

# SA's local content can be global

 By [Chris Moerdyk](#): @chrismoerdyk

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Listening to TV producers and other local content providers complaining bitterly about not being supported by local media has made me wonder why on earth they are not looking at markets beyond our borders.

Instead, they produce local soapies and documentaries that are mostly so parochial that they are simply not exportable and end up costing our individual TV networks many times more than imported programming.

## Yes, we bladdy can

So, it was with absolute delight last week, after delivering a guest lecture at the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business, that I bumped into a friendly fellow called [Niall Kramer](#) who has subsequently proved to me that South Africa is perfectly capable of producing content for the rest of the world.

Kramer, formerly the marketing director at Caltex, is one of the head honchos at Strika Entertainment in Cape Town. It produces that branded content magazine called STRIKAS that comes with your *Sunday Times* every week and, like me, you probably pictured a couple of guys working out of a garage producing a weekly comic.

## Check this out

Wrong. This is probably one of SA's biggest media success stories. Just look at these achievements for a start:

Strika Entertainment has, by a wide margin, the largest scale comic and animation infrastructure in SA. Not only that but it's a big global player, too. For example Marvel Comics, that long-established global comic trendsetter that publishes Iron Man and X-Men, produces about 125 000 printed comics per month. Well, Strika Entertainment puts out 10 times that amount. More than a million.

Strika's comics, as well as broadcast and digital content, are distributed in 36 countries and its client list includes significant brands such as Chevron, Western Union, Visa, Unilever, SARS, Transnet and the National Geographic Society, to name a few. It now has a huge amount of experience in providing multi-platform visually based communications using traditional media, as well as digital and broadcast television, and has extensive experience in dealing with multiple languages and cultures.

Its studio is working on projects in numerous languages as diverse as Zulu, Xhosa, English, Afrikaans, Arabic, Mandarin, Spanish and Tagalog. Yes, even Tagalog. How impressive is that?

## **Move over, Marvel**

Strika Entertainment (Pty) Ltd was established 10 years ago in Cape Town as a unique and dedicated supplier of branded character-based communications to the SA and global market. Over the past decade, the company has stayed true to this objective and now has one of the world's largest comic studios.

It employs 40 staff who have been skilled up as illustrators, inkers, colourists, animators, writers and other related comic and animation skill sets. This talented group of creative and enthusiastic staff produces comics, animated TV and digital entertainment for the world.

The [Supa Strikas animation series](#) now shows in over 35 markets globally. It's getting weekly queries from broadcasters wanting its shows. In South East Asia, it is the second highest-rated show on Disney Channel and was a finalist at the Asian Marketing Effectiveness Awards in Singapore.

## **Social media leveraging**

Strikas reach and entertain millions of consumers through various media every week, receiving YouTube, Twitter and Facebook interactions by the thousand.

Says Kramer, "Some of our most humbling and rewarding interactions are the letters and drawings we receive from local readers who have taken the time to write, draw and tell us their Strikas stories. Like Shakes, they rise above the odds and take on the world in a positive way. These are our heroes."

Now, what is all this telling us? Well, first that branded entertainment is not just about slipping a product onto the set of a TV soapie - it goes way beyond that. It is also telling us that branded entertainment works.

## **You gotta have vision, kid**

But, most of all, this is telling us that if SA's content producers can bring themselves to think beyond local markets, there is a big wide world of opportunity out there. We clearly have the talent. We clearly have the skills. But only a few players in the game, such as Strika Entertainment, have the vision.

And it also tells us that when you have content, you need to leverage it. Strika Entertainment not only delivers content to broadcasters and publishers but also has a "bespoke" or custom publishing division that produces messaging for some really big brands such as Caltex, Visa, Puma, Absa, Eskom, Pepsi, Texaco, ESPN, Coca-Cola, Nivea, BBC, Red Bull and hosts of other big brands.

## **World-class comics**

So, next time you open the *Sunday Times* and smile ruefully at the little comic book inside, that ain't no backyard business you are looking at - it's an empire that is growing by the week and not only taking on the world but beating the big guys at their own game.

And if you are thinking that I am perhaps sounding a little over-enthusiastic about Strika's achievement, I'm not really - it's done a lot more than I have been able to put into words.

What really surprises me is how it has managed to remain so modest about what it has done. It needs to shout this to the world because it's a branded content case history that needs to be told.

**For more:**

- Bizcommunity Search: [Strika Entertainment](#)
- Website: [www.strika.com](http://www.strika.com) and [www.supastrikas.co.za](http://www.supastrikas.co.za)
- Blog: [strika.blogspot.com](http://strika.blogspot.com)
- LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/strika-entertainment](http://www.linkedin.com/company/strika-entertainment)
- Twitter: [@supastrikas](https://twitter.com/supastrikas)

## ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK: @CHRISMOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on [moerdykc@gmail.com](mailto:moerdykc@gmail.com) and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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