

Mobile tech putting African business owners in the driving seat

Smartphone penetration is ramping up across Africa, giving the continent's businesses an opportunity to use mobile technology to become more efficient, productive, and responsive in the way they do business.

According to the [Ericsson Mobility Report for 2015](#), there were more than 910 million mobile subscriptions in Africa by the first quarter of 2015. A growing number of these mobile users are now walking around with powerful smart devices that give them access to apps and information wherever they are.

ERP - making collaboration easy



Keith Fenner

And that, in turn, creates new ways for organisations to interact with employees, suppliers, and other stakeholders. "We're seeing many organisations mobilise their enterprise resource planning (ERP) software," says Keith Fenner, senior vice-president sales - [Sage ERP Africa](#) and Sage ERP X3 AAMEA, director and head of Sage Middle East. "Workers and managers are increasingly able to access ERP data on the road to serve customers, speed up decision-making, and save time."

For example, a salesperson can now easily check from a tablet or smartphone whether a product is in stock while on-site with a customer, says Fenner. They can capture the customer's details and initiate the order without leaving the customer premises, all leading to a faster and more seamless service.

"Mobile workers can now use their time between meetings and at airports more productively," he adds. "And they can access data on the spot so that they can react to opportunities and problems more rapidly. Of course, mobilising business processes also streamlines processes by allowing data to be captured in the field."

Accounting for all on the move



Daryl Blundell

Sage Pastel Accounting general manager, Daryl Blundell, notes that mobility is transforming smaller businesses. "An accounting solution with a good mobile app is a real boon for SMEs," he says. "Employees with mobile devices can be productive many more hours a week because they can work from anywhere in the world and can maximise what might otherwise have been wasted time waiting in airports and reception rooms."

He adds: "Sales people can take their tablets into meetings and give PowerPoint presentations while MDs can quickly see status of business KPIs on a real-time dashboard. And enterprise mobility can allow employees access to information on the fly, such as financial reports, stock orders, customer data and inventory lists."

"Customers can accept terms by physically signing the mobile device, so deals can be negotiated and closed in one meeting. Employees can keep up to date with work without returning to the office and stay up to date on relevant projects : deadlines aren't missed. What's more, it helps everyone achieve a healthy work-life balance."

Mobilising HR functions



Gerhard Hartman

Mobile technology is also helping HR departments to become more efficient and to build better relationships with employees. Gerhard Hartman, head of Sage HR and Payroll's international division, says that companies can now offer employee self-service (ESS) across mobile devices to streamline HR processes and engage employees more effectively. "With mobile ESS, companies can enable employees to file leave applications, doctor's notes when they're ill, and expense claims - all from their mobile devices," he adds. "They can look up their payslips, change their personal details, and more, all without needing to do paperwork or phone the HR department."

Employees benefit from the convenience and access to information 24/7, while managers and the HR department can handle leave requests, expense claims, and other admin from their own mobile devices. The result is that everyone saves time and gets more done, says Hartman. "Accessing HR tools from your mobile simplifies everyone's life - from the employee trying to figure out how many vacation days they have left to the HR team who should be focusing on strategy and value-add rather than on paperwork," he adds.

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