GOtv eyes expansion in Africa as it marks one year of business

By Walter Wafula

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GOtv, a low cost pay television service owned and operated by MultiChoice Africa celebrates its first year in business in four markets. Patricia Kiconco, the country manager GOtv Uganda speaks about the performance of the brand and its future plans for Africa.



Patricia Kiconco

GOtv celebrates one year. What milestones have you registered to date?

Patricia Kiconco: In just one year GOtv has gone from a startup company to become one of the most recognisable Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) brands on the African continent which is amazing for such a young company; GOtv was the first company in Africa to launch a DVB T2 terrestrial network which is the technology that has been adopted by most a countries including Uganda as the digital standard of choice for the migration.

Specifically in Uganda, over the past year, we have set up three strategic DTT transmission sites in Rubaga, Entebbe and Kulambiro respectively these three sites give us significant network coverage over most parts of South Central Uganda.

How many subscribers do you have and what's your target for the next year?

Kiconco: Since launching operations in Zambia exactly one year ago, GOtv has acquired a significant share of the African DTT market; we are already one of the largest DTT operators on the continent. In the coming year we intend to continue this generating growth by expanding our coverage network and improving on our already impressive channel offering.

What impact has price competition from other players had on your business so far?

Kiconco: None at all because we are selling different technologies which are priced accordingly, you see all our competitors are using outdated DVB T technology while we are using the latest state of the art DVB T2.

We have seen other players like StarTimes introduce mobile TV because mobility is the 'in thing' today. Do you have any plans to go mobile?

Kiconco: Yes we do. Our new site at Kulambiro was built with mobile television reception and transmission capacity. It is important to note however that mobile television is a service that DStv pioneered in Africa and it has been available to our customers in most of our larger markets including; Nigeria, Namibia and Kenya for a while now.

How soon do you plan to introduce mobile and what channels will you exploit?

Kiconco: Mobile television will be available to our premium subscribers in the next couple of months or so. As such our full bouquet of over 80 fantastic sports, news, movies, entertainment and documentary channels will be accessible.

This year, the government scrapped import tax from Set Top Boxes. What's your take on this?

Kiconco: This is a very welcome development which we view as very positive for the industry; it is our firm belief that the uptake of DTT technology in Africa will only be successful if the prices of the STB are made affordable. This move puts the ball back in our court as operators to pass on the benefit in form of reduced prices to the end consumer.

- ***What impact is this likely to have on GOtv's operations going forward?***

Kiconco: We believe this will have a positive effect on our sales because we will be in position to reduce our prices and make our product more affordable to a wider audience. The reduction is taxes will leave us with more money to invest in DTT infrastructure and expand our services much quicker than our initial projections.

- ***Despite the tax waiver, we haven't seen the cost of your decoders reduce as a result of this benefit. Any plans to slash the price of your products?***
  Kiconco: The decoders we currently have in stock were already been taxed, the removal of the taxes was not retrospective. Going forward when our new stocks arrive we will definitely be looking at reducing our prices and extending the benefits to our customers.

- ***When you launched GOtv, you promised to offer more local channels to your viewers, but there are only 3 local channels on the platform out of over 35 in operation. Are there plans to add new channels?***
  Kiconco: I must correct you on that one. There are four local Free-To-Air channels on GOtv: NTV, UBC, WBS and Bukedde. We would like to add more local channels and have been in discussions with a number of local channel providers about putting them on DStv and GOtv. This will only happen however if we mutually agree on certain conditions and they meet the criteria required.

- ***Unlike DStv, GOtv's coverage is only in selected towns. How wide is your coverage and when do you intend to serve the whole country?***
  Kiconco: As mentioned earlier GOtv covers a significant portion of south central Uganda this includes Greater Kampala, Entebbe and all the towns between Kampala and Jinja. It's worth noting that GOtv coverage is not limited to the towns alone it includes most of the areas in between.

- ***In which other countries are GOtv operations and where else do you plan to launch the channel?***
  Kiconco: GOtv is available in Zambia, Kenya, Namibia and Nigeria. Soon GOtv will start operations in Tanzania and Ghana.

For more about GOtv, go to gotvafrica.com

ABOUT WALTER WAFULA

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