

# e.tv turns 10 years old on 1 October

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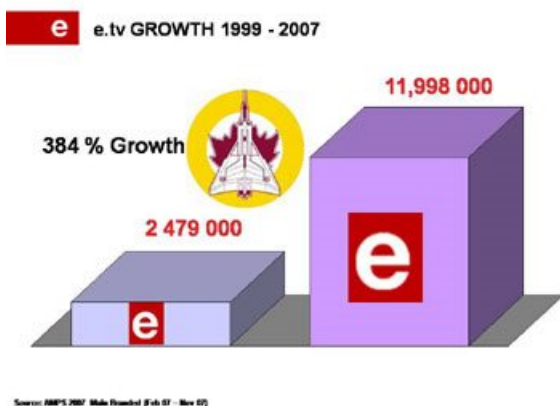
e.tv, South Africa's first and only independent free-to-air television channel, celebrates ten years on air on 1 October. Over the past decade, e.tv has established itself against the odds to become a household name and a key player in the South African broadcasting industry.



At 5pm on 1 October 1998, e.tv started broadcasting for six hours a day and on 17 January 1999, eNews went to air for the very first time. However, after the excitement of the launch months, e.tv soon ran into trouble. Initial budget estimates were significantly below the requirements of the business and the channel was losing millions every month.

In mid-1999, a new management team was appointed and an urgent turnaround strategy was put in place. This strategy, combined with additional injection of funds from original shareholders HCI and new shareholders Venfin, steadily turned e.tv into a success.

AMPS research demonstrated that the channel grew from a regular viewership of just over 2.4 million in 1999 to almost 12 million in 2007 - a growth rate of 384%! By 2000, e.tv had grown to become the largest English-medium channel in the country and by 2002, it was the second largest channel overall, a position it retains today. The channel broke even for the first time in 2004.



Says e.tv's CEO Marcel Golding: "We had some rough times in the beginning but the success of e.tv has outstripped our expectations. Very few people believed that e.tv would survive those first years but now that we've reached our ten year anniversary we have become an indispensable part of South African life."

Over the years the channel has built a reputation for high quality local and international entertainment. Locally produced dramas and sitcoms such as *Backstage*, *Madam & Eve*, *Jozi Streets* and (most recently) *Rhythm City*, have provided e.tv with a strong point of difference from its competitors.

Over the past few years, e.tv has also introduced locally produced reality formats such as *Fear Factor SA*, *Biggest Loser SA* and *Forgive and Forget*, as well as its own emo-tainment show *Let's Fix It*. The channel brand is also firmly associated with WWE Wrestling and its blockbuster movies, which bring in the highest ratings each week.

However, during the past decade the channel's most distinctive programming has undoubtedly been its news. eNews is widely regarded as the most reliable and independent television news source in the country and its prime time bulletins are watched by an average of 1.6 million viewers each night. The success of the eNews brand spawned the launch of the 24-hour eNews channel, which launched in June this year.

e.tv's success has established a sound basis from which to establish a much larger media group. Over the past two years, e.tv's holding company, Sabido Investments, has acquired interests in other television companies on the African continent as well as in content distribution and aggregation and studio facilities.

Golding paid tribute to e.tv staff, particularly those that stayed on with the channel from the early years. "e.tv's success is due not only to their loyalty, commitment and hard work but, in particular, to their unwavering belief that we could achieve

something extraordinary despite the odds being stacked against us,” he says.

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