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Government needs drastic training in communicating

They have an entire department dedicated to it. They have thousands of employees paid to do it. Their public are waiting to hear it. The media are dying to be part of it.

/24-7PressRelease/ - JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, June 12, 2008 - A perfect example is the communication around the xenophobia issue. One minister says xenophobia doesn't exist it's all down to criminality - whilst her colleague ten minutes later in the same building refutes this by saying 'xenophobia is live and well and living in South Africa'. Another minister says if only they had known something about this problem beforehand they could have taken action - whilst our information minister says 'yes, of course he knew something about it beforehand'. Pity he didn't tell his boss Thabo, before he went on television and even smiled (a rare occurrence) when he said 'If we knew about nobody told me - shame someone should tell him'.

This will be my third year taking part in the Wits Business School's Government Communicators Course - teaching them about dealing with the media. It's a little depressing facing yet another group of these people, when I know that despite what myself and other trainers teach them, they'll probably be blocked by red tape a mile long within their respective departments anyway. At least that's what they tell me.

But perhaps I should take hope because during a conversation I had with the CEO of Government Communication and Information Systems, the genial Themba James Maseko he did assure me that things would change. But then again a colleague said he made the same statement two years ago...

Marion Scher is an award winning journalist. A journalist with 20 years experience in the media, Marion not only writes for many of South Africa's top publications, but has had extensive experience in both radio and television, working in research, production and the presentation field. Through her company Media Mentors she consults and trains in the corporate world as well as parastatal and NGO organisations - her speciality being training people on all aspects of media.

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Media Mentors is involved in media training, consulting, writing, editing - in short anything to do with media and the written word.
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