

Creativity is key to good mining stakeholder communication

The many complexities of the mining industry means that the outdated tactics used when establishing stakeholder communication are no longer an option.



Image: The Mandela Initiative

Long-standing legacy issues as well as a broad amalgam of stakeholders makes it even more important to build communications plans that target the correct audiences via a medium not only understood but that also resonates with the audience.

The [Mandela Initiative](#), conducted a research study in 2017, examining the impact of strikes (across industries) on the South African economy. The study found that the frequency of strikes had decreased substantially from the beginning of 2000, but when they did occur, they did so more intensely with a greater time cost.

“The economic consequence of strike activity is substantial, and the industry as a whole has a relatively contentious legacy. Communication can play a leading role in solving this breakdown, and certainly pave the way to engaging the right people in a mutually beneficial and sensitive manner.” says Anne-Marie Pretorius, managing director of Bizmod.

“In our experience, regardless of your intended message there is a journey that the stakeholders need to be taken on for the entire ecosystem to function correctly. The outcome with these stakeholders – from management, to employees and the

broader community – if they are not engaged with, or not engaged with correctly, can be detrimental not only for the organisation, but for everyone who is part of the mining community,” she says.

There are three guiding principles in establishing a solid communications plan:

- Engagement is not a one-way activity. What needs to be identified upfront is a mechanism or portal that allows for return feedback, options and input. The organisational intent and the required long-term goal should also be clearly communicated at the outset.
- Create messaging that is clear and concise. People engage more with the content when it is presented in a visually and/or auditory platform. For a message to resonate with the target audience it needs to be repeatedly communicated, at least seven-times, in a variety of ways.
- Fun, creative and visually appealing communication engages the stakeholder and encourages uptake, understanding and positive engagement. An infographic, song, video, etc., in a range of vernaculars are all better ways to communicate than the traditional mechanisms.

Pretorius says that from the time she has spent working with mining stakeholders, it has been critical to engage community leaders in the surrounding environment. This forum, in addition to one with mining management is vital to ensure buy-in, engagement and to establish a good base from which to talk to employees. “It’s all about having a full understanding of the issues at hand, the background and forming the messaging that will actually mean something to the people being targeted. One cannot do this from an office in the city – it requires immersing oneself in the culture.”

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