



The
Comms
Avenue

TRANSITIONING TO COMMS A GUIDE

Introduction

Communications is an exciting field to work in, especially for those who are creative and understand the power of shaping narratives. However, a lot goes into having a successful career in Communications.

Beyond how glamorous a career in Communications may look like, Communications professionals actually do hard work!

This is important information to have if you want to transition into this field.



Whatever the reason behind your transition may be, this is a bold step that should be carefully thought through and planned for.

If you are thinking of making that switch or starting your professional journey in Communications, we have created this guide specially for you.

We hope that the content of this guide will prevent you from feeling lost or overwhelmed as you navigate through the early stages of your career as a Communications professional.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE TRANSITION

- ✓ **Do your research.**
- ✓ **Learn the art of storytelling.**
- ✓ **Develop your writing skills.**
- ✓ **Be open to receiving feedback.**
- ✓ **Be willing to adapt.**
- ✓ **Build your portfolio.**
- ✓ **Develop your personal brand.**

The Communications industry is one that makes room for professionals from different academic backgrounds to thrive. To transition into this industry, this is what you need to know:

01 Do Your Research

To successfully transition into Communications, you must do your research. Communications has several functions and areas of specialization. You need to know what these are. You also need to know what's trending in the industry. Who are the thought leaders? What is the measure of success within the industry?

Belonging to a professional community like [The Comms Avenue](#) where you can interact with and learn from other professionals can give you access to the important information you need about the industry.

03 Develop Your Writing Skills

Writing is an indispensable skill that you will need at different levels of your career as a Communications professional. Writing in this case is more than just stringing words together. You will have to create content that aligns with the objectives of your organisation.

There are different forms of written content that you'll be required to prepare, and you should be familiar with them. To develop your writing skills, you can take [writing courses](#) which will give you room to practice. Also, read different types of written content to improve how you write.

02 Learn the Art of Storytelling

Storytelling is the art of gaining your audience's attention with stories and words that they can connect with emotionally and encourages them to take the desired action that will lead to behaviour change or increased awareness.

If you don't know how to tell good stories, you need to learn how to do so. It has been said that storytelling is one of the superpowers of a communications professional and we agree!



04 Be Open to Receiving Feedback

Coming into the Communications industry, you'll need to be ready to handle feedback and criticism the right way. In fact, as you make your transition, seek for feedback that'll help you to identify the things you need to work on.

Have an open mind and be willing to make corrections where necessary. This is because no matter how good you think you are, there is always room for improvement.

05 Be Willing to Adapt

When you work in Communications, sometimes you will discover that roles and job descriptions can easily become blurred. It is, therefore, not strange to find yourself carrying out tasks that are outside your initial scope of work.

The unexpected also happens on the job. An example is in the case of a crisis. This is why you must be willing to adapt quickly. Learning to ask the right questions to gain clarity and conducting research will help you a lot.

06 Build Your Portfolio

Having a portfolio will help you to showcase the things you have done in the past. It will also serve as proof that you can add value to the organisation or client you are trying to work with.

Work you have done as a freelancer or a volunteer should be included in your portfolio.

Your portfolio is an important tool. Spend some time working on yours. You can use this template [here](#).

07 Develop Your Personal Brand

You must be intentional about how you want to be perceived by potential employers and clients. A good place to start is to clean up your social media accounts. Make sure your social media pages communicate what you want to be known for.

LinkedIn is an important platform to pay attention to here. Ensure that your profile is properly optimised and be strategic about sharing content that showcases the value you can bring to the table.

PLANNING YOUR TRANSITION

- ✓ **Do a skills audit.**
- ✓ **Know the core competencies.**
- ✓ **Identify existing skill gaps.**
- ✓ **Make a plan to close the gaps.**
- ✓ **Work on your entry strategy.**
- ✓ **Shoot your shot!**

1. Do a Skills Audit

What skills do you currently have that will be beneficial for you as you make the transition?

Carry out an audit of the transferrable skills that you have which you can leverage on. For example, if you have good writing skills, you'd be able to deploy it in your Communications career.

To do the audit, start by looking at the work you've done so far:

- What skills have you gained?
- What are you good at?
- What aren't you good at?



It is important to identify and document your strengths and the areas you may need to brush up on.

2. Know the Core Competencies

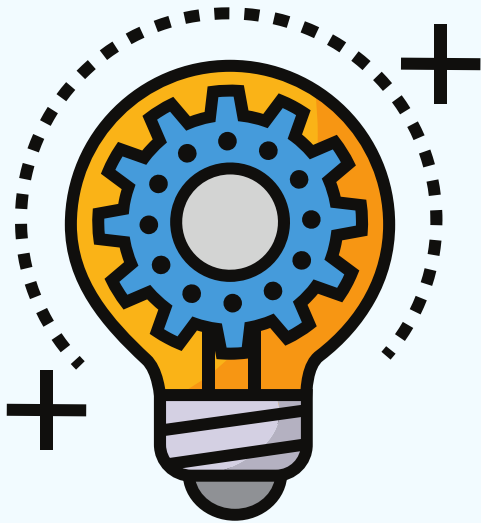
After you do the skills audit, the next step is to know the core competencies that are required for a Communications role.

One way to do this is to go on Google, search for different Communications roles and read through the results.

Another way is to go on LinkedIn and look through the profiles of professionals who currently work in Communications. Check out their career trajectories, and the things listed under the role(s) they've occupied. Make a list of their responsibilities.

Finally, check out the job section on LinkedIn and search for Communications roles. Take note of the skills and requirements stated in the job description section.

3. Identify Existing Skill Gaps



After comparing the list from the first two steps, you'd notice some similarities and a number of differences.

For example, you may realise that you know nothing about strategy creation or social media management even though you have great writing skills.

What this means is that you'll need to gain knowledge about strategy creation.

It is important to do this step because it will let you know the skills you need to hone and the areas you need to develop. You don't want to be blindsided by skills you don't yet have.

4. Make a Plan to Close the Gaps

By now, you should have identified where the gaps are. So, the question is, "What can you do to close the gap?"

You can start by taking online courses to gain theoretical knowledge. Communications has principles and you need to know these principles.

The next step is to look for good organisations or platforms where you can intern or serve as a volunteer.

This will help you to gain hands-on experience and it will also give you the opportunity to put into practice the knowledge gained from courses.

Having a mentor is also useful here as that will help to significantly shorten your transition journey.

5. Work on Your Entry Strategy

Applying to organisations without any practical experience in Communications can be tedious. Even though you have transferrable skills, it may be difficult for them to believe you can deliver if your previous roles have not been in Communications.

What you need to do in this situation is to get your foot in the door. This means having an eye out for opportunities to demonstrate what you can bring to the table. It might be through an event. It might be by networking at a conference. It could also be by giving a pitch to a key decision maker to give you a chance to show the value that you can add to the organisation.

You must have a good idea of where you want to go and spot the opportunities that will get you there.

6. Shoot your Shot!

When you come across opportunities, and even when you don't see them, be willing to shoot your shot.

That means you must pitch yourself and express your desire to work in Communications. Be confident in expressing what you want. You never know the opportunities that can open up when you do that.

Social media and professional networks are an asset here. Use them wisely.

Don't look down on any opportunity to learn, whether it is paid or unpaid. Also, don't be discouraged by the 'no's' or the closed doors.

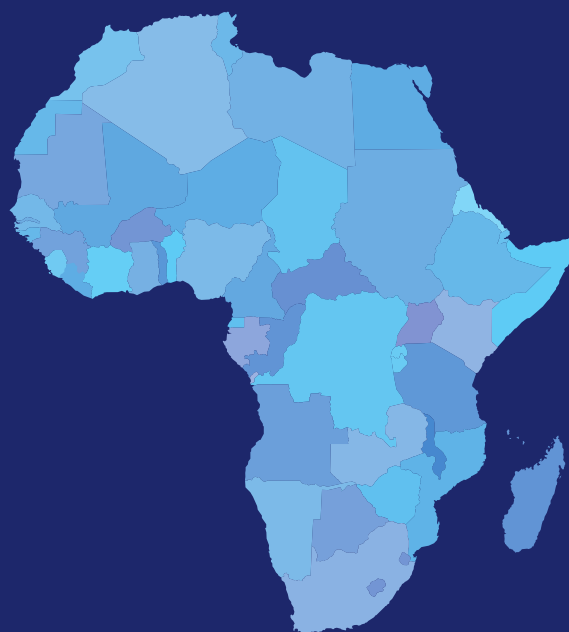
You can make this transition and we are rooting for your success!



ABOUT THE COMMS AVENUE

The Comms Avenue is a capacity building and networking platform for Communications professionals across Africa and beyond. We currently have over 1000 Communications professionals from 20 African countries in our mission-driven community.

Our vision is to become a close-knit community of communicators who work collaboratively and are empowered to contribute to positive change in various industries, across Africa and globally.



To achieve this, we put together programs, webinars, knowledge exchange and networking events that allow our community members to Learn, Collaborate and Connect with senior Communications professionals and peers across the African continent and beyond.

We also produce practical resources and learning materials to help Communications professionals to perform better on the job.

Sign up here to be a member of our community - bit.ly/TCASignUp.

Have questions about this guide? Contact us!

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