

# Telling the truth

 By Louise Marsland

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'Truth.' This was the immediate prediction from South African communications specialist, Ruth Golembo, when I asked her for one key trend prediction for 2014.

Golembo, who is CEO of Lange 360 Strategic Communications, explained: "Truth. Corporate truth: consumers are sick of being misled. They don't have to believe us anymore. Citizen journalism, citizenry, access to information... means that everything you do now has to be authentic, real and true."

And this from a public relations officer and former journalist, no less!

Golembo was quoted, along with other industry leaders in my TRENDAFRiCA 2014 Trends Annual digital magazine available free on [www.trendafrica.co.za](http://www.trendafrica.co.za). She wasn't the only leader who touched on this need for transparency in business - most did. And it is referred to in most 2014 trends, in varying guises, from authenticity to sincerity, a true brand narrative and social responsibility.

## Is it possible?

I've been asked, with obvious cynicism, if this is possible - a business world without obfuscation and spin? I've been given books to read on how PR specialists use bloggers to plant stories and discredit rivals and then watch gleefully how they go viral...

And of course, as an editor, I still receive shockingly bad press releases trying to talk up client products or brands using every adjective known to man and PR.

We are only at the beginning of this latest incantation of our Brave New World, and with privacy concerns mounting across the world and revelations about media phone hacking and spying, not just by governments, but business as well, it is hard indeed to believe that 'truth' could come true.

But the big difference here is the social media millennial generation. They are used to "hacking" life by now to get what they want, subverting rules to suit them, reverse engineering products to produce something else.

What was your reaction when you heard this weekend that Turkey had "turned off" Twitter? Probably a collective "Yeah, right, they can try!"

## Total internet isolation isn't possible anymore

In fact, Twitter usage across Turkey went up by 138% practically overnight. And as fast as the Government 'plugs' access, the faster users across the globe tweet out alternatives. It's not possible any longer to isolate communities or countries totally from the internet.

Same with brands - they have to learn to behave with total integrity with all their customers and to speak the truth to all of their customers all of the time, not just some of them some of the time.

And as we know, it is also about actions, about how brands change the lives of their customers and the communities they serve, understanding and meeting their needs, not just selling stuff or coming up with clever campaigns.

It's inevitable and it is world changing. It is about being more real than reality TV. It is an opportunity.

### ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Burgers (previously Marsland) is Founder/Content Director: SOURCE Content Marketing Agency. Louise is a Writer, Publisher, Editor, Content Strategist, Content/Media Trainer. She has written about consumer trends, brands, branding, media, marketing and the advertising communications industry in SA and across Africa, for over 20 years, notably, as previous Africa Editor: Bizcommunity.com; Editor: Bizcommunity Media/Marketing SA; Editor-in-Chief: AdVantage magazine; Editor: Marketing Mx magazine; Editor: Progressive Retailing magazine; Editor: BusinessBrief magazine; Editor: FMOG Files newsletter. Web: [www.sourceagency.co.za](http://www.sourceagency.co.za).

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