



A reflection of the changing career path of a forester

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Foresters career path over 20 years ago



From 1998: Foresters career path – Outsourcing was rolled out



2014: Foresters Career Path today



Various ingredients: forester career path



● Strategic

- Strong emphasis on South African forestry changing landscape
 - Land claims
 - Consolidated Outsourcing
- Targeted recruitment process – throughout career path
- Sustainable job creation
- Cost efficiency + global demands => mechanisations
- Partnerships with: Government, Universities, Private Sector & Communities

● SHEQ & Global demands

- Safety
- Climate, water
- Pests & Diseases
- Environmental sensitivity
- FSC, ISO, NOSA accreditation – auditing requirements

● Other Legislative requirements

- BBEE, Employment Equity, Workplace Skills Plan/Actual Training report

Forester Development Path: Students



Fitness assessment every year at each level required

Pre-Saasveld Trainee

- Psychometric assessment to assist with final selection
- Placed in-field for 10 months
- Appoint Mentor & Coach
- Exposed to all aspects of tasks in-field through structured logbook. (Including performance reviewed)

Full-time student

- Full-time at Stellenbosch (BScFor) or NMMU (NDipFor). Academic progress monitored
- BScFor – vacation work
- NDipFor 2nd yr practical – structured logbook
- Must have Code 08 license & pass driving assessment before going on in-field

Forester Development Path: FIT



Annual driving & fitness assessments

Forester in
Training (FIT)

- Qualification completed, no full-time B Tech (2 years in-field experience required)
- Structured FIT programme covering all aspects of forestry including secondment to contractors. Use of logbook
- Set training & experience required before progressing to next level
- Coach & mentor assigned

Alternate Career Path:

Planner
Nurseryman

Tree Improvement Forester
Logistics

Forester Development Path: Younger Management



Operations
Junior
Management

Leave relief & cross functional exposure

- Minimum 2 years experience
- Can apply to do B Tech
- Experience, education & training requirements set with required performance measures
- Promoted possible if training & experience requirements are met

Alternate Career Path:

Logistics Specialist

Nurseryman

Silviculture/Harvesting Specialist

Environmental Forester/ Practitioner

Annual driving & fitness assessments

Forester Development Path: Middle Management



Leave relief & cross functional exposure

- 5 yrs minimum experience
- Specialise in either Harvesting or Silviculture
- Encouraged experience in both
- Set training & experience required (emphasis on management & leadership)
- Mentoring roles to students & FITs

Operations
Middle
Management

Alternate Career Path:

Technical Specialist
Nursery Management
Silviculture/Harvesting Specialist

Safety Specialist
Logistics Management

Annual driving & fitness assessments

Forester Development Path: Senior Management



Leave relief & cross functional exposure

Senior Management

- Minimum 10 years experience
- Harvesting & silviculture experience required
- Different areas have different complexities, encouraged moving around for broader experience
- Set training & experience required (financial, management & leadership)

Alternate Career Path:

Head: Harvesting/Silviculture

Executive Management Logistics Management

Annual driving assessments

Forester Development Path: Executive Management



Executive
Management
levels

- Minimum 15 yrs experience
- Business Units have different complexities
- Strong emphasis on leadership & strategic development
- Psychometric assessment if not done already

Leave relief & cross
functional exposure

Annual driving assessment

Challenges for Foresters to consider alternate career paths



● **Modernisation/Mechanisation**

- Students no longer from farming background – little understanding of mechanised equipment however overseeing expensive machinery
 - Training focus on machine appreciation
 - Training some foresters as driver operators

● **Female foresters**

- Safety challenges: living in remote areas
- Family commitments – no longer wanting to go out to fight fires all day & night
- Move to “softer” options in technical departments e.g. Planners, researchers etc.

● **Health & Safety Challenges**

- Aging workforce from farming backgrounds
- Younger generation often more physically challenged
 - Forester occupational requirements determine fitness assessment requirement

● **Business Management requirements – cross functional experience**

- Contractor business operational experience

SUMMARY – Reflecting on Forester career path



The foresters career path has come full circle

● ***What has changed?***

- Pre-university experience essential for student programme
- Forestry qualification now required
- Past – managing own operations; Present – managing contractors
- More steps in the forester path: structured tuition, practice and experiential components
- Forester career path is clearly documented for individual referencing and auditing purposes

● ***What has stayed the same?***

- In-field experience at all levels required – especially working with labour
- Student programme is viewed as one of the recruitment tools into the forester talent pool – the ideal is a long term relationship
- Students are sourced mainly from neighbouring communities
- Each forester 's individual ability to apply knowledge learned and experience gained to foundation to career progression

FORWARD - LOOKING STATEMENTS

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