

African tech hubs looking for sustainable models - Google

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24 Mar 2016

Tech hubs in Africa are increasingly looking for diversified and sustainable models, echoing similar efforts by hubs in the US and Europe, according to Google.



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Speaking to Disrupt Africa, David Grunwald, head of Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) partnerships at Google for Entrepreneurs, said the co-working spaces and hubs Google works with in Africa show similarities, rather than differences, to spaces in the US and Europe, particularly in the way they are seeking to achieve sustainability and revenues.

More similarities than differences

Importantly, Grunwald said African hubs are early-on in their formation looking for sustainability models suited to local markets. “I think there are more similarities than differences in the way they operate and revenue generation to some extent,” Grunwald said.

“Many of the co-working spots we see in the US and Europe no longer have sponsorship and desk rental as the core of their revenues. Some have diversified into incubation or acceleration, taking a small proportion of equity in member startups. Others generate revenue through corporate innovation programmes – which in turn provide their member startups with sales and partnership opportunities, whilst some also run paid education programmes in coding, data science,” he said.

“Most of the hubs in sub-Saharan Africa already start thinking about diversified models even before launch. Some rent out their space for events, also taking opportunities to run paid workshops. I think Africa is slowly discovering what is right for the market and innovating as needed.”

Vibrant tech communities

Google currently supports 25 tech hub partners worldwide, five of these are based in Africa – in Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda and South Africa. According to Grunwald, these African hubs play home to some of the “most innovative and vibrant tech communities anywhere on the planet”.

Grunwald says Google derives its commitment to supporting startups worldwide from its own beginnings as a small tech startup; and says the company hopes its partnerships with global tech hubs will serve to create a connected community of entrepreneurs capable of solving world challenges.

“As a company, we began life as a startup in a garage and remain a startup at heart. Entrepreneurship is firmly in our DNA. We’re committed to helping enable the next generation of entrepreneurs to be successful, wherever in the world they might be,” Grunwald said.

“Google for Entrepreneurs builds spaces for entrepreneurs and strengthens startup communities. Since 2011, we’ve launched our own campuses and formed partnerships that support entrepreneurs across 125 countries. Our mission is to connect global startup communities to resources and each other so that – together – we can work on the world’s biggest challenges.”

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