

Victor Dlamini and Mike Stopforth launch 48H, a social media crisis consultancy



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

2 Dec 2020

Two of South Africa's most admired communicators, Victor Dlamini and Mike Stopforth, have teamed up to create 48H, a social media crisis consultancy. The social media crisis consultancy will bring real-world solutions to clients faced with an online crisis, and the offering integrates well into the existing agency model.



Victor Dlamini and Mike Stopforth

Dlamini and Stopforth possess a set of exceptional skills and experience in social media and crisis management that spans agency, B2B, B2C, media and the public sector.

I catch up with the two communicators to find out more about 48H...

■ ***Congrats on the launch of 48H. Tell us more about the consultancy?***

Dlamini: The consultancy is designed to give a brand access to a pair of safe (and experienced) hands in a time of crisis. Social media magnifies a crisis and 48H zeroes in on how to avert disaster.

■ ***When and how did the idea come about?***

Dlamini: Mike and I have been in the habit of picking up the phone or meeting over coffee to chat about topical issues. Very often it was one that originated from a social media crisis faced by a brand. Our chats invariably brought up scenarios in which such a crisis could have been managed better. This was the genesis of 48H.

■ ***What is the core function of 48H?***

Dlamini: When faced with a crisis, the first 48 hours are critical. It is during this time that it is vital to act smart and act fast. 48H is there to help brands and organisations manage a social media crisis quickly and effectively. We're there to make sure that in those first critical hours, brand stakeholders have objective, experienced partners who can walk them through mitigating as much risk and long-term brand damage as possible

■ ***What are some of the services 48H will be offering?***

Dlamini: Many brands and organisations invest for the good times - they focus on how many likes their posts garner or how effective their influencer programmes are. They don't adequately anticipate or plan for what happens when social media



Victor Dlamini

goes awry. Managing an online crisis is one of the most demanding issues faced by organisations. We have the skills to assist in managing a crisis. The 48H model is unique in that clients will not pay a retainer, they would only reach out to 48H when they are needed.

Stopforth: We can guarantee a timely response to the client's query, but because of the time sensitivity and the 'fixer' nature of the business, the traditional processes and onboarding need to be fast-tracked. We can respond or work as fast as the client needs us to, and also serve as supplementary support to a brand's existing PR, digital or social media agency.

What has the biggest challenge been with starting a business in a time of Covid-19?

Dlamini: Covid-19 has accelerated the adoption of many technologies, but it has also given people more time to be on social media. So paradoxically Covid-19 made this process quicker.

■ ***You are both well-admired communicators in the industry. What sort of experience will each of you be bringing to 48H?***

Dlamini: In a nutshell our clients will be getting direct access to two founders who have been deeply immersed in the evolving nature of social media and have written extensively on its impact on business and society. We'll give them an opportunity to step back from the bubble of their ecosystem and share with them our deeply considered views.

■ ***What excites you most about launching 48H?***

Stopforth: I love businesses and services that are specialised. 48H is hyper-specialised and designed to complement the agency and consulting ecosystem perfectly. Our research showed that clients wanted to call on partners with deep expertise and insight, when needed, to solve very specific problems without the red tape of complicated retainer agreements. 48H fits neatly into that gap in the realm of social media crisis.

■ ***Could we see any new fresh approaches to social media?***

Stopforth: Brands are having to innovate to stand out from the rest of the crowd in social media, and the platforms themselves are recognising the need for new dimensions and capabilities to drive engagement. New platforms are offering brands interesting angles at content creation and customer engagement, but every new opportunity is a double-edged sword: as brands stretch themselves to differentiate, they increase the risk of inducing a crisis.

■ ***Social media has become a very powerful tool. What can organisations no longer ignore when it comes to social media strategy?***

Stopforth: Authenticity and accountability. The gap between what brands promise customers (in their marketing and communication) and what they deliver in reality, is the source of 99% of what goes wrong in social media.

■ ***How important is it for brands to tell stories that resonate with consumers?***

Stopforth: It has always been and will continue to be in future. It's arguably more important for brands to listen to stories



Mike Stopforth

customers tell them, though. Social media provides an unparalleled playground for this kind of listening and engagement.

■ ***Lastly, social media is continuously changing. What sort of trends can we see in 2021?***

Stopforth: I'm not sure I agree that it is continuously changing. Sure, the algorithms and features of various platforms change, and every now and again we get a new entrant that shakes things up a bit, but we're seeing significant consolidation and commodification of the elements of social networks that have made them sticky and appealing for so long (just consider, as an example, how pretty much every platform now has a time-limited "story" feature a la snap).

Social networks are still, and will be for some time, a uniquely intimate and revealing interface for brands to connect with customers, and for customers to connect with each other, and as has been the case for over a decade, the brands who intrinsically understand their role in that ecosystem and deliver value with it will succeed.

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