

## Why integration matters more than ever before

 By vanessa baard

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Companies spend millions of Rands every year on building a brand and protecting their reputation. Most companies opt for a myriad of marketing agencies, looking for specialists rather than having all their communication needs met by just one agency.



Image by 123RF

But, clients will only realise the value of many agencies through integration – having an impeccable conductor who can pull it all together – a ‘Chief Communication Integration Officer’ of some sorts. The importance of integration does not only refer to different agencies servicing a client. Integration of the marketing and communication departments remains a real problem as well.

In many large South African corporates, there are still very distinctive marketing and communication functions. Even when you walk the corridors, marketing and communication departments are still separated – missing opportunities for creative synergies, message integration and simply great ideas to be born.

Time and money is often wasted when two departments working within the same company only start integrating their ideas on a new product launch, campaign or business strategy too late.

Unfortunately, added to this, there is still a culture amongst agencies of protecting their own turf and fighting for the piece

of the pie as opposed to doing great work, even if that means working alongside other agencies, for the best benefit of the client.

Smaller agencies are aggressively seeking more business outside of their geography and expertise, and larger agencies are going after smaller opportunities in order to keep growing. Specialists will continue to broaden their service offerings to go after new prospects while generalists will add services to keep up with the evolving needs of their clients.

Camaraderie and synergies between the agencies and departments are the key ingredients for success. But these synergies need to be driven by that 'strong conductor' who brings it all together.

The role of the integration officer is not an easy one. The job description should read somewhat similar to that of the headmaster – someone who is able to manage budgets, spend wisely, manage egos and someone to keep all the children playing together nicely in the corporate sandpit.

More than ever, as brands continue to expand their presence into key African markets, the need for integration increases. Not only will integration need to take place between marketing and communication silos, but the campaign and execution is going to need to transcend cultural and language barriers.

Great marketing, like a great orchestra, comes down to the ability of the conductor.

## ABOUT VANESSA BAARD

With over twenty years' experience, Vanessa brings a wealth of experience within strategy development, crisis management and content development across various business-to-business clients...

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