

Unlocking African abundance through digital technologies

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As the digital revolution remakes global businesses - creating new revenue streams, ways to deploy and monetise data, reach consumers and leverage business ecosystem players - Africa stands at an inflexion point.



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As new ideas, digital technologies and business models penetrate the marketplace, the ability to disrupt is becoming more and more of a necessity; competitive pressures are stiffening and traditional businesses are struggling to keep pace. Yet, corporates now have a tangible opportunity to harness the possibilities that spring from that disruption.

On one hand, the digital revolution opens doors – opportunities that, in aggregate, have the potential to create meaningful numbers of employment opportunities in Africa and promote GDP growth. Add to this the fact that many developed countries are now looking to strengthen trade relations with Africa and invest more in the continent.

On the reverse, the mere adoption of digital technologies has proven to be no sure-fire path to growth – a lesson that many countries deploying new technologies without a clear strategic intent have had to grapple with.

It is against this backdrop that Accenture Africa has launched its new 2019 brand campaign to unlock African abundance for all. The core is meaningful digital adoption – enabling African organisations to harness digital technologies intelligently to improve their bottomlines as much as contributing to the economy and creating employment opportunities on the continent. The core is taking the new and applying it for impact – in every industry, every country and every day.

Hand in hand, we can create a thriving, abundant Africa. Yes, digital has the power to enable a brighter future. But the story here is about far more than digital alone. It's about people understanding and unleashing the power of digital technologies in their day-to-day lives.

Foundations of change

The new business imperative means that companies – not only in Africa, but throughout the world – need to adapt to the digital landscape, aligning their operations and offerings with the new capabilities of a tech-centric ecosystem, as well as establishing new revenue streams. With outcomes-based transformation as a key driver – by viewing change as creative, not destructive, it becomes possible to unlock the value trapped in existing business siloes and processes. As companies move toward a more connected, digital future, they will need to break down barriers and adopt new ways of working.

The promise of digital extends far beyond the corporate world. When harnessed as part of social impact services, digital is now at a stage of development where it can be used in the fight to help solve some of the biggest challenges in Africa, among them healthcare, housing, and basic amenities.

Smart metering, IoT technology, 5G capabilities, improved data management at the provincial and national level: all promise to help shift how Africa and the world approach the challenge of connecting and empowering people. Insights platforms for government form one of the pinnacles – by combining mass data storage, management, analytics and visualisation capabilities, it's now possible for governments everywhere to not only improve their abilities to store comprehensive datasets, but to use that data far more intelligently than ever, meaning improved outcomes for all.

Here, the burgeoning platform economy plays an allied role, helping to link together the corporate, non-profit or public-sector players needed to bring about the necessary change.

Organisations leveraging platforms with third-parties for their rewards programme for example, have perfected this craft. Open platform banking and wealth management platforms are also attracting media attention.

New business ecosystems

New business ecosystems are cropping up elsewhere too – and all are underpinned by platforms' connective power. By linking industry players in new ways, information flows differently, with the result that power dynamics shift. In the platform economy, disrupt or be disrupted is an ever-present theme, and ecosystems will continue to remake industries at an increasing pace.

Intelligent operations and cloud technologies are also playing ever more key roles, helping to pave the way for a brighter, more connected, more intelligent future. With artificial intelligence leading the charge in both the automation of routine processes and the generation of data-based insights, human abilities are set to be vastly enhanced by those of machines.

At the same time, uniquely human skillsets such as empathy and relationship-building will become ever-more important counterpoints. At the core of the change lies a simple idea: the ability to react to and harness market and consumer shifts more rapidly by creating new offerings, new sources of revenue, and most importantly by working together to unlock Africa abundance for all.

In conclusion, organisations on the continent need to work together and build – through digital technologies – resilient and profitable businesses, thereby creating jobs and contributing positively to economies.

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