

# DA invites bloggers to social media unveiling



By [Justin Hartman](#)

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The Democratic Alliance (DA) unveiled its new social media strategy yesterday, Thursday, 19 February 2009, to a small audience in Cape Town comprising journalists, party members and, believe it or not, bloggers. I was one of the lucky ones to crack an invite yesterday afternoon and I have to admit I was extremely excited to hear what the DA had up its sleeves.



Pic by Justin Hartman

Cape Town City mayor and DA leader Helen Zille gave the first speech highlighting the DA's progressive and forward thinking strategy. Zille said that "this new digital strategy will reach South African voters in exciting and groundbreaking ways. Our approach is to build a personalised relationship with the DA's supporters by involving them in our activities and campaigns."

The speech was followed by another from DA CEO Ryan Coetzee and he took us through the elements of the new communication strategy. This new strategy includes:

- Two interactive websites
- Online advertising and marketing
- SMS communication
- Mobile web access
- Engagement with voters via social networking and in the blogosphere

## New DA website launched



Then the two new websites were unveiled. The first was the DA's main website, [www.da.org.za](http://www.da.org.za), which has seen a major facelift and integration with various forms of social media. Some of these include videos embedded via Vimeo and Times Multimedia, a new forum component and various other social tools for sharing information. It's cutting-edge, usable and really puts the pressure on the other political parties. A job well done.

The new Contribute to Change website, <http://contributetochange.org.za>, is equally impressive at first glance. The core of the website is to allow people the freedom to bring upon change in our country and the site has a strong social networking aspect to it that facilitates this process. In addition to the social networking, you can pledge your support to making a change in the following ways:

- Build a team by recruiting your friends.
- Spread the word by sending letters to all the major newspapers and talk shows.
- Attend or host a DA event.
- Make phone calls and reach out to voters.
- Go door to door.
- Donate some cash.



Each of these allow individuals to take action and contribute to change, as Zille puts it. I noted that while this website was extremely well put together, I worried about what the value proposition was for end users and laymen like you and I. My first impression of the site was that this is very heavily directed to helping the DA and, while this is positive, I struggled to see how this benefited consumers - in other words, what were the DA doing for us in return?

## Quick to answer concerns

For those who have heard Zille speak, you'll know that she delivers a convincing and strong message and she was very quick to answer my concerns. The whole aim of the DA is to ultimately shift focus on opposition toward the focus on our country and how we as citizens could help make a difference. While I do respect this and it was a convincing argument, I am still concerned that an ANC or COPE supporter wouldn't use this website as it's too heavily focused on the DA.

I wanted to ask, but thought not to at the time, whether or not the DA had given any thoughts to making this website agnostic - similar I guess to the new [SA Elections website](#) from *The Times*- as this could really bring the whole country together and not just DA supporters. If the Contribute To Change website was powered by the DA yet remained in the background, I think this website could be far more successful in the long term.

What has really impressed me, though, is that the DA are by far the most progressive political party in South Africa. The [ANC's attempts at social media](#) have been dismal [see Matthew Buckland's blog post, [ANC turns to social media](#)] and these two new sites by the DA really highlight its commitment to long-term change in our country.

Both the new DA and Contribute to Change websites are built off open source technology, specifically WordPress, BBPress and BuddyPress, and it's great to see the use of open source to drive the DA's campaign.

I have to commend the DA, its web development team and the guys running the social media strategy behind the scenes on a job well done. I'm only worried that the Contribute to Change website is a little *too advanced* for a South African audience but only time will tell.

- [www.da.org.za](http://www.da.org.za) and mobisite <http://mobi.da.org.za> were both created by [World Wide Creative](#).

- Adapted from [original blog post](#) published on 19 February 2009

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