

Performing optimally in the digital sport media space

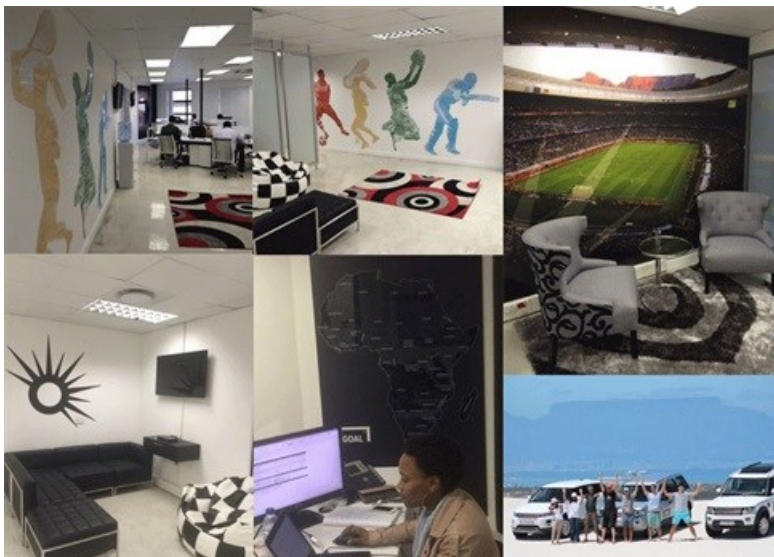
By Leigh Andrews

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What do you get when you amalgamate two previous company names Premium TV and Inform? Perform Group, of course. Peter Burroughs, Perform Group Africa MD, explains how the company keeps scoring goals on the continent...

I'll try keep the sporty puns to a minimum, but it's hard to when Burroughs affirms that Perform Group has a great synergy with what they strive to do for our clients at every touch point. Every wicket and goal post, if you will. You may think it's a purely British company as that's where it was founded in 2008, but Burroughs confirms that in surfing the ever-growing 'digital wave' within sport and media, Perform Group now has an office footprint in 26 countries. Then, in 2012 they tightened their focus to the continent with the fastest growing economy, and set up offices in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and here in Cape Town.

They also have various touch points in the digital marketing space with brands, agencies and content creation, and one of their brands www.Goal.com - the largest football website in Africa - has just partnered with a local soccer charity in the Western Cape to help them build awareness of their programme by providing access to larger media audience.



Seems they're on to a medal-winning strategy. Burroughs tells us more...

■ 1. *The sports media market is an interesting one. What's the basic work flow or creative process like in Perform Group?*

Burroughs: The Perform business is broken down into two divisions, Media and Content. Within the Media division, we own the largest sport website in Africa, www.Goal.com and have a wide network of talented journalists, editors and commercial staff that make the platform buzz. We capture all breaking news from the world of football, both local and international, and offer brands via their media agencies the opportunity to engage with our passionate audience on whichever 'connected device' is their preference.

On the Content side we collect, manipulate and distribute sports data, editorial and video on behalf of some of the biggest rights holders in sport. For example, through our OPTA brand, we provide an end-to-end solution for The English Premier League, to help them extract value from their official match data.

■ 2. *Sounds good. What makes you stand out from the rest?*

Burroughs: Being a digital-first business that has scaled up quickly, we are inherently nimble and can identify opportunities in what is a very fluid industry landscape, across both Media and Content. We don't have a legacy in any of the declining advertising mediums and therefore can build our strategy around the myriad of opportunities that exist within the growth of internet connectivity and mobile phones.

■ **3. *Certainly a winning strategy, especially in Africa, where mobile is king...***

Burroughs: Indeed. With the continued growth of Goal in Africa, now reaching over 20m unique fans every month and 60m+ worldwide, we recently appointed a new Africa Managing Editor, Steve Blues formerly of Media24, to continue to drive the growth and engagement of this product in what is an ever-evolving and dynamic landscape.

Our strategy in Africa is to continue to grow our touch points with the 'connected' sports fan in as many ways as we can. That might be through the growth of our own existing or new D2C channels, like Goal.com or via our B2B relationships with broadcasters, bookmakers and media companies.

■ **4. *How does the local marketing industry compare internationally in terms of ad spend?***

Burroughs: The South African and wider African digital marketing industry is still in the infancy of its life cycle, when compared to some of the more digitally developed markets in North America and Europe. Emarketer predicts that digital advertising will command around 30% of all media spend in the US in 2015 - compare that to their forecast for Africa of less than 5% and you understand the exciting opportunities that exist in our market space.

■ **5. *Give us a teaser of what's next for Perform in this space...***

Burroughs: Perform in Africa currently dominates the digital football space but there are plenty of other sports that have a following across the continent without a wide variety of places to access them. With the Rio Olympics only one year away, this is an area we are looking at.

■ **6. *Expanding that focus, what trends do you see as the biggest still to come in the latter-half of 2015?***

Burroughs: From a Content perspective, I think the importance of sports data to media organisations will continue to grow as we evolve into an ever more 'second screen' culture. With reliable deep data being the fuel of sporting conversation and analysis for everyone from professionals to commentators, pundits and armchair enthusiasts, the requirement to access the data will be more and more important.

In the Media space, I think it's two-fold:

1. The tech revolution is coming and I think the buzz word for the next 12 - 24 months will be 'Programmatic', as agencies and publishers alike look to define the best strategy for their respective clients.
2. Video advertising - investment is starting to shift towards buying against VOD platforms. The consumer is starting to spend more time watching traditional linear programming online and more and more 'made for digital' short-form content proliferates into the market every day.

Noteworthy insights for all marketers aiming for first place on the continent. For more on Perform Group, follow their [Twitter account](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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