

MultiChoice sets an example

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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An Onion to Prasa for a tweet about dealing with its problems by convening a 'war room'. Who is your enemy? Commuters are your customers.



Screen grab from the ad.

I remember saying to a black colleague in the mid-1990s that, following the release of Nelson Mandela in February 1990, South African business did more damage to the economies of southern African countries in three years than the old SA Defence Force could do in 10.

And I wasn't kidding. Few people remember that once South Africa lost its international pariah status, SA companies could start doing business openly in Africa (they had been doing it undercover before) again.

However, many took advantage of the general export incentive scheme, which effectively subsidised South African exports. South African-made batteries, textiles and car tyres sold, because of that, for much lower prices in Zimbabwe, for example.

That destroyed those industries in that country. And bred intense resentment.

“ The resentment still lingers in countries to the north of us, in part because we – black and white – are still arrogant to the extent we believe we are somehow separate from the rest of Africa and the ‘dark continent’ only begins at the Limpopo River. ”

I was reminded of the anger on both sides of the river with the explosion of violence fuelled by resentment of foreigners in South Africa. In retaliation, we saw SA businesses getting attacked in a number of African countries. So, it was good to see that not all of our business relationships with the continent are of an imperialist or exploitative nature.

MultiChoice has provided hundreds of jobs, as well as skills training, for Africans in many countries. This is true corporate social investment (CSI).

The company has made a number of “reality TV” videos of the people it has empowered.

The one I saw – not long after seeing Zambians attacking a Shoprite Checkers store – was of audio engineer Brian Michelo, a young Zambian family man given a hand by MultiChoice through the DStv “Gift” programme.

He trained as an audio engineer with SuperSport and speaks about how the opportunity has enabled him to continue to care for his family, as well as start building his own recording studio.

He is a deeply religious man who, right from the start, reveals his love for Gospel music. Throughout the ad, we hear his voice – and see him singing – the haunting *Amazing Grace* hymn.

“ Given everything which has happened, and is still happening, in this country and across Africa, the past week or so, the ad brought goosebumps. It may be idealistic, I know, but we can, and should, help each other. ”

Companies like MultiChoice have a critical responsibility to act as responsible corporate citizens... and this is a good example of how it should be done.

If you are a customer of MultiChoice, it does make you feel a bit better about the company.

So, an Orchid to MultiChoice for the ad, but for also doing real good, and making a difference, with your brand.

If only the people who run state-owned enterprises were as good at running companies as they are at using social media or

putting out grandiose press releases...

That was the thought that occurred when I saw a tweet this week from the Passenger Rail Agency of SA (Prasa), which has been managed into the toilet by various ANC cadres over the years.

In the manner of the fastest finger first tweeter, Transport Minister Fikile “Mbaks” Mbalula, Prasa’s top brass got together to talk about the future.

“ [#WarRoom](#) - The management team is in full attendance because the importance of taking stock of where we are can never be taken for granted. Dropping a ball is NOT an option! [#FixingTransport @DoTransport pic.twitter.com/dpCXA5fglY](#)— PRASA Group (@PRASA_Group) [September 6, 2019](#) ”

Instead of actually doing something constructive and coming up with a solution to the mess that is commuter rail – you can almost hear a new passenger coach being set alight as you read the tweet – Prasa announced it was convening a “war room”.

Much in the style of those other wannabe fighters, the Economic Freedom Fighters – which decides its moves at a “war council” – Prasa was perhaps trying to sound efficient and effective.

However, it’s not good to send out a message that you are entering into a battle.

“ *Who is your enemy? What weapons are you using? What will be the collateral damage? Commuters are your customers. A little more customer service and a little less “flanking attack” might be nice...* ”

Just do your job. Once you’ve done it, tell us. And we will judge how well you’ve done it.

We wonder what next: the Brian Molefe Distinguished Service Order for bravery in buying Chinese trains?



Pay back the pension money, court tells Brian Molefe

Theto Mahlakoana 26 Jan 2018



You get an Onion, Prasa.

ABOUT BRENDAN SEERY

Brendan Seery has been in the news business for most of his life, covering coups, wars, famines - and some funny stories - across Africa. Brendan Seery's *Orchids and Onions* column ran each week in the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg and the *Weekend Argus* in Cape Town.

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