

Bookmarks 2014

Individual Award Entry

Social Media Marketer/

Community Manager

Zahira Kharsany

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APPROACH

Zahira is experienced in both proactive campaign-driven and responsive communication. She is enthusiastic and incredibly driven to achieve positive outcomes. This is rooted in an understanding of the power of the right message delivered to the right audience at the right time.

Zahira is a social media enthusiast who began her career as an intern with the Mail & Guardian Online, a platform that shifted her focus and attention to online media. Her experience spans from the online portals of the Mail & Guardian, to the weekly print paper and news agency, Inter Press Service. During her time as a journalist she has interviewed heads of states from the SADC region, as well as then Finance Minister Trevor Manuel. She was also at the front of the turmoil during South Africa's darkest period since democracy – the xenophobic attacks that ripped the nation. Her experience as a journalist has also led her to have a little fun in interviews with international bands such as the Muse and the late Teaser's owner Lolly Jackson.

Journalism led her to digital and her time at Mail & Guardian spearheaded her interest in social and how people communicate and interact online.

Zahira is currently a Senior Content and Community Manager at Cerebra. She is a writer, blogger, technology junkie, freelance journalist and an ardent sports fan.

Her passion lies in social media, journalism and community management. She understands that communication is no longer a one-way street, but that businesses need to understand and adapt to the conversations held about their brand quicker, building trust and brand loyalty with consumers in the process.

She is self-motivated, diligent, enthusiastic and able to work independently with minimal supervision, or within a team environment. She is always looking for ways in which she can up skill herself to achieve her goals.

In the past year at Cerebra, she has worked on various accounts and clients, which include Absa, Hollard, Altech Autopage, SimplyBiz, Vodacom, EMC² SADC, Brand South Africa and Bosch Services South Africa.

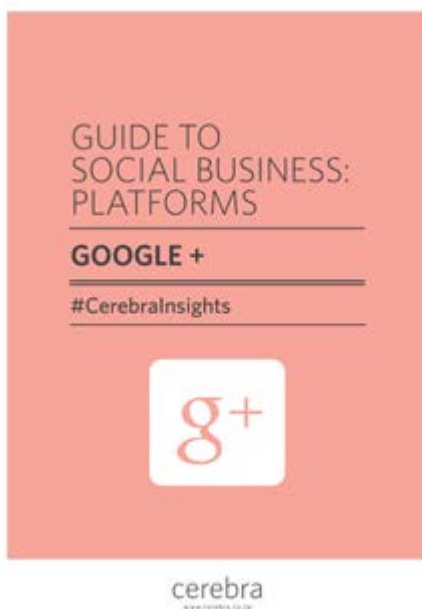
She understands that each community she works with has its own set of rules and nuances and is able to see how this plays out in the local arena. Her understanding of people and their highs and lows has enabled her to connect with them through her reactive interactions as well as pro-active use of content. Her strategic insight in digital and content strategy has led to the organic increase of various communities, while insight into SEO and paid media has led her to understand the social landscape even more. The combination of community growth and content has led to the retention of many new fans in her client's communities. There has seldom been any drop-off in any community handled by Zahira. Successful communities are key to her job performance and the knowledge she has gained over the years in the business has led to her and her team achieving success even on small niche communities such as EMC², Bosch and Amadeus.

As a senior within Cerebra, she is also responsible for ensuring that her team is always motivated and tackles any situation head on. She is continuously facilitating training sessions, both internally and externally, as part of Cerebra's Academy.

Over the course of the year there have been many challenges with the communities she has actively worked on. This included a banking crisis on Absa, and Absa no longer sponsoring the South African Football Team, Bafana Bafana. Zahira has been actively involved in overcoming various other crises amongst various clients that are not part of her portfolio, making her an integral part of the community management team.

Another challenge Zahira has overcome includes running successful communities for Amadeus across Africa. While the original portfolio dealt with only the Southern Africa region, the extended portfolio deals with various other regions on the African continent, taking into consideration different languages, and cultural and religious differences. Amadeus Africa is now a thriving niche community that deals with travel agents across the region. It is a business-to-business platform and therefore the nature of the community is different from business to consumer.

EXECUTION



Zahira is firmly aligned to the latest developments on social, which has led to her writing an eBook on Google+ - Guide To Social Business: Platforms - Google+ (<http://www.cerebra.co.za/resources/guide-social-business-platforms-google>) earlier in 2014. On completion of the guidebook, she also conducted a social media 101 training to members of the public. She understands the continuous movement of social media and has thus been able to pick up on changes in her communities - clear examples of these are the change in attitude of travelers during the volcanic explosions in Iceland recently, resulting in the way travel agents viewed this incident on the Amadeus Africa portfolio.

This has led to the production of material to assist travel agents using the Amadeus software throughout Africa, to combat this.

Another example can be seen in the Altech Autopage community, which expresses a lot of frustration with the client. Through her community management skills, she is able to minimize explosive conversations and change frustrated customers to happy consumers.



She has taken a keen interest in understanding market trends and platform changes and has been able to implement those within her communities. The increased number of community engagement on small niche communities is an attribute to this.

Example - niche community growth


| Bosch Service South Africa | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Platform | No. of fans May 2013 | No. of fans May 2014 | % Growth Overall |
| Facebook | 216 | 701 | 225% |
| Twitter | 41 | 124 | 202% |

She currently spearheads communication between various platforms with links to Facebook and Hootsuite. She uses the knowledge gained by these interactions to share platform changes within the communities. Through her links with the various platforms, Amadeus was able to amalgamate all their various regional Pages in Africa, into one main page.



While working on technology giant EMC², Zahira translated the international strategy and added local flavor to it. After a mere four months, the Marketing Director for the EMEA region, based in Austria, regularly used South Africa as an example of best-practice, and encouraged other participating countries, including Turkey, Poland, Austria, Czech Republic and Saudi Arabia, to follow in South Africa's footsteps.

Interestingly the key performance indicators for EMC² are set globally per quarter. These targets range from engagement, to growth and also number of blog posts created regionally. While on the account these KPIs were met every month and exceeded quarterly expectations.

| EMC² Southern Africa | | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
|  | June 2014 | July 2014 | August 2014 |
| No of new fans | 103 | 31 | 39 |
| Total Followers | 337 | 368 | 407 |
| MOM Growth | 44% | 9.2% | 10.6% |


| EMC² Southern Africa | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| | June 2014 | July 2014 | August 2014 |
| No of new fans | 11 | 1 131 | 278 |
| Total Fans | 726 | 1 857 | 2 135 |
| Engaged Users | 703 | 2 485 | 2 483 |
| Total Reach (organic) | 1 951 | 8 862 | 6 423 |
| Total Impressions (Organic) | 18 540 | 21 823 | 15 172 |
| MOM Growth | 1.53% | 155% | 14.97% |

EMC² Southern Africa shared a link. 5 August

Did you know?

Syncplicity has introduced a revamped mobile app, extending its promise to provide beautifully designed apps that improve workforce mobility, productivity and collaboration.

Read more: <http://bit.ly/1mCLx52>



Gartner names EMC Syncplicity a leader - Transformation
transformation.emc2.co.za

EMC Syncplicity has been positioned as a "leader" by Gartner in its 2 July, 2014 Magic Quadrant for Enterprise File Synchronization and Sharing.

Like · Comment · Share · Buffer 103

EMC² Southern Africa shared a link. 6 August

What is it like to be a successful female employee in EMC's customer service team?

Find out from our team: <http://emc.im/1m4vVJ0>



EMEA Female Employees Discuss Their Success in Customer Service

What is contributing to their success in EMC Customer Service? Were they able to evolve the way they wanted? How do they successfully manage your work life b...

Like · Comment · Share · Buffer 70 1 3 Shares

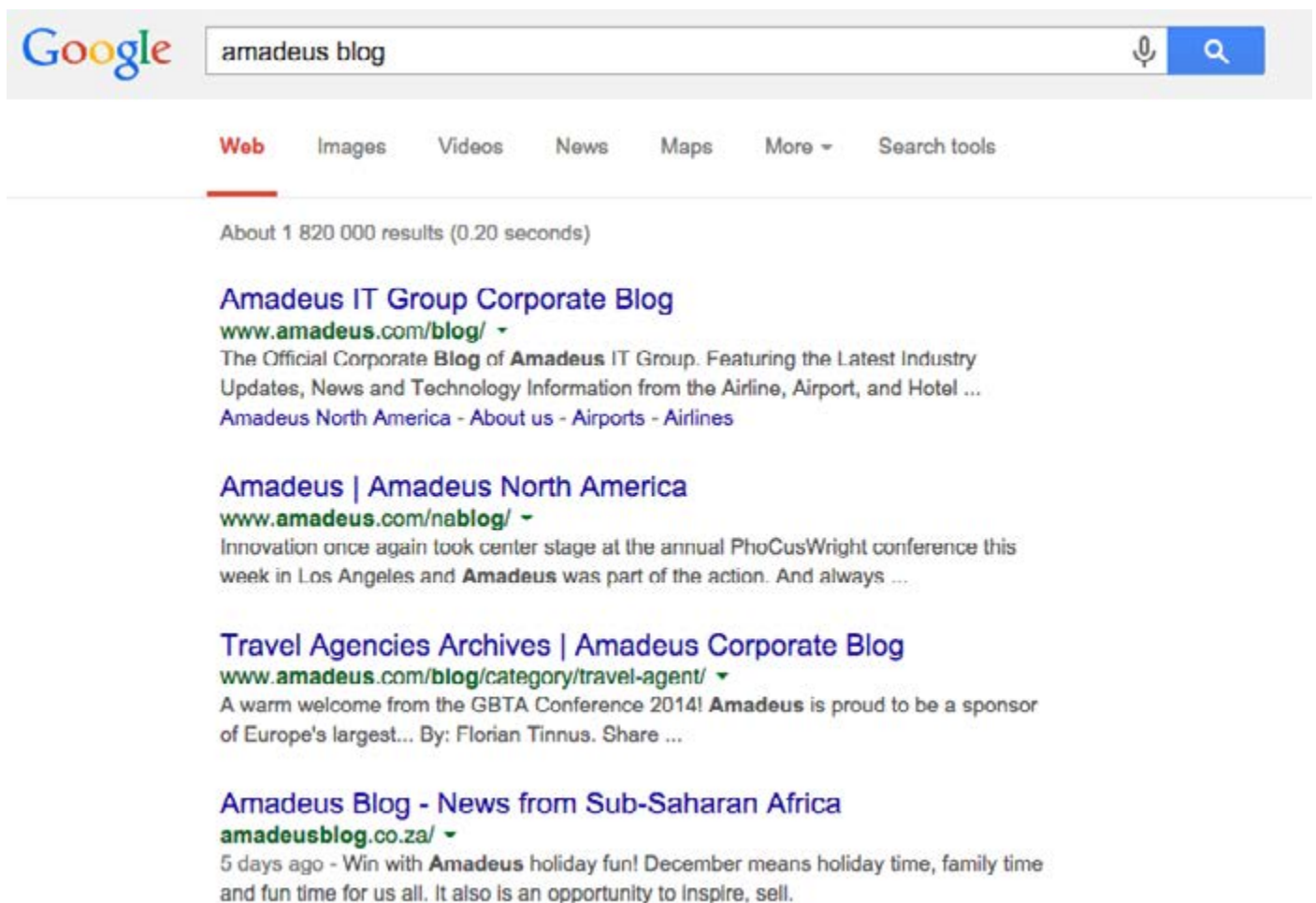
Zahira further plays a key role within Cerebra. She actively manages a team and is a key resource in the community team. She assists with training that ranges from YouTube Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), to Blog and Website SEO. She also facilitates training and learning amongst the team around key community skills and how to manage crises and frustrated customers. She holds weekly sessions with team members to also assist in understanding various clients and content writing for social. She nurtures and builds new team members on a day-to-day basis. In a market in which there is a shortage of well-trained community managers, Cerebra employees are sought after for their high quality of work and the intensive training they have undergone.

INNOVATION

Zahira keeps abreast of all social changes and is instrumental in assisting team members before interviews regarding this. She has a keen interest in Google Plus and facilitated the writing of the Guide To Social Business: Platforms – Google+ (<http://www.cerebra.co.za/resources/guide-social-business-platforms-google>) earlier in 2014. The eBook was picked up by Google South Africa and shared by their team with clients. This led to the facilitation of social media 101 training to members of the public and to internal team members. She is the go-to person within Cerebra for all things Google and Google Plus related.

Through her interest in paid media, Zahira has been well positioned to run Cerebra's campaigns on clients on Facebook and provide invaluable services. She is the only one that currently runs media without an external agency assisting. Her report on the progress of the campaigns has led to clients extending campaign budgets. This was clearly seen in the Facebook campaigns run for Hollard on social during 2014. The increased numbers was one of the KPIs set out by the client through advertising. The ads used were mainly around sponsored stories, ensuring that there was a tie in between the content Cerebra was producing and the final numbers. This also ensures that the community growth is a valuable one and one that can then be activated in future campaigns.

Her Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) knowledge has further enabled her to reap the benefits of the content hubs she manages for clients. Her understanding of how SEO works for blogs, Facebook, Twitter and Google Plus, has ensured that she is always looking for ways to help her content appear first in search streams. This can be seen with the Amadeus Blog (www.amadeusblog.co.za), which now appears in the first page of search results for Amadeus Blog, after the North America region.



Google search results for "amadeus blog".

Search results for "amadeus blog" (About 1 820 000 results (0.20 seconds))

- Amadeus IT Group Corporate Blog**
www.amadeus.com/blog/ ▾
The Official Corporate **Blog** of **Amadeus** IT Group. Featuring the Latest Industry Updates, News and Technology Information from the Airline, Airport, and Hotel ...
[Amadeus North America](#) - [About us](#) - [Airports](#) - [Airlines](#)
- Amadeus | Amadeus North America**
www.amadeus.com/nablog/ ▾
Innovation once again took center stage at the annual PhoCusWright conference this week in Los Angeles and **Amadeus** was part of the action. And always ...
- Travel Agencies Archives | Amadeus Corporate Blog**
www.amadeus.com/blog/category/travel-agent/ ▾
A warm welcome from the GBTA Conference 2014! **Amadeus** is proud to be a sponsor of Europe's largest... By: Florian Tinnus. Share ...
- Amadeus Blog - News from Sub-Saharan Africa**
amadeusblog.co.za/ ▾
5 days ago - Win with **Amadeus** holiday fun! December means holiday time, family time and fun time for us all. It also is an opportunity to inspire, sell.

This ties in with Cerebra's Community Life Cycle model, which looks at building the community, engaging the community and then activating the community. Zahira has been integral along all three phases of this model and has broadened the way she builds the community to ensure that she maintains engagement and forms a valuable community she can then activate.

Zahira has also been key within the editorial board model, which looks at strategy for clients in a new way. She forms part of the content strategy team as well as strategic overall input for clients. She assists with looking at the social objects, tone, personality, target audience and platforms that new and current clients would be working on.

This has led to her forming part of the team that has been directly briefed at the start of the Altech Node project with other agencies. This was a first in terms of the social team being included from the start of the project that was to be rolled out. This also saw the client facilitating training sessions around the product before campaign launch in order for the team to have a better idea to respond to queries on social.

The central role she plays with clients is evident in her inclusion in high-level meetings, which sees heads of departments as well as CEOs involved in the meetings.

RESULTS

Client Testimonials

I've worked with some really good agency partners, but none that bring their "A" game every day. Zahira's inputs to the projects that she worked on, helped me think of things in a different way and helped my team think of things in a different way. Zahira immerses herself in the projects she works on. She is responsive, knowledgeable, experienced, savvy, trustworthy and... well, just so cool to work with.

- Rakesh Samlall, Assistant VP for Sponsorships at Absa, Marketing and Communications

Zahira is one of the most proficient and efficient Content and Community Managers I have worked with to date. She came onto the EMC2 account with little knowledge of our business landscape and demonstrated a refreshing willingness to learn about the business. She literally threw herself straight into working on our account. She not only picked up the essence of what EMC2 is all about in a short space of time, but also proficiently managed the platforms and content in a way that exceeded my expectations. I have the utmost trust in her abilities. Zahira's competence is also complimented by her easy-to-work-with style and "can do" attitude. Thank you Zahira - I wish you all the best!

- Lara Opperman, Field Marketing Specialist, EMC2 Southern Africa

Colleague Testimonials

Zahira's attention to detail and passion for her job has made working with her an easy and extremely beneficial experience. It is rare to find someone who gives 100% right through a campaign or project, even up until the reporting is done. I would have no hesitation in working with Zahira again and always consider it a learning experience for myself.

- Chase Carneson, Content & Community Manager, Cerebra

Zahira has been an invaluable asset to Cerebra, and to me personally, over the last year. It is a telltale sign that before every radio / television interview, she is the Cerebran I call to get my facts straight! She has an unparalleled understanding of the platforms and principles that govern successful social engagement for brands and is an asset in every client meeting, strategy or presentation. She has had to manage some incredibly challenging clients, some of whom haven't fully appreciated her value, and done so with flying colours on every occasion.

- Mike Stopforth, CEO Cerebra

Zahira is extremely knowledgeable in the field of social media. Although it's still a young and flourishing industry, she has in-depth insight and keeps abreast on trends and current news on all platforms concerning social media. She is always willing to share her findings in order to empower and up-skill her colleagues and teams. As a Senior Content & Community Manager, Zahira has shown leadership skills and an understanding of what social media is, and the impact it has on the communities she has worked on and managed. Her drive and passion for the field cannot be ignored and she is a worthy nominee of both awards, if not the winner.

- Dolly Matsubukanye, Community Manager, Cerebra

I have yet to meet a person more in-tune with the social media and community management than Zahira. Her attention to detail and inclination to digital are second to none - and it's for these reasons that she is always a step ahead.

I might have even called her a guru, or ninja, or social media maven in this testimonial but didn't because that would be an insult... she's far better than that.

- Reece Jacobsen, Head of Community, Cerebra

Zahira is a content genius. Her work on my client projects is always of the highest quality and she takes her time making sure everything is perfect. Zahira will explore all communication principles and options before embracing on any project to ensure that the client deliverables are met in the most creative and objective driven way.

- Jodi-ann Kassel, Account Director, Cerebra

ZK is the first port of call when anyone needs anything. Her knowledge, skills and enthusiasm makes her a pleasure to work with. She always has time to help everyone

- Jana Potgieter, Account Manager, Cerebra

Zahira has great attention to detail when it comes to managing the Amadeus blog. Whether it's the smallest typo or pixelated color, nothing escapes her eye. She ensures that all her colleagues abide by her high standards, without ever being preachy or bossy. Zk gets everyone there by being passionate about the community and inspiring us with her superior knowledge. She has the brilliant ability to sound, on social media with complete strangers, like she's having a conversation with a trusted friend. She knows all the latest SEO techniques, but she never lets content take the back seat. She understands the delicate balance between having a voice and being heard. Her ethical understanding stems from years of experience and a deep personal appreciation for what is right and fair.

As my mentor, Zahira has been supportive and informative. She always makes time to get you back on track, whilst making sure you not only understand what is expected of you, but that you actually get excited about it. She's a good influence and a great leader. She's also organized and will never bring something to the table at the last minute, if she can prevent it. She's flexible and adaptive to our needs and the needs of the community. Her knowledge and attention to detail proves her passion for her trade. She'll never take the easy option if it's not the best option. She feels with her communities and and not only spends her time, but devotes it to them.

- **Frederika Fourie, Content & Community Manager, Cerebra**