

Blacksmith Collective

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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“Like a blacksmith, we forge together various skill sets and craft to create a beautiful finished piece,” explain co-founders Diogo Mendonça and Marcus von Geyso of Blacksmith Collective, a new production collective that pools creative talent to collaborate on content creation and creative consulting projects.



They launched the collective earlier this month and already have a network of over 200 creative partners across the country. I interviewed them to find out how they came up with the idea and to explain the model, and how their ‘*The Streets – Ode to the 011*’ showcases this as well as the power of collaboration and creative freedom...

What sparked the idea to start Blacksmith Collective?

We’ve always been entrepreneurs at heart, and with our agency and production experience, it was a natural progression to start Blacksmith Collective. We’ve always wanted to work for ourselves and creative work really drives us, and we enjoy doing it.

We didn’t initially have the idea to start a collective, we just knew that we needed to collaborate with the right people to be able to execute a project. Having worked together for a few years in the agency and production industries, we had the experience to be able to handle a full scale production within our direct network.

An opportunity came for us to work on our own piece of branded content and, naturally being entrepreneurs, we decided to just register a production business. We quickly realised that with good project management, quality controls and creative talent, we were able to execute a high standard of production work. Hence, we decided to create a platform for like-minded creatives to collaborate, and learn from each other. It has also helped us unearth new talent and give them an opportunity to work on some really big brands.

▣ ***Describe the model.***

Our business model works on a per project basis, working with freelancers and/or other businesses. It allows us to be very dynamic and scale our business based on each brief. So we can work on really small budget projects or full TVCs at any given moment. This allows us to keep our overheads low and allocate budgets to the right things, and benefits both our clients and our creatives, as our creatives get paid really well and our clients get motivated, highly skilled creatives to work on their projects.

The model is simple. We service clients and brands by helping them solve creative problems. As production specialists we project manage and quality control, using our vast network of creative talent. We take the necessary time and research in choosing the best talent for the project.

▣ ***How does it benefit both the client and the creative?***

The benefit for the client is that we prioritise the integrity of the work first by ensuring that the correct skill and mindset is used per project. Having access to our vast network allows us to be nimble and scalable, thus being able to better service our clients with a wider range of offerings. When working with so many creatives, it allows for an environment for concepts and solutions to be fresh and relevant.

The benefit for creatives is that we work on some of the biggest brands out there, and have strong relationships with our clients. Our clients trust has allowed us to work on some really awesome projects thus far.



▣ ***Tying in with our #InnovationMonth theme, how is your unconventional approach to production leading innovation in the creative industry?***

It's not so much about the approach leading innovation in the creative industry, but it's about the approach allowing us to prioritise the integrity of the work. We strongly believe that good work will get the recognition it deserves, thus having like-minded, talented people on a project, in most cases allows the work to literally speak for itself.

The focus is shifted back onto the work. Everyone that works on our projects are credited for their part in the process, and this not only helps motivate creatives, but also instills a sense of ownership and, therefore, accountability to step up and create the best piece of work possible.

Our model inspires collaborative working, and allows us to pull in the best creatives around the world to jump on projects with us and provide their expertise. This is a gap that isn't being filled right now. Our expertise pool is virtually unlimited, and

we can provide clients with a unique team, specifically chosen for their project. And we found that this not only creates awesome work, it also keeps our ideas fresh.

■ ***Comment on your interest in tech applications?***

We love the tech space and are always looking to test our curiosities while challenging ourselves, and for the latest tech to introduce into our marketing strategies or on our production sets. And if it doesn't exist, then we try to build it. Like on our Castle Lite job, there wasn't enough budget to rent a 360° 'glam cam', but we really wanted to make the 360° drinking shot a reality for our client, so we designed and built a 360° camera rig from scratch, for a tenth of the price.

■ ***'Collaboration' is a big buzzword at the moment. Why do you believe in it, and why is it so important, especially in creative projects that require multiple skill sets?***

Everyone can't be good at everything, and that is why you need creatives that can complement each other's skill sets. By delegating tasks and ensuring that each member on the team has a clear set of goals to achieve on their specific project, allows us to deliver higher quality work. Multiple brains will always be better than one, but it is important to have key people steering the ideas and the brain power. This is where we come in, we keep the focus on the golden thread.

■ ***What led you to work on 'The Streets – Ode to the 011', with no client or budget?***

We were putting our showreel together and realised that we needed more footage for it. And we had been wanting to create an inner city content piece for a while, and were given access to a few locations that were going to be demolished, thus we decided to just go with it. We often get so busy taking on client work that we actually don't create or showcase our own work. We also wanted to showcase what our business model truly stands for, by coming with a concept that various creatives believed in and were willing to trade their expertise for. We simply showed them the concept and told them based on their specific talent, that they had creative license to do what they think is the best from their point of view. The end result is a great piece of authentic content, created by a bunch of passionate skilled creatives.

■ ***What other projects are you particularly proud of and why?***

'Castle Lite Unlocks' series as it was our first project and we built the 360° rig for it. 'Castle Lager Intrinsic', as it was the game changer for us and received the highest scoring for a content piece for brand in the African market test. It solidified a lot of our relationships. And then of course, 'The Streets', as it allowed us to showcase the power of our network and just create something awesome.



■ What's next?

- To expand our footprint and work on an international project.
- Hopefully win an award or five.
- And work on our first feature film. (We've received our first movie script, and we're looking forward to being part of a new division in the creative industry.)

For more, go to [WeAreBlacksmith.co](https://www.WeAreBlacksmith.co) and follow them on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and/or [Instagram](#).

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