SA software firms primed for international outsourced development

An increasing number of international companies are realising the benefits of outsourcing software development to South Africa, which is excellent news for the local industry.

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According to a software development company, over recent years South Africa has become a valid offshore alternative when it comes to a variety of software development needs.

Alan Haefele, CEO of Haefele Software, says, "We've seen that our international clients, from UK, Europe and Australia, are outsourcing their software development to South Africa to capitalise on high-quality talent the country offers and the competitive rates. For the UK and the rest of Europe, the similar time zone, overlapping culture and being primarily English first-language have been key decisive factors."

UK retail giant Tesco Stores is one such company that has looked towards South Africa. The company, which is a long-standing client of Haefele's, has benefitted from a high level of software development and more favourable pricing when compared to similar companies in the UK. "I have no doubt that this trend will grow over the years to come as more organisations realise the benefits," says Haefele.

Collaboration is also an important factor when it comes to South Africa's success story in the software space. "Growing global organisations don't only want good skills and competitive rates, they want collaboration," adds Haefele.

"These companies don't simply want a partner to join their solution and follow instructions, they want to share the problem and collaborate on the solution together. South Africans are great collaborators, and we enjoy a strong reputation internationally for our work ethic and commitment to engineering."

Harnessing software talent in South Africa

According to Haefele, we have the software talent in South Africa, it just needs to be harnessed.

Facebook has also started to realise the quality skillset offered. They have begun a strong recruitment drive for developers from the South African skills pool, luring them overseas with promises of big salaries.

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"Software developers need to be mentored, and if this need is not met the country runs the risk of the youth looking elsewhere to be groomed, grown and challenged. With the shortage of software development professionals, many junior and mid-level developers don't get the quality time alongside more senior developers.

This is vital to grow as a developer. There are many institutions, diplomas and degrees providing a different angle and starting point into software development, but in such a fast-paced industry, with tools and technologies changing all the time, there is no alternative to the experience, exposure and mentoring gained alongside more talented, more senior professionals."

During SONA 2019, President Ramaphosa announced the government's plans to digitalise (this the right word?) South African schools. Minister Mboweni then reiterated this during the budget speech by emphasising the need to improve the education system and develop digital skills by investing funds. "We believe this is critical to the growth of the software development sector in South Africa. We need to see those from underprivileged backgrounds tinkering with code – companies like ours have a part to play in this and better access to technology in these schools to drive and fuel this passion." adds Haefele.

Global demand for software development talent outstrips supply by an order of magnitude, and that trend is no different in South Africa.

"It is no surprise that a software developer is one of the highest paid jobs around these days, which is of course, a further motivator to create a successful career in this space. In fact, software developers are one of the most in-demand professionals in South Africa at the moment. There should be no reason why those from less fortunate backgrounds can't be a part of this opportunity."

Global demand increases for software development skills

This global demand means more and more international businesses are seeking out talent in offshore partners all over the world, most often India, China, Russia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. Haefele believes South African talent can compete amongst this list, especially for UK, Europe and US, as we are one of the only offshore options where affordability, high-quality talent, central time-zone, first-language English, and a collaborative approach, all converge.

For now, Haefele believes South Africa is well-positioned to continue attracting some of the world's biggest brands as they

continue to focus on the tip of Africa as their outsourced software development partner. "It is an exciting space to watch."

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