

Wandile Cindi from Eclipse Communications

 By [Emily Stander](#)

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Brand communication strategies can be overwhelming during the time of Covid-19, especially when you are trying to come up with something fresh that speaks to your target audience.



Wandile Cindi, strategist at Eclipse Communications

We spoke to Wandile Cindi from Eclipse Communications for this instalment of #PraisethePR to find out if PR is integral to brand communication, and how PR can best contribute to ROI in creative strategy briefs and implementation...

■ ***How would you describe your organisation?***

Eclipse Communications embodies the philosophy of guiding the growth of its clients by delivering creative concepts and value-based solutions to grow their share of voice and ultimately, their market share.

The approach of 'guiding your growth' not only applies to clients it works with but also the employees - they are the engine room from which exceptional work is delivered and through the stewardship of the leadership team, the growth and development of all employees is of paramount importance to the collective success of the agency and the clients we serve.

■ ***How would you describe your role in your organisation?***

Our business is structured into three main business units, Arts and Entertainment, Consumer and Lifestyle and the Corporate Centre of Excellence. My role as a strategist in the Corporate Centre of Excellence is two-fold; I support the new business function for potential clients and then, I work with existing clients on improving or diversifying its strategies, year on year.

I critically analyse the brief from the brand, gather research through various touchpoints, formulate insights and construct an integrated brand communications strategy that will add value to the brand's equity. In this entire process, I have the opportunity to tap into the expertise of seasoned and skilled professionals across content creation, digital marketing, creative design and account leads to ensure that the agency presents the best possible communications solution for the client.

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

The evolution of PR from traditional to integrating digital media led to one of my proudest career highlights. We worked with a snack brand - South Africa's favourite Nak - and they wanted to reignite their love for the streets with what they termed, the 'Afrilennial' target market. We tapped into popular culture which was the emergence of the AmaPiano music genre and we fused the music with the coolest kids (Kamo Mphela and MFR Souls). This led to one of the biggest AmaPiano songs in the country, *Amanikiniki*, which currently has 19m views on YouTube, apart from progressing popular culture - the brand is still reaping the ROI from a 2019 campaign because of great consumer insights that led to a communications strategy that has the Afrilennial target audience still singing and chanting "Amanikiniki, ayi'cheese, ayi'beef", ayi'chickeni".

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

I always give credit to my former CEO, Guy Munnoch and head of strategy, Ingvild Kjørreford whom I used to work with at a short-term insurance company. They helped me understand the importance of critical and design thinking to provide solutions to business challenges and opportunities - I have carried these fundamental principles with me throughout my career.

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

PR should be included from the onset because media sentiments play a major role in the type of advertising and creativity that needs to be executed. It's one thing to bring to life a brand's corporate identity through creative executions and another, understanding the corporate image and consumer perceptions of the brand to help shape the messaging and tonality based on the current climate. For example, if there are negative sentiments about a particular brand perhaps, a purpose-led campaign may be the best course of action to improve negative sentiments to positive.

■ ***How important to brand reputation is storytelling about individual personalities in business?***

Storytelling through thought leadership articles is a great way to position individuals as subject matter experts to further enhance the overall image and reputation of the brand. This not only gives consumers peace of mind that the individuals are skilled and competent but it also reaffirms to investors and shareholders that the right people are driving profitability and delivering exceptional customer service to grow the brand.

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

PR is so much more than disseminating press releases to build the credibility of a brand through traditional media. The rise of digital and social media has enabled PR practitioners to collaborate with people of influence as third party endorsers for brands through in-store visits captured on their Instagram live or reels, to product reviews and blog posts as a means of enhancing the image and reputation of the brand - which consumers rely on as part of their buying decisions.

Before a consumer makes a purchase, they will consult multiple platforms to get as much information as possible about a brand, this will include reading articles from credible publications, reading reviews from associated groups and seeing which of their favourite personalities have visited or have shared their experiences.

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

With regards to qualities, I would suggest reading and writing as basic fundamentals, followed by relationship building and work ethic that should never be questioned. There are a few qualifications that can be pursued including but not limited to corporate communications, journalism, and strategic brand communications.

■ ***Could you share any future trends or predictions for the PR industry?***

Personally, I believe that with nations trying to rebuild societies and economies because of the pandemic, purpose-led strategies will become important for brands as they look towards their CSI strategies. For example, in an effort to support e-learning in rural and underserved communities or their enterprise and supplier development to support the SME sector. The

role of the PR industry will be for us to tell their story of transformation and position them as good corporate citizens in action.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

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

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