

## Kudos to RMB founders for leading the way

 By [Brendan Seery](#) 20 Sep 2016

The interaction with their audience strikes the right chord.

It's not often that you see heavyweight business people or marketers appearing in ads for their own company and not often you see the founding members of a company appearing in a TV commercial.

We have seen a few, perhaps egotistical, company owners sounding off – more often horribly – in radio ads – but generally owners and founders tend to remain in the background or appear in the news media when necessary to promote the company.

So I was intrigued to learn that the founders of Rand Merchant Bank – Paul Harris, Laurie Dippenaar and GT Ferreira – all appear in the latest TV ad for the company.

They founded the company way back in 1977 and, so the story goes (as it does in the ad), they complemented each other perfectly. Paul was the out-of-the-box thinker; Laurie the numbers man; and GT the skilled negotiator.

Yet, they say their philosophy on business has always been based on traditional values, like discipline, commitment and teamwork.

Those values are echoed in the ethos of SA Rowing, an organisation which is sponsored by RMB, and which has been going from strength to strength over the past decade, to the point where South Africa is now a force in international events, like the Olympics.

The commercial, produced by Giant Films Cape Town to a brief by Stick agency, shows that success in anything is the result of hard, hard work. So we see the rowers get up at unearthly hours of the morning to train and doing it again and again.

We see them tackling the world's best and winning. But immediately afterwards, they are back at it... something RMB would like to emphasise: Don't rest on your laurels.

And the founders haven't, so we see them in a couple of frames. In the one here (in black and white) we see Paul Harris on the left in a boater hat and GT Ferreira (with glasses).

I like the sentiments in the ad; I like the reminder (thanks to SA Rowing and our other hard-working athletes) that South Africa does have the potential to be the best in the world; and I like the fact that the founders of the company became involved, as "extras" in a way.

Orchids to RMB, to Stick and to Giant and to the three founders... you may not have a future in Hollywood but maybe you've set a precedent for businesspeople to connect more with the community around them (without allowing ego to get in the way).



Screengrabs from the ad

I must hand it to Checkers – their current TV commercials are highly effective in stimulating interest... and that leads to sales.

My wife and I paid attention a couple of weeks ago to a commercial with top SA chefs promoting Checkers' range of pork products.

That got an Orchid from me... but even better is the latest ad for the group's new range of ready-meals. Again, we see the chefs from the SA Chefs Association – all well-known names and all pretty much at ease in front of the camera – tasting the various meals and being impressed.

And so was I: these are not your ordinary TV dinners, even allowing for the careful way commercial-maker present food. It was mouth-watering – and the message was clear: with Checkers you can still eat well even when you're rushed off your feet.

Simple, but effective and your brand ambassadors are first class. Orchid to Checkers.

One of the things I keep telling PR people is that, if you are going to use the "shotgun method" of sending out press releases – the same release to scores or even hundreds of journalists – you are not going to have much success.

You may try to impress the client with the numbers, but in reality these mass offerings generally get spiked

by most of us in the media business.

You would expect that an outfit called “Media Savvy” might know this basic PR reality. However, they faithfully bombard hundreds of journalists around the country with the same e-mail message – including editors (who don’t deal with this sort of thing) and journalists who are totally irrelevant to the topic being promoted.

One of Media Savvy’s people loves to use a long e-mail list, which must have been acquired at great cost, to send out her releases... presumably as opposed to having a real knowledge of Who’s Who in the media zoo and contacting people directly. And only people who might have an interest in the topic of the release.

In the past few months, I and a long list of people around the country have been sent (media) releases relating to the doings of the Aggregate and Sand Producers Association of Southern Africa (Aspasa). Truly, these people are no doubt worthy in their field, which includes quarrying. And undoubtedly, some journalists may have wanted to take up the matter of illegal quarrying (as raised by the Aspasa head Nico Pienaar).

Whether motoring journalists – who are on the e-mail list – along with the likes of Homemakers-SA are the right target market is something which has clearly not occurred to Malcolm or Media Savvy.

An earlier release of hers included an address at *Soccer Laduma*, the football magazine. Talk about scoring an own goal on behalf of the quarry association.

Apart from anything else, the latest press release was appalling badly written, only mentioning Pienaar’s surname at the end of the story.

Bad on so many levels, Media Savvy. Apart from your How-not-to-do- PR Onion, I think you owe Nico Pienaar an apology. Not to mention a refund...

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## 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. [View my profile and articles...](#)

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