

"It's an odd quirk of human nature that once you've ordered the goods from the factory on the other side of the world by tapping on your magic box, you expect the genie to teleport them to you instantly," she says. "The ease of online shopping

creates an expectation that delivery will be equally souped up. The idea of waiting two to three weeks for delivery is as outdated as a mail-order catalogue. As a courier and express parcel company servicing these retailers and their clients, we have to have the footprint and the infrastructure to collect from anywhere and deliver anywhere within a matter of days."

SkyNet's international business includes the daily dispatching, from London, of eight containers packed with goods ordered online to its hub in Lagos. Nigeria is one of the many African countries served by the company as the continent's consumers get hooked on shopping online. SkyNet operates in 190 countries worldwide with 23 hubs in SA and 47 hubs in SADC countries.

"With e-commerce expected to grow by as much as 40% annually (according to a 2014 yStats.com survey), we're opening new offices all over the continent every year to keep up with demand," says Sullivan.

"But when it comes to delivering a reliable service in foreign countries, local knowledge is vital. Each country presents its own challenges in areas such as law, customs tariffs and levels of infrastructure. Local expertise is required to operate effectively, which is why we seek to partner with the best local courier and express parcel company in each new country we enter."

However, rather than outsource last-mile delivery entirely, SkyNet merges the new partner into its operation. The idea, she explains, is to retain a consistent standard in every link of its supply chain and to be able to monitor all deliveries from factory floor to the customer's door using its iSkyNet tracking network.

"It's the final link - fast, reliable delivery - that allows the combination of increasing access to online retailers and the growth in Africa's consumer spending power to provide good opportunity for growth for business," says Sullivan.

Source: Business Day via I-Net Bridge

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