



The
Comms
Avenue

THE FIRST 100 DAYS IN COMMS GUIDE

What To Do When You Start A New
Comms Role



www.thecommsavenue.com

About the Guide

Starting a new role in an organisation can be overwhelming in the early days. While you're expected to hit the ground running, there's often a lot you need to become familiar with.

This Guide has been put together by The Comms Avenue to outline the key things that you need to do within the first 100 days of starting a new role. We engaged senior communications professionals from across Africa to share their perspectives on what is typically required in those first 100 days.

We encourage you to use this Guide to deliver effectively in your new role.

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What to do in the first 100 days



Understand the organisation



Integrate and adapt



Ask questions... lots of them



Seek to add value



Be confident and open-minded

"The first 100 days are critical in giving the new hire a feel of whether they are a good fit, both from the expectations given in the job description and the culture of the organisation."

**Yolisa Yvonne
Tyantsi**

01. Understand the Organisation

When you start a new role, one of the first things you need to do is to understand your new organisation. Making assumptions about the organisation and what is expected of you can lead to serious consequences down the road. This is why you must spend the first few weeks learning about the organisation, the internal operations as well as the sector in which the organisation operates.

Some key points to note:

Immediately after joining the team, get familiar with the company's norms and policies. This will help you to clearly know the do's and don'ts within the company, and help you to stay in the company for a longer time.

LOTH MAKUZA

You need to thoroughly understand the organisation and the industry. This includes understanding the objectives, values, mission and vision of the organisation.

You also need to understand the overall organisational goals and identify how your communication objectives fit into those goals.

In addition, you have to identify and understand the stakeholders (internal and external) and figure out the most effective way of reaching out to them.

ANTOINETTE KAMAU

What I expect from new hires is that they give themselves the first month to learn the organisation, its vision, and its objectives relative to their role.

Culture fit is important for both parties and it is very rare for people to ask about company culture during an interview.

Therefore, the first 100 days are also an opportunity to learn about the culture and how one fits in.

YOLISA YVONNE TYANTSI

One of the first things I train my new hires on is understanding our vision and mission.

I also expect them to get to know the environment - what's happening in the market and in the communications industry in Angola, who the main players are, where they are, what they do, how they do it and so on.

NAUSHEEN AULLYBUX

When starting a new role, I have learnt to gradually master the company's approach and its internal procedures.

I had to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of our business. I researched to understand our DNA and our true value proposition.

I learned to understand the needs and aspirations of our clients. I brought my stone to build the spirit of cohesion and teamwork.

KONAN NGUESSAN

Listen and observe first. There is a tendency to want to show that we were the right hiring choice by bringing out the big ideas, and solutions without first observing the new environment. Resist the urge to do this!

It is always best to first observe and learn the new environment - understand the business, its objectives, the pain points etc. A thorough understanding of the status quo will often help us proffer better solutions.

OLAYINKA EDMOND



It's important to understand;

- **Corporate strategy/ mission.** What are the company's stated aims?
- **Corporate culture.** What values and attitudes stand out? How do they compare or contrast with your own?
- **Company structure.** Establish the formal and informal hierarchy. Who's who and who does what? Identify key decision-makers and influencers.
- **Products and services** - Regardless of where you work, you will need to have a good understanding of what products and/ or services affect business performance

CHRISTINE BIRUNGI

You have to be really curious and what curiosity does is that it makes you proactive, or at least pushes you to be proactive. Curiosity means that you're constantly asking questions and looking for information that will either make you understand what you're getting into or make you stand out.

DAVID ADELEKE

02. Integrate and adapt

In the first 100 days, you should lay the foundation for success. This requires you to integrate and adapt quickly. It's also important to identify the areas where you can promptly add value. This is why understanding the organisation and its structure is essential. How you integrate with the existing team in your department and other employees within the organisation will also influence the kind of impact you could potentially make.

Some key points to note:

Study the role and understand the existing organisational structure to determine the best approach for success. Connect with people within the system who can help you to achieve your goals quickly.

Determine quick wins and stay focused on what is important and what would bring in the desired results.

JIDE SIPE

Bring all of your skills to the organisation, not just the ones outlined as necessary for your specific role.

Come ready to be a team player. Be ready to be a self-starter and take initiative but ask questions as much as is necessary. Never be scared to ask a question. Never be scared to take a chance.

Be okay with asking for the support you need to do your job well. Don't just do what is asked of you. Do more.

AUTUMN MARIE FARAJ

An employer needs to know that you can add value to the company within the first few months of working. They need to see your value and not worry if you are a hiring error.

For me, I have learnt to always have a consultant mindset of problem-solving, which is basically identifying the challenges with the current structure that I'm coming into and how best to solve it.

This is how you add value, especially as a new hire.

SHEILA OJEI

You must be able to juggle multiple clients and projects. Sticking to deadlines and prioritising tasks are a must.

It's a fast-paced, multifaceted job, and no one has time to lose paperwork or to mix up names. That is why you must have the ability to schedule, prioritise, multitask and pay attention to detail.

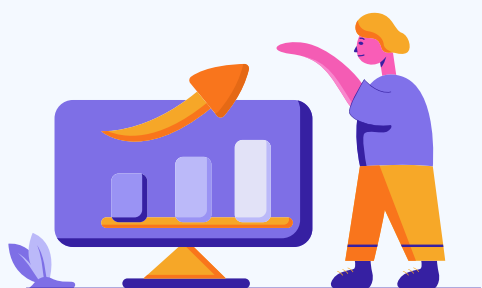
ANTOINETTE KAMAU

Whenever I enter a new role, I spend the first week or two doing a lot of reading. For example, when I was moving to Eko Atlantic City as Head of Communications in 2019, my father bought me books on Civil Engineering, City Building, Construction and Real Estate.

I personally had to consume the entire archive of content that the company had already developed so that by the end of the first month, I could authoritatively speak on the project.

I spend a lot of time building my knowledge and understanding of the industry that I am entering into or the company that I am going to work for.

DAVID ADELEKE



After reading the welcome manual and procedure manual, get to know your colleagues quickly. Introduce yourself to them and try to understand the role of each of them.

You will see that you will have allies who, in the future, could give you feedback and useful information for your projects. They will facilitate your integration.

KONAN NGUESSAN

Be committed to constant learning. If, for example, you're in a company that is into mining, you'll have to educate yourself about the mining sector and learn about communications within that sector.

Think about what you can do to improve yourself as a professional but also learn about the sector in particular so that you're able to anticipate difficult questions that may come from different stakeholders.

CHERYL KHUPHE

The first 30 days should be geared towards establishing credibility among leaders and your peer group while the next 60 days are where you will need to be generating tangible results.

In the beginning, you will still be grappling to understand the business and how it operates but there will be opportunities to prove yourself and make an impact. Grab those opportunities but pace yourself.

YOLISA YVONNE TYANTSI

Dedicate time to spend with each and every team member to better understand them, their work scope, their strengths, and their culture. This will help you to map out the overall team capacity to the actual work plan

NAUSHEEN AULLYBUX

03. Ask questions...lots of them

As a new hire, you may feel reluctant to ask questions because you don't want to look like you don't know what you're doing. This is not the right mindset to have. To arm yourself with all the information you need to perform your role effectively, you must ask questions. Talk to your boss, colleagues and other relevant stakeholders within and outside the organisation. Resist the urge to assume or pretend like you know.

Some key points to note:

In almost every role, I spend time with the company's founders, asking questions about the vision, the goals, the customers and what we are trying to achieve. I speak to the target audience, schedule calls, and dig deeper into the people we serve.

When I first started at I4G, I asked Maya (the visionary) a lot of questions. I spoke to the people we were targeting to understand their needs; we couldn't afford to assume. I listened to what they were saying and what they were not saying. I listened to their words and how they described their problems. I listened. They told us about things we had not even thought about, and two years after, we have grown a community from 0 to 200K.

We have partnered with notable global companies who want to access that audience because they know we know them well.

BLESSING ABENG

As part of my induction process, I engage each department by asking questions such as, how the communications team contributes to the success of the team, what previous challenges have they had, and how best they'd like to work with comms, including frequency of feedback.

Those are the kind of questions I ask because that gives me a blueprint of what needs to be done in the first few months.

SHEILA OJEI





Normalise asking for help. There is often a lot of pressure when one starts a new role and many new joiners don't feel comfortable asking for help in a new environment.

I encourage new joiners to ask for help, speak up and seek clarification where needed as they settle into their new roles.

OLAYINKA EDMOND

Execute and submit the tasks entrusted to you on time

This should reflect your capability.

It will also send a message to the management that they have a certain team member with specific capabilities to get things done.

LOTH MAKUZA

I would always say ask because there's no such thing as a stupid question. Ask as many questions as possible. It's better to ask than to make a mistake that you could have avoided if you had asked many questions prior. The more you read about the client, the more questions you will have.

If your team cannot answer it, find a smart way to get that information from your client so that they know that you're enthusiastic, curious and actually learning about the brand.

LERATO MPHOLLO

You should ask your new employer if there are any documents or company materials to review before you start.

You also need to review your job description and any additional information, including leadership behaviours, competency frameworks, and company values.

CHRISTINE BIRUNGI



04. Seek to add value

If within the first 100 days you haven't added significant value to the organisation, your senior leaders may begin to question why you were hired. We know you don't want that to happen. After you learn about the organisation and spot the areas where you can bring in improvements, you need to add value. Start small. You may not be able to do something huge in the first 100 days but there are several little wins that will prove your worth and value as a new hire.

Some key points to note:

In a new role, I often split the first hundred days in two, taking the first half to learn about the new landscape and then using the second half of the time to get some quick wins from projects that are easy and quick to turn around and that will make a significant impact or solve an important issue.

OLAYINKA EDMOND



Do not delay. Time is of the essence so aim to get your induction sorted within the first two weeks.

If you wait any longer, the likelihood is that it won't happen as you will soon be pulled into the details of your role.

CHRISTINE BIRUNGI

Think inside and outside of the box because in our work, we need to be able to anticipate the client's needs and at the same time have answers for them. So be clever enough to look out for opportunities on how to meet those needs.

CAROLINA BARROS

Without data, you can't bring valid suggestions.

Strategic communications skills are highly recommended and needed at the moment. Advise your management to invest much in result-oriented communications campaigns.

LOTH MAKUZA

Be smart, ready to learn, available and willing to take on new tasks.

JIDE SIPE

I have had a style of documentation, research and team involvement to understand my subject, my field of operation and the company I have joined.

For example, in my current role as the Communication & Public Relations Head at Larsen & Toubro for the Metro Express Project, I have taken at least three months to document the 360 aspects around the project, both through the existing team and through personal involvement and research.

That was the start point from which and till date, I have been able to perform the requirements of my position excellently.

NAUSHEEN AULLYBUX

Put up your hand for various projects, especially during the busy phase and when colleagues are drowning because this is a quick way of building a relationship with your colleagues.

LERATO MPHOLLO



In the past, I have put myself under pressure to score wins immediately. This would result in not giving myself enough time to learn the environment.

I am now deliberate on being patient with myself, setting reasonable goals and not rushing things.

YOLISA YVONNE TYANTSI

Actively pitch new ideas and find ways to contribute outside of the scope of your role.

AUTUMN MARIE FARAJ

I take time to learn from everyone. Institutions are unique. We need to take time and appreciate how institutions work, establish relationships and get a ground to settle.

IRENE NAKASIITA

Many times, when people get new jobs, they don't think long-term. It's always about the now.

I'm very big on 'what impact and what legacy are you leaving behind?'

If you leave the company that you are in today, what will they remember you for?

What innovative ideas did you bring while you were there?

What did you accomplish? What was it like working with you?

SHEILA OJEI

05. Be confident and open-minded

To make your mark in a new organisation, you need to be confident and be open-minded.

Confidence is especially important when coming up with ideas and solutions for the organisation. You must believe in yourself.

You also need to be open-minded because you are in a new terrain here. A number of things will be different from what you are used to. Having an open mind will help you to use this to your advantage.

Some key points to note:



People are at the centre of doing business.

Make sure that you are prepared to interact with different people.

If you are a reserved person like I am, make that extra effort to interact with people or colleagues because people are what make up the company.

You also need to have an open mind. In an agency, you are constantly learning and observing what is happening as well as what is happening with your clients and how what's around you impacts all of you, so, trying to keep an open mind will help you to learn some new and interesting things, but also meet interesting people.

LERATO MPHOLLO

Be confident, even if you may not feel up to the task! You didn't get this far by accident or luck.

There is something that you are bringing to the table. Own it! Learn what you need to know and get the job done!

OLAYINKA EDMOND

Take each opportunity as a new one. While you can count on what you know about PR, what you know about communications and what you can bring into a new role, you also have to understand that the challenges may be different. The context may be different and the company is different.

So, you have to keep an open mind and continue to learn, which means personal development is very important.

CHERYL KHUPHE

Come ready to contribute new ideas and with the confidence that we have hired you because we trust you with this role, yet be humble.

First, listen and observe the team culture.

Listen before speaking so that you can first observe how things happen at this organisation and then contribute, contribute, contribute.

AUTUMN MARIE FARAJ



Attitude is the number one thing.

Take your place on the table, have a voice, and know the market where you work.

CAROLINA BARROS

Be more open to others and see them as chains of links; see them not as adversaries, but instead as success opportunities.

KONAN NGUESSAN



Essential Skills + Tips

Essential skills to have

To successfully navigate the first 100 days, there are some of the key skills you'll need to have:



Communication skills - You must be able to communicate with your senior leaders, clients and stakeholders clearly and confidently.



Writing and storytelling skills - You need to have the ability to write content and stories that are compelling and captivating.



Research skills - You should know how to dig for information and find ways to get the answers that you need.



Data analysis skills - You should understand how to collect data, track and analyse information from the data to measure and make decisions.



Social & interpersonal skills - You must be able to work and interact with others for a common purpose and goal.



Time management skills - You need to be able to master deadlines and prioritise tasks effectively.



When you first start out, you really need to have great interpersonal skills. You also need to be very humble and demonstrate a teachable spirit because when you're starting, you basically have to rely on everyone else giving you the information that they need to give you. You also need to be confident.

Cheryl Khuphe



Other skills

documenting
creative-thinking
emotional-intelligence
presentation
stakeholder-management
adaptability
team-work

Another really important skill is the ability to understand the people you are working with and what type of human dynamics are in the organisation.

You need to understand the office politics, people you need to work around or with, and the power dynamics within the organisation. This is very important.

DAVID ADELEKE

Familiarity with the media and all forms of social media, currently in use and a list that is constantly changing, is critical.

A new professional should know which platform to use for what and must also have the skill to use each platform to its fullest potential.

ANTOINETTE KAMAU

You must be able to collect data and track and deduce information from the data. You need to be able to measure. Measure growth, engagement, impact, etc. You need to be able to string it together and weave stories and patterns and even find trends.

You can tell the stories of your audience, the company, the growth, their experiences, etc.

BLESSING ABENG



Tips from Senior Professionals



Christine Birungi

As a communicator, it is very important to understand the culture of your organisation. We all come in with a lot of experience and expectations.

Check whether these match the culture of your organisation. This will help you to overcome so many things that lie ahead of you.



Jide Sipe

Be involved in every aspect of the department's functions. Study, learn new things as frequently as possible and have a winning mentality.



Carolina Barros

Know the full story of your clients - who they are, where they came from, what they do, and the feedback that people have about the company.



Blessing Abeng

Experimenting is about asking questions, feeding your curiosity, and wondering. Remember, the goal of an experiment is not to be right; it is to discover.

By experimenting, you discover ways of doing and not doing things. You learn from every experiment and move on really quickly.



Cheryl Khuphe

You need to have clarity on what you need to deliver.

When you have clarity, it will be clear when you request for important information from your colleagues why it is in the best interest of the organisation to assist you and what value you are bringing to the company.



David Adeleke

Understand the business - how the business works, how money moves, and how financial resources are located.

Know that you are not there for fun. You're there for business.

You have to be able to tell or explain how your role has a direct impact on the bottom line or at the very least, you have to be aiming towards that.

Nausheen Aullybux

Communication is a vast ocean of learning and it is a beautiful world.

Swim as much as you can until you can be a champion. Once you are, lead, empower and inspire others to be like you.

Irene Nakasiita

Read more about the organisation you are going to work for and the requirements of the role before you take it.

Autumn Marie Faraj

You are taking on a new role within an organisation.

It is important to fully understand how that role fits into the organisation, how the organisation operates and communicates, and how you fit into this larger organisation, and not just the individual role.

Yolisa Yvonne Tyantsi

Do not walk in and criticise how things were done before you joined.

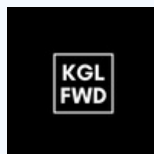
Get to know the business and align with the vision, culture and objectives of the organisation before you can make assumptions on changes and course of actions.

Listen, read and start your own network.

THANK YOU

We are grateful to all our contributors for the valuable insights they shared and for making this resource a truly rich material for young communications professionals who are starting a new role.

Some organisations represented...

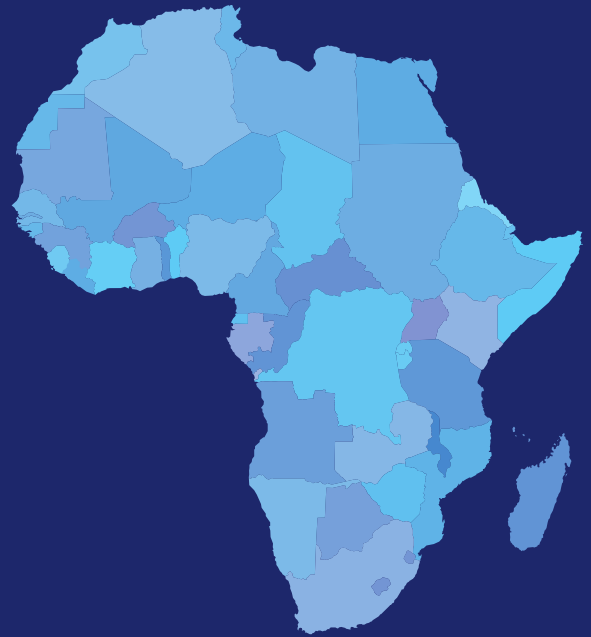


We are also grateful to our team of volunteers who helped to bring this Guide to life and provided input that shaped its structure.

Finally, we are grateful to our community of communications professionals across Africa for their constant engagement in The Comms Avenue community and the rich conversations that sparked the idea to create the First 100 Days in Comms Guide.

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.

To support the work we do or partner with us, click [here](#).

Have questions about this guide? Contact us!

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