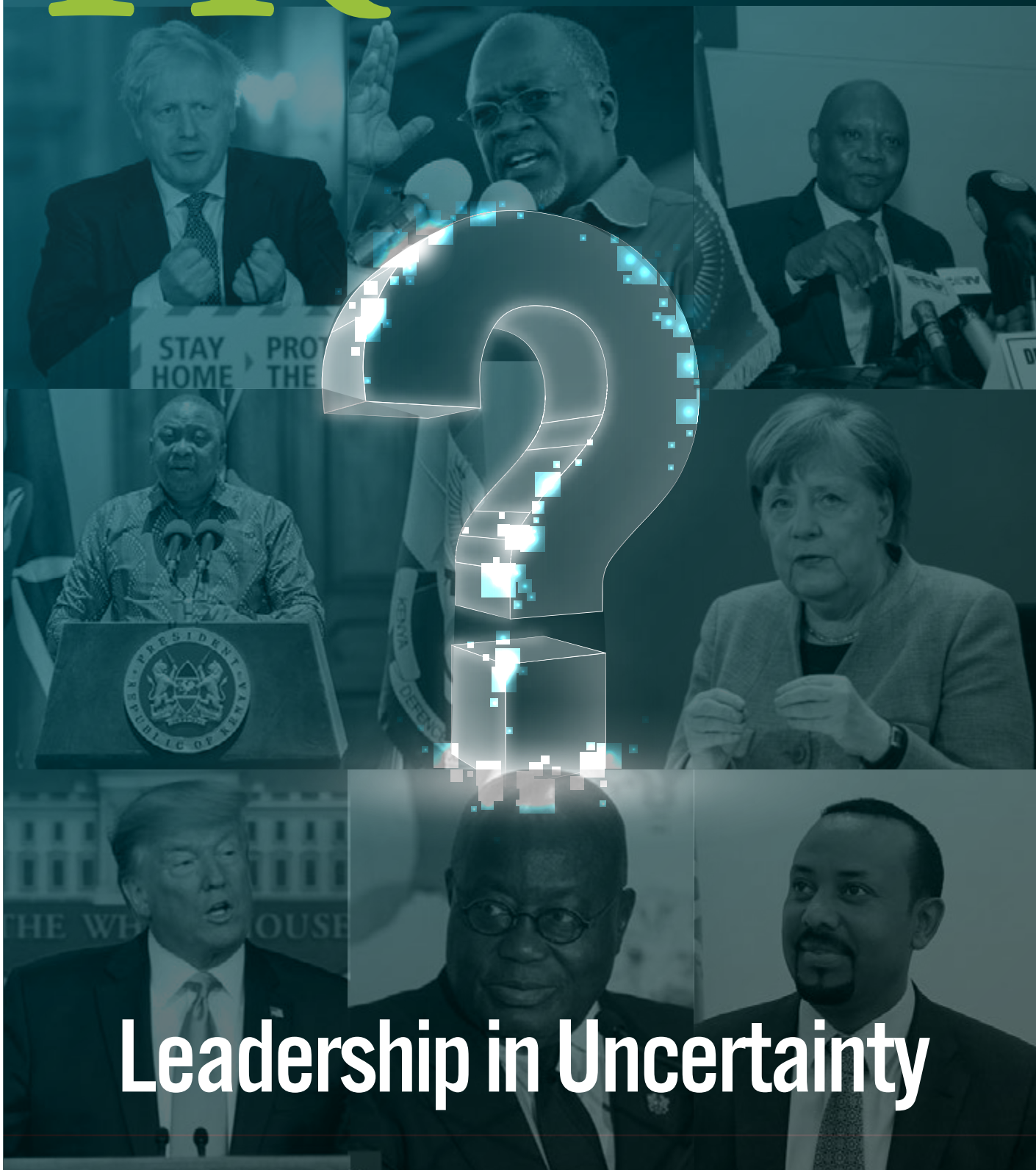


PR DIGEST

A PUBLICATION OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF KENYA



Leadership in Uncertainty

COVID -19: WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP
ACTIVISM IN FIGHTING MISINFORMATION

8
10

RESTORE TO DEFAULT SETTINGS?
STRATEGIC APPROACH IN CRISIS HANDLING

22
39

Be Present... Even When You Are Not

Google Cloud
Partner

BusinessCom is a Google certified partner, based out of Nairobi with a presence in Tanzania, South Africa and growing. Our focus is to promote a new way of working that employs G Suite & Copper CRM tools to significantly improve how your business operates.

As Africa's longest-standing Google Partner, we have perfected the art of collaboration and communication across functions within the organization thus allowing you to focus on what's most important- your business' success.

With G Suite you can maintain control over the day to day activities of your business across any device from anywhere! Some key features include:



Storage and file management through Google Drive (Drive) which is accessible from anywhere in the world and across any device (computer, vlaptop, tablet, phone...) All your company data would reside here, no need for physical storage.



Communication through Gmail that comes with in-built Antispam & Antivirus and guarantees 99.9% uptime. Which means, you never have to follow up an email with a phone call to ensure the recipient got it.



Google Chat is an excellent tool for internal communication within and across departments. It is an instant way of 'talking' and sharing documents and files with team members. Handovers are a breeze because new members need only jump into relevant chats and catch themselves up- it's a business continuity dream!



Google Calendar & Google Keep allow one to effectively plan and execute activities for the day week month etc.



Google Docs, Slides, Sheets etc are collaboration tools that require no introduction, however on G Suite come with serious upgrades that allow for real time editing from multiple locations, tracking of changes, accountability, approval, web search functionality, all without the need to save multiple versions of 1 document as all versions are available within the one document.



Meet

Google Meet for conferencing. In one click, you are able to meet up one-to-one or as a department. Google Meet's security controls are turned on by default, so users won't have to do a thing to ensure the right protections are in place and because G Suite is secured by the same system that Google uses, you can be sure your meetings and personal data are safe too! You can share documents, chat videos, even your entire screen; it's just like being in the room.

For more information on G Suite and how we can help your business, visit our website on businesscom.africa or reach out to us at sales@businesscom.africa, we would be happy to help.

Business Com
Consulting Services

Editor's Note

Welcome to the new normal!

It is not an overstatement to say that the activities we had planned for this year- this far- came to a halt on 12th March 2020 when the first case of COVID- 19 was confirmed within our borders. That we have been confused, gripped with fear for our children, loved ones and parents is an understatement! For parents whose children were then in school, '*mother bear*' instinct kicked in. Events that followed shortly after introduced what has now become our new normal.

Sadly, that isn't the only fight right now. We have since moved to Black Lives Matter campaigns and marches against police brutality after the whole world watched a video of a cop in Minneapolis brutally murdering a black suspect George Floyd. There has never been a time when Public Relations professionals have had to deal with a myriad of crises than the last couple of months.

This edition was carefully thought through with the help of seasoned industry experts. Special thanks to the President and the Editorial team for their much needed guidance that enabled us to give you these stories. I am proud of this edition, which has been done by an amazing team that has deliberately adhered to the tenets of writing to deliver quality for your readership, now that you are working from home or have some time to spare for the printed WORD; talk of the silver lining of the COVID - 19 pandemic.

We also featured a research mogul who quit her job to start a competing firm but still managed to keep the relationship with the former boss intact.

We hope that this edition will make for a good read.

Happy Reading!

Maureen Koech, MPRSK
Editor

Editorial Board

1. Elizabeth Mulae
2. Awino Gilbert
3. Joseph Ndegwa
4. Kamuzu Banda
5. Nicholas Manyara Mureithi
6. Dr Wilfred Marube

Chairperson
Member
Member
Member
Member
Editorial Advisor

WEBINARS JUNE-JULY 2020



JUNE 5TH COMMUNICATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT	CPD POINTS 5 POINTS	REGISTRATION Member:2,000/= Non Member:2,500/=
JUNE 12TH CRAFTING PERFECT MEDIA PITCHES	CPD POINTS 5 POINTS	REGISTRATION Member:2,000/= Non Member:2,500/=
JUNE 19TH STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT	CPD POINTS 5 POINTS	REGISTRATION Member:2,000/= Non Member:2,500/=
JUNE 26TH PLANNING AND MANAGING PR CAMPAIGNS	CPD POINTS 5 POINTS	REGISTRATION Member:2,000/= Non Member:2,500/=
JULY 3RD ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT	CPD POINTS 5 POINTS	REGISTRATION Member:2,000/= Non Member:2,500/=
JULY 10TH DIGITAL COMMUNICATION FOR PR INFLUENCE	CPD POINTS 5 POINTS	REGISTRATION Member:2,000/= Non Member:2,500/=
JULY 17TH CRAFTING MESSAGES AND FRAMING NARRATIVES	CPD POINTS 5 POINTS	REGISTRATION Member:2,000/= Non Member:2,500/=
JULY 24TH STORYTELLING FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS	CPD POINTS 5 POINTS	REGISTRATION Member:2,000/= Non Member:2,500/=
JULY 31ST THE VALUE OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS IN BRAND MANAGEMENT IN KENYA	CPD POINTS 5 POINTS	REGISTRATION Member:2,000/= Non Member:2,500/=

Payment Details: **M-Pesa Paybill: 569108** **Account Number: Membership Number**
 admin@prsk.co.ke | @prskkenya | www.prsk.co.ke

TABLE OF CONTENTS



30 | After working for my boss for close to a decade, I left him to start a competing company and we are still friends-
Infotrak CEO, Angela Ambitho



12 | Activism in fighting misinformation



74 | Engaging the public proactively better than "regular updates"



52 | Misinformation paralyzing efforts in fight against global pandemic

14 | Genesis of generational fights in workplace

Technology and its ease of doing business has continued to segregate staff members to the knowing-how and not-knowing how teams.

21 | Just because you have a crisis, do not disparage your stakeholders

All the messages in the organization should have this multiprong approach, where all audiences are spoken to in their own context.

22 | Businesses bouncing back post COVID-19

Businesses can survive through this tough period by securing the confidence of their clients.

39 | Strategic approach in crisis handling

The ability of leaders to speak truthfully, sincerely and to show empathy during crisis is crucial.

63 | PR and Current Affairs are not mutually exclusive in practice

A knowledgeable communicator will call for a continuous audit of the information that the organization sends out.

83 | Etiquette guidelines virtual meetings

To enhance concentration and performance of work-related duties, you are encouraged to follow the usual morning routine.



PR members now have benevolent scheme

The Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) has introduced a self-insurance scheme which seeks to support members and their families by supplementing their last expense budgets.

The scheme that was passed during a special general meeting in March this year, is open to all PRSK members, regardless of the category of membership. The member has to be in good standing, fully paid up of their membership dues as well as not have any disciplinary issues with the Society.

Each member will be required to contribute an annual premium of Ksh 2300 to cover the principal member, spouse, four parents; i.e parents and parents-in-law and, up

to four children. This will see the member get a payment of Ksh 100,000 in the event of the demise of any of the listed dependents.

“This is a good scheme and we hope our members will sign up to enjoy the benefits,” Ms Anekeya, the Chairperson Membership and Professional Development Committee said.

Contributions are to be made every year by 31 st March along with the membership subscription fees.

This scheme is being provided in partnership with Liberty Insurance

PR manager to head Youth Enterprise Development Fund

Mr Benson Muthendi, Youth Enterprise Development Fund’s Public Relations manager was appointed new Chief Executive Officer on acting capacity.

Until his appointment, Mr Muthendi had been the PR Chief at the Fund since August 2008 and is among the first people who helped build the foundation of the Fund in 2007.

He has previously worked at the Kenya Institute of Education as the head of Communication and Training and a radio and TV programmes script writer and producer for the same organization. He also served as the communication and community mobilization officer for GOK/UNICEF ILFE project in Northern Kenya.





PRSK Chief appointed CEO of Kenya Export Promotion & Branding Agency

The Public Relations Society of Kenya President Dr Wilfred Marube has been appointed CEO of Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency, a position he will hold for three years.

His appointment comes days after his election to the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management Board as the Delegate-At-Large for Africa.

Dr Marube's appointment comes at a time when communication professionals are encouraged to assert their positions in their organizations, a move that the former Executive Director of the Institute of Human Resource Management, Ms Dorcas Wainaina encouraged during the

January PR Connect.

"Dr Marube is better placed for this job owing to his vast experience in communication. This is what the Agency needs especially as COVID-19 continues to bite," Mr Jas Bedi, KEPROBA Board Chair noted during Dr Marube's inauguration.

During his term, Dr Marube will be expected to grow the Kenyan brand both locally and internationally, noting that tourism has been one of the hardest hit sectors by the corona virus pandemic.

PRSK fellow elected to Global Alliance Board



Member of the College of Fellows Peter Mutie has been elected to join the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management Board during the 18th Annual General Meeting that was held on Sunday 19 April. The meeting was held remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions regarding travel and public gathering.

Mr Mutie, who was elected alongside PRSK President Dr Wilfred Marube will begin his one-year term on July 1 st and will be regional delegate-at-large representing Africa. The two are joined by Nigeria's Dr. Rotimi Oladele who will hold the same position, totaling the representatives from Africa to three.

The members participating at the AGM agreed to change the by-laws to make them more inclusive and allow a global wide-netted approach to working together. "These changes have been met with widespread global support, allowing GA to become stronger, richer and true to our mission," GA President Justin Green noted.

The two representatives follow the footsteps of FPRSK Jane Gitau, whose term on the board ends in July this year; and Fellow Kentice Tikolo who has also previously served on the board. Kenya's voice in the global discourse will be as strong as ever.

A new initiative that aims to maintain important human connections while we are social distancing at home

PR Firm partners with PRSK and APReCoM to launch #StayInReachOut Campaign

Engage Burson Cohn & Wolfe in partnership with the Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) and the Association of Public Relations and Communications Management Firms (APReCoM) has launched a campaign appealing to Kenyans to reach out to their friends, family, relatives, colleagues, business partners and all their associates as they continue heeding to the government's call to stay at home and keep effective social distance.

The campaign dubbed “#StayInReachOut,” the communication experts are urging each Kenyan to maintain a circle of five (5) people that he/she is to reach out to daily from the comfort of their homes.

“The #StayInReachOut initiative aims to move people through difficult times by just making contact and showing they care. Very simply it asks each one of us to identify a personal circle of contacts and commit to reaching out to them regularly, while we are all staying at home,” says Engage BCW Managing Partner Desiree Gomes.

“We are committing to staying IN, but also to reaching OUT - to our colleagues, working remotely, perhaps feeling isolated and disconnected from their team members; to our clients, some uncertain how to navigate their communications needs; to people in our networks facing daily challenges of keeping businesses open and revenue coming in; to our friends in ‘lockdown’; and to our vulnerable family members with health fears.”

According to Public Relations Society of Kenya President Dr. Wilfred Marube, the current isolation and quarantine measures put in place in the wake of preventing the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, could lead some people into mental health issues like stress and depression, hence more reasons as to why people should continue socializing as proposed under the #StayInReachOut campaign.

“There are thousands of Kenyans currently grappling with the effects of job losses, others are staring at pay cuts, business shutdowns while others are worried about being lonely, and the chances of them contracting the

infectious disease,” said Dr. Marube.

“This global pandemic has changed our daily routines including limiting physical interaction and social distancing. In these challenging and unprecedented times there has never been more need to reach out,” He added.

In line with APReCoM's vision which is ‘to be the catalyst for credible communication that empowers decision making’ Okoth Obado, APReCoM Chairman welcomed the #stayINreachOutCovin-19 campaign noting that it was relevant, coming at a time when human liberties and freedoms were being curtailed to unprecedented levels and therefore causing social, psychological and economic upheavals to the detriment of society.

“As APReCoM, we fully support the #stayINreachOutCovin-19 campaign that is designed to encourage us to deliberately reach out to a sphere of family, friends and colleagues even as we keep away from them to maintain the social attribute of our nature as humans”, said Obado. He urged those participating in the #stayINreachOutCovin-19 campaign to ensure that while reaching out, they should only share information that is factual and thereof beneficial to the recipients during these tough times.

An engaging “nomination video” concept, using a combination of the globally recognised elbow bump, that has become the new handshake, with the physical gesture of reaching out will encourage people to share the message.

“We are challenging others to join this movement, sharing #stayINreachOUT in their own spheres of influence in ways that are human, empathetic and relevant right now.” Explained Desiree.

The challenge will run across Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram where Kenyans are urged to post a video of their physical gesture of staying in and reaching out and also tagging their 5 selected people in their network.

It doesn't have to be gloomy for membership organisations

By Lina Jamwa



The world has literally been thrown off balance by the COVID-19. For instance, Business Membership Organizations (BMOs) rely on voluntary membership and goodwill of its members. Their main source of income is membership subscription. As the need to focus on taking care of one's family and loved ones, as well as purchasing essential items like food and sanitizing equipment increases, members are bound to shift their focus from paying subscriptions to fulfilling these needs. This definitely results in reduction of revenue. They are also losing out on revenue from networking events as physical events have been banned. Donors have also relented as advocacy ventures have reduced and are not being followed up on aggressively. All these can spell doom for membership organisations as their very source of income is threatened directly. However, it does not have to be all gloom for them. Membership organizations can consider ways of cutting costs, staying afloat and remaining relevant to their members during these turbulent times.

Stay home be safe

With organisations adopting working from home as part of the safety measures against COVID 19, the need for constant communication with members increases. Amidst all the news surrounding us, it is very easy for members to lose track of what their association was or is doing for them, making it harder to come back after all the dust has settled. BMOs need to communicate often with their members.

Constant communication goes a long way in reminding members that the Association cares for them and is still in existence. Members want to know about existing opportunities to make money or get jobs. They also want to know innovative ways to handle their businesses as well as staying healthy. They need reassurance

from their professional association on the general work environment in the industry. BMOs can also educate their members on subtle areas affecting their businesses during these times.

BMOs could take time to research well on where their members' focus is, leverage technology for efficient communication in order to meet their objectives however small

Value addition

BMOs need to spend only on very necessary expenditures. It would not be wise to undertake a big office overhaul or make new hires at this time. They should instead keep a lean expenditure as how long the pandemic will last is not known. The aftermath of the same will also be grave. Therefore good strategy and planning needs to go into every business decision at this point. Keeping expenditure to the bare minimum ensures only must-do items or issues are handled and that some money is kept aside for the possibly rainy day ahead. Members will only opt to be members at an organisation if they feel the value of being there. BMOs could take time to research well on where their members' focus is.

Technological advancements have literally made the world flat. Communication and even execution of events have become smoother with technology. BMOs need to invest in technology that will help them connect with their members and still remain relevant. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) trainings and networking events that are held by BMOs typically involve physical interactions and networking. Our current situation presents a platform to explore other ways of meeting other than physical meetings. BMOs should take advantage of web conferencing platforms like Skype, GoToMeeting, Zoom, Join.me, Microsoft

teams among others. Members can still earn their CPD points by attending these online events and training sessions.

Managing teams

Besides these platforms can also be helpful in streaming meetings with your team, partners and other industry counterparts during this time. Considering their defiance of geographical boundaries, these platforms also make it possible for a wide range of your members attending the events. Invest in an online store to enhance purchase of your merchandise and other products that you may have. Partner with riders to ensure delivery of these products to the members. You can also use team management softwares to manage your team during this time.

Depending on the size of your team, you might have to engage a combination of softwares to efficiently manage your team. Systems like Bitrix24, Scoro, Zoho workplace, Proworkplace and Hubstaff among others are very useful in efficient management of teams. It is especially important right now for BMOs to ensure to leave a lasting memory in the minds of their members. Members want to be reassured, not via system generated reminders but via some human touch. BMOs should keep in touch with their members and resolve their immediate problems. Instead of just asking for subscription payment, BMOs can also show genuine care for the wellbeing of their members. They could take time to echo the government's sentiments on the pandemic and show that they are cooperating and doing their part in flattening the curve and encouraging their members to do the same. They should also ensure to protect their members of staff.

Jamwa is a Membership and Communication Manager Architectural Association of Kenya (AAK)

COVID -19: Women in leadership

By Constance Mukenyi Muiruri



*Dr Ruth Jane Aceng,
Minister of Health, Uganda*

The COVID-19 pandemic has rocked the world over and changed what we described as usual. Many nations have crumbled under this pandemic. However, what stands out is the leadership throughout this epidemic.

It is normal to panic and be full of anxiety under any form of threat to humanity. Some leaders, however, have taken it upon themselves to sail their ships away from getting drowned by this wavy sea of the coronavirus.

The Wall Street, an American journal recently recognized some of the notable leaders who have faced the pandemic face on fearlessly. The journal dated the 4th of April listed Dr. Jung Eun-kyeong- Director of South Korea's Centre's for Disease Control and Prevention and Dr. Jenny Harries- UK's Deputy Chief Medical Officer. Sam Walker also recognized our own Health Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe for his calm composure while faced with the uncertainty beholding the coronavirus pandemic in the country.

Alongside their male counterparts, female leaders have taken it upon themselves to steer the wheel to safety amidst the pandemic. Which leaders do you ask?

Germany launched the most extensive coronavirus testing

program in Europe. It conducts an average of 350,000 tests weekly. This is vital for early COVID-19 detection so that the appropriate measures can be put in place from isolation to treatment.

Taiwan, officially known as the Republic of China, has done an impressive job in maintaining COVID-19 infections. Currently, the nation is producing facemasks and exporting them to other parts of the world.

New Zealand is also on the frontline in managing the deadly virus. The country shut down all tourism activities and went into lockdown. This move greatly impacted the rate of infections in the nation. The state can now proudly say they have tried to limit the deaths to only four.

You might be wondering why I'm giving you all these details about all these countries. But guess what they have in common? Yes, they are all led by women!

Strong stance

All these nations managed to combat the coronavirus pandemic by making firm decisions early enough. They all provide their citizens with easy medical access and very aggressive contact tracing systems.

Looking at Taiwan's location, it is easy to see that the country was vulnerable to COVID-19. Further adding to its vulnerability, the country is shunned by WHO, and Beijing claims it is its territory. However, the nation, with over 24 million people managed to tame the virus.

When their president, Tsai Ing-weng got wind of the pandemic hitting China, she immediately ordered the inspection of all flights from Wuhan. She later on restricted all flights from Hong Kong, Mainland China and Macau.

This early stance has dramatically impacted the rate at which the virus spread in the country. Taiwan only has 393 reported cases of infection and six deaths.

The Nordics

Out of the five Nordic countries, four of them are led by women. These countries have so far recorded the least number of deaths following the coronavirus pandemic.

A case in example is Finland. Led by their Prime Minister Sanna Marin, the country with over 5.5 million citizens has recorded only 59 deaths. This is even though they are governed by the world's youngest leader aged 34 years.

Denmark has recorded only 321 deaths with over 3000 people making full recoveries. Norway, on the other hand, has recorded only 152 deaths out of the 6,900 cases of coronavirus infections.



*Sanna Mirella Marin,
Prime Minister Finland*

Sweden, on the other hand, has recorded 1,333 deaths as of 17th of April out of the 12,540 infections. These numbers are significantly higher than those in the other Nordic countries. This is the only Nordic nation led by a male, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven.

However, some male president's like South Korea's Moon Jae gained worldwide recognition for managing to flatten the curve.

Is it time?

While it is important to note that some male leaders have also taken a forefront in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, it can't escape our minds, is it time to increase female leadership?

As per the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the UN, only 152 elected leaders are female globally. Men, on the other hand, make up 75% of all parliamentarians. 76% of all people in the mainstream media and 73% of decision-makers are males.

While Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the UN Women Executive Director, indicated that females are allocated 25%, she acknowledged that the number was too low.

The corporate world has also started embracing female leadership. We are now seeing more women taking up leadership positions like CFOs and CEOs.

It is time for gender equality and representations in political and management arenas. Citizens need to see the importance of also having females in leadership and elect them. This will deal with the fact that women leaders are mostly nominated and not elected, especially in Africa. This move is primarily to meet the 25% rule, sometimes making the nominated leaders cronies.

From the coronavirus pandemic management statistics, the world needs more female leaders.

*Constance is an information scientist:
conniemukenyi@gmail.com*

Activism in fighting misinformation

By Malesele Maubane and Meodi Mothapo

The world is currently grappling with a health crisis in the form of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Misinformation, which is part of the FAKE NEWS phenomenon, is rearing its head and has a potential to undermine communication efforts around the global disease, especially on social media platforms.

A crisis, widely defined as “a time of intense difficulty or danger”, if not handled properly, can affect public safety and result in financial loss. Misinformation is usually defined as “false or inaccurate information, especially that which is deliberately intended to deceive” and is mostly witnessed to thrive more on digital platforms like social media, it is thus important to counter it in the same space. It must be noted that during a time like this, those with cruel intentions find an easier way to peddle false information which has a potential to cause panic within communities.

From a South African context and in dealing with the health crisis, we are introduced to the concept of activism. Dr. Benecke the President of the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) posits that “activism and Public Relations used to be seen as opposing forces, with activism seen as forbidden and a threat to organisational reputation and sustainability.” Perhaps, a conclusion can be drawn that activism and PR have found a common enemy in misinformation.

At PRISA we stand for trustworthy and verified information on COVID-19. We are actively promoting reputable sites and collecting authentic information to distribute to citizens. We applaud and support government communicators for all their hard work. COVID Comms SA, a South African network of communication volunteers working alongside government and others to produce and distribute accurate and helpful information on the COVID-19 outbreak in SA has thus taken on an activist role in dealing with the fake news cases. Coordination of its volunteerism work and mobilisation of resources is done through various streams such as sponsorships and donations, copywriting, translation, graphics, video

production, network mobilisation and distribution, media; and original content

Fake news or misinformation is making the battle against the virus not only one against a health crisis but also a test of the South African communication machinery. There is however appreciation that the pandemic is no longer about government, but calls for all sectors of society including social partners to be on board.

In dealing with the pandemic South

Africa has done well by having a crisis communication plan in place and collaborative efforts.

Maubane is the Immediate Past President of the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA), former Chairperson of its Limpopo Regional Chapter and a COVID Comms South Africa Volunteer. Mothapo is a Communication Specialist and a COVID Comms South Africa Volunteer.



HOW KEMSA IS COPING WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AMIDST GLOBAL MEDICAL SUPPLY CHAIN LOCKDOWN

Efforts made by Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (KEMSA) have been against widespread supply chain disruptions following the effects and response to Covid-19.

KEMSA is a state corporation whose mandate is to procure, warehouse and distribute quality and affordable Health Products and Technologies (HPTs) to public health facilities and isolation centres.

In line with its mandate, the Authority has actively been involved in sourcing for Covid-19 products to mitigate the spread of the pandemic by equipping the health workers with requisite assorted personal protective equipment.

The Authority has closely collaborated with Ministry of Health (MoH) and other government agencies involved in the fight against Covid-19 to facilitate timely delivery of products to the doorstep of targeted health facilities, isolation centres, testing laboratories, surveillance teams, National Command Centre, Emergency Command Centres amongst other institutions involved in the fight against the pandemic.

Consequently, KEMSA has established a good working relationship with development partners like UNEP, UNAIDS, National Aids Control Council Kenya (NACC), Hunan Road and Bridge Construction Company to come up with solutions to address emerging issues and support the GoK's effort in fighting the Covid-19 pandemic.

OUR SERVICES

KEMSA is a state corporation under the Ministry of Health established under the KEMSA Act 2013 whose mandate is to:

Procure

The Authority's procurement procedures are guided by the Public Procurement Regulations. KEMSA has been mandated to work closely with local manufacturers to support procurement and other related logistics services for Covid-19 products. This helps to better manage any disruptions that may emerge in being able to deliver products on time.

HEAD OFFICE

13 Commercial Street, Industrial Area | P.O Box 47715, 00100 GPO, Nairobi | Tel: +254 (20) 39223000, +245 719 033000

Email: info@kemsa.co.ke | [f](https://www.facebook.com/KemsaKenya) Kenya Medical Supplies Authority | [t](https://www.twitter.com/Kemsa_Kenya) Kemsa_Kenya



Warehouse

KEMSA has two warehouses in Nairobi and eight depots across the country to enhance flexibility and quick response to customers demand. The Authority has kicked off operationalization of Kisumu and Mombasa Depot as regional distribution centres to serve as additional distribution hubs due to the growing demand.

Distribution

In partnership with experienced third party carriers, KEMSA has set up a robust distribution network with the capacity to access the last mile of all Public Hospitals, Health Centres and Dispensaries countrywide.

Our Vision

To be a leader in innovative health supply chain solutions that support better health service delivery

Our Mission

KEMSA will provide reliable, affordable and quality health products and supply chain solutions to improve healthcare in Kenya and beyond.

Genesis of generational fights in workplace

By Carlos Cheluget



The question of how to handle generational fight in workplaces around the world has not been answered for many years despite scholars and Human Resource specialists developing models and manuals on yearly basis. The answer to this challenge has evaded HR practitioners for many years due to a number of mutating factors in the world of employment. A servant or an officer who was a junior youth few years ago, has grown to be a senior youth or middle age or prospective retiree within a very short time.

With a lot of uncertainties in the world due to the spread of COVID-19, let's give a critical look at this issue. By asking ourselves some critical questions; Does this break give us a chance to address the matter and take corrective action? I hope so, considering the stay home order and institutions now operating with a skeleton staff.

In the Kenyan context, generational fights can be attributed to several factors. But let's first undertake a situation analysis of employment in this country. It's clear that the government has downscaled employment in public institutions in last the decade. This is against the reality of the country opening more universities and equally expanding admissions in the

last 15 years. Remember the number of chartered public universities soared from a paltry number of five to 23 within ten years. We churned out more graduates eyeing white collar jobs than technical experts required for craftsmanship. Today the government is simply trying to buy the youthful years of the same generation by offering them temporary employment baptized as internship, apprenticeship, mentorship or contracts. The other side of this could be job cuts and retrenchment, which a populist government cannot dare. The country therefore continues to operate with an aging workforce. This is basically conducting business from the edge of a cliff considering the damage COVID-19 is causing in civilized and developed countries whose population pyramids are almost inverted.

Changing Technology

Back to our discussion, what are the real causes of generational fights in employment circuits in this country? In employment, time flies, so is the technological advances witnessed in the performing of basic to technical duties. For example, technological advances witnessed in the computer and telecommunication era waits for no man. What we learnt and perfected today, that makes us look techno savvy and literate,

quickly advances to a new version and renders laggards and conservative staff to near illiterate and old minded within very few years. To survive the ever changing world of technology in workplace, young and old alike should remain abreast to this. In what the late Historian Prof. Ali Mazrui said on modernization of the late 20th century; drink deep or taste not the river of civilization. Technology and its ease of doing business has continued to segregate staff members to the knowing-how and not-knowing how teams. The young generation in our workplaces, just like our teenagers at home with our phones, are advantaged here.

Organizational culture

The inherent bad organizational culture in most of our institutions play a great role in the fights. It can pass without saying that most of the organizations are managed by the old. The average age of the top management in most institutions is above 45 years. Here titles and positions matter than outputs. Titles and positions come with benefits and privileges. This group strongly guard their positions and ensure youngsters are kept at bay.

Tribalism and Nepotism

The second point on this culture related cause is tribalism and nepotism. Organizational leaders have always



degenerated to village and family kingpins. Their respect in these quarters is earned and measures on how many of his/her siblings or kinsmen has he/she been able to “push” for their employment, either in their institutions or related ones. It is almost the question of dynasties in the political arena. This has continued to disadvantage the less privileged youth seeking employment. For those who are already been employed, these vices extend to poor career progressive structures and poor salaries and remuneration terms. Discrepancies that disadvantage the youth than the old generation.

Retirement Phobia

As years pass, the old generation start to suffer from retirement phobia. The reality of facing their sunset years with the fear of not having done or accumulated enough, may cause frustrations that may be aimed at the younger generation in the workplace. Any new change may be resisted by the outgoing age group in defense of being targeted or demeaned. It creates a syndrome of “I am the only one who knows” having been there for the longer period. This also degenerates to refusal to delegate and avoiding required absenteeism in workplace like leaves and long fieldworks.

Old School Versus Modern

On the flipside of the coin, several generational fights in workplace may be related to the younger generation. Developing from the question of advance/modern educational background, youthful staff may tend to undermine the old guards, reducing them to spectators if not beggars of information and knowledge on new trends. The young turks should leverage their new age trends and learning with the mature and tested experiences of the old. By doing so, they appreciate the level of the understanding of the old guards and give some value addition with the new trends.

Insubordination

Insubordination in governmental institutions is a common disciplinary issue. Where a junior staff acts or speaks in manner aimed at demeaning or outsmarting their seniors. What about the most abused form of allocating duties called ‘reverse insubordination’? Where a senior staff deliberately and wrongfully surpasses their immediate junior to work with a much lower cadre staff in order to demean the middle level staff? This has become a new and serious cause of conflict in most institutions.


Get Rich Quick or Die Trying Analogy

In the last five years, there has developed

a breed of generation and even professionals who dream of quick money, less work, casual approach to issues and don’t caring attitude. They are called the ‘Sportpesa’ generation. This has been attributed to poor parenting and peer pressure. This generation is now entering the employment market. Borrowing more than saving, partying more than investing and social chatting more than social acquainting. Have you ever asked yourself why mobile phone financial borrowing has become a lucrative business for the telephony industry and other players? Back at workplace, the behaviors from this generation not only irritate but infuriate the old turks who still have decorum of office culture and respect to self and others.

Modern day organizations should strive to put in place structures to mitigate these conflicts and create harmony in workplace. This should be added to number of other cross cutting issues like gender mainstreaming, corruption prevention, drug and substance abuse, disability mainstreaming and other measures currently being implemented.

The writer is a Corporate Communications Manager - Rift Valley Water-Nakuru



Rewarding performance is the motivation for employees to go the extra mile

By Hilda Malowa

With new dynamics in corporate organizations of moving from paying for just the job, service and seniority to paying for skills, knowledge, competency, performance and productivity. This has not only led organizations to seek new and creative ways to improve employee performance but at the same time strive to remain competitive and relevant in the market.

One of the new methods is payment for performance. Many a time, this compensation method reinforces outcomes of a company needs, as well as fulfills the financial vision and needs of employees. Many employers, however, have also resorted to the reward management which was designed to attract, retain and motivate employees.

Extrinsic and intrinsic rewards

Extrinsic rewards generally focus on offering performance-linked salary increases, monetary rewards, long term incentive plans, team-based rewards, and security benefits to employees as a way of boosting their morale and improving productivity of employees at the same time.

On the other hand, intrinsic rewards are non-monetary rewards and could come

in form of enriching job responsibility and empowerment. This also involves the organization giving awards to employees, as well as recognizing them personally, which has proven to be more fulfilling to employees in comparison to money. However, it is important to understand ways and methods that enhance performance and productivity, and seek for what works best for an organization.

With increased cost of living, people tend to be motivated by money. The salary a worker is paid can have a great influence on his or her performance. Employees no longer view salary as just money, they also see it as the value and level of appreciation for services rendered. Salaries often bring a feeling of security and allow employees to feel accomplished and, therefore, has a direct impact on overall performance and productivity.

Internal and external equity

An organization should also ensure internal equity in terms of employees' remuneration. There should never be favoritism in salary allocation, which should follow clear guidelines based on factors such as education background and experience just to mention but a few. While considering the internal equity, a company should also take into account the external

equity, that is, salary competitiveness versus the industry.

Laura Woods stated in an article recently that once an employee feels unfairly remunerated, their level of productivity and performance goes down and they start scouting for alternatives.

The extra mile

Just as customer satisfaction motivates consumers to use a certain product, better remunerated employees will always have a working morale and even go an extra mile in perfecting their work. Therefore, it is important for an organization to have a well-designed compensation plan, which gives equity a high priority to all employers. This can be based on commissions, bonuses and a comprehensive benefits package to complement a basic salary.

Therefore, organizations must take into account the perception and impression their employees have, roles of employees and how greatly these impact on their morale, motivation and satisfaction.

Hilda is a Corporate Communications Intern at the Salaries and Remuneration Commission (SRC)

Adapting to work place diversity

By Catherine Awuor

There is no question about the unprecedented reality of the workplace. It is facing a new future with managers managing five different generations at once. With each, however, comes a completely new outlook on work ethics, morals and methods of communicating.

There is the Silent Generation -born between 1925 and 1942- which values respect, authority, teamwork and work ethics. For this category, community and neighbourhood are vital. The Baby Boomers -born between 1946 and 1964-values face-to-face communications over technology, are workaholics and value continuous learning. They are best labeled as “Me Generation” for their emphasis on personal gratification. The generation X which is born between 1965 and 1984 is best referred to as the “middle child” of generations and, are characterized by their results driven attitude. They are the best known for their motivation and need for security. Generation Y, also known as “millennial” makes up the largest portion of the working population. This generation is mostly identified as the new technology era kids who have grown up with mobile phones and the internet. They exhibit a lot of confidence at the workplace and have high expectations of their employers. Take it, they are loyal to people – not institutions. Then there is Generation Z or “Nexters” comprising of those born between 2000 and 2018. They are digital natives in the early stages of their careers. This generation is open minded, they like independence and highly creative. On the contrary, their attention spans and interpersonal skills are wanting.

Enthusiastic employee

I am reminded of Kyle, a 22 year-old and an enthusiastic new starter at a financial institution. He was looking forward to impressing his new colleagues with his creativity. But he soon finds the going tough. The team is a mixed bunch, some of the team members do not seem to appreciate his eagerness. They feel that Kyle does not understand that way things are done in the organization. Kyle is not alone. Globally and across different sectors of the economy, generations are working

together. Even if this mix of behavior adds diversity to a workforce, it creates challenges and obstacles. Workforce Diversity must drive the formation of new business models. Good intentions are not a substitute for accountability. Organizations must remain agile in order to withstand the test of time.

Amidst this diversity, lies the force of digital technology that is paving way where mindsets will be more important than skillsets. Generational intelligence is required to leverage on the diverse workforce that appreciates the contributions of each generation while respecting the differences in behavior that each generation displays. The Captains of the flights in the organizations should get their workforce to board the same plane of teamwork and collaboration; encouraging people to build their digital eminence; encourage and reward employees, create room for mentorship opportunities and develop a learning environment for the prosperity of all. As part of driving organizations to the new frontier amidst the paradigm of generational mix, leaders should focus on transition to future work, activating a digital organization, creating “an irresistible work experience, Sustain

organizational performance.

In order to manage the younger generation believe in their own abilities and their capability to deliver, let them have some form of control over the task and recognize every little effort. It might also help if the older professionals embrace technology since technology it is at their heart it would be easy for them to operate in a tech-friendly atmosphere. This however should have very strict conditions attached to it so as to avoid idleness and misuse of the technology for other purposes other than meeting the organization’s vision. The younger generation are non-appreciative of traditional methods. That include the dress code ethics, formalities that are there due to hierarchy etc. This could be solved by creating an open working system where despite there being hierarchy the senior and junior staff are able to freely interact on work related tasks. Once in a while the staff can also be allowed to move from the traditional formal wear and probably bring in their own style.

*Awuor works for Bank of Africa.
Additional story by Nyumpha Thuo*



Investing in behaviour change communication

By Farida Aliwa

Awareness of the importance of hand-washing at critical times in the country remains high, why is the practice of good hygiene still so low



In countries in East Africa, where infection numbers are relatively small at this point, we are at a crucial stage of preventing new infections and curbing the spread. Our immediate response is to focus on increasing access to clean and safe water, increasing access to soap and hygiene products and ensuring that we limit virus transmission in common spaces.

My own reflection on previous epidemic responses, such as Ebola and learning from years of WASH programming in Kenya, is that while awareness of the importance of hand-washing at critical times in the country remains high, why is the practice of good hygiene still so low? A study in 2009 found that despite very high levels of awareness, only 14% of primary care givers in urban low income areas washed hands at critical moments, and only 5% consistently used soap. A number of practical and other issues proved to be real barriers to translating good intentions into consistent actions. These included the type of facilities, accessibility and of course prioritization of water use in the home and shared facilities. But the simple truth remains that it is still just not a habit or a desirable thing to do.

Simplified messages

Investment in relevant behaviour change communication (BCC) is needed. BCC that responds to the needs of low income communities and that communicate simplified messaging on hygiene. We would also need investments in how effective communication is managed and invest in new channels of communication that use and encourage social distancing, such as using media channels, murals and/ or community messaging boards. This would, of course, change the spread of other infectious diseases as well, reflecting on the recent breakthrough in our own work that has reduced cases of waterborne diseases in children under 5 over the past year by 5%!

Designing, developing and piloting 'do-it-yourself' training manuals for use by community members is an innovation we are pretty proud of and that has been received very well by the communities we work with. This includes training manuals on water safety and behaviour change, personal hygiene and soap production that would all be crucial in this stage of preventing the spread.

Aliwa is the Regional Director, East Africa, Practical Action



How to leverage on data for efficient decision making

By Shem Siteki and Vincent Kipyegon

Enterprises go through numerous risks before they actually get to realise some tangible benefits. A lot of thinking and intuitions is needed before arriving on a well-informed judgment, regarding the direction you should take.

Previously, when businesses had to take decisions, there was a high degree of reliance on elements like the experience and instincts. With the changing times, there exists a tangible need to get ahead of the pack and focus in providing advanced insight. This means being hands-on rather than hands-off to particular market changes; in addition to considering future risks besides current events, so as to become more alert and responsive. The present times provide an opportunity to tackle future challenges. Thus, the level at which a business address problems currently and the future is what governs their level of achievement. To this end, the uptake of big data technology has shown lots of promises as regards to how companies deal with both present and prospective challenges. As its adoption continues to spread and integration with artificial intelligence and cloud becomes more reorganised, further growth is projected. Latest projections note that by 2022 the global big data technology and services market is poised to reach a valuation of over \$ 118.52 billion growing at a (compound annual growth rate) CAGR of 26.0% from 2015 to 2022. To further support these projections, a recent study found that we create almost 2.5 quintillion bytes of data every day.

Intelligence researcher Kai-Fu Lee notes that AI is “the new electricity and big data is the oil that powers the generators”. Lee defines Artificial intelligence as the process of recreating human intelligence in a machine by simulating human perceptions, common sense, cognitive reasoning and natural language processing in computer programs. Big data in itself is not useful without artificial intelligence, machine learning or data science to process and analyse data, understand patterns, summarize insights and predict a specific outcome. Machine Learning is the process of training computer programs (algorithms) to recognize patterns or objects from existing vast amount of data.

Today's businesses have access to various kinds of data collected from various customer touch-points, comprising website business apps, mobile gadgets, blogs, documents, archives and more. Big data can in fact positively affect how business executives fundamentally tackle business problems in general and shape decisions that concern strategy. This then enables them to depend on objective data. Indeed, according to a new Oxford Economics, 75% of executives in top organisations agreed that: “decisions can be mapped directly to company strategies”; 78% said: “decisions are data driven”; 62% said: “decisions are made in real time”; and 63% said: “decision making is distributed across the organisation.” Evidently, data has an impact on decisions in different ways across businesses.

ability to analyse it efficiently and derive valuable insight, then preventing risk will be much easier; as well as the ability to build a competitive edge. However, a major blunder people make regarding. Big data is assuming that the more you amass without any plan, you won't have an appropriate framework to find key information and make smart decisions. You can get lost in a sort of data jungle –you see a mass of material all over and don't have any bearing to find your way out. Success in big data is all about setting clear business objectives. In its nature, data analysis seeks to find a pattern within, or connection amongst two data levels. It is from these patterns and correlations that insights and conclusions can be drawn. Secondly, link up each decision to the data. Every time you have a decision to make regarding your business actions, do your best not to rely on personal instincts. Instead, determine to undertake a logical mind-set. Lastly, if you're uneasy with the concept of learning how to integrate data into your decision-making process on your own, there are a number of educational choices you can follow to acquire the skills required to thrive. Generally, there is huge potential in relation to the adoption of big data technology in decision making. By leveraging the wealth of digital insights existing at your fingertips and embracing the power of business intelligence, it's possible to make informed decisions that will lead to commercial growth, progression and an increased bottom line.

Shem is a PR and Communication Specialist. Vincent is a PR practitioner based in Nairobi

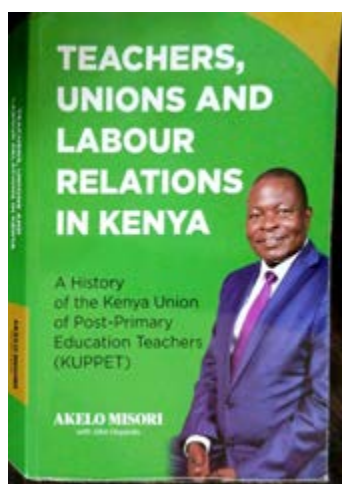
In his book, *AI super powers*, Artificial

If your business has good data, the

Becoming by Michelle Obama and Teachers Unions and Labour Relations in Kenya by Akelo Misor

By AG Awino

Your spouse may not support your plans but if you have the drive, push forward, they will join you later- these 2 books affirm!



Life sometimes changes from bad to worse or vice versa as we pursue our goals. The people around you might discourage you while others adopt a wait and see attitude. The two books, although written by different authors who are worlds apart in their experiences, converge at one point: sometimes your spouse may be your least supporter when you begin a journey of 1000 miles.

Teachers Unions and Labour Relations in Kenya - The current Secretary General (SG) of Kenya Union of Post Primary Education Teachers (KUPPET) narrates how, as the then Chairman of Kuppet, he had been encouraged by his colleagues Njenga and Kathurima to go for the SG post, which they believed he could hold well. However, at home, his wife, a High School teacher and a Principal, believed otherwise. "With all the problems in the Union, you need someone who is gifted in politics, communication and strategy, someone who can build an institutional system," she told her husband. The wife was simply saying that he lacked the qualities of a good communicator and did not have capacity to build institutional systems. However, when the elections were held, he comfortably won and was re-elected again in 2016. Akello reckons that modern unionism requires planning, negotiation and advocacy. This has led to unlocking various hurdles with the government and has seen their numbers soar. The book emphasises on research advocacy and planning as the bedrock of modern unionism.



Becoming, a memoir by Michelle Obama, lays bare the challenges that couples go through even they pursue dreams as different individuals. In pursuit of these dreams, your spouse may be the least to cheer you up, at least at the foundational stages. When Obama grew restless and decided to explore the world of politics and trained his eyes on the Illinois Senate seat- Michelle wasn't amused! Her goals as a wife had revolved around maintaining normalcy and stability. Barack had been an absentee husband and dad while, her- Michelle- had been brought up in a family where everybody showed up for dinner. She therefore hatched a plan together with her friend, Valerie Jarret who was equally convinced that Obama should not run for the Senate seat, to dissuade Obama. After all, they needed to pay their bills and politics was going to threaten what she had hoped for marriage- comfort and status quo. When Obama quipped that he had seriously thought about the decision to run, she fired a shot: "If you lose, you will have to find something else to do and if it doesn't work on the Election Day, this is really going to be the end really and for real!"

When Barack started mulling over the idea of running for the US Presidency, he avoided having any discussion around being the President of USA with Michelle, who had hoped he would not go for the high office even after the Time Magazine published a story titled: Why Barack Obama could be the Next US President. Barack however went ahead and became the 44th president of USA.

These two books are a must-read. The experiences shared therein could give you pointers on how to sail support ships with our spouses and close associates.

Just because you have a crisis, do not disparage your stakeholders

By Brian Sagala



For Public Relations (PR) and Communications professional, there is no better time than this to step up to the plate and earn their pay. The core role of this team is to build an image of confidence to the public and all stakeholders, which would give the clients the reassurance they need to indulge with the organization and offer the internal employees some gusto to go about their daily roles.

The main reason individuals are wary during a crisis is usually the fear of the unknown. People do not know how long the pandemic will last, how adversely it will affect them or how they can overcome it. This is a classic case of fear building up due to lack of information. Human Beings are most comfortable when they feel they know or understand what is going to happen. Without information, their imagination is free to run wild.

With this concept in mind, any PR or Communications practitioner, can tackle the confidence crisis his/her organization may be facing and turn it to his advantage. A starting point for a PR or Communication professional would be to clearly define their audience. A common mistake that occurs in organizations is that the emphasis is only put on the customer, meaning all messages drawn are geared towards the clients, which often leads to the internal employees offering conflicting services and messages. Consequently, any signs of confusion further contribute to diminishing confidence of the clients during the crisis.

It is imperative to communicate adherence to all applicable laws as such, licenses to be displayed prominently for view for all concerned parties such as the government and the public

Stakeholder involvement

Communications should be geared towards all stakeholders involved. It is the role of the communications team to break down the information into a language that the distinct diverse audience groups understand. Even though the essence of the message may be one, it has different implications to the different stakeholders. All the messages in the organization should have this multi-prong approach, where all audiences are spoken to in their own context. The context for the client, during this pandemic is that of reassurance. The client needs to know that it has not been business as usual and that on top of the normal precautions, there are internal steps that have been taken to ensure that food delivered to them is clean and prepared by healthy individuals. During uncertain times an individual is more likely to deal with a professional organization rather than an informal one. It is therefore imperative to communicate adherence to all applicable laws.

Common practice dictates such licenses to be displayed prominently for view for all concerned parties such as the government and the public. Finally, in efforts to dispense information to clients, it is crucial that the core tenets of the PR profession are followed. The information must be as factual, consistent and coherent. Even though the crisis is a serious matter, the relayed information must be conveyed in a tone that is family friendly. A good example of this is after the Westgate attack by terrorists in 2013, shopping malls were forced to conduct mandatory security checks at the entrance. Malls that put up stern warnings at their access points experienced lower traffic than those that had friendly signs like; 'Friendly Security Check- Help us to keep you safe'. Clients need to feel that even in a crisis they are being addressed with decorum.

Businesses bouncing back post COVID-19

By Philip Sambu

We are living in unprecedented and frightening times as the whole world undergoes a global health crisis. The future of the global economy and social structures are under tremendous threat from the COVID-19 pandemic which was first reported in December in China's industrial province of Wuhan. Commonly described as a Black Swan event, almost each and every country in the world has been affected by the ongoing COVID -19 crisis which has resulted into thousands of infections and several deaths particularly amongst the elderly with underlying health problems.

It's worth noting that the path taken by COVID-19 from China into the current hotspots of Iran, Italy and the United Kingdom is eerily similar to how the Bubonic or 'Black' plague in the fourteenth century spread along trade routes from the Far East, cutting into Persia and finally the Italian port city of Genoa.

The impact that was felt in the middle ages is currently being replicated but at a more significant scale due to the globalized nature of our economy. We have witnessed Global markets shed trillions of dollars; small scale enterprises have been forced to shut down leaving millions of people jobless. The aviation and tourism industry have halted operations due to travel restrictions imposed by governments.

Extreme, or draconian measures currently in place are bound to lead to desperate times and possibly social upheaval as humanity struggles to cope with the disease that has already altered life as we know it.

From a business perspective, many thought 2019 was bad – clearly, we had no idea. 2020 is appearing to be one of the worst years on record. Even if the virus is brought under control, strategies that were already in place have already been ripped to shreds as institutions will be forced to recalibrate.

Strategies in Place

As a strategy to deal with the COVID

19 crisis, companies have put in place contingencies to mitigate the dangers of an economic shutdown and to ensure business continues as smoothly as possible.

Due to social distancing directives from the Kenyan Government, remote and flexible working arrangements have already been put in place by companies who don't necessarily have to rely on physical addresses. This new mode of operation ensures that organizations can seamlessly carry out their operations as the fight against the virus rages on.

Building confidence with Clients

Many successful businesses rely on building relationships and networks. During this period characterised by lockdowns of common joints where clients and customers network, businesses can survive through this tough period by securing the confidence of their clients. This can be done through regular virtual meetings updates regarding how products and service delivery will be affected, maintaining contact with suppliers, reviewing terms and conditions on current commercial relationships in order to deal with logistical challenges.

Employee engagement

Most esteemed companies and multinationals agree that employees are the bedrock of client service, being actively engaged in employees' welfare is critical not only for their own well-being but also to ensure employee-managed supply chains, operations and the like are faithfully executed.

Considering a company's greatest resource is its human resource, employee care is key especially if new responsibilities for the current extreme conditions are being created. The key here is communication – like the relationship between a married couple, clear and understood communication is imperative for the relationship to survive.

Cash Flow for Long/ Short Term Planning

Another critical issue is maintaining cash

flow for the near and long term. Most businesses have cut down on non-essential costs like newspaper deliveries, restricting the use of company of vehicles to essential staff e.g. delivery personnel and as mentioned before, telling people to work from home which will reduce electricity and internet connectivity bills.

The upside of the corona virus pandemic is in its illumination of non-critical expenditures that COVID-19 has exposed that will assist in the long-term cash flow strategy. Do you really need a multi-year lease on a fifteen-room office along Riverside Drive or can the company do with a co-working meeting space? Do you need an entire full-time staff, or can you move some to be independent contractors?

Stakeholder/investor engagement

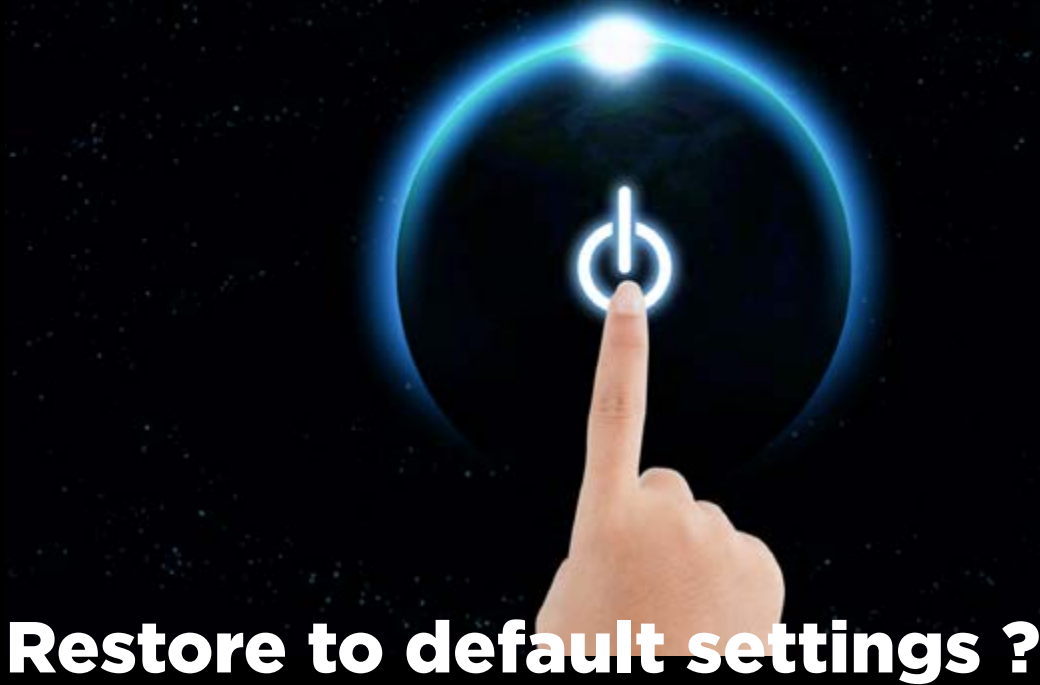
Finally, stakeholder/investor engagement is crucial if businesses are to survive past the COVID-19 crisis. Business leaders ought to be currently identifying the consequent emerging challenges and develop systems that will track positions daily. It is also important for businesses to identify the short- and medium-term priorities of their stakeholders. This will help in the development of engagement plans going forward and assess any legal liabilities that may arise.

We do not know how the world will look like from a business perspective once lockdowns and quarantines are lifted. We know at least two things-the business world will never be the same and that the businesses that survive will either be by having robust cash reserves and/or by pivoting and innovating..

As Charles Darwin said *"It is not the strongest species that survive, nor the most intelligent but the one most responsive to change."*

The writer works at Pied Piper Digital Marketing





Restore to default settings ?

By Elsie Adewa

When Deepak Chopra said All great changes are preceded by chaos, he was onto something. The world as we know it has changed, forever! It's hard to imagine that almost two months ago, we took for granted so many things that we didn't think we needed, things like meeting friends, handshakes and even hugs. We blamed a lot of things on the economy, but the sad reality is, that was just an excuse. The world has been given an unwanted break and, in a way, restored to factory settings. We are now, 'forced' to spend more time with family, prioritizing our health, review bucket lists and plans that fell by the wayside as we chased 'a better life'

When it comes to businesses, pain doesn't even begin to cover what's going on. Many companies were caught flatfooted. 'No one could have been prepared for such an unprecedented event' is the running narrative. Terms like recession, global meltdown and end times dominate the news and our conversations. This situation has exposed how much we've been relying on old fashioned traditional modus operandi, physical systems which though adequate, have limited adaptability. With what seems like an endless eternity of being locked down in our homes, these legacy systems are proving bothersome for organizations. Meanwhile, other organizations owing to technology, opportunity, timing or all three, have been able to continue operations sufficiently. A quick search on the internet will bring up companies such as Gitlab, 10up and Automattic,

that have been working remotely from the start and probably, have less to worry about when it comes to adapting new work environments. Having leveraged early on cloud native technology and flexible working models, they may just make it through unscathed. With online collaboration and communication products like G Suite, Copper CRM, Zoho, Quickbooks online and many more, we should also follow suit and not just to get through this hurdle we are facing but for future posterity of our businesses and the global economy.

We are now in limbo.

So, what happens next? We need to get creative; rethink how we have been doing things and reinvent ourselves and our ways of working. While sadly not all of us have that luxury but through the ingenuity and out of the box thinking of those who can, we may come up with solutions not just for ourselves but for those that are desperately struggling.

Let us embrace opportunities and or innovations for continuity of some if not all operations.

Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change – Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Frankenstein

Elsie is the Chief Marketing Officer at BusinessCom Consulting Services

Lilian Kang'ethe

Current Read:

5 AM Club: Own Your Morning Elevate Your Life by Robin Sharma

He is one of my favorite writers. The book doesn't only share the benefits of waking up early but it shares how powerful it impacts on our rest day activities.



Music: House music and Kwaito South African music are keeping me busy, happy and groovy. These genres are always my escape plan from what is happening around us; matters COVID-19. When am dancing and listening to these, I am in my own little world where anything is possible.



Agatha Waleghwa Lenjou

Current Read:

Making Cents by Waceke Nduati Omanga.

It's about real conversations about personal finance. It's talks about people's experiences, failures, lessons learnt and their eventual success with personal finances.

Gospel & Bongo Music keep me moving during this quarantine period.



Beatrice Kung'u

Current Read: *All in the Family* by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen et al.

It's a gift from my daughter, who inherited my love for books. Coming from a large family and being a parent myself, the book makes for an interesting and refreshing reading, as it's made up of 101 interesting real-life families' stories, as told by various individual family members, from children, parents and even grandparents.

The second book is *Emma's War, Love, Betrayal and Death in the Sudan* by Deborah Scroggins. The book is about Africa's longest running Sudan civil war, weaved and captured as a narrative of stories of the experiences of Emma McCune, a British aid worker living in Sudan through the Civil War.

Music: 10,000 reasons by Matt Redman and Kutemba Nawe by Rebekah Dawn



Kenneth Kimutai Sawe

Current Read:

Who Moved My Cheese by Dr. Spencer Johnson.

This is a short, funny and very interesting story that follows the physical and emotional journeys of four characters – Sniff, Scurry, Hem and Haw – as they search, find, lose and must rediscover their favourite food, cheese, in a large maze.

Sniff, Scurry, Hem and Haw's stories explore the various ways we all respond to this change. And though it's disarmingly simple, *Who Moved My Cheese?* captures and explores powerful and resonant truths that could have been written just for you.

This book will define who you are in the Maze. I highly recommend this book for everyone during this period of uncertainty.

I am listening to Bob Nesta Marley and the Wailers Album called *Live*. Favorite song in the album is *Get up! Stand Up!* Released in 1975.



Fred Omondi

Current Read:

I've been revisiting my copy of "Care Work" by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha.

When I'm not struggling with boredom, or at work, or distracting myself with charming, well-crafted and beguiling pieces of music or football documentaries, I'm planning the person I want to be in the world after COVID-19.

Leah's book focuses on care as compassion, care as a constant act, and a blueprint for building communities that don't prioritize the needs of one group over others, which is important to me.

Believing that every change that comes our way has a significant resolution worthy.



Caroline Sang

Current Read:

Turtles All the Way Down by John Green

This is a book about Aza who has Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) with spiraling thoughts as well as anxiety. Aza feels trapped dealing with thoughts that are entirely out of her control. She has a hard time managing day to day life because such simple things will send her to a complete spiral; her mind constantly pulling her in different directions. Even so, she tries her best to be a good friend and daughter and to live the life she wishes she had.

John Green gives a reflection of his daily life and internal thoughts when portraying Aza's illness and how thoughts can sometimes control a person which brings the ugly side of mental health to come alive and also what it can manifest into. I like the way that mental illness is portrayed as affecting not just the individual but also those around them. It is great seeing how family and friendships are tested and yet remain.



Lina Jamwa

Current Read: *The Principles and Power of Vision* by Dr. Myles Monroe

This book asserts that personal branding is very important for every professional. This is not possible without a clearly cut vision. This book unravels how having personal vision can shape one's focus and lead them to unravel the much elusive purpose and destiny.

Music keeping me going during quarantine: *Thrive and Praise in You in this Storm* by Casting Crowns



Anne Rose

Current Read:

We Are Going To Need More Wine by Gabrielle Union

In this book, this larger than life actress gives her life's story. Her approach is refreshing. No fabrications, just honest realities that resonate deeply with her readers, making her human. She opens up to the insecurities of her youth and her struggle to find acceptance of herself in her own perfect skin. She reveals her struggles with pregnancy, experiencing the downside of being a successful, wealthy, black woman and its effects on her first marriage as well as speaking about building a family with her current husband.

Her wit, candour and brazen approach to life make this book a must read as we discover that she is more than just a celebrity, but a reliable friend for all seasons.

Music: Depends on my mood. I create a fusion of Salt n' Peppers' Are you Ready and Jeff Kaale's Mai Tai



Gladys Gathoni Gichuhi

Current Read:

Where hope takes root by his highness The Agakhan.

The author highlights more on how pluralism occurs in human society. He further explains how to embrace and enhance the cause of pluralism through tolerance, openness and understanding towards other peoples' cultures, social structures, values and faiths.

Music: Depends with my mood. But a fusion of gospel, jazz and country is my drug.

Grace Omondi

Current Read:

5 AM Club: Own Your Morning Elevate Your Life
by Robin Sharma

The book emphasises on the importance of a proper morning routine.

It's a story about how an entrepreneur, an artist and a billionaire met at a seminar and agreed to meet at the billionaire's place at 5 am in the morning. The billionaire then explains to them how to own their morning. They eventually get elevated. Just as the book title suggests

The ideas apply to anyone who would wish to create healthy habits to achieve their goals.

Music: I like all things pop music, particularly Ed Sheeran and Charlie Puth



Tonui Kipkurui

Current Read:

The Bigger Deal: Working Your Way to a Life of Meaning by Sunny Bindra

This is a book about possibilities. It is an impassioned demonstration that there is so much more every single one of us can do to have bigger lives. The Bigger Deal is about better businesses, careers and better contributions to our shared humanity. It is a book about the meaning of work, success and life.



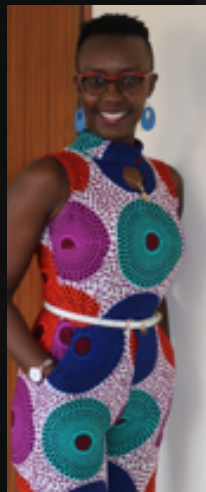
Kennedy Opondo

Current Read: *The H Factor of Personality*
by Kibeom Lee and Michael C. Ashton

The book takes you on a journey to understand why some people are so manipulative, self-entitled, materialistic and exploitive and why it matters for everyone. The H Factor is a worthy read. Its descriptions of how a low-H acts in the areas of politics, religion and sex are on the money wraps it all.

If you can, please grab a copy.

Music: I'm an old soul trapped in a young man's body. I listen to Rhumba and Jazz. These genres sooth and relax my wandering thoughts.



Jacqueline Abuga

Current Read: *The Accidental Further Adventures of the Hundred Year Old Man* by Jonas Jonasson and *The Unmistakable Touch of Grace* by Cheryl Richardson.

Jonas' book is a hilarious, satirical and humorous one, that can make you forget the current pandemonium occasioned by COVID-19. Cheryl's an uplifting book that reminds you that there are no coincidences in life. Every event and experience and even person we meet, has been put in our path intentionally to raise our level of consciousness and remind us of a higher power. I'm reading it a third time.

Music: I'm doing a cocktail gospel, African music, Jazz and RnB. I jig to Jerusalem by Master KG



James Karanja

Current Read:

Breaking the Jewish Code

The book is filled with insights of Jewish history revealing hidden

meanings why the Hebrew covenant with God works, spiritual principles to living in health, wealth and prosperity and most of all secrets that then Jewish people have known including prophecies to guide the future.

Music that's keeps me going is Mozart as a change from my normal listening.



**Miriam
Kamuira**

Current Read:
Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren

This is a 40 days' spiritual journey where the reader is expected to read a chapter a day for 40 days. It's meant to awaken the reader to remember they were created with a specific purpose in life which God intended them to live. One of life's major challenge is to discover the reason for existence and how to fulfil that purpose. Once a person is able to discover their reason for being on earth, then every decision they make is geared towards its fulfilment.

Music: All that Matters by GUC



**Lilian
Mathu**

Current Read:
*The Subtle Art of not giving a f*ck: A Counterintuitive approach to living a good life* by Mark Manson

This book is the perfect description of don't judge a book by its cover. When a friend recommended this book, I was hesitant as I felt that its title was rather vulgar. Being in the first few chapters, so far so good. Manson basically talks about putting focus on leading a meaningful life with optimism.

Musica: Egemeo by Godwill Babette. As a Christian, the song encourages me every morning that despite all, He has brought this far and He is in charge of the future. This is my wake-up alarm ringtone.



Patience Nyange

Current Read: *Perfect Imperfections* by Mankasa Mavengere Munsaka

With the background in Harare Zimbabwe, Mankasa uses female characters to highlight the struggles of women trying to hold down careers and relationships in a big city where tradition, patriarchy, domestic abuse and unhealthy societal behaviours form a backdrop. These are similar challenges that modern women in Kenya are going through. In my pursuit to understand the power that women hold about themselves and how to make that power mean something not only to them but also future generations, this book is a perfect pastime for me during COVID-19 lockdown. I am learning and taking notes. I plan to make use of all the lessons therein.

Music: I am listening to Lynda Randle- God on the mountain. The song has been perfect in my struggle coping with COVID-19. I am assured I will overcome this, it's a matter of time.

Sam Kumba

Current Read:
The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership by John C Maxwell

An American author, speaker, and pastor who has written many books, primarily focusing on leadership.

This book encourages readers to embrace their leadership and the ability to expand it. It offers many new lessons, from a practical perspective, as well as reminding the reader of truths that will serve one well. In short it sharpens one's skills.

Music: Rhumba. Slow but with a message.



Nancy Marangu

Current Read: *Transforming Multilateral Diplomacy, The Inside Story of the Sustainable Development Goals* by Amb. Macharia Kamau, Pamela Chasek & David O'Connor.

The book provides an insider's perspective of the negotiations that produced the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The book tells the story of the people, issues, negotiations and paradigm shifts that unfolded through the Open Working Group (OWG) on SDGs and the subsequent negotiations on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. It is a captivating read for anyone interested in multilateral negotiations, sustainable development and the UN. The book leaves me as a reader guessing on the so what after the SDGs.

The music that has been keeping me going is Uniongoze Yesu.



Michael Ochula

Current Read:
Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe

This novel is centered on the life of the protagonist of the novel, Okonkwo. As the novel develops Okonkwo accidentally kills a man and he and his family are exiled from Umuofia. During his exile white missionaries arrive in Umuofia and change the village.

Music: Rhumba



Vivienne Atieno

Current Read:
Just finished Educated by Tara Westover

It's her biography. Tara first set foot in a classroom when she was 17. To do that, she had to go against her family beliefs led by her schizophrenic father. (She discovered this much later.) and even self-teach herself mathematics and grammar to allow her to be admitted in university.

This book also highlights the struggles that come with believing in yourself and wanting to be better- against all odds. It looks at fierce family loyalty and the impact it has on us when making personal choices. Most of all, it teaches us to seek better.

OUR COVID-19 HEROES, WE THANK YOU!





Valuable lessons for health communication

By Carol Wanza

The year 2020 has seen the world thrown into chaos with the COVID-19 pandemic. Originating from Wuhan, China, the COVID-19 virus has within a few months become a global problem. With over 7.8 million infections and counting, the global village has been shut down, businesses have been affected, government inefficiencies have been exposed, fingers have been pointed but here in Africa, health communication has played a huge role in mitigating spread of the virus.

Health communication is primarily meant for behaviour change. It helps citizens understand the situation, gets people to adhere to health guidelines, increases confidence in the healthcare system and promotes more interaction between patients and healthcare practitioners. In the case of a highly infectious disease such as the Corona virus, it helps keep down the rate of infections geared towards saving lives. Below are key highlights of what we have learnt about health communication from Africa's perspective.

Easy Format

The importance of audience analysis cannot be stressed enough before any communication process. When it comes to disseminating health messages, we have people who speak different

languages, who come from different cultural and educational backgrounds, people who consume messages through sign language, different age groups, and these different audiences need to effectively receive the messages being sent out. During COVID-19, we saw these come into play albeit the delay in message localization that was noticeable.

We still have communities that do not have COVID-19 messages broken down in their own dialect and rely on local authorities to do the translation through word of mouth. In these times when people are being asked to stay indoors and minimise outdoor movement, tactics that worked before like local chief barazas and roadshows are not effective and some audiences have been left to rely on mass media communication to know what authorities are saying. Even with this, since national health officials are not using various languages to communicate, if the stations do not translate sound bites, it means that there are those who are still not getting a clear picture of what is being said.

Two-way communication over broadcasting

When it comes to health communication, it is not enough to just send out data

and information about a disease. You have to use channels that allow for two-way communication and thanks to advancement in technology; this is now possible through social media and feedback platforms such as texts and emails.

People will always have questions and myths that need to be clarified. It is not enough to send out information telling people not to panic and to wash hands and sneeze/cough into their flexed elbow when they are also accessing information through other means. This is especially if there seems to be a conflict of what is being sent out. I watched various online posts from health officials and agencies receiving genuine questions and feedback that never got responses, fuelling panic and frustration.

Break down and simplify data

Data is meant to inform and not bring panic. Translated into various formats such as infographics, charts and graphs, animations etc; data helps people get a visual of what is being communicated. When you throw figures at people without explaining what they mean for instance, it renders them ineffective because people are not able to properly interpret them.

The corona virus has spurred a lot of interest in voluminous data to track its spread and to aid in prevention efforts. It has brought numbers, statistics and charts to the front line of people's news consumption. Unfortunately, media has used data to bring a level of panic among publics by emphasising the infections and deaths and not highlighting enough of the number of recoveries which have in every country, remained significantly higher than number of deaths.

Credibility of information sources

Let's face it. In today's world, people are exposed to various sources of information and there is no limit to what people can access. It is important to pay attention to where information is coming from seeing that everyone publishing material is looking for an audience. It was impressive to note how the Ministry of Health took ownership of communication during COVID-19 and deterred politicians and other sources from independently sending out data on infections from within the counties. It was also good

to note that Presidents in Africa were actively endorsing Ministries of Health and advocating for people follow World Health Organisation guidelines. They broke critical updates and some like President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda interestingly offered indoor fitness tutorials to their citizens.

Copy paste tactics do not always work

Even though the corona virus was new waters for every single country, we saw a lot of copy paste approaches being used in

prevention tactics across the world. One would figure that an approach that works in developed countries will probably not work in third world countries. The big issue of discussion that came up was lockdown. As many nations automatically went the lockdown route, some like Sweden kept things moving and only emphasised on social distancing.

Communication here was focused on information about the lockdown itself and that people need to keep off the streets but not enough of what was supposed to

happen during lockdown and how the situation would affect emergency services or how government and agencies are going to support vulnerable people during the lock down. Because not enough was sent out to ease people's anxiety, backlash ensued.

It was therefore evident that copy pasting of ideas was not the solution. This is since every nation should employ its own unique strategies of harnessing technology and communication to address the global pandemic.



Film is team work and business

By Margaret Wanjiru

I would like to believe that you have watched a movie or many movies for that matter. Yes? No? Yes! Especially now with the many hours spent at home, there is more screen time. At the end of the film or movie in this case, there is a long list of names that no one ever seems to bother about. In any case, it often moves along so fast that one doesn't quite get a chance to read through it.

I remember watching the famous Australian TV show Neighbors from way back. It was the only show I was allowed to watch by my parents. Neighbors had that list, also known as the Credits List, at the end of every episode. I would struggle to understand the role of all those people whose names would scroll up the Credits. One thing that I didn't quite understand was the mention of Gayle's Wardrobe. Gayle was one of the actresses and the credits had a particular mention of her Wardrobe. I just couldn't figure out what it meant and my father also had no clue at the time. Since then, I started keeping a keen eye on the credit lists to try and point out other strange entries, not sure who would explain them to me.


Fast forward to 2007 and I am seated in an office along Thika Road typing out a Credit List for a German feature film that was shot in Lodwar, Kenya. This particular list had over 100 entries that have to be credited appropriately. You cannot err with someone's name nor the role they played in the film. To many television and movie viewers, this list isn't a big deal.

If you want to know this for sure, check how fast people leave a movie theatre or change TV channels once credits start rolling. However, to the people who make these productions, the credits are such a big deal. It takes that entire team to entertain you. That list is a compilation of every person who has played a role in ensuring that you get entertained, from the camera assistant to the painter who is always working to give the sets different looks with the paint brush.

It is my curiosity to understand Gayle's wardrobe that landed me in a Film Production company. I have compiled many credits and that list preaches team work in film and television production is such a realistic way.

Curious friends have sat through credits and asked me what a Gaffer does or a Best Boy. A production set has many functions, from the wardrobe department to make up artists, stunt guys who showcase the dangerous moves, grip guys who are in charge of camera support to directors, locations scouts and managers who find relevant locations and manage all aspects around them. The list is long!

The world of film and TV production is very interesting whose overall economic impact is somewhat not wholesomely understood within the corporate space. Although slowly, the corporate world in Kenya is embracing this and as such, we have seen notable companies using the platform to amplify their brand. TV shows such as Unaitas Top Chama Show, Coca Cola's Coke Studio Africa, KCB Lion's Den and the very recent Old Mutual's Amazing Voices. A lot of creatives are bound to churn out extraordinary content for the screen and theatres should the corporate world step it up a notch higher by taking time to understand the production process and consequentially investing resources into film and TV projects.



After working for my boss for close to a decade, I left him to start a competing company and we are still friends- Infotrak CEO, Angela Ambitho

By Maureen Koech

At the height of high octane politics and clamour for constitutional change, Ms Angela Ambitho, hitherto unknown, ventured into polling as a business and became a competitor to the company that had employed her for eight years. The timing, depending on how you look at it, was a both blessing and a herculean task: The new beginning was marked by the coming of a baby boy though she was soon to find herself at the centre of ridicule and unwarranted expletives by unhappy consumers with her research findings.

Infotrak, arguably one of the most successful research firms in East Africa, has tested Miss Ambitho's patience and resilience in a field that had previously been considered male-dominated. An alumnus of Loreto Convent Msongari and the University of Nairobi, Angela could pass for a girl next door. "This confirms that our education system isn't too bad after all," she proudly said. She took up a part time job at a media monitoring firm, The Steadman Group, during a one-year strike while doing her undergraduate and that is how she fell in love with numbers and polling. It is during this time that her mentorship journey into research began under the tutelage of Roger Steadman.

"I photocopied papers and did what a lot of interns detest doing nowadays," she recalls with an infectious smile. This is what exposed her to the work environment and instilled work ethics in her. When she graduated with a

Bachelor's, she went back to Steadman and asked for a job. She was hired as a client service director and six years later became the Managing Director of the firm. She later left the firm in 2004, while heavily pregnant with her son, Kyle, ripe with experience and exposure to begin her own firm.

Starting the company

When the time was nigh and, in the interest of being different, she began scoping for business ideas and was even considering fashion and apparel at some point. "Angela, what do you know about make up or beauty?" one of her friends asked surprised. "You are excellent at research, just go do it differently," he added. She then travelled to the Big Apple to scout for ideas and opportunities in the field before coming back to set up shop, her mind made up. In 2005, working with little one year baby Kyle, Infotrak established an office in Valley Arcade.

The name Infotrak came about during a brain-storming session with a group of close friends and family. "It was an unprecedented moment for all of us in the room," recounted Angela.

After setting up shop, she made another trip to New York in 2007 to seek funding and a global status for her firm. This she did by getting into a partnership with The Harris Interactive, who according to her, were awed by her eloquence and conviction; and later released their maiden poll together, alias, The

Harris Poll in August of the same year. Unfortunately, Harris Interactive took a hit during the recession in the U.S thus taking them back to the drawing board. This would then define her as a research mogul in the following years.

Juggling and little resources

Different stages of running a business come with different challenges. In the nascent stages, one of the major challenges for her was juggling many balls because she didn't have the resources to hire adequate personnel. She also had to prove that she could do the job well. "Currently, I think one of the major challenges we face is dealing with the uncertainty of the business and economic environment which has resulted in budget cuts that affect our industry," she says.

To her, success is the ability to move from one failure to the next without any loss of enthusiasm. "I never feel floored for too long. Instead, I treat failure as yet another opportunity to learn and improve," she adds.

Behaviour change communication

Pandemics such as this pose a preparedness challenge to communication professionals. As she lauds efforts by the Ministry of Health to making Kenyans understand the severity of this disease, she notes that the change from normal to abnormal ways of doing things didn't come easy as was mirrored in her latest COVID-19 poll. Behaviour change communication requires

collaborative thinking as it is the kind of communication that considers what the public is thinking and feeling. “A strategy with behaviour change in mind should always have a call to action,” she opines. Ambitho posits that communication professionals have to conduct thorough research on the knowledge gaps. And this should in turn advise their long-term communication strategies. There should be no ambiguity in communication.

“Communication and research are born of the same mother. PR in the world over heavily relies on research to advise strategic and targeted communication,” she said.

She challenges the Research Association in Kenya and PRSK to collaborate on new ways of changing the perception on research. “The onus is on both,” she remarks.

Kenyans and Research

The Bible says: My People perish because of lack of knowledge. Research begets knowledge, which is power. Research firms become more popular during election polls in Kenya. As to whether this speaks to our culture as a people who don’t care for other forms data is another discussion altogether. Listening to her speak about her organization’s *raison d’être*, one could see this is someone who is at home speaking about data and analytics. A lot of people though, have come out guns blazing to refute some of the opinion poll results, especially political polls. “We are not arm chair revolutionists. We speak with conviction because that is what the numbers say,” Ms Ambitho quips.

According to her, polls on politics, sex and relationships gain the most traction. Other than the fact that Kenyans are political animals, the other two pave way for more research questions.

The County Index

This is one product that Angela is proud of as it is the only way the public could hold the county leadership accountable. Amidst the outcry from leaders faulting the results at first, she sparked the conversation by launching the index on the key 14 functions that the county governments are required to perform. “This tool is the only weapon that the public should use in every election to weight the performance of their leaders.” She said.

Ruthless bullies

Kenyans have been ranked the most ruthless online bullies by the United Nations body, United Nations Offices on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Under the guise of Kenyans on Twitter, AKA, KOT, Kenyans stand out when it comes to online vicious attacks, the comedian, Mulamwa being one of the latest victims. Angela became a victim of social media bullying when a tabloid conducted a survey that ranked her second after Fatou Bensouda in the most hated women list in Kenya. “I have learnt to grow a thick skin and not let some of these things get to me. I believe in what we do and we do it right. We however need to do better as a people than to top the list of bullies,” Angela notes deep in thought when we seek her comment on this.

Business outlook

The novel corona virus pandemic presents a myriad of challenges and opportunities almost in equal measure, with everyone trying to grapple with what the new normal means. “E-commerce and digital operations are unreservedly the new *modus operandi* for many of us,” she opines. Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype and many other online meeting platforms have made it easy for most organizations to resume operations, albeit online. With

this in mind, this pandemic has exposed the technological gaps that were otherwise sheltered by the 8-5 system of operating. “It would be sad for any organization to resume the normal way of doing things post COVID-19,” she sallies.

Working from home- the new normal

“It is time for businesses to rethink their operation models from brick and mortar to massive investment on tech advancements.” She emphasized. While not so many people have the luxury of working from home, she believes that this will be the wake-up call for those in white collar employment. The future of research according to her will be digital and heavily reliant in technology. “We are looking at the possibility of carrying assisted telephone interviews, SMS, online focus groups and web interviews,” she observes.

Mentorship

A person is as good as the people who mould him or her. Angela counts herself lucky to be among the few people who still have a relationship with their former bosses. Despite the fact that Roger Steadman didn’t get over the fact that she left, she owes him for the mentorship and guidance he has provided over time and especially when she feels stuck. “We are still flattening that curve and are in a good place where we can now laugh together,” she cracks a joke speaking about the person who has given her insurmountable support in her career journey. “Humphrey is also one person I have immense respect for. Because he believed in me and held my hand,” Angela notes speaking of Humphrey Taylor, the Chairman Emeritus of The Harris Poll.

Her parents have walked the journey with her too. “They instilled values in me that have helped me weather many storms. They keep me straight and narrow,” she proudly speaks of her parents. “As a mother of a teenage boy, you would forgive me for wanting to mentor both young women and men because both deserve guidance,” she gags. She has mentored several young people through Infotrak and has a group of young upcoming female executives that she has mentored over the past ten years. “I’m very proud of their progress and achievements,” she said.



Health communication in the wake of corona virus disease

By James Waithaka Mwangi

The use of health communication techniques is marred by challenges especially during a global health crisis like the current COVID-19 such as the evaluation of communication interventions and the complexity of behavioral health.

In a state of agency like the global Corona virus, health communication requires meticulous considerations in development of message to be communicated. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) recommends that all content on health communication message must be accurate without interpretation or judgments. The information should be available to all and offer both benefits and risks of the potential actions. For instance, in current COVID-19 pandemic, The Kenyan Ministry of Health is sharing with the public the benefits of adhering to guidelines as well as the consequences of not following.

The Health information shared must also be consistency from other sources. For example, the local guidelines to combat COVID-19 is in conformity with World Health Organization guidelines. Furthermore, the consistency of the information should be evident over the time. The cultural compliance in sharing health related information is key in delivering effective health communication. This is because it takes cognizant of the complexity and dynamic characteristics of the given population.

Health Communication focuses on the evidence based informational contents. This entails comprehensive review and vigorous analysis in coming up with practical guidelines or performance measures. However, this can pose a big challenge in the event of an outbreak or emergency like the current pandemic. The choice of the media platform to deliver a specific health communication also determines the reach of the targeted population.

Reliable health communication enhances trust if the source is credible, and the content of information is up to date. During this era of digitalization, this can be challenging as multiple sources arise and affect the reliability of crucial information.

In the last few months, we have witnessed multiple advertisements and informercials in all our electronic and print media, all repetitively sharing information on observing the COVID-19 prevention guidelines, even toddlers can now side loudly the wash your hands songs; Repetition of this messages helps at delivery of the seriousness of the matter while reinforcing the impact within the targeted population.

The circulation of the COVID 19 information has been shared in a timely way across all the platforms and networks which is crucial in creating a positive response. Because of its complexity, health information should be understandable in terms of readability or language level and the format used by the various media used to relay it.

In addition to social marketing

modelling in health communication, there is also a need to include other areas of communication or modelling. As a result, risk communication, crisis communication, outbreak communication, healthy literacy, health education and health advocacy can be tapped in developing knowledge and practice in effective health communication. Furthermore, when health communication strategies are done well, they enhance the targeted audience knowledge, attitude and behavior.

Health communication has much to offer in the effort of minimizing the impact on public health. It seeks to combine theory and practice in understanding communication process and changing human behavior. In its multidisciplinary and multilevel approaches, those who are tasked with the role of health communication have a special opportunity to produce critical impact in informing and saving lives. More so, it can be the best time for identification and growing of good leadership especially in times of uncertainty.

James is a clinical officer based in Nairobi.



Finding truth in contagion

By Ezekiel Kagunda Mureithi

The COVID-19 epidemic could have been prevented if the mainstream media had been forthright from the very beginning of the outbreak. This is the resounding message from many people across the globe. Is the world therefore, justified to blame the spontaneous spread of coronavirus on governments' manipulation of rhetoric and media censorship of the truth? The arise of moral correctness in mainstream media and conflicting interests of conglomerate owners to withhold information might have caused the world dearly.

A key and critical ally on the fight against the virus has been information. This epidemic has brought out the insatiable urge for information with people desperately trying to understand the genesis of the virus, transmission, prevention, and treatment. The scramble for information raises a critical query, what should the mainstream media disseminate as authentic, credible and wholly information? In the rush



to contain public panic across the globe, governments have been calling on mainstream media to be cautious when conveying information related to COVID19. Where do we then draw the red tape between responsible journalism and management of information?

United States President Donald Trump has waged war with World Health Organization, alleging the United States was mis-informed about the severity of the virus. However, many critics argue that Fox News deliberately disseminated Trump rhetoric that downplayed the disease infectious nature and out of ignorance people who continued to shop, travel, interact and so did the virus. A scenario that replayed itself across Europe.

Fox News, United States most popular channel and a close ally of Donald Trump changed the rhetoric of a common flu to a deadly virus when infections spread throughout New York, a little too late to correct the damage.

If WHO had been misled by China about the deadly virus, the media had an opportunity to unfold the truth by conducting more independent investigation and research. The media however carried China rhetoric and the world has paid a heavy price for that complacency. The gravity of the virus wasn't known, at least in the earlier stages. Getting the facts right is the cardinal principle in journalism. The Media is obligated to disseminate accurate information and leave the interpretation and reaction to the audience. Media today wants to do both, control information and manage the reaction of the people.

In the current epidemic, fake news account for more than half the information shared online. With a great number of people accessing quick information online, unscrupulous new sources are eager to flood and brainwash millions of people with the click of a button. Responsible journalism should not stand in the way of telling factual information despite its gravity. If we were to applause this kind of journalism, wouldn't it be fair to say that journalism then is limited to positive rhetoric that is not subjected to any scrutiny or government backlash?

Lack of transparency in media leads to cultivation of vigilante groups that take it upon themselves to fact check and question the credibility of information much to the anger of government and media houses. KOT (Kenyans on twitter) or the so-called twitter DCI has taken it upon themselves to question the validity of any information given by the government and major media houses. Whereas KOT methods on several occasion have been extreme and vulgar, this particular group has brought sanity on distinguishing false and misleading information. On numerous occasions KOT has uncovered misinformation, propaganda and fact checked the authenticity of any information shared to the public.

Despite the new normal in the world, let's remember the role of the media to offer transparent and credible information remains unchanged. Truthful and bold reporting is a moral obligation of every journalist

The writer is a Public Relations/ International Relations Consultant.

COVID-19 offers myriad of lessons

By Seraphine Nyamolo

Experience is the best teacher, and that history repeats itself couldn't be far from the truth. In this digital era, where information is at the click of a button, we are privileged to live at a time like this. Lessons learned a century ago, of The Spanish Flu with similar yet greater mortality rates, can be implemented and adequately perfected in this day.

You may ask, "What does all this have to do with me?" The answer will depend on how you feel as a responsible member of society at the conclusion.

Picture this, You wake up one morning with all your activities lined up, you have no idea of what's about to happen the next instant then "Boom" a slap in the face the world is in disarray and everything is crumbling around you and you feel weak, terrified, worried, and frustrated all that in a nutshell. What do you do?

That's the same situation everyone is present in the globe, but before we get folded up waiting for a devastating end, there's still hope at the end of the proverbial tunnel.

If I have learned a thing or two in this short life I've lived, it's that the lessons of mother nature (COVID-19) are cruel but sufficient for the welfare of all.

I would like to summarize the lessons in three different categories:

- The interrelationship between man and his environment.
- Economic repercussions and government.
- Infrastructure and development.

• The interrelationship between man and his environment.

They say a man is not an island.

During this time, we all know of the social distancing rule meant to keep us safe, moreover free from epidemics. This is difficult but vital and has drawn most families together. Now more than ever there's a great cohesion in the home.

The gathering in houses of worship has also been affected. Everyone knows of the existence of a superior being. It is now that we appreciate this fact of religion, our

hope and prayer is for normalcy.

Vegetation can thrive, birds can flock, the air is clear of pollutants from industry and vehicle emissions. The world has taken a compulsory leave, Global warming has diminished and wars among nations ended, peace is prevailing and that's a plus for mother nature.

• Economic repercussions and the government.

The inevitable depression is affecting most economies due to all the lockdowns and unemployment. The superpower countries are powerless. No one knows when the pandemic is going to end. These are the drastic times that always call for drastic measures. To some degree, this pandemic has rendered all classes of people equal. It beckons us to be creative thinkers, innovative and face this pandemic head-on. We need to be our brother's keeper as it has always been meant.



The principle of sharing is caring should be more prevalent. Once it's over we won't revert to business as usual but should have a progression from all this. With beneficial experiences, innovations, mindsets all to strike the iron of opportunity while it's hot. You may ask "What opportunity?" Believe it or not, there's a flip side of greater opportunity both momentarily and later, just focus and you'll perceive it.

Measures put in place to cushion the poor, elderly, and jobless should not only take effect now but remain considering all our votes matter during polls. You as a responsible citizen should pay close attention now more than ever on how you are being handled by your government. It's time to scratch backs literally.

• Infrastructure and development

Self-reliance has been overlooked by most governments thus contributed to the spread of COVID -19. Most countries worldwide depend on China for most of their infrastructure and development projects. I am not vindicating them; you can all see the effects now that products that could be locally manufactured cannot be accessed. The local intellects behind such products are now being constrained to produce under tension leading to creative but inferior production.

Development of healthcare and infrastructure especially in third world countries has been neglected due to the upper-class members of society having their services provided abroad. Now that it's impossible to fly out, the message sent successfully.

The education sector has turned to digital platforms. Remote areas posing a great challenge to the government especially in third world countries.

Finally, cleanliness is next to godliness.

Hygiene, a crucial factor in combating the epidemic, should be a major concern. Given the highest priority in all dealings currently and in the future. Governments with issues of providing water to their citizens should find ways to do so.

Take-aways for today

As the COVID-19 pandemic is upon the world, the importance of quick initial response cannot be overstated. Be extra vigilant about observing hygiene practices and keenly observe social distancing. One way to create this mindset is to imagine how you would behave if you knew that everybody around you is infected. Dampening the wave of infections will be key to preventing ICUs from becoming overwhelmed. Something that might have been achieved in northern Italy through early and aggressive social distancing measures.

All these are lessons we can learn from and see great opportunities. COVID-19 is not only a passing pandemic but also an eye-opener to a better life.

Force majeure in era of COVID-19

By Nyamu Githaka,



Normally during negotiations, Force Majeure (FM) is regarded as a futuristic and sometimes mundane boiler plate provision that we adopt from past agreements. Rarely do we critically review the impact of such provisions in light of industrial advances, neither do we fine print the definitions of FM causing events.

How many of us have taken time to link the definition of a pandemic or reference to an epidemic in a force majeure clause to the World Health Organization (WHO) pronouncement? In the past, outbreaks have been used in reference to scourges by various viruses including the deadly Ebola virus.

As a first step to resolution of FM events, agreements should provide for mitigation and corrective measures upon notice by a party affected or claiming effects of an FM event. We should encourage our clients at this stage of the corona COVID-19 pandemic, to make a detailed initial early assessment of their rights and obligations under various agreements while also seeking expert advice on the effects of the relevant force majeure provisions and, the corrective procedures required to be instituted and followed. Whatever measures a party chooses to undertake, such actions should be properly documented and notified to the other affected parties. These records will form a very good foundation for settling any disputes that may arise in the future.

If a party is rendered wholly or partly unable to perform its duties and obligations under an agreement because of an

Force Majeure event, normally such party should be relieved to the extent necessary from whatever performance is affected by the event. However, such other rights and obligations not affected by the FM event should be carried out normally.

Where an FM event continues unabated for an agreed period of time, including any extensions thereof, the same is usually deemed to be an incurable FM Event and may be grounds for termination of part or whole of the agreement in question. The termination may be in accordance to the provisions of the agreement or due to the Common Law doctrine of Frustration.

One other area FM events may affect in relation to projects, is in respect to compliance requirements, for example to a regulator or environmental agencies. Such compliance requirements include environmental reports and construction progress reports, provision of work permits. In such instances, clients are advised to communicate to such agencies in a timely manner. Such communication should detail the FM event and its effect on undertaking such obligation and any mitigation/corrective measures that have been undertaken by the client.

During the existence of FM Events, clients should be keen to exercise all reasonable endeavours to mitigate or limit damages. A timely review and management of the situation at hand is key to successfully navigating the current times.

The writer is a Notary Public Advocate

Balance between the knowledgeable versus the fulfillment oriented

By Ken Mwango & Akeyo Nyagilo



It's an early Monday morning in the Nairobi C.B.D and you walk into a bank to carry out a transaction. Since your transaction requires that you physically visit the Teller you queue up and sit on the waiting benches. That is after you've printed out your waiting slip from the automated queuing machine. When your turn comes up you proceed to the counter and find the Teller on her phone. She seems totally engrossed as her well manicured finger scrolls up and down her screen. She lets out a chuckle before putting her phone away and looks up to attend to you. "How may I assist you?" She asks. You're irritated because you stood there for around 45 seconds waiting for her. Every second counts in this fast paced City but the young lady behind the counter seems unbothered because I mean she needed to reply to that urgent Whats app text.

Welcome to the modern workplace culture. Long gone are the days when the work place was deemed as a place where an employee sat on an office chair idling away with countless files piling up on the desk as he waits for the next customer to attend to. Today if you walk into a number of offices you're likely to find a young person seated at the reception with ear phones and a phone in hand typing away or listening to music from the computer. As you wait to be served, the youthful receptionist will be in no hurry to abandon her source of entertainment to attend to you or will direct you to the office you're looking for without taking her eyes off the computer screen. You may take offence depending on your personality and upbringing but it's the present reality we're dealing with.

Strict deadlines

If you're the boss in your organization and above fifty years old you've probably had to assign some duties to your juniors regularly with strict deadlines as you attend to other business. When you return after a while to monitor progress, you find your junior staff with headphones on as they work with a momentary glance at their phones as they reply to notifications. One of them looks up at you only to be met with a stern look. You suspect they're doing anything but working. The truth is they're and are actually about to complete the assignment.

It's how they work. Millennials account for approximately 45% of Kenya's work force. This is the generation that was born between the late 70's and early 2000's. They grew into and with the technological advancement of the new Millennium. These are young people who grew up with a different mindset and advanced skills due to exposure to an environment that promotes efficient ways of working and this tends to bring some conflict with the older generation who fall into the category of generation X; born between the early 1950s to early 70's. This generation learned to work with their hands and feet literally and pride themselves in having walked bare feet to school 20kms away... Of course while confronting snakes and hyenas. They believe in pure hard work and most of them are currently holding jobs they've been having for the past 30 years or just retired.

Career fulfillment

Millennials believe in career fulfillment more than just grinding away at a 9 to 5 job. They're more likely to switch jobs in a huff if they sense the slightest boredom or if they decide to stay, will challenge the existing work structure to fit their needs and wants. Management which is usually comprised of generation X is reluctant to change because they're more set in their ways and are at the plateau phase of their careers where stability is key in their lives. For Instance young people prefer communication through e-mails

or work Whats app groups rather than a long dreary two hour afternoon meeting that communicates the same agenda that would have sufficed on e-mail. Productivity is an important factor for the youth. If they can complete their day's assignment in three hours they don't feel the need to continue hanging around the office and would rather engage in something else. To an older person this may come off as laziness but to a young person this is efficiency. It is assumed that a person should be productive or rather busy during an 8 hour work shift but not necessarily. The Kenyan labour system is structured around a pay as you earn system where an individual will be paid for the 20-25 days they work in a month rather than what they produce. This is where the bone of contention is between the two generations. The older folk began their careers at a time when number of hours worked was considered industrious. Millennials see it otherwise.

As people work longer and delay retirement, various generations are meeting at the workplace which is a big challenge to human resource managers. They have to be aware of the generational tension, which in most cases is misconstrued for disrespect for the older generation as observed by Jeanne c. Meister, founding partner of Future Workplaces. Managers are urged to create diverse workplaces that will keep all employees motivated. The level of motivation individuals or teams exert in their work can affect all aspects of organizational performance. It's the responsibility of the boss to ensure proper research is done on the type of workforce they have and figure out what keeps the various teams on their toes while still coexisting perfectly in the same environment. Ensure cross-generational mentoring is encouraged to create friendship amongst the teams.

Mwango is a Lab Scientist and Researcher at Kenya Water Institute. Akeyo is a graduate electrical engineer in the construction industry.



Significance of functioning leadership during crisis

By Ochula Michael, PRSK

Leadership basically means that as a leader; 'The buck stops with you'. It is the responsibility of leaders in any given society to create a culture of leadership development. However, we exist in a society where, if you mention leadership, people associate it to those in high ranking positions in government including the Head of State. Leadership is seen as the ability to influence, motivate, and inspire a group of people towards a particular direction by inspiration and not through intimidation or manipulation. It involves setting the general direction for others to follow. The Cabinet Secretary for Health Mutahi Kagwe has so far exhibited all these qualities of a good leader during the COVID-19 outbreak in the country.

A leader provides a roadmap detailing the way forward in a specific period of time say, three years and with a clear picture of, 'This is the direction that we are taking'. It means you are taking the people you lead from a known place to an unknown

place that is far better than the current one. For a leader to do that, he or she must have people that will work with. Leadership exists in all spheres of life including the family unit, in schools and even at the individual level, one needs to exercise personal leadership.

Our greatest responsibility as citizens is to think like leaders. If we all think and act as leaders, do you think the streets would be littered with garbage or someone would steal public funds meant for development. Or would our roads be turned into death traps? Or would we be coerced to abide by government regulations like the curfew or cessation movement to flatten the COVID-19 curve? It is lack of leadership that is responsible for the corruption and unethical conducts in the country. In fact, the reason that there is poor planning in most sectors in our country is because of a leadership deficit.

Lack of strong leadership affects everything. As a society are sitting on a time-bomb because we are not doing enough to grow the next generation of leaders-the youth of this country. There is an argument that do you build people first or build institutions? That is what everyone is doing now-reforming institutions- the judiciary, the police, the Land reforms-were all 'reformed. Sadly, we are not doing much to grow the leaders of tomorrow-those that will be charged to lead these institutions.

The problem is if we are building institutions without building people, someone would emerge who would destroy those institutions. We are talking about Vision 2030, isn't it? But the people that would drive that vision are the young people today and yet a number of them have no vision, let alone short-term objectives in their lives. The youth of this country need strategic and effective mentorship to enable them defend the Constitution, participate in promoting value-based leadership characterized by integrity which is an integral part of our national value system. However, do we have adequate leaders whom our youth would see as role models to emulate? My guess is as good as mine.

That is the kind of work that ought to be done now. We need to do it for this country right now. Relevant institutions, government ministries and key stakeholders should lead that process. There is self-discovery when young people discover themselves first which I believe is the most important thing. It is not even about employment; employment is the last thing. You should rather spend money in promoting knowledge where people can discover who they are and then find their leadership niche.

The youth need to discover themselves and their purpose early in life – at less than 20 years old and find their vision. By the time they will be out of school, they would not need to go to anybody to give them a job. Instead they will be job creators and not seekers. This will equip them with the power to fight the battles even in tough, competitive and the ever-shrinking job market. Despite the economy hardship in the country, their heads should be out high to make it in life.

The silver lining in this pandemic

By Fatma Hirsi



Conservationists have long been highlighting the depletion of the earth's ozone layer leading to global warming and thus unusual weather patterns - flooding, drought, longer winters or summers, wildfires, tsunamis and typhoons. Yet, COVID19 has offered a chance for her to refresh, to clean up the air, the waterways, and the land that had been polluted with litter, plastics and other effluent.

This is indeed a silver lining to this pandemic that has taken the world into quarantine, physical distancing, self-isolation, curfews and, in extreme cases, total lockdown. Many cities are clear of humans, clean, safe, leaving the empty streets free of litter and pollutants with industries that were open and emitting smoke into the air drastically reduced. Nature has quickly taken up its role and is healing the earth.

We are receiving heart-warming stories that sea life is returning to European canals and rivers with dolphins frolicking in these waters where, before, cruise ships, big boats and gondolas plied the waters transporting goods and tourists. Media reports also indicate that animals that had been missing for years, like the Ocelot are once again roaming the streets in India. Others like the Pandas in a Hong Kong Zoo, thanks to the COVID-19 zoo closure and without gawking humans, are getting their groove back after 13 years of inaction and have given in to their natural mating cycle. All over social media, people are sharing beautiful photos of mountains like Mt. Kenya and the Himalayas taken from windows in cities hundreds of kilometres away; sights not easily visible before due to fog, smog and hazy clouds occasioned by pollution. Cleanliness has also been instilled with the advice to avoid physical contact, disinfect and wash hands often leading to better health habits.

Perhaps this is the time for us to understand how much damage we do to mother earth and realise that this gives us time to fix things. I hope that we learn from this, that life, as we knew it can never be the same again, and be more responsible. Littering should be fined heavily, like they do in many developed countries, so we stop carelessly throwing rubbish from car windows clogging drains causing damage. We also need to embrace community clean-ups like in Rwanda and agitate for full implementation of the 3 Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle). The positive impact this pandemic has had on our environment will hopefully last and UNEP should be happy about these positive results; albeit, perhaps for a short while. Communications experts in environment and conservation matters also have a chance to look at the positive aspects of this global close down and use it to encourage people to rethink their daily habits and activities. If mother earth can revitalise in a matter of weeks, we can do our bit too and stop the man-made pollution.

Another silver lining is that there is a new world order, but not of the political kind. In lockdown, families have bonded more, home-schooling their children, working from home and doing their grocery purchases online. Crises teach us new ways of doing things.

Fatma is a Communications Specialist, PRSK Fellow

Strategic approach in crisis handling

By Jacqueline Marita



When countries face crises, there is need for dissemination of information to counter misinformation and disinformation, thus it becomes critical for states to communicate information rapidly, accurately, objectively, in a transparent and factual manner.

In addressing the need for citizens to get information, governments have provided instructive information regarding the corona virus pandemic. They have circulated hotline numbers for enquiries related to signs and symptoms of the corona virus and what to do if one suspects that they have contracted the disease. Governments have provided daily updates regarding the numbers of those tested, the positive cases, recoveries and deaths.

Governments have also provided information by reassuring people that they are well prepared to address the pandemic. Specifically, they have continuously communicated guidelines on what the public should do such as social distancing, avoiding public gatherings, washing hands with soap and water, closure of malls, schools, restaurants, places of leisure such as parks and gymnasiums.

Social media technologies

New media is taking centre stage in communication regarding crisis. Channels such as YouTube, Facebook,

Twitter and Instagram have become key sources of information for the public.

When the State of Queensland, Australia was hit by severe flooding in 2011, the Queensland Police Service (QPS) emerged as the key source of information for the public. By extensively utilizing social media, QPS was able to share information warning the public of road conditions, call for assistance and fight rumours during the flooding incident.

While this method worked in Australia, it may be a challenge in our setting. Our government is addressing crisis which is complex and the gruesome approval processes that hinder releasing of any information fast.

In the age of social media, there is even more pressure for governments and states to release information quickly before other sources that may be less credible release the information in an inaccurate manner. Governments therefore struggle and by the time this information is released it may be too late.

Ethics and diversity

Governments must address the issue of ethics and diversity. In Italy, a country that has experienced the highest number of deaths as reported by the World Health Organisation, the health care system has been stretched. Media have reported that doctors are having to choose between

who to offer ventilators, age of patients to survive and so on.

Leadership

The ability of leaders to speak truthfully, sincerely and to show empathy during crisis is crucial. President Trump has been accused of not taking more stringent steps towards hampering the spread of corona virus between the months of January to March 2020. These has earned him a lot of criticism and blame for the rapid spread of the virus. Communicating truthfully, consistently, early and often will help to curb scaremongering and fake news which can contribute to panic and even result in anarchy.

Human rights and artificial intelligence

Constitutions of many countries guarantee rights and responsibilities for their citizens. For instance, people have a right to freedom of movement but this can be curtailed during crises, for instance when movement is restricted to protect the health of people.

We all have a duty and responsibility to follow health guidelines to avert further spread of COVID-19. It is both a collective as well as an individual effort to rid the world of this pandemic.

Jacqueline is the Communications Manager for Commission on Revenue Allocation.



Lessons from COVID-19: Secure the future through technology

By Jane Gitau, FPRSK

I had dreams and tears in equal measure, imagining what our own Konza City could be as a properly established hub for digital.

A five-tray trolley moves unassisted down the corridor to a door. “Room 311 your dishes are on the third shelf. Please take and press finish”. The door opens, a person covered in the now famous surgical mask and gloves picks the food and the talking trolley wishes them bon appetite and moves on to the next door to repeat the process.

Welcome to China in the age of the corona virus pandemic, where hospitals were using robots to deliver food to people in isolation so as to minimize infections on contact. This image, the first I ever saw of Wuhan, China, remains etched in my mind. I had never heard of Wuhan, so I looked it up on the map. It seemed some remote place so as I said a prayer for Africa that day, I was sure the answer would be yes. I prayed that this dreadful disease would never set foot in Africa because I was sure none of us had the capacity to deal with it. No economy in Africa used robots on a regular basis.

In my lifetime, I have prayed many times. Many of those prayers have been answered and many others have not. At the Christian Union in high school, they taught us that God has three answers to prayer – yes, no and wait for some time. The wait can be a real test of patience and of course Yes is often the answer I want when

I go to pray. Sometimes, when I feel overwhelmed, I am silent and I say to my God, Lord, I don't know how to pray.

A few weeks prior to this, I had been to Shenzhen, China's Silicon Valley. In 1980, Shenzhen was established as China's first special economic zone. With a population estimated at 13 million, Shenzhen now hosts the Shenzhen Stock Exchange as well as the headquarters of numerous multinationals including Huawei. Standing atop a 100-storey building, one of several in this leading global technology hub, I had dreams and tears in equal measure, imagining what our own Konza City could be as a properly established hub for digital.

Prayer not answered

COVID-19 was announced in Kenya. Then I remember the robots and my mind raced to Konza City, to what might have been our "Silicon Valley" had we taken the dream more seriously. I dream that a Kenyan equivalent of Huawei would have been established and become a leading technology giant. Huawei was founded in an old factory in 1987. Now, it employs nearly 94,000 people, with its headquarters stretching over four campuses across two square miles and it has operations in more than 170 countries.

Technology is what has enabled us track the Corona virus infections across the globe in real time. There are boundless opportunities that the digital space can produce when properly harnessed. One can certainly get a lot of edutainment in these days of staying at home.

I thought of Uhuru's laptops for kids. It has taken COVID-19 to expose our soft underbelly as a nation. With schools forcibly closed and emphasis laid on digital learning, what should have been a seamless shift of learning space, became a nightmare for our learners and their teachers. Indeed, the most reliable learning partner has been the radio teacher who taught me long ago before we heard of digital. Supposing we had properly executed this project, providing computer labs, electricity and computers to every school in the republic and training all their teachers and converting all curriculum to digital. Suppose every child in the republic had their laptop or tablet with them at home, what would this stay at home experience have been for all of them? We would be in the same tuff with South Korea where learning is ongoing at home via technology

With little or no institutional support, one of these tech-savvy characters created Mpesa. It is the one innovation that is now keeping our economy moving. What can

several minds like that do when given the right support? Are we aware that we are standing on the edge of a technological evolution and the faster we embrace it the better for us as a nation?

According to the Global Industry Vision (GIV), by 2025, exactly 5 years from now, industrial robots will be working side by side with people. For every 10,000 people there will be 103 robots. Many of these will be purpose built, for hazardous environments from undersea rescue to fighting forest fires as well as managing repetitive tasks and high precision assignments. On the domestic front, 14% of household chores will be performed by robots. From basic chores such as ironing, vacuum cleaning and picking up things, to complex areas such as nursing, replacing body parts and companionship in study and at therapy, robots will be present.

These few weeks during which we have been under the spell of COVID-19, we have put the spotlight on the corrupt tendencies that have undermined our technological progression leaving us at the mercy of other nations. We even import toys for our children to play with. The laptops for children project had a poor start and choked all the way due to greed and selfishness. In a February 2019 article, the Nation newspaper averred that the project failed because of theft and misuse among other things. That we stole and continue to steal from our children is both ugly and unforgivable.

If one city can be built on a foundation of technology, one single company employs over 90, 000 people, then we must do everything possible to secure our future and that of our children through technology. That investment in technology- the children's digital learning and Konza City- need to go full circle. For that to happen, there must be no sacred cows.

If there is a lesson to learn as we seek to protect ourselves from the novel corona virus, it is that we must hold ourselves together as a nation. There comes a time when external solutions cannot be depended on. Building the capacity to manage our affairs is the key. Integrity must stop being a word we use at election time. It must be the norm because integrity is doing the right thing when no one is watching.

Jane Gitau is a Fellow of PRSK and the Communications Manager for Kenya Seeds Company.

Audience specific communications, vital in the fight against COVID-19

By Anthony Kagiri and Salome Gathoni

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has the whole world in a state of panic and disrupted our lives. With schools suspended, workplaces closed and people working from home, many Kenyans wait anxiously for the daily briefing from the Health Cabinet Secretary with the hope that the curve will flatten so that we can go back to our normal lives.

In mid-March 2020, it was heart-warming to watch Norway's Prime Minister, Erna Solberg hold a kids-only press conference to address their concerns in the midst of this pandemic. Their questions ranged from schooling, birthday parties to going outside and visiting grandparents. She reassured them by saying "It's OK to be scared when so many things happen at the same time." This audience specific communication is fresh. Most importantly, it is thoughtful and empathetic. Compassionate leadership in action.

Segmenting audiences and authentically communicating to them the present challenges whilst allowing candid conversations will be a great step to innovative measures, owned decisions and a spirit of unity is a win in the present and future. The skills, the leverage on technology and wealth of resources we can tap into from engagement is untold. We can listen to each other. We can take a mother's concern of her son being bullied in school for wearing a pink mask and make powerful, memorable and sensitive responses. This was the case in Taiwan when the CDC minister and male officials wore pink masks in solidarity. We cannot fail to recognize the display of emotions and heartfelt gratitude for health workers and careers in this COVID19 fight as March ended in UK by millions of people. National applause for this special group in the health sector across the globe cannot be overdone. They are the heroes of the hour. There are opportunities to show compassion. In offices to communicate hard news, beating curfew hours, sharing foodstuffs



in our neighbourhoods, the list endless. We can escalate it to regional, continental and global levels.

When South Africa's Communications (ironically) and Digital Technologies minister broke the lockdown rules, the Head of State was firm. Ms. Stella had to apologize publicly. In addition, she had to take two special months of leave, one being unpaid. Does it sound compassionate? Contrast with Kenya's curfew brutality during the initial days. A wrong message at a wrong time. We can find ways to correct the wrongs when they are wrong and spread uplifting moments. Compassionate leadership is about leading from the head and the heart. The human family is facing challenging times, never has being empathetic been so welcome. We all need it. We can touch hearts as we learn from crisis management stars during this time.

Before the first case was reported in Kenya, Aga Khan University Hospital, Nairobi (AKUHN) for instance, set up a COVID-19 Response plan and a COVID-19 Response committee to execute the plan. In the middle of the pandemic and uncertainties, social media has been awash with information but many have no way of sifting through it to establish the truth from falsehoods. This has led to the need for leadership to help bring

clarity, clear uncertainties and provide credible and verifiable information. To respond to this, the Hospital took the lead to create awareness on COVID-19. At the onset, we created a dedicated webpage on our website where we have hosted resource materials on the virus. These have included facts about the virus, frequently asked questions and videos by our infectious diseases experts.

In rapidly changing contexts and a good measure of uncertainty, balancing leaders' responses with compassion is a tough call. The evolving threat is real. Daily realities are different. Effectively articulating the present in an honest and compassionate way is essential. At the heart of communication and messaging, is people. A connection needs to be made. The message then has to be simplified for easy understanding, and loaded with convincing and persuading power. It has also to bear a call to action while outlining 'what is in it for everyone'. In his 4th Presidential Update, H.E. Yoweri Museveni went to expound some terms in the local dialect. There was no second guessing what the terms including the fairly new ones meant for the audience.

Anthony is the Senior PR Manager, Aga Khan University Hospital, Nairobi. Salome is the Corporate Affairs Manager at AIC-Kijabe Hospital.

Leadership competencies for implementing sound decisions

By Ali Hassan Idow

These are the most stressful times for government and business leaders as navigating through the uncertainty of the current pandemic requires informed decisions. Working from home, extensive travel bans, conferences and sports events postponed, self-quarantines and social distancing are the new directives now imposed.

The coronavirus pandemic has placed unexpected demands on leaders and has similarly created fear among employees and other stakeholders. In a bid to stop the spread of this disease, governments and business organisations have imposed some strict measures such as lockdown in some regions, but these changes have also led to some unexpected consequences.

Communication

One of the critical dimensions that lead to a successful change effort is the use of communication effectively. Change messages need to be communicated promptly and appropriately.

Misinformation is on the rise as people share information that are not authentic hence propagating fear. Develop a communication strategy that shows how orderly your communication is and what has been prioritized especially frequent updates.

Collaboration

It is advisable for leaders to call upon the capabilities and contributions of all employees, team members, taskforces, and members of the public too. The roles played by these groups is important in trying to overcome, even to a smaller degree, the uncertainties caused by this pandemic. This will help reduce the rumor mill and instill confidence in the people you serving.

Pause, Assess, Anticipate and Act

One of the biggest mistakes that leaders make is resorting to their personal intuition when making decisions during a crisis. It is to be known that unexpected and surprises happen during a crisis. Collect information continuously and avoid making rush decisions that might

hurt the people you leading. This means assessing the situation from different approaches, anticipating what might happen next and then acting accordingly. According to Mckinsey, “the pause-assess-anticipate-act cycle should be ongoing, for it helps leaders maintain a state of deliberate calm and avoid overreacting to new information as it comes in.

Compassion

Having a committed and resilient team around you is of utmost importance during this pandemic. However, leadership comes with responsibilities and in this regard, people look up to you for guidance and assurance. It is evident the virus is potentially affecting the most vulnerable and medically challenged in our communities. If a team member wishes to be with their family to look after them or just work from home, as a leader

you will be required to be considerate and offer them that opportunity. Compassion at this time is a very important manifestation of leadership.

Confidence

During crisis times people look up to leaders for hope and assurance. The coronavirus pandemic is taking a toll on every sector around the world. Its consequences could last longer than anticipated. One of the defining challenges for leaders is to take their organisations into the future after the unexpected and extraordinary impact of a crisis. It is therefore necessary that leaders make decisions that make a positive impact and difference in people's lives.

The writer is a lecturer and a postgraduate student at Multimedia University of Kenya.





COVID-19 yielding blueprints for future pandemics

By Leonard Khafafa

As John Maxwell once said, everything rises and falls on leadership, the diverse leadership styles showcased during this COVID 19 global pandemic have presented different leadership scenarios across the continent. The novel coronavirus pandemic has left the entire world groping for direction. Its effects and results have been adversely felt which are almost leaving the entire globe to a confused halt. Since it is unprecedented, there are no hard and fast rules about what ought to be done; simply different countries trying out a plethora of solutions. From these, patterns emerge. Some reveal sound equitable leadership with ideas that may become blueprints for future pandemics. Others expose those at the helms of some countries as being

bereft of leadership skills.

Because the output of the citizens of a nation can be hampered by debilitating disease, there is a correlation between the severity of COVID-19 and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of countries. Borrowing from a model by Board of Innovation, a global strategy and business design firm, this can be explained graphically. Placing GDP on the Y-axis and the severity of the pandemic on the X-axis, different graphic scenarios emerge that reflect leadership in this season of crisis.

The analysis of the current leadership scenarios has created different perspectives and ideologies based on the

leadership styles. We have a V-curve, a U curve and L curve scenarios, as we dive in to understand each scenario, let's realize that each of them is valuable in their own way.

The V-curve

Board of Innovation talk of the V-curve, a relatively short-term scenario of up to half a year. In this play-out, GDP drops rapidly as the severity of the pandemic increases to a certain point beyond which it rises again until the crisis ends. What causes a rebound is rapid effective pandemic control through lockdowns and economic stimulus. The leadership of Germany under Angela Merkel comes to mind. Immediately the country was made aware of COVID-19, they developed



Here, social distancing measures and prolonged economic stimulus ease damage and lead to eventual recovery. The US under President Donald Trump best reflects this. Slow to react, Trump initially dismissed the pandemic as “no worse than a seasonal flu” and that boasted that the US was in control. It was only much later that the potential long-term impact of COVID-19 has dawned on his administration. Right now, a 2 trillion-dollar economic package has been rolled out to protect the economy by putting money into the hands of US citizens. Even then, the toll exacted has been heavy. Currently, there are close to 700, 000 infected with 34,000 fatalities and 56,00 recoveries.

The L Curve Scenario

The last scenario, the L-curve, is where some western countries and most of the developing world lie. The impact here is potentially over three years. GDB drops to a low point and does not rise as the pandemic increases in severity. This scenario assumes a gross failure in pandemic control affecting the ability of countries to produce. Eventually, with no economic stimulus, there are widespread bankruptcies and credit defaults. Spain and Italy have borne the brunt of COVID-19. At the beginning of the pandemic, Italian leaders were spotted having wine in crowded restaurants oblivious of the morbidity of the novel coronavirus. Although Africa is yet to experience the brunt of the pandemic, it is clear that it is inadequately prepared for such an eventuality. Afflicted developed countries have fallen short in terms of hospitals, medical equipment, and personnel to care for the sick. But the “dark” continent must now strive to stay ahead of the curve. This is a crisis that cannot be wasted! Judging from the levels of innovation and creativity brought on by the threat of a full-blown crisis, leadership prescience is required to fully exploit these. Already, it is showing. Factory workers began the production of personal protective gear for local frontline health workers, commissioned by the Ghanaian government. In Kenya, university students created ventilators to help patient’s breath in the severest cases of COVID-19. Some textile factories have been repurposed to supply the country with face masks to prevent spread of coronavirus.

testing kits, put a moratorium on the export of sanitizers and concentrated on the production of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) for their front-line medical workers. The net effect is that although the country has had over 137,000 infections, there have been just 4,000 fatalities and 66,000 recoveries. Further, factories are back in production and there is talk of high schools and colleges reopening soon.

The U Curve Scenario

The next scenario is the U-curve. This presupposes that the impact period is longer, extending to one and a half years. GDP plunges rapidly to a nadir, bottoms out for an extended period, then rises rapidly when the pandemic is contained.

Building a Sustainable Africa

As much as the notable steps are encouraging, they must be taken further for Africa to move from the darkness traditionally associated with it to ascendancy on the global stage. Scholar. Dr. David Mwambari, a lecturer at King’s College, London, says “a major overhaul is needed across the continent to transition economies from relying on the extraction and sale of raw materials to the West (and East-i.e., China), and into building up local industries that utilizes local resources and turn them into value-added products for export.”

COVID-19 has presented the time and opportunity for such a transition. Any African leader worth their salt, will by now have grasped the long-term ruinous effects of the pandemic and planned accordingly. Failure to do so will precipitate social unrest stemming from financial hardship. A raft of measures is desirable. The first of these is the continental push for debt cancellation. Many sub-Saharan countries are in hock to usurious lenders over infrastructural projects of dubious utility. Payments for these must be suspended or cancelled in favor of mitigatory financial measures to the most affected.

Second, extractive capitalism must stop, and existing contracts renegotiated to include greater involvement in the value chain on the continent. Finally, leaders across the continent must begin to implement the Africa Free Trade Area Agreements (AFCTA). Borrowing from the European Union and other economic blocs, Africa can build itself by allowing free movement of resources within its borders. Close to 50 per cent of the world’s commodities come from Africa and yet its share of global trade is a negligible 0.1 percent. AFCTA, properly implemented, would ensure a reversal.

COVID-19 may soon be behind us but how each country acquits itself will depend on the percipience of its leaders. This is the opportunity for Africa to rise to the fore, as Professor Catherine Adoyo of Georgetown University puts it, “cultivating our agency as cultural stewards and self-determining citizens of the world”

The writer is a Public Policy Analyst.

Providing leadership during uncertainty

By Lina Njoroge



Leadership is one of the most important aspects not only in those good and happy times, but more so in times of crisis. A reliable and effective leader is identified during a crisis through how they handle the situation. It is paramount for a leader to effectively exhibit their skills and what they got in times of uncertainty.

Crisis whether in a country or in a company, is not something that is expected to occur frequently. However, it is logical to have a crisis management plan in place just in case it does occur. In most cases, a crisis situation is a complex process that call for critical thinking from the leaders.

In this case, what will separate a good leader from an ineffective leader is by how they react including how they make decisions during the crisis. Whether their decision-making is based on panic mode or how they ably handle the situation.

During any unfortunate or unforeseen occurrence, whether drought, terror attacks, diseases outbreaks where people's lives are at stake and so on, effective leadership is necessary.

Crisis situations

In Kenya, for instance, during the Westgate attack in 2013, the government having experienced a similar attack in the past it was certain that a crisis plan would be in place. This is considering that terrorism is one big problem that has been fought for years across the globe with Kenya being a victim in the past. The way the Ministry of Interior and National Coordination reported, was absolute telling since it exposed many inconsistencies and contradictions in its statements on the situation which was sort of disappointing.

Fast forward to 2020 where the nation is threatened by the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. We see our government hands on especially by giving daily reports and updates to the citizens as well as putting in health safety measures just to make sure all Kenyans are safe. Commendable move I must note, compared to the previous one.

If may highlight some of the characteristics that a leader should have in times like this in my own opinion.

No Emotions

This is not the time to show emotions, if anybody makes decisions based on emotions nothing works since things lean on one side hence leading to irrational behaviour which can be quite dangerous in any setting. That's why a leader needs to be bold and strong, be hands on and ready for anything.

Communication

Communication is quite significant whether it's between your family, colleagues, friends or whoever one interacts with on daily basis. Leaders should be able to communicate clearly and effectively with their juniors. Public entities should equally be able to properly communicate to the general public especially if the crisis is something being experienced countrywide. Always have the right information, don't contradict your words, be 100% sure, this is not the time to make mistakes since everyone is always looking upto this figures. For example, going back to my above case study in Kenya during COVID-19, as a communications enthusiast, I have noted

how the Cabinet Secretary for Health has been effectively carrying out his role, his communication is very clear, constantly updating the country. That is definitely a plus for him.

Optimism

A leader's character will affect his/her followers in a great way. This means he/she needs to always be optimistic about the situation no matter what. This is similar to a parent and a child; if they show pessimism and negative attitude towards a situation it breaks the child's heart. In the same scenario, leaders should remain positive with the situation by assuring no matter how bad it is.

Open-Minded

Crises clearly are unprecedented and unforeseen. This calls on leaders to be open-minded and to expect any kind of situation. This subsequently means that the crisis communications plan should be flexible and open for adjustments.

Confidence

Confidence is one of the most valuable traits anybody can have. This is what most people look upto in leaders during a crisis. If the leader projects fear among the followers, then expect everyone to have that fear. This trait however should come from within not just an outside acquired trait. People need someone to look upto when hope seems too far-fetched for them; that there's one person assuring them that all is going to be okay is important.

In conclusion, it is important that everyone stays calm and shuns all the negativity that could be spreading around. Let us aspire to look after each other in times like this where even mental health could be put to the test.

Remember it is during crisis situations where the true character of any individual, not only our leaders is projected. Doing the right thing and following the safety regulations is all that is required making sure that we collectively pull out of this crisis together as one nation.

Remember to stay at home and frequently wash your hands with soap or alcohol-based sanitiser. Keep safe.

Lessons to learn from the Spanish flu in handling Corona virus disease

By Moturi Kenyanya



The Spanish flu is arguably the world's deadliest pandemic to ever infect humanity. It spread worldwide during the 20th Century (1918 – 1920). The disease is deemed to have originated from Fort Riley, Kansas from viruses in swine and poultry which the Fort bred for food. Oblivious to what had befallen them, the soldiers from Fort Riley were then sent around the world to fight during the World War I. This is how the disease was spread.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, it is estimated that about 500 million or one-third of the world's population at that time was infected. 50 million people are also estimated to have lost their lives as a result of the worldwide flu. It was initially considered to be a normal flu, but its effects were later realized to be disastrous hence needed to be handled keenly. Persons less than 5 years, 20 – 40 years and above 65 years were susceptible to contracting the disease.

During the World War I, the media reported infections and fatalities of the disease in neutral Spain while failing to highlight reports in Germany, United Kingdom, France and the United States. This created a false impression that Spain was the hardest hit by the epidemic and that the rest of the world was immune. This made the citizenry to be reluctant in deploying preventive measures and only came to realize late when the disease struck closer home. It is opined that more U.S troops died from the 1918 Spanish Flu than were killed in battle during war.

The virus was spread by way of sneezing and coughing from an infected person to an exposed person. The close quarters and massive troop movements during the World War I accelerated the spread of the virus. The transportation system made it easier for soldiers, sailors and civilian travelers to spread the disease. With no vaccine to protect against influenza infection and no antibiotics to treat secondary bacterial infections

that were associated with influenza infections, control efforts were limited to non-pharmaceutical interventions such as isolation, quarantine, good personal hygiene, use of disinfectants and limitations of public gatherings.

According to World Health Organization (WHO), Coronavirus disease, 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2. The disease was first identified in December, 2019 Wuhan, China and has spread globally resulting to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. Evidently, the more developed air, road and water transport system has propelled the global spread of infections. Just like the Spanish Flu, common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Other symptoms may include, fatigue, muscle pain, sore throat, loss of smell, abdominal pain, viral pneumonia and in extreme cases, multi organ failure. COVID-19 is seemingly one of the deadliest diseases to affect the globe. Most Governments around the globe have locked up their borders, directed their citizens to maintain social distancing (quarantine), wear masks, embrace good personal hygiene as well as; use of disinfectants and limitations of public gatherings. This is being done in a bid to flatten the curve.

Currently, there is no cure for the flu, and many doctors only prescribe medication that would alleviate symptoms. In order to flatten the curve as was done during the Spanish Flu or borrowing from countries that are winning the war against COVID-19, it is necessary for people to stay at home, practice physical 'social' distancing and maintain good hygiene. If you must leave the house, ensure that you wear an appropriate face mask, wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face/ eyes. The sooner we embrace this directive as issued by the Ministry of Health, the sooner we will tackle the pandemic. It is a stupendous challenge, one that we were not prepared for but together we shall surmount it.

Novel virus brought reality of globalization

By Wausi Walya

In January this year, the novel corona virus was just a developing story and many of us could hardly pronounce it nor the city it was associated with, Wuhan. In fact, at the time, many people joked about the Chinese love for animal meat in all its form and the focus was more on this as a weird diet. We missed the point that it was a real struggle on that end and, everything was being done to contain its spread. What we did not release is that globalization means that States are much more dependent on each other and it was just a matter of time and our interconnectedness would come with many lessons.

States are interconnected through political systems and diplomatic ties, states have allies and trade partners but in times of distress, they will act in the interest of their citizens. Over time, many states have entered into trade agreements, with minimum deliverables determined for a certain period. African countries, for example, have a pact with the United States through the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) which will come to a close in or be reviewed in 2025. African countries are about to benefit from access to a three billion market in the new Africa Continental Free Trade agreement.

Driven by the success of existing regional integration that allows for maximizing of access to larger markets and minimal trade barriers, more countries are trading with neighboring countries. Technology is now in every one's hands and we can get the election results of the super power at the same time with its own citizens. We are able to visit any country of choice to sample their tourism attractions by air or sea.

What does all this have to do with COVID-19?

The immediate solution for various states to stay





away from the virus was to close their borders including travel bans. This can be interpreted in the immediate as self-preservation. The loss for IATA members has been in millions of US dollars within days. Many countries importing from China have seen a decline in the expected goods barely a month from when the pandemic set in. Understandably, China's priorities changed and impressively focused on containing the virus, with a classic example of putting up health facilities within days, an opportunity to demonstrate China's prowess and responsiveness to this crisis.

The global connectedness through technology saw panic spread at a fast rate. Institutions like the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF found themselves grappling with misinformation and fake posts on social media. Many messages were circulated to fill the void left by government communication in many countries especially who were shying off from this rather delicate conversation in the initial stages.

These are the moments when state sovereignty is under threat because there is little control over information sharing on social media.

How is the World changing?

From closing borders to the precautions including crowd control and to treating the virus, the world order has changed. Many events have been cancelled, joyous ceremonies like the Easter Holidays were celebrated without the usual buzz and weddings have been deferred and this amounts to colossal losses across the world and distressing to many families. Mourning loved ones has become a tight ceremony with almost no chance for grief and sick patients are on lonely beds with no family to visit them.

The stock markets have gone down and tourism receipts in many top destinations have dropped to zero. Our culture as a friendly people especially in Africa is threatened. We are known to love warm

handshakes and embraces yet all these have had to be dropped as part of the pre cautionary measures in combating COVID19.

Companies have had to make consideration for more employees to work from home, teachers have had to embrace technology to prepare power point presentations complete with a voice over and live video classes to enable learners complete their syllabi content. The Pope has had to change his prayer tradition to a pre-recorded or live mass online.

We see a united world now slowly coming to terms with the effects of globalization, the reality that indeed it matters that we all share one planet, the earth, our only home. Global actors like International Organizations, NGOs and states are all working together to contain COVID-19 with diplomacy intertwined in the daily decisions and operations of every decision. There will be many changes in our daily lives when it is all over, we may have to re learn handshakes, appreciate masks as part of protective clothing and internalize washing hands as a must-do.

When we casually say, the world is a global village, it will make much more sense. We have witnessed panic and paranoia from every corner of the globe and without exception, this pandemic has sent a rude reminder on how interdependent we are.

When it is all over, I pray that we will have learned to be kinder to each other after the confirmation that indeed we breath the same air. That we share much more than boundaries, hotels, airports and hospitals. We share the planet earth, our only home. May the fresh lessons never fade and may we be stronger with a renewed commitment to a better version of our individual selves for the sake of humanity.

The writer is a Public Relations Practitioner and a PhD. Student at the United States International University – Africa.

Sealing credibility gap in the fake news era

By Denis Okore



One of the key objectives for any organisation or entity in a crisis must be to establish – and maintain – credibility. This ultimately depends on the audience's perception of the honesty and sincerity of the communication made, and whether they truthfully reflect the interests of the stakeholders. In other words, it involves ensuring that there is no “credibility gap” between words and actions in the communication process.

As the communications function finds more prominence in organisations both in private as well as public sectors, it ceased being a support function and rather became an integral part of leadership. This means it is now imperative that in management, communication becomes part and parcel of the organisational strategy and that therefore, leadership is not complete without a clear communication strategy. It is indeed now evident that the goals, mission, and culture of the organisation will not achieve the desired visibility both internally and externally. As the world deals with the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been increased pressure for leaders to ensure there is consistent communication in their entities for various reasons.

Era of fake news

Technological advancement has made news convergence instant. While this is great development it has also complicated matters for leaders as they engage with their audience because their messages have been overshadowed by the prevalence of fake news. Fake news is transmitted at the same speed or even faster than the

organised and packaged information. This has raised the complexity bar for organisations as they compete for attention of the same audiences.

As the world struggles to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals, organisations, and governments continue to deal with communication situations to update the audiences and stakeholders on various aspects of how the situation is unfolding. We have seen celebrities and influential persons coming to engage directly with their audiences, organisations coming out to speak about how they are supporting their staff to cope and government officials coming to speak in form of planned media briefings. In all these cases, there has been a specific message that the audiences have been treated to and has been received and acted on differently.

Verify before forwarding

Again, members of the public have been at the forefront of spreading messages and updates as they receive them. In some cases, the information might be based on fake news. It is imperative therefore, that while in this dispensation, everyone exercises caution on the information they are cascading. There is need to verify the authenticity and credibility of information before sharing or forwarding on social media platforms.

This is because on one hand you will be passing incorrect and unverified information and on the other hand your will psychologically affecting the recipient further causing them untold anxiety. It is almost obvious everyone is frightened by the fear of the unknown and so it is important that we guard the mental state of others by exercising caution.

Communicating under prevailing fragile situations is too demanding because of the stakes involved arising from a wide range of sensitivities. It is therefore imperative that there is a conscious process going into the formulation of messages. It is everyone's responsibility as the carriers of both hope and fear through the messages that we convey. Remember, to think and have in perspective your intended audience. Time is ripe to undertake utmost care in handling information. The main thing is to verify and verify even more each message you have received before communicating.

Maintaining public trust with creative communication

By Joyce Mulama And Elly Wamari

Ordinarily, companies get tempted to slash communication budgets during economically uncertain times. Yet such times offer the rare opportunity to truly build or affirm public trust. It's more like the commonly agreed view that you get to know who your true friends are during times of crises.

The current uncertainty occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic and the apprehension it has brought upon society in general, requires forward-looking organisations to up their communication game rather than hibernate.

This is a time to come out and consistently communicate, whether it is to give assurances or guidance, or to offer advice and moral support. Consider what happens when someone gathers the courage to go to the dance floor when everyone else is seated. They get all the attention, don't they?

When you communicate consistently, you will be remembered as the brand that walked with the public during tough times and respond with goodwill as soon as the situation improves. Granted, the impact would be long-term.

Even more than marketing, communication is a valid channel through which brands can secure lasting public trust, which ultimately translates to positive reputation. A good reputation

enhances the bottom line.

But for communication to play this role effectively, it must be delivered appropriately. In this sense, relevance, consistency and authority must be conveyed with the necessary tone and language, at the right time, using the most effective platforms and effusing positive energy, even and especially when communicating bad news.

If you are managing communication in a company that goes all quiet every time there is a budget constraint, it is time to convince the rest of the leadership to think differently. With creativity or innovation, and with all the many platforms of communication at one's disposal these days, messaging doesn't have to be expensive to warrant a budget cut. It doesn't.

Joyce (MPRSK), an accomplished development communication specialist with vast experience, is the Managing Partner of JET communicators Ltd.

Elly (AMPRSK), an experienced journalist and communication consultant, is the supplements editor of Daily Nation and a Senior Associate of JET Communicators Ltd



Misinformation paralyzing efforts in fight against global pandemic

By Keith Njiru

Social media users have been forced to separate the wheat from the chaff due to flooding of information related to the pandemic. The New York Times reported that some employees at the World Health Organization termed this spread of hazardous and at times false information an 'infodemic.'

Spread of misleading information

According to a study by GeoPoll carried out in Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria between 10th – 13th March, 75% of the respondents relied on WhatsApp to access the latest health updates regarding the novel coronavirus. This emphasizes the weight in which people rely on social media for information, particularly due to the wide internet penetration prevalent in those countries coupled with reduced internet costs. This information is mainly spread through social groups in Facebook and WhatsApp.

One piece of misinformation shared widely on WhatsApp was a message purported to be from 'Stanford Health Board' which provided a 'test' for individuals to conduct every morning to know if they are infected by COVID-19. One of the sample procedures given was to drink lots of water. In an article by

the BBC, Professor Trudie Lang of the University of Oxford stated that there was no biological mechanism supporting the idea that one can just wash down a respiratory virus down their stomach and kill it.

Verify credibility

One method which practitioners in the communication industry can be wary of such information is through relying on credible and official organisations for information related to the specific issue. For this case, there has been a continued effort by the relevant bodies such as World Health Organization (WHO), Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Doctors Without Borders and closer home, the Ministry of Health, to provide credible information and discredit any myths related to the novel coronavirus. These bodies play a crucial role in providing much needed guidelines on how to prevent the spread of the virus and clarify any grey areas.

Role of PR practitioners

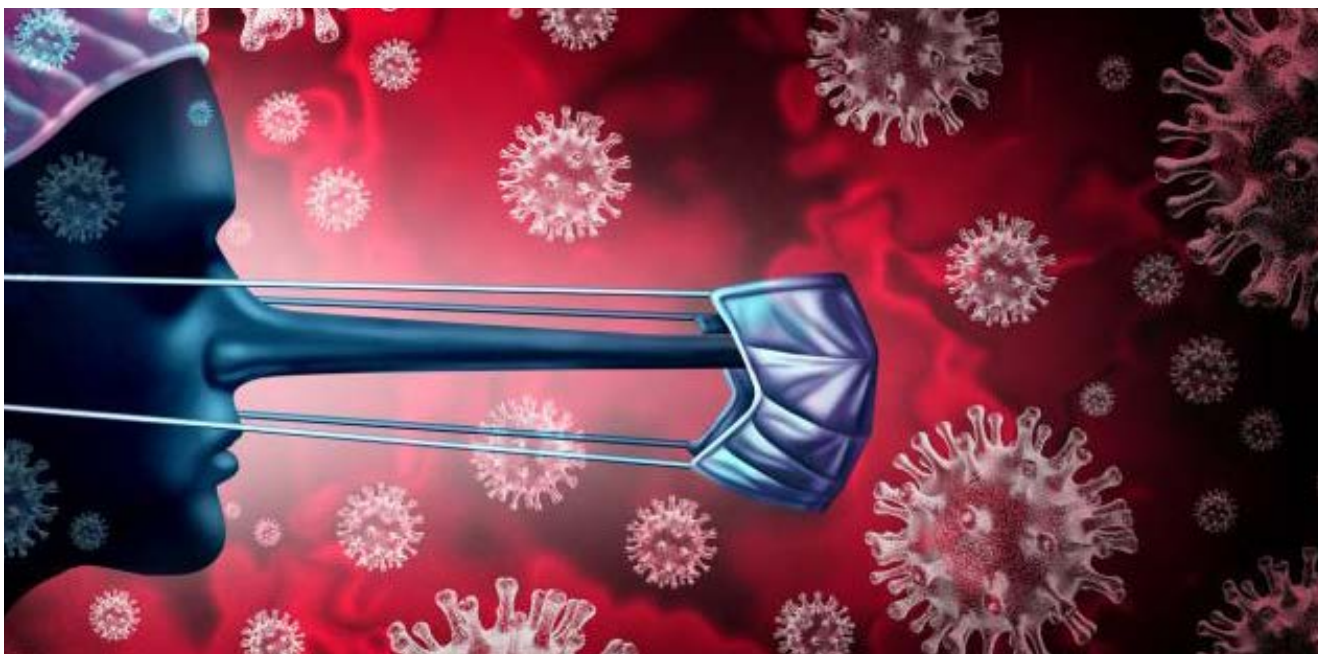
PR practitioners can draw the value of establishing and maintaining relationships across organisations. This was exhibited when organisations established linkages with select institutions in championing

various causes. For example, in the wake of the misinformation spreading on social media, the World Health Organisation worked in collaboration with the tech giants Facebook, Twitter and Google in an effort to curb the spread of misinformation. As such, there should be a concerted effort to maintain these relationships well beyond COVID-19 and perhaps work on areas of mutual interest to the interested organisations.

The spread of COVID-19 and the subsequent loads of information provides an opportunity for PR practitioners to learn and apply fact-checking techniques. A simple exercise that one can do for instance, is to conduct a reverse image search on a viral photo. This will most times detect a photo which has been shared several times and trace the photo to its original source.

As we continue to navigate our lives back on track after this pandemic, it's critical for PR practitioners to recognize the crucial role played by social media in reaching audiences, and how misinformation can be spread through the platform.

The writer is a Communications Student at Strathmore University





Facebook and ilk must put in place mechanisms to curb fake news

By Douglas Mwale and Deryl Aduda

Misinformation, post-truth or 'fake news' as US President Donald Trump likes to call it, is the new reality that we live in this century where communication has been greatly revolutionized thanks to the development and rise of diverse social media platforms. The flow of information in this era has completely changed and is no longer what it used to be 15 or so years ago before the rapid of social media. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp are some of the most popular social platforms in the world which allows people to connect freely and much more easily than before. Businesses are also now able to connect with their clients wherever they are around the globe and this has undoubtedly improved many businesses and also helped in the development of many more. The World is now just but a small village thanks to social media which has broken the barriers of distance, borders, language et al, which used to hinder people around the world from interacting freely by exchanging thoughts, opinions and going-ons. Nowadays, I can easily chat with a friend located as far as Australia from the comfort of my living room as I also keep up-to-date with the happenings locally and around the world. All I need is an internet enabled device and a social media account.

Fake News has emerged as one of the key battlegrounds in the fight against the deadly disease: "Vladimir Putin has dropped 800 tigers and lions all over the country to push people to stay home.... Stay safe everyone!" Another one claimed Dr Li Wenliang, China's hero doctor who was punished for telling the truth about Corona Virus and later died due to the same disease, had documented case-files for research purposes and had in the files proposed a cure that would significantly decrease the impact of the COVID-19.."

Double edged blade

Despite the numerous good things and fortunes brought about by social media, it would not be a far-fetching argument to say that it is a double-edged blade that cuts both sides. Social media has brought with it as much negatives as the positives. Anyone who says that they don't believe in the existence of 'fake news' must surely be living in the world of denial. Everyone on social media especially has been trying to share information about the disease, some of which have been proven to be true while others not. Some of the information is even being spread by celebrities and people in power which further complicates the issue owing to their influence on the public.

For instance, US President Donald Trump has more than once claimed that chloroquine and hydrochloroquine drugs used to treat malaria, are effective in the treatment of Coronavirus. Trump has continued to spread this information on his news conferences and his twitter accounts despite medical experts, some of whom work for him, cautioning people against using the drugs as there is no proof of its curative abilities.

Fake statistics

Locally, Nairobi Governor Mike Sonko while citing a fake World Health Organization report recently claimed that consumption of alcohol is good in preventing the disease. Health experts also came out to discredit Sonko's claims and cautioned people against following his claims. The effects of the spread of fake news and misinformation can therefore not be underestimated and ignored and must take the efforts of the social media platform companies and the regulatory bodies to tackle. The social media companies should and must put up mechanisms that will make it hard for peddling of fake news. There has been a lot of efforts to curb the menace worldwide, but it is evidently not enough and more needs to be done especially at such a moment where there world is in a war with an invisible enemy which we don't know much about.

It might help if we took the following steps to identify what's true or false: Check the source of the message. If the source, for example, is a friend of a friend or a doctor friend or an unnamed, untraceable professor in some non-existent university, you are likely reading false information. Ask yourself the claim being made as much as you check the images as well as spelling mistake and grammatical errors. Double-check links before opening them. Netflix-usa.com is very different from netflix.com. If it is on WhatsApp, check if the message has been forwarded multiple times by looking at the arrows at the top of the message. Two arrows mean the message has been forwarded multiple times and might need more fact-checking. Finally, check other credible sources. If, say, something as important as a cure for COVID-19 is found, it will be reported on multiple, reputable sources. (WHO, CDC, KEMRI, MOH)

Douglas is a PR officer at IMG-Kenya Limited.

Deryl is a Corporate Communications Associate at VitalRay Health Solutions.



PR an anchor of hope and recovery for crisis

By Paul J. Oyier

The COVID-19 pandemic is changing the world of public relations and communications and with it, the way we approach this critical practice area. In the past weeks we have been inundated with stellar and not so stellar examples of PR in action during a crisis.

The world over, governments and inter-governmental organizations have taken a lead role in communicating to citizens, reassuring and sharing information that they can act on to have some semblance of control. President Donald Trump has been on one end of the scale with Elizabeth Arden of New Zealand on the other in terms of effectiveness. Locally, President Kenyatta to his credit acted faster than most world and African leaders to establish a National Emergency Response Committee. Cabinet Secretary for Health, Hon Mutahi Kagwe, has been the spokesperson of the NERC giving updates through daily press briefings and deputized by his Chief Administrative Secretary, Dr Mercy Mwangangi – favourite of the press corps for her calm and subject matter expertise-driven approach.

These world and government leaders have tried to approximate the six principles of crisis and emergency risk communication (CERC), namely, be first, be right, be credible, express empathy, promote action and show respect, with varying degrees of success. What has been clear though, is that it is a learning and refining experience for those humble enough to admit it and committed enough to change.

The Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) through its Panel of Experts on Crisis Management & Communication reached out to the Ministry of Health (MoH) and was invited by the Ministry of Tourism & Wildlife, in early and mid-March respectively to offer pro-bono advisory services as part of efforts to extend a helping hand rather than a critical hand in these trying times. We have been privileged to objectively assess government communications from the inside, while offering advice and practical help in solving issues around this particular crisis.

From that vantage point, it is clear that government communications is indeed in dire need of strengthening, structural reform and strategic planning and execution. A lot of this was captured in the Makali Taskforce on Government Communications, which made some radical recommendations, which if implemented will ensure we have a crisis-ready government from a communications perspective.

The MoH has an elaborate and impressive Risk Communication Strategy in place, but because there is a distinction between risk communication and crisis communication, the key question then became, what do we do when the crisis (or pandemic) strikes? The Risk Communication strategy does not address that and perhaps that is the reason, there is no proper framework for the communication response, compounded by the fact that all government communications on the pandemic are

being controlled from the Ministry of ICT, Innovation & Youth Affairs.

I would have recommended a ‘collaborate and coordinate’ approach as opposed to the prevalent ‘command and control’, which does not lend itself to agility and input from a variety of stakeholders who can add value. This would then empower communications teams in various ministries, departments and agencies to adapt the messages to their respective sectors and be more seized of their concerns and relay the same back to decision-makers.

The Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, for example is the only ministry to my knowledge, with a gazetted and sector-specific crisis management steering committee bringing in several stakeholders. I noticed an early and deliberate attempt by the Ministry to meet, listen and explore solutions with stakeholders. These meetings were targeted and with a clear aim: to put people and humanitarian interests through a health, labour and economic recovery plan for the sector. Such an approach by all ministries would yield better results from a crisis communications perspective.

Furthermore, because the government has a long-running trust deficit with the public, the best way to start bridging it is through transparent communication that demonstrates organizational performance with a view to encourage and incorporate feedback. In the absence of this, it will not achieve the communication impact it desires.

It lies with public relations and communications professionals under the PRSK, to help bring about this change not only in the public, but also in private and development sectors too. The value of public relations alongside most professions, will be questioned in the coming months and we must be ready with answers.

To be ready for that, I suggest five key things we must do:

• **Change our mindset**

We will have to accept that what worked may not work anymore and that our clients, audiences and stakeholders are seeing their organizations and world

differently and so must we.

• **Listen more keenly**

To change our mindset and to be more, we need to learn to listen keenly, to understand and know the pain-points of our audiences, clients and stakeholders

• **Have a strong bias towards strategic action**

We will need to show more than we tell or write, but even so, we will need to do that within the strategic locus of the organizations and clients we represent.

• **Bring measurement into every conversation**

What gets measured gets done. However,

beyond that measurement is the only way we will be able to demonstrate our value.

• **Collaborate more**

We do not have a monopoly of knowledge and so we should embrace collaboration within the profession and develop subject matter expertise away from generalist duties.

With such an approach we will see public relations as the anchor of hope and recovery through this crisis and beyond.

The writer is member of PRSK and a crisis communications expert

Chengachenga siruhusu

By Mzalendo Kemboi Amos



1. Nimewaza kuwazua, Mawasiliano pevu,
Uongozi tunazua, Sisi sote ni werevu,
Koti zetu tunavua, Hatujali nywele ndevu,
Wanahusiano mwema, Chengachenga siruhusu.

2. Umewadia wasaa, Tukabili hili janga,
Kumbuka hatuna saa, Utalamu ndio panga,
Tuepukane usaa, Uvumi ndio huchanga,
Wanahusiano mwema, Chengachenga siruhusu.

3. Umekithiri uongo, Enezwa mitandaoni,
Tutumieni ubongo, Ukweli kote nchini,
Mzima kama kigongo, Kenya baki kileleni,
Wanahusiano mwema, Chengachenga siruhusu.

4. Kumbatia ubunifu, Hamasisha umma,
Uvumbuzi kwa sufufu, Tuzamieni daima,
Kwa mioyo mikunjufu, Enezeni jumbe njema,
Wanahusiano mwema, Chengachenga siruhusu.

5. Wauguzi ndilo jeshi, Hebu tuwapige jeki,
Tutoe habari freshi, Tusiwafume mikuki,
Kukiwa utatanishi, Wafae siwataliki,
Wanahusiano mwema, Chengachenga hatutaki.

6. Ukarimu sisahau, Faraja kwa walofiwa,
Lishe bora si nahau, Wenye njaa tafikiwa,
Waso kazi sisahau, Omba watatunukiwa,
Wanahusiano mwema, Chengachenga siruhusu.

7. Mawasiliano tosha, Serikali tekeleza,
Maagizo si kuchosha, Kipuuza we taoza,
Heko kwa wanaopasha, Ya korona kumaliza,
Wanahusiano mwema, Chengachenga siruhusu.

8. Nidhamu yetu ni ngao, Korona tutakomesha,
Si vielelezo kwao, Wakenya sijepotosha,
Tusiwe na mshangao, Matumaini kupasha,
Wanahusiano mwema, Chengachenga siruhusu.

A person in a blue shirt is pointing at a screen. The screen displays various white geometric shapes (squares, circles, triangles, and a large arrow) on a dark blue background. The person's face is partially visible and slightly blurred.

Change communication inevitable for effective management

By Caroline Khamala

Change can occur in any organisation and can either bring a positive or a negative effect. Organisational change is one of the most painful and challenging moments for both the employee and the employers especially when tough decisions have to be made. Whenever change is introduced in the organisation, some or all staff experience some form of discomfort and thus create a barrier and resistance during the implementation period.

Organisation change is simply defined as the process in which an organisation changes its structure, strategies, operational methods, technologies or organisational culture and leadership to affect change within and the effects of these changes on the entity both internally and externally.

Conrad and Scott (2012) state that this process involves some pain, even when it is necessary. Such changes may for instance result in layoffs, reorganisation that cause as many problems as they solve, and alterations in previously satisfying jobs that are no longer as enjoyable.

Organisational change may be necessitated by a number of factors: the changing political environment, advancements in new communication technologies, crisis and other unexpected occurrences within or outside the organisation, the changing donor needs, leadership style among others.

Scholars such as Kotler (1996) suggested ways in which organisations can survive in the twenty first century ranging from eliminating the traditional management ways of doing things to embracing modern practices that are “characterised by attributes commonly described as vision;

contemporary values; quality mindset; stakeholder focus; speed orientation; innovativeness; flat structures; cross functionality; flexibility; global focusing; and networking.

According to a research report by Erin Jones titled, “The effects of Organisational Restructuring on Government Employee Locus of Control” most planned organisational change which take the form of mergers, reforms, restructurings and downsizings end up being implemented without first communicating the information to those who are affected. Inclusivity and effective communication are paramount at this stage.

During this period, continuous and constant communication is critical to ensure that employees not only understand but are also fully involved throughout the entire process. This is where strategic, effective and highly-skilled leadership plays a key role in the process to initiate the change to members through communication with the aim of reorganizing the organisation.

As it is expected, change may come with a lot of resistance or acceptance from employees. A complaint task force therefore should be constituted to handle any emerging issues raised to the satisfaction of every individual or groups. During the consultation process, the top management needs to ensure that staff are clearly informed about the process of restructuring using clear communication channels such as management-staff meeting or supervisor-subordinate meeting, email communication and other communication channels where applicable. Communication aids in ensuring that there is clarity in the

changes being implemented.

In terms of decision-making, unit heads may employ different approaches such as the top-down approach whereas some of them apply either the decentralized system. Some may opt for both centralized and decentralized depending on the prevailing circumstances.

It is also worth noting that at times management’s decision to restructure may not be influenced by activities happening in other organizations but guided by its strategic objectives and the direction they want to take in the long term.

An organisational structure should be developed by a team guided by the top leadership and clearly communicated to staff in terms of the direction the organization is taking, why, when, how and who is involved and affected.

In organisation change, the business structure has a great impact on the overall performance. This means that it is critical for company managers to place employees in the right position within the organization to ensure better performance since each person has a clear understanding of their specific roles and responsibilities. In addition, organisational culture and information technology may also influence its performance.

The bottom line is that in every change management process, organisations should ensure that there is inclusivity in every layer of the staff establishment. There is also need to create clear communication channels to guarantee smooth flow of information to eliminate ambiguity or speculation.

Incorporating PR strategy in the overall organisational planning

By **Lindah Mbaisi**



Truth is, organisations that downplayed the role of Public Relations in their overall business strategy will be the biggest losers during this global crisis period. It is very unfortunate that the PR function or communication value is only recognized and acknowledged during a crisis. The misconception that PR is a damage control tool must be dropped. The noble profession can only achieve its objectives when its activities are fully incorporated in the overall plan of the organisation.

Indeed, Public Relations provides the greatest value to an organisation when it is used strategically not just during this time when the whole world is engulfed in anxiety; but all the time. The economic impact of COVID-19 has been felt globally however the extent to which the current crisis will affect operations in organisations will depend on its ability to communicate.

PR should form part of all processes

While organisations are fighting to stay afloat, communication of this crisis will determine whether the relationships we have built survive or not. Now more than ever, this health crisis, has presented an opportunity for organisations to stay at top of the stack by use of effective communication strategies.

Amidst the chaos that the crisis has presented, it is time for organisations to send positive messages that promote brand values, strengthen community relations, and most importantly enhance online presence. A good business strategy is one that utilizes PR in all its processes.

Organisations need to keep the wheel rolling by using the appropriate PR activities to aid the organisation in monitoring the interests of its consumers and employees during a difficult time. Listening actively and responding effectively helps in identifying potential threats presented by COVID-19 that may cause conflict which could halt operations. Messages developed as guided by the PR strategy and activities will ensure the organisation reaches to its targeted audience hence achieve its overall goals.

The crisis that is COVID-19 is a clear indication that:

- A Public Relations strategy can no longer stand alone, it must form part of the business strategy to drive results for the organization as a whole.
- The Chief Executive Officers will give relevant and valuable information to the audience based on what Public Relations representatives' advice. Communications professionals are the eyes and ears of the organization.
- The role of PR practitioners during this crisis is critical. From adequately preparing the spokesperson(s) to setting the tone the communication being passed across and eventually how they deliver the message is a representation of the PR.
- The presence of a PR professional and their role in the boardrooms must not be reduced to merely being present. However, this is a role that must be earned through demonstration of value and measurable contribution to the organization's goals.

Even as organisations go digital by offering services online & making contact via phone calls /emails, PR demands that brands continue to give a professional/friendly image. As practitioners, this is not the time for us to hide behind a computer while intentionally or unintentionally ruin the relationships and reputations that we spent YEARS to build.

Through the PR representative, organisations must be prepared with the right strategies that will help them minimise the impact of any crisis. Evaluation of the crisis, its context and a step-by-step guide on how to survive through it. Organisations must continue to portray themselves as friendly, empathetic and provide solutions by showing that you are doing something about the crisis or situation at hand. It is crucial that we provide as much support as possible.

COVID-19 has not just presented us with a crisis, this is such an amazing time to learn. There is need to acknowledge that PR professionals have essential information and advice necessary to aid in effective decision-making processes. Let us step up and proficiently play our role during this defining moment.

Linda is a PR professional and founder Hans J. PR and Communications.

How to guarantee trust among stakeholders in a government office

By Nicholas Mureithi

Competency in social and communication skills is an essential ingredient in ensuring that leaders maintain public trust in State agencies. The current pandemic arising from the corona virus disease dubbed COVID-19, has revealed the dire need for leaders to muster the art of effective crisis communication. I must however commend the entire team led by Health Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe for a splendid job in constantly briefing the nation on the global contagion. Crisis situation arising in corporate entities both in public as well as private sectors need to be handled with utmost caution. This is based on the fact that any negative occurrence, tends to have a proportionate negative impact to the brand image. A dented image will subsequently take much more time, investment and effort to repair. Therefore, proper crisis communication planning needs to be established to handle pre, during and post crisis phases. The overall aim should be to not only safeguard the brand image, but to also preserve public trust in the brand.

Transparent and accountable

It is through clear, frequent and skilful communication that managing any form of crisis would guarantee sustained public trust. The mode of communication however, needs to be founded on transparency and accountability in the messages. The officials handling the crisis management process need to come out as open and honest in their communication for the public to build trust in the message. It is similarly important to maintain consistency in the timing, method and process of communication during any crisis. An integral component of any form of crisis communication is being accessible to the public. It involves being able and willing to respond to any unclear issues. Simplicity is key in delivering a clear message that is devoid of any ambiguity. The communication should thus be brief, relevant and factual. Use of visuals and illustrations can be an effective method in depicting a clear picture of the crisis at hand, including possible measures to address it.

Calm and reassuring

The sole item that the general public need in times of any crisis, is information. It is through a smooth flow of information that they receive reassurance. This brings out the need to gather crucial information fast enough and to subsequently convey truthful messages promptly. As a communicator during crisis, one needs to resolve to be the trusted and reassuring voice throughout the crisis. However, it is necessary to plan the mode of communication in advance. The person charged with the responsibility of disseminating the information needs to not only remain calm and eloquent but also undoubtedly firm and resolute. A good strategy of attaining firmness and guaranteeing an assertive delivery of the message is to be direct and straight to the point. Skirting around issues results in suspicion that the message being communicated might be false.

Empathise

Public officials for instance, are required to have the capacity to clearly understand the feelings and experiences of the general public. They should be able to detect and address the people's emotions and frame of mind. This calls on them to communicate cautiously, appreciating that citizens have feelings and expectations. A tactical approach in this, would be to strike a balance between avoiding to promise too much, but to equally over-deliver in the process. Members of the public want to feel appreciated and respected. Therefore, the messages ought to be packaged in a manner that recognises their plight and pain or suffering if any. The person communicating the messages should openly show sincere interest and obvious empathy in the grievances. He/she should provide encouragement and assurance that the crisis situation is ably under control.

Display confidence

Maintaining public trust cannot be effective if there is lack of confidence in the team handling the crisis. Confidence enables whoever is delivering the message

to speak articulately, clearly and with certainty. The messages should therefore be filled with a bold sense of sureness. Confidence breeds credibility in the message. The delivery of crisis communication messages should be assuring and eliciting hope. Confidence also enables the speaker to muster effective non-verbal gestures that aid in delivering the message to the target audience.

Allow queries and feedback

Finally, to achieve success in the entire process, there is need to clarify any unresolved issues. Provide an opportunity for the related stakeholders to seek clarification and give feedback based on the way forward.

Resolution and recovery are preferably the final stages in ensuring that public trust and goodwill are not only built, but also preserved. Feedback in a post-crisis stage enables criticism and an analysis of possible areas of improvement in the future. A healthy communication flow results in an atmosphere of trust and sense of inclusivity among all parties involved.

The writer is a Communications Officer in the Office of the Auditor-General

STUDY ONLINE

Explore World-Class PR Practices



CIPR

CHARTERED INSTITUTE
OF PUBLIC RELATIONS



www.simonpage.ac.ke



+254 724 146 609, +254 755 661 290



progress@simonpage.ac.ke



16th Floor, Barclays Plaza
Market Street, Nairobi CBD



Pandemic redefining way of life

By Ann Odera

Since its emergence in Asia few months ago the COVID-19 pandemic has spread to every continent of the world and on its wake, a health crisis that has defined our generation. Today, it arguably poses the greatest challenge ever faced by humanity since the World War II. The COVID-19 pandemic as a global crisis, has however awoken us to realities of the time with the following lessons that are worth pondering;

The Power of Internet Connectivity and Technology

The internet has since its roll out in the 1960s transformed the way we conduct our businesses with magnitude of impact now manifest our undertakings and specifically how it limits physical presence at the workplace. Coupled with the Internet is technology. It is worth noting that since the efforts to reduce person to person contact began around the globe in mid-March 2020, most people have not physically gone to their workplace but have been working effectively. In Kenya, His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta directed “State and public officers with pre-existing medical conditions and/or aged 58 years and above to take leave or work from home”.

Many organisations have also allowed

their employees to do the same. The power of technology has today enabled more and more people to continue communicating despite not meeting physically let alone the amount of money that was used for business travels. Looking into the future, employers should review whether working from home outweighs working in the office in terms of saving on utilities, fuel, time.

• Innovations thrive during Crisis

The COVID-19 disease has presented unique conditions that has allowed innovators to create rapid, impactful change. The disease opened opportunities to generate ideas that led to innovations more than just simply opportunities to solve problems. The most remarkable case in point is Mombasa where the County Governor, Hassan Joho and Kenya Trade Network Agency (KenTrade) Chairman Suleiman Shahbhal collaborated for a timely intervention that won plaudit across the nation. They mooted the idea of reducing the Corona virus spread among the high risk population, mainly commuters who depend on the ferry as a means of transport to and from work.

The sanitizing spray booth, first of its kind in Kenya, was built and tested in two days before it was installed at the Island side of

the crossing channel and proved effective especially among the poor who did not have Physical Protection Equipment (PPEs). In Italy, a start-up engineering company began quickly using 3D printers to create the valves used in ventilators that were being used to save lives. With advanced technology, individuals, organization and nations can leverage on innovative ideas or technologies to assist business functions event during crisis. The right technology can help to improve crisis response, streamline processes, save time and lives.

• Allocation funding to boost healthcare and health education

The Government of Kenya has in recent decade prioritized on improving the healthcare system, however with the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, the effort has shifted to crisis response with lessons on how to effectively plan for the unknowns and especially complex crisis like COVID-19. During the advent of Coronavirus some of the mainstream media did highlight the contradiction of patients who were scheduled to be airlifted abroad for specialized treatment in countries with more advanced medical care.

It is possible that these patients gave



consideration to the available options internally, options which are considered either expensive or unavailable. Some elites in the African continent have been known to travel out of the continent to seek treatment abroad rather than invest in healthcare in their own countries. With the grounding of flights in most affected countries, even those who could afford the best medication in the world became helpless. It would be important to follow up with these patients or their guardians to know how they managed during the crisis.

On the issue of health education, maintaining personal hygiene or social etiquette such as washing hands, wearing masks or use of hand sanitizer are not new phenomena. The education received from the Ministry of Health and voluntarily by media houses during this period was commendable but should not be enhanced during crisis or entirely left to commercial advertisers.

• Business Continuity Plan (BCP)

Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is a proactive business process that lets a company understand potential weaknesses and threats to their organization in times of crisis. In early 2020, global consultancy firm Mercer

surveyed companies around the world to learn how many were prepared for downtime from events such as the spread of Corona Virus. They found that 51 percent had no plans on how to address this type of emergency.

A business continuity plan takes all contingencies into account, and right now, businesses could be realizing they didn't even imagine some of the events that could bring their operations to a halt. The challenge is therefore for organizations including state entities that do not have Business Continuity Plans in place, to scan their environment or best think of the worst case scenario to enable them prepare should a disaster strike. Importantly, communication professionals as sources of communication during crisis and should be part of the team that plans for such eventualities. "Don't wait until you're in a crisis to come up with a crisis plan." Phil McGraw.

• Climate Change and the environment

The late Professor Wangari Mathai, the 2004 Nobel laureate, once said that we need to promote development that does not destroy our environment. The global temperature has been rising due to the greenhouse gases which are produced by human activities. The pandemic has affected almost every corner of the world, causing billions of people to stay in their homes in government imposed lockdowns as safety measure. However, it also refreshing to see photos and videos of animals in some parts of world taking relaxing strolls and wandering through the streets as humans are told to stay inside.

The sudden reduction in the industrial emissions from human activities within the few weeks was unprecedented and there was significant drop in air pollution in many parts of the world. "New York has had exceptionally high carbon monoxide numbers for the last year and a half," said Columbia Professor Róisín Commene in an interview with the BBC, adding that it was the cleanest he had ever seen. But when life will eventually resume to normalcy, of which I am positive it will, the challenge of the "reset back to the Global Village" will be to maintain the positive effects of working from home, curfew or lock-down that has over the years degraded our environment.

Public relations professionals should be trained or they need to proactively adopt imaginative approaches communicate to the public to the extent that later will be motivated to be conscious of the environment since continued pollution will lead to irreversible changes in ecosystems around the world.

• Role of media

It is evident that today the news media plays a constructive role in our society-from collecting and packaging information to creating or raising public awareness towards the perceptions or attitude of certain issues. In Kenya for example, we have been forced to consume politics of the day at the expense of development. The coverage of COVID-19, enabled journalist to shift from politics and focus on other issues which is worth admiring. The United States of America news media for example had gained momentum on coverage of the elections that are expected to be held in November 2020.

The various conflicts in the Middle East and closer home the "Kieleweke" and "Tanga Tanga" political cleavages and the 2022 succession politics that have dominated our screens. If communicators can shift focus on more developmental issues such as environment, education, technology or health and treat them with the enthusiasm that COVID19 has been given, then news media will be playing a positive role in transforming the society. By the way whose responsibility was it to demystify or simplify such terms that we repeatedly heard such as Social Distance Modeling, Quarantine and PPEs that were being used during daily briefing broadcast live to the public on radio and TV? Why was it assumed that all viewers or listeners understood understands these terms?

The COVID-19 pandemic as a global crisis has indeed redefined us and our human existence. It has on its wake, exposed us to overwhelming social, economic and political crises that will leave deep scars. This global crisis has thrust on our shoulder the burden of hope that we have to carry on as we nervously walk into the future. In it lies the lessons of opportunities in crisis!

The writer is the Head of Corporate Communication at KenTrade

Relooking politics and leadership

By Njeri Gathigia



'We shall never change our political leaders until we change the people who elect them.' - Mark Skousen, American economist and renowned writer

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? That's the age old question; the answer usually depends on who you ask.

The same question, albeit worded differently, could be asked in discussions regarding the Country's politics and leadership. In Africa, politicians are synonymous with bad leadership. Consensus on whether it is the voters who elect bad leaders into power or it's the trappings of power that turns politicians into bad leaders has been sought for a long time to no avail.

In my view, however, the answer to the question, "who came first, the voters or the leaders?" is a categorical "the voters!" From among ourselves, we the voters, choose who we think will best represents us, our ideologies, principles and interests. The norm in Kenya usually, is to elect the loudest, most boisterous politician and then spend the next five years complaining about how we were hoodwinked when the so called 'politicians' don't live up to the hype.

In the words of Mark Skousen, an American economist and renowned writer, *'We shall never change our political leaders until we change the people who elect them.'*

Most surprising in these five-year cycles of comedy, is the fact that somehow as we get towards the electioneering period, by this I mean a year or so before the general elections when the campaigns really heat

up and all bets are off; politicians find their way to the remotest parts of their regions in search of votes. After elections however, once *'Mheshimiwa'* has successfully captured the seat, amnesia sets in and he suddenly and conveniently can't remember where the beaten path to the people who elected him into office is.

For five years, Mhesh wines and dines in the most exclusive hotels of the world, you know...those places where his whole village combined cannot afford to buy a bottle of water. The 'honourable leader' hops from one plane to another in the name of benchmarking tours. Every once in a while however, Mhesh will take a break from enjoying the tax payers bankrolled luxuries to shout and threaten dire consequences should his salary not be increased by a few hundred thousand shillings.

Meanwhile back in his constituency/ County, the electorate continues to languish in poverty, life becomes unbearable, the school dropout rate increases, the number of teenage pregnancies hits the roof, unemployment bites, crime becomes the order of the day, social amenities become an unattainable dream and the community swears that next time...next time they will do better! Next time they will seriously vote for leaders who have their interest at heart. But the next time never comes because the more things change, the more they remain the same.

It is not easy to control an empowered electorate. Disempowered people are the easiest to manipulate at will. So they shun every opportunity to empower their people and shoot down any proposal that would lighten the burden of Wanjiku. They make it impossible for Wanjiku to have even one night of peaceful rest, where she doesn't have to worry about where the next meal will come from, or where she will lay her head come night time. They ensure that she is so pressed down by the need for survival that she has no time to look up and realize they, politicians, are emptying the public coffers dry.

Our leadership is evidently a direct reflection of the people that we are, our ideals and standards. It is a reflection of how we think of ourselves and what we think we deserve. Politics and leadership should not have to be synonymous with bad leadership. We have had political leaders who have stood out as beacons of hope for good leadership, leaders who have committed to emancipate their people from the shackles of poverty, empowering their people and developing their countries. In Africa, the likes of Nelson Mandela, Thomas Sankara, Paul Kagame and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere have proven that it is possible for politicians to be good leaders.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the 35th President of USA affirmed that "We the people are the boss and we will get the kind of political leadership, be it good or bad, that we demand and deserve." If we want good leadership then we, the voters, need to do better, we need to demand better from the electorate, but first...we must choose better.



PR and Current Affairs are not mutually exclusive in practice

By Reuben Wanjala & Nephath Mbau



For many years now, the greatest enemy to any kind of progress has been a misinformed public. It appears that most people, if not everyone, have a psychological need to believe in conspiracy theories even if they have no basis at all. People are always looking forward to something new and interesting. If the truth isn't available, lies will always be developed to fill this space.

This tendency to believe in half-truths and baseless claims to support probabilities is what has greatly undercut the work of Public Relations departments. With a promising rise in Public Relations practice in organizations, misinformation has likely risen too to counter this. The prevailing rampaging of the Coronavirus, COVID19, is yet more proof that even the most organized and well-structured PR campaigns are futile in the face of misinformation. This is of course made possible by the increased reach of social media in the West and the Rest.

Social media

We have witnessed how powerful social media can be. It is the most effective way to send information, both wrong and right. Rogue internet and social media users have taken this opportunity to develop conspiracies about pandemics, like COVID19, and floated the all over social media. If there is not an effective counter strategy to counter the lies, people conspicuously start believing in them and doing what the messages stipulate. Other than the original developer of the message and those who share without verifying, we see no foul play if an unsuspecting individual in the remote areas of Turkana or Baringo believes them to be true. COVID19 is a very new disease and are desperate to try out anything new. In such a scenario, the biggest crime would have been committed by those in authority or those responsible for sending out the right messages. As PR practitioners, it is our responsibility to ensure that we establish an ethical order into which, a large majority can subscribe to.

Social media & Law

It is true that the proliferation of social media has made it extremely hard for messages to be disseminated through the right channels and serve the intended purpose. What is also true is that countering the effects of misinformation can be a tall order for any PR practitioner especially if they do not have the

requisite knowledge on the subject at hand. It is incumbent upon all PR practitioners to be well-versed with current affairs. Professionals should now realize that PR is not an organization thing. Its applications are now wider than ever. One of the most important things to be aware of in these times is the law. In this case, studying or being a fulltime scholar in PR is not only limited to how well you are able to communicate and be understood by your audience. The organization can come into conflict, real and imagined, with the law and you will be required to offer comments that will probably save your company or spell doom. You can't do that effectively if you haven't mastered the critical aspects of the law that apply or are necessary to your company's area of practice. Being versed in a wide area of subjects will give you a sense of responsibility and actually identify messages intended to misinform the public or simply strike an agenda.

A knowledgeable communicator will call for a continuous audit of the information that the organization sends out. This will help in understanding if the targeted group is able to unpack the messages that they receive. For the audience to be able to decode messages and information from an organization, the organization should develop and maintain a consistent communication pattern and also have a consistent source of the same.

Access to Information Act, 2016

Laws that relate to PR practice come in handy. For example, Section 3 (b) and C of the Access to information act, 2016, offers a framework through which a person can access information held by an institution. The public officers Ethics Act 2003 further prescribe a raft of qualities and attributes that every public and or state officer should have at all times for them to effectively serve the public good. Public officials are required to follow uniform rules and standard operating procedures that (attempt to) treat everyone equally. Where PR person fails to allow themselves to be driven by these principles, the public good is the one that suffers. When the customers, and stakeholders realize that their public interest is given a back seat in any organization, the resultant is eroded public trust.

What we have to ensure that we effectively use the only weapon that we have: Correct information.

Blunder or Strategy: Revisiting Presidential Messaging in Kenya

By Paul Mugambi

The events that followed after Kenya confirmed its patient zero on March 12th, 2020 confirmed that this pandemic would be a major disruptor. Two days after the first case, President Kenyatta arrived at his office on Harambee Avenue in a navy-blue Mercedes Benz car with civilian number plates that were fixed upside down. This we came to learn was because the President had bad news for the country. Schools, offices, businesses, borders were closed and it became a rollercoaster from there. The shocks associated with this closure began to be felt shortly after— businesses collapsing, job losses, weak shilling quickly joined the fold. The basic needs remained the ultimate reasons for anyone to get out of their homes – food, water and shelter vide rent.

President Uhuru Kenyatta's communications team gets the marks for using the "bully pulpit" to get their principal's message to the public. The follow-up news stories in Swahili and vernacular (Kikuyu) radio stations and, articles in print media with summaries of the speeches helped in spreading the message far and wide. The President's update was pegged on the need to show the seriousness of the pandemic. More points for the optics.

However, many would argue that the President's approach in crisis messaging was short sighted. While his counterparts were introducing measures that would cushion their citizens, his approach seemed more economic and elitist.

For a slow-burn crisis live the COVID-19 pandemic, the thinking must be long-term and definitely beyond the headlines. This is not just a public health pandemic, but a food security crisis with economic and security implications. His COVID-19 measures do not address the multiplicity of the challenges at hand. While the President understands that majority of the productive population works in the informal sector, the content of his speeches appears very short-term and pro- business. Little, if any of the measures so far address the basic.

It would have helped if from the beginning he had mirrored the maize flour subsidies given ahead of the 2017 elections. He could have done a similar thing for the COVID-19 pandemic with maize flour, water and electricity bills. Such steps would have done two things from a messaging point of view: settled the worries of the majority of the population and given him the public goodwill that he cared about the

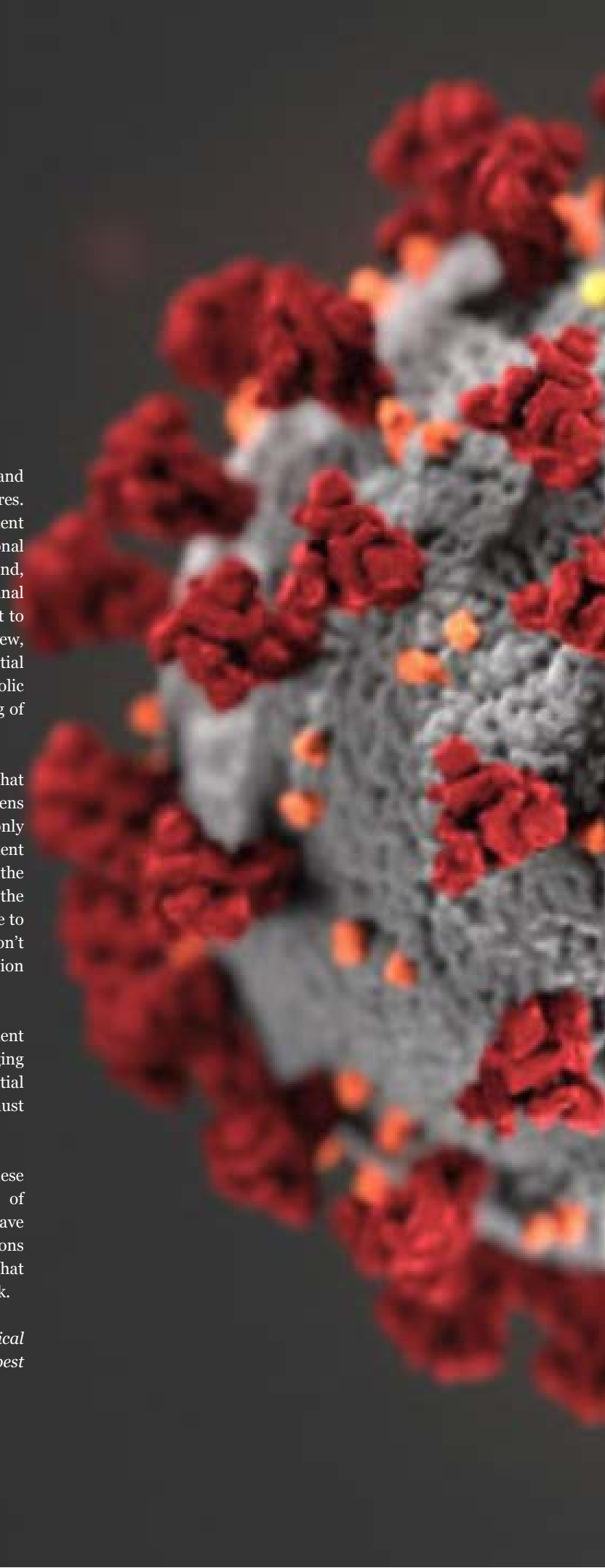
people and, softened the public's reception of the draconian interventions needed to limit the spread of the disease. The messaging priority ought to show that it is possible to care about the people and the economy, without reeking avarice of capitalism.

It was odd that in his second speech, the new thing –hitherto unsaid by his officers—was about the Google project for internet balloons to fly over Kenya. Yes, the Google balloons made it into the Presidential speech as part of the measures to deal with COVID-19. The census data released in February 2020 shows that only 9.9 million people use the internet in the country. Of these, 6.3 million people, are youth aged between 15 and 34. Now, remember, this is a country where 75% of the population is under the age of 35 years. With schools closed and loss of means of livelihood for the 83% of Kenyans employed in the informal sector, getting the internet into the country at subsidized rates, helps keep this restless population busy. This was a great strategy for stability that ought to have been played up in the messaging.

While Google finally had the permission to bring in the balloons and get more Kenyans online, the returns on the amount of data they will harvest from the region's largest economy is phenomenal. At some point, when this crisis is over, any possible mischief orchestrated by a tech multinational in a developing country shall be revisited, and as always, there shall be political casualties. The messaging ought to have anticipated that.

The quality of copywriting in presidential messaging also came to the fore in the president's third address. After he had spoken, it was unclear whether he had banned any movement "within" the Nairobi Metropolitan region, or if he had isolated the region from the rest of the country. It was fortunate, but embarrassing, that moments after the speech ended, the Chief of Staff had to clarify the Principal's message. The quick reaction from the Chief of Staff saved the day, but the communication pitfall was the failure to anticipate the lack of clarity in the first place.

The day after, President Kenyatta had an interview with journalists Gatonye Mbugua (Kameme FM), Jeff Kuria (Inooro FM) and Karanja wa Kamau (Coro FM), all three vernacular radio stations which broadcast in Kikuyu language. It was great that the communications team anticipated



In a crisis, presidential communication is about hope, inspiration, and persuasion. It is about laying out a coherent strategy to assuage fears of the citizens, markets, and the international community, that the country has a plan to mitigate the crisis and move beyond the crisis.

the need for the President to clarify his message and speak some more about the partial lockdown measures. However, the choice of having a Kikuyu president speaking to a Kikuyu audience at a time of national crisis, in a country where ethnic tensions run high and, where presidential power is construed as a communal heritage (a birthright to some Kikuyu people) ought to be questioned. From a political communications view, and even in crisis communications at the presidential level, where national unity is the enduring symbolic optic, the ethnic angle in the presidential messaging of the COVID-19 crisis should never have come up.

Clarity of messaging is critical. Remember jokes that came about post the Presidential address when netizens said “we don’t care what the president has said but only what the police have understood”? When the president condemns the excessive use of police force in the implementation of the dusk-to-dawn curfew and the same time giving the impression that the police have to mete out “the full force of the law” to those who don’t adhere to the terms of the curfew, brings forth confusion and the double entendre is unhelpful.

In the interim, it is important to note that the President is the cheerleader for our nation. As such, his messaging ought to be that of hope. The crust of any presidential communication, be it about lockdown or tax relief must be hinged on the unshakeable pillar of hope.

As Kenya battles the COVID-19 pandemic, these are some of the things that the team in charge of presidential messaging should worry about. They have to think strategies, policies, measures and repercussions through. Because once the President stands on that podium to address the country, there isn’t going back.

Paul Mugambi is a PhD Candidate in Political Communications at Corvinus University of Budapest and a Communications practitioner

How to appear presentable on screen via video conferencing

By Alfred Kidaha



Television commentators who normally look flawless and dazzling are now looking like “something else” when commenting or reporting on some matters away from the TV set. Many appear gloomy and dull making viewers to scrutinize bad looks more than the substance of their talk or interviews.

Many IT professionals and media observers have written fairly enough on the technical aspects of how to use these conferencing tools, but few have drawn us to the lessons of how to enhance the image of those using the tools. From my observation and views sampled from some of those who use these gadgets, I offer some lessons not in any particular order of importance. When on zoom, Microsoft, Google or any other video conferencing tool, please do not recline the laptop screen away from you. When you do, you are taking a picture of you from a “worm’s eye view” position. You will only show us your big nose. Make it a bit straight.

Regarding lighting, behave the way you do when taking normal pictures. Sit against the light, but not directly. In other words, stay away from flat frontal lighting or light at the back. If you are a regular on TV, invest in some good lighting like

I noticed with Dr Bitange Ndemo and Senior counsel Abdulahi Ahmednasir. They had more interesting light from the side of the subject.

“One doesn’t need to invest in anything, all they need is good natural light and position their gadget well. Unless one lives in an igloo then there would be a problem. Even so, they can sit by the door so that they don’t lose network,” says Dr Joy Omwoha of Technical University of Kenya. This is also good advice for those who do not necessarily appear on TV at night or in the very early morning talk shows.

Framing

Framing is also a very important point to consider. Examine all parts of the frame carefully before you get on air. This is the time to look for more destructing elements such as a pole or pillar coming out of your head because it’s behind you. For those who live in SQs where many of us begun, it could be a Green (Gor)/blue (Ingwe) underwear hanging on that nail on the wall.

Background

A good background is a must for someone appearing on TV or a teacher conducting a session online. It is a set and we should

strive to achieve even a quarter of what TV set look look like. Dr Nancy Booker, of Aga Khan University offers her advice on background and says, “Could they also invest in some nice background. It’s a set remember? They can get ideas of where they could get some not-so-expensive painting. One can get some in traffic and if you bargain well, you can get a good buy. Ask for *bei ya lockdown*.”

There is a good reason as to why Andrew Boyd, author of introduction to broadcast journalism said, that a good presenter should have the Hollywood actor/actress looks. This creates a first impression and sometimes even to audience who are familiar with us, we might appear as strangers. Do not scare your audience and if possible, do some light make-up on your face.

Audience

Remember your audience is looking for content on why they should watch you and not the guest in the next channel or the next preacher streaming live on Facebook.

Alfred is a lecturer of Journalism at Multimedia University

Vulnerability: PLWDS have been forgotten in the COVID fight

By Macdonald Ogambi

The government is putting in place measures to ensure that citizens are not affected by the economic impact of the pandemic by increasing cash allocations for persons with severe disability.

My concern is however directed to the fact that Persons Living with Disability (PLWD) have a higher vulnerability to the COVID-19 as most of them depend on assistance from members and caregivers to be able to conduct their day to day activities making the observation of social distance a nightmare. Moreover, some disabilities come with health conditions that increase the vulnerability to contracting the virus. Similarly, the persons with disability depend heavily on others for assistance in ensuring that they observe the high standard of hygiene that is highly recommended in dealing with the virus. The situation is not made any better by the fact that the infrastructure is not conducive in most cases thus limiting accessibility.

Targeted messages

It is on this background that the government should give special attention to this vulnerable group. One way on how this can be done is by developing messages targeted at persons with disabilities specifically on how they can protect themselves from the disease. To achieve this, communication experts as well as experts on disability issues and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) should work closely with the government and health practitioners in developing these messages.

First, the messages should be designed to reach the different forms of disabilities that we have such as the blind and the deaf. Beyond having messages that target the persons living with disabilities as regards the preventive measures against the disease, the messages need to inform the caregivers on the best way to take care of persons with disabilities as regards the observation of hygiene of the people they are taking care of as well as that of the assistive devices.

For persons with persons with disabilities that require constant medication and constant medication and checkups need information on where to get these services particularly at these time of uncertainty. Apart from communication, the ministry of health should consider including disability issues as they train and equip doctors in dealing with the corona virus disease as this will go a long way in ensuring that they get proper attention whenever needed. It is therefore important that as they consider several groups as vulnerable groups and therefore require special attention, persons with disabilities should be considered as such.

Ogambi is a Masters in Corporate Communication Student at Multimedia University of Kenya and a person living with disability.





The resilience challenge in crisis

By Derek Bbanga

We are living in unprecedented times and level of stress and fear are shooting through the roof. According to the Harvard Business Review, the key goal in managing dynamic and unpredictable challenges is resilience – the ability to survive and thrive through unpredictable, changing, and potentially unfavorable events.

Research has shown that whenever an event occurs around us, such as a pandemic like this, our emotional brain, tags that event as either a reward or a threat. The tag is an emotion. Reward emotions are typically positive while threat emotions negative. This emotion tag is communicated to the thinking brain, which involves structures such as the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex helps us determine good from bad, better from best, and it helps us anticipate behaviour and determine the behavioural response to events. The way you feel influences the decisions you make and the behaviour you display.

The emotional tag sent from the emotional brain interacts in a way with the thinking brain that can either enhance or impair its functioning. More specifically, this research has shown that positive emotional tags, such as feeling satisfied, valued or useful, tend to enhance the functioning of our prefrontal cortex, helping us think more openly, creatively and laterally. As such, when we experience positive emotions, either consciously or unconsciously, we tend to be more open to new ideas, be more engaged and willing to do difficult things and develop new solutions and we tend to think more deeply about issues and see more options. Positive emotions also increase dopamine levels, which are important for interest in things and learning.

Conversely, negative emotional tags, such as feeling concern, worry, frustration or stress, tend to limit the functioning of our prefrontal cortex, narrowing our thinking and limiting our interpretation of events. These negative emotions tend to diminish our cognitive resources. As a result, we become biased in our views, lose our capacity to objectively evaluate situations and conceptualise our best responses to them. You may have experienced this in some people's reaction to the pandemic when they became anxious and began panic buying and hoarding. The science on emotions has found that the influence emotions have on our decisions, behaviour and performance is both conscious and unconscious, productive and unproductive.

If you look into the science of emotions, you'll find that the way we feel influences three very important parts of ourselves. Firstly, the way we feel influences the way we think and the decisions we make. For example, you don't ask the boss for a pay rise or more resources when they are in a bad mood due to having laid off other employees- you know what the answer will be. Secondly, the way we feel influences our behaviour. Where do emotions show up? In our facial expressions, body language and tone of voice. Because of this, they are fundamental to how we interact, build rapport, connect and collaborate with others. Finally, the way we feel influences our performance. For instance, people perform best when they feel valued, cared for, consulted, or when they feel like they are doing meaningful work.

The writer is a Genos Certified Emotional Intelligence Facilitator.

Email: derek.bbanga@publicimageafrica.com

Time to revisit approaches to health communication campaigns

By Stephen Osomba

Despite the spirited efforts put forth by the government, there has been a great deal of non-compliance by the public on health safety advisories. A majority of people haven't grasped the seriousness of the situation with many willingly disregarding safety measures communicated by the government. Pleas to practice social distancing, sanitize, and wearing medical masks have largely gone unheeded even though the virus is substantially deadly.

Negligence by sections of the public brings to fore the role and approach to effective health communication campaigns in behaviour change. Conceivably, the two key questions one would ask are: why are some members of the public not observing prescribed COVID-19 safety precautions despite the seriousness of the disease? Is the communication approach taken by the government defective?

Communication issues on COVID-19 Pandemic

Majority of the people could still be ignorant about the dangers posed by COVID-19 with many perceiving it like a normal flu. This has been brought about by the substantial spread of misinformation throughout social media which is now markedly very pervasive. As a result, health communication efforts by the government is lost in a sludge of propaganda. While the government has been able to take action against some perpetrators of fake news, social media is too large a platform to be effectively supervised.

Furthermore, some members of the public wrongly assume that they aren't susceptible to the virus and consequently downgrade the severity. The reduced perceived susceptibility and severity motivate them to disregard prescribed safety measures.

Perhaps, the biggest drawback on the ongoing COVID-19 health communication campaign by the government has been a failure to accommodate and address

the urgent needs of the vulnerable population. The economic challenges they face also inhibit them from frequently washing their hands and wearing medical masks. This is further compounded by the fact that they don't have savings to draw upon during a lockdown.

Appropriate approach to health communication

The gist of any health communication effort is to model positive behaviour. However, shepherding the desired action among the target audience is a daunting task. To this end, it is important to take up a strategic approach when engaging in health communication campaigns. This calls for an understanding of the operating conventional wisdom, health concepts, language, social norms, and priorities for different cultures as well as settings. A further consideration is also given to health literacy, internet access, and media exposure.

A typical health communication campaign aims at increasing risk perception so that the target audience understands the severity of the disease and reinforcing the positive behaviours that mitigate the risks of infection.

Communication Campaign

There can never be a perfect health communication campaign. Each campaign is unique and draws upon a different, special approach. In times of a pandemic, communication specialists need to be dynamic and agile in their execution throughout the crisis. Further, it is critical to constantly review ongoing communication efforts and make speedy adjustments to keep the campaign on track. If left unchecked, things can fall off the wagon real quick leading to a complete health disaster. The ongoing COVID-19 health communication campaign in Kenya hasn't dealt with all barriers to behaviour change and as a result, the efficacy is somehow limited. Granted, in any campaign, there is a need to focus on cues to action that are meaningful and appropriate for the target population as well as the need to increase the availability of support and needed services. This will go a long way in empowering individuals to change or improve their health conditions.

Stephen is a Communication & Marketing Specialist based in Nairobi





Social media propagating crisis

By Marren Akong'o

Social media can fuel crisis to unprecedented heights. As the Coronavirus crisis was escalating in China attracting a global attention, public reactions on social media about mistreatment of the whistle blowers by authorities escalated the crisis. Dr. Li and the Kenya airways employee created awareness about the crisis- a move that was aimed at alleviating danger during a pre-crisis stage. However, by disclosing sensitive information the posts catalysed the crisis.

During crisis there can be information void because so many things happen at once. As people seek information from all the available sources, social media quickly fills this void, unfortunately sometimes with misinformation. Unlike in traditional media, unverified information about causes, treatment and prevention of COVID-19 are posted by “experts” on social media platforms.

Before this virus made its way to Africa, there were unconfirmed reports that Africans, children and young adults were immune to the virus. Misinformation on social media is sometimes accidental, coincidental or even deliberate and due to interactivity, this spreads faster and easier during crisis. The danger of this is a lot of people are likely to ignore safety measures prescribed by the Government hence, compromising the fight against this disease.

An efficient tool in managing crisis

When Dr. Li informed the world about Coronavirus, its symptoms and contagious nature; his parents had also fallen ill at that time which raised global attention to the crisis. Videos of individual experiences with the disease

shared via social media links dispelled rumours and provided accurate information about symptoms and prevention of transmission of COVID-19.

Insufficient information heightens crises and therefore, Governments and organizations can tap on social media capabilities for consistent and prompt communication. Studies have shown that organizations that maintain their own blogs and use dialogue in response can easily cope with crises and neutralize their consequences.

Social media reports enabled quick response to sale of fake Coronavirus testing kits in Kenya and recycling of used masks in China and now contact tracing. Other cases that may exacerbate the crisis include suspected infections, poor living and health conditions, racial discrimination and lack of compliance to quarantine and curfew policies.

Post-Coronavirus crisis management

Governments and organizations must prepare to manage the devastating effects of Coronavirus pandemic. Massive loss of lives, jobs and economic meltdown has already begun. Records of personal experiences showing disease management and recovery when shared on social media platforms give hope and help people cope with difficulty. Jokes, chats and humour about the pandemic offer comic relief that is useful in emotional healing. Governments, scientists and psychologists will find accumulated social media content useful in counselling, inspirational teaching and healing purposes.

Marren is a lecturer in the department of Communication, Media and Journalism, Rongo University

It is time for PR Professionals to take up leadership roles

By Hillary Sang

In times of crisis like the current one against the global coronavirus pandemic, communication plays a critical role. It is the time to disseminate safety protocols and inspire hope as the situation is being addressed by various experts. Various leaders across the globe are now sharpening their communication skills. While leadership is the engine of every successful industry, communication is its fuel.

An astute leader must sharpen communication skills so as to inspire colleagues as they ascend to leadership positions. The big question is why aren't communication professionals leading? While at PRSK Summit in November 2019, Wausi Walya, PR chief at Kenya Tourism Board hinted that she might be considering running for a senate position in her home county. Arik Karani, head of communication at Athi Water Works is among the many Communication professionals in the country who are on the road to acquiring legal certification. Essentially, once you are at management position heading a corporate communication unit, you have hit a ceiling. But there is a way out.

According to Ms Dorcas Wainaina, the former Executive Director of the Institute of Human Resource Management (IHRM), being a CEO is not a preserve of accountants and business executives only. These are the steps PR professionals can follow as they scale up the corporate ladder:

Know and brand thyself

Know your strengths and weaknesses, if you are an introvert then start by adopting some extraverted behaviors, mingle with people freely and try to strike conversations that will break the ice for you. Think of a nickname that resonates well with your publics or colleagues., something that is quite common with politicians. Success isn't always about greatness, it's about consistency. Consistent hard work gains success. Greatness will come - Dwayne Johnson aka The Rock.

Draft a personal development plan

No one can teach you how to be a CEO, there is no school for CEOs. Passion for your job will drive you to achieve your goal. You need energy to fuel your passion, pursue your goals with temerity.

Learn how to handle office politics

No one can teach you how to handle office politics. These politics will always be there at the cadre of the job you hold but are severe at the CEO level. Have undaunted courage and do not hold grudges. On the other hand, do not be too loose since that is the surest way of losing a job.

Connect with the culture of the people around you and build relationships

Perfect the art of employee relations, media relations and public participation. Although wide consultations and comparisons are essential to decision-making, remember certain decisions are personal and you must have a firm stand. Remember to manage your ego, it can bring down a leadership record developed in thirty years within three hours.

It would be good to add on to the list of our colleagues who have managed to take up leadership roles. They include Dr Alfred Mutua, Governor Machakos County as featured exclusively in previous edition of PR Digest, David Omwoyo CEO for Media Council of Kenya, Dr Ezekiel Mutua, CEO for Kenya Film Classification Board and Dr Naim Bilal, CEO for KBC. Others are former Principal Secretary for Broadcasting Fatuma Hirsi, former Statehouse Spokesman and Kenya High Commissioner to UK Manoah Esipisu and of course the current Statehouse Spokesperson Madam Kanze Dena.

The writer is a Public Relations professional and member of PRSK





Strategies for Kenya to adapt to global COVID-19 effect

By Angela Njeri

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared COVID-19 novel coronavirus, a global pandemic, meaning that it will have a sustained global impact. The virus has spread in over 180 countries and territories around the world. In a bid to contain the spread of the virus through human contact, many governments have enforced stringent measures such as travel restrictions, total national lockdowns, self-isolation and quarantine measures of entire populations.

Supporting Kenya to Stop Economic Recession

Due to the consequences of the COVID 19 crisis, we have witnessed collapsing business in the global arena which have significantly disrupted the supply and production chains. Global markets, monetary and fiscal authorities are reacting to the spread of the virus in different ways that are having a huge impact on people's lives, families, communities, economies and markets. Due to the lockdowns put in place globally to prevent the spread of the disease, many countries including Kenya are coming face to face with a possible recession. This is attributed to the slow down of movement of people,

goods and services across the globe which promotes economic growth. To sustain the Kenyan economy the government introduced the partial lockdown in Nairobi, Mombasa and Mandera which restricted movement to counties to manage the spread of infections. The Government also issued guidelines that recommended organizations to support their staff to work from home, this move has played a big role in supporting the economy from collapsing. Although the tourism and Hospitality industry has been gravely affected, we have witnessed growth in e-commerce, delivery services, telecommunications and money transfer. Generally, we have witnessed a rise in trade in services which has greatly supported the Kenyan economy during the current tough times.

According to World Health Organization (WHO), by March 19, 2020, the number of confirmed cases worldwide had exceeded 200,000. The statistics indicate that it took over three months to reach the first 100,000 confirmed cases, and only 12 days to reach the next 100,000 cases. The exponential growth of infections worldwide is unprecedented. In Kenya is

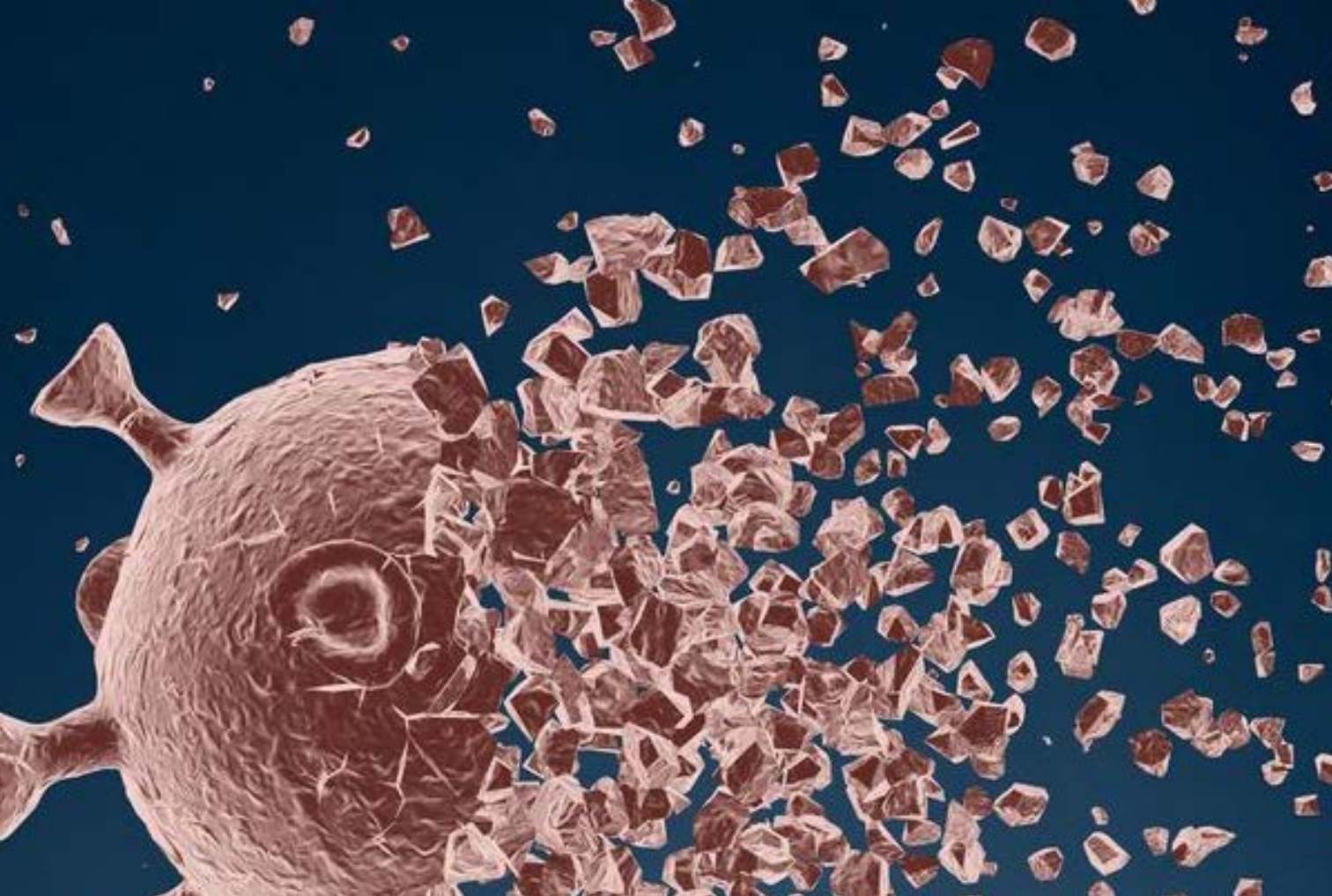
moving towards 800 people with a few fatalities reported.

Multilateral Cooperation

The International Monetary Fund in its World Economic Outlook in January 2020 had projected a rise in global economic growth to 1.3 percent in 2020 up from 2.9 percent in 2019. However, with COVID-19, it is increasingly becoming clear that protracted subpar global growth will remain in 2020. Stronger multilateral cooperation and national-level policies that provide timely support could foster a sustained recovery to the benefit of all. Kenya has received enormous support from inward contributions from several public and private agencies as well as support from international bodies, the cooperation plays a key role in cushioning the country and its people during this pandemic.

Developing Inclusive Strategies

Across all economies, a key imperative - increasingly relevant at a time of widening unrest - is to enhance inclusiveness, this can be achieved through enhanced information sharing with the public, stakeholder, active involvement



with pertinent parties and strategic engagement with partners; both private and public. To adapt to the current COVID 19 crisis, Kenya needs to strengthen the governance structures and create safety nets that protect the vulnerable.

Organizational Planning

Organizations are charged with creating a safe environment for their employees every day. And when a crisis occurs, it can be even more challenging to keep employees at every level in a safe place, physically and mentally. Most organizations need to reorganize their workplans considering the current situation at hand. There is a need to develop short term plans that they can implement work during and post the COVID 19 crisis. This will ensure the organization stays intact and embraces the new challenges brought about by the global health crisis.

Strategic Communication

As we all know, communication is a two-way process. In order to maintain workplace culture while making this shift, organizations must find new ways of engaging their employees as they work remotely from home.

As organizations, it's imperative to put on a united front for your employees. This has been made possible by various available platforms like virtual Zoom meetings, Microsoft teams, WhatsApp calls, webinars and many others that organization can use to reach out to their staff and stakeholders. There is a lot of uncertainty in the minds of employees which can be eased by constant communication through the agreed platform. This is time when employers need to create time to listen to your employees' needs and ideas on strategies the companies can implement to create impact.

Working with a team can be difficult when employees are physically apart from each other. Additionally, staying collaborative and focused on team and organizational goals can seem impossible. Communication and trust are key to engaging your dispersed workforce. Clear guidelines will help managers remain confident, and employees will understand what's expected of them. To enhance the connection with employees, companies ought to explore other avenues to engage employees rather than the traditional

email and office calls.

"If you can't stroll down the hallway to catch up with an employee, then communication becomes the glue that holds everything together"

Swift in Spending

The current pandemic has restrained people from spending their money, businesses and households are unlikely to behave as if the future was known with certainty, even if policymakers take action to lower the chances of a prolonged downturn. This makes spending choices more heavily dependent on current conditions rather than future expectations.

We have seen severe impacts to human lives, communities and the economy in countries such as Italy and China, it is our belief that if we work together and act quickly and strictly follow the guidelines of the health authorities we will come out of this pandemic a more united country.

The writer is a communications professional and a member of PRSK.



Engaging the public proactively better than “regular updates”

By Musyoki Kivindyo

The mysterious Coronavirus has manifested in mass hospitalization and ghoulish death pictures streaming in from China, Italy, Spain, Britain, USA and others. This has jolted the world as life grinds to a halt and unprecedented ghostly silence envelopes even the busiest of cities Europe, Asia and America. Closer home, Kenyans had been watching the news and going on with their lives as usual, until ‘patient zero’ was confirmed by the Health Cabinet Secretary, Mutahi Kagwe on 13th March 2020. Suddenly life changed, panic set in and the reality of the Corona virus edged nearer for Kenyans. As the meaning of a dawn to dusk curfew was barely settling in the minds of Kenyans, Nairobi,

Mombasa and Kilifi Counties were ‘locked down’. For the first time in living memory, Christians marked the Easter holiday indoors as the number of infected persons hit 200, with another 1,600 in quarantine. The fear is undeniable.

Information is precious

In the face of this outbreak, information now has become a serious “commodity” if we can call it so. Kenyans are anxious to know if their neighbourhood is safe, where the virus was last “seen” and which places to avoid as the pandemic continues to ravage the world.

Response to the threat of the Coronavirus outbreak in Kenya has been characterized

by daily updates by the President, Cabinet Secretary or Cabinet Administrative Secretary. It is about the number of infected persons, tests, discharges, the sad losses and the measures to control the spread of the pandemic. As the numbers continue to rise, panic-stricken Kenyans, healthcare providers, doctors, County Governors, political leaders, social commentators and civil society activists raised the alarm about the inadequacy of Kenya’s healthcare system and the impact on livelihoods. The fear mainly being fanned by the signals of monumental distress from first world countries like Italy, Britain and America, who are expected to have things under control.



There is hope

Out of this crisis, there has emerged individuals and institutions that have given hope to Kenyans by providing solutions and means of dealing with possible escalation of the outbreak. Engagement with the public on solutions to deal with the Coronavirus has started to reassure Kenyans, who had been alarmed by the admission that there were not enough critical care facilities in Kenya. The lack of isolation wards, ICU beds and basic personal protective equipment exposed the characteristic nature of Kenya's response and handling of emergencies. Mombasa Governor Ali Joho, surprised many when he quickly mobilized the acquisition of respirators for the County hospital, set aside isolation beds and worked with willing stakeholders in Mombasa to provide hand-washing stations at the Likoni Ferry and food aid

to the less fortunate. As other leaders elsewhere were wringing their hands and watching, Governor Joho added the master stroke. The installation of the walk-in, walk-out spray booths at the ferry crossing designed to disinfect a large number of pedestrians at once, reduced congestion and close physical contact. The Mombasa Governor's public engagement with the people was about the actions the County Government was taking to help in the fight against the Coronavirus. As Coast residents and Kenyans heaped blame on the National Government for Police brutality on ferry commuters and the violent enforcement of the curfew, Joho's public relations strategy took a different stance. Not one to waste a good crisis, Joho scored points with his constituents and Kenyans at large for his speed of action and proactive engagement with his audiences. In a rare move, the Governor met with Islamic leaders and pleaded with them to close Mosques as away to avoid physical contact. Despite their staunch beliefs in an equally religious city, they heeded his passionate plea.

Kitui County Governor Charity Ngilu halted the production of uniforms at the now famous Kitui County Textile Centre (KICOTEC) when the alarm was raised about the shortage of face masks. The factory commenced round the clock manufacture of face masks with an expected output of 30,000 pieces per day, to restock the National Government's stores. Ngilu's swift move earned her praise from Kenyans and global news media of note including the Washington Post and the BBC. Begging the question as to why Kenya has been importing some of these items from China, which is also

the source of this global pandemic. But that is a story for another day!

How does public engagement build trust and galvanise people towards a united objective? One cannot help but draw examples from star performers who have demonstrated that it can be done. Former US President Barack Obama has been cited severally for his ability. In a report by Albert Bozzo writing for CNBC back in 2009, several people spoke about President Barack Obama's handling of crisis. "The only thing that matters is credibility," says Lanny Davis, a former Hillary Clinton supporter who thereafter become an Obama convert. "Obama has this phenomenal ability to be credible and the rare talent to say what he means and mean what he says." Said Davis.

Critics and supporters alike observed that President Obama's successful leadership was a result of both his own skills as well as those of a very good support team. In particular, they cited his savvy political instincts, winning personality and public speaking skills, while his staff deftly anticipated issues and prepared adequately with accurate timing.

Governors Ngilu and Joho have demonstrated leadership and spoken directly to the "pain points" at a time of crisis. Engaging Kenyans and showing them that it is only by working together that we can beat the spread of the Coronavirus.

Kivindyo is the General Manager, Avid PR – part of the BSD EA Group



Investment in virtual customer support systems is indispensable

By Grace Wandera

The COVID-19 scourge has shaken the world in a manner that no other pandemic has hit humankind in recent times. The imminent effects of the pandemic calls for immediate strategic realignment of the day-to-day life through an array of measures all geared towards containing further spread of the disease. Avoidance of crowded places and maintenance of safe social distance while interacting with people is among the eminent measures that has a far-reaching impact as far as fighting COVID-19 is concerned.

Unfortunately, the indiscriminating disease also poses a notable threat to bodies charged with the provision of services that are crucial to members of the public. As a result, corporate bodies, companies and other organisations have had to rethink their delivery strategies to fit in the current space we are in as a country; without monumental disruption of service delivery to the people. A key strategy adopted by majority of the corporate bodies is a 'work from home' approach with only employees in critical delivery units physically reporting to work.

The space we are in highlights the crucial role that automation and digitisation of processes plays in any organisation. In addition to the obvious and known pros of such advancements which include enhanced efficiency, automation and digitisation of processes is a key step in ensuring effective and seamless business continuity. This is especially important for service providers and agencies whose core mandate is provision of very essential services to the public. The said providers could either be in public or private sectors.

Corporates leverage on technology

To a significant extent, Kenya has made notable strides in laying a solid foundation for technological advancements and innovations that support our day-to-day crucial needs. Kenya notably, prides in mobile telephony, one of the technological advancement and innovations that has allowed limitless connectivity in elite and non-elite regions. The use of mobile



telephony in Kenya strategically supports the President's recent directive on the use of cashless transactions to minimise the spread of COVID-19, much as this pandemic has laid bare the importance of technology at every work place.

Virtual customer support

It is important to note that turning to virtual support, especially during this period, is highly encouraged. Organisations can embrace the use of online platforms to serve their customers. As mentioned earlier, we are fortunate to belong to a country that has laid a strong foundation for technological advancements and as such, most service providers in both private and public sectors have similar platforms that can come in handy where virtual assistance is

required.

As we collectively make strides towards combating the pandemic at hand, let us make good use of the available online platforms when a need to seek support on essential utilities arises. On the other hand, corporate bodies, organisations and business entities that are yet to invest in such technological platforms should jump the fray and build similar capacity in order to successfully wade through the murky waters of the unforeseen. That way, disruption of normal business operations will have been reduced to the minimum.

Ms Wandera is the Deputy Commissioner for Marketing and Communication at the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA)

Trends to expect post COVID-19 pandemic

By Peggy Juma

Our normal way of doing things is going to change post coronavirus pandemic in Kenya. Here's a brief outlook of the future of events in Kenya:

1. Virtual events

Human to human interactions is key in expanding knowledge and providing networking opportunities among other benefits. However, in the wake of coronavirus, event organizers will have to rethink solely relying on physical meetings. Virtual events offer a safe alternative for convergence while still safeguarding the attendee's wellbeing. Tools like video conferencing and live stream challenge physical barriers and enable you to carry on with events in case of cancellations.

2. Consider bulk communication tools

You will need to adapt communication models that make it easy to pass information during a crisis. Take up channels that enable two-way communication in order to address emergencies as they spring up. The attendees should also be made aware of safety guidelines so they can protect themselves. There will also be a need to increase awareness about hygiene, especially in relation to transmitting diseases. This can be done by creating signages around the event venue to remind them to wash their hands. Bulk emails and SMS can also be used to pass this information.

3. Need for crowd control

Large crowds make it easy to transmit viruses. Moving forward, we will need to redesign event spaces to ensure attendees can keep a safe distance between each other. Make use of onsite registration tools that are fast and efficient in reducing queues during check-in. When selecting venues, choose locations that can allow attendees to stay 6 feet apart if need be.

4. Onsite health care team

Not all event planners consider having a medical team on site. However, with the risk of infections, it will be necessary to have medical personnel present at the venue. It will also be wise to consider health scanning on entry, providing sanitary items like masks and sanitizers, educating audiences on identifying signs and symptoms of infections and setting up an isolation areas or room in case of anything.

5. Adapt mobile applications

Mobile apps have several inbuilt features that help reduce physical human contact without sacrificing engagement. Attendees can make use of chat rooms to network, share photos of the event, participate in polls, and surveys, access conference information etc. The event organizer can also make use of this tool to send push notifications for attendees to be in the know on any important information.

The writer works for Digito one.



The universal constant: change is inevitable in the wake of COVID-19

By Frank Ojwang, University of Lapland, Finland

Managers have an enormous task to offer leadership during crisis, worse yet a pandemic of global scale. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented an unprecedented crisis to many organisations, agencies and governments – profit and not for-profit organisations and agencies. The ability and competence of a leader and manager has historically, greatly been tested during the crisis situations since time immemorial. The managers' ability to handle a situation in the wake of a pandemic threatening world order defines or breaks their grip on authority and re-affirms their commitment to their vision as leaders.

In a rapidly changing world, thanks to globalization and the megatrends driven in part by technology, well-weighted and evaluated communication has the potential to influence positive impactful change or enshrine the status quo deeper, for the sustenance of the old guards. The world order is well rested on the status quo especially in developing countries like Kenya with unorthodox changes driven by the new age generation perceived as a threat to the lifeline of the older generation and their sense of loss to their legacy, intellectual capacity and socio-economic usefulness.

Pandemic transforms way of doing business

The COVID-19 pandemic has debunked the need for physical presence in office buildings in some sectors. In addition, the need for managers that subscribe to the old school of management and administration has been brought to the forefront and the organisational change magnifying lens is focusing on the old school way of doing business vs the new world order that is driven by smart algorithms via technology. The advancing institutions and organisations today are adopting blockchain technology and smart algorithm for multi-criteria optimisation of model sequencing problem in assembly lines. These models enhance performance and fast track impact.

It is interesting to note however that the technology-driven smart algorithms edge out the orthodox way of conducting business and by extension, render as redundant the old guards holding the helm of many organisations and agencies today. How does an experienced old guard with a wealth of experience bow out after being beaten flat by a computer in the hands of a fresh graduate from the university? Many sectors are having to wake up to the fact that the computing models can solve problems and fast track development and even boost the growth of institutions.

Additionally, the computing models offer

realistic and well-weighted solutions that are guaranteed of success, translating in improved performance and greater impact with the help of a handful of young, smart and exposed professionals. How does this kind of change affect the old school of managers and leaders? In all possible ways, change is a very difficult force to stop, and making an attempt to divert the course of change when its time is nigh, delaying the change and derailing positive transformations in the lives of human beings and for humanity.

Effective managers and leaders who visibly articulate what they need and clearly communicate the way forward for their staff is what the world needs in the wake of a global pandemic. Furthermore, the pandemic presents a solid platform for reflection and internal introspection to determine the actual minimal needs for an organisation that optimizes positive impact for humanity first, before considering profits.

Integral role of PR

Public relations is critical for organisations today in complimenting this change. The ability of leaders and managers to present the organisations as having a human face is the role that only human beings and visionary leaders at that, can step-down to the competent and diligent staff that commit their working hours daily to grow an organization or institution.

Professionalism challenges the old school leaders and managers that are seemingly slow to respond to or, that are resistant to change to find a balance between their analogous smartness engulfed in wisdom and best estimate based on their analytical capacity drawn from their experience, and the smart algorithms-led alternatives to improving organisational performance. The latter, skilfully blended with the managers at the helm with their years of experience and flexibility, is the desired change presented by this unprecedented challenge at this time. A vibrant public relations and communications division is very resourceful and handy in managing and facilitating such significant change in a well-calculated and premediated fashion. That allows the manager at the helm to secure his or her position while still retaining and utilizing the best talents that propel the organisation to optimal

impact that is predictable and much needed usually by the vulnerable groups in the society.

It is high time that the managers that serve a key leadership function, took a cue from their peers in developed countries and deliberately purposed to transform their organisations and institutions into world class facilities. Africa and more specifically Kenya, has better opportunities and affordable labour compared to the developed world. Strategic changes need to elevate organisations under visionary leaders from local organisations to regional and multinational agencies that are impactful in all segments of the society.

We cannot avoid change

Change is inevitable, today the world over is encouraging the electronic payment

model as the recommended model of transaction in a bid to minimise human contact. How are the corporate leaders and managers taking advantage of this model of transacting and what strategies are they developing to sustain it as the new order of doing business beyond the pandemic? What other cryptocurrencies and related ideas are the leaders and managers borrowing from the developed companies comparable to the ones that they lead in Kenya and the region?

The time to embrace change is now and every old school leader needs to brace for the challenge that the pandemic will expose in the next few months – smart algorithm technology is the new mantra of profitable and impactful leadership and governance. Strategic leaders will adapt to the new order of business

How to have a successful virtual meeting

By Kellen Mugambi

The COVID-19 pandemic has made virtual meetings essential to enhance collaboration and communication. Working from home has become a more common practice, with most people adopting various teleconferencing platforms for productivity. The commonly used video conferencing platforms include Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Skype, Cisco Webex and Google Hangouts and others.

The following are important tips to effectively conduct video conference meetings: Download, Install and login into your Video Conference platform. Join the meeting early, before the scheduled start time and connect from a well lit, quiet location with no background noise. It is important to mute your microphone whenever you are not speaking as well as turning off the video to minimise audio problems. If you are doing a presentation, share it by email and keep it brief.

Mugambi is a Communications Officer at NITA



Valuing people and strategic communication in crisis leadership

By Nelson Opany

As a leader, among the key considerations to succeed in navigating your team through crisis is creating an environment in which your team feels safe and empowered to individually play their role in helping the organization overcome the crisis.

An article by McKinsey & Company on 6th March 2020 titled *Leadership in a crisis: Responding to coronavirus outbreak and future challenges* shares some great insights into leadership practices that can help leaders respond effectively in times of crises. The article suggests building a network of teams to support crisis response; adopting deliberate calm and bounded optimism in crisis decision-making; pausing to assess and anticipate before taking decisions; demonstrating empathy in dealing with human tragedy as a first priority; and, communicating effectively, transparently and frequently.

Sound leadership communication underscores the real importance of putting people and communications at the centre of crisis leadership. Achieving a

blend between these two critical aspects is the hallmark of effective crisis and people management and can ultimately define the post crisis stability of an organization.

In a crisis, leaders need to focus their energies on taking care of their most precious resource – people, in focused and effective ways, using communications as a pivotal tool.

It's not about a Plan but a Culture


It greatly helps to invest in building a set of behaviors and preparedness mindsets that cushion leaders and their teams, from overreactions that could jeopardize their physical and mental strength to navigate through a crisis. This is contrary to popular practice of developing massive policies and guidelines that people even forget exist when a crisis sets in. What this implies is crises are won or lost even before they occur. Leaders who build agility into organizational processes during normal times will have the 'software' needed to go through difficult times.

Corporate cultures founded on values of

human care, mutual respect and open communication help to build strong teams and develop social capital that galvanizes people around each other to create a support system on and off work. Such cultures lessen the stress of transitioning to unfamiliar situations when crises occur.

Crisis leadership may sometimes require leaders to coordinate and motivate their teams from a distance. This comes with unique challenges for which agile leaders need to acquire special skills before crises occur. At such times the simplest actions may be the most impactful as people shift focus to small wins that bring them immediate sense of success and satisfaction.

It may also demand leaders to anticipate different potential outcome scenarios and how to react when they happen. This helps to prepare people psychologically and the organization for any outcome hence increasing the chances of success. At such times the simplest actions may be the most impactful as people shift focus



Sound leadership communication underscores the real importance of putting people and communications at the centre of crisis leadership. Achieving a blend between these two critical aspects is the hallmark of effective crisis and people management and can ultimately define the post crisis stability of an organization.

to small wins that bring them immediate sense of success and satisfaction.

Finding a Silver Lining in times of Difficulty

Crises can create stressful demands requiring a delicate balance between continuing implementation of earlier defined plans and the need to address emerging challenges. Difficult times require great coordination and rescoping of work for each team member amidst new priorities that come with managing the crisis. It calls for adjusting existing plans, lowering of expectations on your team and reviewing performance targets.

Surviving a crisis demands great agility in organizational management. According to Ahmad Alhendawi, the Secretary General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement, developing an agile organization during a crisis requires a response to current realities that allow for quick reconfigurations of strategy, structure, processes, people and technology towards supporting the

organization during a crisis.

Every dark cloud has a silver lining. As much as they bring challenges, crises can be eye-openers to great opportunities for individuals and organizations to reinvent themselves. They are moments to rethink normal programming and standard operations. Leading an organization through turbulent times calls for lots of creativity and innovation. Adversity can help people innovate new approaches to doing things differently that can change future growth trajectories of organizations. Deploying technology across functions can also offer new paths for enhanced effectiveness and efficiency.

From physical to mental rejuvenation, crises can also create opportunities for personal and professional development. When people take a break from normal work schedules, they find time and space to explore new things that improve them physically, mentally, socially, academically and professionally.

Information and Decisions

During crisis we must dissuade ourselves from thinking that a top down approach will always deliver best results out of the situation. Sometimes galvanizing team members around creative and strategic thinking can offer unimagined ways out of a crisis. Operational level employees can offer frontline understanding of their personal and organizational challenges in ways top executives may not always appreciate.

Whatever decisions leaders make at such moments require the full understanding and support of their teams to succeed. Simple, effective, honest and frequent communication is precious. Leaders need to maintain open two-way communication to build confidence and trust across the organization. This will help in managing the sometimes sharply varying expectations, emanating from the uncertainties brought about by the crises.

Organizations need to employ collaborative and transparent decision-making processes, that allow for constant learning and adaptation to ensure organizational priorities remain on track, albeit under different circumstances. This promotes rapid problem solving and execution under high stress, and quick

reconfigurations in times of crisis. It also creates a platform for bouncing back when it's all over.

Future-Proof Organizations

In crisis, leaders need to maintain a clear vision around which they unify the organization, something they cannot achieve without persuasive communication. Organizations that intentionally invest in building good relations with employees will benefit, in times of crisis, from empowered, passionate and dynamic teams that become critical in adoption of a rapid decision and learning cycle when it really matters. Enabling technology can offer much-needed leverage to sustain virtual connections and efficiency when physical contact becomes limited.

When crises occur, they no doubt come with great ramifications that stay on long after they have ended. Despite the real need to address immediate emerging concerns, it's important for leaders to choose to look ahead. Building future-proof organizations means learning from a crisis and implementing measures for long term stability. Crises offer conscious leaders vital lessons on challenging existing strategies and practices, to innovate new ways that open unprecedented opportunities for future achievements.

Crises bring out the value of effective corporate communications to both internal and external audiences – lack of which breeds unfounded anxiety, misinformation, fear and mistrust. Most importantly, they remind us of how important our relationships with each other are, and the need to invest in building social capital within and outside our organizations as these become the fuel that drives us through difficult times.

How organizations adapt to the long-term impacts of crises is to a large extent determined by how leaders treat their people and how effectively they deploy communications when it matters most.

The author is the Manager, Communications and Partnerships at the World Scout Bureau Africa Regional Office, Nairobi.

Teachings from this calamity

By Linda Karimi



Almost from the onset of 2020, conversations globally have revolved around COVID-19. While we would have hoped for more positive outcomes, sadly in many countries, people have lost their lives and thousands more are unwell as a result of the disease. The fact that the illness is highly contagious has further complicated matters with most employees in white-collar jobs encouraged to work from home, while others have taken unplanned leave.

Businesses have been forced to close owing to the cessation of movement in some counties and the national curfew imposed by the Government, in order to curb the spread of the virus. But as with every situation life presents us with, there is always something to learn. Here are some of my thoughts and learning points so far:

Silence is golden

Granted, for those of us used to the hustle, bustle and not to mention traffic snarl up in the big cities, silence can be a bit uncomfortable. After all, noise and a raft of activities has been the norm. I have learnt that in silence, I can introspect more on my life by taking stock of what I have achieved. I can take time to develop a hobby, read a book, go for a walk, try a new recipe, take online classes; and the list continues. True, time indoors is relished by most introverts. However, with this new normal, extroverts can adapt and find new ways of doing things and with 'Zoom' and other online software, video and online meetings are possible and one can still interact with other people virtually.

We are highly adaptable

After spending a considerable amount of time indoors, I needed to re-stock and buy additional supplies, so I took a walk to my local supermarket. I must say that as I walked by and passed various businesses, I was pleasantly surprised. From the local butcher, to the cybercafé, the local 'mama

mbogas', the local dairy, the posho mill, hardware shops, even the local charcoal seller was not left behind! All had their own unique version of a sanitization method. Some had hand sanitizers, but most had a 'mtungi' (water jerrican) or bucket affixed with a tap and some liquid soap.

Before you buy anything, the message was 'sanitize.' The sheer adaptability by using simple solutions to combat a global health threat was quite encouraging. Just outside my local supermarket, the proprietor went the extra mile and stuck a handwritten paper to the 'mtungi' written 'Let's wash hands here.' And of course as a law abiding citizen, I gladly washed my hands. As we adapt in matters personal hygiene, the world is making a business adjustment by shifting goods and services to the online space. This means that rather than burying your head in the sand and waiting for the storm to blow over, you also need to adapt and ensure that you are thriving in the digital space during this period.

Social media messages can be toxic

We are in the information age and statistics from the BBC estimate that Google, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft alone store 1,200 petabytes between them. This is 1.2 million terabytes, where one terabyte equals 1,000 gigabytes. This amount of information is too much for my finite mind to fully comprehend, let alone if you would add information obtained from other search engines and social media channels. That said, it would not be wise for you to consume every social media message.

Many videos going around on WhatsApp can impart fear and panic rather than provide hope and faith. It would therefore be better to avoid believing or sharing it altogether. I had made it a resolve to watch one 'daily brief' from the Government on the current health crisis. This information would be delivered to me either through television or the internet.

I vividly recall on one occasion; the Health Ministry Cabinet Secretary announced to the public that cases of infection had risen to 110, with 3 deaths. At this point, I felt depressed as the number of positive cases continued rising. I decided to go jogging around the neighbourhood and then followed that with a prayer for the country. This clearly helped to restore my spirits. I still have high hopes that the pandemic will go away and we will return to normalcy. In the meantime, be cautious what information you get on social media platforms. Stay at home and be safe.

Those are some of the valuable lessons that I have learnt so far. What has the current health crisis taught you?

Linda Karimi is the Corporate Affairs Executive at KUSCCO Ltd.



Guidelines to observe in virtual meetings

By Elizabeth Mulae

The coronavirus pandemic reckons with the saying necessity is the mother of invention. Just before the first case was announced in Kenya in early March 2020, virtual meetings were frequently used for international calls from partners, donors making projects follow ups, business to business meetings across Multi Nationals, Foreigners connecting with colleagues and family or calls from spouses working outside the country.

The work from home experience took off slowly in the first few days as Kenyans were adjusting to the unforeseen reality. As time went by, however, it has been implemented fully by multiple organizations across the country who are keen on ensuring the safety of their employees.

Awareness has been created on effective use of professional platforms like Microsoft teams, Zoom meetings, Skype, WhatsApp online calls, email messaging, bulk text messaging and even personalized telephone calls to both internal and external stakeholders.

Environment

A conducive work environment is crucial in promoting concentration, creativity and execution. This calls for creation of a working spot in our homes that is conducive to conduct office meetings, making calls and execute the planned day to day tasks and duties. Most employers have provided guidelines to staff working from home to send weekly reports of accomplished tasks outlining any wins and challenges experienced.

Managing Disruptions

Many of us who have worked from home during the last few weeks would agree with me that there are many disruptions that can hinder the process of a successful meetings. Those with kids will suddenly realise that out of curiosity, they keep coming to look at what you are doing, door bells and even consultations on home related issues may interfere with these online meetings. It is advisable to mute microphones as you

excuse yourself to handle the distractions. Muting also protects your privacy and ensures you remain professional.

Listening

As we all know, communication is a two-way process. It's important to embrace the element of active listening during the meetings. Ensure you have a notebook and a pen to note your feedback during these engagements. The team leader should manage the meeting and ensure each member speaks to integrate all ideas and promote involvement. Active listening promotes teamwork and appreciation of ideas from all participants enhancing ownership and synergy.

Attire

The tendency to relax and not follow the morning grooming routine has kicked in in most of us, this is highly discouraged. To enhance concentration and performance of work-related duties, you are encouraged to follow the usual morning routine. Take a shower, wear comfortable smart casual wear and ensure your hair is well groomed.

Time

As the saying goes, time wasted is never recovered, ensure you keep time for your virtual meetings. This enables the organizers set a time limit that will guide how long the meeting takes. This shows that you respect the timings of the participants. Start the meeting immediately you have quorum.

Conclude Meeting by Hanging Up

As virtual meetings become popular across the world am sure we have all seen videos circulating of particular people that forgot to end the meetings respectively. Ensure that you protect your privacy and dignity by using the hang up icon appropriately before you start engaging in other activities. Just like we sign out our emails when we visit a cybercafé.

The writer is a corporate communications manager at the Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency.

Weathering the Storm

*When the dark clouds of a crisis gather overhead,
Pregnant with mischief,
And rumbling with sadistic intent.
Streaks of lighting shooting out of it
Like sparks from Hephaestus' anvil.
What will you do Mr. P.R.O?
Corporate Communicator, what about you Ma'am?*

*Credibility, the organization's spine,
Reputation, too on the line.
All eyes on you, what step to take?
When everything seems to be at stake.
Your turn under the sword of Damocles.*

*Constant and open communication is in order,
Loop in thy stakeholders.
Timely responses are gold,
Don't let the information flow grow cold.
Above all forget not empathy,
Showing you care is key.
Stakeholders' lives matter,
Treat them right and do not falter.*

*When the storm is finally over,
And the golden rays of sunshine,
Pierce through the fleeting clouds,
The world will remember what you said.
They will recall how you said it,
And recount what you did.
Measure for measure it is said,
Thus they will return the favor.*

*Lo and behold!
To you in PR it is told,
"Do unto others as you wouldst they should do to thee"*

- Killian Luhombo

*Currently a postgraduate student at Daystar University
pursuing Corporate Communications. I also hold an
undergraduate degree in Education (English and
Literature).*

With COVID-19 corporate social responsibility has been put to test

By Simon Mwangi



Jack Ma, a Chinese business magnate, is arguably the most talked about individual in the world right now thanks to his efforts to help curb the spread of the novel Coronavirus. Through his foundation he has donated equipment worth billions of dollars to almost every continent as his personal contribution to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. His actions have redefined the concept of social responsibility bringing into sharp focus the role of corporates especially in times like these.

The current crisis is unlike anything seen before. There isn't an economy, sector and business beyond the reach of its ruinous impact. And while every business is faced with navigating the new economic landscape for its long-term survival, there are also short-term challenges and opportunities that can be addressed using the values of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Ordinarily, some organizations undertake activities within their communities and publicize them with a view to projecting themselves as being mindful of the wellbeing of their immediate stakeholders. There are those whose actions and impact to communities cannot be refuted owing to massive investment pumped into CSR activities. However, it is imperative to note that since coining of the term in 1953 by Howard Bowen, an American Economist, the concept has nowadays revolved into a public relations tool.

Initial tracking shows that total philanthropic spending in response to COVID-19 has exceeded \$1B globally, with companies and their foundations representing over 80% of pledges and contributions.

Politicians and other opportunists are taking advantage of the situation to publicize their own versions of social responsibility activities within communities. Some, especially in Kenya, have gone to the extent of branding face masks offered for free to vulnerable communities with a view to appealing to their emotions. Their efforts are indeed bearing fruit because currently the poor and marginalized in society are at their most exposed psychologically. This is occasioned by the fact the Coronavirus has brought with it fear, panic, and uncertainty. Therefore, any venture seen as providing a buffer against the dreaded pandemic is received with open arms.

This then begs the question; where are the corporates when the country is at its vulnerable? Perhaps as a clarion call to action President Uhuru Kenyatta, recently constituted a COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund which is mainly composed of members drawn from the business community. Already, some corporate entities have contributed and shared the details of their contribution with the public through well publicized events where they are seen handing over dummy cheques to the fund administrators. Other Kenyans of goodwill, international donors and partners have also been asked to contribute to the fund whose proceeds will be used to finance the war on COVID-19.

Globally, renowned brands are rechanneling their efforts towards the fight against this pandemic in their countries. In the UK, for instance, University College London engineers worked with clinicians at the University's hospital and Mercedes Formula One to develop a breathing aid that can help

keep coronavirus patients out of intensive care in under a week. In the US leading vehicle manufacturers, FORD and GM, are said to be 'undertaking a warlike effort to produce ventilators.' There are various other such examples drawn from across the globe that show how corporates are doing their part in giving back to the community.

In Kenya, some leading corporate entities have also offered to cushion Kenyans economically through various interventions. Some have offered to refine oxygen and deliver it for free to hospitals. While there may be others undertaking other noble and socially responsible activities without necessarily highlighting them, all this is a demonstration of the changing role of CSR. This pandemic is serving as a wake-up call to corporate entities that without communities their business interests cease to be vital. It is a realization that for them to thrive, they need the communities for whom they must unreservedly co-exist with.

During crises such as these the way companies treat their workers, who are their biggest assets, presents a real test to their corporate purpose. How they respond when employees cannot come to work due to required self-quarantines, mandated office or school closures goes a long way in promoting their productivity and efficiency even as they look at external social responsibility.

With the current outbreak, many corporates are learning that existing time-off policies negatively affect the employees that most need support. Companies must now develop a balance between their bottom line, while also maintaining a sensitive and adaptive approach to employee sick leave and personal time.

Simon is a student at the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), London, UK studying International Diploma in Public Relations



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

CIPR

CHARTERED INSTITUTE
OF PUBLIC RELATIONS



Online CIPR CLASSES

ENROL FOR

Professional PR Diploma and PR Certificate
at the University of Nairobi Accredited Center

For more information visit: <https://www.uonbi/cipr-qualification-uon>

Contact details

Director, Corporate Affairs

Cell: +254 725 419 205, +254 721 581 030

Email: cipr@uonbi.ac.ke

A world-class university committed to scholarly excellence