

FOR THE LOVE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Vincent Magwenya has 18 years of combined journalism and corporate communications experience, working for companies such as Reuters Television, Worldwide Television News now known as Associated Press Television News, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, based in Washington D.C, the South African Broadcasting Corporation as Executive Producer of Morning Live, Magna Carta Public Relations, Standard Bank Group and The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa.

He is also the former Spokesperson to President Zuma and before re-joining Magna Carta he worked as Director of Communications for Standard Bank Africa and Director of Group Stakeholder Relations Management for the Standard Bank Group. We chat to him to find out what made him successful in his field.

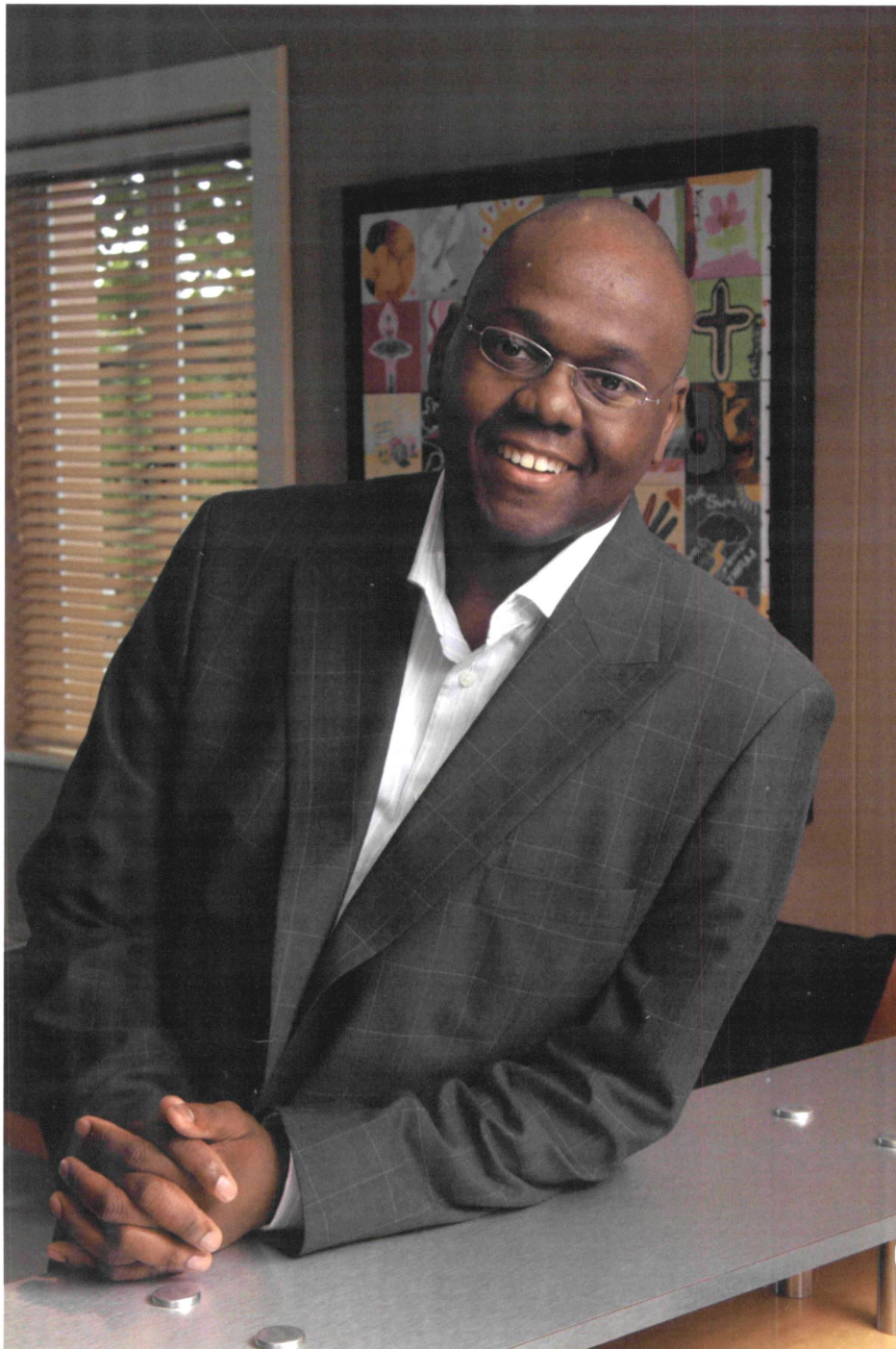
1. How did you get to where you are today?

I am an unashamedly ambitious person. So it's been a combination of a drive to succeed, hard work, dedication and an element of luck.

2. What did you want to become when growing up?

I wanted to be a Human Rights Lawyer, but I could not afford fees to law school.

“ I ACTUALLY TOOK A YEAR OFF MY STUDIES AFTER WRITING MY SECOND YEAR EXAMS AND WENT ON TO WORK FOR REUTERS TELEVISION ”



so I ended up studying Television Production and Communications.

3. When did you realise you loved the art of communication?

It was when I commenced with my studies at Technikon Natal (now known as the Durban University of Technology). I discovered the love for arts, communications and producing television programmes.

4. What did you do after graduating from Durban University of Technology?

I actually took a year off my studies after writing my second year exams and went on to work for Reuters Television. This was in 1994 when I took a gap upon realising that South Africa's first democratic elections presented an opportunity for a young trainee journalist who understood their way around townships and KZN rural areas, which at the time were hotspots for political violence.

During the elections I ended up working for another international news agency, Worldwide Television News (WTN, now known as APTN) I was assigned to cover KZN. Following the elections my contract expired and I did freelance work in Johannesburg for a year.

The following year in 1995, I went back to school to finish my studies and before the end of the first semester, WTN offered me a full time position and I joined them soon after I completed my studies. By the time I graduated I was full time employed by a global news agency. All because of a gap and the opportunity I seized towards the end of 1993 after writing my exams.

5. Do you think you would have been where you are today without your qualification?

It certainly did provide me with the foundation required to enter the work place and to an extent did open some doors for me. But a lot of my career successes have been achieved through hard work and a consistent positive performance in the work place. Qualifications are enough to give you the foundation and a slightly realistic view of the world you are heading into, however, it is the manner in which you apply yourself, the desire to learn and a positive attitude that carries you forward.

6. How does your typical day look like?
My typical day consists of a number of

meetings with my colleagues in the office discussing the work we are doing for clients, working on new business opportunities and staff related matters. I also spend a lot of time performing or supervising administrative work for the business and interacting with clients, which I regard as critical in my role in constantly checking on their satisfaction levels with the services we provide.

Generally we are facing similar challenges as most businesses in the current subdued economic climate. The economic pressures on our clients are certainly extending to us with respect to what clients are able to spend on our services. Specific to our industry is the enormous challenge of

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skills shortage and the competition for good talent.

8. Tell us about your new role as CEO for Magna Carta?

It's a very exciting and demanding role. The environment is fluid and you need to have the ability to move quickly in managing the daily challenges faced by the business and equally in identifying and seizing the opportunities that are presented. I lead an incredible team of talented and passionate communicators who are very dedicated to their clients and to Magna Carta.

Out of a staff compliment of 75 professionals, I have about 7 senior people in the company that report to me. They cover the

core PR business areas where we service clients including geographies outside of South Africa as well as support functions such as HR, Finance and Business Development. The role has everything in it, I have to be hands on at times and be where the action is and at other times I have to lead and provide strategic direction on the work we are doing for clients and the overall direction of the business.

9. If you were given a chance to change two things in your industry, what would it be?

Increase what clients spend on Public Relations and have more capacity to train more talented young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

10. What factors can cost a leader to lose their role?

Abuse of authority, insensitivity towards staff and a lack of appreciating the enormous responsibility that comes with leadership.

11. What has been your biggest learning curve?

I have had so many and I still continue to learn.

12. What advice would you give someone who wants to go into your industry?

They need to possess a natural ability to tell stories, be curious about the world around them, and have an interest in reading and acquiring knowledge. More importantly they need to have passion for communicating and engaging with people from diverse backgrounds and orientations.