

Tracey Jones, "Our strength as South Africans is our diversity"

By  Juanita Pienaar

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Tracy Jones, the founder and MD of Positive Dialogue, a digitally-led strategic communications consultancy, says the agency's unique approach is that their ideation is insights-based, and their implementation is facilitated by digital innovation.



With 20 years of experience in PR and communications across a range of sectors, Jones is a force to be reckoned with and is passionate about the future of digital PR. She sees herself as a strategic, out-of-the-box, creative thinker and a firm believer of modern-day PR.



PDC's "non-traditional approach" is part of its winning recipe

Juanita Pienaar 4 Jul 2017



Here, she shares some amazing career highlights and personal tips on getting to the top in the comms industry...

Mention some of your career highlights to date?

Stand out moments in my 20-year career in PR would be launching Nelson Mandela's 'Touch of Mandela' limited edition art series on Robben Island – with Madiba hosting 250 VIP guests. I had the honour of meeting him four times and on each occasion, he left me humbled and inspired at his strength of character and inner peace. His launch event resulted in massive media coverage – including front-page *New York Times*. I don't attribute any of the results to my skills as a PR, but more to the much-loved global icon of the man he was.

Another highlight was assisting Matt Silver-Vallance on his Robben Island Balloon Run. He harnessed himself to 30 balloons and took off from Robben Island into the national airspace, to safely land 20km away in an NSRI boat in the ocean, as a PR stunt to raise awareness and funding for a paediatric hospital in SA. Our campaign raised over R1.5m and raised awareness through global coverage on the need for more paediatric care in SA.



#BehindtheSelfie with... Tracy Jones

Leigh Andrews 9 Aug 2017



Another would be in assisting in the PR for the 46664 concert, again, for Nelson Mandela. All the celebrities performing at the concert were staying at the Westin Hotel and attended a pre-drinks reception. I had to politely ask Sir Richard Branson to not take all the VIP pins for his retinue – in order to ensure the safety of Madiba. He smiled that grin of his, turned around, and asked his posse of 12 ladies to return them all and only take one each. Bono, Annie Lennox and Beyonce who were queuing behind him just smiled.

Driving around the Monaco Grand Prix track with former F1 driver, David Coulthard as part of my hosted media contingent to launch his Hotel in Monaco.

There are too many more to mention, needless to say, this career has created truly memorable life experiences, growth and opportunity, which is what still makes me jump out of bed every day.

■ ***Having been in the industry for quite some time now, how do you see the role of women changing the industry?***

Interestingly, PR is the one industry that has always been 'dominated' by women. If anything, we would encourage more men to consider PR as a career path in order to create more diversity. There are not many other professions that can say that.

■ ***Do you think the future of comms will benefit from more female leadership?***

Not just women per se, but women from diverse cultural backgrounds who each have their own unique story, perspective, upbringing and obstacles overcome. Our strength as South Africans is our diversity. You see it when the lens through which a group of women all view the same thing differently. That brings incredible insights that in turn can result in a unique problem-solving ability for businesses.



No 'cookie cutter' solution

Tracy Jones 22 Apr 2015



■ ***What are your personal tips on getting to the top in the comms industry, specifically as a woman?***

“ Step into your inner power and don't be intimidated by the boardroom. Know your worth, and the hard-earned experience you bring to the table and let your voice and unique perspective be heard. It has value – own it. ”

Embrace change. Soak up information like a sponge. Research and read voraciously – it'll spark a campaign idea or business solution sometime in the future. Women are great at creating and nurturing relationships. Build business relationships with people that allow you to connect them with others that are mutually beneficial to both. The power of your network and business community can achieve meaningful things.

■ **And what is your key message to fellow women this Women's Month?**

As the strategic communication partner in the Duke Group, I'd like to quote our CEO, Wayne Naidoo, who is championing transformation in the communication industry: "Stand up, take up space, break barriers, create the change you want to see, and be mindful that the power is in your hands. Make it count."



#BehindtheSelfie with... Wayne Naidoo

Leigh Andrews 13 Jun 2018



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ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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