

Meet Veliswa Boya, one of SA's first black female cloud engineers



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Women are increasingly taking up their place in the working environment, and although it's no secret that when it comes to STEM industries there's still a significant gender imbalance, with more women considering a career in technology. Veliswa Boya is an example of pursuing not only technology, but also engineering, and has recently become one of South Africa's first black female cloud engineers.



Veliswa Boya, cloud engineer at Standard Bank South Africa

We chat with Veliswa Boya to find out how cloud computing works, how it benefits business and she shares some advice for females aspiring to hold a career in STEM...

■ ***Cloud computing is currently a hot topic. For those who don't know, what is cloud computing? How does it work and why is it skyrocketing so progressively?***

Put in very simple terms, if you have a smartphone, chances are you are already using the cloud in your personal capacity where you are storing your photos or documents in the cloud (whether iCloud or Google Cloud) instead of locally on your device.

If you use Netflix or use Airbnb from time to time, you are consuming products of a business that is using the cloud. Cloud is the consumption of remote resources or services, via the internet, provided to you by a third-party service provider (e.g. Google, Amazon, Microsoft, etc.). This saves you the time that it would take for you as a business to build these services yourself.

The consumption of cloud services is offered on a pay-as-you-go basis, which saves you upfront costs that you would normally incur when buying your own equipment to host these services inside your premises. These services are rather hosted in the cloud.

■ ***How did you become interested in cloud-based technology?***

I have always loved all things technology. When I first came to know about the cloud, I was really excited by how it is so central to innovation. This ultimately influences how businesses are able to offer faster time-to-market for products, better customer service, and better products to their customers.

■ ***Could you tell us about your journey to becoming a cloud engineer?***

With just under 20 years in IT, I have had more role changes than I can count. This was always driven by me constantly seeking to avoid getting into a space where I felt too comfortable; where I am not being challenged anymore.

When cloud started being adopted by more and more businesses in South Africa - as I was going into yet another role change – I found it very interesting.

“ *I was curious to learn more and get involved in this “newshiny thing”.* ”

It made sense to me as it seemed to be very central to the digital transformation that most businesses are seeking. At the time, my exposure was to the Amazon Web Services (AWS) Cloud. I loved the range of services that they provided, I also enjoyed the sophistication of these services.

I started learning by reading up on the offering, watching lots of webinars and building things using the services available. After a while, I then decided to validate what I felt I knew by studying towards the certifications on offer.

I wrote my first Associate level (Solution Architect) and passed. Recently, I followed it up with another Associate level Developer certification. I am hoping to write the last Associate level (Sysops Admin soon).

There is still so much scope for opportunities in business for cloud, as it is still at early adoption in South Africa.

Standard Bank partnered with AWS earlier this year, and an amazing opportunity to join the cloud team as one of the cloud engineers became available to me. I now help teams with cloud strategies, cloud migration planning and design of cloud

architecture at Standard Bank.

■ What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?

I am not sure whether to consider this as a challenge or an opportunity, but the world of technology changes constantly. I made up my mind early on that there is no other way to stay afloat, so to speak, outside of being prepared to always be learning; to keep up with the changes in technology and to make sure that your skillsets are always relevant.

■ How will the cloud transform the way we do business in the future?

Businesses will be able to better innovate to benefit their customers. They will be able to go global in minutes and scale their businesses as their customer base grows. Businesses will also be able to build more resilient applications, resulting in better stability of their systems and therefore, better customer services.

This is all made possible by the elasticity of the cloud.

■ What impact will this have on South African businesses?

We are all in a global economy now. We are no longer trading from our little corner away from the rest of the world. This means that our competitors – and also our customers – are global. Cloud provides businesses with the ability to service customers, no matter which corner of the world their customers are in.

■ What advice do you have for females aspiring to hold a career in STEM?

Women tend to stay away (sometimes walk away) from STEM for numerous reasons. However, we need more diversity in STEM in South Africa. STEM underpins the careers of the future. We also need a diverse group of people designing the products of the future because the customer is diverse. We need more women and other people from currently underrepresented groups in this discipline.

■ What are some of the key trends we can look forward to, in terms of cloud computing in SA?

One of the biggest and most impactful trends to highlight is one that is currently making an impact in the form of smart devices that are being adopted into people's homes, and at quite a fast pace.

IoT (Internet of Things), which is defined as connected devices/sensors that exchange data, underpins these smart devices. The devices/sensors collect data from the environment, send it to the cloud, the data gets processed in the cloud and output is then consumed by a user usually via a mobile app, text or email. Cloud Computing enables IoT.

There are many interesting use cases of IoT, such as where IoT is used to enable rhino anti-poaching.

I think we will see more interesting use cases for IoT in South Africa and the world.

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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