

Provantage celebrates 10 years in operation

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Provantage was started in 2003. Together with Brendan Taylor and Vaughan Berry, MD Jacques du Preez grew the business into one of the fastest-growing and most innovative media and activations companies in the country. The guiding principles of starting the business were twofold: to create jobs and to have an impact on the industry.



Provantage was launched as an activations business, coining the phrase "Activations". "We did whatever we had to do to pay the bills. We implemented roadshows, in-store activations, mall activations and route to market. We worked across all market sectors for clients such as Clover, Kodak, Score and Michelin," says Jacques.

With the guiding principles in mind and with the aim of becoming a formidable leader in the OOH industry, the team continued to add new products and services to the portfolio offering, and in so doing, grew the staff count.

In 2006 Provantage entered into the Transit Media space with their first fleet of taxis showcasing a Kellogg's campaign. In the same year, the company opened an office in Durban and in the Free State, investing in resources and people at a national level. Its head count and revenue grew quickly and a year later they expanded into Cape Town. Their events business launched in November that year, and Dom Smith joined the team as MD of Provantage Events and Experiences. Provantage was morphing into a total out of home media offering.

In 2007, Provantage launched Taxi TV - the first in-taxi television station in Africa. The new platform offered advertisers the opportunity to take their brand and brand messaging to captive commuter audiences. Systems and procedures followed, as well as infrastructure to ensure that the business functioned optimally. In a few years Provantage had grown significantly and the company moved to its present premises in Republic Road, Randburg. With Taxi TV, one of the most successful and innovative products to date, the company obtained a lot of traction with big brands and another offering was launched - Tavern Media.

Expansion

In 2009, when the company celebrated its sixth year of operation, Car Wash Media was added to the expanding portfolio. Provantage also ventured north into Africa and launched its Ghana branch. This provided the backbone for giving clients access to numerous and varied consumer markets. The footprint on the continent expanded to include Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia and Angola.

Then in 2010, the same year that the FIFA Soccer World Cup graced our shores, Provantage acquired the rights to advertise to a highly desirable audience - the hundreds of thousands of travellers moving through the brand new King Shaka International Airport. The future was looking exceptionally bright and the company was heading to increase their portfolio of media opportunities in the airport arena and develop a substantial relationship with ACSA.

Innovation

One of Provantage's core visions was to constantly adapt and anticipate the changing landscape of OOH advertising. With the addition of numerous offerings to their portfolio and their constant quest for innovation, the company's impact in the OOH arena was felt and it was recognised for its contribution. In 2009 they were runners up in the Media Owners Sales Team (MOST) Awards in the Out of Home Category. In 2010 and then again in 2011 Provantage was awarded a MOST (Media Owners Sales Team) Innovation Award as the leading innovator in the media industry in South Africa.



Managing Director Jacques du Preez cutting the birthday cake

2014 was another year of significant milestones. After a long search for the right equity partners, Provantage teamed up with Zico (Zungu Investment Company). Zico acquired a significant shareholding in Provantage PTY (LTD). The transaction significantly boosted the company's empowerment credentials and illustrated their firm commitment to transformation in the media industry. It also substantially enhanced their ability to raise capital and attract significant public contracts and business. That same year, out of home media veteran Skhumbuzo Nkosi joined the Provantage Board to lead the company's Media Division, inclusive of Transit, Outdoor and Tavern.

Another major milestone was reached - Provantage, leading the Umjanji Media Consortium, acquired the advertising rights to all PRASA facilities countrywide. Provantage could now provide their clients with the opportunity to reach over 3,7 million passengers daily in upgraded and developed facilities, giving them a better advantage through the direct access to advertising platforms, further helping them achieve their objectives. The exclusive rights came at a time when PRASA had already undertaken a large-scale infrastructure development project as part of the government's recapitalisation programme.

That same year, Provantage, leading PTM (Public Transport Media), won the tender for exclusive media rights to the City of Johannesburg's commuter shelters. For the next twelve years the company can offer advertisers access to commuters, pedestrians and motorists in the most populace economic hub in South Africa.

"Our strength lies in world-class service coupled with the ability to develop innovations across all environments. How can we use technology and our face-to-face skills set in a significant manner to connect with audiences? This is the direction of OOH globally," says du Preez.

In line with global trends and technological developments, Provantage started to analyse the opportunity to launch digital place-based networks within the South African out of home landscape. In April 2012, Provantage launched Airport Ads and airport.tv - a major innovation that would change the landscape of OOH media in the country. Airport.tv, a fully-fledged dedicated television network, was rolled out in all nine ACSA airports across the country. A first for South Africa, airport.tv offers advertisers exceptional value and unparalleled access to the upper LSM market and Business travellers.

In 2012 the company was named the Overall Best Media Owner in the country, moving from ninth place in 2011 to first place in 2012, beating Television, Print and Radio. Provantage also took first position in the Out of Home Category, a big leap from runner up in 2010 and 2011. Furthermore, in 2012 Jacques du Preez was awarded the MOST Rising Star Innovator Award, for the third year in a row. The awards validated what the company had been striving towards since inception - innovation, vision, excellent service, job creation and unsurpassed professionalism.

In February 2013 another innovative product was launched - TRANSIT.TV. South Africa's largest, live, digital, national television network, TRANSIT.TV encompasses state-of-the-art, high-definition digital screens across major inter-modal transport nodes in Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg. These are further complemented by 600 in-taxi screens. The network is broadcast in major commuter nodes nationally including train stations. It also broadcasts within the rank and taxi environments in lanes and inside quantum taxis. The platform delivers a mid-LSM commuter audience of 6.9 million viewers.

Both airport.tv and TRANSIT.TV utilise state-of-the-art technology and software. They are both live thus providing immediacy both from a content and advertising perspective. Moreover, they don't just pipe advertising to viewers but aim to add significant value to their lives and journeys.

With the ever increasing need for accurate and independent research measuring the efficacy of OOH mediums, Airport Insights and Research (A.I.R.), in conjunction with Millward Brown, was launched earlier this year.

A.I.R. reveals crucial insights into how consumers process brand messaging and information over and above measuring the efficacy of the channel. "Not only have we seen major support from a number of big brands and advertisers in South

Africa but research confirms that airport.tv is indeed valued by air travellers," says du Preez.

A.I.R. has revealed that of those consumers who verified seeing an advertisement on airport.tv, 76% took out the key message - an extremely high percentage. Furthermore, those who recalled an advertisement attributed an average liking score of 7.13 out of a possible 10. The research confirms that the airport environment delivers a high-end captive audience that consumes media delivered via screens.

To measure the efficacy of TRANSIT.TV, Transit Track was launched. The study will be a quarterly commuter survey that provides efficacy data on Transit.TV as well as other key insights and data relevant to the commuter base.

Success strategy

"It was our vision from the start to offer a full solution to advertisers. In line with this, over the last few years, we've created brands in their own right, all working together. Airport Ads, Media, Events, airport.tv, TRANSIT.TV, Provantage Africa and soon Proactive are testament to how our vision came to life offering world class out of home media opportunities in South Africa," says du Preez.

With the innovative, new-age digital offering the company offers a geographic footprint that spans the entire country, offering advertisers the entire South African landscape and consumer base. The company is also re-inventing some of their services. "It is a constant journey, part of our culture of innovation. It is not just about new ideas but taking our existing services and refreshing them. We've invested in systemising and making sure our core disciplines are strong. Investing heavily in technology gives our back office systems and people scalability for an international expansion," says du Preez.

People

Provantage has always attracted top people, employing like-minded individuals who understand the business and who aren't scared to roll up their sleeves to do what needs to be done. The team of executives and management staff bring a wealth of knowledge and experience from a number of industries including media, marketing, advertising and event management. It is this diversity of experience and backgrounds that ensures constant innovation and perfect pitch delivery for clients.

Provantage currently employs 125 full time staff. Moreover, an average of 1,500 casual and part-time staff are employed per month. Job creation is a vital cog in the wheel that keeps the company moving forward. "Our key success is our people. People are our biggest asset and it is because of them that the business has grown as well as it has. It's the phenomenal people on the ground, in the regional offices, the Support staff, Marketing and Sales Departments, Stakeholders and Suppliers that have given Provantage the winning edge," says du Preez.

Provantage's Human Resources department constantly works towards maintaining a healthy environment for employees. The company looks out for their well-being and their careers, promoting growth and providing opportunity. The culture is one that strives towards professional, efficient and effective service.

CSI

Provantage is a main supporter of the Dance Academy, an organisation that provides dance training to children and young adults aged between 13 and 30. Many of the dancers perform regularly in Provantage's Shoppa Shows and form part of the company's part-time staff. Their training ensures that performances are professional, seamlessly choreographed and entertaining.

In order to contribute to skills development and job creation in South Africa, in 2008 the company started a Learnership Programme. "When we first started Provantage, one of our guiding principles was to add to job creation in the country. The Learnership Programme is run with the backing of the Services SETA and provides various courses including Customer Service Management, Business Management, Contact Centre Support, Financial Management and Communication Management. Many learners are recruited by Provantage and to date the Programme has trained over 1500 learners

nationally.

The Future

Provanantage has had a massive impact on the OOH industry, through job creation and skills development and the introduction of new media platforms that have significantly transformed the landscape of out of home advertising. The company will continue to operate at the helm of innovation to bring world-class offerings to clients. "The future looks extremely bright. We will continue to innovate, expand our portfolio and reinvent services so that they are in line with new developments. Our footprint in South Africa and Africa is set to grow, creating further opportunities for job creation and the provision of relevant, effective, targeted advertising platforms for brands to spread their message," concludes Jacques.

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