



Celebrate: International Women's Day

SHE WILL BE HEARD:
After all the Women's Day Celebrations,
where to next?

Cloud & Service
Provider Africa
Working Group
(CISPA)

DCDT publishes
its draft Data &
Cloud Policy

Rapid Deployment
of Broadband
Infrastructure
Action Lab



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WELCOME FROM JUANITA

Dear Colleagues,

It is with great excitement that we bring you the next edition of Conext, the Digital Council Africa's official Newsletter. The aim of this publication is to let our members know what we have been busy with in the organisation, but also and probably more importantly, to provide a platform to our members to showcase their companies and products. Remember that this belongs to you, our members, and the publication is distributed to more than 10 000 people in sub Saharan Africa. So go on, share a thought leadership piece with us, or send us some information about your company.

In the office we are hard at work on several matters however the one that is currently stealing the lime light must be the draft Data and Cloud Policy that was published by the DCDT on the 1st April. Over the last few weeks we have established a working group to deal with the sector's response to the direction. Congratulations to Mike Silber and Avela Gronemeyer who were elected as Chair and Deputy Chair of the Working Group. We are now in the process of establishing Sub Committees to discuss and craft a formal response to the DCDT. A reminder that anyone who wants to participate in this work is welcome to join a sub committee.

A warm welcome also to our new board members Moses Mashisane (MTN) and Valencia Risaba (LIT) who have joined the board. We look forward to working with you and want to thank you for giving your time to help guide the organisation.

We are also proud to let you know that we recently signed an MOU with BPESA, (Business Process Enabling South Africa) and look forward to a strong collaboration between our two organisations, both of whom have a strong reliance on the digital economy and a vested interest in growing the digital economy. For those that do not know, SA was ranked the Top Global Business Services Location for 2021. No doubt BPESA has played a big role in helping to guide the sector to this number 1 spot. We look forward to finding ways of closer collaboration to grow our respective economies.

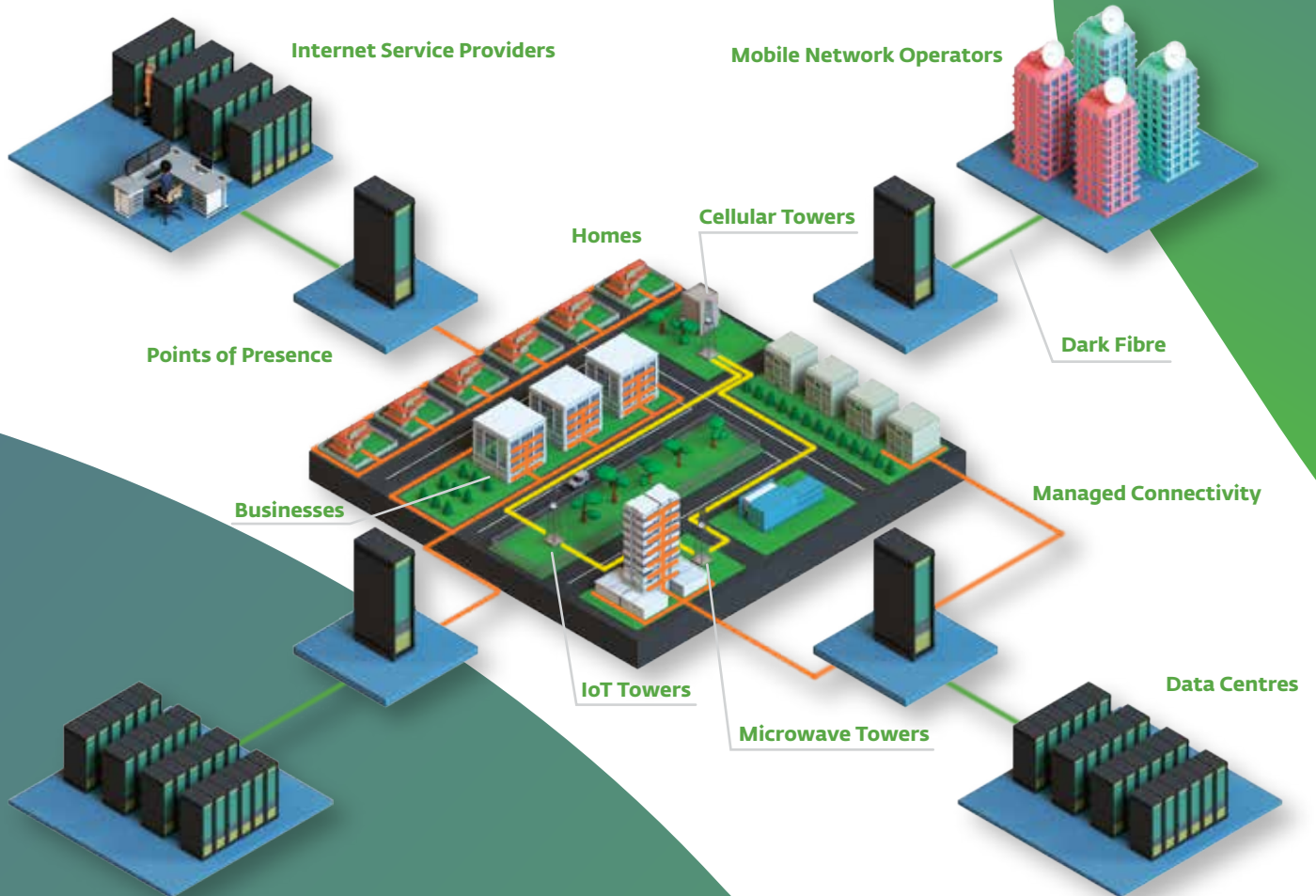
Another relationship we are very excited about growing is our engagement with Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator. The Digital Council believes that the digital economy poses incredible opportunity for the continent and remain committed to the inclusion of the youth in the future. Watch this space for more information on this exciting collaboration.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the organisation and its work. Without you none of it would be possible.

Yours,
Juanita Clark
CEO



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NOTICES

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 in-

terest 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.

STAY CONEXTED. Follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)



The 5G Economy:
Understanding its potential

Expert Speakers


- Dobek Pater**
Director: Business Development, Africa Analysis
- Rafs Meersman**
Chief Executive Officer, Comsol
- Kelly Fournier**
Head of Client Acquisition, Comsol

Member Webinar

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.

On April 8th 2021, the DCA hosted a webinar which looked at a deep dive into The 5G Economy and its Potential. Expert speakers include Dobek Pater from Africa Analysis who presented an overview on their new report entitled “The Future of 5G in South Africa”, which looks at how the market in SA is expected to evolve given the many factors impacting 5G network roll-outs and adoption of services. Raf Meersman and Kelly Fournier from Comsol added to the conversation, bringing a global perspective. Some of the topics presented on included:

- Why is 5G so different from 4G?
- The role of fibre for 5G
 - Delivering on the 5G promise
 - Backhaul versus fronthaul and capacity and latency needs
- Phased rollouts and converged networks: how to be 5G ready
 - Building a multi purpose 5G ready network
 - How much fibre? Where?
 - Fixed Wireless Access on 5G? When and where?
 - What are the challenges as opposed to FTTH?



2021 AGM
May 18 | 10am
AGENDA

AGM

Members are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Digital Council Africa.

Date: 18th May 2021

Time: 10:00 to 12:00

Please click [here](#) to register. A link for the virtual meeting will be distributed upon registration.

In Memory of



Mak Mbelenge

FTTX-DRC Council and its board wishes to inform all interested parties of the sudden passing on of **Mr. Mak Mbelenge** who duly served as the Head of Training Committee and who was instrumental in drafting the adoption of the Constitution as a founding member of this professional body. We are extremely saddened by the loss of our friend, colleague and family member. Mak was a pillar to our launch and was well known in DRC as the Director of Fibre Solutions a company well deserving of his name.

He succumbed to Covid in the UK on the morning of the 20/02/21.

Digital Council Africa and the board members of the FTTX Council DRC wish to extend our deepest condolences to his extended family, his wife and the 3 kids that he left behind. **We will live to his legacy!**



Chose Choeu



Monday, 8th February, 2021 – The ICT Industry and associated bodies in their entirety would like to extend its heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the well revered giant, Mr. Chose Choeu.

Mr Choeu began his career in the late seventies in the education and teaching field. He started out as a teacher in the Kuruman area and because of his passion for education moved up the ranks to the position of school principal. Following on from this, he ventured into a new challenge, being the ICT industry starting out as Senior Manager for Government Relations at Telkom. Subsequent to that, he again took on a new challenge of being in the regulatory arena as the Executive for Regulatory and Government Relations.

He then moved to Microsoft South Africa in 2003 as the Director of Legal and Corporate Affairs where he worked on cutting-edge business and regulatory issues in that environment. In 2010 he joined Eskom as the Divisional Executive for Corporate Affairs.

Because he also understood the evolution of the public policy and the regulatory space to enable technology advancement for social good, he redefined this function from one specifically focused on legal matters to one which merged business strategy with public policy. This then allowed for bilateral relations between the private sector and the public service to collaborate in the battle against the Triple Challenges of Poverty Inequality and Unemployment facing the country and continent. He was therefore a trailblazer in this space and allowed for those that followed in his footsteps in the entire industry to have a template of how it should be done. He also served on various boards including Chairman of the Eskom Development Foundation Board, Chairman of the Performance Management and Remuneration Panel of SALGA and President of the International Chamber of Commerce, amongst others.

His death will leave a great void in the sector but his contribution has significantly shaped the ICT sector as we know it today. He will be sorely missed by all those that knew him.

May his blessed soul rest in eternal peace.



FROM THE OFFICE

Message from the Treasurer

Dear Members

As a not-for-profit, the DCA is reliant on membership fees to effectively run the organisation. In this regard, we ask members whose fees are outstanding to make payment ensuring certainty in the execution of the budget.

Thank you to all member companies who already made payments for the 2021/2022 membership year and thank you for your continued support.



Annual Invoicing

The Council's bookkeepers have issued the annual invoices for the 2021/2022 membership year. If you have not received this by now, kindly reach out to Reesha Iyer at reesha@digitalcouncil.africa.

Please take note of the adjustment in fees to the *SMME/Institutional/Individual category*.

Member Certificates

Member Certificates for 2021 will be issued to members whose fees are up to date.

Please reach out to Reesha Iyer at reesha@digitalcouncil.africa to request a certificate for your organisation.

Database Management

To ensure that the relevant people in your organisation are receiving our communications, continually update the contact details of the individuals that should be added to the Council member database.

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

Want to feature your company in the upcoming Conext?

Reminders will be sent from the office to submit your feature. All members are encouraged to participate and showcase their company in Conext.

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](https://www.digitalcouncil.africa).

CONEXT Conference 2021



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Monday - Fibre

Tuesday - 5G

Wednesday - Cloud & Data

Thursday - Cyber Security & Governance

Friday - IoT & Edge

Welcome

A warm welcome to our new Board Members



VALENCIA RISABA

Valencia is an admitted Attorney of the High Court of South Africa. A seasoned commercial lawyer and capable manager with over 15 years of experience, 8 of which were in the Telecoms industry, she currently heads up Regulatory Affairs and Corporate Services at Liquid Telecom South Africa. She has served in legal and Regulatory roles in both the public and private sector, having worked in various capacities for a large State-Owned Entity (Eskom), and has a proven track record in the Telecoms sector in South Africa and African markets such as Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania.

Key areas of expertise include Commercial Law, Legal due diligence in major funding transactions, Labour law, Regulation, Stakeholder Management and Corporate Governance.

Valencia holds BProc and LLB degrees from the University of the Witwatersrand, a Higher Diploma in Corporate Law as well as a Masters' degree in Business Leadership from UNISA.



MOSES MASHISANE

Moses Mashisane is the General Manager for Legal and Regulatory Affairs at MTN South Africa.

Previous to joining MTN Moses was a Council Advisor at the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA).

Moses joined MTN as Head of Regulatory Affairs for MTN Nigeria. He also worked as GM Regulatory Affairs at MTN Irancell.

Moses has extensive legal and regulatory experience and will be a great asset to the Digital Council Africa board and will provide excellent guidance on compliance issues and other regulatory developments affecting plans and programs of the Digital Council Africa and its members on matters which is legal or regulatory in nature.

MiRO

a member of the **Hudaco** group

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Hello

A warm welcome to our new Members



Maluleke Telecoms is a Level-1 BBBEE service provider for Telecommunications Infrastructure and was founded in 2015. We are a full turnkey service provider for Fibre Optic Infrastructure. Our services include feasibility studies, site survey, planning, civil build, cable termination and project commissioning. Over the past 6 years we have proved our capability of delivering high quality services and being reliable. This is what sets us apart from our competitors.

At Maluleke Telecoms, our values are what define and guide us, and we realize that our success and sustainability depends on them. It is for this reason that we strive to always abide by our values. We believe that being Ethical, Professional and Excellent in providing our services and interacting with our clients will allow us to secure long-lasting relationships with our clients. With that said, we promise our clients that they will always get value for their money.



MTD Civils and Network Planning is a full turnkey FTTx specialist with extensive knowledge in fibre networks including civils work for overhead solutions, trenched solutions, maintenance, and installations. They are an owner-managed company established in 2015 and based in Gauteng province.

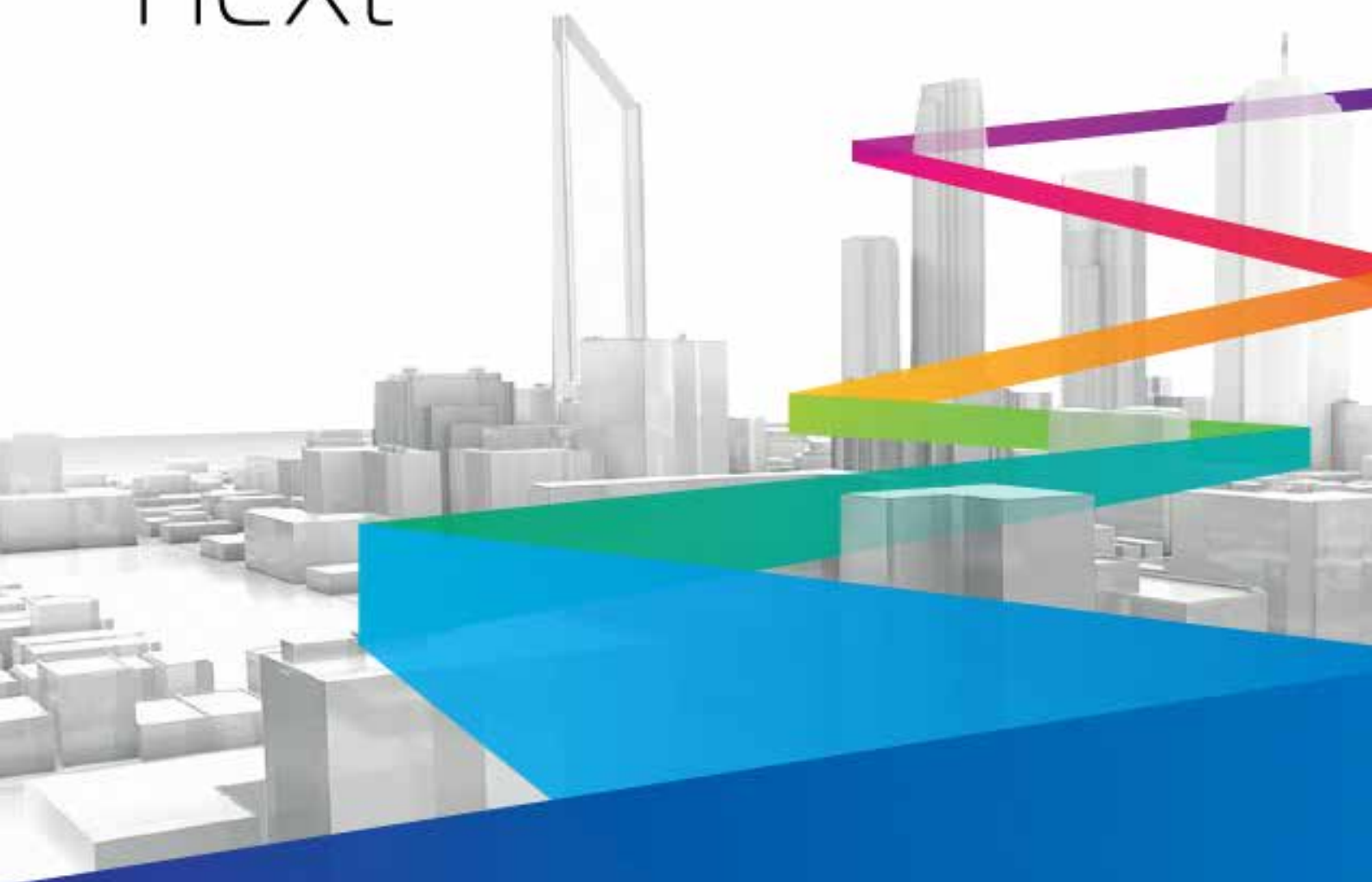
MTD offers a range of services including wayleave applications, planning and building overhead or trenched fibre solutions to installations, tailoring services to meet their clients' needs.



Helios Towers (HT) owns and operates telecommunications towers and passive infrastructure in five high-growth African markets. Our principal business lies in building, acquiring and operating telecommunications towers that are capable of accommodating and powering the needs of multiple tenants.

These tenants are typically large MNOs and other telecommunications providers who in turn provide wireless voice and data services, primarily to end-consumers and businesses. We also offer comprehensive tower-related operational services, including site selection, site preparation, maintenance, security and power management. We provide space on their tower sites under a combination of master lease agreements (MLAs), which provide the commercial terms that govern the provision of tower space, and individual site agreements (ISAs), which act as an appendix to the relevant MLA and include site-specific information. We also enter into ground lease agreements with property owners to host our sites on their land.

now meets next



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International *women's* day

8 March is the day that globally we celebrate the progress that we have made in terms of gender inclusion. We consider the progress that has been made and the work that remains to be done.

Even in 2021 women and girls are more likely to be poor, unable to get an education, and not have the same career opportunities or access to funding. Women are still the victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and human trafficking and exploitation, and although this is changing, we have a long way to go.

For those that know anything about the organisation, you know that the rights of women and the you girl is a matter that is close to our hearts. You will also know that I believe in getting things done, not just talk about it.

This conversation is not just by woman, for woman. **Every man, woman, boy and girl has to acknowledge that equality is not a privilege, it's a right.** Access

to equal education is not a privilege, it's a right. Access to equal promotion is not a privilege, it's a right and access to equal pay is not a privilege, it's a right. We need to reset the way we think about things and make sure that we do it right going forward. I do not know a single woman that wants to be employed simply because she is a woman. I do know woman that want to be employed because they are the best candidate.

So for every employer out there, here is my dare today: So, next time you read a CV, delete the name of the candidate of the CV's and recruit and promote the person that is best for the job and secondly, institute a policy that will enforce equal pay.

Thirdly, tell us about it. We want to honour you and your company so you will attract the best candidates! If you are already doing it, we salute you! Let us know who you are!

Juanita Clark | Chief Executive | Digital Council Africa





SHE WILL BE HEARD:

After all the Women's Day Celebrations, where to next?

by Phumza Dyani

The sound of women spread like fire across the globe and was unmistakably audible this year with a resounding message of, 'less talk' and 'more action', across the board. What we have learnt is that the plight of women was magnified significantly by the pandemic. At the same time, this phase proved to be the greatest unifier through global actions of women participating in platforms never thought of before. It also taught us the importance of an amplified voice and message from women globally.

Let us never forget that women are at the cornerstone of society, women are not just in the kitchen anymore, they have been most of the Angels showing up during the Covid19 war in the most obscure corridors of society, at war to save lives. Why then, does this significance does not translate into harder conversations about equality, surely, we are not a society that says a female life is of less importance than a male life. Or is that what we are saying?

One thing we have learnt to recognise as women is that our voices are so powerful and can create the change we want to see. What is important is to take the same messages shared in the International Womens' Day platforms to our individual lives, our Corporates, organisations as well as Boards. We need to personalise them and to further interrogate things that are of concern to us which we say nothing about. We need to look at how our bodies respond to these and find a language for them to bring them to the fore. The time to be a bystander on issues affecting women is over. What affects another woman affects all of us and we need to bring the different perspectives, cultures, and context to these conversations. The more it is heard, whether through Talks, writing, music, poetry, the more it makes a shift in the world that 'Enough is Enough'.

"Some women get erased a little at a time, some all at once. Some reappear. Every woman who appears wrestles with the forces that would have her dissappear. She struggles with the forces that would tell her story for her, or write her out of the stpry, the genealog, the rights of man, the rule of law. The ability to tell your own story in words or images, is already a victory, already a revolt." Rebecca Solnit, Men Explaining Things to Me.

Continue to raise your Voice.

By raising our voice, we bring this into conscience what is acceptable and what is not. We need women lawyers to be more vocal, educate and assist the rest of us with what legislations and policies that need to change to support women. We need businesswomen to come up with ideas and solutions of how to better assist women become independent, creating businesses and earn their own keep. We need teachers to create curriculum that will assist us in progressing the education of women and men. The International Women's Forum is advocating for Harvard to introduce a curriculum on Gender Parity. Every woman is a potential Advocate for change, this work should not be left to just Activists or major Events.

'I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own' - Audre Lorde.

Do not miss the opportunity to call things out.

Secondly, we need to speak whenever we see behaviours that perpetuate inequality around us. One day at our Exco, which is predominantly 80% male, we had a lady presenting a particularly important piece of work which was critical to establishing a Woman's movement within the organisation. We had a young gentleman that had an interest in this document and kept on asking questions, which sounded helpful initially. As time went on, I became uncomfortable with the extent of the interrogation vs his reactions to others in the past. The tone and the

way he did this was irking me, but I held back, deciding to see where this would end. At some point, it was just unbearable for me. I had to intervene and point out my unappreciation for the manner he was doing this. To my surprise, nobody in the room saw anything wrong with his approach except for me and the lady involved. This is where I could have left it off. I said, I am sorry, you may not see this antagonistic approach that is being used in these questions, but I see it and I feel it. As a Senior in this room and the only woman that can point this out, I cannot continue and say it is ok. It is not ok. There is a way to raise points and a way a person is made to feel like they are being cross questioned in a court of Law. I cannot sit by and not point that out. To my surprise, the Senior gentleman in the room acknowledged that there is a long way to go in learning as well as unlearning certain behaviours. He was open to learn.

In hindsight, I reflect on the message I would have sent to this bright young lady who was courageous enough to stand and

be a Chairperson of this Movement. It would have killed the energy of what we were attempting to form here. It would have marked that we are doing all of what we are doing for window-dressing and nothing would, infact, change. What she saw in action was the endorsement that we build these structures to drive not only change for us but for generations to come. That on its own requires us to be authentic and truthful.

Recognise the contribution some men are making.

We must recognise the men that are showing fairness and supporting women either through behavior, actions and support that they too are playing a role in driving for a change. We need to encourage and educate them as to where they can do more. What we need to recognise is that the real fight is not against men but for equal treatment of women. In the celebrations, my consistent question was, 'Where



are the men and what are they choosing to challenge. Are they willing to challenge themselves to understand that this is a bigger war than themselves and what they contribute adds to the tapestry that is important for this time?’

President Biden’s composition of his team as well as the statements he made boldly placed his mouth where his money is at. It was a living action of inclusiveness and not just lip-service. We are forever grateful to the countries that have led this message and look to others to follow suit.

Equal voice in decision making, more bold and intentional moves to make the change.

What we need to recognise more of, I quote from one of my most powerful interviews on my Podcast: She-Unleashed with Modesta Mahiga-Mbughuni - ‘A woman who has agency in her voice, is earning her own income and is able to influence things, is going to have a different conversation in her homestead and society vs a woman who doesn’t, and feels is at the mercy of her home and community’. It has never been more important to have deeper conversations on the types of movements we need to be part of to be effective. We need to lobby and vote for more women in influential positions to drive

change. Women need to also, independently, seek for spaces of influence and not lose sight of the purpose they are there for.

‘Above all, be the heroine of your life, not the victim.’ Nora Ephron

Accountability for change.

Now I have been part of many Women development focused organisations and at times, it is a tragedy to see that there is an expectation for leadership to drive the change. Each one has a role to play in effecting change, however small their contribution may be. In the true words of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *We should all be feminists*: ‘I have chosen to no longer be apologetic for my femaleness and my femininity. And I want to be respected in all my femaleness because I deserve to be.’ May we all arise to this noble calling knowing that our daughters are dependent on the actions we take to have a future where they are respected, treated as equals and allowed to thrive.

Choose to Challenge.

‘I love to see a young girl go out and grab the world by the lapels. Life is a bitch. You have got to go out and kick ass’ Maya Angelou.

Morgan Markle was the epitome of strength in this year, where a woman took on one of the most powerful institutions ever and refused to be silenced by those

perceived to be powerful. It called for all of us to, with fierceness, face those we perceive to be powerful and in turn suppressing who we are.

Stay true to who you are.

‘You had power all along my dear’ Glinda the Good Witch The Wizard of Oz

A powerful lesson for this time is that there is a great need for a female energy leadership, especially at these times where the world is calling for fair, inclusive recovery. We have learned that we are perfect in our imperfections and the female leader needs to appear in her true strength of femininity, nurturing and unifier. Despite the world having told us we are not adequate, not strong enough, not good enough, we are in fact Perfect!



Phumza Dyani

‘I love to see a young girl go out and grab the world by the lapels. Life is a bitch. You have got to go out and kick ass’ Maya Angelou.



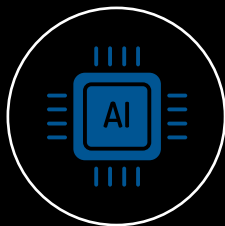
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MetroFibre Networx

MetroFibre Networx revolutionised fibre for business in South Africa when it became SA's first globally compliant Carrier Ethernet 2.0 (CE 2.0) open access fibre network, connecting cloud, application, voice and Internet service providers with their customers in 2010.

Today, MetroFibre is a South African ICASA-licensed open access fibre network operator and internet service provider to many of SA's leading blue-chip companies, multinationals, SMEs and thousands of connected residential customers.

As a rapidly growing business, powered by passionate and committed people who are making world-class connectivity possible for businesses and homes across the country, our investors include AIIM, STOA Infra and Energy, Sanlam,

African Rainbow Capital, management and others. We are a proud, home grown company where superior quality, customer satisfaction, respect, integrity and teamwork are part of our DNA. MetroFibre Networx is actively involved in and members of our industry bodies - the MEF Forum and the Digital Council Africa.

We take our role seriously when shaping and promoting best practice to provide world class connectivity for our customers. We are immensely proud of the facilitating role we play in making our country and cities more connected and integrated places to work, live, transact, learn and engage. It's a bright and exciting technology-enabled future, and we want to enable all our customers to enjoy the benefits it will bring.



CISCO and Broadband Infraco Roundtable Discussion Tech Trends of the future

On 24th March Juanita participated in the Tech Trends of the future Roundtable Discussion. Some of the topics discussed during this engaging digital webinar were:

Unpacking, with industry experts, the tech trends that will significantly contribute to a transformation of society and grow the economy. These trends will significantly change the way we work, live and play! COVID-19 has shown us that it is difficult to predict or define exactly what our future looks like, we have had to adapt to a digital way of life at a much faster pace than before. This pandemic has however accelerated digital transformation and it has become apparent that it not just the workplace that will rely heavily on technology. Organizations will pursue digital investments that will enable the company to achieve its goals and deliver value faster, better, and more competitively.

India / SA Bi-Lateral Meeting



Juanita joined **BPESA**, a not-for-profit company that serves as the industry body and trade association for Global Business Services in South Africa, and **NASSCOM**, the premier trade body and chamber of commerce of the Tech industry in India, as a speaker at an event aimed at exposing Indian based organisations to Africa as a growth and collaboration market. The focus is across the Global Business Services Sector with a lens on ITES (IT enabled Services), Digital and ITO (IT Outsourcing). The session took place on 10th February 2021 from 10am – 12pm.

Serving the international and domestic markets BPESA promotes domestic and foreign investment into the Global Business Services Sector in South Africa and works with its partners to stimulate economic growth, new job creation and skills development.

The ICT Industry must work together to attract and retain skills

A study estimates that South Africa has a skills shortage of close to 70,000 ICT professionals which is further exacerbated by the drop in students pursuing qualifications in this field. This at a time when these industries are becoming ever more crucial to meet the future needs of our increasingly digital societies. There is a growing need for companies within the sector to invest more in attracting and retaining people not only for their own organizations but also for their sectors as a whole.

The most recent SA ICT Skills survey highlighted this shortage and stressed the importance of co-ordinated efforts to cover the various industry niches that must be resourced. Making the sector more attractive and rewarding to work in, as well as joint efforts to develop the required skills, puts a renewed focus on human resources: we must be more deliberate in our people management practices to secure our long-term success.

People are often recognized as the greatest assets of organizations and are crucial to the achievement of business strategy. An article on the WEF website goes as far as to say that people are what set successful companies apart from their peers. As people standards and practices evolve, it is vitally important for any organization to assess its competence and performance objectively in this area.

Without external measurements, such as external benchmarking and comparisons against peers, it is easy for an organisation to lose touch with what is happening in its industry or the larger market; it could soon find itself losing valuable skills and struggling to replace them.

The factors that could lead to this often lie beyond salary and benefit comparisons and may not always be easy to pinpoint. Factors which were often overlooked in the past have become key focus areas as organizations realize the value of taking better care of their employees and ensuring that they are fully engaged. For example, research by the Top Employers Institute highlights the increased consciousness brought about by social movements, such as Black Lives Matter, that have also spurred organizations on towards putting diversity and inclusion at the forefront of people practices. In the same way, the drive for gender diversity and equality means that organizations must pay more attention to their people practices in this area too.

Employers are also realizing the need for purpose and fulfilment as well as development and growth – making sure that they support their people to be the best they can be. Apart from formal programmes and avenues to promote well-being and development, simple communication with managers and team members is one of the major ways to maintain awareness of some of the key factors that may affect people and their performance.

In 2020 specifically, organizations' ability to ensure that employees were able to continue to work as smoothly as



Portia Thokoane, Chief Human Capital Officer at DFA

though they were on site became a major differentiator in how the pandemic impacted employee productivity and engagement. This meant not only providing the necessary tools for remote work but also beefing up remote IT support and cybersecurity. And it meant taking measures to mitigate the emotional and psychological impact of being isolated from normal work life.

When DFA embarked on its journey to be recognized as a Top Employer, we knew that, in addition to being an opportunity to attain a status as a company that is concerned about its people practices, it would give us an understanding of what we needed to do better. Being a part of the ICT sector, we felt that being certified as a Top Employer would contribute to boosting the appeal of the industry as a potential field of study and career path.

Of course, being one of a handful of companies in our sector with this certification is not the end – we also hope that it would encourage the rest of the fantastic ICT companies out there to follow suit and show their commitment towards excellence in people practices. We must work together to ensure that our industry has the valuable people it needs to sustain itself and thrive well into the future.

CLOUD AND SERVICE PROVIDER AFRICA WORKING GROUP (CISPA)

DCDT publishes its draft Data and Cloud Policy

The Digital Council has established the Cloud and Service Provider Africa Working Group (CISPA) to develop and support the adoption of an integrated reporting framework which seeks to support industry stakeholders with a vested interest in the Cloud and Data environments and to:

- Develop and publish a sector position on the Draft Data and Cloud Policy which was published by the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies on the 1st April 2021;
- and to develop and publish a common industry stakeholder point of view;
- and make clear the position of the sector by engaging government and other key stakeholders on aspects relating to the Data and Cloud policy environment;



At a meeting held on 13th April 2021, **Mike Silber**, Group Chief Regulatory Officer at Liquid Intelligent Technologies was appointed as Chair and **Avela Gronemeyer**, Health & Public Service: Digital Transformation & Innovation at Accenture was appointed as Vice Chair.

The Digital Council will provide ongoing support to the Chair and Vice Chair and will facilitate, on behalf of the sector, workshops and meetings as may be necessary to achieve its objectives.

Should you wish to participate in this working group, please email reesha@digitalcouncil.africa.



Juanita Clark elected as President of the FCGA

The FTTH Councils Global Alliance (FCGA) is a platform of the six global FTTH Councils in Americas, Latam, Europe, MENA, Africa and APAC. Since 2011, they all ensure that regional commitments are always combined with the power of global co-operation. As part of this a new President is elected every year to chair the initiative and to help develop global initiatives and projects. As part of the Presidential term they identify a project which they will aim to deliver during their tenure. During the 2021 general meeting Juanita Clark was elected to serve as President for the 2021 term. As part of her term Juanita has elected to focus on the impact of the pandemic on the future of work and demand for broadband services. Globally the COVID19 pandemic has forced many companies into remote-work arrangements in an attempt to curb the pandemic. Many companies now face complicated decisions pertaining to whether their staff will return to work, remain at home, or somewhere in the middle.

The Digital Council Africa, in collaboration with its FCGA partners, has embarked on a global study to better understand how companies are viewing the issue of Work From Home and what that will mean for demand. The results of the study will be presented at a global webinar accommodating 2 time zones. Please watch this space for more information on the webinar and results.

Communications Africa Afrique

Fibre in Africa

Juanita was interviewed by Communications Africa.

Published bi-monthly for over 20 years, Communications Africa is the leading pan-African communications magazine. Its editorial covers telecoms, broadcast and convergence subjects, in both English and French. The magazine is distributed to technical, commercial and government executives, involved in telecoms and broadcasting, throughout the continent. Every issue includes reports on key industry events and analysis of local, national and regional developments in the telecoms and broadcast sectors.

Q Despite the dominance of wireless in much of Africa, there seems to be more optimism that fibre to the home or premises could have a role in Africa's communications future. Why is this?

A Fibre is often seen only in the context of FTTH and whether there is a business case for end to end fibre networks, but fibre also forms a part of mobile communications network architecture as well. As more people in Africa come online, there is a greater need to deploy backhaul infrastructure to accommodate demand.

Q How has the arrival of subsea cables helped the development of FTTx?

A Ofcourse the early disrupters took great risks when they built sub-marine cables as take-up was not as clear cut as they might have liked, a Decade or so ago, most fibre network operators worked on the premise of 'build it and they will come'. Most of them have been incredibly successful and today we know that the arrival of sub-marine cables have played a significant role in providing the capacity for African consumers to connect to the rest of the world, at speeds, and prices, never seen before. The demand has been staggering and

has resulted in many more cables being deployed, connecting Africa to every corner of the world. Without them the terrestrial fibre industry certainly would not be where it is today.

Q Has the regulatory landscape improved in recent years?

A It has been very slow but we are beginning to see significant change now. As with the rest of the world the COVID19 pandemic have played a big role in highlighting the need for fibre optic infrastructure. For a long time many governments – and investors - viewed the telco sector as an 'either/or' – either you provide mobile communications or you provide fibre communications, and many people believed and touted Africa to be the mobile continent. Today we know that the two technologies cannot be separated and that they heavily rely on each other. It has taken a lot of education but we are getting there. What we still need is for policies to be developed that will enable the rapid deployment of infrastructure. As with most other countries in the world there are still issues with obtaining rights of way (wayleaves), and there are too many diverse policies in place or no policy at all. It slows down the pace at which companies can deploy. Also, we

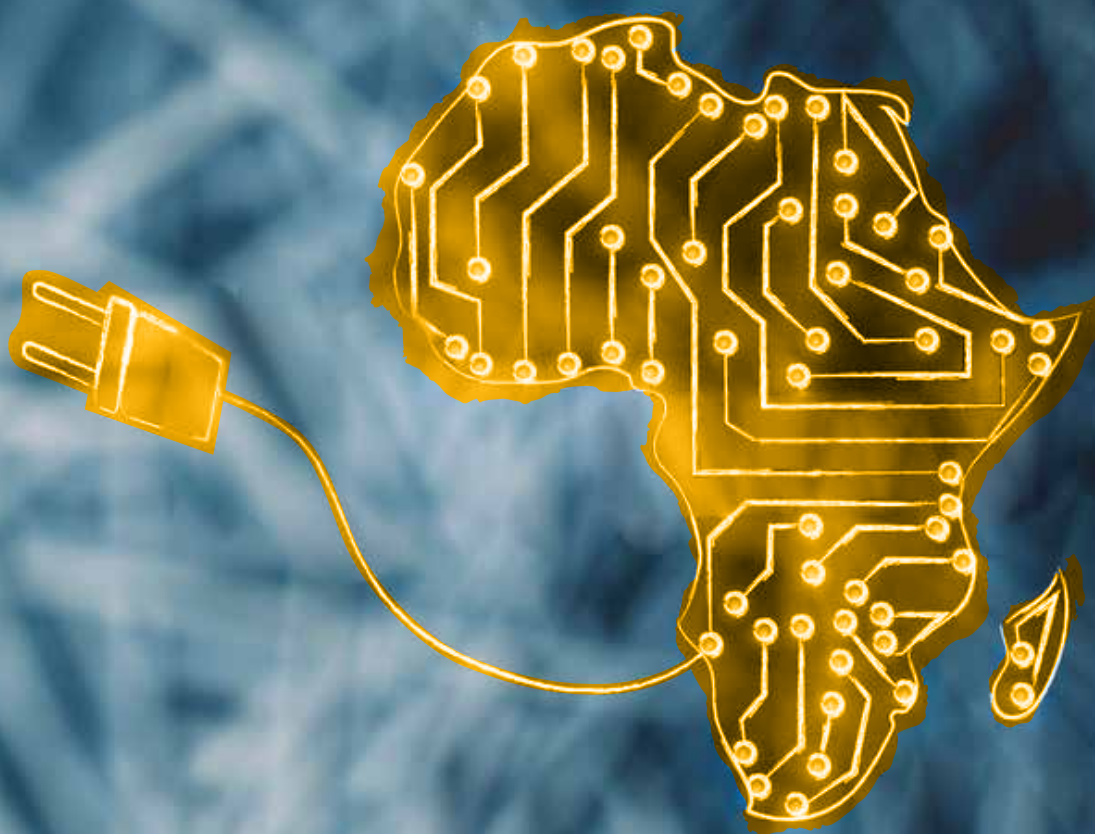
have to manage the costs associated with approvals, and standardise so that companies can plan more effectively. Although we have come a long way there is still much needed work to be done to remove cumbersome processes and costs so we can move faster.

Q How about cost? Is rollout becoming easier as economies of scale bring costs down?

A Costs have come down significantly certainly due to economies of scale, but Fibre Network Operators have also learnt some lessons and have become significantly more efficient in adopting cost effective deployment methodologies and adjusting their deployment strategy in general. Also, as governments attitude towards the applications and approvals sped up it has helped projects move forward and planning to become more stable. The maturity of the regulatory market has a definite impact on the total cost of ownership.

Q What technological developments are making fibre more effective to use and roll out?

A Many companies have certainly learnt that there is a place for other methodologies such as aerial deployment. Although we would



like to see every meter of fibre deployed below ground, for obvious benefits, it simply does not support the business case in the more rural areas.

Q Is the African end user market for fibre mainly business-based or are there ways to make fibre to the home affordable?

A The FTTH market is showing substantial growth and demand continues to increase, especially since the pandemic hit us. FTTH providers have seen demand increase by as much as 40% and this is expected to continue as Work From Home becomes the norm for many people. We are also expecting fibre to start reaching more rural towns as people exit the major cities since they do not have to report to a office anymore. This tendency will have a major impact on urbanisation, and we are strong-

ly encouraging business to adopt WFH strategies. The price of FTTH service continues to decline as the take rate increase, and currently, especially in South Africa, the price point compares very favourably in comparison with mobile data.

Q What other challenges need to be overcome to bring more broadband services to more Africans?

A Africa faces many challenges, many of them socio economic. Unfortunately many governments still think that connectivity is the least of their problems. Therefore the fibre landscape varies widely in Africa which makes it a challenge to isolate a single issue to be overcome. In more mature markets there are very different challenges to markets that have just had a cable land. Sharing of lessons across Africa is very important as is ongoing policy changes to ensure

that fibre is deployed at scale. The greatest challenge is that every country is at its own stage and needs ongoing engagement and support and this requires an immense amount of capacity to help change this.

Q What do you see as your role in bringing digital connectivity to more Africans?

A Digital disruption is challenging the status quo of traditional industries, generating a continuous flow of innovation and new technologies affecting stakeholders and industry. The Digital Council Africa works to raise awareness for the potential of the digital economy and our members are deeply committed to ensuring that every African is included and can enjoy the benefits of the digital economy.

CREATING WHAT CONNECTS US



Connectivity enables an enormous range of additional capabilities. Every industry either directly depends on, or hugely benefits from, the proliferation of smartphones – primarily because people who've never had a bank account or a secure way to save, transfer, and invest money now have all of that in the palm of their hands.

Dura-Line has been there every step of the way. We started out in the U.S.

as just a small extrusion company in Middlesboro, Kentucky, but have grown to over 20 locations worldwide, including Canada, India, Oman, and Europe. We don't know everything about everything, just everything there is to know about HDPE conduit. Our staff of highly trained and specialized engineers have been hands-on problem-solving with the telecommunications industry since the dawn of cell phones. Dura-Line is at the forefront of the industry creating strategic solutions that solve the issue of the unpredictable needs of tomorrow's fiber cable requirements.

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In one year, Dura-Line produced over 1.4 billion feet of digital network infrastructure. Through our innovative product solutions and unparalleled customer insight, we are the ones who enable the

physical build-out of this new technology realm that impacts education, healthcare, agriculture, energy, transportation, industry, and more.

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Rapid Deployment of Broadband Infrastructure Action Lab

The Gauteng Province, the Public Private Growth Initiative, in partnership with the Digital Council Africa and Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, participated in the next GPG Action Lab to discuss the Rapid Deployment of Broadband Infrastructure.

This initiative by the Gauteng Province will see GPG take the lead in deploying cost effective broadband infrastructure to under-served township areas within the provinces.

Access to technology and connectivity became a defining feature of effective responses to COVID-19 and the lockdown. Those with

digital access rapidly adjusted their living and work patterns; however those without were further marginalised. This trend is expected to continue globally as work and learning from home increases in the next few years. This poses a great threat to the country and may dramatically increase the gap between high income and low-income communities, including the digital divide.

A reset that opens the digital world to all South Africans is vital, but this will require innovative and cost-effective solutions, with the public and private sectors working in collaboration. This project is a

key component contributing to the President's priority to ensure digital access for all and in turn inclusion in the digital economy.

The aim of the collaboration is to remove blockages and stimulate investment in broadband infrastructure to under-served township areas of Gauteng Province. In order for this project to be successful, effective implementation is key.

Much of the groundwork has been done to address this and a draft broadband deployment framework has been developed for consideration by the Action Lab.

Captains of Industry session with MEC Parks Tau



Juanita was a speaker at the Gauteng Provincial Government Captains of Industry session hosted by MEC Parks Tau. She joined Evan Jones from BPESA, Tanya Cohen from the PPGI and several other high profile speakers as they discussed the work they are doing in collaboration with the Gauteng Provincial Government Economic Development.

Juanita focussed on the Province's Rapid Deployment of Broadband strategy that they have been developing in conjunctions with SEA (Strategy Execution Advisors) which is built on 4 Focus areas which aims to remove barriers to entry.

The Digital Council Africa will host a session with its members to present the strategy as soon as the final presentation is approved by the Office of the Premier. It is now in its final phase considering execution and associated project KPI's.



THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Digital Council Africa Participates in Infrastructure South Africa Strategic Planning Session

In November 2019, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the establishment of the Infrastructure and Investment Office in the Presidency and in May 2020 cabinet confirmed the establishment of Infrastructure South Africa (ISA) as part of approving the South African Investment Plan.

ISA is now deemed the single point of entry for all infrastructure projects and the custodian of the comprehensive infrastructure project pipeline.

The decision by cabinet has warranted the review of the mandate of the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Council (PICC) Technical Task Team which has since merged with the Infrastructure and Investment Office in the Presidency to form what is now referred to as ISA.

To this end, ISA hosted its first comprehensive Strategic Planning Session which focussed on providing thought leadership and strategic thinking and ideas to the ISA team on its mandated areas. ISA invited the Digital Council Africa to attend the strategic planning session to add value to the strategic discussion that took place over 2 days.

[Click to read](#) the letter from Dr Kgosiensho Ramokgopa, Head: Investment and Infrastructure Office, Presidency.

Juanita participated in the **Development of the FTTx sector in South Africa and Future Prospects** discussion.

Tuesday 13 April | 12:00 SAST

FTTx – Development of the FTTx sector in South Africa and future prospects

Moderator:
Juanita Clark
CEO
DIGITAL COUNCIL AFRICA

David Cooke
Partner
ACTIS

Kobus Viljoen
CFO
CIVH

Abraham Van der Merwe
Founder & CEO
FROGFOOT NETWORKS

Alan Knott-Craig
Founder
HEROTEL

Jan-Jan Bezuidenhout
CEO
METROFIBRE

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Executive,
Telecommunications,
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National Digital Skills Forum

Department of Communications and Digital Technologies announce the formation of National Digital Skills Forum:

South Africa has many industry and government digital skills initiatives that are underway, some of which are carried out through industry-government partnerships.

The biggest challenge and concern is the silo approach in the development as well as implementation of these initiatives which lead to duplication of resources and general lack of visible impact.

The National Digital and Future Skills Strategy, developed by the Department of Communication and Digital Technologies (DCDT), is intended to provide a framework

for the prioritisation of critical digital and future skills as well as to ensure coordinated and integrated implementation across government and various sectors.

The National Digital and Future Skills Strategy recognises the importance of leadership and governance to ensure successful digital skills generation and development for the next five years to ensure future impact. The Strategy proposed the establishment of the Digital Skills Forum as an institutional mechanism that will ensure a coordinated implementation of the digital skills programme. This is also echoed in the recommendations of the diagnostic report of the Presidential Commission on the 4th Industrial Revolution (PC4IR) which acknowledges that the skills devel-

opment ecosystem is characterised by a silo mentality and expresses concerns about the speed at which entities are able to adapt and change curricula to accommodate the needs of the workplace.

The Digital and Future Skills Strategy states that the Digital Skills Forum will provide technical digital skills support to the broader work of the HRDC and ensure coordinated implementation of the digital skills programme with secretarial support from the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies. The Digital Council Africa will participate in the forum and the participation will be led by Juanita Clark and Sipho Makhelema. For more information on the Digital Skills Forum and the Terms of Reference [read here](#).



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OUR PRODUCTS BUILD NETWORKS

m4a (Pty) Ltd is an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) with the following manufacturing technologies: extrusion, injection moulding and compression moulding. Our 4 Telecommunication Outside Plant (OSP) product pillars include **axsCHAMBERS™**, **CNKT™**, **fibreDUCT™** and **fibreCABLE™**. Our investments in Modern Composite Technology manufacturing assures high performance and world-class products.

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A selection of Connectivity Solutions complementing our fibreDUCT™ and axsCHAMBER™ Range of products. This includes Fibre Splice Enclosures, Cable and Accessories.

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End to end solutions including Heavy Duty Duct Cable, Micro Blown Cable and Aerial Cable Short Span for Telecommunications Networks.

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KEY TECHNOLOGY AREAS

Service Provider vendor Management

- Delivering services over Closed and Open Access networks to FTTH and FTTB markets

Layer 2 Service Management over 3rd Party networks

- For FTTH & FTTB on a Pay-As-You-Grow Model

Colocation Services

- Presence in all Teraco data Centre locations in South Africa
- Enabling FNO & ISP services on a Pay-As-You-Grow Model

Last Mile backhaul

- Connection service delivery, provisioning, management & support on multiple networks across South Africa

Open Access

- ISP Delivery over multiple Networks
- Delivery of services to multiple ISPs

Infrastructure design services

- Complete design and specification of active and passive infrastructure to international ITU/IEEE standards

FSN Capabilities

- Design, costing, implementation & management of projects involving Fibre Optics
- Tailor-made proposals, business models & solutions
- Installation, commissioning, support & maintenance on all active and passive networks
- Service Level Agreements specific to client's requirements
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A NETWORK FOR YOUR GATED COMMUNITY

A TEC, founded in 2005, is a specialist ICT company focusing on satisfying the telecommunication, Security and management needs for clients situated within Gated Residential and Commercial communities.

FibreSuburb Networks is a division of ATEC Systems and Technologies Pty Ltd.

A TEC has been one of the pioneers of fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) industry in achieving the following milestones:

- First company to provide true FTTH in a gated community
- First Company to provide true FTTH in a residential suburb
- Founding Member of the Association for Residential Communities (ARC)
- Founding Member of the FTTH council for Africa, now known as the Digital Council Africa
- Ability to build hybrid networks which facilitate GPON and point to point network topology on the same network

FibreSuburb Networks is led and managed by an experienced, dynamic and passionate team. Every solution we deliver is accompanied by a comprehensive service level agreement designed with the client's requirements in mind. We pride ourselves on our service delivery, transparency and ethical business practices and the longevity of the operations of our client base is a testament to our commitment to be the preferred partner of choice for all your telecommunications needs.

As a Network, the following sets us apart from the rest:

- 24/7 NOC facility - Offering pro-active remote monitoring and support of sites through a managed service;
- On-site support - FSN deploy a team of qualified Field service Technicians (FST) to maintain your Network within the estate;
- Proven Track Record and Reputation - With more than 15 years of experience servicing the subscribers in residential, commercial and industrial gated communities;
- Reference sites available, many of which have been operating for more than 8 years;
- Ability to service communities in remote areas as well as major metropolitan areas that have not been serviced by larger incumbent networks;
- Ability to service communities as small as 10 units all the way up to 1000's of units;
- Operator Independency - ATEC is a privately owned company and is not dependent on any specific network capability or coverage;
- Scalable solutions that grow as the need arises whilst offering market-related and competitive pricing to the subscriber;
- Future-proof networking design methodology and execution to service both Single Dwelling (SDU) and Multi-dwelling (MDU) communities;
- Tailor-made finance, co-investment and full-funded options available to suit the client's requirement;
- Increase ability for property developers to monetize their Gross Lettable Area (GLA) percentages at estates;
- Enabling the "Smart Estate" evolution to new and existing communities on private network infrastructure



Enabling the Techtrepneur™ Press Release

"Job creation in a time of job uncertainty; by linking skills and capacity with opportunity to meet the market need in a geographical proximity".

André Hoffmann, CEO and founder of "MyTechie" explains. MyTechie is essentially a Technician-as-a-Service (TaaS) solution, matching qualified technical service resources, such as electricians, plumbers, fibre-broadband technicians and a variety of skilled artisans, to be made available in areas where service providers and consumers are in need of accredited and competent technical services and skills. This service is all available via an easy-to-use digital services trading platform, with mobile and geo-location capability.

Initially focused on a business-to-business model (B2B), introducing some large national project rollout programmes to the community based technical teams, the platform will evolve in the coming months to include consumers who might need the local village technician to demystify some 'tech' for them in their homes or businesses.

South Africa has a lot of latent talent and skill, unemployed and underemployed, and all we require to unlock this, is to leverage technology effectively, to make it visible to the market it addresses and preferably within a proximity so that it is viable for both the buyer and the seller.

MyTechie aims to close the gap between learning, application, and market demand for skills and capacity within the proximity of local communities and thereby improve the earning capability and economic survivability of our people of all ages.

The proximity of the dispatchable technical resources to the market need at the edge, means that the impact on our environment is significantly reduced, as travel distances are much shorter, making MyTechie a very 'Green' service delivery option for companies.

Systemically viable and highly scalable to meet your business and your customers' needs in their suburbs, villages, towns, townships and cities as the community based 'village' technicians take ownership of their 'turf' and become what we call 'Techtrepneurs™.'

Proudly supporting all the 'tech' that they are certified to represent, and thereby reduce the customer adoption friction across the broadband service delivery ecosystem.

What is unique about MyTechie?

Finding work-based experience is a big challenge for graduates today. MyTechie provides a tiered roadmap, incentivised financially, from INTERNSHIP to QUALIFICATION to MASTER of the craft.

MyTechie is not just a 'Yellow-pages' for services, we provide an ecosystem of support around the candidates that will include such things as financial services, medical aid, retirement instruments and more will be catered for in future. This will provide the systemic support for SMMEs that they would not normally get, out in the harsh world of competitive hustle in the gig-economy.

At MyTechie we will leverage the buying power of the group and the internal wallet to reduce supply side costs of consumables, tools, training and other resources, thereby creating some disintermediation to the advantage of the Techtrepneurs™.

Quality is in the DNA of the platform. We value and incentivise professional affiliations with relevant professional voluntary associations like the South African Institute of Electrical Engineers (SAIEE) and the Institute of Information Technology Professionals of South Africa (IITPSA) and others to leverage continued professional development, mentorship and professional ethics.

The way we work is changing!

Employment is no longer a reasonable expectation for our youth. We need to develop an entrepreneurship culture from school level.

We need to set the expectations of our youth, and train them to embrace a resilient lifestyle that is battle-hardened towards coping in austere economic conditions, and these 'black-swan' global pandemics that occasionally rattle the eco-

conomic balance and are outside our individual control.

Value Proposition to Service Providers:

- On demand trained resources available 24 by 7.
- Geo mapping of skills resources to demand and supply.
- Skills are mapped to Geo and time availability of the end-customer.
- Quality guarantee in the private space.
- Self-regulating.
- Fourth industrial revolution compatible.
- Accurate and up to date skills record of all technical agents used.
- Accurate records of all inside or outside plant work undertaken.
- A direct up-sell of your products and services by a commercially enabled workforce.
- Go Green by reducing travel distances to reach your customers.

Tap into a competent team of brand trusted 'village' technicians in support of the technical industries in meeting the consumer needs within their own communities. Supporting everything from fibre-to-the-home installations, renewable energy solutions, through to the full Internet of Things ecosystem, across its lifecycle from the private property boundary gate and in and around the smart home. Competent technicians, vetted, trained, certified and available in the communities you serve.

All equipped with their own smart device, tools, and the MyTechie

App. You will be able to select the technician or team of your choice and dispatch them in their zone to undertake inside-plant site surveys. Install fibre drop cables with termination, customer premises equipment and commission it with the Network Operations Centre. Convert copper to fibre services or up-sell to higher value products. Provide first line (Tier-1) network field support, and so much more.

By far the majority of both companies and individuals in the MyTechie federation are from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, with an encouraging number of females also being confident to mix, in what is traditionally a male dominated domain.

The Future

Besides the direct consumer demand for the deployment of technology in our homes and businesses, the opportunity for technicians, electricians and other artisans to participate in corporate driven national projects is growing daily as MyTechie is facilitating skills for service providers on a number of national projects in 2021:

1. A Smart Energy roll out of a million IoT devices to around fifteen thousand businesses nationally over the next three years (using electricians).
2. An innovative locally developed solar Photo-Voltaic water heating system, national rollout using electricians with solar PV certification.
3. Fibre-to-the-home cable connections in many of the smaller towns around South Africa.
4. A national rollout of broadband fixed wireless customer premises equipment for a global service provider.

Call to action:

- Artisans, electricians and technicians wanting to participate must email their CV and supporting documents to techie@mytechiesa.co.za
- Service providers and companies that what to tap into this on-demand resource pool for your projects and programs send an email to info@mytechiesa.co.za to see how MyTechie can give you the EDGE.

Conclusion

It is hoped that you can see the benefits of this strategic blend of largely 'previously advantaged' skill and experience along with the development objectives of the young and upcoming black techpreneurs, collaborating in this systemically viable platform and ecosystem.

It allows for the entrepreneurial and hard-working skilled artisan or technician to make a real positive impact on their own economic wellbeing and achieve a reasonable 'middle-class' lifestyle.

Contact:

Andre Hoffmann
+27 78 800 2686
andre.hoffmann@mytechiesa.co.za





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The Golden Cow Of Kenya

By Ms Fiona Asonga | CEO: Tespok

The ICT sector in Kenya, and Africa as a whole, should by now be on a very steep digital growth trajectory when considering all that has been happening in the recent past.

The world today has changed and is far from what may have been envisioned 2-3 years ago. The current dispensation has totally changed the world as we knew it, pushing for a much greater dependence on ICT's and digital adoption.

However, this opportunity is going to pass Africa by if African governments don't align their policies with the current pace of digital transformation. The digital environment is a fast paced one and requires policies to keep up with it to ensure that a sustainable and inclusive digital sector is built, yet it seems that governments insist on

doing things in the same old way yet they expect a different result. As the nation grows, it is imperative that we review what we have done in the past to make sure that it keeps pace with what the future looks like so that we can grow our economies. The only way forward is to choose the path of continuous improvement.

Any matter pertaining to taxation leaves investors terrified to say the least.

For the sake of this article I will only consider official government tax payable to the Kenya Revenue Authority. (For the purposes of keeping things simple I will not talk to any other fees paid to a government agency such as licensing fees).

The ICT sector in Kenya seems to

be the most heavily taxed of all economic sectors in the country. In making my point I would like to refer to the following specific tax laws affecting the industry which includes:

1. VAT Act 2013 at 16%
2. Internet Data tax 2018 at 1.5% per transaction
3. Excise duty on data and telephony 2018 at 15%
4. Income Tax through the Finance Act 2019 tiered but highest at 30%
5. Corporate Tax at 30%

In addition the government introduced:

1. The Value Added Tax (Digital Marketplace Supply) Regulations, 2020
2. Income Tax Act and the Income Tax (Digital Service Tax) Regulations 2020.

Prior to the implementation of the new digital tax ICT companies are already being taxed approximately 92.5%. I am left perplexed as to how companies are meant to run a business on 7.5% of turn-over?

It reminds me of the English folklore of the Goose that lay the golden eggs. In the case of Kenya, I will call it the Cow that produces golden milk. We have to make a decision on whether we would like to have the cow produce milk every day or do we simply slaughter the cow for short term gain? We forget that there is a process to the formation of the golden milk in the cow and this cannot be fast tracked. No cow can give you all the milk you need from it during its life time in a single milking, but if you are patient then over time the cow will give you as much milk as you may need, and more. Government cannot see ICT's as the next big thing yet forget that the industry is still at the nascent stages. It still needs time to grow and it needs to be given an effective regulatory environment to help it grow, before you can simply tax it at exorbitant rates.

To compound the situation, those that impose the taxes have very little appreciation for industry terminology. The sector itself is learning new words referring to things in the sector that the sector itself has never heard of before. The taxman coins his own terms and expects that somehow industry will serendipitously understand what he is referring to when he says internet data tax. What exactly is internet data in the first place? Internet is a network of networks and data is the content that goes through the pipes. The term internet data services has not been defined in any of the Acts and creates room for misinterpretation on what is been

referred to. When used alongside telephone it can refer to the internet data bundles that are sold by the telecom operators. The Internet Service Providers (ISPs) do not package their product in that manner. The content being consumed via the ISPs tends to be foreign. An ISP provides a customer an empty pipe that the customer decides what to fill in it. My simplistic way of thinking tells me; it is not possible to tax something that doesn't exist or cannot be defined. To date, industry is unable to submit this tax as it is not understood what it was referencing. While the goodwill to support revenue collection exists and is evident in the submission of other taxes that are clearly defined internet data tax remains a challenge.

Excise duty is a tax that is normally imposed at the point of production, there is need of clarification on the point at which this tax ought to be imposed? Due to implementation of excise duty by each provider, it has meant that the said 15% has been passed along the value chain resulting in a higher cost to the end user and increase the tax to 45%. This is an additional tax of 30% to the already 92.5%. It raises the question is private sector an investor or government grant provider in this country. It is industry's humble opinion that this was not the intent of the government hence the need for clarification on the point at which the tax ought to be imposed. The content is not necessarily produced in Kenya and some of it is so necessary for government functioning that it doesn't make sense to implement the tax then offer mandatory e-citizen services.

At the same time, Digital Service tax implementation introduces aspects of breaches of privacy that service providers need to be

cushioned against; as they find themselves contravening the data protection act. The government seems so bent on taxing that we are not taking time to consult and consider workable solutions within the sector. The Digital Service Tax shall not apply to:

- i. Income taxed under provision of section 9 (2) and section 35 of the Income Tax Act
- ii. Online service provided by the government
- iii. Income already exempt under the 1st Schedule of the Income Tax Act
- iv. Online Services online services which facilitate payments, lending or trading of financial instruments, commodities or foreign exchange carried out by: a financial institution specified under the Fourth Schedule to the Income Tax Act; or a financial service provider authorized or approved by the Central Bank of Kenya

How is and ISP suppose then to know what to tax? There is no option but to breach individual right to privacy if this is to be implemented. While it is good that these exemptions are mentioned, it is actually not possible for service providers to put in place this kind of monitoring since the costs are punitive. It is therefore important that there is alignment of all existing laws for ease of undertaking business activity within the ICT sector.

The impact of unclear and extremely complex tax policies on declining government revenue and tax collection cannot be ignored. New taxes may initially look impressive in terms of revenues but may disappoint as soon as people get a chance to adjust their behaviour. Past experience and case studies

have shown that the introduction of new consumer taxes (including Excise) results in the distortion of consumer behaviour as individuals alter their consumption habits, and this makes no sense of government revenue projections – except if such behavioural change has been factored into the revenue expectation for the new tax. As per the Laffer Curve which is a theory developed by economist Arthur Laffer to show the relationship between tax rates and the amount of tax revenue collected by governments. It has shown that when tax rates are already high, if you make them higher, the less money government will collect as people will look for a way to avoid tax or find alternatives to the items they consume. Simply put, if the cost of living in a country is too high, there will be mass migration to other countries by your skilled labor force hence lowering tax revenue generation and decrease in foreign direct investment as investors will not invest in the heavily taxed industry due to limited return on investment. This may explain why most Kenyan ICT skill prefer to work, establish and operate in other countries while presenting to fellow Kenyans a simple front end engagement interface.

Kenya is perceived as one of the foremost digital economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the highest percentage of financial account ownership in the region (82%) according to the World Bank's 2018 Financial index report. This is deemed to be partly the result, not only of the vibrant mobile money sector, but also due to growing interoperability between traditional banking and mobile wallets, particularly bank-to-mobile transfers. If there are 'penalties' associated with the infusion of digital money into mobile wallets via banking channels, then we are bound to see

a decline in electronic payments utilizing those channels. The introduction of taxes for money transfers in addition to mobile money taxes is a double whammy which will discourage the use of digital financial services by consumers, ultimately excluding a greater number of people from the formal financial sector as they revert back to cash transactions.

Today, the ICT taxation environment has become hard for consumers, service providers and government due to its complexity. One aspect is to determine applicability of the new tax laws to different services and the calculation of the tax remittances due. In addition it is worsening inequality within the economy as taxes on low value payments ultimately have a more severe impact on the poor.

The failure by the taxman to recognise ICT as a utility will have severe impact on efforts to grow a digital economy as envisioned in the Digital Economic Blueprint. Total tax being 92.5% (at a minimum) and 122.5% if strictly applied not including additional digital taxes proposed in the current Finance Bill, makes Kenya a poor ICT business and investment destination. To make matters worse, taxes are simply passed on to the consumer in order for companies to maintain their operations. The cost of living evidently rises and those that have will continue to benefit while those that don't have will be left to figure it out for themselves.

We are about to cut open the cow but we must remember that the golden milk that we were supposed to get tomorrow will disappear, leaving Kenyans thirsty and excluded. Let us consult and find a way to keep the cow alive so that we continue to benefit from the golden milk.

This article was first published on LinkedIn and was re-published with the permission of Ms Fiona Asonga, CEO of TESPOK.

About TESPOK

Technology Service Providers Association of Kenya (TESPOK) is a professional, non-profit organization representing the interests of technology service providers in Kenya. Established in 1999 as Telecommunication Service Providers of Kenya; the strength of the Association rests on its ability to be truly representative of the Kenyan ICT industry as a whole. Through the print, television and radio media, the association has brought the issues affecting its members into the limelight, and this has created awareness among policy makers and the general public as well as produced several concrete outcomes. TESPOK's mission is to be

"An Industry voice in Technology, Providing Policy and Direction within the Industry and Government"



Internet service providers are available everywhere and operate on most fibre networks. This provides internet users with an extensive list of options to choose their preferred ISP with whom they want to do business.

MyOwn ISP is a fibre internet service and solutions provider that focuses on customer service and allowing flexibility toward our customers' needs. Not only do we provide fibre internet and telephone services, but have extensive knowledge in fibre networks as a division of ATEC Systems and Technologies, a founding member of the FTTH Council of South Africa.

Internet services have become an integral part of our day to day lives at home and in business. The internet provides solutions and gateways to an infinite world of social and technological possibilities, home automation and security.

We are driven to providing solutions to improve our customer's internet experience and value all our clients' feedback which assists us to continuously provide world-class service. MyOwn ISP has a passionate and dynamic team with extensive experience in the telecommunications industry and have a good understanding of our client's service expectations.

MyOwn ISP has a support team ready to assist every day of the week who can assist you with coverage checks on our website as well as provide customised solutions for your home or business. We don't believe in lengthy phone calls and hundreds of emails before having a problem resolved and pride ourselves on a three-step escalation path.

Operating on Open Access Fibre Networks around South Africa gives you access to become one of our valued clients who can also experience *Fun. Fast. Fibre*



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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.

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