

Learning from the best

Once viewed as tough to explore and unprofitable, markets such as China, India and many countries in Africa are now being thought of as the cash cows of the mobile communications industry.

But chasing after this untapped market is challenging. Coping with harsh limitations has fostered a new breed of operators, who, in order to expand and turn a profit, simply have to be creative, cost-effective and imaginative. For want of a better term, we have dubbed them the "Modern Masters." It should not come as a surprise to anyone within the business, but some of them are doing really well.

So, when planning this issue, we felt we had to back away from the term "emerging markets." The term leads you to think of markets left behind, and that if they only apply the business models of the industrialized world, they will eventually catch up. But they are not walking in anyone's footsteps. They are actually ahead in many respects.

IT IS ONLY A MATTER of time before they start to apply competitive pressure on the mature markets of the industrialized world. Why would cost-effective solutions be confined to emerging markets? Transfer-

ring money safely and cheaply using a mobile phone is discussed by Idea Cellular and MTN in our articles from India and South Africa. These operators are pioneering something that will probably also change how money is handled in the rest of the world.

Opening up new business territories also means finding new ways of using communications that customers value and will want to buy. This of course cuts across the traditional borders of emerging and mature markets. Vertical integration of telecom and IT-based services is highlighted in "Reinventing healthcare" where Singapore leads the way.

IT FEELS LIKE A BLESSING to work in an industry with the potential to change someone's life, as evidenced in "A phone can mean a new life," and also spur large-scale economic growth. In "Waving the magic wand," we describe new business models which we hope nobody will think are limited to "emerging markets." •

Mats Thorén
editor-in-chief
mats.thoren@citat.se



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ADDRESS Telefonaktiebolaget LM Ericsson, SE-164 83, Stockholm, Sweden

PHONE +46 8 719 00 00

INTERNET/SUBSCRIPTIONS www.ericsson.com/ericsson/corpinfo/publications/

ADDRESS CHANGES AND DISTRIBUTION Phone: +46 8 449 88 00, fax: +46 8 449 88 10, e-mail: ericssonbusinessreview@strd.se, address: Strömberg Distribution AB, SE-120 88, Stockholm

PUBLISHER Patrik Regårdh

EDITORIAL COUNCIL Patrik Regårdh, Marianne Thunberg, Marcel Noordman, Miguel A Rodríguez, David Wilson, Robert Grönborg

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Mats Thorén

ART DIRECTION Ellen Fjellstedt Collin

PROJECT ADMINISTRATION Eric Peterson

PROJECT MANAGEMENT Ericsson Editorial Services (Citat Journalistgruppen), Phone: +46 8 610 20 00, PO Box 1042, S-164 21 Kista, Sweden (Kista Entré, Knarrarnäsgatan 7)

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