Leveraging Technology for Enhanced Service Delivery: How Irembo Empowers Citizens in Rwanda and Africa

Israel Bimpe, Irembo's CEO and Akim Benamara, Founder of TechAfrica News discuss Irembo's aim to extend their success across Africa, driving digital transformation and enhancing service delivery.

INTERVIEW BY:

Akim Benamara
Founder of TechAfrica News

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Can you provide more information about Irembo and its contribution to digital transformation in Rwanda and beyond?

Irembo is a company based in Rwanda that has developed two main products: Irembo Gov and Irembo Pay. Irembo Gov serves as a comprehensive platform for all government services, digitising over 100 services in Rwanda. It allows citizens to apply seamlessly through

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multiple platforms and choose their preferred payment method.

Additionally, government institutions can digitise their services on our platform, streamlining payment processes and improving overall efficiency. We also have a payment processing platform that facilitates smooth operations. Moreover, this platform is available as a standalone product for institutions seeking faster payment settlements.

Yesterday, Irembo joined the Smart Africa Alliance, which aims to create a unified digital market by 2030. How do you envision Irembo's role evolving in the coming years, particularly in Africa's digital transformation?

Certainly, as Africa moves towards greater integration and becomes a continent where trade, living, and working can happen seamlessly across borders, I believe Irembo will play

a significant role. Joining the Smart Africa Alliance allows us to collaborate with other members, including governments and private sector entities, towards this vision. We aim to extend the success we have achieved in Rwanda to multiple countries, facilitating interconnectedness and improving services across continents.
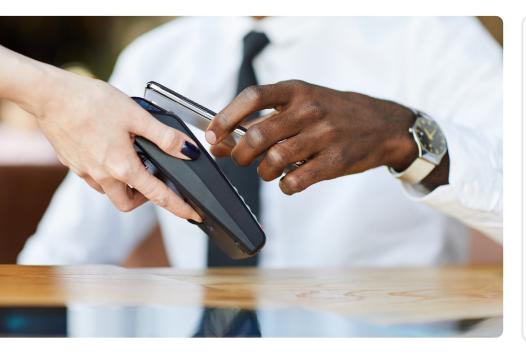
Based on your experience, how will Irembo leverage technology to enhance service delivery and accessibility for citizens in Rwanda and other African countries?

Our platform, available as a web platform, mobile app, and USSD platform, has leveraged technology in multiple ways. First, it has enabled government institutions to digitize their services, eliminating paperwork and long queues. This empowers officials to focus on other impactful activities, such as

> 66
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community engagement. Citizens, instead of physically visiting government offices, can request services via mobile or USSD and make payments through mobile money. This reduces waiting times, eliminates friction, and minimizes corruption opportunities caused by inefficiencies. Our technology has processed over 25 million applications, saving more than 50 million working hours and collecting over 300 million US dollars efficiently. This success extends across the ecosystem, with the platform developed by young Rwandans and African engineers.

What role do you believe public-private partnerships play in driving digital transformation in Africa, and how can they maximize their impact?

Public-private partnerships are crucial for accelerating and enhancing digital transformation in Africa. While the continent may have missed previous industrial revolutions, this transformation is driven by technology and services enabled by technology. To achieve the digitization agenda, the private sector must collaborate with governments, leveraging the latest technologies to improve public services. Platforms like Smart Africa facilitate such partnerships and engagements, allowing stakeholders to deliver significant value and improve their countries' development.

From your experience building and scaling a tech company in Africa, what lessons have you learned, and what advice would you give to other entrepreneurs in the region?

One important lesson is to focus on solving unique problems. Our company addresses the challenge of inefficient government services, which exists not only in Rwanda but in many other African countries. By making government

and its services more efficient, we create opportunities for companies to operate effectively. Entrepreneurs and technologists should explore unique industries and spaces often overlooked. I encourage them to join our mission of making governments and institutions more efficient through digitization and digital integration.

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During our extensive discussions with Pierre, we have come to realize the challenges African countries face in achieving digital transformation, particularly in terms of device affordability. Both our public and private sectors are collaborating on this issue. However, there are some countries that have made significant progress by visiting Iran. Considering these advancements, shouldn't we be able to develop a blueprint at this stage? We need to identify what is crucial and determine the starting point.

I completely agree that having a blueprint is essential. When we look at countries like Rwanda, they have already provided a solid foundation as a blueprint. However, we must acknowledge that realities vary across countries and regions. It is crucial to take these diverse circumstances into account. Nevertheless, if something has proven successful in one country, as mentioned by some heads of state during the opening ceremony, there is no need to reinvent the wheel.

We should simply replicate the effective strategies and approaches that have already been proven to work. By doing so, we can leverage the success stories and expedite our progress. Therefore, we already possess valuable lessons and examples from successful implementations. We just need to be more intentional and proactive in implementing them.

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