

# The telco space is primed for digital reinvention

By [Stergios Saltas](#)

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While no industry is immune to digital transformation, telecommunications has long been viewed as a sector that would and will continue to, experience massive disruption.



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After the initial decades of dizzying growth and exponential profits, network operators and downstream providers must reinvent their core business to capture a larger slice of today's digital consumer lifestyle.

In the African context, the situation is especially fluid, with new players and technologies threatening the old order.

For both disruptive upstarts and established network operators, staying competitive in this environment means taking a digital-first approach.

Underlining the importance of this approach is a Gartner prediction that digital business will represent 36% of a business's overall revenue by 2020, with IDC predicting that by 2022, 80% of revenue growth will depend on digital offerings and operations.

As Mariam Abdullahi points out in ITNewsAfrica, African operators need to rethink their business models – moving from “simple communication services delivery to becoming digital service providers (DSPs) that power their customers' digital lifestyles”.



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### Starting with communications

A key part of this digital transformation involves getting digital communications right.

In fact, it's more important than ever. In a [report](#) published by EY on the challenges facing the telecommunications industry, one of the key findings was that: "digital business models, customer experience and cost control lead the 2020 strategic agenda".

Taking customer communications digital can go a long way to driving all three of those things. The benefits of leading with digital communications include the following:

- Digital processes enable hyper-personalisation of communications, meeting the consumers' need for customised engagements
- Relevance of both content (the message) and context (when it arrives) are achievable through digital processes
- Triggered messages and scheduled communications can be combined to create a customer life-cycle communication plan that drives loyalty
- Building the ability to communicate across digital channels enables a business to move from interaction to conversation

That's before even getting started on the operational cost savings, the reduction in errors, increased efficiency, and improved compliance that comes with digital transformation.

### Legacy players versus disruptive upstarts

Established networks have legacy systems to deal with which often work against achieving a good customer experience. If you started out sending your customer communications in paper format, for example, moving over to entirely digital formats is going to be challenging. Internally, changing to a digital-first culture means overcoming long-held mindsets. And while most customers might embrace digital transformation, there will still likely be some who are resistant to it.

In contrast, new entrants can start without that legacy, and adopt a digital-first approach – everything from the initial customer order to customer inquiries, billing and payments – is handled online.

That makes the task of ensuring that their customer communications well timed, engaging and relevant much simpler.

Additionally, it makes it simpler for them to be where their customers are. Research shows that more than [three-quarters](#) of customers prefer communicating with brands digitally, with [60% switching contact channels](#) depending on where they are and what they're doing.

No telco can hope to properly address those needs if they remain locked into legacy customer communication systems.

### Embarking on the digital transformation journey

While disruptive, digital-first startups do have the advantage in this regard, established players can still reap the benefits of digital customer communications.

Any telco that hopes to do so must start by mapping the customer journey. Understanding that journey will make it simpler to get quick wins in transforming communication to digital.



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Interactive, relevant, useful communications will enhance the general customer experience. Importantly, they will also demonstrate the benefits of digital transformation to the rest of the organisation.

And in a telco space that's not only more crowded but also has new disruptive players itching to blow it apart, that's vital.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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