

How businesses can play their part in growing the tech ecosystem

 By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

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Emeka Afigbo, strategic products partnerships manager at Facebook, says he is often reminded just how much the technical ecosystem in Africa has grown and how the internet is drastically changing the continent.



Africa is now on the map. In the past, if someone showed a world map in a conference presentation, pinning certain countries where tech innovation is happening and growing, Africa would always be empty. Now, however, with the digital revolution we find ourselves in, things have changed and there are amazing developments coming out of Africa.



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Afigbo, who spoke on day three of this year's [AfricaCom](#) at the AHUB stage, believes that in addition to focussing on making a profit and improving customer satisfaction, companies also have an obligation to build the larger technology ecosystem and community and to help empower digital architects.

Obligations

1. Innovate

Innovation is such a buzzword so this seems obvious, says Afigbo. What he specifically refers to, however, is to constantly seek out and discover the next frontier.

"Imagine for a moment you are a desktop app developer in the early days. Would you have been prepared for the coming of the mobile revolution? Are you prepared for what is coming next? Are you actively trying to find out what's coming next?"

It might not seem critical for your business right now, but if you want to stay relevant and *survive* as a business in future, you have to do it. You absolutely have to seek out the future possibilities and opportunities and innovate accordingly.

2. Empower

No matter the size of your business, whether it's 50 or 500 people, you have a value chain.

There are people and other businesses that help you along the way to add value to your customers. Empowerment doesn't necessarily mean money, but can also be knowledge sharing.

Why should you bother if it doesn't seem critical to help you reach your financial targets next month? "Because it's the right thing to do," he says.

He says it actually also makes business sense because having a vibrant ecosystem of partners is one of the best buffers as a business against the unknowns in the future.



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One community that is a key part of Facebook's value chain is the developer community and tech communities and it continues to invest in these communities. For example, the Facebook Developer Circles allows for developers to come together, collaborate, share knowledge and learn from each other.

3. Advocate

Every business has some key issues that they care about and are passionate about.

"I believe you have an obligation to actively advocate for those things in your ecosystem or community," says Afigbo.

Why? Well, firstly, because if you care about it, it's worth advocating for. Secondly, advocacy is the best way to lend your voice to help shape the community around you.

If you don't make your voice heard when certain things are being discussed, you'll be left out of the conversation.

"Facebook cares deeply about a number of issues," says Afigbo.

One such example is diversity in the tech landscape. It is an advocate for the issue around women in tech and it aligns its projects to address this issue.

"Bring the world closer together"

Facebook's new slogan, "Bring the world closer together", clearly illustrates that community and vibrant ecosystems are central to its mission. It's inspiring to see it penetrating the African continent as well.

Afigbo encourages businesses to think about what their role is in their respective communities and ecosystems.

“ *In order to empower the digital architects of the future, we have to take hands and join skills, knowledge and resources. We all have a responsibility to ask ourselves what we can contribute.* ”

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ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work here and here. Contact Ilse through her website here.

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