

GovComms

March 2015

A newsletter for government and public sector communicators

Highlights



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Govt gets techno-savvy

By: Amukelani Chauke

Communications Deputy Minister Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams has unveiled a mobile app for the South African Government website, set to further put a wealth of information and services at the fingertips of techno-savvy South Africans.

The Deputy Minister launched the app during the Department of Communications' media and communicators networking function on 11 February, the day before the 2015 State of the Nation Address (SoNA).

The event was attended by government communicators and journalists from all over the country and was held in Greenpoint in Cape Town.

The app links users to the recently re-launched mobile-friendly government website, www.gov.za, which bridges the digital divide and can be accessed on any cellular phone.

It allows users to view, among others, the latest

available jobs in the public service; tender bulletins; news and radio bulletins; information on services like renewing your driver's licence or renewing your car licence disc.

The app, which is available for a free download on your play store, also gives users contact details of all government departments across all spheres of government.

The app will be updated automatically when the www.gov.za website is updated, to ensure

that users of the app have access to fresh, up-to-date information.

Addressing journalists at the launch, Deputy Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams said the mobile app would also be a useful tool for media practitioners.



communications

Department:
Communications
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



"As members of the media, we urge you to go out there and tell everybody that has access to [the app] that as government, we are trying to reach out to all South Africans.

"As government, we are committed to ensuring that our people indeed are governed," she said.

The app, which is managed by the Department of Communication's digital and content team, is fully-loaded with up-to-date information.

Journalists can also keep abreast of all upcoming events – from service delivery events to media briefings schedules from municipal, provincial and national government departments.

Tehno-savvy editors wishing to check and download the latest news from sanews.gov.za or those who would like to listen to radio bulletins will find the app very useful.

The radio bulletins are loaded on to the sound cloud for quality downloads.

The Deputy Minister said while re-launching the www.gov.za website, government became aware that an increasing segment of the country's population now uses mobile apps in their daily routine.

This includes using apps for banking, shopping, finding out about public transport schedules or for entertainment and leisure, like reading sports news.

The app is also the "go to guy" for advice on how to access services, and where to find the nearest service point.

Citizens who would also like to find out what they

need to do or what documents they must take when they approach government for services without hiccups will find the app very useful.

It is available on both Android and Apple mobile devices. The app was developed on the back of evidence that there was an increasing appetite for government information, the Deputy Minister said.

Currently, the number of cellular phones in South Africa surpasses the population count.

According to research, one out of every 51 million South Africans has 1.17 cellular phones.

This shows that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is crucial to economic growth, development and job creation in a developing country such as South Africa. Access to information via ICTs is even more important.

In South Africa, there is a high rate of mobile device penetration, with cellular telephones being the primary means of accessing the internet for most citizens.

The government website currently enjoys large traffic volumes on a monthly basis.

Taking the app to the public

From the day of the launch until 1 March 2015, the department embarked on a nationwide awareness and education campaign to create awareness and hype around the app.

The second phase of the launch from 2 to 31 March 2015, will be used to reach out to the target primary audience – Android and Apple users – where unique selling points will be showcased via the app.

Between 1 April and 3 May 2015, the department will ask users for feedback of their experience with the app.

Vuk'uzenzele app launched

The Deputy Minister said the launch of the South African Government app comes after her department launched the Vuk'uzenzele newspaper app in November last year.

The app allows users to download and read the government newspaper that is distributed nationwide and gives further access to a publication with a print-run of 1.7 million copies. It is also available in a Braille version.

It gives readers quick access to view and download the newspaper's monthly editions free of charge. It also offers opt-in notifications to users when a new download is available and gives readers full access to the Vuk'uzenzele archive.

Win an iPad

We are giving away an iPad, sponsored by DEP Technologies, to one lucky reader. To win, simply download the free South African Government app by searching for "SA Government" on the Google or Apple Appstore or download the free Vuk'uzenzele newspaper app by searching for Vukuzenzele on the Google or Apple Appstore between **11 February 2015 and 31 May 2015.**

Media Landscape 2014: Celebrating 20 Years of South Africa's media

By: Una Seery

South Africans from all walks of life participated in celebrating 20 Years of Freedom and Democracy in 2014. The conferences and exhibitions, books launched and rallies held all celebrated what the country had achieved since 1994. Most agreed that things had changed for the better. But this milestone also provided an opportunity for citizens to reflect on the changes that had taken place, the challenges that remained and what could be done to deepen freedom and democracy.

Within the media environment, practitioners took the opportunity to celebrate, discuss and debate what progress had been made. Some remembered a time pre-1994 when the press was under siege, and journalists and editors were randomly arrested and newspapers banned. A number of draconian laws restricted what journalists could write or people talk about. Community media was crushed and freedom of the airways was a pipe dream.

Post-1994, government committed itself to ensuring that freedom of the press and other media, the freedom to receive and impart information and ideas, and artistic freedom, were included as key aspects of the new South Africa. As early as 1994, in addressing the International Press Institute, President Nelson Mandela had stated: "A critical, independent and investigative press is the lifeblood of a democracy" and had insisted that these freedoms should "enjoy the protection of the Constitution." Two years later, the freedoms were enshrined in the Constitution, and hailed worldwide as a major achievement of the new democratic government. This opened up the way for major

change in South Africa's media landscape.

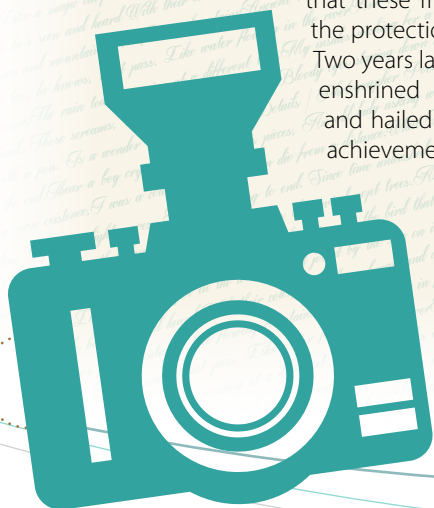
As milestones provide important opportunities for reflection the Department of Communication (DoC) decided to run with the 20-Year theme in the second edition of its media landscape series that reflects on topical issues within the environment. Authors writing for *Media Landscape 2014: Celebrating 20 Years of South Africa's media* were asked to select a topic and consider how far we have come since 1994, to weigh up what has changed and to present a roadmap for the future.

Broadly speaking, the authors of the 10 chapters and two Fact Sheets start from the premise that the South African media is in a far better position today than it was 20 years ago. The foundational building blocks namely the Constitution, laws, policies and programmes entrenched during the transition to democracy are seen as being as important today as they were 20 years ago. Many of the chapters therefore reflect back on these to help determine how far we have come.

Chapter by chapter

From a common starting point, each chapter homes in on a range of topical issues. In the first chapter *Evolving media policy of the ANC: Time to go back to the drawing board?*, the media policy of the ANC pre- and post-elections is considered in light of some of the more recent initiatives of the ANC government: namely the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), the Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT) and the Protection of State Information Bill. The question that is asked is whether, after 20 years, the more recent actions of the ANC are excesses of the organisation or normal behaviour of a ruling party. As many of the issues raised are not clear-cut and require debate, the author argues for more discussion and debate around issues emerging in the media environment.

Media diversity, a key principle of the emerging democratic government, is explored extensively in two chapters. The chapter simply titled *Media Diversity* looks at media ownership, content and audience needs and wants and it considers how



far South Africa has come in reflecting the country's diversity of people, interests, views and opinions. The author argues that while the South African media system is indeed pluralistic – from audio visual, through to print and online media, – the key question is whether it is also diverse. In considering diversity, the whole value chain is interrogated: from ownership through to content and audiences. Generally, while there is recognition that the environment has changed for the better there is much to be done to deepen and sustain diversity. This includes breaking with ownership patterns, addressing audience needs and wants through language diversity as well as considering funding mechanisms to enhance this diversity.

The chapter titled *Indigenous languages and South Africa's media environment* focuses more specifically on the diversity of language, the use of indigenous languages in the media and its impact. This chapter reinforces the position taken in *Media Diversity* in that it also concludes that while there has been some change, evidence suggests that there is still a long way to go before it can be argued that South Africa has a truly inclusive media.

Media ownership, more particularly print media ownership, emerges as an issue in a number of chapters (*Twenty years of media ownership; Twenty years of Media Development and Diversity*). Print media ownership is shown to be largely untransformed with just four companies, namely Media24, Caxton, Times Media Group and Independent, still dominating this space. While there have been some shifts in ownership and influence over the past 20 years, the situation within this environment has come full circle. The only current major change is the purchase of Independent News and Media by Sekunjalo. How this will contribute to development and diversity remains to be seen but some analysts are calling for transformation to be addressed head-on and without delay. One of the suggestions is for government to address print, broadcast and digital media transformation through a process of policy review.

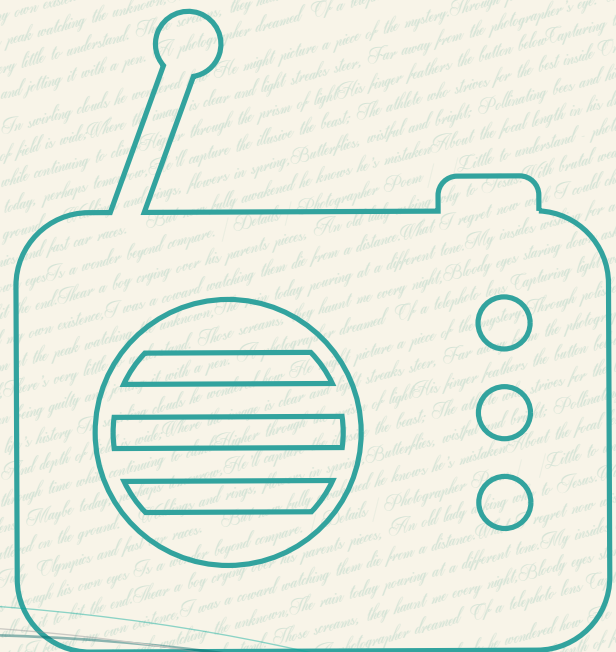
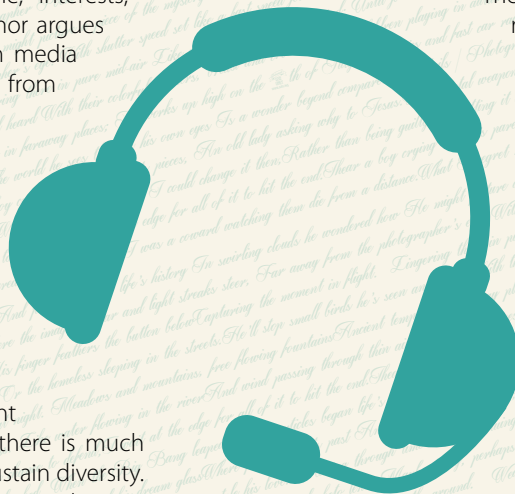
Community and government-owned media are viewed as sectors that should be enhanced if media development and diversity is to flourish. The community radio sector

has made large strides since the dawn of democracy.

There are currently approximately 160 community radio stations on air. *Community Radio: A snapshot of the landscape after 20 Years* reflects the transformation that has occurred in this environment but also considers what needs to change in the next 20 years. This includes building and improving the sustainability of these stations, improving content so that the station reflects the needs and wants of their local listeners and reconsidering community control and what this means.

Government Communications – 20 years of empowerment and development gives us a glimpse into another world, namely that of government media and how this has evolved since the end of the apartheid era. We are taken through the principles and policies that guide this sector and introduced to the rationale behind the formation of the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS). At the same time we find out about the products and platforms that now exist – all of which demonstrate how far this organisation has progressed along the continuum of freedom and democracy.

The remaining chapters move away a little from a preoccupation with development and diversity issues and focus more specifically on how the media reports on issues as well as technological changes in this environment. The chapters *Mind the Perception Gap* and *Twenty years of Freedom: Whose democracy are we reporting?* home in on analysing media reporting over a



period of time and each chapter suggests how this can be improved upon.

In *Twenty years of Freedom: Whose democracy are we reporting?* the content of news reports is analysed to see whether there has been any change in reporting on race, racism and xenophobia, elections, children, HIV and AIDS and gender-based violence. While clear improvements have been made, problems persist and will have to be addressed for change to be effective. In *Mind the Perception Gap*, the author takes a different approach and looks at how the media influences public perception while not always presenting "reality" in a balanced and objective way. This can contribute towards widening the gap between what is real and what is perceived. This is done not only through the selective use of journalists' sources but in the topics they choose to report on and the tone they adopt when reporting. Constructive journalism is seen as one way in which this challenge can be overcome.

No current discussion would be complete without a look at the digital environment and *Journalism in a new world of Social Media* touches on this. Here we are introduced to Twitter and the role that this has played in changing the face of journalism. We also read about how South Africa has taken advantage of technological innovations to support and stimulate development, more especially within the communication environment.

Finally two Fact Sheets bring you up-to-date with the ICT revolution taking place in South Africa as well as competition cases happening within the print media environment (*South Africa and the ICT revolution and Competition Commission vs Media24 Limited*).

There is a lot to look forward to in the forthcoming edition of *Media Landscape 2014: Celebrating 20 Years of South Africa's media*. Make sure you get your copy!

Getting your copy

Media Landscape 2014: Celebrating 20 Years of South Africa's media is currently in production. It will be available in April 2015.

Should you wish to order your copy, please contact:
Una Seery, Tel: (012) 473 0325
Nkele Sebaso, Tel: (012) 473 0207

SA celebrates power of radio

By: SANews



Radio still plays a prominent role as an affordable means of communication for all the people in the country, including underprivileged communities in remote parts of the country, says President Jacob Zuma.

The President said this on 13 February when South Africa joined the international community to celebrate annual World Radio Day.

The day was declared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2011 to raise awareness about the importance of radio as a means of communication, particularly its accessibility and unique ability to bridge the communication divide in all parts of the world.

Radio is a dependable medium of information, education and entertainment, both for old and young people, which also advances the constitutional provisions of freedom of speech and expression.

This year's World Radio Day was celebrated under the theme 'Youth and Radio'. The goal is to encourage the greater participation of the youth in radio, not only as listeners but also participants in various roles such as producers, broadcasters and all other functions in radio.

The theme highlights the importance of youth involvement in radio to enhance greater social inclusion through this medium.

According to the available information, community radio audiences grew to 8.6 million listeners by July 2014, which constitutes close to 30% of the total radio audience market share in the country.

Getting communicators to communicate

By: Allison Cooper*

Those trained in the art of communication – public relations (PR) practitioners, government spokespeople and editors and journalists – are usually good at their jobs ... except when it comes to communicating with each other.

We took some time out to speak to communicators from all sides, asking them each the same questions, in an attempt to foster a better understanding of their role and responsibilities to increase the flow of communication between them.

What can be done to improve the relationship between government communication officials, PR people and editors/journalists?

PR industry's take:

Ingrid Lotze, joining force at join.the.dots and vice president of the Public Relations Institute of South Africa (PRISA) - The basics apply in any relationship: do we understand one another's perspectives? Do we listen to one another and are we open to connection? The relationship between these individuals is often clouded with agendas, ego and power struggles. The phrase "you two should talk" is more relevant in this environment than in any other.

Government departments can host media open-house days, with a focus on building relationships and not on selling a story. Journalists can stop chasing



LET'S TALK

only the story and start reinvesting in building their networks, their inquiring minds and developing insight into new areas. This is where understanding and co-creation of solid journalism comes into play.

PR practitioners can spend time within the halls of government departments, talking to representatives and connecting on a personal level. They can listen to their government counterparts' challenges and the boundaries they face so that new ideas, innovation and collaboration can be born.

Chirene Campbell, managing director of Owlhurst Communications - The key to solid, positive relationships between any group of people is clear and regular communication over a number of channels (telephonic, WhatsApp, email, social media, etc). Misunderstandings and assumptions take place because no-one thought to ask the right questions, or pass on the right information timeously. Most importantly, follow through on your promises. If you promise to respond to an official or journalist by a certain time, do it.



Government communicators' take:

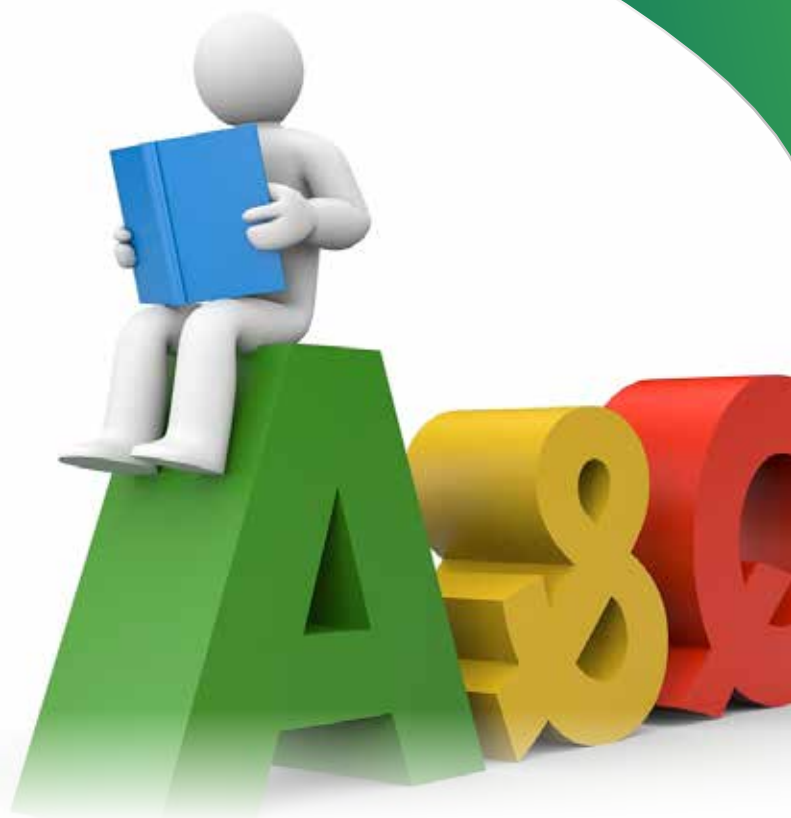
John Sukazi, head of communication at the Gauteng Provincial Treasury and Spokesperson for the MEC of Finance - The relationship between government and the media in South Africa is robust and this is healthy for any democracy. In the majority of stories published in any form of media in South Africa it has become very rare to find an article without a comment from a government spokesperson. This means that journalists make an effort to reach government and request comments and that government spokespeople work to ensure that they respond within given timeframes.

What is needed to improve the relationship further is ongoing dialogue between journalists and government spokespeople. This must be done in the form of background briefings, networking sessions, workshops, etc. The government system is very complex and requires journalists to develop a full understanding of the environment to report thoroughly. The challenge with the current situation in South Africa is that most media outlets do not have "government affairs" or "public affairs" as a news beat. They only have "politics" as a news beat. Therefore, the relationship could be further enhanced by the separation of these two news beats in newsrooms because a public affairs reporter will develop greater insight into the administration of government and be able to report comprehensively.

Government must also ensure that it appoints spokespeople with first-hand knowledge of the news media and who have the relevant qualifications.

Marietjie Engelbrecht, Senior Manager Communication Services CapeNature - Clear, concise communication is key and it is important to take the time to explain complex issues if required.

Themba Ngada, marketing manager for the City of Cape Town, a chartered public relations practitioner and experienced journalist - Each of these segments must train and retain their own. We must attack and conquer the "juniorisation" of the newsroom and the exclusive use of news agency feeds to avoid employing full-time journalists. On the government communicator side, we have seen a slide towards politically-aligned spokespeople playing the role of competence-based professional communicators and lines thinning between the



two. There is space for both but government professional communicators should not taint themselves with the colours of the governing party as they are civil servants. If they do, they must not be surprised when bypassed by journalists.

Editors and journalists' take:

Glenda Nevill, editor of The Media Online (www.themediainline.com) - Understanding each other's roles would go a long way to smoothing out the often fraught relationships between the parties. On government's side, it's vital to understand how deadlines work and try to respond faster to requests for comment or clarity on issues. It's essential to respond, even if it's just to say 'I'm still trying' or 'I haven't forgotten you'. Don't ever lie to journalists. Rather say 'I don't know'.

Journalists, although it can be tricky considering how tight some timeframes are, should try not to leave their questions until the last minute. Yes, I know sometimes it's done on purpose to

Conversations

Matter



prevent injunctions and that sort of thing, but still, respect the fact that government communicators have political principals to answer to, who can be extremely difficult to pin down.

PR practitioners, the same applies. Understand the media you're talking to. Don't try and pitch an engineering story to a media outlet or a puff piece on a beauty queen to the *Daily Maverick*. Do your homework and see who writes what.

Cathy Stagg, assistant editor, Cape Community Newspapers - Meet each other face-to-face, but not necessarily one-to-one. Editors could invite a spokesperson to address a staff meeting, at which problems could be raised and discussed. Journalism seminars, such as the ones organised by the Forum of Community Journalists, is another excellent option. Inviting a government spokesperson, such as a police officer, as a guest speaker to explain the difficulties they face is an excellent way to build trust and understanding. Government communications officials should be mindful of deadlines, but could also invite editors and senior staff to have a meeting at which views can be exchanged.

Hillary Green, editor, Benoni City Times - It's important to understand where the opposite side is coming from; there should be ongoing feedback between the officials, PR people, and editors and journalists about the media's requirements. In the case of community papers, such as the Benoni City Times, our news content is very specific to our area and generalised press releases and communications do not meet those needs. By having regular meetings and/or phone or email communication it is possible to satisfy the official aim and requirements of a local publication.

Ingrid von Stein, CEO of www.bizradio.com - Firstly, understand the media landscape. Tell the truth and don't spin the story to make things appear better than they are. Get to know journalists. Build a relationship of trust. Don't say "no comment" as we then know you are hiding something and we will go off and do our own research.

What are the pitfalls if these relationships cannot be improved?

PR industry's take:

Lotze - We face the pitfalls of polluted relationships between the government, PR practitioners and the media every day. Government agendas clash with the media agenda to get a good story. Power struggles end in mudslinging, blame and shame and the entire system remains broken. If we cannot mend these relationships, the toxins that ride along the corridors

of misunderstanding, disconnection and conflict will continue to jeopardise our democracy.

Government communicator's take:

Engelbrecht - It is important to build trust both ways. The story may not always go your way, but as a communication person it is important to keep the communication lines open and ensure your message is heard and understood by the journalist.

Editors and journalists' take:

Nevill - The readers are the ultimate losers as they're not getting the information and the various sides of the story that hopefully give a balanced view of the subject. Ignoring journalists' questions doesn't mean the story is going to go away. It just means that your side of it, your chance to give your facts, is lost.

Stagg - The message will get lost. Editors and journalists serve the needs of their readers/listeners/viewers. Communication officials need to find a way to give them answers to questions that are direct, brief and arrive before deadline.

Green - The main problem with poor communication or lack of timeous response from the government body (particularly in the case of local government) is that the reader suffers and the quality of information in the local publication is impoverished.

Should the two sides gain a better understanding of each others' role, how do you think this will benefit each party, the public and the country generally?

PR industry's take:

Lotze - In an ideal world the outcome would include the government hearing and taking the reading public's perspective into account and the media fulfilling their roles as the public watchdogs and getting their news scoops, but there would also be an air of respect and understanding of a bigger picture which is the successful governing of a country to the benefit of the people.

Campbell - Smoother relationships lead to open and authentic relationships. The media, consumers and citizens of our country are very perceptive to the tone of communication provided by an organisation, and will more easily trust and follow a voice that is open and honest in both positive and negative situations.

Government communicators' take:

Sukazi - I have seen a lot of young journalists making an incredible effort to understand the government system and how it works, so that they can report in a balanced manner. Also, an increasing number of spokespeople make themselves available and respond to questions from journalists on time. This shows that both parties are increasing their





knowledge of each other's work and this is good for the public as it ensures that access to relevant information is provided so that they can make informed decisions.

Engelbrecht - Better understanding improves most relationships! This relationship is symbiotic; we need each other to reach the public and to report accurate information.

Editors and journalists' take:

Stagg - If mutual respect and trust are established, the flow of information will be more effective. The benefit will be better-informed communities and a country that is proud of the services that are provided by various departments.

Green - A better understanding benefits the official body in that its message is presented to the public while also informing the reading public of matters of importance to the community in a manner which fits in with each publication's brief for its style and audience.

What one thing can you do personally to foster better communication and understanding, which would ultimately lead to more balanced reporting?

PR industry's take:

Lotze - Within the context of ever-developing new technology, apps and citizen journalism as well as shrinking advertising and marketing revenues, smaller subscriber bases, shrinking company values and critically low staff levels, the traditional ways of working together have been upended. The one thing we can all do is to start looking for unconventional ways to engage with one another long before the 'story' appears. The need to reconnect as human beings eye-to-eye is beginning to emerge as the way we will find productivity, innovation and development.

Campbell - My reputation is my best asset so I need to ensure that I do what I have promised to do: walk the talk or move along.

Government communicators' take:

Sukazi - Enhanced media relations will ensure that we receive balanced coverage in all forms of media.

Engelbrecht - We need to talk more with one another and try

to provide exactly what is requested to the journalist, but also provide background information to improve understanding, especially on complex/emotional matters.

Ngada - Champion the formation of a forum.

Editors and journalists' take:

Stagg - Lead by example. Always give the communications officer as much time as possible to respond. Questions must be brief and to the point.

Von Stein - I would like to have a direct line to the communications person so I could take them for coffee and together we could understand how things work. Working together is always better than working against each other.



***Allison Cooper** is the Joint MD of Allycats Public Relations, which was launched in 2008. She has over 19 years' experience in public relations, publicity generation, journalism and freelance writing.

Contact: ally@allycats.co.za

Broken relationships

in the communication space can be fixed

*By: Johanna McDowell

Communication managers of government departments who are locked into a contract with an advertising, marketing, communication, digital or PR agency and feel frustrated by the relationship need not feel helpless. Specialist industry intermediaries can help in a situation where the relationship with the agency is unsatisfactory and campaigns are ineffective.

Interaction with advertising agencies can be volatile and emotionally charged because campaigns and projects revolve around abstract perceptions and ideas where decisions are largely subjective.

Issues that create relationship problems revolve around the quality of briefs, expectations on both the client and the agency's part, personnel changes and whether either party is seen as being sufficiently pro-active or not. It is this lack of communication that can lead to a breakdown in the relationship.

Business consultants can be approached for advice, but often lack an in-depth understanding of the specialised problems that beset relationships between professional communicators and the agencies that serve them.

Unknown to many there are specialist intermediaries in today's communication space that offer a specialised service for resolving such issues. They evaluate current relationships on a



number of different – all critical – factors and levels.

Intermediary services gather information from both agency and client, disseminate the data and then supply analysed feedback which is presented to both parties at a joint session.

The data is collected via an online questionnaire, which is streamlined to enable quick completion and superior analysis to measure the relationship between the client and the agency. This allows the intermediary to analyse the results

and give guidance to clients in areas that require improvement.

In understanding this, the client is able to work on salvaging the association rather than having to appoint a new agency which can be a costly and time-consuming business.

The Independent Agency Search and Selection Company (IAS) has designed an online measurement tool, the TLC software solution, to address this issue. The TLC software helps to extract the precise information needed to complete in-depth analysis. This data enables all parties to formulate a strategy for future success in an open, constructive meeting.

This service brings to light issues that can only be identified with experience. There is no off-the-shelf software solution that can be bought or used for this purpose, which is why the IAS designed specialist software to target problems.

Addressing the issues making the client and/or the agency unhappy is important. It helps build a better future with the current agency. If a new agency really must be taken on board, intermediaries can manage the process of the putting out the tender and handling the pitch.

As client and agency evaluate their own respective performances across those same criteria (self-evaluation), gaps are identified. These are analysed as part of the reporting back process. The intermediary presents back to them to ensure that there is transparency. Along with presenting the results, they make recommendations and put measurements in place for further evaluation at a later stage.

Many leave it too late into the business year to address problems, so the sooner clients and agencies apply some TLC to their relationships the better. If used early, it can eliminate future relationship and communication breakdowns, because agreed upon delivery expectations are already in place. A relationship audit should be standard practice if clients want to effectively manage and maintain a proactive rapport that produces quality results in the end.

The opportunity to discuss a breakdown in communication rarely presents itself at a time when both parties are open to finding solutions. The reality is that client/agency relationships are constantly being tested and often fail. Finding out why a relationship is failing is essential to avoid having the same happen with a new agency, but if the problem between a current agency and client can be fixed this is always first prize.

***Johanna McDowell is the MD of Independent Agency Search and Selection Company.**



About the IAS

The IAS in association with the AAR Group United Kingdom (UK) was founded in South Africa by Mazole Holdings Group in 2006. IAS specialises in client/agency relationship management and helping clients find agencies. International associate company AAR Group was founded more than 35 years ago in the UK and has associates and branches throughout the world.

The IAS is committed to the international and local pitch guidelines as defined by both the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising UK (IPA) and the Association of Communications Agencies SA (ACA).

Mazole Holdings is a South African company owned 40% by Dan Moyane and 60% by Johanna McDowell. Mazole focuses on building businesses in the marketing and communications space.

The IAS is a level 4 BEE contributor.

Trends 2015: internal communication in 2015

*By: Ilona Fookes

The fundamentals of what internal communicators do will always be the same, that's shaping and curating conversations.

What is changing is the landscape. In a time when companies are facing immense change and uncertainty, the role of internal communication in the change process is greater than ever. The communicator of the future will harness employee moments of truth to influence behaviour by changing mindsets - a move away from the traditional change curve against which change communication has always been planned.

With this in mind, smart communicators know that in 2015 they will need to adapt to change and activate the right conversations with the right audience. To achieve this, the focus will be on increasing the speed with which the organisation communicates with employees and also on being more effective to ensure maximum impact.

More speed

- Internal communicators will be planning to adapt. Agile internal communication planning and implementation will be the new benchmark, where communicators will use 'sprints' or rounds of work to continue to move forward. They will be testing and reassessing along the way while ensuring continuation of messaging across each 'sprint' as they drive conversations in the business. An agile approach to internal communication will help communicators move past traditional sequential planning and execution processes, to adaptive iterative planning that enables a quick response to unexpected change. Instead of rigidly planning for the next year or next quarter, agile communicators are equipped to plan for the next month, week, day or even hour.
- In 2015, more organisations will move away from the traditional business partner role that internal communication previously fulfilled. The shift will be towards a centre of excellence framework. Such a framework incorporates cross-functional teams that are employee-centric, have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, are fully accountable for their performance, and can adapt and respond quickly to unexpected change. This allows communicators to develop a clear strategy that supports and accelerates organisations' immediate go-to-market priorities.

- Measurement becomes more agile. The move away from annual employee surveys to using measurement tools that constantly monitor organisations' moods and conversations is a growing trend. This will provide internal communicators with rich data, enabling faster adaption, shorter lead times and always-on, real-time communication.

More impact

- Where and when we have conversations is changing. Communicators will start to shift the way they use channels so that they can facilitate employee-centric conversations. Organisations will start introducing new channels and use existing channels differently in a way that speaks to employees in the same way they choose to have conversations outside of work. The move to mobile, social channels, which allows employees to engage with their workplace wherever they are, is becoming more important than ever.
- Increasingly, employees are an organisation's most trusted ambassadors internally and externally which gives rise to an increase in employee-generated video. This supports the changing role of communicators, who will no longer be the producers of content, but provide the tools for the employees to be self-served communicators. Employees become the new storytellers across organisations thus equipping employers with ambassadors who are not only advocates for the company brand but vocal brand activists.
- There is no separation between internal and external communications. Internal and external audiences are converging, and consumers, employees and other stakeholders have a greater ability to interact and influence on a peer-to-peer level.

Looking ahead, the internal communicator is no longer simply managing the message. In 2015, the new internal communicator is a strategic and trusted advisor who interprets the company vision and strategy, shapes conversations and facilitates change with speed and impact.

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icandi CQ has been adding creative intelligence to internal communication, branding and marketing projects since 1998 by combining imagination, innovation and inspiration to ensure business results for a range of blue chip clients. (Level 2 BBBEE status).

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