

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE MULTI-PLATFORM WORLD**

**“MUST SMALL STATES MISS OUT?”**

**by**

**Mesake Nawari**

**Fiji TV Chief Executive Officer**

**At the**

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**As we say our greetings back in the Fiji Islands, BULA VINAKA!**

- Madam, Chairperson
- Delegates
- Ladies and gentlemen

I thank the CBA for inviting me to be part of this panel this morning. In fact this is my first CBA since I joined Fiji TV almost 2 years ago.

It is indeed a privilege and an honour.

**“Must Small States Miss Out?”**. The answer is simple ...No.

Let me share with you Fiji TV’s experience in proving that broadcasters can also make a difference to their country and other nations in a multi-platform environment.

Fiji TV is a public listed company and 99% owned by locals. We commenced operations in July 1994 with a Free-to-Air service called Fiji 1 and 2 years later introduced terrestrial Pay TV service. TV industry in Fiji is 15 years old.

When Fiji last hosted the CBA Annual Conference in February 2004, we reported to you then that our coverage was about 85% of the Fiji Islands through our analogue terrestrial service only.

That’s 85% of a nation with an economic zone of 1.8 million square kilometres and a population of about 830,000 people.

So in terms of our reach up to 2004, we were broadcasting to just over 700,000 people using the analogue platform.

Today, we have 100% coverage of the Fiji Islands.

And we did it in just a little over 1 year.

We could have reached the remaining 15% of Fiji by adding one transmitter at a time.

At that rate, we would finish in another 30 years.

In fact, getting a regular supply of electricity to these areas is a challenge on its own.

But we took the option, which is to leap frog ahead with the available technology – the use of satellite and digital infrastructure.

Just when we decided to move forward, our plan was derailed when the contract partner for satellite delivery gave our transponder space for KU band satellite to another party.

And this was made purely for the reason that we were a small company in a small developing country.

Our pleas that the contract we had with them be honoured were completely ignored and we had to seek legal action.

The company is based in the Amsterdam so after a loss in the Lower Court, we appealed the decision and the Appeals Court eventually ruled in our favour.

But by then, there was no KU band space available to us in our part of the World. Instead of our initial Satellite service provider unwinding the KU Band transaction which would have cost them millions of dollars in law suits, we agreed to accept the option they gave us to switch to C-band.

We launched our Direct-To-Home service called SKY Pacific in December 2004, rolling out 12 channels, with one Free-To-Air 10 Pay TV channels (pre-paid subscription service), and a Pay Per View Channel.

This was a milestone for us in bridging the information gap. As you saw in the video, it was the first time some of our people had access to locally relevant television.

In December 2005, we expanded SKY Pacific by four additional channels. This service now offers 14 Pay TV channels, a pay-per view channel and off course our free-to-air service, Fiji 1.

Our Sky Pacific footprint covers most Pacific Island Countries territories including Tonga, Samoa, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau and New Caledonia and parts of New Zealand and Australia.

Sky Pacific is an encrypted service and we don't sell to New Zealand and Australia because somebody else owns the rights in those countries.

We also use this platform to deliver to broadcasters in Other South Pacific Island Countries LIVE Sports and other programmes such as the Oscars, Emmys and the Grammys.

We acquired EMTV, the only free-to-air service in Papua New Guinea in December 2004 from Channel 9 Australia.

So between Fiji TV and EMTV - our broadcast reach now stretches right across the Pacific.

In terms of viewership, that represents a potential market of approximately 7.6 million

people.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is about 92% of the total population of the Pacific region – excluding New Zealand and Australia.

So in the space of 1 year, we have managed to increase our market from 700,000 people to over 7 million people – a massive jump indeed.

That was only possible after our conscious decision to shift to the satellite platform.

We are now moving forward with 8 radio channels to be made available on our satellite delivery platform– another new business area that's only been made possible by moving onto the digital platform.

What's next?

Well, we're watching what's happening, in the mobile business, internet, video-on-demand, use of personal and digital video recorders and iPods.

In Fiji alone, the only mobile operator there, Vodafone Fiji, will be launching 3-G this year.

We're already in talks with them on a partnership for the supply of local content.

We're now revamping our website so we can stream locally produced programs including News and Current Affairs **via** the internet, not only to the people of Fiji and the Pacific, but to the rest of the world especially Pacific Island Communities.

Content is still King.

But the question for us now is what to do with it and how to manage that transition in order to extract incremental income.

In the Pacific, where the terrain, the different languages and cultures are the major challenges for broadcasters and media companies, we just cannot continue to rely totally on traditional broadcast methods anymore.

Our people are travelling more and more.

After being exposed to other cultures and ways of life particularly in the Western world, their own needs when they return home are changing.

They come back home now with iPods and Blackberry, the latest mobile phones and laptops.

Television itself and even the internet, is changing the way of life of our people.

Our governments are opening up our markets – particularly in pay television, ISP's and soon mobile business. Telco charges are coming down as well.

So in order to survive and in order to continue to provide compelling content to our audience, we have to change the way we operate our business. Diversification for us is the way forward.

We need to partner with broadcasters in the region, telcos and other companies that can help us broaden our market and deliver our content in cost effective ways.

But the other challenge for us then is not to lose sight of our core business.

For us at Fiji TV, that will always remain the **delivery of compelling content**.

As long as we produce and broadcast compelling content, we will continue to have an engaged audience.

The other major challenge we face is to retain and enhance the unique identity of our people – the Pacific people.

We're deluged with so many different values and cultures from around the globe that it becomes very easy to lose our own.

We firmly believe at Fiji TV that we have a responsibility to help protect that unique identity.

With the move toward multi-platforms, managing the transition in terms of our customers is a challenge in itself.

Fiji TV is at a stage now where we are starting to introduce campaigns to migrate our terrestrial pay tv service subscribers to the DTH service.

This is not an easy task because people naturally resist change.

Our literacy rates are not as high as developed countries so we are viewed with a lot of suspicion.

So, ladies and gentlemen, to answer the question: Must Small Nations Miss Out?, we say NO.

We cannot afford to miss out or allow others to leave us behind.

Multiple platforms should be embraced as they offer what we create for a much wider community to consume - anywhere, anytime.

But from our experience, the transition toward the multi-platform environment for broadcasters in small nations must be carefully planned and managed.

Partner with those that have experience in that area, seek professional advice and manage our public relations well.

But at the same time, do not lose sight of our core business of informing, educating and entertaining our people.

Thank You.