

# South Africa needs a new type of media company

 By [Michal Wronski](#)

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I love media. It's a dynamic industry that always keeps you on your toes.

Although I've only been in media for just over four years, through Fuseware I've worked with SA's top brands and media houses to help them understand social media and broader digital trends. My knowledge of programming and technology has also helped in identifying market opportunities, and I would implore anyone in the industry to get their hands dirty with some code if they get half a chance. It really changes your perspective of the world.

With that said, I still believe South African media companies (and I am referring to media owners that are going digital now) are not doing things as optimally as they could. There is room for massive improvement which has the potential to be tremendously lucrative if applied correctly. If I were to start my own digital media company or head one up, this is how I would do things.

## A global focus with local execution

I truly believe that South Africa houses some of the best creative talent in the world. We are rock stars at content production, advertising and creative campaigns, and win awards globally because of this. Very little of our talent, however, is applied to international content production and many local media owners focus solely on the South African market. I love SA, but the market is simply too small to really capitalise on many of today's global media trends. Luckily with the Internet, country borders are blurred and a content team can produce for an international audience. South Africans need to open up their minds and see what lies beyond our borders that can be leveraged.

## Data-driven publishing

We live in the digital age and can track, split test and optimise anything that can be measured. There are some extremely sophisticated methods for optimising online advertising, yet very few of these models have been well applied to content. If we can measure every part of our reader's journey on our site, why can't we optimise the entire experience uniquely for them to ensure they always keep coming back? External data is also not used that often, perhaps because publishers traditionally have not been technology companies so maybe are not fully aware of what's possible. From my trove of data, I can tell you right now the articles people are reading and sharing on any website in the world, what content specific demographic segments are consuming, and what content is hot right now across any vertical. Why don't publishers use the vast troves of internet-based data to create better content and understand what their audiences really want, in real-time?

## Diversification of revenue sources

It's 2014 and there are more ways to make money online than there are BuzzFeed clones. Yet most publishers are fixated on paywalls, or default back to Google Ads. You're generating millions of daily impressions, yet you're OK with a \$2 RPM? There are better monetisation models, or at the very least other methods worth testing, especially if you operate in a niche vertical. My goal here would be to establish direct partnerships with other publishers, brands and advertisers that operate in a synergistic way to go way beyond just ad placements. Imagine what is possible when you combine content and commerce in a value-creating way while integrating your technology with an e-commerce giant?

## Creating meaningful impact

Perhaps this is more of a personal goal of mine than a must-have for the industry, but most content produced on the web is mind-numbingly hollow. The troves of fake content, nonsensical quizzes and click-bait devoid of value have overtaken social

networks. This is what the masses want so many publishers are willing to give it to them, but this kind of intellectual fast food only serves to dumb-down the masses and doesn't really progress us forward as a global community. I believe that technology can be used to empower, inspire and educate people that then elevates them to new levels of self-awareness and thinking. Content that creates a meaningful impact on a person's life, while simultaneously drawing them in using age-old techniques, is where the sweet spot lies. This may not be the case for hard news, but for many niche publishers this is what consumers want.

## Be emotive, not sensational

Today's consumer wants to be emotionally moved through content. Click-bait-type content works because it feeds that allure of high-quality emotive content, only to disappoint once the user has clicked through. Sensational headlines are known to draw traffic, and traffic means money, so it's hard to provide a business reason to not be sensational. However, I believe that *emotive* content, content that truly makes a person inspired, nostalgic or excited can attain far greater reach in the digital age. A sensational headline would perhaps make me purchase a newspaper, but an emotive article will make me share the content on social media - an action that can be far more valuable. Click-baiting still works, but if used needs to be followed through with an equally rewarding experience, not an anticlimax.

## True social integration

This isn't about adding a comments section and a link to a related hashtag in an article. Social media has become the largest source of traffic for many of the world's top publishers, yet the loop hasn't always closed on how to integrate social media in a really meaningful way. This isn't even a conversation about crowdsourcing content from social media. It's about using social media audiences to fundamentally drive the content creation process. It's also about bringing the key online influencers into meaningful conversations around content and seeding the content socially anywhere on the web. The irony is that many of the world's top bloggers have got the social formula right, but traditional publishers are still clueless at times.

The digital age has changed so much how we live, work and play. It's also changed how we discover our world. Consumers want to be consumed by amazing digital experiences through content, and today's media owners are in the perfect position to do just that.

## ABOUT MICHAL WRONSKI

Mike is technologist, entrepreneur and previous MD of Fuseware (<http://www.fuseware.net>, @fuseware), a company specializing in social media analytics and research. Fuseware was acquired by Ornico Group in May 2015, where Mike joined the team as a business development manager. Contact Mike at [michalw@ornicogroup.co.za](mailto:michalw@ornicogroup.co.za) or follow @mkewronski on Twitter.

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