

Bridging the talent shortage in modern data centres

By [Carol Koech](#)

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The rapid expansion of data centres has created a high demand for skilled professionals who can design, build, operate, and maintain these complex infrastructures. Unfortunately, the supply of qualified individuals with the necessary expertise has struggled to keep pace.



Source: Supplied. Carol Koech, country president, Schneider Electric East Africa.

As a result, the data-centre industry is facing a significant talent shortage, hindering its ability to meet the increasing demands for data processing and storage.

A report by Uptime Institute indicates that by 2025, at least 2.3 million full-time staff will be required to keep data centres globally operational, with demand coming mainly from internet giants and colocation providers in Asia Pacific, Middle East, and Africa.

To address the shortage of data-centre talent, industry leaders must work together to improve recruitment, enhance training and increase awareness of opportunities. Traditional hiring and mentorship strategies must be replaced with new approaches that leverage the latest digital transformation and innovation trends.

Here are three ways to bridge the data-centre talent gap:

- **Embrace the gig economy to meet the tech talent crunch:** The gig economy, characterised by short-term contracts or freelance work, is rapidly gaining popularity and becoming more mainstream worldwide. In India, for example, a recent study conducted by the public policy think tank Niti Aayog on "India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy" indicates that the country's gig workforce is projected to grow to 23.5 million workers by 2030.

Data centre companies have the opportunity to leverage the growing pool of skilled gig workers to access a broad range of adaptable professionals and quickly advance projects without the need for time-consuming recruitment procedures.

Additionally, gig workers can be brought on board on a short-term basis to address non-core tasks or to manage spikes in demand. This flexibility allows companies to remain agile and responsive to changing business needs while also helping to control costs.

“ View our webinar about managing [#datacenter](#) complexity to hear Uptime's insights on how data centers can adapt - and thrive - within unpredictable conditions like [#climatechange](#), [#economic](#) obstacles, and fluctuating corporate [#strategies](#). Watch on demand: <https://t.co/HUKbHdpFWX> pic.twitter.com/Adiq7kH9ts — Uptime Institute (@UptimeInstitute) [December 28, 2023](#) ”

- **Recognise the significance of non-traditional, transferrable talents:** Data centres require a diverse range of skills beyond technical expertise. Individuals with backgrounds in fields like project management, logistics, customer service, and even arts can possess transferable skills that are highly applicable to data-centre operations.

By tapping into this talent pool, data-centre players can access a broader range of adaptable professionals who can contribute to projects without the need for time-consuming recruitment procedures.

In many cases, non-traditional workers may possess unique abilities that reveal hidden potential, even if they are not immediately apparent.

Data centre players can make changes to job descriptions' requirements to create a more inclusive and diversified tech talent pool. By doing so, they foster a diverse and dynamic workforce, bringing fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to the industry.

Offering training programmes and certifications that bridge the gap between non-traditional talents and data-centre requirements can help these individuals acquire the necessary skills for success in the field.

- **Mentorship as a tool to engage and inspire:** To support the next generation of data-centre talent, leaders can play a role in inspiring young people to consider a career in technology. This can be achieved through internships or Stem-related programmes.

Mentoring can help support both senior- and junior employees' ongoing professional growth. By pairing experienced professionals with those who are just starting their careers, mentorship programmes can help develop skills and provide guidance to help bridge the skills gap.

A dedicated professional development platform like the Schneider Electric University can also help close the skills gap in the data-centre industry by helping industry players upgrade their skills and keep up with new technological-, sustainability-, and energy-efficiency developments.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carol Koech is country president of Schneider Electric East Africa.

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