

# Participate in the 2014 ICT Skills Survey

ICT practitioners and employers are encouraged to take part in the 2014 annual ICT Skills Survey, the sixth edition of this evaluation of skills requirements and skills acquisition in the ICT sector in South Africa.



Adrian Schofield

The Joburg Centre for Software Engineering (JCSE) - a University of Witwatersrand partnership with government and industry - in conjunction with ITWeb and with the support of the Institute of Information Technology Professionals SA, the Information Technology Association and Eduflex's Virtual Assessor survey application, aims to ensure this year's survey is the most comprehensive to date.

In order to guarantee the continued success of the Skills Survey, manager of the JCSE's Applied Research Unit, Adrian Schofield, called on more industry players to participate in the survey and contribute to helping policy and decision makers who are working to close the skills gap in SA.

"The debate around the skills needed to create, implement, support and use ICTs is global and perennial. Innovation and commoditisation of technology and the consumerisation and proliferation of devices ensure that the employers and practitioners in the sector must invest in skills and skills updates on a continuous basis," said Schofield.

Concerns around South Africa's ICT skills shortage are not new and Schofield maintained that participation in this year's Skills Survey is a fitting opportunity for the industry to help address the challenges facing the sector.

## South Africa falling behind its peers

In 2012, the United Nations Conference on Trade & Development and Innovation Report identified South Africa as a source of high technology for other developing economies. However, data also showed South Africa to be falling behind its peers in the percentage that technology represents of total exports. The report attributed undeveloped skills as a major reason for the disparity.

Schofield explained that the ICT sector currently grapples with a number of wide-ranging issues; from the quality of education and the employability of graduates, the investment in training and development, to the job roles and retention practices of employers - all of which take place against the background of an uncertain economic and political environment.

The JCSE's 2012/3 survey unearthed data that showed the demand for skills was at the level reported in 2011 - at around the 10% to 15% of total employees. The previous survey also indicated that priority skills were in the fields of software as a service/cloud computing, network infrastructure, information security and application development, while the top programming languages were .NET, C#, C++, Java and VB.

## **An accurate picture**

The 2014 ICT Skills Survey will seek to provide an accurate picture of the current situation in South Africa and will use the accumulated data to identify and analyse the prevailing trends in the market. Schofield also encourages CEOs, CIOs and HR managers concerned with recruiting and retaining ICT skills in any public or private sector to complete the survey. He added: "We also need current and aspiring practitioners at all levels to tell us how they have acquired their current skills and their plans to improve their talents in the future."

"Whether you are a practitioner of ICT skills (which covers the whole range of activities in electronic media, information and communications technologies and electronics from the most junior to the most senior) or an employer of any of those skills (in any sector of the economy, including business, government and civil society), go to <http://ow.ly/c89ld> and answer one (or both, if it is appropriate) of the two surveys."

Globally, the pace of change in the ICT sector shows no sign of abating. Last year, the European Union forecast a shortage of 700,000 entry-level skills by 2015, while the United States predicts a shortage of between 20,000 and 40,000 computer security experts. Industry-wide participation in the 2014 JCSE ICT Skills Survey will provide a more accurate portrait of the South African ICT landscape, while also serving as a valuable addition to the country's knowledge base.

Schofield said that the JCSE hopes to publish the new report in October this year.

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