

Ambition and partnership key to driving smart city adoption

By [Edwin Diender](#)

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Despite negative perceptions around the rise in the use of automation, artificial intelligence and other technologies, in conjunction with the innovative implementation of ICT, can not only improve the quality of life across a broad range of factors, but also improve workforce efficiency, and create new jobs in the process.



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Research shows a 90% correlation between ICT investment and progress in a country's ability to meet key goals as set out by the United Nations. These goals include good health and well-being, quality education, smart cities and communities, and climate action.

One such use of ICT is seen in smart city deployments around the world where sensors, networks, big data, and analytics are combined to improve the quality of government service delivery, enhance public safety and security, and create an environment that attracts investment.

In addition, ubiquitous mobile broadband connectivity and cloud services can help communities and cities expand access to education and healthcare for residents.

Safe, smart cities can drive job creation

The foundation for any city looking to become smart should be to first become a safe city. Using technology to provide security across public areas and transportation networks has shown to have several positive knock-on effects.

This can be observed in Nairobi and Mombasa, with areas covered by safe city initiatives are seeing a marked decrease in crime rates as a result of improved monitoring, cross-agency collaboration, and emergency response efficiency.

In a country where tourism plays a vital role in the economy, improvements in safety and security is playing a vital role in restoring confidence - not just for tourists, but also local residents who want to open small businesses.



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More people on the streets mean more opportunities for small businesses which, in turn, mean more opportunities for suppliers and logistics providers, as an example.

Investing for the future

Investing in safe and smart city implementations go beyond just technology, as ICT companies are well-positioned to work with city officials, regional representatives and national governments to ensure that a percentage of the workforce required for such programmes and initiatives are allocated to groups such as disadvantaged minorities or even to tertiary students needing practical experience.

In addition to providing these individuals with skills and training, and work for the period of the programme, such initiatives help companies unearth scarce talent, as these students are potentially the IT managers, system administrators, networking engineers, and CIOs of the future.

Partnership approach needed

A successful smart city is one that transcends political decision-making and closed proprietary technologies. It requires ambitious city management to drive the vision and ensure that smart cities are built on a solid foundation with a baseline, from which anyone - or any administration - can use and build upon.

In order to ensure sustainability, it is also vital that smart cities look to solve real-world challenges that cities and communities are facing, and are able to support and even drive socio-economic development.

Key challenges include legacy IT systems that confine information in silos across departments in the ministerial organisation. The new economy is about integration and aggregation, and city governments need to work with partners in

order to combine these disparate systems and gain a holistic view of smarter city and community operations.

Using open standards makes it easier to merge these various systems and move away from verticalized information silos into having a horizontal layer of unified technology that gives city administrators all the information they need in one place.



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There are so many aspects to safe, smart cities, and governments need to take an ecosystem approach. For long-term sustainability, there has to be a symbiotic relationship between all those involved, and not to just have a consortium of partners looking to put a platform in place.

While cities can use benchmarks provided by global institutions like UNESCO and the World Economic Forum to measure their progress or success of their smart city implementation, there is a requirement for constant and consistent improvement.

This is not a project with a fixed and predetermined beginning and an end; cities need to keep looking at ways in which they can move across and higher up the value chain.

It is a long-term effort, and it is important that they hold onto the principle of what they aim to achieve, for their communities and its residents.

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