

SA's new digital nomad visa and what it means for local coders

By [Mvelo Hlophe](#)

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With South Africa getting closer to rolling out a digital nomad visa, it is a mix of good news for the economy but also a cause for concern about how it might affect our local coders.



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Remote work is gaining popularity, allowing individuals to combine travelling the globe with maintaining full-time employment. And in exciting news for digital nomads – South Africa will launch a new digital nomad visa featuring two categories: a remote working visa and a critical skills visa.

These visas aim to attract remote workers and skilled professionals globally as part of South Africa's efforts to position itself as a global hub. Once put into action, this move would establish Mzansi as only the fifth African nation offering this kind of visa to people who spend long periods working in different countries.

While this may sound promising, what effects will this development have on our local coding community?

Considering the broader impact

As South Africa becomes a hotspot for remote work with the new digital nomad visa, we need to think about the big-picture impact of this exciting development. Beyond the immediate economic benefits, we must carefully assess how this decision could affect our local coding talent.

As a country, we are facing a delicate balancing act where we need to consider both the opportunities and the challenges that this decision could present.



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Digital nomads, with their diverse skill sets and global perspectives, undoubtedly bring value to South Africa's tech landscape. Their presence contributes to the local economy, driving revenue generation through spending on various services and stimulating job creation across sectors like hospitality, tourism, and technology.

So too, their entrepreneurial spirit within this community acts as a catalyst for innovation, fostering a vibrant startup ecosystem that enhances South Africa's reputation as a tech hub.

However, with these advantages also come challenges, especially regarding the potential displacement of our local coding talent. Digital nomads earn higher salaries and drive up living expenses in city centres like Cape Town and Johannesburg.

This results in higher rents and food costs, pushing locals to move to the outskirts and spend hours in traffic to get to their place of work. Because of this decrease in quality of life, lucrative opportunities abroad or even just working remotely for an international company lure many skilled coders.

This leads to a depletion of our pool of talented coders, as local businesses find it hard to match the salary packages offered by international rivals.

Strategies for retaining local coding talent

If we introduce the digital nomad visa, proactive measures must be taken to level the playing field and ensure equal opportunities for all.

One approach is through taxation policies that aim to redistribute wealth. This will help ease the strain on local coding communities who are being priced out of their homes because of inflated rental and living costs brought on by digital nomads.



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By implementing fair and transparent tax structures, we can balance the economic benefits of digital nomadism with the need to protect the interests of our citizens.

Local companies will also need to step up and adapt their job offerings to vie with attractive international salary packages. Offering benefits, such as flexible work hours and a supportive company culture that can foster a sense of belonging that transcends financial incentives, will go a long way in retaining talent.

South African companies should also look at attracting new talent by providing access to on-the-job training, free online learning and mentorship programmes.

The importance of collaboration

Ultimately, the key to harnessing the potential of digital nomadism lies in collaboration.

We should encourage local coders to attend industry events, workshops, and mentorship programmes where they can network and exchange knowledge with one another. Being able to bounce ideas and learn from each other would mean that coders can work together, rather than feel threatened by one another.

Indeed, the digital nomad visa introduction poses both benefits and drawbacks for South Africa. While it brings economic opportunities and fosters innovation, it also poses challenges such as gentrification and talent retention for local companies.

By implementing strategic policies and encouraging a collaborative culture, we can successfully navigate this change and build towards a future where both local and international talent coexist harmoniously.

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