Looking at the bigger picture – moving towards 2010

By Daniel Munslow

Ideas of nation building and the challenges of communicating ideas through drop-down marketing were the topics being addressed during the second panel discussion of the day at the Fourth National 2010 Communication Partnership (NCP) being held in Sandton.

There is no shortage of news that needs to be communicated – but there are huge challenges in terms of HOW news and agendas need to be communicated to all the relevant stakeholders. These include media; tourism; Pan-African perspectives; government; safety and security; nation-branding; international media; and the organising committee.

Rich Mkhondo of the 2010 FIFA World Cup Organising Committee says a lot still needs to be done over the next 300 days ahead of the World Cup. Tighter co-ordination of communication is key to taking messages to the next level in terms of public and media understanding. Mkhondo says messages need to be communicated clearly to the 18 000 journalists who will be coming to South Africa, and helping them to share the right messages with their readers.

People always need more information, and Mkhondo confirmed that plans are afoot to ensure measures are in place to communicate 360-degree messages to all stakeholders.

Mvuzo Mbebe from the South African Broadcasting Corporation highlighted the public broadcaster’s role in communicating and transmitting the World Cup domestically; internationally; and to the rest of Africa. Among the challenges faced by the SABC is that of communicating the right messages to the public by way of the changing broadcast landscape in the direction of DTT (Digital Terrestrial Television), and the requirements from the consumers in being ready for these changes.

Mbebe said the SABC is ready to ensure signal will be available to reach everyone, and share the World Cup on a platform everyone can reach. The main communication message from the SABC is that no matter what television set or receiver people have, they will have a platform to watch the World Cup.

Wendy Tlou, Global Manager of South African Tourism, says their role is two-fold – welcoming the international community and partnering with FIFA to experience the tourism offering and how it relates to the soccer experience. Recently, a new campaign was launched domestically to ensure that as many South Africans as possible know the basic ‘diski’ dance, thereby creating unity among the public and show the world how united and colourful the country is.

Tlou believes that 2010 opens up huge opportunities in terms of leveraging word of mouth experiences among global visitors to create the perception that South Africa is a preferred tourist destination. She says the infrastructural improvements the country is seeing this year will also change the way in which business tourism changes in the years to come. “Let’s use this event to start to be cohesive… what role do you have to pick up on that, and make sure we deliver a truly world-class event”, says Tlou.

Kwakye Donkor from the Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa, a body that represents southern Africa to the world, says the World Cup will create an African legacy that will change the face of tourism forever. The concept of ‘ubuntu’ will be taken to a new height as a result of the interaction between the southern African nations who aim to spread the benefits of 2010 further north.

Themba Maseko of Government Communication & Information Systems, the body that communicates messages to and from government bodies, says the World Cup gives the country the opportunity to portray a positive outlook of the country. It is therefore important that the government speaks with one voice. To that end, GCIS has put specific measures in place that enable unified communication and committees that bring groups of communicators together to ensure consistency of messages.

Tremendous progress has already been made, but there is still room for growth and improvement, says Maseko. “What can we do today to make the event a ‘my world cup’?”

Issue management is a key part of work at the GCIS - an area where much attention is currently focused. The World Cup is not a solution to every problem in society, but government must acknowledge that there are problems and communicate the solutions as a united government.

Senior Superintendent, Vish Naidoo of the South African Police Service, says there is a mammoth task under way to ensure that the country’s policing infrastructure will be ready to secure the FIFA 2010 World Cup. Police Services have been touring with journalists to familiarise them with the measures that are being taken to ensure safety. While there are still issues to be addressed, policing efforts are very advanced.

Over 50 000 civilians serve as reservists in South Africa, and of this, 10 000 will assist in the active policing of the World Cup. “It becomes a matter of training”, says Naidoo. It is a challenge to bring in untrained volunteers because of legal issues and matters of chains of evidence.

About the 2010 NCP

The right to host the 2010 World Cup brings South Africa a unique opportunity that extends well beyond football.
One of the biggest impacts from hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup will come from the phenomenal marketing and communication opportunity it will offer the country and continent. As world attention focuses on the first African World Cup, this is an opportunity for Africans to tell their own stories.

The 2010 National Communication Partnership is a joint effort of communicators across society, and in the many creative and communication disciplines, to take advantage of this communication opportunity of a lifetime to benefit our country and continent.

The 2010 National Communications Partnership had its genesis in a meeting in early 2006, convened by GCIS and the IMC and hosted by the Minister in the Presidency, of senior government communicators and a group of private sector corporate communicators. The latter expressed their commitment to taking advantage of the 2010 FIFA World Cup communication opportunity for the benefit of the country and continent.

They identified the need for some facility to ensure a well co-ordinated marketing and communication campaign in the build-up to 2010, to maximise tourism and foreign investment opportunities for many years beyond 2010, as well as to mobilise South Africans across sectors as hosts, and to build national pride.

Such a facility would help ensure that all 'left hands' were aware of what 'right hands' were doing; facilitate the development of an overarching strategic vision for communicators across sectors and disciplines so everyone worked together to take advantage of this communication opportunity of a lifetime for our country and continent.

As a result, the 2010 National Communications Partnership (NCP) was formed. Its plenary membership now stands at around 250 leaders of communication across sectors and disciplines – marketing; advertising; communication; public relations; creative industries; and tourism in the public and private sectors. The work of the Partnership is driven by a task team representative of the various disciplines and sectors, which meets monthly.

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