Tech4Africa - The trends of 2013

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Trends in 2013

After opening up speaker submissions to the tech community, and keeping a firm ear to the ground for the last 18 months, this is a brief summary of how we see technology evolving in Africa. Some of it is positive, whilst some of it is negative. However, this is all part of how an ecosystem matures, so it's positive in the bigger picture.

The breadth of tech is maturing

We're seeing that there are a number of newer technologies becoming more and more popular over and above the usual technology stacks one comes across. Due to the proliferation of open source libraries and coding sites like GitHub, it's now easier than ever to get up and running with something new.

Developers want to get onto the Cloud

More and more technologists are realising that running massive local infrastrcture is inefficient, so they're turning to cloud based services which allow them to provision on an "as needed" basis, with monthly billing. Amazon has pioneered this, but there is still opportunity for local players to provide local latency and support.

Mobile money is here to stay, eCommerce is growing

It seems pretty clear from any major African country you visit outside of South Africa that mobile money is going to be a part of everyday life sooner or later. So far, Mo De seem to be the best examples of innovation in the micro-loan space, with mPesa leading the pack for payments. It's not clear who the eventual winners are going to be, but what is clear is that because Africa has a huge base of the economic pyramid, there is demand for the ability to make micropayments, and take microloans.

Added to that, it really feels like eCommerce is starting to gain a second wind as people start to realise that transacting online is safe, and much more convenient than making the trip to the local mall. We feel this industry is still immature in Africa with a relatively small pool of competitors, and pricing models which make ecommerce margins more difficult to make sustainable fast, but it will go through a lot of growth and then consolidation over the next five years.

Entrepreneurs are largely naïve

We're increasingly perplexed by the naïveté we see a lot of entrepreneurs and innovators display. The single biggest element is unrealistic expectations within the local market, ie: what can be achieved, how it will be achieved, and in what timescales. This comes down to experience and a lack of role models, which hopefully changes as the cycle matures. Over and above that, it feels like there is a real lack of execution on the ground (Can you point to any real execution? If so, please tell us), combined with not solving problems that create value for the end user. When you put all of the above together, it's clear the innovation and startup ecosystem is still very young, and has some maturing to go through.

Boon of tech hubs and innovation competitions - but little substance to show

We're seeing an explosion of hubs and competitions across the continent with a lot of talk on social media, but we're not seeing a lot of substance emerging out of that yet. Again, this is a good thing as any ecosystem needs to go through a

process like this to reveal the quality that is left behind, and so this re-iterates for us how important it is to stay relevant.

About Tech4Africa

This year the Schedule for Wednesday 9 October will focus on deep dive technical sessions, hands-on workshops and hacking sessions held in five separate rooms; whilst on Thursday 10 October there will be higher-level presentations, demos and inspirational talks held in the same auditorium.

The main venue for Tech4Africa 2013, which is to be held from 9-10 October, is the Focus Rooms, The Core, 1st Floor South, Cnr Kikuyu and Leeuwkop Streets, Sunninghill, Sandton, Gauteng, South Africa.

For more information about Tech4Africa 2013, view the schedule, go to www.tech4africa.com, email Zinnia at zinnia@tech4africa.com or call Zinnia on +27834576935.