

E-sports veteran Nick Holden teams up with 365 Digital as gaming solutions specialist

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The gaming industry is now bigger than the film and music industries combined and is a global mainstream phenomenon that attracts gamers from all walks of life and all corners of the world. The gaming scene in South Africa is heating up, with [revenues from video games](#) set to reach R6,2bn by 2022.



Nick Holden

Acknowledging this and responding to the growth in the local market, 365 Digital confidently recruited Nick Holden to become the company's gaming solutions specialist for Anzu.io; the world's premier blended in-game advertising marketplace, which they represent in South Africa.

Nick Holden is a well-respected pioneer in the South African gaming scene with over 10 years of experience. With his credentials, 365 Digital will be providing brands expert advice and opportunities to unlock the potential of advertising to audiences in gaming environments.

Nick's passion for gaming was easily realised when asked the simple question...

Why Anzu?

"What intrigued me initially about Anzu was that as a product, it does not look to exploit the gamer but rather becomes part of their environment. The blended in-game advertising places ads directly into the surrounding environments in a truly non-disruptive manner.

An example of this seamless integration with Anzu is if I were to play a car racing game like Trackmania; a billboard next to the race track will display an ad in an ultra-realistic way. This allows me to play but still be exposed to the brand messaging. It's a much better experience than having pop-up adverts strangle-holding my gaming experience. So, it's great for gamers. You are not interfering with our experience and allowing us to do the thing we came to do – play the game."

What's in it for brands?

"This is where it really got interesting for me. Anzu is the gateway to one of the worlds' fastest growing forms of entertainment and what is available to brands now is a product that allows brands to measure and track branding campaigns within a gaming environment in real-time, for the very first time.

I've worked with many brands over the years that have been looking for an entry point into in-game advertising. What has been missing from conversations until now has been credible measurement and transparency of data to back up campaign results. Problem solved! ANZU have brought the transparency of mainstream digital advertising to gaming by partnering with third-party measurement vendors such as MOAT, Cheq.ai and IAS.

That is also thanks to them being forward-focused enough to develop their software within game creation tools, like Unreal Engine. This allows them to deliver the programmatic ads into gaming environments much easier and in real-time. Long gone are the days of hardcoding ads into games.

What is the future of gaming in South Africa and what can brands look forward to?

“The future of gaming in South Africa, let me rub my crystal ball quickly... In all seriousness, South Africa has a vastly different ecosystem to what has been created overseas where, most importantly, access to gaming is far easier and more affordable for their general populace”

“We already have a diverse demographic of gamers but there is still some difficulty to access this audience and engage with them, from a brand side. Our work with brands in South Africa gets me excited, as we now have the right vehicle to reach and connect with gamers.”

“When it comes to gaming in South Africa, I cannot see the growth stopping in the long term. The market will shift and change – however, the barrier to entry for gaming will keep lowering with the increasing access to smartphones and decreases in data costs.”

Things to consider when running an in-game campaign?

When approaching gaming as a channel for advertising, brands should consider making use of formats that enhance the gaming experience and not degrade or hinder it. People are there to play games and have a great time doing it. If a brand can be part of the gameplay natively and show up authentically, then we're all building an ecosystem that is sustainable.

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