

Back to basics - how can you enter the PR industry?



By [Zimaseka Njomi](#)

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I found myself somewhat puzzled by a question posed to me by a young graduate recently. She sent me an e-mail, and told me she admires me. Wow. Really? Why?

"You have really made it, I just finished my degree and I am struggling to enter the industry"

The truth though is that the "You have really made it" statement was disillusionment on her part - far from fact.

But since she didn't need to know this, I geared myself to offer expert advice.



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What would follow of our conversation got me thinking: we write, advise, counsel on many topics directed at potential agencies, potential employers, fellow peers and without a doubt, for the sheer passion and zeal for the industry. What are we doing for those, who after reading our articles, are inspired to enter the curious world of communications, PR and marketing? Little.

After a few back and forth e-mails, so came the question, "What should I do, I don't know where to begin and I feel like I am proving my parents right. I should have studied something else, accounting."

Geesh.

This young woman sent me back to the basics! Where should she start, how should I advise her, does she have anything tangible to offer, how do I elevate her from regret? To wish she had instead studied accounting was a clear indication she was in a bad space.

The process will never be the same for all of us, but some pointers have been noted along the journey and some young talent should immediately realise and practice these three guidelines:

1. The rules of the game are charted and changed on a daily basis

There is an interesting report out there titled "What Keeps Marketers Up at Night?" produced by Adobe. Notably, marketers are up at night because they doubt their digital ability with only 48% of digital marketers feeling highly proficient in digital marketing, and only 9% of respondents strongly agreeing with the statement "I know our digital marketing is working."

Many marketing experts graduated before "digital" happened and therein lies the opportunity. New graduates, in fact, students not yet graduated need to be aware of industry trends and changes. You must always be aware of an area of exploitation as a job seeker.

This should never be left too late, students must be active in their fields long before they graduate. It is the only way to keep abreast of changes and choose your path of specialising according to current demand.

2. You need to get relevant work experience while you are still at school

There is hardly a professional job that will advertise a vacancy which requires no experience. Jobs are created by Business South Africa, entrepreneurs and government. These are not charitable entities, they are there to create profits or to deliver on approved Performance Plans.

They do not trust the inexperienced graduate to bring them the profits they need. You have to get experience! Start young, start while at school and familiarise yourself with the reality of the workplace. Start immediately and do so in areas which are industry specific. Even if you start in administration - as long as it's within the relevant industry!

3. Seek industry advice and guidance

The best place to start is industry forums, content leaders in marketing, spaces where you can share commentary, question, share your own thoughts and learn. It's important to view relevant blogs and comment. It's vital to be agreeable but to also challenge and offer different insights when you don't agree. That is how people notice you and what you may have to offer.

Approach social networks with a different view point, with an aim to share more concepts that will improve your industry. Avoid indulgent posts about yourself. Add value and be curious; in the process you learn and become more marketable.

There are many ways to improve your chances of being employed, be curious! Be interesting and prove you are a marketer by marketing yourself.

ABOUT ZIMASEKA NJOMI

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