

Virtual studios with MGG

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Image by Gunther Muller

Technical events supplier, MGG, have set up two virtual studios at their premises to accommodate their clients' wide range of events from conferences to product launches, live broadcasts, and music performances.

Interestingly enough, this professional virtual experience is extremely affordable. It's not a Zoom meeting but rather an appealing package for companies wanting to reach out to their clients or employees, and a temporary solution while South Africa awaits the green light to reopen events. MGG is also able to assist with hybrid events which cater for up to fifty guests. These events take place in a venue and combine a live audience with an interactive online audience.



MGG's Tamsyn Strydom and Vickie Whitehead

MGG Project Managers, Tamsyn Strydom and Vickie Whitehead, explain how the studios came about.

"I was in Durban on a big event when the first cases of Covid-19 were identified in South Africa," Tamsyn recalls. "Just a couple of days later, on 15 March, the president announced that large gatherings of more than one hundred people were prohibited. I remember the number of cancellations we had on that same day. It was quite a shock."

The MGG team regrouped and decided to build a virtual studio in their warehouse. "Many other rental companies immediately made this offering available, but we took a back seat and first ironed out how we could create this environment for our clients within our space, keeping in mind that we had a pandemic on our hands."

MGG is one of the few rental companies who employ a health and safety manager and have implemented strict safety procedures at their workplace during this time.

While a local music band was one of the first to make use of the virtual studio, Vickie Whitehead wanted to reach out to her corporate clients who mainly consist of event planners and professional conference organisers. "We wanted to keep our clientele up and running, not only

the end client but all the PCOs and the service-providers in between, who otherwise would have no facility to carry on making a living,” said Vickie.



MGG's Studio B

MGG initially built a large studio in Warehouse B, consisting of a stage with stairways on either side. While this stunning platform was successfully used for various events,

the crew soon realised that there was a need for a smaller, corporate space. As a result, Studio A (Warehouse A), was born.

“It’s about changing your view on events,” said Vickie. “We are used to big stages and everything we do is on a large scale. We had to change our mindset and now everything is much smaller, more intimate and offers a very different angle to how we previously did things. Many skills and new skills have come out of this.”



Truth be told, MGG have been streaming for years, just at venues instead of at their own studio. “We are very fortunate because we have a big pool of highly skilled technicians in various disciplines,” adds Tamsyn. “It was a natural transition for our video engineers to be running content as they would on a normal event, for our video technicians to pick up the cameras because the basis was still the same. Audio engineers and the lighting team could continue what they were doing. Very little has changed except that the venue has now become the screen. The skills are still there; it’s just changing how you utilise them.”

The set in Studio A can be split up. There is a small satellite stage on the left, ideal for MC link-ups, and a big screen on the right-hand side. The separate spaces work very well for broadcast, offering two very different looks and giving time for cross and changeovers while keeping the screen dynamic for viewers at home.



Image by Jacobus Janisch Le Roux

Studio A was specifically designed to accommodate a green screen element. “We have done a number of events with virtual sets which is a fantastic solution and comes at a tenth of the price it would cost to build an actual set,” said Tamsyn. MGG has three in-house designers, who virtually draw the sets and have worked exceptionally hard over this period. “It works out very well because on the big screen you can have a full green screen event, and then on the smaller satellite side, you can have the link-ups.”



Image by Jacobus Janisch Le Roux

While virtual events will never replace the thrill of a live production, the platform has opened doors for the future. It means that international speakers, as an example, could attend an event virtually and thus save costs on flights and accommodation. It's also a great way to host product launches, interactive conferences or live streaming events having the peace of mind that a technical company, like the MGG team, will ensure a smooth and professional broadcast event.



Image by Jacobus Janisch Le Roux