

## No surprise that Herdbuoys dumps SAA account

It has not been in the least bit surprising to hear that HerdBuoys McCann Erickson (HBME) has announced that it has severed its five year relationship with South African Airways. While the reasons have been diplomatically couched in the fairly typical adspeak commonly used when client and agency go through a divorce - things like "protecting commercial interests" etc - there very little doubt that at the bottom of this schism is pure and simple human incompatibility.

 By [Chris Moerdyk](#) 14 Mar 2006

Because in 99 times out of 100 when clients fire agencies or when agencies resign accounts, it is because the people involved simply don't get on any more. Five years ago when Hunt Lascaris parted ways with SA Herdbuoys was chosen largely on the compatibility of their team with those at SAA.

Now, a few years down the track most of those people at SAA - like Victor Nosi and many others - have moved on to other pastures and very recently of course, the man who got the account for Herdbuoys in the first place, Happy Ntshingila, has moved on as well.

### Difficult client

But, SAA has always been a difficult client. There is no question that the problem back in the Hunt Lascaris days was one of personality conflict and incompatibility.

There cannot be any other reason. Like Hunt Lascaris, Herdbuoys have produced some excellent advertising for SAA, but when it gets to the point where an agency no longer has any influence over the advertising it produces, things become completely untenable.

And the best course of action is for both sides to quit while they are ahead. Hopefully, when SAA once again goes into its pitch process it will once again give the issue of human compatibility a bigger weighting than creativity or strategy because the best creativity and strategic thinking in the world counts for absolutely nothing if the marriage between client and agency teams does not work right from the start.

I remember working on the SAA account way back in the 1960's when all advertising decisions were taken by a committee on the client side of no less than 18 people. Things have improved a bit since then but it is still one of the most difficult clients in the country for any agency to handle. And SAA should ask itself why before appointing the next agency.

### ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public af for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on [moerdyk@gmail.com](mailto:moerdyk@gmail.com) and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).  
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