

Lack of evaluation methods and measurement a threat to African PR industry

By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Poor evaluation and measurement are one of the biggest threats to the African public relations (PR) and communications industry,



Source © Matthias Ziegler [123rf](#) Poor evaluation and measurement are one of the biggest threats to the African public relations (PR) and communications industry

This is one of the findings from the Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA) Africa and African Public Relations Association (APRA) joint research on the state of ethics and PR landscape in Africa.

The report, released at annual APRA Conference, which this year takes place from 15-19 May in Zambia, found that while the biggest threat identified is reduced budget (59%) poor measurement and evaluation (53%) was a close second.

Why this is concerning is that the result is similar to 2022, showing that no real growth in adopting recognised evaluation methods has taken place over the past year. In addition, 26% of those surveyed did not use any evaluation methods (compared to 25% in 2022).

This was one of the key focuses of a panel discussion on the report findings that was recorded earlier and then shown at

the conference.

The panel was moderated by Danette Breitenbach, co-editor of Marketing and Media at Bizcommunity.com. Panelists include Faisal Hussain from PRCA (UK), Henry Rugamba from APRA (Uganda), Tolulope Olorundero from Nigerian Women in PR (Nigeria) and Dustin Chick from Razor (South Africa).

Ethics and Transparency

The second part of the survey concerned ethics and transparency in PR and communications. While ethics is very important in the PRCA Professional Charter and Codes of Conduct, it is concerning that the report shows that 15% - an increase of two percent - of the respondents indicated that they have been asked by someone to act in an unethical way or had decided to do so in the past 12 months.

Five percent acted on an incident, and 10% did not. Only 0.5% reported the incident and 17% did not report it.

However, it is heartening to see that 79% said no when approached by someone to act in an unethical way while five percent were unsure.

When respondents were asked to rate how ethical PR is in their country, the mean average out score is 5.3 (out of 10), a year-on-year decrease of 0.8 compared to last year.

“Consequently PR’s perceived ethical standing has gone backward, and there is clearly much work to do in the region to ensure that ethics is at the forefront of the agenda when it comes to the PR and communications industry,” states the report.

The respondents did feel that their organisations were ethical, with 69% responding that their organisation was not compromised. The report also surveyed respondents about their perception of their organisation’s ethical business practices compared to similar organisations in other countries across Africa.

The vast majority (90%) said that organisation ranks ‘above average’ while the remaining 10% ranked their organisation ‘below average’.

However the same cannot be said about their countries with 88% of respondents saying their country was compromised. Asked to compare their respective countries’ ethical business conduct against others on the African continent, 67% of respondents said their country was below average, while only 33% said their country was above average.



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PR standing in the boardroom

A concerning finding of the survey is that 47% of PR professionals said they are not appreciated in the boardroom - up from 14% in 2022 – and 19% felt they have to prove their existence.

Only 28% said senior leaders are relying on PR more than ever - a five percent decrease on 2022. Respondents felt that organisations only remember PR when they are challenged. They also felt 'governments are not investing enough in PR and communications or hearing the call of strategy in this area'.

What PR professionals do

What PR professionals do has remained steady, with 61% citing communications strategy development (slightly down on the 63% in 2022) as their main activity, while just over half ticked reputation management.

Crisis management and Corporate PR made up 50%, increasing by 10% and 4% respectively. Crisis management and reputation management have become more important over the past two years, at the expense of digital and social media, which have decreased by 10%.

Also less important are ethics management, sales promotion and events planning – the latter two an effect of Covid and also demonstrating the shift from physical to digital PR.

Future of reputation management in Africa

Asked what this will look like in Africa produced responses ranging from bleak and not promising to fairly optimistic to a positive outlook. What is certain is that there is work that needs to be done to move the needle away from just coverage to reputation management and communications that is trusted and valuable.

A new strategy is needed as there is no improvement here.



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Of the respondents, 54% said the perception of PR had improved and would be utilised more if a recession occurred, while 21% said no and 25% were not sure.

While there is a mainly positive outlook, the results are a mixed bag.

The report expands on this, quoting one respondent who alluded to the idea that the PR industry may be becoming less valued during the current 'technological revolution' and that there may be a shift towards the reliance on artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT

.Again this shows the need for education and training on technology and what it means for the industry going forward.

Training needs

The biggest training needs identified by the report include:

- Strategy development (59%)
- Reputation management (51%)
- Crisis management (42%)
- Ethic management (41%)

While only selected by 30%, the metaverse generated the most interest demonstrating the importance of getting ahead of the curve and educating PR professionals on matters such as AI and its impact on the sector.

The PRCA's survey of PR and communications practitioners from across Africa received more than 550 responses from a total of 27 countries, This Census is based on a sample of 566 respondents from across the region, with data gathered between 21 January and 27 February 2022.

The survey was generated by Reputation Matter using sample sources from the PRCA's own database, a public link on the PRCA website as well as respondents recruited by APRA.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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