

# Magazine muscle

*It is a popular misconception that the power of print is on the decline. Commercially, the demand for paper for magazines, books and a variety of commercial applications has doubled over the last decade.*

**P**rint is a resilient medium. Over the last century, it has survived attacks on its supremacy as a communication medium from a number of directions. The first assault came from the development of broadcasting – the popularisation of radio as a news medium from the late 1920s and the rapid spread of television from the 1950s – finding its peak in the mid 20th century. Analysts back then were predicting the demise of print.

But it hung in there, only to be confronted in the '80s and '90s by the rise of the Internet – from a mere 213 computers connected in 1981 to an estimated 800 million users worldwide by 2002. This, combined with the continued popularity of the cinema, videos and DVDs, and more recently computer gaming, once again prompted forecasters to predict the end of print. But it is a delightful irony that during the last decade (the period of most rapid growth of the Internet which is considered the most significant of the latest threats to print) the demand for paper used in magazines, books and a variety of other print media has doubled – partly because of online media's requirement for print to advertise itself.

So where does print get its stamina to not only hold its own, but to actually grow in an environment saturated with other media?

One source is the fact that magazines, for example, have the ability to stimulate the brain more than any other medium. In studies of brain activity, neuroscientists have discovered that the amount of neural activity involved in reading print media is second to none. This research has shown that still images represent the most significant input for the brain, activating it and provoking response. Reading activates and moves the eye muscles, while watching TV leaves the eye muscles almost passive. Reading takes effort. And the more effort you make, the more you learn and the more you remember. In short, little effort means little long-term memory, greater effort means greater long-term memory.

This is vitally important to communicators, because it relates directly to the development of learning, judgement and discernment – which directly affects your ability to make decisions.

Electronic messages are passively imbibed and require no learning skills. Television communicates at a level that does not arouse the brain: you get the gist but not a really meaningful picture.

But understanding the power of print also requires an understanding of how people consume media. TV remains the most popular medium for relaxation – it allows people to disengage their minds and switch off from everyday life. People simply let the box entertain them and in many cases, TV sets

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**It is pretty unlikely that people will become knowledgeable without being excellent readers... I make a point to read at least one weekly from cover to cover because it broadens my interests. If I only read what intrigues me, I finish the publication the same person I was before I started out. So I read it all.**  
Bill Gates”

are on continuously – providing an ambience, but not often watched with a purpose. Radio is similar in that it is often a complimentary medium, used to accompany other activities like driving.

The Internet is most commonly used either as a communication channel (email or chat rooms) or an information channel. Individuals find it hard to develop a relationship with a medium that is often perceived as quite lonely, anti-social and intense.

With magazines (and to a lesser extent newspapers) people choose what they want to read and when they want to read it – thus making a deliberate decision. This means that they become involved in a publication to a far greater extent than with any other medium. Also, because of the proliferation of magazines, this is a medium that is able to satisfy the varied information and cultural needs of a wide variety of people.

More than any other medium (with the possible exception of the Internet), magazines

offer a voice to niche and minority interests, which are often overlooked by the broad-spectrum approach to audiences that TV, radio and newspapers are required to take. Magazines can satisfy the entertainment, information and aspirational needs of interests as varied as extreme sports to crochet; high finance to DIY.

And of course this all offers unprecedented marketing access to audiences. The penetration of magazines into so many sectors of the community means that advertisers can reach their target audience at least as well as – and in many cases better than – through television, but at a fraction of the cost. Understanding this, has led organisations to produce magazines specifically for their customers – so-called customer publishing. This has developed into a US\$5 billion industry worldwide, that is growing at a remarkable rate. Companies have discovered that customer magazines increase sales and customer loyalty, generate new business and have positive effects on their customers' relationship with their brand.

Industry magazines or B2B magazines are an extension of this idea, and have remarkable success in the business community. Many business people believe that B2B magazines provide the most authoritative, up-to-date and relevant editorial coverage of their industries. Some business leaders estimate that they get about 80% of their knowledge of their industry (product awareness, sales leads, competitor information, independent points of view) from B2B magazines.

So, is print under threat? Certainly. Is it dying? Evidence supports that the opposite is in fact the case. Print still remains the most effective and compelling story-telling medium available. Whether that story be the story of a brand or product or of the latest breakdown of a celebrity marriage, the research tells us that print retains the power to tell it best.

**Information for this article was taken from the first issue of Sappi's Power of Print magazine. For more information, please contact: Megan Larter, Marketing Communications Manager: Publishers on +27 (0)11 407 8169, email [megan.larter@sappi.com](mailto:megan.larter@sappi.com) or visit [www.sappi.com](http://www.sappi.com)**



*Among the many unsung heroes of the democratic South Africa are the “struggle printers”. Ronnie Morris spoke to three of them.*

# It was my duty to print

**L**ocked up in prisons and police cells, harassed by security police, attending secret meetings in churches in the early hours of the morning to take instructions from political activists, often never paid by cash-strapped organisations, they defied the apartheid government by printing newspapers, pamphlets and posters.

Allie Parker, 61, started printing “struggle material” in 1968. He ran a grocery shop in Athlone and traded under his wife’s name because of the Group Areas Act.

“The Group Areas inspectors gave us a lot of hassles and because I saw the injustice of the system up close I decided to go into printing with Richard Peters, a friend. I had no prior experience but decided to print against the system.”

Parker said one of his first printing jobs was to advertise a meeting to be addressed by Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Fatima Meer to protest the expulsion of several University of the Western Cape (UWC) students.

Thereafter most of his printing work was for anti-apartheid organisations including trade unions and churches.

“Ebrahim Rasool (now Western Cape premier) used to come to me at 2 or 3am in the morning because pamphlets had to be out in the morning. Willie Hofmeyr (now head of the Asset Forfeiture Unit) used to give me hell because something had to go out in the mornings on the train stations. We had to work through the night.

“I never printed for the (coloured) Federal Party or any organisation which had any dealings with the system even when asked to do so.”

Parker said in 1972 they printed a pamphlet listing the names of all the activists who had been killed in police detention. During his first brush with the law, security police visited his business and told him no one was ever killed in detention, they just died.

During the bus boycott in Cape Town in 1980 he was detained because he printed all the pamphlets of the community-based political organisations.

At that stage he was asked by the Bureau for State Security (BOSS) to spy for them and was offered R20 000.

“I told them I could not give them an answer

“**During his first brush with the law, security police visited his business and told him no one was ever killed in detention – they just died.**”

and would do so the next day. I told my lawyer Dullah Omar (the first Minister of Justice in democratic South Africa) who wrote them a letter to tell them to leave me alone.”

Two days after that he was arrested by security police and interrogated about the bus boycott but refused to say anything. He was taken to Pollsmoor Prison.

“I started to count the number of people in the cell and knew everyone of them. I decided to keep quiet. After 14 days they took me to Victor Verster Prison where I met some of the guys who brought printing jobs to me. All asked me the same question: “What did you tell the police?” I told them I did not make a statement. I could see the relief on their faces.

“Dullah came to visit me as my lawyer and asked me if I had made a statement. When I said I did not, he got up, took my hand and with tears rolling down his face said: ‘Allie you did well.’ I was never charged.”

Spells in detention followed in 1972, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1980 and 1982.

Parker said he was always aware of his opposition to apartheid and decided to fight the system of government. “I felt I could contribute to our freedom. It took a bit longer than I thought”.

He was never afraid of detention and sometime even prayed to be detained because it was so nerve-wracking not knowing when police would next raid his business.

He was paid sporadically for work done while others could not afford to pay him.

“It was my duty to see that we gain freedom or that the apartheid laws be abolished for everybody. It was my duty to print. I have lost thousands of rands because some organisations could not afford to pay. I was always looking for money. I am not sorry that I did this.”

Parker retired in 1995 when he decided he had achieved what he had wanted, a non-racial South Africa.

“I’m very disappointed at the way business is being conducted with everybody grabbing. The democratic South Africa has lived up to my expectations but I would have thought the upliftment of the African people would have been quicker. It makes me very heartsore to see so many people begging on

the streets”.

Prakash Patel, now 44, was 21 when he took over Esquire Press, the family printing business from his ailing father in 1982.

The company printed the community newspapers *Grassroots* of Cape Town, *Saamstaan* of Oudtshoorn, *New Era*, *Living Roots* and *Varsity*, the University of Cape Town student newspaper.

“There were no set hours to the day, we worked from 6am to 6am because certain copies came at 10 and 11 at night. We had meetings at places you could never imagine. Trevor Manuel (now finance minister) used to meet with us in a church in Surrey Estate to give us instructions on what to print for the United Democratic Front (UDF).

“It was very risky and we had everything to lose. We had to print our name on every publication that was registered with the minister of the interior.

Security police harassment happened four to five times a week and the firm had more than 2 000 printing plates seized and more than 100 criminal cases were laid against the company.

“I felt there was a need to expose the criminal element in government and the police. I was very politicised because of my father and his links with the Indian Congress. My father always raised money for the African National Congress from the time he left Durban for Cape Town in 1952”.

Patel said the firm lost a lot of money, as much as R3 million, because there was never a structured way to handle finances to pay the printers.

“It was about the struggle, money was not the important thing. We believed in one thing and that was we had a little bit and we must share it. As printers we were in a position of power at the time to educate the masses.”

Patel said he was arrested and detained a few times for interrogation but never held for long periods.

“I’m not bitter and will never be. I felt at the time we had a role to play in the democratisation of society yet I think the higher authorities should have looked after us for the role we played.”







Patel said his company had printed more than 3 000 publications for the ANC, including the first picture of Nelson Mandela published in South Africa.

They outwitted the security police who thought they worked regular 8am to 5pm days. He would black out the windows of the printing room and staff would park their cars inside the factory. When police raided the next day numerous publications would be gone.

"Those were bad times, they came through our offices with machine guns, 50 of them at a time. They harassed my staff and held my building hostage when they conducted a raid."

Martin Dannheisser of the *Springs Advertiser*, said in the mid 1980's they printed a number of publications, including the *Weekly Mail*, the publication of the South Africa Student Press Union (Saspu), *The National* newspaper, *The Kairos Document* for the Roman Catholic Church and *New Nation* newspaper.

With 15 workers they operated during normal business hours except for Thursdays when the *Weekly Mail* had to be printed that evening.

"We had the odd times when the police arrived and said there was a bomb on our premises and that they had to search the building. This meant that we had to clear the building. This happened four or five times.

"We did not take too much notice of them but it did stop production. We always tried to get the



### Unsung Heroes:

Allie Parker (far left), Prakash Patel (left) and Peter and Martin Dannheisser (below) are among those whose courage and determination to simply do their duty helped to make scenes like that above possible.

*Weekly Mail* out by midnight but because of this we only managed to get it out at 3am."

Their building was also defaced with graffiti which accused them of being members of the South African Communist Party.

The security police also conducted regular raids saying that they wanted to scrutinise the *Weekly Mail*. They however never had a publication seized. A couple of editions of the *Weekly Mail* was banned but only after they had already been printed, he said.

Dannheisser said the security police had offices near their premises and his brother Peter had to assist the *Weekly Mail* staff in getting their newspapers back from the security police.

"We were not radically political nor were we particularly defiant. There were lots of commercial printers who would not publish these newspapers. We were not heroes, we had a press and they needed a job done and we were prepared to do it," he said.

