

A tribute to an astute business executive

The news of the passing of Mr Aaron Maleke came as a devastating blow to me. We met in the late 90s through a common acquaintance in the Pretoria CBD. From that moment onwards, I knew Aaron Maleke was an astute businessperson. The three of us were supposed to create a weekly newspaper distributed to all the townships around Pretoria. I was based in Temba, Mr Maleke in Stinkwater, Hammanskraal. We owned different business ventures. Mr Maleke published calendars, desk pads, and other office paraphernalia. However, the newspaper project would not come to fruition. We differed sharply on work ethics and we split. Years later, I met Mr Maleke in Mafikeng running a newspaper, Mmegadikgang. As stated above, he was a shrewd businessperson and not a journalist. Hence, his publication is more successful, than all the Black-owned publications in the North West Province. I know his competitors around Mafikeng envy his publication's success. Mmegadikgang carried more advertisements than the newspapers circulated within Mafikeng. Maleke is a distribution strategist. His publication is widely distributed on the streets of Mafikeng, rivalling Mafikeng Mail. Aware of his shortcomings as a newspaperman, he solicited my services as a consulting editor for his newspaper. Having forgotten what had happened in the past, I agreed to offer my services. Again, we were at loggerheads because of work ethics. Maybe we were tight together because we were hometown boys. Maleke never stopped dreaming about his publishing business. He was eager to produce annual reports for government departments. Late last year, we worked on a blueprint to expand his distribution footprint and increase his circulation. We also worked on a business plan aimed at re-aligning his operations. And now all of his dreams are like a mirage.

This life is just but a passing spark. Death creeps into our lives at least expected moments and robs us of friends and colleagues. You have run your race in the publishing sector, Bro, let the others learn and follow your footprints.