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Updated 24 June
2019

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June 24, 2019
22:21

Small business plays a critical role in economic growth. Most governments look to small businesses for job creation, creativity incubation and deployment, and the spurring of economic development.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reported that over 95 percent of enterprises globally are SMEs, accounting for between 60 to 70 percent of the working population and contributing as much as 60 percent to the GDP.

However, those same small businesses typically struggle to survive beyond the four to five-year mark from date of setup, for various reasons. Improving the performance of SMEs in a cost-responsible manner should therefore be a priority.

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When a startup is busy bootstrapping, they should not neglect building the right business culture from the beginning. Doing so can help them stay competitive on the HR front.

In order to hit the ground running earlier than the competition, HR talent needs to be on-demand without having to build up an internal HR department.

On-demand HR can help move from one priority to the next in a flexible way. This on-demand HR specialists' talent can help a small business grow into a more established second-stage business and can help a startup or SME scale up in many smart ways, while staying lean.

Emma El-Karout, a Johannesburg-based future work innovator, has founded One Circle, an online HR collaboration platform scheduled to launch in 2019.

One Circle is a smart collaboration workspace where businesses hire HR consultants on-demand over a technology-enabled ecosystem. Completely virtual, the platform gives access to quality HR consultants from around the world and across the employee lifecycle to advise, plan and execute on projects, when needed.

Born and raised in Lebanon, El-Karout intends to launch One Circle as a means to combat two major societal issues in South Africa — being unemployed, and the retention of experienced workers in the economy post-retirement.

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People from all around the world are attracted to flexible work. Working from home has shown to increase productivity due to increased focus and simply actually working more, instead of navigating congested traffic to get to the office.

Niche collaboration platforms, such as One Circle, are becoming the norm for businesses to connect with specialized consultants, virtually and on-demand.

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