

PR puts its money where its mouth is...

By [Brian Berkman](#)

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It goes to show: nothing piques competitor interest like money. At the recent Cape Town PR-Net meeting, where 70 communications professionals met to discuss 'Fees, Salaries and Return on Investment' at Marimba Restaurant, the tension between wanting to know what competitors charge and peoples' willingness to share that information, was palpable.

So too, the abject silence as Sharleen Lomey of Viv Gordon Placements read out the salary ranges in PR. From R3000 to R30 000, is the 'zero-to-hero-in seven-years scenario' if you're brilliant at your job.

The other stat I managed to ring out from tight-lipped panelists was an average hourly rate of R500. But, as Ruth Golembo of Lange PR, one of the industries most respected practitioners, explained, they didn't bill by the hour but rather by what the job required.

By contrast, Galia Kerbel, standing in for Marcus Brewster who was abroad, said Marcus Brewster Publicity billed using a PR Index which quantified publicity output in units which were billed (on average) at R500.

I had to pointedly ask both Ruth and Galia to commit to a price per job. Ruth said, by way of example, that a press release (research, writing, editing, negotiating and disseminating would take eight hours and cost R4000. Galia on the other hand, using the PR Index, quoted a writing fee of four units (I stand corrected if I have not remembered these figures correctly) plus a newspaper placement fee of four units, totaling R4000. Surprisingly, both billing models seem to work out to the same amount for the same output.

Henry Shields, director of Marimba and former attorney, offered some useful client insights: He didn't like the way attorney's billed by time unit, nor did he like complex billing models like those that had a menu of offerings. He stressed the importance of being clear about billing upfront and not having to negotiate for it at the end of a job.

In conversation with some smaller consultancies at the bar after the meeting, I heard that the average hourly rate was R400 per hour.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Berkman heads up Brian Berkman Publicity and runs PR-Net, a networking forum for PROs in Cape Town and recently launched in Gauteng. He has just started writing a regular 'Blog' (Web Log). For more, go to: www.BrianBerkman.com

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