

Microsoft launches program built to help tech startups grow

Microsoft South Africa has launched Head Start, a support program that boosts tech startups by giving them open access to wide-ranging skills development resources, coaches and mentors, a fully-fledged customer network, and the platform on which to build their products and services.



Lionel Moyal, commercial partners lead at Microsoft South Africa.

Head Start is a complete program that will help tech startups innovate in the most trusted cloud – Azure - while strengthening the local startup system and preparing them to sell to global marketplace. South Africans who want to take their tech business to the next level can register and join the Microsoft South Africa Head Start programme.

“As a company whose mission it is to empower every person and organisation on the planet to achieve more, we get how critical entrepreneurship is, especially in the South African context where job creation is vital if we are to improve our economy,” says Lionel Moyal, commercial partners lead at Microsoft South Africa.

Supporting startups

The Economic Impact of IT and Microsoft in South Africa Report, Microsoft recently undertook with IDC shows how IT job opportunities are growing three times faster than national job opportunities.

“We want to give as much support to tech startups as we can to make South Africa more globally competitive, and create jobs, but, if we don’t have skilled South Africans to fill these jobs it will be at a loss. Many of these amazing opportunities run the risk of being lost in the country due to the current skills gap that exists, which we’re working hard to close,” he says.

The report shows how cloud computing is driving massive growth in IT. Over the next five years - between 2017 and 2022 - the adoption of cloud services will generate nearly 112,000 net new jobs in South Africa, of which Microsoft will contribute to 44% of the available opportunities, offering 53,000 net new jobs in South Africa. In today’s economic environment, that’s substantial.

To succeed, tech startups need three specific doors to open: the Technology door, the Business Development door and the Compliance, Regulation and Legal door.

“A key differentiator of the Head Start program is the direct access to coaches and mentors that candidates have to guide them through these three key areas, with over 50 Microsoft South Africa staff volunteering to mentor. Candidates just need to schedule an hour meeting with various business experts from multiple fields across the business, and they’ll get one-to-one expert advice straight from those in the know,” says Moyal.

Mentoring categories

The three mentoring categories are defined as follows:

- **Technology:** App development, Data and AI, DevOps, Cloud Platform, Security, Business Apps, Modern Workplace
- **Business:** Marketing, HR, Finance, Business Development
- **Legal:** GDPR, Security, Compliance and Legal

The business benefits for tech startups are multiple and immediate. When candidates join the Microsoft Partner Network, they instantly become part of a global community that connects them to the relationships, insights, tools, resources, and programs needed to amaze customers and drive growth.

Signing up to Head Start means direct access to digital coaching and training, live events, and more. With all types of internationally-recognised qualifications and certifications offered by Microsoft Head Start, tech startups can vastly improve their knowledge and boost their organisation's trajectory.

Moyal explains that through Head Start, Microsoft South Africa can help grow tech startup businesses by opening the right doors at every stage of the journey. And with over ten high-level partners involved in Head Start, the added value proposition is hard to resist. Candidates can look up the partners on the Head Start website.

“When we talk about empowerment, we simply mean that with the right tools, anyone can become anything. By connecting tech startups with a worldwide network of customers, cloud architects, business development experts, and the latest cloud technologies, Microsoft wants to nurture and evolve these startups into fully-fledged Microsoft partners themselves. The ecosystem itself is far bigger than Microsoft, but by backing the bold entrepreneurial spirit of the brave tech startup, we can bring real change to the future of the country and the continent. There’s no better investment,” concludes Moyal.



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The launch of Microsoft Head Start coincides with Global Entrepreneurship Week (12–18 November 2018), where millions are inspired to unleash their ideas, start and scale new businesses, and connect to potential collaborators, policymakers, researchers, mentors and even investors.

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