

In partnership with



The State of Ethics and the Public Relations Industry in Africa 2023



ReputationMatters®

Quantifying your value!

OUR VISION

Africa's go-to reputation specialists building resilient businesses that you want to do business with.

OUR VALUES

- Growth • Respect • Excellence
- Authenticity • Trust

WHAT WE DO

Quantifying your value.

SERVICES

- Reputation Measurement using our proprietary Repudometer® methodology.
 - Employee Climate • Brand Identity
- Customer Satisfaction • Competitor Analysis
- Stakeholder Mapping • Policy Development
- Reputation Mentorship • Consulting

WINNING TEAM

We were awarded SABRE Africa awards in 2018, 2019 and 2020 for measurement and evaluation for these clients.

INVESTING IN THE COMMUNITY

We support the **Re.Bag.Re.Use** initiative. Empowering community members to crochet shopping bags from empty bread bags.

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Foreword

Yomi Badejo-Okusanya
President, APRA (The African Public Relations Association)



“Public relations fails when there is no integrity.”

In other words, PR is not just about manipulating the media or public opinion but rather about building and maintaining a trustworthy relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders.

Therefore, honesty and ethical practices should be at the core of any PR strategy, and this is what we have achieved with this survey.”

In the past, one of the African PR industry's major challenges was a lack of regulation and oversight. This lack of oversight resulted in unethical practices and harmed the industry's reputation as a whole.

The emergence of APRA has been a step towards promoting ethical standards and professionalism in the industry. APRA aims to enhance the credibility of PR practitioners in Africa through capacity development, networking, and advocacy. This we have done by providing a platform for networking and collaboration among professionals from across the continent, resulting in bridging the knowledge gap and fostering best practices.

We wish to thank our friends at the PRCA for partnering with us in conducting this survey on ethics in the African PR community. It gives credence to our findings and underscores the importance of promoting ethical practices in the PR industry across Africa.

Their collaboration and support have been invaluable in ensuring that the survey reached a wider audience and provided meaningful insights. We look forward to continuing our partnership with PRCA to advance ethical standards in the industry.

In the words of Vivienne Segal, “PR means telling the truth and working ethically—even when all the media want is headlines and all the public wants is scapegoats. Public relations fails when there is no integrity.” In other words, PR is not just about manipulating the media or public opinion but rather about building and maintaining a trustworthy relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders. Therefore, honesty and ethical practices should be at the core of any PR strategy, and this is what we have achieved with this survey.

Thank you.



@PRCA_HQ



PRCA Africa



The Survey

The survey received 274* responses from a total of 21 countries that participated

In partnership, the African Public Relations Association (APRA) and the Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA) developed a combined survey to measure the state of ethics and the public relations industry in Africa. Previously these were two separate studies.

The survey received 274* responses from a total of 21 countries that participated. Most respondents were from South Africa (50%), followed by Nigeria (16%) and Uganda (5%).

The majority of respondents work within the media, marketing and public relations sectors (22%), followed by finance and business services (9%) education and training (7%), government (6%) and non-profit organisations (6%). Most of the respondents indicated that they work within an organisation that has between two to five employees (17%), followed by 11 to 15 people (15%).

Most of the respondents work in an agency role (39%), with in-house being represented by 21% of the respondents.

Freelancers or independent consultants were represented by 13% and the rest of the respondents ['Other'] (22%) were either PR academics in universities, suppliers to the industry, or other related professionals.

Respondents represent a broad range of ages, the two main age group categories were between the ages of 35 and 44 years old (29%) and 45 and 54 years old (29%). The levels of seniority ranged from 32% holding the role of Chair, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Managing Director (MD) or Founder, with 16% heading up a communications department/team, and 10% within a communications role.

Of those who specified their gender, just over half were female (52%). PRCA surveys in other regions find that women often account for two thirds or more of the PR workforce. A small number of those responding to the survey (4%) said that they have a disability. Roughly 15% of the world's population live with disabilities, according to UN estimates, but they are often underrepresented in the labour market.

METHODOLOGY

This research study is based on a sample of 274 respondents from across the African region, with data gathered between 09 February 2023 to 16 March 2023. The study includes two components: the perception of ethics on the African continent as well as the

perception of the state of public relations. The survey was conducted by Reputation Matters. An online survey was developed and shared to both APRA and the PRCA's respective databases via email, WhatsApp, social media platforms and websites.

Frequent reminders were shared to encourage participation. Both APRA and the PRCA's members, and partners were encouraged to share the survey link with their respective networks to garner more responses. The survey was made available in both English and French.

*It must be noted, that the number of responses are not representative, however interesting trends and insights were still derived from the data.

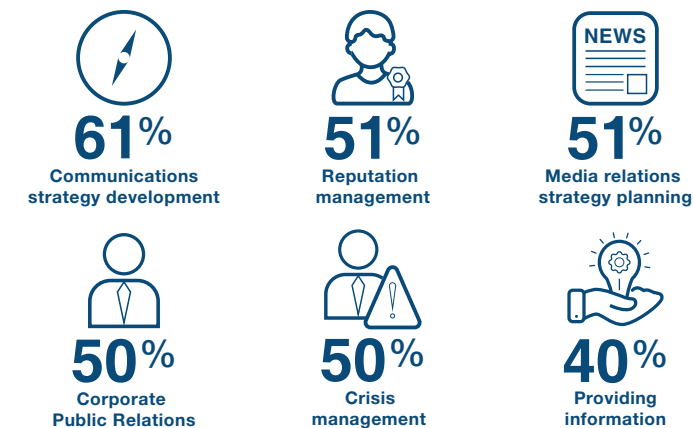
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The Present Landscape

WHAT PR PROFESSIONALS DO

The roles of PR and communications professionals cover a wide range of responsibilities. We asked respondents to choose the main function or functions of their role from a list of options. The range of options selected by the respondents indicates the versatility required of PR practitioners.

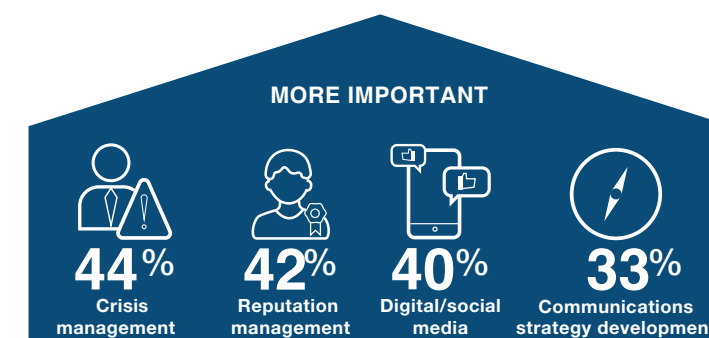
Communications strategy development (61%) continues to be the most common response, and this was also the case in 2022, when the percentage stood at 63%. More than half of the respondents selected reputation management (51%). Interestingly, crisis management and corporate public relations featured as a common responsibility (50%) and has seen an increase of 10% and 4%, respectively, compared to last year.



A CHANGING ROLE

Respondents were asked which PR activities they thought had become more important in their country in the past two years, as well as which had become less important. Interestingly, crisis management (44%) has taken over from digital and social media (40%) as the highest priority. This is followed by reputation management (42%). The perceived importance of digital and social media has decreased by 10% when compared to last year's data.

When asked which PR activities had decreased in importance, the most common responses were ethics management (16%), sales promotion (14%) and events planning (14%). The latter two highlight the continued impact of COVID-19 and the shift away from physical PR and towards an industry that has become increasingly digitised.



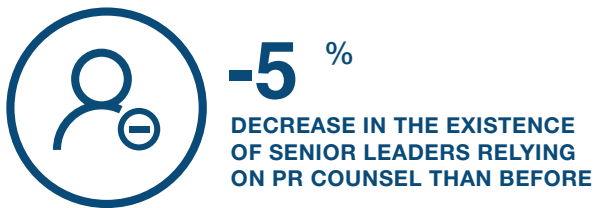
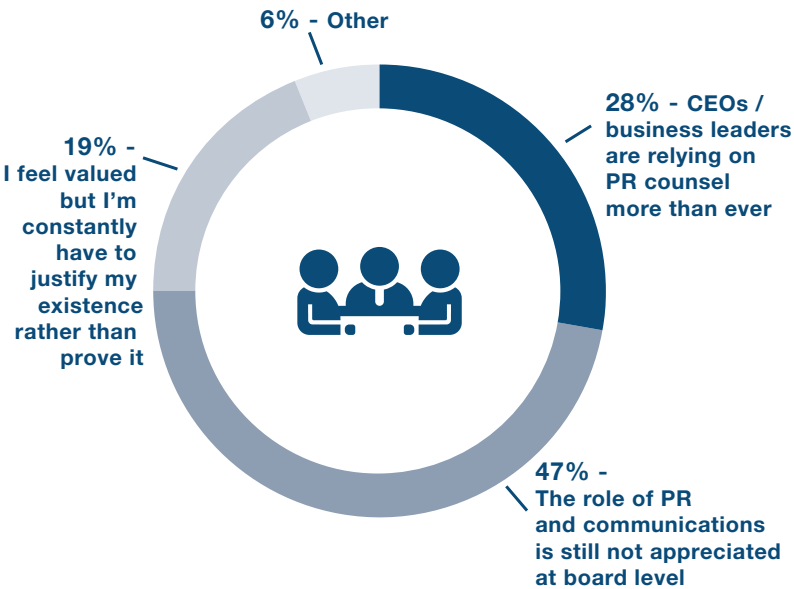
PR'S STANDING IN THE BOARDROOM

We asked PR practitioners to rank their experiences and to describe the standing that the field has within an organisation's boardroom. A concerning figure is that 47% of respondents stated that the role of PR and communications is still not appreciated at board level.

Subsequently, 28% mentioned that senior leadership are relying on PR counsel more than ever, and 19% said they feel valued but are constantly having to prove their purpose. Compounding this concern is the fact when compared to 2022, the number of PR professionals feeling unappreciated at board level has risen by 14%, and the fact that there has also been a 5% decrease in the existence of senior leaders relying on PR counsel than before. Despite this, there has been an 8% decrease in the number of PR professionals who are constantly having to prove their worth.

Ultimately, PR continues to be leaned on for its reactive value, as opposed to the real value it could add if it were involved at an earlier stage of an organisation's business strategy. These comments are echoed by respondents, who state that "most organisations remember PR when they are challenged" and that "governments are not investing enough in PR and communications or hearing the call of strategy in this area".

IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE PR'S STANDING IN THE BOARDROOM?



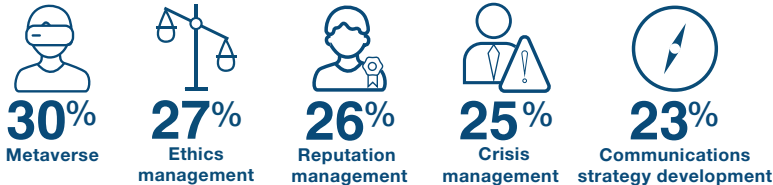
TRAINING NEEDS

Training and development are important for all industries. As such, we asked PR and communications practitioners what training they would recommend in their region. The top responses were communications strategy development (59%), reputation management (51%), crisis management (42%) and ethics management (41%).

Interestingly, when asked which areas respondents would be interested in taking training sessions on, the 'metaverse' was selected 30% of the time and as a result, generated the most interest. This focus on technology outlines the importance of getting ahead of the curve and educating PR professionals within the region on contemporary matters such as artificial intelligence and how it will impact the sector.

Both APRA and the PRCA wishes to further their efforts in assisting African PR practitioners in becoming more strategic and improving their standing in the boardroom. Training remains a priority for both entities and they will work closely together to support the industry across the continent.

WHAT TRAINING WOULD YOU RECOMMEND



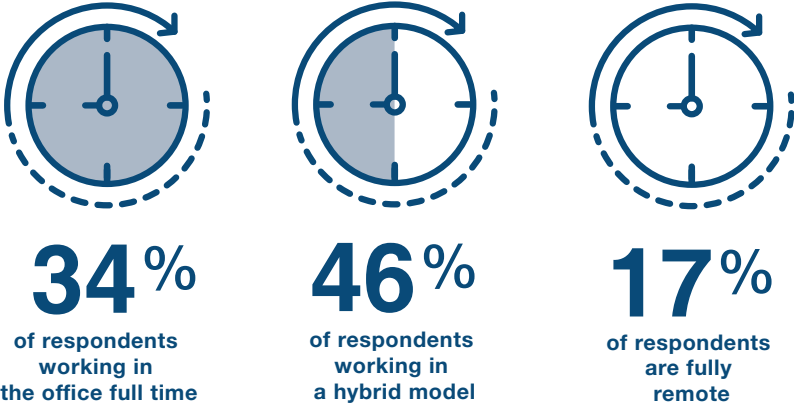
WHAT TRAINING WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN

WORKING MODELS

Regarding working models within the region, 46% of respondents reported working in a hybrid model, 34% are in the office full time, while 17% are fully remote.

Interestingly, when asked which factors they would value most when considering a new role, flexible working was selected only 14% of the time, whilst remote working was selected only 10% of the time. Factors such as organisational values and purpose (33%), financial compensation (23%) and development opportunities (16%) all ranked higher.

WORKING MODELS



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Ethics and Reputation in African PR and Communications

ETHICS

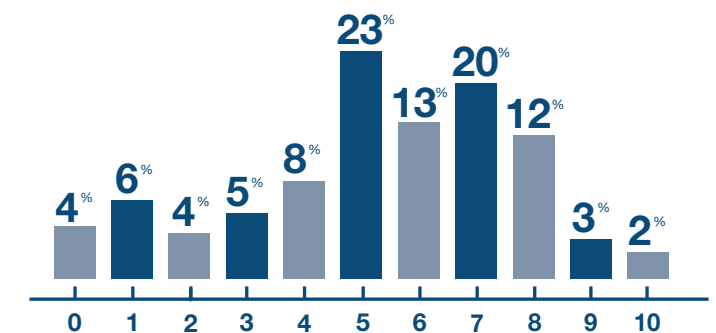
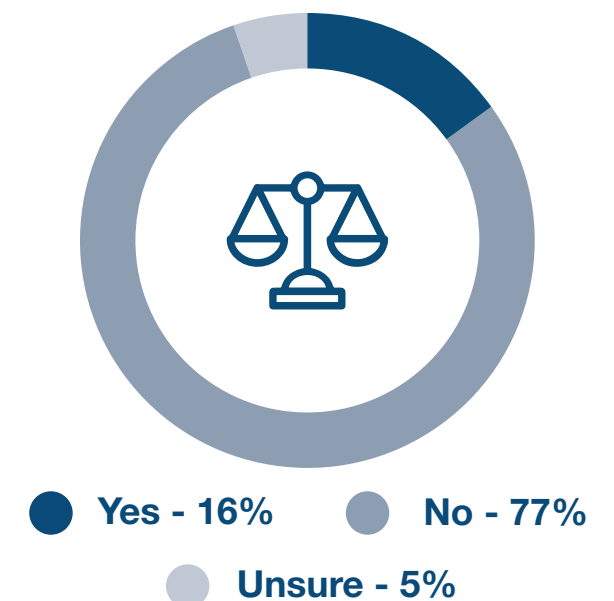
Ethical standards are crucial for PR and communications' best practices. All APRA and PRCA members must abide by, and are accountable to the **APRA Code of Conduct** and **PRCA Professional Charter and Codes of Conduct respectively**.

To follow up on the previous year's studies that APRA conducted into the perception of ethics, respondents were asked whether they had been asked by someone to act in an unethical way, or had decided to do so, in the last 12 months. The results have seen an increase of 2%, with 16% of respondents selecting 'yes' in 2023. Although this is a small percentage increase, it is very concerning that more people within the industry are being asked to act unethical in some way, or are put in a position where their ethics could be compromised. The vast majority continue to select 'no' (77%) and however, it is just as concerning that 5% of the respondents indicated that they were unsure whether their actions were unethical.

Respondents were also asked to rate how ethical they thought the PR industry is regarded in their country, on a scale from zero to 10, with zero meaning not ethical at all and 10 meaning very ethical. The majority of respondents selected 5 (23%), followed by 7 (19%). The mean average score is 5.3 in 2023 and this presents a year-on-year decrease of 0.8 when compared to last year.

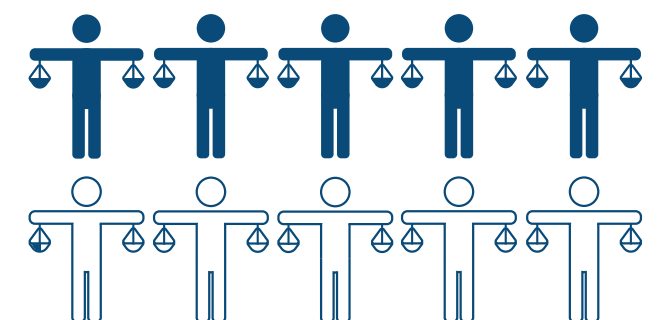
Consequently, PR's perceived ethical standing has gone backwards, and there is clearly much work to do in the region to ensure that ethics is at the forefront of the agenda when it comes to the PR and communications industry.

ACTING OR BEING ASKED TO ACT IN AN UNETHICAL WAY IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



0 = not ethical at all, 10 = very ethical

Average: 5.3 out of 10



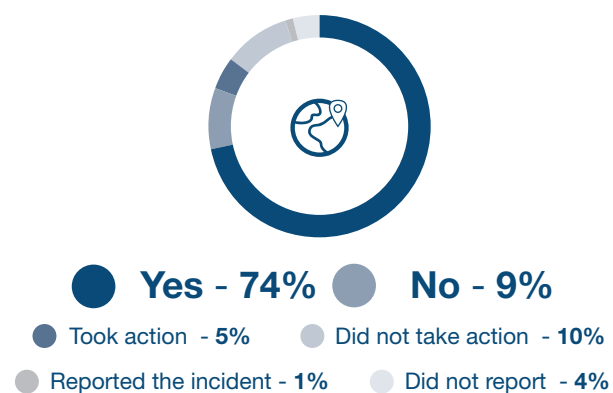
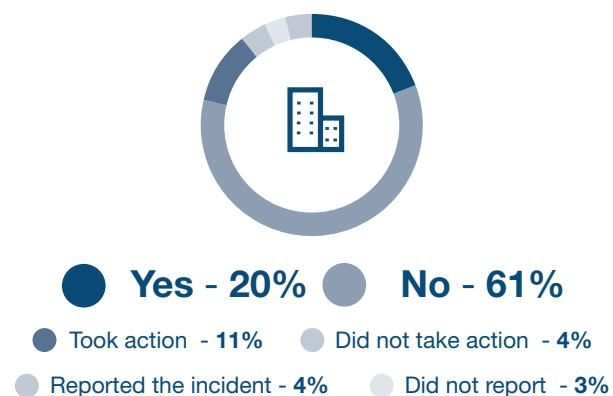
Additionally, we asked PR practitioners in the region to state if they felt as though their personal, organisations and country's ethics had been compromised over the past 12 months.

From an individual point of view, the majority (65%) of the PR professionals did not feel that their personal ethics were compromised over the last 12 months whilst 15% did. Of those respondents who had felt compromised, 14% acted on the incident and 2% did not, whilst only 3% reported the incident.

From an organisational point of view, 20% of the respondents answered, 'yes' while 61% answered 'no'. Additionally, 11% acted on the incident that compromised ethics whilst 4% did not. Only 4% reported the incident whilst 3% did not.

In stark contrast, the vast majority (74%) of the respondents indicated that they feel that the ethics in their respective countries have been compromised; only 9% disagreed.

BEING ASKED IF THEIR ORGANISATIONS, COUNTRY'S AND PERSONAL ETHICS HAVE BEEN COMPROMISED OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS?

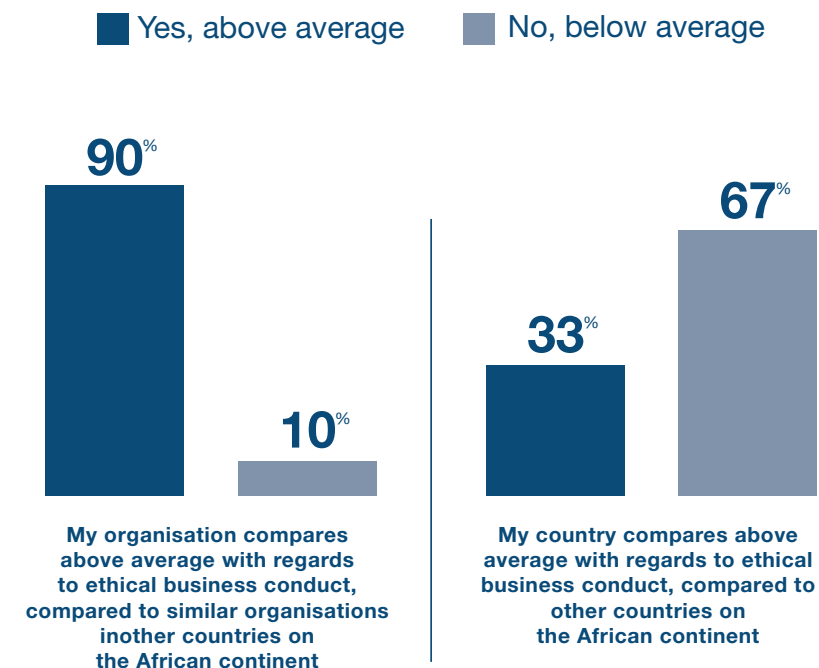


We also asked respondents about their perception of their organisation's ethical business practices compared to similar organisations in other countries across Africa. The vast majority (90%) said that their organisation ranks 'above average' while the remaining 10% ranked their organisation 'below average'. Notably, when asked to compare their respective countries' ethical business conduct against others on the African continent, 67% of respondents said their country was below average, while only 33% said their country was above average.

To gauge how ethics is prioritised on an organisational level, we asked respondents to indicate whether ethics is a driving force to achieve the business' vision. Most respondents (82%) indicated that ethics was a major driving force, while 10% indicated that it was not. In the previous ethics study in 2019, 86% of respondents indicated that ethics was the driving force towards achieving the business' vision. Most respondents also indicated that ethics plays a key role in leadership decisions (86%).

When it comes to choosing business partners there was a 5% decrease between the 2023 results (78%) and 2019 (83%) results. Managing financial matters dropped to 78% from 85% from the 2019 study, with delivering products and services (86%), remaining the same as the last study. There was a slight decrease when respondents were asked whether ethics is communicated on all levels within their organisation, with 76% indicating that there was enough communication, compared to the 2019 study, where 79% of respondents indicated that ethics was communicated enough. Even though the percentages are relatively high on an organisational level, and predominantly positive, any decrease in ethics scores should be a concern for the industry.

PERCEPTION ON ORGANISATION'S ETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES



PR PRACTITIONERS VIEW ETHICS ON AN ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL



A similar set of questions were asked to gauge how respondents thought that ethics was prioritised on a country level. These results present a very different picture compared to the perception of ethics within an organisation. When asked about the driving force behind how governments lead a country, only 14% of respondents indicated that ethics was the driving force. In 2019, 42% indicated that ethics was the driving force behind leading the country, marking a concerning decline with this result.

When asked whether ethics plays a role in government decision making, only 13% mentioned that ethics plays a role. In 2019, 39% mentioned that ethics plays a role in government decision making.

When it comes to choosing other countries to work with only 22% of respondents indicated that ethics is a consideration, decreasing from 42% in the last study. Looking at how governments invest in local communities, 20% of respondents indicated that ethics is a consideration while 64% indicated that it is not.

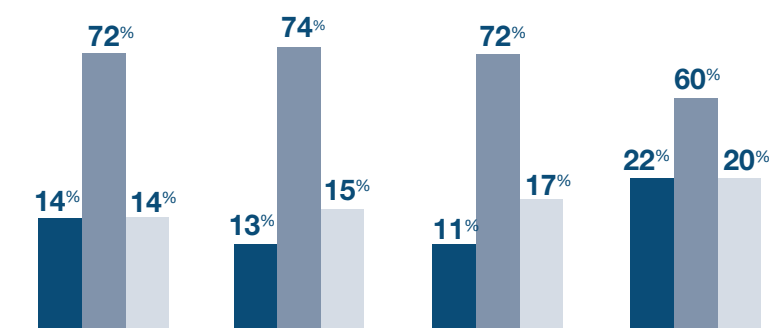
When asked whether ethics plays a role in the financial management of government, 70% indicated that it did not, whereas in previous study only 36% mention that ethics was not considered in financial management of government.

To gauge how ethics influenced service delivery from government, 67% of respondents indicated that it was not a consideration. In the previous study, 40% of respondents indicated that ethics was not a priority with service delivery.

Lastly, we analysed how PR practitioners in the region view their respective countries' ethics. The results of these questions are illustrated in the graph to the right.

PR PRACTITIONERS VIEW THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES' ETHICS

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

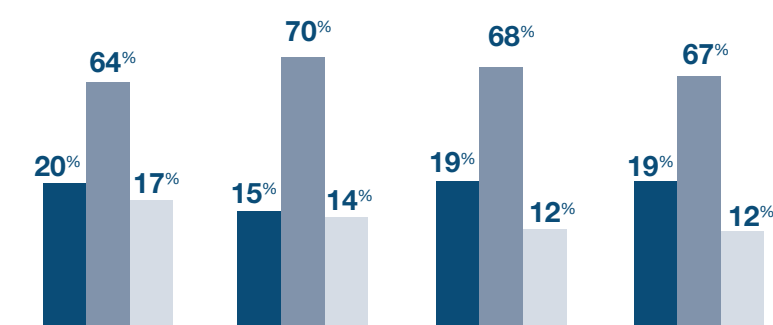


Ethics is the driving force behind the vision of how Government is leading my country

Ethics play a practical role in the Government's decision making, it is not just something they talk about

Ethics is the driving force that enables my Government to do their job in the right way

Ethics play a big role when it comes to choosing other countries to work with



Ethics is the driving force behind investing in local communities

Ethics is the driver behind clear and transparent management of financial matters by Government

Ethics is one of the most important contributors in quality product and service delivery by Government

Ethics and ethical standards of the country, is clearly communicated by Government

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PR & Comms in Africa

Navigating Opportunities and Challenges

IS THE INDUSTRY RECESSION PROOF?

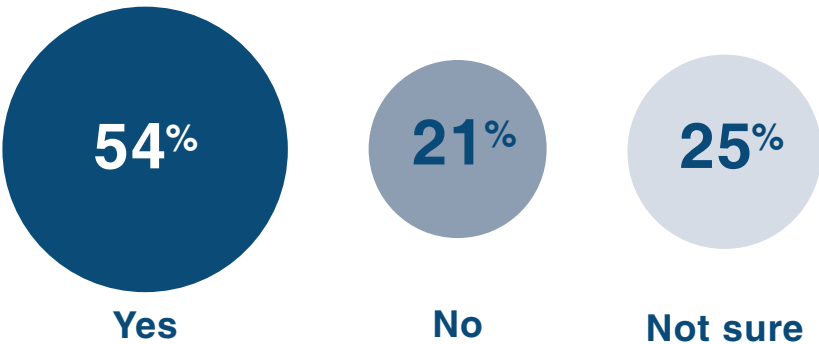
As the financial world continues to recover from the impact of COVID-19, other challenges loom. In this survey, we asked respondents to consider the importance of PR and communications and whether they felt that the perception of PR had improved, and if the industry would be utilised more if a recession were to occur. The majority of practitioners (54%) responded with ‘yes’, whilst 21% responded with ‘no’ and 25% stated that they were ‘not sure’.

Although most respondents had a positive outlook, the results present a mixed bag. This sentiment is echoed throughout the respondents’ comments; one individual stated that ‘COVID-19 illustrated the value of PR and communications’, while another individual stated that ‘PR did not significantly improve during the pandemic’.

In fact, many organisations cut their budgets. Interestingly, one respondent alluded to the idea that the PR industry may be becoming less valued during the current ‘technological revolution’ and that there may be a shift towards the reliance on artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT.

However, it must be noted that AI tools such as ChatGPT are not used for building relationships with stakeholders. There are also challenges around using information generated by ChatGPT as sources and references are extremely diverse.

IS THE INDUSTRY RECESSION PROOF?



“ COVID-19 illustrated the value of PR and communications.”



“ PR did not significantly improve during the pandemic.”



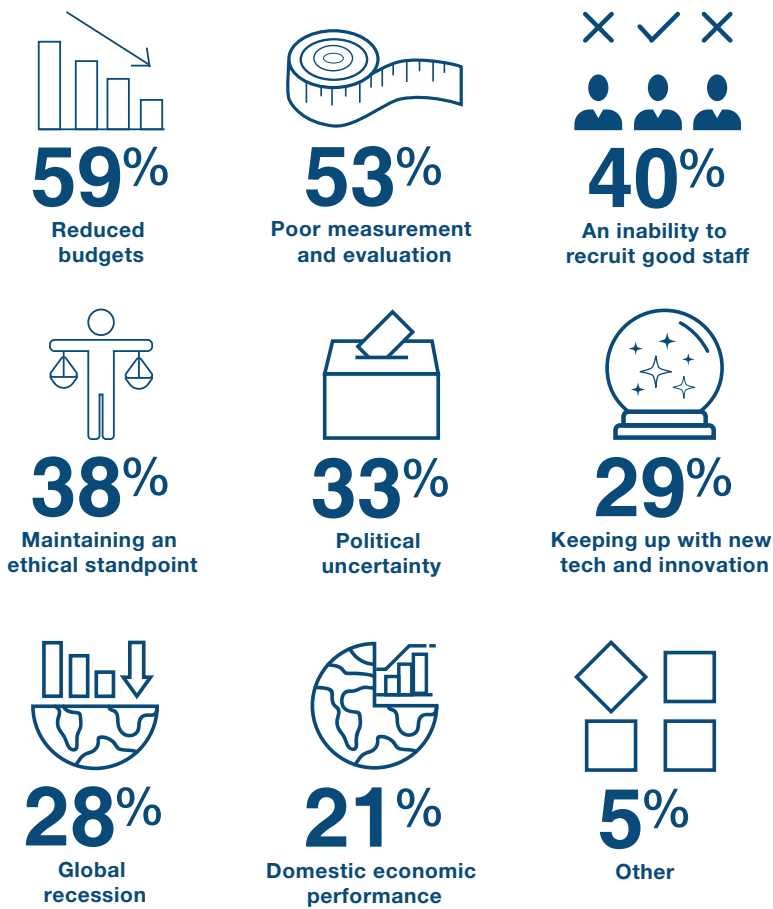
“ the PR industry may be becoming less valued during the current ‘technological revolution’ and that there may be a shift towards the reliance on artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT.”

FUTURE CHALLENGES

We asked respondents about the biggest threats facing the PR industry in the immediate future. The results show that reduced budgets (59%) and poor measurement and evaluation (53%) are still the biggest concerns, similar to the results from 2022. This suggests that there has been little improvement in these areas.

Other major threats include the ability to recruit staff with the right expertise (40%), maintaining an ethical standpoint (38%), and political uncertainty (33%). The threat of political uncertainty has increased by 8% compared to the previous year. Interestingly, under the ‘other’ category, many respondents mentioned the perceived threat of artificial intelligence to the PR industry, specifically the role of ChatGPT.

This highlights the need for further education to ensure that PR professionals are equipped with the skills to effectively utilise AI and overcome any scepticism towards its use.



EVALUATING MEASUREMENT

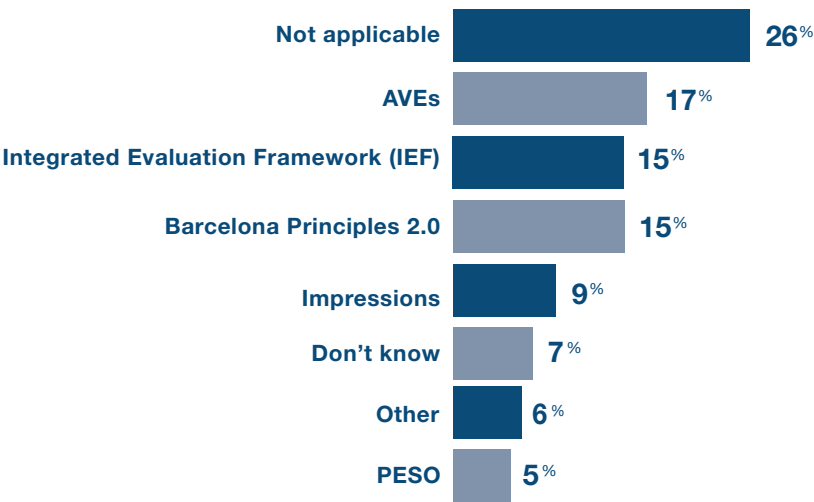
With poor measurement and evaluation continuing to be one of the biggest threats to the industry, it is concerning to see that there has been no real growth in terms of adopting recognised evaluation methods.

In fact, over a quarter of African PR practitioners (26%) continue to say that they do not use PR evaluation methods, meaning there has been no progress compared to last year when the figure stood at 25%. The most common forms of measurement are Advertising Value Equivalents (AVEs) (17%), Barcelona Principles 2.0 (15%), and Integrated Evaluation Framework (IEF) (15%).

The PRCA does not consider AVEs to be a rigorous or meaningful measure in many contexts, and that other forms of measurement are always preferable. Ultimately, the lack of adoption of measurement and evaluation methods is a significant concern for PR professionals in the region.

However, the absence of year-on-year improvements highlights the clear need for a new strategy in this regard. Further education may help bridge the gap, and it is essential for the industry to embrace more comprehensive and rigorous evaluation methods to demonstrate the value of PR to clients and stakeholders.

WHAT IS YOUR PREFERRED METHOD OF EVALUATION OF YOUR WORK?



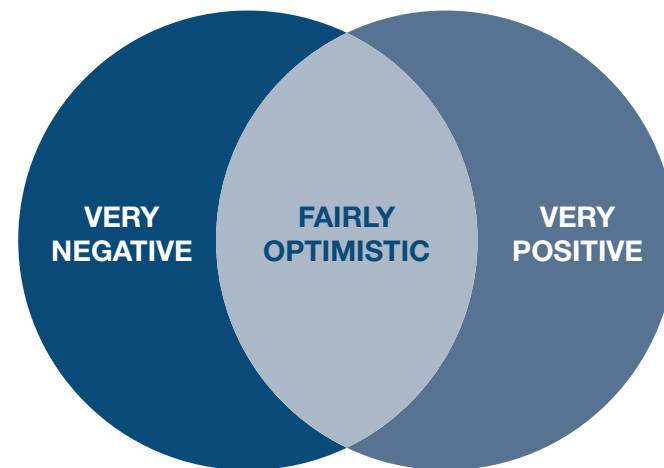
THE FUTURE OF REPUTATION MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

Lastly, we asked respondents to share their thoughts on what the future of reputation management in Africa will look like. Again, the results were mixed, with respondents expressing various levels of optimism. Some respondents stated that the future looked 'bleak' and not promising, while one respondent said that 'Africa will continue to struggle with reputation due to the constant challenge to balance an ethical business model based on integrity while trying to do business in government environments riddled with corruption'. Meanwhile, some respondents were 'fairly optimistic, as long as budgets don't shrink,' and they believe that 'there is a lot of work to get PR in Africa to a stage of global understanding and respectability'.

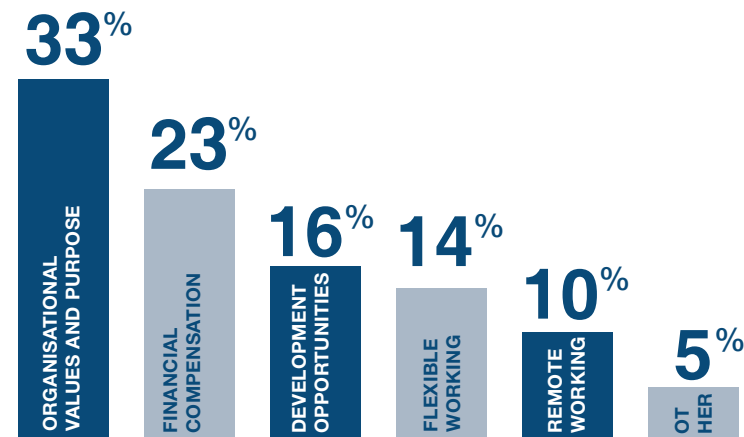
Respondents that had a positive outlook, stated that 'the future is very bright because consumers are becoming more discerning and brand promises must be upheld. Therefore, brands must continue to protect and build their reputation in the minds of their targeted stakeholders'. In summary, 'there is much work to be done to move the needle away from 'just coverage' to reputation management and communication that is trusted, valued, and valuable'.

In summary, 'there is much work to be done to move the needle away from 'just coverage' to reputation management and communication that is trusted, valued, and valuable'.

THE FUTURE OF REPUTATION MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA



MOST VALUED FACTORS TO CONSIDER A NEW ROLE



Members of the PRCA Africa board

Yomi Badejo-Okusanya (West Africa Chair)

President, African PR Association

Kamal Taibi (North Africa Chair)

CEO, Strateus Group

Bridget von Holdt (Southern Africa Chair)

Co-Market Leader: South Africa, BCW

Soni Kayinamuna (Joint East and Central Africa Chair)

CEO, Clarity Communications

Samuel Bekele (Joint East and Central Africa Chair)

Chief Executive Officer at Spotlight

Abayomi J Ojo

Strategic Growth Consultant, WhirlSpot Media

Adam Hunter

Managing Director, Hook, Line & Sinker

Briony Brookes

Head of Public Relations & Strategic Communications, Cape Town Tourism

Cheryl Reddy

CEO, Eclipse Communications

Conny Sethaelo

Corporate Communications and Public Affairs Director, Nestlé East & Southern Africa Region

Dustin Chick

Managing Partner, Razor/M&C Saatchi

Eloïne Barry

Founder and CEO, Africa Media Agency

Ipelegeng Thibedi

Chief Executive, Weber Shandwick Africa

Joseph Kanyamunyu

Managing Director, Publics Africa Communications

Judith Middleton

CEO, DUO Marketing + Communications

Karena Crerar

CEO, Edelman Africa

Khadija Idrissi Janati

Managing Director, Tea and Koffee

Kwame Senou

Executive Chairman, THOP The Holding Opinion and Public

Lerato Mpholo

Managing Director, Opinion and Public BCW

Leroy Ankrach

Principal Consultant, Diffusion Ltd

Michelle Lewis

Managing Director, Have Your Say

Samuel Bekele (Joint East and Central Africa Chair)

Managing Director, Have Your Say

Moliehi Molekoa

Managing Director, Magna Carta

Nicola Nel

Founder and Managing Director, Atmosphere Communications

Olugbeminiyi Idowu

Founder and Managing Director, Talking Drum

Omawumi Ogbe

Managing Partner, GLG Communications

Samantha Presbury

National Managing Director, Ogilvy PR South Africa

Sarah Gooding

Managing Director, WE Communications

Sergio Santos-Van Vuuren

Managing Director, MSL_SA

Tom Manners

Co-Chief Executive, Clockwork

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