

East African CIOs should lead digital innovation at their organisations

NAIVASHA, Kenya - CIOs in East Africa must work closely with their boards to invest in technology that will enable their organisations to thrive against the background of more demanding customers, digital disruption and fiercer global competition. Robust core business management systems and the cloud are key technologies in this regard.



Billy Owino

That's according to [Billy Owino](#), regional director for [Sage East Africa](#), which will be exhibiting at the 6th CIO100 Symposium & Awards held at Enashipai Resort & Spa this week. He says that the pace of change in the business world is accelerating because of trends such as mobile-first customers and employees, big data, and intelligent, connected sensors and devices in the workplace.

"CIOs must lead innovation in their organisations by accelerating the move away from monolithic, legacy software to more agile solutions ready for this new world," he adds. "Businesses need core business and ERP solutions that are leaner, more focused, more modular and more agile to remain competitive in a changing market. These solutions help organisations be more competitive, efficient and responsive."

Cloud is an important enabler for mobility, the Internet of Things, big data, and other disruptive trends in business software, he adds. It gives organisations flexibility and choice in how they purchase business systems, provides the processing muscle to cope with massive data sets, and provides easy access to applications and data wherever people are.

The future is mobile and connected

Owino says mobile is the future of "everything" and solution providers like Sage are giving enterprises the power to control their businesses from the palm of their hand. Organisations must give their customers, employees and business partners access to business applications and data wherever they are. Today's business software is designed to make collaboration easy and draws inspiration from consumer mobile apps and social networking tools for its look and feel.

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This gives the workforce the ability to respond to problems and opportunities in real-time. Executives can sign off processes from their tablets or check KPIs, while field sales and service team members can better serve customers because they have access to inventory, customer and service level data wherever they are.

The Internet of Things is here

Another trend organisations must be ready for is the Internet of Things, where devices in the home, office and factory are increasingly equipped with Internet-connected sensors. This allows them to monitor themselves as well as gather contextual information (temperature or GPS location, for example), and share it with other devices and services.

The result? Connected devices can take automated actions without a human being in the middle to make decisions. Says Owino: “Sensors in a shop could trigger a request for stock when a shelf is becoming bare or a factory could monitor the uptime and condition of its robots and machines, alerting a technician when preventative maintenance is necessary.”

Data, data everywhere

“Mobile access, the Internet of Things, and growth in unstructured data in the business mean that companies need ERP platforms that can feed their strategies for big data analytics,” says Owino. “Cloud-based solutions are a good match for businesses that still rely on legacy systems or manual processes – they can be deployed rapidly, offer high levels of scalability and security, and allow East African businesses to modernise their applications without large investments in data centre infrastructure.”

In addition, the cloud empowers East African companies to streamline their IT environments and eliminate many of the traditional risks that lead to data loss, security breaches and systems. “Using the cloud for accounting and other applications means keeping the information stored in a secure data centre where the professionals look after it,” says Owino. “It takes the burden of data backups and patching applications from the CIO and the IT department, allowing them to focus on business innovation rather than IT administration.”

“For CIOs, trends such as the cloud, mobility and big data are a massive opportunity to help their organisations improve their competitive advantage and grow their businesses,” Owino says. “The CIO’s role is more important than ever as companies try to make sense of the latest disruptive technologies.”