

Standing the test of time... already

 By [Andy Rice](#)

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LeadSA has just celebrated its first birthday, and so one might be forgiven for expecting it still to be finding its feet. But, even with just a solitary candle on its birthday cake, LeadSA is no helplessly dependent infant; far from it, LeadSA's report card after just 12 months boasts an impressive, and well-documented, raft of achievements which the media have been only too happy to publicise.

But does all this conspicuous and noisy activity mean that LeadSA has acquired the status of a true brand, as opposed to an embryonic vehicle for promoting an array of good deeds?

The truth is that LeadSA not only meets the essential characteristic of all strong brands - that they make and keep their promises - but it also displays many of the attributes of the most evolved and progressive of contemporary brands.

In no particular order of importance, consider the following aspects of the LeadSA brand:

- **Versatility**

Modern brands can't afford to be completely dependent on a narrow and single-issue offering, and so they mitigate this risk by broadening the categories they play in.

From potholes to rhinos, and from crimelines to bills of responsibilities, no one can accuse LeadSA of not having breadth of vision!

- **Small things matter**

Brands are defined by every aspect of their behaviour, no matter how apparently insignificant.

This is a lesson that LeadSA has taught South Africans - that we can all make a difference, and that every little action counts.

- **We all own the brand**

Today's marketing professionals understand the blunt truth that control of their brands has moved out of their hands, as consumers become more empowered, and as their voices reach millions through social media.

Primedia Broadcasting and the Independent Newspaper Group may be the nominal parents of LeadSA, but the future direction of the brand lies with the South African public.

- **Displaying citizenship**

Brands used to be simply about commercial transactions, and thus their influence was confined to the business categories they operated within. In the 21st century, brands are expected to play a role in people's lives, and not just their consumption habits.

By addressing and uplifting society, LeadSA has shown itself to be in the vanguard of the growing trend towards being true brand citizens.

Across the world, societies are grappling with the challenge of defining where government responsibility ends, and where active individual citizenship begins. In the UK, it has become a central plank of the coalition government, with prime minister David Cameron calling for his vision of "big society" (and its automatic corollary, "small government") to become a reality through the private sector taking responsibility for delivering solutions to social needs that government cannot alone resolve.

In South Africa, thanks to branded initiatives such as LeadSA, it seems that we are some several steps ahead of our supposedly pioneering counterparts in Europe.

Happy birthday, LeadSA! If you can achieve this much in just 12 months, then just imagine what will have been done by the time you reach true adulthood!

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