

Tech industry holds opportunities in 2021 and beyond

South Africa's gender gap, which was estimated to close in 99.5 years from 2020, has now increased by a generation to 135.6 years to close from 2021. This is according to this year's World Economic Forum's (WEF) [Global Gender Gap Report](#) which revealed that out of the 156 countries monitored, 55 countries regressed or stalled with South Africa unfortunately regressing from 17 to the 18th position of gender equality.

Issued by [Hook, Line & Sinker](#) ^{31 Aug 2021}



In light of National Women's Month in August, Emma Rijkers, business unit manager at Hook, Line & Sinker Communications (HLS), says that a sector which holds opportunities for women in South Africa is the tech industry. "The number and variety of jobs in the technology industry are increasing, and as the world fast approaches the Fourth Industrial Revolution, this sector will remain future-proofed."

Integrated communications agency HLS works with several international tech and software clients to build their brand, solidify their reputation, and amplify their impact in the media and online. "Technology has become intrinsic to our daily lives and whether women take up tech-related roles, or supporting roles like marketing or human resources within tech companies, the opportunities are endless."

At HLS, we're inspired daily by our clients in the tech-space who are encouraging females to forge career paths in the tech industry. For example, our client HyperionDev, South Africa's leading tech education provider backed by Facebook and Google, increased its female learnership by 60% in 2021 and Meet and Code Europe increased female participation in its digital skills workshops by 51% in 2020.

"We need to change the stigma that tech is only reserved for boys and men, by celebrating women in tech and highlighting how women can shape the technology of tomorrow and what better way to start than through communications," Rijkers adds. "We're passionate about the potential of technology to change lives – but that can only happen when everyone is able to participate."

When it comes to their own industry, the HLS team which is made up of majority women who are excited to see how technology will continue to evolve communications going forward, and how new approaches can change the conversation for greater impact – especially in a developing country such as South Africa.

The agency's social media manager, Zoe Mandalios, is looking forward to the widespread adoption of 5G – a necessary precursor to the digital economy. "5G enables a new kind of network that is designed to connect virtually everyone and everything together. I'm excited to see what the full effect will be on our economy."

While Bulelani Ngcauzele, junior account manager, says she sees greater use of holograms in building unique virtual experiences, and even music concerts. "In a post-pandemic world where face-to-face interactions might never be the same again, normalising the use of holograms in our day-to-day environment could be groundbreaking," she says.

Rijkers says data analysis will soon become more prevalent even in fields such as consumer behaviour, and in turn this will ramp up the communications strategies she delivers for clients. "I'm interested in looking at what the data generated by us tells us about human psychology. We look at how to understand the data and then how this understanding can be applied to create and market new products, in a way that's incredibly robust and data-driven," she says.

Hook, Line & Sinker is passionate about the ability of technology to transform our world and provide a more inclusive and sustainable society. That can only happen if women have the ability to contribute in equal measure. "We're partnering with brands who are changing the face of their industries, bringing new thinking to the table, and who value the ideas and contributions of women on their staff, in their partnerships, and in their customer base," Rijkers concludes.

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