

Engine Shop continues global push with latest acquisition

By **Ben Fischer, Staff Writer**

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SA Studios Global's Scott Debson will take on an executive role with Engine Shop.

Engine Shop has acquired SA Studios Global's esports and soccer divisions, further developing its international ambitions in a deal that makes Engine Shop the lead agency for Major League Soccer's esports effort and Umbro in North America.

Former SA Studios Global partner Scott Debson will now become executive vice president of strategy for Engine Shop. Jamie King, who led the gaming and esports division at SA, is now executive vice president of esports at the Bruin Sports Capital-owned agency.

The deal is the third in a string of acquisitions designed to make Engine Shop an international player in esports, soccer and the Olympics. The agency bought Olympics consultant Terrence Burns' business in February and The Gamer Agency in December. CEO Brian Gordon said the three pickups vault the agency into the most important international sport platforms.

"You're going to see us continue to build on that global strategy, but to us, if you've got esports, you've got football and you've got Olympics, and you then build around that, you're in pretty good shape," Gordon said Engine Shop now has about 25 people in its gaming/esports business. The combined agency will promote itself as one of the few shops that can bring both traditional sports and esports expertise to both consulting and activation work.

The SA Studios deal developed out of Engine Shop's talks with The Gamer Agency last year, which designed the Mixer NYC Studio gaming venue at Microsoft's retail store in Manhattan. SA Studios was consulting for The Gamer Agency on that project, and King was head of studio production.

SA Studios has handled various campaigns for Major League Soccer since 2013, and was the lead agency on its recently completed eMLS Cup, in which gamers represented 19 MLS clubs in a FIFA18 tournament.

Debson said Engine Shop's size, along with Bruin's Capital backing, was appealing because they can now accept more clients than they could before.

"Both Jamie and I see an enormous amount of opportunities on a weekly basis, so to actually be able to look at some of those with an experienced team behind us is also very interesting," Debson said.

King and Debson will report to Gordon and Engine Shop President Chris Handy.