

Power failures, low bandwidth? Try cloud computing

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In sub-Saharan Africa, a literally dark area where only 53% of urban dwellers and 8% of rural communities, respectively, have access to electricity, and where Internet connectivity and data are still a luxury, cloud computing might be just the best solution for emerging businesses, according to two speakers at the 2011 [Tech4Africa](#) conference.



Cloud computing has become a critical tool for emerging technology and is ideal for places such as Africa because it is insulated from failures and built for low latency and connectivity within the same region, said Simone Brunozzi ([@simon](#)), technology evangelist at Amazon Web Services APAC.

"Africa is beautiful"

"Africa is beautiful and is fast becoming a great place to live in and do business, but sometimes there are a lot of frictions, and these include infrastructure challenges, difficulties to get capital, set up a business, hire people and fire them if you don't like them," Brunozzi told delegates yesterday, Thursday, 27 October 2011.

He said African start-ups and emerging entrepreneurs should consider sticking to cloud computing to lower their barriers and push their businesses forward.

Award-winning Ghanaian businessman Herman Kojo Chinery-Hesse, described by BBC as Africa's Bill Gates, echoed Brunozzi's sentiments on cloud computing. He said, "Cloud computing is key to Africa's creativity and vital because of power failures and unreliable and limited bandwidth."

"Being an African must be in the mindset"

"Being an African must be in the mindset, not on paper," he said, adding that one should consider modifying technology to suit the local business environment.

Apart from North Africa, where 99% of its urban population and 88% of its rural communities have access to electricity, the rest of the continent - sub-Saharan Africa - is a perfectly dark place, as the region only generates 47MW of electricity, less than 0.6% of the global market, according to figures released recently by US-based PenWell Corporation.

The load-shedding and blackouts saga, that plunged Africa's leading economy, South Africa, into darkness and chaos in 2008, was said to have negatively impacted on small-scale enterprises, which are believed to be the lifeblood of the country's survival, jobs creation and economic growth.

'Work around limitations'

"Europe and the whole of the West do not have power failures, but we do so that is one of the fundamental reasons we should move to cloud," Chinery-Hesse urged.

"There are many limitations in Africa, including less connectivity and power failures, but do your best to work around those limitations," Italian-born Brunozzi said. "Learn how to scale, be agile, incubate to reduce costs and re-use and re-use, cloud computing is one of the typical examples."

"Africans should learn to work at the bottom of the pyramid and look for loopholes in order to be creative," Chinery-Hesse told delegates.

Products that work well in Africa

He lauded SA companies for building products that work well in Africa, unlike western companies which sometime get it wrong. "You have to be on the ground to understand Africa's market needs."

Internet Solutions MD Derek Wilcocks said the world is fast changing, reiterating that businesses should make leaps by using new technologies.

Wilcocks, whose company is hosting the conference, cited content, collaboration, community, commerce and cloud as the five key trends driving business's survival in the current fast-changing world.

The two-day [Tech4Africa](#) conference, the brainchild of London-based Gareth Knight, will continue today at The Forum in Bryanston, with [speakers](#) such as Toby Shapshak ([@shapshak](#), *Stuff* editor and host of Biz Takeouts, the Bizcommunity/Chai FM Marketing & Media radio show), Jason Xenopoulos (Native CEO, [@JasonXenopoulos](#)) and *City Press* editor-in-chief Ferial Haffajee ([@ferialhaffajee](#)) (the only woman in the lineup full of men) scheduled to speak.

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Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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