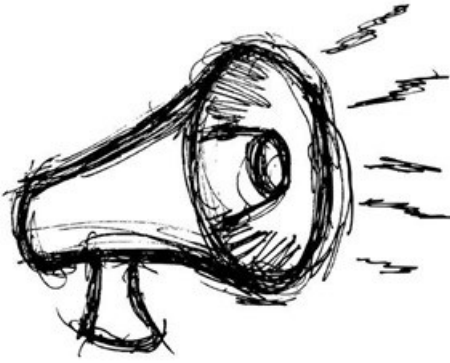


Brutal honesty has found its place

 By [Janine Lazarus](#)

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Recently, I took part in a robust IABC Africa panel debate in Cape Town on communicator readiness for 2020. The thing about discussions like these is that if they are facilitated well, they can spark discussion that sets the tone for the entire conference.



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And ignite unbridled dialogue under the steermanship of director of the IABC International executive board, Daniel Munslow, it certainly did, running well over the conference's tight schedule.

There is no doubt that demands on communicators are changing now more than ever, and panellists Mia Azam, Woolworths financial services senior communications manager, Sappi's group head of corporate affairs, Andre Oberholzer, and 2016/2017 chairman of the IABC's International Executive Board, Dianne Chase, all put forward sound arguments for remaining future fit as the needs of businesses evolve.

But to my mind, the more things change, the more they stay the same – with perhaps one small difference: When your audience 'pays' you with their time, it has become even more critical now than ever before to get your message across as quickly and efficiently as possible. The future is about communicating real-time decisions rapidly.

The 24-hour news cycle and the lack of historical perspective has made us all dangerously impatient. Rapid technological disruption, the rebalance of world power, and continuing economic uncertainty, all combine to create highly volatile and increasingly complex messages.

Making this powder keg even more unstable is that communicators need to drill through huge volumes of information and

translate issues into easy to understand terms. Our interactions need to break through the clutter and present messages that are compellingly succinct.

What is also fast disappearing - at last - are the communication silos of old and, along with them, the tired necessity of having meetings upon meetings which, more often than not, result in nothing at all.

To the Twitter generation, a week feels like an age. A CEO shares the stage today with much younger and often self-taught opinion makers who, for the most part, have developed a knack for getting their message across in news their audience can use.

Simply put, if you're not on the bus, it will leave you behind at the station. The holy grail of deadline has never been more sacred.

I work with leaders across a range of business sectors and believe that they rarely have had a more challenging time. It's not enough to be an executive with stellar credentials who is sorely lacking in effective and efficient communication skills.

In order to remain relevant, it is absolutely critical for executives to adopt an agile approach in their communications. It's all about reducing complex messaging into short and powerful soundbytes.

So, if I had to offer my clients some advice, I would tell them to broaden their circle. They need to find straight shooters who tell them what they need to hear – not what they want to hear.

Brutal honesty has, at last, found a very real and important place.

ABOUT JANINE LAZARUS

Janine Lazarus is a South African journalist and interviewer of top names in the news, public figures and celebrities. Follow @JanineLazarus on Twitter.

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