

Leverage digital technologies to mitigate challenges, drive growth

For companies operating in Africa, there are significant opportunities in the digital disruption taking place across all industry sectors: long considered the next frontier when it comes to innovation, the continent is poised to benefit from this push towards digitalisation.



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“With the gap between technology and business all but disappearing, decision-makers are faced with a choice of either embracing a new, disruptive environment or become irrelevant to those companies that do. Unfortunately, many still perceive digitalisation to only be about technology. And yet, the collaborative environment it enables is an integral component of it,” says Sneha Shah, managing director for Africa at Thomson Reuters.

Digitalisation is, after all, as much about adopting a new technological outlook as it is about using an innovative environment to get people inside the organisation working together more fluently. So, instead of staring blindly at the likes of big data, cloud computing, and other IT jargon, an organisation should identify how this disruption can be used to drive business growth.

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For Saidah Nash-Carter, head of innovation at Thomson Reuters Africa, this is resulting in a far-reaching [digital] impact spanning industry verticals.

“In the past, technology change was something driven by IT departments and very rarely had significant business repercussions. Yet, with the boundary between business and technology becoming more fluid, technology has grown beyond just hardware and software support,” says Nash-Carter.

This new dynamic means the likes of data analysis, business intelligence, artificial intelligence, and machine-learning are increasingly vital tools for the digital business of today. Fundamentally, this also presents an organisation with opportunities to collaborate more effectively. The silo approach of the past must make way for a more integrated means of managing the business environment.

“By being able to break down the traditional boundaries of the past, an organisation can leverage digital technologies to mitigate challenges and drive growth. In many respects, Africa presents an ideal platform to do this. By being able to learn from more developed countries, organisations across the continent can adapt and implement more tailored approaches that best suit country-specific needs,” says Shah.

Africa: mobile-first

There are always opportunities in crises and decision-makers across Africa must identify how best to exploit those. If they are using digital transformation as the basis in this transition, then they will be able to refine not only internal processes and systems, but also the way they engage and operate with their stakeholders.

An example of this is how a lack of infrastructure across the continent has become a powerful enabler. It is no secret how Africa has embraced mobile technologies. In fact, the continent is used by many as an example of how to be mobile-first (in some cases even mobile-only).

This focus on mobile investment and expansion have resulted in the development of innovative technologies such as mobile payment systems, mobile healthcare and education solutions, and even mobile agricultural solutions.

“Instead of inhibiting growth, constraints and challenges are leading to the establishment of a perfect environment for Africa to be world-leading when it comes to mobile and digital solutions. This enables stakeholders across the continent to drive change for digitalisation using mobile as that enabling platform,” says Shah.

Disruption opportunity

Thomson Reuters will be discussing digitalisation and how to turn disruption into opportunity, how to do things differently to future-proof tomorrow and how to harness opportunities in 2018 at their upcoming [Thomson Reuters Africa Summit](#). The Summit is set to stimulate powerful discussions with a network of Africa’s best thinkers, visionaries and thought leaders on what the future of doing business in Africa will look like; and what succeeding in business in the future will require.

“By leveraging human passion, commitment, and skills, the digital journey becomes an enabling one for businesses in Africa to benefit from. How that journey takes place will be up to them, but digitalisation becomes an integral element of that,” concludes Nash-Carter.

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