

Everyday vs workplace digital skills: Preparing for an all-digital world

 By [Zuko Mdwaba](#)

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Increasingly, business competitiveness, employee performance and satisfaction, and customer experience rely on the combination of technological advancements and skills readiness. Yet although many citizens around the world are hopeful for technological change, confidence in their capability to make the most of these opportunities over the coming years is weaker.



Zuko Mdwaba, Area Vice President at Salesforce South Africa

This is according to a new [Global Digital Readiness Index](#) from Salesforce. Insights from more than 23,000 workers across 19 countries reveal a growing global digital skills crisis and the urgent need for action. Respondents shared views on their preparedness for digitalisation, current level of digital skills (everyday and workplace), access to resources and support, and upskilling participation.

According to the International Finance Corporation, [230 million jobs](#) in sub-Saharan Africa will require digital skills by 2030. In South Africa, many graduates lack the basic and critical skills needed in the workplace.

Wits University's [2021 ICT Skills Survey](#) found that companies within the South African tech sector were finding it hardest to fill vacancies in positions such as software developers, computer network technicians, developer programmers and computer network and systems engineers, despite a noted increase in vacancies in these positions. Additionally, the most in-demand skills listed by employers are in cybersecurity, big data and analytics, DevOps, and artificial intelligence.

Our new digital-first world revolves around everyone having the skills to participate. As the gap between hope and confidence grows, a global commitment to bridging widening digital skills gaps is fundamental to our world's future success and prosperity.

A key part of this must include differentiating between everyday and workplace digital skills, preparing the workforce for new jobs that will emerge, and reimagining the role business can play in cultivating a culture of continual digital learning.

Prioritising 'real world' digital skills

An advanced level in everyday digital skills such as social media and web navigation does not necessarily translate to the skills needed to drive economic recovery and positive societal impact.

Salesforce's Global Skills Index reveals that many respondents feel unequipped and unprepared for some of the most important digital skills needed for the workplace. Nearly three out of four respondents worldwide say they don't have the resources required to learn the digital skills in order to succeed in the current and future workforce.

According to all survey respondents, the five most important digital skills business needs to invest in today, and over the next five years are collaboration technology skills, digital administrative skills, encryption and cybersecurity skills, e-commerce and digital trade skills, and project management technology skills.

These skills differ to those typically taught in traditional school settings, such as coding and data science, and reiterate the need for recruitment by companies to focus less on established education programs, and more on the 'real world' digital skills that their teams actually require.

Cementing skills as a long-term business commitment

Low digital confidence correlates with low levels of active learning across the globe. This is not helped by continued lack of cohesion between education, skills and jobs around the world.

Businesses with a digital readiness strategy at the heart of their agenda will be best placed to survive and thrive, by auditing the current skills of their workforce, and those needed for the future; identifying how skills can and will be developed within an increasingly hybrid working environment; taking action to ensure learnings are implemented effectively; and making themselves more attractive and relevant to job candidates amidst a major skills shortage.

By continuing to equip workers with the digital skills of the future, we can unlock new growth and opportunity whilst addressing upcoming challenges - whether they are new pandemics, economic shocks or sustainability-related.

More companies recognise their duty to help build a sustainable future for everyone. The relationship between digital upskilling and sustainability is a growing concern, increasing the demand for digital skills for operating technology that promotes sustainable business activities such as tracing, measuring and analysing climate data within an organisation.

Now more than ever, businesses must work closely with governments and community stakeholders, to ensure that training and recruitment scale up to match digital demand, to reach all aspects of society, and to accelerate recovery and growth. Together, we can rethink digital transformation and life-long education, ensuring a digital-first mindset to help close digital

skills gaps more efficiently.

Boosting confidence over hope in our capability to leverage new technologies effectively and participate in the digital economy is key to unlocking major socio-economic change that ensures growth, innovation and happiness in equal measure.

ABOUT ZUKO MDWABA

Zuko Mdwaba is Area Vice President at Salesforce South Africa.

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