Open source skills in high demand

The unemployment rate in South Africa rose to 27.5% in the third quarter of 2018, while the demand for skills remains high - leaving an industry conundrum that is yet to be solved. According to SUSE, partnerships that focus on upskilling graduates and providing real-work skills, as well as placement opportunities - could be exactly what the industry in looking for.

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"The skills shortage is nothing new," says Grant Bennett, country manager, South Africa & sub-Saharan Africa, SUSE. "However, if we consider that our unemployment rate is a combination of deficient demand for labour, due to the increasingly skills-intensive orientation of the South African economy, and substandard supply, programmes that focus on in-demand skills and provide on-the-job learning are critical. And given that technology mainly driven by open source innovation and software-services provide a massive market opportunity, championing these become critical."

And this is exactly what the graduate programme partnership between SUSE, Axiz and CTU Training Solutions is focused on doing.

Says Magda Hanekom, business development manager at Axiz, "The industry needs a platform to upskill the future generation with 'real-world knowledge' providing an opportunity to increase their worth and productivity in the eyes of any future employer. In fact, these programmes need to go beyond just providing graduates with the necessary skills, but it should pair companies with the right talent for their needs - be it cloud technologies, web technologies, open source, networking technologies, security etc. to harnesses much-needed skills in the interest of the industry as a whole."

The SUSE graduate programme saw their 2018 students graduate at an event held at Bryanston Country Club recently. With a focus on upskilling learners who seek a career in open source, and in an effort to increase technical resources and skills in the market – the first year of the programme has seen tremendous success with a 90% pass rate, with 50% of graduates already being employed and commitment to place the remaining graduates by early 2019.

"Linux and open source skills and experience are certainly in demand locally, but candidates are hard to come by but with the right programme and committed partners on board, we can start to close the gap," adds Hanekom.

According to the 2018 Open Source Jobs Report, open source jobs are in more demand than ever before. In fact, Linux tops the list as the most in-demand open source skill, making it mandatory for most entry-level open source careers. What's more, hiring open source talent is a priority for 83% of hiring managers where many are also increasingly opting to train existing employees on new open source technologies and help them gain certifications.

"As an industry, we have a role to play and need to focus on ensuring that such training and certification opportunities are highly accessible to everyone who wants to seek them out. It is also for this reason that we will be focusing on 30 learners with no IT background for 2019, where this year's graduates will act as mentors – ensuring the cycle of support, upskilling and job opportunities continue," concludes Hanekom.

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