MTN turns to AI and APIs to gain tech advantage

In an era defined by data-driven decision-making and digital transformation, MTN's AI ambition statement is clear: "By harnessing the full potential of our data, we'll unlock new sources of revenue while improving margins through smart automation. With the right governance model in place, we'll take bold steps toward our ambitious vision of becoming a true digital platform business by the year 2025", says MTN SA CEO, Charles Molapisi.

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MTN is poised to become API and AI-led, exemplifying its dedication to fostering innovation and automation. This strategic shift encompasses several key areas:

- **AI APIs:** Enabling developers to seamlessly integrate AI features into applications, orchestrating AI for both internal and external monetisation.
- **Digital assistants:** Mimicking human conversation to perform a variety of tasks and services, improving efficiency and user experience.
- **Robotics process automation:** Streamlining operations by automating tasks, reducing manual work, enhancing accuracy, and boosting productivity.
- **Machine learning:** Allowing for autonomous learning through predictive and prescriptive analytics, paving the way for more data-driven decisions.

At the heart of this transformative strategy is SiYa, an internally launched employee AI-driven chatbot. SiYa is not just an innovation but also serves as the foundation for what customers can anticipate from MTN in 2024. With SiYa, MTN is taking the first step in a journey that will ultimately redefine customer engagement and set new standards for customer service.

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The name "SiYa" draws inspiration from Siya Kolisi, the revered Springbok captain, renowned for embodying unity and a service mentality, through all he does. By choosing the name SiYa, the company aims to capture the essence of unity, harmony, and effective communication that has become synonymous with our national rugby team.

SiYa's introduction represents a pivotal proof point in MTN's AI strategy and commitment to a desire to lead in the digital transformation space. SiYa's capabilities extend from assisting employees with inquiries, offering information on company policies, and sharing insights from MTN's knowledge base. The knowledge gained from SiYa's interactions will be instrumental in shaping the future of customer engagement at MTN.

Employee interactions

SiYa opens up employee-company interactions. It's designed to offer immediate, contextually relevant support to employees, enhancing their experiences and reducing the friction often associated with traditional interactions.

Molapisi adds, "SiYa's ability to comprehend intricate user requests, tailor responses to individual preferences, and continuously enhance the quality of interactions aligns perfectly with our organisational strategy."

SiYa empowers employees to engage in meaningful conversations while managing their daily activities, demonstrating MTN's vision for the future.

Users can easily connect through the Microsoft Teams app, where the AI excels at handling basic employee inquiries, providing information on company policies, and sharing insights from MTN's knowledge base. As SiYa learns and evolves through interactions, users can expect to see him take on more roles and become increasingly helpful.

SiYa's growth doesn't stop with employees; he evolves in tandem with the learning and development of the chatbot. This dynamic progression will eventually enable SiYa to guide customers in making device purchases and seamlessly collaborate with human advisors, marking a significant departure from conventional processes.

Significant opportunities

"For MTN, significant AI opportunities lie in Customer Value Management, Network Operations, and Customer Service, areas that are crucial for improving customer experience, reducing costs, and driving revenue growth," says Molapisi.

> *Our AI strategy builds on existing programmes that already drive six of the eight foundational capabilities required to become AI-native. However, we recognise the need for a step change in AI culture, AI ethics, AI studio funding, and AI skills development.*

The digital roadmap includes AI to drive efficiency and core revenue growth while enhancing both customer and employee experiences. AI as a service intends to create and monetise solutions, making them accessible to competitors and similar businesses. Meanwhile, AI as a solution seeks to develop AI solutions that complement core business offerings and cater to consumer and enterprise needs.

MTN's pursuit of becoming an API and AI-led organisation signifies its commitment to delivering innovative solutions and

fostering a culture of AI adoption.

"By harnessing the power of AI and APIs, we are not only future-proofing our operations but ensuring that our customers, both internal and external, can look forward to a more streamlined, efficient, and data-driven experience," Molapisi concludes.

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