

Communicator

3 **Adaptability** is the key to success

4 Think like a strategist

5 IABC/TORONTO ANNUAL REPORT 2012 – 2013

8 **Lessons learned:** fundamental career advice never goes out of style

10 **CSR with a megaphone:** the opportunities of social customer service

12 **Head to head:** text or video content. Which delivers best?

14 **AGEISM:** JOB SEARCH CHALLENGES FOR THE MATURE COMMUNICATOR



THINK LIKE A STRATEGIST

Is your New Year's resolution to accelerate your communications career in 2014? Score a promotion? Earn enough to buy some serious bling? If so, think strategically to capture executives' attention and prove you are far more than a nerd with words.

Why strategy matters

Strategic thinking involves considering your organization's big picture, including its goals, before you create communications. You may wonder, isn't that the CEO's job? Yes, but it's your job to make executives' lives easier, especially if you desire upward mobility. I asked some senior communicators for their perspective on achieving this:

Cyrus Mavalwala, founder, Advantis Communications suggests, "Everyone wants the confidence of their leadership team. Thinking and acting strategically will both maximize your positive impact on your organization and position you for a successful career."

Similarly, Linda Pophal, CEO of Strategic Communications LLC, tells communicators, "To gain credibility, think like a business strategist. Make sure you're achieving the greatest value from the least amount of resources" to advance your career.

How to think strategically

To develop a strategic mindset—and boost your career success—Mavalwala recommends:

Listen and learn

To earn the respect of your leadership team and establish a trusted relationship, assess how you act when your boss brings you a request. Which type of relationship do your actions most closely fit on the Communicator Client Relationship Model?

COMMUNICATOR CLIENT RELATIONSHIP MODEL

	What you provide your client	Where you spend your time	What your client gets
TACTICAL RELATIONSHIP	Understanding of Communication	Creating Delivering	Implementation of their idea
STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP	Understanding of the business	Defining the problem developing the solution	Business outcome
TRUSTED RELATIONSHIP	Understanding of them	Listening Advising Coaching	Trusted business partner

© Cropley, Mavalwala - Act Like An Agency

Mavalwala developed the Communicator Client Relationship Model along with Adrien Cropley, ABC, CEO, Cropley Communications and Past Chair IABC International Board. They have presented on this at the IABC World Conference.

Spend more time actively listening and questioning before jumping into implementing, advising or coaching.

Dig deeper

We all ask the "5 Ws" when taking a brief but we could dig deeper to unearth critical details that will make our case stronger. When considering what you want to achieve, address what the target audience needs to "know, think and do." This also helps position your objectives as business outcomes versus outputs.

Think like a CEO

From the first day I entered this industry back in the '90s, I always tried to act like someone two positions above my own. Before you know it, you'll be thinking like the CEO. This clearly focuses your attention on generating business value in everything you do.

In addition, Pophal recommends:

Think business, not just communications

Put communication tactics on the backburner. Instead, begin by focusing on measurable goals and objectives.

Know your audience

Learn as much as you can about the audiences you're trying to influence before you communicate.

Respond. Don't react

Deeply understand your competitors. Rather than automatically reacting to rivals, pause to think, then respond creatively.

Resources for strategists

As Mavalwala puts it, "Taking another writing course likely won't change your CEO's perception of you. Instead, strive to always deliver meaningful business value."

Use these resources to strengthen your strategic communication skills:

- > IABC case studies
- > Ragan.com best practices
- > Harvard Business Review business cases
- > Quirk.biz's e-marketing case studies
- > Mitch Joel's book Ctrl Alt Delete



Lisa Goller is a strategic freelance writer and editor whose business background and passion for communications help executives, entrepreneurs and editors get results. She admires the work of Linda Pophal and Cyrus Mavalwala, whom she interviewed for the article. Learn more at lisagoller.com.