

#GoogleforSouthAfrica

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When Google South Africa hatched a plan to give people in disadvantaged areas access to free internet hotspots, Calvin Van Rensburg, head of programmatic trading at Amnet South Africa, and Nivasha Pillay, digital account director at Vizeum, combined their talents to make it happen.



The challenge: Google Station (gStation) is a community-based initiative which is aimed at providing free quality internet service for 30 minutes, with no limit on the data you can use, to disadvantaged communities.

The strategy: Google understands that internet connectivity is a game-changer – particularly in underprivileged communities – and this initiative significantly contributes to society by raising economic standing and giving people access to opportunities and education they otherwise would not have.

The execution: By partnering with Google on the launch of gStation, Telkom assisted in providing access to technology in these communities and contributed towards the empowerment of society as whole.

The result: At least 124 locations in and around disadvantaged communities in Cape Town have been impacted by this campaign, with 364 more to be reached across South Africa. Additionally, the project has successfully aided in the upliftment of communities and educated more than 432,563 people, and the Telkom brand has seen strong growth in streaming products, with positive sentiment gaining by 8.45%.

The collaboration (Calvin and Nivasha): We live in an age where digital technology is transforming the way we live and work. It has already fundamentally changed the way in which information is disseminated and consumed by all, and this has impacted on everyone – particularly those who do not have access to technology.



With digital adoption ramping up in our country, human behaviour has shifted, and where our attention was once based on scattered moments throughout the day, now clients and brands have had to ensure that they are able to speak to consumers, in real time, in order to create a connection.

This new way of life has posed challenges in the work environment, as clients have had to shift the way in which they communicate and tell stories to ensure they have deeper, more meaningful conversations, but also remain true to their brand promise.

Fortunately for DAN, we embrace this way of working, and the agility which we demonstrate in the execution of campaigns has ensured that we thrive in this fast-paced environment.

Evidence of this can be found in a recent first-to-market collaboration that was facilitated through three teams – two from DAN South Africa (Vizeum, Johannesburg and Amnet, Cape Town) and one halfway around the world at Google (California). To anyone else, this kind of collaboration would seem daunting, (think different time zones, and coordinating diaries to ensure that campaigns are set up, managed and optimised in real time), but we love this kind of challenge.

The impact

Dentsu and Google partnered with Telkom – one of the largest telecommunications companies in South Africa – to provide communities without access to the internet an opportunity to be part of the conversation, to learn more, grow more and see more. This also advanced digital adoption in impoverished communities and positioned Telkom as a brand that cares for its community and seeks to uplift them by providing access to free Wi-Fi.

This project is testament to the power of digital and its ability to make the impossible possible. We now know that time and distance aren't barriers when we all have the same goal, and that driving communities forward using technology can fundamentally change the way in which humans behave. Another important learning is that instant messaging apps are invaluable in sharing knowledge in real time, because, face it, no matter what the time zone is, we are all 5 seconds away from an IM on any cellular device.

Helping almost a million people get free access to Wi-Fi has been heart-warming and empowering, to say the least. It has given us renewed purpose to be change agents in a society where access to technology is currently a hindrance to growth.

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