

Same values, new business model

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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PR is a business that has moved from static to dynamic and it is our task to create new ways of doing PR, keeping in mind the values it has always operated in - being ethical, having integrity and producing quality work in the quickest timeframe possible.



[Maxim Behar](#)

“We need to change because our world has changed,” International Communications Consultancy Organisation (ICCO) President Maxim Behar told delegates at the 2017 National Prisa Conference.

The conference took place at the Indaba Hotel in Fourways, attracting PR practitioners and consultants from across the continent. The conference also formed part of the 60 years’ celebration of the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA).

“We are experiencing the biggest change our industry has seen in 100 years – the change of ownership of the media. Social media has allowed everyone to own the media. Previously media belonged to news anchors, for example, but today a taxi driver with a mobile phone can be more popular than a sports star.”

This change is good and has propelled PR from consultants to decision makers. “While we can assist our clients with media, including social media and media relations, the most important part of our work today is crisis communications and

reputation management.”

Companies and brands are increasingly turning to PR as a result. “Digital and advertising agencies cannot solve a crisis and do not have the know-how of dealing and running with a company crisis and managing its reputation.”

This requires a thorough understanding of social media and the appropriate language needed to solve a crisis. “The different languages we speak on social media channels is one of the most important changes in our world,” he adds.

Despite these changes, ethics and integrity are more important today than ever. “We have influence and therefore it is our responsibility to operate in a transparent manner. PR has always been 95% 'relations' and the rest 'public'. Today it is 100% public. If you are transparent, then you will be ethical.”

For the first time ever PR is entirely measurable with results reported to the clients on many levels. If PR is a 100% measurable business, then it requires quality comparable to any other news source. Therefore, quality must be a given.

Lastly, speed is of the essence. “Previously it took 10 hours to solve a crisis; today it takes 10 minutes.”

He believes that it is time for PR to stand up and be leaders. “We are the masters of content as we are the ones who we create it, and in today’s world this makes us decision makers.”

Behar is a globally recognised PR expert, CEO of leading Bulgarian PR consultancy M3 Communications Group and Hill+Knowlton Strategies chairman for Czech Republic. The ICCO is the voice of public relations consultancies around the world. The ICCO membership comprises national trade associations in 32 countries across the globe in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas and Australia. Collectively, these associations represent some 2,500 PR firms.

Prisa, which celebrates its diamond jubilee this year, started in 1957, with 23 founder members. Today it boasts around 520 members (excluding students).

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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