

Enabling government through technology

 By [Lionel Moyal](#)

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It is no secret that the South African government is currently experiencing enormous pressure from local residents and the wider international community to meet its own deliverables.

Recently, the World Bank slashed local economic growth expectations to just 2.4 percent for the year. Similarly, a floundering education sector, growing unrest within the labour market due to increasingly frequent strike activity and pressing inquiries relating to lack of general service delivery are bearing down on state orientated departments and entities.

Can technology make a difference?

Although the South African government has a reputation for openness towards innovation, it has yet to embrace the remarkable opportunity that lies within the mobile sector.

South Africa is widely regarded as a global pioneer when it comes to cellular adoption. Today, market penetration is well above 100 percent, with many users owning two or more devices in order to take advantage of operator specials or packages.

Local smartphone adoption rates are also impressive. According to professional services network, Deloitte, there are currently over ten million active smartphones in South Africa. Although brand market share statistics are unreliable, the majority of major players are well represented.

These devices are also becoming more affordable. As prices drop, so current feature phone users are expected to begin moving towards more intelligent devices.

Mobile metre

To service this growing market, Intervate recently announced the launch of a mobile metre reading application that allows users to measure and submit their own electricity usage.

In districts such as Johannesburg, where billing scandals and lack of service delivery continue to plague local municipalities, this could pose an elegant solution to the problem.

The challenge here is that government, although willing, is often slow to respond. Considerable administrative barriers and restrictive tender processes have made collaboration with innovative partners increasingly difficult.

Furthermore, state agencies often lack the internal business processes required to service improvement. Great ideas are a positive step forward, but when poorly implemented they can simply exacerbate the challenges.

In order for the state to realise the benefit associated with mobile platforms, it must rethink its approach to technology and on-going support. The opportunity is certainly present, government just needs a push.

ABOUT LIONEL MOYAL

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