

# The future of business publications in SA

By [Greg Stewart](#)

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The newly released Q2 ABC circulation figures show a depressing continuation of the ongoing circulation decline in most business and general news publications in South Africa.



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There are few exceptions with some declining over 20% and this is on the back of several years of dwindling circulation figures. Going back to the early 90's some of these publications had more than double the circulation they currently manage to achieve and simultaneously the advertising rates have grown while their printing costs are effectively halved.



## Newspapers ABC Q2 2018: Static, with some highlights

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## Magazines ABC Q2 2018: Decline continues

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One can easily point fingers, but it is more educational to see what the exceptions are doing to save and, in some instances, grow their audiences.

Most publications rely on advertising revenue to survive, but some are doing well to embrace and or traverse the digital world and are growing their subscriber and advertising base, while also developing new digital platforms to gain new audiences. And there is good business sense in doing so.

*Business Brief* is the stand out exception to the trend of declining circulation with a 49.4% growth year on year. Most of their sales are subscription-based digital PDF versions of the magazine, saving both printing and distribution costs with only a small number of printed versions being distributed. One wonders when other publishers will start embracing digital

versions as a viable publishing format. In today's digitally enabled world you don't need your publication sitting on some coffee table to reach readers, it goes with the readers wherever they are and whenever they have the time available to do so they can read it.

## Print publications

| Business and News publications ABC Q2 2018 |                   |               |
|--|-------------------|---------------|
| Publication Name                           | Circulation       | % change year |
| Business Brief.                            | 49,470            | 49.4%         |
| Entrepreneur                               | 14,883            | 1.3%          |
| Financial Mail                             | 13,080            | -1.3%         |
| Finweek                                    | 17,188            | -4.5%         |
| Forbes Africa                              | 14,915            | -22.1%        |
| Noseweek                                   | 11,940            | -0.3%         |
| Personal Finance                           | Changed Publisher |               |
| SA Real Estate Investor Magazine           | 14,554            | -5.7%         |
| Your Business Magazine                     | 7,572             | -19.2%        |
| Publication Name                           | Circulation       | % change year |
| Star, The                                  | 72,375            | -9.9%         |
| Sowetan                                    | 70,061            | -4.8%         |
| Burger, Die Daily                          | 46,983            | -1.4%         |
| Citizen, The (Daily)                       | 42,595            | -3.5%         |
| Burger, Die Daily                          | 39,685            | -1.5%         |
| Beeld, Daily                               | 36,210            | -9.4%         |
| Cape Times                                 | 29,611            | -4.4%         |
| Cape Argus                                 | 27,346            | -5.8%         |
| Mercury, The                               | 25,043            | -5.0%         |
| Business Day                               | 20,145            | 0.4%          |
| Daily Dispatch                             | 16,546            | -11.9%        |
| Herald, The                                | 16,210            | -14.0%        |
| Volksblad - Daily                          | 14,306            | -2.7%         |
| Pretoria News                              | 12,686            | -7.9%         |
| Sunday Times                               | 250,575           | -4.6%         |
| Sunday Nation                              | 117,695           | -17.3%        |
| Rapport                                    | 112,332           | -9.6%         |
| Burger, Die Saturday                       | 51,111            | -2.9%         |
| Weekend Argus                              | 51,106            | -2.6%         |
| Sunday Tribune                             | 50,386            | -4.4%         |
| City Press                                 | 50,200            | -26.9%        |
| Sunday World                               | 45,211            | -17.0%        |
| Saturday Star, The                         | 40,409            | -16.4%        |
| Beeld, Saturday                            | 36,624            | -4.6%         |
| Independent on Saturday                    | 36,211            | -2.9%         |
| Weekend Argus                              | 32,883            | -5.0%         |
| Citizen, The (Saturday)                    | 31,446            | -6.9%         |

## Digital growth continues

In contrast to the printed medium, digital business publications continue to show significant growth in their subscriber base. It would, of course, be argued that these are free subscriptions, but the fact remains that their numbers are hard to argue with.

Many traditional print publications are now also offering paid for premium digital newsletters with premium web content. However, with consumer behaviour as it is today, it can be argued that any person who subscribes and remains a subscriber to a free email newsletter is a committed reader. With all the email spam today, people only accept what they wish to read or see.

Monetising this audience has historically been a huge issue for publishers, however, with more and more advertising revenue moving into digital platforms, due to response factors and lower cost, these newsletters should become hot advertising property offering great value and good engagement opportunities for advertisers.

## Digital business publication newsletter subscriber growth

|                | Jan-18 | Feb-18 | Mar-18 | Apr-18  | May-18  | Jun-18  | Jul-18  |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Ince-Connect   | 59 306 | 58 350 | 63 289 | 71 700  | 101 163 | 114 281 | 118 207 |
| BizNews        | 66 162 | 76 143 | 84 091 | 105 288 | 223 815 | 244 915 | 234 237 |
| Business Brief | 11 872 | 16 282 | 15 783 | 15 107  | 26 514  | 25 507  | 24 818  |



## ABOUT GREG STEWART

Greg Stewart has been in various media and advertising roles over the last 30 years. He started at The Star in the late 80's and has been in senior management positions at various media and advertising companies including The Independent Group, Prime Media digital, The Citizen as well as running his own media and advertising consultancy for a number of years. He currently runs his own media consultancy - TFC Media

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