Aspiring African innovators to watch

By Lauren Hartzenberg   28 Sep 2016

The Gartner Aspiring Innovators programme has for a second year identified early-stage tech startups from the African continent that have created interesting and unique enterprise solutions.

Jeffrey Mann, Gartner Research.

The successful innovators were selected by Gartner research analysts, with Jeffrey Mann – research vice president for collaboration and social software at Gartner Research – leading the decision-making process. He presented the pick of the bunch at the Gartner Symposium/ITxpo in Cape Town this week.

The goal of the programme is to support the African startup technology scene, and provide conference delegates with access to innovative local technology providers. The chosen few were given the opportunity to join MTN Business, the programme's corporate sponsor, on the ITxpo show floor to discuss their products with delegates – many of whom are senior IT decision-makers. Press opportunities were also made available to the startups.

Selection criteria

To qualify for the programme, applicants had to meet certain criteria:

• They had to be based in Africa
• Have B2B or corporate B2C use cases
• Have fewer than 50 employees and less than R20 million revenue
• Have a product in production or in beta with at least two customers
• No subsidiaries of, or products developed by larger companies
• Not chosen for any previous Aspiring Innovator Programmes

Chosen innovators

The 35 proposals received from five countries were whittled down to six startups. This year's Aspiring Innovators are all based in South Africa. Of those selected, a 'wildcard entry' also made the cut despite not meeting all aforementioned criteria – created by university students with no prototype as yet. But Mann says he waived the rules due to the sheer interesting nature of the project.

Impression: A digital document delivery and e-signature business solution provider. Enables users to take a picture of a document, digitally sign it and send it.

Invoke Solutions: Reporting tool. Attaches on to up-to-date data sources on the web to generate analytics.

Provulo: Builds and hosts lightweight cloud-based services that helps its customers design, optimise, automate, replace and take their business processes online in a cost-effective manner.

Tuse: An application that allows a user's mobile device to become a node in a wireless mesh network, on which users may send free messages, free calls or transfer files to other peers for free.

Iot.nxt: A platform that allow companies to integrate their IT platforms with Internet of Things (IoT) devices seamlessly.

[Kriterion](#) (wildcard entry): Anti-fraud government tender application created by four students at University of Johannesburg. Provides a transparent platform to view progress on tender bids, and verify and track responses aimed to lower corruption procurement in the government market.

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