

The Proficient Communicator

Becoming an indispensable asset
as a Communications Professional.






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Meet The Author

Hello! My name is Adedoyin. I do a number of things that mostly center around Communications and Ministry. I am a Communications Advisor, an Author, Co-Founder of The Comms Avenue, a Corporate Trainer/ Facilitator and an Avant-Garde Missionary. However, the one I cherish the most is being a child of God.

My faith in God is at the centre of my life and it guides all that I do, including my career. God's divine purpose is also the reason why I am passionate about sharing knowledge and supporting the career journeys of young African Communications professionals.


I haven't always known how my career would unfold. In fact, I've had to take many steps of faith, trusting that all things will work together for good, just as the Lord has promised. I look back at my career journey so far and I am grateful that I have allowed God to fully lead the way.


There is so much that I have learnt from my career journey and of course, there are mistakes that I have made. My desire is to share the things I have learnt to shorten the learning curve of younger professionals in the African Communications industry.


This e-book, "The Proficient Communicator", contains insights and tips on how to work purposefully as a Communications professional and become an indispensable asset known for delivering outstanding results.

Your journey won't be perfect and there will be challenges but I hope this book inspires you to believe that you can have an exceptional career in Communications - one that is both fulfilling and financially rewarding.

Enjoy this book and feel free to connect with me on social media if you haven't done so yet!

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If you have feedback regarding the content of this book or you have a follow-up question for me, please send an email to adedoyin@thecommsavenue.com.



Who is a Proficient Communicator?

“You don’t become proficient by chance; neither is it something that happens overnight. Becoming proficient requires a constant commitment to training and practice as well as having a continuous thirst for knowledge.”

If you opened this e-book and wondered, “What exactly does it mean to be a Proficient Communicator”, don’t worry, I’ll tell you.

Let’s start by defining the word, ‘Proficient’. It means:

- **Able to do something to a higher than average standard: SKILLED.**
- **Very skilled and experienced at something.**
- **Well-advanced or competent in any art, science, or subject.**

From these definitions, it is clear that being proficient means to be highly skilled and competent. If you are proficient at something, you are very good at it.

I like how Merriam Webster further expands the word: *“Proficient usually describes pure ability that comes from training and practice.”*

I’d like you to take note of these words: **SKILLED, TRAINING** and **PRACTICE**.

Being a ‘Proficient Communicator’, therefore, means that you are a Communications professional who has become highly skilled and competent through dedicated training and practice.

It also means that you are a professional who leverages this skill and competence to deliver ideas and solutions that transform organisations, businesses and nations.



You may be wondering, “Can I really do **all of this using my skills as a Communications professional?**” The answer is, “Yes, you can” and this book will show you how.

Before I dive into this, I’d like to wrap up this section with this point:

You don’t become proficient by chance; neither is it something that happens overnight. Becoming proficient requires a constant commitment to training and practice as well as having a continuous thirst for knowledge.

It also requires time to apply what you have learned within different contexts and scenarios.

Finally, **it requires a healthy dose of professional confidence and faith.** Without these, becoming a Proficient Communicator may be a bit of a struggle.

The Top Qualities of a Proficient Communicator

“A Proficient Communicator always works with a strategic mindset. That is, in fact, a necessary quality to deliver results that you can defend and be proud of.”

When I started my career over 13 years ago, I just wanted to do what was necessary to get by - have steady work that brought in a decent amount of money that could take care of my bills.

I really did not have any grand dreams, especially because I stumbled into Communications cluelessly. But there is something that cannot change about who I am as Adedoyin and it's that drive to be excellent in everything that I do.



Since I had found myself in this field, there was this deep desire to become the very best I could possibly be. Getting the nudge from God that this was the career path He designed for me, my career started to be less about making money and more about fulfilling purpose.

I soon realised that I couldn't fulfill purpose if I remained at a mediocre, 'winging it' level. I needed to come up higher and go through the rigour of training and practice to gain mastery that will cause me to stand before kings not just within Nigeria but across Africa and globally.

And so in 2018, I began my own journey to becoming a Proficient Communicator. I'll share more about this journey in the next section. Before that, however, I'd like to highlight the eight qualities I have noticed in senior Communications professionals who are proficient and have gained mastery in this field.

1. Working with a Strategic Mindset

If you get a brief from a client or your boss tells you about a new project that the organisation wants to focus on and your first thought is, "We need to create a social media campaign, plan a press conference and send out newsletters", then you are a professional who works at the tactical level.

A Proficient Communicator never rushes into tactics because they understand that there is a much bigger picture that can only come together through research, data and insights gathering and the implementation of a cohesive strategy.

How do you know that a social media campaign is the right approach to take when you haven't done any research?

How can you tell that the press conference will deliver the right outcomes when you haven't aligned with your senior leaders on what success looks like and you haven't crafted your Communications objectives?

A Proficient Communicator always works with a strategic mindset. That is, in fact, a necessary quality to deliver results that you can defend and be proud of.

2. Having the Ability to Ask the Right Questions

I have always been an inquisitive person. I remember wearing people out with my questions as a child. Only my dad encouraged my curiosity. In my career, I have found that this ability to ask questions, especially the right ones, has helped me to do my job even better.

I have also seen this quality in senior professionals who have become experts in this field. They know how to ask questions. They listen, ruminate, and probe to get the valuable insights that they need to:

1. Understand the nature of the organisational problem or issue.
2. Explore plausible ways that the problem or issue can be solved through strategic Communications.

In addition, they also leverage the art of asking the right questions to skillfully navigate senior leaders to a path that opens up their perspective.

An executive might have a tunnel vision about a problem the organisation is facing and how it should be solved. However, by asking the right questions, you can open his or her mind to fresh perspectives that then makes them willing to receive your recommendations, especially if those recommendations aren't conventional for that executive.

So, a Proficient Communicator must learn to ask the right questions to get the desired results. The best approach will only become clearer when you ask the right questions.

3. Focusing on the Results that are Important

Have you spent time and energy executing a campaign or Communications activity and then at the end of the year, you heard the words, “So, what did Comms add to the bottom line?”

You've definitely worked hard and you saw a rise in your engagement metrics but you found it difficult to show how your hard work converted to results that were important to your executives and senior leaders.



This is what usually happens when Communications professionals approach their work from a tactical level. They see a disconnect between their tactical activities and the results that move the organisation forward.

A Proficient Communicator focuses on the results that are important to the organisation.

“Adedoyin, are you saying that engagement metrics such as new followers and comments on social media are not important?”

No, that's not what I am saying.



Those metrics are important but you cannot stop there and they should not become your only focus. How many of the new followers performed a call to action that was critical to your organisation?

Did they buy, download, subscribe or visit? How did the comments on social media lead to an overall positive reputation rating for your organisation?

The right results are outcome-based and they lead to clear organisational impact. These are the results you need to pay more attention to.

4. Adopting a Proactive Approach and Staying Resilient

A Proficient Communicator is not someone who waits to be told what to do. Neither is a Proficient Communicator simply an order-taker. Instead, a Proficient Communicator thinks ahead and provides valuable counsel accordingly.

It is important to have the foresight to understand what the possible implications of a proposed course of action (or inaction) could be for an organisation and prepare scenarios to overcome any negative consequences that may arise.

Do you know how the latest economic and societal trends will impact your organisation's ability to achieve its corporate strategy?

Are you thinking ahead about what your organisation should be doing to achieve a certain outcome? All of this requires you to adopt a proactive approach.

Beyond being proactive, Proficient Communicators are also resilient. It's not every time that your strategic counsel or suggestions will be listened to.

Sometimes your recommendations are accepted but unexpected roadblocks can threaten their successful implementation. And we face several roadblocks in our work, ranging from limited budgets to lack of executive buy-in.

You have to be willing to go the extra mile to ensure that you achieve your objectives and if you want to deliver the expected results, you just have to be resilient!



5. Working with Excellence

I think I can write a whole book on working with excellence. It is such an important quality, yet I find that it is lacking in a lot of professionals. From poorly formatted documents to little attention to detail, a lack of excellence shows up in many ways in the work we do and even though it may appear to be little, it can have a huge impact on how you are perceived as a professional.

A Proficient Communicator makes the extra effort to be excellent.

I have watched some senior professionals I admire at work and I marvel at how thorough they are and how they insist that things must be done properly. None of that ‘manage it like that’ mentality that I have seen a number of times.

If your desire is to be a Proficient Communicator, then the quality of your work needs to reflect an excellent standard. And can I just point out that excellence is not a one-time thing. **It is that constant commitment to ensuring that your outputs reflect the highest standard you are able to produce.** No shortcuts or trying to cut corners and this applies even when the remuneration is not as high as you’d like it to be.

You must have a minimum standard and that standard should be one of excellence.

6. Having In-Depth Knowledge and Committed to Lifelong Learning

Is it possible to be a Proficient Communicator without knowing your stuff and staying committed to lifelong learning? I really don’t think so. The world of Communications is changing rapidly and if you are not a lifelong learner, you’d quickly find that your knowledge and skill set have become obsolete within a specific context.

Before this commitment to lifelong learning is the foundation of the knowledge and competencies that you possess.



Even though there are creative elements involved in the work we do as Communications professionals, the practice of Communications is not 100% intuitive.

There is a science to it.

There are tried and tested frameworks and models that help you to achieve measurable results. You can only learn this from training or academic learning.

Again, there are no shortcuts to this. When I review Communications strategy documents, I can easily tell when the person who worked on it lacks the foundational knowledge of strategic Communications.

Don’t be that professional who only has surface knowledge of Communications principles.

Do what is necessary to gain in-depth knowledge and develop the relevant skills and competencies that will help you to become proficient.

After you do this, stay committed to lifelong learning to build on the knowledge you have acquired and further sharpen your skills. It is easy to become stale when you don’t embrace learning

7. Working with Confidence

I think for a lot of professionals, confidence is one thing they struggle with at one point or the other in their careers. And there are many reasons why this is the case. One of them is the most famous imposter syndrome.

It is important to have a healthy perception of yourself and your abilities as a professional.

Yes, there are times you may find yourself in rooms where you are wondering, “What am I doing here? What value can I add in this space filled with great men and women?” However, when those thoughts arise, you need to be able to hold your head high and remind yourself of your superpowers as a Communications professional.

You’re not always going to know everything and there will be times the subject matter being discussed will fly over your head, but you must remind yourself that there is value you can bring to the table because of your track-record and how competent you are.

I must confess that having in-depth knowledge and knowing your stuff does bring its own level of confidence.



I cannot tell you how getting a Masters degree in Communications significantly boosted my level of confidence. I knew exactly what I was talking about because I had received academic training from a reputable business school in Europe.

So, if you want to be a Proficient Communicator, you have to work on your confidence. This is because Proficient Communicators speak up and speak out when they need to. No cowering or shrinking back!

I’d like to add one more quality which I have seen in professionals I really respect. Not everyone has this quality but I believe it should be a key part of being a Proficient Communicator.

8. Being a Generous Professional with a Generous Spirit

Over the course of my career, I have come to appreciate the power of generosity as I have navigated the path God has set before me in the Communications industry.

Have you felt that deflating feeling of wanting to do something or play in a space but there’s no information on how to get started?

You don’t know who to talk to, who to benchmark against and learn from. It makes the path a lot harder because you have to figure things out on your own.

I think this is not necessary, especially when there are people who have walked the path that you are planning to embark on. Professionals who are generous and take the time to look back and hold the hands of those coming behind them bring a ray of light to what looks like a dimly lit maze.

I know it’s not easy to commit to sharing knowledge when you work in an always-on, round-the-clock industry but I believe a Proficient Communicator is someone who is intentional about helping others to navigate their own career journey better, even if it is just one person.

Whatever level you are right now, I’d like to encourage you to think about how you can pay it forward and become more generous with your knowledge and time as you rise in your career.

Proficient Communicators don’t want to rise and shine alone; they want to take as many people as possible along with them as they rise and shine.

Unpacking the Bigger Picture: Becoming a Proficient Communicator

“Mastery is not gained through head knowledge alone. You must be able to skillfully apply what you know to real life situations and different contexts to achieve the desired results.”

Now that you know the key qualities of a Proficient Communicator, let’s go back to 2018 - the year I began my journey to becoming a Proficient Communicator. I’d like to share with you the intentional steps I took that have continued to pay off.

Before I do that, however, allow me to highlight some things that came as a result of becoming proficient in my practice of Communications:

- **A boost in professional reputation.** I became known as someone to go to for solutions and results. I also became known as someone to engage if you want things done properly and on time.
- **Becoming an indispensable asset.** This was actually an interesting one. I began to see clients and organisations become adamant about working with me, even when my schedule was completely packed. I also started getting more recommendations and referrals.
- **Broadening of career options.** This is one of the things I love about being a Proficient Communicator. It expands your options. You don’t have to be at the mercy of one organisation or a 9 to 5 because you have competencies and skills that are highly sought after.
- **Expansion of earning potential.** I think this flows naturally from the two previous points. Being highly competent brings new career opportunities and it definitely expands your earning potential too.
- **Increase in negotiating power.** I have really appreciated being able to negotiate for the things that are truly important to me when dealing with organisations and clients. Most of the time, this works in my favour because I understand what I am bringing to the table and the person at the other end of the table also recognizes that.
- **Helps you to leave a good legacy.** This is the most fulfilling for me. As I learn, I share what I know and help other professionals to navigate their own professional journeys. I’d like to believe I am leaving a good legacy that I can be proud of in decades to come.



Some of the points I have listed above may resonate more with you than others.

At the very least, I hope one of them resonates and creates in you a deep hunger to become a Proficient Communicator.

If you are ready to begin your journey, these are the intentional steps I have taken in my professional journey to become a Proficient Communicator:

▶▶ Doing a Skill Audit

In 2018, I had a Brand Communications agency and while we were doing well, deep down I knew there was more. I didn't plan on creating an agency and we simply went with the flow as more briefs came in. That means that I was learning a lot on the job and there were a lot of things that I did intuitively.

I sat down one day to think about where I wanted to go in my Communications career. Even though I stumbled into the career cluelessly, I was clear at this point that this was something that I wanted to do for the rest of my life. Or for a long time, at least. And since this was the case, I needed to do it well and aim for the top.

After spending some days reflecting and praying, I decided that my ultimate goal would be to take on the role of a Chief Communications Officer (CCO) at a renowned global organisation. I'm sorry I don't think small! Since I was clear about that, this was the next question I had to answer - **“What do I need to do to become a CCO?”**

Even though I didn't put a specific timeline, I was very clear about the fact that this would be a journey and I needed to take the steps that would lead me to my desired destination.

To answer the question of what I needed to do to become a CCO, I decided to do some research.

What are the competencies and skill sets that a CCO needs to have? That's the question that I wanted to answer through my research. After reading several articles on LinkedIn, I had my answer. I was able to create a CCO persona that I could benchmark with.

Looking at the profile I had created, I needed to know exactly where I was in terms of my skill set and mastery of the required competencies. This is when I decided to do a skill audit. I started by listing my areas of strength and expertise.

Then I went on LinkedIn and I reviewed the profiles of Africa-based and global Communications professionals to see the skills they had. I quickly discovered that the CCO title wasn't quite common across the world but I found titles such as Communications Director and Vice President of Communications, which was also good enough.



I listed the skills and highlights from the experience section of the profiles I reviewed on LinkedIn. When I put this list in a table with the skills I already possessed, the gaps started to appear.

I quickly discovered that:

1. There were several competency areas that I had not been exposed to in my work.



2. If I wanted to occupy the highest Communications role or position in a global organisation, I needed to have either a Masters degree or a recognised professional certification.

3. I needed to be a member of a recognised global professional association.

By the end of my skill audit, I realised that there was a lot I didn't know and the best way for me to close that gap was to get a degree in Communications where I could learn the theory and principles.

Through divine direction and leading, I eventually went to IE Business school where I obtained a Master's degree in Corporate and Marketing Communications and I can tell you this, it was a game changer for me.

If you want to learn how to do a Skill Audit, please watch this [video](#).

▶▶ Defining How I Wanted To Be Positioned

Going to IE was such an eye-opener for me. Not only did I learn a lot of new things, I learnt how to do the things I was good at even better. I learnt the frameworks and principles behind the things I did intuitively and I cannot begin to tell you what a difference this has made to my practice of Communications.

One particular course in my final semester especially stood out. It was called Communications Consulting. We were essentially taught how to function as a Communications Consultant and the strategies for positioning ourselves to become successful consultants.

This course really got me thinking about what it would be like to work as a Communications Consultant instead of being a CCO, the kind of consultant I wanted to be, the kind of work I wanted to do and how much I'd like to earn from working as a consultant.

It is important to begin to paint a picture of what you want to achieve and where you'd like to go in your career. You need to be able to define what you want to be known for, the kind of organisations or clients you want to work with and the kind of reputation you want to have in the field.

I was clear that I wanted to be known as a consultant that brings innovative solutions and ideas. **I wanted my results and depth of knowledge to set me apart.**

I also wanted to be positioned to work with global organisations as a consultant. I didn't want to be limited to Nigeria. I wanted to work with clients across Africa and the world at large. As I write this, this has actually become my reality.

When I finished from IE, I spent two months in Spain based on instructions from God. I really didn't know what opportunities were available there but I knew it was the perfect time to begin to sow the seeds towards where I wanted to be.

A conversation with a fellow IE 'alum' helped me to start sowing these seeds.

Just before my official graduation. I was added to the Nigeria Alumni group on WhatsApp and I discovered there was a lady who had done the same programme I did and was working in Communications in the UK. I reached out to her to have a quick chat about where I was in my journey and where I was hoping to get to.

She encouraged me to join a professional association and invited me for an open session the IABC UK chapter was hosting later that week. Since I had a lot of free time on my hands, I decided to sign up. I found the session quite interesting but I didn't say much. There I was - a woman from Nigeria who was in Spain for an extended holiday and was trying to figure out her way to becoming a Chief Communications Officer.



At the end of the one hour time slot allotted for the Session, the moderator announced that people could drop off if they had other things to do but the meeting room would still be open for those who wanted to stay on. Again, not having much on my plate, I decided to stay. That was a good decision.

I was spotted and asked to share about my journey. I was as honest as I could be and when I was done, I was told to connect with a particular gentleman on LinkedIn, include a note that they referred me to connect with him and ask for a quick chat

They really believed the guy could be of help. I didn't even waste time. When the meeting was officially over, I went straight to LinkedIn and dropped the note for the gentleman. I wasn't sure what to expect but he responded to me the next day and before I knew it, his PA reached out to schedule a virtual meeting.

Even though I only had 30 minutes of this gentleman's time, that conversation was a defining one. He opened my eyes to things I hadn't considered and he expressed faith that I would be successful in my pursuit. This meant a lot to me!

After that conversation, I knew that I had to make joining a global professional association a priority. Even though I couldn't afford the annual membership fees at that point, I had the CIPR and IABC on my radar.

The next thing I did was to follow these associations and their related pages on LinkedIn. Of course, I connected with the people I had interacted with during the IABC UK chapter meeting. Finally, I was clear that I wanted to share valuable content on LinkedIn. I wanted to teach what I knew to as many people as I could and I was going to use the platforms available to me to do this.

I shared my first Comms content on YouTube and I haven't looked back since. I eventually joined the IABC a few months after my conversation with the gentleman and I joined the CIPR over a year later.

As I look back now, that decision to follow the right people and pages, join professional associations and engage actively within these associations helped me to become better positioned for the opportunities that I wanted.

I also got to learn more about the practice of Communications in other regions. There's a longer story here but at this point, my focus had now shifted from becoming a CCO to becoming a highly-sought after global Communications Advisor to organisations and senior executives and I had this strong sense that I was on the right path.

We worked together on the proposal, went through several layers of interviews and after a few weeks, we got the brief.

I moved straight into developing a Communications strategy with my colleague and we started to lay the foundation for execution.

Don't just stop at writing or sharing content about what you know. Make sure this knowledge is backed up with actual experience.

Expanding My Experience and Preparing for the Opportunities

So, I had completed my Masters degree at IE Business school, I had joined a professional association and I had connected with global Communications professionals. One thing was still missing though - my work experience was still largely African and mostly Nigerian.

If I wanted to be a Communications Advisor who works with clients and organisations from across the world, I knew that I needed to expand and diversify my experience. Now, what I had to figure out was the how. How would I get this done?

I talk about God a lot because I have seen Him show up in so many ways in my career. Right when I was trying to figure out 'the how', I got a message from a colleague who was about to send in a proposal to handle a brief for a UK-based organisation. To say I was excited would be an understatement. It was meant to be a 12-month project focused on different regions so it really did appear to be exactly what I needed.

However, before we could launch in full execution mode, the organisation unexpectedly pulled the plug. It was so disappointing. I had one of my, "God, why did this happen" moments. I just didn't understand but I chose to stay in faith.

Another brief did come in but not on the scale of the one that was cut short. But it was still a good brief for expanding my experience as it involved creating a PR strategy for a product that would be launched in Nigeria and the UK.

Forgetting the disappointment of the past, I dived into the brief and I was really pleased with what we were able to achieve. Even though I didn't realise it then, that brief was a springboard that God used to open the path to engage with organisations beyond Nigeria. Working with an extremely creative team helped me to put into practice the things I had learnt from IE and see tangible results.

This point is very important because mastery is not gained through head knowledge alone.

You must be able to skillfully apply what you know to real life situations and different contexts to achieve the desired results. **Don't just stop at writing or sharing content about what you know. Make sure this knowledge is backed up with actual experience.** Doing this has made a huge difference for me. Being able to practically apply Communications frameworks and principles and also test out certain ideas has helped to greatly deepen my expertise.

As I started to work on more global briefs, I became more intentional about attending webinars and conferences where I could expand my knowledge and also meet new people within the Communications industry. Soon enough, I was connected with professionals from Hungary, Norway, Dubai, India, Russia and many other countries. I remember being invited to join the recording of a podcast by the host who was from Sweden. I totally enjoyed the experience and I have also enjoyed having several virtual one-on-one chats with professionals from across Africa and in other regions of the world.



Aside from expanding my experience and network, I also worked on my professional profile and other personal brand assets. I had an encounter that made me realise that I wasn't fully prepared for the opportunities I had been praying for. I received a message from a client I had done some work for several years ago.

He had been following me on LinkedIn for a while and he had recommended me for a particular engagement with an organisation. He called to give me a heads up. The representative from the organisation reached out and asked me to send them my profile. They wanted to make a final decision of who to go with from a pool of recommendations.

I sent my regular profile which was a few paragraphs in a PDF document. I don't know what it was...actually I do, it was the nudge of the Holy Spirit, but as soon as I sent it, it dawned on me that the profile I had wasn't good enough for where I was going. **It didn't project my skills and experience in the most excellent way. I, therefore, was not surprised when the rep gave me feedback that they chose someone else.**

However, something she did that I deeply appreciated was that she told me that I needed to work on my profile because what I had sent didn't showcase the entirety of my expertise. She went the extra mile to send me a sample profile she thought I could use as a template. When I saw the sample profile, I knew exactly what I had to do. Within a day, I worked on and designed my professional profile which I still use today. You can check it out [here](#).

Although I didn't realise it then, all of these steps were preparing me for the opportunities that were coming. When I have one-on-one sessions with professionals, I always ask, **“Are you preparing for the opportunities that you are seeking for?”** **The season of waiting and silence are the best times to get prepared.** It may just be a bit too late to start working on expanding your expertise or developing your profile just at the point where the opportunity arrives.

So, you have to ask yourself, **“What do I need to get to where I want to be? What can I start working on now?”** I’d like to add **one more question, “What do I have in my hands?”**

The journey to professional success is not a sprint. It is a marathon with many milestones along the way. It is also a journey where through practice, application and a commitment to professional development, you will get better as you go along.



I remember when I started actively creating content for YouTube. When I knew that I wanted to teach and share knowledge, my YouTube channel was the thing that I had in my hands. Even though I didn’t have the perfect equipment, I decided to just start. The goal was to use the equipment that I had as excellently as I possibly could and I am glad I started when I did.

While the quality of the content is not where I want it to be yet, I do wonder what would have happened if I didn’t start with what I had in 2022. I have recorded over 70 Communications-focused content which has been viewed cumulatively by thousands of professionals and the feedback I have received have inspired me to keep going.

What does this mean for you? **You may not have all you need to fully achieve your goal but there is something in your hands.**

How well are you using it? The iPhone you see today had version 1.0, 2.0 before the version that’s currently available for sale. You can’t always wait until all the conditions are perfect. Just start with what you have, gain traction and watch how things will begin to fall into place.

So, how well are you using what you have in your hands and how well are you preparing for the opportunities you are seeking for?

▶▶ **Going the Extra Mile to Deliver Exceptional Results**

I was on my way to a meeting one day when my phone rang. I hesitated to pick up my phone because I had just arrived at the venue where the meeting was taking place. However, when I looked at the screen of the phone and saw who was calling I knew I had to pick the call.

The call was from a respected mentor who had an urgent need. There was something that needed to be done which she had given to another Communications professional to handle because she knew I had a lot on my plate. Three weeks later nothing much had been done and there was a time-bound deliverable that needed to be submitted.

“
In my journey so far, I have realised that character and professional reputation are just as important as your skills and competencies but a lot of professionals tend to take their professional reputation for granted.
”

With the deadline being dangerously close, she had no choice but to reach out to me to help. “Adedoyin, I don’t know who else can turn this around.”

Even though the timeline was tight, I was able to jump on it and send the final deliverable within 48 hours. I remember the mentor saying, “I should have just come to you first.”



In my journey so far, I have realised that character and professional reputation are just as important as your skills and competencies but a lot of professionals tend to take their professional reputation for granted.

How you do your work is very important. Are you willing to go the extra mile and are you pleasant to work with?

Are you committed to excellence and do you deliver good work in a timely manner? Can your clients and bosses go to sleep knowing that whatever you deliver will be to the highest standard. Can you be trusted to work to the highest standards of ethics and integrity?

To become a Proficient Communicator, you must be able to go the extra mile to deliver exceptional results. This is one of the things that will give you a competitive advantage in the industry.

You should deliver what you say you will deliver and put in your best towards every task you are given.

For me, my drive for excellence comes from my understanding that the work that I do is for the glory of God. I want God to be pleased with whatever comes from my hands and this is why I rely heavily on the Holy Spirit as I do my work, from developing strategies to advising clients.

What mechanisms will you put in place to ensure that you always deliver excellent work. Remember that you also need to be mindful of your character. No one is perfect but if you have character flaws that hinder your career progression, then you need to work on it. Don’t be that person who is rude, tardy or difficult to manage.

This is why I am very intentional about my professional development and personal growth. I don’t leave it to chance. Every day, I must get better, I must do things more effectively and I must also track, measure and document the impact of the work that I do. You should do this too.

▶▶ **Enjoying the Journey**

I’ll confess that this is not something that I have fully mastered but I have a deeper understanding of why it is important to enjoy the journey.

Sometimes, we’re so focused on the destination that we lose sight of the blessings and wins of the present moment.

That was me for so many years. I’d do really good work but I’d move on very quickly and put all my attention on the next brief. No time to pat myself on the back and say, “Adedoyin, well done!” I soon realised that when you are destination focused, you never really arrive because the goal post is always shifting.

It is important to pause and enjoy where you are now as you work towards your desired destination of mastery and professional success.

I am learning to celebrate my wins. I am learning to take well-deserved breaks - go to the spa or go on vacation when I can afford it. I work hard and I should be able to enjoy the fruits of my hard work.

Working in the Communications industry can be quite 'round-the-clock' because there's always something to do.

We are 'always on' as Communications professionals because anything can happen at any time. Despite this, balance is required.

Rest is important. Moments to look back and reflect on the journey so far should be protected at all costs. So, enjoy the journey as you go along and acknowledge and celebrate your wins.

I hope you've been able to take away a thing or two from the intentional steps I have taken so far.

Every day, I must get better, I must do things more effectively and I must also track, measure and document the impact of the work that I do. You should do this too.

Here's a quick summary of the steps you should take to become a Proficient Communicator:

1. **Do a skill audit and create a professional development plan.**
2. Define what you want to be known for.
3. **Aim for mastery of the key communications competencies.**
4. Look out for learning and growth opportunities.
5. **Leverage LinkedIn strategically and follow the right people.**
6. Join a professional association and attend their conferences, summits and events.
7. **Expand your learning beyond Communications and PR topics so that you can understand things from multiple perspectives.**
8. Work on your CV and be prepared for the opportunities you want.
9. Be committed to excellence. Stay curious.
10. **Protect your professional reputation. Deliver what you say you will deliver.**
11. Track, measure and document the impact of your work. Learn how to communicate this impact in a language that your stakeholders understand.
12. Speak up, speak out and be seen.
13. Volunteer purposefully.
14. **Have an abundance mindset and find ways to support other professionals around you.** Sharing your knowledge will not limit the opportunities you can gain access to.
15. Celebrate your milestones and enjoy the journey!

Strategies for Getting the Right Results

If you don't understand how the organisation operates, how it makes money and what the key drivers of growth are, you really don't have any foundation to build your Communications strategy on.

Have you ever developed a Communications strategy that you were very proud of but after execution, you didn't achieve the results that you wanted to achieve? Or maybe you achieved some results but they were not the results that your boss and executives were expecting?

A lot of Communications professionals find themselves in this boat and this is usually due to a lack of proper understanding and application of strategic Communications frameworks and principles.

As I stated at the beginning of this e-book, if you continue to remain at the tactical level, your results will continue to be sub-par and they won't meet the mark.

To get the right results, you have to be strategic. There is no shortcut for this unfortunately. This means that if you haven't done so yet, you need to learn the strategic Communications framework and how to apply it in different contexts.



There are many trusted training providers that have courses that will help you to bridge this gap but I'd like to highlight some essential things that will help you to deliver the right results:

1. Have a thorough understanding of the organisation and the drivers of growth.

You cannot create an effective Communications strategy for an organisation you do not understand. If you don't understand how the organisation operates, how it makes money and what the key drivers of growth are, you really don't have any foundation to build your Communications strategy on.

Take the time to gain an in-depth understanding of the organisation.

Speak to other employees across different functions. Speak to the senior leaders. Read the organisation's strategy documents and any other documents that will give you insights about where the organisation is coming from and where it is heading to.

2. Conduct appropriate internal and external research.

Once you gain this understanding of the organisation, you need to do some research.

What is working and what isn't. What are the pressing problems and why do these problems exist?

It is not enough for your boss to tell you to develop a Communications strategy to attract a new audience segment. You need to research this new audience. You need to know what will appeal to them.

You also need to know whether the expansion to a new audience segment is the best move for the organisation in light of the context and current factors within the organisation.

There are so many questions you need to ask, a lot data to collate and insights to extract to begin to answer the relevant questions that will help you to develop your strategy. Never skip this critical step.



3. Setting objectives that are aligned with key organisational goals.

Now that you have the foundational information you require, the next step is to develop your Communications objectives.

It is important that your Communications objectives are aligned with the organisation's goals. **It is, therefore, always a good idea to outline the top three to five goals of the organisation and use that to develop your Communications objectives.**

Your Communications objectives should never be vague or generic. Having an objective such as, "Attract new investors" or "Create buzz for the event" will not bring measurable results. What you need instead are objectives that are SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound.

There is a lot more that goes into creating well-aligned and measurable objectives.

If all of this is new to you, you can start by watching this [video](#) on my YouTube channel and then enroll for a credible course or programme to close your knowledge gaps.

4. Get the buy-in of critical stakeholders, collaborators and implementers.

After you have defined your objectives, you'll need to analyse your target audience, develop your strategy, create your message and outline the tactics you want to deploy to achieve your objectives.

You can review this bite-sized [Strategic Communications Course](#) to gain practical knowledge on how to create an effective Communications strategy.

Once you've started to formulate your strategy idea, it is important to get the buy-in of the critical in-house or internal stakeholders, collaborators, supporters and implementers.

Communications professionals usually make the mistake of spending time developing a strategy and plan, only to discover that they cannot implement it due to resistance from a key department they need to engage with.

“ Carry people along and don't function in a silo because you will need others to successfully implement your strategy. ”

Or sometimes, your boss just doesn't like what you have come up with. This can be quite draining especially if you spent time and effort developing the strategy.

One of the best ways to avoid this is to carry people along the ideation and strategy creation process. This is especially important for colleagues who will play a key role in implementation. For example, the tech team. **You cannot create a plan that involves getting 10,000 hits to your website in one day when the current capacity your website can handle is 5000 hits.** Of course, your tech team will reject such a plan, especially if there isn't an immediate budget to upgrade the capacity of the website.

Carry people along and don't function in a silo because you will need others to successfully implement your strategy.

5. Get your baseline figures and measure the metrics that matter.

Do you know why it is sometimes difficult for you to articulate what Communications contributed to the bottom line? It is because you are not paying attention to measurement and you are not connecting the dots properly.

It is true that Communications is not Sales. **However, our activities generate leads, improve understanding, create interest and so on.** All of these are necessary steps that lead to the final action of sales.



People hardly make a purchase decision for a completely new product on a whim or engage with your organisation out of the blues. Something must have happened for them to choose your brand - an engagement with your brand online or offline, recommendations from a trusted friend, or a trial from an event. **Something must have attracted and appealed to them. Communication is key to creating this awareness and appeal.**

So, rather than get upset when you are being questioned about what you brought to the table during the year, start to measure the metrics that matter.

That event that you did, how many people registered? How many people eventually attended? What kind of people were in the room? How many indicated interest in performing your call to action? How many were successfully followed up by either the Sales or Marketing team? How many eventually made the purchase or subscribed or did whatever it is that you wanted them to do? How much came in from this group of people?

I hope you can see how the work you do leads to the bigger picture of the bottom line. **The problem has been that we stop at social media or event attendance metrics but there is more.**

Let me also add that it is important to have your baseline figures. This is what will help you to determine whether you have achieved your objectives or not. How can you determine if understanding of your key messages has actually improved by 20% when you don't have any baseline figures you are working with.

Growth or a lack of it, has to be measured against something.

You know you have added weight when the number on the scale increases or when your clothes begin to feel tight. There is something you are benchmarking against.

The same applies to your Communications objectives and activities.



Gaining mastery in measurement is not an overnight thing, but if you begin to pay attention to what matters today, you will see the results over time and your measurement skills will improve. Again, please enroll for a good course or programme to close the learning gaps here.

So, make sure you become skilled at looking for and spotting correlations between your Communications activities and business outcomes. You can only showcase the difference your work is making when you track the right things.

6. Evaluate and review as you go along.

Another intriguing thing I have seen Communications professionals do is to wait until the end of an implementation phase to determine whether or not their strategy was successful. This is not the best approach at all and I'll tell you why.

Imagine you are implementing an activity or tactics over a six-month period and the desired goal is to see a 50% increase in brand preference. A key player enters the market in month two offering a similar product and this player has a competitive advantage. You couldn't have foreseen this while you were creating your strategy.

Will you continue with the strategy that you have developed or will you evaluate this new piece of the puzzle that has come into play and determine whether your Communications strategy will still suffice?

Of course, there are many dimensions to this example, things to be done on a corporate and departmental level but the point is that it won't be wise to continue with the same Communications strategy when there has been a material change in your context.

Evaluation helps you to identify what is going on well and what isn't. **You'll be able to spot things that are not going as you anticipated and you'll be able to course correct as required.** All of this will have an impact on the overall success of your Communications strategy.

7. Report your results in the language your stakeholders will understand.

After you have developed an outstanding Communications strategy and you have achieved great results, your results have to be documented and reported to your key stakeholders in a language they would understand.

It's great that you tripled the number of your followers but what does this mean within a business context?

If you work for a corporate organisation, your boss wants to hear about tangible business results.

If you work for a development organisation, your boss wants to know how many donors were secured and nurtured, and how many programmes were successfully delivered.

It's not that all the other milestones you want to report are not great but like I have stated before, they have to be tied to outcomes your stakeholders are expecting to see.

I have found it useful to learn principles of data analysis and data storytelling.

It has significantly helped me to communicate my results better to business and nonprofit leaders.

This is a skill you may consider adding to your existing skill set.

This has been a crash course for developing effective Communications strategies.

Again, if you pay attention to the seven points I have outlined, you will see a positive difference in the results you are able to achieve.

It's great that you tripled the number of your followers but what does this mean within a business context?

Tying it Together: Mapping Your Comms Career

There is no one size fits all approach to mapping out your Communications career. There are several ways to arrive at the same destination.

Please use the table below as a guide for what you should be thinking about at the key career stages.

0 to 3 Years

I'd call this the 'Laying the Foundation' years. These are the years behind the scenes where no one really knows you and a lot of this is still confusing. Use this time to:

- Seek knowledge and opportunities to practice what you learn.
- Learn the full spectrum of the Communication practice.
- Take note of the areas you enjoy and those you don't. The goal is, however, to have a good understanding of the key competency areas.
- Have a general vision for your career. Don't niche yourself too quickly.
- Seek out mentors to guide you.

Adedoyin's Career Advice: Put your head down and do the work. Be humble enough to learn, seek guidance and apply what you learn. Focus on developing your skills and don't be distracted by the noise.

4 to 6 Years

I'd call this the 'Exploration' years. You have laid a good foundation but you're not yet an expert. These are years to go deep into the competency areas you want to develop expertise in. Use this time to:

- Seek out more opportunities to grow and stretch. Ensure you have depth in key competency areas.
- Create a more concrete vision for your career but be flexible about how it will be achieved.
- Be more intentional about joining a professional association and participate actively when you join.
- Prioritise getting a mentor, within or outside your organisation.

Adedoyin's Advice: Focus on making career moves that will get you where you'd like to be. You should be learning, stretching and improving yourself. Also pay attention to documenting your work and achievements.

7 to 10 Years

I'd call this the 'Expertise Zone' years. This doesn't mean that you'd automatically become an expert. Instead, if you follow the tips stated above, you'd be able to do your work with a deeper level of expertise.

You should also be operating as a trusted advisor within your organisation at this level. .

- Prioritise getting a professional certification of higher degree in Communications.
- Seek out thought leadership opportunities to share your knowledge.
- Expand your knowledge beyond Communications.
- Be very intentional about expanding your professional network on a local, regional and global level.

Adedoyin's Advice: Be a real master at what you do!

Over 10 Years

Ideally at this point, you should have gained mastery of the key Communications competencies. If this is not the case, please go back and close the gaps.

Adedoyin's Advice: This is a great time to look back and give back. Mentor younger professionals and share your expertise as much as you can. It is also a good opportunity for advocacy - lending your voice to make changes and improvements to the Communications industry.

Some General Advice

There are two important things I'd like to highlight for you to pay attention to as you map out your Communications career on any level:

1. Aim for Mastery. Think about being the best and stretch yourself to get there. Your professional development is not your organisation's responsibility, it's yours.

Do the work to become a master and you'll see the difference it will make in your career. Again, this will not happen overnight. Commit the time and commit to the process.

2. Pay Attention to Ethics. Be an ethical professional. While the leading professional associations have a code of ethics that their members are expected to adhere to, it is a good idea to have your own code of ethics.

Remember, your professional reputation is important. Your job as a Communications professional is not to lie or manipulate information.

Set your boundaries and know your walk away point. Check out the IABC Code of Ethics [here](#).

10 Key Questions To Always Ask on the Job

“Communications is not a support function. It is a core function that contributes significantly to organisational performance and growth.”

Whether you work for a corporate or development organisation, whether you work in house or within an agency, there are some important questions you need to get answers to in order to do your job properly and get the results that a Proficient Communicator is expected to deliver.



Here are the 10 questions you need to ask on the job:

1. What does this organisation want to achieve?

I'm sure at this point you already know that without knowing what the organisation's overall goals are, you will struggle to develop and implement strategies that will deliver the results that will be valuable to that organisation.

2. Why does this organisation want to achieve this?

Aside from knowing what the organisation wants to achieve, you also need to know why.

What is the overarching strategic priority that this is hinged on? What will happen if the organisation doesn't achieve this?

Knowing this will be particularly helpful in streamlining your tactics and it also presents an opportunity to provide strategic counsel that not only moves the organisation to where it wants to be but also where it needs to be.

3. How is this organisation positioned within the industry?

The answer to this will help you to measure just how much work needs to be done to move the organisation from point A to point B. If an organisation occupies a low industry position, there may be reputational or product-based issues responsible for this. **The strategy you'd deploy for this organisation will be slightly different from the one you'd deploy for a market leader.**

In addition, knowing how an organisation is positioned will also help you to properly manage expectations. An organisation cannot expect to move from the bottom of the ladder to becoming one of the top three organisations in an industry within one year without significant investment and a commitment to closing operational or human capital gaps that contributed to its low position for example. **You're a Proficient Communicator, not a magician!**

4. How do we make money in this organisation?

It is essential to understand what the value drivers within the organisation are. How is money made? How is value created?

Is there one star product or donor or are there multiple streams that bring in revenue for the organisation?



Doing the research to get the answer to this question may also help you to spot opportunity areas that the organisation isn't properly taking advantage of.

Again, this question will help you to develop your strategy and it will help you to think critically about connecting points through which strategic Communications can be leveraged to create value within the organisation, directly and indirectly.

5. Who are we talking to? What do they want/need and why?

This is all about knowing your audience and stakeholders - both internal and external.

The worst thing you can do as a Communications professional is to assume that you know the needs of your stakeholders and audience without actually speaking to them first.

To create a Communications strategy that will deliver the right results and outcomes, you need insights.

Ensure that you can clearly articulate and define who you are speaking to, what they want, need and expect from your organisation and why.

6. What is the typical buyer or audience journey for my organisation?

This question is linked to the previous one. Do you know how people in your target audience group first connect with your organisation and then move along the funnel, if at all they do?

Do they start off on social media and then end up on your website? Do they start from a Google search and then go to a review site before calling your customer service line?

Knowing this will help you to develop strategic messaging that will move them further along the funnel across the different touch points and communications channels through which they interact with your organisation.

“
Always have in mind what success looks like for your boss and senior leaders and make sure the strategies you develop will help you to deliver the outcomes they are expecting to see.
”

7. What does success mean to my boss/senior leaders?

This question is a very important one. You may run along to implement your Communications activity and give yourself a pat on the back because the event room was filled during your official product launch event. Great results, right? However, what was more important to your boss was the quality of people who were in the room and the final sales during the event and afterwards.

If you're saying, "Adedoyin, but we cannot guarantee that people will make a purchase after we get them into the room", I hear you completely.

I, however, need you to realise that if you have spent money towards putting this event together and you've gathered so many people to attend the launch event, then conversion needs to happen somewhere, especially since this is what is most important to your boss.

Your job as a Communications professional is to find the connecting points that will allow you to achieve this outcome. If you don't know how to do this then you need to learn because it is possible.



So, always have in mind what success looks like for your boss and senior leaders and make sure the strategies you develop will help you to deliver the outcomes they are expecting to see.

8. How can I use my Communications skills to help this organisation to achieve its goals?

I can stand on the mountain top to shout this point - **Communications is not a support function. It is a core function that contributes significantly to organisational performance and growth.**

The question is, do you know how to leverage your skills and knowledge of Communications to help your organisation to achieve its goals? If you don't, again it's time to learn the fundamentals and build the competencies required to be able to do this.

Whenever there is a business or organisational problem, you must be able to determine if this is a problem that Communications can solve and if it is, you should be able to map out how to leverage Communications principles and frameworks to solve that problem.

9. In what way can I add value to this organisation?

You cannot be a Proficient Communicator and you won't add value to any organisation you work with, either on a full time basis or as a consultant.

Opportunities to add value just don't miraculously appear. Maybe this happens for some people but in my experience, you have to be intentional about adding value to spot such opportunities.

So, right now with the organisation that you are currently working for, can you think about how you can add value and leave the organisation better than you met it?

Asking this question regularly will open your eyes to subtle and unexpected ways you can make a difference within the organisation.

10. How can I show that my Comms activities are making a difference to the organisation?

This final question speaks to how you show your results. It's not enough to put in the work to develop the right Communications strategies that help you to achieve the expected results.

You must be able to show how your strategies and tactics are making a difference. Communication Measurement is an entire discipline and competence that every Communications professional needs to master.

However, a good starting point is knowing the metrics you need to pay attention to and measure over time to show that your work is making a difference and delivering results from a cross-functional and organisational perspective.

Ask and answer these 10 questions and you'll definitely see a difference in the kind of results you achieve from your work.

Opportunities to add value just don't miraculously appear. Maybe this happens for some people but in my experience, you have to be intentional about adding value to spot such opportunities.

Some Final Words....

When I started to write this book, the goal was for it to be a quick read. So, I thought it would only be a few pages long. However, here we are - 29 pages later.

I have no regrets though. If this e-book can become a go-to resource that helps you to become more proficient in the practice of Communications and if you can leverage insights from it to improve your chances of succeeding in the Communications industry, then my job is done.

I do not doubt that I will receive testimonies from those who read and diligently apply all that has been shared in this book.

Your mind is open and it is time for you to run with all that you have gained from this book. I think I have done my part but I'd like to leave you with these final words:



Please believe in yourself and your abilities. Every master was once a beginner and every master is a continuous learner. The things I know today are the result of a commitment to the rigour of study and professional development.

I did not get here by chance but by God's leading, diligence and great discipline.

Be ready to commit to your own process. Your journey may turn out to be different from mine but you will definitely need to put in the work. Avoid a shortcut mentality. It won't pay off for you in the long run.

Learn from your mistakes but don't dwell too much on them. The fact that you made a mistake does not mean that you are a failure or that you are not good enough. Review your mistakes, learn from them and keep it moving.

When the down moments come, do find ways to encourage yourself. I love how the Bible tells us that David encouraged himself in the Lord. He worshipped when he didn't know what else to do. What do you do when you feel discouraged? I talk to God and I have faith that all things will work together for my good. Don't stay down for too long. There is a long and bright journey ahead of you.

Remember that value is always sought after and rewarded. So, the goal should be to become a valuable professional. Avoid comparing yourself too much to your colleagues or those who have gone ahead. Appreciate their journeys, learn from it but understand that we are all running different races. My timing is not your timing.

And finally, please enjoy the journey! I pray that you will look back at your career journey and smile because you've had a fulfilling and rewarding journey. My career and entire life is built on the Rock of Christ. I invite you to put God at the centre of your career and watch the great things He will do through you.

As always, I'll be here rooting for you!

Resources

I curated a resource called the Comms Career Cheat Sheet which has links to reports, podcasts, courses and websites for your professional growth. You can access the Comms Career Cheat Sheet [here](#).

I'd like to highlight specific courses to check out:

- [Comms Intensive Africa - Strategic Communications Course](#)
- [SA & A Communications Training](#)
- [CIPR Communications and PR Training](#)
- [Comms Strategy Course](#)
- [The 360 Comms Audit Course](#)
- [Effective Issues Management Course](#)
- [Measurable Comms Objectives Course](#)

About Adedoyin

Adedoyin Jaiyesimi is a Communications Advisor, Corporate Trainer and the Co-Founder of The Comms Avenue, a Pan-African capacity-building platform for communications professionals across Africa.

A certified Strategic Communication Management Professional (SCMP), Adedoyin has over 13 years' experience creating and implementing communications strategy, and guiding organisations on the strategic use of communications to achieve organisational objectives.

In her capacity as a Communications Advisor, Adedoyin has successfully executed projects for the mothers2mothers, African Philanthropy Forum, the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), and other reputable organisations. As a corporate and executive media trainer, she has also facilitated communications training for GIZ Nigeria, Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), Michelin Nigeria, amongst others.

To book a virtual consultation or one-on-one session with Adedoyin, please click [here](#).

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This e-book was created and designed by Adedoyin Jaiyesimi.