

Keep up with your clients' needs

 By [Marion Scher](#)

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25 years ago I was one of the main freelance writers for one of South Africa's leading women's magazines. Each year we would get together and discuss how the magazine should change the following year. What did our readers want to read about next year?

If you did this today you'd be dead in the water. Today consumers' needs change almost on a monthly basis and publications have to change with them.

The world of communication has been turned on its head by technology and reaching your target market, whether it's media or the consumer is a whole different ballgame today.

Just recently I was updating my website and as always I tried to look as critically as I could at my course contents to see where I could make improvements. After 20 years of running courses I've made many changes but none as often as I do today.

Listen to your clients

Each time I give a course, whether it's on dealing with the media or a writing course, I'm asked to angle it in a particular direction. My job is to listen - and give the client what they want, albeit with some steering thrown in...

For instance today's media courses, especially crisis media, inevitably centre these days around social media - which makes sense when you think how quickly news, especially bad news, travels through these networks.

Unbelievably, I find myself telling major corporates that they must hire some young people to monitor their company's social network image. Find out what people are saying about them on Facebook or Twitter. To do this you, the trainer have to be up to date on this - know who's playing in that arena.

Stay one step ahead of your clients... and your competitors

The point is I am constantly looking for what the client wants and needs. If you want to be current in the training world you have to stay one step ahead of your clients.

This means staying up to date in your industry. Attending conferences, workshops, reading blogs and tweets. Being able to tell your clients how best to use what's out there from Facebook to LinkedIn and even YouTube. And of course networking.

Be aware of what other trainers are offering. Are you competing on an even playing field or do you have to up your game? As far as I'm concerned you always have to up your game - always give just that bit extra.

Communicate

Perhaps the most important aspect of this is communicating with your clients themselves. Regularly ask them 'just what are your needs - how can we design courses around them?'

It's a tough business environment out there right now and going the extra mile together with making a difference to your clients' businesses.

ABOUT MARION SCHER

Marion Scher (www.mediamentors.co.za) is an award-winning journalist, lecturer, media trainer and consultant with 25 years' experience in the industry. For more of her writing, go to her Bizcommunity profile or to Twitter @marionscher.

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