

Tugging at the public's heartstrings

By  [Brendan Seery](#)

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Claw/SPCA: get message across; SANDF continues to shoot itself in the foot when it comes to communication.



Source: www.unsplash.com

It's always difficult when you have to say goodbye to a pet which has been in your family for years - and that's what we're going through at the moment after we found out that the rescue dog we adopted almost 10 years ago has cancer and not long to live.

We have no hesitation in adopting another dog – and from the same place, the Community Led Animal Welfare (Claw) on the West Rand.

It was happenstance that this week, as we were making those arrangements, a post popped up on social media from the people at Claw. Perhaps because of the current situation we find ourselves in, it made me emotional, but on reflection, it also did a brilliant job of focusing attention on the work Claw and other animal welfare bodies do every day – and the heartache they face.

It was a photo of a dog called Bobby, looking miserable, with his two humans near him. In the post, Claw wrote: “We find it extremely heartbreaking when children are sent to surrender their pet dog. These two youngsters spent a good while in our driveway, seemingly reluctant to approach us. “There were tears all round when we were told that Bobby could no longer stay with them.”





We find it extremely heartbreaking when children are sent to surrender their pet dog. These two youngsters spent a good while in our driveway, seemingly reluctant to approach us. There were tears all round when we were told that Bobby could no longer stay with them. Fortunately we were able to go home with them and find a solution which will ensure that Bobby will stay with the children.

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Adjusting to that tragedy of children having to surrender their beloved animal was difficult, but then Claw added: “Fortunately we were able to go home with them and find a solution which will ensure that Bobby will stay with the children.”

Many were the comments I saw from people who admitted they cried at the story. I didn’t (that’s my story and I’m sticking to it).

The simple piece of communication touched hearts in the way that many advertising and marketing professionals only wish they could. It told a story better than many a multimillion-rand ad campaign could.

I also noticed a campaign put together for the Sandton SPCA by Grey Africa professionals – and they also managed to hit the emotional sweet spot in a clever way.

Based around the idea that “the universe is trying to tell you something” – in this case, to adopt an animal; the executions featured everyday objects and scenes where the outline of the animal was easily discernible.





If you're seeing silhouettes of animals all around you, maybe you should adopt?

It's simple and clever and gets across the message with clarity.

Orchids to both Claw and Grey/Sandton SPCA. It's the least I can do.

The SA National Defence Force (SANDF)

SANDF is in an extremely difficult position financially. Although, you might not have guessed, had you seen the video of the farewell dinner for the retiring chief of the SA Air Force, where guests appear to have been allocated, at their tables, about one expensive bottle of scotch each, in addition to wine.

The military desperately needs to tell its stories. But, even more so than the generals who ran the defence force in the apartheid years, the new, ANC-appointed top brass have less than no clue about how to market themselves.

The cluelessness shows clearly in a press release put out on LinkedIn, of all places. It was about a top brass visit to inspect "modern equipment" at the Lohatla base in the Northern Cape.

As evidence, this piece: "Indeed, the preparedness and willingness by the general officers commanding without any hesitation, couldn't go unnoticed."

Message to the author of this piece of "communication": You are not writing for Kim Jong-un.

Message to the SANDF hierarchy: get competent people in your comms department.

Until you do, you will continue to get Onions like this.

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ABOUT BRENDAN SEERY

Brendan Seery has been in the news business for most of his life, covering coups, wars, famines - and some funny stories - across Africa. Brendan Seery's *Orchids and Onions* column ran

each week in the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg and the *Weekend Argus* in Cape Town.

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