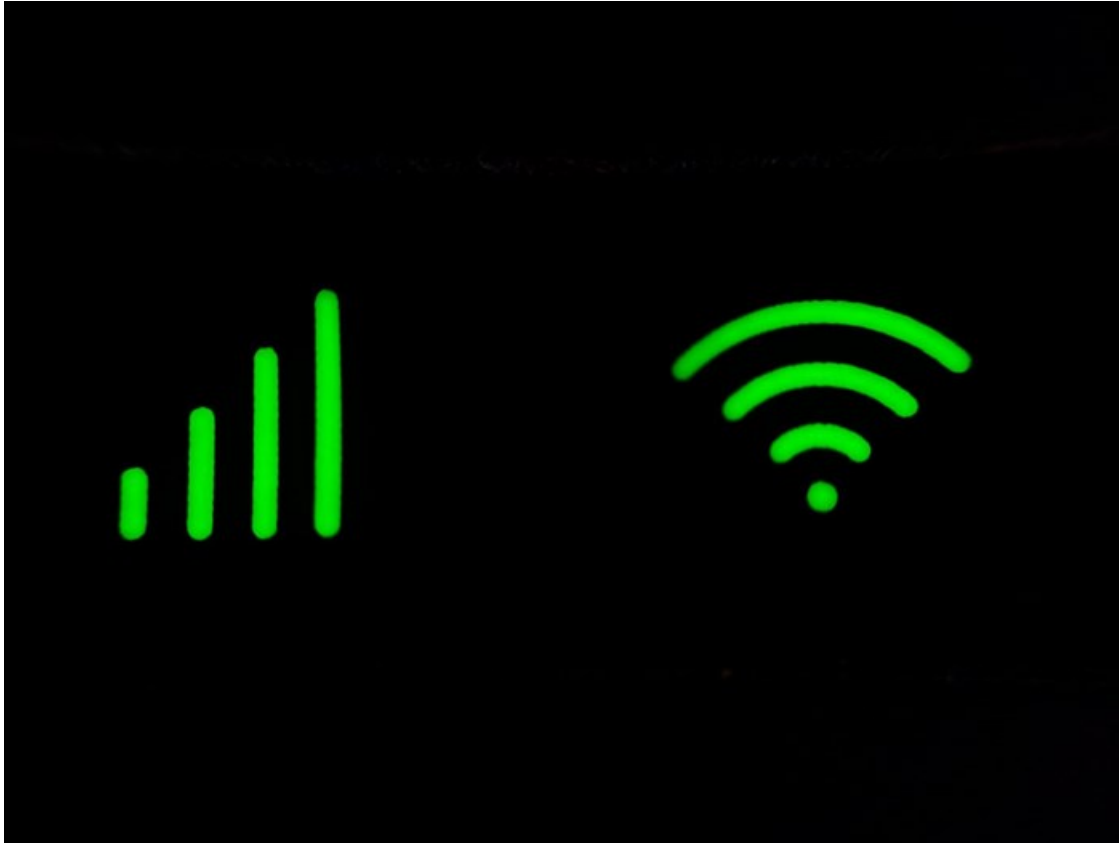


The multi-billion rand 5G auction is done. Now what?

By [Nitesh Singh](#)

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Most of the headlines have predictably focussed on the enormous amounts paid by the mobile network operators rather than the benefits of 5G (fifth-generation mobile network) - the new global wireless standard.



Source: [Uhsplash](#)

Suddenly though, we are living in game-changing times and how we prepare for 5G will define the way we work for years to come. What this auction achieves, once the spectrum is optimally utilised, is it increases capacity-delivery one hundred times more than 4G. Simply put it makes businesses more efficient and gives consumers access to more information faster than ever before.

It means the world of connected cars, smart stadiums, and advanced gaming that all rely on 5G networks is suddenly a step closer. On a more basic level, it enables all of us to download content more quickly.

That has a domino impact on efficiency and productivity which in turn leads to greater profitability. And closing the loop, more speed and success in business has an inevitable and positive effect on job creation.

So, the next question what do we need to do right now to start changing the game? Already many leading local companies are unlocking value from 5G and converging technologies, putting them on track to grow revenues and drive innovation. But organisations need to start planning quickly and strategically to ensure they reap early rewards, unleash innovation, and grow market opportunities.



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This is a multi-faceted challenge and to realise the full benefits of advances in network connectivity, companies will not only have to invest in a suite of new convergent technology solutions but will have to implement difficult organisational and cultural change.

Part of that is making sure next-generation connectivity and technology remain firmly on the C-suite agenda.

Part of this process is also to overcome entrenched fear and even scepticism. Companies will understandably have concerns over the complexity of technology integration, how to extract real return on investment, and how to choose the appropriate partner ecosystem.

But there is light at the end of this fibre tunnel. Eighty percent of companies surveyed by Accenture say they are at various stages of adopting digital technologies, ranging from wide adoption to partial implementation; 78% say they are planning to invest in 5G-enabled campus networks. Sixty-six percent say they are planning to invest up to 10% of their IT budget on advanced networks like 5G in the next three years.



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And that is good news because according to Accenture's most recent Innovation Maturity Index, 85% of South African companies are vulnerable to future disruption showing a need for them to ramp up their innovation capabilities.

5G alone will not create the revolution I have referred to. Next-generation networks must also be paired with complementary digital capabilities. End-to-end digital transformation will come about through the convergence of 5G and key technologies: cloud, edge computing, AI, and IoT.

It is an exciting new world, but I am worried that a lack of 5G and digital skills is a key impediment for companies coupled with a lack of funds to support investment. Training and budget recalibration need to be top of mind.

Future network and technology architecture and integration is a massive undertaking, involving significant capital outlay, and cannot be done end-to-end in-house. By partnering and jointly investing, the advantage will be gained to improve risk-adjusted returns, and drive revenue.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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