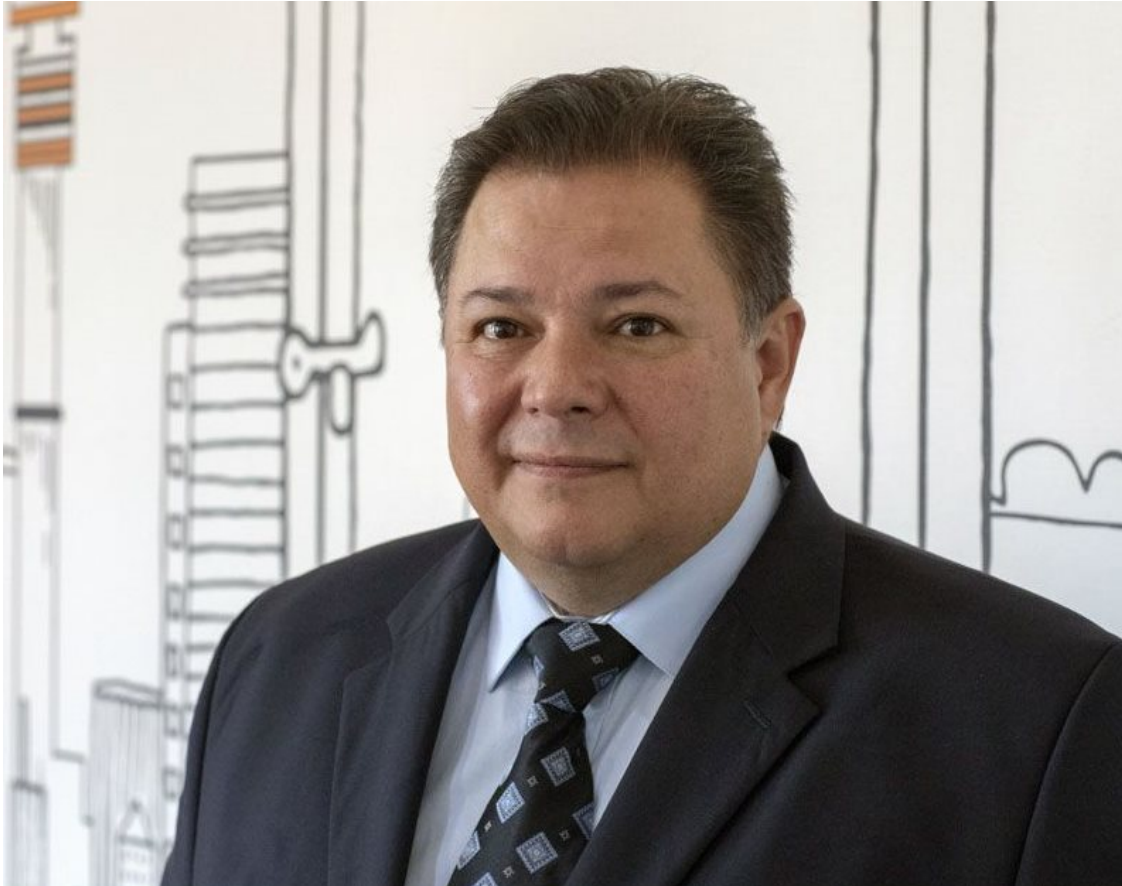


Co-innovation - a big technological enabler for SA businesses in 2020

By [Keith Matthews](#)

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As the world moves quickly into the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), South Africa finds itself at a tipping point. Most local businesses are currently operating on a micro level in this regard - stuck in the middle of what they need on a practical level and what is available to them technologically.



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Despite being one of the most agile markets in the world, South African businesses are still looking to find use cases for 4IR technologies – such as the Internet of Things (IoT), the Internet of Enterprises (IoE), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) – all of which have infinite potential for development across industries and sectors.

Essentially, these businesses are in the perpetual 'proof of concept' lifecycle loop, which might assist in identifying problems or challenges, but does not assist with solving these. South African businesses need to start making strategic decisions to put these incredible technologies to work on a scalable level right now; for example, through process and efficiency improvement and automation.

Data

Data is the building block for innovation of any kind, and businesses are producing more and more data.

According to IDC, 175 zettabytes of data will be generated annually by 2025. This is over ten times the 16.1 zettabytes generated in 2016. The analyst firm predicts enterprises will create nearly 60% of this new data. However, data that is simply generated is like a dot on the map – without action and process attached to making use of the data, it is useless to the business.

In order to guide local business forward, it is important that their technology partners are working to deeply understand their business needs and problems and solve these through co-innovation – making the best possible use of their data. This will be the biggest enabler for local businesses in 2020 and beyond.

For example, data can be used to ensure local mining companies are adhering to strict health and safety standards. One example sees an entry and access management system is set up, where each miner is identified for entry using facial recognition technology and then scanned at the entrance to ensure he is wearing all the necessary personal protection equipment (PPE). Should they not be wearing the right PPE, the system can alert the necessary people, and the problem can be rectified before he enters the mine. This example saves the business time, ensures optimal safety in terms of the right personnel entering the vicinity and can eliminate human error in the PPE checks.

In another example for the local mining sector, wearable technology has been used to ensure health and safety requirements are met in the vicinity of dangerous heavy equipment, such as a ball mill. Each worker is given a wearable in the form of a watch to wear on their wrist, which tracks their movements and sends an alert to them and their managers if they are too close to the mill. Should they come in dangerously close distance, the mill will automatically be shut down to avoid any safety hazards or injuries on site. The system can then generate audit trails for the business, allowing them to analyse and report on the behaviour of their workers in this regard.

Another example of how data is useful to enterprises is being able to geo-fence or automate stock data. For example, ground handlers have to manage thousands of assets within the airport environment, which can often be lost or left unattended, making them difficult to find. Being able to locate the asset using data can significantly increase management efficiency and optimise equipment usage ratios.

How to use the data

Data can also be used to manage maintenance operations in a predictive manner, by receiving data from a monitored asset before an incident occurs. This allows the business to gain a diagnosis for potential issues with equipment, anticipate these issues and make the necessary repairs before the equipment is unable to run any longer.

In the construction sector specifically, use cases have been implemented to effectively and efficiently maintain cranes being utilised at remote sites. This has a real impact on cost savings for the enterprise as it ensures that workflows are continuous and maintenance is able to take place on a planned basis rather than an ad-hoc basis when issues are already affecting the equipment.

In these examples, it is clear that data is being shared with the extended enterprise or business ecosystem in order to deliver real value for the business. Data is at the heart of innovation, which provides these integrated and intuitive solutions that can solve complex business problems effectively.

Data is the cornerstone not only for digital businesses like Google or Microsoft, but for all businesses across sectors and industries, and can be used to benefit the workforce on a human level as well as push the business' bottom line.

With endless potential available, South African businesses need to make the decision to move forward in their digital transformation journeys toward Africa's 4IR, one step at a time; and co-innovation is set to be the differentiator in this regard.

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