

South Africa struggling to retain skilled tech workers, new SAP report reveals

By  Imran Salie

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Yesterday, 8 March, software company SAP unveiled a new report called *Africa's Tech Skills Scarcity Revealed*. The report was presented to media across the continent in a Teams meeting. Presenting the report was SAP Africa's managing director Cathy Smith.



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In her talk, Smith touched on tech skills in Africa as the world continues to transform digitally. One of the interesting points uncovered in the report by Smith is the fact that the continent is facing an IT skills shortage, thanks to the recycling of skills and the rapid growth of digital transformation.

"What has been happening, in reality, is that we are seeing a recycling of skills between all the major players across Africa. I'm sure many people that are working in the ICT industry will resonate and acknowledge the fact that most IT professionals will have worked with at least two or three vendors in their careers.

"So we are not seeing enough investment and focus on bringing new capabilities into the ICT industry. This is because customers typically want to have experience working on their business or on new projects. Now, it is no doubt and we have absolutely seen that there is plenty of academically qualified IT professionals who will have good academic backgrounds," Smith said.

The SAP leader mentioned that the skills challenge also presents an opportunity for the continent. She said that filling the gap starts with leveraging our youth. She explained:

“ We have an opportunity not only to inject new skills and create a higher level of sustainability within the ICT industries across the African continent. We also have an opportunity to really create a new set of revenue streams for many other economies on the continent and to avoid challenges with huge unemployment amongst our youth by creating generating services on the continent. ”

Change management

Smith also touched on change management. She explained that change management means the impact of the change organisations make when it comes to technological transformation.

"The importance for us around change management is so high, the priority of recognising it as a skill and as a key component to digital transformation is fundamental for customers achieving the value that they were promised in digital transformation.

"If we go on to the new world of work, so when we talked about change management, of course, we recognise that people struggle with change, right? It's not something that is easily embraced. It's not something that even though many people are in the ICT industry they will easily adapt to the new world of work in lots. It's creating lots of tension across different industries

"For a continent that is rapidly transforming through the accelerated adoption of digital technologies, ensuring effective change management could greatly improve outcomes and equip organisations with new capabilities to drive growth and innovation," Smith said.

Other findings from the report

When it comes to South Africa in particular, the country is faced with the challenge of retaining skilled tech workers; whereas Kenya and Nigeria (the other two countries where SAP conducted its research) are struggling with attracting top talent.

Kenya on the other hand remains optimistic about skills opportunities, while its counterparts in the research are less hopeful. The report mentions: "Only 53% of Kenyan organisations expect to experience a skills gap in the next year, compared to 80% of Nigerian companies and 73% of South African organisations."

South Africa places greater value on digital transformation skills compared to Nigeria and Kenya. Digital transformation skills were cited by 70% of South African companies as an in-demand skill, compared to only 33% of organisations in Kenya and Nigeria.

A positive takeaway from the report for South Africans is that the country faces little difficulty in attracting talent. The lack of tech skills in Nigeria and Kenya has had a negative impact on its companies.

SAP's full report can be read [here](#).

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