

# CONEXT

The Official Newsletter of the Digital Council Africa

April 2024 Edition

Explore  
Upcoming  
Events

How Google  
is Supporting  
Election Integrity  
in South Africa

Request for Information  
on Digital Economy  
Masterplan Activities

Celebrating 30  
Years of Democracy



Issue #017



## WELCOME FROM JUANITA

Dear Colleagues,

It is with great excitement that we bring you the latest issue of Conext for 2024. This publication is the official Newsletter of the Digital Council Africa, and its aim is to not only 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 let us know what they are up to.



**On 27 April 2024 we celebrated 30 Years of Freedom and Democracy.** In 2024, South Africans mark 30 years since the historic election of Wednesday, 27th of April 1994. This day, now known as Freedom Day, is commemorated every year to honour those unsung heroes and heroines who fought for freedom and paved the way for an equal, representative and non-racial nation.

**"Thirty years must be a celebration not of government, not of a governing party but of all South Africans because it is... South Africans who brought about this freedom."** Minister Zizi Kodwa.

Last year, our **Connect Member Summit** brought together our esteemed members and partners for an exclusive, members-only event. Held at the end of the year, this summit served as a platform for fostering dialogue, stimulating conversation, and connecting in an informal space. **We are excited to announce that the 2024 edition of our Conext Conference will take place in Sandton on the 28th of November. We are really looking forward to seeing you all there!**

We are proud to see the progress made by our second intake of learners, who began their Optic Fibre training on 3 February 2024. The all-female crew, recruited from different townships in Johannesburg, are well on their way on their empowerment journey and recently participated in some hands on training.

The Digital Council believes that the digital economy poses an incredible opportunity for the continent to participate in the global marketplace. More specifically we believe that the digital economy can create thousands of much-needed jobs for young people. A well governed environment, where the right policies enable investment, is critical to ensure that the digital economy continues to grow.

Working towards this is at the heart of what the Digital Council stands for.

Remember that Conext belongs to you, our members. So we invite you to make use of this platform to share a thought leadership insight with us, an update about your company, or product information that may benefit other members.

Thank you for your continued support,

*Juanita*

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# FROM THE OFFICE

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## 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](mailto:nadene@digitalcouncil.africa)

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## 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**



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## 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.

**Next Issue:** June 2024

**Theme:** Youth Day

Contributions can be sent to Nadene Reignier at [nadene@digitalcouncil.africa](mailto:nadene@digitalcouncil.africa)

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## 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](#).**

## Let's keep in touch

As people come and go, it's important to keep our database up to date. Please take a moment to update your contact information so we can stay connected. Your updated details ensure you receive the latest news and updates from Digital Council Africa. Thank you for helping us keep our community strong!

# Welcome

## Welcoming our new Members

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Angola Cables is a multinational company operating in the ICT industry with tailored connectivity solutions for the wholesale and corporate segments. With a robust transport infrastructure and highly interconnected IP network, Angola Cables allows customers with greater access to the largest IXP's, Tier 1 operators and global content providers. Through

SACS, Monet and WACS submarine cable systems the company directly connects the Americas, Africa, and Europe and has established partnerships to reach Asia. We manage the Tier III Data Centre AngoNAP Fortaleza (Brazil) and the Data Centre AngoNAP Luanda (Angola) as well as PIX and Angonix - one of the largest Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) in Africa.

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



VulaCoin is a fintech SAAS platform enabling digital micropayments in low-income telecoms and digital services applications. It provides payment aggregation, digital wallet, product engine, digital marketplace and self-help functionality, and enables African fibre network and mobile operators to create pay-as-you-go capabilities in their new or existing post-paid fibre networks.

To find out more visit <https://about.vulacoin.com/about-us>



Myriad Capital is a digital infrastructure asset owner and operator, positioned to drive cost effective new economy products and services in South Africa and the USA.

For more information go to <https://myriad.co.za>.

**JOIN US FOR CONNECT 2024**



# Digital Council **CONNECT**

SANDTON CONVENTION CENTRE | 28 NOVEMBER 2024

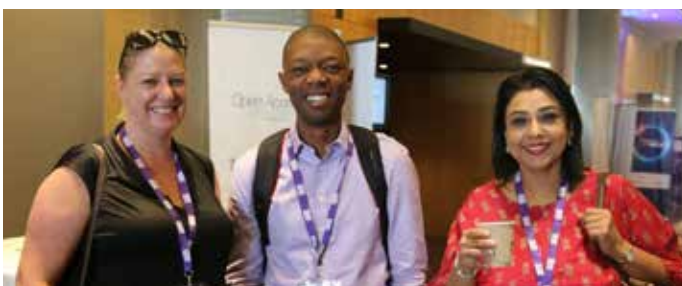
The official AGM of the Digital Council Africa Members

Our Connect Member Summit last year was a huge success! This exclusive event, designed for our members and partners, provided a platform for meaningful dialogue, engaging conversations, and networking in a relaxed setting.

The summit offered attendees a unique opportunity to interact with and learn from top CEOs and leaders in the sector. Allowing participants to gain valuable insights into their strategies and received firsthand market perspectives.

This year, we're excited to invite you to join us again for our upcoming Connect Member Summit. We're gearing up to provide you with even more valuable insights, engaging discussions, and exclusive access to industry leaders. Stay tuned for more details on this year's summit and how you can be a part of it!

## Some moments from last year's event



## UPCOMING EVENTS



**9 FOUR BALLS  
ALREADY TAKEN!**

**SECURE YOUR SPOT  
TODAY BEFORE  
THEY'RE ALL GONE!**



**Digital  
Council**

# GOLF DAY

**1 JULY 2024 | THE RIVER CLUB, SANDTON**


Experience golfing excellence at the ultra-exclusive **River Club**.  
Join us for a day of unforgettable golf and networking.

Visit <https://golf.digitalcouncil.africa/> to secure your spot  
and explore sponsorship opportunities.

We look forward to seeing you on the greens!

**THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS**



A close-up photograph of a fiber optic cable connector. The cable is dark, and the light within the fibers is glowing with a vibrant green color. The background is dark, making the green light stand out prominently.

## Best Practices for Assuring Successful PoE Device Deployment

Looking at the challenges of a typical Internet of Things (IoT) rollout, the biggest hurdle usually isn't how to connect IoT devices to the LAN. Instead getting power cheaply and reliably to the device is often a far more difficult problem. For example, installing AC power outlets next to every IoT device is laborious and cost prohibitive. It's also an overkill considering the relatively low amount of energy required by most IoT endpoints. Therefore, power over Ethernet (PoE) has become a must-have technology for virtually every enterprise and industrial IoT rollout. That said, PoE installations come with their own set of unique challenges.

Cable professionals, integrators and administrators must possess a certain level of knowledge when it comes to understanding what is needed from a power delivery perspective. Additionally, because PoE standards and use-cases are constantly expanding, deploying and managing PoE endpoints and IoT devices requires a tool that provides granular visibility into whether a PoE device will be able to draw sufficient power across copper cabling for extended periods of time.

### Three unique testing phases emerge throughout the lifecycle of the deployment:

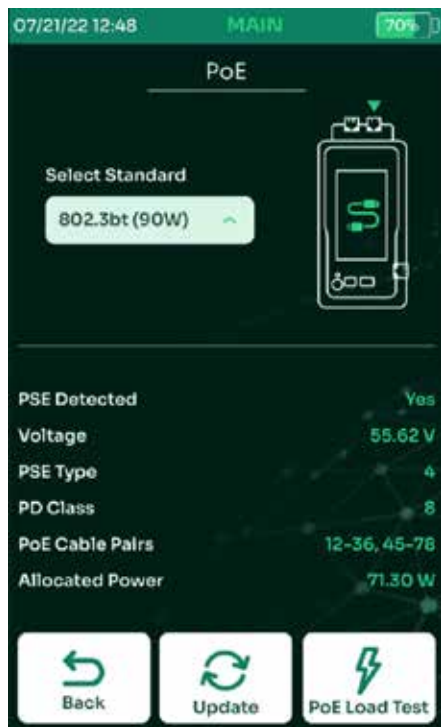
1. During new cable installs – and when no PoE power sourcing or PoE endpoint devices currently exist to test against - cable installers must use test equipment capable of verifying DC resistance unbalance measurements within a pair and across pairs. This will provide assurance that proper power and data delivery should be able to be achieved over every twisted-pair in the cable run.
2. Once the cabling and PoE switches/midspans are installed, further testing should be performed to verify that the power sourcing equipment is delivering power to PoE endpoints that satisfies the endpoint's load requirements. In this situation, test equipment acts as the PoE endpoint and will run power load tests to provide assurance that the required level of PoE at the PD can be achieved.
3. PoE load testing is useful to IoT integrators, cable installers, and network administrators, as it helps to eliminate any finger pointing between these groups when a problem does arise. It's also a great opportunity for the cable installer or integrator to create additional revenue by adding this critical step into their cable plant installation, verification or device integration process.

Let's drill down a bit further to understand the types of PoE tests that should be run, the different types of cabling to choose from based on PoE needs, the importance of cable certification for new installs and how to choose an AEM test tool based on job role.

## How does PoE Work and what are the necessary PoE Test functions?

According to the IEEE, power over Ethernet is comprised of three components:

Power sourcing equipment (PSE), the powered device (PD) and the cabling used to deliver power to the device. Examples of power sourcing equipment is the switch or midspan power injector and an example of a PD is a security camera.



Example PoE Test Results listing  
PSE Type and PD Class



Example DC resistance test results



PoE Load Test Screen

It is important to understand that twisted-pair copper cabling is dual purpose: it not only carries electricity to power the device, but is also used for Ethernet data transport.

There are several IEEE twisted pair PoE standards that exist today. Each one delivers varying power levels from the PSE to the PD. These standards also provide the necessary signalling that both the PSE and PD will understand. The signalling is used to detect whether the PD indeed needs power as well as a negotiation process to determine the amount of power the PD requires for operation. Currently, there are eight different power classes available as defined by the IEEE. The power delivered by the PSE ranges from 4 Watts in a class 1 device to 90 Watts in a class 8 device. To learn more about the most popular IEEE PoE and PoDL standards, refer to AEM's detailed blog ([AEM-test.com](http://AEM-test.com)).

When planning for PoE rollouts, it's important that both the PSE and cabling be thoroughly tested to verify proper operation within the various PoE classes. This includes not only peak Wattage capacity – but also sustained power delivery over time and whether the cabling can succumb to DC resistance unbalance issues. Extended testing for DC resistance unbalance has become an essential step within the IoT deployment process as devices that require PoE++ levels of power at 60W or higher are more prone to causing significant interference problems with data delivery. Thus, for IoT implementations that require higher power delivery levels such as modern wireless access points (WAPs) and panto- tilt (PTZ) cameras, thorough testing of DC resistance unbalance is highly recommended.

Finally, both PoE load and negotiation testing will ensure a smooth PoE endpoint rollout with far fewer issues related to long-term power delivery use and Wattage mismatches.

### IEEE standards

IEEE standards define different levels of powering. PoE also follows the same distance limitation of 100meter that twisted pair cabling runs follow, as power level will decrease as it traverses the wire. This is why the standards defines power levels at both the PSE and PD.

PoE Type	IEEE Standard	Power @ PSE	Power @ PD
PoE	IEEE 802.3af	15.4 W	12.95 W
PoE+	IEEE 802.3at	30 W	25.5 W
PoE++	IEEE 802.3bt (Type 3)	60 W	51 W
PoE++	IEEE 802.3bt (Type 4)	90 W	71.3 W
PoDL / SPoE	IEEE 802.3bu IEEE 802.3cg	79 W	52 W

*Common Applications*

End Point Network Device	Max Power Requirements	Max Reach	Applicable Standard
VoIP Phones, Wireless Access Points	12.95W	100m	IEEE 802.3af
PTZ Surveillance Camera	25.5W	100m	IEEE 802.3at
Video Conferencing, Multi-Band WAP	51W	100m	IEEE 802.3bt (Type 3)
Building Lighting Systems, TV	71W	100m	IEEE 802.3bt (Type 4)
Building Automation, Sensors, Actuators	7W	1000m	IEEE 802.3bu

## Choosing the right cabling

There are several Ethernet cable standards that PoE can operate across. Some cable types are better than others depending on the wattage your PDs require. Within common office and manufacturing deployment environments, you'll likely come across existing four-pair copper cabling using CAT5, CAT5e and CAT6 standards. PD's requiring lower wattage can utilize this older cabling. However, it's highly recommended that when powering devices that require 60W or higher sent over the cabling, newer CAT6A (or higher) cabling should be run. These types of cables use thicker conductor diameters that helps reduce resistance. This is critical so that power is not lost due to compounding resistance over longer cable runs. CAT6A cabling is also better insulated and can handle the added heat produced by the higher power loads being sent across the wires. This is especially important when running higher wattage PoE in large cabling bundles. Lastly, thicker cables are far more capable at delivering higher power and faster Ethernet transmission speeds for multigigabit connections over twisted pair copper. Thus, running newer cabling future-proofs your IoT investment.

## Certify all cabling to ensure it meets stringent standards

To increase the likelihood that your cabling won't be an issue when running PoE, it's necessary for cabling contractors to certify cabling to meet the cable manufacturers strict standards. This is true not only in terms of ensuring that the cabling can operate at multi-gigabit speeds – but also to test and ensure proper power load capacity for IEEE 802.3af, 802.3at and 802.3bt standards.

## Choosing the right test tool

Any successful IoT deployment requires that the proper tools be in place to get the job done right the first time. Reach out to Lambda Test for more information on AEM's product portfolio and the local support we can provide with any PoE project for planning, testing and troubleshooting.

To find out more visit [www.lambdatest.co.za](http://www.lambdatest.co.za) or send them us an email at [support@lambdatest.co.za](mailto:support@lambdatest.co.za)

## WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

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### **Celebrating 30 Years of Democracy: The ICT Industry's Transformative Journey in South Africa**

On Friday 26 April the DCDT, in partnership with Industry and sponsored by the DCA, held a luncheon that brought together the ICT Sector to celebrate 30 years of collaboration and growth in the Industry.

As South Africa celebrated 30 years of democracy, the ICT industry reflected on its pivotal role in shaping the nation's progress. Since the historic 1994 elections that marked the end of apartheid, ICT has been a driving force behind South Africa's social, economic, and political development.

Over the past three decades, the ICT sector witnessed remarkable growth and innovation, transforming the way people communicated, worked, and accessed information. From the introduction of mobile phones to the widespread adoption of the internet, ICT bridged gaps, empowered communities, and enabled businesses to thrive in a digital age.

One of the key achievements of South Africa's democracy was the expansion of ICT infrastructure and access. Through initiatives like the National Integrated ICT Policy White Paper, the Government worked to ensure that all citizens had affordable access to modern communication technologies. This not only connected remote areas but also opened up new opportunities for education, healthcare, and entrepreneurship.

The ICT industry also played a crucial role in driving economic growth and job creation. South Africa's thriving tech ecosystem produced innovative startups and attracted investment from around the world. The rise of digital platforms and e-commerce created new avenues for businesses to reach customers and expand their markets.

Looking ahead, the ICT industry remained committed to advancing South Africa's democracy by leveraging technology to address key challenges. From promoting digital inclusion to enhancing cybersecurity, the sector continued to evolve and adapt to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world.

As South Africa celebrated this historic milestone, the ICT industry stood ready to build on the progress of the past 30 years and drive further innovation, growth, and development for the next generation.



## From Deployment to Customer Service How Does An ISP Successfully Pivot?

by Dan Bloch, Vice President of Global Cloud Solution Sales, Calix

We were delighted to spend some time with our good friends and Corporate Members at Calix recently, who have been telling us about their UK deployment, and their considerable shift towards the consumer. Based in Canada and the US, we caught up with Dan Bloch, Vice President of Global Cloud Solution Sales over coffee.

Dan explained that a successful deployment is a technical achievement, requiring the synergy of multiple parties, precise costing, well trained staff and effective communication. What comes after that is a whole other set of skills, requiring ISPs pivot immediately into a customer service role.

Dan went into detail. "The main issue is one of service. How do I make sure my services are distinct, regardless of where a subscriber is being serviced?" He is right of course. Broadband is not a tangible product, like a pizza or a new frying pan. Consumers are only interested in speed and service. There is nothing else to distinguish broadband providers.

He went on, "Correct. There are two challenges as I see it, post deployment. Whatever we do, it has to look like me and my brand, regardless of what the plumbing is underneath. And then the second challenge is, how do you

pivot away from building a great network? The serviceability infrastructure around the network needs to adapt to a consumer marketing and sales powerhouse, because without marketing and sales it's really difficult to monetise the big, massive infrastructure investment you've just made."

Pivoting is right. Left brain engineers rarely possess right brain creative instinct to make good marketers. The transition is considerable.

Dan smiled and took a sip of coffee. "You're right. Ultimately ISPs are evaluated on the value of the asset; and if the asset isn't generating any revenue or profitable revenue, it's obviously not as valuable as it could be. At Calix, we've seen massive investment in great technologists building out amazing networks. But we've noticed there is significantly less investment in understanding what it takes to be a good consumer company.

It probably doesn't occur to people at first to make that leap, I suggested. "No really, no. So we don't see a lot of differentiation, or even much investment in creating viable monetisation strategies."

Historically, the UK is not really known for its customer service. It doesn't take much recall to think of a time any one of us received terrible customer service in the UK. We've come along in leaps and bounds in the last twenty years, but we still have a long way to go compared to North America. So how do you carve out excellent customer service when you're not known as a consumer brand? "Let me take a step back," Dan began. "Most altnets don't have a brand, a renowned image that people recognise that they're going to buy from. So the only way really is a lot of marketing investment, word-of-mouth and consistency. And having a differentiated experience over any other alternative.

So it's money and effort then?

Dan nodded. "Why does everybody buy from Amazon? Because it's easy, because it shows up the next day, and there's a huge choice, and always something within my budget. That's it. So the same goes with providing a differentiated Internet service. If all you're going to do is provide connectivity to the house and not focus on what that enables inside the house, and how will it be used? You will only ever look like a commodity."

And a faceless one at that. "That's right. It's hard to have a differentiated service, because then it's like water. You turn on the tap - the water comes out or it doesn't, but it's only on or off."

**So how do you differentiate your service? It can't be an easy task. Dan replied, "You have to think: how is it being used in the house? Am I consuming it from an iPad, and I'm streaming wirelessly, and I don't want to ever see the little circle going slowly, slowly, slowly, waiting for it to spool up content?"**

He warmed to his theme. "Am I out in the garden, and I'm zapping a plant with my phone and trying to figure out what kind of plant it is? Do I need to pull it out because it's a weed, or you know, Carolina Reaper?" Or Japanese knotweed. Don't get me started. Dan laughed. "So you have to think about how the subscribers are using it. And then, once you think about how the subscribers are using it, you have to tailor how you're going to market with the use of my service in mind, and if you can unlock that secret, then you're differentiated."

Dan agreed that the network gives you some empowerment as an ultimate on things like maybe pricing levels of service. But that won't be differentiating enough. It won't

lead to an influx of acquisition of new subscribers. "So you have to think about what appeals to subscribers, and if your offer looks the same as everybody else's. And you're not a known brand, or you're a brand associated with less-than-stellar service."

He went on. "There are lots of companies working with models that give away the first year free of charge. Or they might give the second year away at 50%. I've talked to a bunch of people about this and what I can't understand is, why are you giving it away for nothing? Why aren't you asking for something in return? I tell them this and they look at me like I have three heads. I'm already struggling to get subscribers, they tell me. Why would anybody give me anything when I'm trying to get to them?"

"And I said, Well, you don't have to make it onerous, but you have to make it meaningful, so I give them an example. Why don't you create a lawn sign and say, I'm going give you fifty one percent off if you put my sign on your front lawn for the next three months."

"Why would I do that, these guys ask me. So let's say the person who buys it, let's call him Jason. Well, Jason has neighbours. They're going to walk their dogs. They're going to see your sign. They're going to ask Jason about it and he'll say, Oh, I have the best Internet service ever. It's so fast. I never wait for anything. It just downloads. They're going to go home, and they're going to talk to their spouses. 'Jason just got the best Internet ever from this company, sweetheart.'

Dan concluded, "That word-of-mouth is powerful, better than any advertising. It will spread like wildfire. And the more places your signs pop up, the more brand recognition you will have. And because you're getting a warm lead from someone that's trusted you get implied trust. That's how you build a brand at the grassroots."

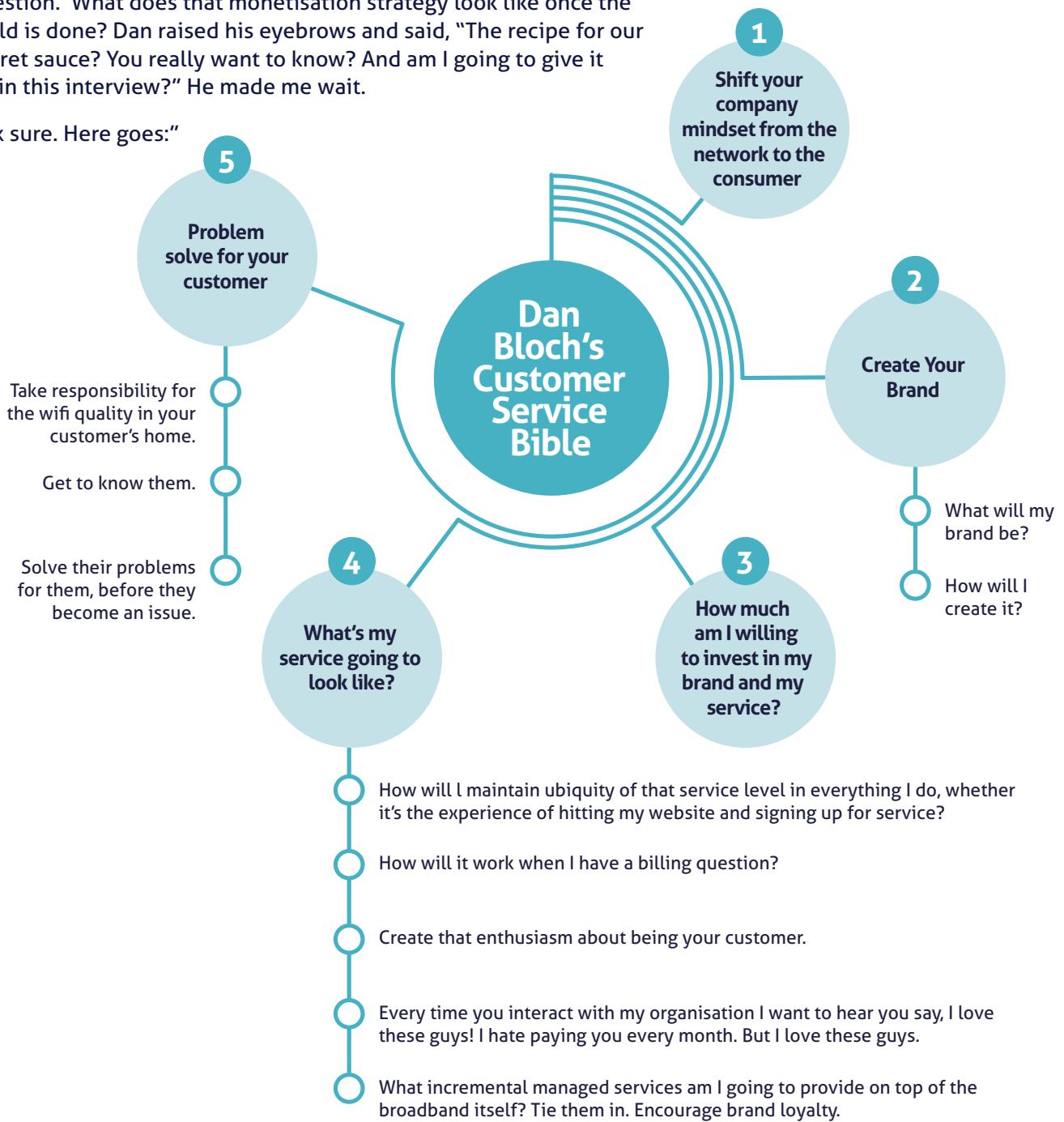
Drawing directly from the Seven Principles of Persuasion, there are two at work right here. Social Proof (if Jason said it's the best, and I value Jason's opinion, then it must be good) and the Principle of Reciprocation (you scratch my back, I'll scratch your's).

Dan went on to explain that the ISP has to make investments about building out their brand, and then consider how their service itself will be different from anybody else's. "The ones that will win are the ones with the deepest pockets, and they can afford to do a lot of acquisition, who also understand that they're going to have to monetise it and have monetisation strategies."



At this point Broadband took a chance and asked the million dollar question. What does that monetisation strategy look like once the build is done? Dan raised his eyebrows and said, "The recipe for our secret sauce? You really want to know? And am I going to give it up in this interview?" He made me wait.

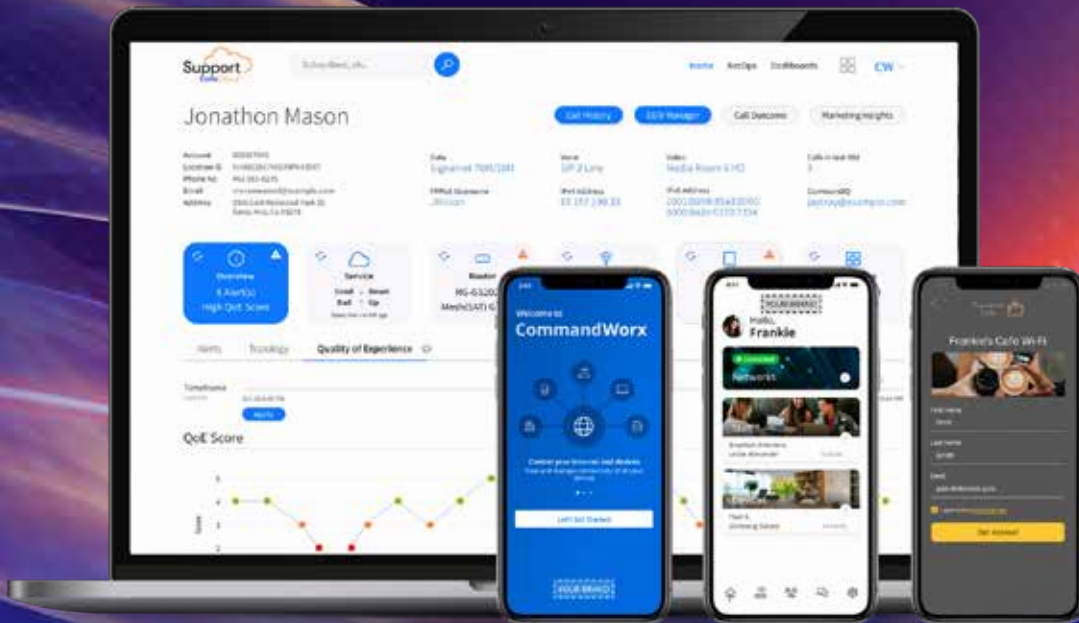
"Ok sure. Here goes:"



"ISPs need new ways to differentiate and grow their brand in an increasingly competitive market," said Dan, "and we are answering the call with the launch of the Calix Revenue EDGE solution in the U.K. market so that even the smallest altnet can think beyond speed and offer new managed services that will set them apart in the marketplace. Building your brand by providing customer relevant connected experiences with incredible customer service no matter which network you deliver on is how you create a differentiated proposition and sidestep the race to the bottom on pricing. We're excited to see U.K. providers reaping the benefits of the Calix Revenue EDGE, a proven and tested solution that will help them to grow ARPU, create upsell opportunities, increase subscriber satisfaction, and eliminate churn."

For more information, see [www.calix.com](http://www.calix.com) or contact Gerard Rebelo, Regional Sales Director at Calix, on +27 82 772 0659 - [gerard.rebelo@calix.com](mailto:gerard.rebelo@calix.com)





# Monetize your network with our end-to-end turnkey solution



**Managed Wi-Fi**



**Customized App**



**Enhanced Security**

For Residential & Small Business Subscribers

**Empower Your Business with:**



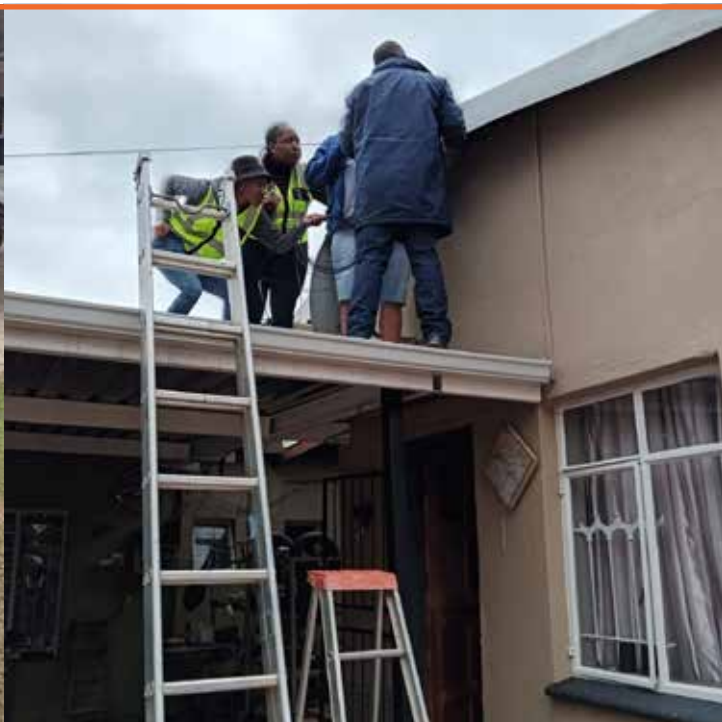
The Calix Cloud seamlessly integrates with your network, empowering precise business optimization.

Access real-time data—network intelligence, subscriber insights, and platform performance—360 degrees of insights to elevate subscriber acquisition and loyalty.



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## WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO



## Empowering Young Women

We are proud and excited to announce that the second group of learners who commenced Optic Fiber training at **Letlhakga Projects (Pty) Ltd** on January 18, 2024, have successfully undergone their theoretic training and are currently doing their practical field work.

The **FemaleForce Network crew** is now doing exceptionally well, acquiring the practical hands-on skills and installing Optic Fibre at various sites around City of Tshwane, which includes residential, commercial and industrial zones, under the guidance and supervision of Letlhakga Projects team.

The Digital Council Africa, in collaboration with our partners **MICT SETA**, would like to congratulate the learners in their resilience, persistence and perseverance to complete the training and acquire the skills needed to secure employment opportunities, enter our digital economy and assist Africa in bridging the digital divide and drive transformation.

**DCA would like to sincerely thank MICT SETA and Letlhakga Projects for the tremendous support they are providing to our learners.**

**We wish them all the best in their future endeavours.**



# Five governance strategies that can help accelerate the AI opportunity in Africa



By Akua Gyekye,  
Government Affairs Director,  
Microsoft Africa

Over the past year and a half, we've seen the audience for AI extend from IT experts to almost anyone with access to the internet. Thanks to Large Language Models online users can now interact with AI systems, whether they can code or not. In fact, a big part of the reason why Generative AI has been such a game-changer is because it has eliminated the need for specialised AI knowledge to experience the benefits of the technology. In short, the opportunity to democratise AI has never been greater.

And with AI increasingly in the hands of African innovators, we expect to see faster and more profound progress in nearly every field of human endeavour.

However, for Africa to meet this opportunity and truly democratise AI, there is still much work to be done around accelerating access to internet connectivity and growing digital literacy – which is why this has been such a central focus of Microsoft's investments in the continent over the past 30 years.

We are also keenly aware that the challenges ahead extend beyond the need for greater investment in essential infrastructure and capabilities. In fact, many public and private organisations in Africa view

the risk of new safety and regulatory requirements as one of the biggest stumbling blocks to wider implementation of the technology.

It's clear that to fast-track AI, leaders will need to work together to advance its governance more quickly. To support these efforts, we compiled a report titled "Governing AI: A Blueprint for the Future" which was spearheaded by Microsoft's Vice Chair and President, Brad Smith. This has since been reworked to suit the needs of different countries and regions and earlier this year we launched, "AI in Africa: Meeting the Opportunity". This whitepaper explores the five key focus areas that can contribute positively to the work ahead.

## 1. Implement and build upon new government-led AI safety frameworks

When it comes to using AI safely, one of the most effective ways to accelerate progress is to build on existing governmental frameworks.

Several African countries have already begun to formulate their own legal and policy frameworks and are helping to lead discussions around AI policy and strategy development on a regional, continental, and global scale, offering valuable insights for other countries looking to do the same.

While at different stages of implementation, they all are looking to find balance between the need

to create guardrails for the new technology while at the same time wanting to help a nascent industry grow, innovate, and adopt these new and emerging technologies.

**The African Union (AU) continues to convene experts from across the continent and this year published a policy draft containing a comprehensive continental strategy for AI regulations for African countries. Their coordinated approach aims to consider the “responsible, safe and beneficial use” of the technology for all Africans. Once adopted, this framework would help countries that lack AI policies or regulations to create their own national strategies and would also urge those that have them to revise and harmonise their policies with the AU’s.**

The draft proposes guidelines for codes and practices that are tailored to different sectors, standards and certification bodies to evaluate and compare AI systems, regulatory sandboxes for secure testing of AI, and the creation of national AI councils to supervise and track the responsible use of AI.

## 2. Require safety brakes for AI systems that control critical infrastructure

While most potential AI scenarios do not pose significant risks, it’s going to be increasingly important to identify those high-risk situations that will require ‘safety brakes’. This is particularly relevant when it comes to systems that manage or control critical infrastructure such as electricity grids, water systems, traffic systems or emergency responses. These brakes ensure systems can be quickly controlled or stopped by humans if necessary.

One way for governments to begin developing this safety mechanism is by defining the class of high-risk AI systems that are being deployed to control critical infrastructure and then requiring developers to build

and embed such added layers of security in the form of ‘safety brakes’.

From there, operators can rigorously test and monitor these high-risk systems, making certain that they can avoid unintended consequences and remain under human control. This approach highlights the need to create AI systems that can recognise, prevent, and stop unwanted behaviors, following the best standards in human-computer interaction.

## 3. Develop a broader legal and regulatory framework based on the technology architecture for AI

To address AI’s legal and regulatory challenges, a framework mirroring AI’s technology architecture is needed, focusing on the three layers of the tech stack, with different obligations for the level of applications and the layers beneath, which are the AI foundational models and the infrastructure. The law will also need to place various regulatory responsibilities upon different actors based upon their role in managing the different aspects of the AI technology.

Laws should apply existing protections to AI applications, ensuring safety and rights without necessitating new regulations, as current laws can often be adapted.

For foundational AI models and their deployment, however, new regulatory approaches are necessary, especially for models with significant capabilities. This could include a multitiered licensing regime, enforced by the government, for the development and deployment of highly capable AI models, emphasising safety, security, and international cooperation.

One of the initial challenges will be to define which AI models should be subject to this level of regulation. It will be necessary for leading AI developers to share specialised

knowledge about advanced AI models to help governments define the regulatory threshold. They can then outline the requirements that must be met to obtain a license to develop or deploy a highly capable AI model.

An effective licensing regime will help to ensure that we maintain control over our electricity grid and other AI-operated infrastructure.

Additionally, AI datacentres, critical to the operation of these advanced AI models, should be mandated to meet specific requirements to ensure the responsible development and deployment of these technologies.

## 4. Promote transparency and ensure academic and public access to AI

A key aspect of AI policy that will require serious discussion in the coming months and years is the balance and tension between security and transparency. For example, some experts think that keeping AI model weights (which are parts of a model that are crucial for a model’s abilities) secret will be necessary for security as this might be required to safeguard vital national security and public safety interests. However, in many other cases, transparency will be important to improve the understanding of security needs and develop best practices. This is why it’s important to think through how one can provide different types of transparency in different circumstances.

Transparency reports can play an important role in driving corporate accountability and empowering the public to understand AI systems, including where and how they are being used. Ultimately, the public needs to be informed when content has been created by AI. This also applies to original content that has been altered using AI.

Another aspect that adds to transparency is to provide broad access to AI resources for academic research and the nonprofit community. Academic research has and will continue to play an important role in societal innovation and the nonprofit sector will be critical to ensure that AI technology remains accessible and accountable.

## 5. Pursue new public-private partnerships to use AI as an effective tool to address the inevitable societal challenges that come with new technology

AI is a powerful tool with immense potential for good. Like with other technologies, however, there are some who will try use it as a weapon. Fortunately, the technology can also be harnessed to fight against

the abuse of AI and to address societal challenges. Public and private partnerships between governments, companies and NGOs will be needed to drive progress in this and other key areas, from skills development to sustainability efforts.

We've seen the effectiveness of this approach in countries like Nigeria where we've partnered with the United Nations Development Programme to co-convene the AI for Development Reference Group, a multi-stakeholder and interdisciplinary collaboration tasked with helping shape the country's AI agenda. In Kenya, we launched a Responsible AI series with Bowmans, Strathmore University, and other stakeholders to discuss AI policy, regulatory frameworks and governance within the country's AI ecosystem.

And in South Africa, Microsoft's partnerships with key players across the public and private sectors are reshaping public service delivery and addressing multifaceted business and societal challenges in areas such as health care system optimisation. Collaboration with the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation (DTHF) at the start of COVID-19, for example, contributed to crucial COVID-19 vaccine trials. A system harnessing Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Microsoft Azure Cognitive Services was implemented to help the DTHF manage various healthcare services and clinical trials, providing the Foundation with real-time access to data to improve efficiencies and reporting while also enabling the automated booking and scheduling of participants. Ultimately, the DTHF was able to enrol and manage study participants much faster and more efficiently.

These are of course a few examples with many more initiatives taking place across Africa.

While we certainly don't have all the answers to the questions that this new AI era brings, we believe that by working with stakeholders across the continent, we can help shape a future where AI is a tool that benefits everyone. Grounded in responsible regulation and collaborative partnerships, Africa can fully realise the opportunities presented by a future with AI.

# WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO



**WEBINAR**

**STATE OF THE MARKET:**  
A look into the Digital Council  
Africa's Annual Market Research

**Digital Council**

**EXPERT SPEAKER**  
Bora Varilyagci | CEO, Digitalthings

8 March 2024 | 10 - 11 | Register @ <https://bit.ly/49A689y>

In this session we shared our annual research with members with the aim of equipping them with invaluable insights into the current state of the sector. Our annual research offers a comprehensive understanding of the present landscape of the sector, enabling members with the knowledge needed to shape the sector's future.

## Our infrastructure products help to build a superior network

m4a (Pty) Ltd's axSCHAMBER™ range offers a modular solution for the network builder ensuring unsurpassed flexibility, performance and economy. These are round grade level chambers (also referred to as vaults), and access points, for use in telecommunication, water, and other utility network builds.

The modular nature allows for easy and efficient assembly. The modern materials we use offer high tensile, flexural and compressive strengths, also resulting in lighter weight products.

At m4a we pride ourselves in #takingcarbonback. Installing products like these support carbon capture and other GHG emission goals to become a net zero industry.

### SHOWCASING THE AXS 900R IN A TELECOMMUNICATIONS APPLICATION



Excavation around an existing backhaul fibre network link for the retrofit of a 900R axSCHAMBER™.



The chamber base plate is placed below the multiduct sleeve and the side wall panels are assembled around the multiduct sleeve. No cutting required.



The first row of panels completely assembled showing a 500mm chamber depth.



The second row of panels is then placed onto the first installed section, creating the 1000mm chamber depth.



A complete 900R is shown assembled and ready for backfilling to commence. Complete assembly and retrofit achieved in 30 minutes.

These utilities products, all manufactured by m4a, come together to create the instrumental system behind ensuring a rugged infrastructure network for years to come.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

**WEBINAR**

## 5G South Africa versus the world



10 May 2024 | 10 - 11:30 | Register @ <https://bit.ly/3I0JpHQ>

**EXPERT SPEAKER** Christopher Geerdts | MD, BMIT

## 5G: South Africa's Progress in Comparison to Global Trends

In a rapidly evolving digital landscape, 5G technology stands out as a pivotal advancement with the potential to revolutionize connectivity. As South Africa navigates its path towards 5G deployment, this webinar hosted by the Digital Council Africa in collaboration with BMI TechKnowledge (BMIT) aims to delve into the country's progress relative to global benchmarks.

Titled "5G: South Africa vs The World," the webinar will mark five years since the publication of BMIT's influential report, "Roads to 5G for South Africa." The event will not only evaluate South Africa's journey towards 5G but also compare its advancements with those of other countries.

Christopher Geerdts, Managing Director of BMIT, will lead the discussion, drawing on his extensive 30-year experience in the industry. Geerdts has been instrumental in various technological advancements, including the launch of GPRS and corporate APNs with MTN, as well as contributing to 3G strategies in southern African countries in collaboration with Huawei.

### The webinar will cover key topics, including:

1. The (bumpy) road to current progress in 5G deployment.
2. South Africa's advancement compared to global counterparts.
3. 5G's role in bridging the digital divide.
4. Unlocking the full potential of 5G for societal benefit.

BMIT, approaching its 35th anniversary as a bespoke ICT analyst and research firm in South Africa, has been at the forefront of tracking technological trends and providing insights to industry stakeholders. Serving major operators, government departments, SOEs, investors, and other industry players, BMIT continues to play a crucial role in shaping the ICT landscape in South Africa.

**Register to join us** at what promises to be an insightful exploration into the state of 5G in South Africa and its implications for the future.

## How Google is Supporting Election Integrity in South Africa



By Abongile Mashele, Head of Govt Affairs and Public Policy: Google (SA)

2024 is an important year for elections across the world, with many countries going into the polls to elect their leaders for the forthcoming years. South Africa will hold its 7th democratic elections on 29 May, in a year that marks the country's 30th anniversary of democracy.

In line with our commitment to helping organise the world's information, making it universally accessible and useful, Google has undertaken a number of steps to support election integrity in South Africa by surfacing high quality information to voters, safeguarding our platforms from abuse and equipping campaigns with the best-in-class security tools and training. We'll also do this work with an increased focus on the role artificial intelligence (AI) might play. Here is an overview of our efforts:

### Connecting people to reliable and trustworthy information

During elections, both seasoned and new voters in South Africa will be actively seeking information around various candidates, voting locations, and campaign agendas. Here are some of the ways we make it easy for people to find what they need:

- **Search:** Google Search surfaces high quality, authoritative information. When people search for topics like "how to vote," they will find information about ID requirements, voting stations and more — linking to authoritative sources from our partners such as the *Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC)*.
- **YouTube:** During an election, voters across the country come to *YouTube* to get news and information from a diverse set of authoritative news sources. For example, when voters search for election-related topics, YouTube's recommendation system prominently surfaces election content in search results, the homepage and the "watch next" panel. At the same time, human reviewers and machine learning technology combine to detect, review and remove content that violates our policies.
- **Ads:** To support responsible and transparent political advertising, all advertisers who wish to run election ads in South Africa must complete an identity verification process and display an in-ad disclosure that clearly shows who paid for the ad. We also limit targeting of election ads to the following general categories: age, gender, and general location (postal code level). All election ads are published in our *Political Ads Transparency Report*, where anyone can look up information such as how much was spent and how many impressions were received.

## Equipping political candidates and campaigns with security features and training

Besides ensuring that South African voters are fully equipped with accurate and timely information, we are working hard to help high-risk users, such as campaign and election officials, improve their security and to educate them on how to use our products and services to connect with voters and manage their digital presence.

- **Security tools:** We offer free services like our [Advanced Protection Program](#) — our strongest set of cyber protections — and [Project Shield](#), which provides unlimited protection against Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks.
- **Training:** In collaboration with IEC, we have trained representatives of political parties on our elections integrity work including product policies, recommended security protocols as well as reporting and removal processes for harmful and illegal content.

## Protecting online information around elections

Maintaining access to trustworthy information online during the election period in South Africa is crucial. We continue to enhance our enforcement systems as well as work with the wider ecosystem in the fight against misinformation.

- **Enforcing our policies:** We have long-standing policies that inform how we approach areas like manipulated media, hate and harassment, and incitement to violence — along with policies around demonstrably false claims that could undermine trust or participation in democratic processes, for example in YouTube's [Community Guidelines](#) and our [unreliable claims policy](#) for advertisers. Our Trust & Safety teams are equipped with local knowledge and language expertise to monitor for and enforce upon content that violates our policies. And with recent advances in our Large Language Models (LLMs), we're building faster and more adaptable enforcement systems that enable us to remain nimble and take action even more quickly when new threats emerge.
- **Tackling coordinated influence operations:** Our Threat Analysis Group (TAG) helps identify, monitor and tackle emerging threats, ranging from coordinated influence operations to cyber espionage campaigns against high-risk entities — and reports on actions taken in our [quarterly TAG bulletin](#).
- **Working with the wider ecosystem to safeguard election integrity:** Google is working with industry players such as the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC), Media Monitoring Africa (MMA), and TikTok through a Framework of Cooperation, designed to protect and safeguard the integrity of the elections and fight against misinformation. This framework allows signatories to work together to promote access to information, candidates conduct awareness campaigns on elections, and provides training to political parties, and other key stakeholders on addressing misinformation.
- **Establishing a fact-checking coalition with South African media:** Google is funding a fact-checking coalition led by [Africa Check](#) with South African media which works together to fact-check claims made by political parties, provide voters with reliable, non-partisan information on key issues, and equip the public with the skills they need to identify election misinformation. Africa Check is also supporting national and local media with election reporting training and workshops. Through the [Google News Initiative](#) we will support a further six fact-checking coalitions across the African continent as more countries head to the polls this year.
- **News publisher workshops:** Additionally, we will be offering workshops to help news partners to optimise their YouTube presence during the election period, including how to utilise YouTube tools and understand platform guidelines, along with strategies for election coverage on YouTube.

## Helping people navigate AI-generated content

As more people interact with AI-generated content, we have introduced policies and tools to help audiences navigate:

- **Ads disclosures:** We were the first tech company to [require](#) advertisers to disclose when their election ads include synthetic content that inauthentically depicts real or realistic-looking people or events. This includes ads that were created with the use of AI. Our [ads policies already](#) prohibit the use of manipulated media to mislead people, like deep fakes or doctored content.
- **Content labels on YouTube:** YouTube's [misinformation policies](#) prohibit technically manipulated content that misleads users and could pose a serious risk of egregious harm. YouTube also requires creators to disclose when they've created realistic altered or synthetic content, and will display a label that indicates for people when the content they're watching is synthetic and realistic.

# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

- **A responsible approach to Generative AI products:** In line with our *principled* and *responsible* approach to our generative AI products like Gemini and Search Generative Experience (SGE), we've prioritised testing across safety risks ranging from cybersecurity vulnerabilities to misinformation and fairness. Out of an abundance of caution on such an important topic, we're restricting the types of election-related queries for which Gemini and SGE will return responses.
- **Watermarking:** *SynthID*, a tool from Google DeepMind, directly embeds a digital watermark into AI-generated images and audio.

This all builds on work we do around elections across the African continent and in other regions, as part of our long-standing commitment to supporting democratic processes. As we enter into a period of heightened political activity in South Africa and across Africa, we remain committed to informing voters by surfacing high quality information, protecting our platform from bad actors, as well as assisting campaigns in managing their security and digital presence.

Article Source: [Google Blog](#).

# WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

## Supporting SA's Digital Transformation

27<sup>th</sup> EDITION  
**DIGITAL**  
TRANSFORMATION SUMMIT  
EXITO

SUPPORTING PARTNER  
Digital Council

CO-COLOCATED WITH  
**CYBER**  
SECURITY SUMMIT  
EXITO

#EXITOOTSSOUTHAFRICA

**FROM VISION TO REALITY: CATALYZING SOUTH AFRICA'S DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

15TH MARCH 2024 | 09:00 AM - 05:00 PM | SANDTON CONVENTION CENTRE

**Mlindi Mashologu**  
Deputy Director-General (DOO) -  
ICT Information Society and  
Capacity Development,  
Department of Communications  
and Digital Technologies

**Dr. Thabiso Njongwe**  
Chief Digital  
Transformation Officer  
Absa Group

**May Govender**  
Group Chief Information  
Officer  
Old Mutual Limited

**Lungile Binza**  
Chief Digital Officer  
South African Broadcasting  
Corporation

The DCA was a proud supporting partner of the 27th Edition of the **Digital Transformation Summit South Africa 2024**.

This transformative event, showcased how digital innovation is reshaping industries and creating new opportunities for growth. The summit, which took place as an invitation-only in-person event, brought together over 200 C-Level Executives, Directors, and Heads of Technology to explore the potential of Web 3.0, AI, metaverse, blockchain, cryptocurrency, ICT, IoT, cyber security, and other 4IR technologies.

Attendees gained valuable insights into how organizations are adopting digital transformation, overcoming challenges, and enhancing cyber security. The summit provided a platform for strategic partnerships and addressed real business challenges, focusing on skills development to accelerate South Africa's digital transformation, stimulate economic recovery, advance social and gender equality, and create jobs.

## Inaugural Digital Skills Forum Meeting



Our government has recognized the importance of developing digital skills, and has taken giant steps towards bridging the digital divide.

One of those significant steps was evident in the establishment of the Presidential Commission on the 4IR (PC4IR) by His Excellency, President Matamela Ramaphosa in 2019. This commission was mandated to provide leadership for society to understand, navigate and assume agency over what will be the fundamentally altered future.

The Department Of Communications and Digital Technologies a year later developed the National Digital and Future Skills Strategy, based on a comprehensive assessment of the digital skills gaps that exist in the country and those necessary in the future.

This Strategy provides a guide for the development of professional and societal digital skills required for the country's advancement as a digital economy. It also seeks to ensure that the citizens can benefit from enhanced levels of digital skills, leading to an improved quality of life, education, greater economic growth, and creation of new jobs.

Amongst other objectives, the National Digital and Future Skills Strategy seeks to ensure that citizens are provided with the necessary levels of basic and specialized digital skills that will empower them to function within the digital economy.

The Digital Skills Forum, launched this year, is aimed to be the coordinator of the National Digital Skills Programme.



**communications & digital technologies**

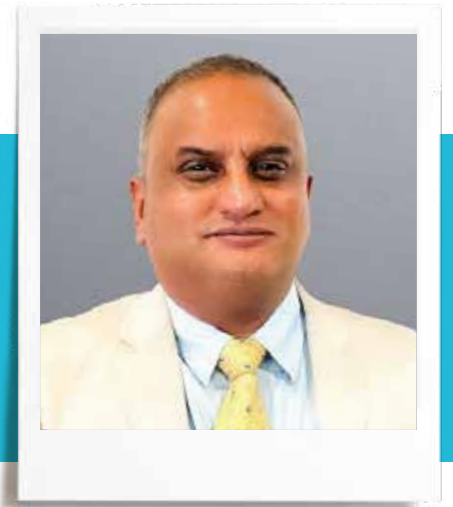
Department:  
Communications & Digital Technologies  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

The most crucial role of the DSF will be to bring together the necessary expertise, financial resources and institutional support as well as to track the performance of the National Digital Skills Programme.

The work of the DSF will be based on specific focus areas identified in the National Digital and Future Skills Strategy.



## IN CONVERSATION WITH



**Sudhir Juggernath**  
CEO, TelCables South Africa

Q

**Can you provide us with some insights into Telcables and its relationship with the Angola Group?**

Telcables is a subsidiary of Angolacables Group. It is our way of fulfilling our group vision "global presence local business", having said this we have Telcables South Africa, Telcables Nigeria, Telcables Brazil, Telcables Maderia and Telcables Bermuda. Telcables is the global brand, having local representation in the respective markets and regions, leveraging Angolacables Global Network and shared resources.

Q

**You assumed your position in September 2023. Where were you employed before joining Telcables?**

I was at Orange for 6 years, based in South Africa, reporting into Paris. Responsible for the Wholesale International Carrier Business for Southern Africa.

Q

**How would you describe your experience during the initial months at Telcables?**

It has been fascinating and interesting, dynamic young people, inspiring board members, culture is truly amazing, people are so open to help and make you feel comfortable. The one attribute which stands out the most is humility. We have a team of very passionate people energized to ensuring our customers are always connected.

Q

**As you transition into your new role, can we anticipate significant changes in your strategic approach?**

This is probably the most anticipated question for the market, so the answer is no, our strategic approach will come in the form off; we will do what we do best, focus on our own assets, WACS, SACS and Monet Sub marine cable systems together with our own home growth clouds2africa and backup2africa solutions empowering our customers and partners with best-in-class quality, SLA's and pricing. As you can imagine the South Atlantic Cable System, our own, provides a digital bridge between Africa and the Americas. It is the shortest path from Africa to the Americas and as we see in this always connected world we live in, good content, great quality at the best latency is becoming the standard ask from consumers. Based on this we want our partners and customers to experience this.

Q

**What do you perceive as the most significant challenges currently confronting cable operators?**

wow, ok, straight to the point.. interesting enough it has always been the ongoing bandwidth demand growth, how do you keep up with this and still try to drive down operational and capital costs.

Q

**Recognising the importance of market resilience, do you intend to collaborate with partners to bolster this aspect of Telcables' operations?**

Interesting question and one which is of uttermost importance to us, indeed we believe in co-opetition( if such a word exists) the art off working together even though we all have some of the same assets. We foster this approach as this industry is small enough for all like-minded companies to succeed. We believe strongly in reseller and partnership models, this is our go to market. We will continue to develop solutions to empower our partners and resellers.

# CALL TO ACTION

## INVITATION **DIGITAL ECONOMY MASTERPLAN**

The Digital Economy Masterplan, finalised in 2021 and signed off in 2023 is now reaching the implementation stage.

The Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT) will be hosting an information sharing session with Stakeholders to provide an update on the process for updating the Digital Economy Masterplan's implementation plan and tracking mechanism.



DATE	TIME	ONLINE
<b>THURSDAY 11 APRIL 2024</b>	<b>09:30</b>	<b>TEAMS</b> Meeting ID: 380 025 035 643 Passcode: XSaLYu



## Unlocking South Africa's Digital Future: The Implementation of the Digital Economy Masterplan

The Digital Economy Masterplan for South Africa was developed by the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT), in collaboration with business and labour stakeholders, during the course of 2020. The Masterplan identified where South Africa's digital economy can be leveraged to achieve the country's development objectives: inclusive growth, job creation and transformation. The Masterplan identified required interventions in five areas: digital inclusion, skills for work, responsive governance, innovation & competitiveness and government digitisation.

While the Masterplan was finalised in 2021 - with input and validation from government, business and labour – the Masterplan was not officially signed off for implementation until August 2023.

DCDT is now moving forward with implementation of the Masterplan. The strategic focus of the 2021 Masterplan remains relevant and will not be reformulated. The current need is to appreciate progress against the key imple-

mentation pillars (between 2020 and 2024) and redefine the further implementation priorities in the short (3-6 months) and medium term (3 years). Specific emphasis is now being placed on establishing quick wins for rapid implementation whilst developing a sustainable mechanism for aggregating and tracking initiatives in progress.

For further enquiries please contact Mr. Gavin Morkel on 083 399 2929 or email to [gmorkel@dcdt.gov.za](mailto:gmorkel@dcdt.gov.za)

### REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON DIGITAL ECONOMY MASTERPLAN ACTIVITIES (2021 - 2028)

The Masterplan's objectives of inclusive growth, job creation and transformation must be supported by initiatives in five areas: digital inclusion, skills for work, responsive governance, innovation & competition, and government digitisation. We request digital economy stakeholders to provide information on current and planned initiatives in these five areas.

This request for information (RFI) form should take 15-20 minutes to be completed.

You may access the request for information [here](#).

## Why access to broadband should be a human right

Mike Bell (pictured left) sees high-speed internet connection as the linchpin of a thriving, equal-opportunity society.

Ask Mike Bell, Corning's senior vice president and general manager of *Optical Communications*, what motivates him to come to work every morning, to lead the high-speed fiber broadband business he's contributed to since 1991, and he'll answer with his own question: ***"What could be more exciting than expanding the bandwidth of human potential?"***

Bell's zeal reflects Corning's mission to connect the unconnected to the transformational benefits only made possible by reliable, high-speed internet access.

To meet ever-growing demand, the company has *invested more than \$500 million in fiber and cable manufacturing* since 2020. This expanded capacity helps ensure strong supply for internet service providers to make fiber connections available to all Americans, regardless of where they live.

**In this interview, Bell shares why his team is so committed to this vital pursuit.**

Since Corning invented the first low-loss optical fiber in 1970, more than 6 billion kilometers of fiber have been deployed globally. But there's work to do: Only 19% of Americans are connected by fiber today.

### Why should broadband access be a human right?

The pandemic's massive, unplanned experiment proved that only those with high-speed internet could really participate in our society as it works today. It's as critical as electricity.

The 80% of Americans who don't have access to fiber broadband got left behind. It's not OK to let that digital divide persist, to accept having a "less than" population.

### What would equal access look like?

We want every American to have a fiber-to-the-home broadband connection providing equal upload and download speeds, capable of bringing people together via seamless video. Equal upload and download speeds are important because increasingly we're all uploading as much as we're downloading – uploading videos to social media, downloading apps to our devices, and so on.

Once you have a single fiber to your home, you'll never need anything else. Only fiber provides the kind of future-proof bandwidth capacity that sets folks up for success for decades to come.



**Who agrees with you?**

The U.S. government. We've seen bipartisan support for the "Internet for All" movement via the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 allocating \$65 billion (about \$200 per person in the U.S.) in new spending for high-speed internet. Of that, about \$42 billion will go toward new infrastructure under the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program.

**But what if families cannot afford internet service?**

President Biden recently pointed out the absolute necessity of affordable, reliable, high-speed internet service, calling it an essential utility like water or gas. Initiatives like the American Rescue Plan aim to get and keep low-income households connected, whether they're living in cities or our vastly underserved rural areas.

**You're clearly passionate about this.**

I believe in equal opportunity, in making sure everyone has a chance to reach their full potential.

Access to education is the single most transformational thing in American life. Learners with high-speed internet can avail themselves of all human knowledge, participate in classes anywhere on the globe, and unleash their gifts in ways unimaginable 25 years ago. How much talent are we missing out on by not connecting everyone to those opportunities?

**As individuals grow their strengths, the community benefits, too.**



Absolutely. Broadband is an engine for economic growth and vitality. Employment opportunities open up. Market knowledge gets democratized. Entrepreneurs can transact globally as well as locally. All because people can fully take part.

**Seems like high-speed internet undergirds the very fundamentals of a high-quality 21st century life.**

It does. And I'd be remiss if I left entertainment off that list.

Why shouldn't everyone be able to livestream fantastic concerts, or the latest blockbuster movie, or dive into a global community of gamers?

And opportunities to enjoy, learn, and create are only going to expand with the growth of generative AI tools and augmented reality applications.

We're headed into an era beyond watching how-to YouTube videos. We're going to see virtual worlds and instructional elements put right into our real-world environment. Making use of that capability requires a high-speed connection.

**You don't want anyone to miss out.**

All of us miss out when anyone remains unconnected. But, my goodness, imagine how we can move the world forward when we all share that connected pathway toward a better version of ourselves.

**The job's not yet done, but it's 100% worth doing.**



*Mike Bell with U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo at Corning's newest optical cable manufacturing facility in Hickory, North Carolina.*

## WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

IN-PERSON BREAKFAST SESSION



Primerio

## COMPETITION LAW UPDATE & DISCUSSION



On the 4th of April the Digital Council Africa in collaboration with Primerion hosted the Competition Law Update & Discussion Breakfast Session at the Inanda Club in Sandton.

### TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

- The recent public interest guidelines and how to manage this risk in deal making;
- Consolidation and the lens through which a competition agency scrutinises transactions;
- Presenting a competition case before the Tribunal; update on African competition law developments.

A follow-up session is planned. Invitations will be sent out via email.



Juanita was invited to be a speaker at the National AI Summit held on 5 April at Johannesburg Business School.

The Summit was convened by DCDT Minister, Honourable Minister Gungubele, to share the contents of draft National AI Plan with key stakeholders and the ICT industry. This was a pre-policy process that is intended to collate inputs and incorporate them into the draft plan before it being taken through the Cabinet System for release for public comments. The draft National AI Plan approaches the computing system in a logical flow that would provide impetus for adoption and provision of direction to all stakeholders.

### For more information:

[Click here to access the Discussion Document](#)

[Click here to access Minister Gungubele's Keynote Address at the National AI Government Summit 5 April 2024](#)

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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](mailto: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](mailto: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.