



grow



M&CSAATG

Levergy

From start-up to agency of the year
in 4 short years



With a game-changing approach and delivery that exceeds expectations, sports and entertainment agency, Leverage, is a force to be reckoned with. This, together with their sheer speed of growth from start up to mid-size agency in only four years, makes them a formidable contender in their field.

The world of sports sponsorship marketing is a challenging one, particularly in South Africa, where the concept and the value that lies in sponsorship is not often understood and optimally leveraged. For Clint Paterson, CEO of the multi-award-winning agency, Leverage, sponsorship marketing was ripe for disruption – an opportunity he and his partners grabbed with both hands.

Starting out as the new kids on the block four years ago, Leverage was first seen by many cynics and competitors as a wild card 'Jerry McGuire' move. They've since moved leaps and bounds from that perception, opening doors to being entrusted with big brand assets in sports and entertainment. Today, the brand-boosting skills of Leverage stretch from sponsorship management to activations, digital communication and PR. The agency also recently launched a team that is dedicated to the mining of strategic insights, to help companies understand where the opportunities for sponsorship are ripe.

Unlocking opportunities in sponsorship

"Sponsorship is about so much more than companies putting up their branding, which is often how it is approached in South Africa.

If you look at what's happening overseas in the United Kingdom and the United States, there are such strong sponsorship programmes, where the approach is very strategic and a lot of thought has gone into it," says Paterson.

In his experience in the industry, many clients looking to enhance their brands have had previously unsatisfactory experience with sponsorships. His response to this, which is one of his team's drivers of success, has been educating clients on what

best-in-class sponsorship actually entails, and how to derive maximum value from it.

"Marketers in corporates tend to accept the need for advertising agencies, and digital, but they don't necessarily see the value that lies in sponsorship.

Companies are typically more driven towards their CSI initiatives, and that is a good thing, but strategic sponsorships allow a company to leverage the sponsored property to gain greater traction for their brand, all while doing 'good,'" says Paterson. "People are more likely to respond to a hero rather than a brand."

The big win that cemented Levergy's leadership

A big milestone in Levergy's growth journey was when Audi put its sponsorship work out to pitch. The job at hand related to management of the Proteas sponsorship property. Clint and his team were up against everyone in the industry and won the account, which made it "the first time that other agencies really stopped to consider us as competition. It put us in the boardroom; not only as contenders, but as winners."

Stabilising the rocket ship

Paterson and his business partner Struan Campbell started Levergy in 2013, after leaving the sponsorship agency they worked for at the time, where Paterson held the role of Managing Director. Ready to disrupt the sponsorship industry, they bootstrapped the company and in four, short, years they achieved rocket-speed growth. They grew from a business with three employees to a complement of 25, that form an agile and competitive team today.

At the end of 2015, the business' rapid growth and the need for strategic guidance saw Paterson engage with business coaching firm, Grow. He was sceptical at first. Having come from an agency background, and from a senior role, he wasn't sure where they could help him, but his business coach added strategic and pragmatic value from the start.

Paterson explains, "My coach has been pretty phenomenal for me personally. We had millions of plans and he helped us be more focused and accountable to them. He keeps me in check and is very honest and objective. He makes us think about things differently, has helped to streamline our plans and now things are a lot clearer."

In his view, it's really good to have someone who is not emotionally involved to discuss company management and strategy with. "Having my coach facilitate our strategy sessions impartially is good; he brings a calmness to it. He makes us ask and answer tough questions about what we do, which is important." The year of 2015 also saw Kieren Jacobsen joining Levergy as a business partner, which Clint says was a significant milestone given his extensive experience in Sports Management.

Gaining agency recognition

Paterson and his team have worked hard to change perceptions about sponsorship and, in the process, have achieved numerous successes for their clients. At the same time, in unlocking the power of role models in the sporting world, Levergy has become a role model in itself.

In May 2017, the company was named Sport Agency of the Year, in recognition of their work on New Balance, SuperSport and Audi campaigns, at the esteemed Discovery Sport Industry Awards. Levergy also received a record nine awards on the night that included Creative Activation of the Year for The Audi Bowling Lab, Best Use of Social Media for SuperSport's Euro 2016 Campaign, and both Campaign of the Year and Best use of PR for New Balance's 'Feel the Fire'.

The recognition builds on an already impressive start to 2017 for the agency that also picked up two awards at the recent IAB Bookmark Awards.



Being acquired by a world-class international brand

As if nabbing nine awards in one night were not testament enough to the strength of this formidable company, Leverage celebrated yet another significant milestone. Five-time UK Agency of the Year awardee, M&C Saatchi Sport and Entertainment, announced their acquisition of Leverage in June 2017.

Commenting on the deal, Paterson said, "To be recognised by the M&C Saatchi Group as the company to represent their sport and entertainment offering in Africa is a proud achievement for us. We have always considered their work and approach as the global benchmark, and are excited about what we can achieve together on the African continent."

Geared for further growth

Rapid growth is tough to manage, says Paterson, "It's quite easy to retain your vision and culture when there are four or five of you, but with more growth that becomes more challenging."

We needed to define that vision and those values and ask ourselves, 'What's the Leverage way?' As leaders in our business, we have had to learn to trust that the team is doing things the way that we feel they should be done when they're out in the field without us."

The human element has also proved challenging. Culture and doing things the right way is important to Paterson and his business partners, and one of their major challenges has been finding people who feel the same.

He explains that the sponsorship industry isn't regulated like the advertising, marketing, PR and media industries are, and that there is no-one guiding the process, saying "this is what we should be doing". There is, for example, no specific curriculum at a tertiary level that addresses sponsorship on a larger scale. It is likely that this lack of formal structure in the industry, and lack of dedicated tertiary instruction adds to the challenge of finding the right people to bring into the business.

Yet the high energy of sports-centric go-getters at every turn when one walks through the agency, indicates that it is here that the agency leaders are building winning teams. Grow has been an integral part of this achievement. "Our coach has helped us to put proactive plans in place, told us what we should be doing and what we should have in place before we recruit. He gives us tangible help in the

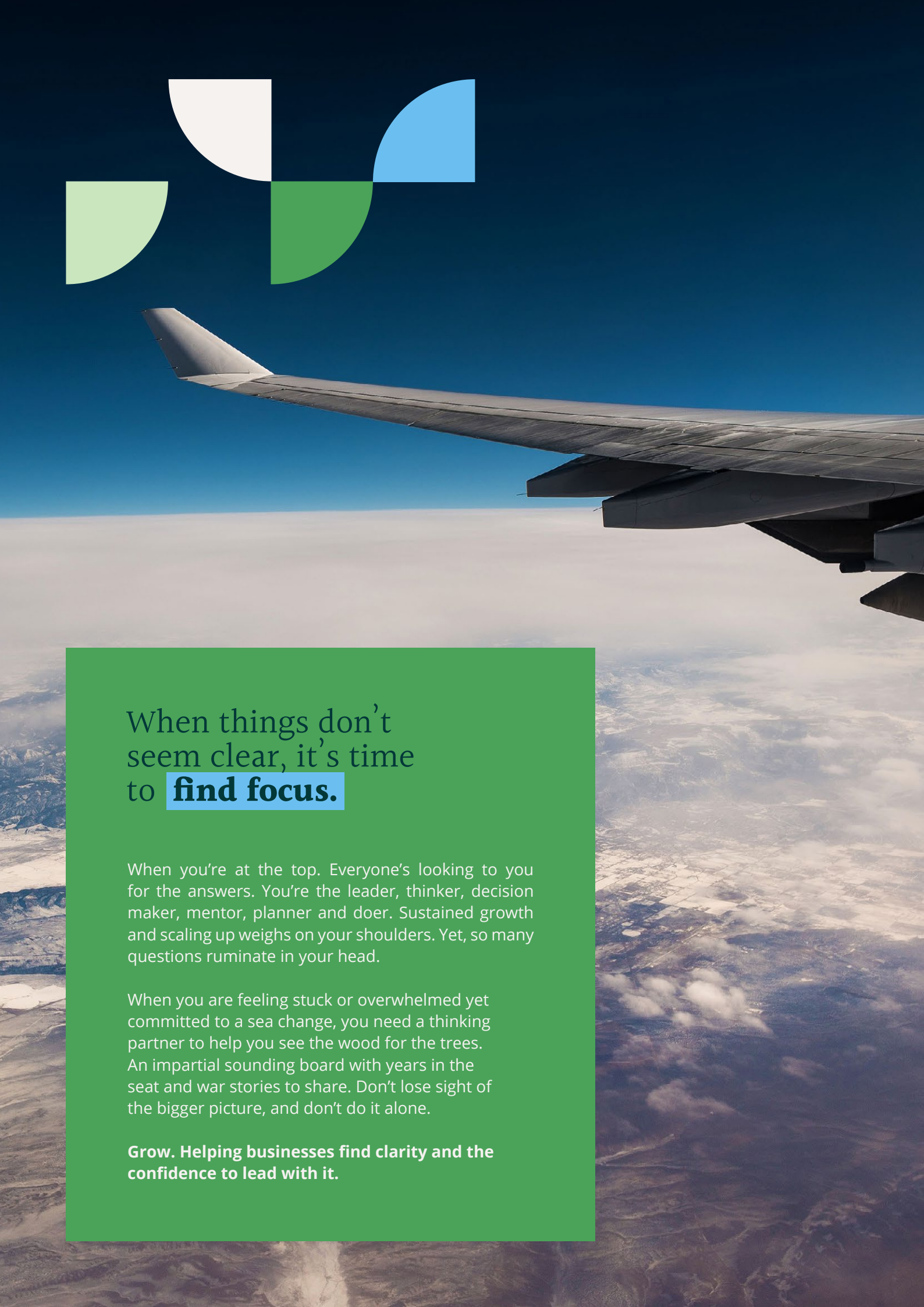

business. Our coach is passionate about our business, and takes a strong stance in what we are doing," says Paterson.

It is fitting that in their chosen niche, Paterson and his partners have a big match temperament with scores of lessons that anyone can learn from. They have boldly set some big targets for 2020. Looking forward, they intend to keep their successful balance between innovation, creativity and structure. This focused agency is certainly in gear to continue to grow but more so, they are geared to continue to disrupt.

In Paterson's words: "Sponsorship is ripe for disruption" so get ready to watch as the future game of brand building through sponsorship unfolds on their path.



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When things don't
seem clear, it's time
to **find focus.**

When you're at the top. Everyone's looking to you for the answers. You're the leader, thinker, decision maker, mentor, planner and doer. Sustained growth and scaling up weighs on your shoulders. Yet, so many questions ruminate in your head.

When you are feeling stuck or overwhelmed yet committed to a sea change, you need a thinking partner to help you see the wood for the trees. An impartial sounding board with years in the seat and war stories to share. Don't lose sight of the bigger picture, and don't do it alone.

Grow. Helping businesses find clarity and the confidence to lead with it.



Build your business with **clarity and confidence.**



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