

How membership is becoming a sustainable business model for public interest journalism

 By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

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The Daily Maverick [recently won](#) Best News Publisher and Best Reader Revenue Programme at the Wan-Ifra (World Association of News Publishers) Awards and has also been announced as the co-winner of the Global Shining Light award at the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN) Awards that took place in Hamburg last month.



Styli Charalambous, the CEO of *The Daily Maverick*. Image supplied.

In a press release sent to *Bizcommunity*, the online publication states that:

“ The importance of being able to generate revenue for an independent publishing house is as important as chasing after breaking news. ”

For the *Daily Maverick*, this has been a challenge for the past decade because of its commitment to keeping its quality journalism and investigations free for all, helping it to not only continue its role as a watchdog but also participate in the evolution as news media emerges from its post-apocalyptic period.

The company had to shift from a business-to-business revenue model to a business-to-consumer business model. Its willingness to change its approach to technology in its business was one of its main reasons for success.

Here, Styli Charalambous, the CEO of *The Daily Maverick*, elaborates on a remarkable year of growth that the publication has experienced and shares his thoughts on how membership is carving out a place as a sustainable business model for public interest journalism.

■ ***It has been a huge growth year for Daily Maverick. Please tell us why this year, in particular, has been so significant.***

Our team has almost doubled in headcount in the last year, so managing that kind of growth is really challenging. We run a lean, tight ship and we always emphasise investment in editorial over anything else.



Tim Cohen and Pieter-Louis Myburgh join *Daily Maverick* as part of newsroom expansion

8 Mar 2019



We've added *Business Maverick*, *Maverick Life*, *TGIFood*, *Maverick Citizen*, *Our Burning Planet* and *Declassified UK* to the mix of editorial as well as expanded our internship programme and core offering of analysis and investigations. We also launched our membership programme, *Maverick Insider*, so it's just been a crazy year.



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■ ***Please comment on how membership is carving out a place as a sustainable business model for public interest journalism.***

It's a model that is perfectly suited for us, and we're embracing the opportunity to engage with our members – which is the heart of any membership effort as opposed to a subscription or donation model. We're very excited about the changes it's forcing us to explore, and the feedback from our members has been incredibly supportive. It's not only helping us out financially but helping us evolve as a news organisation. I think it will explode in popularity, and I'm surprised it hasn't taken off more in more developed markets like the UK and US.

■ ***Can you let us in on what other plans are in the pipeline for the next 12 months?***

We're just about to launch our 10-year book looking back at the *Daily Maverick* adventure in news. "We have a game changer" is our pilot experiment into book publishing, and we're doing it in a very different way to how books are normally done. If it goes well, we'll invest in dedicated resources to make a proper go of it. We're also figuring out how we can get our podcast off the ground, and kicking the tyres on some other products that I can't really share any info on at this stage. It'll be a very busy 12 months, again.



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Styli Charalambous 18 Jan 2019



■ ***What are you most excited about?***

There's just so much to be optimistic about, and I guess that's probably what we should be grateful for – a better class of problems than the ones we had for the first decade. But if I had to choose one thing it would be membership, and how it's influencing almost every part of the organisation for the better.

■ ***What's at the top of your to-do list?***

Technology. We've underinvested in this space and, now that we have a measurable return on investment through

membership, we can afford to look at ways tech and data can improve our lives. We're also part of some exciting global projects that will help us make up the gap in tech that bigger players have on us.

📌 **Anything else you'd like to add?**

I'm incredibly proud of our team – both editorial and non-editorial – that are doing incredible work rivalling many better-resourced organisations in more developed markets. We're a proudly South African success story, and I am honoured to have been part of it.

For the latest news and updates you can visit the Daily Maverick [website](#) or follow it on the following social media platforms: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#).

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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