GovComms

A newsletter for government and Public Sector communicators

HIGHLIGHTS

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

MDDA ON MEDIA LITERACY

SOCIAL MEDIA

Certificate in government
communications on the cards

By Brent Simons
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Government Communications (GCIS) will introduce the first government-owned and endorsed certificate in government communications during 2013.

This comes after the Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, Obed Bapela, urged GCIS and academics to develop a course to standardise efficient communication.

Addressing an academic symposium hosted by GCIS and the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) recently, Deputy Minister Bapela instructed GCIS to look at ways to professionalise communication through training interventions.

He effectively called for all government communicators to have a similar understanding of their role in the government communication system.

Deputy Minister Bapela instructed GCIS to "constantly seek avenues that will contribute towards heeding the Presidential call for the development of a professional cadre of public servants".

However, he cautioned that the professionalisation of government communication could not be achieved by GCIS alone.

He asked GCIS to work closely with academic institutions to develop courses aimed at capacitating government communicators to ensure proactive communication.

Deputy Minister Bapela warned that communication with citizens was "not a luxury". Citizens, he said, had a constitutional right to access government information.

He also asked government communicators not to "see the media as an enemy" but to strive towards building effective partnerships with media institutions for the benefit of government and the people they serve.

The objective of any future course, he added, must be to professionalise the government communication system in South Africa. GCIS should prioritise this to ensure that government communicates more effectively and proactively with its citizens.

Following the Deputy Minister's guidance, GCIS has developed a partnership with relevant private sector partners and academic institutions and if all goes well, the first accredited certificate aimed at empowering government communicators will be introduced shortly.

The certificate will introduce all government communicators to the basic principles of political communications and the specific role they play in this process. They will also be exposed to development communications and communication platforms to be used when communicating with specific target audiences. However, a major imperative will be to educate communicators on government policy and how they need to communicate these policies. Emphasis will be placed on practical exercises and case studies.

According to Deputy Minister Bapela, basic, open and proactive communication will ensure that the public receive government information and that the views and concerns of the public will then be taken into account in the planning, implementation and evaluation of government delivery programmes and policies. He instructed GCIS to lead this process.

Empowering communicators through training and development programmes will contribute significantly to government better communicating its objective of creating a better life for people.

The Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (Palama), as government's training academy, will be responsible for the implementation of the course.

SIPs media coverage
in the spotlight

By Suzette van der Westhuizen
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I t's been a year since President Jacob Zuma made the ground-breaking announcement on the Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs).

The SIPs received unprecedented media coverage because infrastructure formed the central theme of the President's 2012 State of the Nation Address (SONA).

While coverage has lost some momentum since then, it has never completely disappeared from the media environment.

Government's infrastructure plan is intended to transform the country's economy, create new jobs, strengthen service delviery and support the integration of African economies.

In support of the infrastructure plan, 18 Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) have been developed and approved to support economic development and address service delivery in the poorest provinces. Each SIP comprises a large number of specific infrastructure components and programmes.

Regarding to media coverage throughout quarter one and two of 2012, volumes and ratings remained balanced and within range. Sentiment took a negative turn in the last two quarters, with some industry voices losing confidence that government would deliver on its proposed multi-trillion-rand infrastructure spend and claiming that "not a single tender" had been issued for a main infrastructure project.
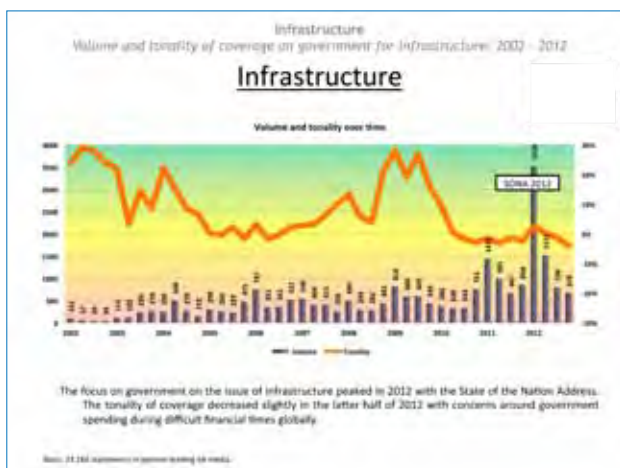
Media coverage of SIP 9

SIP 9 aims to accelerate the construction of new electricity generation capacity to meet the needs of the economy and address historical imbalances. Analysis shows that many issues related to this SIP are expected to top the media agenda, such as electricity tariffs and energy shortages, are more specifically associated with Eskom. The more niche issues such as nuclear energy feature prominently for government. Government is clearly the dominant voice when reporting on energy infrastructure initiatives. Naturally, coverage was found to be highly concentrated to financial publications and largely factual (neutral) in nature.

As with general coverage of the infrastructure plan, media interest in SIP 9 peaked around the 2012 SONA. While the issue had a sustained presence in the communication environment, those volumes could not be maintained.

Tariff increases

Eskom's announcement of a tariff increase application in October 2012, coupled with the downgrading by Moody's, contributed to a more negative rating, which reached an all-time low of around -50% in tonality during November 2012. Much of the media debate on this SIP juxtaposed the proposed Eskom electricity tariff increases against the requirements of electricity supply security and the financial consequences of Eskom's new build programme.

Media reported largely on the objections of business, civil society and labour to the increases, citing dire consequences on the profitability of business and resultant job losses, as well as the impact on consumers - contrasting it with what is seen as exorbitant salaries for Eskom

Infrastructure
Volume and tonality of coverage on government for infrastructure: 2002 - 2012

Infrastructure

Volume and tonality over time

The focus on government on the issue of infrastructure peaked in 2012 with the State of the Nation Address. The tonality of coverage decreased slightly in the latter half of 2012 with concerns around government spending during difficult financial times globally.

employees. However, *The New Age* explained the factors driving up the cost of electricity and emphasised that more people now had access to electricity and load shedding seems to be something of the past.

The debate on electricity tariffs also had much less of an effect on government than on Eskom. Coverage on government around this issue was less negative and more stable in tonality, while for Eskom it was erratic and in negative territory.

Supply security
The media still loosely refers to what they describe as "the electricity supply crisis" in South Africa and express support in editorial comments for an independently owned and operated electricity grid. Despite concerns about supply security, there are usually objections to Eskom's reliance on coal for its electricity generation programme and nuclear build programme expressed either in direct media comment or civil society voices quoted.
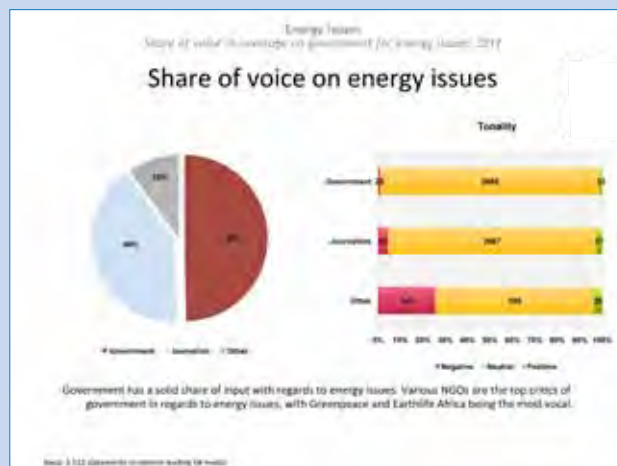
There is also an ongoing general debate about the rich economic rewards of fracking and the expected high environmental bill, owing to the use of large quantities of water and chemicals.

Government share of voice
It is clear from media analysis that government maintains a very strong presence on energy infrastructure issues in the communication environment with a 53% share of voice. This huge presence is mostly maintained in a factual or neutral tone of coverage by the media, indicating that the media is carrying the messages from government without prejudice. Civil society voices are very vocal critics of government on a number of energy issues such as coal-fired power stations and nuclear build plans, though their share of voice is relatively low. In most cases the criticism is directed at Eskom.
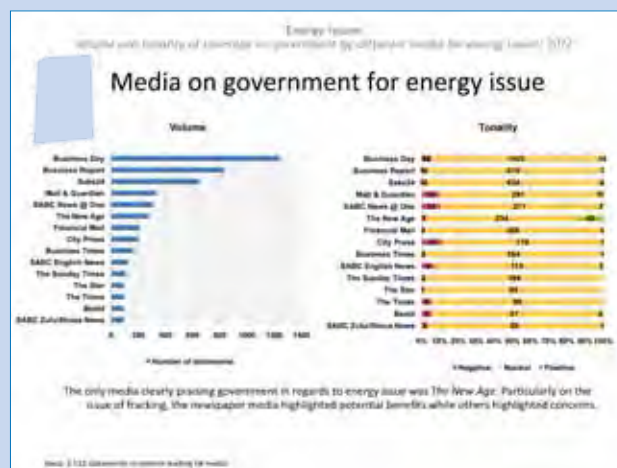
Media sources
Financial media is by far the frontrunners in reporting on government with regard to energy infrastructure. The only media source that can be singled out as putting any notable slant to

the issues related to SIP 9 is *The New Age*, with a few more positive comments than other media. Some negative sentiment was also detected from a source such as *Business Day,* but within a huge volume of neutral coverage. The same is not necessarily true of all the voices quoted, as indicated in the discussion on the various issues in the environment.

Considering that the focus of this SIP is electricity generation for socio-economic development, it is notable that the financial aspects and economic impact of government's energy infrastructure initiatives feature as the dominant story as opposed to reporting on the social side of the story. The social aspect came to the fore only when addressing concerns about the impact of the electricity tariff increases.

While many of the controversial energy concerns are directed towards Eskom in the media, ultimately, criticism about issues such as electricity tariffs and supply security will be increasingly directed towards government, if government does not effectively communicate on its initiatives to resolve these matters.

Internal communication:
high value, low cost

By *Daniel Munslow

2012 was a challenging year for most businesses. Not just from a financial perspective but from an employee engagement one as well. It makes sense that the two are linked – it is more difficult to create and sustain solid engagement when times are tough and it is the role of internal communication to maintain that connection.

Looking back at the internal communication landscape in South Africa over the past year and the trends we are implementing in dozens of companies across Africa, here are some of the highlights of what can be expected in this specialised discipline in 2013.

You cannot change the business if you're a post office

The role of internal communication is changing annually in South Africa, while it continues to mature and develop. Strategic internal communication is about fulfilling the role of counsellor and business partner in the organisation you work: "I've got a communication problem, how can you help?" and "I've got a business problem, how can communication help?"

A large number of internal communication practitioners still find themselves distributing information – acting as the business's post office looking after the email, intranets, publications, videos and even events; being the writers and photographers of the above and channels' managers – panning the booking for the channels.

While each of these plays a role, the financial return question is simple. If I spend 70% working on low-value activities, when do we get to problem solving?

Formal communication has a 10% impact on behaviour, compared to 45% for leadership

It was back in the 1990s that Jim Shaffer pointed out where the real value of communication was. What he said was simple – formal communication has a 10% impact on behaviour, compared to 45% for leadership and 45% for the corporate infrastructure. Research by the Public Relations Institute of Australia clearly shows, as we have seen in every communication audit in South Africa, that distributing information and operational communication do not create the value. The value is achieved through face-to-face communication.

Invest in the ability of your leadership, line managers, and supervisors to communicate effectively. Rich communication shows the best returns.

Breaking down silos to increase collaboration

Collaboration is central to innovation and innovation is the mandate for companies hoping to remain competitive. Communication plays a key role by enhancing the quality of conversations and collaboration within business, thereby achieving cultural alignment and improved entropy. Communication skills coaching to support managers' ability to communicate will be central to this strategy.

What keeps CEOs up at night? The fact that you cannot control the conversation.

Historically, information flowed in a linear format and conversations to employees could be controlled by managing the flow of information. No more. Employees and customers alike are communicating 24/7 about companies – your services, products, what you stand for and even your goals and objectives. And there is little room to control the conversation. Through employees, businesses need to manage the conversations by

Daniel Munslow

being clear on what you stand for, who you are and what you do. The conversations should be central to any decision-making process and should include solid upstream communication.

Digital internal communication – allow a conversation
Strategies are no longer dictated from the top down. It is important to ensure that employees have space in the business to communicate among themselves and upstream. Digital internal communication channels are becoming increasingly prominent and important to South African companies wanting to innovate and lead the way in the communication space.

Time to relook at employee intranets
In many large companies the corporate intranet is somewhat of a misnomer. It can provide valuable information to employees but seems to languish unused with low hit rates and a sense from employees that it is irrelevant to them until it contains something they need. Moreover, it's another example of substantial investment that does not generate the desired return.

Distributing information and tactical activities are not where value is created
Employees are becoming increasingly bored by recitations of facts and corporate jargon. Today's world is already information cluttered and there are many case studies that show storytelling and face-to-face communication deliver the best results. Instead of getting caught up in the content, ask what are you trying to achieve and see whether there is alignment between the channel and the desired outcome.

Long-term trend from tell and sell to consult and involve
Not new to 2013, employee engagement is becoming more and more about how an employee 'experiences' an organisation – from relationships with leaders, superiors, subordinates and technology. We've spoken about collaboration and leadership communication – all are important to shifting from a purely telling and instructing model of communication towards an engagement and motivating approach.

Re-energising company values
In order to overcome the increasing gap between employee values and company values, many companies are reintroducing or reinventing their company values to secure buy-in. Companies are taking this one step further and involving employees in the development of a series of behaviours to attach to the values to ensure they come to life and are measurable. It's an important element in making the work more meaningful.

Motivating employees
Employees are not only a company's most important asset - they are the face of your company. Be it a teller in a bank or the car salesman on the shop floor – these are the people who represent the brand. For this reason, they need to be communicated to strategically, efficiently, timeously and in a manner that ensures behavioural change is achieved. The question you should be asking is, 'Are your employees able to share their knowledge, particularly with customers, influencers and even each other?

Daniel Munslow is a director at Talk2Us, a strategic internal communication conslutancy with over 12 years working experience with leading listed and mutinational organisations. He is a stategist, trainer and facilitator, working with leadership in organisations to assit them in achieving brand engagement with their employees. Daniel is an IABC Africa Regional Board member, a judge of the IABC Africa Gold Quill Awards and has served on the Blue Ribbon Panel, and is an All-Star presenter at the IABC World Conference. He is also chief judge of the South African PRISA PRISM Awards.

Media literacy, reading
high on MDDA's agenda

By *Lumko Mtimde

The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) is on a drive to introduce basic media literacy and a culture of reading to learners and educators in the country's schools. The MDDA has a mandate to create an enabling environment for media development and diversity that is conducive to public discourse and reflects the needs and aspirations of all South Africans.

In addition, the agency is required to support initiatives, which promote literacy and a culture of reading.

In 2009 the MDDA formed partnerships with Print & Digital Media South Africa, Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ), The Star, Media Monitoring Africa, the Departments of Basic Education and Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, as well as district and local municipalities to introduce a culture of reading and basic media literacy in schools.

The aim of the programme is to create media awareness among learners, encourage them to pursue careers in the media industry and promote debate and dialogue on the media between learners and media professionals (owners, editors, regulators, etc.).

Learners are also encouraged to produce student media products, school newsletters and magazines in historically disadvantaged schools, particularly rural areas.

So far, the programme has been rolled out to 40 schools in the Alfred Nzo District in the Eastern Cape in 2009, the Ngaka Modiri Molema District in the North West in 2010 and the Zululand District in KwaZulu-Natal in 2011. In 2012 it was the turn of the Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality in the Free State.

Training was provided to more than 200 learners and educators between 2009 and 2012, resulting in the development of school newsletters.

During the 2012/13 financial year, the MDDA partnered with the Department of Correctional Services on a special project which extended the programme to juvenile centres in the Free State and Northern Cape.

Through this partnership, 90 youth offenders and parolees were trained in media literacy, media monitoring and the development of a newspaper. The partnership also raised awareness about the MDDA in prisons and promoted its mandate and work.

The agency remains the custodian of this programme and continues to promote access to information and freedom of expression platforms in many marginalised communities. To promote access, the agency sends copies of community and small commercial newspapers and magazines to the two prisons bimonthly. This is intended to encourage reading and active media participation in juvenile centres and prisons.

Learners and teachers from schools in the Free State were among those to benefit from the MDDA's campaign to promote media literacy and a culture of reading at schools.

Learners from the Alfred Nzo District in the Eastern Cape were encouraged to pursue careers in the media industry as part of the MDDA's drive to promote media awareness.

The long-term goal of the MDDA is to see media literacy included in the school curriculum, with schools producing their own media products. The intention is to assist young people to be more critical consumers and producers of media as well as stimulate interest in media as a field of study.

It is hoped that the initiative will set a platform to develop media literacy skills, which can be used across the curriculum, would contribute to improving educational standards and promote a culture of reading. The pool of creativity and communication skills in the country will also be expanded when the culture of reading is encouraged.

As part of the programme, participating schools are provided with additional support through aftercare training where practical, basic journalism training is provided at school level.

The training providers are project partners who provide coaching and mentoring to beneficiaries helping them form news and editorial teams and to produce their own school newsletters.

Throughout the five provinces the programme has provided 290 learners and educators with basic media literacy skills.

During the stakeholder consultative process on the Media Literacy & Culture of Reading 2011-2012 project, stakeholders highlighted the need for the MDDA to provide comprehensive aftercare support that would ensure the project's sustainability.

The exchange component aims to continue providing training and encourages beneficiaries to meet with their peers from other provinces for training and capacity building at a peer-to-peer level.

An exchange programme was held in December 2012, in partnership with Bush Radio in Cape Town, where the Media Kidocracy Konference (MKK) played host to 100 children and youths.

The MKK project provides young people with a platform to be heard on relevant issues. It also gives them access to media-making tools and various methods of expressing their thoughts.

The MKK is an annual Bush Radio project that targets young people in the country and Southern African Development Community. It encourages them to engage on various media platforms and to use media as a tool to communicate and express their views in a democracy.

The MKK 2012 programme comprised mainly panel and round-table discussions on youth-related topics, practical training workshops and the production of cartoons, comics, photography, print, radio, television, graffiti and online media.

The agency has also partnered with the IAJ and commissioned the development of a toolkit on the Media Literacy Project. The toolkit called Start You Own School Newspaper is the result of numerous consultations with key stakeholders and experts in the field of children/youth media, journalism practitioners, educators and the learners themselves.

More than 300 toolkits have been distributed at schools, juvenile centres and prisons and are used as a guide by project beneficiaries to establish their own newsletters and newspapers.

In March the MDDA will host a national Media Literacy Summit at which the work done since 2009 will be evaluated and the new implementation plan for the remaining provinces will be revised.

The agency is thankful to all partners and corporate citizens who contribute to the aftercare programme by providing funds for the quarterly production of school newsletters and contributing equipment such as computers, laptops, printers, digital cameras to rural schools.

The MDDA looks forward to more South African companies supporting the programme, which ultimately deepens and sustains the country's democracy through the creation of an informed society.

Lumko Mtimde, MDDA Chief Executive Officer

Youth offenders were trained in media literacy, media monitoring and developing a newspaper thanks to a partnership between the MDDA and the Department of Correctional Services.

Add technology to
your marketing mix

By *Allison Cooper

Social media, Quick Response (QR) Codes and Augmented Reality (AR) are rapidly changing the way in which news is reported. Not only can government and brands avoid the gatekeepers of information, notably editors and journalists, but also can go directly to the heart of the matter and engage directly with their customers.

One of the major downfalls though, is that these ever popular and growing marketing, media and advertising applications are instant. This means that the reputation you have been trying so hard to build can be destroyed via one person's tweet, which becomes a massive negative marketing campaign before you've even had a chance to log onto Twitter or Facebook.

When using any form of social media you, therefore, have to ensure that you are alert, quick and honest, and when you think publicity, you should think news. Anyone who still thinks journalism is a profession of free lunches and function hopping is hopelessly out of touch. Mainly under-staffed and under-resourced newsrooms are more often than not grubby, chaotic places.

Journalists, used to working on the frontline amidst the worst and the best society has to offer, can spot rot from a mile away, especially the colourful ramblings submitted as news by their better paid 'colleagues' on the other side of the fence - the publicity practitioner and media spokesperson.

A quick glance is all it takes before a finger automatically hits the delete button and this is where social media can become your best friend. Besides speaking directly to a target audience, you can also cut through the clutter by ensuring interaction with customers and engaging their attention in a memorable way. This will ensure that you remain top of their minds when they are in the market to purchase a particular product or service.

Measuring return on investment
Applications such as competitions, polls, surveys and promotions offer great interaction and get the message out. But measurement of these campaigns is all-important and how you measure your impact with customers on these sites would have to be determined by the objectives of your campaign.

You therefore need to ask yourself some important questions before you log in and tweet. Do you want to increase your follower base? Do you want consumers to retweet what you are saying? Do you want to drive them to your website to enter a competition online? Do you want your consumers to engage with you?

Only after you know what you want to achieve will you be able to measure your successes or reach your milestones.

Once you've decided what your goals are, you can turn to a number of tools to help you measure them. These include Google Analytics, Omniture (Twitter and Facebook), Hootsuite (tracks clicks on Twitter), PostRank Analytics and Social Bakers (measures social engagement on various platforms), Radian 6 (measures consumer engagement) and Twitalyzer (allows Twitter users to track their use over time).

Just remember though that the physical social network, like a restaurant for example, will never be replaced by technology. It is here that you can implement a marketing or advertising campaign to capture the imaginations of your consumers and then drive them to your social platform or online space to further engage with you, 'like' your page, make a donation, enter a competition, etc.

Great applications in the media sphere, which are doing just this, include QR Codes and AR. But what are they and how do you use them to your benefit?

Quick Response Codes

A QR Code is a matrix barcode (or two-dimensional code) that is readable by QR scanners, cameras on mobiles phones and smartphones. Mobile bar codes – particularly the pixelated QR Codes – are becoming a common sight. They leap off the page in press and poster advertising. They even appear on websites, television and video games.

The advantages are numerous. Not only do they encourage the reader to take action immediately, using his or her mobile phone to scan the code and follow the link, but this action is measurable as dates and times at which the code is scanned are reported, along with the type of mobile phoned used. For print media – like magazine ads – the ability to track response gives the advertiser a clear view of the medium's lifetime.

Some marketers use QR Codes because they are inexpensive, measurable and easy to incorporate into printed materials. However, it is crucial that they provide clear benefits to customers and must provide immediate access to relevant and engaging content.

Tips for successful QR Code campaigns:

- Use a shortened URL to create a clear QR Code.
- Link to content that is relevant and adds value.
- Optimise content for mobile.
- Place QR Codes where your customers are.
- Always provide instructions for use.
- Provide directions to obtain free scanner.
- Assess response rates and commit to improving.

Augmented Reality

With consumers' fast-paced lifestyles brands need to change with the times. They need to interact with their target audience to ensure the uptake of a product or message and to remain top of mind when consumers make their purchasing decisions.

This is where AR is having a great impact as it enables engagement with a product or brand to such an extent that the senses are stirred. AR merges virtual components over live video streams, in real time, leaving a lasting impression.

With a varied, constantly evolving media landscape on tap and consumers being savvier than ever before, marketers need to ensure that their marketing mix moves with the times and gives consumers what they want. Consumers want more ambient and experiential marketing media, such as AR, which they can have fun and interact with in their own time.

A sure-fire solution to getting your message across effectively is to make sure that the message is contained in something that adds value to the life of the consumer - something new and exciting that's also results driven. The smartphone penetration rate in Africa is growing year on year and there has never been a more important time for marketing campaigns to capitalise on this end-user trend.

Audiences are becoming savvier in terms of how they can interact with messages and brands. The predicted increase in smartphone usage shows that audiences are not only accepting this technology but also expecting it to be part of the marketing mix. Don't let them down!

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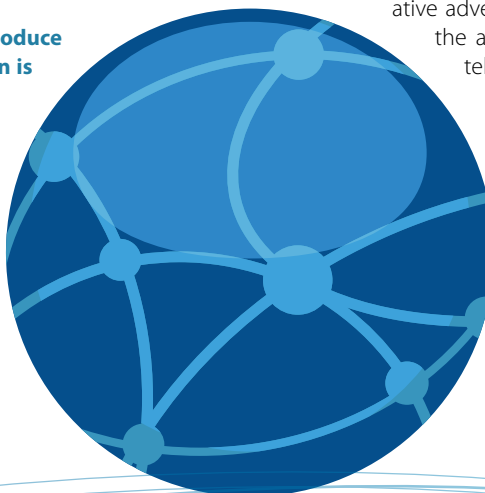
2013 marketing
and advertising trends

By *Johanna McDowell

There are a few trends to be aware of in 2013, which will help create opportunities within the advertising and marketing arena in South Africa. A number of these trends come from local and international intelligence.

The Independent Agency Search and Selection Company (IAS) has access to international insights from its global partner - the AAR Group UK - with added input from the 2012 AdForum Summit in New York and the 2012 Global Social Media Summit in London. This has helped the company to identify the following trends in 2013:

1 . The speed required to market, produce and get the work into the public domain is becoming crucial.

■ . Research and pretesting could slow this process down. Therefore, it is advisable that agencies turn their attention towards refining the research process and implementing measures that would increase efficiency. While these developments are underway, agencies must maintain their integrity in order to match the deliverables to their clients.

2. Measuring the efficacy of a campaign.

■ Access to data technology assists agencies to measure the results and impact of a campaign effectively. This means that the analysis of data is becoming more of a necessity and is frequently required by clients to measure the return on their investment.

3. A great creative advertisement is becoming more valuable than an ordinary one.

■ It is easy to get wrapped up in data but a great creative advertisement is still a great advertisement and the agency of the future will still produce great television advertisements. Television is not dead - more people are watching television than ever before. Yes, they also watch advertisements on social media platforms, but television is the social glue for many communities in a way that other screens are not.

5. The relationship between a client and an agency is becoming more important during tough times.

As an intermediary, I have noticed that clients have come to rely on their business partnerships, as a result their rela-

tionship with the agency very important. Clients are more likely to create a long-lasting relationship with an agency, provided they receive the deliverables that they have outlined on the onset of the relationship.

4. New agencies are beginning to emerge since the end of the recession.

■ Many people might have moved on or broken away and created their own advertising agencies. This gives clients more choice, creates a bigger pool of creative perspectives, knowledge and expertise and creates for an exciting and more competitive market place.

5. Social media – the rush is now over.

■ Companies were rushing to be on social media platforms so they would not be left behind. Stakeholders are now being considered. Social media is heading towards a more strategic and intentional approach. Successful campaigns should last for 12 months and are measured according to how they are aligned to the business strategy and objectives.

Also, social media platforms such as LinkedIn are under utilised and can be the determining factor within the professional networking landscape. This confirms the talk at the 2012 Global Social Media Summit where it was highlighted that LinkedIn hosts 64 million professionals on their network. Their main aim is to link talent and opportunity on a massive scale. Accessing this network is crucial for business.

6. Renaissance of the direct mailer.

■ The advent of newer and more effective online and digital technology is allowing direct mailers to become more focused, measured, instant and cheap. Agencies can communicate thought leading information and their vision to manage their relationships with prospective and existing clients through this medium. They can be contacted via email and allow for analytics to become more pronounced in terms of the market place.

For more insights visit *www.agencyselection.co.za*

Johanna McDowell is the managing director of the IAS. She graduated in marketing and business studies, specialising in the European Union, at Twickenham College of Technology in the 1970s.

Since then she was worked for large corporates and advertising agencies in both the UK and South Africa. McDowell ventured into public relations in 1993 and opened her own company Integrated Communications. She is also CEO of Mazole Holdings, a black empowered marketing services group.

The IAS, in association with the AAR Group, was founded in South Africa by the Mazole Holdings Group in 2006. IAS specialises in client/agency relationship management and helping clients find agencies.

Spending advertising
budgets wisely

By Donald Liphoko
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"For years, corporate marketers have walked into budget meetings like neighbourhood junkies. They couldn't always justify how well they spent past handouts or what difference it all made. They just wanted more money – for flashy TV ads, for big-ticket events, for, you know, getting out the message and building up the brand. But those heady days of blind budget increases are fast being replaced with a new mantra: measurement and accountability." - *Making Marketing Measure Up, Business Week.*

Often government communicators are accused of playing the neighbourhood junkies. But in reality, they are more akin to Oliver Twist – just getting by.

So what is all the money for? The role of government advertising spans providing information on the state's policies, services and activities, and discouraging harmful behaviour. Communicating with the people we serve is a critical indicator for the health of a modern democracy.

How much to spend, who to target, what message to communicate, where to place the communication, which languages and how often to repeat the messages are critical decisions.

In Canada the government spent C$83,3 million (approximately R743 million) on advertising in 2011, while the United States federal government spent US$750,4 million (approximately R6,6 billion). The Australian government's advertising budget for 2012 was A$70 million (approximately R641 million). In 2013, the United Kingdom is planning to spend £285 million (approximately R3,9 billion). These figures give some perspective on our R224,3 million (Nielsen, 2012) advertising spend.

Unlike the proverbial neighbourhood junkie, government communicators' advertising budget priorities should be informed by a rigorous accountability framework that aligns budgets to outcomes in a logical chain through specific activities and outputs that lead to the achievement of intended policy impacts. Campaigns cannot be delinked from government policies and the public good.

In addition to programme outcomes, the appropriation of advertising funds is informed by multiple factors and is even more challenging when the goal is intangible. Research is a fundamental resource that assists us in budget scoping, by quantifying the current status and establishing reliable assumptions for the desired programme impacts.

Although no one is quite sure how much to spend, what is certain is that advertising expenditure levels must be decided on in the programme planning stages – before any advertising can take place.

The role of advertising must be clearly defined and the tasks decided before determining the advertising budget, with the understanding that advertising is not a panacea for all communication outputs.

Communication factors to consider in the planning stage include:

■ The volume of competing voices in your message subset. The more diverse the messages you will be competing with to make your case, the larger the advertising budget.

Figure 1. Results-based management pyramid (National Treasury 2007).

The developmental results of achieving specific outcomes

What we aim to change?

The medium-term result for specific beneficiaries that are the consequence of achieving specific outputs

What we wish to achieve?

The final products, or goods and services procuded for delivery

What we produce or deliver?

The processes or actions that use a range of inputs to produce the desired outputs and ultimately outcomes

What we do?

The resources that contribute to the production and delivery of outputs

What we use to do the work?

Impacts
Outcomes
Outputs
Activities
Inputs

Manage towards achieving these results

Plan, Budget, implement and monitor

■ The size of your demographic target. The greater the number of people in your targeted audience, the greater the funds that will be required to adequately reach them. Further, the more demographically different the audience, the greater the number of media types and language modes that will be required.

■ The current perception of the policy intervention. An assessment of the targeted beneficiaries' acceptance of the programme expressed in research findings often provides useful benchmarks for the required advertising effort.

The temptation to rely on historical information to decide future adverting budgets is great, however, it is necessary to establish clear objectives and only then cost your advertising plan to meet the stated objectives. A rand spent in advertising is a rand that cannot be invested in other inputs. Advertising therefore must compete with other alternatives and the level of advertising budget must have quantifiable returns.