

How to win in the African digital space

By [Seanice Kacungira](#)

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The purpose of this article is to share practical insights based on our work around the continent of Africa in terms of what the digital landscape looks like; and where we feel it might go this year.



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Every beginning of year you are bombarded with predictions: “These are going to be the top 10 trends in Avocado eating this year”; “This is what cats will be wearing the most this year”; “Bitcoin value to fall to zero...”

Maybe one of these is absurd, but hey, here we are in an era where the most important decisions for our futures are made by well, you know which world leader comes to mind... But I digress, we have a lot to say, but we’re aiming to keep it short and sweet so we’re looking at four areas that we would advise you to keep your eye on and focus on in order to be ahead of the curve and grow in this space:

1. VIDEO

Video ain’t going nowhere – from some of the research we’ve done with young people aged between 18-24 years, the average amount of screen time they get in a day is about six hours - six hours! And this is average, so be sure a lot of this demographic are getting more. Also, this is on mobile, so don’t get too excited yet Netflix. (Adoption of VOD Streaming services is a whole other topic we’d love to get into, but next month!)

Looking at markets like Uganda, Rwanda, Nigeria and Kenya (with Kenya/Nigeria being among the highest adopters), the idea that data bundles are expensive and therefore video would not be adopted in SSA? Absolute bollocks - they're not interested in those boring marketing videos you're selling - it's more likely to be what bad black is saying today, or sadly, the latest footage from the breakaway media house headed by John Allan Namu, covering a tough time in the Kenyan landscape dealing with terrorists.

If it's interesting you will get the views and it will be shared widely despite the fact that there is a social media tax in Uganda (Ridiculous, I know!)

Video content will continue to grow exponentially in 2019 and a savvy marketer will be thinking not only how to incorporate this into their strategy, but also how to make it work with the content creators, making the best content and yet not being intrusive – some examples we are loving are [NSSF in Uganda with Conan](#) (look at this sick engagement though!); and Safaricom in Kenya with Njugush...

2. INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer marketing is an interesting kettle of fish - sometimes smelly, always slippery. Thing is with influencer marketing, it should always be about quality over quantity, and authenticity over quick results that may end up damaging your brand. I mean below is an actual example of influencer marketing gone wrong.



So what does one do with this area of digital marketing specifically in the African context, because it's only going to keep growing. We're gonna level with you folks – there's no shortcut or quick fix measure here. Influencer marketing is like the SEO of in-bound marketing, you've just gotta build that ship – you can't buy it ready made.

Our recommended strategy here is DO NOT look for someone with 1 million followers that doesn't give a hoot about your brand, pay them 5,000 dollars and ask them to share random posts about your product with their audience. We ALL see through this because we know this person has never talked about your product before and is just doing it for money. Honestly it's not a great look for you.

What you want to do instead is identify your most loyal customers, the ones that do go out of their way to review you or yes, even complain (it shows they're using your product – okay?). Get these guys and work on using them as your influencers – have them demo your latest stuff and make them the celebrities and heroes of your campaign. Is it hard work? Sure. Less glamorous than hiring Kim Kardashian to help you sell your range of Bibles for millennials? Yep, but long term will it work out better for you? We'll bet you our sweet NEW Mac-book Pro's it is (see what we did there? Influencer marketing for Apple!!)

3. SPEND ON ADS

When we look at the African Market and media spending online; there are some rather atrocious things happening here; from a lack of transparency on spend to campaigns that are running with zero optimisation; to just getting the basics wrong from campaign set up to targeting.

Let's be clear: we've made the mistake of not optimising as well – you learn through mistakes, but there is no excuse to keep on making these mistakes in 2019. This year you want to make sure you are doing two things:

- Testing, testing, testing. Make sure you are actually getting the best results by running two to three campaigns with different artwork and or, copy, so you can gauge which one delivers better for you.
- Learn, learn, learn, DAILY. Look at the campaigns you are running and ask yourself honestly how are they performing; and why aren't you converting or getting leads? We ran a campaign for a client in SA a while back and they were getting zero leads through their site. On investigation, you know what? Turns out their web developer had changed the email address through some update so it was sending any enquiries to a non-existent donotreply email address! I mean, we almost went purple thinking of all the spend we'd put to the campaign! Luckily we learnt first-hand how important it is to check in (manually) with your campaign DAILY and at the first sign of a low uptake, unqualified leads, etc, raise a red flag and try to figure out where the issue lies.

4. EMAIL MARKETING

We're really rooting for this baby, hey. From automated actions to CLEAN, OPT-IN databases that actually provide real value, we've fallen back in love with email marketing because it's really a very powerful tool that unfortunately, on the continent, in companies big and small, is extremely underutilised.

Let's also look at the fact that a secondary target here is CRM tools that obviously play a big part in one's email marketing strategy. We've engaged with huge MNC's who are paying for powerful CRM tools that unfortunately are going woefully underutilised – from Salesforce to Hubspot, Zoho to Blu Task (that's our own CRM tool that we developed), it would be great if we could all spend more time unearthing and understanding the benefits of email marketing for our clients and ourselves this year. We're all over that and are seeing some really good open rates with good content and this is an area we plan to spend a lot more time on this year as well.

So there you have it – we hope this wasn't a total waste of your time and that we have given you some insight into the trends we're seeing in the markets that we're in.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Seanice Kacungira is group CEO of Blu Flamingo Digital Africa. She loves digital almost as much as she loves her horses, but not as much as she loves her children.

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