

Getting the local app market buzzing with Buzzme

 By Leigh Andrews

20 Oct 2015

Vredendal-based entrepreneur John Bock talks us through the launch of his new social networking app 'Buzzme', intended to connect Africans in new ways...

No one can deny the importance of social media and social networking, but the past decade has seen a dramatic shift from these being channels for purely personal communication to a great new way to do business.



John Bock

Bock, who is also a chemical engineer, understood this shift and decided to create a new way for friends and family on the continent stay connected as up to four friends can now "buzz" each other on one video call, while also perfect for the businessman travelling in Africa looking to research his destination before landing.

The result? [Buzzme](#). Even better? It's free, as Bock says: "The biggest challenge in Africa remain internet access and the user will have to use his data or Wi-Fi to buzz.

Here, Bock tells us more about the benefits of his homegrown app and how he made it available on the Google Playstore...

1. How did the app come about?

Bock: This app's idea started in February 2014, and particularly during the time of Ebola where you were daily searching for stories but could not find those community-told posts. Further to this, there was a need for more integration between African countries and I wanted to find a way of connecting Africans on the continent.

2. How does it compare to existing group calling/chat apps on the market?

Bock: Firstly, not all chat apps offer the video calling and group video-calling feature. But the feature that sets Buzzme most apart from the rest is that you can posts stories that relate to your country and through this platform connect with anyone in the world and raise concerns. They will be able to comment on any topic of discussion. This aspect of UGC will also assist the businesses in that it will be honest opinions and it will allow the business owner to build that relationship with customers and users.

The business traveller can also connect with businesses or entrepreneurs in another country by posting her/his business profile. The platform will allow businesses to advertise their services to rest of the world.

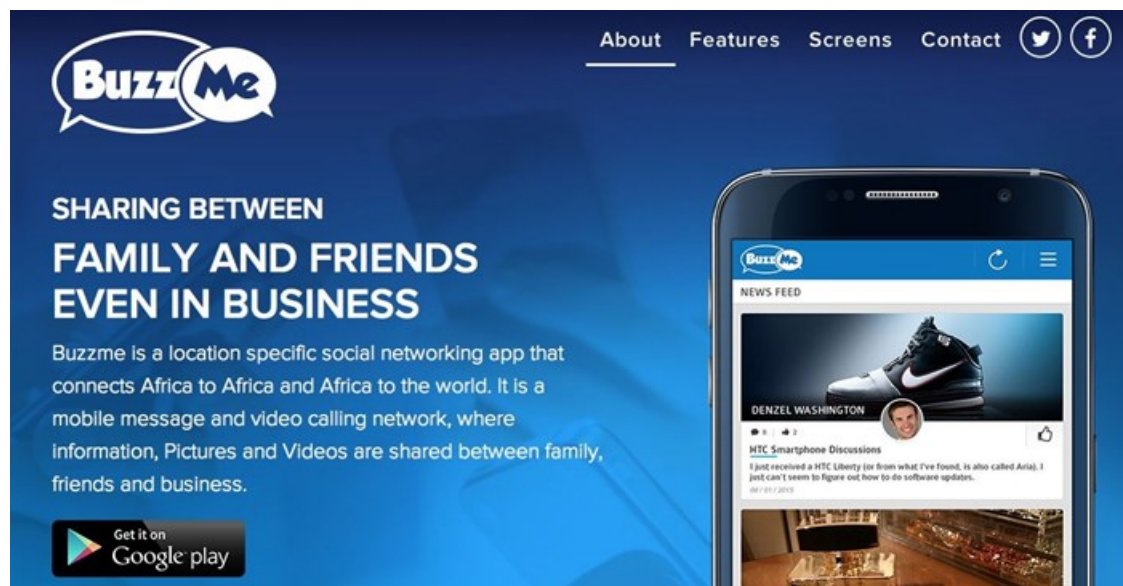
3. What's the reasoning behind offering the app for free?

Bock: Any new app needs users and when you start a new app and compete with big companies like Facebook and Skype, you will have to find ways of attracting those users.

4. Makes sense. What does it take to crack into the local techno field?

Bock: It is certainly not an easy task to enter this space. My drive and energy to make this dream and vision a big success will make it much easier to crack into this space. You need to be innovative, have enough funding and a good development team behind you that will help drive this idea to help set your foot in the market. The lack of finance remains a bottleneck but that is the least of my concerns. A strong marketing plan and proof to users of the benefit of being part of the Buzzme

family will ensure Buzzme grows from strength to strength.



A screenshot of Buzzme

■ 5. Tell us how you made the app available on the Google Playstore.

Bock: There is a process Google wants you to follow. I have a strong development team in India who assisted with the development and helped make it available on the Playstore. Of course you need to Beta test your app before launching it on Google Playstore. Lessons learned: I needed a solid privacy policy that would protect users as well as the company. Because it is a calling system, there are only a few company that has the SDK software for development and I could not find a good hosting company that could link to the system. So, with my calling system run in Germany, developers in India and my servers with Amazon in USA, businesses can see that if you set your mind to it, success can and will follow.

■ 6. What's response been like so far?

Bock: There were a few startup issues where users complained about the connection. Unfortunately, you need data or Wi-Fi to use the app, like all the other social media apps. But the overall response received was good and we will certainly continue with improvements.

■ 7. Tell us about the need for all to celebrate Africa and promote business on the continent as best we can.

Bock: Too often, the outside world sees Africa as a country entrapped with corruption and receiving handouts. We will have to be independent and create our own economies. Africa is a beautiful continent filled with resources and beautiful people. We must unite as one nation and support each other as individuals and as businesses to grow as a powerful economic continent.

Strong sentiment. To find out more about Buzzme, [click here](#) or follow the #Buzzme hashtag on Twitter.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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