

Beneath the campaigns: Mental Health Struggles in Zim's Marketing Industry

In the heart of Harare's bustling corporate landscape, Rudo, a 32-year-old Marketing Manager at a leading FMCG company, seemed to have it all, back-to-back awards, viral campaigns, and a growing team under her leadership. But behind the confident smile and impeccable presentations was a woman battling chronic anxiety, burnout, and deep emotional exhaustion.

"Every Monday felt like I was preparing for war," Rudo recounts. "Deadlines were insane, expectations unrealistic, and working weekends became the norm. I once had a panic attack during a client pitch but powered through because failure was not an option."

Rudo's experience is not isolated.

Zimbabwe's marketing industry, known for its high-pressure environment, creative demands, and client-driven culture, is silently breeding a mental health crisis. Professionals are burning out at alarming rates, often masking emotional distress with energy drinks, long hours, and a relentless hustle culture.

The Cost of Creativity



Ntombizanele Mangumba

Marketing, by nature, is a high-stakes field. Campaigns must deliver results. Budgets are tight. Clients demand 24/7 responsiveness. Add the economic instability, power outages, and digital transformation pressures in Zimbabwe, and the result is an industry teetering on the edge.

Tendai, a seasoned marketing consultant, says, "We don't talk enough about the mental toll this job takes. We glorify

'hustle' but ignore that people are drowning silently. There's a cost to creativity when you never rest."

A Culture of Silence

The stigma surrounding mental health in Zimbabwe remains a formidable barrier. In marketing circles, vulnerability is often seen as weakness. Professionals fear that speaking up about mental struggles may cost them promotions or key accounts.

"There's a toxic belief that stress equals success," shares Rutendo, a digital marketing specialist. "You're expected to be always available. When I asked for mental health days, I was told, 'You can rest after the campaign.'"

Paving a Healthier Path

However, the tide may be turning. A few progressive agencies in Harare are now introducing wellness policies, employee assistance programs, and mental health workshops. A Communications Agency, recently hired a Wellness Officer and they run monthly mental health check-ins. Its CEO, Tapiwa, believes the future of marketing depends on mentally fit

teams. "You can't sell hope to clients when your staff is struggling in silence. We've seen creativity flourish when people feel safe and supported."

What Can Be Done?

Experts recommend a multi-pronged approach:

- **Policy Integration:** Embed mental health in HR policies—include mental health days, access to counsellors, and wellness leave.
- **Leadership Training:** Equip managers to recognise and respond to burnout and emotional distress.
- **Workplace Culture Shift:** Move away from the 'always-on' expectation and promote boundaries.
- **Regular Mental Health Campaigns:** Use the industry's creativity to normalise conversations around mental health.

For Rudo, her breaking point became her turning point. After collapsing at work, she took a month-long sabbatical, began therapy, and now advocates for mental health within her new agency.

"I've learned that taking care of your mind is not a luxury - it's survival. No campaign is worth your peace."

Must commuting feel like a daily brush with death?



By Valerie Moosa,

Each day, I join countless others trying to eke out a living. I wake up, get ready, and stand by the roadside waiting for transport, usually a kombi or, where available, a mushikashika, and we are left at the mercy of these public transporters. Lately, though, mushikashikas have become fewer. Sadly, boarding a kombi these days feels like stepping into a war zone. Just this past Friday, I narrowly avoided serious injury when a hwindi slammed the

door shut before my foot had cleared the way. Why? Because they were trying to speed off before being pounced on by the police or municipal officers. The scramble to escape arrest is now a dangerous daily ritual, and passengers are caught in the crossfire. Earlier this week, in another kombi, the driver swerved slightly into the oncoming lane to avoid a parked vehicle. Plainclothes police officers immediately stopped the kombi and began manhandling the driver. He tried to explain, but they were not interested.

In the process, they broke the ignition key, and once they realized their mistake, they simply fled the scene, leaving a stranded vehicle and frustrated passengers in the middle of the road. We had to walk the rest of the way into town. These are not isolated incidents. They reflect a chaotic system where public transport operators and law enforcement are locked in constant confrontation, with the commuting public suffering the consequences. We are not asking for luxuries. All we want is to get to work safely and with dignity. Is that really too much to ask? Authorities must stop treating commuters like collateral damage in their attempts to regulate transport. It is entirely possible to enforce laws and maintain order without endangering lives or humiliating drivers. People are already under immense stress from economic hardship; commuting shouldn't add fear, injury, or helplessness to the list. We deserve a public transport system that works for everyone.

Renowned Madagascar Scientist, Explorer and Mentor Named Winner of World's Leading Animal Conservation Award

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Through his work, René de Roland has also helped to shape the next generation of Malagasy conservationists. His legacy extends to more than 100 students at local Madagascar universities, with his mentees earning 90 master's degrees and 16 doctoral degrees. "The Peregrine Fund is tremendously proud of Lily, whose commitment to science, conservation and his community inspires us all," said Chris N. Parish, President and CEO of The Peregrine Fund. "We are beyond excited that the Indianapolis Prize is recognizing him for his research, mentorship and decades of work in the conservation profession." René de Roland earned his master's degree, doctoral degree and professorship at the University of Antananarivo in Mada-

gascar. He joined The Peregrine Fund as a student in 1992 to study Madagascar's imperiled raptors. Established by the Indianapolis Zoo in 2004, the Indianapolis Prize recognizes and rewards the world's preeminent animal conservationists who have achieved major victories in advancing the sustainability of an animal species or group of species. Winners receive \$250,000, which is the largest individual monetary award given in the animal conservation field. René de Roland, the 2025 Indianapolis Prize DeHaan Finalists and the 2025 Indianapolis Prize Emerging Conservationist Award Winner will be celebrated at the Indianapolis Prize Gala on Sept. 27, 2025, presented by Cummins Inc., in downtown Indianapolis. SOURCE: www.prnewswire.com