

Marketing communications is not about bells, whistles and confetti



By [Thamsanqa Malinga](#)

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It was a quiet day at the office and a rather insisting request to send a staff announcement came through. A colleague who happens to be internal communications manager used his powers to veto the publication of the announcement (I must say I fully agreed with him).



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A discussion ensued about how in companies many people fancy themselves communications experts and the marketing communications department is seen as a "nice to have" with no ROI in terms of rands and cents. Everyone who has done Communications 101 as a filler subject thinks this is just a field they can master. This thinking normally leads to some in the C-suite all 'armed' and ready to shoot down everything from the marketing communications team.

Marketing communications is not about pulling out bells, whistles and confetti at a whim. It is not about "getting" journalists to attend 'that' event tomorrow. It is not about handing out key rings and pens blazoned with company logo or dishing t-shirts to staff 'going on some crusade'. It's not all about 'the newsletter'.

Central to strategies

Marketing communications is central to any organisations' strategies. It helps define an organisation's relationships with customers not only by the kind of messages exchanged, but also by the choice of platform and occasion to suit their customers' preferences.

Marketing communications wraps communications around customers and helps them move through the various stages of

dealing with the company. In return the company simultaneously consolidates its image, develops a dialogue and nurtures its relationship with customers.

Organisations should realise that marketing communications is not just a 'business function' but is the interface between the business, its brand(s), and their customers, consumers and the public. Marketing communications should be seen a vehicle in which the broader company objective can be realised. Granted, its core function is not about rands and cents but get this - it's about making sense of the company objectives.

A specialised field

If you are part of the lot that thinks it's just easy to be a marketing communications specialist (C-suite lot included). I've got news for you, this is a specialised field. Like everyone is not a doctor, an engineer, a pilot etc. well, not everyone is a marketing communications guru. This is a specialised field as well.

I am tempted to mention that there are bodies like the European Association of Communication Directors (EACD), a European network for in-house communication professionals. And locally you have the Africa orientated African Association of Communication Directors (AACD), PRISA as well as the Council for Communication Management in South Africa among others. These bodies are devoted in ensuring that the field of communications is recognised as a specialised field, the same for its practitioners.

So just in case you are tempted at proving that you "can do this" and unleash the genius in you, please pause. Breathe. Ask yourself why did the company establish a communications department and also go to the trouble of hiring practitioners in the field. Leave marketing communications to the team at the back office on the first floor, but most importantly, listen to what they say and work with them... Then sit back and enjoy the rewards.

A fellow practitioner in the field told a joke of how an executive at her company came to her and blurted "I don't know what is it you do but keep on doing it as you are making me shine out there both in and outside the company".

So leave us to do what we do, we will make you shine.

ABOUT THAMSANQA MALINGA

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