

Well done, e.tv - under the circumstances

My first reaction to those interviews e.tv did with two self-confessed criminals was one of shock and horror that media morality had sunk to the level where crime was elevated to the same level as a discussion with tourism industry leaders on world cup business strategy.

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#) 20 Jan 2010

It also pretty much immediately occurred to me that, surely as a presumably good corporate citizen, it was e.tv's duty to inform the authorities of what was clearly an intention by two people to commit some pretty violent crimes. Something that media such as Primedia have been urging consumers to do for years now.

There is a bigger picture

But then, I saw the bigger picture. A picture that I would hope e.tv also considered above and beyond the age-old tendency for media to uncover sensational news stories.

In my opinion, there are times when media should be allowed, even encouraged, to push the envelope of ethical journalism.

It happened often during the apartheid era when editors took decisions to publish stories that elsewhere in the world would have been considered unethical, speculative, sensationalist and even immoral. But, given the draconian media regulations at the time and the fact that the entire world and the majority of South Africans considered apartheid hideously immoral, these editors felt justified in crossing ethical boundaries

Apartheid era measures

I believe the same situation exists today. The high level of crime in South Africa, both real and perceived, is already having an effect on the 2010 FIFA World Cup. For example, and for crying out loud, a British company is already marketing "stab-proof" clothing for fans travelling to SA for the world cup.

Indeed, there has been a lot said by world cup organisers, authorities and police about security during the world cup. We have heard our flamboyant police commissioner pounding the podium about zero tolerance and cracking down on crime.

But, frankly, no one is really seeing anything.

And what the e.tv interview did for me was to suggest that if a news reporter could track down two criminals then why the heck haven't the police done so?

The e.tv interview seemed to highlight that there is a heck of a lot of talk and very little action.

It reminded me that was a huge hue and cry about crackdowns on errant motorists over Christmas but we still had a frighteningly high death rate.

All bark and no trousers

All the talk about cracking down doesn't seem to have stopped the way crime is affecting ordinary people,

day in and day out. What e.tv has done is show that the crime problem is reality and not perception.

While e.tv might have upset a lot of people and annoyed many of its viewers, one has to admit that it got the attention of the police and the government. And hopefully it is not too late for both Government and the police to realise that they have a huge job to do before June this year.

Courage rewarded

A huge job in trying to persuade a heck of a lot of people in this country is that crime is not an acceptable way of making a living. That it isn't a job. It isn't a career. And they need to be at least as clever as journalists when it comes to tracking down criminals.

e.tv will take a lot of flack over the interviews and over the suicide of their informant. Hopefully though, its courage, misguided or otherwise, will be rewarded in the long run.

Somebody has to start making this country safe for us all.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

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