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OPINION

Social media and tech startups: The new youth leadership platforms

by Chika Nwogu On Mar 8, 2019



tech-startup

As technology becomes more ubiquitous, new ways of thinking and doing things are visible and accessible. Ideas, beliefs, systems and standards are being propagated today through many ways and predominantly through social media and technology startup companies. According to a 2018 Business Insider report, social media platforms are most popular among the 18 – 29 age demographics. Digital jobs are now highly sought-after career and income options. The unemployment challenges have birthed more entrepreneurs and freelancers.

The rise of social media influencers and technology companies have created more income opportunities, produced leaders and influenced government policies – directly and indirectly. Social media influencers are individuals with established credibility in a particular area, a large number of followers on social media platforms, and the ability to engage and persuade their audience on a number of issues. These individuals may or may not own their own businesses, but earn income through idea propagation.

Technology startups build hardware, software, algorithms and platforms for a consumer, and technology enabled startups leverage on technology to deliver products or services to the customer.

Today, with a simple click, it is easier to form or join a group with common interests, and then determine the future direction of these teams from any location. These teams could be as few as two members, and as many as, but not limited to, one million members; with no need to assemble at the same geographical location.

Historically, ideologies were limited to small geographical regions and could take a couple of years to reach other territories or continents. Today, technology has made it easier and faster to reach any part of the world with ideas and concepts that can change lives, transform societies, improve well-being of a nation as well as ensure security of lives and properties.

New industries emerge as ideologies overlap or get refined. These industries exist to solve a problem or create a movement with the potential of influencing the society and possibly government policies. In the past, Nigerian influencers were mainly political leaders, religious leaders, traditional rulers, billionaire traders and captains of huge businesses mostly over 45 years old. Today, we can see influencers in various forms across all ages and industries. They are known as entrepreneurs, opinion leaders, activists, and thought leaders with huge digital and non-digital following. These leaders are developing systems, influencing people and spreading their ideologies globally leveraging on digital channels and startup companies.

Social media and technology startups have provided more opportunities to lead and influence others. Building a followership on social media, or starting and running a company requires brutally honest answers about your motives, passions and goals in life, because these are drivers of the kind of system and culture an organization or followers imbibe; as a famous saying goes, "an organization is a reflection of its leader". Therefore, young people are paying more and more attention to their personal brand and identity as well as what legacy they would like to leave.

Industry observers have noted the rise of more technology focused entrepreneurs in the last 5 years. The government has also put in place some policies and interventions that support the rise of tech entrepreneurs. Fresh university graduates, typically in their early to mid-twenties now have better chances at being successful business owners and opting for entrepreneurship versus getting employed in an organization.

We can now see web designers, applications developers, social media strategists, product development specialists, user experience designers, user interface designers, enterprise designer begin their careers by starting businesses in tech subsectors such as Health tech, Edutech, AgTech, FinTech, Transport, Logistics and Ecommerce.

This immediately places them in leadership capacity, leading themselves, and then anyone who joins them in their entrepreneurial journey. Mentors, thought leaders, advisors, influencers are the roles they are likely to play at various points within the tech ecosystem. As soon as the business gets started, they are tasked with communicating the mission, vision and values of the organization and also the strategic direction for the venture. As a result, they develop a strong personal identity and an understanding of their impact on their community. Because they understand the challenges facing their peers, it is easier to proffer solutions to addressing the issues, applying communication skills, teamwork, professionalism and project management skills to solve a problem.

Leveraging on their positions as organisations or team leads in startups, they use various technology channels to propagate ideologies, systems and ways of doing things. They do this by thoughtfully building a followership or 'tribe' based on similar interests. These followers view them as inspirational role models, mentors, or in some cases competition. Having large following on various digital media channels might lead to various digital and non-digital public engagements, seminars and conferences. Using technology, these days, people now find themselves tasked with leading teams, predominantly from a very young age.

By getting into leadership at that age, they are reminded of what is important and valuable to them, their peers and their community. It is some sort of compass, suggesting directions to take, and has further expanded opportunities for youth development and youth engagement. We now see more youths deeply concerned and involved in community development, making concerted efforts to solve social injustice and economic challenges through social media engagements and technology startups.

Leadership thus takes a new perspective and continues to evolve, and the youths are standing up and being counted! What number are you?

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1 COMMENT



Beks Says  11 months ago

Nice article, I think in our current political space that is clearly dominated by old politicians and politics of acrimony. The youths stand a chance to influence policies and get their voices heard via the concerted and focussed use of social media

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