

Providing insights for a better South Africa

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It comes as no surprise that public sector research is an area of much interest in South Africa, given the constant cries of poor service delivery and calls on the government to improve the lives of its citizens. Heading up this area at TNS South Africa is New Business Development and Public Sector Director, Ivan Motlogeloa. He explains that the mandate of his business unit is to give clients and policy makers in the public sector information and ammunition to help them draft, design and implement better policies, with the end goal of serving citizens better. This differs from TNS's other practice areas in that the goal is not to help clients sell more as much as it is to help them use TNS's expertise and resources to improve lives.



Ivan Motlogeloa

Motlogeloa discusses that there are several ways in which TNS can assist its clients in this manner, by implementing various projects to gauge perceptions around service and delivery. He mentions the Public Sector Excellence Awards, which asked South Africans to rate the quality of service provided by various government entities and how well they meet the needs of citizens. This culminated in awards being presented to the best performers, but also provided useful insight to those who needed to up their game.

Other services TNS South Africa offers in this area include programme evaluation, which looks at the benefit of spending money on one project over another, in terms of the infrastructure it is developing and jobs it is creating. Behaviour change programmes investigate the factors driving certain citizen behaviour and what steps can be taken by government to remedy this, while impact assessment projects evaluate both the positive and negative effects of granting a license or implementing a particular policy.

The company has also undertaken citizen satisfaction projects for various municipalities and cities to gauge whether they are meeting citizen needs, such as public transport, provision of clean water or energy/electricity, the upkeep of public spaces and service delivery, as well as the level of financial inclusion and access South African citizens enjoy. An evaluation of the level and quality of communication between the government and its citizens is another example of how TNS acts as the bridge between the state and its citizens.

Looking further afield, Motlogeloa also mentions studies TNS has conducted in line with positioning South Africa as top of mind for foreign direct investment and as a top tourist destination. This is done by asking pertinent questions about positive and negative perceptions of the country by foreigners, as well as looking at areas foreigners are most surprised or impressed by, or alternatively disappointed in, and using this as insight going forward.

Of course, moving forward into 2014, it is a given that election research is top of mind in South Africa. Motlogeloa explains that TNS carries this sort of research out for political parties and media houses and advocates of democracy, to gauge, for example, general mood around the elections and party preference in the lead up to voting.

However, Motlogeloa is quick to reiterate that the point of TNS's research in the public sector is to provide the sector and the government with insights to improve quality of life for the citizens of South Africa and to work towards making the country a better place. Certainly a worthwhile facet of the company then, and one that deserves as much recognition as the areas TNS is perhaps better known for, such as providing strategic insights for clients to grow their brands. After all, the brand our country portrays is the starting point for it all.

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