



# GCA BULLETIN 4

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## The 2009 elections – a milestone to a successful GCA

The recent elections have confirmed South Africa as a stable and thriving democracy. It also served as a reminder to government communicators of the long journey that has been travelled in ensuring strategic content and coherence in government communication and that a lot of work still lies ahead in better serving the people as demanded by the Constitution.

Critically, we proceed from the understanding that without information, there can be no popular participation; without popular participation there can be no lasting legitimacy or transformation of society.

Central to this obligation is the fact that the core mandate of government communication is to meet the communication and information needs of government and the public. This mandate requires that government communication should expand access to opportunities and help the people of South Africa to act as their own liberators.

Good communication lies at the root of success in the fast-moving global world – particularly in matters of delivery and development. It fosters the necessary environment for the pursuit of partnerships leading to shared growth and a better life for all.

Within the context of the free and fair elections we just witnessed, government communicators should ask themselves some key questions: to what extent are we acting to build on our country's achievement to help ensure that the public is informed about its rights and responsibilities?; to what extent are we communicating to ensure that those who are disadvantaged know about the opportunities that democracy has brought, and are then able to take advantage of them?

In providing credible and correct answers to these questions, we should remember that government communication is a critical instrument in harnessing the groundswell of hope and optimism in our nation into concrete action for higher rates of growth and development. The mandate that the people have given to the soon to be formed government should be fully supported by communication to be fully functional and operational.

The experience of government over the last 15 years of freedom has shown that the purpose of strategic communication is to integrate all the programmes, public education and advocacy efforts to conclude a long-term communication strategy to support government's service-delivery implementation programmes.

The strategies will ensure that we are better positioned to be more proactive and strategic, rather than consistently reacting to the existing environment. The strategies will also help us to deploy resources more effectively and strategically by highlighting synergies and shared opportunities in various government programmes and work areas.

The creation and adoption of a strategic communication plan represents a significant step for government. The adoption of such a plan represents a cultural shift toward communication and a clear recognition that all the efforts have a communication element.

The adoption of a clear strategic communication plan can ensure that departments are able to enter the Government Communicators' Awards (GCA) and be recognised for improved delivery, innovation and excellence in the government communication profession, which are key and central to the task of government to provide a better life for all.

The formation of the new Government in the aftermath of the successful elections gives communicators an opportunity to put in place strategic plans that will allow government to communicate better in a coherent and integrated manner. In this effort to improve communication, it is important to also work towards forging a communication system that integrates all the three spheres of government and extending communication to those who need opportunities most in the rural areas.



**government  
communications**

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