

Penny Biram of Norton Rose Fulbright SA

 By [Shan Raddiffe](#)

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For our #BehindtheBrandManager series, Penny Biram, head of Marketing (Corporate Communications and PR) at Norton Rose Fulbright South Africa Inc, chats to us about the importance of compliance checks, and the differences managing consumer and legal brands.



■ Tell us a bit about yourself...

Penny Biram: I studied Public Relations after receiving my Performer's Certificate in Musical Theatre with Trinity College, London and moved from Gqeberha (formally PE) to Johannesburg in 2003 where I started my career with a small advertising agency. I truly honed my skills in PR at Cathy Findley PR where I worked closely with Cathy, learning about all the important foundations of the trade over a three-year period. A career highlight was undoubtedly working on the Indian Premier League (IPL) with a team at Magna Carta in 2009, which saw me flying around the country and meeting all of my childhood heroes. Since then, I have been drawn more towards corporate communications and grown a passion for the professional services industry.

■ You have a very interesting and varied background and have been working in communications within the legal industry for several years now. What are some of the biggest differences you've found working in the legal space compared to say, more consumer-based brands?

Biram: I used to love the consumer brands, but as I've grown in my career, I've realised that the corporate side of things is where I really want to focus. I also prefer working on one brand because you can really put all of your energy into it, instead of cutting yourself into 10 pieces for different clients who all want the same things in different ways. I can be a lot more strategic now and it's paying off as our ROI is increasing.

■ What is it you love about the legal industry and your role in it?

Biram: There is a legal element to almost everything – from basic transactions to a massive merger or restructuring. There are so many different facets to law as well and I love that some days I am doing things for the banking and finance or employment practice, and the next I'm working with the litigation team and perhaps writing an article with our shipping practice – there is never a dull moment! My role within the firm extends from internal and external comms to PR and digital. I also manage our blog, local website, intranet, social media and brand assets. It helps that I work with the most amazing people as well!

■ ***What are some of the biggest lessons you've learned from your experience in the industry?***

Biram: Because of confidentiality and potential conflicts in our industry, my main learning has been to get everything checked by the compliance and risk team first. I don't pitch anything without their consent or offer any interviews to our lawyers without running it past them. Conflict checks are key!

■ ***Message delivery and connecting with clients and stakeholders can often be a challenge. What is your strategy when delivering the intended message?***

Biram: 2020 was a year of learning and adjusting for the world of marketing. The lockdown meant that we couldn't see our clients face to face, so we had to change our strategy and find new ways to engage with them. It has made us remember that the basic marketing tools actually work the best, and if you have those in good shape, everything else naturally falls into place.

■ ***What do you think are the most successful channels for getting your brand message out there and why?***

Biram: Word of mouth has always been a popular marketing tool, so this year, I'm focussing on client testimonials as this is where people get their referrals from these days. This is also why websites like Tripadvisor and Airbnb have so much traffic – people rely a lot on a good referral. Most probably also the reason why community pages on Facebook, for example, are so popular.

■ ***How do you plan on building on the Norton Rose Fulbright brand going forward?***

Biram: Norton Rose Fulbright is a massive, global brand, so I am lucky to have a huge international team alongside me. Integration is key for us, and so we meet regularly (at all hours of the day and night) to share ideas and brainstorm. 2020 was a great year for the firm, and our plan is to continue on that upward trajectory.

ABOUT SHAN RADCLIFFE

Shan Radcliffe is the editor of Bizcommunity HR, Education and Legal.

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