

Marius Greeff, founder and director of Turn Left Media

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This week we go behind the mask of Marius Greeff, founder and director of Turn Left Media.



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■ *Could you briefly explain what your role entails?*

I'm the founder and director of Turn Left Media. We're a very niche independent, boutique digital media sales house. Our mission is to help African brands connect to, and build, economic opportunities.

We do this by making it easier for brands to engage with their key stakeholders, be it clients, employees, or stakeholders on key, niche digital platforms. Focused on representing only the best in digital platforms, Turn Left Media exclusively represents LinkedIn, the world's largest professional social network.

I've been working with the LinkedIn brand for the last 11 years, and in a business of our size, on most days I get to work with people, building marketing strategies, developing technology, writing content, helping out our teams and clients, and presenting opportunities.

■ *What's really behind your mask - literally and figuratively speaking?*

A big smile, and a big beard. I'm normally the joker in the business, as we work hard, and play hard. So I try and never take life too seriously. I like innovating in whatever we do, asking why not, rather than why, and figuring out ways of doing things that have never been done. #Dadbod #FatherofTwo #AlwaysBeSmiling

■ *Growing up, what did you want to be?*

Not in media! I wanted to be a palaeontologist and later a marine biologist before settling closer to home as a CA through The University of Pretoria. We went to the Open Day and walked through the Business Sciences Faculty and my mother said "Well, you can sell ice to an Eskimo, so if Accounting doesn't excite you, why not this?" I started my degree in Marketing Management and later my Honours in Communication Management, and have never looked back.

▣ ***How did you end up in the industry?***

It's been a serendipitous journey, having worked in the financial services and retail industry before ending up in media. I worked for Exclusive Books and met the fantastic team from Habari Media, who represented Facebook, BBC, LinkedIn and several other brands as the pre-eminent sales house in Africa at the time.

They spoke about the role of digital transformation in marketing, and it sounded like the perfect opportunity to approach as my next steps in my marketing career. I started as a commercial channel manager at Habari Media, responsible for the business monetization and evolutions of the business portfolio of brands we represented, including LinkedIn, BDFM, JustMoney and the BBC. I found a passion for delivering tailored digital solutions to niche, key brands to establish their footprints in Africa.

Over time this evolved to include being the commercial director for Habari Media, and later Spark Media, and then founding Turn Left Media with my partner John Bowles

▣ ***When you founded Turn Left Media, what did you hope to achieve?***

When John I founded Turn Left Media, we came from a business that represented more than 150+ unique brands and offerings, a literal smorgasbord of opportunities for everything the client could want. In that equation, we lost the ability to provide focused, niched, tailored solutions on a granular level, and we wanted to renew this. It's something we call the "Goldilocks" formula, not too big, or too small, just right.

We also wanted to build out the economic opportunity for our continent, bringing together the best brands and people with the opportunity to do great work, generate revenue and drive the continent forward. To do that, we partnered with brands such as LinkedIn, the world's largest professional network, and over time brands such as *The Washington Post* and CNN.

▣ ***What has the journey been like?***

WOW! It's been a massive learning curve, becoming an owner and feeling the total weight of all of the responsibilities on your shoulders. It gives you a new sense of purpose and the freedom to dictate the tone and ethos of the business. Our company has been unique in our approach and values since the start of the business, and we've carried this through into everything we do.

Since our first employee, we've always focused on hiring mature, self-starting individuals, who can run their own businesses, and saying "we might not see you for 2-3 weeks, and we need to trust that you'll be fine", so when Covid hit, our teams cracked on the next day as if nothing had happened. We've grown from three employees to over 30 individuals, across three locations, so it's been an amazing ride.

▣ ***What excites you most about your career?***

Being able to co-create strategic opportunities with agencies and clients. Really getting immersed in the brand, their

purpose and objectives, and then taking all of that and marrying it with my knowledge of B2B and LinkedIn. I'm also crazy excited about the rapid advancements in technology, both in our industry and as a whole.

■ ***What has been the highlight of your career?***

I've had a few highlights in my career, including meeting individuals like President Ramaphosa, John Smit and several others, but the moments that leave me blessed and humbled has been the opportunities we've been able to give our staff, through the business I helped create. Some of our staff have bought their first homes, cars, some of them have never been on an aeroplane before or been out of their provinces. This ability to give them these opportunities to better themselves and the lives of their families is the most inspiring thing in the world.

I'm also super proud of the work we're doing with the SAME Foundation, as our NGO partner. We've helped develop several computer and science labs in under-privileged communities across the country, the latest one is the state of the art science lab constructed at Lehlohonolo Primary School, situated in Gugulethu, Cape Town. The school educates a staggering 425 underprivileged pupils in a tough community with very few essential services. We aim to get them passionate about science, maths and IT.

The project commenced In August 2021 and was successfully completed in October 2021. Helping kids acquire math, science and computer skills is a long-term investment into South Africa and Africa – helping them participate in the future global economy. Next one, Soweto!

■ ***When you're not busy working, what do you do? How do you socialise these days?***

I'm married with two beautiful kids, who tend to keep me nice and busy when I'm not working. Work-life balance in the pandemic has ironically enough not been easy, as the separation from business to personal remains challenging when it's not separated by physical space anymore. When I do have time I spend it reading, anything from biographies, business books, fiction and fantasy. I'm also learning how to code in my spare time, through Udemy learning C###, Java and a few others, and then socialising with a few very close friends.

■ ***What are you watching/reading/listening to at the moment?***

At the moment I'm reading *Atomic Habits*, by James Clear, which resonates with my iterate improvements focus on life, as well as Jordan Peterson's 12 Rules for Life. One's pretty weighty, as only Jordan can be, and the other has already helped me shift my approach to getting things done. I'm also watching *The Wheel of Time* on Amazon Prime, an epic fantasy series based on the books by one of my favourite authors, Robert Jordan (yes, another Jordan).

When I have a few moments I also use LinkedIn Learning for audio growth, as the courses can be downloaded into super small bite-size pieces of 5-minutes or less, so it makes it easy to steal a few seconds in between meetings and work for self-improvement.

■ ***What does 2022 have in store for you?***

We're always looking at how we can grow and improve, so look out for developments in tech through TLM, more insights and research opportunities through LinkedIn, as well as the access we have to tools like GWI. I'm also crazy excited about our new business The Social Craft, with Sam Coom, which focuses on employer branding, pipelining and value creation through thought leadership. It's a bold new step for myself, and we're already seeing how businesses are resonating with our approach.

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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