

# Communicator

## POUNDING THE PAVEMENT? TAP YOUR CREATIVE SIDE TO HELP YOU GET HIRED

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"I never thought I would have started a media relations campaign about myself," says Carl Mavromichalis, a 10-year accredited communicator and media relations specialist. But this campaign was quite successful, with a headline news story and Mavromichalis' headshot on *The Globe and Mail's* Toronto page. *The National Post* also ran a story on it. A Saskatchewan radio station and Toronto's CFRB did interviews with him.

This was all because of Mavromichalis' job hunting contest—Help Carl Get Hired in May, 2009. The basic idea was that Mavromichalis would give \$1,000 to anyone who referred him to a job where he was then hired. There was a \$500 bonus if the job came with a six-figure-salary. Mavromichalis wrote a news release on his contest and used Marketwire to send it out. In addition to the traditional media, he tried social networks as well. He started a blog named Help Carl Get Hired on Blogspot (<http://helpcarlgethired.blogspot.com>). He posted it on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. As a result, he got 25 job leads. Although the contest has ended, the job search continues. Mavromichalis is still getting referrals.

According to the IABC International Member Employment Situation Survey Findings released in March, 2009, 10.92 per cent of respondents had lost their job. A full 28.67 per cent of the 284 respondents were looking for a new job. One source put the figure of unadvertised jobs at 80 per cent, and in the communications field the figure

may be higher. On the other hand, many big companies don't advertise their jobs. "I applied for a job for which another 200 people might have applied," a frequent scenario, says Mavromichalis.

During the economic downturn, the worst job market many of us have ever seen, senior people are being laid off and new grads are finding no opportunity to get hired. Employees at all levels are in the same boat. Old-fashioned approaches such as posting resumes on job search engines like Workopolis and



## NEGOTIATION SKILLS – IT’S NOT ABOUT WINNING AT ALL COSTS

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Listening and asking questions are the two most important skills in your arsenal. You can write a stunningly original tagline. You can develop a plan to launch a new internal initiative on time and under budget. The media campaign you’ve just mapped out is exceptional in its detail and insight. In short, your skills as a communications professional are excellent. But all of this means nothing if you can’t work well with others to convince them of your idea, and that generally requires negotiation.

Negotiation is rarely presented to us as a formal procedure—it’s an integral part of daily life. “Throughout each day, we’re constantly trying to persuade people,” said Cyrus Mavalwala, a partner at Advantis Communications and VP of Advertising & Sponsorship for IABC/Toronto. Here, Mavalwala shares his tips on how to become a better negotiator, and in doing so, a better communicator.

- 1 Practice – While life automatically gives us plenty of opportunities to practice negotiating, Mavalwala suggests enhancing your skills through more formal channels: “You can practice negotiation through role play with your colleagues. For instance, you can have one person play the role of a journalist and another play the role of the person giving the pitch,” he explains. Mavalwala also suggests joining a group like Toastmasters International ([www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)). As with most communications, face-to-face negotiations are always best, so the ability to speak clearly and confidently is a must.
- 2 Listen and ask questions – “Listening is the most important thing you can do in the negotiation process,” Mavalwala says. Listening allows us to truly understand what the other party wants and what they really need. Mavalwala has found this approach to be particularly successful when working with the media. “Starting a pitch call with ‘Do you have one minute to talk about X and then we can decide whether we should continue the discussion?’ shows you’re respecting the journalist’s needs,” he explains. Simple approaches like this go a long way to building a relationship that will continue to serve both parties.
- 3 State objectives clearly; make sure everyone understands and agrees – One of Mavalwala’s key tips for working on a project with clients and other stakeholders is to manage expectations from the outset: “Every party needs to have a clear vision of the desired outcome that they really need to achieve.” Once the objectives have been set, an open dialogue must continue: “To get the negotiations moving forward, try to reach agreement on one or two points at the beginning and then explore the

tougher challenges. But, don’t forget to disarm the bomb before it goes off. If you raise and resolve the contentious issue early, you’ll prevent people from continuing to focus on the negative.”

- 4 Understand that you have many “bosses” – Great relationships with people on your team, senior managers, administrative assistants and other colleagues are vital to a productive and happy work life. So how can we balance all of the needs that we’re faced with on a daily basis? Mavalwala believes it all goes back to listening and asking questions, and understanding that you don’t just have one “boss” to whom you’re accountable. Be sure to bring team members in early and share successes with everyone who was involved in a project, be they designers, mailroom staff or consultants, to foster a sense of pride and ownership.
- 5 Settle for nothing less than a mutually beneficial resolution – “The only sustainable way to negotiate is to settle for nothing less than a mutually beneficial resolution,” Mavalwala says. It may not be the easiest route, but trying to find a solution that works for everyone will smooth the path in the future. Before you sit down to negotiate, determine the best and worst-case scenario for all parties involved before negotiations begin. The agreed upon outcome will always be strongest if all parties are committed to the process and believe everyone at the table is fairly negotiating for the best result.

Investing time and patience now will pay off the next time you need to negotiate. The next time you’re faced with a ridiculous deadline, you’ll know that you have built strong relationships with an extended team of people who are willing to help you out. Achieving great results with no stress? Who wouldn’t want that? 🍀

~ Sonya Malcolm