

Fintech: opportunity for SA youth and Africa's growth

Africa's youth need to move from being technologists to techpreneurs, fintechonologist to fintechpreneurs, thereby releasing the true value of Africa's communities, businesses and people. This was the message from Khonology to more than 3,000 youths who attended the Standard Bank Youth Expo recently.



@goodluz via [123RF](#)

The Expo is a platform that brings together South African Youth to be exposed to brands and organisations that wish to engage them on both intellectual basis as well as create awareness for their products and services.

Bridging the gap

"The lack of financial knowledge is one of the hindrances of bridging the gap between corporates, markets and the education sector. This is an issue that can be solved by introducing technology and finance across all subjects or modules, making sure that we understand how these factors integrate and impact the value chain in the economy," says Khonology marketing manager Africa Nkosi.

Nkosi shared his past fintech experience and explained how he witnessed its potential to unlock value for Africa. "We live in a digital global economy where competition has become knowledge-based. In modern theories of growth and development, technological innovation has taken the centre stage."

He says there is growing interest in the relationship between technology, finance and how it can promote growth and development in Africa. "In order for Africa to be developed, we Africans need to step up and form a new economy, an economy that shapes our education, our industries and output as an economy. This new Africa we speak of can be created in various ways," he adds.

"Exposure to fresh minds, upping the volume for young people who have innovative ideas and solutions to complex African problems. The collaboration between communities, academia, business and Government can drive young minds to innovate in a way that influences all key economic drivers in a measurable and sustainable way."

Fintech fertile ground

The fintech sector is one that is booming right now with a lot of innovative technological ideas and one that is playing a major role in the evolution of technology and the world as a whole. A few trends that are riding the fintech waves include the rise of big data, blockchain technology, increased automation, security management and regulation, artificial intelligence, payments, rise of alternative products and the sharing of information.

Companies such as 22Seven, Snap Scan, Ikhokha are taking full advantage of this booming sector which seems to have a lot of opportunities for young people. There are quite a number of youth who are developing innovative solutions and selling the ideas to major corporations, the opportunities are there for youth to collaborate and continue developing solutions that address African issues.

"We need to keep driving this innovation and look to disrupt and do things efficiently and effectively. Africa is a fertile ground for new fintech services which are leveraging the power of communities and social media to make financial services more relevant. The largest market in Africa is unserved, an estimated 330 million adult Africans lack access to formal financial services," Nkosi explains.

Addressing the skills shortage in the country, especially a combination of technical skills and finance, he says entrants to fintech need to have a unique selling point to challenge global competition in the technology and finance space. "Social intelligence skills play a major role to becoming an active citizen that offers value across the global economy. The thinking, communication, etiquette and most importantly approach to solving the problem is what's most important. How one tackles complex problems is key to finding relevant and impactful solutions in financial technology," he stresses.

"For instance, engineers have excelled with solving problems in the technology and finance space, this dynamism has proved that it is not about the background linked with the career but the thinking and approach that unlocks your potential in financial technology."

Key drivers

Nkosi says financial literacy, technology and economics should not be elective subjects, but rather compulsory from primary to varsity level. "They are key drivers to ensuring that the future knows the fundamentals of being market makers and players. Banking, telecommunications, insurance and manufacturing as a few industries that are changing through fintech."

"We must start training technologists who gain unique fintech skills and who can change their environment. This way we drive employment and education forward for Africans by Africans," he adds.

"The lack of financial knowledge is one of the hindrances of bridging the gap between corporates, markets and the education sector. Let's change the narrative, action the talk and release Africa's potential," he concludes.

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