

# The aloe in the room

By [Mathe Okaba](#)

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In his first budget speech as minister of finance, Tito Mboweni provided the country with some insight into how the government intends to get us back on track and back on the path to success, towards growth. There were many interpretations, but in reality, there was no silver bullet, not for state-owned enterprises (SOE's), not for industry, private citizens, small business or anyone for that matter.



Minister of finance, Tito Mboweni delivering his budget speech for 2019. © [Twitter](#).

## Time for renewal, for growth

Minister Mboweni focused on looking inward, to getting our house in order for taking action that would ultimately bear fruit. For agencies, there's a lesson there. Agencies need to fiercely defend what they set out to do.

Mr Mboweni stated that we should look after what we sow, what we as a country have ploughed and laboured over so tirelessly, defend it from the ravages and risks, prune it, look after it and in turn, it will grow and bear fruit. That's at government level, and yes, Eskom needs to be sorted out, since without power all of this is simply rhetoric. But again, there's a lesson.

What are agencies here for, if not to help brands succeed? It's not to simply create pretty pictures, accompanied by some

clever copy. Agencies set out to build brands, guide them, ensure they have longevity, and deliver a return on investment to the brand owner. In these relatively tough times, as a profession, we need to target growth. And how do we do that? By creating effective communications campaigns that have a positive effect on the client's bottom line.

Why? Because it's the currency of the profession, of the industry - validation that we are able to swing opinion and drive brand objectives successfully.

## The aloe in the room

The minister walked into the Parliament with an iconic South African plant, the aloe. He noted that a predecessor had brought plums - sweet, vibrant and full of promise. The aloe, on the other hand, is resilient, sturdy and drought resistant. He used it in an analogous manner, describing how as a country, we need to take the bitter with the sweet. To prove that if we plant anew, we can return to those plum times.

“ Viva our Aloe, the symbol of Renewal! Look after it, nurture it, prune and tend to it!! [pic.twitter.com/k9SjnaC5k9](https://pic.twitter.com/k9SjnaC5k9)— Tito Mboweni (@tito\_mboweni) [February 20, 2019](#) ”

Chat to any agency representative, and they'll tell you how difficult it is out there. Budgets are shrinking while expected delivery remains on par. South African agencies are akin to the aloe. They are resilient. They make do with what is available and always look forward to plum times. They are iconic in their own right. South African agencies and the professionals within them are highly regarded worldwide. Punching way above their weight.

In years past we've spoken about recession, difficult times, shrinking revenues and increased expenditure. It was all about where the money was going. This year it would seem, it's more about 'what the money can do'. And that's precisely what agencies should be asking as they take an inward view of how to make it out there.

## The budget in action – everywhere

We're a tough bunch. While issues at the SOE's threaten the entire economy, tax bracket creep and a review of civil servant wages reduce disposable income and so-called 'sin taxes' drive increased revenue collections for government, all of us need to suit up.

Our industry has staying power. We've never given up, and we're not about to start. But what we can do is raise the bar on the perception of what we offer. As a collective, we can drive our own 'currency'. Our true value.

We should use this year's budget as a reminder of how to keep our own houses in order, and in so doing, making them work to the best of their ability. Making them stronger, more efficient and effective. As tax paying citizens we expect something in return for our taxes. Remember that when planning your next brand campaign.

## It's time to deliver

Our profession should strive to always create effective communications campaigns. Campaigns that truly deliver against set objectives. Government is highlighting the ills that come from doing something simply to say, there, we've taken action. But what does that action deliver?

Let's ensure we take action with proper insight. Targeting effective communications ultimately leads to overall success, for client and agency. Look after the industry seed that we have grown over the years. Nurture and protect it, and it will deliver the plum.

ABOUT MATHE OKABA

Mathe Okaba is the CEO of the Association for Communication and Advertising (ACA). She is a consummate business professional and entrepreneur with over 23 years' experience spanning the advertising, media, sponsorship and events industries. With a passion for strategy, planning and project management, she has built a solid reputation as a successful leader and team player...

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