

Musa Kalenga presents "New ways for New Days" at #BizTrends2021 online



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Entrepreneur, investor, keynote speaker and author, Musa Kalenga was one of eight speakers at [BizTrends2021 online - Towards New Norths & New Narratives on Thursday](#), 28 January 2021.



Musa Kalenga presents "New ways for New Days" at #BizTrends2021 online event on Thursday, 28 January 2021.

With many titles to his name, Kalenga is the CEO of Bridge Labs, as well a shareholder and a board member at The Brave Group and Loxyion Conexyion. He was the first chairman of the Youth Advertising Board of South Africa in 2005/6 and also currently holds the position of Chairman of the School of Consumer and Information Sciences Industry Advisory Board at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). He is also the author of *Ladders & Trampolines*, a book that shares anecdotes and experiences about growing up in Southern Africa, as well as working and doing business all over the continent.

I caught up with Kalenga to chat about his passion for Africa, technology and humanity ahead of [BizTrends2021 online - Towards New Norths & New Narratives](#).

■ Your background lies in adapting technology for social good. How and when did your interest in tech begin?

As far as I can remember I have always been interested in solving problems for the continent. Initially this was by ensuring that we used the minds of young people to give a new and fresh perspective. This organically evolved into the use of technology as a means to engage young people and solve problems. Back in 2009, in one of my first business ventures - Monatefellaz, we conducted some experiential research using closed Facebook groups as a way to engage, track and gather data on young people within a certain research cohort. This was the beginning of my appreciation of the scale and impact that technology could have.



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■ ***In your opinion, what is the state of tech innovation in South Africa?***

Using the Gartner Hype Cycle as a reference, the various industries are at different stages of maturity.

“ On average, I think most are between the “Technology Trigger” and “The Trough of disillusionment.” ”

The technology trigger is super early stage and in fact likely not internal innovation, but innovation forced by external changes in the market - i.e Covid-19. At this stage the expectations of technology generally are unrealistic and not achievable. This stage leads to a flurry of activity and panic driven decision-making and often ends in tears. The Trough of disillusionment is the outcome of knee-jerk reactions to innovation and in South Africa many companies feel “duped” or let down by the promise of innovation.

■ ***From your point of view, what are the opportunities and challenges for tech in Africa?***

In almost every sector, there are massive opportunities.

“ The problem in Africa is about a systematic approach to unlock the opportunity ”

. Based on the Gartner Hype Cycle, most companies will struggle to capture a market opportunity because of a lack of skill and foresight.

■ ***With your passion for the African continent, what can be done to widen digital inclusion and STEM education in Africa?***

I think the basics need to be put in place. We need a new crop of educators with a high level of digital literacy skills. This will transform their appreciation of what technology can do for learners and to enhance the classroom experience.

“ STEM remains an important opportunity around the building blocks of a competent population of the future and much more can be done to support alternative ways of learning STEM subjects. ”

There is also an opportunity for a narrow, much more intense focus on STEM-only curriculum. There may be an argument of reduced cost and hyper focus on these core subjects.



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■ ***As an entrepreneur and investor, what are the trends that you are starting to see in the ecosystem? In marketing and advertising, programmatic marketing as well as performance marketing will be increasingly valuable for marketers and brands. Both are areas of marketing that can create and deliver immense value. Artificial intelligence across almost every sector is becoming a key topic to debate and discuss. This begins by operationalising AI in organisations starting with data strategy, but also more importantly - the “softer issues” like ethics in the field of AI.***

■ ***You've been described as a marketer of the future. What do you think is the biggest challenge facing the marketing and media industry at the moment?***

A lack of skills in critical thinking, creative and the application of digital literacy.

“ There is also a gaping hole regarding “policy formulation” with regards to all of the above on industry bodies. ”

The curriculum that marketing students are exposed to also needs to evolve to meet the new market demands.

■ **You're speaking at our BizTrends2021 online event. What can we expect to hear from you?**

My talk is all about “New ways for New Days”. This is understanding the way is shifting and being practical about the challenges and opportunities that come with it.

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Imran Salie 2 Feb 2021



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