

Broadband and infrastructure in spotlight at IT summit

The 4th annual IT Leaders Africa Summit will be held in Johannesburg on 13 and 14 March 2013. The summit is hosted and produced by international business-to-business conferencing company, Kinetic Events.

Telecommunications is one of the fastest growing sectors within South Africa's economy, driven by rapid growth in mobile and broadband connectivity in recent years. South Africa boasts a network that is reportedly 99.9% digital and includes the latest advancements in fixed-line, wireless and satellite communications.

Three industry challenges are to be addressed in order for South Africa to participate in the global information communications technology sector, namely limited access to and the high cost of broadband in the country, the lack of international competitiveness of broadband, and the digital divide between the first and second economy. South Africa has access to some of the fastest and most networked undersea fibre optic cabling that link the country to Europe and beyond.

Penetration is not competitive

In a recent report released by Google, it is suggested that South Africa's current broadband penetration is at 8.5 million users as recorded at the end of 2011, an increase from 6.8 million recorded in 2010. This compares to about 17% and is currently not competitive with some other big economies on the African continent as compared to Nigeria with a 29% broadband penetration, followed by Egypt, Morocco and Kenya.

Google SA's country manager recently stated that access and cost remains one of the biggest obstacles to Internet connectivity in South Africa, particularly in less developed areas. The impact of the highly networked undersea fibre optic cables link South Africa to the rest of the world and has been weighed down by South Africa's current ICT infrastructure. It is recorded that the speed at which data is transferred slows significantly when the data comes ashore.

While real capacity and supplied capacity cannot be evaluated in fair comparison, the government's plan is that by 2020, 80% of South Africans will be successfully supplied with broadband access. The infrastructure roll-out is said to be at a cost of nearly R90 billion. Government is prepared to pay this sum in order to reduce data costs and increase access throughout South Africa.

Attempting to reduce costs

While access and cost remains one of the biggest obstacles for Internet connectivity, particularly in less-developed areas of South Africa, the planned new broadband network is central to the country's attempts to reduce the cost and problems associated with Internet access. The Department of Communications recently released the estimate costs of rolling out a nationwide broadband network, reducing connectivity costs between \$7 billion and \$10.5 billion, making up a small part of

the \$118 billion worth of infrastructure the government is seeking to develop in the next decade.

The IT Leaders Africa Summit provides an exclusive business-to-business platform to share, network and engage in a focused interactive environment with IT industry peers, senior executives, government officials, senior decision makers, IT leaders and international guests. The summit will cover top business issues and technologies, impacting the enterprise with strategic tactics needed to yield higher results and to gain a competitive advantage within the industry.

At this year's summit, the spotlight will be placed on broadband and infrastructure. Delegates will be given the opportunity to take control of discussions and debates through expert-led interactive keynote sessions featuring internationally renowned guests, strategic workshop sessions featuring industry thought leaders and solution providers, and innovative networking and interactive discussion sessions.

For more information, go to www.itleaders.co.za.

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