

MTN's head is now in 'the clouds'

By [Zeenat Moorad](#)

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MTN will go live with its bouquet of cloud services aimed at small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) this month, following a trial period in six of its major markets across Africa, the company said on Tuesday (9 April).



Cloud computing refers to the use of the Internet to provide technology services, including infrastructure and software, either from a remote location, through data centres, or at the client's premises.

Executive for MTN's group enterprise business unit, Farhad Khan, said the response to the MTN cloud trial, launched in December last year was positive.

"What the pilot project confirmed is that our offerings are on the mark. There is great appetite for ICT solutions that are relevant, customised and affordable," Khan said.

MTN's cloud computing project model centralises access to services where a third party, in this case MTN, acts as the single point of contact for customers.

The focus is on convenience, as centralising access to services eases the administrative burden for businesses, where instead of dealing with multiple service providers, they now deal with just one.

"A particular challenge facing small- and medium-sized businesses in Africa is the high cost of IT (information technology) software and hardware. This includes the licence fees. What MTN cloud services seeks to do is enable SMEs to minimise these costs and at the same time improve productivity and efficiency," Khan said.

MTN went live with MTN cloud in Ghana and Nigeria on Wednesday (10 April) and other markets will later in the year.

A report published by IBM last month revealed that the future of cloud computing for telecommunication companies in Africa was bright and nowhere is cloud's potential effect on driving telecommunications business more relevant than in

Africa.

"The prevalence of mobility and the lack of IT infrastructure make Africa an ideal launching pad for innovative cloud-based services," IBM computing expert Kedrick Brown said.

According to Brown, numerous communications service providers (CSPs) were launching or exploring the feasibility of similar cloud-based services throughout the emerging world - especially in Africa.

"Cloud computing is no longer just about making IT more efficient and effective. Cloud is seen by business executives generally, and telecommunications managers in particular, as a key to accelerating revenue growth, organically and into adjacent markets that had previously been outside the purview of telecoms," Brown said.

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