

Auto and General sets the standard in insurance claims

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Insurance is often considered a grudge purchase, yet I've always prioritised it, even if it meant stretching my pennies. My mother's words have always lingered in my mind, reminding me of the importance of having it for those "rainy days".



That's why I thought Santam's use of an umbrella as a symbol was particularly apt.

Of course, having that cover for a rainy day means nothing if your insurer fights you every step of the way. As is the implication from one insurer who promises to pay "100% of valid claims", claims which one of its assessors, or a committee, will decide which are valid or not.

We've got your back is the idea behind the latest Auto and General ad: When we say we'll cover you, we mean it.

Their slogan, which I see has been trademarked, is spot on in that respect: "Never not there." That slogan alone is worth an Orchid.

The TV ad focuses on how the company reacted during the disastrous Knysna fire of 2017. I know people who lived through that and I know the devastation it caused.

With footage of the firefighting and home videos of the damage (accompanied by the sound of a homeowner weeping), Auto and General states that it paid out all claims (they don't qualify it by saying valid) within seven days.

This allowed those who had lost houses to begin the process of rebuilding their property, if not their lives (a process which would probably take longer).

As the ad closes, there is another brilliant piece of copywriting: "When suddenly happens, who is there for you?"

It is a simple but powerful promise – which is, essentially, what good insurance is. And it is confirmation that the art of copywriting in SA advertising is far from dead.

An Orchid to Auto and General and, if you'd let me know, I'd be happy to acknowledge the agency and its copywriters.

Ogilvy's lack of mentorship

What doesn't seem to be in oversupply in our creative industries is the duty to mentor and encourage talent and those who are new in the business.

That is why I was so incensed by a piece of rubbish, masquerading as a press release, which ended up in my inbox recently.

It came from a "junior influencer campaign manager" – I won't name her because she knows not that she knows not – at Ogilvy PR.

It was a rambling, barely coherent release about "more women taking to the skies" and badly referenced some women who have made it in the world of aviation.

There was little detail, no flow or point to the release and it was difficult to discern the client. I later found out the client was Turkish Airlines.



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This amateurish production jars badly with what I know of their normally slick marketing.

There was even the use of a tiny, probably copyrighted image by Reuters about a successful African woman pilot.

Apart from the fact, that there was little further info on said woman, the use of the Reuters pic demonstrated a total lack, probably, of the law of copyright (if you send this to someone and they use it and you don't have permission, then you're both guilty of copyright infringement).

I suppose the clue was in the "influencer" part of the job title: If you're dealing with that airhead world, perhaps they aren't as fussed by logic or quality. Here, in the much-reviled "mainstream media", we are, however.

I replied with what I thought was a gentle chiding, basically saying it was unusable and that I was surprised someone above her (surely there is because she is a junior) had ever let this garbage see the light of day. I also pointed out the faults.

Back came a breezy reply saying thanks, but what was I interested in? A rebuke from a journalist – which would be damaging for your client – had been brushed off.

Clearly, there is little or no mentoring at Ogilvy PR. If there was, this release would never have been sent out in this form or to the wrong target audience.



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If this was vetted and allowed to pass muster, then I shudder to consider what Ogilvy PR considers best practice.

A former journalist, who runs her own PR company, is fond of saying that, particularly in this country, those of us privileged to have learned in the media and marketing business have an obligation to pass on our knowledge and to help others up the ladder.

Each one, teach one, she reminds me about that old anti-apartheid slogan.

It's a pity that Ogilvy PR doesn't view it this way because neglecting this can damage not only your reputation but also that of your client.

And get you an Onion in the bargain.

ABOUT BRENDAN SEERY

Brendan Seery has been in the news business for most of his life, covering coups, wars, famines - and some funny stories - across Africa. Brendan Seery's *Orchids and Onions* column ran each week in the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg and the *Weekend Argus* in Cape Town.

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