

Transforming the African collective

 By [Chris Ogden](#)

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Technology has transformed the collaborative capabilities of African business.



Chris Ogden, MD of RubiBlue

At his State of the Nation address, President Cyril Ramaphosa emphasised the importance of collaboration in giving Africa the boost it needs to compete on the global stage and harness the opportunities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

This same sentiment of collaboration is what defines much of the spirit and community of Africa, the principle of 'shared economies' transforming socio-economic networks and business potential. Within this concept of the shared economy lies the potential that technology has unlocked across the continent and the growth of interconnected networks that share resources and assets in order to further their own expansion.

Already these models have proven themselves on the global stage with platforms such as Uber and Airbnb – the most commonly used examples – capitalising on what's shared is earned. This change has been brought about by the increased accessibility of technology and connectivity. Now, most people are connected, whether or not they want to be. And this connectivity can be used to leverage the continent's potential.

There is a need for the small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and startups to gain a stronger foothold in Africa. Their limited growth in some countries the result of excessive legislation and complex paperwork that is slowly being undone as governments recognise the damage it is doing. However, they are equally in the unique position of being able to leverage off technology to bring in clients and opportunities that previously would have been out of their league. They can collaborate with one another, using the skills of one to enhance the offering of the other.

Beyond borders

Technology also allows for deeper networking and contact development for smaller companies and gives them access to new markets across Africa. A startup in Kenya can collaborate with an SME in Nigeria and a one-man-band in South Africa to offer a remarkably rich offering to an enterprise or to redefine an entire market.

There are so many tools that allow businesses to now go beyond the limitations of border and budget that the only block is a change in mindset. To fully harness the potential of the technology and the collaborative qualities of Africa, people need to recognise that they no longer have to be in the same office or town to work effectively.



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What makes Africa stand out is that there is already a deep sense of community and a passion for working collaboratively. This culture allows us to work together to change communities and face the fairly significant challenges that impact on business and individual. There has been a shift in thinking over the past decade as smaller companies and startups have focused on their ability to embed themselves within their communities and make a sustainable difference rather than just expand the bottom line. Of course, the latter attitude isn't going to go away any time soon, but that isn't changing how African innovators view the future.

Technology is allowing for companies across Africa to develop a unique collaborative perspective that streamlines operations, improves potential and engages with new markets. It is also inspiring the individual and the entrepreneur to be more inventive and to collaborate more dynamically on projects and new opportunities. Africa already has the right mindset to create these partnerships and to leapfrog into new markets with innovative solutions.

The only question that should be on any business mind is this – how quickly can I get off the ground?

ABOUT CHRIS OGDEN

Chris Ogden is CEO at RubiBlue

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