

Availability, trust and security key trends for African businesses in 2017

 By [Claude Schuck](#)

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Here is a look at the evolution of data availability and associated issues that have the potential to transform ordinary businesses, power new business models, enable innovation, and deliver greater value. Take a look below at our 2017 IT trends for South Africa.



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Vendor compliance and trust under scrutiny

Data has become the currency of the digital age. Companies therefore need to have peace of mind that they are working with a reputable brand and one that will take care of their sensitive information in a manner that meets regulatory compliance. And, while vendors need to earn the trust of buyers through their actions, it will be a focal point in implementation strategy for the foreseeable future.

Already, companies across industry sectors in the South African market have started to see major changes in customer and partner behaviour. Many are now viewing backup and disaster recovery as something that is akin to insurance. So, while IT managers want more features from these solutions, they do not want to pay upfront for them. Instead, to address this trend, a consumption-based model has emerged.

This model heralds a shift from long-term contracts to companies purchasing availability on a 'pay-per-play' basis that is determined by their usage. This is where the trust relationship will come in. If a provider is someone that does not adhere to all legal, technical, and business requirements, then its relevancy in the always on world will be questioned. Eventually such providers should either re-evaluate their credentials or risk being displaced by more credible providers.

Availability a key demand

The past 12 months have seen the 'always on' movement become part of standard business process for forward thinking

organisations. Now, as businesses of all sizes realise this, it is no longer a case of whether it can be done, but rather the extent to which it should be done. Decision-makers will continue to scrutinise the data that needs to be always available, and the data that can be recovered in a slightly longer timeframe. Ultimately, 2017 will be all about having data accessible wherever and whenever it is needed.

Availability is something that cannot be ignored. The nature of connectivity and the demands of users mean companies will need to do everything they can to ensure that their data is always available.

Hybrid becomes mainstream

As more businesses place availability at the heart of their plans, the industry will see a push towards hybrid cloud adoption in the enterprise. After heavily investing in legacy systems over the years, decision-makers cannot afford to rip and replace their entire infrastructure. Instead, the hybrid approach provides a practical and cost-effective opportunity to move some of the workload into the cloud. In doing so, decision-makers will reap the benefit of having peace of mind that availability is taken care of when it comes to mission-critical data.

According to [research](#) from the IDC on cloud IT infrastructure spend, vendor revenues from sales of infrastructure products for cloud IT grew almost 22 percent year-on-year to \$29 billion in 2015. The expectation is that more workloads will become cloud-enabled which will ease the strain on internal systems and resources. This will see more widespread comfort levels in hybrid solutions as the legacy-only approaches of the past gradually disappear. Of course, this will not happen overnight but there are positive signs that such a time is getting closer.

With this migration, companies across industry sectors will be able to transform their business strategies and economic models to be more reflective of the dynamic always on environment. This transformation will have a positive impact on licensing models that used to be very complex and costly. Software licensing will therefore be much more flexible and affordable in a hybrid cloud environment.

Analytics expands across the enterprise

Building on all this is the need to make sense of the data available to business decision-makers. Analytics, specifically real-time, will be essential for those companies who want to make sense of the data they have at their disposal.

With virtually every aspect of business being measured, CIOs will need to work closer with other C-suite executives to build on initial successes with analytics to see how to fuel decision-making in other parts of the business. This will be a key component of transforming into a digital business with every decision made reflected by analyses of the data at hand, and the connection of analytics capabilities across the business.

Security drives decision-making and spending

Finally, cybersecurity will remain a fundamental principle throughout 2017. After becoming a major board level concern in 2015, this year we've seen cybercriminals become more skilled in infiltrating systems of all manners. Organisations will need to adopt increasingly sophisticated approaches to counter this. Furthermore, it's not just legacy on-premise systems that will need security to be paramount. Threat intelligence will need to be incorporated into every element of a hybrid cloud environment whether that is on-premise or in the cloud itself.

Already, we have seen many analysts put cyber security as one of the greatest threats to every organisation in the world. Part of this can be attributed to the increasing importance placed on data. Earlier this year, Juniper Research [reported](#) that the cost of data breaches will exceed \$2 trillion by 2019 as a result of the rapid digitalisation of people's lives and enterprise records.

Cybersecurity measures must be completely integrated into business strategy and will be a natural part of remaining competitive. Other regions are progressing quicker than Africa, but this year could lay the foundation for better cybersecurity principles across the continent.

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