



Marie Yossava



“Be good at what you do and do what you are good at”. This authorless, unattributed quote is often rightly dismissed as glib lip service, spouted by charlatans who wear their pants too high and apply a tad too much gel to their hair. Nonetheless, there is an element of truth to this maxim. No one embodies this more than this month’s featured Accredited in Public Relations (APR) practitioner: **Marie Yossava** APR of Grapevine Communications. As is expected of a member of the PRISA elite, Marie has displayed exceptional competency, professionalism and stellar achievement in the field of communication and public relations.

With well over two decades in the profession, Marie has shown consistency and commitment that isn’t always easily associated with a constantly changing industry. She has been largely immune to the sweeping trends and fads that sometimes afflicts practitioners, desperate to be seen as proactive, and as a result has had outstanding longevity. Of course, that’s not to say that she hasn’t embraced change and innovation when necessary. No one survives in the world of communication without being a step ahead of the curve. Yet, her refreshing approach to public relations puts paid to the mistaken notion that success cannot be found in the traditional mould of public relations practice. Having established that Marie’s good at what she does, it’s interesting to find out how she knew she was good.

When posed with the question as to what about herself she’d like to share with the rest of the PRISA family, the response was telling: “People – networking to meet new and interesting people and can’t imagine life without people, they are the measurement of the value of my life.” That is the root of all communication, to create shared meaning and build relationships between people. It is heartening to see Marie involved in a profession that specialises in managing these interactions with people through communication management. The second part of her answer is also revelatory, as it is clear that she defines herself (or at least a part of herself) through her public relations consultancy, Grapevine Communications.

Having managed and owned the agency for 18 years, her pride in it is understandable. This is before the list of lengthy of achievements and projects that it has been involved in. These include: launching the Pecanwood Golf and Residential Estate with the Golden Bear, golfing legend Jack Nicklaus; being the public relations consultancy that managed Bakers Mini Cricket for six years; providing strategic brand advancement with Nokia around the country in 2003, media partnering with *Morning Live* and Independent News; becoming the first African and South African representative for Public Relations Boutiques International in March 2012 and establishing itself as one of the country’s premier boutiques. The individual accolades are plentiful too. Marie has been nominated Best Public Relations Person 1999, 2000 and 2001 by the media /marketing editor of Independent Newspapers.

Hardly surprising that at this time she saw fit to develop her already impressive personal brand and became a member of PRISA in 2003. A short nine years later, she obtained her Accredited in Public Relations Practitioner (APR) SAQA recognised designation. This was an opportunity to take stock of all the work she had done. Becoming an APR allowed her to accurately gauge her progress, her environment and the direction to take in the future.

Marie’s response a lesson to all aspiring practitioners, if ever I saw one to the value of self improvement and reflection through PRISA’s internationally recognised accreditation process.

As she explained, “It was an opportunity to recap the work and experience I have gained during the past 18 years and acknowledge that I was at the top of my game, which is important to be able to share with clients and the industry. The assignments also presented an opportunity to examine my consultancy’s current status quo, the media / public relations landscape and where Grapevine is positioned.”

Moving forward, Marie is working on an exciting initiative with Steyn City Properties. A project she boldly declares as the largest and most unique lifestyle development South Africa has yet seen. As for PRISA, Marie would like to see us take a more aggressive approach to social media. She believes PRISA has the potential to turn it into a powerful tool and resource. “The current Oscar Pistorius case indicated the power of social media and how pervasive it can be.” Wise words from a stalwart and we would all do well to take heed.

