

Communications in a time of crisis

On Sunday, President Cyril Ramaphosa stepped up to the plate when he announced Covid-19 as a national disaster. His comprehensive speech allayed the country's fears - and had South Africa overlooking the fact that he'd kept us on tenterhooks for hours awaiting its delivery.

 By Sandra Gordon 18 Mar 2020



Image source: Gallo/Getty Images.

Any crisis calls for strong leadership, delivered with clear, concise communications. Failure to address the many communications issues related to a crisis only deepens misunderstanding and fear, and creates further havoc – which means now is the time for business leaders and institutional and organisational heads to follow the President in stepping up and notifying their employees, clients and stakeholders of their intentions to deal with this crisis.

The impact of the Covid-19 virus is already felt, even in countries with low infection and mortality rates. Every industry and walk of life impacted by the social distancing to negate the effects of this global pandemic. This places the media and communications industries front of line in delivering relevant, factual information that encourages cooperation in warding off the worst effects of this global crisis.

Strategise your course of action, and communicate that clearly to your team, your clients, and relevant stakeholders. Leverage the power of digital wherever possible to keep your brand relevant and top of mind and seek solutions to overcome any existing hurdles.

My communications strategy in 5 easy steps:

- Identify issues that will affect your company, brand, product or service.
- Identify and nominate a relevant spokesperson who will convey your message concisely.
- Establish a user-friendly communication channel – and keep it jargon-free.
- Listen to feedback – and respond timeously to complaints and suggestions.
- Consistency, too, is key – keep stakeholders abreast of updates and changes, regularly.

Finally, where needed, utilise the power of public relations to get your message out.

ABOUT SANDRA GORDON

Sandra is the CEO at Stone Soup PR. Founded in 2002, Stone Soup South Africa is a 100% women-owned and managed, boutique agency, specialising in bespoke Public Relations strategies and plans, communications, reputation management and events. We are based in Johannesburg with representation in Cape Town.
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