

Writing is not just a skill or talent, it's a calling

 By [Miranda Lusiba](#)

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In my PR Degree years, I was never taught how to write. Yes, I was taught the basics of how the media works but not how to craft a story. Because of my passion for writing and my persistence, I was lucky enough earlier in my communication career to get a mentor who was willing to teach me how to write.



Source: www.pexels.com

I think without knowing - my love for words started in school because the subject that I enjoyed the most at Queenstown Girls High was English. When I started my career in PR, I actually started wishing that I had done journalism instead because learning to write was the very basis of becoming a reporter. The fact that I wasn't taught how to write during my tertiary years didn't stop me from pursuing my dream to know how to write.

I knew that I wouldn't be the best PR/Communication expert I wanted to be if I didn't know what made a good story. I also knew early in my career that it would be difficult to sell a story to a journalist if I didn't know how to come up with a newsworthy angle that could possibly make it to a newspaper or broadcast platform.

The ability to write in PR gives any communication professional an upper hand over other peers even when applying for a specific job in this area of expertise. My passion to write helped me to become the PR professional that I am today, however over the years I made the mistake of thinking that I could turn any PR hopeful into a writer as well.

Not all PR professionals are good writers

My old-school colleagues and I have over the years learnt the hard way that some young PR professionals are just not meant to be writers, no matter how hard we tried to teach or train them – they just didn't have the skill, passion or the calling.

That is why in some big PR agencies, you still find people that are specifically hired to be in-house writers, while others would be client service managers who take briefs from clients, coordinate everyone that services that client and make sure that everyone delivers according to the stipulated expectations. Over the years, my love and ability to write worked to my advantage because it turned me into an all-rounder. Instead of relying on a writer to take my client brief and draft a story – I have over the last two decades been able to turn business ideas into compelling stories.



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As much as this became an advantage for me over the years especially when companies were thinking of downsizing and retrenching, my essential skills and consistent delivery helped me to not be considered for the cut. However, this also worked against me at times and a lot of PR professionals who are writers will understand what I went through. Being efficient and knowing how to turn around stories at a moment's notice also became a curse because my ability to write gave my colleagues the impression that writing is easy and that one could just open a blank page and start writing.

In most of the corporates that I worked in; I found a lot of colleagues expecting me to write something quickly. To quote them verbatim, they'd say: "Please write a story quickly for me, I'm sure you can just slap something together in 30 minutes".

For someone who doesn't know what it takes to write a good story, one would think that it's easy to just churn out stories. What a lot of people don't know is that for most of us writers, if we had to write a story when we got to the office in the morning – we would start working out the angle in our heads while busy preparing to leave the house for the office. Then we'd write the story in our heads while driving in traffic into the office so that by the time we open a blank MS Word page – we'd already know where to start. If we didn't do that homework in our heads, then we would end up staring at a blank page or producing sub-standard work. In writing terms, that is what we call writer's block.

So, to those who don't know how to write - I hope you will now appreciate what writers go through to produce brilliant stories because it's definitely not as easy as we make it look. However, I still stand by my word and would like to still encourage young PR professionals to take the time to learn how to write because this will always give one an advantage over other applicants applying for the same position or even colleagues when one is fighting to hold on to a job.

ABOUT MIRANDA LUSIBA

Miranda Lusiba is the Founding Director of Strangé Consulting - a boutique PR Agency specialising in Communications, Freelance Writing, Media Relations, Reputation Management and Media Training.

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