

Will the real marketing industry please stand up?

 By [Louise Marsland](#)

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The untimely demise of the Marketing Federation of Southern African has a host of potential players crawling out of the woodwork. What is worse, is that instead of talking to each other, the industry is jockeying for power in the media. This is the best strategy to regroup that our key marketers can come up with?

First industry associations like SAMRA and PRISA jumped in to offer marketers without a home, a place to call their own - and were roundly criticised for their opportunism.

Now the IWF (Industry Wide Forum) and the Services SETA are both claiming to represent the industry in forming new associations.

In a press statement issued last week, the IWF said representatives of the media and advertising industries would initiate a process to establish a substitute body that will perform the functions of the defunct Marketing Industry Federation of Southern Africa (MFSA). This initiative fits in with the intention of the IWF to hold an indaba in 2006 where all the role players in the industry, including Government, will be brought together to discuss the principles of advertising regulation and to determine the ownership of these principles and to ensure a unified vision in respect of these principles for the future.

The marketing, media and advertising industries are signatories to an agreement - the Master Agreement - which has as prime object the financing of the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The Master Agreement also established the Industry Wide Forum (IWF), a forum of all the presidents of the organization in the marketing, media and advertising industries.

But in its report back from a meeting held a week ago, the Services SETA claims that following an open meeting, facilitated by the Services SETA, representatives of the marketing, advertising and public relations and communication management industries agreed on a possible way forward that would bring fragmented sectors closer together.

The general consensus was that an overarching communication alliance should be discussed. This alliance would bring together what could be termed the whole communication sector, including all marketing sectors, all advertising, as well as all aspects of public relations and communication management.

Those present volunteered to take part in six small working groups to draw up initial plans. They agreed to reconvene early in November to present practical proposals to the whole group and obtain consensus on the way forward.

The working groups will discuss the following:

- A professional body to bring all aspects of the marketing profession together.
- The certification of qualifications.
- Historical factors that would help avoid the mistakes made by the mfsa and inform the way forward for a sustainable body.
- The Chartered Marketer qualification (CMSA).
- Education and training providers to the different sectors of the industry.
- Communication and information on decisions and the process to all stakeholders.

A small working group was also suggested at the Services SETA meeting to develop a model for the broadly representative communication alliance with equal partners.

The ever-vocal marketing analyst and industry veteran, Chris Moerdyk, calls it a shambles!

"It seems to me that the country's communicators are quite incapable of communicating. Other industries must really be laughing themselves silly as they watch marketers running around like chickens without heads, frenetically forming representative bodies right left and centre. It is this sort of mindless knee-jerk reaction and confused communication that crippled the MFSA. It really is sad to see such lack of co-ordination and co-operation in the marketing sector," Moerdyk said.

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.

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