

How Smile 90.4FM uses the power of radio to make a positive difference

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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To end off its recent Winter Wish programme, the [Smile 90.4FM](#) team, including Smile Breakfast Show presenters Bobby Brown and Lindy Hibbard, went to meet with the children of The Learning Vine Tutor Centre in Table View, Cape Town, delivering boxes of stationery and toys to the value of R10,000. The school, a facility for learners from Grade R to 12 with learning, behavioural and other social issues, has been struggling with funding and having to face the possibility of closing its doors.



Learning Vine Tutor Centre students

The Winter Wish programme is just one of the many initiatives the station runs throughout the year in order to make a positive difference in the lives of Cape Town's more vulnerable communities. We interviewed Lois O'Brien, managing director of Smile 90.4FM, to find out how the station goes about engaging its listeners in its CSR activities, what she believes makes for a successful CSR campaign, and how Smile 90.4FM ensures its initiatives make a sustainable difference.

■ ***How does Smile 90.4FM go about engaging its listeners in its CSR activities?***

Lois O'Brien: We engage with our listeners through our airwaves, website and social media platforms. We outline the need, how we believe our listeners can assist us in making a difference in the project, and what the desired outcome will be.

■ ***Many of Smile 90.4FM's CSR campaigns have successful outcomes e.g. the Winter Wish programme and Breakfast for Beds campaign - why do you think this is? What, in your opinion, makes for a successful CSR campaign?***

O'Brien: We are blessed with the most engaging and generous listeners who wholly buy into our ethos of "putting smiles on people's faces". They are as passionate about making a difference as we are, and assist and engage with us wherever possible to do so. Furthermore, our listeners completely trust that our 'Smile in Action' or community projects are genuine and authentic.



Smile 90.4FM Breakfast Show presenters Bobby Brown and Lindy Hubbard with Learning Vine Tutor Centre students

■ ***In a city like Cape Town, there are many areas in which a company could invest its CSI spend. In its CSI strategy, what areas are made a priority for Smile 90.4FM?***

O'Brien: We love the concept of service at Smile 90.4FM - anything we can do in the spirit of service to uplift and empower the people of Cape Town. We do not have a specific focus on any one area, but rather look at where we believe we can make a difference in the lives of communities.

■ ***Through its CSR campaigns, how does Smile 90.4FM ensure it makes a sustainable difference?***

O'Brien: Our campaigns are built around a needs analysis, and the goals for each campaign are aimed at making a real difference. We also call on the community to help us in working together to assist those in need. We use the power of radio and the generosity of our fellow Capetonians to make a positive impact on as many lives as possible.

■ ***How important is it to align your CSR strategy with the brand and what are the benefits of doing so?***

O'Brien: Smile 90.4FM is a purpose-driven brand. We don't have a specific CSR strategy in place, but we are committed to promoting acts of love and kindness that make a difference in the lives of our listeners. Our presenters have the power to make people feel good and to lift spirits by amplifying the good news in the Mother City. Any 'Smile in Action' or community projects that we have in place naturally tie in with sharing the good news.

■ ***What is Smile 90.4FM doing for Mandela Day this year?***

O'Brien: Smile 90.4FM is sending out 67 buskers to play 67 minutes of music in honour of Madiba at 67 locations around Cape Town in a Making Music for Madiba event on Tuesday, 18 July - the city's first mass busking event. Young and old, amateur and pro, famous and obscure, they are taking to the streets at 12pm on Mandela Day, and will even include some of Cape Town's most loved bands, such as Majosi and Michael Lowman.



Making Music for Madiba

All proceeds raised by the buskers will be donated to a city music development programme that will enable children from under-resourced communities to access music tuition and musical instruments. For those wanting to catch the Making Music for Madiba magic live, each participating busker can be identified by a Smile 90.4FM poster and bucket for collecting loose change. Buskers can be found in many areas across Cape Town, such as the Waterfront, Gardens Centre, Howard Centre in Pinelands, Cape Gate, Burgundy Square in Milnerton, Observatory Hall Island, Ottery Hypermarket, Long Tree Café in Bergvliet, Farm Village in Noordhoek, Fish Hoek Main, Jan Marais Park in Stellenbosch, and more.

■ ***What is the greatest challenge for SA at present, and how can we harness the power of Mandela Day to address this challenge?***

O'Brien: The greatest challenge is the divide, and anger, amongst race and income groups across South Africa, as well as the lack of delivery (and the accompanying expectation gaps). Mandela Day serves as a start to bring people together to promote peace, reconciliation and cultural diversity, to make the world a better place. It is a day where we can look back on what has been done, and through respect for our fellow humans, plan the way forward.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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