

Why digital skills are critical

Google last week announced that over 500 000 young Africans have been trained on digital skills through its Digital Skills Africa program. The Digital Skills program was announced in April when Google committed to train one million people across the continent on digital skills within a year. Six months later, Google has reached the halfway mark.



Image by 123RF

The announcement was made alongside the launch of its [online training portal](#) for Africa. The online portal offers 89 courses in three languages.

Says Google South Africa country director Luke Mckend, “Although 500 000 people have acquired digital skills since we launched the program six months ago, there are people across the continent who are unable to attend face-to-face training sessions and who want to acquire digital skills in their own time, from their phone or computer. The online portal will make it possible for them to take advantage of the free digital skills training program.”

The portal, which offers online courses on a wide range of digital subjects, including web analytics, social media management and mobile marketing, will be available in [English](#), [French](#) and, in the near future, Portuguese.

“As we mentioned when we launched the program in April, we want anyone in Africa to be able to access digital skills training. Through this new online portal, more people will be able to gain the skills and knowledge to help them build and grow businesses and find and create new jobs,” commented Mckend.

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The internet continues to be a key engine of growth for business in Africa and globally, with McKinsey’s [estimates](#) putting its total GDP contribution in Africa at \$300 billion within the coming decade.

Although Africa’s online population, which is currently estimated at 340 million, is said to have grown by a rate of over 7 000% since 2000, the continent is yet to enjoy a corresponding increase in the size of its Web economy.

The program aims to equip Africans with the digital skills they need to either start their own internet businesses, or to gain employment. People go to the web when they want information, and particularly when looking for local businesses. By equipping young people with these skills, they can go into these businesses and help to raise the business' web presence and grow. In other words, Google is aiming to provide the skills needed to help African economies take advantage of the digital era and the opportunities it presents.

The internet literally gives any business a potentially global market, but without the skills to tap into this channel, businesses cannot take advantage of it. The internet is at the heart of economic growth and the Digital Skills Program is aimed at helping more Africans play a part in the digital economy. Everyone can succeed online, start a new business, grow their existing one, or share their passion.

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