

Lessons learnt from starting my own PR business



By [Miranda Lusiba](#)

24 Mar 2021

When I started my PR business in 2012, the only thing I knew very well was my profession: Public Relations (PR). I knew that what I had learnt in the 13 years that I spent working for big companies like the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA), Absa, MTN and Business Connexion (BCX); I could use in my own company. My main goal was to run "my own show" and service "my own clients" in my SOHO - Small Office, Home Office type of business.



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As a PR expert, I was confident that I could do my work in my sleep, little did I know that running my own business needed far more than that. The first mistake that I made is that I went into the business with debts that I had accumulated when I was working full-time; not thinking about the fact that I did not have a monthly salary any more to service those debts.

Secondly, I did not know that I had to worry about complicated business stuff such as cashflow, overheads, company financials and administration, HR just to name a few. It all sounds very complicated neh? Yes, it was confusing for me too because I am a content person not into numbers or financials at all.

Jack of all trades

These are important things I had to learn because now I was a 'one man show' running all parts of the business on my own. In big organisations that I worked for, there were different departments that were responsible for various functions like HR, finance or legal issues. Now, all of a sudden, I did not have that kind of support in my business.

I had to become a 'jack of all trades' and 'master of none' very fast. Just to clear the confusion and for any of you who have started running your own businesses to learn a few of the lessons I learnt.

Cashflow is money that comes into the business regularly that is paid by your clients for a service or a product. This money allows you as a business owner to pay for the debts that I was referring to earlier or to cover any other monthly expenses (business/personal). Please note though that for you to have 'cashflow' – you need to have clients first that you provide a service or product to. And very importantly, these clients need to pay you regularly and on time – otherwise things will be bad for you and your business.



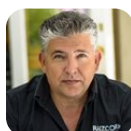
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I then learnt about 'overheads' – this is basically your business expenses, and these could be rent for an office space, stationery, airtime and data, the computer/laptop that you use for work, car expenses like petrol – just to give you a few examples. I learnt that it was very important to keep monthly expenses low; if I wanted my business to survive. It did not help that I was told by everyone that most black-owned, small businesses normally failed within the first two years. Just imagine how scared I was because I was not only black, but also a young woman. So, here the lesson I learnt was that I needed to cut any unnecessary expenses so that my business could survive on very small amounts of money.

So, I did not get a fancy office to rent, I worked from my home - on my sofa or bed with a laptop on my thighs, I realised that the only thing I really needed to service my clients was a laptop, a 3G Card/WIFI Router, airtime/data and a bit of stationery. So not having an office meant that if a client called me wanting something urgently while I am driving; I would stop on the side of the road, open my laptop, connect and send the document to the client. What was important for me was that work was moving - it did not matter if I worked from a boot of a car.



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This at the end meant that I could get paid and make some money. So, my advice to those who still want to start their own business – try to go into a business that does not need a lot of money for you to be able to start – because this is usually money that most of us do not have.

Lastly, I know that not all businesses are the same and our experiences might differ, so it is definitely not one size fits all. I am just merely telling my own story hoping that it will help a person or two.

ABOUT MIRANDA LUSIBA

Miranda Lusiba is the Founding Director of Strangé Consulting - a boutique PR Agency specialising in Communications, Freelance Writing, Media Relations, Reputation Management and Media Training.

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