

The power of partnerships for tech entrepreneurs

By [Ashleigh Butterworth](#)

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South Africa has been put on the map as a "big four" tech startup ecosystem, with partnerships in the tech space skyrocketing in Africa over the last few years. The continent is fertile ground for technological advances and the development of internet infrastructure is boosting this growth. According to the World Bank, by 2025 the internet economy is forecasted to reach \$180bn. In addition to this, if there is just a 10% improvement in internet connectivity, the GDP is likely to be boosted by 2.5%.



Content marketing specialist at Finch Technologies Ashleigh Butterworth | image supplied

Seeking out partnerships with the right players is not only essential in building better products, but also in improving digital literacy and financial inclusion.

Looking at examples in financial technology, here are a couple of partnerships leading the way in South Africa:

Tech integration

After building a successful platform, website, or product, both large enterprises and startups can face similar stumbling blocks. Growth can reach a standstill when any business lacks the resources and customers needed to stay afloat. "Tech partnerships and integrations are a growth lever, they allow oppositions to build better, more intuitive and integrated products and solutions faster, without the need for 'know-how,'" according to Michael Bowren, co-founder of Finch Technologies.

Software-as-a-service (SaaS), greatly benefits from integrated solutions because it allows for more functional products. It's a win-win situation for both parties involved. Organisations that use these integrated solutions have seen a decrease in the sales cycle, costs per lead (CPL), and churn. In the financial services space, integrated solutions have helped fix an extremely broken onboarding process.

Partnerships in tech don't always need to be technology based. If we look at business finance online marketplace FundingHub, they've attributed their success to the affiliate partnerships as well as the technology. An online marketplace is beneficial to both parties. The lender doesn't need to spend their budget on generating more leads through online solutions. And, the marketplace platform can make its revenue off commission.

Community building

On the flip side comes the need to partner with tech companies with the intention of building networks and leveraging each other's connections. Tech startups are all driving a common goal on the continent – to digitise products and services in Africa. Creating a community in the tech space is a critical component and can take many forms.

As tech innovation rises so does the need for networks that facilitate learning, communication and growth. Platforms like Innovation City give entrepreneurs and world changers the opportunity to accelerate digital innovation by fostering co-creation. While Women Who Build Africa offers an intentional community that brings together women and non-binary people working in or around the tech space across the continent and in the Diaspora.

Being part of these communities allows startups and entrepreneurs to exchange information, but also create long-term relationships that bring mutual benefits. According to Zippia, 78% of startups see success from networking and for tech teams especially these events can catapult a company's growth.



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A common error for tech startups can often be marketing and PR tunnel vision, with the purpose of only promoting your brand. Startups can see greater impact then they encourage open dialogue with competitors. Panel discussions and virtual chats provide the ideal platform for sharing thoughts about a common topic. These discussions allow startups to unpack their product offering, dive deeper into tech trends and leverage the communities of other panellists.

The end goal? The ultimate sign of making it in the startup space is either being acquired or at least being presented with the opportunity to exit. Partnerships provide the ideal roadmap to get to this triumphant position, you just need to be strategic about forming them.

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