

# Is South Africa ready for the workplace of the future?

Digital will change the way South African businesses operate on a profound, cellular level. It is not a superficial layer to an existing strategy or an added extra. It is a force that will change the very DNA of a business and impact how it engages with its customers and staff. This year's IAB Digital Summit, powered by Accenture Interactive, will explore the full spectrum of opportunities that digital brings to South African businesses.

No business can build a powerful brand or attract today's consumer if it doesn't turn its gaze inward first. Game-changing, fast-growing brands have all experienced radical change on the inside in order to make the most of the digital marketplace.



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Lee Naik, CEO of TransUnion Africa and a speaker at the Summit says, "The dramatic shift in digital communication is changing the way the South African public engages with businesses, brands and government. This is the age of dynamic customer expectations, where the customer has a say in defining their experience. They expect service delivery to be consistent across all channels that governments and businesses offer."

How can businesses adapt their internal processes to serve today's consumer? The [2017 Fjord Trends report](#), compiled in collaboration with Accenture Interactive, has some profound insights on the businesses of the future.

The report notes that organisations must acknowledge the need to rewire completely in order to become more people-centric with regard to both their customers and employees. Some of the world's leading corporations are achieving this through breaking down silos in order to inspire creative thinking and using the latest digital tools to create a platform for organisation-wide flexibility.

Thebe Ikalafeng, founder and chairman of Brand Leadership Group and Brand Africa and another speaker at the Summit says, "On a continent in which 70% of employees are under the age of 30 who are mobile and tech-savvy, businesses must begin to adapt to and embrace the remote workforce. Young professionals now view flexibility as a key contributor to job satisfaction."

This sentiment is mirrored in the 2016 Fjord Trends report, which states that employees now expect tailored experiences, rapid growth and personal connection in their careers. This has resulted in the emergence of employee experience (EX) design, where workplace processes, structure and culture are reimagined at an organisational level. In the case of adapting South African business to meet the needs of a mobile workforce, the main barriers include a traditional 9-5 organisational culture and the digital infrastructure to manage efficiency.

While team communication platforms such as Slack, Jabber and Yammer exist, South Africans still need affordable and fast connectivity to enable the mobile workforce to stay connected anywhere, anytime. The evolution of LTE and Fibre in the country in addition to more affordable devices should drive data costs down, making it easier for businesses and their employees to connect.

Ikalafeng adds, "The businesses that will thrive in the digital age are those that are responsive, adaptive and agile." This ultimately lies in how businesses communicate and receive information from their customers. As smart technology offers businesses unparalleled insight into who their customers are, they have the opportunity to tailor their business offerings to meet evolving consumer needs.

Access to data and technology also comes with a new set of responsibilities. Businesses need to invest in proper, respectful data practices. As outlined in the 2017 report, businesses also need to interrogate the social impact of the technology and innovation they create. As we have witnessed with big businesses such as Uber and Airbnb, consumers and media are unafraid to challenge the ethics and unintended consequences of revolutionary digital businesses.

Expect more snackable insights and real business learnings at the IAB Digital Summit, powered by Accenture Interactive. The event will be held on Thursday, 16 March at The Galleria in Sandton from 9am until 3pm.

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