

# Looking Back, Thriving Forward:

Letters to Young Communications  
Professionals

## Comms Mentorship Conference

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# FROM THE PIONEER

**S**tarting off my career in communications, I didn't know what to expect. In fact, I didn't even know the field existed. What this means is that I had to learn on the job a lot.

I had so many questions but I had no idea who to turn to for answers. Google became my best friend. I scoured the internet for answers almost every day. And I prayed, asking the Holy Spirit for direction and help.

Even though I wasn't sure whether or not I would be successful in my comms career pursuit, I knew I needed to have faith. And so I kept pushing past every uncertainty, doubt and negative voice.

It's been 13 years and I look back, grateful to God that I chose to believe. I am also grateful that I now have the opportunity to pass on the lessons I have learnt to younger professionals and create platforms where they can receive answers and direction.

That's the heart behind the Comms Mentorship Conference and it is the reason why we have put together this publication.

In this publication, you will read letters from senior industry experts in the African communications industry. These letters are reflective, refreshingly honest and they contain just the right dose of inspiration for your own career journey.

I hope this publication will become a go-to guide as you navigate through your Comms career. I hope the letters will serve as a reminder that you are not alone in this journey. You are seen, you are valuable and you will do great things, even if it doesn't feel or look like it at the moment.

So, enjoy every letter and save the quotes that resonate most with you!

I'm always rooting for your professional success.

From your dependable cheerleader,

*Adedoyin*



# Comms Mentorship Conference

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# Tolu Akin Aribasala

Managing Director at LSF PR (Africa)



## *Dear Young Professional,*

I hope this letter finds you in one of those quiet, in-between moments: between doubt and determination, between figuring things out and finding the strength to push through. Maybe you've just started your first job in public relations. Or maybe you're still sending out endless applications and pitches, stuck between personal and professional choices, wondering if you're even on the right path.

Wherever you are, pause and breathe. You're doing just fine.

I know there are days when it feels like you're running out of time, like everyone else has it figured out, and you're just trying to catch up. But life is not a race, and the pressure to "arrive" early is a mirage. The truth is, there is no finish line, only growth, only becoming.

Becoming, as you'll one day understand, is a lifelong process. It's full of unexpected turns and quiet transformations. There's always room to stretch, to evolve, to become more.

So here's something I need you to hold close: You are capable of far more than you know. Every time you dare to stretch beyond your comfort zone, with every "yes" to something unfamiliar, the world responds. Doors open. Rooms expand. You grow into spaces you once felt too small for.

Dream audaciously. Understand that embarrassment is the price of entry. Do not let rejections deter or diminish the value that you are. Believe boldly. Show up confidently. If you set your mind to something, you can do it. Trust me, you will do it.

Stay focused, but not rigid. Life will challenge your plans, and that's okay. Stay intentional. Let your values anchor you, even as you learn to bend with the wind. Distractions may sparkle, but they often steal time from what truly matters. Choose long-term fulfillment over momentary applause. Your path won't always be loud or glittery, but it will be yours and that is enough.

Don't take life so seriously that you miss the beauty in the ordinary. Laugh hard. Rest well. Love deeply. Let joy be part of your ambition, not the afterthought. You don't need to be perfect to be powerful; you just need to be fully present.

And please, never forget this: your authenticity is your superpower. There's no second you. The world may try to shrink you, mold you, water you down. Don't let it. Your difference is not a liability; it is your unique print in this trail called life.

Remember to stay loyal. Be someone others can trust but also be discerning; not everyone who claps for you is for you. Guard your energy like the asset it is. Let go of relationships that dim your light. If you ever feel the urge to shrink, to stay small so others feel big, fight it.

Visibility is not arrogance. You're allowed to take up space. You're allowed to be excellent. You're allowed to succeed. Own it. Say yes to growth: be curious and keep learning. Learn from books, from mentors, from your mistakes. Stay teachable even when you think you've figured it out.

And above all, trust the timing of your life. Not everything has to happen now. The right doors will open when you are ready. So, keep showing up, keep doing the work and keep believing in the woman you're becoming.

She's already in you.

Compassionately yours,

*Tolu*

# Moliehi Mothiane Molekoa

Managing Director, Magna Carta Reputation Management Consultants

## *My Dearest Future African Queen,*

I write to you with a heart full of gratitude, reflection, and a deep sense of pride. You're standing at the edge of your career, wide-eyed, hopeful and determined—and that's a beautiful place to be. But let me tell you something you won't find in a textbook or a motivational quote: the road ahead is not smooth sailing. It's paved with yield signs, potholes, red traffic lights—and, thankfully, some amazing green ones too.

What will carry you through the stops, starts and detours is not just your ambition, but the solid family background that grounds you. Those values instilled early on will serve as your compass when the noise of the world gets loud. They'll teach you to interpret the signs of the day—when to push, when to pause and when to pivot.

I'm grateful that you chose to invest more in building your character than simply expanding your network. That choice will become your superpower. In a world driven by appearances and shortcuts, your authenticity will quietly speak louder than empty credentials. People will trust you, not just because of what you know, but because of who you are. What they see is what they get—and that kind of integrity is rare.

So be consistent. Be known for something. Be excellent in your work not for applause, but because you honour the craft. Stand your ground without stepping on people's toes—it's possible and it's powerful.

Let yourself be stretched and tested. I know it's uncomfortable. But it's in the stretching and testing that you'll find your truest calling, your sharpest

**“Be excellent in your work not for applause, but because you honour the craft.”**

edges and your clearest voice. Don't run from it—lean in. You'll come out the other side stronger, clearer and more aligned with your purpose.

And while it's tempting to blend in—don't. It's easy to follow the crowd, to dim your uniqueness in the name of belonging. But you weren't built for the ordinary. It takes guts to stand alone but trust me—it's those moments that will make you sought after. Chosen. Respected.

Keep reading, questioning things and go beyond the headlines. Build a mind that thinks deeply, speaks wisely and contributes meaningfully when you're invited to the table. Don't just show up—bring something of value with you.

Above all, give yourself grace. You don't know it all—and that's okay. You're still growing, learning and becoming. But even as you grow, remember you are more than enough and can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. So do it wholeheartedly. Do it with excellence. Do it with kindness.

You're on the right path. Keep going.

With love and belief in you,  
Your Older, Wiser Self

*Moliehi*



# Euloge Ishimwe

Strategic Communications Specialist

*Dear younger self,*

**Y**ou're fresh out of university, full of purpose. Your degree in Communications feels like a passport to influence and impact. You want to change the world, and I admire that about you. But before you dive in, I'd like to share a few lessons that could help you thrive, not just survive, in this ever-evolving profession.

First, don't limit yourself to "Comms." Learn beyond it. The best communicators are systems thinkers. Understand how your organisation works, its business model, strategy, politics, and pain points. The more you grasp the full value chain, the more indispensable you become. The real magic happens when communication is embedded into decision-making, not just messaging.

Second, avoid the silo mindset. Align your work with CEO priorities and strategic goals. Influence starts with relevance. No matter how brilliant your campaign is, if it doesn't help the leadership team sleep better at night, it won't move the needle.

Third, don't underestimate internal communication. I know you'll be tempted to chase external visibility, media coverage, or viral content, but trust me; if your internal stakeholders aren't engaged, your message won't stick. Internal alignment is mission-critical. Over time, you'll learn that employees are your first and most important audience.

Fourth, stay curious. Keep learning, not just new tools and platforms, but also emerging technologies. AI will become a game-changer in our field. It will take over some of your tasks, and you'll feel unsettled. But you'll also realise it's a powerful ally. Use it to scale efficiency, but keep your edge in critical thinking, judgment, and human connection. That's what AI can't replicate.

Fifth, be an all-rounder—but choose a specialty to master. Develop breadth and depth. Whether it's crisis management, internal comms, or digital storytelling, owning an area of expertise will set you apart.

And finally, plan ahead. Have a short-term plan and a long-term one. The road won't be linear. Some seasons will test your confidence. Some decisions



may cost you popularity. But purpose and clarity will anchor you.

The role you've chosen will grow broader, faster, more entangled with business, ethics, and technology than you can yet imagine. Become the voice of calm amid the noise. Bring counsel, not just content. Let your words carry meaning, not manipulation. And when you tell stories, make them stir something real. Let them awaken Kama Muta—that rare, powerful feeling of shared humanity. That is where your true influence will lie.

It won't always be easy. But it will be meaningful.

So walk with foresight. Work with courage. And always, always, anchor yourself in values. Because in the future I see, communication won't just be about the message. It will be about meaning. And that, dear self, is where you will lead. Keep going.

Warmly,

*Euloge*



## *Dear Young Comms Professional,*

Let me start with the backstory.

I didn't start out with clarity. I wasn't one of those lucky people who knew exactly what they wanted to be when they grew up. I graduated at 20 with a degree in English and Literary Studies. I had even done my research project in Advertising. But

somehow, I found myself in banking.

As you can imagine, the one thing I consistently got top marks for during appraisals was my communication skills and my knowledge of current affairs. But finance? I didn't get it. More importantly, I wasn't interested. Still, I worked at five different banks. Why? Because I thought the jobs were the problem, so I kept changing jobs.

The jobs weren't the issue. It was me. I lacked clarity about who I was and what truly moved me. It took years of questioning, trying, failing, reflecting and ultimately, unpeeling. But when I finally found my why, my True North, this changed everything.

If I could speak to my younger self and maybe to you, this is what I would say:

### **1. START EARLY**

Let me start with this truth: Whenever you find clarity, that's still your best time. But since I've already lived those years for you, let me save you some time.

Start early. Start thinking early. Start asking questions early.

Start researching, planning, and seeking advice early.

When I graduated at 20, I told myself, "I'm still young, there's time." By the time I truly figured things out, I was almost 30. That's when I started all over, I went back to school, I retrained and retooled, came back into a job that paid 70% less than my earnings and started to climb the ladder all over again....but this time with **CLARITY & PURPOSE**.

# Tosin Adefeko

CEO, AT3 Resources

You will succeed but how far you go often depends on how well and how early you understand yourself. Finding your why requires introspection. And that takes time. But once you find it, everything else begins to align.

## 2. SKILL UP

Having a degree is a great start, but it's not enough. To thrive in the workplace, and in life, you need skills. Ask yourself: What can I actually do? What would I keep doing, even if no one paid me?

This isn't a motivational cliché. It's the truth. When you figure that out and become deeply skilled in it, you will stand out. You will become valuable and value always opens doors.

## 3. SERVE

My former boss Dr. Biodun Shobanjo once said, "Tosin has served her time as a good apprentice" and I wear that badge with pride. Serving is not beneath you. Not everyone will be, or should be an entrepreneur. Through service, you learn.

Find people whose values align with yours. People who have walked the path you want to walk. Serve them well. There's nothing you want to do that someone hasn't done before. And if you serve with humility and excellence, they'll show you how they did it. That invariably becomes your blueprint for success.

I have many processes and procedures I work with today that are a replication of my bosses standards. Why reinvent the wheel?

## 4. VOLUNTEER

This one took me a little longer to learn, but it's gold. Volunteering may feel like unpaid work and yes, technically, it is. But it gives you something far more valuable than money: Visibility, Networks, Purpose, and Access.

When you volunteer for causes and communities that matter to you, the right people see you. They experience your competence, your values, and your passion firsthand.

The first five years of starting my company, 50% of my time was spent volunteering. Many of those

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”

platforms and the people I met became the bedrock of the businesses I eventually got paid for.

Volunteering opens doors you didn't even know existed. It's one of the best career accelerators out there.

## 5. STEP OUT

Whether you choose the intrapreneurial path or strike out as an entrepreneur, be bold. Build things. Don't hide. When you figure something out, share it.

When you overcome something, teach it. Your story is not just for you. It's your legacy. And never forget this - **Data matters. Science matters. But stories? Stories move hearts. Stories spark change. Your story can change the world.**

I wish you all the best in your career journey.

Best regards,

*Tosin*



# E. Maaweh Tanga

Director, Projects and Donor Communications, CARE International Ghana

## Letter to a Boy with a Dream

*Hello Young Dreamer,*

I know you're trying hard to make things work. You're chasing opportunities, pushing yourself, and sometimes wondering if all the effort is even worth it. Know this, you're on the right path. But there are a few things I need you to prioritise.

First, finish that manuscript. There is a world where you will make a good living telling stories that your young, naïve mind cannot yet comprehend. Understand that there is nothing like a perfect idea. Stop waiting for things to fall in place. Be at your inquisitive best and swim against the tide.

Second, document everything like your life depends on it. There comes a time when truth depends on who owns the media platform or source codes to a scary, futuristic technology called "artificial intelligence." Facts as you know them are now subjective, and truth is a blurred spectrum of interests, half-truths, and profit. This is important because content creation has taken over the world, with citizen journalism more credible now than mainstream news.

Third, keep being that back-seat boy with the front row mentality. Keep your head up and take your place among the greats. In my timeline, there is a shortage of leaders, an extinction-level event that has left the world in chaos. Now, look here, man. Those ideas that keep coming at very random and



odd hours, the ones you're not sure people will understand - trust your instincts. Don't let fear keep you from greatness. Try, fail, learn, and try again, but please never stop. Also, be patient with the process and with yourself. Trust the journey. God didn't bring you this far to leave you halfway.

Finally, don't walk this road alone. Look for people who challenge you to grow. The people who will shape your future to this point are the ones you have met and will encounter daily as you journey through life. Remember, character will take you to places where talent has no idea exists. You have what it takes. Keep showing up. Keep learning. Keep building. You're doing well.

From your older, more experienced, and fulfilled self.

*E. Maaweh*

**“ Understand that there is nothing like a perfect idea. Stop waiting for things to fall in place. Be at your inquisitive best and swim against the tide. ”**

# Sola Abulu

Principal Consultant, SA&A Associates

*Dear Young Sola,*

These are some lessons I'd like to share with you:

1. Continue to put your head down, work hard and learn. Everything you learn now will be useful for you in the future.
2. Embrace the good and the bad experiences. You are going to learn more from the bad experiences than the good ones because the bad ones are going to shape your philosophy of leadership and positively differentiate you in the future.
3. Do not listen to all those who tell you not to speak up because there is no reward for silence. And the future pay-off is much higher than that of silent suffering.
4. Join a professional network now - international and local. Be active and ensure you put in the work so that in 20 years from now you will be a Fellow. Understand that whatever you are doing in your day job is only of value in that context. So, begin to build a professional profile and identity that is not connected to your current job or any other job you will ever hold.



5. Begin to build yourself as a personal brand not only within your place of work but more importantly externally. Because that is what you will have to fall back on when you eventually stop paid employment

6. Don't believe the people who say that you cannot build a business or run it effectively or that you can only be a paid employee working for others. They know nothing about you or your God and His plans for you and the grace upon your life. Dare to dream big. Imagine a future greater than your dreams. The Lord will run it for you.

7. The journey of a thousand miles really begins in one day. Do not despise small beginnings. Great things always start small.

8. Continue to run your own race. Sola Abulu has no duplicate.

9. Do not let the limited view that others have of you dictate the way you look at yourself. Most people have no idea what God has placed in you. Or His plan or purpose for your life. The worst thing you can do for yourself is to frame your view of yourself and your future within the boundaries of their words and beliefs about you.

10. Be very careful about the people you have around you. The people you trust, confide in and allow to speak into your life. Not everyone who pretends to be a friend is truly one. Allow God to guide you in terms of every aspect of your life - including your friendships and close relationships.

11. Finally - trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding. In ALLLLLLL your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths. God knows what He is doing. As a matter of urgency - you must trust Him with the big and small things in your life. He always has your best interests at heart. Do not mute His voice or ignore His counsel. You will live to regret it if you do.

I am rooting for you!

From your future self,

*Sola*

# Adaoha Njemanze

Founder/Principal Consultant, NOVVA Media & Communications

*Dear Younger Adaoha,*

Welcome to the world of Public Relations, a dynamic, demanding, and enriching field where perception shapes reality and communication creates impact. As you embark on this journey with ambition and curiosity, remember these key lessons that will guide and ground you.

First, attention to detail will be your greatest asset. In PR, it's not just about being organised; it's also about being observant. Every nuance in email tone, every unspoken shift in a client's expression, and every subtle change in public sentiment matters. Train yourself to notice everything. These small details will sharpen your work, enhance your strategies, and make your messaging more intuitive.

Amid the deadlines, deliverables, and challenging days, don't forget to enjoy the experience. Embrace the brainstorming sessions, the creative chaos, the tight deadlines, and the quiet victories. Every phase of the journey will shape your growth and resilience in ways you can't yet imagine. Soak it in; don't rush through it.

When you stumble, remember that mistakes are not failures, but opportunities for improvement and skill enhancement. In this fast-moving industry, perfection is unrealistic. What matters more is how you respond. Own your errors, learn from them, and move forward. Be kind to yourself during these moments. Life is already complicated, so show grace. Extend the same grace to others, including colleagues, clients, and the media. Your ability to learn from mistakes will set you apart.

Connect with your colleagues. The people you work with can be an incredible source of learning, collaboration, and support. Don't isolate yourself. Ask questions. Share knowledge. Listen. You will be

surprised by how much you can gain from their perspectives.

One of the most important things I can tell you is this: do not be afraid to rebrand or start over again. This is one of my favourite phrases, "Reinvention is

not a weakness; it's a strength." Whether you're pivoting in your career, refining your message, or evolving your identity, give yourself the freedom to grow and redefine.

Write about everything. Read widely. PR is at its core about storytelling; your writing ability will shape your influence. The more you write, the more clarity you will gain. The more you read across disciplines, the more connected and creative your thinking will become. Let curiosity be your compass, and always remain eager to learn.

And yes, remain ambitious. Think boldly. Don't just

"think outside the box"; reimagine the box entirely. The most powerful ideas won't always follow a script. Innovation in this space requires courage. Trust your instincts and lead with your voice. Your ambition will be the driving force behind your success.

Finally, I want to emphasise this: "The industry may be more inclined toward extroverts, but that doesn't mean your quiet voice doesn't belong." As an introvert, find the spaces where your strengths shine. Find ways to make your impact felt. Your influence doesn't need to be loud to be powerful. Show up fully, in your way.

There is so much ahead of you. Keep showing up. Keep learning. Keep growing.

Regards,

*Adaoha*



# Thandukwazi Gcabashe

Founder & Lead Consultant, Articulate PR

*Dear Younger Thandukwazi,*

If you're reading this, it means you've just stepped into the world of communications, armed with your curiosity, grit, and a stubborn belief that storytelling can shift perspectives. Hold on to that — it will become your compass in rooms where your title won't yet carry weight.

Let me tell you something upfront: there's no shortcut around the work. The weekends you'll spend rewriting media releases, the early mornings prepping executives for interviews, the nights questioning whether you belong — they all matter. Those invisible hours, those behind-the-scenes wins, are building the kind of practitioner who leads with both strategy and soul.

You'll learn that credibility isn't built by being the loudest voice in the room, but by being the most prepared. Keep reading, keep listening. Learn from editors, from clients, from drivers on the morning shift — they all have stories, and knowing how to hear them will make you a better communicator. Never underestimate the power of humility in a profession that sometimes prizes performance over depth.

There will be moments when your ideas are dismissed because you don't yet have a degree. Don't shrink. Your voice has value. Yes, you will pursue formal learning, but it's your lived experience — growing up curious, adaptable, and resourceful — that will give you your edge. That same edge will shape how you build teams, mentor others, and one day, launch an agency that serves with clarity and conviction.

You'll learn that reputation is currency, and consistency is its strongest investment. Your integrity, how you show up when no one is watching — that's what will keep doors opening long after the spotlight has moved on.

And when burnout whispers that you're running on fumes, listen. Rest is not the enemy of ambition. Protect your peace like you protect your best idea — fiercely and without guilt.

Lastly, remember this: the industry will

**“ You'll learn that credibility isn't built by being the loudest voice in the room, but by being the most prepared. ”**

change. Channels will evolve, trends will shift. But people — with their hopes, fears, and need to be seen — will remain at the heart of our work. Keep serving them with honesty, humanity, and courage. You're going to be more than fine. You're going to be necessary.

Asante sana,

*Thandukwazi*



# Daisy Wanzala

Account Director, Edelman Africa

*Dear Younger Me,*

**H**ey girl! You made it and you will make it!

Above the storms and challenges of life, here you are. I must say, hold on a little longer, observe and learn, because everything will fall into place. Remember your favourite quote from The Alchemist, "It is written."

As I write this, I'm seated in a beautiful office, wearing some gorgeous stilettos, red lipstick on, and guess what? I drive a red-wine car! I tell you this because all the dreams you once had about this time, well, they're now part of my reality. "How did we do it?" I can hear you ask. Hone-eeey, we've mastered the art of time - allowing it to unfold, to unravel what many would call life's stories.

Do you remember crying and worrying about what people would think of you, your personality, your character? Girl, we fought that self-doubt. We created our own spaces where our cups are now filled until they run over. Best decision ever. We've mastered the courage to show up and show up authentically in rooms we once thought we didn't belong in.

We've also mastered the courage to set boundaries bravely and fearlessly knowing that what is meant for us will never miss us. But above all, we've chosen our path: one focused on being a good human, with great intentions and bold visions.

Remember that one time during your first job when you cried all night wondering why colleagues didn't like you? Let me tell you, Maina, we've had more moments like that than you could ever imagine. But now, my darling, we've learned to be all that we can be. As long as our heart is in the right place, what others think doesn't matter. We owe no one an explanation for choosing to live boldly. And anyone who cares to judge would ask for the full picture before making assumptions.



We are now living boldly and living our parents' wildest dreams!

Through it all, we've learned that God is good. And indeed, all the time, God is good. Let's face it, here we are, in a place where others may have written us off. And guess what? God never left our side. Not for one second. He is the author and finisher of our faith. In Him, we will always trust. It's through His divine grace that we are who we are and that is enough.

Though I must say, you were always good at keeping the faith. I mean I could use your 3:00 am prayer points and stamina - how did you do this?

I'm trying, but it's becoming tough as the days go by. But.... in these imperfections, I hope to feel even more grounded in His love.

We've also learned that it is not our job to judge or condemn others, even those who hurt us. Because guess what? We are all imperfect beings seeking a spiritual encounter. (You see, we've grown; we are now speaking like Oprah!)

There's so much I could tell you, but I'll leave you with these two truths:

- You will do your job excellently, with hard work, discipline and consistency.
- Life will throw you curveballs that only you can decide how to handle.

So right here, right now, we are, and we will continue to win at life. We must, hun. And we will because in God we move and have our being.

With All My Love,  
Adei / Daisy / Hadassah  
ESG & Sustainability, Corporate Communications & Marketing Consultant  
(Look at that, honey!)

*Daisy*



# Anna Ceesay

Founder & CEO, Fabella Communications



*Dear Anna,*

I'm writing this letter as I'm about to turn 40.

You're 25 and have just started your career as a journalist. As you navigate the next fifteen years, here's my advice:

1. Keep following your heart, especially during the tough times. Your values will always protect and guide you. Trust your instincts.
2. Don't be afraid to speak up. You have a unique perspective and great value to offer. In a few years, you will be able to speak in front of anyone, but you have to practise now.
3. Invest in your growth – from this moment. Personal, professional and spiritual. Read a chapter of a book every day. You'll think you don't have time, but you do. In a year, you'll be shocked at how

much you can learn. (FYI – I wish I had done this sooner!)

4. Hone your listening skills. To be the best storyteller you can be, you need to master active listening. In the future, people will tell you it's one of your greatest assets.
5. You may not stay in journalism forever...Spoiler – you end up working in communications and realise it's what you were always destined to do. But the skills you're developing now will continue to serve you. Writing, editing, pitching, researching, speaking to people, and ultimately – telling stories.
6. Learn from your peers. Keep asking questions. If someone is where you want to be, find out how they got there. Nothing is out of reach if you figure out the roadmap.
7. If you start getting too comfortable in a role, it's either a sign that you need to move on or acquire a new skill. Always strive to stretch yourself and be better.

8. Understand how to work with colleagues and manage people. It's a skill that is vastly underrated. True leaders nurture, empower and learn from their teams.

9. Patience is not a virtue that comes naturally to you. But there will be times in your career when you have to wait (time of writing included!). Someone very wise tells you that what's yours will not pass you by. Heed their advice.

10. Enjoy the ride and expect the unexpected. You didn't enter this industry to have a 9-5 life. There will be some highs coming that you'll never forget.

I don't have all the answers, but I hope this is helpful. You got this.

Lots of love,

*Anna*

# Nicolas Emane

Senior Strategic Communications Professional

## *Dear Younger Self,*

For many people, starting a career represents an important milestone that brings an invaluable opportunity to show the world what they are capable of, become independent, and grow fast. This feeling comes with an incredible energy and enthusiasm making us believe that we can achieve anything within minutes, which quite frankly is good to challenge the imposter syndrome that is always somewhere around, but doesn't always serve us well.

In fact, in this cascade of optimistic projections, we often forget that we did not know how to perform some of the tasks and assignments, simply because they were not part of our academic training.

Reflecting back on the early years of my career, not understanding that I had the possibility to pace myself and think, consult, and research before acting, probably contributed a lot to breaking my first eggs.

Currently, being in a position where I get to recruit young and eager employees, I am definitely more interested in their ability to take their time, research, consult, learn, and calibrate before proposing or activating solutions.

I am much more comfortable with the conviction one has in their proposed solution than their ability to beat deadlines. I remember phrases like: "Are you sure about this? Please go back and adjust it." Back then, what sounded like a bad observation on my work now resonates as an opportunity for improvement, with trust that I am on to something that just needs refining.

Early in my career, I often perceived assignments as a race against the clock, and a challenge to impress my hierarchy by making the fastest completion in history. Today, I often give extra time to young recruits to complete an assignment and make sure they assess all the angles of the problem before providing a tailored solution.

Pacing yourself as a young professional is a very underrated skill that will show your ability to properly analyse a problem or situation before

proposing a solution. It enables you to become more confident during your pitching and to show people in the workplace that you are more than just a doer, you are a strategic thinker worthy of more important assignments.



Pacing yourself will also serve you well during a corporate crisis, when the ability to think straight is what gets you in the task force. Therefore, taking a step back and time to think is not perceived by people with more experience as inability to get the job done, but rather as the ability to propose meaningful solutions.

I don't know if learning that skill earlier in my career would have made any difference to where I am today, but it would definitely have changed some perceptions about me in the workplace.

To my younger self, always remember, your ability to learn is as important as your ability to do.

From your future self,

*Nicolas*

# Veronica Ofosuhemaa Owusu-Ansah

Account Director, Lyme Haus Limited

## *Dear Younger Self,*

As I reflect on my journey as a corporate communications professional, I want to share with you the valuable lessons I've learned along the way. These insights will guide you as you navigate your own path and help you avoid some of the pitfalls I've encountered.

### **Take it One Day at a Time**

Remember that life is a journey with unexpected turns. While it's tempting to rush, focus on steady progress and celebrate your small wins. It's the journey that shapes you, not just the destination.

### **Be Intentional About Growth**

Don't let success distract you from personal development. Continuously seek opportunities for growth, and prioritise self-improvement. Invest in courses, training, and mentorship programmes that will help you to stay ahead of the curve.

### **Cultivate Strategic Networks**

Build meaningful relationships, but be intentional about your network. Identify gaps in your career and seek out individuals who can offer valuable insights and support.

Nurture these relationships, and be willing to offer value in return.

### **Value Time**

Time is a precious resource that cannot be regained once lost. Balance your work and personal life, and prioritise self-care. Learn to say no to non-essential tasks, and focus on high-impact activities that drive results.

### **Speak Up and Seek Help**

Don't hesitate to address concerns or challenges at work. Prioritise your sanity and peace, and know when to let go. Speak up when necessary, and seek help when you're struggling.

### **Plan for Life Beyond Your Career**

Stay adaptable, seek new experiences, and explore international opportunities. Remember that your career is just one aspect of your life. Invest in your personal growth, and prioritise relationships outside of work.

### **Prioritise Rest and Productivity**

It's okay to rest when you're tired. Productivity is not just about being proactive; it's about working smart and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Take breaks, practice self-care, and prioritise activities that recharge your batteries.

### **Final Words of Wisdom**

- Attitude and integrity will take you far in your career. Stand tall in everything you do.
- Don't seek validation from others; the universe will reward you in due time. Focus on delivering perfect service with a selfless attitude.
- Be prepared for the unexpected twists and turns in your career journey. Plan ahead, and don't be caught off guard.
- Cultivate meaningful relationships, and prioritise your professional associations.
- Don't harbour pain or negativity at work.

Focus on delivering results and maintaining peace with your colleagues.

- Remember, you're not alone in your career journey. Stay focused, and don't be afraid to seek help when needed.

I believe in you, and I know you'll navigate your career journey with wisdom and integrity. Keep pushing forward, and never lose sight of your passions and values.

With love,

*Veronica*



# Mabel Adeteye

Head, Brands & Marketing Communications, Wema Bank

*Dear Young Mabel,*

**T**oday, I am taking a deep breath, reminiscing on my sixteen-year journey from press releases to global brand strategy.

When I started my career, I was certain I wanted a career in communications. That clarity is a gift I will always be grateful for. Though PR wasn't exactly the "shiny" career path at the time. Some didn't understand it beyond 'press releases.' But me? I knew better. I saw its power, transformation and fulfillment, and I was willing to wait and work for it.

I remember how it all started. I remember how I constantly showed up and said "yes I can" to briefs. I offered support even when it wasn't my task. I was willing to start from the ground - up, to learn. There was no entitlement, just an intense hunger to grow.

That willingness to "do the groundwork", that spirit of service and support became my edge. And oh, I wasn't chasing the spotlight, I was chasing mastery! Slowly, that diligence opened doors no shortcut could have ever led to.

Still, if I could sit with you my younger self, eyeball to eyeball, I would tell you a few things that have impacted my journey.

First, it's okay not to have all the answers. I pushed myself hard. I was my own toughest critic. Sometimes I thought excellence meant perfection. I stumbled, I was told to redo my work (I can't forget those slides). But through all of that, I become sharper. So, If you are reading this, allow yourself the grace to grow.

Second, never lose that curiosity. It served me well, from reading, taking courses, seeking mentors, asking hard and tough questions. I didn't rely on talent alone. I built knowledge intentionally and deliberately. And more than once, that investment has helped me hold my own in rooms far beyond my years.



**Continued on Page 17**

# NO



# THIS PAGE IS NOT EMPTY.

**IT'S FULL OF EVERYTHING  
WE'VE BUILT IN 20 YEARS.**

**AGENDAS. PRESIDENTS. MOVEMENTS.**



# Mabel Adeteye

Head, Brands & Marketing Communications, Wema Bank

“  
**it's okay not to have all the answers. I pushed myself hard. I was my own toughest critic. Sometimes I thought excellence meant perfection. I stumbled, I was told to redo my work (I can't forget those slides). But through all of that, I become sharper. So, If you are reading this, allow yourself the grace to grow.**

”

I also did something I wish more young professionals would do: I regularly checked in with myself. I reviewed my strengths and weaknesses like I was editing pitch decks (one of the best things I love doing).

Oh my world, I didn't deceive myself for any reason. When I identified gaps, I created plans to close them. That level of self-awareness became one of my professional superpowers.

Lastly, be kind to yourself. I have worked for and across industries; Tech, Media, Government, FMCG, Consulting, Banking, Telco, Aviation, Automobile, Health etc., and sat on both agency and client sides.

Every transition has stretched me. Every crisis taught me something. And every failure humbled me. But one thing I will never forget; My Consistency, Integrity, Word and Curiosity will remain my strongest assets.

## Few take away for my younger self;

- Start with clarity, but stay open to growth. It's okay if your path evolves, just be intentional at every stage of your journey.
- Be available, be teachable and be consistent. Show up and show up fully. Even when the task is small, treat it like it matters, because you may never know when it will.
- Chase mastery, not moments. Awards, big projects, and shiny brands are great, but depth of skill, knowledge and character will keep and sustain you.
- Invest in your learning. Don't wait for your organisation to train you. Own your development, read, enrol, attend and stretch yourself.
- Own your voice. Don't play small. Speak up. Put your ideas forward. Learn to articulate your value and own it.
- Stay grounded in your “why.” The communications landscape will continue to evolve but your purpose is your anchor.
- Don't fake it. Be authentic. Be honest with yourself about your gaps. Be authentic, and trust the journey even when it's not formed. True confidence comes from doing the hard work and being open to learning, not pretending you have already arrived.

To the young professional reading my note to my younger self, don't wait to feel “ready” before you act. Jump in. Be visible. Take initiative. Ask questions. Offer help. Follow up. Be the person who finishes what they start.

The communications industry is evolving and bright, but it requires heart, consistency, and value. Never lose sight of why you started!

Regards,

*Mabel*

# Wura Tunde-Anjous

Head, Country Program Communications, Mastercard Foundation

*Dear Younger Me,*

When I think back to where it all began, I smile. Not because I had it all figured out, but because I didn't. And somehow, that turned out to be a gift.

I had just become a mother, and life looked nothing like the vision board I'd made for myself. I was trying to hold the pieces together, unsure of how my personal and professional worlds would co-exist. Then, an unexpected opportunity came when my cousin offered me a job. It wasn't flashy, and it wasn't part of "the plan," but it was the door that led me into the world of communications and brand strategy. And what a beautiful journey it's been since then.

If I could sit across from my younger self or any young professional just starting out, I'd say this:

**Your path doesn't have to look perfect to be purposeful.** Sometimes, the redirection is the breakthrough. That first role may not come with a big title or clear career path, but it might just be the one that sets your entire journey in motion. Embrace it. Show up. Be curious. Learn everything you can. The seeds you're planting now will bloom in time.

I'd also say this: **you belong, even when it feels like you don't.** There will be rooms where you feel invisible. Projects where your ideas are overlooked. Moments where you'll question your voice. Don't let those doubts take root. Speak anyway. Try anyway. Fail forward if you must but keep showing up as yourself. That's your power.

In the communications world, we're often the ones

“  
**People will remember how  
you made them feel far  
more than they'll remember  
a perfect pitch.**  
”



crafting messages, curating voices, shaping stories. But don't forget that your own story matters too. Make space for it. Let it evolve. Let your values shape the way you work, lead, and create. People will remember how you made them feel far more than they'll remember a perfect pitch.

Also, **be kind to yourself.** You don't need to be in every room or win every award to be doing meaningful work. Rest. Refill. Reflect. Your career is a marathon, not a sprint. Trust your pace.

If you ever feel like you're walking an unfamiliar road, you're not alone. Many of us started out unsure, taking side steps and second chances. But with time, those twists and turns make sense. They make you better, more grounded, and more human in your work.

So, walk boldly. Keep learning. Lead with heart. There's space for you here.

With love and so much pride,

*Wura*

# Blessing Emmanuel-Macaulay

Founder, PR Fusions

## *Dear Younger Blessing,*

**Y**ou won't believe how much power you already carry: quiet, instinctive power that doesn't always look like what the world celebrates. But hear me, just because it isn't loud doesn't mean it isn't valuable. In fact, that ability you have to sense when something is off... that subtle unease when a decision doesn't sit right... that's not just a feeling. It's foresight. It's discernment. It is strategy in seed form. One day, that very instinct will be the thing that saves organisations from disaster. So don't downplay it. Nurture it.

Early on, you'll walk into rooms where no one looks like you or even likes you. And you'll be tempted to shrink. Don't. Being different is not a disadvantage. It's a distinguishing factor. You weren't built to echo every opinion or chase applause. You'll find strength in the moments where you stand alone, especially when your voice is the only one calling out the risk no one wants to see. Let that moment grow you. Let it sharpen your courage.

You'll soon learn that you're not "just in Comms." You're not the girl who writes press releases or drafts captions. You're a strategic advisor. A mirror. A voice of reason in emotionally charged rooms. Your job isn't to flatter, it's to protect, challenge, and guide. And yes, it will be uncomfortable sometimes. You'll have to say what others won't. But that's where your power lies. You don't speak to be liked. You speak to make things better.

One thing no one tells you: PR comes with real power. Not the flashy kind. The shaping-thoughts, steering-decisions, reputations-are-on-your-desk kind. And with that power comes responsibility. You'll need to walk that line daily, balancing truth, timing, and trust. Don't be careless with it. Use it to elevate others. Use it to protect what's valuable. Use it with wisdom.

**Now here's something you'll wish you learned sooner:** document your wins. All of them. Even the ones that don't feel like wins yet. Don't trust your memory, it's not loyal. Good work doesn't always speak for itself. And when the time comes to

remind people of your value, silence won't serve you. Keep receipts. Archive impact. Tell your story, often and well.

And when you feel overlooked, when you're waiting for a seat at the table, stop waiting. Drag your chair there. Or better yet, build a new table. Show up with insight, not just presence. Prove why Comms belongs in the room. You don't need permission to be relevant. Just bring undeniable value.

Finally, ask better questions. Especially the uncomfortable ones. Don't just nod through briefings, probe deeper. Ask why, what for, what does success look like? The more clarity you demand, the more strategic your role becomes. That's how you shift from executor to advisor.

You're growing into someone powerful. Be patient with her. Be proud of her. And don't forget: your voice matters more than you know.

Yours in clarity, confidence and the future,

## *Blessing*



# Lolade Nwanze

Startup Consultant & Fractional CMO, MineTrade

## About the Knot in your Belly

*Dear Lolade,*

**H**ow are you?

Busy as usual trying to connect life's dots?

I know how tough it is to be taken seriously when you are young. That's why I have come from the future to announce to you that you made it and that in the end, it didn't even matter to you. Not because you didn't care anymore, but rather because you found the truth.

Life is not linear and there are several pathways to the end picture. And contrary to what you think, that one mistake will not define you because success is not linear; it is layered. You see that big picture? Hold on to it. Don't let LinkedIn confuse you.

Everyone starts small, and our life journeys will be different. Some get the big career break that changes everything like a magic wand. While some, like you, get incremental opportunities that allow us to make all our mistakes on a safe and manageable scale, where the impact is minimal and the individual is mentored.

Mistakes are for learning and growth, so make them quickly and learn swiftly. I have good news for you; there are more mistakes in the future.

### **The knots in your belly**

About those knots you feel in the pit of your stomach, that nervousness and worry that almost cripples you when you want to make a move or are awaiting feedback, which seems like judgment? Yes, those knots, they don't go away. I know; I know you think they will when you 'grow up,' get that promotion, or join a new job where you are more senior. But they are life's gift to us; to keep us grounded and remind us that we are human.

The knots won't go away, but as you grow, you will get better at handling them. You will come to expect them every time you have to make a big decision like transfer out of state, put yourself forward for a much higher role, ask for a raise that you deserve, make your first board presentation, lead the biggest client account for the company or give your first TedX talk or keynote speech.

You will come to expect them. And when you don't feel them, you will look for them. They will become an indicator of sorts for you - your own personal measuring system. You will master fear and anxiety and use them as career tools. In the future, they will come less often. When you don't feel them, you will know that the pursuit is not big enough, that you need to challenge yourself more, and that you have been in your comfort zone for a little too long. There's nothing wrong with that either. It is okay to not be on the offensive every single time, and there will be lots of time for that in the future.

But while the time is day, pursue those opportunities and master your knots.



### **The cure?**

It is not our accomplishments that make us; it is what we do with them. Dream, dream big. Aspire, because we must be excited about life. And if today's dreams do not excite you, dream again. It is the gift of life; we can be anything, and we don't have to follow the textbook career path to be successful. Be open-minded about opportunities that don't look like 'the next big thing.' Keep defining what success is to you. You are the lead protagonist and you are here for a purpose. And when the knots come again, close your eyes and dream big.

Signed,

*Lolade*

# Mncedisi R. Dlamini

Communications Specialist, Young Heroes, Eswatini

*Dear Younger Me,*

You're just stepping into the world of communications, full of curiosity, ambition, and maybe a little doubt. You're eager to do well, to learn fast, to prove yourself. That's good. Hold on to that. So as you begin, I want to share something I've learned along the way, something I wish I had known earlier.

In this profession, you will meet two kinds of communicators. The first is the textbook communicator. They are familiar with all the theories, frameworks, and tools. They can recite models, perfect a pitch deck, and analyse audience data with textbook precision. This kind of communicator is valuable. There's nothing wrong with being one. In fact, you will need a little of this in your toolkit as you move along.

Then, there's a second kind of communicator. This one brings personality to the table. They take the tools and theories and infuse them with who they are. They turn communication into connection. They don't just deliver messages, they make people feel something. They speak not just from knowledge, but from lived experience, and that, younger me, is the kind I hope you become.

You see, personality is not a soft skill. It's your perspective, your essence, your unique way of seeing and solving problems. It's how you move through the world and how you make your work matter.

When you read classics like *Made to Stick* by Chip and Dan Heath, don't just read to pass an exam or to sound smart in a meeting. Read them like a novel. Read them like you will draw from them every day. Let the lessons sink into your consciousness. Make them part of your rhythm.



It's very important to remember: you're going to mess up. You will write the wrong thing. You will pitch the wrong angle, and you will misunderstand the brief. It's okay. Mistakes are proof that you're trying. Fail fast, learn fast. Every error is a stepping stone, not a dead end.

Don't run from tradition either. There are timeless elements in communications that still matter. Read deeply and often. Write, really write, with a pen if you can. Set a goal to write one or two pieces a month. Let your words find their own weight. You will discover things about yourself you

didn't know were there.

Be curious beyond the obvious. Listen to great radio. Watch theatre. Study storytelling in all its forms. Learn how a pause can speak louder than a paragraph. That's where the soul of communications lives.

Yes, use artificial intelligence. It's a brilliant tool, but don't let it write for you; let it write with you. Let it enhance your thinking, not replace it. No AI will ever have your voice, your life, your lens. That's your power.

This field is going to keep changing. Stay with it. Learn what's new, yet hold on to what's you. Over time, you will carve out your space. You will find your voice. And when you do, you will see how much more powerful communications becomes when it carries your signature. So, as the song goes, all in all, if you get a chance to sit it out or dance, I hope you dance.

From me to you with love,

*Mncedisi*



# Ithiel Kotin Dofontien Ofontien

Communications Professional

*Dear Ithiel,*

I'm writing to you from the future, one that you are shaping each day with passion, energy, and, at times, a touch of impatience. You want to know everything, master it all, right away. You download the latest software, explore the trending platforms, and stay up late trying to understand the workings of new algorithms. I know you well. And I don't blame you. But listen closely to what I'm about to say.

You will accumulate a lot of technical skills, sometimes too many. They will be useful, of course. But remember this: tools change, platforms evolve, trends rise and fall. What you learn today might become outdated tomorrow. You won't be able to chase every novelty forever. And that's not what will make you a great communicator. What will truly make the difference, Ithiel, are your transversal skills.



You must learn to truly listen, not just hear. Read between the lines. Understand the unsaid. Cultivate empathy, because a good communicator is first and foremost someone who understands others.

Learn to think critically. You'll see that people don't always tell the truth, and sometimes, even you won't

**“ Develop emotional intelligence. Because one day, you'll lead, inspire, and champion causes. ”**

have it. You'll need to doubt, question, and cross-check sources. That mindset is what will make your insights meaningful, beyond surface impressions.

Be curious—not only about your craft but about the world. Read. Travel. Meet people. Communication is a mirror of society. The more you understand human dynamics, cultures, emotions, the better you'll be at crafting powerful messages.

Sharpen your mental agility. Being good at using a tool isn't strength. Adapting to it, understanding it, even bending it to your needs—that's what counts. What you need to learn is not just the tool itself, but how to learn.

Develop emotional intelligence. Because one day, you'll lead, inspire, and champion causes. You'll have to manage teams, conflict, doubt, and failure. You'll need to communicate when everything is falling apart. And sometimes, you'll be your own first audience.

And finally, Ithiel, never forget to be authentic. You'll encounter shallow communicators, shiny on the outside, empty within. Never become one of them. Say what you mean, mean what you say, and stay true to what you do.

Keep dreaming. Keep working hard, but above all, work wisely. You don't need to know everything. You just need to be adaptable. And that, trust me, is the real superpower of tomorrow's communicator.

With all my respect,  
Your future self.

*Ithiel*

# Grace Lolina M. Hounsou Houessou

Impact & Well-being Communicator, Benin, Cotonou

## *Dear Younger Self,*

**T**oday I address you, with the impulse of the heart and the deep desire to share a path travelled, with its pitfalls, its discoveries, and above all, its lessons.

A few years ago, I didn't know that communications would become much more than a job for me: a space where my values, my talents and my deepest aspirations intersect.

It all started for me with teaching the German language in 2014 on the basis of a master's degree in Germanistics. I was a German teacher, and I liked to share knowledge with learners. Then, I obtained a Master's degree in Human Resources Management to achieve my dream of becoming an administrative official. I seized the opportunity when I was offered an internship in 2019 at a development project.

I learned resilience. I also learned that behind the administrative and logistical tasks, there was another field: that of human relations, the links to be forged, the messages to be conveyed. Routine set in for a while, but it awakened in me a greater need: that of discovering, exploring, broadening my horizons. I then dared to express to my supervisor the desire to train in graphic design. This first training, the result of my will and personal investment, was a revelation. I discovered the immensity of the digital world and its infinite possibilities.

My curiosity turned into a thirst for learning. In my spare time, I read job descriptions, I explored the skills expected, and I dreamed of what my place could be. This was how I dared to apply for a position as a "communication assistant". My first official step in this area was modest: to organize an operational planning workshop. I discovered that communicating is not just about talking. It's listening, capturing the unsaid, understanding silences, creating links, and promoting. Where some people perceived inaction, I discovered the art of attention.

Discreet successes followed one another: a well-organized workshop, valued media coverage, communication products that brought visibility to the project that recruited. That day, I understood: communication is not a simple ornament. It is a

powerful lever in business, provided that you take full responsibility for it.

Of course, this path has been fraught with doubts and challenges. I had to learn to trust my inner voice. Self-confidence is not born from a simple wish. It is forged through effort, training, trial, error, and questioning. I had to understand that to carry a message, you must first believe in it. I learned to ask for other people's opinions, to express my opinion, to ask for help, to feed myself from our constructive exchanges, and to join spaces where I could grow. My membership in the national association of communicators in Benin, "LES PROS DE LA COMM DU BENIN" was a decisive turning point. Beyond knowledge, I found a network, a place of exchange, and a continuous source of inspiration.



This job is demanding. It tests you and forces you to stay humble. You often shine in the shadows, valuing others. And sometimes you doubt your own light. I, too, have gone through these grey areas: the aborted projects, the unfair criticisms, the nights of doubt. But I have learned to work for impact, not for applause, to measure my success not by likes, but by the lives touched. And this is the real remuneration.

With all my affection,

*Grace*

# Monyévèdo Firmin Tovodounnon

Managing Director of EIG Benin and Vice President of Training at Les Pros de la Comms

## Finding My Path in Communication: The Journey of an African Strategist



**M**y name is Monyévédo Firmin Tovodounnon, and I am the Managing Director of EIG BENIN, a school specialising in communication, digital media, and audiovisual professions.

Certified in Business Strategy by HEC Paris, I discovered communication in the field long before pursuing a Master's degree in Marketing Communication.

My first experience in an agency was a turning point. A Lebanese client was struggling to sell his powdered juice product, packaged in small sachets, on the Beninese market. After conducting a market study, my boss and the team redesigned the packaging, improved the visuals, and launched a multichannel campaign. Six months later, sales had skyrocketed.

That day, I realised something powerful: With communication, you can work wonders. But my beginnings were far from easy. Without formal training in communication at first, I believed that, as a graphic designer, I could handle everything alone. I quickly learned that communication is a chain of expertise, where each role plays a vital part.

### Here's what I learned on the field:

- Don't call yourself an expert too soon.
- Keep learning constantly.
- Don't work in isolation - collaborate.

- Know your audience - that's the foundation of any strategy.

The African context brings its own challenges. Many companies expect a single profile, often a graphic designer, social media manager, or "comms lead", to do everything: strategy, content creation, and execution. Even in job postings or tenders, roles are often poorly defined. That's why in Africa, you must be strategic, adaptable, and a good communicator all at once.

Over time, I understood that lasting success always starts with a clear strategy. Today, I never start a project without a market study, environmental analysis, a clearly defined problem, and solutions that align with both the objective and the available resources. And that's the key. Available resources must guide your choices. Many young professionals design impressive plans that stay on paper for lack of budget. Start simple. Use what you have. Adjust. Prioritise. Deliver results.

I've also experienced a period of distraction after my studies trying to do too many things at once. It was thanks to two mentors, Marcel and Joël, that I found clarity. Since then, I've stayed aligned: strategic communication + education.

### To young professionals, here's my advice:

- In the beginning, try many things. Make mistakes.
- Learn through action. But at some point, pick a direction and become strong in it.
- Chasing every trend keeps you shallow.
- Choosing a focused, long-term path makes you strong, relevant, and impactful.

Today, I mentor others because I know what I would have loved to hear earlier in my journey. Africa needs young communicators who are trained, grounded, strategic, and creative. This requires serious learning, strong mentors, and consistent practice.

**So to you reading this:** go forward, learn, listen, try again and don't give up. Because communication is not just a profession. It's a powerful tool to transform our societies.

Wishing you all the best.

*Monyévèdo*

# Tabvi 'Mellow' Motsi

Brand Strategist, Educator, Storyteller and Author of '45 Lessons From My Father'

*Dear Younger Mellow,*

**Y**ou remind me of Will from Good Will Hunting—brilliant, instinctive, able to make magic from nothing. But unlike Will, you weren't hardened by trauma. You were raised in love. A bit over-sheltered, perhaps—but you had a strong family, and a circle of friends who always saw your light.

You were clear-eyed about your gifts early on. You knew what made you different. What you didn't fully know yet, was how much bravery would matter.

In 2008, when Zimbabwe was in deep crisis, your sister offered to fund your relocation to South Africa. "You're our lotto ticket," she said. "You'll flourish in the media hub of Africa." And she was right. But you chose to stay. You chose to build Mawazo with your childhood friend, Chris Mahakata—an act of boldness and belief in local potential.

But in truth, it was a misfire. Not because the idea lacked power, but because the environment wasn't yet ready. It was a season when creativity wasn't properly valued, and world-class thinking often went underfunded. Still, Zimbabwe made you—your roots, your grit, your lens on the world. That foundation would one day become your advantage.

You also passed up a scholarship to study design in the UK. Then a job in Cape Town, thanks to your late friend Walter Murray. You told yourself you were staying true to your roots. But truthfully? You were scared. You weren't ready to bet on your greatness.

**“Don't be afraid of what God has given you. Your talent is not too small. Your story is not too early. Say yes before you're ready. The universe doesn't wait.”**



Now, as the older Mellow—47 years in, more courageous than ever—I can tell you this: you were always enough. The world was never too big for you. You just didn't see how ready you already were.

Today, you collaborate with purpose-driven teams and bold thinkers in places you once only dreamed of—Charlotte, San Francisco, London, Kigali, Kampala, Harare, and Nairobi. You help shape stories, build brands, and breathe life into ideas. But still—imagine what could've happened if you'd embraced the global stage in your twenties.

So here's the truth, younger Mellow — and to every young communicator reading this: Don't be afraid of what God has given you. Your talent is not too small. Your story is not too early. Say yes before you're ready. The universe doesn't wait. When ideas knock, open the door—because the world needs your voice, your vision, and your bravery now.

With love and light,

*Tabvi 'Mellow'*

# Reece-Hermine Akouavi Adankwenon

Senior Expert in Institutional and Development Communication Top LinkedIn Content Creator Benin (Favikon 2025)

## Letter to My Younger Self

**"Communication is a bridge, a bond, and an act of faith. You will be living proof of that..."**

*Dear Reece-Hermine,*

**Y**ou've just stepped into the professional world. Even as a little girl, your head was full of dreams. You wanted to become a journalist, a TV presenter, just like your big sister, the late Annick Bailey. You carried a journal filled with questions, and a heart brimming with energy.

You already believed that communication could change the world... and you were right. But let me tell you what you don't know yet.

You'll start slowly, step by step, especially if you want to be versatile: print media, radio, television, and digital. You'll make truth-seeking and investigative work your weapons, convinced that truth and justice deserve a strong voice. You'll be rewarded, encouraged, and sometimes hurt by this quest for impact.

Hold on to your faith. What you're building now will sharpen your vision, your standards, your commitment. You'll learn that listening is more powerful than the microphone, and that ethics outweighs scoops. Then, you'll shift paths.

You'll step into the world of institutional and development communications. A new rhythm, new codes. But deep down, it'll still be the same mission: making the essential audible. Turning complex challenges into simple, meaningful actions. Creating connections between people, ideas, and worlds.

You'll learn that communication isn't about posters, two-minute videos, or catchy texts. It's about explaining the unexplainable, translating a message from a donor to a mayor, from an expert to a grandmother, from a project to a community. It's about ensuring everyone understands...and takes action.

You'll realise communication is not a luxury, it's a force. A project without communication is like a song with no music. It dies in silence. And even the

most brilliant message is worthless if it doesn't come from genuine listening. It's not what you say that matters, it's what the other person hears and understands.

You'll see that form can destroy substance. Even the best message, poorly delivered or poorly felt, will be ignored. You'll learn humility. What worked in Kinshasa might fail in Porto-Novo. There's no magic formula, only constant adaptation, the courage to doubt, and the will to keep learning.



This noble profession will take you far. It will wear you down at times. It will make you cry, but also dance with joy. You'll discover: words can heal, visuals can awaken, and well-crafted messages can transform entire communities. And above all, it will teach you that you can make an impact by staying true to your values and true to yourself.

So, go on. Listen. Learn. Fail. Try again. Always with passion and intensity. Never forget: your voice, your pen, your perspective, they are tools of change. Use them to make the world a little fairer, a little more humane.

With tenderness and trust,

*Reece*



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