

University graduates create social network

By Gregory Gondwe: @Kalipochi

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Barely four months after bringing into the ICT market a search engine they call 'C-Finder', Mzuzu University Bachelor of Science graduates, Kondwani Chimatiro and Daniel Chiwinga, have brought another ICT innovation with a social network platform, almost designed to work as international social network set-up called 'Sahebo'.



Daniel Chiwinga

Chimatiro and Chiwinga told Bizcommunity that Sahebo which can be found on www.sahebo.com is derived from a French word commune, which means community. Sahebo, which was recently launched, took the pair three months to develop.

The two graduates, who have both completed their Bachelor of Science Studies in Information Communication Technology, hope to keep on improving and developing the platform to provide a first-class service to its users.



Kondwani Chimatiro

"We are currently working on applications that will enable our users to create community projects or share business ideas and many others," Chimatiro said.

"We are just four weeks old in the industry and just started our own company known as Ctech Systems which provides ICT solutions," said Chimatiro, adding that they are doing software development, web designing, web hosting, multimedia, network installation, computer repair and maintenance, online advertising and many others.

The impact of social networking

The two noted that their firm cannot ignore the facts and effects of social networking and its impact on the way the world is doing business.

"That's why we created Sahebo to localise this technology and make it rich in our cultural values in such a way that our users can easily integrate what is described as African and Western culture to provide a blended platform which is simple to use while sharing with the rest of the world," said Chimatiro.

He says they hope people will use Sahebo to share messages to the other social platforms instantly with fewer efforts.

A global village

"As Africans we understand the social business dynamics in Africa and its challenges. But if we can be connected there is nothing we wouldn't achieve," declared Chimatiro.

"As you may be aware that through internet and social networking nowadays the world has become a global village," said the two, in explaining what has prompted them to bring a social network into a market well represented by Facebook and other innovations.

Chimatiro and Chiwinga agree that we are living in one large community where global issues are influenced by all global citizens, which means there is room for such new introductions.

"The world now acts as one platform to build businesses, democracies and dreams which were only limited then but now a wireless reach away," he said.

Broadcasting houses, political parties, businesses and customers, he says, are demanding a direct audience with their service suppliers or legislators, whether be it the Arab spring or Wall Street.

"As global citizens, through social media, we have shared our burdens and successes by harnessing technology which enables us to communicate in real time and filter through huge information that is passing through these shared communities to better serve our customers," he said.

The pair say they are working on Sahebo day in and day out to make it the largest social site in Africa.

"We are hosting Sahebo ourselves. We are planning to launch Sahebo social site publicly soon, once we finalize the site," Chiwinga said.

The social platform will among its many advantages, benefit politicians and farmers and many Malawians who have not been able to share their opinions with a wide audience.

A fusion of technologies and frameworks

In coming up with Sahebo, the two graduates say they fused different technologies and frameworks to make sure that Sahebo is operational.

"Our audience is broad if you look at what we want to achieve at the end of our quest, you see through this platform, service users can speak directly to service providers and vice versa," says Chimatiro, "We want to enable a farmer in the village interact with business firms seeking to buy cotton from China or pigeon peas in India without the need to worry about exorbitant long distance phone bills."

According to statistics, some 29% of online adults used social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace in the months leading up to the Malawi's 2009 elections to connect with friends or family, and 12% of online adults did so using Twitter.

He said that works out to a total of 41% of adult internet users who engaged in political campaigns on social networking sites in at least in several ways. With Sahebo, Chimatiro and Chiwinga hope to be there for politicians who lagged behind to connect to social media campaign.

"This will help to make them understand how the dynamics of doing politics have changed as will be proven in the 2014 general elections," he said.

Chimatiro and Chiwinga say the "political social media user" cohort represented by the 29% of internet users eligible for voting are representing a 45% margin in opinion perception swing, and enthusiasm for using social media provides Sahebo conducive environment to educate those who can educate others on issues of human rights, and civic education on election issues by providing a neutral platform where issues affecting daily life can be debated.

With Sahebo, the entrepreneurs say they are looking at group buying where users can come together to buy products from a supplier who in return, will offer reasonable discount to the group for buying in a large quantity - a functionality they hope to add soon.

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