

# Insight 2019: South Africa's digital prospects start to shine

 By [Doug Woolley](#)

11 Dec 2018

South Africa is awaiting the arrival of not one but three international data centres, each representing a major hyperscale provider. Suffice to say, SA and its neighbours will soon have access to the same digital power, flexibility and reduced costs that makes the likes of Google, Facebook and Netflix possible.

It's not an isolated event but in response to the market's appetites. Companies large and small are rethinking and rebuilding their data centres, moving to massive hosting sites, using public cloud services, and investing in more specialised private systems. Not long ago this was the message brought to a reluctant market, but by 2018 the adoption of modern technologies - collectively called Digital Transformation - is in full swing.



Doug Woolley, GM, Dell EMC Southern Africa

## Important gains

There are many challenges facing our country, but we are also seeing important gains. The fast growth of fibre, refreshing new attitudes around mobile data, and proactive moves by the government are all pushing digital's momentum in the right direction. Digital is prompting both foreign investment and massive expansions by local companies.

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According to an International Data Corp (IDC) report, the local IT industry is outperforming other parts of the economy and is a real job creator. Much of this is due to cloud adoption, which moots suspicions that digital technology will reduce employment. In contrast, it shapes a smarter business environment, which is more productive and innovative. This grows economies and creates work.

### **What does it mean for 2019?**

The IT sector is still a small part of SA's GDP, but that view doesn't take in the knock-on effect of technology. For example, you can now apply for an ID or passport online, a big step forward from the stifling queues that many had to take time off from work to attend.

Local services are taking on international rivals in the taxi and entertainment sectors. There has been a steady bubbling of startups taking SA innovations to international markets. Smarter farms, smarter taxis, smarter cities, smarter mines - digital is rippling through our society.



### **Survey reveals SA businesses are slowly adopting digital transformation**

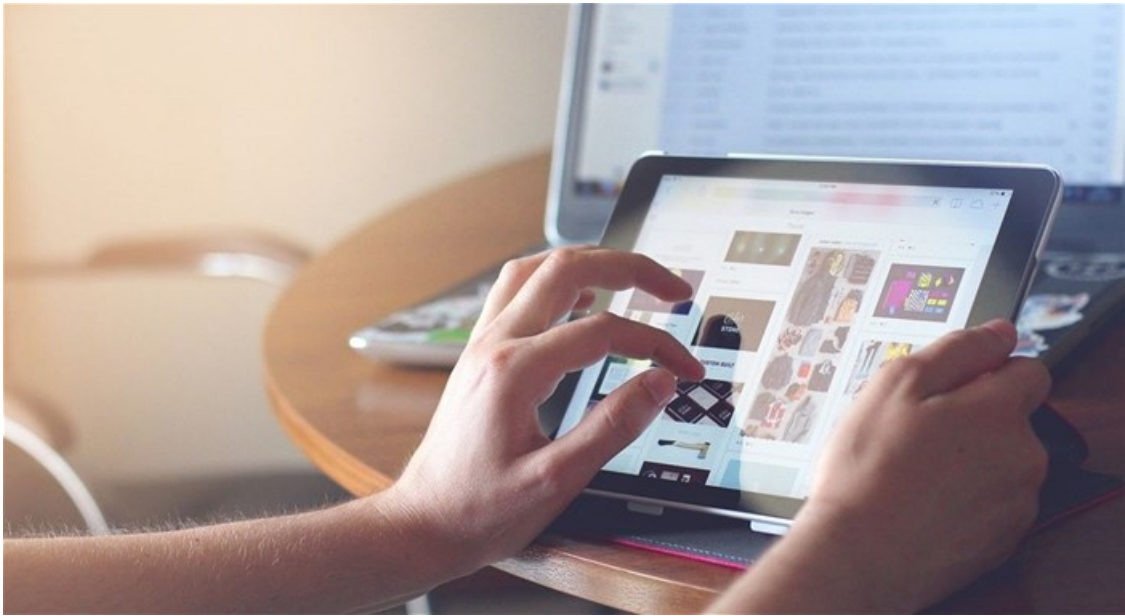
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That ripple will continue to grow and reverb in 2019 - of that, I have no doubt. Today we have many local use cases where businesses and services have changed how they serve their markets. This is silencing digital's critics as well as giving clear pathways to transformation. Making the switch is not easy. It takes leadership and an appetite for change and its challenges. But the practical proof is out there for all to see and the ways to accomplish it are clearer than ever before.

Meaningful change requires a certain level of strife. We can use this idea to colour our expectations for 2019. We can't deny that it will be a tough year as the repercussions of a struggling economy start making themselves felt. But that means for the enlightened and proactive there will be opportunities for change as well. The groundwork for that shift is, as I explained earlier, already in place.



Source: [pixabay.com](https://pixabay.com)

2019 will be tough, but it will also see SA flex its digital muscles. These are ready for primetime in a society that increasingly appreciates the relationship between digital technology and our wellbeing.

The arrival of Azure, AWS and other international data centres to the market show that foreign investors see that potential.

In 2019 South African society will start seeing it as well.

## ABOUT DOUG WOOLLEY

Doug Woolley is the general manager of Dell EMC South Africa.

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