

#BehindtheSelfie with... Hestelle Robinson, COO of Homemakers Media Holdings

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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This week, we go behind the selfie with Hestelle Robinson, COO of Homemakers Media Holdings...

Commenting on the current crisis affecting the industry, and of course the economy as a whole, Robinson believes the eventing industry was one of the first to be affected with the ban on mass gatherings and that it will certainly be one of the last to be allowed to re-open.

“ The effect is detrimental to many, with massive job losses, overnight our cheese moved and we were forced to re-look at how we do things. As for the larger part our industry has been unchanged for decades. Organisers, venues and suppliers all have a role to play and we need to enter the age of co-optation. By working together we will achieve so much more. The silver lining is that we now have to implement all those 'one-day-we-should' plans. We had to take a critical look at how we do things and are currently working on some very exciting plans to safeguard our and our clients' businesses. We definitely are not wasting this crisis! ”



Hestelle Robinson, COO of Homemakers Media Holdings, wearing her mask

1. Where do you live, work and play?

Jozi (compliments of Covid-19 life and work now holds the same address), wherever I can.

2. What's your claim to fame?

Not so sure there is a lot of fame here. I'm more of a background operator making it happen.

3. Describe your career so far.

Interesting.

I read once that the average person has at least five different careers, not positions or jobs, but vastly different titles. I've had 14, not to mention numerous side hustles. Take a deep breath, in no particular order, here we go: waitress, restaurant manager, caterer, retail assistant, data capturer, Post Office teller (yes you read right), communication specialist, PR consultant, lecturer, online manager, shop owner, marketing manager, exhibition manager and COO.

I would not change anything, not even the copious hours of sorting mail. On second thought, maybe I could've done with less of that. I've seen so many times in my career that no work was done in vain. Everything I've done had purpose, taught me a skill I needed later in my career or a lesson I needed to learn.

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

Family (two and four-legged), books, cameras, wool shops (not always in this order).

5. What do you love about your industry?

It's going through immense change, and we've not seen the end of it yet, resulting in us having to evolve, think and act fast. Be ever adaptive. This speaks to me.

6. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

Nope, no average day here. There is, however, one constant and that is a lot of interaction with the various teams. This would range from creative brainstorming to detailed financial meetings.

7. What are the tools of your trade?

We're currently working from home, something we've been preparing for over the last 18 months. And, thankfully so, with the announcement of the state of emergency, we were fully operational and every team member, even our receptionist, can work from home.

Although we still have some changes to make, most of our tools are now cloud-based from word processing and design to financial.

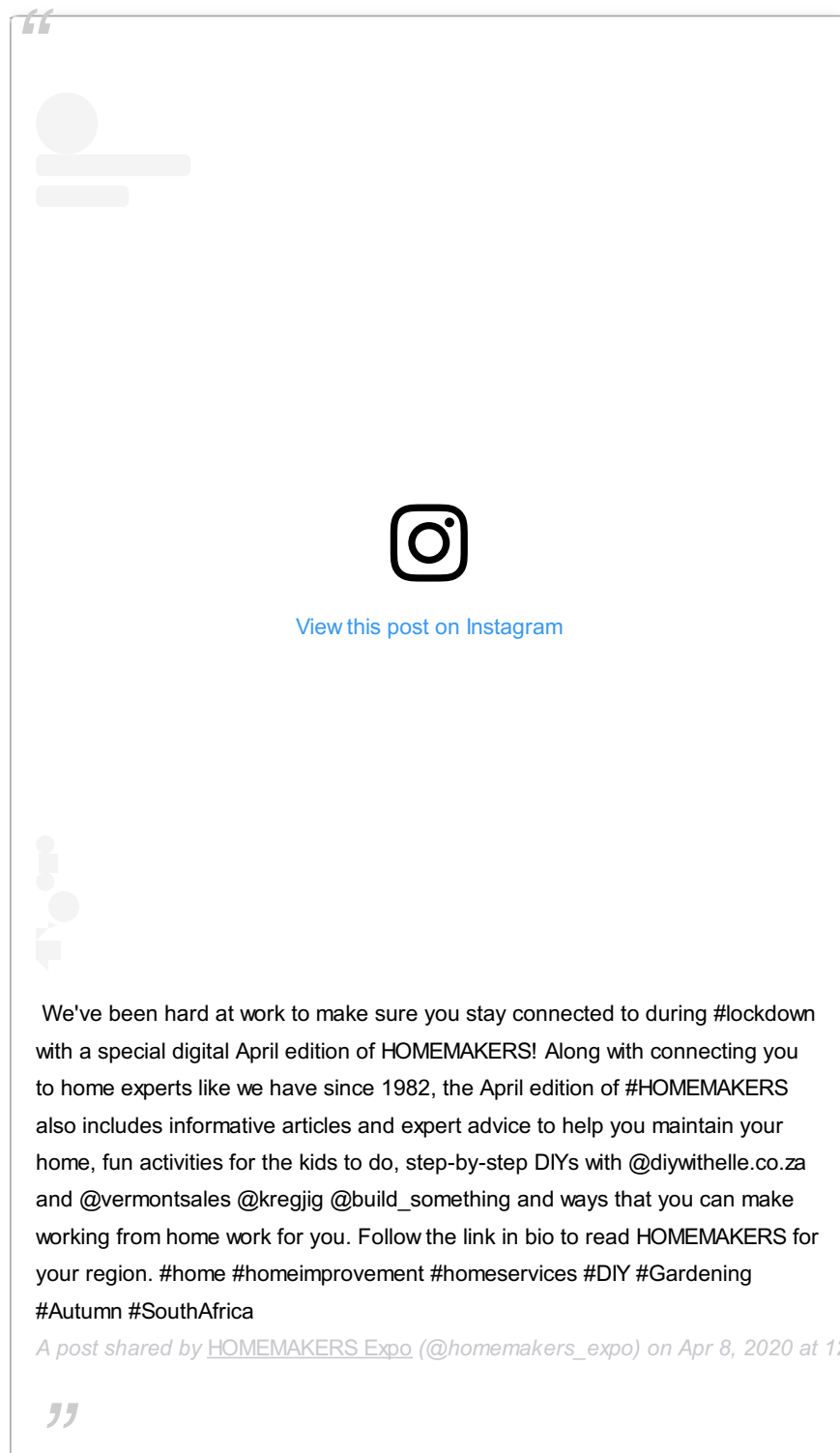
All my meetings now take place electronically and video calls trump voice calls.

8. Who is getting it right in your industry?

I have to refer to two industries. The first is publishing where we specialise in connecting suppliers with buyers, both in print and electronically, something I think AutoTrader did really well.

Secondly, the event I really admire is an international event, [Maison&Objet](#). They have stayed true to their brand, have loads of added benefit, seamlessly facilitate the connection between buyers and suppliers and succeed in attaining visitor

attention throughout the year, not just at the event.



9. List a few pain points the industry can improve on.

Again referring to the two industries. With publishing, I would say it is the effective transformation from print to digital and the ability to use each product for its receptive strengths. There are certain things you can do on paper that won't work electronically and vice versa.



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In the events industry, my biggest bugbear at this stage is the discount culture that has emerged. Undercutting affects everybody.

10. What are you working on right now?

Innovative digital products, improved distribution methods and added benefits with our events.

11. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

Never really been one for buzzwords. The one catchphrase I do often utter is, 'Let's make it happen.'

12. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

In the middle of the night (notorious bad sleeper) and in water, be it the pool or shower.

13. What's your secret talent/party trick?

That I can subtitle the activities of any four-legged member of my family.

14. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

Technophile!

15. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

Lockdown memes, artwork approvals and many, many, many photos of my kids, in front and behind cameras, the entire family of aspiring photographers.

16. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

You better have stamina. This industry is not for sissies. It's long hours mostly behind the scenes and not at all as glamorous as you think. But if you're up for the challenge, the reward is immense satisfaction to see your final product, either in the form of a printed magazine, digital format or when the event doors open. That feeling is addictive!

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**Interviewed by [Jessica Tennant](#).*

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