

**THE COMMS AVENUE
CHAT WITH A COMMS PROFESSIONAL**

The Comms
Avenue

HIGHLIGHTS FROM MONALI SHAH'S SESSION

My journey has been quite non-linear. Straight out of high school, I started as a DJ in the night and a sales person at a CD store during the day.

As I started in University, I began to indulge in the Music, Entertainment and Events industry part time in the same company I was a DJ at.

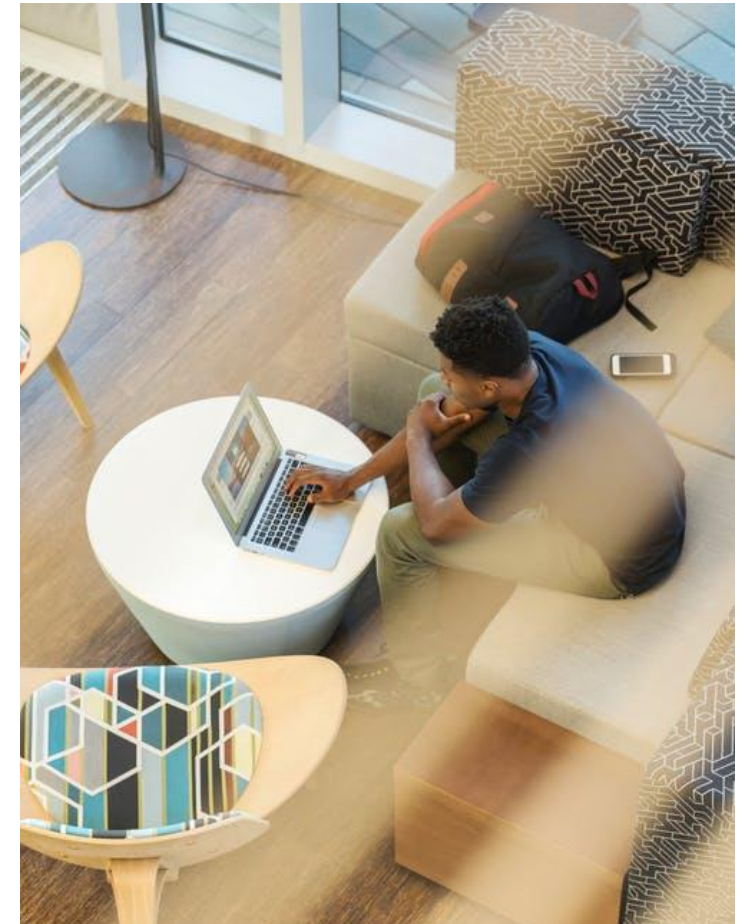
I moved fully into Music, Entertainment and Experiences Industry. With a full IMC lens, I did stints at agencies and companies such as Viacom. From there, I moved to Ogilvy and Coca-Cola where my Marketing Communications career as it's traditionally known began.



GOALS

I didn't really have a career goal. All I knew was that in the long run, I wanted to thrive in whatever I did, I wanted to be happy and I wanted to make a positive impact. I didn't want my time at work to feel painful. These are the things that helped me to achieve this:

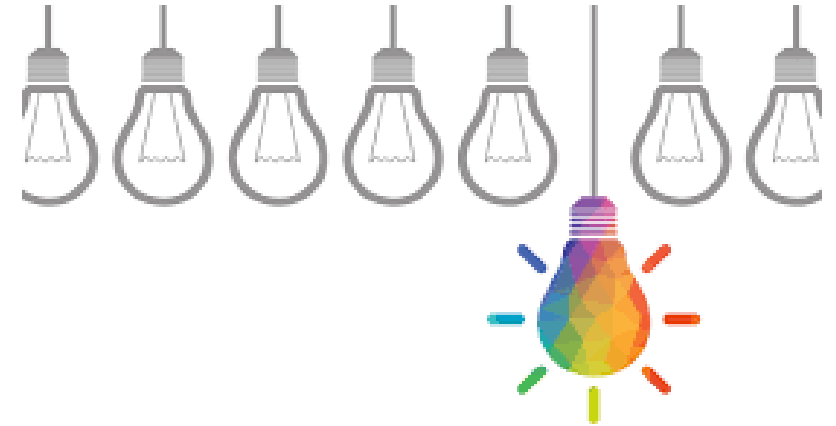
- 1. Love & Passion.** In my perspective, this is the single most important thing. If you don't love what you do, it will always feel like a 'job'.
- 2. Hard work.** There is no substitute for working hard. Even the smartest people in the world work very hard and when you love what you do, it doesn't feel like hard work.
- 3. Being open to new and different experiences.** If someone offers you an opportunity that may seem slightly out of the journey you thought you would be on, don't be afraid to say yes, as they may have seen something in you that you didn't even know you had. Having a breath of experiences is an advantage in today's world.
- 4. Be humble to learn more all the time.**



DEVELOPING CREATIVE CAMPAIGNS FOR A GLOBAL BRAND

These is my checklist for developing creative campaigns for a global brand:

1. Having a scientific approach to being creative by identifying the key problem to solve.
2. Trying to be simple as possible. Sometimes we mistake creativity for complexity and originality. What is the one key message you want consumers to take out and how will you communicate it in a way that is enticing enough?
3. Ensuring there is a big idea. After remembering the second point above, can the idea thrive across multiple touch points? Can it survive for a few years to come?



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4. Creating value. With the plethora of communications and messages that consumers are receiving in today's world, what is the value that our campaign is creating for them? Without this, we will just be interrupting their lives.
5. Relevance through an 'outside in' focus by tapping into the minds & hearts of consumers we are designing for. If you can't afford formal research, it is ok. There are so many consumers around us, whether it is people who work with us, families or friends.
6. Being courageous, being able to take a bold stance and make a bold statement. Being a leader brand, it's your responsibility to lead and sometimes say or do something that everyone may not agree with.



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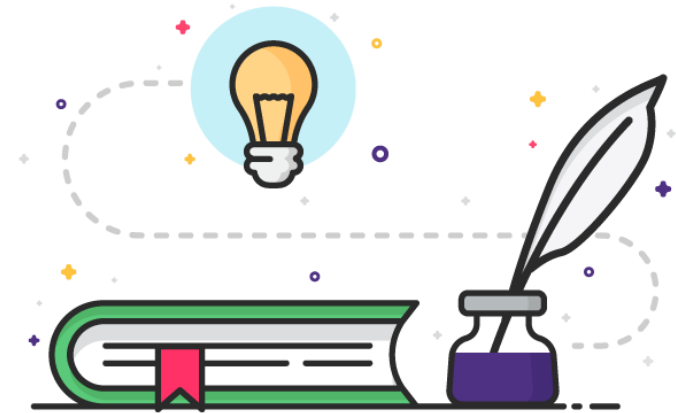
For agencies, this is my checklist:

1. Ensuring there is a big idea that sells. David Ogilvy famously said, “If it doesn’t sell, it isn’t creative”.
2. Doing your home work. Know the product, the brand that you are creating this communications for. Some of the best campaigns I have been part of have come from working with creatives and teams who took time to research, to understand the product and its uniqueness.



WHAT INSPIRES MY CREATIVITY

1. Being curious. I research and read anything that I'm curious about, and anything that I'm working on. I also try to listen through multiple conversations. It helps me to feed my unconscious brain during the times when I let my mind wander.
2. Keeping the child in me alive. Weren't we all creative in some way when we were children?
3. Doing nothing, letting my mind wander and having time to think by spending time alone.

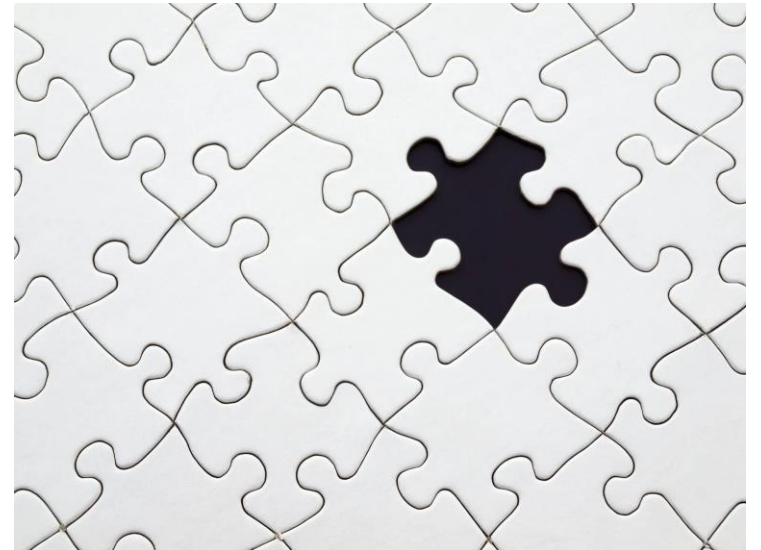


HANDLING DIFFICULT CAMPAIGNS

I've definitely worked on a campaign that didn't measure up to expectation.

One of the key principles is listening and monitoring as you launch a campaign and being open. Be prepared to tweak and change as you go. Sometimes it's not possible to do this but it is possible to take learnings for the future – failing forward.

I was part of a campaign that was launched whereby the TV didn't perform as well as we had thought but the same content on digital performed outstandingly well. Applying the formula I listed above, we continued to make the changes to the campaign by listening to ensure we got as close as we could to the business results desired and whatever learnings we couldn't apply immediately, we banked it for the future. Content for TV and Online audiences cannot be treated in the same way.



SKILLS

The most important skills a Communications professional needs to thrive in this season is to be empathetic.

Most times, the formula remains the same. It's the information, the insights and the execution that differs.

With regards to Marketing Communication POV, what is the unique selling point of the product? Why would a consumer want to switch from what they already use?

Identifying the USP and then determining how to communicate it makes the difference most times.

