

Creating a Successful Portfolio

In order to create a portfolio that will effectively represent my skills and abilities to potential employers in the communications field, I first had to understand their perspectives. I interviewed ten people representing the marketing, public relations, consulting, and media relations industries. I found that a successful portfolio should primarily showcase my abilities to write effectively, strategically message, and connect the skills I gained in my past experiences as a teacher and admissions analyst to the job I want.

Writing Effectively

The majority of Communications professionals fundamentally rely on their ability to write well – even when the written word is not their primary medium. According to a Director of Communications and Marketing for [REDACTED], a good writer is someone who pays close attention to detail and can write in a variety of different contexts (e.g. social media, websites, newsletters, press releases). Both the Senior Manager of Media Advocacy for [REDACTED] and a Strategy Manager at [REDACTED] similarly agreed that the mark of a successful writer is someone who can write in different voices depending on the audience and document being written. A Digital Marketing Associate at [REDACTED] added that an effective writer knows which platform and context will reach the target audience in the most meaningful way.

Strategic Messaging

Productive communications professionals must be able to successfully convey a succinctly crafted and strategically oriented message. Both the Senior Project Manager at [REDACTED] and Strategy Manager at [REDACTED] stressed the importance of brevity in messaging. They both advise that job applicants should be able to capture a message in a short five-second bite when pitching ideas to media outlets, as well as through a five-minute pitch when addressing stakeholders. The Senior Manager at [REDACTED], the Digital Marketing Associate at [REDACTED], and the Senior Director of Strategic Communications at [REDACTED] all pointed out that successful messaging maintains a company's brand and helps the company reach its goals.

Connect the Dots

Both interviewees from [REDACTED] and the Digital Marketing Associate from [REDACTED] agreed that it is important to understand how my past experiences connect to future opportunities and that my resume needs to reflect a tailored connection for each job to which I apply. The Director of Communications and Marketing at [REDACTED] said I should emphasize my experience with recruiting at Graduate Fairs as a way of representing a brand using frontline marketing tactics. The Senior Director of Strategic Communications at [REDACTED] suggested that I draw on my experience in communicating with a diverse group of audiences (e.g. parents, students, applicants, prospects) as a way to effectively develop messaging for a diverse group of stakeholders.

A successful portfolio will demonstrate my ability to write, message strategically, and draw useful connections from past experiences to the communications sector.

I plan to provide strategic examples in my portfolio that exhibit my abilities to write in a variety of mediums and to an array of audiences. I will also provide examples of my skills in determining how to craft a message to target audiences. My past experience in teaching and admissions provide a unique context for finding and relaying these examples in my portfolio.

Interview Matrix

Interviewee Title	Summary	Key Themes
Senior Project Manager	Working in media is really fast paced and you are always on . Messaging is so important and you have to be able to nail it in short bites. There is a lot of relationship management in Communications and Public Relations. The best way to get a job is to network , find internships , and reach out to organizations that you admire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fast Paced -Always on -Messaging -Relationships -Network -Internships
Director of Communications and Marketing	Everything moves really fast and in Communications things are always coming up so you have to be on most of the time . A successful person in Communications will be a good leader, adaptable, and a good writer with strong attention to detail. He looks for people who are generalists and are good at a lot of things and who can learn quickly. The best way to market myself is to emphasize my role as brand ambassador when recruiting for Georgetown and to show that I have front line marketing skills because of that.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fast Paced -Always on -Writing -Wide variety of skills -Connect the dots
Senior Manager, Media Advocacy	With media advocacy you can hear about a need for something and know that you can make a difference. It is important to care about the issues that you are advocating for, to be flexible, and to make a case for yourself and the work that you do. It is also important to know how to write in different voices and message effectively . The work life balance is great because there is no big expectation to work outside of work unless something big comes up, but the salary is not as high as private sector. The best way to get a job is to volunteer at the organizations you are interested in and to network .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Writing -Messaging -Network
Public Affairs Officer	At smaller organizations you have a lot to juggle and be in charge of; communications, creative services, and public engagement . The public affairs piece means that you have to bring work home with you and you have to be able to respond to anything that involves your company. Smaller companies don't have as many resources so it's good to have a wide variety of skills ; photo, video, website, email, social media, metrics. Having tangible skills that others don't have will help when finding a job (Adobe suite, Coding). You must be outgoing and persuasive .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Always on -Tangible skills -Messaging -Wide variety of skills
Senior Director, Strategic Communications	Georgetown's office of Strategic Communication is small, but handles a lot of work. It is fast paced and can be very busy depending on what is happening at the University. You have to be willing to work nights or weekends at times . In order to be successful it is important to have attention to detail and to be empathetic and collaborative. Knowing a little bit of HTML, CMS, and analytics is important. Messaging is important because you have to represent Georgetown's brand effectively and accurately in everything. When looking for jobs it is important for me to focus my narrative and connect my work as an educator and in admissions to communication skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fast paced -Always on -Messaging -Tangible skills

Demand Generation Specialist	Working for a technology B2B company can be challenging because you are not working with people in the same way. Data analysis is very important and you have to be able to know which data is useful and which data is bad. You can leave work at work, but work is so accessible you can find yourself working at home anyway . It is important to have coding abilities, Adobe Suite proficiency, CRM certs and marketing automation certifications. When looking for a job internships and meet-ups are important. It is also good to gain coding skills, adobe skills and list them on your resume and LinkedIn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tangible skills -Always on -Internships
Senior Consultant, Human Capital Practice	Human Capital Practice involves internal communications, change management and leadership development. Every day is different and you only work on one project at a time. Most projects last six months to a year. 90% of the time work is not done at home and you can leave work at work. In order to be an effective consultant you have to be organized but flexible. You also have to be able to figure things out on your feet and how you can add value to something that is new to you. Hard skills are valued and will be used, but are not necessary. You must be client ready by knowing how to message to different stakeholder and to be professional. In finding a job it is important to network , figure out how you will tell your story and connect past experiences to the job you are interested in .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Wide variety of skills -Tangible skills -Networking -Connect the dots -Messaging
Strategy Manager	Works with internal communications as a consultant at Government departments. The lines between what needs to be done are much more fluid than they first appear and you have to be good at a lot of things . It is important to be able to communicate with high level people, boil down messages into a five minute pitch, take a complex problem and make it digestible. Writing skills are extremely important. A good writer should be able to write a press release and target a narrative towards particular audiences. It is important to tailor your resume for each position and leverage network connections when finding a job.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Messaging -Writing skills -Networking -Connect the dots -Wide variety of skills
VP Media	The clients are people that matter and it is nice to be able to feel like you are helping them. Control of schedule is not your own because you never know when you will be busy or not busy so some days are longer than others. It is fast paced business but the company is close and friends. It's important to be a go-getter, to be positive, and eagerness to do well in a fast paced environment. It is important to network when finding a job and to give things a chance that you might not have thought of before. It is also important to connect the dots for future employers between past experiences and how they fit with the job. Internships are helpful as well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fast paced -Always on -Networking -Connect the dots -Internships
Digital Marketing Associate	Working in networking requires strategic thinking. It can be fast paced , but you don't really have to take work home with you. It is important to know how to write and effectively message to your target audiences and understand what platforms will work best to reach particular clients. A successful marketer will have experience with different marketing strategies and can look at data to help shape decisions. In finding a job internships are important. Marketing classes can also be helpful. Networking and knowing how to frame your narrative towards the jobs you want is important.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fast paced -Writing -Messaging -Tangible skills -Networking -Connect the dots