

EXPERIENCING
PUBLIC
RELATIONS

...A collection of essays by Nigerian Women in Public Relations





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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to every Nigerian Woman in Public Relations practicing across the world.

We also dedicate this to the memory of Emilia Asim-Ita who passed on in January 2021. She was a consummate Public Relations Professional, leading development communications expert and a staunch supporter of the Nigerian Women in PR vision.



Acknowledgement

This book is the product of a community, a testament of what is possible when women come together with a common purpose.

We specially acknowledge all contributors who took time out of their very busy schedule to send in their articles. Thank you for trusting us with your stories and for embarking on this journey of with us. Without you, there would be no Experiencing Public Relations.

To the founding volunteers of the Nigerian Women in PR Community – Oluwatomi Lawal and Olubunmi Isiolaotan – thank you for your consistent support over the years.

Amarachukwu Chimuanya was the Community's pioneer full time staff who worked assiduously to support the delivery of this project.

To our 2021 Volunteers – we appreciate your tireless work to see this project succeed.

To Abel Adejare for your brilliant design work on the entire #ExperiencingPR project – thank you!

To EVERY Nigerian Woman in Public Relations who will read this book, to our male counterparts, business executives and policy makers – this is the beginning of a journey that will redefine the practice and perception of Public Relations.



Introduction

After 15+ years of practice as a public relations professional, one thing has remained constant: the less educated my bosses and clients are about the value of public relations, the higher the probability of non-commensurate pay and denied access to the executive team which reduces me to an implementation officer instead of a strategic advisor.

So, when I founded Nigerian Women in Public Relations in 2019, the objectives were dual-pronged: education and inclusion.

On the one hand, we set out to celebrate, support, inspire and empower Nigerian Women in Public Relations aspiring to practice or practicing across the world. On the other hand, we determined to prioritise public education and enlightenment about the profession. We rejected the toga of anonymity and mystery traditionally associated with public relations (women) and instead embarked on very ambitious programs and campaigns to achieve our objectives.

From the PR Students on Campus Summit to the Student Ambassadorship Program, from #PRin30Seconds to #ExperiencingPR – our foundation is education and inclusion.

This book is the product of a strategy session we held in my living room in September 2020; three ladies asking themselves: how else can we get people to see the IMPACT of public relations? We thought that storytelling, which is a critical component in public relations, is one way to get people to Experience PR.



Introduction Cont.

In this compilation, you will see that one word is repeated by almost all our contributors: Passion. The only way to have a long and productive career in public relations is the passion you have for the profession. You will face several challenges on the job, and the only reason you will likely not give up is the passion you have for public relations.

From describing who the PR professional is to discovering and switching to PR, the deficiencies in the current PR curriculum in tertiary institutions in Nigeria and how to get a seat at the table – our contributors tell a cohesive and compelling story that takes you from entry level to the pinnacle of your career as a senior PR woman.

We describe this as the ‘mentorship at the flip of a page’ book. Find and connect with our contributors online, share parts of the book that resonate with you using #ExperiencingPR, and keep talking about your work in public relations.

This is a marathon, and we are thankful to everyone who helped us complete this first lap successfully. Join the race, do your part.

Happy reading!

Tolulope ‘Tolucomms’ Olorundero

Public Relations Consultant & Founder

Nigerian Women in PR

February, 2021.

Chapter
01

**THE PR
PROFESSIONAL:**

Who is she? What is her role?
What is her potential impact?

By Victoria Uwadoka





CHAPTER ONE

THE PR PROFESSIONAL:

Who is she? What is her role? What is her potential impact?

By Victoria Uwadoka

Hi, my name is Victoria. I am a PR Professional and a woman - an important distinction in view of the focus of this publication.

In Nigeria today, the PR profession is perceived to be dominated by men. I use the word 'perceived' deliberately because there is no real data to prove it. Why is there this perception? You know the saying, "Perception is Reality"? As a woman, what makes me different from other PR professionals? What are the 'roadblocks' if any? Okay, we shall come back to this matter.

Let's start by meeting the PR Professional. Yes, as in many other professions and business sectors, the role of PR is changing in the new normal, yet the basic principles remain the same. The future-ready PR Professional must understand how to remain relevant today while positioning for the future.

✓ **The PR Professional: Who is She?**

The first thing you notice about a PR Professional is that she is a quintessential communicator, deploying storytelling as a tool and as an enabler. She is a consummate influencer, a connector, building bridges by engendering trust. She is astute, curious and tuned into her environment. She is intentional and present - an attribute that is invaluable in the world as we know it today.

The PR Professional is inspired and passionate. Why is this important? PR is both a science and an art. You can learn the tactics and processes, but truly successful PR professionals are artists with a passion. They are inspired by the vision of what





they can create. Be really sure that this is what you want: Passion is everything. If you really like it, if you really want it, you will succeed.

✔ **The PR Professional: What is her Role?**

Whether she represents an individual or an organisation, the PR professional builds trust and a strong reputation for her client, organisation or brand. This is the currency she brings. She is the face and spokesperson of the organisation – representing the brand, on and off duty. And no, there are no down times! Whatever she says or does will reflect on the brand she represents. Still sure you want to do this?

The PR Professional is a trusted advisor - she works with decision makers, helping them understand the message, the right medium for transmitting this message to their audiences and the potential impact of the message. Part of her job is to articulate and amplify the personality of the brand to its various audiences, internal and external. This skill helps the professional fulfil the strategic responsibility of Public Relations as a management function.

She has the courage to challenge management decisions as the icon and guardian of the brand reputation. If PR does not have access or is not operating in a strategic management position, it remains just a process of public relations rather than a strategy. It is important to make this distinction to help the brand you represent understand the value of PR as a strategy and not just a set of tactics. I have worked for companies where my first job was to help the management understand my role and why they hired me in the first place!

What did I do? I'll tell you after we look at this our matter - Women in PR.





No one will discover any talent you do not showcase and promote.



The PR Professional
: What is her potential impact?



The Challenge:
Proving your value in the new normal.



The Strategy:
Magnify and elevate your profession.

What Makes Women Different from other PR Professionals?

Personally, I have always wondered what influenced the perception that there are more men in PR in Nigeria. Why do we accept that as a fact even though there is no data to back up this assumption?

Are women showing up and making themselves heard? Okay - this is not 'Twenty Questions,' so let's get some answers!

Fundamentally, there is no difference between a Woman in PR and a Man in PR. In fact, some of the key competencies required to succeed as a PR professional come naturally to women – empathy, team spirit and tenacity. According to data from various sources, including the World PR Report, women make up between 63% and 85% of the workforce in PR agencies, however only 30% of agencies are run by women! Why? If there was one thing I have learnt over the years, it is that no one will give you anything you do not ask for. Women are the best advocates of Women in PR. Harness your skills as a PR professional and sell your brand – YOU! See yourself not as a woman or a man – see yourself for who you are: a talented, passionate and focused communications professional, an influencer and a connector.

“The secret to outstanding achievement is not talent but a special blend of passion and persistence.” Angela Duckworth in *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*

One key difference between men and women in the workplace - not just in PR - is that we women shy away from promoting ourselves with the same skills we deploy to position the clients, organisations or brands we represent!

Girl, you need to show up, be present, own your voice and take your place at the table.



Now that we have established that no one is stopping us from flying, let's see what can be achieved when PR Professionals take their place. We will review the post-COVID era as the case study.

Globally, individuals, organisations, communities are dealing with the after-effects of the COVID-19 outbreak in one way or another. Today in Nigeria, there is the added collective depression brought on by the #EndSARs crisis.

In every crisis, conflict, challenge or relationship: communication is key. I often say that communication is everything, and I truly believe that. Now more than ever, people need someone to help them understand what is going on, to help them connect the dots. Governments and organisations need someone to help them articulate their messages to connect with their citizens, audiences, customers, stakeholders and partners. This is where you come in. So, how can you position yourself as the go-to expert? How can we collectively as Women in PR help our nations, institutions and organisations navigate these troubled times?

Remember I mentioned that I sometime have to prove myself in a new environment? In closing, here are some principles I have learnt on my PR journey, which hold sure even today.

1. The first thing you should do is demonstrate what you offer.

If it does not work for you, it will not work for your client. What are the best practices you have tried and tested? Demonstrate how they will bring value. With the outbreak of COVID-19 in Nigeria and the precipitated lockdown that followed, there was so much confusion. I knew that my people needed an anchor – one sure ground they could stand on as we all tried to figure out what was going on. They needed reliable information that would provide clarity, comfort and direction. I had to put my PR pro cap on and get to work! This is what we are trained to do – manage through crisis! So, I put together daily updates for my team, - synthesizing the facts from all the noise. There were so many voices, so many views, a veritable Tower of Babel! I focused on the basics: here is what is going on, here is what you can do, this is where you can get help when you need it. I then set up daily catch up meetings with my team to help them settle into working from home, and to respond to their concerns. It was easy to sell this strategy to other leaders because I could confidently show them that it worked!

2. The Post-COVID era is a unique opportunity for you to develop new competences.

Yesterday's skills will not work for today's challenges. Part of the proof of your professionalism and experience will be your agility – your ability to adapt quickly to change. For instance, a deep understanding of how new technology works and how that enables citizen journalism is critical in these times. Many agencies have been beneficiaries of virtual experiences in this crisis. This is a golden moment for practitioners to take centre stage, innovating new strategies and touch points for driving relationships with various publics.

As Mr. Ken Egbas, founder, Whitehouse PR, said in a recent presentation to the NIPR community, the PR Professional of the future is a Communication Technician, Expert Prescriber, Communications Facilitator, Problem-Solving Facilitator, Environmental Influencer, Social Listener, Social Scanner par Excellence, Crises Management 'One-Stop' Shop, Omni-Present Relationship Manager and a Trend-Spotter/Voyeur.

” *Yesterday's Skills will not work for today's challenges.*

3. Focus on the long term.

Look beyond the current crisis towards sustaining, rebuilding or building for the next 10 years.



4. Cultivate new connections.

Focus on building trust with your stakeholders. There is a richness of experiences in diversity, so share your knowledge. We are excellent teachers! In Nigeria today, there is still a very low level of understanding of what the PR profession really is! I have personally been in forums where those who were invited to make presentations on the PR practice completely missed it! That is why I applaud one of Nigerian Women in PR's initiatives: the PR Student on Campus Summit. But that is a topic for another day.

I look forward to hearing from you on your PR journey as we learn from each other and grow together, contributing our strengths to develop the PR profession in Nigeria and across the world. Here's to magnifying our profession.



Bio

An associate member of the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Victoria is a Communications professional with over 20 years of experience. Her career spans various industries including logistics, entertainment, beauty, healthcare, ICT, food and beverages. She is an alumnus of University of Nigeria Nsukka and holds professional certifications in PR, Marketing and Digital Communications from the Nigeria Institute of Journalism and Kellogg School of Management respectively. She has authored multiple articles on Communications and Marketing and enjoys sharing her knowledge with other professionals to build the ecosystem.

Chapter
02

**DISCOVERING PR AS
AN UNDERGRADUATE
MILLENNIAL**

By Ibukun Falope





CHAPTER TWO

DISCOVERING PR AS AN UNDERGRADUATE MILLENNIAL

By Ibukun Falope

The importance of Public Relations (PR) cannot be overemphasized. It has become increasingly important for organisations and individuals to communicate effectively and intentionally. They must do this in languages their target audience and other stakeholders understand, especially in this digital age where messages are easily misunderstood and can negatively affect organisations' or an individual's reputation.

The world is a global village where information spreads at the speed of light. Malcolm X stated that the media is the most powerful entity on earth. It has the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty, innocent.

The PR field is diverse and this has made it interesting for me in navigating my journey. I consider myself a multi-passionate millennial and I am privileged that my career allows me pursue multiple roles. A clear example of this is my interest in the beauty industry and communications in government; both diverse areas but can co-exist in some form when creativity is deployed.

For my undergraduate degree, I studied Mass Communication at Covenant University Ota, Ogun State. In year 3, my mind was opened to PR as I studied courses in Brand Management, Public Relations Campaign Planning and Management, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Business Ethics, Public Relations Policy - Planning and Strategy, Public Relations in Government, and Consumer Behaviour. These are essential courses in creating a solid foundation in PR and I was able to





identify the key areas of PR I was passionate about. This later informed my decision to lean towards PR versus Communications. Also, I completed a few team projects in CSR that helped me understand the importance of teamwork in creating a brand and an image. The opportunities I was exposed to early on involved excursions to some of the top PR firms where we got to interact with key PR professionals and observe some of their processes.

Transitioning from course work to internships was easy because of the foundation I had. I interned in two companies that specialises in Advertising and PR. This was quite fruitful because I got to put what I had learned in the classroom into practice. I would later build on my experience after school.

” *If you can't organise your thoughts on a page, you will find it very difficult to communicate with clients and colleagues.*

After graduation, my first job was the role of a communications manager for a health organisation. I thoroughly enjoyed doing this for three years which greatly helped in my interpersonal relationship skills, as I had to deal with a medical team and understand what they were saying clearly. My ability to undertake research and keep up-to-date with the latest market trends in the medical field was paramount.

However, the most valuable experience I acquired during this period was polishing my writing skill which is extremely important for a PR professional. If you can't organise your thoughts on a page, you will find it very difficult to communicate with clients and colleagues. The more styles you can write in, the better; the saying that “practice makes perfect” is the whole truth.

I think it is important that after your undergraduate degree, you get work experience to be sure of what area you want to specialise in. That is what I decided to do. After my first job, I was 100% that public relations were the right career path for me. I decided to go for a master's degree programme in Advertising and Public Relations Management at De Montfort University Leicester, England.

My work experience made the master's programme a lot easier as I could relate to what was being taught. That is the advantage of building on your work experience before a postgraduate programme. Academically, I exerted myself as I had never done before, knowing I would need this kind of capacity to function in the high-pressure environment of PR. The ability to work on multiple client projects at once will be part of your everyday routine. This means handling multiple clients with varying needs and different deadlines. Professionals who thrive and enjoy working in such a fast-paced environment will love the energy of PR.



Accuracy in your work is essential for a successful and long career in PR. The ability to tell your clients' stories through the fast-paced and ever-evolving media demands accuracy and attention to detail. Delivering a flawless edit should be the goal, as the smallest mistakes could be the difference between a campaign's success or failure. The media landscape is constantly changing, and the target audience is consuming content through apps and social media platforms now more than ever. As a PR expert, you must be flexible and adapt to these changes as quickly as possible.

The rise of social media in recent years has been one of the greatest catalysts for change in the PR industry. Every organisation wants to have a digital footprint that leaves a positive trail. Because of this, I decided to do a short course in Social Media Management. Content created for campaigns is most times pilot-tested on social media. If you don't know how a specific platform works, you will not be able to get the best from that platform. A great feature behind social media's power is the ability to measure a campaign's reach. You can also carry out social media listening for your clients to find out what exactly the target audience is saying about them. This insight will help you when crafting messages to get adequate engagement. Being social media savvy will take you places in the PR industry.

Presentation skills are also a must. I did a lot of presentations during my master's programme which had to be done creatively with engaging slides that explain what you want to say to your clients, media buyers and journalists. These individuals will expect a professional and insightful delivery of information which you must not fall short of. A lot of resources and apps are available online for presentations.

As a PR professional, the ability to think on your feet can not be overemphasized. Quick and strategic thinking will help you a great deal.



Excellent strategic thinking comes from a place of passion and knowing your subject matter like the back of your hand.

More than a soft skill, the ability to build your professional network is crucial to your success in PR. LinkedIn is a great platform for this. Your ability to build relationships, expressing confidence and charisma will complement oral and written communication skills which

will make you a great PR professional.

My present job as a PR manager for a Fashion Illustration Company was as a result of networking.



The globalisation of businesses has created an increase for PR professionals who are bilingual or even multilingual. This is so important and has motivated me to learn another language. The more languages a PR professional has under his/her belt, the greater the probability for international postings and job offers. This in turn provides the opportunity to build a diverse professional portfolio. An international mindset is important!

Excellent time management skills refer to completing projects on time, mastering deadlines and prioritising tasks.

A successful career in PR is built on a foundation of excellent communication skills. The PR landscape is continually evolving, and I foresee it will require the sharpest minds that can leverage emerging technologies. However, the constant driver for longevity, for me, is passion.

Passion and hard work for what you do will be the X-factor in helping you stand out in this very competitive industry. My advice for a successful career in PR is to identify your passion and work towards it. In addition, get a mentor to glean experience from – and in reading this book, you have taken a very bold first step. I am proud to be a PR professional and I am confident that if you use these building blocks I have highlighted, you will surely succeed in the industry. All the best in your PR endeavours.





Bio

Ibukun Falope is a Public Relations enthusiast. She has been in active practice since 2017, specializing in Product Branding and generating consumer insights.

She holds a Masters' degree in Advertising and PR from the De Montfort University UK and a first degree in Mass Communication (PR specialisation) from Covenant University, Nigeria. She is also a Hootsuite certified expert.

She loves reading and travelling. She looks forward to making a positive contribution as a Nigerian woman in PR.

Chapter
03

**EDUCATIONAL COURSES
AND SOURCES:**
Changes in Public Relations

By Adaoha Njemanze



CHAPTER THREE

EDUCATIONAL COURSES AND SOURCES:

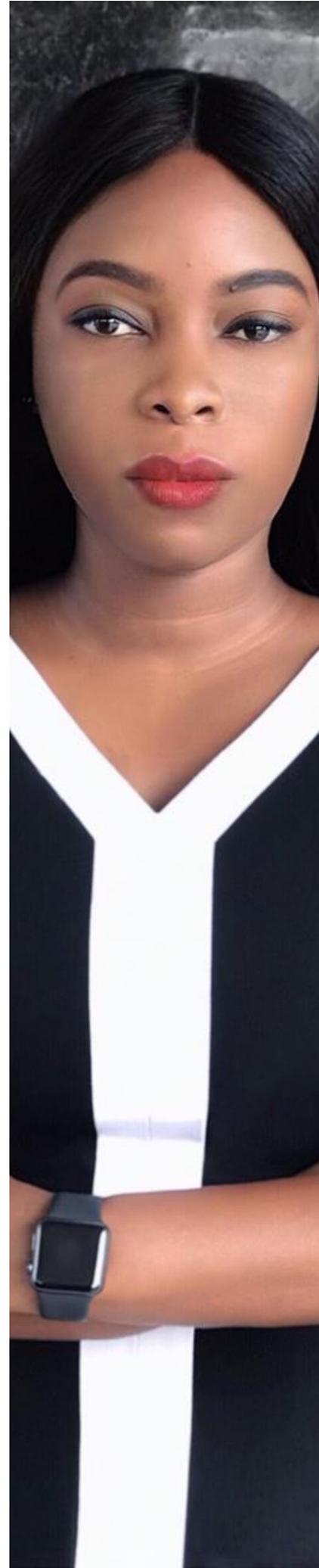
Changes in Public Relations

By *Adaoha Njemanze*

✓ The significance of incorporating Public Relations into the educational system

There are occupations that, when mentioned while growing up in Nigeria, were deemed "professional" and worthy of respect. Public Relations was not one of them. As a young female professional, navigating the Public Relations industry has been both thrilling and challenging. Against the wishes of many friends and family members, I began a quest to learn the fundamentals of the media and its complexities. My fate in Public Relations and Communications was sealed while studying in University, despite the minimal curriculum offer, as we watched the Domino Pizza fiasco unfold before the world.

In the Nigerian educational system, a degree in Business Administration may have a range of courses like Marketing, Insurance yet courses such as Public Relations and Advertising may be nowhere to be found. As a Theatre Arts graduate who wanted to join the country's governing public relations association (Nigerian Institute of Public Relations), I was not considered for a waiver. I was instead required to write a 15-course examination to qualify (this has now increased to 33 courses). But a waiver is granted to a graduate of Marketing or Mass Communications. I had always wondered why did NIPR did not actively lobby for Public Relations to become an earned degree years ago. I recall directing this question to the



Institute's employees when we registered for exams. No satisfactory response was given. At this time, I had at least two years' experience working in public relations. I mostly learnt from materials provided online by Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), Chartered Institute of Public Relations, UK (CIPR) and the YouTube channels of bespoke PR agencies. This motivated me to work harder, as I understood the impact of the industry which I not very popular but is an essential part of any successful organisation.

My passion has led my friends to jokingly refer to me as the *walking PR Lecturer*. This is because of my readiness to always explain what the profession is and how it works. I realise it is pertinent for prospective and old clients to understand what the profession is about and what value practitioners can offer. Many times, business executives misunderstand what PR entails, especially with the similarities it shares with marketing and advertising. I make it a point of duty to emphasize the services that will be delivered to them, using each opportunity to open their minds to the power of public relations.

I believe that the genesis of the misrepresentation of public relations comes from an educational system that has struggled to break down the media units into separate specialisations as seen by our counterparts in other countries. For instance, *Dance, Creative Writing* are studied as individual degrees in other countries rather than combined as modules under Theatre Arts or Mass Communication. Some educationists would argue that the combination of these courses gives you a vast knowledge of various professions under these two common degrees. This has proven counter-productive though as evidenced in the quality of graduates being churned out and insufficient knowledge of public relations in the society.

The similarities amongst all the courses became burdensome for me, especially as I moved from one university to another within the country studying the same course. We were overburdened with courses I did not find interesting or relatable to public relations. At the University of Calabar, we were required to choose an area of specialisation in our final year, so when that time came for me the choice was easy: Public relations and communications. The challenge, however, was that we did not have lecturers who could quickly connect with public relations and communications with the realities of businesses and the society at large. This led me to hours of binge-watching YouTube, search for public relations videos. I also bought many books beyond the recommended texts by lecturers. I made it a goal to get into a Master's degree program in public relations and communications where I would get first hand classroom teaching. I found that reading relatable PR stories piqued my interest as they gave me a deeper understanding about the profession.



As a Media major in the university, you could easily identify the disparity between the students' knowledge of current happenings in the society and the lecturers' knowledge and developmental gap. A simple illustration: my undergraduate project topic focused on citizen journalism and its effect in the year of study. Most of the lecturers at the defence session did not believe in citizen journalism and disagreed with most of my points, its effect on society despite advancing technological changes and how it impacts news distribution. Essentially, my lecturers could not fully grasp the democratisation of information dissemination with the advent of social media. Yet days later, a PhD student was referred to me so he could use some of my defence points for his communications coursework.

That is the reality of the educational system in Nigeria: lecturers are still using curriculum developed in the 90s to teach courses and students that need to support businesses in the 21st Century. There is a seeming unwillingness of tutors to adopt new media in teaching methodology, and a critical lack of interest in teaching relevant skills to make students ready to fit into a fast-paced business economy. Are our lecturers afraid of making progress?



I would spend hours researching top PR agencies in Nigeria, and aspire to work for people like Bobby Taylor now Robert Taylor, and at agencies such as Red Media, BHM etc. A clear example of how passionate and enthusiastic I am about practicing Public Relation: on the last day of my final exams in school, I applied for a job with Bobby Taylor and booked a flight to Lagos via Aero Contractors for my interview. As they are wont to do, our flight was cancelled that day. I remember crying profusely and feeling disappointed when, after I wrote to reschedule, I did not get an email response. Despite the lack of exposure in the profession, I was mostly inspired by these firms and the work they were doing and believed I was on the right track.



This is why I heartily commend Nigerian Women in PR for the Student Ambassadorship program it initiated in tertiary institutions across Nigeria. Each institution where the PR Student on Campus Summit is held, five brilliant female undergraduates are selected through a rigorous screening process to become Student Ambassadors on their respective campuses. For a year, the Student Ambassadors get hands-on PR experience, ably guided and tutored by volunteers of the Nigerian Women in PR. This is a commendable system that bridges the gap between the classroom and the boardroom.

As I moved into the work space, I found out that most organisations limit public relations officers to just *press release writers and social media managers*. It does not help that many communication/public relations officers are not PR professionals but rather people who have stumbled on the job by chance. So, they have little to no idea how to properly operate and expand their work scope to deliver value to their organisations. This became a dilemma for me. I did not feel valuable in one of the first jobs I worked in after graduation. I felt like the work put on my desk daily stifled my opinion and knowledge, and I was not inspired by the lack of creativity and strategic thought behind most client campaigns so I moved on.

Whenever I meet PR practitioners and students excited about the profession at the entry level, I emphasize on the broadness of the profession and how it is an integral part of every organisation. It has become one of the most misrepresented disciplines because of numerous concepts related but not the same as public relations. Public relations is not Marketing and Advertising. In my experience, I have come to understand that many organisations recognise that public relations is a great way to structure and enhance their brand strategy. However, there is practically no knowledge of implementation. This is why I always take the opportunity to educate them on the power of PR.

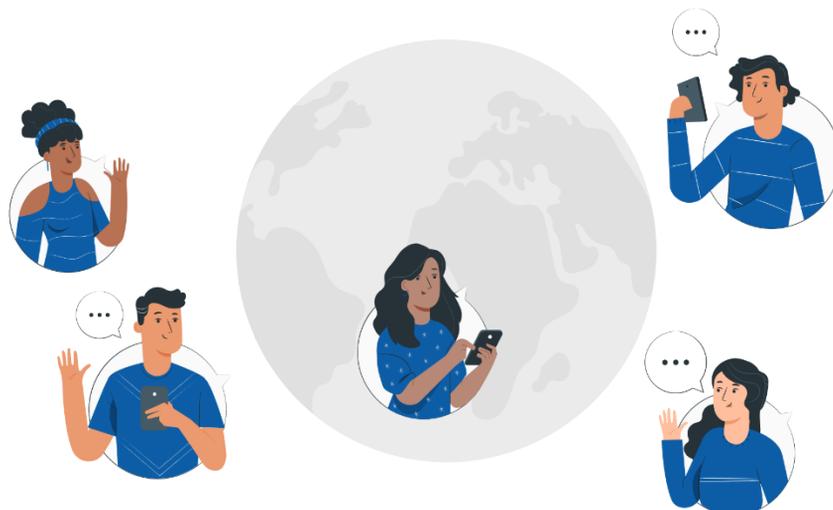
Today's world is beginning to understand the power of public relations as there are numerous career choices in the profession. Public Relations got tremendous prominence in Nigeria during the 2015 elections, which saw the former President Goodluck Jonathan team engage internationally renowned American Public relations firm, Levick to manage his image, much to the criticism of home-based practitioners. I believe I was one of the elated PR professionals when National Universities Commission (NUC), unbundled Mass Communication as a degree programme into several separate degree programmes in March 2020. These degrees include Public Relations, Journalism & Media Studies, amongst others. This is a fantastic shift and a bold move to broaden the media ecosystem. The possibilities are now limitless; this is an opportunity for the next generation to reinvent the language of communication and strategy. It will also relieve the stress of taking many irrelevant courses and force an update in the currently outdated curriculum being used.



To further tackle the stigmatising and misrepresentation of the practice, Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) should endeavour to engage more with the educational institutions, through speaking engagements, internships and interactive sessions. I discovered the governing body in December 2016 because I wanted to write the CIPR UK exams and I was referred to acquire my licence from Nigeria first despite practicing for two years. NIPR needs to be more functional and strategic as they are currently not as visible as they are supposed to be. I must mention however, that writing the NIPR exams opened my eyes to areas I did not even know about public relations. This is the reason I think the Institute should do more to encourage aspiring practitioners and non-members to register, especially if they intend to have a long and enjoyable career in PR.

I have immense respect for Nigerian Women in PR like Bukky Karibi-Whyte, Bidemi Zakariyau, Bola Balogun, Nkiru Olumide-Ojo, Bola Atta, who have continually set trends in public relations and corporate communications. These are women I believe can learn from. As I grow and evolve in this profession, I never hesitate to follow their work, learn from them or seek help when at crossroads.

We are currently in an information age, therefore how we speak it, how we process it, how we share it and the language we use is extremely essential in making sure messaging is well received. As practicing Public Relations Professionals, we have to be accountable for portraying and presenting the career in the most respectable manner. We must leave impressionable footprints for those who are eager about the profession and the organisations we serve. After all, this is what public relations is all about - influencing attitudes and opinion. Public Relations is not a career for the faint-hearted but for the diligent, passionate, and hardworking professional.





Bio

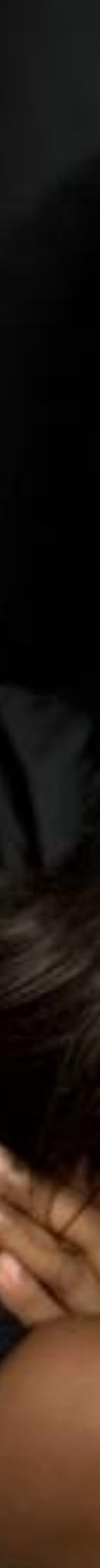
Vivian Adaocha Njemanze is a public relations professional and a communications strategist with over six years' experience. She is the founder and CEO of NOVVA Media and Communications, a boutique public relations firm which has worked and consulted for different brands across all sectors. She is also the founder of the NOVVA Children's Initiative which aims to provide the requisite educational materials for better learning for children living in slums.

Her clients have been seen in cover stories and press features in BBC, CNN, Glam Africa, Schick, ThisDay, Pride Magazine UK, Citizen TV Kenya, Houston Weekly, HBE Canada and many more.

Chapter
04

**SWITCHING
TO PR**

By Demilade Abolaji





CHAPTER FOUR

SWITCHING TO PR

By Demilade Abolaji

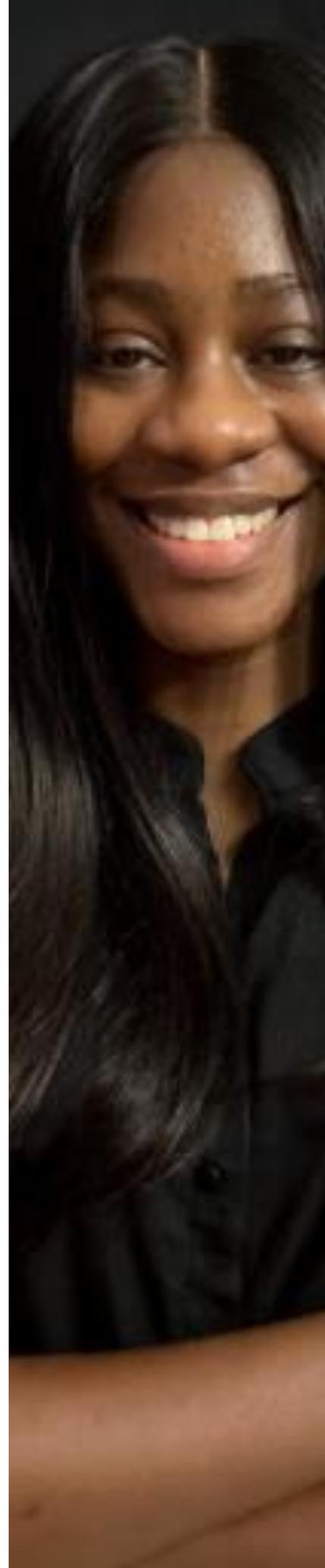
Imagine a young undergraduate who did not know what her plans were after graduation, who felt like an idiot when asked the popular question “so what do you want to do after you graduate?” and consistently had no answer.

That young undergraduate was me.

I had interned in a media agency, advertising agency, done sales and merchandising all while I was in the university but nothing piqued my curiosity. I was not sure what I wanted to do but I knew it wasn't any of those. After graduation, while I was waiting for my National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) call-up letter, I had applied for several internship positions and did not get any of them. Feeling lost, I decided to go back to the media agency I had earlier done my internship; at least that offered a temporary “I don't have to stay at home” opportunity.

I still was not feeling fulfilled. It was not challenging enough for me and so I called one of my friends who was interning at a PR agency for ‘ginger’. During our conversation, I was given enough ‘ginger’ to shoot another mail at an employer I had reached out to previously about being an intern in his company. After sending him the mail, I gave him a call to confirm that he had seen my mail. He sounded warm over the phone and said the General Manager of his company would reach out to me. I got a mail at the end of the day from the General Manager of the company inviting me for an interview – that was a good thing.

After the interview, I got an offer letter and two weeks later I became a Public Relations intern. I had never experienced the world of PR. It was confusing and tasking but it was also





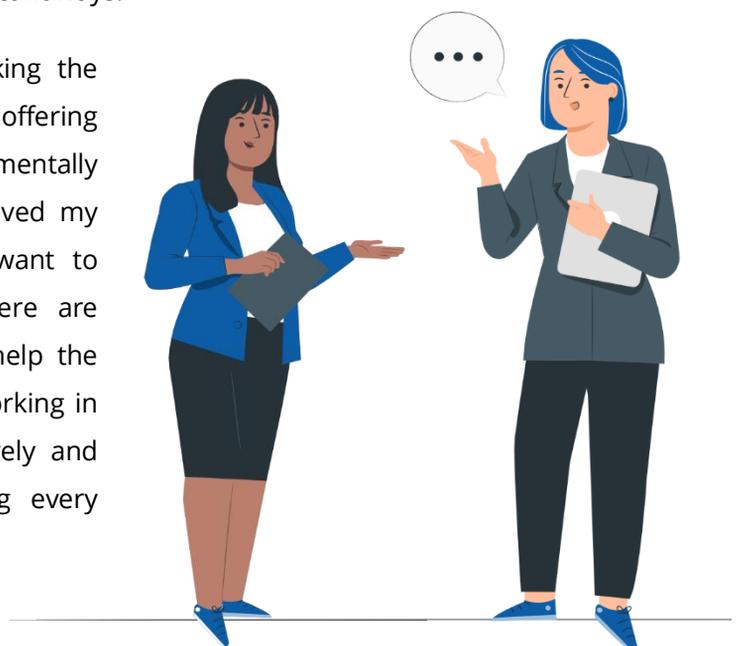
exciting. There is no one-size-fits-all to any situation, each circumstance had to be approached differently. The first two months of my internship at this organisation, I was a mass of confusion. I was immediately thrown into a series of projects and campaigns; I was stretched mentally and physically but I loved every bit of it.

Keep in mind that I had never experienced the world of PR and apart from my friend, I really did not know any other person in the field. I had to be intentional about my growth and take advantage of every learning opportunity I got. My internship ended when the COVID-19 pandemic began to take effect but I did not feel unsure about my abilities. I knew what I had gained, the number of campaigns and projects I had handled and was certain I could work in any organisation.

During the lockdown, while staying at home, I reached out to another friend and asked if I could work with their NGO full time. I was interviewed and my responses to the interview questions reassured me of my growth. The questions I answered correctly with data were questions I would not have understood several months earlier. I got the job and that meant I could continue brainstorming and finding ways to improve their organisation in my own way.

A couple of weeks after that, I reached out to a woman I have always admired. Her career growth inspires me. I asked her to be my mentor and to my surprise, she agreed! She advised I join The Comms Avenue, which I did and I do not regret. I also applied to The Comms Avenue Mentoring program and was selected. Here, I was given another mentor and he has been helping me in significant ways.

Looking back, I do not regret making the switch. PR offered and is still offering everything I want in my career. It is mentally tasking, it pushes me, it has improved my research skills and it makes me want to improve on my work because there are several ways communications can help the organisation I work for. So, while working in PR was a different ball game entirely and nothing I expected, I am enjoying every minute of it.





Bio

Demilade is a Publicist for Audio Girl Africa and a multi-sector brand communications professional with 2 years' experience across FMCG, Political and Health sectors. She loves using meaningful stories to help brands connect with their customers.

With a background in Public Relations, Demilade has handled different projects such as; Baileys Bakefest 3, Coca-Cola *Be Santa* campaign, Atlantic Hall's 30th anniversary and fundraiser and LIB: Breaking Free, to mention a few.

At Audio Girl, Demilade communicates the unpopular stories of women's achievement in the Audio Engineering industry and tries to empower even more women to venture into the sector.

Chapter
05

**NURTURE YOUR
CAREER:**

5 Tips for Aspiring Women in PR
& Marketing Communication

By Mabel Aladenusi-Adeteye





CHAPTER FIVE

NURTURE YOUR CAREER: 5 Tips for Aspiring Women in PR & Marketing Communication

By Mabel Aladenusi-Adeteye

Over ten years' experience in the public relations industry has taught me what it truly takes to make it as a woman in corporate and marketing communication.

Early on in my career, I figured out that jobs were jobs, yes, but they were actually paid opportunities to learn! Like a sponge, I soaked up as much knowledge as possible. I committed to educating myself on the job. I handled tasks that might not have been as enjoyable as others.

When you've been fortunate to work with some of the top brands in the world, you develop a lot of critical skills, and very quickly: Grit. Tenacity. Efficiency. Adaptability. Openness. But perhaps one of the most important things I've learned is that women in our field face a specific set of challenges. We still have a long way to go in terms of levelling the playing field for female professionals.

The most important lessons I want to share here are personal. For women to become leaders, we need to trust ourselves, push ourselves, and rely on ourselves to create more opportunities for other women. This is true no matter your industry. Here are some of the lessons I've learned about leadership in my career journey as a PR, corporate communication, marketing, and digital communication expert.



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Being a high achiever takes hard work, but it also takes intuition and a community of supportive colleagues. Don't work alone, as it will only isolate you from the wisdom and mentorship of your community.



#1 Curiosity is Everything

In 2007, I pivoted from a career in journalism to a communication and customer experience position with Guinness Nigeria Plc. The new role put me on the frontlines of customer relationships. I was responsible for all of the invisible elements that support a seamless customer experience. At Guinness, I had to track paperwork, interface with suppliers, screen and organise appointments for the big bosses.

It was in my earliest days at Guinness that I discovered the power of curiosity. If I was responsible for prioritising information, I need to find my curiosity. What makes one supplier better than another? How can I help this customer get what they need while doing what is best for the company?

I want all young female PR professionals who are pursuing a career in communications to take note. You may be tasked with handling some of the most doldrum and boring tasks in the early stage of your career. This is an opportunity to grow your curiosity. You get an insider's perspective into the inner workings of your organisation's business. Absorb as much as you can and master everything that comes across your desk. It takes a lot of hard work to make a company run seamlessly, and being curious about the boring stuff will ultimately make you a stronger leader.

#2 Become a Strong Advocate

After learning how to support executive leaders with administrative support, I went on to work with some local brands before taking a new position as an Associate Analyst at The Quadrant Company. Within four years at Quadrant, I was promoted from an Associate Analyst to an Analyst and then to Account Manager. My role then was basically centred around everything PR, Strategic Communication and Event Planning. I was saddled with the responsibility of supporting various brands' communication and PR presence in Nigeria, organising press conferences, strategizing about digital and traditional media, handling new product launches for companies like British Airways, Coca-Cola, Etisalat, Ford, etc. I worked on both local and international PR campaigns at Quadrant and I am forever grateful for all the learnings.



” *Women, listen up: Your career is not a disjointed series of separate experiences.*

the head of your professional journey and you must see every new experience as interconnected. When I made the move to Quadrant, I had to go through an adjustment period. At first, I felt like a fish out of water. From behind the desk and speaking to clients on the phone, I was now speaking directly to brand representatives and pitching marketing strategies. But then I remembered that my previous experience prepared me for this.

Learning how to strongly advocate for the needs of your clients and customers is a skill that every PR professional needs to acquire. I believe strongly that it is my job to speak up for the client's needs. I am their voice in every room when they are not present, and the duty rests with me to exceed their expectations and meet the brief to the letter.

Women in leadership positions are strong advocates. Don't shy away from opportunities to advocate for your clients. It might feel uncomfortable at first, but take it from me: a woman who stands up boldly and clearly for the needs of her clients will go far in her career. People will take notice and you will earn a reputation as a thoughtful and firm leader. If you're putting the client first but others are put off by your advocacy, it is their loss.

#3 Trust Yourself and Build Your Community

In 2015, I joined TVC Communications and I have been working with this amazing company for the past six years. I could never have predicted back in 2006 that I would end up leading corporate strategy at a major communications company. But everything came full circle, and my journalist's heart and the PR, event,



strategic communication and media strategy expertise at Quadrant made this next move possible.

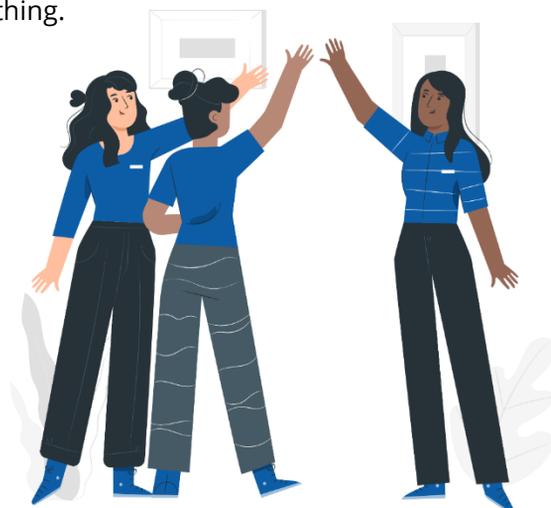
At TVC, I wake up every morning to a new set of challenges. It is one of the best parts of my job. From setting communication strategy; crisis management; campaign and event planning, publicity budget to strategising about press coverage, digital strategy, branding, partnership, etc. I get to solve problems alongside some of the most skilful people in the industry. I apply the lessons I learned throughout my career to resolve current-day issues. While I take my position very seriously, being a senior leader has nothing to do with dictating to-do lists to junior employees. Instead, I believe that it is my responsibility, as a female brand strategist and corporate executive, to lead by example.

I remember one of my old bosses saw me recently and said “Mabel, whoa you have not changed a bit with your energy level and can-do spirit.” It meant so much to me and further reiterated my commitment and passion for what I do.

This means I must trust myself implicitly and continue extending my hand to other talented women coming up in the media industry. It is no simple feat to trust yourself, as most of us women know. We suffer from imposter syndrome inside our own minds, and we are also undervalued and overlooked at every turn by colleagues and clients.

Trusting yourself is a revolutionary act, and I encourage all female professionals to take this message to heart. It does not make you unprofessional or illogical to trust your own expertise. Of course, you should do your due diligence to research your options and speak with people you trust. But when it is time to make the decision, you must make it confidently.

Demonstrate that you trust yourself and your clients will follow your lead. This kind of behaviour will attract other confident women. Soon, you will find yourself surrounded by (and uplifted by) the support of your community. When you trust yourself and you trust your community, you can do anything.





#4 Align Your Beliefs with Your Outcomes

Gender inclusion is important to me. On the one hand, I believe that women are equally skilful and deserve equal opportunities. But I also believe that gender-equitable outcomes are better for business. When you can make the case for your beliefs with a moral and economic justification, you'll find that people are more interested in your opinions. It's worth taking the time to examine your own beliefs and make sure they are connected to real-world outcomes. Otherwise, you will be speaking to the air and building castles in the sky.

You must be very articulate about your goals as a female leader. Get specific about the skills you will need to succeed, and take into account that you may need to demonstrate extra skills to achieve the same levels as your male colleagues. This is an unfortunate fact of life but it is better to face it head-on. In your conversations about changing the industry, bring facts about why gender parity is good for business.

Nobody wants to suffer through a philosophical monologue. Instead, make it a conversation by sharing information and asking for their perspective. Get people on your team so that you are contributing to a collective effort rather than building adversarial relationships.

#5 Don't Worry About Your Reputation

This is something that many women worry about. I understand the impulse—your reputation gets you work, after all. If you have a bad reputation, it could prevent you from getting hired. But I'm here to debunk this myth. I am not saying you should have a bad reputation, but hey, be capable of sieving gossip from genuine feedback, oppressors or ego minded people who will bad mouth you just to pull you down.

Women creatives, you must let your work speak for itself. The more you pay attention to the gossip, the more space you create in your life for people who are committed to wilfully misunderstanding you. That is not the way to create a powerful career.



Focus on the quality of your work. Advocate for your colleagues and clients. Trust your decisions and stay curious in each and every moment. You cannot be everything to everyone. Stay accountable to your own compass and lead with your dreams and not your fears.

Lastly, remember that you belong to a global community of amazing women who want the best for you. They can offer you leadership opportunities, and when you're in a position of power, you can offer a hand up to the next generation of women. To make the change, we must do it together. Don't be distracted by the myth of the solitary high achiever. Instead, focus on community over competition.

No matter where you are in your career, this moment is asking you to show up and do the messy work today. I will be right there alongside you, fighting for gender equity and focusing on creating excellent results for my clients. You're never alone, even when it feels like you are. I believe you have the potential to be a leader - now you just need to believe in yourself!





Bio

Mabel Aladenusi-Adeteye is a classically trained corporate communications and public relations expert with over a decade full time experience in marketing communication, customer relationship marketing, public relations, digital media marketing, brand management, event management and branding, corporate affairs and sustainability.

She has demonstrated broad knowledge, experience and professional judgment in the field having managed numerous high-profile communications initiatives both for local and international brands, from corporate restructurings to product introductions, market roll out, international crisis communications response to grassroots engagement efforts, B2B & B2C communications, media relations and perception management.

Mabel is accredited in public relations with the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) UK, Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), accredited in Digital Marketing, Integrated Communications and Marketing from the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) UK. Certified in Strategy and Sustainability from IESE Business School, Mabel is an alumnus of the department of Business Administration of the prestigious Babcock University, Ahmadu Bello University and the Lagos Business School.

She is a member of the world's largest and most influential PR and communications membership body; Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA), UK. Mabel is a certified Advanced Branding expert with numerous digital certifications with Google such as Digital Sales, YouTube Channel Growth, Campaign Manager, etc.

Mabel Aladenusi-Adeteye is currently the Head, Corporate Communications & PR for one of Nigeria's leading broadcast media firm, TVC Communications; owners of TVC News, TVC and Max FM.

Chapter
06

**PUBLIC RELATIONS
IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

An Expansive Opportunity for
Practitioners

By Adebola Olomo



CHAPTER SIX

PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE – An Expansive Opportunity for Practitioners

By Adebola Olomo

More than anything, what the digital age has done to Public Relations (PR) is to demystify it. I remember the days when it was a big deal to be a copy writer, especially for the press. There was a time, while working on The Experience Lagos brand, I had written this piece and felt so proud of it. I wrote it in the way I was sure the reader would feel at ease reading it, but alas, the client sent a revert days later to say that their Press consultant had mentioned it did not read like press. I was astonished. Looking back now, I feel proud of myself for that moment rather than the embarrassing feeling of having a press release returned for a full rewrite. That really sums up the difference between traditional and digital. Till now, many journalists hold dear to past glories where they had a particular tone and style to writing for press. This has, however, gradually begun to give way as even newspapers are mostly read online now via their blogs; and other forms of media have adopted one digital angle or the other.

What needs to remain sacrosanct though is the skill of writing with the reader in mind. With the digital age comes an array of self-professed public relations officers who confuse writing a social media Instagram post for being a PR expert. In recent times, technology has transformed the field of Public Relations by redefining





the functions carried out in PR and the techniques of how results are measured. Organisations are not just about disseminating information to the public, there is now specific focus on the how and why.

Many years ago, working at MTN Nigeria, my role was to get everyone to use SharePoint, a tech tool for communications. It was akin to passing a camel through the eye of a needle. It was really difficult, especially as the tool itself at that time was not inspiring, so teams did not find the motivation to develop content and communicate via this tool. For them, paper was much easier to pass around, from desk to desk, with secretaries happy to move workload from one unit to another. Today, emails, social networks, chat hubs are the deal; people would rather do a voice note than a phone call. That is the blessing of digital. However, with the digital age comes the responsibility to be thorough in the way we write, regardless of the platforms we are publishing on. Although the way we communicate today is different from the traditional days, we still need to ensure that our depth of knowledge on the subject matter we pen resonates with the readers; and our style of writing must ensure we don't lose them whilst communicating. Presently, I am sure more sophisticated digital communication tools are being used in MTN for internal communications. Yet, I am also sure that the rigour and perfection that goes into articulating content that go on the platforms remain the same. That the ages have changed, should not take our professional quest for excellence away from us as PR experts.

Prior to the digital age, a press release would be the most popular means of communicating a message. Yet even with the reduction in circulation of print media, traditional public relations practices still play a major role in strategic campaigns and branding strategies. This is because the major objectives of digital PR and traditional PR are similar, but the mediums are different.

The use of digital and social technologies has blurred the boundaries between PR and marketing such that many individuals in PR want to expand their skills to take on a broader role within digital marketing. This is because of the changes and huge impact of the internet on the way content is created, distributed and marketed to its desired audience. I really do not see the difference these days with PR and Marketing. PR helps Marketing do better, especially as they are experts in delivering content to target audience based on the platforms being used. Most organisations will, however, employ

separate agencies for Marketing and PR. I have found this counterproductive in the sense that, it is practical to have two agencies manage your PR and Marketing vehicles, but content development needs to find a meeting point. There needs to be a confluence in the way content is developed to speak to the target audience. The challenge that this presents can be seen where you have brands having a radio jingle that sounds radically different from posts on their Facebook Page. It becomes obvious that it is same person trying to speak to same people but saying it in different ways. This ends up confusing their target audience. I recall one of the comparative tools available on social media ads platforms such as Google or Facebook that gives you the opportunity to run two ads and compare side by side, which resonates more with the audience so that you can get more value for your money by taking off ads that is not converting. This also should be the collective way brands work with PR and Digital Marketing Communications, such that they can agree on content types for varying platforms but branching from an agreed communication line. This way, even if they branch out, they are connected, and the audience can see or feel the connection. They can also use comparative tools to determine which platform connects better with the audience given the message being delivered.

Today, the first-place people have access to the news is likely to be on their smartphones. Despite these changes, publicity outreach continuously relies on the following:



**IDENTIFYING
YOUR GOALS:**

Where do you want to attain publicity?



**SPECIFYING
YOUR AUDIENCE:**

Who do you want to reach?



**SELECTING YOUR
MEDIA TARGETS:**

What media outlets do your audience read/watch/connect with?



One of the notable additions to PR that has emerged in the digital age is METRICS. The ability to measure PR campaigns used to be ambiguous but with the use of social media, results are now easier to measure. Measuring a campaign's performance can be as simple as tracking an increase in followers, likes, or tweets. They offer real time reports on data funnelled into a single dashboard to provide a clearer understanding regarding overall social engagement so that organisations can monitor their return on investment.

For traditional PR colleagues, this continues to be a myth yet we must all embrace this innovative tool that allows us present the effect of work done to our clients. This also helps for strategizing, audience mapping and content generation. I remember how long it took me to include a measurement page in a proposal document. Clients will always ask for this, but it was easy in the past to remain vague. In previous times, we will simply ask the Radio station or TV station, what their viewership numbers are and they will likely give numbers that reflect

likely give numbers that reflect their best days at work. We will include this in our press package to clients to show the expanse of audience their content will reach; but this is no longer enough. More recently, the analytics from digital platforms give a holistic and nitty-gritty view of how well content has done, and to whom it has connected with better. We must all embrace this innovative tool that allows us present the effect of work done to our clients.

This also helps for strategizing, audience mapping and content generation. I remember how long it took me to include a measurement page in a proposal document. Clients will always ask for this, but it was easy in the past to remain vague. In previous times, we will simply ask the Radio station or TV station, what their viewership numbers are and they will likely give numbers that reflect their best days at work. We will include this in our press package to clients to show the expanse of audience their content will reach; but this is no longer enough. More recently, the analytics from digital platforms give a holistic and nitty-gritty view of how well content has done, and to whom it has connected with better.

” *There are different measurement tools available to PR professionals to quantify the success of campaigns.*



Therefore, the digital age has developed new distribution methods and measurement tools that allow public relations professionals to track campaign results in real time. In my opinion, it has expanded the opportunity for PR practitioners who are open to learning how best to adapt and expand their offerings to clients. Clients may find it easy to hire content developers, but we need to continue to show in our output that having a PR expert makes a difference to an organisation's entire communication activities.

” *Technology has not eliminated the need for traditional public relations; it has only given public relations professionals a greater ability to connect with their target audience.*





Bio

It's not a common thing to see a person of the noble legal profession diversifying into other fields, not to talk of trail blazing a whole industry. A graduate of Law from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife, Adebola Olomo is a tech enthusiast who specializes in Marketing & Innovations, Web Development, Public Relations, Tech Consultancy with a comprehensive working experience of STLC and SDLC.

She is the founder and Managing Director of Deefrent Limited, a Digital Communications Company which she started in 2009. You may not know her but you must have definitely felt her work with various multi-national organisations from communications to marketing consultancy.

Adebola Olomo is an epitome of finesse and excellence, leaving no stone unturned in getting things done. She has effectively mastered the fast-paced art of digital marketing, PR, communications and web development hence it is no surprise she leads one of the foremost digital marketing and branding firms, Deefrent Limited as the Managing Director.

Before she came to wear those incredible shoes, she served in various capacities in the corporate sector, one of which was as a communications consultant with MTN Group South Africa after a sterling performance at MTN Nigeria, winning many awards including the much-coveted Star Performance award.

She has worked on various projects across the Private, Public, and Social sectors in Nigeria rebranding and managing top level clients including Lagos State ministries, First Bank and The Experience, Lagos. Her sterling achievement have been severally rewarded, including receiving the KPMG Outstanding Young Person award.

Adebola relocated to the Republic of Ireland five years ago with her family and has since began to make her mark in the city of Dublin. She is currently the PR Director for the African Professionals Network Ireland, helping to ensure diversity within Fortune 100 firms.

Chapter
07

**WORK-LIFE
INTEGRATION**

By Temi Ophylia Ibekwe





CHAPTER SEVEN

WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

By Temi Ophylia Ibekwe

Work-life integration is an evolving concept in recent times. It is described as the integration of work with various other aspects of life including health, family, personal development and more. While work-life balance, a term we are more familiar with, states that work and personal life can exist separately yet equally, work-life integration brings work and personal life together, showing that there isn't much difference between both in reality.

Work-life integration advocates are not big on work time being separate from personal time, "I only work 9 am to 5 pm on Mondays to Fridays" wouldn't apply here. Instead, "I understand what my work responsibilities and timelines are and understand the things I need to achieve in my personal life, and so I create time to achieve these things". Work and personal life co-exist. This is a fascinating concept and even though I didn't know the term before, it is how I viewed and treated work and personal life for over a decade.

Life is a composition of many aspects which could be summed into health, social, financial, civic, spiritual, family and more. Ideally, one should not outweigh the other or others in a way that we neglect them and become only one-sided such that work alone provides our major experiences or becomes the sum of story. We live in a society where survival, the need to meet physiological needs as described in 'Maslow's hierarchy of needs', is a priority for many and comes at a cost paid through earnings from work. Work then takes a central and highly significant aspect of our lives. In most cases, other aspects which significantly grow us or make us better are neglected or relegated to the side-lines.





The ideal human living in the 21st century and in this digital age is one that has some level of grip on the various aspects of life. To achieve this, the concept of work-life integration is visited. Is it possible? Yes. Is it doable? Yes, but requires a high level of will power and self-discipline. One of the driving forces of work-life integration is personal values. Having things/principles you value and prioritise help you find ways to integrate them into the life you are creating or have created.

Starting my career as a client service executive at a leading marketing agency, Chris Parkes Marketing Solutions in Lekki Phase I, in 2010, I can strongly say that integration helped me get a grip on things and helped me move on quickly in my career. Although employed through NYSC, I was never treated as a Corps member. I was absolved in full time, of course with all the benefits, perks that come with the entry-level job. Living in Surulere and working in Lekki meant that I had to find ways to integrate punctuality, love for my job with a flourishing social and spiritual life which I valued at the time as much as I did the job.

One of the things I did was to identify the barriers to my achieving the things I valued and that for me was distance and time. The solution was to move these things closer to one another so I could close the gap. Could I leave the job and focus on social, spiritual and family which was in Surulere? No, that would not have been smart. But could I move at least two of those close to work? Yes. I ensured I did my work wholeheartedly to create time to do things I loved: dance, meeting up with friends and mid-week church service or fitness after work but within the same location. Then I went home to spend time with family.

” *When you work in an agency, you will realise that there are no “work times” just workloads and tasks that need to be fulfilled on behalf of the client at the right time*

A few years later, when I moved to Mediacraft Associates, and then Chain Reactions, both on the Mainland, I improved on this. I personally never saw work time to be only within work hours. With this mindset, if you have to get up sometimes at midnight to attend to work, maybe because this is when your creative juices pour, you do so and do not see it like you are giving too much. As consultants, our priority is the result and not the hours or the process.

Working in the agency means that you get to work with different clients, different brand custodians and leadership styles. This can be overwhelming sometimes.

You need to learn to take a breather when you need to, otherwise you may burn out. One thing that has kept me going for such a long time is my love for physical activity and I make time for this at least three times weekly. Find a gym, dance class, etc. something that helps



reduce the stress from work then stay committed to it along with work. Find things that inspire you and try to fuse these things into your work week. I recall my last job as an employee as the marketing manager at a fast-moving consumer food brand. One of the things I negotiated was gym membership payment by the company annually with a gym that was a few blocks away from the office. I realised that the work was going to be demanding and I also took a look at the things that I valued as much as work because they fulfil and grow me, one of which was fitness.

The firm obliged and it was not until about a year later I discovered the CEO was marvelled and impressed by that request. He felt confident in my personality and character since it was obvious I was going to integrate work with other aspects of my life which for him showed grit, a key character needed to thrive on the job.

Work-life integration will not be the same for each of us; young, middle age, single or married, working in boutique agencies or medium-large size agencies but it is important to know it is achievable. The first step is to change your mindset from set-routine work life to a flexible work time lifestyle. Then understand what your values are in the order of priority then blend these with work, incorporating these activities into your daily life. Try not to fit in too much of one of the lots into your typical day.

At my firm, Phyllion, we do not evaluate people by resumption hours such as early/late resumption, neither do we evaluate productivity by the hours you stayed at your desk. Instead, productivity is evaluated based on your understanding of the tasks given and the value you place on a timely delivery or completion with the bottom-line and respect for other team members in view. This way, if you need to take quick breaks during the day, you have no guilt, but you have an understanding that the quick break might need to be replaced by 30mins or more for work later on the same day. Either way, it is a win-win situation for the consultant, the firm and more importantly the businesses we serve.

” *For a working mom, this may mean mean being reliable enough at work for management to allow you a few minutes to attend a Parents-Teacher Meeting because they know you will turn in work before its due even if it means you get it done later that day.*



In summary, I have put together these five tips to support an effective work-life integration for consultants working in an agency:



Work with a purpose, not just trying to fulfil a work log time. Define the goal for your work activity.



Blend responsibilities daily: understand what your responsibilities are each day. You can use a journal or create a schedule.



Focus on productivity and not just activity. Read this twice.



Break work into small chunks of tasks which you need to complete. Then do them in short dedicated bursts, take a break then continue.



Be flexible. Have a mindset that work is a part of your life just like other aspects. Take as many breaks during the day as necessary. Putting in some work before 9 am or after 9 pm might be necessary too.



Bio

Temi Ophylia Ibekwe is a Strategic Communications Professional with several years hands-on experience in Public relations & Marketing working with consumer brands, government institutions and SMEs. She has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Social Statistics from Obafemi Awolowo University, a Certificate in Market & Research from Pan Atlantic University Lagos, Event Marketing training from George Washington University, USA and is member Chartered Institute of Marketing UK.

Temi has worked in leading public relations firms in Nigeria in Strategy and Account Manager capacities, facilitating pitch wins & project leads in same. In 2014, she emerged Nigeria's representative in Public Relations, Young Lions Category at the Cannes Festival of Creativity in France.

In 2017, she founded now fast-growing PR & Marketing Consulting firm in Lagos Nigeria; Phyllion and Partners Limited, @phyllionimc on social media, having several brands in their kitty with a niche in Tech.

She has created platforms to support SMEs, graduate internships "The Coach" and most recently led her team in championing first Tech PR Conference in Nigeria, #PTC2020.

Chapter
08

**WHY MEDIA
RELATIONS IS STILL
A POWERFUL PART
OF PR FOR NIGERIA
AND ITS DIASPORA**

By Ronke Lawal





CHAPTER EIGHT

WHY MEDIA RELATIONS IS STILL A POWERFUL PART OF PR FOR NIGERIA AND ITS DIASPORA

By Ronke Lawal

As a British-Nigerian PR and communications specialist based in the UK who works primarily with African and Caribbean diaspora clients, media relations is one of the key aspects of my service offer. I have engaged with a variety of global media organisations including national and local media outlets in the UK and seen first-hand what the impact of media relations is on the credibility and reputation of my clients. We are faced with a multitude of perspectives and perceptions about Nigeria and the Nigerian diaspora which can sometimes counteract the messaging that we are trying to amplify through earned media. Some of these perspectives are the truth, some misinformed, some are inaccurate and some are just outrightly unnecessary. How do we ensure that media relations better profiles Nigerian stories not only on the continent but also within the diaspora

itself? Communications and PR specialists as a whole need to be afforded opportunities to work with influential and powerful leaders across Nigeria and must work at building quality relationships with the press and journalists. One of the most frustrating aspects of my role has been to educate members of the

“ *Communications and PR specialists as a whole need to be afforded opportunities to work with influential and powerful leaders across Nigeria* ”



diaspora on what PR is. Whilst individuals begrudge how the media represents Nigerians in the West, many do not understand the strategic communications process that goes into creating narratives. I also worry that too often people place more value and attention on Western validation than diasporan or Nigerian media outlets. I urge Nigerian entrepreneurs and thought-leaders to use PR and specifically media relations to empower and engage their communities on the ground and in the diaspora. They need to work with communicators and media outlets to aid in shifting perceptions but more importantly, encourage tangible development across Nigeria – using interviews with major outlets as an opportunity to speak up on very real issues like the #EndSARS protest and not simply to promote the vision of “Africa Rising”.



“ *Media relations therefore should be a trust building exercise not simply a noise making one.* ”

This is also why we must look to Nigerians in Nigeria and in diaspora to tell their own stories on their own platforms. There is an immense amount of journalistic, photographic and content creation talent across Nigeria and its global diaspora - and the media relations aspect of PR can address this. The continent needs to publicise this variety of talent in order to tell its own stories and change the overall narrative to the world, across the continent and its diaspora. There are so many people doing so much which should be highlighted and celebrated without requiring validation from the Western media. Do we respect Nigeria based media outlets as much as we respect Western media? Are we ensuring that fake news is limited and actual journalism across the continent is paid for and highlighted? Are we calling out the government when it attempts to suppress press freedom? The Nigeria Broadcasting Commission in Nigeria sanctioned media outlets in Nigeria for their reports on the #EndSARS protests. This is unacceptable and requires interrogation. It would also help if more journalists from the Nigerian diaspora were given access to opportunities in the West. At the moment, the under-representation of [Black and Minority Ethnic journalists in the UK](#) still makes it difficult for Nigerian publicist to pitch a story that doesn't fit into certain narratives or focused on a celebrity/well-known figure. We should rise up to support our Nigerian talent which works for major Western outlets,



that they have access to the truth and are encouraged to tell the truth in their content. We must also resist and end the practice of brown-enveloping. Wherever we find ourselves, we must ensure that there is clarity in terms of the difference between earned and paid-for content. The bad practice of allowing paid-for content appear as earned is an insidious practice which leads to bias media relations campaigns that lack integrity.

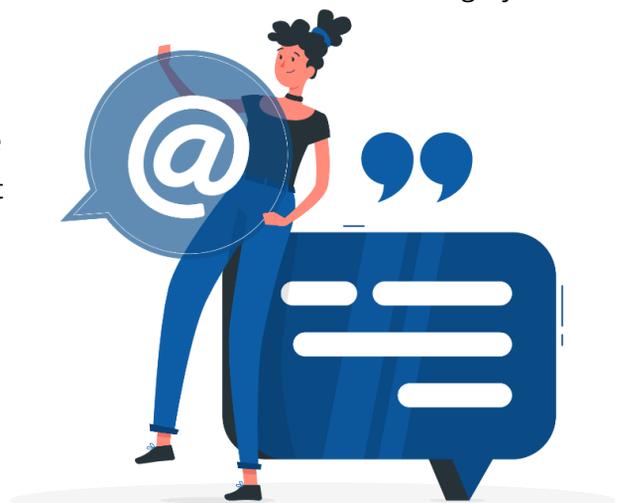
As PR professionals in Nigeria, ensure that you follow best practice in all media relations activities, engaging authentically and openly on behalf of your clients. The role of PR professionals in Nigeria should not simply be to use media relations to publicise and promote but to enhance how their clients are perceived by their publics and stakeholders.

Press releases, statements, announcements and any outgoing communications to the press should always be based on fact and do the work of providing journalists with key information with which they can use to make a story. In our digital age, a story is not stagnant; in fact, stories cross borders. Whether you are a Nigerian PR professional or a member of the diaspora: always keep in mind how the stories that you are pitching to the media will not remain “local”. Think about the impact of the messaging and the potential reach of media placement.

In order to build relationships with the media, keep in mind that we have access to more data than ever before. Use social media platforms to engage with journalists wherever you are; engage with them even when they are not covering a client story. Show an interest in stories which not only show that you have your clients’ interests at heart but you are also a thought leader within PR industry. Your credibility will help you to get the attention of the media outlets that you want to engage with.

In our role as PR professionals and communicators conducting media relations, we need to encourage transparency, accuracy and authenticity. This means upholding communications integrity and calling things out even when it can be difficult to admit the truth. We need to work on sharing stories in a way that will assert actual change across Nigeria and its global diaspora. It is never just a press release or a media interview; it has to be about legacy and impact going forward.

We have the power as PR communications specialists to really make an impact. Now is the time to ensure that people take notice and that Nigerian stories develop beyond the Western Gaze.





Bio

[Ariatu PR](#) Founder, Ronke Lawal was born in Hackney, East London. Having graduated with honours from Lancaster University and the University of Richmond, Virginia (USA) with a degree in International Business (Economics), she started her own [PR and Communications business](#) in 2004. Ariatu [PR specialises in PR and Communications](#) for clients in a range of B2C industries, including lifestyle, consumer goods & the creative enterprise sector.

In January 2010, Ronke became the Chief Executive of the Islington Chamber of Commerce where she remained until the end of 2012. She became a non-executive director of [The Hoxton Apprentice](#) in 2011. She joined the board of Trustees of [Voluntary Action Islington](#) in 2012 and was on The Employers Panel for the [National Employment Savings Trust](#) from 2011-18. In 2018, she became a director on the board at the [Chartered Institute of Public Relations](#). She is a Mentor for The Cherie Blair Foundation, The “Success Looks Like You” Initiative and The [BME PR Pros](#) initiative as well as a mentor to entrepreneurs and creatives outside of structured initiatives. In 2010, Ronke was named as one of the Top 400 women of the year in the UK for her work with the Islington Chamber of Commerce. In 2011, Ronke was honoured to receive a [Precious Award](#) for Inspirational Leadership. In 2019, Ronke received [an alumni award](#) from Lancaster University for making a substantial contribution to her field of work and developed an outstanding reputation among her peers.

Ronke is currently a Fellow of the [RSA](#) (Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce). In 2020, Ronke won the award for PR & Comms Influencer of the Year at the [Vuelio online influence awards](#).

She is [a passionate advocate](#) for enterprise, equality and equity through diverse and inclusive leadership. She is an active [public speaker](#) and is regularly invited to facilitate trainings in personal branding, PR strategy and media. She is regularly invited onto a variety of media platforms to offer her insights on pop culture, current affairs, business and more.

Her varied passions outside the business world include food (Founder of Food Blog [www.whosfordinner.co.uk](#)), travel, music, literature and most importantly living a life she loves.

Connect with Ronke on [LinkedIn](#), tweet her [@ronkelawal](#) and watch her [business videos on YouTube](#).

Chapter
09

**MANAGING
ENTERTAINMENT
PUBLIC RELATIONS:**
a Roller Coaster Career and the
Adventure it Offers

By Satira Osemudiamen





CHAPTER NINE

MANAGING ENTERTAINMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS:

A Roller Coaster Career and the Adventure it Offers

By Satira Osemudiamen

Hello, my name is Satira. As a child, I relished watching entertainment programs on television, like *Scandal* and would dream of having a career that would get me closer to the screen. So, as I got older and became more aware of my desired career path, I started to nurse my interest in entertainment PR. Although public relations was not my first degree, and this was mostly because my parents had a different plan for my life, I ensured that I kept the dream alive. By my sophomore year, I had done what I felt, at the time, was the necessary research to academically and mentally prepare myself to become a well-rounded PR professional. Upon after graduation, I applied for and wrote the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) exams, which I passed in flying colours. At this point, I had fully immersed myself into the world of public relations!

As the entertainment PR girl, I am committed to enabling and supporting entertainers, as well as entertainment companies and events' organisers, achieve greater spotlight for their events, content and activities. I develop robust engagement strategies that will attract the media, secure corporate sponsorships, and build public followership, for them. For me, some of my favourite resources used in achieving a few of my most successful plans required me familiarising myself with



online resources, such as *PR Daily*, *PR Couture*, and *Social Media Examiner*.

I should also, however, share this open secret with you: these online resources are the secret weapons for a modern publicist's work. Certain movies and tv series, such as *Scandal*, *Mad Men*, *Hancock*, *Radio Day*, *All the Presidents Men*, *The Social Network*, and *Phone Booth*, have proven to be entertaining but have practical case studies for me. This is because they reflect relevant scenarios in public relations, in which taking control of an evolving PR narrative is key. These stories also explore client-staff interactions, building resilient strategies, developing new business pitches, and managing agency dynamics.

Now, my experience with the world of public relations and entertainment PR started in 2015. On my first day of work, it felt a little strange because I would soon learn that the assumptions of academic ideologies and methodologies of PR, being similar to the realities of the practice within the profession, was all wrong.

So, my first ever attempt at a PR plan, in my opinion, was the worst I have ever done. However, I am grateful for my PR boss at the time who was willing to guide me on how best to apply my knowledge towards creating a PR plan tailored to my client's needs and expectations. The patience and guidance displayed by my boss then influenced my attitude and performance, and helped me lay a strong foundation for the way I handled my first PR account, a movie festival. But as a fresh publicist, given the responsibility of managing a big PR account at the time, I had my high and low moments. That experience shaped the kind of publicist I am now.

Some of the high points for me was that the festival had extensive media coverage, both locally and internationally. There was also a large influx of non-film celebrities and corporate executives at the opening, closing, and award ceremonies. The red-carpet event was well organised and it had wide coverage and media attendance. Some of my low moments included mixing up the names of some celebrities, not giving the right number of accreditation or media tags. I also did not properly manage expectations for certain media personnel who wanted exclusive interviews with some of the A-list celebrities in attendance. That period marked a significant trajectory for my career - I learnt many hard lessons that remain with me till date. Despite the challenges, the lessons from that day offered me an opportunity to build my media contacts and increase the reach of my professional network. I have gone further, both inside and outside of the different agencies I have worked with, to manage the public reputation



and promotion of A-list celebrities, entertainment companies, and headlining events.

Furthermore, my job as an entertainment publicist grants me unfettered access to VIPs, and one thing I tell people is that these actors, dancers, musicians, and creatives are first human beings before being celebrities. Given all the glitz and glamour that comes with being a public figure, the public tends to forget these individuals are vulnerable just like everyone else.

This makes me more empathetic towards them. There is an expectation for them to act strong, if and when trolled, smile and ignore any slander on their reputation or ignore the media, their gossip columns and online tabloids, when they misrepresent their statements. I see this as very unfair which is why I attempt, as best possible, to understand their personality beyond the persona they show to the public. I make every effort to create a working system that infuses trust, friendship, and professionalism in my managing of their public reputation.

What I do is ensure that they are fully aware of their weaknesses and attempt to guide them to focus more on enhancing their strengths, helping to attract commercial value and secure their audience's affection. This method, however, requires resilience, tons of patience, hours of developing strategies and many weeks of counselling. Every entertainment publicist will attest to the fact that dealing with a reputation crisis and taking control of an evolving PR narrative is the primary delivery of entertainment PR. Every time I scroll through social media and observe a public figure get dragged into baseless and unnecessary issues, I see that such problems could be avoided or better managed if they had a publicist advising. So, I remind my clients that one of the biggest mistakes they have avoided in their careers, is to have me as their publicist. How do we take control of an evolving story or narrative when we are not aware of the details? How would we prevent or curtail a looming crisis if we are not engaged?

PR is beyond getting on front-page covers or participating in broadcast interviews. However, in most cases, the tendency is for many individuals to assume they understand the profession better than the experts, like me. This usually holds true until a crisis hits and then they come to us expecting magic or instant results. As PR professionals, however, we will not cry over spilt milk. In such situations, what we do is





pick up a napkin from the stack we keep nearby and clean up the mess.

Dealing with a reputation crisis for an entertainer can be mentally and physically exhausting. It takes a different level of wisdom, comprehension, situational analysis, and patience, to manage and regain control of a situation. There have been moments where I felt my blood pressure rise. But amid all the madness, you have to be ready because your client's crisis never has a planned calendar or season.

On a personal level, being an entertainment publicist delivers a different sort of blow to friends and family who struggle to understand what my job entails. Everyone will assume that you are like Samantha Jones of the Sex and the City fame, and that all you do is partying, dress-up and have celebrity relationships. This is the caricature of me they choose to see. Most never believe me when I tell them that most hardworking publicists are entertainment PR professionals.

We need to work long hours, sometimes act or play the role of a shrink, friend, manager, fixer, and on random occasions, play the parental role. This is in addition to managing their reputation. I, however, have chosen not to fault an entertainment client's assumption of who we are because my colleagues are guilty of always wearing a smile and would gladly take amazing pictures or party hard despite their mental and physical exhaustion. Long story short, we are career superheroes!

Overall, being an entertainment publicist is fulfilling. Especially when your client receives positive feedback from the media and the public. I love the thrill it brings - the endless sessions ideating strategies, the sometimes-excruciating long hours, and an ever-expanding relationship with the mass media. I see my practice as a ministry to propagate their brands. As the lead strategist for Satira Media and PR, my boutique PR agency, I help my clients develop lasting impressions with their target audience and faithful followers. My goal, as always, is to provide them with creative solutions, carefully steer PR narratives in the desired direction and facilitate strategic partnerships that will enhance their commercial value.

So, to my dear ladies who are interested in entertainment PR: get ready to go on a journey and a wild adventure where you get the opportunity to meet different personalities and executives. You will create and deconstruct strategies, woo the media, learn to control an evolving narrative, multitask in unbelievable ways, but most of all, you will have memorable fun.





Bio

Satira Osemudiamen, with over half a decade experience in Public Relations, currently works as the Lead Consultant, Satira Media and PR, an organisation she birthed two years ago to provide creative communication solutions for entertainment and consumer brands while enhancing the reputation of entertainers.

Before venturing into private practice, Satira worked as Accounts Coordinator at BHQ Media, where she carried out end-to-end management of PR and marketing campaigns for public figures and events; oversaw the approval of brand collaterals; effectively planned and managed press conferences, while expertly leveraging on media relationships and vendors to drive optimal visibility for clients, among other responsibilities. Having bagged her Bachelor's in English Education from the prestigious University of Lagos in 2012, Satira became a certified PR practitioner and consultant a year after, following her certification by the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) in 2013. In 2018, Satira completed another course in Public Relations Career Planning Skills at PR Couture.

Some of her notable achievements include: effectively engaging the power of social media to change the negative public perception of PENCOM; successfully carried out PR support for Freeman Osonuga (the first Nigerian shortlisted to travel to space in 2015); worked as a PR lead on some significant lifestyle events, including the Africa International Film Festival, International Drinks Festival, Olamide Live in Lagos-4; A One Night Stand with Adekunle Gold; and Alternate Sound Live.

No doubts, Satira is the go-to person for campaign ideation and execution, event planning and management, reputation and crisis management, copywriting and media relations, among others. For leisure, she immerses herself in reading, writing, watching movies or following up on the latest lifestyle trends. She also runs a personal blog called Satirayanz- The Diary of a Conservative Preacher's Daughter.

Chapter
10

**RETHINKING
GOVERNMENT
COMMUNICATIONS**

By Adedoyin Jaiyesimi



CHAPTER TEN

RETHINKING GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS

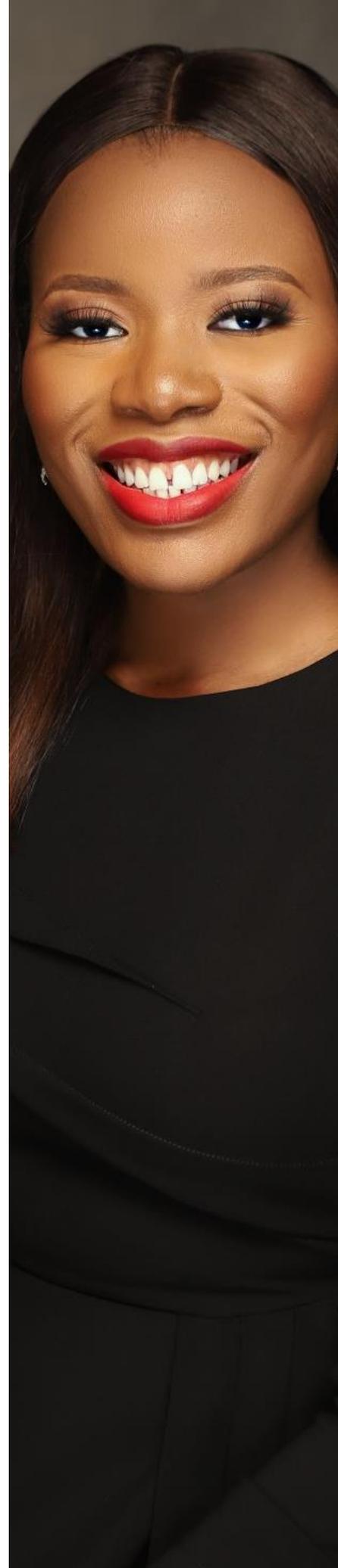
By Adedoyin Jaiyesimi

When I began my foray into the world of communications and public relations, I had no interest in dealing with the public sector. To be honest, it did not even cross my mind that communications also applies to that space. I was content with the world of corporate communications which I was comfortably swimming in. Since social impact is something that I have always been passionate about, I was not surprised when I started to transition to development communications. Using my skills in communications for an impactful end result was quite fulfilling and I enjoyed every brief I worked on for philanthropic and development organisations.

A direct message on Instagram however sowed the seed that grew into a desire to see a transformation in government communications in Nigeria.

It was a pretty normal day and I was mindlessly scrolling through Instagram like we tend to do on less busy days when the message dropped. "Will you be interested in joining the social media team of the Nigerian Economic Summit?" I'll be honest, my interest in this DM wasn't for the most altruistic reasons. I thought about the platform, the kind of people I'd get to network with and I felt it was an opportunity I couldn't pass on. Plus, it was an all-expense paid engagement!

I said yes and a few weeks later, I found myself at the Transcorp





Hilton Hotel in Abuja, capturing the proceedings of the 22nd Nigerian Economic Summit on social media. I paid just the right amount of attention needed for me to get the gist of what was being discussed and be able to summarise the proceedings of the day in the daily report. I remember occasionally saying to myself, "This ministry/ department does this? How come no one has ever heard of this?" "Why can't this information be made available to Nigerians to access easily?" Since I wasn't particularly interested in this sector, I simply brushed off those questions.

However, when I returned to work with the social media team of the Nigerian Economic Summit the next year, I knew I couldn't sweep those questions under the carpet. In fact, I was concerned. Many things that were said the previous year were being repeated by the public sector officials. The issues were the same. I had this sense of Nigerians being out of touch with what their government is actually doing, through no fault of theirs if I may add. There were also a number of gaffes from senior level government officials who supposedly had media aides. "Doesn't he know he shouldn't say something like that on a public platform like this?" Something was wrong somewhere and I wanted to figure out why. It wasn't that I had an intention to solve whatever the problem was but with the way my mind is wired, it never rests until I find an effective solution to any issue that it spotlights.

So, I began to pay attention to how our government communicates. It was worrisome to watch a particular trend unfold in quick succession. I'll give an example that many Nigerians are familiar with. You'd see tweets from official government accounts announcing a new policy or directive only for that same account to come the next day to apologise and say something like, "That is not what we meant." Why was the message sent out in the first place if that was not the intended meaning? For a government that has continuously succeeded in losing the trust of the citizens, it bothered me that communication was not being leveraged as a tool to generate goodwill and support.

” *For a government that has continuously succeeded in losing the trust of the citizens, it bothered me that communication was not being leveraged as a tool to generate goodwill and support.*

Thanks to the disruptive events of 2020, one important truth has emerged – we need to rethink government communications in Nigeria. I am not going to rehash the problems in this article as we already know what they are. I am going to attempt to provide recommendations concerning the shift we need to see in the way our government communicates.



From my experience, the first essential step is to acknowledge the importance of communications in the first place. Why is it important? Why is it needed? My work with Nigeria's leading Think Tank has shown me that good intentions can fall off the wagon thanks to bad communications. There is a 'how' to communications that public sector officials do not have expertise in. Many times, I have reviewed public sector communiques and briefing notes and I ask, "What exactly does this mean? Will the audience that you are communicating with understand what you are trying to say?" It's one thing to have a directive, policy or even a good implementation plan. It is another thing to communicate it and execute it effectively.

This then leads to the next big question – what is our national communications strategy? Every professional in the industry knows that all we do stems from the foundation of an overarching strategy. If you ask around like I have done a number of times, you'll discover that our government currently lacks a cohesive communications strategy that seeps into its ministries, departments and agencies across different levels. Maybe taking this from the federal level is too ambitious. Even at the state level, you may struggle to find a detailed communications strategy.

This is something that needs to be looked into because a strategy will give us direction on how we communicate as a nation. It is also the tool that we can use to shape perceptions and narratives about Nigeria. In 2019, I had the privilege to win the Communicating Africa Challenge which was put together by Africa Communications Week and IE University. The task was to come up with a communications strategy for your country, with emphasis on three focal points of strength. The process of putting together my entry helped me understand why developed countries have become efficient in pushing their own narratives and agenda. They are in control of the perceptions about them as a nation. Think about it. There are nations with higher levels of crime in Nigeria but somehow, they don't get labelled. Recently, I discovered that a country that I thought was a wealthy one has a huge problem of homelessness. Yet, what you see a lot concerning that country is its history and tourist attractions. That begs the question, what are they doing differently? The answer is simple – they are in control of their narrative. Some have even gone further to build a strong country brand!





These questions and the many more that keep me up late at night tell me that there is definitely room for innovation in the way our government communicates. It won't be fair for me to paint an all-round gloomy picture as there are some states and government agencies that have upped their game in terms of communications. Instead of being the exemption, I'd love to see them being an example among many others. There's however hope that it can be achieved. Sometimes, we're often hit with 'why it cannot work in Nigeria' but I have had the opportunity to see the effect of proper communications on the resulting outcomes in the process of policy advocacy. I am certain this can be scaled to achieve more impactful results for the nation as a whole.

Perhaps most importantly, I hope that communications and PR professionals across Nigeria are beginning to see the critical role they can play in transforming government communications. Communications professionals should not be called upon as a last resort to spin a situation or announcement that has gone south. We are to be at the forefront of the conversations, showing public sector officials how to carry their target audience (Nigerian citizens) along in every policy creation and implementation process. I really do think this area needs to be our passion as professionals in this very important industry because, whether we are aware or not, the perception of our nation and our government rubs off on us in one way or the other.

There are many gaps but the good news is that those gaps can be filled. I look forward to seeing more professionals who can make an impact in this space as we rethink government communications collaboratively.



Bio

Adedoyin Jaiyesimi is the Chief Communications Consultant at The Comms Avenue, a capacity building and knowledge exchange platform for communications professionals across the world. The Comms Avenue currently has over 450 communications professionals from Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada in its niche community and offers high-level knowledge sharing meetings and training programs for communications professionals and corporate organizations. She is the Author of the book, *From Clueless to Success* – a collection of 20 backstories from her journey as a communications professional.

With over eight years' experience of creating and implementing communications strategy, Adedoyin works with organisations and senior executives to strategically communicate their brand message for impact and visibility. This involves having strategy sessions, creating communications plans, training internal communications teams, and overseeing execution. She has successfully executed projects for Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, African Philanthropy Forum, Fountain of Life Church, the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), Heritage Bank, the W Community, Specta by Sterling, Women in Business, Management and Public Service (WIMBIZ), Leading Ladies Africa, amongst others.

Her work has been featured in BusinessDay Weekender, Pride Magazine, Y! Magazine, Connect Nigeria, and she has been profiled on Leading Ladies Africa, Guardian Woman, Punch Newspaper, Leadership Newspaper, She Leads Africa and Lionesses of Africa. She was also featured as one of The Spark's visionary women in 2019.

Chapter

11

HOW DO YOU GET A SEAT AT THE DECISION TABLE?

By Aderayo Bankole





CHAPTER ELEVEN

HOW DO YOU GET A SEAT AT THE DECISION TABLE?

By Aderayo Bankole

A gauge of how seriously an organisation takes its communication is its resource allocation: the hierarchical level of its corporate communications head, budget allocation, staff strength, among others. Corporate Communications is a requisite for organisations to resolve challenges and explore opportunities. To achieve goals optimally, the communications function should have a seat at the decision table: I reached this conclusion from my years of experience working in Public Relations and Corporate Communications, both on the agency and client side.

It is the responsibility of communications professionals to convey the difference in outcomes when communications is involved from inception, as opposed to its involvement at execution. People rarely argue with results, and this is how the communications function gets a seat at the decision table; by being clear on the goal and documenting success. This instilled the importance of presenting these results in me in my early days. I worked with an agency that managed multinational brands, and we always needed to measure output. I was tasked with developing the remuneration formula for our consultancy fees outside third-party costs; this showed me the value and need to include communications at the strategy formulation stage of projects. With performance and impact measurement, I had the tool to educate decision makers; I could point out the difference in campaign outputs measured alongside the timing of PR inclusion.

However, in my first experience managing corporate communications as an internal staff, the reality differed from my





expectation. The CEO understood intentionality in brand building and management, but to attain relevance in any new setting, you must also identify key decision makers and influencers, build trust and become a valued advisor. These decision makers typically have top priority projects; supporting the actualisation of these projects with your communications expertise immediately shows the value you add. Recognise those who have the power to influence the decisions you make; these are your sponsors, actively build a relationship with them.

Show your expertise; identify the key performance indicators and objectives, then smash them. Show how communications help other functions to achieve organisational goals. Pinpointing specific areas where your communications expertise is required; identifying each business unit's communication needs even before they have done so themselves is a great way to get invited to provide input on business ideas from inception.

What more can you offer to get that coveted seat? Sharpen your business acumen, show multidisciplinary knowledge, and speak up; these got me noticed early in my career. In my second client-side role, I ensured my strategic thinking, revenue generation and cost management knowledge aligned to the company's strategy and was visible to management. I showed the communications function required skill and expertise. Management looked forward to my contributions and eventually always requested my input before taking certain decisions.

Also, I showed my team was a profit centre. Typically, businesses classify communication teams as cost centres; I turned this around by showing the monetary value of the brands I managed; quantifying my team's contribution to product development and sales by showing the number of prospects brought into the sales funnel, and how our efforts contribute to customer conversion.

As communications professionals, competence is the standard, but we must consistently deliver value to get a seat at the decision table. If this is a personal or departmental goal, be deliberate in your actions, and your results and subsequent relevance within the organisation will get you the desired inclusion.





Bio

Aderayo Bankole is a communications professional with close to two decades' experience in strategic communications, brand management, media management, and leadership communications. She leads the Corporate Communications team at Lagos Business School, where she is responsible for developing brand strategy and managing brand reputation.

Before joining the Business School, Aderayo managed branding and communications for a top firm in the financial services industry. This was preceded by a five-year run in various capacities in Branding, Corporate PR and Client Relations at a reputable Public Relations agency.

Besides her experience, Aderayo holds a Master's Degree in International Marketing Management and has honed her skills in marketing, communications and public relations.

Aderayo is currently exploring other interests in knowledge monetising, professional compering and voice acting.

Chapter
12

**THE SENIOR PUBLIC
RELATIONS WOMAN**

By Oluwayemisi Adekunle





CHAPTER TWELVE

THE SENIOR PUBLIC RELATIONS WOMAN

By Oluwayemisi Adekunle

The PR industry is one where we have a lot of women in terms of numbers. Some schools of thought have attributed this to the ability of women to multitask as this often helps them to come with multiple skill sets. I believe the traditional roles of women often make them to be very good at paying attention to details. The multifaceted roles they also play in the society as mother, sister, daughter, aunty, sister, friend, confidante, homemaker, member of various groups/associations also helps them to get along with people, find creative ways of carrying everyone along and be able to probe, listen to your deep thoughts as they dig every information that aids their mission. As a woman in PR, you will be more in tune with the needs and challenges of the situation you are contending with while managing the perception of your publics. These are the basic skills that help you thrive in PR and as women we are able to juggle everything together, creatively find a way to get along with everyone without dropping the ball while keeping our eyes on the goal.

Is it safe to say that women are rushing into the industry because of the pre-existing skill sets they are naturally endowed with? Or is it a herd mentality of being attracted to the industry because there are lots of women thriving in it already? Or is it a natural predisposition of women being attracted to the bling, glitz and glamour? PR today is more than the bling as you need to be more strategic in proffering a way out of a situation when it may not have yet appeared even when you have all the skills traditionally associated with PR.





While women in PR make up 66% of the workforce (according to the PR and Communications Census 2018) the number of women occupying leadership roles is not at par with this figure. A survey by PR Week from the end of 2018, shows only 39% of leadership roles in the PR industry are filled by women. We still have more men in leadership who would rather give another man the opportunity rather than the woman. Wondering why this is so? Work-life balance still poses a challenge to many women as the demands of raising a family set a roadblock on the path to their career growth. The attitude of some women putting the younger ones down can also be discouraging.

While the gaps are gradually closing, we are not there yet and more organisations need to realise that gender diversity is the key to their success. Having a variety of gender occupying executive roles is the way they can get a good mix of resources to maximize their potential. According to a Morgan Stanley report, "more gender diversity, particularly in corporate settings, can translate to increased productivity, greater innovation, better products, better decision-making, and higher employee retention and satisfaction". It will take more than paying lip service to gender inclusiveness to overturn years of systemic inequality and create opportunities for more female executives; every organisation needs to promote the culture that makes it easy for women to thrive. This can help combat the gender gap and move our workforce toward greater leadership balance. Organisations can start creating this culture by focusing mainly on education and experience in the hiring process, offering salaries based on the market rate rather than salary history, and start rewarding outcomes achieved instead of hours worked. I will also reiterate the need for women to muster support for each other by investing in female-owned start-ups and also patronizing such.

It is quite encouraging to see a lot of women in Public Relations, but we need to encourage more women to get to the top of the profession and mentor younger women who are still facing considerable challenges in their careers. I have been fortunate to meet many older women who mentored and supported me to be where I am today, so I am always happy to pay it forward in doing same for those who are coming behind me. We need more women to be more forthcoming with empathy in cultivating personal growth and professional satisfaction for a more positive and productive working culture for those coming behind. We have to be





relentless in pushing for a balance in gender pay gap by ensuring that businesses are transparent about their push in this regard so women can achieve their full potential. Whilst technical knowledge and ability are of vital importance, soft skills such as leadership, communication and strategic vision are the things that really elevate women to C-suite level positions.

While women in PR make up 66% of the workforce (according to the PR and Communications Census 2018) the number of women occupying leadership roles is not at par with this figure. A survey by PR Week from the end of 2018, shows only 39% of leadership roles in the PR industry are filled by women. We still have more men in leadership who would rather give another man the opportunity rather than the woman. Wondering why this is so? Work-life balance still poses a challenge to many women as the demands of raising a family set a roadblock on the path to their career growth. The attitude of some women putting the younger ones down can also be discouraging.

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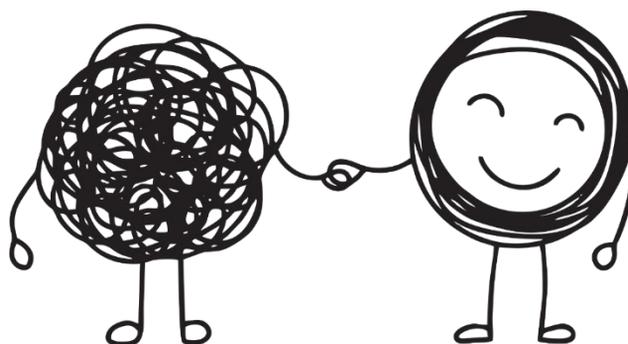
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One way that this can be overcome is through the introduction of mentoring schemes which aim to coach women at younger career level on how to communicate and influence at a strategic and senior level. I benefited from the WIMBIZ mentoring program and its impact has been quite instrumental in my career progression.

They say it takes two to tango: as the senior PR woman is reaching out to groom the upcoming professional, there must be displayed strength in humility. The young, upcoming professional should be humble enough to accept the teachings. It will help a great deal if she can focus on what the senior professional has to offer so as not to be derailed.

Mentoring is very important because it imparts you not only with knowledge and skills but also provides you with the professional socialisation and personal support to facilitate success in life as you are able to avoid the mistakes and pitfall those who have gone before you made. I have been privileged to enjoy the mentoring of women who helped in broadening my worldview by providing adequate support for me to soar and not be limited by my circumstances. I volunteer as a mentor at Cherie Blair Foundation for Women and WIMBIZ as I try to help my mentees navigate through life.

PR is a highly competitive industry and as the future is going digital like we have in other industries. No one should be caught napping. Every Nigerian woman in PR should hone their skills and be more digitally savvy. Take advantage of the Reverse Mentorship Program by Nigerian Women in PR too. It pays to constantly retool your skills and broaden your network; never rest on your oars. Every woman in PR should be an advocate for the next woman. Never put another person down; support and encourage as much as possible. Never, ever stop learning.





Bio

Oluwayemisi is a Marketing Communication professional with over 20 years' experience in Consultancy, Social Enterprise, Banking, E-Commerce, Insurance and Pharmaceuticals. She started her career as a Freelance Journalist and over the years gained experience working with leading Marketing Communications agencies. Presently, she is the Corporate Affairs and Communications Lead for West Africa at a global pharmaceutical company where she oversees Communication and Public Affairs in the zone.

Oluwayemisi possesses outstanding skills at using Communication tools to create and sustain demand and preference for brands. She has expertise in successfully conceptualizing and implementing innovative communications, public relations and marketing initiatives to drive market impact and expansion for top companies in diverse industries.

Oluwayemisi Adekunle is a 2014 Vital Voices Lead Fellow; Fellow, NIMN; Member, NIPR; Member, CIM, UK; Associate, APCON; and a Mentor and Associate, WIMBIZ. She is also a Mentor of Cherie Blair Foundation for Women.

She is very passionate about touching lives and gives expression to this by volunteering for social causes that impacts women and children.



About Us

Nigerian Women in PR, established in 2019, is an independent social impact organisation created to build a robust network of practicing and aspiring female public relations professionals of Nigerian descent. Its aim is to support, inspire and empower these professionals while improving access to career advancing opportunities. With our robust programs including #PRin30Seconds, Students Summit and #ThrivethruPR, we are determined to support female public relations professionals get and retain a seat at the table where far-reaching decisions are made.

The initiatives of the Nigerian Women in PR Community are designed to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 4: to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; and 8: to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Join Us – Nigerian Women in PR Membership Categories

The Inspired

The Inspired Membership category is strictly for undergraduates and young female professionals with up to five (5) working experience in public relations and its related field. This category is designed for young ladies who are seeking more knowledge about public relations and taking fledging steps in the industry. With programs specifically designed for them, we will encourage and show them the path to success in their journey.

Inspired Members receive direct guidance and mentorship from the Empowered Members.



[→ Join Us Today!](#)



The Empowered

The Empowered Membership category is for female professionals with five (5)-fifteen (15) years' experience - essentially professionals in mid-management. Knowing that entry level positions in public relations are filled by up to 70% women, and less than 25% women get up to senior management and board levels - it is obvious that the mid-management stage is where critical attention is required.

What challenges do women in PR face when they are Managers? What barriers hinder them from ascending the career ladder? What workplace policies or life occurrences present as threats to the advancement of middle managers to management staff? These questions will be addressed head-on, with practical solutions proffered via our seminars, events, stakeholder engagement sessions and multi-industry interactions.

Empowered members are mentored and guided into the inner circle of management by the Sage Supporters.



[→ Join Us Today!](#)

The Sage Supporters

These are our de-facto patrons and advisors. Women who have scaled the hurdles and broke through the ranks to become one of the coveted 25% women who make up management teams across the world, particularly as public relations professionals.

Our Sage Supporters are women in public relations and communications who are management and board members. Wisdom many times can be lonely in an environment saturated with ignorance of one's profession. Our Sage Supporters will not only have an exclusive intimate platform to interact amongst themselves, they will also identify and extend access to members of The Empowered Group who have demonstrated competence to handle increased job responsibilities.



[→ Be A Patron](#)



Our Programs

- Experiencing PR Annual Conference
- PR Students on Campus Summit
- Student Ambassadors
- #PRin30Seconds
- Annual Job Fair
- The C-Suite Acceleration Workshop
- The Bridge: A Reverse Mentorship Workshop



Read more on our website: www.ngwomeninpr.org

Support Us

Download our comprehensive program proposal on our website. Our Angel Sponsors are individuals who support the Organisation's activities with one time, monthly or annual donations to aid program delivery.

[Be an Angel Sponsor](#)

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