

Media houses as engaged corporate citizens

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Media houses have a responsibility to be active in the community they serve, and to do what they can to promote tolerance between listeners from different backgrounds, as well as economic development, says Alfie Jay, the newly appointed managing director of Eastern Cape commercial radio leader Algoa FM.

“Whilst Algoa FM cannot fix the country’s macro situation, we have a responsibility toward our immediate environment. I firmly believe that we play a major role in shaping civil society towards a mindset of nation building,” says Jay.

The former operations director of Algoa FM, Jay has been part of the station since 1990, and was one of the team which was responsible for commercialising it out of the SABC more than 22 years ago.

In 2018 Algoa FM became the first commercial radio station outside of Gauteng to win the prestigious Liberty Station of the Year award – a tribute to the broadcasters and the team behind them, he says.

Jay sees opportunities for advertisers to reach more potential customers during periods of uncertainty because listeners tune in to the news and engage with the station in order to stay informed.

“Our macro environment provides rich content as we report the news and engage in the issues that affect our listeners.

“By doing this fairly, accurately and within context, we build up and maintain trust and empathy among our listeners, clients, stakeholders and staff.

“The opportunities to offer this rich content to our clients are endless, and that’s just in the ‘on air’ realm,” he says.

Algoa FM offers an integrated cross-platform package for its advertisers, which can extend from social media to web design.

“Virtual reality, chatbots and interactive content are no longer far-fetched concepts, they are opportunities that are here to stay and they need to be leveraged.

“Our vision to be the leading and most admired media brand compels us to work alongside our advertisers to identify ways in which to embrace these tools so we can successfully provide a path to purchase.

“To say that the results of our online growth strategy have surprised us would be somewhat of an understatement.

“We are seeing year-on-year growth of 138%, from around 230,000 unique page views a month on average in 2018 to 1.488 million in January 2019.”

The station’s website is now the second-most visited media website in the province, second only to a nationally funded news publication.

“Seen in the context of the media serving the Eastern Cape, this growth proves that the Algoa FM team is totally in tune with the needs and interests of our audience.

“Technology is already being harnessed, an example of which is that the Algoa FM App can be accessed via Siri, Apple’s Speech Interpretation and Recognition Interface.

"By leveraging synergistic resources within the AME group of companies, we are poised for further growth," he says.

Jay says the station has also been able to succeed in new markets such as the Garden Route, which it entered in 2011, because it becomes actively involved and adds value to both listeners and the business community.

"Seeking out new frontiers is key to growth and profitability and through dedication to our values we have managed to achieve great results through ongoing engagement."

This includes the broader community.

"Algoa FM is a responsible corporate citizen which continually aspires to growth and gives back through its corporate social investment campaigns, including the Big Walk for Cancer – the Eastern Cape's largest mass participation charity event.

"We have just been recognised by the MICT SETA in Nelson Mandela Bay for the ongoing role we play in promoting employability and sustainable livelihoods through skills development," he says.

The company is also seriously invested in supplier and enterprise development as well as other empowerment ventures.

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