

MEST Africa hosts tech summit in Nairobi

Pan-African entrepreneurial training program, seed fund, and incubator MEST Africa, this week closed its fourth successful MEST Africa Summit, in partnership with Microsoft.



The event saw entrepreneurs, investors, ecosystem players and executives from across Africa and the globe meet to explore innovations and rising stars in the African tech ecosystem. Panelists discussed topics ranging from data in the fintech space, to the latest in agritech and healthcare, to ways we can cultivate a Pan-African tech ecosystem, and more.

In addition to keynotes from MEST Founder Jorn Lyseggen, Microsoft's Chris Lwanga and Lori's Josh Sandler, key speakers this year included Dr. Bitange Ndemo; Philip Thigo; Andreatta Muforo, a partner at TLcom; Bilha Ndirangu, CEO at Africa's Talking; Ngozi Dozie, co-founder of Carbon; as well as representatives from Google Launchpad, Safaricom, the African Development Bank and more.

This year's summit was held in partnership with Microsoft. Additional sponsors included Liquid Telecom, Africa's Talking, Oracle, Intel, Lori Systems, Flutterwave, Stratlink, Ethiopian Airlines and a number of ecosystem partners.

The summit was held at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Nairobi on Conference Day, and the Nairobi Garage, home of MEST Africa's Nairobi Incubator, on Ecosystem Day - both buzzing atmospheres as more than 300 guests came together.

Back by popular demand, Conference Day began with The Great Debate, as representatives from key African markets argued in favour of their home nations regarding which is best to launch a business. The day culminated in the finals of the MEST Africa Challenge; an annual Pan-African pitch competition and ended with a twist. Rather than choosing one winner, the judges awarded \$50,000 in equity investment from MEST and \$25,000 in credit from Microsoft to each of three startups: Oze from Ghana, Snode Technologies from South Africa and WayaWaya from Kenya.

Emergence of new thought leaders

With discussions across a number of industries including AI and IoT, healthcare, cleantech and more, and an exclusive peek inside the MEST Africa Training Program and Incubator, the summit saw an emergence of new thought leaders outlining the main opportunities and challenges for Africa's next generation of entrepreneurs. Ecosystem Day on 12 June also saw the rollout of workshops designed for entrepreneurs and developers, led by sponsors, by Microsoft Azure, Liquid Telecom, Intel, Stratlink and MEST.

Aaron Fu, managing director at MEST Africa, mentioned, "It's our fourth year running the summit and it always serves as a reminder of what Africa can achieve with the right blend of talent and experience. Over the three days, it's always amazing to observe how the relationships between attendees grow, and the fact that we are able to facilitate that is something we never take for granted. We started this with the aim of creating a space for honest discussions on how the continent can continue to move forward and markets can come together - my personal hope is that we continue to see this grow and that more collaborations across markets take shape."

MEST Africa has been training, supporting and investing in tech entrepreneurs on the continent for more than a decade. Over 330 individual entrepreneurs have been trained at MEST, and nearly 60 tech companies have been launched via seed funding and mentorship. Five companies have exited, including Amplify Payments Ltd. (Amplify) who was recently acquired by leading Nigerian fintech player, One Finance Limited (OneFi), to further develop the payments ecosystem in Nigeria.

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