

Lasi Mashaba from the female-owned 1Africa Consulting

By  Emily Stander

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For this #PRAisethePR segment, we spoke with Lasi Mashaba, head of strategy for 1Africa Consulting - a 100% female-owned, full-service agency.



Lasi Mashaba, head of strategy at 1Africa Consulting

Mashaba believes in the power of choosing a career which gives you satisfaction and brings you great joy. “My path to this lies within the PR and communications field, and I look forward to connecting with like-minded people along the way,” she said.

We speak with her to find out more about how she ended up in the PR industry, the effect of PR on brand reputation, and some future trend predictions...

■ ***How would you describe your organisation?***

We provide communication, public relations and business services to clients. We pride ourselves on being an agency ‘with heart’, and we are very passionate about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), including initiatives that help empower young women and girls in Africa. We also help corporate brands develop and execute CSI solutions.

■ ***How did you find yourself in the PR industry?***

Well, actually, I was torn between studying law or public relations. The field of communications was my ultimate choice, and I have not looked back since. My academic background has been a springboard for me entering and succeeding in my field, and I have been fortunate to work with leading brands and organisations seeking assistance with public relations and communications needs.

■ ***Tell us more about your career highlights in PR so far?***

Being appointed as head of strategy at 1Africa Consulting has definitely been a key highlight of my career.

Another notable achievement is being shortlisted for the Best Social Media and Best Pan-African Campaign at the Prism Awards 2019 for an event I spearheaded. The event, on behalf of the Africa Innovation Summit (AIS), was a great success,

trending online for two days in the host region of Kigali (Rwanda).

■ ***What role does PR play in advertising awards and integrated marketing categories?***

PR plays a pivotal role in advertising and integrated marketing communications - it acts as a supportive structure to both elements. PR provides an advisory role to both elements and assists with generating the required awareness to gain the necessary reach and engagement. Furthermore, PR guides media relations while maintaining a positive image with the said media.

■ ***How important to brand reputation is storytelling about individual personalities in business?***

It's important to understand the value of building thought leadership, not only for a brand, but for individual leaders and industry players. Storytelling helps express a narrative that helps build brand reputation, as well as position leaders and organisations positively.

■ ***In the world of business, how can PR be used effectively to influence and ensure that purpose-driven and society building brand stories reach the right audiences?***

When it comes to public relations, both the message and the platform are important. Conducting stakeholder mapping will help identify the right audiences and platform, and public relations specialists can then craft and package communication messaging in a way that connects effectively to various target audience groups. This includes messaging that helps build positive sentiment, such as stories that highlight purpose-driven and social impact efforts by a brand or individual.

■ ***Does PR contribute and promote advertising agency rankings and brand reputation?***

Absolutely. As mentioned, thought leadership positioning promotes reputation-based brand building. PR helps with driving this positive sentiment to various audiences, including clients, industry peers, stakeholders and partners. Of course, in order to build positive sentiment, the agency still has to put in the work, and then PR comes in as a means to get the message across to the relevant audiences.

■ ***What qualities or qualifications would you recommend for aspirant newcomers to the industry?***

This industry tends to change relatively quickly. Ensure that you keep abreast with trends and requirements at a point in time – upskill yourself as needed as new technologies and approaches take shape. You also need to be passionate about the industry and the work that you do in order to grow, succeed and make an impact.

■ ***Could you share any future trends or predictions for the PR industry?***

Thought leadership and spokesperson positioning: Personal branding is very important, because how the public perceives and receives you matters. Brands prefer to associate with knowledgeable yet relatable people. The more relatable you are, the easier you are to approach and the more believable your story is; and this is valuable to get yourself heard.

Social media platforms: Ah, the power of social media! To achieve great reach and engagement, making use of relevant social media platforms to drive one's messaging and reach a certain audience can go a long way. Social media has the power to transcend age, race and social background, and will definitely continue on an upward trend across various industries.

Purposeful brands: This comes to shape with stakeholders understanding the true value of their organisation's messaging. Additionally, people want to align with brands that "stand for something" and are aligned with some form of purpose.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games

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