

## Local ICT skills in high demand despite economic downturn

Cape Town is home to almost 60% of South African tech startups. This is according to data released by Invest Cape Town, which cites high internet penetration, access to startup capital, and top business accelerators, as reasons for the city's growing success as a fintech hub on the African continent.



Jonathan Smit

Ongoing advancements to the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) industry has allowed online businesses to grow at a rapid pace, despite Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

“Local Fintech companies are creating a strong foothold into the global market. We’ve demonstrated our ability to compete internationally with our tech. As the sector continues to grow in South Africa, we should nurture opportunities for industry professionals and foster digital skills development,” says Jonathan Smit, managing director and Founder of online payment gateway, PayFast.

Despite many industries taking a big knock during Covid-19 lockdown, the most employable skills still fall within the ICT industry. This is according to the Department of Higher Education and Training’s draft list of Occupations in High Demand. As more industries have fast-tracked digital transformation, the need for skilled developers and local digital solutions continues to grow. “Tech skills play a crucial role in future-proofing businesses and providing employment across various sectors of the economy,” says Smit.

Additionally, local developers help online businesses find solutions that make sense within the South African market. This can be seen in unique offerings that cater to costing, local support and customisation with South African business models and consumers in mind.

Choosing local technical support and software solutions will provide online businesses with personalised and streamlined processes for their businesses. “It can be jarring and frustrating to deal with international customer service teams when they have little understanding of the South African context. An example of this is the impact of load shedding on businesses,” says Smit.

Local solutions such as PayFast help businesses cater to the local market by offering merchants the ability to accept rand payments and providing uniquely South African payment solutions such as Instant EFT and SCode.

Smit encourages merchants to invest in on-the-ground tech solutions because it creates healthy competition amongst service providers. “As the online market continues to grow in South Africa, it’s important to develop accessible service delivery and support for businesses.”

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