEWEE: So, it is typically that, so we have a very strong culture, in our business we look after our staff extremely well, you know it is [unclear] the right  
15 people. So, we try you know, and offer them everything we can in terms of making it very sticky for people to leave. But the main reason is socio economic, really and obviously the skill set specifically around the Microsoft. You know you can go anywhere in the world and work.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

20 INTERVIEWEE: There is a high demand globally for skilled people in that space, typically what we are losing is highly skilled people which is obviously, it invokes the business as you can imagine, and it is not only, you know obviously we want partners it is an industry phenomena, I mean, you know we often have

conversations with Microsoft and say how do we fix this problem, and I think other than [unclear]

INTERVIEWER: Ja, ja.

INTERVIEWEE: So, it is an industry challenge I would say.

5 INTERVIEWER: Ja, ja. And, Andre, I suppose it is a bit more of a personal question, but as, you know, being in a position that you are in terms of your previous business ownership and now your stake in Mint. You, yourself in your position, have you guys, have you and your family considered immigration? And if you have, I mean, obviously you still here, but what has kept you back in  
10 that sense?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, so I mean I am actually a German national, I have a German passport so I could leave at any time if I really wanted to. My wife has a European passport so also another barrier. So, I guess if I had to be brutally honest I ,you know running my business and having doing that for the last 15  
15 odd years, it kind of kept me here because it gives you an opportunity of a certain lifestyle that you enjoy I guess. It is also a challenge and exciting etcetera, you know had I probably not been in that state I mean the probability of me immigrating would probably be quite high, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: Hm-hm.

20 INTERVIEWEE: I guess the other problem, or the other reality is that my parents are still here, and they are in their late seventies now.

INTERVIEWER: Ja.

INTERVIEWEE: So, if I had to move them to say Germany or somewhere else in the world would be quite a challenge. I mean my oldest daughter has

already left the country, my youngest daughter is going to the German school and will be leaving the country and studying in Germany. So, you have, so that is already a problem in itself.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm, hmm.

- 5 INTERVIEWEE: Because these skilled youngsters, or educated youngsters who are coming out of schools are not staying, they are leaving. They have the ability to do that because both of them have European passports. If I have to be honest the last 10 years under some socio economic and political aspects have been [unclear] South Africa. If you look at the world now, and the raping  
10 and the state capture, and everything that has been happening you kind of get a feeling of is it really still worth going, and one of my colleagues who was a shareholder in my business immigrated to the Netherlands. I am in my early fifties so, [unclear] I mean even during Covid, I had a lady packed up and left for Germany you know with the whole family in tow. One of my business partners  
15 left to the Netherlands, his daughter was in matric and he left whilst in the middle of matric, I mean that is unheard of, we would not want to do that you know. So, what particularly are we here, I guess I do love this country, I think it is great opportunities etcetera, and we are always hopeful. But you know if a good offer came up somewhere in Europe, I might consider it. The challenge is  
20 my youngest daughter is now in Grade 10.

INTERVIEWER: Ja.

INTERVIEWEE: I do not think I would want to move her now, I do not know, it is a tough one and my wife ,I do not know if I have mentioned but my wife is an accountant in the city of Jo'burg, and you know she is fighting the battle. You

know it is like giving up and staying in Natal, and I am not that kind of person either so yes, it is a bit of a difficult one.

INTERVIEWER: Difficult, ja, ja. And, Andre, speaking from a business perspective, I mean in your mind, is there any policy changes in, you know, policies like BEE policies or Employment Equity policies? Are there any changes that you believe could bring, you know, you made a mention of your daughters leaving, for example, and a lot of my generation of my vintage, guys would have left straight after varsity to go and ... Not necessarily to immigrate, per se, but to go and gain work experience. A lot of them have obviously dropped anchor rear, but a lot of them have come back. Is there any policy that, from your experience, that could promote these immigrants coming back with the knowledge that they have gained abroad, to come and invest back in the country? I mean, is there something that sticks out for you, or is it just?

INTERVIEWEE: I am not sure, I do not know the answer, there is nothing that comes to mind. I mean I remember there was that bringing them home campaign, or come back home campaign.

INTERVIEWER: Ja, ja, ja.

INTERVIEWEE: In fact, one of my work colleagues who has been with me now for eight, nine years, I think he was one of those chaps, he went to the UK spent nine years there and came back. He came back because he wanted a better lifestyle for his kids, and he has got a family here etcetera.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm.

INTERVIEWEE: So, I guess you know, enticing people to come back you know, I think it is a political thing.

INTERVIEWER: Ja.

INTERVIEWEE: I think there needs to be change, there needs to be a visible change in terms of the socio economic and political [unclear] of this country.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm.

5 INTERVIEWEE: I mean, you know if we seeing recently in the press there are people getting arrested for fraud, and tenders whatever. Maybe it is that kind of run up, and you know the ANC and Ramaphosa does strong arm a bit, and prove that they can actually pull him out. That might entice people to come back.

10 INTERVIEWER: Right, ja.

INTERVIEWEE: Hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Look, either way, it is a difficult topic, you know, and then there is obviously race discussions that pivot off this discussion, there is safety. Safety, I think, is a big driver, as well, for a lot of people that are leaving the  
15 country. I mean, at the end of the day, I think if there was zero crime, or not zero, if there were significantly reduced crime levels in the country, let alone ... Do not worry about corruption and those things, if there was less crime, I think this would be possibly the best place in the world to live.

INTERVIEWEE: I would agree with you I mean that is why my father came  
20 here in the middle of the sixties. I mean they spent 10 days in the Western Cape it is sort of a different world there

INTERVIEWER: Ja, ja.

INTERVIEWEE: So.

INTERVIEWER: Ja, ja, definitely, definitely.

INTERVIEWEE: So, yes, I mean and a lot of people have moved down there, I mean if you look at Mossel bay, George, I mean it is almost an immigration out of Jo'burg into those areas and people are commuting.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm, hmm.

5 INTERVIEWEE: I think now with Covid and with and in terms of sort of virtual meetings and conversations.

INTERVIEWER: Ja, ja.

INTERVIEWEE: I think there will be a bit of a shift, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Ja. Well, let us hope it is all good shifts. Alright, Andre, I am  
10 not going to keep you for any longer. Thanks very much for your insights. If you have got any, do you have any other questions or comments on the topic?

INTERVIEWEE: No, not really, yes, all good I mean the only thing I can cover is maybe do a bit [unclear] is if you need anything on the Microsoft world, and the Microsoft shop.

15 INTERVIEWER: Ja.

INTERVIEWEE: you know we can have a conversation.

INTERVIEWER: No, brilliant, brilliant. Alright, Andre, thanks very much, man, I appreciate your time. And I will tell my old man that we had a pretty good chat, ja.

20 INTERVIEWEE: Yes, no it is off to the bottle store before it closes.

INTERVIEWER: Ja, ja. Alright, great. Thanks a lot, Andre.

INTERVIEWEE: Cheers, man.

INTERVIEWER: I appreciate it. Cheers, hey, bye.

INTERVIEWEE: Bye-bye.



END OF AUDIO