

APO announces expansion plans for 2019

APO Group has recorded growth of 60% in 2018, reaffirming the company's position at the forefront of media relations in Africa and the Middle East. It has also announced plans for continued expansion in 2019.



Lionel Reina, chief executive officer, APO Group.

APO is the leading media relations consultancy and press release distribution service in Africa and the Middle East. The company's positive results reflect the acceleration of organic growth, combined with the strong momentum of new business - and highlights the success of the company's business model in a challenging market.

The year was also marked by the appointment of Lionel Reina as chief executive officer (CEO) of APO Group. Reina is a former vice president and general manager for Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa at Orange Business Services, the B2B division of French telecoms giant Orange – a remit that covered more than 80 countries; and a former Middle East director in the Gulf region for Accenture.

With 25 years of senior management experience and a strong history of providing effective leadership and delivering significant growth, Reina will support APO Group in accelerating its development.

This year was characterised by increased demand for all APO Group services. The volume of press release distribution doubled, generating more than 2,500 print clippings and 800,000 digital articles on business, general news and trade websites. APO Group's unique database of more than 350,000 journalists allow for optimal delivery of client press releases

at the right time to the right audience. The media relations department, which covers all the services a company needs to increase its visibility (including media events, interviews and op ed placements), has seen its turnover double during the same period.

Finally, the results demonstrate the commitment of APO Group's long-standing clients, who have continued to entrust in the strength and knowledge of the company's team and the value of their consultative approach. These established relationships have produced a natural evolution in the requirements of APO Group clients, with strategic communication and business intelligence now a regular part of the company's advisory services.

Prestigious client base

APO Group works with more than 300 prestigious clients, including 57 leading PR agencies and multinational companies across multiple industries. The company continues to strengthen its influence by successfully supporting organisations in their communications development and has taken on new clients like Siemens and Standard Chartered Banking the last few months.

APO Group is committed to building long-term and rewarding partnerships that add value to its customers. One of the company's strengths is its ability to adapt quickly to the needs of its clients by applying specialist knowledge and local market understanding to each unique campaign.



New APO CEO to take group global

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When APO Group was created in 2007, founder Nicolas Pompigne-Mognard had already identified the full development potential of Africa and Middle East. A recent report from Ernst & Young titled, *Attractiveness Program Africa*, published last October, showed that the number of foreign direct investment projects in the region increased by 6% in 2017 to a total of 718 projects – largely thanks to a strong economic recovery across Africa.

The three countries with the highest volume of press release distribution from APO Group clients, are: Kenya, Ghana and Algeria. According to the EY report, these three countries are among the 10 most attractive countries on the continent for foreign direct investment. In fast-growing regions such as Africa, customers' demands are on the rise, which explains the doubling of APO Group's average basket by customer in the last two years.

“APO Group is well-positioned on an attractive continent, with many investment opportunities and significant development potential,” said Lionel Reina, CEO of APO Group. “African countries will add 122 million people to the workforce by 2020. Our objective is to unlock this potential by supporting African and international companies in the deployment of their strategy on the continent. The innovative spirit, talent and professionalism of our teams combined with the proven agility of the company are all assets that enable us to support our customers, wherever they are, on the road to success.”

Video increasing

APO Lab, the research and development department of the firm, works tirelessly on technical innovations and accelerates the implementation of new solutions to ensure the best return on investment for APO Group clients.

For example, APO Group has anticipated the evolution of the press release distribution industry by offering its customers the opportunity to distribute multimedia content alongside their press releases with no additional charge.

Including photo or video content with a press release optimises potential reach as it is easier to share on social media and is more consumer friendly for journalists, bloggers and the mainstream media. In an increasingly digitalised world, this free

service offered by APO Group was a great success in 2018, with the number of press releases, accompanied by videos or photos, increasing by 35%.

Thanks to the APO Lab, the firm plans to continue its digital transformation to further improve customer experience at every stage of their journey. It is developing an ever more innovative range of services, such as the recent photo and video distribution service which allows a client to publish an image or a video simultaneously on 250 Africa-related news websites, including CNBC Africa and africanews (a euronews subsidiary).

Brand partnerships

APO Group continues to strengthen its network with a wide range of distribution partners such as Bloomberg, Thomson Reuters, africanews, Nasdaq, Dow Jones Factiva and LexisNexis. APO Group signed a multi-year agreement making them the main Official Sponsor of World Rugby's African association, Rugby Africa. The company has also built relationships with other leading organisations, such as Getty Images and the International Sports Press Association (AIPS). APO Group partners are key enablers for addressing global challenges and generating long-lasting impact in order to meet clients' communication goals.

"I am very pleased with the performance achieved by the company this year and thrilled to be able to launch this new phase of our development," said Pompigne-Mognard, founder and chairman of APO. "APO Group remains focused on its three priorities: to consolidate its position as a leader in the African and the Middle Eastern market; to create value for its clients; and to accelerate its digital transformation.

"After this prosperous year, we plan to pursue our development and we anticipate strong, continuous growth of 40% on average for the next four years. But, even more importantly, I am confident that we have the right team, the right plan and the right organisation to turn our industry's challenges into opportunities for our clients and our people."

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