

10 random thoughts for young communications professionals

1. You don't need a communications or journalism degree to become a good communicator. Some communications theory and journalism training helps, but energy, initiative, common sense and good writing skills (!!!) are most important.
2. Whenever possible, try and get a job communicating something you're actually interested in. If you can't get enthusiastic about your subject matter, it will be hard to generate enthusiasm among your audience.
3. Diversify your skill set as much as possible. While you can specialize in one area of communications (e.g. writing/editing, internal communications, media relations, speechwriting, special events, web, etc.), a growing number of these jobs require a combination of these skills.
4. If you're just beginning your career, get communications experience any way you can, including as a volunteer. Develop a portfolio to show prospective employers.
5. If you want to work in Ottawa, get your French up to speed. In most cases you won't have to write in both languages, but being able to read and speak French is important, even for "anglophone" organizations.
6. If you're currently working in journalism, forget the notion that going into communications is "switching sides". Communications is just journalism with a mission.
7. Discover what you like to do best: if you really like hands-on communications, aspiring to management isn't the answer, except in small organizations.
8. Unless you're communicating to a very specialized audience, don't think that using jargon makes you sound knowledgeable. Find a way to demystify and humanize your subject matter.
9. Network, network, network. You can not only learn a lot from other communicators, but they make great contacts when you're looking for work.
10. When it comes to communications jobs, **MONEY ISN'T EVERYTHING!** Find a job you're really happy in: the big bucks aren't worth it.

