Do or die: The reader economy

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Middle East

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tiso blackstar group.

- Head of Digital at Tiso Blackstar Group
- Running digital strategy and management
- Former General Manager Digital Publishing at 24.com / Media 24
- Head of Operations FT.com, Managing Editor at the Financial Times in London
- Focused on newsroom integration and change management
- Board member of the World Editors Forum
- Vice President WAN-IFRA
- BA Honours in Anthropology

TISO BLACKSTAR I INTRODUCTION

- Publish 8 newspapers, magazines, 14 websites, radio stations throughout Africa (Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria), run a film and music distribution business and an events company
- Publishing BusinessLIVE, Business Day, Financial Mail, TimesLIVE, SowetanLIVE, Dispatch Live, Herald LIVE
- Big investment in alternative revenue streams: tech, events etc
- Work hard to optimise print business
- Embarking on an overhaul of workflows and processes and new tech to favour a digital-first environment in newsrooms

SOUTH AFRICA I CONTEXT

- Newspaper declining: dailies 16% year on year decline
- High penetration of mobile phones but "smartphone" does not mean internet access is a given
- Android far outweighs IOS
- Data costs are enormously high: 6 x higher than Egypt - spectrum and infrastructure, lack of competition
- South Africans spend more on communication than on health or on education
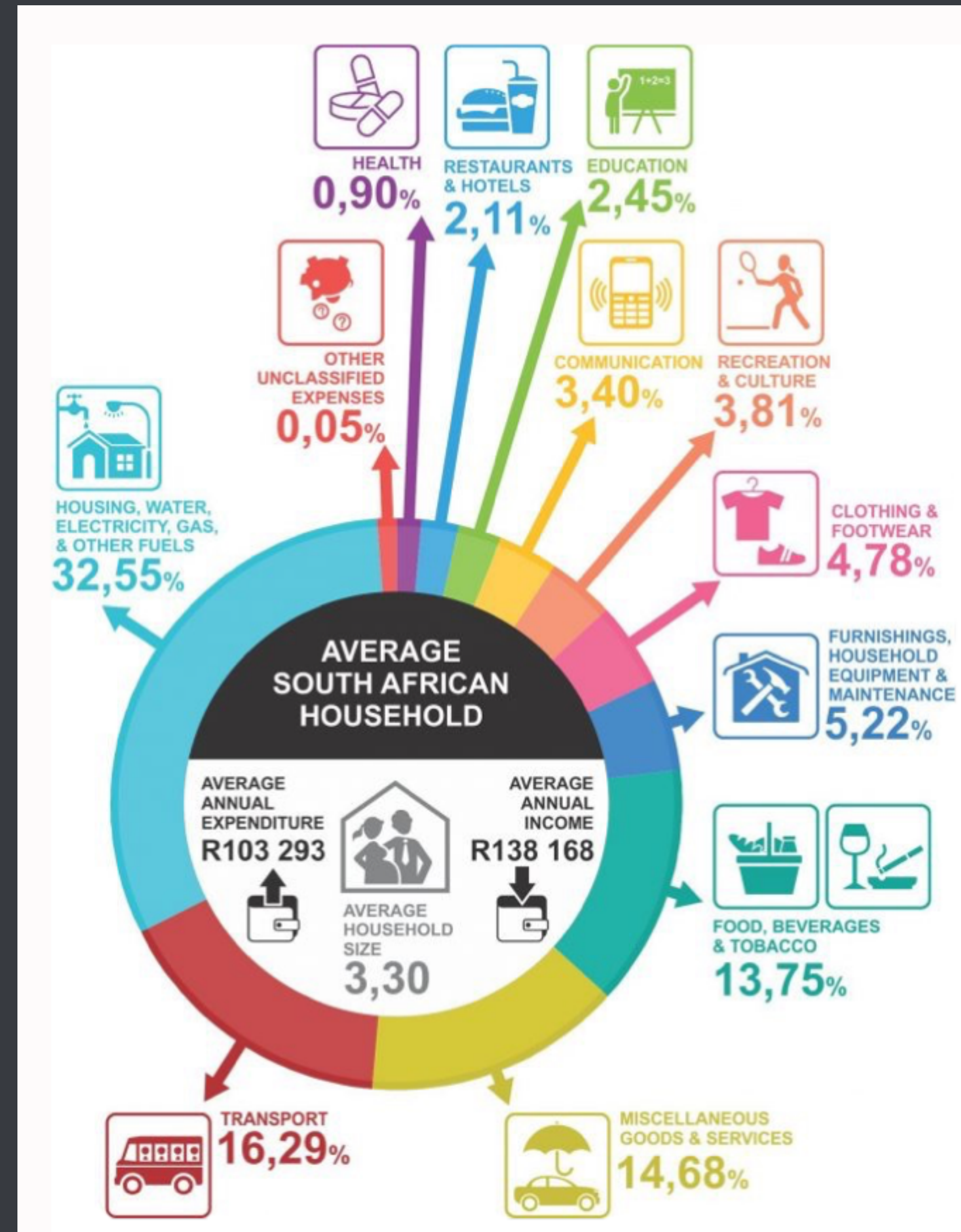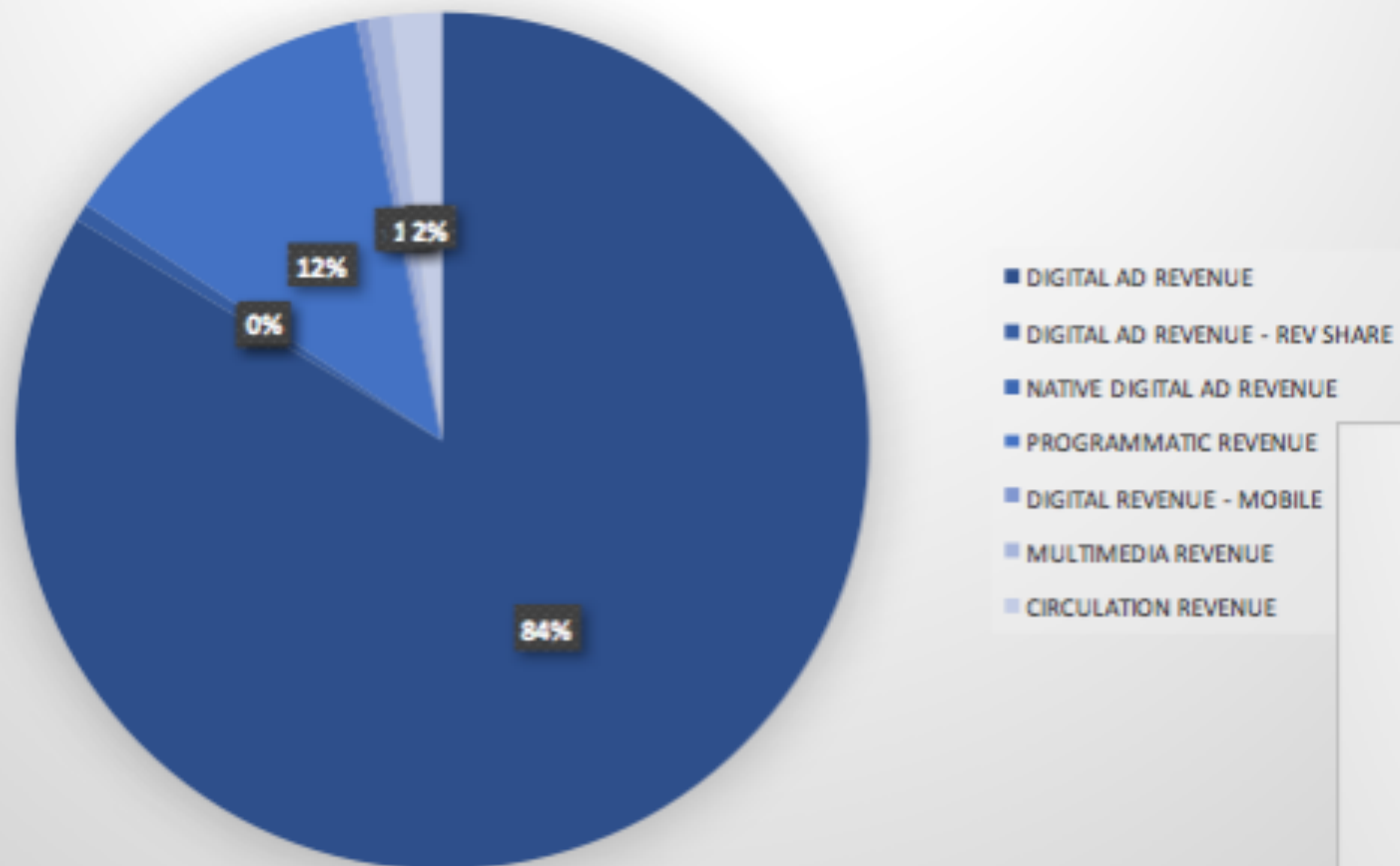
STRATEGY I 2014 - 2017

Areas of focus:

- Product, audience development and multimedia

Strategy:

- To fix broken and unstable TECH, and build solid, scalable platforms for the digital business (replatformed 12 sites). Changed all processes to Agile methodology
- To entrench strong PRINT brands online with excellent journalism from papers starting life digitally
- To CONSOLIDATE and make digital a sustainable business with growing revenue: focus on paid content
- To DIVERSIFY revenue as much as possible: can't stand still!

DIGITAL REVENUE MIX 2017

- DIGITAL AD REVENUE
- DIGITAL AD REVENUE - REV SHARE
- NATIVE DIGITAL AD REVENUE
- PROGRAMMATIC REVENUE
- DIGITAL REVENUE - MOBILE
- MULTIMEDIA REVENUE
- CIRCULATION REVENUE

84%
12%
12%
0%

DIGITAL REVENUE MIX 2018

- DIGITAL AD REVENUE
- DIGITAL AD REVENUE - REV SHARE
- NATIVE DIGITAL AD REVENUE
- PROGRAMMATIC REVENUE
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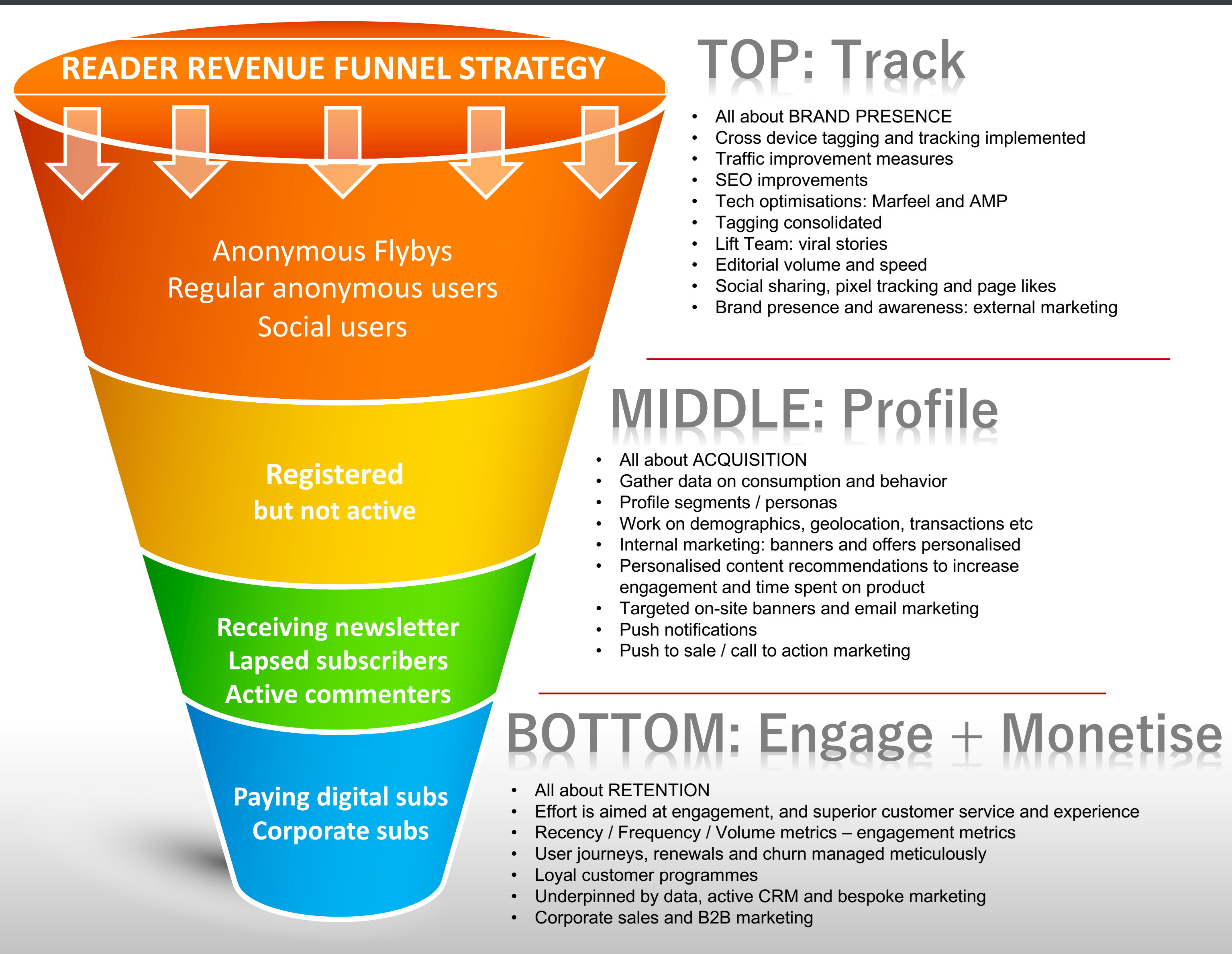- CIRCULATION REVENUE

54%
15%
1%
17%
12%
1%
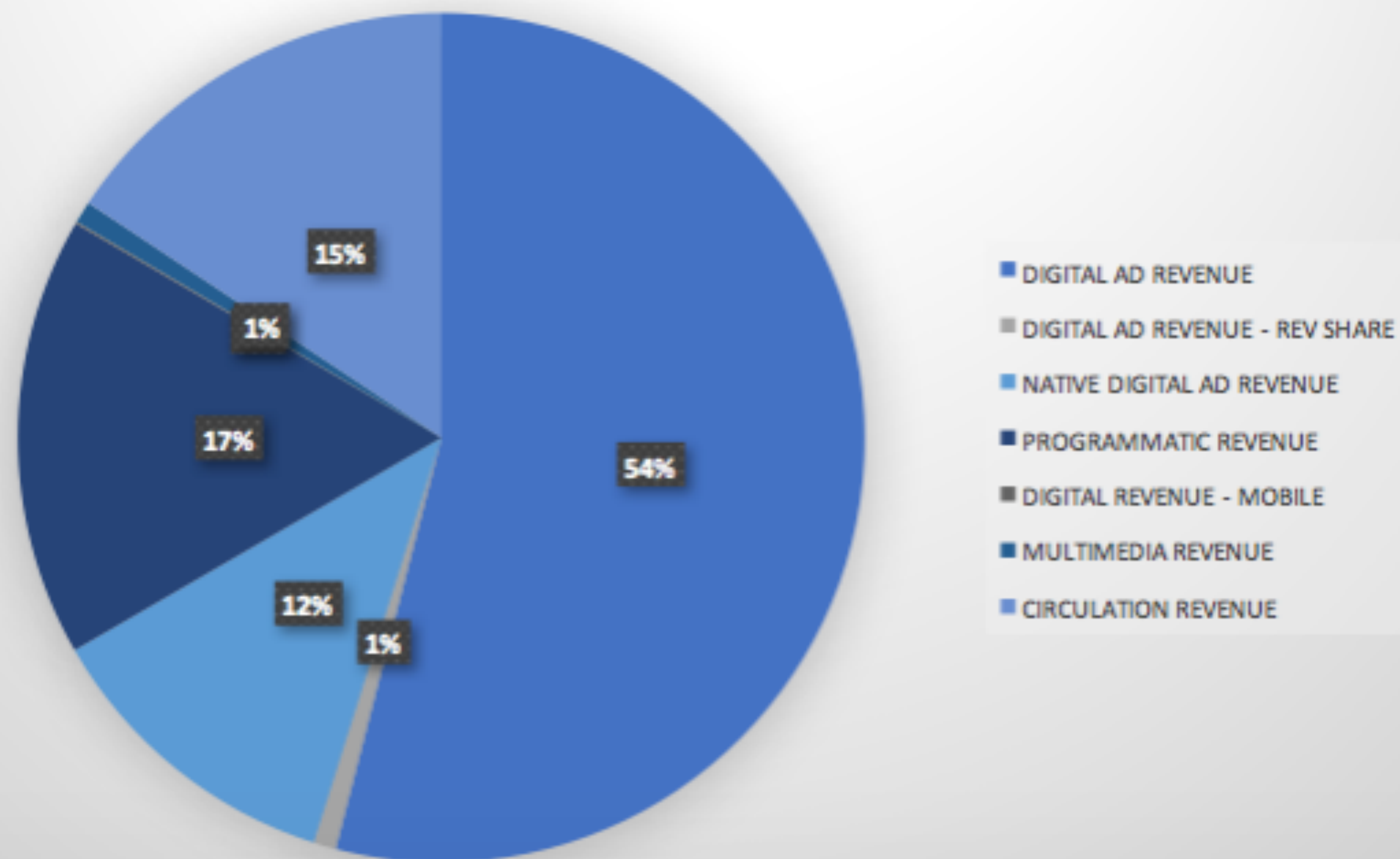
STRATEGY I 2018 - 2019

- 1. Audience first: bring together the right **PEOPLE** to gather data and intelligence on all users of our brands and channels and understand their movements, needs and likes. Build richest audience data in South Africa
- 2. Improve **PROCESSES** and skills across departments (ads, circ, product and editorial) to manage, service, communicate with and monetise readers wherever we find them - reader revenue team formed, product council pending
- 3. Build new **PRODUCTS** based on audience intelligence and market demand, and refine existing products to enhance engagement, revenue
- 4. Measure our **PERFORMANCE**: defined as growing audiences, raising revenue, improving retention + engagement.

READER REVENUE FUNNEL STRATEGY

Anonymous Flybys
Regular anonymous users
Social users

Registered
but not active

Receiving newsletter
Lapsed subscribers
Active commenters

Paying digital subs
Corporate subs

TOP: Track

- All about BRAND PRESENCE
- Cross device tagging and tracking implemented
- Traffic improvement measures
- SEO improvements
- Tech optimisations: Marfeel and AMP
- Tagging consolidated
- Lift Team: viral stories
- Editorial volume and speed
- Social sharing, pixel tracking and page likes
- Brand presence and awareness: external marketing

MIDDLE: Profile

- All about ACQUISITION
- Gather data on consumption and behavior
- Profile segments / personas
- Work on demographics, geolocation, transactions etc
- Internal marketing: banners and offers personalised
- Personalised content recommendations to increase engagement and time spent on product
- Targeted on-site banners and email marketing
- Push notifications
- Push to sale / call to action marketing

BOTTOM: Engage + Monetise

- All about RETENTION
- Effort is aimed at engagement, and superior customer service and experience
- Recency / Frequency / Volume metrics – engagement metrics
- User journeys, renewals and churn managed meticulously
- Loyal customer programmes
- Underpinned by data, active CRM and bespoke marketing
- Corporate sales and B2B marketing

1. AUDIENCE TRACKING I DATA

- Started building a fully functional audience data team - 3 people
- Editorial analyst (Chartbeat / GA / Narratiive)
- Commercial Analyst - works closely with sales team
- Data Manager: strategy and tools for data, optimising audience intelligence to create monetisation opportunities
- Worked with agency called Jellyfish to improve our data stacks: correct tagging on Ad Manager and Google Analytics, upgrading to G360 across the business
- Project extends from audience behaviour for subscription business to audience segments and verticals for advertising
- Main focus: REVENUE
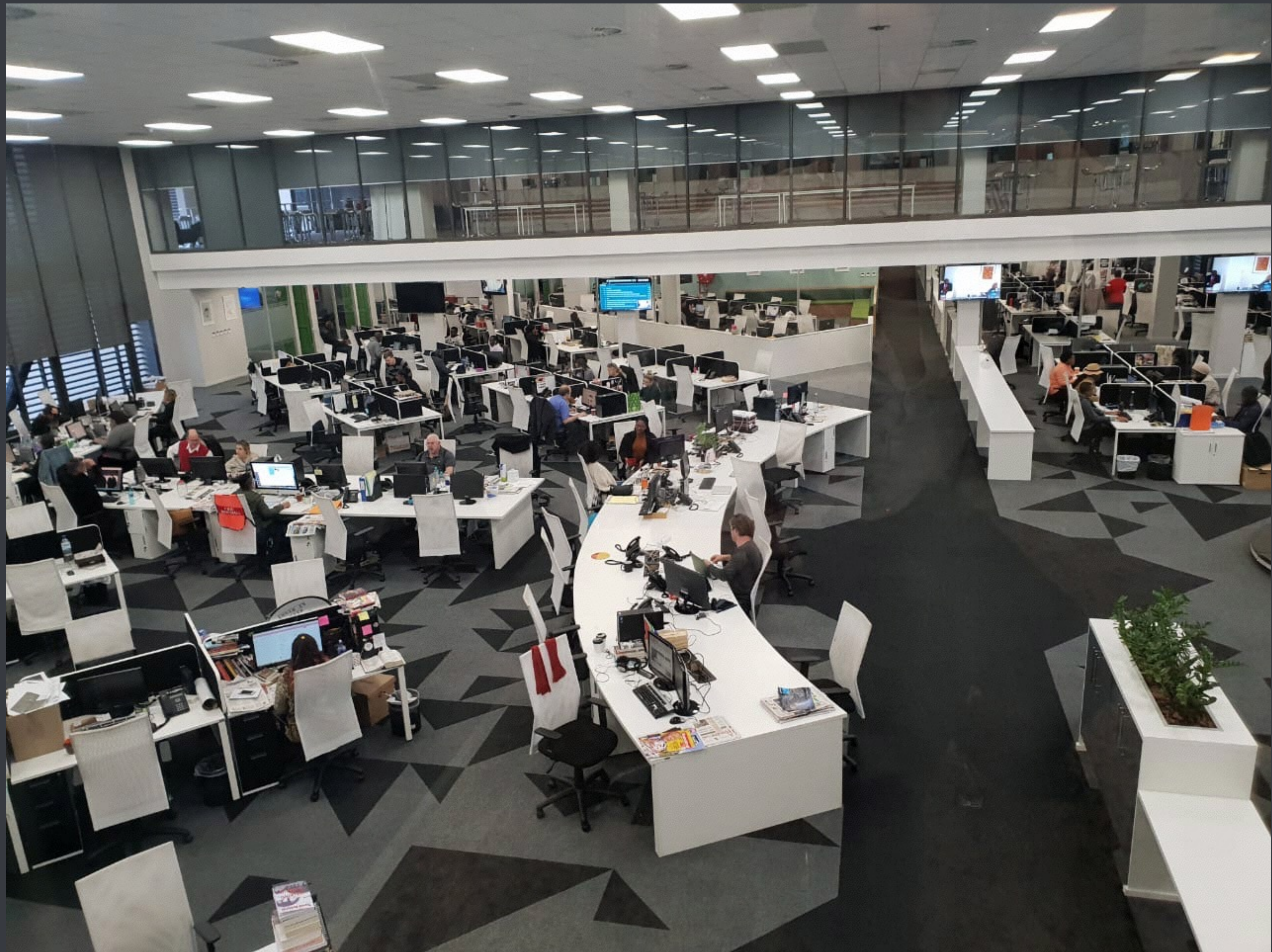
2. PROCESS I NEW NEWSROOM

- Aim: to change our newsrooms to become digital facing and responsive to audience needs, rather than medium-driven
- Note: already relocated to a new building with a massive open plan newsroom - advantages and disadvantages
- Also running an internal wire to foster collaboration between 8 newsrooms: 200+ stories a day filed for group use
- Involves three pillars:
1. New newsroom tech including a new custom built CMS called CosMoS and an upgraded print system (Good News 4 / Tera)
2. Changes to workflows. Earlier starts. Filing for web. Understanding the value of online content for subscribers. Collaboration. Sharing.
3. Improving print processes and efficiencies to ensure sustainability

3. PRODUCT | WORKING AGILE

- Inherited a defunct and unskilled development team
- Sites continuously offline or broken - not a business priority
- Hired a top-class product manager who brought rigour to the business
- Made key development hires, and a partnership with an external team
- Process: introduced Github, Jira, email tracking, improved infrastructure
- Started on most critical issues: stabilised unstable tech
- Started work on a homegrown web publishing CMS, Cosmos
- Always thinking of longer term product that can earn revenue

- PHILOSOPHY: is Agile compatible with print organisations?
- Think Minimum Viable Product… how far can you push a legacy organisation?

- 5 operational paywalls, 1 coming
- All have different business models
- One is **defensive** (protect print revenues) - Sunday Times
- One is **niche** business content (high end readers) - BusinessLIVE
- One is a **digital daily edition** (new concept, print replacement for closed newspaper The Times) - Times Select
- 2 are **regional / hyperlocal**
- 1 will be **vernacular**
- Supported by new data team

FINISH

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