

Millennials, tech and PR

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How a bunch of tech fundis are breaking conventions and changing perceptions for some of the world's largest computer software and technology brands



Three-years ago Hook, Line & Sinker (HLS) was born with a simple formula to combine marketing, publicity, content and social media to breathe life back into the PR game. And then the pandemic happened. Many companies and global stock markets struggled for growth, but for some it was about seizing the moment. What was seen as a business threat quickly turned into a business opportunity and the recipe of tech clients – Covid-disruption – paired with digital agency support, saw HLS revenue quadruple as its business reached into Africa, Europe and the Middle East, while forming partnerships with global giants such as SAP, IBM, Microsoft, Google, Facebook and United Nations.

The key to success? The rapid growth of their tech clients combined with their multifaceted digital offerings. “Times are changing, and so too is the era of the press release and red-carpet events,” says HLS head honcho Adam Hunter.

“The print media has been challenged for many years. This, combined with Covid-19, has seen media houses close and publications disappear and has resulted in one journalist for every 10 PR professionals – making it extremely competitive for brands to be seen and heard.”

HLS was established in 2016 as a small consultancy that provided clients, many of which sit in the Fortune 500 with marketing and PR expertise. We have steadily grown and won various pan-African and tech campaign awards over the years but 2020 was a defining moment for the company.

“We turned a global threat into a growth opportunity. We hired several full-time employees, nurtured a growing client list and multiplied agency revenue during this period thanks to our digital offering and focus on intelligent content development.” Hunter oversees the HLS team that now supports 16 different market units across the globe and specialises in business-to-

business (B2B) tech clients and global startups.

But it is not just HLS that has seen promising results. The agency's client list includes companies such as SAP, Skynamo, RoomRaccoon, Mobiz and UK's CoGrammar, trading as HyperionDev in SA – all heavyweights and innovators in their spaces and all leveraging HLS's unique approach to ensure highly visible penetration into competitive markets.



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Adam Hunter, Hook, Line & Sinker 14 Sep 2020



Local Stellenbosch startup Skynamo secured R371m in funding last year and is aggressively acquiring UK competitors as part of its growth strategy. Similarly, Mobiz closed R18m in funding to continue its African-innovation growth journey to enter the US market this year, and RoomRaccoon has won best Hotel Management System in the World for two years running.

Last year, more than 1,2 billion students were affected by school closures globally. As a result, education has changed dramatically with the distinctive rise of e-learning. Two HLS clients, Meet and Code Europe and HyperionDev, have made massive strides in the tech-ed space and have shown solid growth during the pandemic, supported and amplified further by HLS digital communications.

Europe's largest digital skills youth program, Meet and Code, now spans across 35 countries. In 2020, more than 40,000 youth were empowered through 1,325 virtual coding workshops. Adding to this, HyperionDev is one of the largest providers of digital skills bootcamps globally and delivers digital learning to more than 40 countries. In addition to the financial backing by Facebook and Google, HyperionDev's 2021 equity crowdfunding initiative in the UK raised £1,8m and surpassed targets by 200%.

“ Thanks to HLS's expertise, clients can connect with key audiences to fully realise the potential of digital and ride the waves of change that are fundamentally altering the media space today. ”

Content, the agency realised early on, is queen and, as such, is versatile and scalable. As the media world shifted, the agency changed with it, crafting and amplifying content intelligently across multiple touchpoints, platforms and publishing networks. The goal was to cement branding and growth for clients without heavy reliance on publishing houses and press releases.

“We are continually coming-up with creative ways to repurpose content and extend value,” says Hunter. Using budgets once set aside for big events and conferences, companies are looking for partners to help them build their profiles and remain connected at a time we feel so disconnected. Digital may have opened doors across the world, but it still creates a divide and a noise that only highly specialised and targeted campaigns can bridge. For HLS, it is about building the bridges to deliver results – and that keeps them innovating and adapting to the challenges that digital and the pandemic present for their clients.

“Businesses and service offerings are changing. Our clients have evolved, and we have to evolve with them so that we remain an asset,” concludes Hunter. “We hire specialists who share our ethos and support our growth strategy, and we are working with brands that are interested in translating the complexities of digital and publishing into opportunities. Our growth is ongoing, and our client list is expanding, and we look forward to helping more customers discover the power of collaboration with the right digital agency.”

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