

Driving success: Q&A with Minesh Bhagaloo, Ford SA's director of communications

 By [Naresh Maharaj](#)

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Naresh Maharaj, a *Bizcommunity Auto* contributor, recently caught up with the general manager of communications Minesh Bhagaloo.



Ford SA's general manager of communications, Minesh Bhagaloo | image supplied

■ ***Minesh, thanks for making the time in your busy schedule. Who is Minesh?***

I lead the comms team for Ford South Africa, and hail from a family of five with an older brother and older sister. I have two amazing kids, a son in second-year varsity and a daughter in grade ten - and enjoy being both spiritual and an avid traveller.

I have an Honours degree in journalism and media studies from Wits, I'm a bit of a bookworm when time permits, and I have recently discovered a deeper meaning through both personal and professional community upliftment.

My mantra is that of an eternal optimist, with the glass always being half full and a silver lining always evident on the darkest of clouds. Life is not about the easy choices - but finding fulfilment in the harder choices is where real balance for me lies. Someone once said to me that contentment is not about getting everything you want but realising how much you already have – and I try to remind myself of that often.

■ ***Do you have a role model?***

There were a few but my late uncle gets the highest spot on the podium. An entrepreneur who looked after dozens of family members through a family business, he created opportunity for many, and his table was always big enough to never turn anyone away. He was larger than life, with a personality only overshadowed by his warmth and generosity.

■ ***When did your journey at Ford Motor Company begin?***

An interesting question, it actually began a decade before I joined the company. As a senior motoring journalist with the Independent Media Group (IMG, ironic hey!), consisting of titles like *The Star*, *Pretoria News* and the *Cape Times*, Ford was always firmly on my radar.

I attended many media launches and got to understand the blue oval culture many moons before getting a Ford access card. Ford was always one I felt would understand me, and to this day I enjoy that the company encourages (some may say humours) my different way of thinking.

■ ***Walk us through a day in your current role***

No two days are the same. In essence, it's about pushing the oval forward in terms of reputation, essentially, but in an authentic way. We ensure that employees and media, and other stakeholders for that matter, understand the vision of what we stand for and are trying to do as a company and see the true authenticity of the message. Employees are our ambassadors, and ensuring that they are part of our journey is paramount to our success as a company.

■ ***How are you adapting to the ever-changing Comms climate?***

The challenge is really around traditional and new media, traditional and new journalists, and traditional and new ways of communicating. Working in a space like Ford means that we are never short of tools and resources, but like a certain superhero once said - with great power comes great responsibility. We wield a big blue axe at times in the comms space, and we need to ensure our story is always newsworthy while at the same time keeping media interested in the brand.

■ ***What makes your job rewarding?***

Making a difference really. Media calling me and telling me they loved a product of ours, or are proud of the difference the company is making in SA, or just thanking us as a comms team for making their daily grind easier by giving them accurate information on time. We are externally facing as much as we are internally, and our scorecard is a little more far-reaching than Simon Vermooten, but that makes it all the more exciting. The rush of a front-page story, or winning a bakkie shootout.

■ ***What has been your greatest career highlight?***

I was content as a motoring writer. Many PRs in the industry were likely not as content with many of us writers, but it was a comfortable space.

Crossing over to what many media describe as the dark side, corporate PR, was a big step, and history will show that not many have done it gracefully - or walked quietly into that dark night after.

My greatest highlight happens daily in that I get to enjoy what I do, sure there have been standout moments here and there, but it's the daily challenges that make it interesting, and the small wins that allow me to enjoy the five-day more than the single overs.

If I had to choose a highlight, I reckon it will be when we get to look back at it all and smile, and say we did our best, and

that we fought the good fight for a brand we truly cared about.

ABOUT NARESH MAHARAJ

Naresh Maharaj is a petrol head who loves cars and writing about them. He is also a Member of the SA Guild of Motoring Journalists. Naresh is also an international sports correspondent and an acclaimed corporate MC and voice-over artist. Naresh is a sports/news producer for community radio stations and also an award-winning sports journalist. Contact Naresh on nmaharaj321@gmail.com

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