

# South Africa's digital revolution will transform our economy

In the heart of South Africa, a digital revolution is unfolding. The nation's ICT sector is outpacing the growth of its GDP, accounting for a staggering 8% of the annual wealth generated. From the ubiquity of online payment systems to the vast archives stored in the cloud, our economy is as much a resident of the web as it is of our physical world.

By [Deon Geyser](#) 6 Feb 2024



Deon Geyser, CEO, Liquid Intelligent Technologies SA

ICT infrastructure providers are at the forefront of this transformation. We witness its impact daily, from the smallest retailer to the behemoths of the manufacturing industry. The internet has become so integral to our lives that it shapes our very existence.

This metamorphosis is most apparent in sectors such as mining, manufacturing, logistics, and retail, where advanced and reliable solutions have become the norm rather than the exception.

As businesses increasingly rely on cloud-based solutions and interconnected services to streamline their operations, the need to safeguard, expand, and ensure the efficiency of our network becomes paramount.



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The advent of cloud services, internet access, and private networks has not only opened up new avenues for traditional businesses to enhance their efficiency but also paved the way for the emergence of new enterprises.

However, this has also highlighted the need to guarantee reliable access to these networks. This is the driving force behind extensive investment in building a fibre network to providing much-needed high-speed connectivity to both urban and remote areas.

## Private internet

In the past, when we spoke about private Internet networks in business, we generally referred to automation – cutting-edge technology applications that drive efficiency and innovation in numerous industries. However, the narrative has shifted in the face of the current crisis.

Load shedding has become a regular occurrence for all South Africans and is a significant challenge to businesses, disrupting operations and threatening economic productivity. As a result, we have seen an increased demand for private network solutions. However, instead of using these systems for state-of-the-art applications, clients are using them for basic reliable communication.

Despite the challenges the energy crisis poses, we remain optimistic and motivated in our goals. We see these challenges as opportunities for growth and innovation, reinforcing our commitment to developing and bolstering South Africa's digital infrastructure to meet the surging demand for ICT solutions.

Over five years ago, we committed to investing R8.5bn into South Africa by launching two data centres in Johannesburg and Cape Town, ensuring that local businesses don't need to look beyond South African borders for their data storage needs. We also connected over 2,500 public sites in the Eastern and Western Cape, ensuring that more people in the country have access to high-speed connectivity.

However, to sustain this investment and to continue driving digital transformation, we need an enabling and stable policy framework. One that offers predictability to investors and encourages further development of the ICT sector. A stable environment includes not only a stable currency but also a policy framework conducive to promoting investment.

## Resilient future

The digital transformation journey we have embarked on offers solutions to current challenges and paves the way for a resilient future. The ability to adapt and innovate in the face of adversity is a testament to the resilience and potential of the ICT sector.

The power of connectivity extends beyond ensuring business continuity amidst load shedding; it empowers us to reimagine and reinvent how we live and work. It allows for remote operations and the use of IoT, paving the way for more efficient and sustainable business practices. With automation, we can streamline processes, reduce waste, and drive innovation.



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As we continue to invest in our digital infrastructure, we are responding to more than just the immediate challenges posed by the energy crisis – we are laying the foundation for a digital future, one that is resilient, inclusive, and sustainable. Our response to the energy crisis should include a strategy to ensure our connectivity remains uninterrupted.

A shutdown in telecommunications is as impactful as a power outage, even more so. If we can't communicate, we cannot function and certainly cannot grow.

Ensuring connectivity has become just as, if not more, vital than power reliability. This is our challenge and our opportunity. As we navigate our energy challenges, let us seize this opportunity to invest in our digital future to build a resilient and interconnected South Africa. Let us embrace the age of connectivity.

It is vital that businesses in South Africa should continue to invest in infrastructure despite the challenges that surround us. We do not promote this digital transformation and commit to a vision of a connected future where every individual and business has access to reliable, high-quality ICT services, then who will?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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