

What does digital transformation mean for local business?

By [Fatima Hassim](#)

10 Aug 2018

The Fourth Industrial Revolution has already begun to shift the business landscape, but what does it mean for South African businesses?

The business landscape is changing, it's no secret. The Fourth Industrial Revolution has already begun to shift the business landscape, and the challenges faced by businesses increase at the same pace as their competition. The barriers to entry for many South African businesses lies in the scarcity of digital talent. We desperately need to find a solution to this challenge and establish our role in enabling digital transformation across all sectors.



Fatima Hassim, managing executive for Vodacom Business.

According to Frost & Sullivan, South African telecommunications operators are currently in the early stages of digital transformation, more so when compared to the level of progress being made in more developed markets.

Investment injections into the sector would benefit the economy

It is, therefore, safe to say that investment injections into the sector would ultimately benefit the economy, and shape the digital landscape for businesses. A large part of South African telcos has begun their digital journey by establishing dedicated digital departments. In doing so, they are able to better develop their offerings and more effectively execute their digital strategies.

The solution lies in finding the right talent, the type that oozes digital wit, which happens to be just as important as the technology that businesses should be utilising to advance into the digital society of the future. Thankfully, we're well on our way to tearing down this unwelcomed barrier.

Through an increased focus on skills development, workshops that seek to upskill employees in sought-after digital skills, Vodacom's very own girl coder programme and providing the proper tools and resources to upskill employees – we have seen growing access to skills development in the ICT sector, which is complemented by backing from the government.

Private and public sector partnerships hold the key to unlocking skills development and youth upliftment and should be at the forefront of the digital transition we're currently undergoing. Simply put, we should go above and beyond to provide enough infrastructure support and skills development to propel our progression.

Embedding digital literacy in the school curriculum

For starters, we need to embed digital literacy in the school curriculum, essentially instilling digital skillsets at the very core of our primary education. The unwelcomed reign of digital illiteracy needs to come to an abrupt end. We need to do away with the inability hindering the average Joe's ability to use a smart device, an issue that has plagued South Africa's rural areas lately. That in itself poses a major barrier to digital progression.

By knocking down barriers, such as these, we can begin to open doors to digital skills development. It's the first step in bridging the digital divide gap, and essentially enhancing these much-sought-after skills.

It's no secret that the South African telco industry is very competitive, as telcos battle it out to remain at the forefront of innovative solutions – all of which is an effort to gain a competitive edge. A strategy that has been widely adopted by some of the big names in the industry is that of acquiring businesses with unique digital offerings and varying areas of expertise. The aim here is to offer their consumers, and business customers, forward-thinking end-end ICT and digital services.

Every business will have a unique digital journey

Bringing the discussion back to broader business – it's worth noting that each business will have a unique journey to undergo to achieve digital transformation.

By integrating digital technology into all areas of a business, the SA's enterprise landscape can truly benefit from the fundamental changes in operation and the delivery of service to their respective customer bases. This feeds into customer centricity and personalisation, which is important when considering the fact that these days, it pays to be personal.



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Aside from the profit-making opportunities, the efficiency that will come with it, or even the fact that their competitors are doing it – the biggest benefit will come from the appreciation that will be expressed by their customers. The truth of the matter is that external customers, internal employees and people associated with that business have already adopted digital practices in their personal lives.

Think of online shopping, online banking and even smart homes which all form part of their day-to-day lives. So all they're waiting for now is for their beloved businesses of choice to embark on a digital journey of their own.

By taking a step back, and observing the current economic standing of our country, we can get a clearer picture of what needs to be achieved to truly become a digital society. There's no need for us to be burdened by the shortage of digital skills, and the massive unemployment issue we're faced with. The answer lies in our hands.

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