

Increased investment in youth key to future proofing IT skills

When Marc Prensky coined the term *digital native* in the early 2000s it was under the assumption that the pace of digital transformation would accelerate alongside the evolution of technology. A 2017 study showed that this idea that younger people - who were born into a more digital world - are automatically better with technology than those who transitioned from the analogue era is a myth.



IT skills are in high demand in the banking sector. Source: Tima Mroshnichenko/Pexels

South Africa has a wealth of young talent, brimming with creativity, energy, and fresh perspectives. According to recent Institute of Information Technology Professionals South Africa statistics, [54% of tech professionals fall under the age of 35](#). This demographic trend underscores the potential for innovation and growth that the country's young talent possesses.

While young talent in the tech sector holds immense promise, they face a range of challenges such as limited access to resources.

Many young individuals encounter barriers when it comes to accessing quality education, training programmes, and resources necessary for acquiring in-demand tech skills. Addressing this challenge is crucial for nurturing talent and bridging the skills gap.

Another key challenge is the evolving skill sets. Rapid advancements in technology necessitate continuous upskilling and adapting to stay relevant. Young talent often faces the challenge of keeping pace with ever-changing tech landscape, requiring comprehensive training and development opportunities.

“Investing in and future-proofing young talent within the technology sector is vital for driving innovation and economic growth,” says Aneline Rhoda-Wright, people lead in the Information and Technology office at Absa. “By addressing challenges and collaborating across sectors, we can empower young talent to become the next generation of tech innovators, propelling our industry and country forward.”

Skills development programmes, internships, and mentorship opportunities providing young talent with hands-on experience, practical skills, and guidance from industry experts are key to ensuring that youth are employable as they enter the world of work. By bridging the gap between academia and the workplace, these initiatives empower young individuals to transition smoothly into their chosen professions.



Aneline Rhoda-Wright. Source: Supplied

“We recognise the power of mentorship and guidance in shaping the future of young individuals. We believe in building the future generation, and the partnerships that we have forged along the way emphasise this drive through the array of young talent initiatives we are sponsoring across our Technology division. Our intention is to be an active force for good and play a vital role in reducing the challenge of youth unemployment in South Africa,” adds Rhoda-Wright.

Banks are investing in IT skills

Organisations like [The Digital Academy](#) that aim to address a skills gap in the banking and technology industries by focusing on filling important and in-demand positions have become easy investment targets for banks

This nine-year-old programme recruits young individuals, including learners with disabilities, who are motivated and have a natural aptitude for software development and trains them in the practical, hands-on development skills that employers demand.



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In 2022 the South African banking sector increased IT hires by 11.8%. So far in 2023, Absa alone has 572 beneficiaries in these skill development programmes who will one day add to the country’s workforce and address the skills shortage.

“The youth are the future leaders, innovators, and drivers of economic growth. By empowering them with the right skills, knowledge, and opportunities, we are investing in a brighter future for South Africa. Through our initiatives, we aim to create an environment that encourages entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity, thereby unlocking the potential of our youth and propelling positive economic growth,” concludes Rhoda-Wright.

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