

Quality as a Strategic Leader



Risk, Speed and the Shifting
Technology Landscape –
*A view from inside an ISO-
certified business.*



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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN QUALITY FAILS?

FREEDOM DAY | Service delivery or service delayed | Are municipalities failing?

Sinenhlanhla Masilela | Published 4 weeks ago



Service delivery in South Africa remains a big challenge for municipalities. This is largely due to municipalities not having the required resources to fulfil the delivery of basic services.

Image: humeleng English/Independent Newspapers

R400bn price tag to fix failing municipal water services in SA, says government

Despite repeated requests, dozens of failing municipalities have still not submitted plans to the Department of Water and Sanitation to address their deteriorating water services.



By Victoria O'Regan

1 Feb 2026



Residents collect water outside the One Eloff building in Marshalltown, Johannesburg, on 6 October 2025. New water laws will allow the DWS to criminally charge municipalities for non-compliance. (Photo: Alastair Russell / Our City News)

15+ product recalls in 3 months: Every major product recall in South Africa so far this year

Yasmine Jacobs | Updated 1 month ago



There were over 15 product recalls this year.

Image: ChatGPT



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN QUALITY FAILS?



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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gov.za | Official Information and Services



Minister announces withdrawal of draft AI Policy

Sunday, April 26, 2026



Communications and Digital Technologies Minister Solly Malatsi has announced the withdrawal of the Draft National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy following an internal process.

"Following revelations that the Draft National Artificial Intelligence Policy published for public comment contains various fictitious sources in its reference list, we initiated internal questions, which have now confirmed that this was the case.

"This failure is not a mere technical issue but has compromised the integrity and credibility of the draft policy. As such, I am withdrawing the Draft National Artificial Intelligence Policy," the Minister said.

Home Affairs Suspends Two Officials Over AI Use Linked To...

Home Affairs suspends two officials over AI use linked to revised White Paper on Citizenship and Immigration

30 Apr 2026

Home Affairs suspends two officials over use of AI "hallucinations"

The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) is suspending two senior officials with immediate effect following the detection of apparent Artificial Intelligence (AI) "hallucinations" cited as references appended to the recently Cabinet-approved Revised White Paper on Citizenship, Immigration and Refugee Protection.



FOUR LESSONS WE CAN LEARN FROM RECENT QUALITY FAILURES

01 Quality belongs to the process

The most expensive mistake is treating quality as a function. Where the process owns it, the function becomes a coach. Where a function owns it, the process resents the audit.

03 Speed has become a quality outcome

PDSA cycles get faster when feedback loops get shorter. Continuous improvement at industrial pace is what separates quality leaders from quality administrators.

02 Telemetry beats testimony at every governance forum

Boards and regulators have stopped accepting 'we believe' and started asking 'show me'. The organisations that scale quality are the ones that turned observation into instrumentation.

04 Your supplier's quality is your quality

In a connected supply chain, you inherit every weakness upstream. Connected SLA management and supplier scorecards are no longer mature practice. They are now baseline.



WHAT HAS CHANGED AND WHAT HAS NOT

The discipline is the same, however the speed, evidence base and stakes are not.

P

PLAN

THEN

Quarterly steering committees, paper plans, assumptions tested in pilots

NOW

Continuous planning informed by live telemetry. Assumptions tested in production with controlled rollouts

D

DO

THEN

Implementation as a project, with a defined start and end

NOW

Implementation as a capability that is always-on, instrumented, observable

S

STUDY

THEN

Monthly QA reports, sample audits, lagging customer feedback

NOW

Real-time observability, leading indicators, anomaly detection across the value chain

A

ACT

THEN

Corrective action plans, root cause workshops weeks later

NOW

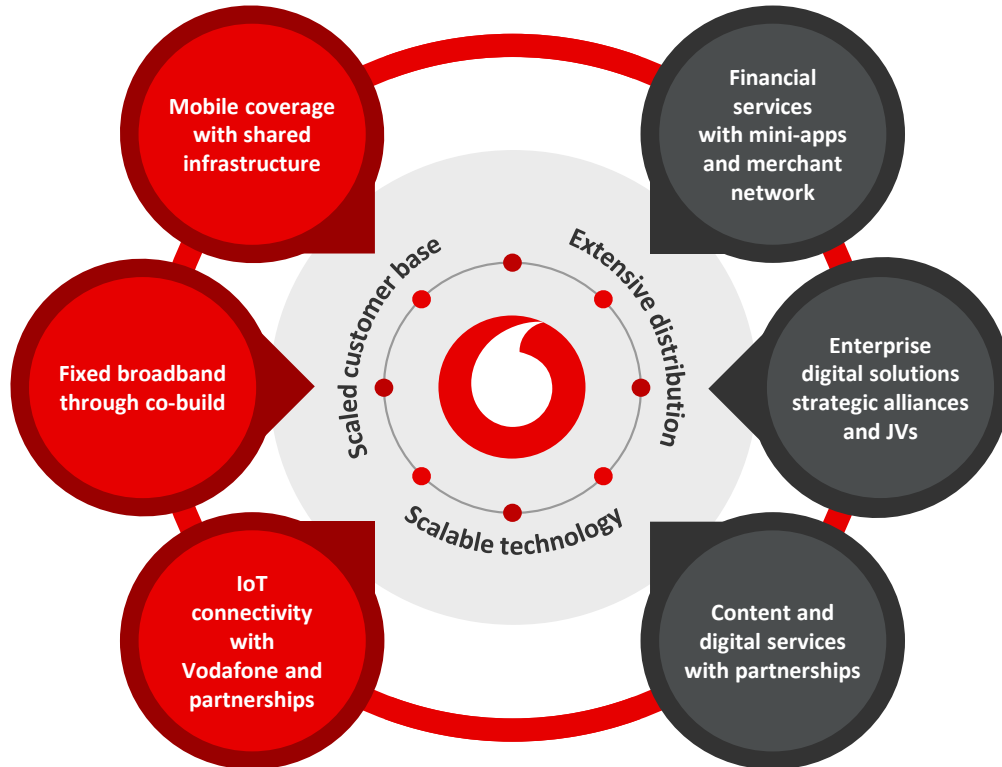
Automated response where appropriate; structured RCA where judgement is required

The PDSA discipline still teaches us where to look. What has changed is how fast we can look, and what counts as evidence.



Connectivity

Beyond connectivity



Critical success factors



Strong partnerships and integration capabilities across the Vodafone Group



Connectivity (mobile and fixed) and fintech scale



Fit for purpose IT platforms for seamless integration (e.g. APIs)



Commercial excellence (dedicated management focus on new lines of business)



Digital skills (incl. AI, GenAI at scale)

More than a network. A digital transformation partner.

Vodacom Business serves enterprise and government clients across South Africa and the continent. Beyond connectivity, our subsidiary ecosystem delivers integrated solutions that turn data into outcomes.



Digital platforms for last-mile service delivery



End-to-end IoT, edge computing, smart asset monitoring



Managed cloud, cyber security, system integration



Geospatial data, mapping and location intelligence



Secure payments and connectivity for retail and financial services

Five integrated capabilities under one accountable partner. Not five vendors to manage. One outcome to underwrite.





Digital Water Tower

Built with Mezzanine. Launched March 2025 with the Strategic Water Partners Network.

THE CHALLENGE

Gauteng loses close to 40% of its water supply to infrastructure failures, theft and inefficiencies. Municipalities cannot see where losses occur, cannot prove consumption, and cannot bill accurately.

THE SOLUTION

Integrated platform consolidating geospatial consumption data, network topology and demand reports across reservoirs, treatment plants, distribution and consumers. Real-time visibility for utilities and citizens.

QUALITY OUTCOMES

Early detect

Leak detection through predictive maintenance

Audit ready

Single source of truth for service-level disputes

Verifiable

Service delivery evidence for regulators

Transparent

Citizen-facing dashboards build trust



Smart Metering Ecosystem



Deployed across Buffalo City, Naledi, Sol Plaatje and others under the RT29-2024 National Treasury Transversal Contract.

THE CHALLENGE

South African municipalities are owed over R384bn in unpaid bills and owe Eskom R98.5bn. Inaccurate billing, interim estimates, tampering and ageing infrastructure undermine revenue and trust.

THE SOLUTION

NB-IoT smart electricity and water meters with AI analytics. 63,000 meters installed at Buffalo City alone over three years. Real-time consumption, automated alerts, smart prepayment and revenue protection.

QUALITY OUTCOMES

Accurate

Billing replaces estimates and disputes

Tamper-proof

Anomaly detection at the meter level

AGSA-ready

Audit-grade consumption records

Recoverable

Lost revenue identified and reclaimed



Where is where it starts

A F R I G I S

From Click to Doorstep: How AfriGIS Location Intelligence Drove a Major Logistics Client to 93% First-Time Delivery Success

THE CHALLENGE

Inaccurate address data created major logistical bottlenecks across South Africa. This led to high operational costs and frequent delivery failures.

THE SOLUTION

AfriGIS deployed location intelligence APIs and Master Address Data. This combination standardized routing and verified unstructured addresses automatically.

QUALITY OUTCOMES

Accuracy

First-time delivery success rates increased dramatically to 93% within two years.

Savings

Route optimization reduced operational costs and protected profit margins.

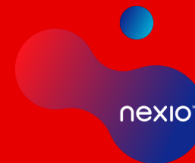
Efficiency

Automated data validation maximized fleet efficiency without requiring new vehicles.

Proactivity

Operations shifted from reactive troubleshooting to precision-based planning.





Security Operations Centre

Onsite at Vodacom World, Midrand. Adaptive risk and trust model for managed cybersecurity.

THE CHALLENGE

South Africa ranks among the world's most cybercrime-affected countries. Traditional perimeter security cannot keep pace, and quality data integrity is now a board-level risk for every regulated business.

THE SOLUTION

24/7 managed SOC providing continuous risk assessment, dynamic trust adjustment, real-time threat monitoring and digital forensic incident response. Microsoft platform integration backed by Vodacom infrastructure.

QUALITY OUTCOMES

24/7

Continuous monitoring and detection

Forensic

Evidence-grade incident response

POPIA

Breach notification and audit trails

Adaptive

Risk posture evolves with the threat





Secure, Resilient Payment Connectivity

Bank-Grade Resilience: How XLink Secured Secure, PCI-DSS Compliant Retail Transaction Routing for Major Financial Institutions

THE CHALLENGE

Unencrypted merchant transaction routing risked non-compliance penalties and exposed financial cardholder data environments (CDE) to interception. These localized point-of-sale network outages caused severe transaction drops that compromised banking brand trust.

THE SOLUTION

XLink deployed its managed connectivity engine built on a rigorously audited, end-to-end secure architecture. The platform combines multi-network cellular failovers with tokenised data pipelines to enforce strong encryption parameters across all banking terminal fleets.

QUALITY OUTCOMES

Compliance

Sustained PCI-DSS Level 1 and PSD2 data compliance.

Resilience

Secured 99.9% uptime across 250,000 banking endpoints.

Protection

Isolated cardholder environments to prevent data leakage.

Governance

Fulfilled PASA regulatory transaction requirements seamlessly.



Virtual Wheeling

First-of-its-kind PPA with SOLA Group, signed September 2025. A national blueprint.

THE CHALLENGE

Traditional wheeling is a one-to-one IPP-to-buyer arrangement. Vodacom operates 15,000 low-voltage sites across 168 municipalities, which made bulk renewable energy procurement impossible to scale or audit.

THE SOLUTION

Mezzanine-built platform that aggregates consumption across distributed sites through smart metering, then reconciles against IPP generation. Renewable capacity flows to the grid without affecting Eskom's balance sheet.

QUALITY OUTCOMES

Verified

Consumption-to-generation reconciliation

Compliant

Auditable Scope 2 emissions reporting

Replicable

Open model now available to any business

100%

Renewable purchased electricity achieved

OUTCOME PATTERNS WE SEE ACROSS SECTORS

Different industries, the same underlying patterns. Quality outcomes ahead of technology features.

MANUFACTURING

From inspection to instrumentation

Defects detected at the line before they reach the customer. Cost of poor quality measured in minutes rather than months.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

From audit trail to audit-by-design

Compliance evidence generated as a byproduct of normal operations. Regulators get what they need without project effort.

HEALTHCARE & PHARMA

From paper SOPs to verifiable workflow

Cold-chain integrity, patient data lineage, and regulatory submissions move from manual reconciliation to continuous assurance.

PUBLIC SECTOR

From after-the-fact reporting to live accountability

Service delivery and financial reporting share the same evidence base, closing the gap AGSA has been calling out for years.

The patterns travel across industries. The accelerator behind them is what differs.



THE HONEST TENSIONS WE ARE ALL SITTING WITH

The questions that come up in every executive conversation. There are no easy answers.

Standardise vs adapt

Common process gives auditability. Local context drives outcomes. Where is the line?

Build the capability vs buy it

Quality used to be built. Now it can be subscribed. What stays core, what becomes utility?

Automate the gate vs trust the operator

Automated controls at scale. Human judgement catches what rules miss. Both, in what proportion?

Speed vs evidence

Faster cycles require faster evidence. Where evidence lags, governance breaks.

If these resonate, you are in good company. We are seeing them across the room, and the conversation matters more than the answer.



THREE QUESTIONS WORTH LEAVING WITH

These are questions for you and your board to ponder.

1

When your governance forum asks for evidence of quality performance, what proportion of that evidence is observed versus reported?

2

On your last three significant platform decisions, was quality in the room from the start, or invited in to validate?

3

If you had to defend your quality posture to a regulator tomorrow, would you reach for a system, a spreadsheet, or a story?





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Further together