

IABC hosts World Cup feedback session

South African communicators recently shared their key lessons learned around communication challenges during the 2010 FIFA World Cup at an event organised by the African chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). The session was hosted in partnership with the IABC Brazil network ahead of the next World Cup, scheduled to be held in the South American country in 2014.



Communication - a central role during the World Cup

Event organiser, Mari Lee, ABC, CEO of DevCom, said, "The World Cup Lessons learned event was absolutely mind-blowing, and I'm sure none of the communicators had a full picture of their impact and the amount of 'behind the scenes' work that our world class communicators invested to make this global event such a success."

Facilitating the day-long session was Daniel Munslow, chief communications officer at Talk2Us, with the list of speakers, including Dr. Tobeka Boltina (Novartis), Linda Hamman (Talk2Us), Mari Lee (DevCom), Geraldine Frohling (SARS), Julie Wells (City of Tshwane), Francois Stremmelaar (Royal Elephant Hotel), Ilze van der Merwe (Preferential Communication), Janine Lazarus (media expert), Ingrid Jenson (Gautrain), Brigadier Sally de Beer (SAPS), Ashley Theron (Child Welfare South Africa), Ilse Blank (Deloitte) and Yolande DeNysschen (MSL World Wide).

Key outcomes

Each speaker focused on a key area of expertise - ranging from internal communication, social media, long-term business benefits, child welfare challenges, corporate communication, to brand South Africa, and more.

From an internal communications perspective, Dr. Tobeka Boltina from Novartis, noted that a key imperative for them was alignment of all messages to a common goal communicated equally to all staff. This ensured employees were all on the same page and committed to a united vision.

Secondly, leadership with the business was imperative in ensuring staff buy-in to communication principles. It was stressed that putting posters up around the office and sending out email updates was not enough.

Finally, Boltina said there was a significant need for cross-divisional integration across the organisation to unite different business units.

Sustainable growth strategy required

In terms of the long term business benefits, and the legacy of the World Cup, Talk2Us CEO Linda Hamman noted that the country (and communication) finds itself at the bottom of an upward curve, which has huge potential on the one hand, but also requires a sustainable growth strategy. The World Cup has seen brand South Africa as the biggest winner, mostly thanks to a country united by a common goal. Now, we are likely to see foreign investors coming into the country faster than initially predicated. With this, comes a global standard of customer service and service expectations.

To achieve this, Hamman suggests, the starting point must be to ensure that companies have unified messages, where brand promise is 100% aligned to staff delivery of those promises.

Well known media trainer, Janine Lazarus, highlighted the positive media exposure South Africa received during the World Cup, but also questioned its sustainability.

Brigadier Sally de Beer, spokesperson for the South African Police Services, demonstrated the extreme complexities of communicating security-related issues, not to mention the preparations and infrastructure that had to go into the creation of a sound platform to serve as the backbone of a safe World Cup.

Next steps

A publishing team, headed by Taryn van Olden, CEO of Cyan Sky Communication Consultancy, is in the process of compiling a unique booklet that will be distributed to a network of over 18,000 communicators around the world, highlighting the lessons learned through this initiative. It will contain these, and many other lessons learned, in detail.

This booklet will be launched at a special dialogue session with Brazil that will be held on 15 September 2010, between 6.30pm - 8.30pm. The session will be sponsored by Investec.

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