

# Contemporary ICT insights for South African companies

By Rob Lith

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Thanks to the fourth industrial revolution, businesses today have more tools than ever at their disposal. From the power of the cloud, giving flexibility and scalability to organisations both big and small; to IoT, effortlessly merging the digital world with our everyday lives, it's safe to say that technology has opened doors to efficiencies, advantages, and new ways of thinking that were once considered science fiction, or even wholly unimaginable.



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The internet has, of course, played a large role in making such innovation possible.

In fact, it continues to drive disruption after disruption, forcing businesses to constantly evolve to meet a new generation of consumer demands.

Organisations that don't adapt are bound to disappear. Those that take tomorrow into consideration, however, continue to grow and thrive.

***“But what exactly is on the horizon? What should a modern business work towards, or be mindful of, if it is to take on the future successfully?”***

## Current forecast-centred insights

Here are a few current forecast-centred insights from within the ICT (information and communications technology) industry to consider.

### Chatbots are only multiplying

Any business that doesn't consider chatbots important is going to find itself at a serious disadvantage in future. Though this particular trend is still in somewhat of its infancy today, it is set to explode over the next few years.

In fact, it's predicted that by 2020, there will be 1.8 billion chatbots!



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With the primary focus for many organisations currently centred on customer experience, incorporating this technology into the service side of a business is a natural move. With it, a company can assist more clients faster, and help them resolve any issues or questions they have in a much more efficient manner.

## GUI is shifting to VUI

Have you ever noticed the microphone icon to the right of Google's search bar? That's VUI or voice-user interface - another growing trend that makes human interaction with computers possible through a voice/speech platform.

Think of Alexa and Siri, for example, and how they've both become must-haves in the daily lives of so many people. That may not be the case currently in South Africa, but it will be in the near future.

This isn't to say that businesses today should ditch their GUI efforts entirely in preparation for the shift. Rather, they should supplement the visual with voice. This again ties into the overall customer experience. What if a client doesn't want to look around on a website for a product or service, for instance, but would prefer to ask the question and be taken there automatically?

## Low quality to high definition

The above points lead perfectly into this next insight: 40% of CEOs and CIOs say that what's most important to them currently are platforms that allow both high-definition audio and video. The reason for the desired quality improvement is straightforward – it makes the experience that much better for the user and improves their overall journey.



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Having a platform that is capable of delivering high-definition audio and video essentially opens the door to impactful omnichannel executions. For clients, it means they have more ways to interact with an organisation. For the organisation itself, technologically advanced, boundary-pushing platforms provide more avenues to spark interest and inspire interaction from consumers.

## Collaboration is key

One thing every business should be mindful of – arguably the most important consideration, actually – is that customer value perceptions don't stem from the company itself, but rather from the overall ecosystem it operates in. This means that although your own organisation may be at the top of its game when it comes to its own services, there's always room for improvement in terms of customer experience, like adding complementary solutions to your offerings.

***“ However, we can't all be experts in everything. Collaboration, therefore, is something every organisation should seriously consider. ”***

Innovation happens organically when resources are shared to solve a problem or meet a new need, and this is where an ICT-driven solution comes in handy. It unifies communications and multi-layered business processes, driving innovation and collaboration for greater efficiency.



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With that in mind, perhaps it's time for organisations to consider doing more collaborative work, not only to help their clients but themselves too. Boosting the overall ecosystem of an industry will reap benefits for all those that exist in it, after all.

At the very least, every organisation should be working towards implementing the latest ICT technological trends – particularly those discussed above – even if it's just on a basic level.

That way, they'll have the springboard they need to dive into a more productive and efficient tomorrow, without the fear of ending up at a point where it's actually too late to catch up.

### ABOUT ROB LITH

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