Africa is a goldmine of cybersecurity opportunities

By Anna Collard   26 Nov 2020

Africa offers a wealth of chances for startups and innovators looking to address cybersecurity risk across the increasingly digitised continent.

Anna Collard | image supplied

Cybersecurity presents an incredible market opportunity in Africa, with the number of internet users soaring and demand for IT security skills growing rapidly. Security skills and services are in high demand everywhere. The number of African internet users will double to one billion by 2022, and global cybersecurity spend will top $170.4bn in 2022. At the same time, cybercrime is estimated to cost the global economy a total of $6tn by next year, and cybercriminals' interest in Africa is growing, so it's a ticking time bomb.

One of the biggest challenges facing organisations around the world was a lack of skills to manage cybersecurity. Worldwide, there are currently around four million vacancies in the cybersecurity field, and this is expected to rise to nearly 10 million in the coming years. In Africa, we only have approximately 10,000 certified cybersecurity professionals.

In this environment, there are huge opportunities for individuals to upskill themselves as cybersecurity specialists, and for entrepreneurs and innovators to develop solutions to the growing cybersecurity challenge. In Africa, there are opportunities for startups offering managed cybersecurity services, niche security and forensics services, and for developers and innovators who build security into their solutions from the ground up.

Demand for skills was so high that banks and financial services organisations were looking to launch their own cybersecurity academics, and governments were working with the private sector to stimulate cybersecurity innovation. For example, KnowBe4 is involved in the GovX cybersecurity innovation challenge to drive innovation towards a more digitised and cyber safe South Africa.

Learning cybersecurity skills in school, instilling cybersecurity from early age

More needs to be done to bring security skills into the school curriculum early; and to position cybersecurity as a

prospective career choice, particularly for young women, who are underrepresented in the industry.

The opportunities in this field extend far beyond becoming a certified cybersecurity specialist. We also need to see a security culture instilled in all organisations and cybersecurity taught from an early age since cybersecurity is no longer a technical skill – it is becoming a life skill.

We need solutions to this problem – people will increasingly depend on secure digital platforms for everything they do, so they need to be taught how to do so safely. Recent KnowBe4 research in Africa's education institutions found that only 3.7% offer cybersecurity awareness or training.

My advice from experiences as an entrepreneur in the cybersecurity field: Just do it – we need African solutions for African problems, and cybersecurity is a major opportunity. Just get into the pool.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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