

2010 communication: still no central message

By: Karin Botta

Having attended the fourth and final National Communications Partnership (NCP) Conference last week, I hoped to gain clarity on the NCP's communications plan and my role as a communicator in delivering on that plan. Although feeling inspired to take on an active role, I'm still unsure of what that role will be and the central message is that the NCP wishes professional communicators to champion.



Despite being a brand leadership workshop for the communication industry, the session aimed to serve two functions: not only to debrief the industry on the Confederations Cup and provide a status update on the progress for 2010, but also to discuss and agree on a way forward for communication for 2010.

Holistic message

The partnership, consisting of the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), the Local Organising Committee (LOC), FIFA, Brand South Africa, the National Tourism Board, and various communications agencies and stakeholders in the private and public sector, aims to drive a holistic message and create brand ambassadors in South Africa in acting as hosts to the world in 2010.

Everything made so much sense. If the practice of branding, and in this context nation branding, is essentially about creating consistency around the 2010 brand message, then mobilising and uniting people through a centralised message and calls to action that encourage citizens to act as brand ambassadors is a natural strategy.

The process, it seems, is well understood by those in control of our nation's 2010 communication; however, there is still no brand message.

Lot of talk

There was a lot of talk surrounding [Germany's 2006 campaign](#), a nation-building campaign that united Germany and greatly improved the perception of Germans and Germany as a whole.

Quite simply, the campaign encouraged making friends. The 'Time to Make Friends' campaign was honest, and spoke directly to the perception and relationship troubles that Germany had with the rest of the world and, most importantly, gave the German people the tools to literally, be friendly.

On top of this, the country launched a 'Land of Ideas' campaign locally and internationally that positioned Germany as a cultural centre, and delivered on that external promise by investing large sums into arts and culture in the country.

It didn't matter which host city you went to; Munich, Frankfurt, Berlin, the messaging was consistent and the communication was coherent. It sung of one Germany, one voice. It was - by all accounts - a masterfully managed and delivered campaign.

What are we telling?

So in South Africa, what are we telling the rest of the world, for 2010?

With the exception of the ['Diski Dance' campaign](#), the national tourism board is not creating any new campaigns, and using old positioning and campaigns with the 2010 logo stamped on them.

2010 provides us with an opportunity like no other to refocus our international positioning as we reach out to the millions of people visiting our country and the billions watching around the world and what are they going to see?

Well, so far no one knows.

In addition, South African Tourism will be using an American service provider to research and train 500 000 service industry staff (a debate for another day). Again, what will the campaign message be that aligns everyone in preparation for the delivery for service excellence? 'Come and feel it?' 'South Africa, It's Possible?', 'Welcome'?

No-one knows

Again, no-one knows.

At the end of the conference there was agreement on several symbols and calls to action that we can communicate and rally support for. The Diski Dance, Flying the Flag, learning and understanding the National Anthem, and support for Bafana Bafana were but a few.

However, none of these provide a great context; none of these adequately represent what South Africa has to offer the world. They are all sub-components of a bigger message - which, with less than 300 days to go, is unknown.

Dr Irvin Khosa said in his address at the NCP conference that he's not feeling it, there isn't enough hype and we need to get moving. Well, Dr Khosa. we aren't feeling it either.

It's time

So maybe it's time for the 2010 national communication partnership to dispense with the consultation and commit to a core message that as communication professionals and South Africans we can all get behind.

For more:

- 2010 National Communications Partnership website: <http://2010ncp.co.za>
- 2010 National Communications Partnership on Twitter: [@2010NCP](https://twitter.com/@2010NCP)
- 2010 National Communications Partnership channel on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/)
- 2010 National Communications Partnership group on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/)
- 2010 National Communications Partnership fan page on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/)

About the author

Karin Botta is a strategist and trend analyst at The Fearless Executive (www.thefearlessexecutive.com). Contact her on karin@thefearlessexecutive.com.

Copyright © 2009 Biz-community.