Contributing to connectivity

By [Danette Breitenbach](#)   13 Nov 2019

Free fast internet is a game-changer, but while public Wi-Fi is highly valued by South Africans, deploying a sustainable service can be challenging. In a step to overcome this, Google South Africa announced the launch of Google Station across 135 sites across the Western Cape.

Image credit: Google Africa.

The project has been running for two months.

Helpful to South Africans and Africans

Google Station is a free and quality internet service where users can access the internet for 30 minutes, with no limit on the data you can use.

> *We are excited to be bringing Google Station to more than 100 locations in the Cape Flats, Cape Town. Google Station is a program to provide fast, free and open Wi-Fi to the area in partnership with ThinkWifi, an internet service provider. [#GoogleforSouthAfrica](#) [pic.twitter.com/lcJ2y00vDd](#)— Google in Africa (@googleafrica) [November 7, 2019](#)*

> "The average South African has to work for five hours to afford 1GB of data. That's where Google comes in, contributing to connectivity through Google Station," says David Shapiro of Google's Next Billion Users Initiative.

He was talking at the first Google for South Africa event in Johannesburg recently, where the announcement was made.

"Google is committed to making products that are helpful to South Africans and Africans," explains Asha Patel, head of marketing at Google South Africa.

The launch focused on communities who do not have access to data but where the infrastructure is available through partnerships to provide the service.

"We work with internet providers and identify high traffic areas and then deploy the necessary infrastructure. This first partnership locally is with Think WiFi, while Showmax and Telkom are the first advertisers on the platform," says Adama Bari Diallo, head of partnerships at Google's Next Billion Users Africa.

While building infrastructure that gets more people online is in line with their mission, they are not looking to be a telco.

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"But setting up this type of infrastructure gives access to other providers. If you look at the breadth of things we are working on in Africa, we need partners, so we are constantly talking and engaging with partners," says Nitin Gajria, who leads the sub-Saharan Africa region at Google.

At present, there are no immediate plans to expand the service. Gajria explains they want to get it right first in the communities they are in so that it works in the right manner. "We do not want to rush it and are spending a lot of time to see the impact of the location."

> " *At Google, we talk about building for everyone, we believe that you cannot create products and services for communities without asking and co-creating with them. Jean-Baptiste Head of Product Inclusion at Google talking about building with everyone. #GoogleforSouthAfrica pic.twitter.com/gF00hCwn3X— Google in Africa (@googleafrica) November 7, 2019* "

To date, the feedback from the community has been good. "The community understands the benefits of the service, so we have not had many security issues at the site. By educating the community, we have had none of the sites vandalised," says Patel.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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