

Digify Africa CEO Gavin Weale speaks to new ways of learning

By [Emily Stander](#)

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Recently, Digify Africa won gold at the Smarties Awards for their innovative chatbot Naledi - a learning and skills development bot that users can access through WhatsApp.



Image supplied: Gavin Weale, founder and CEO of Digify Africa

We spoke to Gavin Weale, CEO of Digify Africa, to find out more about the chatbot and what this could mean for the future of learning...

■ ***Tell us a bit more about your work***

Digify Africa is a non-profit company with a focus on digital skills for young people, but we have more recently been developing ways of getting learning material to young people at scale using WhatsApp. We now have an innovation team building interactive chatbots that can deliver our courses at a low cost via mobile handsets, meaning a very low barrier to entry and using a platform many people know how to use already, and have on their phones.

■ ***Tell us a little more about Naledi - how does it work?***

Naledi was made in partnership and powered by Meta with the support of Techsys and Geekulcha. Naledi aims to create Facebook digital marketing pros and equips students with the skills they need to grow businesses and pursue a career in digital marketing - all directly from their phones.

It offers content, quizzes, and study groups, as well as a layer of gamification through badges and leaderboards to encourage engagement.

■ ***What influenced the inception of Naledi?***

We are always looking for ways to help us amplify impact and we realised that leveraging WhatsApp as a learning solution can revolutionise the way we deliver digital skills across the continent.



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■ ***How do you think chatbots like Naledi can contribute to equal access to education in Africa?***

More people own mobile devices today than ever before - we are taking advantage of that to enable wider access to educational content for young people across the continent.

■ ***Specifically, what challenges do you think using channels like WhatsApp can help overcome in terms of education and training?***

Access to resources such as laptops and data is a challenge for many - mobile-based learning provides a great learning solution that can help us overcome some of the access barriers.

■ ***What changes can chatbots and other new technology make to the education landscape, in your opinion?***

We have seen the shift towards online, mobile-based learning will be a real game-changer that will add value to the education landscape.

■ ***What challenges have you faced with Naledi so far? How have you overcome these challenges?***

Our key challenge was how to deliver the best content to our learners. To do this, we created a playbook on best practices for creating content specifically for mobile and WhatsApp. We also developed our own WhatsApp CMS to be able to load courses of content easily at scale.

■ ***What kind of future do you think this technology paves the way for?***

The kind of future we hope to see is one where the digital divide is closed, and that people with limited access to data and technology can still access educational material to upskill themselves.

With the explosion of e-learning as a method of delivering education during Covid, we need to make sure that young people in Africa don't get left behind and we hope that our work with chatbot learning can make a meaningful contribution to that challenge.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games
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