

# Strategic Communication Portfolio

**Calem Edward Karna**



# Introduction

This portfolio is not a collection of summaries. It is a reflection of how I think, how I write and how I contribute to communication that matters. From rail safety editorials to campaign support and stakeholder messaging, each piece included demonstrates my ability to connect insight, narrative and purpose.



*Hello, I'm Caleem Karina*

I'm a communications professional with over five years' experience across corporate, digital and stakeholder environments. I believe communication should do more than inform. It should influence decisions and drive action.

I develop clear, purposeful content that translates complex ideas into accessible narratives. My work spans integrated campaigns, organisational messaging and digital content, always grounded in structure, intent and a deep understanding of audience.

# Vision & Mission Of My Life

To become a trusted voice and strategic thinker whose work shapes narratives, influences decisions and leaves a lasting impact on organisations and society.



## Career Objective

To contribute within a dynamic organisation where I can play a role in shaping high-impact communication, supporting leadership positioning and strengthening stakeholder engagement in complex environments.

## Vision

To shape credible, influential communication that strengthens trust between organisations, stakeholders and society.

## Mission

To design and deliver strategic communication solutions that translate complex issues into clear, impactful messaging, strengthen stakeholder engagement and protect organisational reputation.

## What Drives My Work

I am driven by the belief that communication is not a support function—it is a strategic function. When done correctly, it influences perception, builds trust and enables organisations to operate with clarity and purpose.

# My Experience

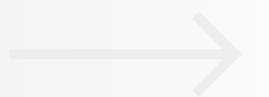
My experience is built on a combination of structured communication support, content development and strategic alignment. I have worked in environments where communication needed to be both accurate and impactful, often within tight timelines and evolving priorities.

At Cut2Black Media, I supported the execution of integrated digital campaigns, contributing to content development, audience research and campaign alignment. This role strengthened my understanding of how campaigns are structured, how messaging is refined and how communication performs across platforms.

At Bloubos Montessori, I worked more directly on stakeholder communication. I developed and implemented communication approaches aimed at improving engagement, strengthening messaging consistency and enhancing organisational visibility. This required a more hands-on approach to content, feedback analysis and communication planning.

- Content development that aligns with strategic intent
- Audience-focused messaging
- Communication that is clear, structured and purposeful
- Supporting the delivery of campaigns and communication outputs

My experience has shaped how I approach communication today, with clarity, discipline and an understanding that every message serves a broader objective.



To Whom It May Concern,

**LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION**

I am pleased to provide this reference for Calem Karna, who worked under my supervision at Cut2Black Media as a Junior Account Executive.

During his time with us, Calem supported a range of communication and campaign-related activities, gaining practical, hands-on experience across key areas of the work.

His responsibilities included transcribing interviews, supporting copywriting tasks, conducting research for campaigns and contributing to social media audits. These tasks required a high level of attention to detail, accuracy and the ability to work within deadlines, all of which he handled well. Through this exposure, he developed a solid understanding of how communication campaigns are structured and supported.

Calem approached his work with a positive attitude and a willingness to learn, which enabled him to grow in confidence and contribute more effectively over time.

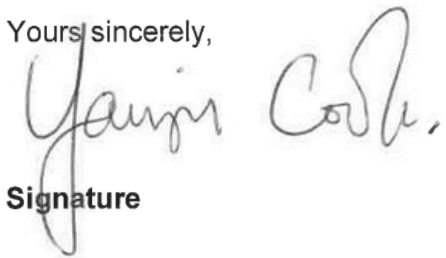
He is dependable, meets deadlines and works well within a team environment. He is open to feedback and applies it constructively to improve the quality of his work.

Calem has shown a strong interest in developing within the communications and digital space, and I believe he has the foundation and work ethic to continue building his capability in this field.

I would recommend him for roles within communications, digital media or campaign environments, where I am confident he will add value and continue to develop his capability.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,



**Signature**

# My Experience

## Research & Insight

I rely on research and context to inform messaging, ensuring that communication is not only creative but credible.

## Strategic Communication

I approach communication with structure and intent, ensuring that messaging aligns with organisational priorities and audience needs.

## Digital & Campaign Support

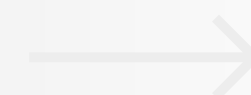
Experience supporting digital campaigns, including content creation, research and performance analysis.

## Content & Narrative Development

Strong writing is central to my work. I focus on developing content that is clear, engaging and grounded in purpose.

## Stakeholder Communication

I understand the importance of consistency, tone and clarity when engaging different stakeholder groups.



# 3 November 2024

## Sunday Times Editorial

### Rail safety in South Africa — Charting the path to a safer future

When the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) unveiled the **State of Safety Report 2023/24** on 30 October, it presented a pivotal moment for South Africa's rail sector; a mirror reflecting not just its challenges but also its resilience and potential for transformation.

The report is a narrative of contrasts, blending progress with persistent hurdles. It paints a picture of decreasing operational fatalities yet exposes rising threats in security-related incidents. At its core, the report underscores the intricate tapestry of rail safety in South Africa, one where operational efficiency must coexist with security and infrastructural integrity.

### Progress amid adversities

The strides made in reducing train accidents and operational fatalities are commendable. With an overall decrease in Fatalities Weighted Injuries (FWI) related to operational occurrences by 6% compared to the previous reporting period, the sector showcased the effectiveness of enhanced safety protocols and dedicated efforts from railway operators like Transnet Freight Rail (TFR) and the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA).

Yet, the shadow of recurring incidents, like the 14% increase in train collisions and a sharp rise in people-related occurrences at station platforms, serves as a stark reminder that the safety journey is far from complete.

KwaZulu-Natal, contributing to 36% of the operational occurrences, remains a focal point, demanding urgent, tailored interventions. The province's alarming rate of 896 recorded occurrences not only highlights systemic vulnerabilities but also calls for community-centric solutions, strengthened enforcement and infrastructural upgrades.

### The security conundrum

The report unearths a troubling rise in security-related fatalities, with incidents escalating by 345.74% from the previous period. The new reporting category, "human bodies found within railway reserves," alone contributed to a significant portion of these numbers, emphasizing the harsh realities within the railway environment.

Theft and vandalism, impacting 74% of security-related incidents, reveal systemic gaps in asset protection and the urgent need for robust collaboration between law enforcement and rail operators.

### Operational challenges and the way forward

Operationally, South Africa's railways faced unique stressors, not least of which was the ongoing electricity crisis. Frequent power outages disrupted services, amplified risks, and tested the resilience of safety systems. However, these challenges also became a crucible for innovation, as teams adapted to maintain operations under extraordinary pressures.

Amid these adversities, PRASA's 116% surge in train kilometers and increased passenger rail usage reflects renewed public trust in rail as a viable transport option. This progress must be safeguarded with relentless vigilance and strategic investments.

### **A collective call to action**

The State of Safety Report is more than a ledger of incidents, it is a blueprint for transformation. The RSR's mandate to oversee safety and collaborate with stakeholders provides a solid foundation, but real progress will require a unified effort from government, operators, communities and regulatory bodies.

### **Towards a safer tomorrow**

The 2023/24 State of Safety Report is a clarion call for change. South Africa's rail sector stands at a crossroads where decisions made today will echo into the future. The question that looms is not just how challenges will be tackled but how the industry will seize this moment to reimagine a safer, more inclusive rail network.

The journey to transforming these insights into actionable progress is long but the destination, a rail system that prioritises safety without compromise, is worth the effort.

For an in-depth look at the findings and the full report, visit [www.rsr.org.za](http://www.rsr.org.za).

**December 2023**

**BUSINESS DAY OPINION PIECE**

**South Africa's railway safety crisis: unveiling challenges, igniting change!**

In the intricate web of South Africa's transportation infrastructure, railways serve as a lifeline for economic progress and societal cohesion. However, the recent unveiling of the 2022/23 Annual State of Safety Report (ASoSR) by Deputy Minister of Transport, Mr. Lisa Mangcu, on behalf of the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), has cast a sobering light on the daunting challenges haunting our railway system. As the communications executive manager of the RSR, it is not only my responsibility but also a call to action to dissect these challenges while acknowledging the rays of hope that shimmer amidst this adversity.

The ASoSR unearths a stark reality, an alarming tally of 10,746 negative events during the reporting period. Within these figures lie troubling revelations: 1,833 operational occurrences and a staggering 8,643 security-related incidents, culminating in 92 fatalities and 175 injuries solely from operational mishaps. More strikingly, the report details 69 fatalities and 55 injuries resulting from individuals struck by trains, a haunting reminder of the pressing need for heightened safety measures.

The report unambiguously emphasises persistent issues like theft and vandalism, contributing significantly to the 79% of reported security-related incidents. These criminal acts not only impede operational efficiency but also pose severe risks to commuters and railway workers. These distressing statistics serve as a compelling call to action, demanding immediate, collective efforts to fortify security protocols and combat elements threatening the safety of our railways.

Amid these challenges, there exist beacons of resilience within our railway network. It is crucial to recognise the positive strides amidst adversity. For instance, the Gautrain stands as an exemplary model of safety standards, reflected in its A-grade assessment. This remarkable safety record underlines the nexus between infrastructure maintenance and passenger safety, setting a benchmark for emulation.

In a tumultuous year, Transnet and PRASA grappled with formidable challenges, a true litmus test of their fortitude and ingenuity. Transnet, amidst these trials, achieved a remarkable milestone, manoeuvring an average of 4,171 tonnes during the 2022/23 period; a significant ascent from the 3,982 tonnes recorded back in 2018/19. Their adept handling of longer, weightier trains, notorious for their heightened derailment risks, was coupled with a commendable reduction in operational incidents, dropping from 1,659 in 2021/22 to 1,539 in the fiscal year 2022/23.

Conversely, PRASA embarked on a relentless quest, exhausting its entire capital expenditure budget to reclaim corridors lost to the malevolent grasp of theft and vandalism. What ensued was nothing short of inspiring. Within the initial seven months of the 2023/24 year, PRASA not only surpassed but eclipsed the total passenger trips recorded in the entire 2022/23 financial year. This groundbreaking resurgence of urban commuter services heralds a promising dawn, poised not just to invigorate South Africa's economy but to profoundly impact the lives of its citizens.

These triumphs, amid the crucible of challenges, serve as an ode to the resolute spirit and innovative prowess of both Transnet and PRASA. Transnet's adeptness in managing augmented tonnage while curbing operational mishaps and PRASA's remarkable strides in reinvigorating commuter services stand testament to their unwavering commitment in surmounting adversities. Recognising and championing these endeavours are pivotal, for they lay the groundwork for a railway network that is not just robust but also agile; a vital catalyst for economic growth and an elevated standard of living for the people of South Africa.

The ASoSR findings underscore the need for a renewed commitment from allies within the industry to bolster collaborative efforts towards railway safety. As custodians of railway safety, the RSR is steadfast in nurturing a culture of safety, innovation and collaboration. While acknowledging progress made, we remain resolute in driving transformative change. Collaboration with operators, stakeholders and communities is pivotal to fortify security measures, mitigate operational risks and enhance safety protocols.

The path ahead mandates a collective ethos where vigilance, innovation and unwavering dedication converge to fortify the bedrock of our nation's progress, the railway system. The RSR, at the forefront of railway safety, urges a unified endeavour; a clarion call to safeguard lives, fortify infrastructure and pave the tracks for a safer, more prosperous future.

Comprehensive railway safety necessitates audacious steps, steadfast commitment and a shared vision. Let us embark on this collective journey, cognisant of challenges but propelled by collective determination. South Africa's railways ought to be more than just a mode of transportation, they must epitomise safety and progress for generations to come.

**November 2021**

## **Business Day Opinion Piece**

### **Cable theft: the destruction of rail**

Imagine it is 6 o' clock in the morning and a nurse is running across a platform to reach a train. Her eyes are bulging, and her heart is beating against her chest as she knows that if she misses this train, she will surely be reprimanded by her superiors as this would not have been the first time that she has been late for work. The train horn hoots, signalling to everyone that it is time to go. The nurse boards the train in the nick of time, and she sighs heavily, trying to catch her breath at the same time. As the train makes its way on the tracks, the lights go off and the train is engulfed in darkness. It stops and all you hear are groans and mumbles from the commuters. Seconds pass, then minutes, the next thing we know an hour has passed. The train is delayed because of cable theft. The nurse's worst nightmare has come to life. Not only does she get reprimanded by her superiors, but she is also dismissed; leaving her and her family destitute as she is the breadwinner of her family. To make matters worse, the thief who stole the copper cable and the middleman who facilitated the sale thereof will probably get away with just a slap on the wrist and the kingpins running the syndicate will remain unscathed.

This is in no way an uncommon story. Cable theft and vandalism of rail infrastructure are on the rise. During lockdown, criminals saw an opportunity to attack the rail infrastructure to make a quick buck as copper is among the most sought-after metals by thieves due to its availability and the fact that it can be sold easily. This unlawful act does not only inconvenience but places many people's lives in danger. More so, it has detrimental implications for the country's economy and railway transport's reliability.

Rail transport forms the pillar of our economy as one of the most cost-effective ways of travelling and moving goods. Millions of South Africans rely on rail to ensure that they not only travel safely, but that they travel between their destinations with the least cost. It is, therefore, disheartening to learn that an estimated R1 billion has been lost by the South African rail sector due to theft, vandalism and public disorder as reported by the Department of Transport. This is unacceptable as lives are affected in the most crippling way.

The RSR commissioned an independent security risk consulting firm to investigate the causes of the escalation of copper theft in the rail sector. The growing copper theft and the illicit industry that has sprung up around it are draining the South African economy and have a negative impact on electricity supply, transportation, communication, health services, productivity, and rail infrastructure. Furthermore, copper theft leads to a widespread lack of service delivery, which contributes to consumer frustration and distrust of government institutions. Although the threat posed by non-ferrous metal theft is serious in South Africa, it is treated with

indifference. One possible explanation for this apathy is that the criminal act of stealing copper is usually not accompanied by violence. The target of the crime is located far away from the majority of citizens. It is also sometimes, erroneously, termed as a "victimless crime". Experts believe that organised syndicates hire people to steal copper cables and other non-ferrous metals that are easily accessible, such as water meters, taps, and manhole covers. The second level consists of "bucket shops," which purchase stolen copper from runners and then sell it to dishonest metal dealers. The metal is then sold to metal recyclers, who ship it to countries like China and India.

Furthermore, the study cites that organised crime syndicates have thrived in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and impoverished states aided this unfortunate development. An unstable environment, unruliness, widespread internal conflict, political turmoil, and economic collapse is typical of a milieu in which criminal activity and organised crime flourish. Although the theft of non-ferrous metals, specifically copper and aluminium, has existed for many years, it has since 1993 escalated to unprecedented levels and annual losses run into billions of Rands. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is that post-liberation conflict citizenry is faced with several challenges, of which the most physically and conceptually challenging is poverty. The current economic conditions, COVID-19 pandemic and the recent unrests made a bad situation worse. In situations such as these, citizens often look for alternative sources for income. Crime is often regarded as a source of income and an unstable situation enhances the opportunity for organised crime syndicates to flourish. Poverty and greed often draw people into criminal gangs and transnational criminal organisations.

Despite all the measures put in place to combat copper theft; it continues unabated. Addressing this complex issue requires a multifarious approach that will pool the efforts of various stakeholders in the industry to turn the situation around.

In practice it will include strategic partnerships collaboration, integration, and leadership which will give rise to improvements in curbing crime in SA by the police force and advancements to the intelligence gathering agencies regarding organised crime syndicates. However, this is just the start. Firming up legislation to increase regulation of metal dealers is paramount in halting the operations of cable theft syndicates.

Liso Nobanda (2018:111) refers to this in his research and advocates for amendments to be made to the existing legislative framework. If the legislation, for instance, can include that the sellers of second-hand goods must first start by approaching the police and produce a document with full particulars of the seller that says the goods are not stolen, that would be a good start. The police should then give the seller a waiting period of at least five working days to verify the goods that are being sold. The RSR support this recommendation. In fact, a transposition of the legislative framework should be considered. The theft of copper cables on a rail track has dire consequences as it can lead to the loss of life when a train derails or collides with another train.







Given that cable theft may have such disastrous consequences in the rail sector, the act is not a victimless crime. The current legislation, the Criminal Matters Amendment Act, regulates bail and impose minimum sentences for essential infrastructure-related offences. This Act came into effect in 2018 and recommended sentencing for cable theft which include a minimum three-year sentence for first-time offenders and for those who are involved in instigating or causing damage to infrastructure, the maximum sentence is 30 years. Perpetrators found guilty of cable theft-related charges must face the might of the law if this scourge is to be eradicated.

Another scholar quoted in the report, William Pretorius (2012:176-184), propose that there should be a better understanding of the nature and modus operandi of copper theft. If the enemy is not known in all its facets, a war cannot be won. The research recommends that copper theft must be identified for what it is, namely a multi-faceted threat from all spheres of life in need of a multi-faceted approach. This approach should encapsulate a joint effort between legal and security (physical and technical integration), a dedicated law enforcement capacity under clear command and control utilising counter terrorism tactics and strategy.







All these recommendations go hand in hand with increased awareness in reporting incidents of cable theft. Communities play a critical role as they are the eyes and ears of law enforcement agencies. Therefore, the Regulator encourages communities through its education and awareness campaigns to report incidences of cable theft. By reporting cable theft, you are not only assisting the Regulator, but you also help to safeguard commuters and workers in the railway industry.

Rail is and will always be the heartbeat of our economy. Let's keep it alive by playing our part. Report cable theft.

# Facebook

Post	Date	Engagements	Reactions	Comments	Shares	Post Link Clicks	Other Post Clicks
 <b>Railway Safety R...</b> Wed 5/3/2025 16:22 CAT It's always better to wait a few extra seconds than risk your life by rushing and falling. Sta... 	Wed 5/3/2025 16:22 CAT	6,334	3,637	26	38	—	2,633
 <b>Railway Safety R...</b> Wed 15/1/2025 10:27 CAT Back to school means more kids on the move! Always stay safe near railways... 	Wed 15/1/2025 10:27 CAT	2,764	776	67	26	4	1,891
 <b>Railway Safety R...</b> Thu 16/1/2025 8:30 CAT Back to School: Educating Our Children on Railway Safety Raising awareness about the... 	Thu 16/1/2025 8:30 CAT	2,638	1,754	12	30	—	842

# LinkedIn

Post	Date	Engagements	Reactions	Comments	Shares
 <b>RAILWAY SAFET...</b> Thu 5/2/2026 18:50 CAT Improving safety and efficiency in rail Today, the Railway Safety... 	Thu 5/2/2026 18:50 CAT	2,744	160	3	2
 <b>RAILWAY SAFET...</b> Fri 1/8/2025 9:59 CAT Exciting Leadership Announcement! It is with great pleasure that ... 	Fri 1/8/2025 9:59 CAT	2,354	696	201	14
 <b>RAILWAY SAFET...</b> Fri 30/1/2026 17:37 CAT Today, the RSR CEO Mr. Brian Monakali delivered a keynote address at the Annual Railway... 	Fri 30/1/2026 17:37 CAT	1,548	209	1	8



# Why Strategic Communication Matters

In today's environment, organisations operate in spaces that are complex, fast-moving and highly visible. Communication is no longer just about sharing information, it is about shaping perception, managing reputation and building trust.

**My experience has shown me that effective communication sits at the intersection of:**

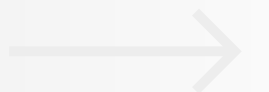
- Insight
- Strategy
- Execution

Without structure, communication becomes noise. Without clarity, it loses impact.

**I am particularly interested in how communication supports:**

- Organisational positioning
- Stakeholder alignment
- Public understanding of complex issues

This is why I focus on communication that is not only well-written, but well-considered, communication that has a clear purpose and measurable value.





**Let's Work  
Together!**