

# Rewarding a career of giving back

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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MP Sejamothopo "Sej" Motau has been honoured for his Lifetime Achievement at the 2017 PRISM Awards held on Saturday evening at The Park House of Events on 7 at the Hyde Park Shopping Centre in Sandton.

Peter Mann, who was the 2016 Lifetime Achiever, made the announcement: "Sej has made an impact locally and internationally, from Botswana to Brazil, India and Nigeria. He's taken up voluntary positions in the private and public sphere in PR, giving back to the industry."

Motau has always been passionate about public relations and communication management. "Consequently, I am driven by a desire to see the profession flourish; served by the best tutors we can provide. We need to ensure that we produce the best practitioners who can serve at the highest decision-making bodies of their organisations. This will help place public relations at the centre – not the periphery – of executive decision-making and not an after-thought somewhat less important function."

A Member of Parliament for the Democratic Alliance since 2009, he also believes that public relations and communication management skills can do wonders for the country's politicians and their relationship with the citizens they are elected to serve. "The country needs all the best skills we can provide to prosper. Public relations and communication management have a great role to play in the achievement of this objective."

He started his career in 1962 as a rookie bookkeeper at the municipal offices of the City Council of Pretoria in Atteridgeville. As part of his duties he had to interface with residents of the township in his section, as well as direct contact with the residents as a cashier when they came to "pay rent" every month. "As part of the team of public servants in the financial section who cultivated good working relationships with the people of Atteridgeville/Saulsville, I had set off on my path in public relations and communications."



Sejamothopo Motau

During his time at the Council he was promoted to senior cashier, but also appointed editor of *Lesedi*, the newsletter for the residents of Atteridgeville and Mamelodi. "My editorship of *Lesedi* aroused my interest in journalism and prompted me to take a course in journalism and short-story writing with Lyceum College."

In early 1977 he joined the *Pretoria News* and became one of the first two black journalists to join the staff of the newspaper. A decade later was a senior reporter and columnist covering education, labour and politics at the paper.

He had also garnered a BA degree from Unisa – majoring in Communication, which included courses in public relations, print media and television; and social psychology and a Master of Journalism degree from the University of California, Berkeley, USA, as a Fulbright Scholar.

It was a series of articles in the *Pretoria News* on student leaders who led the uprisings against Bantu education in the townships around Pretoria, that led him fully into PR. The head of Public Relations at Anglo American Corporation in Johannesburg, Neville Huxham, commissioned him to adapt these articles for publication in *Optima*, the prestigious Anglo magazine and then recruited him to Anglo as a public relations officer.

From there he fulfilled a number of positions in PR in De Beers Consolidated Mines, Transnet, Sasol Limited and DaimlerChrysler South Africa.

His association with public relations and formal relationship with the professional organisation of public relations in this country, Prisa, started shortly joining Anglo, and continues to this day. "Prisa has been quite special and rewarding. I hope that Prisa can say the same on their part."

## ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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