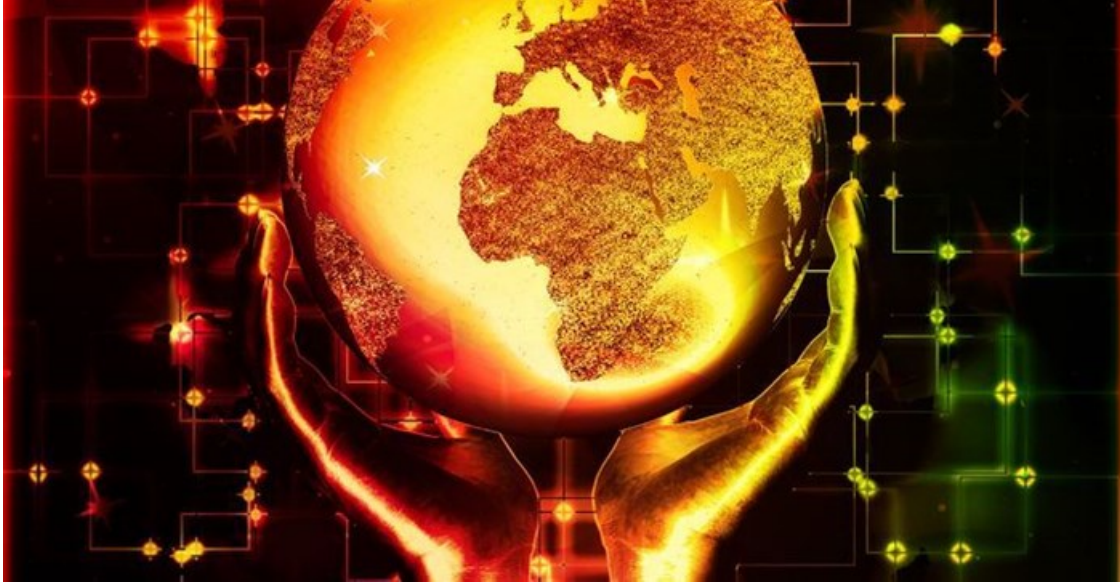


Africa needs to focus on 'intrapreneurship'

The potential in Africa is mainly about inclusion and exploring new innovative ways of providing services and 'intrapreneurship' is a driver for accelerating culture change and organisational transformation.



© Sommai Larkjit via [123RF](#)

Speaking at the first local Intrapreneurship Conference in Cape Town in October, Saidah Nash Carter, head of innovation at Thomson Reuters Africa, said: “Intrapreneurship is a driver for accelerating culture change and organisational transformation and developing the capability to capitalise on opportunities for growth and we need to open these channels of collaboration if we are to truly realise great opportunities across Africa.”

Industries are being disrupted one by one and as a result, business environments are constantly changing. Those that are embracing change and looking for ways to innovate faster and better are succeeding. Those that don't, are struggling. And, intrapreneurship is playing a critical role here.

However, it is hard to innovate in big companies – as they often sit with challenges around legacy procedures and infrastructures that can restrict their ability to innovate quickly. It is for this reason that Thomson Reuters believes it is critical to initiate such discussions around driving collaborative efforts through intrapreneurship; aimed at developing solutions that will start to address, or even solve, large scale problems affecting African countries.

Leveraging technology

“There is plenty of opportunity to leverage great things across Africa and there is so much that we could do through a community collaboration. By leveraging technology and look at leaner and more innovative ways of doing business, this will help us facilitate the growth of starts-up and achieve significant social impact. In fact, everyone should be thinking about the business of the future. We need people to be pushing the boundaries and leading change,” said Carter.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is a change of power which goes back to the individual and the people. However, bottom-up innovation is difficult to predict. “We are already seeing a lot of disruption and this will only increase,” said Carter. “Big corporates will have to decide on how to operate with the new playing field and identifying opportunities is something that they need to stay focused on.”

Take digital money and blockchain, for example, which will eventually result in everyone being part of the system. An ecosystem for trading data is emerging. A marketplace is emerging – which brings with it opportunities and concerns.

Continued Carter: “Africa’s growth here is already taking place. Due to the success of M-Pesa, Kenya is widely recognised as a leading hub for mobile payments. And, we are going further than this – looking at solutions that optimise solar, drive last mile delivery and open up financial inclusion by improving access to, as well as trust in new banking platforms.

“Healthcare is also a great opportunity in Africa. With greater levels of mobile health, remote support is extending reach. These solutions are very much needed in Africa and can only be achieved through collaboration.”

Rise of machines

With talk about frictionless currency transfer and e-governments, as well as digital identities, the big fear story is that of the rise of machines. The growth in the intelligence and capabilities of machines present both a threat and opportunity. Greater Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation will free up time, but also threaten jobs – if people don’t evolve.

“For Africa, the conversation on AI on the future workforce needs to shift from pessimistic concerns around job losses, to excitement and engagement about what technology might mean for the future workforce.

“Focus needs to shift to looking at what re-training will be required to ensure people continue to enjoy productive and rewarding lives, and as machines learn to assume more and more responsibilities in society. It is not about machines replacing humans in the workforce, but rather about machines augmenting humans – making people’s jobs easier and potentially more interesting, but not making them redundant,” added Carter.

Africa’s problems can be solved through real solutions, but it requires deeper collaboration and partnerships that are more dynamic, long-term orientated and democratised.

“Together with start-ups, I believe we will be able to capture innovation and leverage the power of technology across Africa. This will help to not only facilitate the growth of start-ups, but also drive significant social impact. There is no one recipe for how to do it, but we are committed to fostering an innovative discussion so that we are able to light up the lives of millions of people. I believe people will rally behind change and they are ready to evolve and move to the next levels of innovation - and we plan to be here every step of the way,” concluded Carter.