

The Extraordinary Editor

**A handbook for
South African
media leaders**

Guy Berger and Elizabeth Barratt

- This book is dedicated to the memory of Stephen Wrottesley, a champion of journalism and a Sanef stalwart.



Published by
the South African National
Editors' Forum (Sanef)
October 2008

ISBN 978 - 086810-447-8

We are grateful for support from:

Media24 for generously covering the printing costs.

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung for their partnership in this project.

The Association of Independent Publishers (AIP) for sponsorship.

The South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) for sponsorship.

Wag the Dog Publishers of The Media magazine and www.TheMediaOnline.co.za for sponsorship.

Many thanks to:

All those editors, senior journalists and media experts who contributed articles and images for this book, thereby enriching its content with their personal stories and experience.

Femida Mehtar, executive director of Sanef and a former newspaper journalist, who gave practical support and help.

Lalitre L Darnielle (www.lalitre.com) for the cover photo.

We have drawn valuable insights from:

The work of the Poynter Institute, St Petersburg, Florida (www.poynter.org)

The Readership Institute (www.readership.org) and the Media Management Center (www.mediamanagementcenter.org), both at NorthWestern University, Chicago

Radio and Television News Directors Foundation (www.rtnda.org)

The News, Improved manual (www.newsimproved.org)

The American Press Institute (www.americanpressinstitute.org)

WRITING AND EDITING:



Guy Berger is Head of the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University and founder of the Sol Plaatje Institute of Media Leadership. He has been a Sanef member since its formation.
<http://guyberger.ru.ac.za>



Elizabeth Barratt has 25 years' experience as a South African journalist and editorial manager, and is an active member of Sanef. She is currently Managing Editor at *City Press*.

DESIGN:



Shahn Irwin is a freelance designer and illustrator who has done extensive work for the South African media including the *Sunday Times* and *Mail & Guardian* as well as the NGO sector.
shahn@wbs.co.za

CARICATURES:



Baba Tjeko is a multi-talented creative artist, cartoonist and animator, currently working as graphic designer for *Daily Sun/Sunday Sun*.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 License. To view a copy of this license, visit: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0>

Contents

Foreword – Sanef Chairperson *Jovial Rantao* 7

Chapter 1 The job

| | |
|--|----|
| Overview: the beginning..... | 9 |
| Coming in as an outsider – <i>Jethro Goko</i> | 11 |
| Moving up in the company – <i>Zingisa Mkhuma</i> | 12 |
| Handy hints: Suss out yourself before you start | |
| Setting your leadership style – <i>Khathu Mamaila</i> | 14 |
| Managing multiple titles – <i>Esmare Weideman</i> | 15 |
| New product in a special market – <i>Philani Mgwaba</i> | 16 |
| Management vs leadership: What you need to lead | 17 |
| Scaffolding for success: Career paths to becoming an editor..... | 19 |
| Doing it on community papers – <i>Karin Espag</i> | 20 |

Chapter 2 Managing yourself

| | |
|--|----|
| On values: what is important to you – <i>Joe Thloloe</i> | 21 |
| Doing things through others – <i>Mary Papayya</i> | 22 |
| Daily organisation: Building some balance..... | 23 |
| Time management: Slaying your time monster | 24 |
| Answer this: Yes-men & women | |
| Handy hint: Measure your time | |
| More hints: Secrets for creating time | |
| Quiz: Assess yourself | |
| Effective meeting skills: Managing while chairing..... | 27 |
| Try this: Improve meetings | |
| Getting organised: Why you need a good PA | 29 |
| Studying while editing – <i>Kevin Ritchie</i> | 30 |
| Suddenly being a public persona – <i>Lizette Rabe</i> | 31 |
| Being at the tech edge: Get wired: news and mail..... | 32 |
| Presentation skills: Putting on a good show | 34 |
| How about: Alternative methods | |
| Going on TV and radio: How do you really look or sound?..... | 35 |
| Tips: How to improve your image | |
| Networking: The editor as hub | 36 |
| Benefit from being in a body – <i>Femida Mehtar</i> | 37 |
| Stress-busting: How to reduce the heat..... | 38 |
| Quiz: Top work stressors | |
| Tackling conflict: Take control – and talk..... | 40 |
| Sabbaticals: Give yourself a stimulating break – <i>Lizeka Mda</i> | 40 |
| Moving on after editorship – <i>John Dlodlu</i> | 42 |

Chapter 3 Managing people

| | |
|---|----|
| Overview: taking responsibility for staff | 43 |
| Tip: Job descriptions | |
| Recruitment: Systematic steps for staff selection..... | 44 |
| Two vital factors to look for – <i>Brian Dyke</i> | 45 |
| Checklist for recruits: Settling a new journo..... | 46 |
| Creating a newsroom team – <i>Willem Pretorius</i> | 47 |
| The imperfect perfect editor – <i>Caroline Southey</i> | 48 |
| Communication flows: Info flows enable a learning culture | 49 |
| Handy hints: Ways of communicating with staff | |
| Motivating your colleagues – <i>Alan Dunn</i> | 51 |
| External and internal competitions: Rewarding quality work..... | 52 |
| Reassurance through attention – <i>Tyrone August</i> | 53 |
| Configuring conflict: Managing tensions with trust | 54 |
| Handy hint: Questions to ask | |
| Managing HIV/Aids: You need a workplace policy..... | 56 |
| Managing Human Resources: It's a special relationship..... | 56 |
| Ethics and culture – <i>Mathatha Tsedu</i> | 58 |
| Tips: What I have learnt | |
| Safety policy for journalists – <i>Sahm Venter</i> | 60 |
| On the ground: Policy needs to be more than a piece of paper | |
| Presenting tough decisions to staff – <i>Amina Frense</i> | 62 |
| Developing staff specialisations – <i>Peet Kruger</i> | 63 |
| Performance management – <i>Peter du Toit</i> | 64 |
| Succession planning: Successful transitions | 64 |
| Managing gender: Building a balanced newsroom | 66 |
| Try this: Test your gender reality | |
| Definition: Sexism | |
| More info: Behavioural styles | |
| Useful tip: Negotiating strategies for women | |
| Managing race and diversity: Complexities and solutions..... | 72 |
| Policy: The <i>Sunday Times</i> Code of Conduct advises | |
| Definitions: Race-track: what position do you agree with? | |
| Labour law and discipline: Tackling the hardest staff issues..... | 76 |
| Handy hint: Staff need to know | |
| Read this: Avoid mistakes | |
| Absenteeism: How to handle the 'sickies'..... | 78 |
| More info: How much sick leave? | |
| Sexual harassment: Why it is time to take a stand..... | 79 |
| To clarify: It isn't lust, it's power | |
| Training for editors – <i>Paddi Clay</i> | 80 |
| Handy hint: Better training | |
| More info: Websites on training | |
| Tips: Strategy for effective learning programmes | |
| Running an editors' school – <i>Ferial Haffajee</i> | 82 |
| Some advice: An insolent editor? – <i>Neville Stack</i> | 83 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Mentoring in the newsroom – <i>Heather Butler</i> | 84 |
| More info: Get maximum impact | |
| Coaching: Strengthening your staff..... | 86 |
| Management style: Concentrate on strengths..... | 88 |

Chapter 4 **Managing content and processes**

| | |
|---|-----|
| Planning your content to alleviate the chaos – <i>Chris Whitfield</i> | 89 |
| Managing a paper with fractured audiences – <i>Henry Jeffreys</i> | 90 |
| Take a snapshot measurement: How male/female are you?..... | 92 |
| Lessons from tackling tik – <i>Ingo Capraro</i> | 94 |
| Handy hint: Campaign checklist | |
| Definition: Civic, public or community journalism | |
| Finding the ethical high road – <i>Franz Krüger</i> | 96 |
| Ethics roadmap: 3 steps to resolve a dilemma | |
| Africa news from stringers – <i>Liesl Louw</i> | 98 |
| Using news research strategically – <i>Izak Minnaar</i> | 99 |
| Setting online deadlines – <i>Rachel Stewart</i> | 100 |
| Cartoons and cartoonists – <i>Jonathan Shapiro</i> | 101 |
| The truth behind writing leaders – <i>Gavin Stewart</i> | 102 |
| Issues with blogs – <i>Riaan Wolmarans</i> | 102 |
| Editorial policies: Usefulness of guidelines..... | 104 |
| More info: Freebie policies or codes | |
| Checklist: Designing newsroom policy | |
| Weighing up editorial research – <i>Jos Kuper</i> | 107 |
| Acronyms: What are these? | |
| Tip: Follow or lead the audience? | |
| Narrative intelligence: Seeing stories as a management tool..... | 110 |
| More info: Narrative journalism | |
| Sound leadership – <i>Gaye Davis</i> | 112 |

Chapter 5 **Managing business and bosses**

| | |
|--|-----|
| Managing upwards: Editors and their bosses..... | 113 |
| Making business plans: Getting strategic..... | 114 |
| Template: A business plan | |
| Negotiating budgets – <i>Kevin Ritchie</i> | 116 |
| Try this: The budget: tips for triumphing | |
| Vital importance of the Chinese wall – <i>Raymond Louw</i> | 118 |
| Being editor-publisher – <i>Matthew Buckland</i> | 119 |
| View from management – <i>Mike Robertson</i> | 120 |
| Put in guidelines and communication – <i>Sandra Gordon</i> | 123 |
| Surveys and supplements – <i>Lesley Cowling & Adrian Hadland</i> | 124 |
| Paid content in magazines – <i>Ann Donald</i> | 125 |
| Editorial Independence: It's not just for editors..... | 126 |
| Checklist: Are you independent? | |
| 4 bottom lines for editors | |

Chapter 6 Managing politics and publics

| | |
|--|-----|
| Alert: Reporter in trouble and how to handle it – <i>Mark van der Velden</i> | 133 |
| Know the rules: No, they may NOT take away your camera | |
| Ombud as internal conscience – <i>George Claassen</i> | 135 |
| Definition: What does it mean? | |
| Self-regulation of the media: They are keeping us angels | 136 |
| Dealing with critics – <i>Snuki Zikalala</i> | 138 |
| Definitions: Development and developmental journalism | |
| Editors as writers – <i>John Conyngham</i> | 139 |
| When to listen to lawyers – <i>Gilbert Marcus</i> | 140 |
| Catching flak on health at Frere – <i>Phylicia Oppelt</i> | 142 |
| Public intelligentsia: Bringing together the news and views | 144 |
| Spelling it out: Some definitions: getting interested | |
| Surviving religious pressures – <i>Cyril Madlala</i> | 146 |
| Representing the enterprise – <i>Peter Sullivan</i> | 148 |
| Hearing readers' complaints – <i>Gavin Stewart</i> | 149 |
| Freedom of expression: Free to fly for a greater purpose | 150 |
| Quiz: Pick your canine | |
| Media in democracy: Five overlapping roles to play | 152 |

Chapter 7 Managing change and convergence

| | |
|--|-----|
| Bring in the changes – here's the theory | 155 |
| Change the vibe: Cultivating newsroom culture | 158 |
| Middle management: Focus on the field officers! | 160 |
| Work on it: Give them skills | |
| Innovating new products – <i>Peter Bruce</i> | 161 |
| Changing strategy and internalising it – <i>Moegsien Williams and colleagues</i> | 162 |
| Repositioning, relaunch and redesign – <i>Thabo Leshilo</i> | 164 |
| Communicating through change – <i>Paddi Clay</i> | 166 |
| Clarifying some terms: Diverging into convergence | 168 |
| Hints: What makes it easier or harder | |
| Challenges of new media – <i>Judy Sandison</i> | 170 |
| The integrated newsroom – <i>Ray Hartley</i> | 172 |
| Bigger web 2.0 picture: All things digital | 173 |
| New world emerging: The people are coming | 174 |
| Changes in news cycles: Building a bouquet | 176 |
| Web 2.0: Unpacking the jargon | 178 |
| Citizen journalism: Whose side are you on? | 180 |
| Blogging – <i>Andrew Trench</i> | 181 |
| Staff and unions: Extra work and other convergence issues | 182 |
| Definition: What is this 'churnalism'? | |

Chapter 8 Appendix

| | |
|--|-----|
| Record of understanding: 1999 agreement on Section 205 | 185 |
| Sanef guidelines on confidential briefings and sources | 187 |

Foreword

**Jovial Rantao, Chairperson:
South African National Editors' Forum**

The story of South Africa has changed dramatically in the past decade and a half – as has journalism and the challenges we face as we tell the story.

Fifteen years ago, the South African story was as simple and straight as a ruler: there were the oppressed masses and the oppressors. And the story always revolved around how the oppressed were fighting racial discrimination and how the oppressors in turn were trying to justify the unjustifiable.

Today, the South African story is very different.

From the unbanning of the ANC and other political formations, the release of Nelson Mandela, the elections, our first parliament to our constitution; the story has undergone myriad twists and turns – some at break-neck speed.

To be able to properly tell the complete story, editors and journalist have required special skills and commitment.

As this book goes to print, South Africa is preparing for its fourth general election. It's no normal election because the ruling party faces unprecedented challenges for the first time in its 98 years. The change of leadership at the party's Polokwane conference, where Thabo Mbeki was unseated as ANC president by Jacob Zuma, has unleashed a chain of events that no one foresaw.

For good measure, you can add the unedifying prospect of the country having a sitting president – Zuma – standing trial on corruption charges.

These stories – and that's not counting the challenges posed by poverty, the HIV/Aids pandemic and education – have meant that editors and journalists must not only keep up with the game but keep in front. They need to do this to better inform their audiences in an increasingly rich and diverse media environment.

These are the obvious challenges; the others are more subtle and insidious.

For one, our audiences, be they listeners, viewers or readers, are far more discerning, far more independent.

All hugely mobile, most can be identified by a cell phone in the one hand, an ipod in the other and a laptop in front of them at any given time.

To successfully cater for their needs, we must adapt



... and do so quickly. There is no middle ground; either we do so or we die.

Part of this adaptation involves investing in multimedia platforms, a phenomenon that has forever changed the face of South African media as we knew it.

We are currently investigating ways and means in which the new and exciting platforms can be used to deepen the role of media in society.

It is heartening to note how a number of media houses have taken concrete steps to help journalists polish their craft and become increasingly professional in their conduct.

The major challenge, though, remains the reality that the growth of our industry has not been met with commensurate growth in our skills.

Not only must we fend off inter-publication poaching, but government departments and parastatals also have a hunger for our valuable skills, further emptying the barrel.

Sanef has published a number of manuals, from helping reporters deal with anonymous sources to reporting the courts. This latest initiative sets the bar even higher, providing editors and senior journalists with the skills to run their own news organisations by learning about the mistakes and successes of others in the university of life.

The editors and journalists chasing deadlines in our newsrooms are very special. They have every right to feel that way for they are living in a special time, a historic period in our country.

Their greatest role is not just telling this story, but rather keeping alive the tradition they inherited from their forebears in such a way that they can hand over the institution of journalism in this country to the next generation in an even better condition than when they received it.

We hope this handbook will go a long way to helping them do just that.