

# Memeburn set to launch two new sites, awards



By Herman Manson: @marklives

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Matthew Buckland has grown his marketing and publishing businesses, Creative Spark and Memeburn.com, to 12 full-time staff members in little more than a year. At the moment he complains about the pace of growth - as in not quite fast enough - and, to inject further fuel into his budding media empire, he is announcing the launch of a series of new burn.com websites.



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First up is [Gearburn.com](#), which soft-launched last week and which will focus on reviews and news on gadgets and games. The site will be fully operational by the end of this week (that is, by 22 April 2011). Gearburn.com intends offering video reviews as well as more traditional text based reviews.

Several months down the line is Ventureburn.com, which will focus on the venture capital and start-up scene, followed by the Burn Awards, which will recognise innovative and entrepreneurial products in the mobile, 'Net or app space.

## Expanding to include other BRICS countries

[Memeburn.com](#) itself, billed as a 'Mashable/Techcrunch for emerging market tech', has grown to a monthly audience of 80 000 and accounts for about a quarter of Buckland's business. The site is expanding its editorial focus outside South Africa to include the other BRICS countries, namely Brazil, Russia, India and China. Ultimately, the intention is to grow the site and content to a point where Memeburn South Africa and Memeburn BRICS can be split.

Buckland believes SA media has some inherent strengths that makes it competitive in the emerging market space, including the fact that it operates in both the developed and developing markets while also having great command of the English language and Western business practice.

He found Cape Town an easier location to take the leap of faith and start his own business, saying an "optical illusion" in Cape Town makes the start-up/entrepreneurial community seem bigger than it is.

Cape Town is wedged between a mountain and the big blue sea, of course, which forces business to be quite concentrated. Because of this tight geographical spread, the entrepreneurial community are bound closer together than in a city as vast as Johannesburg.

## Help break the isolation



Matthew Buckland

Resource sharing, co-opetition and lots of goodwill help break the isolation many entrepreneurs feel when they launch a business. The new Creative Spark/Memeburn offices on the corner of Kloof Street and Park Road, for example, sport tables donated or sold on the cheap from rivals Quirk and iafrica.com.

The agency side of the business, Creative Spark, will eventually be split from the publishing operation, says Buckland, but for the moment incubates the publishing operations. Buckland does insist that a Chinese wall is firmly in place between the two operations. In fact, he sees this as a key differentiator for the marketing business, as SEO is seen from a publisher's perspective rather than a marketer's.

Search engine optimisation (SEO) practitioners are guilty of filling the web with deceptive content (content designed to rank sites on Google, even if those sites aren't relevant to what users are actually searching for) says Buckland, and as publisher he finds that unconscionable.

### Range of clients

The company has done work for a range of clients including DStv, Cell C, South African Tourism and Windhoek Lager.

[Buckland](#) was GM of 24.com before heading up an innovation start-up called 20FourLabs. He is also the former GM of the Mail & Guardian Online.

### ABOUT HERMAN MANSON: @MARKLIVES

The inaugural Vodacom Social Media Journalist of the Year in 2011, Herman Manson (@marklives) is a business journalist and media commentator who edits industry news site [www.marklives.com](#). His writing has appeared in newspapers and magazines locally and abroad, including Bizcommunity.com. He also co-founded *Brand* magazine.

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