

Uganda's digital transformation, lessons shaping ICT and telecommunications

EDITOR: In an increasingly digital world, the ability to leverage technology for socio-economic growth is paramount.

For decision-makers in developing nations, Uganda's journey in ICT and telecommunications provides not only inspiration, but also practical lessons.

The transition from limited connectivity to a vibrant digital landscape exemplifies how strategic decisions and innovative practices can drive inclusive growth. A pivotal moment in Uganda's digital evolution occurred in the late 1990s when government liberalised the telecommunications sector.

This decision dismantled the monopoly of the Uganda Posts and Telecommunications Corporation, paving the way for private investment. Remarkably, the entry of telecom giants like MTN Uganda and Airtel not only increased access to mobile and internet services but also sparked competition that brought down costs and spurred innovations. Within just a few years, mobile phones became indispensable for communication and commerce, especially in rural regions lacking infrastructure. This transformation highlights a critical insight for leaders: Deregulation and competition can lead to market growth and improved services.

The experiences of Uganda demonstrate that strategic policy reforms when combined with private sector engagement, can yield significant socio-economic benefits. This approach facilitated the emergence of mobile money services in 2009, which addressed a substantial gap in financial inclusion.

By enabling millions of previously unbanked citizens to access financial services via mobile phones, platforms like MTN Mobile Money and Airtel Money empowered individuals and small enterprises, fostering entrepreneurship and expanding economic opportunities.



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