

Rolling up to the Cup, productivity declines, media soars, disabled fans courted

The media is going all out to ensure that a blow-by-blow account will be delivered to fans, especially those who can't make the games or fan parks, including the disabled, some of whom are being provided for in both access and assistance for the first time in South African stadiums. However, a warning, based on European figures, has been sounded about the loss of productivity possible during the games.



Media updates

The Castrol Index player scores from each game, media interviews with Castrol ambassadors, including FIFA World Cup winner Marcel Desailly, and media access to the latest tournament related information from Castrol is part of its role as official sponsor of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

The SABC has purchased 10 Slate 1000 live video production systems for World Cup coverage from Broadcast Pix through the Johannesburg-based dealer and integrator Questek Advanced Technologies. Justin Thathiah, Questek sales executive, said the SABC chose the system because of its integrated production tools, including clip and graphics stores, multi-view, and Inscriber CG. The system also provides multi-definition production, with support for 1080i, 720p and SD sources. It will be used to switch the video and add clips and graphics from live games to fan parks.

Disabled fans get access

Six stadiums will each have 15 seats equipped with headphones and trained commentators will report live on the action happening down on the pitch to accommodate the blind and visually impaired football fans during the games. In addition, each of these six stadiums will have 15 seats allocated to their sighted guides who will accompany them, while specially trained volunteers will provide assistance within the stadiums.

The Institute of Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) was responsible for sourcing, training and coordinating the audio descriptors, while the Academy of Sound Engineering students will perform the technical audio functions that will be necessary to ensure that the audio descriptions are correctly transmitted to the visually impaired fans at the stadiums.

FIFA partner Sony is providing the necessary transmitters that will allow people to receive match-day commentary in the stadiums free of charge. This is a premier in South Africa's sporting landscape made possible through the Swiss National Association for the Blind (SNAB) and the South African National Council for the Blind (SANCB) and financially supported by FIFA.

Stadiums

- Johannesburg - Soccer City Stadium: 8 matches
- Johannesburg - Ellis Park Stadium: 7 matches
- Tshwane/Pretoria - Loftus Versfeld Stadium: 6 matches
- Durban - Durban Stadium: 7 matches
- Nelson Mandela Bay/Port Elizabeth - Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium: 8 matches
- Cape Town - Green Point Stadium: 8 matches

The QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA), *Rolling Inspiration* magazine and CE Mobility have joined in partnership to provide all wheelchair users travelling through the terminals of OR Tambo International, King Shaka International, Cape Town International, Lanseria, Mbombela and Port Elizabeth airports during the World Cup with a gift of a wheelchair repair toolkit and the *Rolling Inspiration* magazine.

"This unique project will introduce the Association to the global world and raise international, as well as national, awareness of the plight of many South African people with disabilities," says Ari Seirlis, QASA's National Director. "We hope the toolkit will be of assistance, but most importantly, we want people to become familiar with our Association, the work that we do and the support that we can offer."

QASA is a leading disability agency supporting the needs of thousands of quadriplegics and paraplegics across South Africa. *Rolling Inspiration* is a glossy publication, published by Word for Word Media and owned by QASA, circulated to 5500 people with mobility impairments. It is the only glossy disability magazine on the continent and enjoys regular input from expert columnists as well as motivational and inspirational articles. CE Mobility is a national wheelchair manufacturer and leading supplier of assistive devices.

Viva Visa

Friday is truly Football Friday and Visa will launch in-stadium fan experiences at the South Africa vs. Mexico kick-off game. And other games in Cape Town and Durban. The Go Fans experience offers fans the chance to have their face painted, be photographed in front of a Go Fans billboard of the competing countries and shout Goal for their teams as inspired by Andrés Cantor. YouTube offers videos of football fans around the world expressing their true colors in support of their national teams.

Counter productivity drop

According to an international research report, Europe Talent (2006), which looked at the impact of the football world cup on productivity, the event can increase employee absenteeism thereby resulting in productivity loss during the tournament. A case study conducted in Holland in 2004, found that tens of thousands of Dutch workers phoned in ill during the European Championship in Portugal in 2004; with the number of people allegedly being sick, rising 20% on days when the Dutch national side played.

The actual level of absenteeism is likely to be higher due to post match celebrations or lack of sleep as fans may stay up late until the early hours of the mornings to watch matches. For business this could translate into millions of man-hours of lost productivity.

According to senior researcher at Productivity SA, Motlatsi Gabacwe, to combat the loss to productivity, it is imperative

that companies put in place measures, which could minimise the impact of disruptions due to absenteeism on productivity; while at the same time accommodating the preference of employees who'll be keen to watch world cup games.

Senior economist at Productivity SA, Michael Ade also adds that, "It is imperative that companies maintain and improve on productivity during the month long period of the FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup tournament. Despite the economy having been in recession in the first half of 2009 coupled with the high job losses in the first quarter of 2010 and recent industrial strike action, the South African economy continues to gather momentum. Care should therefore be taken by management of companies to avoid loss of more workdays as this may negatively impact on productivity."

Recommendations

- Set out a clear policy on the frequency and conditions of World Cup related absence that employees could enjoy.
This policy could also deal with a policy on alcohol in the workplace
- Develop a match roster which shows selected popular matches at work to avoid staff leaving the office for long hours.
This occasion could be ideally used as a team building exercise and morale boosting exercise
- Allow flexi hours work at least for the duration of the World Cup
- Have TVs at workplace especially in the board room and at the workshops for employees to watch specific matches
- Set daily or weekly measurable milestones for employees who can take time off to watch matches once objectives are met
- Encourage teamwork so that more experience members can help out less experienced ones to expedite the tasks
- Encourage employees to take leave or time off to watch matches rather than be present at work but unproductive
- Encourage business meetings via telephone conferencing or video calls
- Encourage workers to commute to work via lift clubs to avoid traffic congestion and delays to and from work

Contact details

Castrol bulletins - <http://castrolindexbulletins.com/castrolbulletins/EN/signup.html>

Tickets for the blind - www.sancb.org.za or email lindie@sancb.org.za

Visa Go Fans - www.youtube.com/visagofans

QASA Wheelchair - 0860ROLLING helpline offers information to people with mobility impairments

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>