

Creative Africa - Exploring the PR potential of Africa as an emerging economic & reputation powerhouse

 By [Regine le Roux](#)

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The theme for this year's annual African Public Relations Association (APRA) conference was *Creative Africa: Exploring the PR Potential of Africa as an emerging Economic & Reputation Powerhouse*.



Image supplied by Regine le Roux. Photographer: David Itumbi (Kenya). (L to r) Derick Chiweshe (Zambia), Hazel Zulu (Zambia), Davies Mupenda (Zambia), Pamela Mupoti (Zambia), Regine le Roux (South Africa), Katasha Ponya (Zambia)

The 34th APRA conference was hosted at the Mulungushi International Conference Centre in Lusaka, Zambia from 15 to 19 May 2023.

Three key focus areas

The conference had three key focus areas:

1. Reputations matter

Reputation management was a big focus throughout the conference. Reputation management should not just be another rephrased concept for PR; it is so much more.

Reputations impact who you do business with, and associated with as an individual, company or country. Having a good reputation directly impacts your bottom line as a company, and potential for foreign investment as a country.

PR is a crucial component of any communicator's toolset, but, there is so much more to building reputations and ultimately the economy for a country and continent. It's more than lip service, generating positive media coverage, and definitely not spin. Being creative and achieving good media means absolutely nothing if the ethics of leaders and organisations are not in place.

Reputation management isn't something that should be fobbed off to the communication team, it is something that the leadership team needs to embrace and foster on all levels of a business and ultimately as a country. With that said, every communicator should have a seat and voice around the board room table throughout the year, not just when there is a crisis.



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2. Research

Research is something that is still disappointingly very low on the radar or list of priorities of many communicators. The younger generations in the field tend to do their research on social media platforms such as TikTok and use Google to source their information. It is important that communicators learn how to speak in numbers; you need to speak the numeral language of the board room, so that you can get your budgets approved in order to help you to be creative.

You'll get much greater buy-in for a concept when you present the facts and figures around the board room table, rather than trying to convince a financial director that your intuition needs to be invested in. Present your gut feeling as facts and figures. As Bridet Kambobe group manager: public relations and corporate affairs at Trade Kings Group shared, "If we can't do research, we can't innovate."

3. Relationship building

This remains a key driver in PR and reputation management. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a topic we'll definitely see a lot more of in conversations and conferences.

AI will also be relevant across all industries, including PR. Policy development and the ethical use of AI tools such as ChatGPT still need to be addressed and developed. For now, it might be a helpful tool to help you to develop social media posts and improve your writing skills, but ultimately, in our profession as communicators, relationships and human interaction to build these relationships remain pivotal.



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Creative Africa

Linking all of this back to Creative Africa, as APRA's immediate past president, Yomi Badejo-Okusanya says, "Public Relations is the art of telling compelling stories."

Reputations matter now more than ever. Building a reputation is an artwork, it is not something that can be rushed, there needs to be balance and harmony. To be a true artist, a true master, you have to put in the work and create more than just one masterpiece; consistency is key. Consistency in your ethics, consistency in the way you communicate, and consistency in the way you build and maintain the relationships with your stakeholders.

There was a kaleidoscope of conversation, a mixture of issues old and new; ultimately all of us sharing challenges of building reputations, finding solutions to better leverage off of research and ultimately fostering closer relationships with each other, our companies and our countries. We are all indeed colourful, creative and all one Africa.

ABOUT REGINE LE ROUX

Regine is a reputation specialist. She founded Reputation Matters in 2005; where they measure and manage companies' reputations using their unique Repudometer® measurement tool.

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