

## Highlights



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## Community media wins at MDDA-Sanlam awards

By Cheryl Langbridge, MDDA

**E**xcellence in local media was honoured at the MDDA-Sanlam Awards' glittering gala event held at Emperors Palace in Kempton Park recently. The event was attended by the Minister of Communications, Faith Muthambi, and the winners were announced from a record of more than 800 entries. These entries came from across South Africa, covering both the community broadcast and small commercial and community print sectors.

The finale of the awards evening celebrated the overall winners, including Best Commu-

nity Station, which went to Aganang FM in the North West. The essence of this community radio station is its people-driven approach, with a clear demonstration of true community engagement. Aganang FM serves as a good role model in this tier of broadcasting, commented the broadcast judges.

The Rantho Letsebe Award went to Zibonele FM in the Western Cape, a station established in 1993 in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, as a home-made radio station. Initially operating from under a bed in a shipping container that housed



Minister of Communications Faith Muthambi, MDDA Chairperson Phelisa Nkomo and Sanlam Limited Non-Executive Director Dr Rejoice Simelane, cheer the local media award winners.





Sibusiso Biyela, Stanger Weekly, winner of the Column Category for Community and Small Commercial Print, with Ainsley Moos, Head: Group Communications, Sanlam.



Duduzile Nchoba, Acting CEO of the MDDA, with Tabletalk, winners of the Best Front Pages in the Corporate-owned Free Sheets Sector.

a clinic and servicing the Griffiths Mxenge community, it has evolved into the second biggest community radio station in the province.

Print Journalist of the Year went to Andries van Zyl of **Zoutpansberger**, who submitted a portfolio of outstanding quality and journalistic ability. Covering hard news, human interest and investigative stories, his compelling writing style catches the reader's attention and holds it throughout.

Samantha Trail, Press Photographer of the Year, submitted compelling moments from hard news, sport, recreation and everyday life, providing pictures that truly tell a story.

Tasneem Hassan of **Northern News Goodwood/Parow** received the Alet Roux Medal, for a promising journalist with three years or less experience as a community journalist and who has also made it into the top 20 of the Journalist of the Year section. Tasneem's stories covered homeless people, an Ebola ward in the Western Cape, gangs taking over school classrooms and bogus doctors fleeing unwary victims of their money.

Winner of the Hultzer Prize for Corporate Owned Paid Newspapers with a circulation of less than 10 000 went to **Mpumalanga News**. The winner both addresses itself to the needs of its readers, including seSwati readers, as well as offering outstanding layout and well-written stories.

**The Lowvelder** was awarded the Cronwright Trophy for Corporate Owned Paid Newspapers with a circulation of more than 10 000. **The Lowvelder** makes effective use of various platforms to converse with its readers and holds its own among commercial publications on the national scene.

In the Broadcast categories, Best Indigenous Music Programme went to Saziso Dlamini, Radio Khwezi; Best Children's Programme to Sameera Bamath, Radio Islam; and Best Sports Programme to Star Nyembezi of Bay FM. Excellence in News Coverage was awarded to Nothile Zwane, Radio Khwezi; Excellence in Indigenous Languages to Saziso Dlamini, Radio Khwezi, and Foster Chauke, Giyani Community Radio; and Best Business Programme to Marcia Hadebe, Vukani Community Radio. Winner of the Best Educational Programme was Sandile Mbili, Radio Khwezi; Best Drama, Mbalenhla Mthethwa, Radio Khwezi; and Excellence in Investigative Journalism, Paul McNally, VOW FM.

In the Community and Small Commercial Print categories, awards for Photography went to Hugo Redelinghuys of **George Herald** for Sport; Lazarus Dithagiso of **Sedibeng Ster** for News;



and Monique Dural of **People's Post** for Features and Portraits.

For Writing, the award for Grassroots Hard News was awarded to Joseph Ramatamo Sehoai of **Greater Alex Today**; to Jabulani Jonk Mashamba, **Greater Alex Today**, for Grassroots Focus On People; Andries van Zyl, **Zoutpansberger**, for Hard News; Dustin Wetedevich, **Potch Herald**, for Investigative Reporting; Andries van Zyl, **Zoutpansberger**, for Focus on People: Human Interest; and Hugo Redelinghuys, **George Herald**, for Sport. Winner of the Columns category was Sibusiso Biyela, **Stanger Weekly**; and for Personal Finance was Thembakazi Mbobela, **Your Money**.

For Best Front Pages, **Zithethele** won Community Media/Grassroots; **Die Hoorn**, Small Independent Commercial (established more than five years); **Tabletalk**, Corporate-Owned Free Sheets; and **Middelburg Observer**, Corporate-Owned Paid Newspapers.

The Best Newspaper: Best Indigenous Language Newspaper was **EzaKwazulu News**; Community/Grassroots went to **Township Times**; Small Independent Commercial (emerging two to five years) to **North West on Sunday**; Small Independent Commercial (established more than five years) to **Grocott's Mail**; and Corporate-Owned Free Sheets to **Tygerburger**, Belville.

### Awards partners

The awards are co-sponsored and organised by the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) and Sanlam and celebrate and promote excellence in community media (print, radio and television) and local media owned by the mainstream media (small commercial print). They are the only form of recognition exclusive to this section of the media.

"The awards benefit not only the more than 400 local media entities throughout the country, but also the extensive audience and readership they serve by promoting media diversity and transformation, and empowering the communities they serve," said the Acting CEO of the MDDA, Duduzile Nchoba.

"It was very encouraging to see the use of South Africa's indigenous languages in the broadcast entries received for this year's awards. As the MDDA, this is a focal point in our efforts to nurture and grow media diversity, enabling our communities to tell their own stories in their own languages."

MDDA Chairperson Phelisa Nkomo said that without doubt, initiatives such as the MDDA-Sanlam Awards have played a crucial role in media transformation, "and we are proud to be a partner in the awards.

"We encourage the local media - owners, publishers, editors, journalists and photographers alike - to continue their important roles of nurturing and cultivating our young democracy through resourceful and responsible journalism in the communities they serve."

Sanlam's Head of Group Communications, Ainsley Moos, commented: "The number and quality of the entries we received this year is testimony to the growth in stature the community media is enjoying. Many of the entries came from very remote areas of the country and entrants must be congratulated for the standards achieved, often in a very resource-poor environment.

"The awards also saw entries from media who had not previously participated. This very positive development reflects the increasing importance of these awards to the local media sector."

Sanlam's Group Chief Executive, Johan van Zyl, added: "We believe community media is becoming increasingly important – not only as a watchdog, educator, trainer and entertainer of people and communities, but also in advancing democracy in our country."

The judges for the awards were drawn from leading media figures in the broadcast and print industry, who gave generously of their time in evaluating the entries received from across South Africa. Six judges adjudicated the print categories and five judges the broadcast categories. The print judges were Henry Jeffreys, Fanie Groenewald, Joe Thloloe, Collin Nxumalo, Mboneni Mulaudzi and Ayi Leshabane. The broadcast judges were Mapule Mbhalati, Robin Sewlal, JP Louw, Bruce Mkhize and Kanyisiwe Mkonza.

In their report on the broadcast entries, the broadcast judges commented that there were "very excellent entries. Some were so interesting and pleasant to listen [to] and judge that it made our work very easy. It made us wonder just how it can be so good while others are so far from the intended outcomes."

Commenting on the print sector entries, the print judges said: "We were pleased with the huge number of almost 800 print and photography entries this year, 30 more than last year. This is indicative of the seriousness with which journalists in this sector regard the competition."

### About the MDDA-Sanlam Awards

The MDDA-Sanlam Awards are held in partnership with Print and Digital Media South Africa, the Forum of Community Journalists, National Association of Broadcasters, National Community Radio Forum and Association of Christian Media. Category sponsors this year included Paarl Coldset, Sentech, Buck Broadcast, The Media Connection, Sound Fusion Media and New Installation Co.

The MDDA-Sanlam Awards held this year were the fifth such event, and brought together more than 20 years of Sanlam Community Newspaper Awards and four years of SABC News/MDDA Community Media Awards in one big event. They aim to encourage excellence and reward meritorious work in the following subsectors/categories of local media:

- Community media – in terms of the MDDA Act, means any media project that is owned and controlled by a community where any financial surplus generated is reinvested in the media project; and "community" means a geographically-founded community or any group of persons or sector of the public having a specific ascertainable common interest.
- Small commercial media (SMME) – in terms of the MDDA Act, means independent media enterprises or initiatives that are run for personal gain as micro, very small or small businesses as classified in the National Small Business Act, 1996 (Act No. 102 of 1996).
- Big corporate-owned local media – local media distributed by corporate media owners like Caxton, Media 24, etc.

# Questions to ask a PR agency... **before you hire it**

\*By Allison Cooper

**B**efore you approach a public relations (PR) agency, it's important that you know what you want to achieve, what type of agency you are looking for, who within the company will be responsible for working with the agency to achieve your goals and what you want to spend.

Here are some important questions that you should ask an agency before you hire it, to ensure that it knows your market and is able to achieve your goals, and to ensure that you know what to expect every step of the way.

## **Do you specialise in a specific PR field?**

There are various PR agencies out there, from two-man teams to global companies, which either offer the full complement of PR services or specialise in a particular field, such as media relations, events or social media. Some agencies even specialise in a particular industry sector, such as travel and tourism, information communication technology or even marketing, advertising and media.

Before you employ an agency it's very important that you know what your own goals are so that you hire a company that knows your industry sector, has business and media contacts in the sector and can get the job done professionally and efficiently.

## **Who will work on my account?**

Some agencies send their top dogs in to pitch and then hire really junior PR people to work on your account while others have dedicated specialists assigned to your account only. This is therefore a very important question to ask the agency at the first meeting.

## **How involved will my company be?**

Some agencies expect constant direction from their clients while others want to take the lead. You need to decide which role you want the agency to play and make this clear from the outset.

## **What do you think our company's biggest challenges and opportunities are?**

A PR agency should conduct its own research before it meets with you or comes in to pitch. Based on this,

ask the agency what it thinks your biggest challenges and opportunities are. This will give you a good idea of how effective the agency could be.

## **What's your approach to promoting a product or service?**

Any PR agency worth its salt will ensure that its PR efforts are in line with your marketing and sales goals. If they don't ask you about your own marketing and sales goals you should be worried.

It's imperative that an agency not only understands your industry sector, company and products and services, but that it knows who your competitors are, what their products and services are, what they are up to and in which markets they operate.

## **Which media would you target for my business?**

While you can't expect a PR agency to give you a list of media before you sign a contract at your initial meeting, it should be able to name a few publications it would target with your news. This will give you a good idea whether or not the agency really does know your industry.

## **Do you have examples of your work?**

A successful agency should be able to provide you with a portfolio of successful PR that it has achieved for other clients.

## **How do you incorporate social and digital media in your PR campaigns?**

PR is now closely integrated with social media and digital and mobile communication. Look for an agency that's familiar with trends and knows how to harness them for your company. You can even ask the agency to provide you with an example of a successful campaign it conducted on behalf of another client.

## **How do you measure results?**

Editorial placement is never guaranteed, so it is important to have a frank conversation about metrics with your potential PR agency.

Many agencies measure return on investment based on comparable advertising placement and then double or triple those figures as editorial placement is more credible. Keep in mind though that editorial placement is not enough. You need other information from your agency, such as circulation figures.

When it comes to social media, will the number of new page likes or shares prove efficiency or will the agency use other metrics too?



### What is included in the contract?

Before signing on the dotted line, make sure you are on the same page as the agency. For example, do you want to pay per project only or are you going to sign a retainer?

If you select a retainer, how many hours a month do you get for the retainer that you pay? What happens if these hours are not used or if more hours are used than expected? When does the agency expect payment? What's the notice period if you are not happy with the service? How often will they meet with you? What kind of report will you get from the agency and how often? How will expenses, not included in the retainer, be handled, for example, does the agency charge extra for travel or cellphone calls or are these expenses included in the monthly cost?

### How soon can I expect results?

If it's editorial placement that you're looking for, it takes time. Great coverage doesn't happen overnight, it's a slow process and builds momentum over time. Magazines, for example, can have up to a three-month lead time to publish a story. Ask the agency what it hopes to achieve and in what time frame.

### What do you need from me to hit the ground running?

Before interviewing a PR agency, gather materials that will help it to do its job more efficiently.

For example, if you are looking for editorial content, what's newsworthy in your organisation? Gather these facts so that the agency leaves with a good story. Do you have a press kit about the organisation or must the agency develop one for you? Do you have high resolution photographs or do you need to hire a professional photographer first?

### How often will I hear from you?

This is incredibly important. Since editorial placements can take months to secure, clients should communicate regularly with their PR agency.

This can happen daily via email or telephone, but at least once a month face-to-face. These meetings can serve as brainstorming and feedback sessions.

### What are your working hours?

This question may be basic, but if your company operates over weekends or public holidays you will need an agency that's available when you are open. Will the agency take your call after hours or is this not a service it offers?

### Who are your other clients?

Before contacting a PR agency, have a look at their website to see who its clients are. Then, Google search its clients to see how often they are in the news and whether the publicity is good or not. Doing a little bit of research like this will give you a good idea of how the agency can perform if it's given the information it needs to do its job correctly.

Once you've done this and you are happy with the results, ask the agency for a current client list. This way you can tell if the company is still their client or if they are using another agency.

### How will my company or project affect the agency's current workload?

Any agency can take on a new client, but does it have the resources available to handle the extra workload or will it have to hire additional employees?

If additional employees are needed, they will first have to become familiar with the agency and how it operates before they can concentrate on your goals and objectives.

### Do you have contactable references?

There should be no difference between hiring an employee and hiring an agency when it comes to asking for contactable references. Once you have these, never assume that they are real. Always contact the references and always contact more than one so that you can ensure that they are genuine.

### Which clients has your agency lost?

Asking your potential PR agency which clients no longer work with it and why will give you a good idea whether or not the agency will fit in with your own work ethic.

### Some do's and don'ts

#### Always:

- Do your homework and research the costs of each potential agency.
- Be reasonable: don't expect the earth from a tiny budget.
- Know how much you want to spend.
- Thoroughly read the contract before you sign it.
- Keep your agency in the loop. It can't do its job if it doesn't know what's going on.
- Inform the agency of any potentially negative publicity so that it can put a crisis communication plan in place.
- Give the agency a good brief and make sure you're on the same page.

#### Never:

- Select an agency based on whether it's the cheapest or most expensive! Do your homework and research each one.
- Expect results too soon, especially if it's publicity you're looking for. Good things are worth waiting for!
- Ignore a journalist. Contact the agency and keep it in the loop.
- Lie to your agency. If the agency does not know all the facts it can't advise you correctly.
- Leave your agency to work in the dark. Chances are you won't get the results you are looking for.
- Badmouth a journalist, publication or previous agency. Most industries are small and news travels fast.



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# Communication 2015: State of the Sector

\*By Daniel Munslow

**T**he role of the communication function is ever changing, and presently undergoing a dramatic shift that sees an increasing number of organisations regarding it as a key business driver. As part of this evolution, communicators are increasingly regarded as strategic advisors to business, rather than 'order takers' whose role it is to disseminate information. Communication is a business pillar that is able to add value to the cultural fabric of any organisation, as well as play a key role in reputation and issues management.

Conducted by VMA Group Africa, the State of the Sector is an annual industry-wide survey that aims to investigate the challenges communicators face and where they believe the industry is heading over the next two years. With responses from 177 senior-level communicators operating in organisations and agency environments, ranging in size from a few dozen to more than 25 000 employees, the 2015 survey paints a picture of the state of communications today and helps the reader to better understand the challenges the industry is facing.

## Reporting

Business communication is refocusing on obtaining and retaining a seat at executive committee level, to ensure the role is effectively integrated across all business functions. Forty-five per cent of respondents said the communication function in their business had a seat on the

company's executive team, which is lower than global counterparts who enjoy over 50 per cent representation at executive level. Encouragingly, 50 per cent of respondents to the survey said that their senior management are key advocates of the function, and 45 per cent are 'supportive'. Only 5 per cent indicated that communication didn't enjoy the support of leadership in their businesses.

Critically, communicators identified downward pressure on budgets (22 per cent) and skills and talent shortages (25 per cent) as the two main challenges for business communication in the coming two years. Budget cuts were not only attributed to the broader macroeconomic climate South Africa is experiencing, but also to business pushback on the function due to a lack of measurement and evaluation of key financial metrics that could be attributed to communication.

It is imperative to report in financial terms to business executives who make business decisions based on empirical evidence. Communication should be collaborating and 'teaming' with the broader marketing and HR communities to identify metrics that can result in empirical reporting and, as a result, sound and demonstrable return on investment.

For example, correlating staff turnover to the engagement levels of leaders in those departments (the turnover metric and subsequent re-hiring costs are tangible, and therefore financially measurable); or creating links between good public relations and sales metrics (again, linking an intangible to the ef-





**Outsourcing and insourcing**

With the downturn of the economy and current budget cuts many organisations are still experiencing, 52 per cent of respondents indicated they are insourcing their end-to-end communication functions. A large number of organisations are doing this by creating shared services units and Centres of Excellence that assist in cost optimisation and improved operational efficiencies. They further increase the cost-benefit ratios by mitigating against unnecessary duplication and expenditure.

Thirty-seven per cent of respondents said they outsource about 25 per cent of their function to agencies; 7 per cent outsource 50 per cent of the function and 4 per cent outsource 50 per cent or more.

Given that 60 per cent of communicators indicated an increase in training budgets to upskill in-house teams, this trend speaks true to cost-cutting measures and streamlined operations, not to mention a prevalence in vendor optimisation. Respondents, however, did indicate that they believe they will need to outsource more work in the next two years because freezing staff numbers will lead to capacity being reached and additional support being needed.



Global research has shown that there is a direct correlation between how much companies invest in communication, and the reputation they have with internal and external stakeholders.

**Harvard Business Review** Analytic Services surveyed more than 550 executives around employee engagement and found that while most leaders understand the importance of internal stakeholder engagement, around 75 per cent of those surveyed said they believed that most of their employees were themselves disengaged.

The same report shows a very interesting correlation between cost cutting – something

many South African communicators are all too familiar with – and engagement: “Low prioritisers were much more likely to focus on cost cutting vs. investment (43 per cent) and more likely to be middle managers within an operations or product management function. High prioritisers, meanwhile, were senior managers who placed greater value on other success factors: 94 per cent believed high levels of customer service are important to achieving business success, compared to 39 per cent of low prioritisers.”

Executives who understand the value chain of employee communication and engagement to customer services don’t cut budgets to communication and in fact increase their budgets to balance all stakeholder communication.



**Budget**

No fewer than 58 per cent of communicators are upbeat about the future, saying they believe more budget will be provided to the communication function. The two main reasons cited for their belief are better macroeconomic conditions and greater buy-in for the role of communication among business decision makers.

**In conclusion**

Organisations with continuous and productive stakeholder engagement programmes develop more innovative responses to issues management, crisis communication, reputation management and employee engagement. By adopting and supporting these functions, they can show a faster adoption rate to new ideas, as well as be more responsive and collaborative on new challenges.

The role of communication in businesses cannot be overestimated, with a full 360-degree approach to integrated communication playing a key function in business development, organisational effectiveness, business optimisation and human capital management. Developing cross functional relationships that foster sound communication takes a deliberate and thoughtful approach that any organisation can benefit from now and in the future.

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