

***The Big Issue* increases frequency**

The Big Issue South Africa is increasing its frequency by changing its publishing cycle from monthly to every three weeks. *The Big Issue*, an independent magazine written and edited by journalists, but sold by street vendors as part of a larger job creation project, has a steadily growing circulation of 16 400 magazines per month, according to the last ABC audit in 2007.



“Despite substantial growth in our circulation, we need to stabilise week-to-week vendor income,” says managing director, Trudy Vlok.

“As with many other monthly publications, our magazine sales drop off sharply in the fourth week of the month. Unlike other monthly magazines however, we are not responsible to corporate shareholders, but to vendors who are literally surviving on day-to-day income.

“Declining sales in the last week of the monthly cycle have a negative impact on vendor retention through t month, which then impacts on our development model. Many vendors find it necessary to diversify to other options or other products, some of which compete with the anti-begging ethos of The Big Issue.

“To maximise the benefits of our job creation programme, we need to provide opportunities for a more regular, stable vendor income stream as well as increasing overall vendor income, hence the frequency increase,” Vlok explained.

The Big Issue management and editorial teams conducted a feasibility study, consulted with the vendors and with printers, Paarl Web and Ince Cape (who sponsor the magazine's printing as part of their corporat social investment spend), before settling on the idea of a three-week publishing cycle.

As from 25 April, The Big Issue South Africa will publish 15 editions of the magazine, each with 52 pages, plus one bumper 68-page holiday edition per annum.

“Yes, a three-weekly cycle is unusual in the publishing industry, but this is a unique solution to a unique need. We are confident that our readers will welcome the extra editions and that they will continue to support our vendors' efforts to earn an honest living,” Vlok added.