

# SABC board to take firm cost-cutting action

By [Chris Moerdyk](#): @chrismoerdyk

1 Apr 2011

The SABC board is believed to have endorsed far-reaching proposals to put the broadcaster back onto a sound financial footing and to bring an end to continually having to be bailed out by the taxpayer.



Some of the most radical cost-cutting measures will involve programming and continuity presentation.

## Programming costs

According to a senior SABC executive involved in drafting the measures, a considerable thorn in the side of the corporation has been the cost of imported programming, mostly from the US.

"It has always seemed crazy to me that the South Africa public needs to be fed expensive sitcoms and movies from the US, when far better content is available elsewhere at a much lower price."

He said that "Hollywood would be replaced by Bollywood" in terms of movies and sitcoms.

"India, after all, has the biggest movie industry in the world and we are convinced that South Africa television viewers across the board will prefer content from India rather than the US simply because we can relate far better to the culture of the sub-continent"

## Chinese content

He added that documentary content and some sitcoms would also be sourced from China.

Other radical changes to programming would involve doing away with continuity presenters and weather forecasters in line with "modern television trends". The SABC pointed out the example of DSTv, where no continuity presenters are used.

The SABC News department would also apparently face a number of changes, with all news bulletins being split in half and the first 15 minutes being devoted to local South African news and the second half hour completely to international news, which will involve a direct news feed from Aljazeera.

### **Sub-titling**

Other cost-saving measures would include making more use of text-subtitling, rather the expensive dubbing from one language to another; no longer having sports commentators at venues but rather in studio conducting commentaries from a TV monitor; making more use of social media and citizen journalism in place of having news reporters on the spot; combining SABC1, 2 and 3 between 11pm and 6am; and reviewing the corporation's radio stations.

According to the proposals, ALS (African Language Stations) will not be affected but consideration is being given to combining SAfm and Radio Sonder Grense, allowing English and Afrikaans languages to be alternated every half hour.

The cost-cutting measures would save the corporation approximately R120 billion a year and profits generated would be used to increase senior management salary packages and bonuses, with a percentage of profit being allocated to the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) to establish radio and TV stations in rural areas.

### **Nothing strange at all**

Asked to comment on the new proposals, the MD of one of South Africa's leading media-buying houses, Gordon Diller, said, "The problem with [choosing to use the SABC](#) as the basis of an [April Fool's](#) spoof is that, given the recent history of SABC blunders, a lot of people will believe this story without any of these suggestions appearing to be in the least out of the ordinary."

## **ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK: @CHRISMOERDYK**

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on [moerdykc@gmail.com](mailto:moerdykc@gmail.com) and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](#).

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