

Gabbi Brondani Rego, "Dreams don't work unless you do"

By  Emily Stander

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In 2013, Gabbi Brondani Rego started a PR agency - Urban Espresso. Engaging with people, building relationships, and sharing inspiring stories were part of the reason she loved being part of the PR world.



Gabbi Brondani Rego

But that's not the only world she is a part of. As co-manager and brand manager for Goliath Gaming, a Multi-Gaming Organisation in South Africa, "The challenge of having to learn the ins and outs of the industry, and how to connect that with the PR and marketing world, has been a very welcoming challenge," said Rego. "I adore being part of an industry that is so young and fresh, where you can write the rulebook for what a cool and effective marketing campaign could look like." Rego is also PR manager for Gamedock, branded content creators within the gaming and esports space.

A Multi-Gaming Organisation (MGO) is a clan or club focused on the business aspect of esports and is made of many competitive teams from multiple game titles. Goliath Gaming (GG) manages some of South Africa's best competitive gamers in titles like *Fifa*, *Fortnite*, *Street Fighter*, *Tekken*, *Starcraft*, and *Counterstrike*. Players ranging from 11-30 years old exist in the organisation, all from different backgrounds.



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Rego ended up in the gaming industry by chance. "I was very much a casual gamer growing up, and during my high

school and varsity years, didn't play that much," she said. She came on board to manage the PR of GG when her brother got involved and the MGO started. "It's been a very exciting and fascinating four years of handling PR in the gaming and esports space."

Women in gaming

Women do exist in gaming, and when the gaming industry is referred to as 'male-dominated', it refers more to the way that games are marketed and tailored for men. As far as it goes in terms of working in the industry as a woman, Rego feels that women need to work a little bit harder to earn the same respect as their male counterparts.

"Personally, I've experienced people assuming because I'm a woman I have no clue about the gaming and esports space, or that I do not have much value to bring to the table," she said. "It's always delightful to be able to prove the doubters wrong."



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To try and make this a better space, Rego believes MGO's, game developers, and advertisers need to do better with the inclusion of women in conversations, brand plans, and projects from inception. Having women involved in these conversations is a step towards better understanding what they need from the industry to feel more included, comfortable, and welcome in the space.

Marketing in gaming

According to Rego, there are huge opportunities for marketing and PR in the South African gaming and esports industry. When brands get it right, game-focused communities have shown loyalty and significant engagement - especially online. Due to the nature of gaming, marketers are able to work with multiple brands - even if they are not intrinsically involved.

"The gaming and esports space in SA is still new and young and fresh, so there is so much opportunity for brands to experiment with relatively smaller budgets than they're used to see what works for them. with gaming - to build and send a meaningful message," said Rego.



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There are, however, some challenges to overcome. The gaming industry is young and new, which means a lot of education is necessary for brand managers and agencies working with brands. Gaming can be incredibly niche, and sometimes it takes a lot of research and understanding to know who and what you are working with. According to Rego, explaining the ecosystem and trying to motivate the value of the industry can be especially challenging - especially because the 'traditional' way of marketing doesn't work in this space.

"I've also found that some brands who have dabbled in the gaming and esports space have not engaged with the right kind of partner to help them achieve their goals," explains Rego. "And so they did not get the Return on Investment (ROI) they expected, or burnt their fingers, and are hesitant to get involved again."



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Rego emphasises that this is why brands and agencies need to do the research, understand who they are working with, and what the gaming industry demands for successful marketing.

One way of being successful is through social media engagement. "Being active on social media is such an easy and cost-effective way for players and MGO's to build their profiles," said Rego. "It's important for players and MGO's to be aware of the kind of content their audience wants to see."

Games as an opportunity

The relatively untapped marketing landscape in the South African gaming industry provides significant opportunities for brands and agencies to understand a new way of marketing.

As Rego says, "Dreams don't work unless you do." Putting in the time and work is how the gaming industry in South Africa can become a giant of marketing - and a safe space for all who want to be there.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

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