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Adopt a slot Bringing companies to the campaign 8th December 2004

16 Days: More than just talk

As the end of the 16 Days of Activism draws near, an article raised in *The Citizen* newspaper stands out in the media coverage of the campaign. "No emergency aid for abuse victim" (*The Citizen*, 6/12/2004, p. 1) highlighted how few aid organisations have the resources or capacity to be open over weekends. The "abuse victim" of the headline is quoted as saying that the campaign is "yet another road-show, a lip service, which has nothing to do with the plight of...victims." The article highlighted the lack of resources and facilities of organisations that are specifically dedicated to providing support and care to people who have been abused. The story highlights the need to not only raise awareness and support for the campaign, but also for clear concrete action that extends beyond the 16 Days campaign.

Government has spearheaded the campaign, media has taken its aims and objectives on board, and civil society organisations have been driving the process. The MMP's challenge presents South Africa's biggest companies with a clear opportunity to take the 16 Days campaign beyond the 16th day.

Much Admired

The selection of companies to participate in the challenge was a difficult task. To guide the selection, the MMP turned to the *Encyclopaedia of Brands and Branding in South Africa* and the Top Brands Survey 2004, which provided a list of the Most Admired Companies for 2004. It seems a fair assumption that key criteria for an admired company would be their clear position on and support for gender equality, children's rights and initiatives such as the 16 Days campaign. According to the Top Brand Survey 2004, the following companies were cited as the most admired South African corporations:

1. Coca-Cola
2. Eskom
3. Telkom
4. ABSA
5. Shoprite/Checkers
6. SABMiller
7. Pick 'n Pay
8. Standard Bank



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9. Toyota
10. Vodacom

Note: Position 9 in the 2004 Survey is, in fact, the SABC, which has demonstrated clear commitment to the campaign. As the public service broadcaster and a key media player, the SABC has been excluded from the list and replaced with Toyota, which held the 9th position in the same survey in 2003.

The majority of these companies have considerable corporate social responsibility programmes and foundations and undertake some excellent community projects. Notably, however, initial Internet research indicates that many of the companies appear not to have pledged their commitment to the 16 Days campaign. Some of those who pledged include:

- Vodacom: An update on their website notes that the corporation "rallies behind the 16 Days of Activism campaign", and provides details of some of the activities in which it is participating.
- Shoprite/Checkers: Proclaims that the company "proudly supports" the campaign; the official campaign logo is featured on their website, and useful numbers are included as part of the information provided about woman and child abuse.
- Standard Bank: Their official statement, by the group chief executive Jacko Maree, describes the corporation as "one of government's major partners since the launch of the campaign". He also notes "The challenge for us as South Africans is to take this campaign beyond its 16 days and to make it a national effort to combat domestic violence for 365 days every year." Maree's words echo one of the most common current debates in and around the campaign: in order for the campaign to make a difference, it needs to extend beyond the limited 16-day period of awareness and activism.

Why the challenge?

Clearly 16 days of awareness will not bring an end to gender-based violence and child abuse. While the media's efforts to highlight the campaign can generally be commended, the MMP's previous research suggests that there will be a dramatic drop in the levels of coverage of gender-based violence and child abuse stories after the end of the campaign. To some extent this is to be expected. Some media will continue to raise issues of gender-based violence and child abuse beyond the campaign, but many media will simply not have the resources to continue to do so. It also needs to be taken into consideration that many media do not have the necessary resources, and in some instances, the incentive, to continue to highlight these key issues.



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What is the challenge?

The MMP challenges the top ten most admired companies, their competitors, their brand builders, their marketing and publicity departments, to continue the fight against gender-based violence and child abuse beyond the 16 days highlighted by the campaign.

Adopt a slot

Not only are the top ten companies the most admired they are also rated amongst the highest in ad-spend. The MMP challenges these companies to double the 16 Days campaign, to "adopt a slot", for 32 days or longer. So, contact your favourite media, television channel, radio station or newspaper and sponsor a prominent feature, space, spot or slot for the next 32 days, starting from the 10th of December 2004 the end of the 16 Days campaign.

- Dedicate 16 minutes of drive-time music to songs for and about women and children
- Take out a spot during a popular soapie
- Sponsor a "Children's Views on Abuse" programme
- Adopt a slot on a talk show
- Sponsor at least five investigative items on woman or child abuse in a weekly paper
- Highlight the human rights issues by grouping relevant items on a regular page or a page in a daily newspaper
- Use your space to highlight the needs of those organisations that deal with violence and abuse
- Use the space to discuss the existing laws and policies on gender-based violence, woman and child abuse.

Send us what you have done and the MMP will evaluate these efforts and award the best corporate media commitment to bringing about change in the levels of gender-based violence and woman and child abuse.

Why take up the challenge?

Companies should take up the challenge because it offers a win-win situation for all parties concerned. Companies will be able to further demonstrate that there is real social commitment behind their brand. Some of the companies have wonderfully inclusive brand pay-off lines, like: "Today. Tomorrow. Together", "Touch tomorrow", "We're on your side" and "With energy anything is possible". Each of these pay-off lines can easily be interpreted as displaying added value and depth by taking on the continued fight against gender-based violence and child abuse:

- ABSA could take on woman and child abuse "Today. Tomorrow. Together."



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- Toyota could "Lead the way" in the prevention of abuse
- Coca-cola can get "real" about the 16 Days campaign
- Eskom to prove that "with energy anything is possible"
- Telkom can ensure that "victims" of child abuse can actually "Touch tomorrow"
- Standard Bank can make life "Simpler. Better. Faster" for survivors of woman and child abuse

Companies will further benefit by having their efforts evaluated and analysed to see who outperformed all the rest in their commitment to fighting gender-based violence and child abuse. The MMP will announce the results in early 2005.

Media will benefit financially by having allocated space in which to focus on gender-based violence and child abuse.

Journalists will benefit, as they will be in a position to continue to address and raise key issues and stories that focus on gender-based violence and child abuse.

Members of the public will benefit through the media's consistent coverage of the aims and objectives raised during the 16 Days campaign. In addition, the public will be regularly reminded of some of the key messages inherent in the challenge, such as abuse being a human rights violation.

What can media do?

The media can continue to highlight the aims and objectives of the 16 Days campaign until it ends on Friday the 10th of December. Media can raise the MMP's challenge and encourage these most admired companies and those not so admired to build their brands and add value to their pay off lines by putting in money and commitment to human rights. One media partner has already agreed to cover the challenge.

What will the MMP do?

The MMP undertakes to monitor the commitment to the challenge by all parties involved (media and corporations), evaluate the best companies' efforts, and feed the results back to the media. This will distinguish between those companies that have built on their image of most admired South African companies, and those that merely pay lip service or less to the eradication of gender-based violence and abuse.



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Comments, queries, or suggestions?

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