

Your BEE radio connection



Tshepiso Mpanza and Nomthi Msane are bringing a new outlook to The Media Connection team.

The Media Connection has always been synonymous with community radio. In its unceasing championing of this sector, the community radio specialist has played its part in empowering disadvantaged communities around the country. And now, The Media Connection has brought empowerment home.

New account executive, Tshepiso Mpanza, also plans to help stations in this regard, drawing on her experience in brand management. She spent her first month at the company on the road meeting several of the country's community stations.

"When I was on the ad agency side, I always saw community radio as the last option," she admits. "After my visits to the stations though, my perceptions have done a complete 360. A number of the stations are very professional and organised - this is real radio, they're as geared up as the big guys who've been around a lot longer."

Mpanza would however, like to help hone the images of some of the stations, offering them training on branding themselves to marketers, and creating marketing collateral.

The health of the sector

There's been a great settling down of the community radio stations over the years. As they generate more and more revenue, they're able to retain their staff for longer which has boosted their growth. Despite the recent economic downturn, funds are still coming in.

"We actually did our best ever at the end of 2008, when many of the commercial and PBS stations were feeling the strain," says account executive Rachelle Jaques. "When you have little in your budget, it makes sense to do more targeted marketing, and community radio can deliver this."

She advises that in these tight times, marketers and agencies should look a little deeper into the radio sector and try the community stations, instead of just going with the top-of-mind stations. "It's easy to think of the big radio brands first, but there are many choices out there that could do even better work for you," she says.

Now reaching over 7-million adults, community radio delivers targeted markets with little wastage, and listeners who are loyal to their local stations. And the reasonable rates on most of them mean marketers can still get the frequency they need to run effective campaigns.

Adding value to campaigns

Marketers can now also get extra mileage in the community radio sector by taking their brand to the community with The Media Connection's Promobile, which takes marketers' on-air messages to the community's doorstep.

"The Promobile adds on-the-ground promotion and sampling to the mix, and has added a valuable facet to several brands' on-air campaigns, including the Vodacom Foundation, the Western Cape Education Department, and Nestle's Ricoffy Mild," says Simon Milne, account executive.

Bearing the marketer's branding, the Promobile goes into communities and makes a lot of noise for the brand, playing pre-recorded features as well as the brand's on-air commercial. DJs from the local community stations come on board to tell people about campaigns, store openings and price specials, while promoters hop on and off to pass out samples or marketing material.

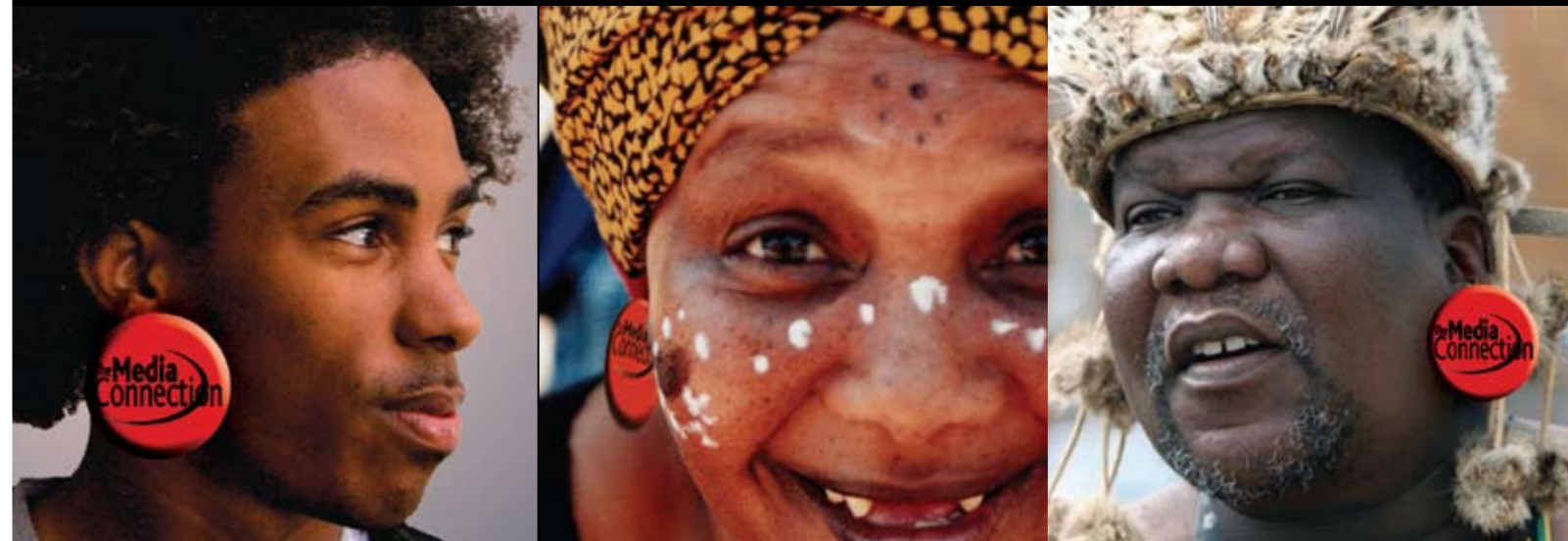
"Calls to action from a trusted radio personality can deliver astounding results," says Milne, who recalls one Promobile-promoted store opening in Maseru. "So many people turned up that the front windows began caving in."

That is the pulling power of radio, and especially of community radio. "The Media Connection is your go-to company if you want to add the impact of community radio to your marketing mix," says Msane. "And you will meet your own BEE procurement requirements into the bargain."

- Megan Chronis



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