

# BUSINESS EXPRESS

## ISP firm calls for standards

By Gitahi Njeri

Kenya's development into an ICT powerhouse has seen the mushrooming of new tech firm offering a wide range of tech based services. One of the areas that has seen a huge number of new players is the bandwidth business that has even sucked in Kenya's telecom giants, Telkom, Safaricom and Zain. According to Communication Commission of Kenya, the bandwidth business boasts of 52 internet service providers (ISPs).

But players in the industry are now calling on CCK to benchmark the standards. Speaking to *The Sunday Express*, Tangerine Ltd managing director Kunal Lodhia says the government has achieved a lot in regulating the communication sector.

"The sector is highly liberalized something that is good for the industry. The liberalization has seen many new players come on board as compared to some times ago when only a few players dominated the industry," Kunal says.

Kunal says the bandwidth business needs some standards if the internet is to play the envisage role in developing the country. "The problem is that when you have so many new players in such business without standards, it is very easy to have some players offering poor services. The way out of this is for CCK to develop benchmarks for the business so that players can be judged by the quality of their services," he says.

Besides the lack of benchmarks in business, there is also the feeling that public information on the benefits of the internet is not adequate. Analysts say that amongst the 3 million internet users by March last year, the biggest percentage used



Kunal Lodhia

the internet for social networking. These users frequent sites such as facebook, Twitter and Myspace.

Kunal says the government should pull up its socks in promoting cyber literacy. "The government should step in to educate the public on the internet. Clearly if you look around, only a few people know the

potential of the internet to change lives. Yet the government has put so much investment in developing the infrastructure. It is only fair that the government matches the investment in infrastructure with public education on the internet. This way we will be able to witness radical transformation of a large

population of this nation as well as its economy," he says.

Even among the regular internet users, there is a trace of this ignorance especially for those that buy bandwidth. "People find it very hard to make smart decision because of the ignorance. As an expert, you provide all the solutions that the client might need to make a smart decision but at the end of the day you find that the only consideration that such a customer makes is based on price. Does that person get the optimum benefits from the internet? The simple answer is no," he says.

To beat the ignorance as well as do business, Tangerine uses an innovative strategy that seeks to help customers first understand their own needs before they can make a buying decision.

"Our strategy has always been to know the customer needs before selling them a product because there is no point of selling bandwidth capacity that a customer does not need. What happens in this market is that some bandwidth providers offer straight jacket solutions meaning that customers sometimes pay for bandwidth capacity they will never need. At Tangerine our policy is that customers should only pay for what they use," Kunal explains.

The CEO adds that Tangerine first seeks to understand what the customer uses their bandwidth for and then advise them on the kind of product that would suit their use. After selling the product, the ISP then enters into a one month monitoring process it tracks how the customers are using the bandwidth. This helps the ISP to know whether the product sold to the customer is giving them optimum value.