

We need to have a conversation around innovation in Africa

 By [Chris Ogden](#)

29 Jul 2020

There is one word that defines the times today - uncertainty. It hangs in the economies and markets. It is the essence of the complexity that the pandemic has wrought. It changes how organisations, governments and individuals approach the future. And it is the dialogue that has been part of the African conversation for decades.



Chris Ogden, CEO of RubiBlue

The markets, politics and economics on this continent have been defined by uncertainty and this is why many entrepreneurs and business leaders have opted in when it comes to business.

While it's true that no one country can claim to have walked out of the pandemic unscathed, there is an ethos that runs through the core of the African business that's defined by potential and driven by passion.

Africa has always been a struggling continent.

Financial well-being has always been elusive, particularly when looked at from a general capita per head. But this complexity has seen innovation emerge from Africa that's changed global perceptions and transformed local markets.

This innovation is not always about wealth creation. It can be found in communities that have found unusual ways to manage challenging circumstances. This has become increasingly prevalent in the pandemic as communities have faced incredibly difficult circumstances around food, misinformation and lack of access to care.

In Sudan, a community organisation called #DefyHateNow exposes false information and helps people act in their own best interests; in Kenya, Mutual Aid Kenya, a grassroots organisation, set out to help the vulnerable communities and individuals; and in South Africa the Ndlovu Youth Choir created a musical version of the World Health Organisation's coronavirus safety advice in key languages. This is innovation on a tangible, individual level.

It is also prevalent in the attitudes of African businesses where the need to create vibrant and agile organisations is critical to survival in markets that are defined by their mercurial nature. African organisations recognise the value that is inherent in the continent and how they can play a role in changing the perceptions that surround it.

Exponential growth

Africa has the largest growing head count which makes growth inevitable. Investors seek out growth and the ability to scale. On this continent, there is the opportunity to tap into exponential business growth from the micro-trader to the next big idea that will change the future. Technology will very likely play a huge role in this as will the African work ethic.

Most Africans are incredibly hard-working people – in a recent study undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), South African came in sixth place as the hardest working country in the world.

From the community-driven solution that grows exponentially to the big idea had by the small business, Africa is always ready to explore new frontiers regardless of uncertainty and complexity. In a space where wealth is low and solutions are often created to uplift individuals and communities, Africans are on a path of great future innovation and wealth creation.

Yes, this is a space where problems about and challenges are plentiful, but innovation is the one thing that will likely secure its future which makes it the right place to be right now.

ABOUT CHRIS OGDEN

Chris Ogden is CEO at RubiBlue

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