

Deutsche Welle
“Learning By Ear”
Jobs & Training 03: IT Engineer

Part 1:**Text: Richard Lough, Kenya****Editors: Ulrich Neumann, Maja Dreyer****Part 2:****Interview: Subry Govender****Editor: Katrin Ogunsade**

1 Narrator**1 Voice-over: Benson (23-years-old)**

Intro

Hello and welcome to Learning by Ear. You are listening to our special series on jobs and training where we introduce you to people from different careers and suggest ways in which you might take up the profession. Today we are dealing with the Internet. 15 years ago it barely existed – today it is the gateway to our global community. But many people still do not have any access to it. Either there’s no proper infrastructure or it’s just too expensive. The people working in Information and Communications Technology – or ICT – are trying to change all that. One of them is Benson from Kenya...

1. SFX_typing

2. O-Ton: Benson

My name is Benson Maina and I am the product development manager at Africa Online.

Africa Online was the first company to connect Maina’s country Kenya to the Internet. That was back in the mid 1990’s, just as the Internet was exploding around the world. 23-year-old Benson Maina has been with the company for 1 and a half years. He’s also still a part-time university student in Nairobi. His job is to come up with new products. In other words: new ways of convincing Kenyans to use the Internet. To do that, he says, you’ve got to “de-mystify” the Internet...

3. O-Ton: Benson

People need to see the practical applicability in their lives and also in terms of bridging the economic divide. It’s usually the preserve of the rich. I believe the challenge lies in getting it out to the masses, not exactly in the rural situation but even in terms of the urban setting, just to get people to appreciate the use or need for Internet on a daily basis.

That’s easier said than done in a country where the average person earns about thirteen hundred dollars a year – that’s about the cost of a mid-range laptop.

In Kenya’s rural areas many live a subsistence lifestyle and earn less than one dollar a day. And even if they could afford a computer, they might not have the electricity to run it. The digital divide in Kenya is immense. It’s no easy job to narrow the gap...

4. O-Ton: Benson

We have many challenges being a third world country with a large part of the population living below 1\$ a day per person. So you’re looking at

a pretty big divide. And even those that have, do not want to spend their disposable income on the Internet.

5. SFX_Server_Room

6. O-Ton: Benson

This is Africa Online’s service room. This is where we store a large number of our servers, the authentication servers, the mail servers, all the other aspects that deal with Internet connectivity here in Kenya.

Ironically it is more expensive to connect to the Internet in many developing countries than it is in Europe or America because the infrastructure isn’t there yet. What’s more, the connection tends to be slow and unreliable. So, how do you convince people to part with their cash and surf the World Wide Web? Benson reckons the answer lies in showing people how the Internet can benefit them...

7. O-Ton: Benson

My task is to just to try and show the value addition that the Internet could have to everyone’s life. If you are a student in terms of education, if you’re a businessman in increasing your opportunities - just basic globalisation that’s brought about by the Internet.

Benson says ICT is a fast moving industry. A little over ten years ago it was impossible to connect to the Internet in Kenya. Now, those who can afford it expect to be able to go online using their mobile phones as they move from place to place. In his job Benson says he has to be innovative to ensure Africa Online keeps creating new business. Otherwise the company will lose out to the growing number of

competitors in the market. But he loves the fact that ICT is an industry that is booming and never sits still...

8. O-Ton: Benson

The first thing that I enjoy is that it is dynamic, it is constantly changing and you can't predict the future - you constantly need to be on your toes, you need to read. That's the thing about ICT, it's not boring, each day is a new challenge, you wake up not knowing what will come up. And if you're not abreast with what is going on you can easily be redundant.

According to Benson ICT is a great industry for young people to get into: Why? Because the older generations, he says, just don't get technology so easily. Computers and the Internet are more often than not alien concepts to - as he puts it - the old guard. But for today's youngsters who've grown up with the technology, ICT makes more sense ...

9. O-Ton: Benson

It's actually easier for the young but it depends on the old guard. If the older people took up the time to read they would secure their jobs but the younger ones are coming up much, much faster than the older ones in ICT!

After a full day's work at Africa Online, Benson takes evening classes in Business Information Technology. So how do you get into ICT? First and foremost, he says you've got to finish school...

10. O-Ton: Benson

You need to be going to school, you need to pay a lot of attention, passing your papers...No one is going to give you a job if you don't

have the qualifications required. If you are looking at your high school situation: your mathematics, your sciences, those should be pretty good. If you are looking at university: business degrees, degrees in economics, social sciences not forgetting your computer science.

Benson is sure: Kenya and Africa's economic future lie in ICT. One reason for it being that the sector does not need big investments to be put in.

11. O-Ton: Benson

In terms of industrialisation Africa is pretty much behind. But when you talk about information and the digital age - that is a game we can catch up really quickly. Things like outsourcing and business process, companies looking for English speaking nations to set up call centres; those are the kind of solutions that will propel Africa. Africa is also looking at introducing a fibre link that will connect the East African coast with the Middle East and Europe and hopefully increase speeds.

Just the thought of it gets him excited.

12. O-Ton: Benson

It paints a brighter tomorrow. You can only imagine what the Internet will bring with it as soon as it gets that fast and we can get a completely electronic world, or electronic country, yeah.

Then, Benson promises, ICT will be really interesting and will affect a lot more people in their daily lives.

Outro

Benson from Kenya believes that Africa’s future lies in Information and Communications Technology or ICT. As he just told us while still studying at university, he also works for the Internet company, Africa Online,. And it sounds like his work is quite motivating and dynamic! If you want to learn more about training and job prospects – stay tuned and listen to our service part.

JINGLE “Ways into the job”

Philip Kruger works as a developer for “Turntribes”, a Mobil Solutions Company in Durban, South Africa. He explained to our reporter Subry Govender how to gain ground in the promising field of ICT – of Information and Communications Technology.

Interview Subry Govender

Outro:

Our correspondent Subry Govender talked to Philip Kruger, the developer of Turntribes Mobil Solutions Company in Durban, South Africa.

And that’s all for today’s Learning by Ear programme about job-profiles.

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Thank you for being with us. Good bye and good luck!