

#BehindtheSelfie with... Ruan Fourie, SEO specialist at Starbright Solutions

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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This week, we go behind the selfie with Ruan Fourie, SEO specialist at Starbright Solutions...

Commenting on the current crisis affecting the industry, and of course the economy as a whole, Fourie believes that having more than one marketing channel is more important now than ever before and that what works now may not necessarily work in the near future.

“ Lockdown has changed everything overnight. For our clients, we have been finding different digital marketing channels and strategies. For some, Google Ads budgets are getting moved to SEO and content marketing. For others, SEO budgets are going towards podcast and video production to help target specific keywords in Google search. We are diversifying digital strategies more than ever before to identify more effective channels. Identifying what works is important, but having more than one marketing channel is more important now than ever before. What is working today might not work tomorrow. ”



"#NotSponsoredByWindhoek, but we can chat after the lockdown."

1. Where do you live, work and play?

I live in Pretoria, work wherever there is a decent internet connection and play online, on the stand-up comedy stage and at my local table tennis club.

2. What's your claim to fame?

I started a silly Afrikaans blog (not a great business decision), got called a "taste maker" by *Die Beeld* and *Rolling Stone South Africa* for making a terrible Afrikaans-pop music video go viral. I started the first-ever Afrikaans podcast way back in 2010. I vlogged my way onto national TV, and started doing stand-up comedy. Oh, and I'm also an SEO that has achieved some really good rankings in some insanely competitive markets, like online casino and sports betting.

3. Describe your career so far.

I think when my parents look at my career they would describe it as "DI-why". I started in IT and soon discovered a love for digital media and digital marketing, especially the content creation part. I started a blog and Googled: "How to get more readers for my blog", and SEO was one of the results that popped up. From there started the process of learning everything I know by doing it. It's an ongoing process that has been going on for 10+ years now.

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

I love creating. I have a little voice in my head that just won't shut up unless I create. In a world that has a constant thirst for content and a distribution channel like the internet, being creative is a huge advantage. Even if I didn't do what I do to make a living, I'd still be creating. I also like spending time with my favourite people (my wife and son), playing table tennis, gaming (video games for the boomers) and doing digital marketing for industries that are regulated and can't just run Google or Facebook ads all willy-nilly.

5. What do you love about your industry?

Everything digital is trackable and has data. My biggest gripe with traditional media is that 'they' love reporting on stats like OTS (opportunity to see). How many people really see your billboard next to the N1? It's all 'guestimations' and rounding numbers up. Digital marketing is 100% trackable, from how many people see something to how many sales happen via any digital marketing efforts.



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Jessica Barrella 19 Feb 2020



How many people see your billboard next to the highway? I'll tell you... None. They are all too busy looking at their smartphones while they drive.

6. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

I'm out of bed by 5:00am and usually in the office by 5:40am. Between 5:40am and 8:00am is usually my most productive time. Every day at 12pm I play table tennis for 45 minutes before I'm behind my desk till around 3pm. Evenings are spent with my wife and son until they go to bed. Once they are asleep, I will either create content or be at a local stand-up comedy show working on my material in front of an audience.

7. What are the tools of your trade?

The internet is key and a device to access the internet. Word processing software like Google Docs, a voice recorder or recording app on my smartphone and tons of notebooks. But by far the most important tool I have is my brain. I'd be useless without it, literally. My sense of humour has also served me well over the years.

8. Who is getting it right in your industry?

The youngsters who are willing to get their hands dirty and learn how to 'do' instead of just talking theory. Ideas are a dime a dozen, but execution is scarce. Buzzwords like 'growth hacking' or 'making something go viral' are finally seen as the red flags they should have been seen for from the start.



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29 Mar 2019



I love the fact that the cream rising to the top are practitioners rather than theorists. Everyone should understand digital marketing in a practical way.

9. List a few pain points the industry can improve on.

Reaching new audiences is something that brands and marketers are constantly striving for, but reaching new audiences is not rocket science. Anyone who has even a basic grasp of Facebook Advertising or Google Ads can easily reach new audiences. The true pain point and only deliverable your brand or marketing team should be aiming for are conversions. Conversions can be qualified leads, downloads, sign-ups, purchases or subscriptions. The industry spends too much time reporting on reach (super easy to achieve with zero effort) instead of conversions (harder to achieve and report on, but essential).

10. What are you working on right now?

I just launched a new line of T-shirts. Edgy, controversial (to boomers, mostly), funny and cool Afrikaans T-shirts.

11. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

'Opportunity to see' is a remnant term from back in the day when advertisers had no real idea of how many people consumed an advert, that is still floating around today even though it has no place in digital marketing at all. If anyone you are working with for the marketing of your business uses the term or the abbreviation 'OTS', run for the hills.

'Influencer' or 'influencer marketing' is a term that causes eyes to roll back into skulls on a daily basis in 2020. Mostly because marketers have abused the term to exhaustion, and also because everyone and their granny with an Instagram profile call themselves an 'influencer' these days. I used to use the term, but lately, I avoid the term because of the gross connections it has. Now I prefer to use 'affiliate marketing', as it better describes what many try to achieve with 'influencer marketing'.

'Growth hack' makes me feel sick every time I hear it. It's a term most often used by marketing hacks. Even the origin of the

word says it: "The word 'hack' is derived from the British term 'hackneyed', meaning overused and thus cheapened or trite".

12. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

Late at night when most people are sleeping. I'm normally on my 'stoep' or in my garden, behind my laptop at that time of night for that very reason. It's almost as if when most other people are sleeping, I can tap into more ideas floating around that are not being utilised by others.

13. What's your secret talent/party trick?

I can roll cigarettes by hand better than most smokers, and I don't even smoke.

14. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

I try to stay on top of new tech as much as possible, but I tend to ignore the more mainstream stuff like a new Samsung phone launch or the new iPhone launch. We already know the device is going to be good and expensive. No need to take hours out of my day to watch live conferences about those types of 'innovations'. But I'm not scared of new tech, I'm more baffled by it.

15. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

More photos of my garden than you would expect to see. I have green fingers.

16. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

Don't for a second rely on the age-old lie about needing a degree to have a successful career. Execution and speed are more important than perfection, and you can develop skills by just doing it yourself. Stop talking about being a marketer and market something online. Put that on your CV.

Follow Fourie on [LinkedIn](#).

*Interviewed by [Jessica Tennant](#).

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