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Components help to combat digital divide

With technology solutions becoming more affordable and readily available, inroads are being made in the ongoing battle to bridge the digital divide, says Tyrone Gruner, Asus product manager at technology distributor Ingram Micro South Africa.

It has become almost passé to discuss the digital divide in South Africa. In many ways, the country is straddling the gap between the developed and developing worlds. This can be seen in a plethora of sectors where big business and entrepreneurs find innovative ways of utilising technology despite the challenges that being in Africa presents.

We continue to hear arguments about how it is difficult to generate interest in technology from people who are battling poverty, have little or no running water, and minimal electricity if any.

However, recent developments like the One Laptop Per Child initiative and the Asus eeePC, with its tiny form factor, have spurred a renewed interest to make technology more accessible to people. When used in the right way, technology can empower people to not only benefit themselves but others in their communities as well.

But it is not only about the 'soft' sell in terms of providing a laptop or software. People need to be educated about how technology is able to help them in their daily lives. Technology access plants the seed and provides some of the tools one needs

for any venture. However, it also appeals to some on a more direct level.

Affordable and readily available components give people the opportunity to build solutions themselves in communities where technology companies might not have access to or might not even be aware of. It is through these people who have experienced the power of technology first-hand that the digital divide will narrow.

Some of these users will take their knowledge and apply that to other facets of their lives and, in so doing, show the difference that technology can make. By giving a person the opportunity to customise desktops from the ground up, a technology vendor is helping to build a community of users. For this to work, the components have to be priced correctly and offer the right degree of customisation that is required.

One such vendor is Asus. It has built a reputation of having quality motherboard and graphic card components that cater to a variety of needs and are available at a good price point. Many hardcore computer users rely on Asus extensively for any upgrades that need to be done to their machines.

So despite the challenges that still exist in the digital divide, more ICT companies are coming to the party and developing solutions that help make technology accessible for all.
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About Ingram Micro South Africa

Ingram Micro South Africa is a joint venture between Ingram Micro Europe, a division of Ingram Micro Inc, (NYSE: IM) and MB Technologies, established to market and distribute components and other technology products to VARs, system builders and integrators, and manufacturers throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

About Ingram Micro Inc.

Ingram Micro Inc. is the world's largest technology distributor. As a vital link in the technology value chain, Ingram Micro creates sales and profitability opportunities for vendors and resellers through unique marketing programs, logistics services, technical support, financial services and product aggregation and distribution. The company serves more than 150 countries and is the only global broadline IT distributor with operations in Asia. Ranked 70 on the Fortune 500, Ingram Micro generated $35.05 billion in revenues for fiscal year 2007.

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