

4IR advancement beneficial to SA transport, logistics

While certain industries have applied artificial intelligence, blockchain, cloud computing, robotics and the Internet of Things (IoT) fairly quickly, industries such as the transportation and logistics sector have adopted technology and innovation at a much slower rate. In the face of an industry still implementing the benefits of the Second and Third Revolutions, how will the Fourth Industrial Revolution improve the sustainability and potential of South Africa's supply chain?



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The Industry 4.0 Revolution has huge potential to benefit the sector through the application of advanced technology, where antiquated tech and reliance on human labour has remained the status quo for many years.

According to Mixo Kobe, CEO of Mixcorp, the interconnectedness of all facets of manufacture and distribution has the potential to increase efficiency, throughput and productivity. "The local logistics industry at large is driven by manual processes, from the loading of vehicles, warehousing and containerisation. Because these operational processes are reliant on the interface between man and machine, risk exposure is increased exponentially based on human error, unsafe environments and labourer's fatigue. Technology mitigates these risks through automation."

Optimising transport operations

Automation of systems gives us access to an unparalleled amount of logistical information, enabling us to optimise transport operations far more efficiently than ever before. High-quality data and analytics significantly improve transportation planning through increased visibility. Through access to rich data generated daily and an increasingly transparent supply chain, we are better equipped than ever to anticipate demand, plan more effectively and track distribution in real time.

Kobe believes that investment in innovative technology needs to be carefully considered and implemented in stages in order to reap the benefits.

"South African companies in the logistics and transportation space are still exploring innovations from the Second and Third Industrial Revolutions. We need to create a solid foundation to support the implementation of 4IR technology. Technological investments are an industry imperative and offer significant ROI, but these changes must be incorporated slowly but surely. Further to this, South African businesses have a mandate to protect jobs threatened by automation. In alignment with current industry capabilities, it is important to strike a balance between man and machine to maximise on efficiency.

Industry 4.0 is set to revolutionise the logistics and transport sector through slow but certain change. "The ball is in the logistics industry's court to utilise the technologies available in order to turn the tides to their advantage. The Fourth Industrial Revolution brings with it huge potential - for our clients, our industry and our economy," concludes Kobe.

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