

Khensani Mahlangu from SANBS believes in PR effectiveness

 By [Emily Stander](#)

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What is the importance of PR in the marketing and media landscape today?



Khensani Mahlangu, communications officer at SANBS

We speak to Khensani Mahlangu, communications officer at The South African National Blood Service (SANBS), to find some answers to this question. With a career spanning 10 years, Mahlangu has experience in various sectors that range from finance to NGOs.

Here, we find out more about her role and the contributions she has found PR makes to effective media strategies...

▣ *How would you describe your organisation?*

The SANBS plays a central role in the healthcare industry. As a brand, we are warm, innovative and we allow individuals to make a big impact by carrying out a seemingly small action. We foster a collaborative spirit and are driven by our contribution to helping save lives on a daily basis.

▣ *How would you describe your role at SANBS?*

My role at the SANBS is to be an intermediary between the world outside and the business. I am one of many ambassadors for the organisation, among many others who do this work of heart. Through storytelling, I give people perspective on what that one pint of donated blood means to the recipient – the person who gets to make more memories with their family members because of blood donors. made possible only by blood donation.

■ ***How did you find yourself in the PR industry?***

By chance. In fact, I found myself in the industry by pure luck as well. I wanted to pursue psychology and sociology in university originally, and I changed my major to corporate communication during orientation week - I have never looked back.

I started my professional career behind the scenes, honing my writing skills and I guess that's where it all took off. Within a short time I was writing scripts, press releases and speeches – I never really imagined myself as the spokesperson of any organisation. Eight years and one more serendipitous incident later, I found myself on the frontline in the PR industry.

■ ***Tell us more about your career highlights in PR so far?***

Managing communication since the outbreak of Covid-19 has been exciting and quite the learning curve for me. This was truly the first opportunity I have had to immerse myself in PR work on the frontline. Previously, a lot of what I did was behind the scenes.

I have loved using PR as a space and platform for advocacy and collaboration with several other NPOs. What I have loved the most is the opportunity to champion causes and talk to issues that really matter.

■ ***Are there any people, clients or organisations that stand out as having inspired or mentored you so far?***

I cannot say that I have a particular person or organisation that has inspired me but I have had the privilege to work with many talented women in my career. The one who stands out the most is Amantle Mokuboung who is a brilliant marketing strategist and all-around powerhouse.

By watching her work, I have been inspired to chart my own path in the industry by leveraging my strengths to achieve my goals.

■ ***How, when and why should PR be factored into advertising and creative strategy briefs for best ROI?***

I think credibility and authenticity play a large role in PR, especially in our industry. By focusing on generating content backed by subject matter experts and through targeted media placement, you stand a greater chance of achieving the ROI prescribed by the strategy. This always serves a brand best.

Not all campaigns/initiatives will require PR support. When they do, it is essential to incorporate it from the beginning of the campaign. Brand perception is one of the most important factors that determine whether or not people will support a business.

The reason for this is simple – it's effective. PR support, from inception, can not only help reinforce the right message but also increases brand awareness and controls the narrative of conversions. I believe that it is unquestionably a powerful tool to help amplify creative initiatives by lending credibility and believability to the marketing exercise.

■ ***In what ways can PR contribute to achieving omnichannel reputation or public awareness for marketers via traditional media, digital media and social media?***

The thing about traditional media is that it presents you with a captive audience. You will always know what kind of audience you will find on these platforms and that makes the targeting, through PR messaging, that much easier.

■ ***What qualities or qualifications would you recommend for aspirant newcomers to the industry?***

I would say PR professionals need to be dynamic and always open to learning. These learning curves will be both pleasant and challenging but they are worth experiencing to make yourself a better professional. Coming into the industry with the ability to wear many hats will also be beneficial.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games

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