

Discovery appoints senior leader to drive innovation and growth in Africa

With a focus on driving innovative commercial and creative solutions that deliver must-have products and services for consumers, Discovery Communications, a global leader in real-world entertainment, has appointed James Gibbons to the newly created role of executive vice president, head of product and business development for Central & Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa (CEEMEA).



James Gibbons

Reporting to Kasia Kieli, president and managing director, Discovery Networks CEEMEA, Gibbons will lead the region's commercial and creative efforts, with the goal of developing Discovery's presence across every relevant consumer category, platform and market, by forging innovative partnerships and developing brands and products loved by consumers.

"We live in a world of limitless choice, in which driving an authentic and meaningful experience for our fans and business partners is what sets Discovery apart. By appointing James into this new leadership role, we are putting more focus on delivering that unique Discovery experience to our stakeholders, in more ways than ever before.

"James has pioneered the way in establishing transformative partnerships and creating new products in territories like Turkey, Africa and the Middle East, and I now look forward to seeing his entrepreneurial spirit and risk-taking mentality in action across the wider CEEMEA region." said Kieli.

Commented Gibbons: “I’ve been with Discovery for almost 20 years but it still feels like the journey is just beginning. CEEMEA is a complex and diverse region, with tremendous potential in both the linear and digital space, and I’m looking forward to tapping into every opportunity, bringing Discovery and Eurosport content to more people, across more screens than ever before.”

As part of his remit, Gibbons will oversee CEEMEA’s central commercial, creative and product development teams led by:

- Lee Hobbs, vice president of brand and content, CEEMEA, is responsible for developing Discovery’s portfolio of channels in the region, sourcing programs that are must watch for consumers, as well as overseeing brand development.
- Unai Iparragirre, vice president of product development and innovation, CEEMEA, will focus on developing new linear and non-linear products, as well as driving innovation within the existing portfolio of brands and products.
- Dilek Doyran, vice president of commercial development, CEEMEA, will be dedicated to incubating and nurturing high-growth emerging markets across the region, including Africa.
- Qaisar Rafique, vice president of strategic development, CEEMEA. Working closely with country managers, Rafique will focus on developing commercial growth opportunities and diversifying Discovery’s business in key markets.

Before taking on his new position, Gibbons was EVP country manager for emerging business in Turkey, Middle East, Africa and the Mediterranean. He has been with Discovery for over 17 years, starting in a programming role in Singapore and since then working in a variety of roles and territories across the globe, including heading up the Asia Pacific Content and Marketing division, and leading the consolidation of the Japanese business during his term as president of Discovery Japan.

During his tenure as country manager for emerging business, Gibbons spearheaded a number of initiatives which have significantly extended Discovery’s reach and scale in the region, including the launch of TLC as a free-to-air channel in Turkey after acquiring CNBCe from the Dogus media group; the expansion of the pay-TV business in the Middle East; and the partnership with Image Nation Abu Dhabi for the free-to-air channel Quest Arabiya, among others.

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