

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



**The  
Comms  
Avenue**

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM O'TEGA OGRA'S SESSION

Choosing a career in communications for me was almost a natural progression. I have always had an interest in public affairs, communications and marketing, even as a kid and I'd bury myself in journals, magazines, books, comics and news stories.

That, coupled with putting myself up for roles where I could shape perception of organisations I belonged to whilst in secondary school and in my university days, put me in line for some communications/marketing related roles.



# THINGS I WISH I KNEW WHEN I STARTED MY CAREER

One thing I wish I knew when I started my career is to never let wrong assumptions fly in the face of irrefutable data when carrying out communications projects. Earlier in my career, it was easy to let things fly just because you wanted traction on a project. That was always the wrong approach and it led to wastages.

I'm happy I was able to adjust quickly enough and pursue a data-led approach that has worked and still works exceptionally well till date. Everything else has been a positive milestone in getting me to where I am and in making me who I've become.



# POSITIONING MYSELF

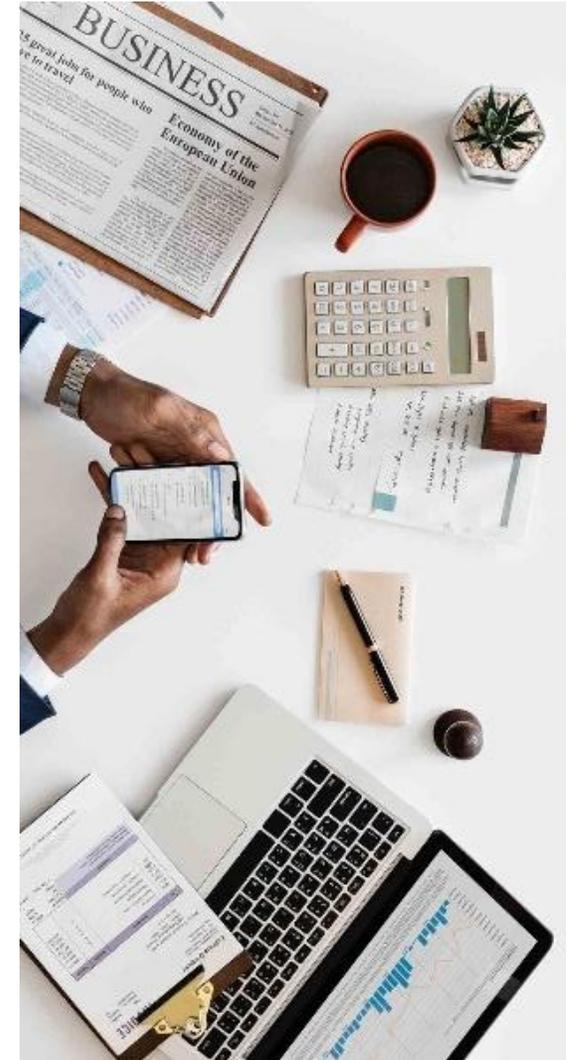
There is no single path to a successful career in communications. However, there are a few things which can position you and help your journey;

1. Understand the basics of the field - not just on the surface, but in fine detail.
2. Actively seek out opportunities to put your knowledge to work.
3. Never be afraid to have an opinion, as long as it is based on a clear understanding of your business, field and data.
4. An understanding of data and research, in addition to constantly challenging your own ideas, will give you new perspectives.



# POSITIONING MYSELF

5. Always keep learning, unlearning and relearning.
6. Do good work, whether it feels comfortable or not; whether anyone is looking or not. Just do it.
7. Seek out collaborators within your space and outside your space. There is more to learn and achieve that way and it builds your competence across various fields. This is one thing that separates some of the most successful professionals from others.
8. Be stubborn about achieving your goals and have no shame about it. Work harder than anyone else and let your results speak. Communications is a way of life. The more knowledge you have, the more competence you can show and the more opportunities you will be exposed to.



# POSITIONING MYSELF

9. Never underestimate the importance of goodwill amongst key stakeholders. Build genuine friendships with the media.

10. There is this thinking that communications professionals are like 'reporters'. You are given a finished work and told to create a plan or 'just syndicate'. I chose to do away with that early on in my career. I was involved in entire projects or processes right from the conceptual stages. In fact, I didn't work on projects or activities that I hadn't been involved enough to build an integrated communications solution.

Communications is a management function. We aren't just a cost-centred function.



# WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FEEL OVERWHELMED

Seek solitude. Have fun even while you work extremely hard.

Take breaks. The better you are in this field, the more in demand you'll be and the less time you will have on your hands because you will be relied upon.

Being properly invested in communications gives you that 360 degree vision that very few functions have asides the CEO, COO and maybe Business Development. This is why you see a lot of excellent communications professionals complaining that there's always a lot on their plates even when it seems like little is going on.

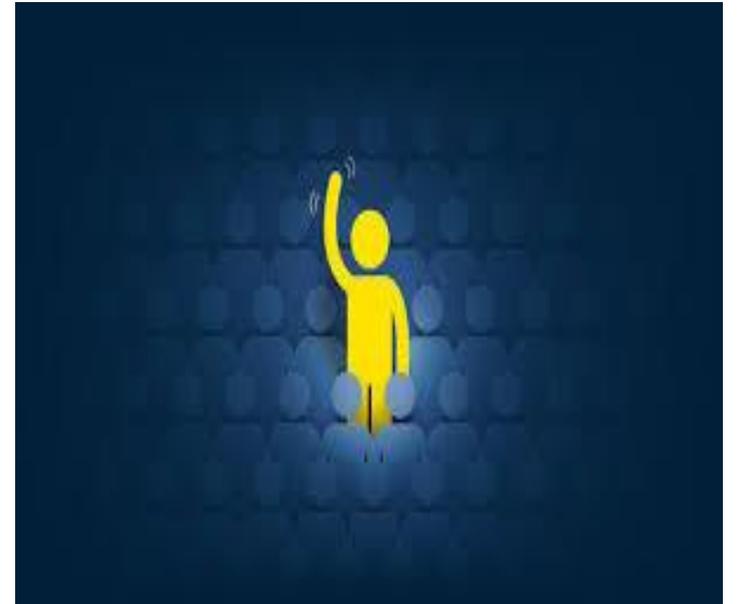
Depending on how you approach your work, it may become overwhelming at some point as you juggle strategy, diplomacy, doing the actual work, learning new concepts, selling your ideas, and monitoring all together.

Once you attain mastery and get your team to tie into your vision, it becomes easier.



# WHAT COMMS PROFESSIONALS CAN DO TO REMAIN AT THE TOP OF THEIR CAREER

- ❖ Focus on credibility and integrity before anything else. Be known for something and stand for it. There will always be newer, younger, more creative persons in this field.
- ❖ Form deep roots (relationships) and have the capacity to learn, unlearn and relearn.
- ❖ Have a deep understanding of your job, business and industry.
- ❖ You must be deeply rooted in all facets of communications.
- ❖ Build your capacity and fight for your seat at the table.
- ❖ Value does not hide. It's like a firefly on a dark, starless night.



# WHAT COMMS PROFESSIONAL CAN DO TO REMAIN AT THE TOP OF THEIR CAREER

Now more than ever, our industry is changing. How well positioned are you to add value? Are you waiting for your organization to do something or you are already working with various business units to see how communications can help move the business forward.

An older industry professional once said to me that we will only be as good as the value we are deemed to add.

Build mutually beneficial relationships that are based on:

1. Shared values.
2. Mutual objectives/interests.
3. Passion and dedication to their craft.

