2021 SKILLS GAP SURVEY

Digital Marketing & Advertising

The IAB SA, supported by the Red & Yellow Creative School of Business, seeks to support the industry in continuous learning. Our objective is to asses the relevant skills shortages and gaps in the digital marketing and advertising industry with the aim of collaborating with our education and training institutions in order to produce relevant current and future talent that isable to meet the needs of the industry.

Thank you to those that took part in our survey, here's what we found...

On February 23 2021, Stats SA released their latest unemployment figures which showed that the Covid-19 pandemic had further exacerbated an already desperate state of South Africa's unemployment. Under the expanded definition of unemployment, which includes discouraged workers, the unemployment rate for Q4 2020 was at 42.6%. Further to this, Stats SA reported that youth aged 15-24 years and 25-34 years recorded the highest unemployment rates of 43.2% and 41.2% respectively.

At the same time, however, the pandemic has accelerated digital adoption amongst consumers and digital transformation within organisations. In the marketing communications space, the marketing and advertising technology landscape continues to grow at a rapid pace, ushering in vast opportunities for business growth and innovation.

This digital opportunity however is only an opportunity to the extent or limit of the available skills to exploit the digital tools that we have at our disposal. South African companies—particularly those in the ICT industry—report a lack of skills in their sectors and this includes the advertising, media and online publishing sub-sectors.

Between our high unemployment rate and our digital skills gap lies the opportunity to improve our industry and to contribute to decreasing our rate of unemployment.

This Digital Skills Gap survey was initiated by the Interactive Advertising Bureau South Africa's (IAB SA) Education Council to better understand what issues the broader advertising and communication industry is facing with recruiting and integrating digital skills into their organisations.

It is our objective and hope that the learnings will be a first step in providing data and insights to inform and encourage closer dialogue between education institutions and industry to accelerate our collective efforts to upskill employees and our youth.

Paula Hulley, IAB SA CEO weighs in: "The IAB SA Digital Skills Gap report, in partnership with The Red & Yellow Creative School of Business, is a critical toolkit enabling both an understanding of the digital marketing skills landscape and an opportunity to nurture continuous learning opportunities at a time where it could not matter more. Digitisation has never happened faster than it is happening right now. This opportunity to equip our industry with critical insights on digital marketing skills gives the full digital marketing ecosystem a tangible opportunity to bridge the gap – and beyond".

With this survey, our focus was on identifying the skills gap (soft & hard), diversity issues, and the future of jobs in the advertising, media and online publishing sub-sectors.

While a lot more research, engagement, and work will need to be done to solve our massive unemployment problem and to realise the exponential opportunities of a highly digitised world, the insights of this survey are a contribution to the multiple efforts required.

Joey Khuvutlu
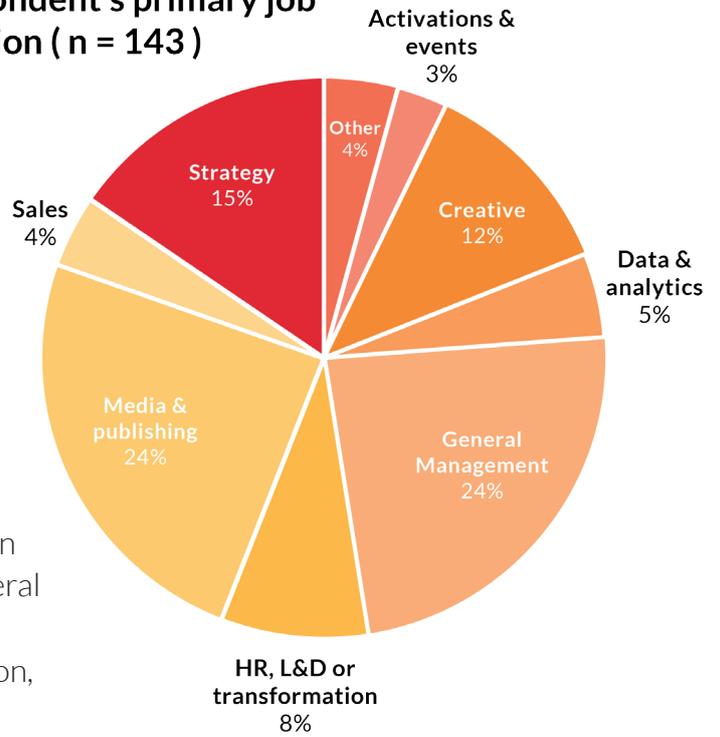IAB South Africa Education Chair
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THE **DEMOGRAPHICS** OF OUR SAMPLE

The study had a total of **143** valid responses.

A majority of the respondents' primary job function is in media and publishing **(25%)**, followed by general management **(24%)** and strategy **(15%)**. The **4%** represented as 'other' consisted of R&D, production, coding & development and accounting & finance.

Respondent's primary job function (n = 143)

- Activations & events 3%
- Other 4%
- Strategy 15%
- Sales 4%
- Creative 12%
- Data & analytics 5%
- Media & publishing 24%
- General Management 24%
- HR, L&D or transformation 8%

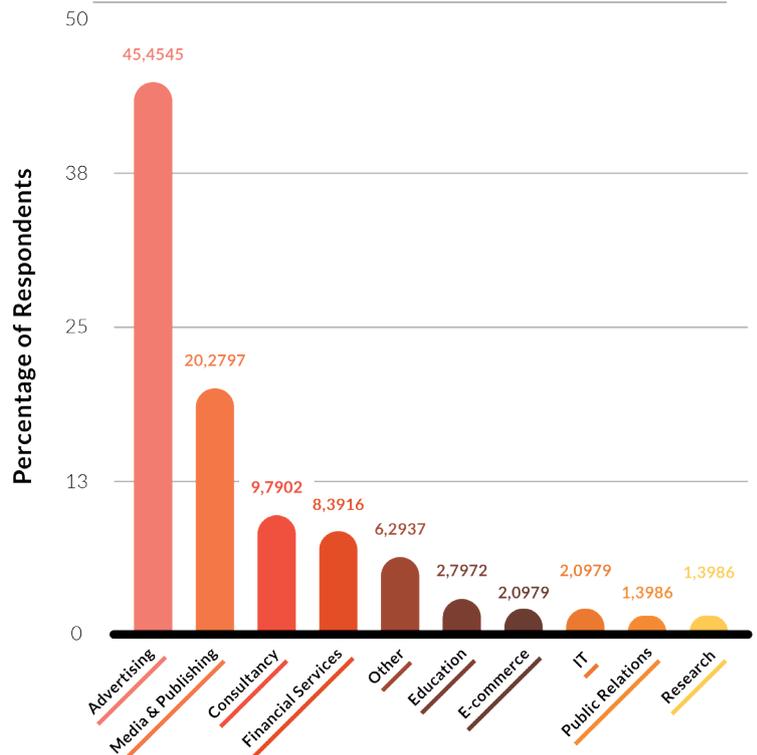| Level in organisational hierarchy	
Executive	28%
Management	26%
Senior	26%
Middle	13%
Junior	7%
	100%

80% of the sample are **highly experienced** in their fields, holding either a senior, management or executive position within their organisation.

13% of the sample hold **mid-level positions**, with a further 7% holding junior positions.

THE **ORGANISATIONS** OUR RESPONDENTS WORK FOR

A majority of respondents **(45.5%)** are employed in the **advertising industry**, followed by the media and publishing industry (20.3%), the consultancy industry (9.8%) and the financial services industry (8.4%).

9 respondents (6.3%) identified their employer industry as **'other'** with industries such as food, agriculture, retail and manufacturing identified.


Percentage of Respondents

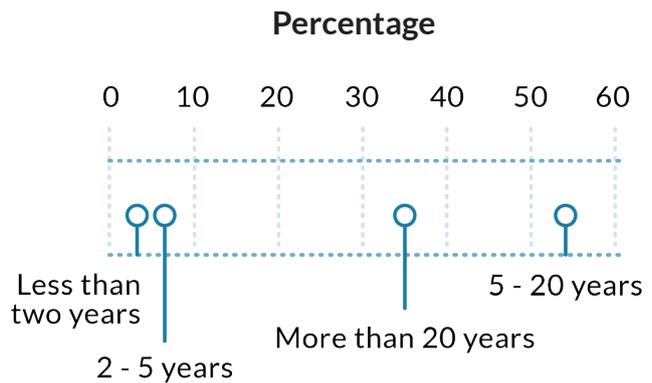|	
Advertising	45,4545
Media & Publishing	20,2797
Consultancy	9,7902
Financial Services	8,3916
Other	6,2937
Education	2,7972
E-commerce	2,0979
IT	2,0979
Public Relations	1,3986
Research	1,3986

Size of organisation (n = 143)

THE ORGANISATIONS OUR RESPONDENTS WORK FOR

31% of respondents work in medium-sized firms (51-250 employees), followed by 26% working in small firms (11-50 employees) and then an almost equal split of the remaining 43% of respondents working in either a micro firm (less than 10 employees), a large firm (251-500 employees) or an enterprise (above 1000 employees).

Enterprise 26%

Small 26%

Large 14%

Micro 14%

Medium 31%
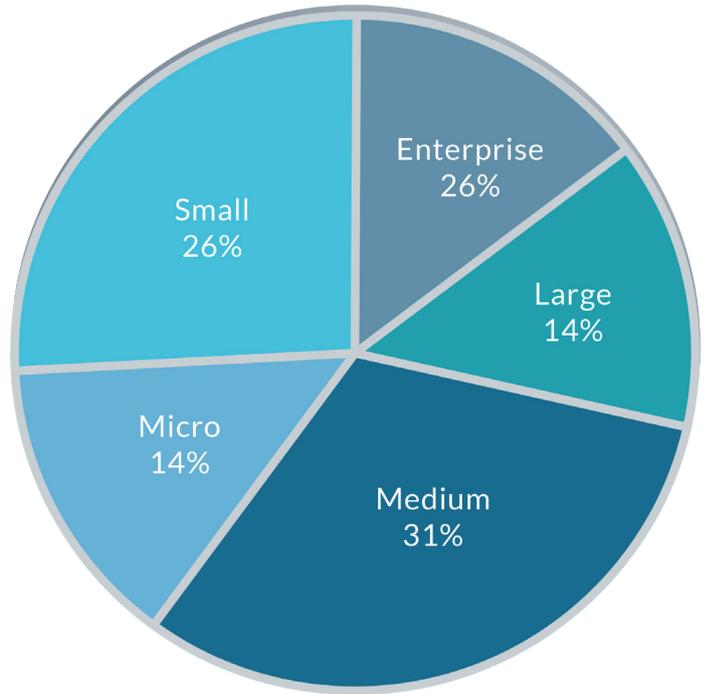
Respondents mostly work in established firms that have been operating for 5-20 years (54%) and a further 35% operating for more than 20 years. 11% of respondents collectively work in organisations that have been operating for less than 5 years.

Percentage

0   10   20   30   40   50   60

Less than two years

5 - 20 years

2 - 5 years

More than 20 years

TRAINING **NEW** EMPLOYEES

Years of Operation

Respondents were asked whether they found that new employees required training and a resounding 83% stated that they **have to** offer digital marketing and advertising training to new employees, regardless of their function within the firm or experience.

We then asked them to differentiate between the training that they offered between hard, technical skills and soft skills – so here's a reminder of what that means:

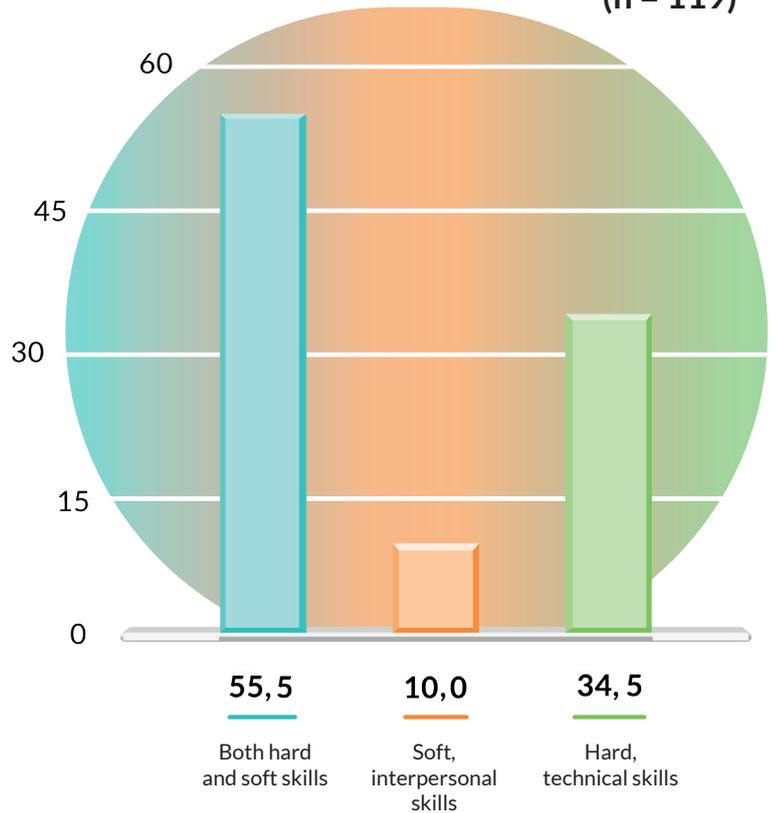| HARD SKILLS	VS	SOFT SKILLS
Hard, technical skills are the specific, teachable abilities that can be defined and measured (i.e. use of a particular software program)		Soft skills are often less tangible and harder to quantify, they refer to skills like teamwork, listening, communication and etiquette.

TRAINING **NEW** EMPLOYEES

**Training required
for new empoyees
(n = 119)**

Of the **119 respondents** that acknowledged the need for training new employees, most suggested that the training provided had to include both technical, hard skill and soft skill training.

34.5% of respondents stated that new employees only need technical, hard skill training. While only **10%** stated that new employees do not require training in hard skills, but rather only soft skill training.

| 60 |
| 45 |
| 30 |
| 15 |
| 0 |

| **55, 5** | **10,0** | **34, 5** |
| Both hard and soft skills | Soft, interpersonal skills | Hard, technical skills |

WHAT TYPES OF **DIGITAL MARKETING** AND **ADVERTISING TRAINING** DO YOU OFFER?

Hard skills:

Hootsuite™   + a b | e a u

Google   f   Sizmek™

1 Many different types of training were mentioned, some of the most common training related to **formal courses** through education providers and **certifications** offered by Google, Facebook & Twitter. Others included **on-the-job training** through mentorship programmes and work shadowing. Many conducted internal training on specific platforms used such as: Facebook and Business Manager, Twitter, Sizmek, Google AdWords, Hootsuite, Tableau and programmatic advertising platforms.

2 Many respondents highlighted the need for training relating to **social media content**, more specifically: Language structure, posting schedules, tracking & boosting content, uploading content to CMS, content development and building dashboards to guide strategy.

3 Further noted types of training related to **paid media advertising**, training in commonly used **industry jargon** and **best practices** in the industry.

WHAT TYPES OF **DIGITAL MARKETING** AND **ADVERTISING TRAINING** DO YOU OFFER?

Soft skills:

Soft skills relating to **communication** both within and outside of the organisation was noted as vitally important for training new employees. Several respondents indicated that new employees would receive training in basic **interpersonal skills** and learning how to **communicate between departments**. The importance of communication extended beyond the organisation to also incorporate **client service** skills.

1

Soft skills that would assist with one's day-to-day business function were also included in training, such as training individuals in how to **contribute towards efficient meetings** as well as understanding how to **articulate ideas** into effective presentations.

2

Further soft skills such as **emotional intelligence** and **empathy** were also noted as being included in new employee training.

3

HIRING **NEW** GRADUATES

Respondents indicated that they were open to hiring new graduates with no work experience, with **77%** stating that they would hire new graduates.

Of those unwilling to hire new graduates **(23%)**, the **primary reason** offered related to a lack of experience. In particular, relating to a **lack of customer service experience** and the requirement for new employees to "hit the ground running" with the added issues that "they take too much time to train and get up to speed".

THE **SKILLS GAP** IN **DIGITAL MARKETING** AND **ADVERTISING** IN SA
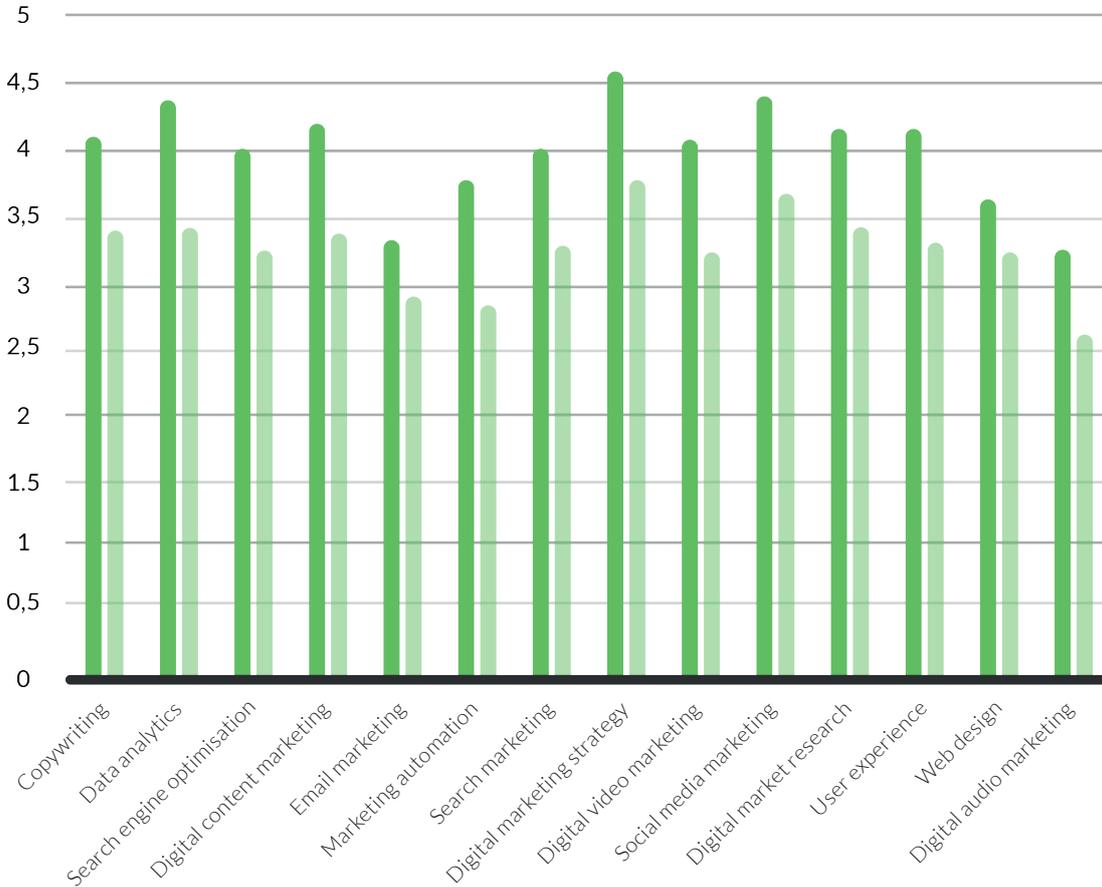
Respondents were given a finite list of attributes and were asked to identify (a) the importance of each digital marketing and advertising skill in their organisation and (b) their satisfaction with the current presence of each of those skills within their organisation. Essentially, the skills they need versus the skills they have.

Respondents rated the importance and satisfaction of each skill on a 5-point scale from 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree.

○ **Importance of the skill**

○ **Satisfaction of the presence of the skill**

Where are the biggest skill gaps?

1	Data analytics
2	Marketing automation
3	User experience
4	Digital video marketing
5	Digital content marketing

The results indicate stark differences between the digital marketing and advertising skills that organisations need and the skills that they have.

Statistically significant differences exist between the skills needed and the skills possessed for every identified skill – suggesting that organisations possess significantly lower levels of the each skill than required.

The biggest skills gap was noted for **data analytics skills**, followed by large skills gaps in **marketing automation**, **user experience**, **digital video marketing** and **digital content marketing** as indicated in the table alongside.

THE **SKILLS GAP** IN **DIGITAL MARKETING** AND **ADVERTISING** IN SA

The table alongside presents the importance of all 14 digital marketing and advertising skills assessed from most important, through to least important.

The most important digital marketing and advertising skill identified was **digital marketing strategy**, while the least important skill was **digital audio marketing**.

	Importance of each skill*
Digital Marketing Strategy	4,6
Social Media Marketing	4,4
Data Analytics	4,4
Digital Content Marketing	4,2
User Experience	4,1
Digital Market Research	4,1
Copywriting	4,1
Digital Video Marketing	4,1
Search Engine Optimisation	4,0
Search Marketing	4,0
Marketing Automation	3,8
Web Design	3,6
Email Marketing	3,3
Digital Audio Marketing	3,2

Note: respondents assessed each skill on a 1 - 5 scale, 5 indicates the most important & 1 indicates the least important

EMPLOYER'S TOP **PRIORITIES**

Respondents were asked to identify their organisation's top two priorities currently, with the results presented from least important to most important in the bar graph alongside.
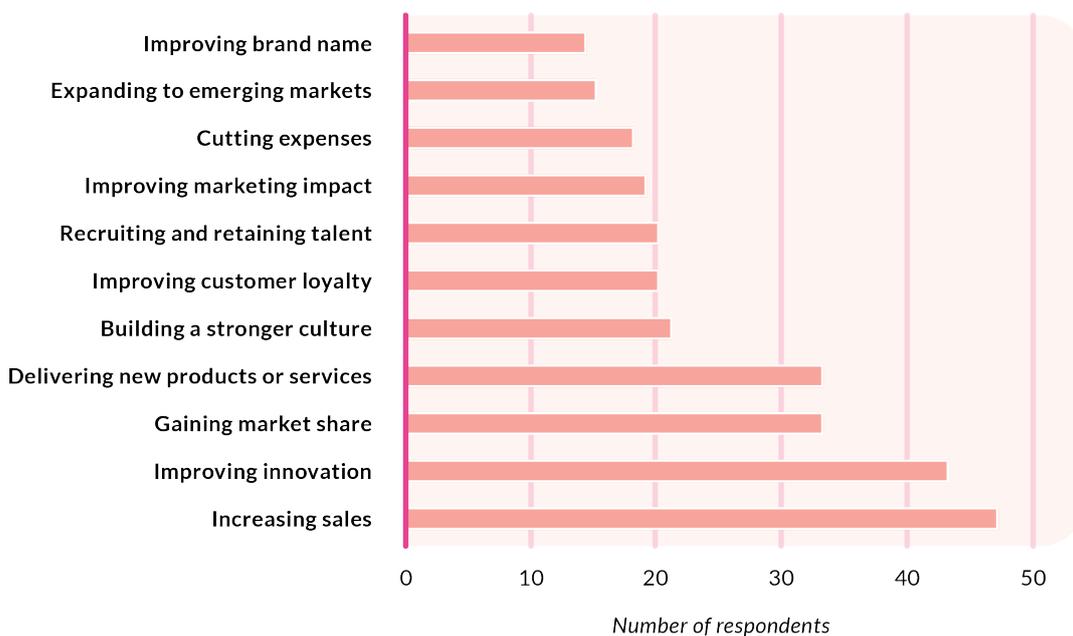
The top four priorities, in order of importance are: increasing sales, improving innovation, gaining market share and delivering new offerings.

Number of respondents

Improving brand name
Expanding to emerging markets
Cutting expenses
Improving marketing impact
Recruiting and retaining talent
Improving customer loyalty
Building a stronger culture
Delivering new products or services
Gaining market share
Improving innovation
Increasing sales

0 10 20 30 40 50

DIGITAL MARKETING & ADVERTISING SKILLS NEEDED IN THE NEXT 5+ YEARS

The respondents are clear that many of the skills needed in the future are strongly rooted in digital transformation and the use of data to drive business decisions.

Nearly a third of all respondents identified **big data** and **data analytics** as the top digital marketing and advertising skill for the future, followed by the importance of **automation/machine learning** and **AI** and then **content marketing** and **content development**.

Top future-focused skills

1. Big data and data analytics

2. Automation/Machine learning/Artificial intelligence

3. Content marketing and development

4. Strategy

5. New digital platforms and tools

6. Search Engine optimisation

THE **FUTURE WORLD** OF WORK

COVID-19 has allowed many organisations to discover the benefits of remote working and flexible work schedules. **85%** of respondents said that their organisation's were planning to continue to operate remotely in the future.

Respondents identified key skills that are needed to succeed in a future, remote working world:

ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR
Being able to effectively self-manage, not only your time and deliverables but to also be self-motivated was identified as the number 1 skill for a remote working world.	Interpersonal skills: The ability to communicate effectively with a remote team, developing trust and accountability was noted as the second most important skill for a remote world.	Given that knowledge sharing is affected by remote working, new employees need to ensure that they are motivated to upskill and actively engage to learn from the team.	Organisations will be actively seeking out digitally savvy individuals that can exhibit their adaptability in the working world to staff their remote teams.

WHAT DOES THIS **ALL MEAN**?

1 There are a number of digital marketing and advertising **skills gaps** that exist in South African organisations. The biggest skill gap lies in **data analytics**, which has been highlighted as a key skill that will be further demanded in coming years.

2 All of the top future skills identified relate to a future digital world that would require employees to be fully immersed in **digital tools** and **upskilled** to support a digital future.

3 The future world of work requires individuals to **self-manage** and develop strong **interpersonal, soft skills** in order to succeed in a remote team.

4 Organisations are having to train their new employees not only in **hard, technical skills**, but also in **soft, interpersonal skills** given the important role of both hard and soft skills in business success.
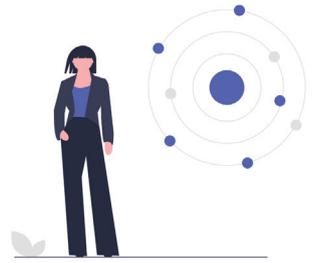
5 It appears that driving **new sales through innovative solutions** are currently top priorities for South African organisations in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS COMPILED BY:

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Caitlin is a senior lecturer at the Red & Yellow Creative School of Business, Cape Town, an adjunct lecturer at the University of Cape Town and has taught marketing across several institutions in South Africa, fueled by the passion to drive change in this country's education. She holds a BBusSci in Marketing, BCom Hons in Finance and a MBusSci in Marketing, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Industrial Marketing at the Luleå University of Technology, Sweden. Her research interests include hybrid entrepreneurship, sustainable and resource-constrained consumption as well as the dynamic use of social media for good.

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If you want to keep your teams on top of their game and ensure they are skilled with what is neccessary for future success - let's have a conversation.

We can help!

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