

Need for open source skills in Africa

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With many businesses transitioning from legacy systems to ones built on open source (OS) software, there is a need for skilled employees that can unlock the value this approach offers.



Image by 123RF

Despite the fact that OS skills development is nothing new, the subtle changes in business requirements over the years mean the need has progressed beyond foundational skills. Today, companies are looking for people who have more advanced OS skills reflecting a more dynamic, connected business landscape.

While the market for this in South Africa is relatively small when compared to more developed countries, there is certainly significant potential for growth. As demand for OS-based solutions increase here, and on the rest of the continent, so too will the skills requirement.

According to the [2016 Open Source Jobs Report](#) published earlier this month, 65% of hiring managers say OS hiring will increase more than any other part of their business over the next six months, and 79% of hiring managers have increased incentives to hold on to their current OS professionals.

Furthermore, the report found that 58% of hiring managers are seeking DevOps professionals while the need for developers remains the top position on their list at 74%. Perhaps the most telling statistic is the one that shows that 31% of

OS professionals say the best thing about their jobs is working on interesting projects, while working on the most cutting-edge technology challenges (18%) and collaborating with a global community (17%) also feature prominently.

This last point indicates just how far OS has come in the business adoption cycle. No longer just limited to core back-end systems, OS provides decision-makers with a way to manipulate the underlying platform to suit more diverse organisational needs. This link between mission-critical platforms and systems are resulting in an increased demand for the associated skills to extract the most value out of the transition.

However, as with any IT component, there are a dizzying array of skills on offer. While much attention is placed on Linux, this is only one part of the OS offering. Companies need to consider the benefits of attracting talent with skills that talk to open customer relationship management, open databases, the open cloud, and even an open management system.

This is resulting in companies increasingly starting to take OS more seriously from a skills perspective. They understand that new requirements mean they have to adopt revised learning programmes that can encompass the likes of online courses, virtual-led classrooms, and self-paced programmes to enhance their existing OS skill set.

It must be remembered that there is no silver bullet approach to take to strengthen OS skills in the organisation. Decision-makers need to be considered and align their development with the company strategy. The most pressing needs are to start taking those first steps to build in-house capacity or to attract more advanced OS talent. The business world of today and the future demands it.

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