

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



The
Comms
Avenue

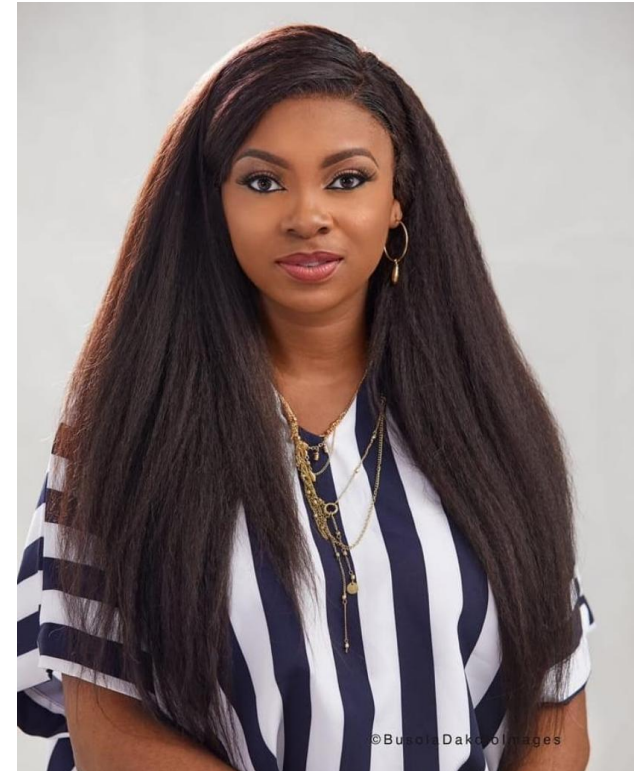
HIGHLIGHTS FROM SOLA OBAGBEMI'S SESSION

My PR journey started when I made it to the Merit List in Obafemi Awolowo University to study Dramatic Arts.

I knew Dramatic Arts was not what I wanted to do practice professionally, so I started looking for things that I'll be excited about and I began to read and research. That is how I found Public Relations. I also discovered the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) and I applied to write the certification exam.

I was certified before I finished my degree in Dramatic Arts degree. When I graduated, I decided to do my Masters in Communications. I majored in Public Relations and Advertising but I focused on PR as my career path.

Finding a career path early helped me. When you discover the career path you want to pursue, I encourage you to go for it.



MY BREAKOUT: HOW I GOT MY FOOT IN THE DOOR

My journey began when I interned with Ken Egbas. I worked with his company for a few years and I learnt a lot. It was a transformational beginning for me.

From there, I moved to CenterSpread where I learnt more about advertising. During one of the strikes in University, a friend introduced me to Red Media after I told her about my love for PR. I joined as a Communications Assistant and when the strike ended four months later, I didn't want to go back to school because I thoroughly enjoyed the job.

Even though I had what looked like a lucrative offer, I stayed with Red Media because of the experience I wanted to gain.



NAVIGATING YOUR WAY TO THE TOP

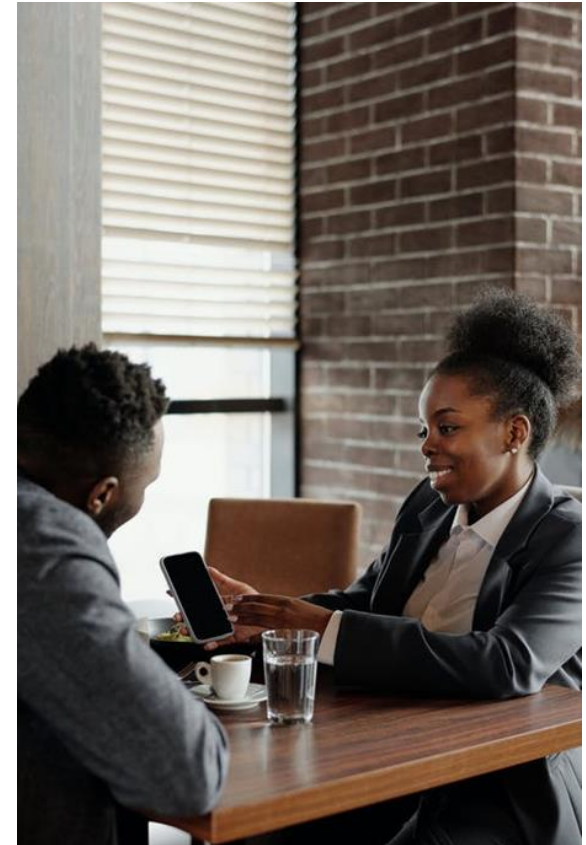
As a communications professional, you need to know what field you want to major in and the kind of story you want to tell.

You also need to make sure that you have passion for storytelling and you must have good writing skills.

If PR is really what you want to do, then you must invest in it and get quality experience. Make the most of every opportunity that comes your way at every stage.

Once you know your career path, the next step is to map out your way to the top and how you can get there. If you don't map it out, people will pull you in different directions.

It is great to have some agency experience because it will help you to build foundational knowledge and a strong network you can leverage on in future.



NAVIGATING YOUR WAY TO THE TOP

Don't be too focused on titles. I left Red Media as the Deputy Chief Operating Officer to take up a Communications Manager role. It looked like a demotion but you will get to a stage where you don't even need titles.

If you know you're moving to a new role to do new things and impact the brand in a way nobody has, you don't need to worry about titles. Just do the work.

Take up roles that you know will help you to grow in your career. Don't get distracted by roles that don't align with the goal you have mapped out.

As you climb the ladder of your career, ensure that you are constantly learning and building relationships.



BEING A VALUABLE PROFESSIONAL

You need to have the value people want. This means that you need to learn everything that you need to know in this field; media monitoring, research, content creation, campaign storyboard and so on.

When it comes to money, I believe there is money in this field. Don't be driven solely by money because you will eventually make the money.

Do amazing work instead, keep learning, hold on to everything you learn and hone your negotiating power.



BEING A VALUABLE PROFESSIONAL

The fact that I was driven helped me. This drive fuelled my thirst for knowledge.

Ensure that you map out the things you need to learn. Focus on learning things that will give you the weight you desire in the field. This may require getting a professional certification, for example. I advise every communications professional in Nigeria to have NIPR.

You must also ensure that you know where you are going to and equip yourself so that when you look at your profile, you can give yourself kudos.

Look out for opportunities in the communications industry where you can volunteer and add value.



LESSONS FROM MY CAREER

Working in an agency, the toughest thing wasn't pitching an account but selling an idea to a client which would be ignored and would eventually lead to crisis. The way I handled it was to develop a good relationship with my clients and engage with them in settings that were not formal.

As a comms person, it is very easy to have a seat on the table. If at the end of the day, you can add value, then your seat at the table will be secure.

Life is too short to work with a brand you do not believe in. You need to work with a brand that you love. If I'm not driven by the mission, I can't work with that brand.

