

# Telkom: Embracing AI for Enhanced Customer Experience and Operational Efficiency

Our Founder, Akim Benamara, and Stefan Steffen, Group Head of Data and AI at Telkom Group discussed Telkom's integration of AI to enhance customer experience and operational efficiency and their perspective on AI as a supportive tool to augment workforce capabilities rather than replace them.



INTERVIEW BY:

**Akim Benamara**

Founder of TechAfrica News

## How do you perceive the significance and role of AI, and how important is it in shaping your operations?

AI is incredibly important and has been for a number of years. Telcos, including us, have adopted AI in various areas of our business, such as supply chain, customer engagement, and optimizing different aspects of our operations. With the rise of generative AI, there's significant hype around its impact on various industries. In the Telco space,

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**STEFAN STEFFEN**

GROUP HEAD OF DATA AND AI

we see it having an immediate impact on marketing, sales, content generation, and customer operations. It also assists us in software engineering as we develop our solutions.

## AI is quite resource-intensive. How does Telkom address the associated infrastructure challenges?

In South Africa, Telcos already have a strong infrastructure in place, particularly for data processing. We've shifted to a hybrid model, leveraging cloud solutions for AI workloads, especially for training large language models that require resource-intensive GPUs and TPUs. Our cloud partners provide easy access to these resources. Additionally, we are exploring partnerships with companies like NVIDIA, who have done foundational work in enabling AI for large organizations.

## Could you outline Telkom's approach to data governance and management, ensuring high-quality inputs for AI models built upon a foundation of data?

Our data strategy at the group level informs how we treat data across the organization, considering it as a valuable asset. Each of our business units has a specific data strategy that aligns with the overall approach. Data governance is facilitated through forums and data stewards, ensuring operational and strategic management of data. We have shifted towards viewing data as a valuable asset in the organization, focusing not only on unlocking its value but also on its effective management.

## Can you share some case studies highlighting the positive impacts of your

## solutions on customer journey and operational processes?

We have utilized AI and machine learning to define personalized customer segments based on CDRs and EDRs, enabling real-time and relevant offers to customers through next best action. In our

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These examples demonstrate the tangible value of AI in enhancing customer experience and optimizing operational efficiency.

## How does your company view AI as a supportive factor rather than a replacement for workers, aiming to optimize workforce productivity?

Our perspective on AI is one of augmentation, where it supports and enhances the capabilities of our workforce. We focus on using AI to guide and assist our service agents and technicians, making them experts in their roles. While some processes can be fully automated, freeing up capacity for more value-adding work, the emphasis remains on using AI as a tool to uplift productivity and empower our workforce.

open server business, we have applied AI to optimize technician dispatch, efficiently managing fault resolutions and installations.

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