

Q & A

Multi-skilling way to go

Mario Matthee, head of software company DVT's internship programme, spoke to Margaret Harris

IS the information and communications technology (ICT) sector still battling to find skilled people?

Yes, particularly in the software systems development space. It is hard to find good software engineers and even harder to find people who are passionate about what they do. Software development is one of those unique jobs that frequently overlap with a hobby; over the years, the best people have always been the ones who are passionate about what they do and like taking ownership.

Why is there a shortage of skilled people?

We are seeing fewer graduates in the sciences and commerce streams. In addition, unrealistic BEE requirements are also placing pressure on the sector. There is a strong focus on salaries as opposed to the value of that a person's skills and the benefit they bring to the business.

This is a professional skill that is probably the easiest to market globally. In the software quality assurance space, many skilled people at the intermediate level are lost to other domains such as software development and business analysis.

What ICT skills will be most in demand next year?

There is going to be a spike in the demand for software developers who can cross over into the business realm as well as candidates with skills in Java, the



GET SKILLS: Mario Matthee says skilled people in ICT are in demand

programming language that has become increasingly popular.

Interestingly, there's a demand for people with older technical skills — going back five years or so — because the rate at which companies are moving to new technology is far slower than the speed at which software vendors release new products.

Why are these skills in demand?

Many software developers focus on the technology rather than the commercial implications of the solution, which is crucial to building what is needed. Added to that is that the best software developers move to new technology as soon as they can, and companies are looking for tool smiths, testers who can perform test analysis and automate and develop small applications. Mobile software

development skills will be in more demand because the need for these developers outstrips the supply of them.

How can people take advantage of this demand?

Start thinking about fast turnarounds that make commercial sense rather than introducing technology that is not required, and you will become a quicker, more effective developer.

Testers without development should consider up-skilling. As the demand for mobile applications increases, so will the need for testing. Testing mobile applications on different handsets is labour intensive. Today's testers must stay up to date with the latest technologies as well as handsets and tablets. Finally, developers should get themselves multi-skilled.