COMMUNICATION THAT COUNTS
LESSONS FROM SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL INVESTORS

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This GrantCraft guide focuses on communicating for impact in the South African context. Through a partnership with Tshikululu Social Investments, we bring you lessons and experiences in communicating for impact from grantmakers, foundations, and others involved in social investment in South Africa.

We’ll explore themes including how to optimise communication with partners, social investors, and grantees; how to identify and achieve communication goals, and how different media can help enhance different messages.

For South Africans, this guide will directly reflect your environment; and for others, we hope you can derive lessons about communication to apply to your own work regardless of where you are in the world.

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The South African Social Investment Landscape

In 2014, South Africa celebrated 20 years of democracy. The country still faces numerous socio-economic and development challenges, due in large part to its history. Yet despite having an estimated unemployment rate of 26 percent and a high Gini coefficient (a commonly used measure of inequality) of 0.59, South Africa is committed to addressing these challenges through its vibrant social investment climate, characterised by passionate people, innovative projects, and collaborative efforts.

While all South African citizens are now equal under the law, the legacy of Apartheid lingers. Severe racial, gender, and class inequalities remain. To address these, the government has implemented affirmative action policies, such as Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE), which aims to ensure that the economy is restructured and transformed to enable the meaningful participation of the majority of its citizens.

The five pillars of B-BBEE are ownership, management control, skills development, enterprise and supplier development, and socio-economic development. Within the socio-economic development component, corporate social investment (CSI) is particularly emphasised. To comply with the socio-economic development requirements laid out in government’s B-BBEE Codes of Good Practice, corporate businesses must provide 1 percent of their net profit after tax for social investment activities, meaning that a significant amount of social investment in South Africa is contributed by business, rather than by individuals, families, or non-corporate foundations.

According to Trialogue, publisher of the annual CSI Handbook in South Africa, in 2013/14 the amount of money spent by corporate business through CSI programmes was R8.2 billion (roughly $750 million), up from only R2 billion in 2003. About half of South Africa’s CSI funding is currently spent on education initiatives, with the bulk of remaining investments targeted at health and social development activities.

HOW THIS GUIDE WAS DEVELOPED

To gather examples for this guide, we went to forward-thinking social investors large and small to find out how they’re using communications to strengthen their programme impact. We also asked communications staff, consultants, and grantees in South Africa for their perspective on the growing use of communications strategies within programmes, rather than as an adjunct to the social investors’ core work. Certain themes and notions are derived from an earlier GrantCraft guide, Communicating for Impact: Strategies for Grantmakers. For a complete list of contributors, see page 28.
UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF APARTHEID

Although Apartheid ended 20 years ago, recovery from its systematic racial discrimination is a difficult and on-going process. Apartheid literally means “apartness” and was a system of government implemented in South Africa between 1948 and 1994 that separated people according to race in every aspect of daily life, entrenching white minority rule and discriminating against non-white population groups.

South Africa’s new constitution is founded on the values of human dignity and the advancement of human rights and freedom. Its Bill of Rights is the most far-reaching document of its kind in the world, incorporating both individual rights and freedom of expression and socio-economic rights. Yet on the ground, change happens slowly. For example, although the average income of black households has increased by 169 percent in the last 10 years, the average white household still earns six times more than its black equivalent. While South Africa’s democratic legislature is undoubtedly progressive and efforts are being made to redress historical inequalities, there is still a long way to go.

One of the key developments of the past few years has been the creation of the National Development Plan (NDP) by the South African government, aimed at eliminating poverty and reducing inequality by 2030 by drawing on the energies of the population, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capacity of the state, and promoting leadership throughout society. Perhaps most importantly, the NDP calls for all South Africans to play a role in building the country’s future through partnership and collaboration. CSI is seen as a critical avenue to promote these goals.

AS YOU READ…

Here are a few points to keep in mind as you read this guide:

● Even with a majority of social investment taking place through corporates in South Africa, there are still variations in practice. There is no one-size-fits-all model of embracing communication that counts.

● The terms “social investor” and “grantmaker” are used interchangeably throughout this guide to represent usage both in the South African context and around the world.

● Communication technologies are always changing, but strategy shared throughout this guide can be applied to new media. Think how ideas shared here might be applied across all communication channels.

● All new strategies take practice and experimentation. With all of the action items and other ideas included in this guide, consider exploring them on a small scale before making larger changes.
Why Communicate?

Communication is central to the successful operation of social investment. From sharing knowledge to advocating or lobbying for a cause, educating people, raising funds, or engaging donors, communication is a vital tool in helping grantmakers achieve their goals.

By focusing on improving communications, foundations and the nonprofits they support can increase their impact and effectiveness. The question is not actually “Why communicate?” but “How do we communicate most effectively to achieve our goals?”

A foundation’s communications need to encompass everything it does to advance its programmes and the work of its grantees by giving relevant people—community leaders, donors, the press, peer organisations, funders, and all other stakeholders—pertinent information.

The most important element of communicating in the context of grantmaking is to understand the goal for each particular communication and to tailor it accordingly. In other words, the starting point is to ask, “What are we trying to achieve?” Then social investors can ask, “Who do we need to communicate with to realise this goal?” and then, “How can we do that in a way that makes the most impact?” These questions apply to everything from large-scale public campaigns to small, one-on-one dialogues.

Different goals for communicating in the grantmaking sector include, among others:

- **Collaboration and encouraging partnerships:** Communication is integral to success when different organisations work together. It also assists in forming and building effective new partnerships.

- **Grantee relationship building:** Communicating with beneficiaries fosters a dialogue that is as much about listening as disseminating information or aid. Effective beneficiary communication helps to reduce tension and frustrations, enhances understanding and action between programme managers and beneficiaries, and facilitates greater quality and accountability of programmes.

- **Public relations or brand enhancement:** Organisations can use communications to build and enhance their credibility and their profile, which can assist them in attracting new audiences, boosting their visibility, and creating new opportunities.

- **Investor relations:** Organisations, particularly corporate businesses, can use communications to connect with investors, demonstrating their vision, activities, accomplishments, and results. This can assist in getting investors to buy into projects and programmes, boosting support and possibly funding.

- **Knowledge sharing:** Communication is critical in sharing research and knowledge, both internally to promote efficiency and knowledge transfer, and externally—cross-organisational knowledge sharing aids in the development of best practice, provides a catalyst for collaboration, boosts innovation, and shortens learning cycles.

- **Internal connection:** Communicating internally is vital for ensuring each person in an organisation (including staff and volunteers) is working towards a shared goal. It also ensures that employees understand the social investment activities being undertaken by the organisation, and have an opportunity to get involved. This contributes to a sense of fulfilment and purpose. Effective internal communication also boosts efficiency and makes for a better working environment.
Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting: Communicating M&E findings is vital in demonstrating that a project is achieving its targets, in picking up any changes that should be made, and in proving to funders that a grantmaker is a reliable partner worth supporting. It's also important in reporting back to key stakeholders to ensure accountability and to build trust in relationships.

It's also important to remember that communication is a two-way street and needs to include listening as well as putting out your own messaging.

Once grantmakers have established why they're communicating and whom they're communicating with, there are some basic guidelines they can use to make sure their communications are effective and achieve their purpose.

DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY*

Use this process as a tool to determine your communications goals and strategy.

Discovery
Take stock of the project at hand, including the reasons for carrying out a communications campaign. Develop a clear objective by asking the following questions:

- Who needs to be brought into the conversation?
- What communication is already taking place?
- What capacity/desire do beneficiaries have to be involved?
- What are some of the risks of communicating in relation to various stakeholders?
- Are there any major gaps in terms of knowledge or skills?
- Why communicate about the social investments?

Design
Here you will get into the specifics of what your communications strategy looks like.

- What medium is most likely to efficiently and effectively reach the target audience?
- What timelines need to be considered?
- What budget is available?

Implementation
Once your communications strategy has been designed, the hard work of implementation begins. This phase takes all the decisions you have made and puts them into action. Some of the steps that form part of your implementation are:

- Collecting the necessary information
- Editing and reviewing the content
- Engaging with media and stakeholders
- Getting internal sign-off

Review
Once a communications strategy has been implemented, and the campaign is complete, reviewing what you've accomplished is important.

- Were targets and goals achieved?
- If not, why not?

* Adapted from the Kaelo Engage model.
Collaboration and Enhancing Partnerships

When a social investor is collaborating with others on social investment work, communication about roles and relationships needs to be treated with special sensitivity, and it’s important for partners to focus on communicating a consistent message.

COLLABORATING WITH FUNDING PARTNERS/GRANTMAKERS

Donne Nicol, head of the Shanduka Foundation, says that collaboration is a core part of everything the organisation does, as all of its programmes are joint efforts in one way or another. For example, in March 2013, the Shanduka Foundation signed an agreement with Kagiso Trust and the Department of Education to work together in 428 schools in two districts in the Free State province. “We worked together for 18 months before the agreement was formally signed. This preparatory period and the intense communications process it involved was definitely part of the reason the partnership is successful.”

The communication process began at the level of the heads of the organisations, then the executives became involved, and then management. Substantial time was spent workshopping best practice and ensuring that each party’s needs and goals were understood. “Physical meetings were critical,” she shared. “It was the only way that we could ensure proper communication between three very different entities.”

Nicol believes that communication structures are critically important. “It’s vital to discuss communication upfront and agree on structures for engagement. We set up committees and a stakeholder relations plan to communicate the collaboration to everyone involved. Once we had signed the agreement, we also realised that some of our staff who weren’t involved in the project were feeling excluded, so we responded with a three-day team-building session. We spent time communicating about each organisation in the Kagiso Shanduka Trust, showing that we share goals and values, and what we want to achieve in education in South Africa.”

She notes that when collaborating on social investment projects, it’s also important to think about practicalities like co-branding marketing collateral. She says that simple things, like discussing upfront how each party’s logo and corporate identity will be incorporated into digital and print materials, can prevent challenges and misunderstandings later on.

COLLABORATION WITH MEDIA/BUSINESS

Beth van Heerden, corporate social investment (CSI) executive of FirstRand Limited, says collaboration is beneficial because it allows for efficiency, instead of duplication of efforts or media fatigue around a particular initiative. As an example, she says that the FirstRand Foundation hosts three CSI that Works knowledge-sharing events annually, which bring together a variety of stakeholders around a topic of shared interest (such as early childhood

“It’s vital to discuss communication upfront and agree on structures for engagement.”

—Donne Nicol, Shanduka Foundation
development or gender-based violence). The organisation works with the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper as a key media partner, which publishes a report on the events. In 2014, however, the partnership developed even further as the newspaper approached FirstRand to co-host a debate on mathematics education in South Africa.

Instead of hosting two separate events on the subject and risking splitting the audience, van Heerden explains that it made more sense to work together for one, powerful event, which would be publicised by both FirstRand and the *Mail & Guardian*. “As you do great work in one area and begin to be known for it, opportunities for collaboration arise naturally,” she says. “If you have a good reputation, people who want to collaborate will contact you. The key is to be open to working together and not have a territorial attitude. We firmly believe that social investment should not be a competitive environment, and we make sure that our public communications show a willingness to partner.”

**COLLABORATING WITH GOVERNMENT**

For a number of South African grantmakers, collaborative relationships with government are particularly important. In addition to communication about work done with government, it is important to communicate clearly and effectively with relevant government stakeholders for the partnership to be effective.

Both the Tiger Brands Foundation and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation work closely with government. They believe that a fact-based, open, and honest relationship with government is most effective. Caitlin Baron, South Africa country lead for the Dell Foundation, says, “Government is inundated with information and requests for partnerships. If projects want to be taken seriously, they have to provide factual information about the work they are doing. For example, illustrating numbers and trends over time and sharing specific stories about the impact of a project on specific people is more effective than generalised information.”

The Tiger Brands Foundation partners directly with government to carry out an in-school breakfast feeding programme (programmes that provide nutritious breakfast for children in economically disadvantaged public schools), which is designed to supplement government’s feeding programme. Kelvin Glen, founding director of the Tiger Brands Foundation (who has since moved on to start his own business), explains that the foundation’s collaboration with the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) is enhanced by communication. “We have regular status meetings at a national, provincial, and district level.” These meetings are a critical opportunity to touch base with and remain close to the foundation’s partners.

Glen highlights that honesty in communication is key to building relationships and trust in public/private partnerships. “We built our relationship with the DBE with an attitude of humility, by offering to work with them, and showing that we didn’t want to critique them or to tell them how to do their job,” he says. “When we make mistakes, we admit them. I think that’s why we’ve been successful in building that relationship. We also spend a lot of time at the Department—working with them and supporting them. That’s been our success.”

He also stresses the importance of hands-on, on-going communication. Being present is one way to better listen to and understand grantees. “A lot of donors do one-off donations, and the only time grantees see that donor is when they want to produce promotional material about their involvement. But it’s important to be in regular contact with projects and to be hands-on in your involvement. That’s why we have a

**ACTION STEP**

Regularly ask partners for feedback on their involvement and each party’s performance and programme efficacy. Try to do this in a way that is non-threatening, allows for responses that aren’t “yes” or “no,” and encourages collaborative conversations.
“Illustrating numbers and trends over time and sharing specific stories about the impact of a project on specific people is more effective than generalised information.”

—Caitlin Baron, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation

project coordinator in each province that visits different schools every day. We do a daily report, and when we identify a problem, we address the issue. We are dependent on the school to implement our project, and encourage them to see the in-school breakfast programme as a partnership. We don't see ourselves as a donor; we see ourselves as a partner.”

IN SUMMARY:

Be clear and concise, and listen: When multiple parties are involved on a project, misunderstandings are inevitable, but many can be avoided through clear and regular communication. By constantly touching base and listening to each other, parties can ensure they’re on the same page and working together to move forward.

Positive tone: It is important to keep the tone of communication positive when seeking to encourage collaboration and enhance partnerships. While honesty is vital, look for a positive way to frame conversations, even when they’re about difficult subjects. When things go wrong, it’s easy to point fingers, but it’s far more effective to refrain from doing so. Instead of laying blame, focus on what needs to be done and map out a way forward together.

Emphasise partnership (and mean it): When approaching potential partners, be sure to understand not only the value they will bring to an initiative, but also how they will benefit from the collaboration. Communicate this clearly and set out each party’s role and responsibilities from the outset to avoid later misunderstandings or one party feeling used, abused, or left out. Seek to understand the other party’s perspective. Remember: communication is as much about listening as it is conveying your own message.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Answer these questions by yourself or talk through them with your colleagues or partners to find out how you are doing with your collaboration and partnership communication:

- Is every collaborator/partner feeling heard, involved, and understood? Rather than assuming this is the case, what can we do to find out?
- Do we have platforms in place to ensure regular communication takes place between all parties, such as meetings or report-back sessions?
- Are we open to new ideas on how to partner with others working in the same space?

ACTION STEP

Document a communication process for ensuring all partners are on the same page. This might include setting a schedule for face-to-face meetings, creating a communications committee, sending out regular programme updates, or creating a forum for feedback.

ACTION STEP

Determine how you could attend your next partners meeting in person, either physically or by using video technology.
Grantee Communications

Communicating with grantees is central to the success of any donor-funded programme. This communication begins with creating awareness around the availability of funding and providing information about the application process, and also includes keeping in touch during the grant period and communicating about the specific work that grantees are doing.

Throughout the grant decision-making process, it is important to communicate consistently and effectively. Clare Digby, manager of the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, emphasises the importance of communication: “The Trust endeavours to achieve a fairly quick response time—from the time of acknowledging applications through to communicating its decisions—though there may be occasional delays between formal meetings of the Trustees.”

The reporting process is also an important point of interaction with beneficiaries. Donors should be clear in terms of what they expect beneficiaries to report on and when this should take place. Feedback should be provided on these reports; all too often nonprofit organisations note that they submit a report and never hear anything in return. In terms of relationship building, providing feedback on reports also reassures grantees that their work is appreciated and is being taken seriously by the donor.

Of course communication is a two-way street, and organisations should not forget to listen to grantees in addition to speaking with them. Judy-Marié Smith explains that the DG Murray Trust (DGMT) undertook a survey in 2012 to get feedback not only from grantees, but from everyone who applied for funding from the trust. “We asked them about their experiences in applying to us for funding and as implementing partners of the Trust,” Smith says. “We specifically found it encouraging to learn that many organisations were really positive about the learning briefs they are tasked with creating. Learning briefs are a reflection on what the

“We don't own projects, we fund them.”

—Katy Hayes, Woolworths

organisation has been learning on a pertinent topic of their choice. Importantly, it explores the implications of that learning for policy and practice. Although organisations report that they find it a challenging exercise, they also say that it is a valuable learning tool assisting them to think strategically about learning and impact. We have since repeated the survey in 2014 and once again, it provided us with perspective on how our partners experience working with us, as well as giving us access to their ideas and suggestions.”

Katy Hayes, head of corporate social investment (CSI) at Woolworths and CSI specialist at Woolworths Trust, says, “CSI is about partnerships. We don't own projects, we fund them. This means that when we want to send out communications, we only do it with our partners' approval, and vice versa. I think what works well is that we only have a few partners, but we work closely with them.”

According to Donne Nicol, “helping grantees access increased funding by creating opportunities for them to showcase their work can be valuable for their continued success.” Shanduka

ACTION STEP

Involve beneficiaries in developing policies around issues like photography and funder visits.
Foundation’s programme **Adopt-a-School**, for instance, invites other funding partners to come and visit. Donne Nicol says that when Adopt-a-School’s funding partners visit its schools, it makes a significant difference. “We call it ‘going back to school for a day.’ Once our partners have met the kids and the principals, they feel a sense of pride and relationship. Many come back and volunteer at the schools.”

Trust between grantmakers and grantees can be enhanced by grantmakers implementing good communication practices.

- Making impositions on organisations and communities, such as having a camera crew show up without prior warning, can damage relationships with grantees and jeopardise projects.
- Failure to engage and consult with grantees can lead to the grantees feeling that they are being used for the social investor’s purposes.

**Stories** might be written from the donor’s office and photos sourced from previous project visits. If grantees see any of this information as inaccurate, or choose to make public the fact that they were not taken into account in the development of the material, the donor stands to lose credibility in the sector.

**IN SUMMARY:**

**Creating awareness:** Potential grantees need to be made aware of available funding opportunities on platforms where they are already engaged (for example, don’t advertise for bursary applications in a publication targeting readers of an older age group).

**Quick feedback:** Quickly letting both successful and unsuccessful programme applicants know about the outcome of their applications is important for retaining their trust and building a social investor’s reputation.

**Involving grantees:** Grantees need to be given a platform to share their experiences and consultation with them can avoid unsuccessful attempts to communicate, particularly community-based stories.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

Write down responses to these questions by yourself or talk through them with your colleagues or grantees to help evaluate your communications with one another:

- Have we been including our beneficiaries/grantees in our communications? If not, how can we do so?
- Have we clearly defined what our expectations are of our beneficiaries when it comes to communications (e.g., are we expecting feedback or wanting them to report on anything)?
- Are we giving grantees the opportunity and platform to express themselves, and are we listening to what they have to say?

**ACTION STEP**

Create opportunities to engage with grantees, as well as regular feedback mechanisms to get their insights into programme efficacy and marketing.

**ACTION STEP**

Consider how communications might affect power dynamics and incorporate equalising elements into communication strategies.
Public Relations and Brand Equity

A unique feature of the social investment landscape in South Africa is the large role of public relations or brand awareness. South African companies are legally obligated to spend a portion of their profits on corporate social investment. In seeking to maximise the return on this investment, companies often communicate with the public and potential clients or customers about the social upliftment work that they do as part of their marketing efforts. The benefit of this is that public relations communications can in some ways also help create awareness about the organisations and activities that donors support.

Public relations communications about a foundation's mission or social purpose can have a significant impact on it or its parent company's brand, the public face of how an organisation is understood.

Katy Hayes from the Woolworths Trust shares: “Externally, you are trying to share that you are a brand that sees critical issues in South Africa as important.” Increasingly, companies are feeling pressure from their consumers to be more active corporate citizens. Companies are always looking for ways to differentiate themselves from their competitors; being more engaged in communities is one way of doing so.

Woolworths is a company that caters to affluent people who are generally well informed about socio-economic and sustainability issues. Their consumers also have the financial luxury of being able to choose where they shop based on factors other than price, which leads them to have higher expectations of their suppliers. Hayes notes, “People expect social investment from Woolworths. We don’t have the option not to communicate about this work. Our stakeholders want to know about it.”

Rene Vosloo, head of Reputation Management at Discovery, explains that communication around the company's corporate social investment projects is very important, as this is an area that Discovery as a company is very passionate about. Discovery was established as a small, specialist health insurer two decades ago, but has since developed into a leading insurer with over 4.4 million clients globally and several partnerships with leading international insurers. The company is the pioneer in shared-value insurance, a new insurance model that creates long-term value for both the insurer and its clients. Building on this philosophy, Discovery started the Discovery Foundation in 2006 as a means to invest in developing scarce medical skills in South Africa’s public healthcare sector.

**ACTION STEP**

Spend time developing an understanding of your brand—not just your corporate identity, but what you should be known for (i.e., brand values and promise). Get external help if necessary.
Before that, the company started the Discovery Fund, a separate fund that gives financial support to various primary healthcare and other non-government organisations working in the public healthcare environment.

The decision to include information about the ways in which Discovery is contributing to society on the company's website and in its marketing materials helps to position the company more positively in its clients' minds and for potential clients. It also helps to raise awareness around the many projects supported through Discovery's CSI initiatives. “In working with projects and beneficiaries on a daily basis, we are often exposed to inspiring and positive stories about people making a difference in our healthcare system. As a company, Discovery believes in the future of South Africa and these many inspirational stories help to change the dialogue in our country to a more positive one,” Vosloo says. Discovery shies away from positioning itself as the hero, however, preferring to put the spotlight on the projects and people it supports, such as by highlighting the achievements and expertise of recipients of its Discovery Foundation Awards. Highlighting the excellent work people do in their communities also has a positive association for the Discovery brand and helps to build trust between different stakeholders.

Pranill Ramchander, head of corporate communications at Anglo American and board member of the Anglo American Chairman’s Fund, says his role is to communicate what is being done by the fund in terms of the impact and difference it is making, and to develop the profile of the company's social investment activities. Platforms used include print, radio, and social media.

He views media coverage as a means of measuring the effectiveness of communication efforts. “We measure the volume of coverage on Anglo American and its corporate social investment in the media, but we also assess what the message is saying about our company. We want it to show that Anglo is making a difference and having a positive impact in communities.”

When sharing information with the media about social investment work, it is important to strike a balance between sharing newsworthy information and sharing information that is only designed to make a social investor look impressive. The media are more likely to follow up on a story that has elements of interest for their audiences beyond the reputation of an organisation. Where a positive impact is being made, grantmakers should be careful to protect the dignity of the people being impacted by their investments.

Another means of measurement Ramchander lists is nomination for communications accolades, along with direct feedback from employees and external stakeholders, including mentions and endorsements. The primary target audience for public relations communications is generally a company's customers and prospects, although Ramchander says Anglo American’s audience encompasses media, unions, internal and external stakeholders, partners, and beneficiaries.

Of course, building brand equity is also important for non-corporate foundations, as it enhances credibility and improves visibility, therefore opening new opportunities for funding and collaboration.

For the Tiger Brands Foundation, being asked to speak at conferences or address the government shows that information about the foundation and its activities is being circulated and positively received. In other words, the foundation’s brand has become recognised and respected.

ACTION STEP
Pursue honest feedback from stakeholders on how your brand is perceived (from funders, partners, grantees, the media, and anyone else who interacts with your brand).

“We don’t have the option not to communicate about this work. Our stakeholders want to know about it.”

—Katy Hayes, Woolworths

ACTION STEP
Identify any gaps between how you want your brand to be perceived and how it is actually seen by stakeholders.
creates a positive cycle—once a brand is well known and esteemed, it becomes more sought after and new opportunities become available, which then in turn act as another chance for the brand to prove itself and further build brand equity.

Building brand equity is also advantageous when competing for donor attention, and in targeting specific audiences. For example, Qhubeka Foundation, an operating foundation that is World Bicycle Relief’s programme in South Africa, gives bicycles to people in return for work done to improve their communities, the environment, or their academic results. Because its work revolves around bicycles, it has focused attention on building the Qhubeka brand within the cycling community. It has become recognised as the bicycle charity. Its successful pursuit of public relations coverage in niche cycling media has allowed it to target a very specific group of potential donors, which has contributed to its grantmaking success and reduced the risk of donor fatigue.

For social investors who want to be less in the spotlight, but who still need to make contact with potential donors or grantees, external communications can be designed to specifically create a subtle brand awareness. For these, communications are still a way of reaching out and making people aware of what the foundation is doing; however, their communication goals are often better achieved by speaking to a smaller, more specifically targeted audience.

**IN SUMMARY:**

**Be careful about tone:** The tone of public relations communications around social investment needs to be humble and not brand-focused. The focus needs to be on the social investment. Subtle branding elements should form the brand association, rather than brash bragging, which may do the brand more damage than good.

**Cultivate relationships with key media:** In seeking to achieve media coverage, it’s important to identify key journalists, photographers, and media platforms, and focus on growing relationships with them. If they are supplied with good content, the relationship will be a mutually beneficial one.

**Be selective:** Avoid the “spray and pray” tactic of sending out press releases to hundreds of publications, many of whom do not engage with the relevant target audience and for whom the content is irrelevant. Irrelevant content will quickly get marked as spam by the media outlets, which is the opposite of what the communication aims to achieve. Similarly, don’t overwhelm media outlets with information that isn’t newsworthy. Instead, choose to send out key updates, such as new projects, targets achieved, and well-researched reports.

**ACTION STEP**

Put together a public relations plan and communicate with key media to share the organisation’s work.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

Answer these questions by yourself or talk through them with your colleagues to find out how you are doing with your public relations communication:

- Do we understand our brand—what it stands for, how it’s perceived by all stakeholders, and how we should communicate these attributes?
- Are we doing effective public relations, or is there room for improvement?
- Which media could we make use of to reach our target audience most effectively, and how can we build relationships with these media?

**ACTION STEP**

Identify all communication channels available to you, and determine how you might leverage each to convey an aspect of your message.
Investor Relations

While only relevant within the corporate social investment (CSI) space, effective investor relations is a key communication goal for many South African businesses. CSI is one of South Africa’s largest social investment avenues, making investor relations an important topic.

Company shareholders mainly interact with social investment work through a company’s integrated report. An integrated report is an annual report that communicates who a company is, what it does, and how it creates value, strategy, opportunities, risks, a business model, and governance so that stakeholders get a holistic view of the company and its future.

“Integrated reports contextualize social investment within the company’s wider business.”
—Setlogane Manchidi, Investec

Because of South Africa’s corporate social responsibility requirements, information about social investment projects is included in an integrated report.

Setlogane Manchidi, CSI manager at Investec, says that he appreciates integrated reports as they contextualise social investment within the company’s wider business. Often, CSI departments within corporates can seem relatively isolated from the core operations. But in reading an integrated report, shareholders are able to see how social investment fits within the bigger context. This makes integrated reporting an essential tool for corporate donors to communicate their social investment work.

Internally, these reports give companies a tool to reflect on their own practices and to consider improvements where necessary, especially where ethics, transformation, and the environment are involved. Beth van Heerden, from FirstRand Limited, sees the social investment section of her company’s integrated report as particularly important. She creates a stand-alone excerpt of the section on the FirstRand Foundation’s work from the company’s main report, which she disseminates to audiences that would not usually receive or read the full integrated report. The excerpt is also made available to stakeholders that attend FirstRand’s CSI that Works breakfasts, as well as an annual social investment conference sponsored by the company. This gives the communication included in the integrated report a wider reach for getting its message out to interested stakeholders.

IN SUMMARY:
For corporate donors, ways to increase the value of integrated reports might include:

Look at other integrated reports: Integrated reporting is still a developing field for communicating for impact. By reading other reports, CSI departments can get ideas from what other corporates are doing and see what works and what doesn’t.

Internal knowledge sharing: Integrated reports give social investment heads an opportunity to affirm their team’s importance to the company.

ACTION STEP
When writing for integrated reports, frame communications systematically. Explain the strategic aims of social investment programmes and what is being done to achieve these aims, highlighting results.
as a whole. Involving the CSI department in putting together the integrated report can be an encouraging process for them.

**Benchmark:** Because integrated reports are developed annually, they can be useful in measuring the year-on-year change in impact and relevance of social investment work, in terms of both developmental impact and positioning within the company.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**
Answer these questions by yourself or talk through them with your colleagues to assess the effectiveness of your investor relations communications and to brainstorm how you can do more with them:

- How can we accurately sum up what our programmes aim to achieve, what we are doing, and our key milestones?
- How can we make this information stand out in the integrated report (e.g., can we use visual elements or a brief beneficiary testimonial alongside monitoring and evaluation data)?

**ACTION STEP**
Use graphic elements to illustrate points, or include photographs to catch readers’ attention.

**SNAPSHOTS**

**Using photography in communications**
Photography helps people relate to those benefiting from funding and gives them an idea of the impact social investment work is making. Pranill Ramchander of Anglo American notes that while budgetary constraints might be an issue, using visual communications, whether photographic or video, boosts the efficacy of communication efforts and assists in cutting through the clutter.

Rene Vosloo of Discovery has also found that one of the best ways to integrate the company’s corporate social investment efforts into Discovery's integrated report most effectively is to improve the quality of the photographs used.

Visual communication can also add credibility; it demonstrates that the work advertised is actually being done. Visual communication is a key component of showing a commitment to accountability and transparency.

Keep the following in mind when using photography:

**Liaise with the community.** Before any photographer enters a community, the relevant people in that community must be asked for their consent and input, including things like what times are most suitable, where photographs should be taken, and whether there are any people who would prefer not to be photographed. Consider drafting a media release form and getting consent from people who are photographed to use the images publicly. Also be aware of safety and privacy concerns. For example, Qhubeka Foundation only uses first names for children, not surnames, and does not publish location information.

**Be clear about expectations and capabilities.** Social investors should have a clear idea of what the purpose of the photographs will be and where they are likely to appear. Photographs for a website are often composed differently from those taken for a coffee table book. It’s also important to share with grantees how the photos will be used. Someone might be happy to be featured in a programme brochure, but not on Facebook, for example.

**Don’t use photography inappropriately.** Social investors shouldn’t use photographs of extreme poverty or squalor to create shock or to guilt people into making donations. Such “poverty pornography” must be avoided and discouraged. Any use of branding in photographs should also be carefully considered and not overemphasised.

**Make visuals available to grantees.** This builds their own communications capacity, and strengthens the funder-grantee relationship.
Knowledge Sharing

Effective communication among donor peers helps to share lessons learned, increase collaboration, and decrease duplication of efforts. Knowledge sharing can take the form of face-to-face dialogue, newsletters, events and conferences, online resource libraries, social media, and more.

Judy-Marié Smith of the DG Murray Trust (DGMT) notes that DGMT had originally created a website specifically for its partners, where profiles of organisations and their learning briefs are shared with each other, but have since opened it to allow participation from organisations not funded by DGMT.

On another web platform, the DGMT NGO Commons website starts to bring together—in one central place—existing resources to guide civil society organisations through the processes of becoming legally established and ensuring the strong governance structures required for their future survival and improvement. In addition, DGMT produces a quarterly publication called Hands-on, which shares important “from-the-field” learning and reports on pertinent research of strategic relevance to civil society. In this way, DGMT facilitates knowledge sharing through multiple platforms.

The people who visit the DGMT websites include partners, grantees, other civil society organisations, and government stakeholders. Some of the ways people are directed to these web resources are through e-mail newsletters and limited social media advertising, although this is an area in which DGMT hopes to increase its efforts in the future.

Knowledge curation is a valuable aspect of what social investors offer their audiences. In some spheres, an overload of information can be avoided by carefully filtering content to provide only relevant and useful information. Social investors that do this establish brand trust that gives future communications established credibility.

Beth van Heerden explains that the FirstRand Foundation views social investment as a neutral and collaborative space. Much of its communication is focused on sharing knowledge to spread good practice in social investment and influencing other corporates. It does this through making its programme strategy documents, evaluations, and other reports available to the public, as well as through its CSI that Works campaign.

The campaign aims to provide detailed information about various issues critical to South Africa’s development, as well as exposing the good work of NGOs around the country. It consists of in-depth research into areas of interest, publishing research papers, and hosting breakfast events. These various activities ensure that the foundation is able to reach a wide audience, including NGOs, corporate social investment (CSI) practitioners, academics, and the media, in a way that appeals to their specific needs and preferences.

According to Kelvin Glen, the Tiger Brands Foundation shares knowledge about its in-school breakfast feeding programme, its positive effects, and its model so others can replicate it. “We did research about the effectiveness of the model over a one-year period across a number of our schools in Gauteng through the University of Johannesburg. They looked at 17 indicators, including body mass index and time and

**ACTION STEP**

Share reports, case studies, and other research more broadly with the field through [issuelab.org](http://issuelab.org), a free online service of Foundation Center.
attendance, and the results shared on the Tiger Brands Foundation website were positive,” says Glen. “The Department of Basic Education was impressed by the evidence and started instituting breakfast provision programmes in all schools in Gauteng, and has begun doing the same with some schools in the Western Cape. We’re proud of that. We can’t profess that it was just us, but we feel we definitely influenced policy through the initiative and sharing our research and impact about it.”

“We’ve always had the philosophy that there are 22,000 schools, which account for around 2.3 million children, that are on the government feeding programme; we will never have the budget to feed all of them, it’s impossible. But, if we can share our learnings, and get other corporates to do similar things in school development and in education, or in community development, we’re contributing to the bigger picture.”

The Tiger Brands Foundation shares knowledge through various avenues, including its website, conference presentations, and taking part in “stakeholder forums,” which it hosts in partnership with the government. A consequence of these efforts has been the decision by a business competitor, Kellogg’s, to also develop a school feeding programme.

Knowledge sharing can also take place at an individual level. Katy Hayes from Woolworths feels that she learns best when sharing information with other people: “The best opportunity to engage is to hear how other people are doing it. When I have a problem on my side and need to make a decision, I make contact with someone from another CSI department and ask them about similar experiences they have had.”

IN SUMMARY:

Do good research: Beth van Heerden notes that knowledge sharing shouldn’t be half-hearted. “You need to have research available, not just anecdotal evidence,” she says. “Quite often, results are not what people are expecting or hoping for, and it’s important to remember (and to communicate) that CSI is a long-term investment.”

Choose the right tools for sharing: Communicating for knowledge sharing may encompass sharing research or anecdotal experiences, ranging from stories to processes and models, and research methodologies and findings. Consider the best ways of communicating each. For example, a video might be the most effective way of telling a personal story, whereas research findings may be best represented by summary graphs, charts, or other visual elements.

Share failures as well as successes: Sharing examples of what has worked and what hasn’t can help organisations to learn from each other’s experiences, building best practice models and discarding anything ineffectual along the way. Sharing failures is just as important as sharing successes, although it’s less enjoyable. Failures often yield excellent learning opportunities and sharing them lets others benefit. For example, Donne Nicol notes that the Shanduka Foundation has learned to invest time in getting to know and understand programme partners upfront, and putting communication structures in place from the beginning, having failed to do so in a past partnership. The organisation shares this example, and now starts every new partnership by developing a shared stakeholder relations plan, advising others to do the same.

ACTION STEP

Make sure your website has findable, relevant information for various stakeholders.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Answer these questions by yourself or talk through them with your colleagues to assess your knowledge-sharing communications:

- Who is our audience and what sort of information are they looking for?
- Where is our audience active and what communication platforms do they use (e.g., are they active Twitter users, or do they prefer to interact with us at events or conferences)?
- Are our knowledge-sharing activities providing value to our audience (i.e., answering the questions they’re asking, providing practical advice, etc.) or simply pushing our own agenda?
Internal Communications

Internal communication with staff is a priority for any social investor. Regardless of the type of donor, grantmaking is strengthened when employees buy in to the process and are invested in its success. This is only possible when they have access to information about grantmaking and are able to engage in it.

“To make an impact, you have to keep at it.”

—Beth van Heerden, FirstRand

Internal communications also serve as a model for external communications in terms of setting expectations and providing information.

In South Africa, family or independent foundations tend to have smaller staff numbers than social investment departments in corporate offices. In addition, all employees are involved in, or at least familiar with, the work of the foundation. This can make internal communication less complex in some ways as compared to a large multinational company; less contextualisation is required. Communication for these small foundations usually takes the form of updating staff about relevant changes in the sector, developments taking place with partners, and internal operations-related information.

Internal communication is more complex in bigger corporate offices, where the majority of operations aren’t connected to the company’s social investment work. This makes it harder for the corporate social investment (CSI) team to connect with other company employees, and makes it difficult for the company to take advantage of the benefits of greater staff involvement in the company’s social investments.

Many corporate organisations do, however, spend time and effort on communicating social investments internally. “It’s important for employees to know who the company has partnered with,” says Pranill Ramchander of Anglo American. “Our employees should also be connected with the projects we’re involved with. Part of my job is to communicate with our employees about corporate social investment.”

Setlogane Manchidi, head of banking group Investec’s CSI efforts, says that internal communications around social investment are important to the business for two reasons: “First, for raising awareness of our CSI efforts among our staff members, since they are our key brand ambassadors; and second, for promoting various staff volunteerism opportunities, enabling us to leverage our human resources for the benefit of our communities.”

Investec communicates its social investment activities in a number of ways. “We use e-mail when we need to share an update or send out a call to action; we write articles for our quarterly internal staff magazine; we host CSI road shows every two years for staff around the country; and we interact through our website or internal portal to communicate with staff,” explains Manchidi.

Communicating internally about social investment initiatives can help “to make staff...”

ACTION STEP

Develop an employee survey to assess whether staff are aware of on-going social investment initiatives or not, and find out what they think about them. Use their input to guide internal communications.
feel like they're part of something special,” says Donne Nicol of Shanduka. “It gives them a sense of purpose.”

Beth van Heerden of FirstRand adds that it’s important to keep communicating, and not to assume everyone in an organisation is on the same page. “Communications is a bit like marketing. Sometimes, you may get tired of what you’ve been saying for the past three years, but it’s important not to give up,” she says. “To make an impact, you have to keep at it for quite awhile. Review what you’re doing, but keep going. Just because people have heard something once, doesn’t mean they will remember it. Consistency in communications is key. Keep framing what you’re doing strategically—explain exactly what you’re doing, why, and what you hope to achieve.”

Internal communications are about more than just information; social investors—particularly corporate social investors—need to include an invitation for staff to get involved. Manchidi says that where possible, it’s best to engage employees face-to-face to get them involved. Face-to-face communication is also increasingly possible with web-based video technology.

“While all forms of communication have worked for us at Investec, nothing beats the power of face-to-face road show presentations. We give our staff an overview of the work we do through a presentation, often making use of many of our social investment videos about our beneficiaries. These are very effective because people often stay behind after the presentations to engage further and I receive numerous e-mails from staff saying they have a better sense of what we do.”

“Remember that your purpose is your message—ask and understand ‘why’ you are communicating.”

—Setlogane Manchidi, Investec

His advice when using e-mail for internal communications is to be brief; otherwise, people don’t take in all of the information. “Don’t over-use e-mail; keep it simple and straight to the point, and choose clear subject headings, otherwise e-mails end up in people’s junk or deleted mail folders,” he says. “Remember that your purpose is your message—ask and understand ‘why’ you are communicating, as this affects the ‘what’ and

PARTICIPATION AS COMMUNICATION

Employee volunteer programmes strengthen organisations’ grantmaking, build employer-employee relationships, boost staff morale, and provide a platform for employee engagement. Support from parent organisations doesn’t have to stop at finances; being involved more deeply helps donors better communicate about their work and keeps staff engaged in their social investment efforts. In doing so, multiple communication goals are achieved simultaneously.

For example, the FirstRand volunteers’ programme lends support to community projects and creates valuable team-building opportunities for employees. Projects range from painting school classrooms to planting veggie tunnels and implementing permaculture gardens for income generation, hosting leadership workshops for nonprofit and for-profit organisations, and running life skills and mentorship programmes for high school learners. FirstRand matches monetary contributions from employees. The organisation believes that volunteering helps employees to discover new skills, such as event coordination, communication skills, and people and leadership skills, all of which can be harnessed by the FirstRand Group. It communicates with all employees about volunteer opportunities, as well as successes achieved by the volunteers and the impact of their work.

Volunteer programmes can take many forms. At Shanduka, each staff member (not just those that work on the foundation) has a minimum amount of R25 taken off his or her paycheck each month. This amount goes towards the foundation’s Adopt-a-School programme. The fact that each member of staff has a vested interest in the outcomes of the programme ensures a greater level of engagement with the foundation’s activities and greater buy-in across the board.

Another way in which Shanduka encourages volunteering is through the pro bono contribution of specialist skills to foundation projects. For example, if the foundation requires tax advice, it is able to approach a tax specialist in the company to help, free of charge.
‘how’ you communicate. It is equally important to understand your audience. Given that most Investec employees are skilled in finance, we strive to communicate by bolstering a story about change with tangible numbers or figures, which is well received. Avoid clutter; the simpler and clearer it is, the better. You don’t want your key message lost in all the noise.”

Finally, he says that while internal communication campaigns are beneficial, foundations and project teams need to be very clear on their objectives, their messages, and the duration of the campaign.

**ACTION STEP**
Set up a formal employee volunteer programme to invite staff to be active participants in philanthropic work.

**IN SUMMARY:**
There are three channels of internal communications that are most effective if carried out in combination:

**Engaging staff:** Staff engagement on social issues, which improves staff morale and helps to attract and retain talent. For example, Shanduka continually communicates good news stories from its programmes, not only to programme funders, but also internally to Shanduka staff. This ensures employees understand the impact of the programmes, feel a sense of fulfilment, and invest of themselves in the projects, taking ownership.

**Volunteer programmes:** Volunteer programmes help to strengthen funded activities. For example, the FirstRand Foundation cites that 22 percent of FirstRand’s 34,000 employees participate in the FirstRand Volunteers Programme, and have donated R35 million in both time and money to their chosen beneficiaries since 2003.

**Information sharing:** Effective information sharing helps entrench social investment in a company’s ethos and philosophy. Qhubeka Foundation compiles a biannual giving report in a visual postcard format that allows people to see at a glance what the organisation has achieved over the previous six months and where funds have been spent. This is distributed to all stakeholders, both internal and external, and made publicly available on the Qhubeka website. Aimed at furthering accountability and providing information quickly to a wide audience, this simple tool has become a favourite with Qhubeka employees and donors alike.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**
Write down responses to these questions by yourself or talk through them with your colleagues to help evaluate your internal communications:

- Are all employees aware of our social investment initiatives and what we’re trying to do?
- Do we know how they feel about what we’re doing? Have we asked for their thoughts and suggestions, and provided opportunities for them to get involved?
- How can we communicate more effectively with our staff?
- Do we need to set up an internal communications platform (e.g., a blog, internal newsletter, bulletin board, monthly presentation, etc.) or change anything we’ve been doing until now?

**ACTION STEP**
For smaller teams, brainstorm ways to get and keep communication strong, such as developing a good paperwork system.
Monitoring and Evaluation

Social investors are under increasing pressure to have strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems so that grantmakers and grantees can determine the effectiveness of their projects, and interested stakeholders can compare the work being done by different organisations in the same arena. M&E is also critical in holding beneficiary organisations accountable and providing a map for adjusting programme strategies as required. The way M&E is presented in communications is important if the data is to be understood correctly.

**USING COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS FOR M&E**

The Tiger Brands Foundation uses mobile phone technology to communicate information about its in-school breakfast provision projects to the foundation’s head office in order to compile daily reports. In this way, real-time information is used to address issues or make improvements to the programme. Kelvin Glen notes, “We look at things like how many kids were fed, what was fed, the hygiene conditions of the cooks that are preparing the meal, the hygiene conditions of the kitchen where the meals are being prepared, and then any other factors that influence our school feeding programme, which provides healthy breakfast meals for school children.”

Tiger Brands Foundation’s team of provincial coordinators, school principals, and school monitors (unemployed out-of-school youth who are contracted to work at the schools on a part-time basis) are tasked with tracking the in-school breakfast feeding programme and its mechanics. The Mobenzi Technology app has been loaded onto standard cell phones and issued to the monitors and schools.

The application was designed specifically to measure various elements of the in-school feeding and school monitors follow pre-loaded questions. This data is transferred directly to the foundation, from which reports can be extrapolated to provide up-to-date real-time reporting.

Glen says that the daily M&E gives the foundation a unique advantage by allowing the team to independently evaluate its programme and helping to ensure that it is delivering on its objectives. The data collected can be used to track trends and measure impact. This information can then be communicated to everyone involved, from funders to partners, other organisations doing similar work, and the media.

**“Monitoring and evaluation has changed the way we do things.”**

—Donne Nicol, Shanduka Foundation

**COMMUNICATING ABOUT M&E**

Verifiable data holds significant value in terms of material for communication campaigns. It gives credibility to a programme and allows for the extraction of key measurements and milestones, such as year-on-year growth. A useful communication tool can be pairing quantitative data with qualitative anecdotes that help audiences to see the real-life impact of the results. Communicating these points not only ensures that all stakeholders are kept informed, but may also result in attracting new funders or partners.
M&E OF COMMUNICATIONS
Gathering information can also be a valuable tool to help guide communication strategies themselves as they unfold. FirstRand initially created podcasts of their CSI that Works breakfast events and posted them online. However, having seen the small number of people that downloaded the material, FirstRand made a decision to stop producing the podcasts as the return on investment was minimal. This ensured that no further time or effort was wasted, but that energy was redirected to initiatives that had been proven to be more effective, such as the newspaper report published in the Mail & Guardian after each event, and live tweeting at the events themselves.

FirstRand tracks the number of new and repeat attendees at its breakfast events, as well as the amount of print and radio coverage each research report or event generates. It is also in the process of carrying out an evaluation of the campaign now that it has been running for more than a year. A survey will be sent out to all attendees of the first four events to identify what is and isn’t working, as well as what impact the campaign is having.

QUANTIFYING VALUE
While they may be well versed in effective programme M&E, many social investors struggle to quantify the value of the communications work that they do, even though they may be confident that it does make a difference. The key question becomes, “How do we measure our communications effectively?”

The communication campaigns that social investors generally feel are the most successful start off with a very specific goal or mandate, which remains “front of mind” throughout the design and implementation process. When thinking about measuring the impact of communication campaigns, some indicators that might help are:

- Improved rating in national grantmaking reviews (such as Trialogue’s handbook)
- Improved relations with the government
- Increased number and relevance of grant applications received, or alternatively a decrease in the number of applications (which may signal that the social investor is becoming clearer about the type of grantees it supports)
- Increased employee volunteerism
- Increased funding for grantees from new sources
- Increased media exposure for the grantee and/or grantmaker

Regardless of which indicators are chosen to measure, clear, measurable targets should be set, and a baseline should be completed. This will set the foundation for understanding the real value of communications.

METHODS OF EVALUATING
Certain types of communication are easier to measure than others. For example, when using a website, measuring engagement in terms of the quantity of viewers or participants is reasonably easy. This can be seen via click rates on links provided on various pages. Although helpful, this type of feedback is largely quantitative. It gives only a limited indication of what was done with the information provided, how it was received, or whether the people receiving it are part of the target audience.

Alternatively, social media platforms can sometimes give more specific information about the quality and frequency of engagement with content. Using surveys as a measurement tool represents a more proactive approach in trying to understand impact. The expense and time commitment related to this type of measurement is often validated by the quality of information it yields.

For example, the Shanduka Foundation recently carried out a survey of its new digital strategy. Donna Nicol noted that “It has changed the way we do things. We learned that people want to see more dynamic content: more information about impact, and human stories.”

ACTION STEP
Combine statistics and data with anecdotes to ensure the impact of grantee projects is effectively communicated and to connect with people on a “heart level” too.
EVALUATE A SPECIFIC PIECE OF COMMUNICATION:
Use these questions to guide thoughtful reflection on the effectiveness and impact of a specific communication. These questions are good to answer yourself, but also to ask various stakeholders.

Where did you see the communication?

Did you find this communication interesting/insightful/surprising? Why?

Had you heard of the grantmaker before you saw this communication?

Did you know what work the grantmaker was involved in before seeing this communication?

If you had heard of the grantmaker before, did this change your perception of them? How?

If grantmaking is being done on behalf of a company, did this communication change your perception of that company? How so?

Would you be more likely to engage with this organisation/company/issue, having seen this communication?

Can you think of any ways that this communication, or similar communication, could be carried out in a way that would be of more value to you?
MEASURING IMPACT ON GRANTEES

It is valuable to keep the mission of grantees’ work at the forefront of communication and not to only focus on developing the brand capital of social investors. Communication strategies should also be designed to increase the effectiveness of the actual projects and organisations being supported.

The Michael and Susan Dell Foundation communicates with potential employers about tertiary bursaries, monetary grants that partially or entirely cover the cost of a student’s studies, and then tracks the bursary recipients into their careers. By doing so, the foundation is able to see if the communication was effective, based on the number of graduates that found jobs in the companies identified.

The DG Murray Trust (DGMT) has designed an online platform with the specific purpose of communicating with grantees and allowing grantees to communicate with one another. This is done by sharing learning briefs written by grantees, which other grantees and the general public can comment on. DGMT actively seeks feedback on whether grantees are using this platform and if it is user-friendly through a survey that has been conducted biannually thus far, but will be conducted every 4–5 years in the future.

IN SUMMARY:

When it comes to effectively evaluating communications work, a number of key themes are consistently found across successful campaigns:

- **Good stories**: People want to hear good stories. They want to hear about the good work that is being done to uplift vulnerable people and communities in South Africa. Pranill Ramchander says that Anglo American has realised that storytelling is one of the most effective forms of communication. “Instead of getting people from the company to talk about our projects, we’ve recently completed a series of DVD clips where we let our beneficiaries tell their stories themselves,” he says. These are used internally and externally and have proven a great success.

- **Rene Vosloo** of Discovery has also found that ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TALENT

Communication about corporate social investment (CSI) can help to attract and retain top talent. It can be an important differentiator between employers, and it can be used to ensure that employees find additional meaning and pride in their work. Effectively engaging in this space can help to equip employees to speak more knowledgeably about the company’s social investment work, both internally and externally. This creates positive brand equity, pride, and belonging amongst the staff, and ultimately impact in local communities.

Increasingly, potential employees are showing an interest in what employers are doing in terms of social investment. “There is no doubt in my mind that for some people, CSI is a consideration when deciding whether to join a firm, stay within, or leave a firm,” says Investec’s Setlogane Manchidi. “I have met many Investec employees who have indicated that our CSI efforts mean a lot to them. They have a sense of pride from working at a company that contributes to society in the way we do.”

Beth van Heerden at FirstRand is asked to make presentations about the activities of the foundation at each induction session for new employees. She says that making sure all new staff members understand the importance of social investment activities shows that the company takes it seriously. It also gives employees an opportunity to engage with FirstRand’s social investment work from day one.

**ACTION STEP**

Look for effective ways of communicating key findings or trends with the audience, such as using infographics or producing case studies.

Engaging with grantees about the effectiveness of communications is also important. It is valuable to ask them things such as:

- Was the communication an accurate portrayal of the work being done?
- Did you feel that your organisation’s voice was represented well?
- Were you involved to the extent that you wanted to be?
- Did you help to share relevant pieces of the communication with your network?
a focus on stories is effective. Discovery often takes this approach when communicating with its medical scheme members. While they may not be interested in reading about a medical condition, they are more likely to read about a person with that condition, so Discovery profiles members in its magazine, giving them the chance to share their stories.

Openness: Within the sector, grantmakers are appreciative when their peers are open about the lessons they have learned, even if this means being candid about things that have failed, or things they would have done differently.

Let the grantee speak: Allowing the voice of the grantee, person, or organisation being supported to come through speaks volumes about the relationship with the grantee, the grantmakers’ confidence in the investment they are making, and the degree to which they are comfortable linking their own brand with that of the grantee.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**
Write down responses to these questions by yourself or talk through them with your colleagues to help evaluate your M&E communications:

- What key M&E data should we be communicating to our stakeholders?
- Are we making the most of the information we collect for M&E, or is there a way to communicate key points more effectively?
- How can we extract and communicate our M&E findings in a way that helps us achieve our strategic goals?
- How are we measuring the reach and effectiveness of our communications? Can we target more relevant audiences?

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**THE DOS AND DON’TS OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media has emerged as a valuable communication tool. It has changed the way people and communities interact with organisations and gives grantmakers access to personal, frequent, and multi-featured ways of communicating with their desired audience. We have chosen to profile this medium for communication because it is increasingly recognised as an essential counterpart to other more traditional communication channels.

“Communication always has to adapt,” says Rene Vosloo of Discovery. “And there has been a massive change in media, with organisations becoming publishers of their own content, in many different forms and on different platforms. I am certainly seeing less reliance on traditional media. In the evolution of digital media, storytelling is going to become more central.”

Social media is different from other forms of communication because it is immediate, is interactive, and allows the user to contribute content. In the world of social investment, these elements make information more accessible, feedback quicker, and networking more extensive.

Pranill Ramchander notes that Anglo American has a Facebook page and Twitter account where it posts links of its video clips of beneficiaries telling their stories, as well as profiling people within the organisation through leadership sound bites and seeking to stimulate discussion around social investment.

Using social media well is about more than just having a Facebook page, however. Grantmakers need to think about the types of audiences they want to reach and which social media platforms will work best for their communication goals. Here are some basic ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ for using social media to communicate for impact.

**DO**

**Complete your profile information.**
This is often where people will look to find out more about what you do, where you are based, and how they can get in contact. Have a link to your website and clear, up-to-date contact details.

**Stay active.**
People lose interest if you leave long spells between posts. Ideally, someone (or multiple people) should be responsible for updating content on a regular basis, and moderating conversations for spam and profanity.

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Keep content new and interesting
Links to articles, opinion pieces, and other useful content give your followers added value.

Provide relevant content
Be selective about what you post; make sure it is always relevant to your communication goal.

Be punchy and to the point
Keep the length of your posts short and use simple language.

Check punctuation and accuracy
Always check twice!

Have questions
Posts with questions get more engagement than those without.

Include a call to action
Give users something they can do to get involved.

Use images
Remember to include clear descriptions of what the images are showing.

Use analytics
Most social media platforms integrate metrics that will show you how many people are engaging with your content so you can see what type of posts work best for your audience.

Start slow
Build your capacity over time and don't try to launch on multiple platforms at once. Start with one platform and only expand once you're comfortable.

Maximise existing networks
Invite people from your existing networks to engage with your organisation online.

Post during peak times
According to Buffer, the biggest usage spikes on social media occur in the early afternoons on the weekend.

DON'T

Post more than twice a day
And even that's quite a lot, particularly for Facebook. If you are tweeting about a live event, make sure each tweet is relevant and doesn't repeat information. Less is more.

Repeat posts
This can become irritating to people who see the same post several times. Rather, post at strategic times when you have the best chance of reaching the most people.

Post content without attribution
Get permission or attribute if you are re-posting or re-tweeting content from another source.

Post the same thing on different platforms
Each platform has a specific style that works best. (Pictures work excellently on Facebook, but article links work better on Twitter.)

Mix platforms
For example, don't link Twitter posts to Facebook. People who follow you on Twitter do so for a reason, they don't want to be redirected to another social media platform. Linking to articles and other websites is fine.

Respond to every comment
Users can have conversations with one another without you needing to contribute; it's only necessary to contribute if you have something new to add or are responding to a question.
WAYS TO USE THIS GUIDE

To push your thinking about communications to another level, try these activities:

**Brainstorm your communication goals.** Use different goal outlines to figure out what your primary communication goals are and how you can achieve each goal. Name some relationships that have been forged through meetings or other activities by your foundation over the last few years and see how these were influenced by communication.

**Learn what your grantees already know.** Ask your grantees what they’re doing to engage their audiences and promote their work. A simple survey about communications may open up new information and spark funding ideas.

**Use a communications lens for current projects.** Take a look at a few proposals you might fund or programmes you’ve just begun and ask yourself and your grantees who needs to be engaged to make the work effective. Brainstorm what type of grant might match the need. Take a look at the examples in this guide to see if any of their goals match yours and ask what you can learn from that.

**Tell war stories.** Bring experienced social investors together to talk about good grants that failed to engage or get their story across. Brainstorm what you might do if you had a chance to do it again. Get educated.

RECAP OF WHAT THIS GUIDE COVERS

We covered a lot of terrain in this guide so that we could make it accessible to the broadest range of social investors and nonprofits possible. We recognise that organisations have different communication goals and needs. Some staff have years of experience with communications and others are just getting started. We hope social investors and non-profits alike feel some aspect of the advice, stories, discussion questions, and action steps helps you improve the impact of your communications.

As with all GrantCraft resources, this guide is intended to connect social investors that care about improving their grantmaking practice. We invite you to share your own experiences and tools.

If something here inspires a reaction or new idea, let us know. We look forward to hearing from you!

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION:

GrantCraft.org is the online home for resources that inform strategy and practice of funders. Visit us online at our website or on Twitter @grantcraft, and e-mail us at info@grantcraft.org with any thoughts or questions. If something in this guide has inspired a reaction or new idea, we want to hear it!
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Established in 1956, Foundation Center is the leading source of information about philanthropy worldwide. Through data, analysis, and training, it connects people who want to change the world to the resources they need to succeed. Foundation Center maintains the most comprehensive database on U.S. and, increasingly, global grantmakers and their grants — a robust, accessible knowledge bank for the sector. It also operates research, education, and training programs designed to advance knowledge of philanthropy at every level. Thousands of people visit Foundation Center’s website each day and are served in its five library/learning centers and at more than 450 Funding Information Network locations nationwide and around the world.

ABOUT TSHIKULULU SOCIAL INVESTMENTS

Tshikululu Social Investments is South Africa’s leading social investment manager and advisor. Led by a team of thought leaders, Tshikululu provides clients with a one-stop service to undertake comprehensive social investment activities in line with national and international development trends. Our team of professionals offers financial management, risk and legal services and expertise in education, health, social development, job creation, agricultural livelihoods, bursary management, the environment, arts, culture and heritage and capital projects.
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