

Collaboration is vital for small businesses

By [Miranda Lusiba](#)

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The Covid-19 period has taught me a lot about the importance of collaboration. I've always valued teamwork when I was still employed; but noticed that because most of us SMMEs that are 'one-man shows' - we tend to prefer to work in silos.



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This silo mentality I find is caused mainly by lack of trust and also by our current circumstances as well – the negative effect on our economy which has led to most of us not being able to afford hiring people in our businesses at the moment and in the near future.

Our government believes that SMMEs can contribute positively to reducing the unemployment rate in the country and I agree with that in principle. This optimistic view though will work only if our economy is turned around and when the development of SMMEs is not only prioritised, but also actioned.



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In conjunction with my business associates, who also own boutique PR Agencies, we realised the importance of working together even more during the Lockdown period last year. Because we could not afford to hire additional, full-time help, we contracted each other as extra hands - as and when we had overflow work in client projects.

The benefits that I saw from collaborating with skilled and matured people whose competence I trusted included the following:

- I was able to confidently introduce my business associate to my clients knowing that both my company and I will be represented well; and vice versa.
- I trusted that the quality of work that will be delivered to my clients was going to be of high standards and that it was not going to attract unnecessary complaints that could have been avoided.
- Because of my business associates' maturity, professionalism and integrity, I could trust that they know what they want, why they are doing the job and that their well-being was dependent on the delivery of consistent and high-quality work.
- In addition, as an SMME it was important for me to know that when I paid a consultant – it was for work of high standard and that the payment did not feel like a grudge purchase.

The support that we gave to each other during this difficult period helped our businesses to survive. Our support for each other over time has gone beyond just contracting each other on projects, but it also extended to us helping one another when we needed either business or PR advice. Also, we decided that going forward we would have regular business and administration meetings to discuss challenges we were facing as SMMEs and find solutions together.

These regular meetings helped us to identify other areas where we needed consistent help from each other, these included doing quality assurance of each other's work. This quality control process included checking each other's documents or even stories before sending them to our clients, because as PR professionals we understand very well the importance of attention to detail.

The trust and respect that we have for each other allowed us to feed off each other's strengths and this is really working for us even now. I would advise fellow small business owners to try this out, they might be surprised just how well it works. For this to work though, it has to be a two-way mutually beneficial relationship – that is based mainly on trust and respect.

ABOUT MIRANDA LUSIBA

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