

Alan Knott-Craig to speak at SACSC Research Conference

Alan Knott-Craig, former Mxit CEO and founder of non-profit organisation, Project Isizwe, will join a list of speakers at the South African Council of Shopping Centres (SACSC) annual Research Conference, which will take place at the Maslow Hotel in Sandton on 17 May 2017.



Living in a connected society where most people have access to smart mobile devices, retailers offering free Wi-Fi have an unprecedented edge and this plays an important role in increasing sales, dwell time and helps gain customer loyalty.

Knott-Craig kicked off the revolutionary TshWi-Fi concept in 2013 and since then more than 1.8 million people have connected to the internet through 90 million logged sessions over 803 free internet zones (FIZs) in Tshwane.

[TshWi-Fi](#) was built by Project Isizwe, which has a sole mandate of providing free municipal Wi-Fi in South Africa. The city of Tshwane was [Project Isizwe](#)'s first Wi-Fi project and remains its biggest, with full funding from the city's municipality.

Says SACSC CEO, Amanda Stops: "The 2017 instalment of the annual SACSC Research Conference is going to be very insightful. Our speakers are incredible and Alan is one such speaker. The Research Conference is at the forefront when it comes to sharing knowledge and expanding the horizons of all those who attend," she said.

According to Knott-Craig, the World Bank estimates that for every 10% penetration of internet access, a country's GDP grows by 1,28%.

Education, economic development, social inclusion

“Project Isizwe works with local, provincial and national government to provide Wi-Fi in low-income communities for the purpose of education, economic development and social inclusion, enabling access to the internet as a catalyst for change. I realised that unless the government provides free internet, most South Africans will be blocked from exploiting the power of the web.

“I think the internet is the most empowering tool in the world. Education, jobs, commerce, healthcare, politics - the internet makes all of it more efficient. I want to live in SA the rest of my life. Free Wi-Fi for all South Africans will give our country the best chances of a bright future,” he says.

Free Wi-Fi Western Cape

Project Isizwe has also established free internet Wi-Fi connectivity in the Western Cape, rolling out capacity for 40,000 users around schools in Atlantis and Robertson. Apart from allowing users free internet through Wi-Fi connectivity, Project Isizwe has developed a content portal called ‘Tobetsa’.

“Tobetsa is designed to give users access to uncapped curated content. This content is focused on education, skills development and employment, and gives local communities the power to access information, education and jobs online, empowering them to participate in the mainstream economy like never before,” he adds.

Free Wi-Fi in retail and shopping centres has its place too. Allowing consumers a chance to stay connected with trends, sales and important information. It is of the utmost importance to know and understand consumers’ needs in order to stay relevant and competitive.

Why free Wi-Fi is beneficial for retailers, shopping centres

- **Improves marketing:** Some Wi-Fi connections require the user to sign-up, once clicked it automatically redirects the user to a landing page. This landing page can be customised for that particular retailer or shopping centre and can be used to advertise special offers. Additionally, retailers have the chance to brand the network with a custom Wi-Fi network name. By letting customers ‘check in’ to your store or restaurant, they’re spreading the word without any effort on your end.
- **Increases customer dwell time:** 62% of businesses report that customers spend more time in their facility when free Wi-Fi is offered. If customers spend more time at your facility, they are more likely encourage their friends and family to spend more time at your business. Wi-Fi access helps customers stay productive and connected while they’re in your store or at your place of business, so they’ll want to stay longer.
- **Increase customer spend:** Don’t worry about customers who come to use your free Wi-Fi without spending a cent. More times than not, they actually end up spending more. For retailers, customers can use the Wi-Fi to browse your products and read reviews in real time.
- **Gain a competitive edge:** Many people choose businesses such as coffee shops and bookstores based on the ones that offer free Wi-Fi. Those that offer fast, free Wi-Fi have a clear advantage over those that don’t. The reality is, customers have come to expect free Wi-Fi at most places.

For more about the conference, go to www.sacsc.org.za.