

COMEXT

The Official Newsletter of the Digital Council Africa

August 2023 Edition

CELEBRATING Women's MONTH



Digital Council Africa taking
centre stage for women at
2023 Africa Tech Festival

Conversations with Women:
Insights, wisdom and
invaluable lessons shared



Digital
Council

Issue #014



WELCOME FROM JUANITA

Welcome to the August issue of Conext, the official Newsletter of the Digital Council Africa and its members.

This publication serves a dual purpose: keeping our members informed about the organisation's recent activities and, perhaps even more importantly, offering a space for our members to share their own endeavours. We wholeheartedly encourage engagement with this platform, inviting you to showcase your company and contribute to the vibrant exchange of insights, and we welcome individuals to send in thought leadership pieces.

Every year, in August, our country marks Women's Month. As part of this celebration and in honour of women, we have decided to dedicate our August issue to this theme. We are privileged to feature the insights and wisdom of some exceptional women in leadership and we are grateful for all the invaluable work done and lessons shared that resonate far beyond our industries, embodying the spirit of empowerment and progress that defines this special month. Please join me in celebrating the unique contribution of women in our sector.

On the policy front, the Draft Electronic Communications Amendment Bill (ECAB) was published on Friday, 23rd June by the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies. The draft bill aims to introduce some significant amendments to the Electronic Communications Act (ECA) and, if signed into law, would result in substantial changes to South Africa's communications industry. In this regard, the DCA has engaged extensively with its members and finalised a consolidated industry response on the ECAB which will be submitted by the deadline. If you would like to receive a copy of the document, please reach out to me by email.

Of course, most of you also know that the BRICS summit took place this month. I had the privilege of being invited as the Working Group lead for Connectivity representing South Africa. As part of our engagements, we welcomed colleagues from across BRICS countries to share experiences and engage in learnings and potential projects which will hopefully lead to accelerated deployment of broadband – the most basic foundation of any digital economy. I was invited to steer a panel discussion alongside esteemed colleagues from Brazil, China, India, and South Africa during the BRICS Business Council meetings which was held on the weekend of the 19th of August. The discourse encompassed pivotal subject outcomes such as ubiquitous connectivity and the identification of prospective future ventures. The wealth of knowledge exchanged, lessons imparted, and remarkable accomplishments shared left me profoundly inspired. Anticipation mounts as we set our focus on bolstering our economy, eager to witness the path ahead for South Africa.

As we continue to strive towards our goal of a South Africa where everyone is connected to all the extraordinary opportunities brought about by the digital economy, we believe it is imperative that we continue our efforts in bridging the digital divide and supporting and enabling the telecommunications sector in its deployment of infrastructure to reach and benefit as many people as possible.

This month we celebrate 2 years of partnership with Harambee! We are proud of what we have achieved together and will continue our commitment to our shared goal of bringing about meaningful change in South Africa. We believe that our sector can create meaningful employment for young people in our society.

By leveraging the joint capability as intermediary entities to partner with the government and the ICT sector we can unlock barriers and enable the implementation of catalytic projects. We invite all of you to join the fight against unemployment. We urge our members to get involved and register on SAYouth.mobi! Let's join hands and eradicate youth unemployment.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Together we are creating a truly transformed Africa, one in which all can participate equally.

Enjoy the read!

Juanita

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FROM THE OFFICE

What is Conext?

“CONEXT: a relationship in which a person or thing is linked or associated with someone or something else.”

In a world that is becoming increasingly digital, it is important to ensure that ongoing engagement takes place. The Digital Council Africa strives to remain in contact with its members, and to provide its members with ongoing communication about its activities. Conext is the answer to staying engaged. Member engagement is encouraged through participation in events and working groups and through the distribution of the Conext Newsletter.

The DCA strives to offer members opportunities to network and collaborate and discuss best practice frameworks that is in the best interest of all, solving complex issues through dialogue and policy recommendations and we encourage dialogue between government and private sector from a platform that is independent and product agnostic. Conext belongs to the members of the Digital Council Africa. We welcome and encourage submissions from our members in the form of conversations related to the development of the digital economy as well as thought leadership articles you have written or would like to share, advertorials, adverts and any information that may be of interest to the ICT sector as a whole.

Contributions can be sent to Nadene Reignier at nadene@digitalcouncil.africa

Social Media

Social media is a fast, effective way to reach our target audience and create awareness of not only the Digital Council and our work but also for our members and as a means to share relevant industry news and updates. We have close to 6000 followers across our 3 platforms and had an organic reach of over 3000 on LinkedIn over the last 3 weeks alone. We plan to keep increasing our social media reach and leveraging it to grow awareness of the work of the Council and its members.

LET'S STAY CONEXTED. FOLLOW US ON



Want to feature your company in the upcoming Conext?

This publication belongs to the members of the Digital Council Africa. We welcome and encourage submissions from our members in the form of conversations related to the development of the digital economy as well as thought leadership articles you have written or would like to share, advertorials, adverts and any information that may be of interest to the ICT sector as a whole.

Contributions can be sent to Nadene Reignier at nadene@digitalcouncil.africa

Member Benefits

By joining the Digital Council Africa members have a competitive advantage because they become informed members of their industry as the council actively engages and represents its members at government level. Council members who lead busy professional lives can depend on the organisation to represent and brief them on important industry trends, new legislative rulings, and advances in technology. The main platform the Digital Council Africa (DCA) uses for this is through its annual conference. This event aims to attract C-level speakers and best of breed OEM's and distributors to keep industry informed and updated on the latest trends in technology and legislation. **To find out more visit our [website](#).**

Welcome

Welcoming our new Board Member



Christopher Shane Chorley: Leading Innovation in Fiber Networks

Meet Christopher Shane Chorley, the visionary Chief Executive Officer steering the ship at Frogfoot Networks. With a profound passion for technological advancement and a keen understanding of the telecommunications landscape, Shane has played a pivotal role in shaping Frogfoot's remarkable journey.

Joining Frogfoot in 2016 as Head of Sales and Marketing, Shane's impact was immediate and extensive, smart planning and unwavering determination, he steered Frogfoot's transformation into one of South Africa's leading open-access fibre network providers. Today, under his guidance, Frogfoot proudly connects over 190 wholesale providers, empowers 13,000 businesses, and brings the power of seamless connectivity to 135,000 residential customers.

Collaborating closely with Frogfoot's founder, Abraham van der Merwe, Shane has been an unwavering force in expanding the network's footprint. His commitment to inclusivity and accessibility has led Frogfoot into previously underserved townships, making the dream of fibre connectivity a reality for all.

Shane's path as a leader is diverse and full of experiences. Prior to Frogfoot, he held influential positions at Vox Telecommunications, making an enduring impression on the path of the company's growth. His instrumental role in the acquisition of Frogfoot Networks in 2015 demonstrated his skill in strategy and his deep understanding of the industry.

Away from the world of business, Shane maintains a sense of balance in his personal life. Residing in Grahamstown alongside his wife and four children. As Frogfoot propels toward an exciting future, Shane Chorley remains steadfast in his commitment to positioning the company at the forefront of innovation and growth. He continues to redefine what's achievable in the world of fibre networks.

Welcoming our new Member

LOITA BUSINESS

Loita Business is developing Africa's largest B2B ecosystem and network, offering a range of services including B2B Marketplaces, payments, trade & supply chain financing, etc. We do this by building technologies that help companies grow through:

- Cheaper access to capital.
- Increased efficiency.
- Building Africa's Next Generation Digital Infrastructure.
- Access to new markets.

To learn more about Loita Business Marketplace solutions, please visit www.loitabusiness.com

NOTICES

Welcoming our new Member



Proudly South African and 100% black-owned, NTG Solutions aim to make our country proud by helping Africa develop sustainably through world-class geospatial solutions. To this end, we integrate leading-edge technology with superior knowledge and skills. The aim is to help our African entities better understand the people and spaces they operate in, improve their businesses, and enhance their service delivery.

We help our clients enjoy all the business benefits of the field without any of the complexities, through one single, seamless, end-to-end service that is rendered through four dedicated, specialist departments:

- Development Planning • GIS
- Geomatics
- NTG Solutions Academy

To find out more visit: <https://ntgsolutions.co.za/>

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO



Business Against Crime
South Africa™

Meeting with BACSA on Extortion and Violence at Construction Sites

A vast number of economic sites around the country are experiencing sporadic incidents of violence and extortion essentially driven under the pretext of demand for community employment and the 30% share inclusion of the locally based Small Medium Micro Enterprises (SMME's) in the major infrastructure projects.

As a consequence of these actions, certain companies, individuals, branded and non-branded gangs are negatively affecting the local economic growth and business sustainability through using mafia-style tactics, but not limited to, demanding tenders from local municipalities as well as contractors and sub-contractors on those infrastructure projects. The security industry is also targeted and forced to meet their demands.

The State of Nation Address by Honourable President Ramaphosa highlighted a need for the prevention and combating of ongoing extortion and violence directed at economic sites, especially the infrastructure construction sector as one of the Deliverables to the National Development Plan 2030.

In this regard, a National Priority Committee on Extortion and Violence at Economic Sites was established to deal with criminal activities according to the law.

The Digital Council Africa is an active participant representing the interests of the Telecommunications Sector.

Inspiring Fifty

AFRICA

November 2023

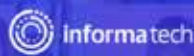
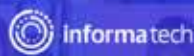
Celebrating the Top 50 Women in African Tech

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Partnerships that matter

The Digital Council Africa is delighted to announce that it has accepted an invitation to act as the official social-cause partner with InspiringFifty Africa – a global awards programme that is part of AfricaComm/ Africa Tech Festival, that recognises the top fifty women who are making significant strides in tech careers across the African continent.

Under the banner of EQL:HER, a leading network for women in technology, InspiringFifty is a global initiative dedicated to increasing diversity in the tech industry by amplifying the visibility of women role models. By highlighting their accomplishments, we hope to inspire more girls and women to pursue tech careers and become future leaders and entrepreneurs.

These awards hold immense importance as they provide a well-deserved platform for acknowledging the inspirational efforts of women in our industry. The winners of Inspiring Fifty Africa 2023 will be unveiled during a prestigious awards ceremony and gala dinner in Cape Town as part of Africa Tech Festival on 13 November.

We encourage all member organisations to nominate a women in the organisation that deserves to be recognised for her unwavering efforts.

[SUBMIT A NOMINATION HERE](#)

New Appointments



**communications
& digital technologies**

Department:
Communications & Digital Technologies
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

A warm welcome to the new **Director-General of the DCDT**

The Digital Council Africa (DCA) extends its heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Nonkqubela Thathakahle Jordan-Dyani on her esteemed appointment as the Director-General of the Department of Communications and Digital Technology (DCDT). With immense pride, we acknowledge her exceptional journey as a seasoned public servant who has demonstrated remarkable leadership within the DCDT, spearheading policies and strategies for digital transformation.

During her tenure as Acting Director-General, Ms. Jordan-Dyani has exemplified her prowess as an articulate and insightful leader, possessing a profound understanding of the national and global landscape of the ICT sector. Her visionary approach has elevated the Department's stature, positioning it as a trailblazer in fostering a digitally connected South Africa that stands confidently on the global stage.

At the heart of the DCDT's mandate is the ambitious task of leading South Africa's digital transformation journey, ensuring digital inclusion becomes the catalyst for economic growth within an enabling policy and regulatory framework. In line with this vision, the DCDT is poised to play a pivotal role in fostering broader economic and social engagement among all citizens through digital transformation, firmly grounded in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

The DCA is resolute in our commitment to championing the DCDT's mandate and aspirations, aligning our efforts to the broader mission of achieving digital inclusivity, fostering economic growth, and contributing to a digitally evolved South Africa that resonates on the world stage. Through collaboration, innovation, and shared dedication, we look forward to realising the vast potential that lies ahead under the visionary leadership of Ms. Nonkqubela Thathakahle Jordan-Dyani.

As the DCA, we pledge unwavering support to the newly appointed Director-General and extend our best wishes for her continued success in this pivotal role.

New Appointments



Jorge Mendes Assumes Role of Cell C CEO

We extend our warmest congratulations to Jorge as he takes on the role of CEO at Cell C.

Jorge brings with him an impressive career spanning over 25 years within the sector, coupled with a deep understanding of the telecommunications industry. His journey has seen him hold senior leadership positions at major mobile network providers in South Africa and internationally.



Kholiwe Makhohliso Takes On the Position of Managing Director for SAP Southern Africa

As Kholiwe embarks on her new role as Managing Director for SAP Southern Africa, her extensive 20 years' technology experience and diverse leadership background across both public and private sectors set her apart.

Commencing her career as an auditor, she has traversed IT, consulting, and sales realms in esteemed organisations such as Accenture and Oracle. Notably, she recently held the position of Vice-President and Country MD at Software AG, where she also served as an executive director board member.

Congratulations on this well-deserved appointment!



Evan Jones appointed as CEO for The Collective X

Congratulations to Evan on his new appointment as CEO for The Collective X, effective from 1 September!

His impressive journey includes roles as Strategy Director at Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, COO at Webhelp, and leadership positions at Discovery Health, TalkTalk, and Merchants South Africa. Evan's wealth of experience and accomplishments make him a dynamic fit for his new role. We're excited to see his vision unfold.

The Collective X is a remarkable digital skills initiative set to double South Africa's output of high-demand digital jobs in the next three years. Tackling the challenge of bridging the gap between available digital jobs and the shortage of skilled individuals is crucial, and Evan is leading the charge.

By enhancing youth digital skills, this initiative aims to boost employment, inject a substantial R300 billion into the economy, and shape a thriving future for our nation. Evan's vision and leadership will undoubtedly drive Collective X forward to make a lasting impact.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO



The Digital Council Africa in partnership with TESPOK is proud to announce the inaugural **EAST AFRICA CONEXT DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE SUMMIT**

Join us on 4 October 2023

The East Africa Conext Conference has been designed with a clear vision in mind: to convene industry leaders, experts, and visionaries, fostering an environment of collaboration and innovation. Together, we will identify and address the specific challenges faced by the technology industry, seeking effective solutions to drive growth and success in a setting that encourage participation and open dialogue.

Our carefully curated sessions and workshops will delve into the dynamic world of digital infrastructure, shedding light on its impact on the industry and the myriad opportunities it presents, and more importantly how we can ensure that infrastructure is deployed rapidly and sustainably.

It will be an invitation only, in-person event with dignitaries in attendance. Virtual attendance is open to all.



nairobi.conextconference.africa

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO



Breakfast held in celebration of Women's Month

The Digital Council Africa, in collaboration with the DCDT, ACT and the SACF co-hosted a Womens breakfast to celebrate Womens month. Abundant conversations, laughter, and camaraderie marked the atmosphere of the occasion which was thoughtfully orchestrated to cultivate a space wherein women leaders could congregate, fostering opportunities for genuine connections, companionship, and mutual support among peers.



Top & Bottom Left: Attendees of the breakfast

Bottom Right: Nonkqubela Jordan-Dyani, Director-General of the DCDT with Juanita Clark, DCA CEO





Girls: it's ok to be scared but to succeed you must also be brave



By Hanlie de Bod, CIO at Harambee

CIO at Harambee charts her journey from accounting teacher to the rewarding world of IT

Hanlie de Bod was appointed CIO of Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator a year ago, after working for the organisation for two years. A woman in such a senior leadership role remains relatively unusual in the tech field but Hanlie thrives in the role, even though IT was the last place she thought she'd find her career taking her.

She was teaching accounting when she was offered an opportunity to work as a SAP consultant with a SAP partner. Although not formally trained in the field, her dad had raised her to believe that she could do whatever she wanted so she took the plunge and loved it from the start, despite her initial fear.

"During meetings I'd write down

all the terms I didn't understand so I could look them up afterwards," she says. "I still have those notebooks. I was usually the only woman among clients and colleagues and I often felt intimidated, but digital is at the forefront of so much in the world and with the work we do at Harambee, it's an exciting place to be."

At 63% women employees and 63 % women in its senior management team, Harambee is a women-led organisation which employs predominantly women, many of them, like Hanlie, in senior management positions. The IT Enablement team of 40, which Hanlie leads, comprises almost 50% women, double the industry average of less than 25%.

This team is responsible for, among other things, developing the SA Youth platform, which is a core component of the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention that enables young people to access learning and earning opportunities.

She's rightly proud of her team: 3.7 million young people are registered on sayouth.mobi 90% of which are active frequent users, and they make sure the platform never fails these youth. Hanlie's sincerity is unmistakable when she says, "We want to do the very best for South Africa's young people. We want them to have access any time day or night, and we want it to be easy for them to apply for

the jobs they want. Personally, I love knowing that the small problems my team and I solve are helping to solve a bigger problem that South Africa faces – youth unemployment.”

She’s also proud of her employer. “At Harambee we employ world class tech talent and our leadership encourages and enables our use of the best and newest technology available. It’s a dynamic environment. I’m talking about things like hosting the platform on a hyper-scaler, which enables us to scale to demand quickly and efficiently, whether small or very, very large.”

“South African employers tend to take school results as a starting point when hiring, but we know that many young people with less than ideal schooling make great careers in the digital world. In IT, formal education doesn’t matter as much as the ability to solve problems and the capacity to learn fast and work hard.”

It is equally important for young women to know that their voices matter just as much as the voices of men. “You can be scared but you need to be brave too, just as I was. If you can do that, you’ll find that IT is a great industry for women.”

Hanlie cites the recruiting period at the end of last year for the Department of Basic Education’s (DBE) school assistant programme, where SA Youth saw sign-ups increase by a factor of 10, to 1.5 million unique applicants submitting 13.5 million applications in a three week period. The platform handled this volume with ease thanks to a great team and great tech.

Because she knows how rewarding it is to work in IT, Hanlie encourages young women to consider tech jobs as a viable career option. She says Quality Assurance and Testing are relatively easy entry points that enable access to the sector at a basic level and provide an excellent grounding to build from. With research by Harambee, the Digital Council Africa, and others, having identified 66 000 high-skill digital job vacancies in the local economy, two-thirds of which are entry-level roles suitable for young people, it is clear that there’s no shortage of opportunity.





Intelligent businesses see the value of a diverse workforce

By Valencia Risaba, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer,
Liquid Intelligent Technologies SA

Africa's technology sector is growing at an immense rate. ***According to a recent report***, the estimated size of the continent's digital economy is US\$115 billion and is expected to grow to US\$712 billion by 2050. As the industry continues to expand, the need for *ICT employees is set to accelerate with it*, with lucrative job opportunities opening up for technologically skilled workers.

With this sector's growth, however, ensuring ICT is diverse and inclusive is crucial. Unfortunately, data shows that women and people from diverse backgrounds are underrepresented in the tech sector, which can lead to a lack of innovation, creativity, and inclusivity.

According to a study by the World Economic Forum, only 26% of professionals in data and AI, and only 12% of cloud computing professionals are women. This lack of gender diversity is not only a prob-

lem for women but also affects the entire industry's potential because when a group is under-represented in any field, they can't bring their unique perspectives, skills, and experiences to the table.

Fortunately, we are seeing a change in the narrative – albeit slowly – and many organisations are taking steps to increase diversity and inclusivity in their workforces. Women have stopped looking at the ICT sector and tech-related courses as being engineered exclusively towards men.

The stereotype of the tech sector – that it appeals to and is engineered towards attracting men exclusively – is also being broken at the top. ICT is seeing more women succeeding in tech who are becoming role models for other women to move in this direction. Today, women can set their sights higher and work towards their dream because they are seeing examples of those who have made it.

The importance of diversity and inclusivity in the tech industry cannot be overstated, and therefore more can – and should be done – to attract more women into the sector. Companies need to be more sensitive about how they treat employees, how they advertise for positions and how they ensure work environments are welcoming and safe for all.

And while it's 'the right thing to do', promoting diversity and inclusivity makes good business sense. A recent report from McKinsey & Company found that companies with gender-diverse executive teams were 25% more likely to experience above-average profitability than their competitors. A company with a diverse workforce can also be perceived as an attractive employment option, allowing it to attract the best talent.

Promoting diversity and inclusivity in the tech industry requires a concerted effort by all stakeholders.

Companies must take steps to recruit and retain diverse talent, ensure that their hiring processes are fair and unbiased, and create inclusive work environments where everyone feels valued and supported.

One way to promote diversity and inclusivity is through apprenticeship programmes. By pairing women with experienced mentors, businesses can help them overcome the challenges around entering the tech industry and provide them with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

Apprenticeships will go a long way in ensuring that females get more of a chance because the gender divide in tech exists largely as a result of a lack of opportunity.

While apprenticeships and training programmes can help prospective women employees develop the skills they will need in ICT to help level the playing field, promoting diversity and inclusivity; what is really needed is a cultural shift.

Companies must actively work to challenge biases and stereotypes and create a culture that values and celebrates diversity. This cultural shift must start from the top, with executives and leaders setting the tone and leading by example, creating an environment in which anyone – regardless of gender – should feel empowered to learn, and share their thoughts and opinions.

Diversity and inclusivity must be committed to. Women – and other

under-represented groups in tech – cannot be hired simply as a box-ticking exercise. Not only is it dishonest, but it also doesn't do the companies any favours because their employees are not being helped to develop fully, which means they can't contribute their best work and fully realise their potential.

The tech industry in Africa has immense potential to drive innovation and economic growth. However, to realise this potential, it is crucial to ensure that the industry remains diverse and inclusive. By taking steps to promote diversity and inclusivity, companies can position themselves as cutting-edge, progressive, and gendered businesses.



**“We will all profit from a more diverse, inclusive society, understanding, accommodating, even celebrating our differences, while pulling together for the common good.”
–Ruth Bader Ginsburg**

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO



Juanita participates in UNESCO's 7th SA National Commission

Juanita was invited by the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies to participate as a member of the UNESCO Communications and Information Sector in the 7th SA National Commission for UNESCO. In this programme her expertise regarding achieving equal connectivity for all South Africans will play a vital role. Mr CL Mukwevho is the Secretary General representing South Africa.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations aimed at promoting world peace and security through international cooperation in education, arts, sciences and culture. Through capacity-building, policy advice, international cooperation, monitoring and foresight in the fields of freedom of expression, access to information, and digital transformation, UNESCO will continue to empower key actors with a view to ensuring that fundamental freedoms are guaranteed online and offline, in line with international standards.

This is all the more relevant to ensure the ethical development and use of emerging technologies, which have a growing impact on all aspects of the world's societies. Citizens will also be empowered to enjoy these fundamental freedoms through the development of 21st century skills and the fostering of enabling environments for media pluralism and diversity.



Juanita leads the Connectivity Working Group on behalf of South Africa

The BRICS countries support a system of global governance that is more inclusive and egalitarian. It aims to improve global financial institutions and advance a multipolar world order that more accurately represents the objectives and ambitions of developing nations. Within the greater BRICS eco system which seeks to advance collaboration between these countries, several sub committees are established, one focussing on the Digital Economy. Within the Digital Economy working group there are several sub working group committees, one of which is Connectivity. We are proud that our very own Juanita Clark led the Connectivity Working Group on behalf of South Africa.

Juanita Clark - SA Lead and CEO Digital Council

Speakers included:

- India: Mr Pankaj Bhardwaj
- South Africa: Ms Nomvuyiso Batyi
- China: Mr Wang, Feng
- Guest speaker: Mr Sehraj Singh



m4a

OUR PRODUCTS BUILD NETWORKS

m4a (Pty) Ltd is a specialist manufacturer of composite and plastics products with a focus on utilities networks and infrastructure markets.

In-house design, tool making, and our various manufacturing capabilities, provide end-to-end development, manufacture and supply of solutions to the client. m4a complies to global mark and specification schemes, and is ISO9001 certified. Investment into injection moulding, compression moulding, and extrusion technologies make m4a a novel manufacturing enterprise.

Our flagship product lines include:

- **axsCHAMBERS™** - A range of round grade level vaults (also referred to as underground chambers), and access points, for use in telecommunication, water, and other utility network builds.
 - **fibrefLEX™** - Rectangular or square vaults similarly used in network builds.
 - **fibredUCT™ and optiDUCT™** - Telecommunication utility network conduit systems.
- **corruDUCT™** - Structured wall, lightweight piping used extensively in telecommunications, electrical, agriculture, and civil engineering infrastructure.
 - **civilworks™** - Polymer and composite infrastructure products for the deployment of civils, electrical, water, telecommunications and other utility networks applications.
- **cnktCLOSURES™** - A selection of connectivity solutions including splice enclosures, cable and accessories which encourage "Right-fit Architecture" for cost saving network design.
- **fibrecABLE™** - End to end solutions including Heavy Duty Duct Cable, Micro Blown Cable and Aerial Cable Short Span for telecommunications networks.

Our raw material processing capability:

m4a continues to grow rapidly, and we will process some 1300T per month in 2023. This includes: DMC - A fibre-glass based composite product range of products, PP - Polypropylene, a plastic used in injection moulding and HDPE - High density polyethylene, a plastic used in extrusion of ducts and pipes.

Our factories and warehousing:

m4a is headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa and is the manufacturing hub that supplies our domestic, EMEA, North American and APAC customer base. Our manufacturing facility covers 38 000 sqm (409 000 sq. ft) with 7 000 sqm (75 000 sq. ft) under roof.



Where we operate:

We have our manufacturing plant in Johannesburg, South Africa: with Sales and (Philippines), Cedar Rapids (USA), Bucharest (Romania) and London (UK).

In summary:

m4a is the leading manufacturer and supplier of composite products serving multiple industry sectors across the globe. The team of dedicated personnel ensure that our ethos of dynamic, innovative, customer-centric service is upheld and that our customers always come first.



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FOSTERING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP:

3 Insights from the Women in Telecommu- nications Summit



By Martha Galley | Executive Vice President, Customer Engagement & Services, Calix

Looking back on my career in technology, I can recall many occasions when I was the only woman in the room. It felt a bit lonely—and frustrating. Thankfully, times have changed, which was abundantly clear at the second annual Women in Telecommunications Summit at ConneXions 2022. What an amazing moment: looking out at a room full of women who are leaders in their organizations and the telecom industry.

While I'm thrilled about the record number of attendees—a 180 percent increase over 2021—I'm even more excited about the strong community we are building together: sharing ideas, strategizing about overcoming challenges, and dreaming about what lies ahead galvanized and energized us all. After the summit, one thing was very clear: We are headed in an exciting direction, where anything and everything feels possible.

3 KEY INSIGHTS: AUTHENTICITY, ALLIES, AND ADVANCING ERG

Many participants, both women and men, sought me out during ConneXions to say the summit was inspiring. The truth is the event exceeded our expectations and energized all who participated. While it's difficult to recreate what we experienced, I'd like to share my top three insights.

1. The Most Effective Role Models Are Also The Most Authentic

We took a deep dive into authenticity in a wide-ranging panel with Carla Shearer, CEO/GM at SCTelcom; Candy Riem, VP of marketing at MEC; and Stacy Giardetti, product marketing manager at Tbaytel. The conversation touched on what it's like to bring our true selves to work, how to create safe spaces where it's OK to be honest and vulnerable, and the importance of supporting other women. These women leaders showed us what it means to be authentic role models.

We need allies to create an environment where women and men thrive. Although the event focused on women in telecoms, I was thrilled to see so many men in the audience. The topics we covered—finding work-life balance, supporting high-performing teams, communicating your value, and overcoming insecurity—are not only women’s issues. They are relevant and important for all of us. As Karen shared in our fire-side chat, it’s invaluable to have male allies, role models, mentors, and sponsors supporting us and pushing for gender equality.

We’re making good progress, but it’s just the beginning. Within Calix, we have a very active Women at Calix employee resource group (ERG) to foster women’s professional growth, champion success, and support others in becoming better allies. And we’ll continue looking for other opportunities to align our industry around this critical issue.

2. Redefining Resilience To Thrive As Leaders

The past two years have completely transformed how we work, serve our customers, and live our everyday lives. Navigating this ever-changing reality tested our resilience like nothing before. That was the overarching theme of this year’s summit—how to redefine resilience and thrive as a leader.

Our keynote speaker, Brittany N. Cole—a leadership coach, author, and speaker—outlined a “resilience roadmap” to help women overcome challenges and grow in their careers and lives. Among her insights, one seemed to resonate very strongly: how to “lose the cape” and be transparent with others. This message of authenticity was carried across the program, including a panel discussion with three women leaders at broadband service providers (BSPs) and a fireside chat with telecoms industry trailblazer Karen Puckett.

3. We All Thrive When Gender Equality Is Prioritized

Though things have changed considerably since I started, we still have a long way to go in narrowing the gender gap in technology. I am proud of the work Calix is doing to address this. The Women in Telecommunications Summit is an essential element, and I am excited about evolving the program to expand its reach to more people in the industry and cover even more topics.

I am passionately committed to attracting, retaining, and growing great women in technology. We know that teams, companies, and communities thrive when women thrive. I encourage each of you to get involved in creating a truly diverse workplace. Join us at the Women in Telecommunications Summit and other industry events. Take steps within your organizations to support women’s careers—start an ERG, participate in a mentor program, or focus on being a strong ally. Together, we can make gender equality a reality.

As always, we welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Please email me at martha.galley@calix.com or connect with me on [LinkedIn](#).



“The word ‘female,’ when inserted in front of something, is always with a note of surprise. Female COO, female pilot, female surgeon – as if the gender implies surprise ... One day there won’t be female leaders. There will just be leaders.”
 Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook COO & Founder of Leanin.org



EMPOWERING DIVERSITY AND EXPERTISE: Tertia Smit returns as Director at BMIT

BMIT has welcomed Tertia Smit's return as a Director after her 5-year sabbatical dedicated to honing her skills as a strategy and personal development coach, particularly focused on empowering women in business and HDI SMEs.

Tertia is set to not only meet the growing demand that BMIT is experiencing, but also make an impact on the landscape of Cus-

tomers Satisfaction and Stakeholder Research. Her unique perspective brings a fresh dimension to research and analysis, with a keen emphasis on addressing diversity challenges inherent in the South African context, from both customer and employee viewpoints.

Tertia's journey with BMIT began twenty years ago, through their Forge Ahead initiative, aimed at supporting HDIs, where she also contributed to early government policy work, actually defining Universal Services for USAASA and conducting pivotal reviews for both USASA and ICASA. She has since managed dozens of customer satisfaction and stakeholder surveys for many government departments and private companies, mainly in the ICT sector.

Beyond her contributions within BMIT, Tertia's advocacy extended to her three-year tenure on the SA Women in ICT Forum Board. Her influence also extended to mentoring and coaching within ICT companies, guiding women's forums, facilitating Team and Culture alignment workshops, and strategising with HDI SMEs.

As the ICT industry grapples with its male-dominated nature, Tertia underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing both conscious and unconscious hierarchies. She remains a firm proponent of HDI targets in South Afri-

ca's ownership, management, and workforce levels, while advocating for comprehensive mentorship and capacity-building initiatives. Tertia's wealth of experience has taught her that self-awareness, passion, core competencies, and individuality fuel success in this journey.

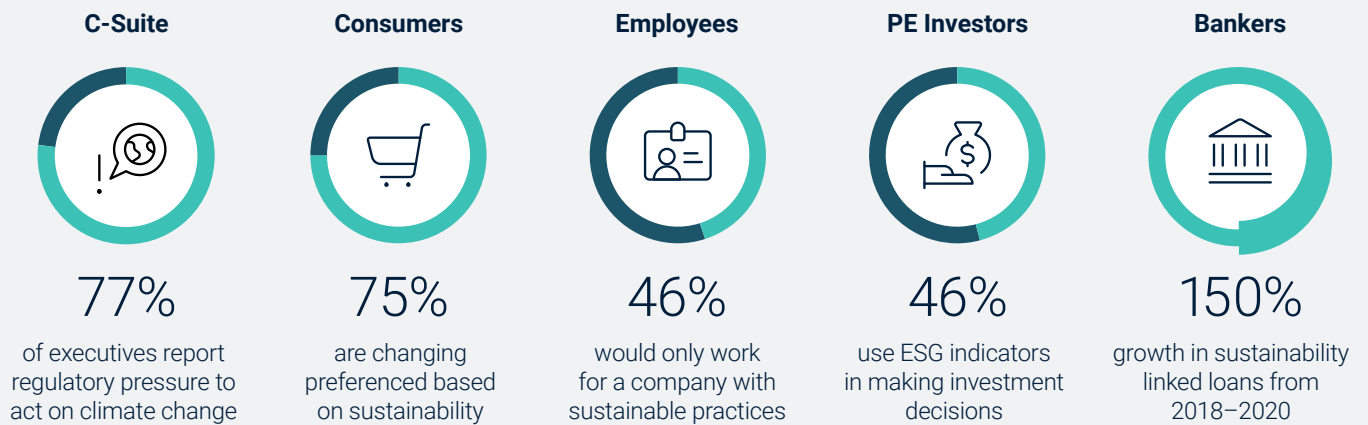
Tertia asserts, "Witnessing the growth and ascendancy of women in the ICT industry, particularly in IT Software and services, has been inspiring. This extends to corporate and SME levels, marking a promising shift in gender dynamics."

BMIT's Managing Director, Christopher Geerds, says their focus on customer satisfaction and brand research is paramount. Tertia envisions deeper insights through meticulous customer research, expanding beyond gender and age segmentation but to develop customer archetypes and personas. As the younger generation defies stereotypical behavior in the digital age, Tertia's vision enhances understanding and fosters progressive change.

For a closer look at BMIT's significant customer and stakeholder research practice, visit <https://www.bmit.africa/customer-satisfaction/> or reach out to Anita directly at anita@bmit.africa.

Sustainability is the next digital revolution

► It's revolutionizing how people behave



Source: Deloitte CxO Sustainability report, 2022

► It's revolutionizing how businesses function

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Final Document ready for submission on the ECAB

The Draft Electronic Communications Amendment Bill (ECAB) was published on Friday, 23rd June by the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies.

The ECAB came about as a result of a Data Services Market Inquiry (DSMI) issued by the Competition Commission on 2 December 2019.

The DSMI report made recommendations that included legislative changes aimed at ultimately increasing the level of competition in the market and driving down prices. An amendment of the Electronic Communications Act, 2005 (Act No. 36 of 2005) is necessary to give effect to the recommendations.

The Bill aims to:

- Amend the Electronic Communications Act, 2005, so as to provide for a new license category for electronic communications facilities services
- Enable the Minister responsible for local government to make a national standard by-law on rapid deployment, to enable spectrum sharing
- Regulate roaming and mobile network services
- Improve the facilities leasing framework and its pricing principles
- Provide for improved competition regulation
- Provide for matters connected therewith.

The DCA has actively involved its members through three industry focus groups to gather inputs in a round-robin fashion. These inputs have been meticulously collated to shape and finalise a comprehensive industry response to the ECAB, as released by the DCDT. Due to the granted extension, we will defer our submission until the extended deadline, which is set for August 31st, 2023. If you would like to receive a copy of the final document please contact Reesha@digitalcouncil.africa

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all companies who provided valuable inputs into the submission, and we believe the document effectively captures the viewpoints of the industry. A very special Thank You to Mike Currie and the Primerio Team.

What is SA Youth?

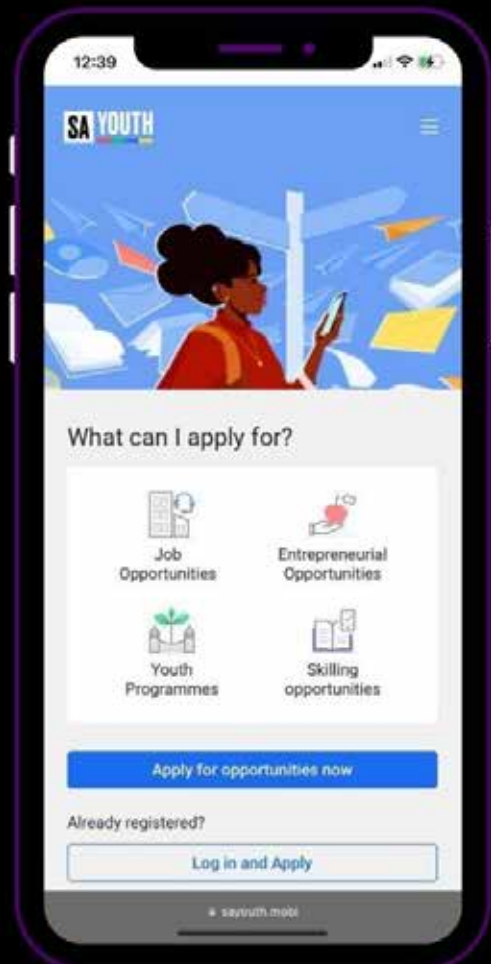
A place for all young South Africans to come to find work opportunities, learn new skills, find out how to become more employable, and get support.

How can you become part of the network?

- STEP 1: Go to sayouth.mobi on your phone's browser and register. NO DATA NEEDED!
- STEP 2: Answer a few questions that will help us get to know you better so that we can connect you to job opportunities that match your profile.
- STEP 3: Log in regularly to search for new jobs
- STEP 4: Build your profile and keep it up to date

What can you do on sayouth.mobi?

- Look for work
- Access work-seeker resources to help to become employable
- Access a list of hustling support resources to help you start or grow your own business.



Need help?

- Call us toll-free between 9am - 5pm Mon-Fri on 0800 72 72 72
- Email us at support@sayouth.org.za
- Chat to us on our Facebook page

To find out more:

- Click on the following link <https://sayouth.me/3zsKdRH> or
- Find us on [Facebook](#) and search for "What is SA Youth?" on the content tab

To access resources you will need to be registered on SAYouth.mobi first



Network Planning, Design & Architecture: Accelerating FTTH in Rural Areas in the African Continent

By Antonio Colina,
Director, Market Development Carrier Networks, Corning

Fiber to the home (FTTH) is transforming communities across the world by providing homes and businesses with high-speed internet access through fiber optic cables. In Africa, many rural areas have historically been left behind in terms of internet connectivity due to the high cost of deploying fiber but that is also starting to change.

Africa is currently one of the fastest growing markets for FTTH, despite its huge and outdated communication infrastructure, with rollouts underway across the entire continent. It is forecasted to reach nine million FTTH/B (IDATE World FTTX Market, Nov. 2020) homes passed by the end of 2023 with South Africa, Egypt and Algeria leading the way and growth in other African countries like Morocco or Senegal.

In South Africa, a number of initiatives, including strong state involvement in ensuring internet access is democratized, have led to considerable growth already. For Algeria, FTTH deployment is perceived as the next priority for broadband connectivity with authorities, operators and investors focusing resources on fiber enhancements.

There are still many important challenges to consider in the African telecommunication market, including cultural and geographical diversity, with more than 3000 ethnic groups and over 2000 languages/dialects. Additionally, it is expected that around 80% of the costs to deploy the network will come from building the civil infrastructure. Africa's diverse attributes will demand optimal and efficient use of resources, and well-considered deployment strategies that emphasize collaboration among the various partners in the FTTH ecosystem.

Network Planning and Architecture

The starting point of any deployment strategy should be effective planning of the network. This is the process of determining the most efficient way to use network resources to meet the needs of users. In the case of FTTH deployment in rural areas, network planning involves considering three main areas:

- The type of technology – considering the operator's long-term goals.
- The customer's requirements, including the areas that need to be covered, the number of users in those areas, and the type of services that will be provided.
- The available infrastructure and what is still required to build.

It is important to have a comprehensive plan that considers the unique characteristics of each area. This should include a detailed network design, a clear timeline, and a budget that considers the cost of deploying fiber optic cables in rural areas. It is also important to work closely with local authorities to obtain the necessary permits and licenses, as well as encouraging all stakeholders to work collaboratively to find the optimal way forward.

With an appropriate plan in place, the network can then be designed. However, the main challenge in Africa when it comes to this is, again, its incredible diversity, not just in terms of topology but also the variations in quality and availability of infrastructure.

Creating a blueprint for the network infrastructure that is as homogeneous as possible so it works with repeatedly lower operational expenses and increasing speed of deployment is key for the success of the build.

In the case of FTTH deployment in rural areas, network design involves determining the type of fiber optic cables to be used, the number of nodes required, and the location of the nodes. A design should consider the terrain, the distance between nodes, and the number of users in each area among other factors, in order to make it more predictable and accurate.

Deployment

Deploying fiber optic cables in Africa, and more specifically in rural areas, comes with several challenges. We already mentioned the diversity in installation landscape, and to this we can add potential high deployment cost and low ROI for operators, requiring public or private investors so operators will also service more challenging, less financially attractive areas.

Other challenges include technical, regulatory, and economic issues – affordability for households in low-income areas is a major issue to overcome. Infrastructure and low skill labor are certainly a major hurdle during the deployment phase too.

Using hardened pre-connectorized solution will help alleviate some of these difficulties as well as bring a more efficient way of deployment.

In 2017, Corning worked on a joint project in the remote village of Buheesi in the Western region of Uganda. Their solution was a shared infrastructure concept, known as Electricity and Fiber to the Village (E-/FTTV). This combined the rollout of electricity distribution lines and fiber optic cable in rural areas of Uganda, creating a virtuous circle enabled by aerial cabling.

Critical to the success of the project was the ability to utilise existing power lines to connect and extend fiber to key locations within Buheesi. Like many shared infrastructure projects, this helped to build the business case for rural deployment in the area by driving efficiencies in cost and overcoming the logistical challenges of building a separate underground network.

To ensure the smooth running of the project, the team conducted a site survey in the village to map out the exact requirements and planning details as well as conducting training with NITA-U on how best to install and manage the fibre.

With the ease of installation and the infrastructure already existing in many places, aerial cabling is speeding up the expansion process at a fraction of the cost and delivering long-term digital transformation for even the most remote of communities.

Therefore, using hardened pre-connectorized solution can help alleviate some of the difficulties, as well as allow more efficient way of deployment. Hardened pre-connectorized solutions in a wide variety of splitter types also help in enabling flexibility when choosing the best architecture type for the network build.

Additionally, solutions like *Evolv @ with Pushlok™* - IP68 certified for harsh environments - provide a faster installation and efficiency as well as fiber lean architecture which is extremely useful, considering the long distances involved in rural deployments. Also, its reliability will ensure long-lasting operational network with less maintenance required.

Conclusion

For Africa's many remote and less developed communities, where infrastructure challenges can prohibit access to both broadband and basic electricity, there's much to be gained by accelerating FTTH deployment and it's encouraging to see the progress already being made.

In and beyond Africa, shared infrastructure – as seen with Corning's project in Buheesi – will play a key role in meeting ambitious rollout targets, with the deployment of aerial cables essential in reaching remote and rural areas and also for temporary network connections.

Ultimately, with the right network planning, design, architecture and equipment it is possible to accelerate FTTH deployment in all kinds of rural areas and Africa is increasingly well placed to capitalize on a growing FTTH movement.





higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Request by DHET to complete survey to identify occupations in high demand, occupational shortages, and skills gaps in South Africa

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) have asked Digital Council Africa members to kindly support the below research.

Kindly distribute this to the relevant person in your organisation.

Dear Esteemed stakeholders,

Understanding occupational dynamics and labour market requirements is vital to meeting the goals of the National Development Plan and ensuring a more responsive post-school education and training system or a demand-driven approach to education & training.

In this regard the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has an important role to play in both aligning skills planning with economic planning and in identifying key occupations to ensure that skills shortages do not constrain the implementation of strategic projects and improve the responsiveness of the Post-School Education and Training system to the skills needs of the economy.

As part of the Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) research programme, the DHET has commissioned research to inform the publication of the list of Occupations in High Demand (OIHD). As you might be aware, the 2023 list will be the fifth iteration (the first published in 2014).

This year, the DHET will also pilot the provincial list of occupations in high demand in two provinces, namely, Western Cape and Mpumalanga.

The approach to developing the OIHD list has been evolving, and every care has been taken to ensure that the methodology employed to develop the 2023 list aligns with evidence-based best practices. Additionally, our evaluation of the list of Occupations in High Demand conducted in 2019 suggests that greater stakeholder engagements will ensure a common understanding and improve the value and utilisation of the list.

To that effect, please see below a link and information on an online survey that the Department of Higher Education and Training is using as part of the methodology to identify occupations in high demand, occupational shortages, and skills gaps in South Africa. **The Department encourages stakeholders to complete the survey by 13 September 2023.**

In addition to completing the survey yourself, keeping in mind the skills needs of the organisation you work for or own, please also forward it to your network, including your suppliers, customers, and partners. It is essential that the survey's coverage encapsulates respondents from all sectors and industries across the spectrum of organisational type and size. The research is also particularly interested in "occupations of the future", i.e. occupations that may not currently exist but will exist in the future due to economic, technological or environmental shifts such as transitioning to renewable energies. Please keep this in mind as you complete the information.

Your partnership in this endeavour is sincerely appreciated.

Kind regards,

Mamphokhu Khuluvhe

Director: System Monitoring & Labour Market Intelligence, Department of Higher Education and Training

Email address: Khuluvhe.M@dhet.gov.za

DHET Occupations in high demand survey

[Begin Survey](#)

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Herotel Empowers Women in Fibre Project: A Commitment to Community and Learning

Women In Fibre Project In Partnership With The Digital Council Africa



COMMUNITY HEART

We connect with our customers, colleagues and community by caring.

Our dedication to social impact shines through its involvement in the Women in Fibre Project and similar initiatives, fostering growth and diversity in the telecommunications industry.

The Herotel team demonstrated its commitment to its core values of Community Heart and Learning Minds through its successful participation in the Women in Fibre Project. The project, a collaboration between Herotel, Digital Council Africa, and the MICT-SETA learnership programme, has not only empowered aspiring women in the industry but has also created an environment of growth and diversity within the organization.

The Women in Fibre Project, a four-week practical training program, provided a platform for 20 talented women to enhance their skills and knowledge in the field of fibre operations. These participants had the unique opportunity to receive invaluable on-the-job training, gaining hands-on experience in real-world scenarios and challenges. By providing such practical training, we ensured that these women were equipped with the necessary skills to excel in their careers.

Beyond the technical training, we facilitated sales training for the participants, recognising the importance of client interaction and relationship building in the fibre industry. This holistic approach to learning aimed to nurture well-rounded professionals who can thrive in all aspects of their roles.

The project's success goes hand in hand with our core values and company mission, which prioritise equality, inclusivity, and the advancement of digital adoption. By supporting initiatives like the Women in Fibre Project, we actively contribute to a more equitable and prosperous society, while simultaneously enhancing our brand reputation.



LEARNING MIND

We increase our own knowledge and we coach and mentor our colleagues.

Through our Herotel Training academy, we company provided the participants with access to various training courses, covering industry-specific knowledge, technical skills, and personal development, emphasising our dedication to fostering learning minds and creating opportunities for individuals to grow both professionally and personally.

As we reflect on the achievements of the Women in Fibre Project with pride, we remain committed to exploring new avenues for collaboration and seizing opportunities to make a lasting impact. By continuing to prioritise initiatives that align with our core values, we aim to shape a better future for the company, the telecommunications industry, and society at large.



Throughout my training time at herotel, I have been able to learn so much more about Optic Fibre, which has made my level of understanding of this industry so much easier.

1. The herotel offices were learner friendly, the staff was kind and did not make me feel like a visitor/learner but more of an employee.
2. The training facility was very safe and conducive.
3. I was always given a chance to ask for help and i would receive it without any hassle.
4. The communication channels were open and direct.
5. Our facilitators did an amazing job, even though this job seemed intimidating at the beginning, they were friendly patient with our different ways of grasping knowledge.

Over and above, I had an amazing time at Herotel, thank you very much for the opportunity 🙏

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SAY



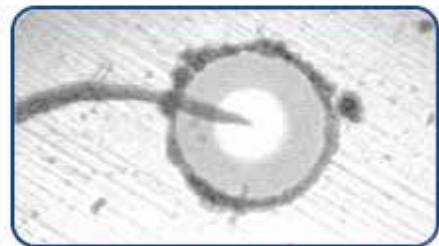
TO



DIRTY CONNECTORS



85% OF ALL NETWORK FAILURES ARE DUE TO **DIRTY CONNECTORS**



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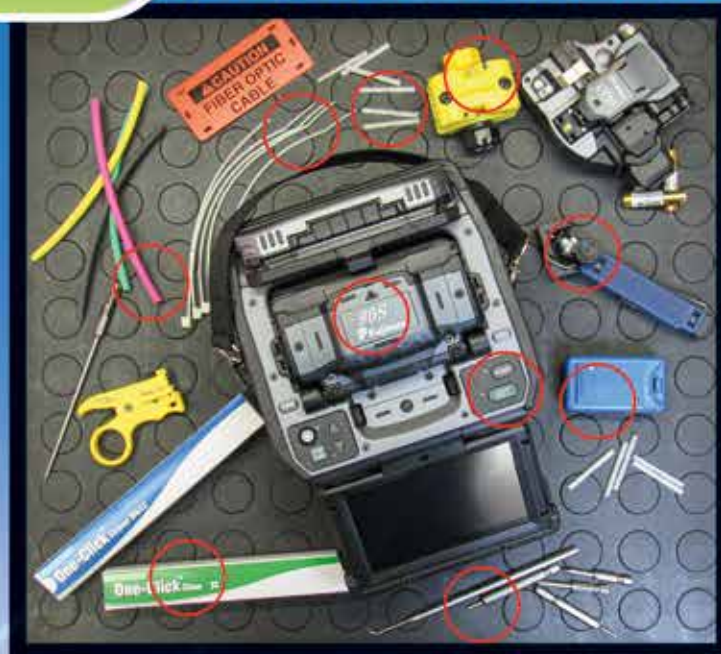


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DID YOU FIND THEM ALL?



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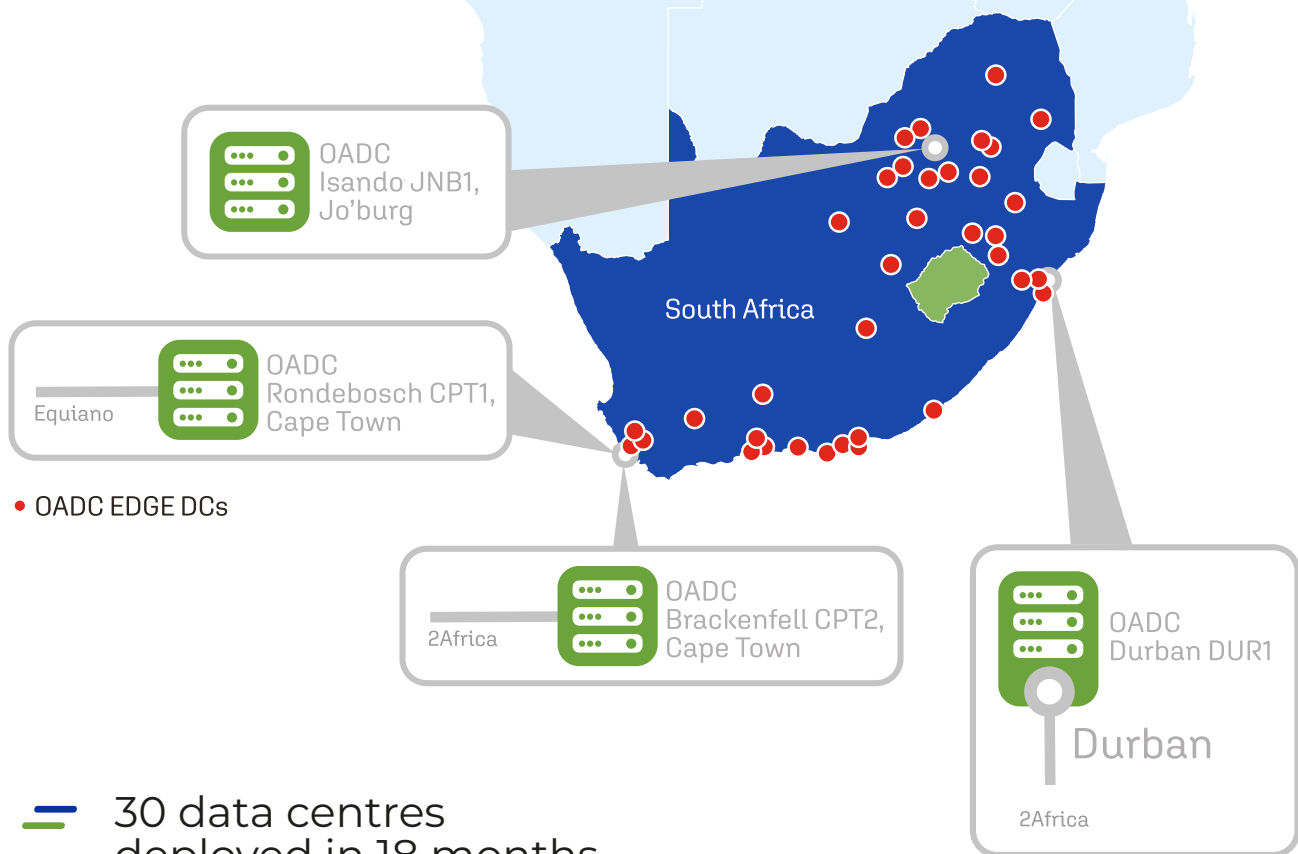


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*Transforming
digital Africa*



Empowering Africa's women through digital skills

By Sayuri Moodliar, ESG Director at OADC, a WIOCC Group Company

Digital connectivity is increasingly enhancing the human experience, yet its benefits are limited to those who have access. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), in 2022 a staggering 2.9 billion individuals across the globe remain disconnected, constituting approximately 37% of the global population. In 2021, only 33% of Africa's citizens were using the internet, leaving an estimated 871 million people without the advantages of digital transformation. In addition, a significant gender-based digital disparity exists. For example, UNESCO reports that only 21% of women in Kampala and 20% in Nairobi engage with the internet, contrasting starkly with the respective figures of 61% and 57% for men.

These discrepancies are often explained by factors such as regressive social norms and stereotypes, and the general unaffordability of data and devices. What is also critical for socio-economic transformation is to provide access to training, financing and networks.

Driving positive socio-economic change in Africa through digital transformation

Digital transformation involves incorporating digital technologies across all aspects of business, re-shaping the landscape of economic and social activities.

The African Union has developed a Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030) to transform Africa into a digital economy. The strategy aims to create a single digital market, promote digital infrastructure development, and enhance digital skills and entrepreneurship. Digital transformation can be used to help achieve many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to drive positive socio-economic change in Africa by accelerating job creation and enterprise development; supporting access to public services, education and global resources; and increasing productivity and innovation.

Investing in digital infrastructure will provide more people with access to the internet and other digital services. This, in turn, will create more job opportunities for people with digital skills and help empower women who may not have had access to these opportunities before.

According to a report by *McKinsey & Company*, technology adoption has the potential to increase the percentage of women in SA's workforce to 45% by 2030, almost two percentage points higher than today, as well as create 1.6 million new jobs for women.

Ahead of the curve

In addition to investing in telecommunications and digital infrastructure throughout the continent, WIOCC and Open Access Data Centres (OADC) are also committed to empowering the youth to access digital skills and careers.

In South Africa's North West Province, the limited-service community

of the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District faces a range of challenges. Less than 18% of persons older than 15 have a matric qualification or higher, and only 4% have some form of tertiary education. Grants from WIOCC were used by the MDCS Skills Academy for three significant initiatives, i.e. establishing a mobile ICT centre that travels to schools in the District to provide ICT training, sponsoring stipends and learnerships for learners with disabilities, and providing bursaries to African female learners to complete ICT qualifications and obtain employment

Another highly successful initiative took place in 2022 when OADC signed a three-year strategic partnership with the STEAM UP programme based in Lagos, Nigeria. STEAM UP's aim is to inspire, motivate and guide young girls in pursuing studies and careers in STEM fields. The mentoring programme is specifically intended to connect aspiring female science students in secondary schools with professional women already working in STEM fields.

Working together

The drive for greater digital inclusivity requires collective ownership, transcending the boundaries of any single societal segment. Collectively, the industry must rise to the occasion, and invest in digital skills, learnership and mentorship programmes, to seize every opportunity to bridge the digital and gender divide.

By leveraging digital technologies, African countries can promote regional integration, generate inclusive economic growth, create employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, as well as narrow both the gender gap and the digital divide. After all, gender equality is much more than a fundamental human right, it is the heart of a prosperous, forward-thinking economy that promotes sustainable and inclusive growth.



IN CONVERSATION WITH



TULANI HLABANGANA

Executive Director: Hr & Learning, Signa Academy

As the Executive Director of Signa Group, Tulani is a transformative leader with over 27 years of international experience in education, HR, and transformation.

Her expertise drives organisational strategies, operational structures, and HR practices. Leading learning institutions, she delivers innovative solutions for optimal outcomes. Tulani believes in inherent employability and uses education to catalyze personal and professional growth. Her joy lies in helping individuals realize their potential through skill development.

Serving on boards and panels, she holds qualifications in Corporate HR and Transformation, Education from the University of Zimbabwe, and Business Studies - Accounting from Harare Technical College.

Q International Women's Day celebrates the remarkable achievements and contributions of women in South Africa and across the world. In the spirit of this significant day, I would appreciate hearing from you: What advice or message would you share with young girls and women today to motivate and empower them to achieve their full potential and create a positive impact in their communities?

In the present day, a girl who has access to the education she desires, especially if digitally connected, has the potential to grow into the woman she aspires to be and make a meaningful contribution wherever she chooses.

In addition to People with Disabilities, Youth and Gender are areas of focus for progressive governments and businesses in terms of human capital and diversifying talent. There is a growing awareness and increasing levels of commitment towards economic inclusion for youth and gender, moving away from the past practice of mere lip service. The evolving skills landscape of industries and businesses is becoming more favourable towards youth and women. Opportunities for young people and women have expanded significantly, considering the rapid advancements and innovations in technology. Historical barriers to entry into the job market or entrepreneurship no longer restrict women. For instance, traditional hindrances such as physical infrastructure in businesses like construction or mining are becoming less relevant. Moreover, various careers have emerged within these industries, as education is no longer confined to classrooms. The rise of digital connectivity has opened up numerous careers that do not require travel or physical strength/fitness, benefiting women and youth. Furthermore, attitudes are shifting towards embracing diversity, especially regarding gender balance at all work levels and domains. A digitally connected girl can indeed grow up to become the woman she aspires to be and contribute to her potential from anywhere.

Q Mentorship and support networks are essential for personal and professional growth. Have you had mentors who significantly influenced your leadership development, and how do you pay it forward by mentoring other women?

I've had a notable mentor in my leadership journey, a man who navigated his own leadership path successfully as a gay individual. We joked about both being 'de-tribalised,' him being a Portuguese man not fluent in the language, and me expected to speak multiple South African languages. To this day, we're friends, feeling like family. He shared his challenges vulnerably, and as he listened to mine, our connection deepened. His insights helped me in challenging situations. He exemplified being authentic while achieving results and collaborative contributions without being abrasive. This approach guides how I lead not just women but all those I work with, through, and for. Consistency, empowerment, and support are central. I point out areas for improvement without belittling, acknowledge others, and make myself accessible for engagement. I'm particularly dedicated to supporting new team members, enabling them to feel empowered and capable.



IN CONVERSATION WITH

Q Women in leadership often face distinct expectations and challenges compared to their male counterparts. How do you navigate and overcome these challenges while remaining authentic to your identity and vision?

Leadership is generally attributed more consciously to women if it is formalized by a title, whereas men are frequently assumed to be leaders. When a woman displays leadership without a title, she might be labelled in ways such as "forward" or "pushy." Conversely, a man exhibiting similar behavior would be seen as a natural leader or proactive. It's important to note that this is a general tendency, not an absolute rule. Various environments require different leadership styles, but thankfully, times are changing. Thanks to gender equality laws and research on effective teams, diversity is now viewed as an asset in many organizations. Past barriers are gradually becoming obsolete. In my personal leadership journey, complexity arises from being an African woman. While it might not apply to everyone, many can relate, regardless of their race. My quiet assertiveness has sometimes been puzzling to colleagues. However, my consistent engagement style has fostered trust. I informally led in my career, lacking the title, benefits, and privileges. Through active listening and guidance, I adopted a transformational leadership style. Collaboration and cooperation were achieved due to my reliability, availability, and consistent approach. My teaching background led me to a coaching/mentoring influence, showing my commitment to achieving objectives, finding solutions, and involving everyone. It wasn't easy in my early career without a title. I remember people asking, "Who is she?" when I requested specific information. Surprisingly, I appreciated this anonymity, as it meant that those who got close to me did so genuinely, not due to a title. While challenging, this authenticity was maintained as more people took me seriously. Being naturally quiet, I flourished where meaningful relationships were established, valuing humility's authenticity. A supportive and open-minded mentor in a leadership position played a significant role in helping me navigate biases along my journey. He allowed me to be myself, demonstrating the power of consistency and understanding.

Q As the director of a learning academy focused on skills development training for youth, what motivated you to specifically empower young women in South Africa? How does your academy customize its programs to address the unique needs and challenges faced by young women?

Starting my career as a teacher, progressing to directing an academy and learning business felt natural. The waste of women's potential, both historical and current, inspired my focus on empowering young South African women. In South Africa, young people often transition to adulthood and parenting roles early, while facing unemployment and dependence. This strips them of self-worth and confidence. Dignified participation in the economy requires education and facilitated access to work environments. Our learnership programs provide post-school education and workplace opportunities for young people, particularly women and those with disabilities. This enables them to gain visibility and prove themselves. Our academy aligns learners with programs that cater to their development needs through work readiness modules. We invest heavily in learner management and support, assigning workplace coordinators for supervision from recruitment to placement. Building meaningful relationships from the outset ensures successful program completion and absorption.

Q Skill gaps in specific industries can hinder women from accessing well-paid jobs. How does your academy collaborate with businesses and industries to identify and address these skill gaps, ensuring that the training programs align with market demands?

At Signa, we're dedicated to running accredited learnerships that provide post-school education and facilitate youth employment. We focus on establishing win-win-win relationships with companies, strategic partners, and host companies. By understanding the end goal, we match learners with the right programs and qualities. Our role as an implementation partner is crucial. We prioritize value alignment and commitment, fostering trust and collaboration. Our learners receive qualifications, hosts gain eager resources, and clients achieve business and transformation goals. Signa facilitates impactful change in the lives of South African youth. We emphasize the 'PowerOfOne' ethos, making a difference one person and one business at a time. This requires aligning programs with the type of organizations that benefit from them. Our relationship-building approach ensures that all stakeholders contribute to changing South Africa. Through collaboration, we prepare Africa's youth for a working future.

As we celebrate Women's Month in South Africa, we are privileged to feature the insights and wisdom of some exceptional women leaders. Each of them has excelled in their respective fields, breaking barriers and setting inspiring examples for all. In this article, we've asked them a pivotal question each, aiming to tap into their wealth of experience and learn from their journey as leaders. Their perspectives offer invaluable lessons that resonate far beyond their industries, embodying the spirit of empowerment and progress that defines this special month. Join us in gaining insights from these remarkable women who continue to shape the landscape of leadership in South Africa.



KASTHURI SONI
CEO, Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator

Q - Your work at Harambee has been instrumental in driving positive change for youth development and employment in South Africa. Could you please elaborate on some of the key challenges faced by female youth in accessing meaningful employment opportunities in the country, and what innovative strategies or programs you have championed to address these challenges and foster the empowerment of young women?

A - The last Quarterly Labour Force Survey from the first quarter of this year indicated that a greater proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (NEETs) are women at 53.5% compared to 46.5% of men. Harambee's 12 years of being an innovator of solutions to address youth unemployment have shown us that female work-seekers have to navigate various broken systems and experience greater barriers in trying to access the labour market. In addition to high data costs and high transport costs of searching for work, young women face the disproportionate burden of unpaid caregiving and household responsibilities, which reduces the time available to look for and participate in paid work.

South Africa also has some of the highest rates of gender-based violence in the world. Whilst this speaks to the hardships that too many women face in their homes, it has also forced them to adapt their behaviour to safeguard their safety. This includes travelling for work during certain peak times, even though it is more expensive; or not taking on longer hours or shift work due to safety concerns on public transport.

Moreover, for those women who are in employment, whether it be in the formal or informal sector, they experience gender wage disparity - meaning that they earn less than their male counterparts for the same job.

Harambee has an intentional focus on supporting innovative programmes and initiatives that enable inclusive pathways for young women to become productively engaged in the economy. Through the multi-channel SA Youth platform, Harambee provides a network of 65% young women with free access to aggregated earning and learning opportunities as well as work-seeker support – they do not incur any data costs to join sayouth.mobi or receive any services.

Of significance is that we also partner with organisations such as BluLever Education on the Skills for Prosperity Artisan Programme to train and transition fearless female plumbers in a predominantly male-dominated sector. These remarkable women like Wendy Mohlwa are challenging stereotypes, overcoming gender biased behaviours in the workplace and starting to shift the gender narrative. Another critical outcome from this programme was the development of a maternity policy for skilling programmes that has been adopted by the industry body.

Together we must continue to lead change, and give these phenomenal young women an opportunity to shine! #womenempowerment



BUSISIWE KHABA

Principal Economic Policy & Regulation, Africa, Middle East & Turkey, Amazon Web Services

Q - What specific accomplishments or changes do you hope to see in the realm of gender equality and women's empowerment, and how do you believe we can collectively work towards achieving them?

A - Women emancipation remains key and forefront in the plight of women, and not just for the benefit of women but communities as well. I believe that women should have ample opportunities to take up leadership roles in all sectors even those that are predominately male dominated, including ICT and digital economy. As women we can't keep having these conversations by and amongst ourselves only. Men also need to become allies and support the course of women towards emancipation.

One of the simplest yet effective ways, is to invite men into these conversations so that they hear and learn more about the plight of women, not just in workplace but women's daily experiences. Next time your organisation has a Women's Day celebration, intentionally invite men leaders to sit in and break down what steps can be taken by men to alleviate the hurdle that women face daily, this may go a long way in shaping and enforcing the narrative of women emancipation.



RESHNI SINGH
CEO, BPESA

Q - Mentorship and support networks can be crucial for women's advancement in leadership. Have you had any mentors or support systems that played a vital role in your journey, and how do you encourage mentorship personally and among other women?

A - People are not born as leaders. Getting into a leadership position is a journey that includes a combination of skills and experience gained from self exposure and mentorship. For me mentors played a critical role in moulding me into the leader I am today. It's through their guidance, support and encouragement that I was able to succeed.

I am a strong advocate for women empowerment through mentorship and I believe it starts with leading by example, by sharing your story about how mentorship impacts on both your personal and professional growth. It's important to be open and honest while sharing your experiences, challenges and successes to inspire and connect with others who may benefit from your story and your guidance. Encourage women to be inspired by the success of accomplished women and seek strength from one another as opposed to being in competition. By fostering a culture of support, sharing, and growth, you can help promote mentorship among women on both a personal and broader level.

I believe that "Every women's success should be an inspiration to another. We're strongest when we cheer each other on."
Serena Williams





KHOLIWE MAKHOHLISO
Managing Director, SAP Southern Africa

Q - As a female leader could you share some insights into how you have been successful in creating opportunities for women, and what strategies or initiatives you believe are essential for fostering gender diversity and inclusion in the technology industry?

A - I have strived to be a conscious leader. My focus has been to ensure gender diversity, diversity & inclusion as a whole, and transformation strategies and initiatives are a priority at a board and executive level. Significantly, I have ensured that these strategies and initiatives are communicated across the organisation to ensure support and buy in from all stakeholders. The participation of women in executive positions is key, but just as significant is ensuring that women actively participate in the decision-making process. As the saying goes: "Diversity is having a seat at the table, inclusion is having a voice and belonging is having that voice heard & acted upon".



VALENCIA RISABA
Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Liquid Intelligent Technologies

Q - In celebration of Women's Day in South Africa, could you highlight the role that improved connectivity and technology play in advancing opportunities for women, particularly in rural and underserved areas? Additionally, can you share some of the initiatives or projects Liquid Intelligent Technologies has undertaken to bridge the digital gender gap and promote gender equality in the ICT sector?

A - With the immense growth of Africa's technology sector, ensuring diversity and inclusivity in the sector is crucial. Improved connectivity paves the way for women and youth in rural and underserved areas to access opportunities through spaces and platforms that, typically, would have required them to go beyond their means to be a part of. Through its recently launched Youth Empowerment Programme, Liquid Intelligent Technologies South Africa, has implemented a transformative initiative aimed empowering unemployed youth by providing them with comprehensive digital training, personal development, mentorship, and coaching to unlock entrepreneurship opportunities. The program has a long-term sustainability focus in that the beneficiaries (the majority of whom are young underprivileged and rural young women) are taught skills, that not only help them to secure employment in ICT, but to also create their own self-standing businesses and become sustainable entrepreneurs. The program is currently deployed in the Phokeng Region in the North-west, Gauteng and the Eastern Cape. Incentives include opportunities wherein participants stand to win a Business Start-up Package, with a financial boost to help them kickstart their ventures and turn their ideas into reality

Through these efforts, Liquid Intelligent Technologies seeks to break glass ceilings and allow women from rural and underserved areas access to opportunities that would, otherwise be exclusive to only those from privileged backgrounds





A Day in the Life of Nikki Popoola

Named by *Capacity* magazine on its **20 Women to Watch in 2021 Power List**, Nikki Popoola is Director, Sales – West Africa for WIOCC Group.

Passionate about wanting to share the fulfilment and enjoyment that women can have from pursuing a career within the global telecoms industry, Nikki is an experienced, senior telecoms industry professional and a founding member of the EMEA Chapter of the Women's Tech Forum (WTF). She also leads WIOCC's 'Women in WIOCC' group and is a mentor within WIOCC to three people.

Nikki is also a devoted mother (to a daughter at university) and a doting dog owner.

MORNING - I live in a quiet Oxfordshire village with my mother, who has been an absolute rock for me and without whom I wouldn't have been able to go back to work after the birth of my daughter, my daughter and two lovely dogs, Cosmo and Luna. As long as it's not thundering down, I generally start the day by getting up at the crack of dawn to take my dogs for a walk across the fields. They are an important part of my life and the walk gives me quality time to get my thoughts ordered ahead of the busy day ahead.

I have worked from home for over 17 years, however I spend a lot of time away traveling on business: which could be to meet clients/suppliers/regulatory bodies, to attend industry events and to meet with my own team. My travel takes me mainly across sub-Saharan Africa, spending a significant part of my time in Nigeria, where I currently have the most activity going on. I relish being back at home, most especially after returning from what, more often than not, has been a hectic business trip in a bustling city.

One of WIOCC's USPs is the development of bespoke, future-proof solutions that precisely meet the current and projected needs of our clients. A frequent fixture in my daily diary therefore is meeting with clients, to discuss scaling up the capacity and reach of the connectivity we provide them, so they can grow their business and increase their customer base.

Typically, this can be achieved by making greater use of WIOCC Group's unique converged open digital infrastructure, which combines a pan-Africa, carrier-neutral, open-access data centre operation (OADC) with access to a hyper-scale, open-access, high-capacity, subsea and terrestrial network (WIOCC). This creates a mesh of open-access connectivity hubs (core-to-edge data centres), interlinked through open-access networks, providing improved connectivity and data management, and enables cloud services to be delivered closer to the point of consumption - which means there is lower latency, which improves the end-user's experience, and reduced backhaul costs.

I also have meetings with **regulatory bodies** about further expanding WIOCC's terrestrial network in Nigeria, which will help further accelerate the country's digitisation by enabling even more businesses and households to take advantage of the increasing number of digital services, products and technologies. Following WIOCC's landing of the Equiano cable into an open-access, carrier-neutral data centre, OADC Lagos, and the linking of this data centre into WIOCC's open-access terrestrial network to create converged open digital infrastructure, which brought so much more capacity into the country (and region). And making the country/region more attractive for inward investment so I also schedule meetings with clients and prospects for **events** later this year, including **ITW Africa** (Nairobi, 12-14 September), and planning involvement/participation (as an exhibitor, expert panellist, speaker, etc) at **AfricaCom** (Cape Town, 13-16 November).

LUNCH - Oftentimes when I'm at home, due to my very busy schedule, I 'forget' to have breakfast and end up having a very late lunch at my desk. On the odd occasion, I try and arrange lunch with a friend, just to catch a breath from an otherwise hectic schedule.

AFTERNOON - Once a week I will have a session with one of my WIOCC mentees, where I listen to what they have to say and try to help them with any issues and challenges they may be facing. We are growing WIOCC's presence in West Africa, initially mainly in Nigeria, and so I often have meetings with infrastructure partners and suppliers as we work on increasing the capacity, reach and reliability of our network.

A few years ago, I founded the *Women in WIOCC* group, which meets monthly and provides a forum for women in WIOCC to meet and discuss any topics. I work hard to keep the content fresh, interesting and topical - the last meeting covered coaching, mentoring and sponsorship - so make sure I put in the time to keep these meetings interesting and relevant. In addition, we invite other inspirational women to share their experiences: earlier this year we had Funke Opeke, Founder and CEO of Main One, and next month we will have Chipso Mtasa, ex-MD of TelOne Zimbabwe.

WIOCC Group provides digital solutions to a wide range of organisations - from content providers, cloud operators and ISPS, to fixed-line and mobile telcos, WISPs and major enterprises. Developing tailored solutions which exactly meet their needs is what we do, so I will often have quite detailed meetings with **prospects**, to understand exactly what their requirements are now and in the future. This gives me the level of detail we need to be able to develop scalable, bespoke, end-to-end managed hyper scale connectivity solutions that would precisely meet the prospect's needs and enable them to increase their customer base.

I have found having a career in telecoms to be incredibly fulfilling and want as many women as possible to share that experience. In addition to the Women in WIOCC group, I am also a founding member of the EMEA Chapter of Women's Tech Forum (WTF) and so I am always looking to find ways to promote this group and what they do. Last year I organised the very first WTF event in Africa during the Africacom Conference in Cape Town under the sponsorship of OADC. It was great to meet with women young and old across our industry and share our experiences and inspire each other. I am looking forward to this year's event which I'm hoping will be even more inspirational.

When I have finished work for the day, I take my dogs out for another walk. This is good exercise for us all and helps me put into place what has happened during the day. In addition to walking the dogs I box twice a week and go to pilates and boot camp classes in the gym. My daughter and I love to engage in high adrenaline activities. In the last year, we have gone skydiving and ziplined on the fastest zipline in the world (in Wales). Fortunately, she still enjoys travelling with me: we were in Thailand together earlier this year and are off to Crete next week.

VH FIBRE OPTICS

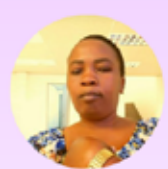
Supporting

WOMEN'S MONTH

Our company is fortunate to have an incredibly diverse and talented workforce, with women playing pivotal roles in every department and at every level. Their dedication, hard work, and innovative ideas have been instrumental in driving our success and fostering a positive work environment.

As VH Fibre, we are committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment, irrespective of gender or background. We firmly believe that a diverse workforce brings about creativity, innovation, both within the work place and our industry.

Managing Director - Johan Kleynhans



WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

WEBINAR: Latest Developments in Business Transformation



Must-Know trends for operational excellence.

Updated mid-year insights.



EXPERT SPEAKERS

Semakaleng Maherry
Solution Architect /
Consultant BITT

**Archimides
Panagiotides**
Solution Sales Lead

17 August 2023 | 10 - 11am | [Click here to register](#)

The Digital Council Africa, in collaboration with Software AG, hosted a highly informative webinar focused on imperative trends in achieving operational excellence.

As the landscape of work evolves swiftly, it brings forth both exciting prospects and intricacies. Acknowledging this dual nature of change, the webinar aimed to equip attendees with valuable insights to prepare their businesses for triumph. Software AG experts, Semakaleng Maherry and Archimides Panagiotides, delved into pivotal trends in business transformation and operational excellence. The session highlighted how these trends are already being harnessed by industry frontrunners.

The webinar proved to be a wealth of knowledge for attendees, offering a full trend map. This map not only assists in navigating emerging trends but also facilitates an in-depth understanding of pressing concerns and their inter-connections. Furthermore, the event provided attendees with the best strategies for enterprises. By unpacking these insights, attendees are well-positioned to leverage the power of operational excellence in the ever-evolving business landscape.

A recording of this insightful and thought provoking conversation can be found on our [YouTube channel](#).

Member Webinars

The Digital Council invites all members to participate in upcoming webinars, which will focus on key topics pertaining to the industry. These webinars will be held on an ad-hoc basis via the collaboration platform and will be communicated via the member mailing list. Please note that members may also request to host a webinar, provided that the content is relevant and informative. Please contact Reesha Iyer at reesha@digitalcouncil.africa.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH SMARTWORKS

Empower young work-seekers with second-hand, work-appropriate clothing for interviews and first jobs.



EVERYONE CAN GET INVOLVED THIS YOUTH MONTH!

This Youth Month we would like to invite you to join us in this incredible opportunity to make a meaningful difference and help unlock the potential of our South African youth by decluttering your closets and donating your gently used, work-appropriate clothing to Smartworks.

Smartworks is an initiative driven by our social partner Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, that provides young work-seekers with quality second-hand work-appropriate clothing to wear for an interview or to help them dress appropriately for their first job.

GET YOUR ENTIRE OFFICE INVOLVED!

Print or digitally distribute *this flyer* to your co-workers and employees!

Collected clothing can be dropped off at:

Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, 5th Floor, 19 Ameshoff Street, Braamfontein, 2000
Please mark all packages for the attention of Sandile Ngakane and Smartworks.

GUIDELINES:

- List of the items needed: suits, coats, jackets, formal shirts, skirts, chinos, shoes, ties, belts, handbags, briefcases, and more.
- We accept clothing for both men and women, of all sizes.
- We respectfully ask that donated clothing is clean and interview-ready, and not in need of major repairs.

Your contributions will go a long way in empowering and inspiring young individuals as they embark on their professional journeys.

Let's join hands to make a positive impact in our community.

If your company would like to get involved in a drive, but don't know where to start, ***contact us*** and we will help!

Thank you for your support and generosity.

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POPI ACT INFO

The Digital Council Africa respects your right to privacy and we aim to ensure that we comply with the POPI Act (Act 4 of 2013), which regulates the manner in which we collect, process, store, share and destroy any personal information which you have provided to us. Your personal information is strictly confidential and we will notify you immediately should we become aware of any unauthorised use, disclosure or processing of your personal information. Kindly note that you may choose to opt out at any time from all marketing and other communications by contacting Reesha Iyer at reesha@digitalcouncil.africa.

LOST AND FOUND

The Digital Council Africa has an [Equipment Monitoring page](#) on its website. The aim is to curb theft of equipment.

To view a list of stolen equipment, you can access the list [here](#).

We encourage members to regularly send through the serial numbers of stolen equipment, and inform us when equipment is recovered to ensure that the information remains up to date and accurate.

Information can be sent to Reesha Iyer at reesha@digitalcouncil.africa

In addition, it remains the responsibility of the industry to regularly do spot checks against the serial numbers of contractor equipment to ensure that stolen equipment is identified and that culprits are eradicated from the industry.

Companies wishing to purchase second hand equipment should compare the equipment serial numbers against those listed on the website.