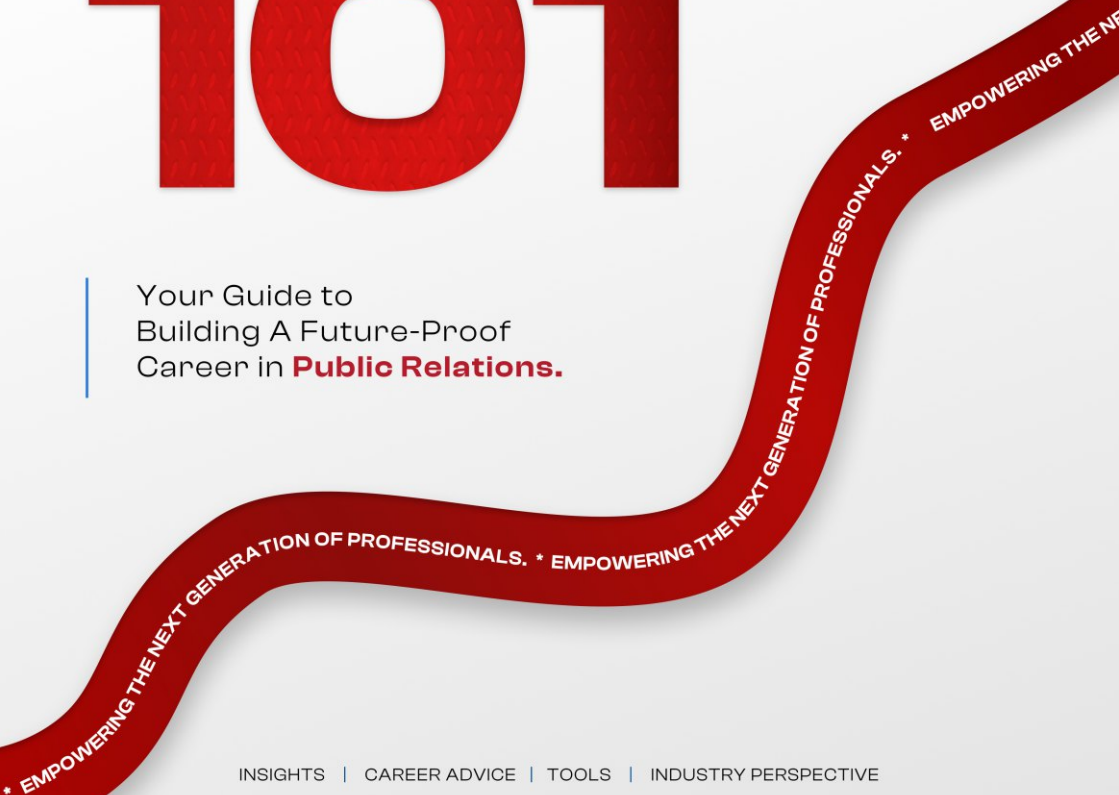




AGENCY 101

Your Guide to Building A Future-Proof Career in **Public Relations.**



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Your Guide to
Building A Future-Proof
Career in **Public Relations.**

* EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PROFESSIONALS. * EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PROFESSIONALS. * EMPOWERING THE NEXT

INSIGHTS | CAREER ADVICE | TOOLS | INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

INSIGHTS | CAREER ADVICE | TOOLS | INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

To every PR and Communications professional reading this, welcome. By choosing this profession, you've stepped into a dynamic field that is constantly evolving, creating new opportunities for those willing to learn, adapt and grow.

For many professionals, a PR agency is where that journey begins. Agencies offer a unique environment to build communication skills, work across diverse industries and clients, and gain exposure to the pace, complexity and collaboration that define the profession.

Yet, for many aspiring professionals, agencies can feel like a mystery. Beyond the work they produce, there's often little visibility into how they operate, what they expect from talent, or what it really takes to build a successful agency career.

That's why this resource was created in collaboration with Redrick PR, one of Nigeria's leading PR agencies especially In celebration of World PR Day 2026 themed: The Golden Age Of Strategic PR.

To provide practical insights from those working within agencies, six PR agencies across Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa have shared their perspectives.

This guide offers a behind-the-scenes look at agency life and practical advice to help you build a successful PR career in the 21st century.

It is our genuine hope that you not only enjoy reading but that you find guidance for your unique career journey.

Yours professionally,

The Comms Avenue





Dear PR and Communications Professionals,

I'm delighted to join The Comms Avenue in celebrating this year's World PR Day and supporting the launch of this valuable resource for emerging communications professionals.

As we reflect on this year's theme, "The Golden Age of Strategic PR", we're reminded that while our profession continues to evolve, the need for thoughtful, strategic and adaptable communicators has never been greater. The future belongs to professionals who are committed to learning, continually embrace change and are prepared to create value beyond execution.

I'm pleased to see The Comms Avenue continue its investment in developing communications talent across Africa through initiatives like this. By creating opportunities for learning, mentorship

and knowledge-sharing, they are helping to shape a stronger future for our profession.

At Redrick PR, we share that commitment. We're proud to support this resource and contribute to a conversation that encourages young professionals to grow with intention and confidence.

Whether you're just starting your career or taking your next step, I hope the insights in these pages challenge you to think bigger, stay curious and continue investing in your development.

I wish every professional reading this a great career journey, and Happy World PR Day!

Warm regards,

Jjeoma Balogun
Founder & CEO
Redrick PR

Acknowledgements

This resource would not have been possible without the generosity and collaboration of the six PR agencies that contributed their time, expertise and experiences: Blue Oceans Rwanda, Brandspark PR, ImageNation PR, Global Media Alliance, Magna Carta Reputation Management Consultants, and Redrick PR.

These agencies have chosen to share their knowledge and offer aspiring professionals access to valuable knowledge. Their openness reflects a commitment to strengthening the future of the PR and Communications profession across Africa.

To every contributor who shared their insights, thank you. We believe this resource will help young professionals build their careers with greater confidence, clarity and purpose.

The future of Africa's PR and communications industry requires investment in the next generation of professionals and this guide is another step towards achieving this goal.



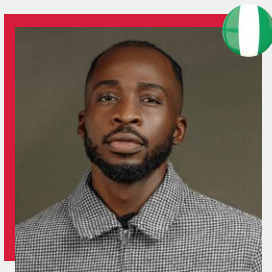
Meet our Contributors

Senior Professionals



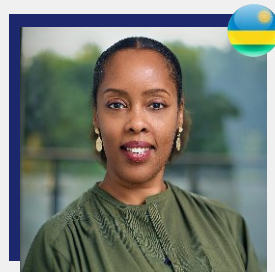
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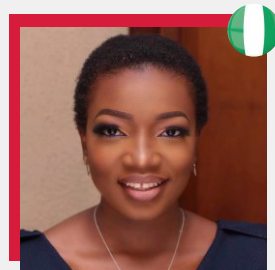
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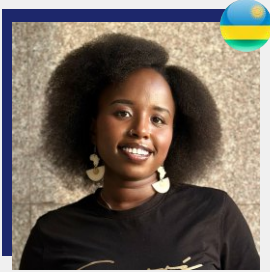


Santher Emene Mbacham

MD/ Lead PR Strategist,
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Meet our Contributors

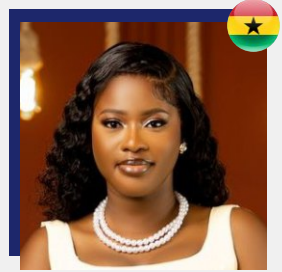
Junior Professionals



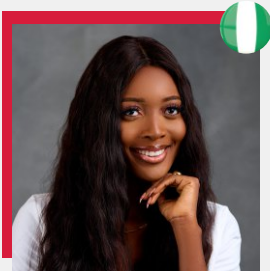
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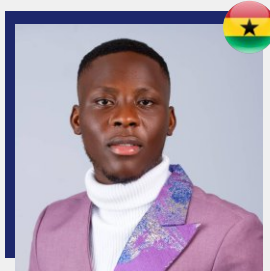
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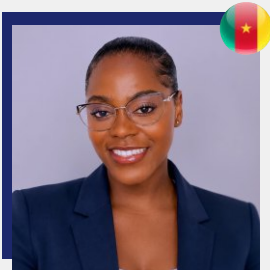
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Imagination PR



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Account Manager, Magna Carta
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Section One:

Brief Introduction to PR agencies



What is a PR Agency?

A Public Relations (PR) agency is a professional services firm that helps organisations, businesses, governments, non-profits, and individuals build, maintain, and protect their reputation with the public, media and with stakeholders.

Unlike an in-house PR team, which works exclusively for one organisation, a PR agency serves multiple clients across different industries. Agencies act as partners, advising clients on how to communicate effectively with their stakeholders, manage public perception, and achieve business or organisational goals.

PR agencies also create and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its various publics, including customers, employees, investors, government bodies, communities, media organisations, and the general public.

What Services Do PR Agencies Offer?

A PR agency offers both strategic and tactical services. Some agencies choose to specialise in one or two areas while others choose a wider array of services. These functions may include:



Why Do Organisations Hire PR Agencies?

Organisations hire PR agencies because they provide expertise, objectivity, specialised skills, and industry relationships that may not exist internally. Agencies have staff that possess a unique set of skills and experience working with a wide range of organisations.

Many organisations maintain an in-house PR and communications team while also engaging an external agency for specialised expertise or additional capacity.

How Does a PR Agency Work?

Although every agency has its own processes, most follow a similar workflow.

STEP
01

Client Discovery: The agency meets with the client to understand their business objectives, communication challenges, target audiences, budget, and expected outcomes. This helps the agency understand how they can come in and what they can do to help the client.

STEP
02

Research: The agency conducts research that helps it evaluate where exactly the client is. Research in industry analysis, competitor analysis, audience insights, media landscape review, and reputation assessment are all done in order for the agency to know what the next steps will be.

STEP
03

Strategy Development: The agency then develops a communication strategy outlining the objectives, key messages, target audiences, communication channels, timeline, budget, and success metrics. This forms a communications plan that will be used to meet the objectives of the clients.

STEP
04

Campaign Execution: The agency implements the strategy by producing content, pitching stories, engaging stakeholders, organising events, and managing campaigns.

STEP
05

Monitoring and Evaluation: The agency measures campaign performance using indicators like media coverage, share of voice, audience engagement, website traffic, sentiment analysis, and social media performance. All of this is done to make sure the communication objectives and business objectives have been achieved.

Section Two:

Is Agency Life For You?



PR professionals typically build their careers either within agencies or in in-house communications roles. While many move between the two at different stages of their careers, others choose to specialise in one path.

Agency life is fast-paced and demanding. It requires professionals to multitask, collaborate, and think on their feet. For many, these qualities are part of what makes agency work both rewarding and fulfilling.

In this section, our contributors share why they chose agency life and what has kept them there.

From Opportunity to Career

For some professionals, agency life wasn't part of the plan. They simply took an opportunity when it came, and along the way discovered a career they genuinely enjoyed.

To be honest, I didn't choose to start my career at an agency. An opportunity presented itself when I joined as an intern straight out of university, and that's where my career started. Along the way, I discovered that I enjoy the fast pace, the variety of clients, and how much you learn in a short time. It's challenged me, helped me grow, and shaped me into the professional I am today.

- Rayian Nimo-Nchang

I did not start out knowing much about agency life. I stumbled into it.

I had just returned to Nigeria in 2017 and, while job hunting, I got an interview opportunity with an experiential agency. I started as a Graduate Trainee, really just an uncertain young man who was happy to have found something to do. But that opportunity introduced me to the beauty, pace, and unpredictability of agency life.

What attracted me to stay is the journey. The process of cracking a brief, finding that big idea in a brainstorm, shaping it through execution, watching people respond to it, and then seeing how it contributes to the client's business.

That entire process still excites me after 9 years. It is very demanding, but there is something deeply rewarding about reminiscing about how you and the team have just turned an idea in a room into something people could see, feel, talk about, and remember. **- Damilola Adeyemi**

I studied communication and got an internship at an ad agency as a copywriter. 23 years later I'm still here. I enjoyed learning the voice of different brands and using that voice to talk to their different audiences. Over time this got me to move from being a copywriter, into strategy and sitting down with different clients to solve their brand problems. **- Paul Karingithi**

Nothing really attracted me. I was handpicked because of my great Journalism background and my writing skills. I also needed a new career direction that gives me more opportunities to explore and be creative. Global Media Alliance was a perfect fit and that has made a more enterprising person with a solidified media background and ethics gained during my journalism career at Ghana Business News. - **Ekow Quandzie**

I actually found myself in agency life by accident. Together with my partners, we identified a problem in the market and decided to solve it. What started as a response to a need gradually evolved into an agency, and before I knew it, I was fully immersed in the world of communications, branding, and business development.

Looking back, I'm grateful for that journey because agency life has exposed me to different industries, challenges, and opportunities that I may never have experienced had I taken a more traditional career path. It has taught me to think strategically, adapt quickly, solve problems, and continuously learn. - **Santher Mbacham**

Creative Freedom

Agency life offers a unique blend of creativity and problem-solving. Every client brings a different challenge, giving professionals the opportunity to develop fresh ideas that go beyond capturing attention to solve real business problems.

The freedom to build something from first principles. After years anchoring the news and later directing communications and protocol in the Office of the First Lady of Rwanda, I understood institutions from the inside.

Honestly what initially attracted me to agency life was boredom. I didn't think broadcasting would push me to use my creative gifts and so I branched out into PR and so far, so good. My ability to be more creative in my thinking is growing everyday. - **Oluwanisola Olakanmi**

Founding Blue Oceans was a chance to bring that institutional understanding to bear across many different clients and sectors at once, rather than being from a single mandate. Agency life rewards range, and range has always grown throughout my career, from trade facilitation and youth empowerment to television production, climate action, cybersecurity, and biomedical engineering – to name a few fields. Few career paths let you move across that many worlds in a single month. - **Diana Mpyisi**

Broad Exposure And Diverse Experience

Working in an agency will expose you to multiple individuals, organisations, industries and experiences. While it's important to note that it is not all glitz and glam, there's a lot to be enjoyed about working within an agency, including how much you learn along the way.

What attracted me to agency life was the variety and the pace. The opportunity to work across different industries, brands and business challenges rather than focusing on just one company. Every client brings a new problem to solve, a new audience to understand, and a new story to tell.
- **Ijeoma Balogun**

What attracted me to agency life was the opportunity to work across different brands and industries. Every client has unique challenges, which means you're constantly learning, thinking creatively, and developing new skills. I also enjoy the fast-paced environment because no two days are the same, and it pushes you to grow both personally and professionally.
- **Sebatso Lemaana**

I've always loved communications and agency life felt like the best way to dive into every side of it; strategy, content, client relationships, campaigns all at once rather than sitting in one lane. - **Ann Njoki Mbugua**

When I was a student, I had always wanted an opportunity to build my career foundation in a way that would make my professional life a bit easy, and starting my career in an agency was the only option available to help me achieve that goal because it would give me the opportunity to work across various industries and experience how these industries operate.

- Espoire Amedorme

What attracted me to PR agency life was the opportunity to work on diverse brands, industries, and challenges while constantly learning and evolving. I enjoy the fast-paced nature of agency work, where no two days are the same and every campaign requires a unique blend of strategy, creativity, and execution. **- Bilkisu Agbaje**

My first experience in Public Relations was with an agency and that's where I discovered that agency life really suited me. Although I later moved into an in-house corporate communications role, I found myself missing the fast-paced environment, the thrill of working on multiple projects simultaneously, and the opportunity to collaborate with clients across different industries.

What really drew me back to agency life was the diversity of the work. It gave me the opportunity to wear different hats—developing communications strategies, managing social media, contributing to creative campaigns, handling media relations, organising events, and working closely with clients to solve different communications challenges. That variety accelerated my learning and kept the work exciting.

I also value the ability to be selective about the projects and brands I take on, allowing me to focus on work that aligns with my interests and expertise. Finally, I appreciate the entrepreneurial nature of agency work, where there is generally less corporate bureaucracy and more room for creativity, agility, and innovation. **- Mafue Woupeya Forchu**

I knew I'd learn faster by working on ten different problems than one. Agency life compresses years of experience into a much shorter time.

- Chiamaka Friday

Section Three:

Laying The Foundation Of Your Agency Career



There are many layers to building a successful career on the agency side. If you're just starting out, it helps to know what hiring teams look out for, so you can get your foot in the door.

Once you're hired, your questions and concerns now centre on dealing with colleagues, managers, and sometimes clients directly. This may look different depending on where you work and the size of your agency, but the core challenge is the same. You now need to know how to navigate the workplace.

Whichever stage you're in, this section offers practical insights from professionals who have walked the path, or are currently on it.

What Agencies Look For In Early Career Professionals

If you're applying to roles in PR agencies, or you're still in your early days, this is a time to learn as much as you can about the basics. There are also certain qualities that can make you stand out when you get hired.

When I'm hiring I look out for three things - Writing skills, Thinking Ahead or taking leadership, and your ability to pay attention to details. These are more foundational things. There are other things that you learn on the job as you go.

Because agency life doesn't give much room for mistakes so you must get the basics and ask plenty of questions for clarity. It really helps and your employers will see that you are really interested and passionate about your job. - **Ekow Quandzie**

Two qualities I believe agencies value most in new hires are a willingness to learn and adaptability. Communications is constantly evolving, and no two clients or projects are ever the same. Agencies are looking for people who are curious, open to feedback, and eager to develop new skills rather than believing they already know everything.

Being able to adjust, take on new challenges with a positive attitude, and remain solution-oriented makes you a valuable team member. Technical skills can be taught, but a genuine desire to learn and the ability to adapt are what enable someone to grow and thrive in agency life.

- **Mafue Woupeya Forchu**

Agency work is fundamentally about trust management, inasmuch as it is also about creative production. Clients hand you their public reputation, sometimes a government's, sometimes a global institution's, and expect you to protect it while also pushing it forward. Candidates who understand that the craft serves the relationship, tend to last. - **Diana Mpyisi**

Attitude is the biggest quality agencies value in new hires.

Of course, skills are important, but many technical skills can be taught. You can teach someone how to develop a plan, come up with campaign ideas, manage a project, write a report, or understand a client's business. What is harder to teach is the right attitude.

For me, that means a willingness to learn, a willingness to support the team, and the humility to take feedback without taking it personally. It can be as simple as bringing positive energy into the room, showing up ready to help, or being the kind of person others can rely on when the work gets intense..

A great new hire may not know everything on day one, and that is fine. But they should bring energy, openness, responsibility, and a genuine desire to grow. Those are the things that make people easier to teach, easier to trust, and easier to build with. - **Damilola Adeyemi**

It's important that you're a team player and remain optimistic about the work and the future. - **Awande Motschi**

Agencies are fast-paced, with no two days being the same. It helps if you are able to embrace change and enjoy the first pace. - **Paul Karingithi**

Early-career professionals need a willingness to learn, openness to feedback, and a positive attitude. Agencies value people who are curious, adaptable, and eager to grow, because skills can be developed, but the right mindset is much harder to teach. - **Ijeoma Balogun**

No two days are the same. If you enjoy routine, agency life can feel overwhelming. But if you enjoy learning, adapting, and solving different challenges, you'll thrive. - **Chiamaka Friday**

What Agencies Wish More Candidates Understood

There are many misconceptions about agency life. From the outside, it is easy to focus on the benefits such as attending exclusive events, receiving products from brands, and celebrating awards and recognition. However, these are only a small part of the job.

It is also easy to assume that agency work is all about creativity. In reality, there is much more to the role than many people realise.

Understanding these realities will help you enter the workplace with realistic expectations.

Many people think agency work is only about creativity and fun events, but it's also about strategy, organisation, and delivering results. Deadlines are real, clients' businesses depend on your work, and teamwork is essential. It's just an environment that requires resilience, hard work and accountability.

- Sebatatso Lemaana

Working in an agency isn't only about having fun or the glamorous bits you see online. It requires hard work. - **'Lola Daniyan**

I wish more people understood that it's not all glitz and glam. - **Oluwanisola Olakanmi**

You need to enjoy the projects you are working on and the clients you handle. Make an effort to know your clients; they are people too. - **Paul Karingithi**

You will have to make a lot of personal sacrifices. Finding that work-life balance isn't always easy but if you are in a self-sufficient team, it makes life a little easier. - **Awande Motsohi**

Your job isn't to impress the client, it's to solve their problem. Sometimes that means pushing back, asking uncomfortable questions, or recommending something they weren't expecting. You'll also spend as much time thinking as well as doing. Agencies need people who ask better questions, not just people who complete tasks. – **Chiamaka Friday**

I wish more candidates understood that agency life isn't a typical 9-to-5 job. While it can be incredibly rewarding, it also requires flexibility. Client deadlines, events, crisis situations, and campaign launches don't always happen during standard working hours, so there are times when you'll need to go the extra mile.

That said, it's not about working long hours for the sake of it—it's about being committed to delivering great work when it matters most. If you enjoy variety, thrive in a fast-paced environment, and don't mind that every day looks a little different, agency life can be an incredibly fulfilling career.

– **Mafue Woupeya Forchu**

it's not all roses and sunshine. Some days are genuinely tough with tight deadlines, shifting briefs, demanding clients but there's light at the end of the tunnel and the growth you get from it is worth it. – **Ann Njoki Mbugua**

I wish more young professionals understood that agency life operates in the fast lane. Things move quickly, priorities shift constantly, and no two days are ever the same. Your ability to adapt rapidly, learn faster than the pace of change, manage your time effectively, and stay proactive is what determines whether you merely survive or truly thrive.

The people who stand out are those who take initiative, anticipate needs, solve problems before they escalate, and continuously invest in learning. More often than not, your growth and progression up the corporate ladder are not determined solely by talent, but by your agility, resilience, work ethic, and willingness to learn and evolve. – **Santher Emene Mbacham**

Soft Skills

Soft skills are essential to building a successful career in Public Relations. Much of the work involves managing relationships with co-workers, clients, media professionals, partners, government agencies, and vendors. How you communicate, collaborate, and build trust with these stakeholders often influences the success of your work.

Developing strong interpersonal and other soft skills will help you manage these relationships effectively and achieve your goals as a PR professional.

Teamwork is very important. Agency work is rarely about one person's brilliance and the strongest ideas usually become stronger when different people shape them. I have learnt to stay resolute about the objective of the campaign, not just my own idea. Sometimes the idea you love may not be the idea that best solves the problem.

In agency life, you cannot afford to only understand the surface of things. You have to be interested in every layer of the onion; the client's business, the audience, the culture, the brief, the tension, the opportunity, and even the things that are not immediately obvious.

Another important skill is the ability to see the big picture. Clients value people who can think beyond execution and understand what the work is meant to achieve for the business. It is good to be operationally sound, but you should not be so operational that you lose sight of strategy, context, and impact.

Finally, analytical thinking is very critical. It helps you back your ideas with data, facts, and insight. In agency life, creativity is important, but creativity becomes more powerful when it is supported by evidence and connected to a clear business or communication objective. - **Damilola Adeyemi**

PR professionals need strong people management skills. Behind every brand are people, and behind every business are people. Building strong relationships, communicating effectively, understanding different perspectives, and earning trust have been essential to succeeding in agency life. - **Ijeoma Balogun**

Soft skills that I recommend are communication, organisation, adaptability, and relationship building. Working in media relations has taught me that being reliable and knowing how to manage people and deadlines is just as important as having good communication skills. **- Rayian Nimo-Nchang**

It's important to have curiosity that survives contact with a difficult brief, and the discipline to follow through is very important. Clients remember the person who made sure that idea was executed properly and on time.
- Diana Mpyisi

Good vs. Exceptional PR Professionals

What sets exceptional PR professionals apart? What do they do differently to earn that reputation? It is easy to become consumed by the day-to-day demands of agency life and lose sight of the bigger picture.

This section is a reminder that building a successful career does not end when you get the job. Excellence is demonstrated in how you approach your work and deliver value throughout your career.

Exceptional PR professionals often don't wait to be told what to do. They take initiative and go the extra mile without seeking validation. They also do what is possible to make the team look good. **- Awande Motsohi**

The ability to create a new path will always make you stand out. I give you an example...when I was the assistant head of PR, I decided to create a new path to support the department and the full business organisation as a whole. I decided to focus on thought leadership and sustainability to drive a good reputation for the organisation. It's the reason the World PR Day festival has become a very good asset for the organisation and for the PR industry. Of course, I did this with the strong support from senior leadership as well as the team. **- Ekow Quandzie**

I believe integrity and reputation are what separate good professionals from exceptional ones. Technical skills and experience can get you in the door, but it's your character that determines how far you'll go. Exceptional professionals consistently do the right thing, honor their commitments, communicate honestly, and earn the trust of clients, colleagues, and partners.

In communications especially, your reputation is one of your greatest assets. People want to work with professionals they can rely on—those who are credible, dependable, and known for delivering with excellence. A strong reputation isn't built overnight; it's the result of consistently demonstrating integrity in every interaction and every decision. - **Mafue Woupeya Forchu**

Exceptional professionals don't just execute, they take ownership. They think ahead, solve problems before they're asked, communicate proactively, and consistently deliver. They become trusted advisors, not just service providers. - **Ijeoma Balogun**

Good professionals deliver what was asked for. Exceptional ones understand the deeper story a client or country is trying to tell and have the range and credibility to help shape it, going further than just executing it. - **Diana Mpyisi**

As an entry-level person in an agency, delivering on the things that are expected of you is all we do most of the time but to climb up the ladder then there is the need to understand business acumen. Learn and understand the business of the business, how the business makes money, what brings value to the business and be strategic with responsibilities in making sure that it contributes to the overall goal of the business. - **Benedicta Akweley Ashong**

A good professional delivers what they've been tasked to do, reliably and without fail. An exceptional one goes further, always looking to do more, do better and improve, both for themselves and for the client. - **Ann Njoki Mbugua**



Technical skills and experience can get you in the door, but it's your character that determines how far you'll go. Exceptional professionals consistently do the right thing, honor their commitments, communicate honestly, and earn the trust of clients, colleagues, and partners.

A good professional ensures the work is done appropriately and meets the deadlines but the exceptional professional meets the deadline, does the work well and understands the business of his/her clients, thereby offering advisories and value to the client. - **Espoire Amedorme**

Good professionals complete their tasks well. Exceptional professionals think beyond the brief. They anticipate challenges, bring solutions instead of problems, build strong relationships, and consistently look for ways to add value to clients and their teams. - **Sebatatso Lemaana**

Exceptional people connect dots. They don't wait for a brief to tell them everything. They're constantly asking, "What's the real challenge here?" - **Chiamaka Friday**

Exceptional professionals go the extra mile and pay attention to those tiny details.

I have also learnt that every moment presents an opportunity to learn something new. Every brief, client meeting, campaign review, mistake, brainstorm, and execution challenge has something to teach you if you are paying attention. - **Damilola Adeyemi**

Skills Highlighted By Our Contributors:

1. Communication & Influence

Communication, Writing, Relationship building/management, People skills, Facilitation, Translating complex ideas, Networking, Managing client expectations, Building trust, Storytelling.

2. Strategic & Critical Thinking

Strategic thinking, Problem-solving, Critical thinking, Research, Analytical thinking, Seeing the big picture .

3. Learning Agility & Adaptability

Adaptability, Curiosity, Willingness to learn, Ability to learn quickly, Resilience, Open-mindedness, Staying on top of trends.

4. Execution Excellence

Time management, Organisation, Multitasking, Managing multiple priorities/deadlines, Attention to detail, Discipline, Execution/follow-through.

5. Collaboration & Professional Mindset

Teamwork, Dependability/Reliability, Proactiveness, Initiative, Positive attitude, Can-do attitude, Leadership, Patience, Self-confidence, Humility/openness to feedback, Responsibility, Professionalism, Work ethic, Service mindset.

6. Digital & Technical Capability

AI integration, Digital savviness, Basic design skills.

Section Four: Dos and Don'ts of Agency life



Starting a career on the agency side is something many young professionals dream about. While there is often a strong focus on getting into the industry, it is equally important to understand the habits, attitudes, and behaviours that contribute to long-term success.

Our contributors share the practical dos and don'ts they believe every agency professional should keep in mind. These insights are drawn from their experiences and highlight what helps people thrive in agency life, as well as the common mistakes that can hold them back.

Dos ✓

Trust & Integrity

- Be honest and transparent with clients and colleagues
- Protect client confidentiality
- Give credit where it's due, especially on collaborative work; recognise creativity and never discredit an idea

Professionalism & Relationships

- Treat colleagues, media, creators, and clients with professionalism and respect
- Build genuine working relationships; volunteer for varied assignments and remember clients are people too

Ownership & Quality of Work

- Take ownership of mistakes by alerting your superiors early and learn from them
- Learn to write well because clear writing is clear thinking
- Always cross-check facts and figures. don't work from assumptions

Communication

- Communicate proactively and often, with both peers and leadership
- Meet deadlines, or flag early if a challenge might affect one
- Learn to read a client's unstated concern behind their stated request

Growth & Learning

- Never stop learning. Stay current on trends, platforms, and technology
- Take feedback and actually implement it; work hard, act with integrity

Wellbeing

- Remain calm regardless of the situation
- Take breaks and go on leave

Don't's x

Overpromising

- Don't promise what you can't deliver. Under-promise and over-deliver instead
- Don't speak for a client beyond what's actually been agreed, or overpromise results just to win business

Wellbeing

- Don't neglect your own wellbeing

Deadlines & Work Habits

- Don't procrastinate
- Don't take on more work than you can manage when already overwhelmed
- Don't confuse being busy with being valuable. Solving problems is what matters

Integrity & Honesty

- Never misrepresent campaign results or data; never forge numbers
- Never compromise integrity for a quick win, or cut corners that could damage client trust
- Never run a smear campaign against a competitor

Communication & Professionalism

- Avoid gossip, office politics, and badmouthing clients or colleagues
- Don't leave communication with stakeholders to WhatsApp alone. Use email as the official channel
- Avoid poor communication generally, including missing deadlines without explanation

Mindset & Judgment

- Don't take feedback or criticism personally
- Don't overthink an idea. Share it and move on
- Don't proceed on a task you don't understand. Ask for clarity instead
- Don't make assumptions. You can just ask questions

Section Five:

Should You Be A Generalist or a Specialist?



Some professionals build experience across a wide range of clients, industries and communications disciplines, becoming versatile generalists. Others choose to specialise, developing deep expertise in a particular sector, service or area of communications.

Both paths can lead to rewarding careers, and the right choice depends on your interests, strengths and long-term goals. Our contributors share their perspective on this career-defining choice in this section.

Early Career Professionals Should Be Generalists

The majority of our contributors were in support of early-career professionals starting off as generalists and they had various reasons for saying so.

Being a generalist provides a broader understanding of how different communications functions work together. As you progress into leadership roles, you'll often be managing multidisciplinary teams rather than doing the technical work yourself. Having hands-on experience across different specialties allows you to better understand your team, make more informed decisions, and provide meaningful guidance. In my view, that breadth of experience ultimately makes you a stronger and more effective communications leader. - **Mafue Woupeya Forchu**

Early career? You have to be a generalist. This opens an avenue for you to learn the majority of the things in the communications space: stakeholder engagement, events handling, budgeting, writing, media relations and a whole lot. I started as that and I was on the generalist journey for more than 6 years.

In my 7th year, I decided to shift the gear to 2.0 to specialised in some areas namely - PR Event curating with events like the WPRD Festival, Campaign Strategy and Rationale, and PR Data and Analytics. And it's been amazing so far. I believe the generalist arena builds you to become an excellent PR person then you begin to specialise. In the specialist zone...you can't afford to make elementary mistakes. - **Ekow Quandzie**

Early career professionals should embrace being generalists. This makes them more rounded as they get a chance to see how everything works. This also helps them make well informed decisions on what to specialise in.

- **Lola Daniyan**

Years ago, I would have said early-career professionals should start by specialising early but with the kind of experience I have gained within these few years, I would strongly suggest starting as a generalist because you get a hold of how it is like to work in different industries or with different skillsets so making the decision to stick to one is easy. - **Benedicta Akweley Ashong**

I think it's good to start as a generalist because it helps you know a little about everything and it's easier to then find and choose a path to specialise in because now you really are sure of what you like and want.

- **Oluwanisola Olakanmi**

It's important to build a broad foundation of knowledge and skills that makes you a well-rounded professional and increases your ability to fit into different roles and opportunities.

Starting as a generalist gives you the chance to discover what you genuinely enjoy and where your strengths lie before choosing an area of specialisation. If you eventually join an agency, that broad exposure becomes even more valuable because agency life requires adaptability, curiosity, strategic thinking, and the ability to work across different industries and disciplines.

Beyond technical skills, it also helps you develop professionalism, personal discipline, communication skills, and resilience, qualities that are essential for succeeding in an agency environment and throughout your career.

- **Mbacham Santher Emene**

I believe early career professionals benefit most from starting as generalists. Building experience across different industries, clients, and areas of communications which provides a strong foundation and helps you discover where your strengths and interests truly lie. - **Diana Mpyisi**

Generalist first. You can't give strategic advice if you've only ever seen one way of doing things. Agencies expose you to different clients, industries and challenges, which helps you develop judgment before expertise.

- Chiamaka Friday

Early career professionals should start as generalists so that they have a broader understanding of the industry. Then, they can hone in on a skill once they are certain of the career path they wish to follow. **- Awande Motsohi**

There Are Exceptions To The Rule

While it's generally advised to grow broad and wide before specialising, this may not be the path for you. One of our contributors shares a slightly different perspective.

I believe early-career professionals can benefit a lot from starting as generalists, but I do not believe everyone's career has to follow the same path.

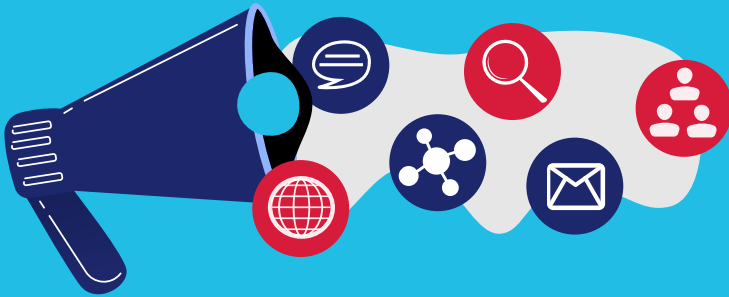
I have colleagues and friends who started out as specialists, and they are also building great careers from that route. But the exciting thing about beginning as a generalist is that it allows you to explore. It feeds the natural human desire for curiosity, adventure, and discovery.

Agency life, in particular, naturally supports that kind of exposure. Today, you may be working on a cultural campaign; tomorrow, it could be a development-sector brief, a beauty launch, a corporate reputation project, or a consumer activation. That variety helps you understand how different industries think, what different audiences care about, and where your own strengths truly lie.

So, while I think starting as a generalist can be very valuable, the more important thing is to stay open. Whether you choose to specialise early or explore broadly, keep learning, keep stretching yourself, and pay attention when new opportunities come knocking. **- Damilola Adeyemi**

Section Six:

Essential Tools for Modern Public Relations Practice



Over the last decade, the profession has become more data-driven, more technology-enabled, and is increasingly being held accountable for measurable impact.

Today's PR professionals are also expected to influence reputation, engage audiences across multiple channels, support organisational goals, and demonstrate the value of their work through data and insights.

This evolution presents significant opportunities for communications professionals. By embracing and understanding digital tools, analytics, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies, PR practitioners can work more efficiently, uncover deeper audience insights, improve strategic decision-making, play a more influential role within their organisations, and help their agencies and clients achieve stronger outcomes.

As the communications landscape continues to evolve, the most successful PR professionals will be those who combine traditional communication expertise with the digital and technological capabilities needed to thrive in a rapidly changing environment.

Recommended Tools

Across Key PR Functions

Project Management Tools, Content Creation and Visual Communication Tools, Social Listening and Strategy Tools, PR Analytics Tools, AI and Productivity Tools

Categories	Tools our contributors recommended	Other Tools to explore
Project Management	Google Workspace, Microsoft Excel, Shared calendars	Asana, Trello, Click Up, Notion, Monday, Airtable.
Content Creation	Canva, Gamma, GoogleSlides, Magnific AI, Broadcast production & editing tools, ElevenLabs, Google FX	Adobe Express, CapCut, Descript, Loom, Synthesia, Figma.
Social Listening	Meltwater, Brand24 BrandMentions, Traackr, Klear, CoverageBook	Brandwatch, Determ, Sprout Social, Hootsuite, Mention, Google Alerts, Talkwalker Alerts, AnswerThePublic Manual social search and hashtag tracking for small teams.
Digital Analytics	Google Analytics, GoogleTrends, Google search	Looker Studio, Google Search Console, Semrush, Ahrefs, UTM Tracking, Prowly, and Muck Rack.
AI Tools and assistants (Heavily recommended)	ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, Kimi, OmniAI, ChatGPT Enterprise	Perplexity

Measurement and Analytics

One of the most important responsibilities of a modern PR professional is measuring and reporting on the effectiveness of communications activities. Beyond executing campaigns, you also need to track performance and use those insights to inform future decisions. As organisations place greater emphasis on ROI,

PR professionals must be able to connect their work to meaningful outcomes, not just report on activities carried out. Understanding data, in other words, has now become a core skill.

When measuring communications performance, key areas to track include:

- **Share of Voice:** to compare brand visibility against competitors.
- **Sentiment Analysis:** to understand shifts in perception and reputation.
- **Media Reach:** to assess the potential audience reached through coverage.
- **Message Pull-Through:** to determine whether key messages are being reflected in media coverage.
- **Referral Traffic:** to measure website visits generated through earned media.
- **Engagement:** to evaluate how audiences are interacting with content.
- **Conversions and Search Visibility:** to connect communications efforts to broader organisational objectives.
- **Executive Visibility:** to track thought leadership and spokesperson presence.

Ethical Use of AI

Artificial intelligence can be a powerful tool for research, content development, analysis, and productivity, but it should always be used responsibly. PR professionals should treat AI-generated outputs as a starting point rather than a final product, ensuring that all information is verified, accurate, and aligned with professional and organisational standards.

Today, AI can help you build the foundation of a 50-page presentation in minutes, develop ideas in ways you may not have initially considered, help overcome writer's block, and generate concepts that can then be refined and elevated by human expertise. It also significantly reduces the time spent on administrative tasks such as meeting minutes, reports, research, summaries, and content drafting.

That said, AI is not replacing PR professionals. It is amplifying those who know how to use it effectively. The real value still lies in strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, relationship building, storytelling, reputation management, and understanding human behavior. AI can accelerate the process, but it cannot replace the judgment, creativity, and contextual understanding that great communicators bring to the table. - **Santher Emene Mbacham**

AI is transforming agency work by making professionals more efficient, informed, and strategic. It automates time-consuming tasks such as research, content ideation, meeting summaries, media monitoring, and data analysis, allowing teams to focus on higher-value work like strategy, creativity, and relationship building.

However, AI isn't replacing PR professionals, it's enhancing their capabilities. The human elements of communications, such as critical thinking, emotional intelligence, creativity, crisis management, and building trust with clients and the media, remain irreplaceable. AI can generate ideas, but people provide the context, judgment, and authenticity that make those ideas meaningful.

- Bilkisu Agbaje Temitope

AI is compressing the distance between an idea and a first draft. Research that once took a junior team member a full day can now take an hour, which means the value an agency offers has shifted further from pure production.

What AI cannot do is sit in a room with a policymaker and sense what they are not saying, or know which line in a statement will read as tone-deaf in a particular political moment. My work has always depended on that kind of contextual instinct, built over two decades that is not easily replaced by AI. Every tool we rely on exists to buy back time for the parts of the work that still require a human in the room: facilitation, editorial judgment, and relationship management.

Agencies that thrive will be the ones who use AI to handle the mechanical work faster, so their people have more time for exactly that kind of judgment.

- Diana Mpyisi

AI is changing agency work by automating many executional tasks, but it makes human insight more valuable, not less. Anyone can generate content. The real differentiator is understanding people, culture, business, and strategy.

The agencies that will thrive are those that use AI to work smarter while focusing their human talent on generating insight, exercising judgment, and providing strategic counsel. The future belongs to those who create value beyond execution. **- Ijeoma Balogun**



PR professionals should treat AI-generated outputs as a starting point rather than a final product, ensuring that all information is verified, accurate, and aligned with professional and organisational standards.

I am fortunate to have entered the agency space with knowledge on AI so it made things a little bit easy for me. From conversations with colleagues who have been in the industry for a long time, all I can say is that AI has definitely made our lives easier. A plan does not have to take days to complete nor do you have to spend days to analyse data so you can make informed decisions.

However, AI makes your work easy only when you know how to use it, one big step to getting ahead of others is integrating AI into our work and to successfully do that, prompting becomes necessary and that means you need to master writing, whatever you do always improve on your writing skills.

- Benedicta Akweley Ashong

I think AI is transforming agency work by making professionals more efficient and allowing them to accomplish much more in less time. It has become a valuable tool for streamlining research, brainstorming ideas, drafting content, analyzing data, and automating repetitive tasks. This gives communications professionals more time to focus on strategy, creativity, and relationship-building—areas where human insight remains essential.

AI has also changed the way we present ideas. Today, we can create more compelling visuals, mock-ups, presentations, and campaign concepts much faster, making it easier for clients to understand and engage with our vision.

I see AI as an enabler rather than a replacement. Agencies should use AI to enhance human creativity and strategic thinking, not replace it. The technology is powerful, but it's still people who provide the judgment, empathy, and storytelling that great communications require.

- Mafue Woupeya Forchu

Section Seven: Final Words of Advice



If you've made it this far, congratulations. We hope this guide has given you practical insights into agency life and what it takes to build a successful career in public relations.

Before we conclude, our contributors have a few final words of advice. These reflections didn't fit neatly into the earlier sections, but they offer valuable perspectives that every aspiring and early-career PR professional can learn from.

One thing I believe is that having managers who are concerned about their subordinates beyond work-related issues, show empathy and are interested in their lives is the best thing every young professional needs to be able to grow fast and discover their hidden talents and abilities.

I believe even though this publication is mainly for early-career professionals, it is also an avenue to advise the managers to show genuine concern about their trainees and get to know them beyond work and be interested in their lives as a whole. - **Espoire Amedorme**

Build a life alongside the career, not after it. Some of the work I am proudest of sits outside client delivery altogether like Spoken Word Rwanda, which has given young Rwandans a platform for poetry since 2011, and the Kigali Global Shapers Hub, which connects young leaders to global dialogue through the World Economic Forum network.

An agency career can consume all of your hours if you let it. The professionals who last, and who do their best client work, are usually the ones who also invest in something that has nothing to do with a client at all. - **Diana Mpyisi**

Embrace every opportunity to learn. Agency life is fast-paced, challenging, and sometimes demanding. Be kind to yourself and don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone. Most importantly, remember that your reputation is your greatest asset. - **Bilkisu Agbaje Temitope**

Agency life can be demanding, but it is one of the best environments to learn and grow. It teaches you resilience, collaboration, strategic thinking, and adaptability while exposing you to a wide range of industries and challenges. If you're passionate about communications and willing to keep learning, it can be an incredible journey to take. - **Sebabatso Lemaona**



An agency career can consume all of your hours if you let it. The professionals who last, and who do their best client work, are usually the ones who also invest in something that has nothing to do with a client at all.

Everyone's journey is different so focus on yourself. Don't give up at the smallest inconvenience. If you don't understand something, always ask for guidance. Acquiring knowledge requires you to speak up. Seek a mentor to fast-track personal growth. Never stop learning.

Learn to interrogate, and not look at things at face value.

When entering agency life, understand your why, but also give yourself the flexibility to pivot if your personal development requires it. - **Awande Motsohi**

As a Gen Z I would say, PR isn't as glamorous as your feed makes it look and it's not as scary as the horror stories either, it's somewhere in between and that's what makes it exciting.

Don't wait to feel "ready." Say yes to the internship, the small gig, the chance to learn. Stay curious, stay coachable and lead with what makes Gen Z different; your native fluency in digital culture and authenticity. Be patient with yourself; the growth comes to those who stay in the room long enough to see it through. - **Ann Njoki Mbugua**

Enjoy the adventure, nothing is permanent. The good times will come and go, so will the bad times. - **Damilola Adeyemi**

About Redrick Accelerate Workshops (R.A.W.)

Redrick Accelerate Workshops (R.A.W.) is the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative of Redrick PR, established in 2018 to prepare young professionals for successful careers in communications.

Created in response to the growing gap between classroom learning and industry expectations, R.A.W. delivers free workshops, mentorship, career conversations and practical learning experiences led by communications professionals. The initiative is designed to equip undergraduates, recent graduates and early-career talent with the knowledge, skills and exposure needed to navigate the workplace with confidence.

Since its launch, R.A.W. has partnered with industry leaders, organisations and practitioners to create accessible learning opportunities that encourage continuous growth, meaningful connections and career readiness.

At Redrick PR, we believe the future of the communications industry depends on how intentionally we invest in the next generation. Through R.A.W., we are committed to creating opportunities that open doors, spark conversations and inspire the next generation of communications professionals.

To learn more about Redrick Accelerate Workshops or collaborate with us, visit www.redrickpr.com

Have questions about R.A.W. or would like to collaborate with us? Contact us!

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 RedrickPR

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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 two thousand (2000) communications professionals from thirty-five (35) African countries in our mission-driven community.

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

To achieve this, we put together programmes, 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.

Our mission in a nutshell is to build the Competence, Confidence and Character of Communications professionals through our programmes and activities. 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, visit www.thecommsavenue.com/partner/

Have questions about this guide? Contact us!

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