Digital Strategy For Development

My name is Simeone Rico, I’m 23 years old.

I’m a digital and innovation strategist. so, basically, what that means is; I walk into an organization and turn it upside-down. How i mostly do that is by helping them understand the strategic value of technology and how they can use it to really achieve their goals.

I think, for me, its almost like a personal mission because I believe that there are better ways to do things in this world, a lot of people do believe that. but very few people have the time or resources to effect it.

I believe that technology really puts people in charge of themselves and of the things that are around them, including the policies that shape everyday lives -- their activities they do whether they be social, economic or political.

And I believe from that empowered point of view, they are very conscious about what they say, what they do, and how they do it. it's no longer that 'oh, we elected MPs and Parliament, or we put leaders in various positions and then we just leave them to do what they want to do. and when they do stuff that we feel is not according to our liking, as a people, we get annoyed but we don't feel empowered enough to do something about it.

I don't think that's the right mentality. I think we should be able, regardless of whatever process happens, in whatever organization, in whatever country, in whatever context for that matter, I think, the people, or the beneficiaries, of that process or that organizations should be empowered, should be able to have a voice to actually say that, 'no, this is wrong.' or 'yes, this is right.' or 'please go on,' or 'please stop.' because then you realize how important the work that you're doing is and you get to understand first hand, and experience first hand the value that it's adding to people's lives. i think technology does that beautifully.

A lot of people say 'technology is technology,' I think technology at it's best is human because it adopts the shape of the being, the human being. It’s like when you fill water into a container it will definitely take the shape of it, right? So I think that is what technology does. it adopts society's true reflections and brings it out in the most authentic way possible.

The technology sector has the belief that since technology is good - I call it technology optimism - since technology is good then you should use it for good and not for evil. And how tools, like the internet, and the cultures that they have, I think they've been able to dictate a very friendly very proactive culture whereby 'we are here to help you, not to destroy you.' so, with technology and the culture around it already shaping that way, having development practitioners and people, the beneficiaries, the communities and the societies around us. Putting them in power, or giving them the opportunity to really voice out their concern in a way that is actually practical and influences some of the actions in their lives. and i believe it becomes extremely important, and extremely valuable.

So, I’d say that it's not just enough to be on Facebook, or Twitter, or Google+, or LinkedIn or FourSquare. I mean, these services and more will continue springing up and it's pretty pointless if all you're doing is just blasting out messages and information and things like that. i think the most important thing for the development practitioners in this industry is to realize the strategic value of these technologies, and build ecosystems around it that help them achieve their development agenda.

If it's a new school that you want to put up in a country, then you need to realize that the technology itself will not do it. I mean Facebook is not going to build that school, right? People are. You need to understand that Facebook will not get you a donation, people are. So you need to start looking at it from the point of these people, what's on their mind? What are they going through? And can technology help you understand that? I believe it can in a number of ways. So people just need to figure out the best way to build ecosystems around that concept and effect whatever agenda they wish to achieve.