

# GovComms

JULY 2012

A newsletter for government and Public Sector communicators

## HIGHLIGHTS



**MANAGEMENT TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**  
GCIS drives professionalism



**YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES**  
Bridging the information gap



**MEDIA COVERAGE**  
Infrastructure in the news

## Community media in touch, in context



By Donald Liphoko  
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In Nairobi, citizen journalists took on the task of reporting post-election violence. Activists for social justice, students, and entrepreneurs mobilised to track events in real time and feed them to a website through e-mail and SMS. Volunteers used the running commentary to map hotspots and alert residents to marauding gangs in unsafe neighbourhoods.

In Lanet Umoja, a village with 28 000 residents in western Kenya, Chief Francis Kariuki tweets on issues brought to the tribal council by the community. His Swahili Twitter feed reports on missing children, crime alerts, and community meetings. Kariuki's rural constituents access Twitter through third-party cell-phone applications, and forward tweets to one another via text messaging.

Across Zambia, health centres in conjunction with Roll Back Malaria run educational community radio dramas to reach mothers with young children in an anti-malaria infection campaign, tasked with reducing child mortality. In Blantyre, Malawi, Fred-

erick Bvalani started a Facebook group, named Malawi Fuel Watch, in the face of growing fuel scarcity. Using geo-location, the group's 6 000 members upload information on the availability of fuel and even the length of the queues, using the little fuel they have more economically. In rural Orientale Province, eastern DRC, 27 communities use high-frequency radio technology to enable people in some of the most isolated villages to communicate with each other through Early Warning Radio – a network which serves as an early warning system for villagers under threat of attack from militant rebels.

All of these instances showcase the readiness of African communities to embrace local media to address service-delivery shortcomings in their neighbourhoods. Each case operating outside mainstream media delivers street-level news to marginalised communities. Whether we acknowledge it or not, local is the new frontier for government communicators.



government  
communications

Department:  
Government Communication and Information System  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



If we do not begin to put infrastructure and communications investment in place to cascade our messages into the community media sector, we risk leaving a void, which will be filled by mainstream media voices. More importantly, our absence from community media will result in growing alienation from the beneficiaries of governments' initiatives to those most in need. Community media constitute an important conduit for government to listen to its citizens' concerns and respond timeously with communications remedies.

In granting the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) its public interest mandate and powers, as described in sections 2, 28 and 78 of the IBA Act, 1993 (Act 153 of 1993), Parliament proclaimed a new system of regulating broadcasting in South Africa, giving the policy directives for licensing and creating community broadcasting. This was enhanced through the MDDA Act, 2002 (Act 14 of 2002), giving meaning and effect to section 16 and 32 of the Constitution, establishing the duty "to help create an enabling environment for media develop-

ment and diversity that is conducive to public discourse and which reflects the needs and aspirations of all South Africans."

By including community media in our communications plans, GCIS seeks to defend the gains of a democratic government by ensuring the viability of a vibrant community media landscape, representing South Africa's divergent views. It is in this context that our media strategies, contact plans, and media schedules set out to be inclusive in the allocation of advertising spend.

Our media planners customise community and local media solutions to fit department-specific communications objectives. These community media titles are drawn from a growing canvas that includes radio, print, out-of-home, television and digital (mobile, Internet, social media) properties. There are 751 community and local newspaper titles reaching 6,6 million households. Four community television stations currently broadcast to communities in Durban, Soweto, Cape Town, and Pretoria reaching in excess of 1,7 million viewers combined.

The World Wide Worx Internet Access in South Africa 2012 study shows our Internet user base growing from 6,8 million in 2010 to 8,5 million at the end of 2011, with a forecast of 10 million users by the end of the year. A staggering 8 million South Africans currently regularly access the Internet on their phones. With 4,5 million Facebook friends, 1,1 million Twitter users, and 10 million active Mxit users, South Africans are increasingly interconnected. Every day, citizens are in conversation about government's services on these localised participatory media platforms.

To keep up to date with this dynamic environment, GCIS has established a weekly knowledge forum through which media owners present their credentials, the latest media innovations and consumer research. We also collaborate with the MDDA, the Digital Media and Marketing Association, the Advertising Media Forum and the Advertising Media Association of South Africa to ensure that government's campaigns are at the leading edge. Instead of engaging traditional media gatekeepers and imploring them to consider government news, let's work together to reach communities directly.



# Getting the messengers into shape

By Brent Simons  
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One of the hallmarks of the modernisation of government communications in South Africa is the importance the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) places on the development of professionals in this sector.

The Communications 2000 report, also known as Comtask, identified professionalism as one of the key principles that will enhance effective government communications. In addition, it recommended that GCIS take the lead in training and developing government communicators employed across the three spheres. To this end, GCIS is now in the process of establishing a training and development unit.

The objective of this unit is to professionalise government communications by:

- identifying, coordinating and implementing effective-impact training programmes
- establishing a government communications corps that not only understands communication but promotes government policies as key communications content
- cooperation with academic institutions to introduce a minimum qualification in government/public sector communications.



## Capacity building

GCIS CEO Jimmy Manyi says this unit will be tasked with “an unprecedented effort to train professional communicators and political leadership in communication skills. This effort will build communication capacity nationally, provincially and locally, and will ensure that communication professionals will be effective in the full spectrum of communication, from interpersonal methods to working with media and managing campaigns. This effort will involve partnership with public communication institutions across Africa and other international centres as part of bringing the practice of government communication in line with best experiences globally.”

The training unit will therefore have a strategic role to play in ensuring that GCIS gives life to its vision of becoming the pulse of communication excellence in government.

George Washington University’s Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication, along with the World Bank’s Communication for Governance and Accountability Program (CommGAP), recently identified the strengthening of communications capacity as central to governments achieving their outcomes. In essence, they argue it is in the best “interest of governments to communicate effectively about the work they do.” They suggest that governments “benefit from developing and maintaining effective communication capacity...”

Therefore an effective and proficient communications system must be seen as central to the management and service-delivery

process of the South African Government. As a function of good governance, open, proactive and interactive communication ensures that the public receives government information and that the views and concerns of the public are taken into account in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes to ensure better service delivery.

Following the January 2011 Cabinet Lekgotla, President Jacob Zuma acknowledged the importance of speaking to and maintaining strong links with the people of South Africa. To realise “direct contact with our people” he said communications must become a “primary task”.

In view of President Zuma’s call for GCIS to assert the presence and voice of government in a highly contested communication environment, Minister in the Presidency, Collins Chabane, identified communicators as a critical link between implementing government’s programme and the empowerment of citizens.

However, to establish a direct link between government and the people, Minister Chabane urged GCIS to implement capacity-building programmes for all government communicators. The objective is to empower government messengers with the tools to develop, disseminate and communicate government

messages effectively.

In addition, all training will have to focus on how government messages can reach their target audiences. Training courses will not only ensure a better understanding of the role of the media in our democracy, but will also build strongly on the role of the government communicator as a direct link between government, the media and our citizens. Hence, communication strategies

must be designed to reach different target groups through multiple channels.

Through accredited training courses, GCIS will improve the collective skills of all government communicators. To this end, a course will be developed, which all government communicators will attend. Although GCIS will pay for the design and accreditation of the course, departments will have to budget and pay for their communicators to attend.

An academic symposium to secure buy-in from academic institutions to introduce a minimum qualification in government/public-sector communications by 2014, is planned for later this year. This event will be addressed by senior government communicators, academics and industry experts.

Recent GCIS research indicated that the public wanted more information directly from government. By introducing training to improve the skills of all government communicators, GCIS will ensure that government communicates more consistently and more proactively!

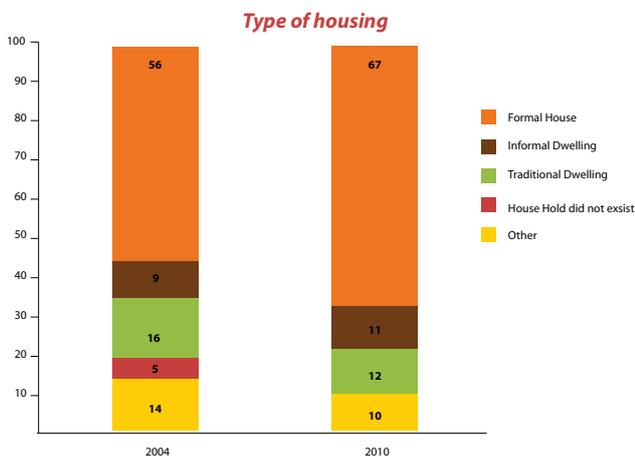
# Youth education and unemployment: Matching the message to the opportunity

By Kopo Lehobye  
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With the dawn of democracy in 1994, many South Africans were looking forward to a better South Africa, especially for the youth. And yes, government has made great strides in improving certain conditions such as improving access to basic services including water, sanitation, housing and education. As evident in the graph below (Figure 1), in 2010, 67% of the youth lived in formal housing compared to 56% in 2004.

However, there are still some areas where the public and youth in particular believe government is performing poorly in addressing challenges. For instance, 74% and 65% of the youth believe government is doing fairly/very badly in addressing job creation and narrowing the income gap.

Figure 1: Access to housing



Source: Stats SA General household Survey

The youth's negative sentiment regarding government's performance in job creation is not altogether unfounded – in 2011, statistics have put the overall unemployment rate for South Africa at about 22% (Stats SA Quarterly Labour Force Survey 2011). And for the youth, the crisis of unemployment is dire because of the 22% unemployment rate in South Africa, almost three-quarters (72%) are younger than 34. Although over time, education has been prioritised as part of the strategy to improve employment, this on its own will not change the unemployment status fast enough.

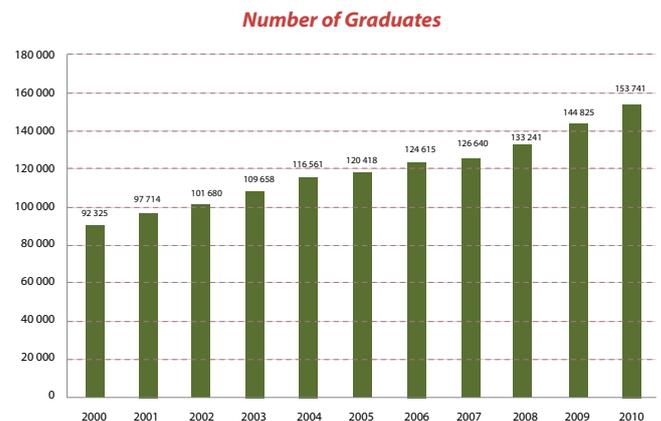
Many young people have since had the opportunity to access higher education facilities; however, many more can potentially access education through the available financial assistance such

as NSFAS, Eduloan, and departmental and company bursaries.

According to figures from the Council of Higher Education, 892 936 students (726 882 undergraduates and 138 610 post-graduates) were enrolled in South Africa's public higher education institutions in 2010, compared to about 837 779 in 2009. The Higher Education Information Management System (HEMIS) recorded that in 2010 about 153 741 students graduated from public higher education institutions – an increase of approximately 6% on 144 852, which graduated in 2009 (Figure 2).

Most of these are assumedly youth because Stats SA General Household Survey 2010 shows that 40% of enrolments in higher education institutions are youths aged between 20 and 24 years, while a further 21% are youths between ages 25 to 34.

Figure 2: Total number of graduates



Source: Council on Higher Education

Though young people are aware of the various financial institutions/assistance, the GCIS National Qualitative study conducted in February/March 2012 in five provinces (Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Western Cape and Eastern Cape) among youths aged 18 to 35 years revealed that few students have accessed financial assistance because of perceived negative outcomes and tedious administration involved in the application process.

However, education on its own will not address the challenge of youth unemployment because the workforce needed in the country should not only be a qualified workforce but an 'employable' workforce. This means having relevant skills and necessary practical experience.

Having an educated youth is only one step in the right direction of empowering and developing the youth as the stark reality is that a qualification or education on its own does not necessarily translate to employment. Therefore, other measures over and above education should be put in place, such as skills development.

Another step towards understanding and tackling the youth unemployment crisis is for employers to start understanding who the unemployed youth are, where they live, and what skills or qualifications they have, because although there is some headway in attempting to close the labour skills shortages by increasing the number of graduates there is still some way to go.

Furthermore, employers should remember not all unemployed youths are graduates. In truth, 50% of unemployed youths have not completed high school and only 34% have completed high



school. This poses a huge problem because if formal schooling levels are low, did they attain some sort of skills development training. Then at least the young unemployed force would be 'employable'.

And yes, there is a substantial proportion of unemployed graduates, but again the question arises: are these graduates 'employable'; do they have relevant skills and practical backing?

### Youth unemployment gap

In the quest to close the youth unemployment gap, ways of ensuring that our youth have skills that will assist them to be 'employable' should be seriously considered.

There is a shortage of skills in the country, but more often it would seem that people are not sure what the term 'scarce-skills' refers to. In addition to formal education, skills development and entrepreneurial skills development should perhaps be the focus in attempting to close the unemployment gap. However, young people should first know which specific skills are needed so that they can consider attaining skills that will make them 'employable'. Scarce skills refer to those occupations in which there is a shortage of qualified and experienced people.

In the case of South Africa, scarce skills include managers, social workers, engineering professionals, doctors, nurses, law professionals, ICT professionals and associate professionals, educators, artisans, city planners (Skills shortages in South Africa: Case studies of key professionals, 2009), as well as economic and financial scientists, geologists, mathematical scientists, actuarial scientists, statisticians and agriculture specialists ([www.nsfas.org.za/bursary.htm](http://www.nsfas.org.za/bursary.htm)).

Addressing these scarce skills can influence the country's New Growth Path positively, which is aimed at enhancing growth, employment creation and equity.

FET and HET colleges have been reinigorated, but their benefits in ad-



ressing skills shortages and unemployment should be emphasised. Private business and government should drastically expand learnership and internship programmes and ensure that the youth understand how these programmes work and how they can benefit them by making them more 'employable'. These programmes should not only target graduates but also unemployed youths with little formal education. Remember, this is the bulk of our unemployed youth.

#### Some employment creation programmes identified are:

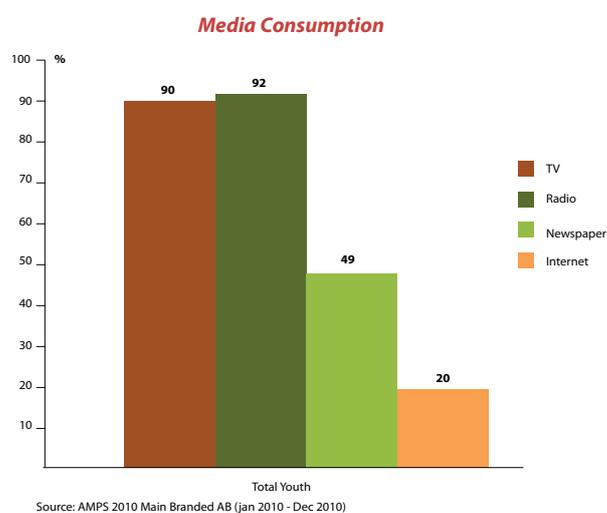
- The EPWP, which provides poverty and income relief through temporary work for the unemployed.
- Home-based Community Care, which provides health and social services to vulnerable people in their homes, and trains caregivers to administer these services.
- The Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP), which is aimed at creating sustainable rural communities throughout the country.
- The National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC), which aims to enhance skills development by providing unemployed youth in rural areas with opportunities to work in their own communities and be trained to provide the necessary services for local socio-economic development ([www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/programmes/index.html](http://www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/programmes/index.html)).

The youth should be aware and informed about these programmes; therefore, they need to be informed about employment opportunities and skills development using media platforms.

The youth's mainstream media usage mimics national usage with television being at the top, followed by radio and then newspapers. Therefore, when using mainstream media for communicating with young people, one should consider using Metro FM and Ukhozi as these have 21% and 19% of youth listenership respectively. About 80% of 15- to 34-year-olds tune into SABC 1 and at 54%, the *Daily Sun* is by far the youth's favourite newspaper, followed by the *Sowetan* (25%) (AMPS 2011) (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Youth media usage**

In the era of digital and mobile technology, it comes



as no surprise that the South African youth have embraced technology.

Gradually, their Internet access has increased to 20%, an average slightly higher than the national average of 16% (AMPS 2011). This is therefore a potential platform to reach the youth.

And of the youth that accessed the Internet, most stated that they used the Internet for searches, e-mail, social networking and chatting. The majority (46%) access the Internet via their cellphones; only 28% use a computer for Internet access (FutureFact 2011). Therefore, when packaging online information, communicators and designers must keep in mind the interface will probably be on a small cellphone screen.

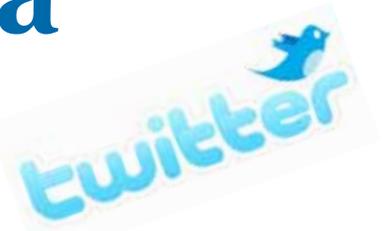
Government, along with private business, is faced with a huge challenge of not only creating an enabling environment for employment opportunities, but also ensuring that the youth are developed in relevant skills and have access to information about all the available opportunities.

Currently, 40% (GCIS National Tracker 2011) of the youth believe unemployment is a huge problem in our country, while 74% are negative about government's performance in addressing unemployment.

In the next few years, it would be wonderful if only a small youth minority mentioned unemployment as a challenge. And it will be great to see many more young people saying that government is doing well in addressing unemployment.

# Getting to grips with social media





By Sanita Groenewald  
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In today's fast-paced world where your phone is considered "un-smart" if it can't tell you your blood type and your mother-in-law's middle name just from you holding it, the modern communicator has to be just as clever when making use of the dozens of communication platforms out there.

The advent of the Internet has invented and opened doors no-one could have dreamed of, and with the birth of social media, it's become even better. So everyone is on it, even that "tannie" in the small Karoo town no-one has heard of, communicates with her grandchildren on Facebook.

As much as we understand the value of being on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, it can be a little daunting when you have to be on it and actually talk to real people in a professional capacity.

Yes you can "yadder" with your buddies about your colleague's atrocious fashion choices, but as a communicator, how do you go about the business of talking to people on Facebook?

Just dishing out the latest info about your department's programmes doesn't cut it because behind those profiles who "like" your page are real people who want real interaction with government.

To help government web content managers get on with it, the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) organised a seminar early this year under the tutelage of social media whizz Hugh McCabe.

For departments who are new to social media, McCabe laid

then you have to talk back. Social media means participating, sharing and networking.

To keep the conversation flowing, you have to have some pretty good content. Content is still king and needs to be kept fresh and relevant. This is where your adaptability skills come in.

The language and tone has to fit with the people you are interacting with. The department's content could also provide just one part of a potential conversation, where the recipient provides the other part. This might be a bit different to how one normally writes for the website, but when in Rome, do as the Romans do.

Inasmuch as you can plug your department's information till the cows come home, you should keep in mind that social media is not an advertising or a media channel in the traditional sense.

People are on 24/7 just waiting for something new to talk about. You have to make sure that you make a real connection with them.

"The critical success factor for any social media marketing activity is for it to be genuine. If it seems or feels inauthentic, it will fail. The guiding principles for any organisation venturing into social media are: be active, be everywhere, be nice," advised McCabe.

Being active everywhere means that you must provide constant, contextual, responsive and valuable content for every target group and on a variety of platforms so that your audience can watch, read and listen.

Being nice, on the other hand, means developing a thick skin when listening to and monitoring feedback, which can be quite negative at best. Don't take it personally – just respond timeously in a constructive manner like the true professional you are.

Very important to note: departments should develop a social media strategy to help them use social media as part of the department's overall communication strategy, planning engagement on issues. Get your ducks in a row so you get the best value out of using these platforms. Being ill-prepared for using social media can actually do you more harm than good.

## McCabe's quick guide to navigating the social media jungle

### Facebook

Número uno. Most popular social networking site, with more than 4,5 million users in South Africa, which is roughly half of the country's Internet users.

Government departments can create a Facebook page and use it to update users on the department's activities. It's an ideal medium to use as part of a communication campaign and to solicit comments.



down the basic rules of engagement. First things first: listen. Listen to everything that is being said about your department and build conversations around that. Social media is all about word of mouth – you want to get people talking about you and also talking to you. But



The homepage on Facebook must be branded with the department's coat of arms and its name. With the new Facebook layout, it is possible to add a unique photograph – a "cover".

McCabe pointed out a few key differences between business pages and personal profiles that should be kept in mind.

Pages allows one to designate multiple administrators, so that more than one person can manage the account and update it. If one of your administrators leaves the department, you still have control over the page. As far as possible, keep the conversation going daily with the latest developments from your department.

You can also include information on services, noteworthy achievements, photos/videos (which everyone absolutely loves) and even links to documents published for comment and invite people to comment.

### Twitter

This popular messaging service allows users to send and read messages called tweets. It's extremely useful in public relations, and can be used to monitor and respond to what is being said about your department.

Twitter is a nifty way to drive new traffic to your website, engage with new audiences, and alert users to new information on the website. Best of all, it's fast and totally mobile.

Individual employees can use Twitter to liaise with the public and the media. However, this should only be done as part of a carefully orchestrated campaign.

### YouTube

It's the Number 1 video-sharing site. GCIS has set up a Government Channel on YouTube, and is allowing other departments to share this space, although the videos have to be approved by the GCIS video section before they are published.

Videos must be short and to the point, as viewers quickly lose

interest. YouTube can also be used for audio files, and this works like a radio broadcast where the listener doesn't have to focus on the broadcast exclusively, but can listen while doing other things.

### Blogs

A blog lends a personal touch to your online presence. It doesn't have to be written by one person – it can be published under the name of the departmental spokesperson or Director-General but written by different people. It's a good way to highlight current issues and deliver key messages.

### LinkedIn

This business-oriented social networking site allows registered users to maintain contact with people they know in business. Members use LinkedIn to find jobs and business opportunities in response to recommendations from a contact in their network. LinkedIn groups can be created for specific interest groups, such as government website content managers.

LinkedIn also allows company profiles and can be used to advertise jobs and keep track of who's where in government.

Links to bookmarking sites, such as Digg, StumbleUpon, Delicious on your website, drive users to the website. Together with Flickr, a photo-sharing site, these examples are currently the most used by government departments worldwide.

The social media arena is constantly evolving, with new platforms starting up all the time. Once one has established a presence, keep it that way and grow your following by keeping up-to-date with new trends.

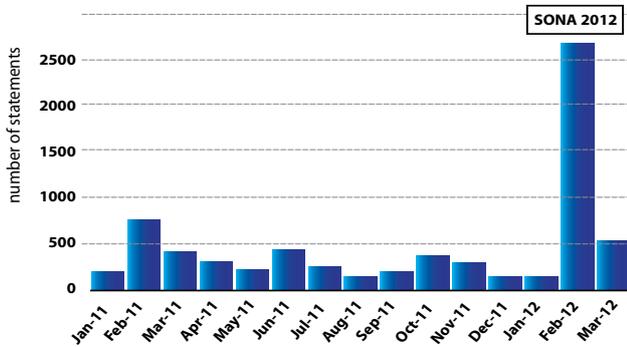


# Building South Africa: how media see infrastructure

By Nkele Sebas  
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**D**uring his 2012 State of the Nation Address, President Jacob Zuma announced a campaign to develop the country's infrastructure to boost economic development and create job opportunities. The news received unprecedented coverage as infrastructure formed the central theme of the address, with more than triple the amount of coverage previous addresses had generated.

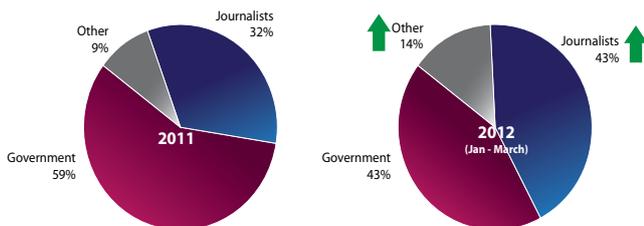
## Volume of coverage on government for the issue of infrastructure: Jan 2011 - March 2012



Basis: 7.355 statements in SA media

Compared with other programmes announced in the address, this announcement drew remarks from a broad spectrum of commentators and contributed to the majority of the positive reactions to the State of the Nation Address. As a result, debate around the topic increased from 9% in 2011 among other commentators, to 14% in 2012. Media noted that economists applauded the plan saying it would lead to a sharp reduction in poverty, inequality and unemployment. But there were also some cautious comments about where government would get the money to fund the "massive" plan.

## Share of voice in coverage on government for the issue of infrastructure: 2011 vs. Jan - March 2012



Basis: 7.355 statements in SA media

Since then, a lot has happened; the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC) convened an intergovernmental forum on infrastructure, bringing together the

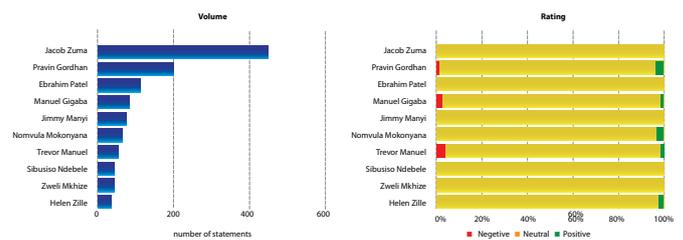


President Zuma accompanied by the Eastern Cape Premier Ms Noxolo Kieviet at the official opening of Ngqura Port as part of the infrastructure development plan he outlined during the State of the Nation Address earlier this year.

three spheres of government to discuss the implementation plan across all three spheres. Cabinet also approved the framework for the multi-billion rand infrastructure implementation plan, which comprises 17 strategic infrastructure projects and 153 project components. The President's launch of the Dube Trade Port, Port of Ngqura and Transnet's announcement of a R300 billion infrastructure programme received favourable coverage in the media.

## Sources quoted on infrastructure

### Top government sources quoted on infrastructure: Jan 2012 - Mar 2012



Basis: 3.413 statements in SA media

The President and the Minister of Finance emerged as leading sources, with the Minister of Public Enterprises and the Minister of the National Planning Commission tackling the benefits and the challenges associated with government's infrastructure plan.

## Rating of coverage

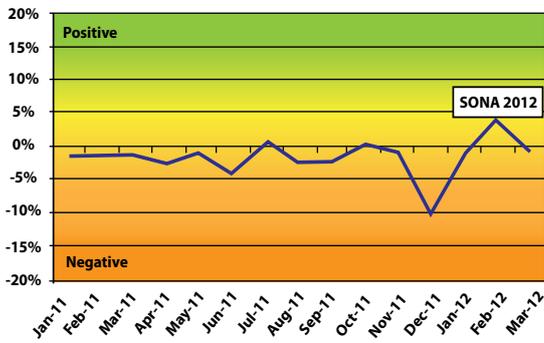
For the whole of 2011, the mean rating on infrastructure was negative, dropping to -10% in December. However, the positivity that followed the announcement helped to elevate the rating to a positive 4% in February. The line has again slipped to below 0%, but active communication and sharing of progress as the implementation of various programmes unfolds will certainly help to sustain the level of positivity that was seen during the State of the Nation Address.



ployed graduates/youth, will continue to attract interest from the public, and in particular, the media. Rigorous marketing of these programmes will also sustain the positive coverage.



**Rating of coverage on government for the issue of infrastructure: Jan 2011 - Mar 2012**



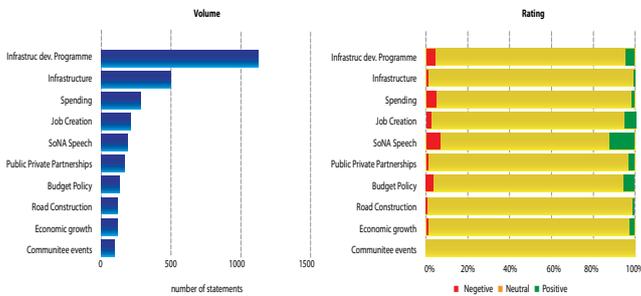
— Rating of government for infrastructure

Basis: 7,366 statements in SA media

**How infrastructure ranked among other issues related to government**

Government's infrastructure development programme formed the main focus of coverage in the media. The speech itself attracted around 15% positive coverage. The more positive issues of job creation and public-private partnerships also featured among the top issues.

**Top issues for government in articles focused on infrastructure: Jan 2012 - March 2012**



Basis: 4,413 statements in SA media



**Conclusion**

In the way that 2011 was seen as a year of job creation, infrastructure in 2012 has been identified as a major driving force for boosting the level of economy and creating job opportunities. As the year progresses, details on how infrastructure development generates employment opportunities, especially for the unem-

# Where are the academic communication scholars?

By Vusi Mona  
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It was a breath of fresh air to hear Wits Journalism Professor Anton Harber's views at a recent public relations conference on government publishing its own newspaper.

Harber said there was no basis for the media to object to government publishing its own newspaper, as long as it did not carry advertising. The qualification is interesting but one I can live with. I welcome Harber ripping the veil off the exclusivist power of the commercial media to publish and his stance on making access to information as egalitarian as possible. That is what a democrat must always seek to do, especially a democratic intellectual or scholar.

When government announced last year that it was going to convert its bimonthly magazine, *Vuk'uzenzele*, into a monthly newspaper, Harber's protégés and colleagues in both the media and academia protested – rather too much I thought. To them, the freedom to publish a newspaper is their exclusive right – a privilege that is natural and immutable.

Ironically, it was lost on them that they do not publish in all South Africa's official languages, including Braille – which *Vuk'uzenzele* does. They see newspaper publishing as their exclusive domain, even when they cannot meet the information needs of the blind and speakers of African indigenous languages. When they objected, they probably had forgotten that for their products only the fully sighted, the relatively well-off (and there aren't many in our country) and those who can read English and Afrikaans need apply.

Prof Harber's view challenged the perceived and historic wisdom of permitting only market forces to shape the contours of newspaper publishing in South Africa.

It is not often that academic communication scholars acknowledge the contradiction between our highly concentrated corporate media system and the communication requirements of a democratic society.

Ours is a country with a tragically low number of media and communication academics who would dare question the legitimacy and desirability of our corporate media system. The best they give us is interpretation and/or defence of the system.

Critique is in terribly short supply unless, of course, it is directed against state-sponsored legislation.

The silence by communication scholars on the impact of the commercial media juggernaut on our democracy – and the dearth of research into alternative media systems/models – is deafening for a country that believes in freedom of expression and upholds academic freedom. Perhaps this has to do with the whole question of university-industry relations where some of the big four media groups are sponsors of journalism and media studies faculty chairs. But, that is a debate for another day.

What we must lament in South Africa is that our communication and journalism scholars have tended to accept the absence of public service principles in our newspaper publishing system, though sometimes consenting to it with considerable misgivings – which is what Unisa's Dr Phil Mtimkulu did at the same conference when he said *Vuk'uzenzele* was welcome as long as it did not "publish propaganda". He need not worry. We live in a post-Soviet period and *Pravda* would not exactly fit into our constitutional democracy.

Interestingly, public service principles are not contested when it comes to South African broadcasting. Public broadcasting exists side-by-side with commercial broadcasting. Indeed, the capacity of public broadcasting to promote a democratic political culture and the value of the South African Broadcasting Corporation as part of the nation's broader educational network is recognised by all, communication scholars included.

However, when it comes to newspaper publishing, our scholars are either sanguine about the power of our corporate media system or have resigned themselves to its immutability for the foreseeable future. For them, the profit-driven and advertising-supported newspaper publishing system has become somewhat sacrosanct. How else do they explain the absence of critical analysis of our print media system? This analysis is largely left to left-leaning political parties and a handful of media activists.

In a society where the dominant perspective is that our newspaper publishing system is democratic and needs no reform – and there is no counterview from academia – proponents of media reform are easily shunted to the margins.

The lesson to academic communication scholars is that their analysis is of crucial value to efforts to democratise communication. They do not have to wait for the benevolence of the media industry to initiate or lead a media reform movement.



# Communication begins at home

By Dorris Simpson  
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**T**hink safety, health, education, employment and rural development and you have a fair idea of the range of South Africans with whom government could and should be communicating about its five key priorities.

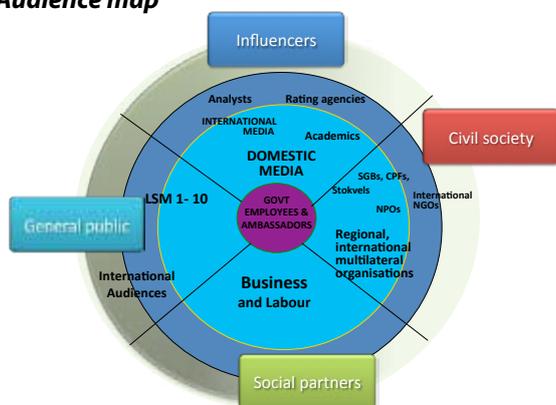
How does government stay in contact with – or solicit feedback and ideas from – rural women, the urban youth, small and medium enterprises, farmers, jobseekers, and any other categories you may care to name?

A functioning and healthy democracy and an efficient economy demand a good and steady flow of information and interaction between government and various constituencies that may include the general public, social partners, civil society groups and international interest groups or governments.

The diversity of its stakeholders presents government with the challenge to develop platforms that will satisfy the communication and information needs and preferences of target audiences that marketers are increasingly carving into more specific, focused and nuanced categories.

As part of its mandate to provide strategic leadership in government communication, Government Communications (GCIS) has developed an audience map distinguishing various target audiences from one another and detailing the various groups' preferred means of obtaining information from or about government, or engaging with the Public Service.

## Audience map



One of the key niches showing up on the audience map is a sector that has to be the first port of call in anything government says and does – even ahead of citizens, some would argue.

It is a sector which, if put together in one place, would come close to and possibly equal – at 1,3 million – the population of Nelson Mandela Bay.

This sector is critical to the maintenance of dialogue in our society and the delivery of services.

We are talking about public servants – the primary target market for government. In principle and practice, all public servants are communicators. In their own environments, personal and official, they are called on, in the office and at home, to represent and articulate government's policies and programmes.

This communication not only happens face-to-face: increasingly, public servants are active in online social communities where their positions have the potential to defend the image and work of government or reinforce the worst perceptions some people may have.

Empowering public servants with information is therefore a cru-

cial step towards enabling this community to serve as champions of government's words and deeds.

Heeding President Jacob Zuma's call for a professional cadre of public servants, GCIS established *Public Sector Manager (PSM)* magazine in 2011 as a platform to communicate with a strategic component of government's target audiences – middle and senior Public Sector managers.

*PSM* aims to help public sector/government managers and their departments/agencies improve the quality of services they provide and the ethical standards they observe, by reporting on management innovations and best practices within the Public Sector.

To extend the longevity of the positive stories in the magazine and also broaden its impact, a monthly *Public Sector Manager* forum has been introduced as an extension of the magazine brand.

Various political principals such as the Ministers of Health and Education, as well as Directors-General have featured on the *PSM* Forum schedule for them to unpack their programme and perspectives and give managers the opportunity to engage robustly and critically without fear of repudiation.

Coupled to *PSM* magazine is the product you are currently reading – *GovComms*. It is a quarterly newsletter aimed at government and Public Sector communicators, providing insights into developments and challenges in the communicators' space that can help improve professional communicators' depth of practice.

Another GCIS initiative is an occasional e-newsletter, *Government Dialogue*, that is circulated to all Public Servants. Its focus is on new developments in the government space. The frequency is flexible to ensure tactical communication driven by current or short-notice developments.

GCIS' own efforts are reinforced – and in some instances, preempted – by initiatives in various departments that are aimed at building knowledge and morale within the Public Service.

Various "uniformed" departments – the Police, Correctional Services and Defence – operate print and electronic platforms targeting their managers and staff.

In a different sector, Sport and Recreation South Africa has launched – for internal and public mobilisation purposes – its "Magnificent Fridays" campaign, with the hope of emulating the success of the "Football Fridays" campaign during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Civil servants were instrumental in galvanising the entire nation to stand behind the sports heroes and heroines for the purpose of helping them to achieve their best in international tournaments.

As Barcelona or Bafana Bafana will testify, communication within the team makes a crucial difference to how fans react in the stands or on the streets.

Government is no different, and anyone tempted to rush onto the departmental rooftop to trumpet a particular message to external audiences, is well-advised to pause and consider how well the internal team is lined up behind the action or the message concerned.

*GovComms* would like to hear how you or your departments approach this communication challenge and opportunity, as part of sharing best practice across government. Let us know via this email address [dorris@gcis.gov.za](mailto:dorris@gcis.gov.za).



## Getting to know Donald Liphoko

**D**onald Liphoko, former director at The Media-Shop, has more than two decades of media agency experience at the likes of MindShare, FCB and Sonnenberg Murphy Leo Burnett. This former vice-chairman of the SA Advertising Research Foundation and founding councillor of the Marketing Excellence Awards Council now also serves on the Vega Regional Advisory Council. Some time ago, Donald was also a strategic planning manager for commercial airtime sales at the SABC.

As part of his long-standing career, Donald has judged the prestigious *Financial Mail* AdFocus Advertising Awards and the Roger Garlick Awards and is a judge for the MTN Radio Awards 2010.

He played an integral role in establishing FCB Africa across several countries in Africa, including Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire and the DRC. Donald co-authored the *South African TV Guide for Marketers* and has written extensively about the local advertising industry, focusing on media strategy.

We took some time from his busy schedule to ask him a few questions to learn more of the man behind Donald Liphoko.

**Q: Tell us about your career in the communications industry and why you chose to work in the public sector?**

**A:** I've worked in the communications industry for 20 years, starting out as a voice-over artist in radio, event production, television sales and business strategy, consumer research, media planning and strategy. In that time, I've had the good fortune to work on public-sector campaigns, both here and abroad. The transition to the public sector was a natural progression for me, as I'd like to contribute more meaningfully to building a better South Africa.

**Q: What, in your opinion, are the qualities required to be successful in public service?**

**A:** Listening acutely, an awareness of the long-term planning horizon, a sense of social justice, and being able to hold conflicting viewpoints are key qualities.

**Q: You have been in government for a short while. What are some of the challenges you have identified in the public sector and what are some of the things you have come to admire and respect?**

**A:** Managing complex state machinery requires far more respect than I believe civil servants are accorded. I have found a cohort of committed and supportive public service employees, and have revelled in the collaborative environment.

**Q: GCIS is implementing media bulk-buying as a government-wide programme. What is your 'key message' on this programme, and give us three reasons why departments can't afford to stay outside this programme?**

**A:** The essence of media consolidation is to deliver value-for-money communication for government departments, so that the savings can be used in government's core programmes. Each rand we save, contributes to the provision of quality education, safer communities, equitable healthcare, rural development, and decent work for all.

**Q: From a creative point of view, what is your assessment of government advertising, compared with the obvious excitement at what comes out of the private sector? Is it possible for the public sector to get to a similar point of creative enterprise, without undermining the integrity and the seriousness of the message?**

**A:** Government advertising is effective to the extent that it must deliver measurable results, which constrains some of the creative flair that is more obvious in mainstream advertising. However, that doesn't mean the work we produce has to be boring; there are many award-winning public-service campaigns we can learn from around the world. A topical example in the transport sector is the government of Murcia, Spain, which launched a campaign to reduce driving in the city ([www.mejorentranvia.com](http://www.mejorentranvia.com)), where the city offered lifetime tram passes in exchange for citizens' cars.

**Q: What do you expect your annual report to say a year from now about how bulk buying has progressed?**

**A:** My expectation is that we will have exceeded our broad goals, and will have entrenched a media planning and buying philosophy for government that empowers departmental role players to the benefit of our citizens.

**Q: How can our readers connect with you (contact info, social media)?**

**A:** With a smartphone, and a tablet – there's no time off. Government communication services are always on.

**social media profile**

- twitter**  
handle@donaldliphoko,  
130 tweets, 52 followers,  
following 12
- facebook**  
35 friends, relationship  
status: married
- foursquare**  
19 friends, 157 points (7  
day high), 788 checkins,  
24 badges, 7 mayorships
- LinkedIn**  
223 connections
- Gist**  
713 contacts
- Google Search**  
1220 mentions,  
0.35 seconds

Like · Comment · Share · 7 minutes ago · 25  
2 people like this.