

AI for SMEs: potential for South-African companies

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a firm component of day-to-day business in many companies and their work processes worldwide – in order to increase efficiency or optimise processes. What possibilities does the implementation of AI offer in enterprises? And how can my own company benefit from AI?



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These questions were raised by South-African entrepreneurs during their visit to neuland.ai, a firm which is specialised in the development of AI solutions for SMEs. AI Strategist Akram Mihyar (neuland.ai) and the South-African entrepreneurs Aletta Smith (African Origins Farming (Pty) Ltd) and Catherine Sebati (Africawide Health (Pty) Ltd) talked about their specific experience and the benefits of the company visit.

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Akram Mihyar in dialogue with the South African entrepreneurs

PG: Mr Mihyar, why is your company participating in the *Partnering in Business with Germany* programme?

Akram Mihyar: For us, *Partnering in Business with Germany* is a valuable platform to make our company and our services more visible at the international level. I particularly appreciate the direct contact with passionate entrepreneurs from a broad range of countries. We are a young enterprise which still has to learn how to best present our services, especially abroad. The talks and discussions help us gain a better understanding of how our technologies are perceived in various markets. It is interesting to learn something about the participants' ideas and requirements and to see how our solutions can be helpful to realise these ideas and meet the requirements.

What are the advantages of your participation in the *Partnering in Business with Germany* programme for

your company?

Akram Mihyar: All the participants are potential customers and cooperation partners in the participating countries. After the company visit, we talked with several participants about possible cooperation and we hope that this will be followed by more as the issue of AI is becoming increasingly important for firms. The company visit is thus an easy way to establish valuable customer contacts and to find potential partners.



South African executives at neuland.ai with Catherine Sebati (1st row, 2nd from left) and Aletta Smith (3rd row, centre)

Ms Smith and Ms Sebati, what specific ideas which you wish to realise in your companies have you gained during your visit to neuland.ai?

Aletta Smith: The visit has inspired me to use AI tools as a personal assistant. I want to learn how to use them effectively, as they might help me, for example, to draw up my business plan for an application for funding, communicate with customers in German and better plan my daily activities.

Catherine Sebati: I want to make use of AI for the onboarding of new staff members and for the rationalisation of invoicing processes. Although I am already using tools including ChatGPT and Perplexity, I now intend to integrate them in a smarter platform in order to optimise organisational procedures and make them smoother.



Establishing contacts during the company visit

In general, how do you assess the possibility to gain specific insights by means of company visits in the context of the programme?

Catherine Sebati: The company visits are very effective. They provide a rare opportunity to gain insights into the functioning and management of companies. The visits are characterised by the fact that the companies not only present their successes, but also speak openly about the challenges they are facing.

Mr Mihyar, why would you encourage other companies to participate in the *Partnering in Business with Germany* programme?

Akram Mihyar: The programme provides the opportunity to get in touch in an easy manner with potential customers and cooperation partners who have their own views of global economic developments and of our

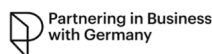
company. The companies' own networks are thus being expanded, and at the same time the staff enjoy the intercultural exchange.

How do you assess the importance of artificial intelligence for the economic transformation in your home countries?

Aletta Smith: I have worked with computers since the 1980s. During the company visit, I learned a lot about AI which I did not know before. This was very useful and has taught me very much in a short period of time.

In South Africa, AI provides the great opportunity to train people, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises. I also see the potential for integrating young people in the world of work thanks to training initiatives. This can result in the creation of many new jobs and long-term economic benefits.

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