

# How to future-proof Africa

By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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As humans we possess the unique ability to think about a problem and invent a solution. However, often the solution requires a changing behaviour, which leads to other inventions. The result is a wheel that is spinning faster and faster, and one that is creating anxiety - more recently about jobs.



This is a worldwide issue and was part of the conversation at the SingularityU press conference held in Rosebank in anticipation of the [Summit](#) taking place on 15 - 16 October 2018 in South Africa. The conference was part Virtual Reality (VR), with various Singularity University representatives from across the globe joining the conference in the VR space.

It is easier to quote jobs that are going to be extinct than imagine new jobs that will be created, said Oren Berkovich, director, SingularityU Canada. “Instead of focusing on jobs lost, the focus should be on how people, corporations and governments imagine these new jobs will look like and what the skills future jobs will require. We need to think about them today.”

Artificial Intelligence (AI) will replace tasks, but in doing so it will empower us to do so much more than previously, said Rob Nail, Singularity University CEO. “In the long term the concept of a job will shift radically with a bigger shift to enhancing our capabilities with a focus on creativity, innovation and understanding customer desires. This is the human side of things, and will led to a new category of exploration that will enable us to delve deeper into topics we have had difficulty in understanding in the past.”

“There is a real difference between thinking about work in the future and doing work in the future. We have to think about innovation as we move through this digital era, as it impacts us financially socially and economically,” said Valter Adao, Deloitte head of innovation.



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There is a need to contextualise the future of work construct in Emerging Economies which face different problems to Developed Economies, Adao added. “In South Africa, 50% of the youth are unemployed so we have to look at this differently. At the same time, if we do not embrace this change, we will be less competition against developed and other developing markets. That is a huge risk, but we have no choice but to progress.”

He believes that we will create the jobs. “The signs are there. We can find jobs that can be fulfilled by unskilled individuals, for example, collaborative consumption, such as individuals who assemble IKEA for you. We can also leverage digital platforms to bring people previously excluded into the economy and to stimulate industries that have become dormant or have stalled.”

Simon Carpenter, SAP chief technology officer, said that for us to operate and be optimal in this new world, we need the right skills in place, “Coupled with government policy that supports the right sort of investments and builds technical capacity. China has achieved this, and we need to follow this direction.”



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To transform Africa, we need to do more with digital technologies, Carpenter said. “Imagine if we could do over 50 years what China has achieved. That is exactly what we need to do and to achieve this we need to work with young African entrepreneurs, techies and academics to figure out how to up our game. We can no longer do what we have always done.”

Mic Mann, director of SingularityU South Africa and Mann Made, added that the SingularityU vision is to future-proof the continent, using technology to leapfrog it into the future. “As Africans we need to lead the way during this wave of technological innovation and not follow the tail of disruption.”

Standard Bank’s Belinda Carreria, executive head of Interactive Marketing said that future-proofing Africa will require a core shift. “It requires us to be aware of the effect of technology.”

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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