

From Journalism to PR

A Comprehensive Transition Guide



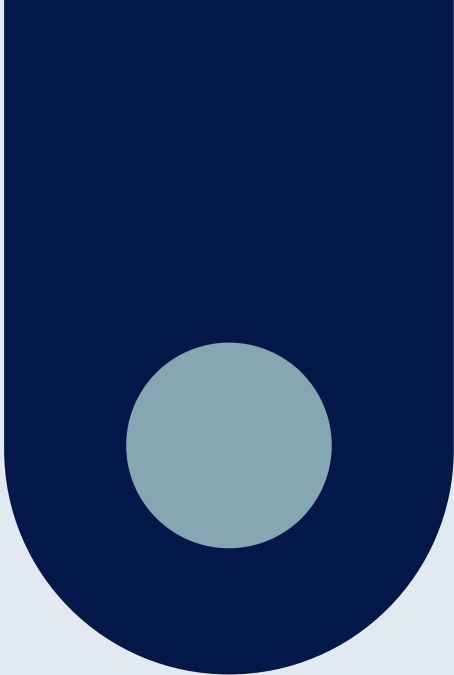


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Welcome Message



About Hezron Insights

No matter your experience, there's always something new to learn and ways to improve. "Hezron Insights" provides you with the tools and resources to elevate your Public Relations, Leadership, and Life Skills.

Hezron Ochiel,
Hezron Insight,
Nairobi, Kenya.
info@hezroninsights.com
www.hezroninsights.com

Introduction

Working as a journalist has long been one of the most fascinating careers, offering opportunities to mingle with influential figures and cover compelling stories. However, the industry now faces a different reality: declining advertising revenue models, the shutdown of major companies, and widespread staff layoffs. The harsh truth is that journalism's heyday is over. Even if you secure a staff journalism position today, the likelihood of losing it in the future is high..

Public Relations (PR) and communication fields have become the natural landing spots for journalists looking to change careers. Both PR and journalism involve storytelling and communication. However, these fields operate from different perspectives and objectives.

PR professionals depend on journalists to share their corporate stories, reach a broad audience, and enhance their brand's visibility. Conversely, journalists depend on PR professionals for story ideas, insights into industry trends, and access to experts who can explain those trends. Journalists need PR experts to provide quotes for their stories and to speak on talk shows.

Journalists possess unique skills that are easily transferable to PR. Their ability to research, conduct interviews, and distill complex information into engaging content makes them ideal candidates for PR roles. These skills allow them to create compelling narratives that connect with the public, making the transition to PR both logical and potentially rewarding.

Understanding The PR Landscape

What is Public Relations?

Public Relations (PR) is the strategic effort of managing and distributing information on behalf of an organization or individual to shape public perception. This practice focuses on building and nurturing a favorable image, fostering robust relationships with key stakeholders, and delivering messages that support and enhance the organization's objectives.



Main Purposes of Public Relations

1. **Enhancing Brand Image** – Public Relations focuses on building and maintaining a positive image for the organization or individual while establishing and strengthening trust and credibility with the public and key stakeholders.
2. **Managing Reputation** – PR is crucial for protecting and restoring an organization's reputation during and after crises through effective crisis management. This includes continuously monitoring and addressing potential threats.



3. Building Relationships - Developing and nurturing relationships with customers, employees, investors, and other key stakeholders is a core purpose of public relations. This also involves maintaining strong connections with journalists and media outlets to secure favorable coverage.

4. Communicating Effectively - Public relations aims to craft and disseminate clear, consistent, and compelling messages that align with the organization's goals. Additionally, it nurtures a positive work environment by keeping employees informed and engaged through effective internal communications.

5. Promoting Products and Services - PR strategically promotes new products or services to generate interest and drive sales. This also includes organizing events to showcase these products, services, or key initiatives, enhancing visibility and engagement



What journalists should know about the PR field?

1. PR fields are much slower than newsrooms – Approval processes in the corporates can be challenging due to their hierarchical and bureaucratic nature. Unlike newsrooms, where assignment approvals are quick, corporate projects require navigating budgeting, work planning, and organizational priorities. Before starting a project, consider if it was budgeted for and aligns with the organization's priorities. You must also navigate procurement processes and obtain multiple approvals.



2. Focus shifts - Transitioning from the “public's right to know” to “preserve the corporate image” can feel like operating with your “hands tied” behind your back. In PR, you're no longer investigating and probing but balancing the need to provide information while protecting your brand. The daily tasks of PR involve diplomacy and gentle persuasion while upholding ethical standards and credibility. Unlike journalistic writing, which emphasizes impartiality, PR focuses on creating audience-centric and persuasive content that aligns with your institution's strategic objectives.

3. PR is collaborative - The PR industry requires collaboration across departments, clients, and agencies to develop consistent and cohesive communication. For example, you might work with the marketing team to ensure messaging aligns with campaigns or coordinate with external agencies to manage a product launch. Journalists, who are used to working independently, may find it challenging to adapt to the collaborative and team-oriented nature of the PR environment.

4. Think like a CEO - Unlike in journalism, where you interview executives to obtain information, PR doesn't offer the luxury of interviewing your busy CEO. You are required to know company issues as thoroughly as your CEO does. Instead, you are required to draft questions and provide responses as if they originate from the CEO. For instance, if you're preparing a statement for a press release, you'll write questions and the answers, then forward them for review and approval to ensure they align with the CEO's voice and the company's messaging.

5. PR is easier than journalism - The PR industry requires in-depth language skills, people skills, a breadth of knowledge, and an understanding of news. Think strategy, event planning, digital media, crisis communication, press releases, and even a high level of knowledge of media buying. Other necessary skills include media analytics, pitching, and multimedia production to amplify change. Additionally, you need to navigate corporate culture and play boardroom politics to get your ideas embraced and adopted by the company's top brass.

6. You're expected to drive up sales & fundraising - You'll work with tools like CRM systems and conversion rate analysis. You'll learn how to utilize newswire services to boost SEO rankings, build strong website authority, and drive traffic to your website. Additionally, you'll develop brand management skills and understand consumer behaviors, among others. As foreign as these may sound, you are expected to grasp all of them. It is no longer about how many stories you have published; it is about how they translate into sales or fundraising.



My Story

How I Transitioned from Journalism to PR

Today, when you read newspapers or watch TV, you will realize that negative news still enjoys a fair share of coverage. On the other hand, solution journalism attracts little attention. Despite this, countless positive developments are happening in healthcare, education, innovation, infrastructure, and more.

I began my career as a freelance journalist, honing my skills in both creative and technical writing.

Back in the days when I was in the newsroom, while politics and negative news were thriving, I carved out a niche for myself in transformative news—stories that positively impact people's lives. If you have worked in the newsroom, you will understand that such pieces of content were not easy to sell to a news editor.

However, it is not entirely the media's fault for focusing on negative news. Some analysts argue that negative news gets higher ratings and sells more papers than good news. By focusing on positive events, I wanted to provide an alternative to the gloom-and-doom news currently flooding our outlets.

Sometimes my articles were published, and sometimes they failed to make it into the papers. But that did not dampen my spirits.

Later, I widened my scope to include health alongside humanitarian issues. Gradually, I found a niche in health stories that eventually landed me a job in the corporate communications field.

Some of my popular stories include:

[A mother's death costs the family dear - Kenyan study](#)

[Kenya tackles poverty by sending teen mothers back to school](#)

[Pneumonia vaccine shows promise in Kenya](#)

[Research needed to tackle maize lethal necrosis in East Africa](#)

Today, I use my journalistic skills in concise writing and quick thinking to craft powerful stories that build a positive brand image.

Current Landscape of Public Relations

The PR sector is **projected to reach \$144.28 billion by 2028** at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.0%. This growth is attributed to the dominance of digital media and influencer marketing.

You might have heard that the Western world now prefers hiring workers from developing nations. The cost of living in these regions is generally lower compared to Western countries, leading to more competitive salary expectations. This allows Western companies to access highly skilled talent at relatively lower costs. There is no doubt that companies are quickly learning from the COVID-19 experience, which cemented remote or freelance working.

Another factor companies consider is specialized skills rather than generalists, driven by the demand for deeper expertise and the ability to utilize emerging tools and technologies in the PR industry. For instance, PR professionals who excel in storytelling, are savvy in social media, possess strong knowledge of media relations, and specialize in niche content generation—such as medical, technical, and digital media—are becoming highly sought after.

Content Writing Niches, Salaries & Industry Trends



1. Freelance Writer

A freelance writer is an independent writer who contributes content to multiple publications for a living. According to [ZipRecruiter](#), the average annual wage is \$50,109 in the United States of America, with an average hourly salary of \$24 per hour.

2. Speechwriter

A speech writer is a person who specializes in writing speeches to be delivered by another individual. Top executives and politicians recruit them to write speeches for important events. The average salary of a speech writer in the United States of America is \$72,832 per year, according to ZipRecruiter.



3. Ghostwriter

A ghostwriter is a writer who produces written content credited to someone else. They do the writing but do not receive credit with a byline. Ghostwriters are typically paid per word, with rates ranging from \$0.01 to \$1 depending on genre, length, and the writer's experience. According to [Kindlepreneur.com](https://www.kindlepreneur.com), highly experienced ghostwriters could earn between \$20,000 and \$100,000+ annually.

4. Technical Writer

Technical writers specialize in conveying complex technical information in simple terms. They focus on intricate subjects such as programming, cybersecurity, software engineering, instruction manuals, how-to guides, journal articles, and other supporting documents. Their wages vary depending on experience. An entry-level technical writer earns an average of \$58,700 per year, while a senior technical writer earns \$88,300 per year, according to Salary.com.

5. Medical Writer

A medical writer or communicator specializing in health-related topics, responsible for producing content for medical websites, brochures, and patient education materials. According to ZipRecruiter, a Freelance Medical Writer in the United States, earns around \$49.27 per hour, with an annual salary of \$102,603.

6. Content Writer

A content writer specializes in creating engaging information for websites, including blog posts, web pages, white papers, press releases, and social media posts. Wages for remote content writers vary greatly. In the United States of America, they can earn hourly rates ranging from as low as \$13 to as high as \$99.52, according to ZipRecruiter.

As technology rapidly evolves, the public relations industry must stay current with the latest trends. This involves leveraging social media platforms, creating engaging video content, and utilizing the newest analytics software. Staying ahead is crucial. The demand for tech-savvy PR professionals is increasing. Large corporations and startups seek experts to manage their social media platforms, handle crisis communications, integrate marketing strategies, and utilize technology and tools, among other responsibilities.

The Public Relations Landscape

The public relations landscape is complex and ever-evolving, mirroring broader job market trends where flexibility, expertise, and technological advancements shape employment patterns.

1. Complexity of Modern PR

The rise of digital media, social media platforms, and online marketing requires PR professionals to have specialized skills in digital communications, social media management, and content creation. Employers are looking for PR professionals who can analyze data and metrics to measure the effectiveness of PR campaigns, understand audience behavior, and adjust strategies accordingly.

2. Niche Expertise

Companies prefer candidates with experience and knowledge in their specific industry (e.g., technology, healthcare, finance) to better understand market dynamics, regulatory environments, and audience needs. Specialized skills such as crisis communication and reputation management are highly valued, as these professionals can effectively navigate and mitigate negative publicity.

3. Integrated Marketing Communications

Expertise in developing and executing comprehensive content strategies that align with overall marketing goals is essential for PR professionals. This involves creating targeted content that resonates with the audience and supports brand messaging across various channels. Knowledge of search engine optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is also crucial to enhancing online visibility and engagement. Proficiency in these areas helps ensure that content reaches the intended audience effectively, driving traffic and improving search engine rankings.

4. Technology and Tools

Familiarity with PR tools such as media monitoring software, customer relationship management (CRM) systems, and email marketing platforms is crucial for modern PR professionals. These tools help streamline communication, track media coverage, and manage relationships with key stakeholders. Additionally, the ability to create and edit multimedia content, including videos, podcasts, and infographics, is increasingly important in modern PR strategies. Proficiency in multimedia skills enhances the ability to engage audiences across diverse platforms and formats, making PR campaigns more dynamic and effective.



5. Strategic Thinking and Planning

Understanding business strategy and the ability to align PR efforts with business objectives is essential for PR professionals. Mastery of business acumen ensures that PR initiatives contribute to the company's overall success. Strategic planning involves anticipating market trends, setting clear objectives, and creating detailed action plans to achieve desired outcomes, ensuring sustained growth and positive public perception.

So, how can one position themselves for these emerging opportunities?

Whenever I meet people, and they ask me how to land opportunities in the PR space, my answer has always been the same: personal branding. Personal branding involves creating and promoting a unique image or identity to build a professional reputation and stand out from others in the industry. It involves consistently showcasing one's skills, experiences, values, and personality to attract opportunities and build credibility.

Six Ways to Position Yourself as A Go-To Expert in PR

Here are a few tips you can use to position yourself for virtual job opportunities:

1. Freelance

Sign up on freelancing platforms like [Upwork](#), [Freelancer](#), and [Fiverr](#) to find short-term and project-based PR opportunities. These platforms offer flexibility and a variety of projects that can help you build experience and expand your professional network.

2. Utilize Job Platforms

Regularly monitor job boards such as [Indeed](#), [Glassdoor](#), and specialized PR job sites to stay updated on the latest opportunities in the field. These platforms frequently list full-time, part-time, and freelance PR positions across various industries. Additionally, leverage LinkedIn's job search feature to set up alerts tailored to your preferences for PR roles. Engaging with industry-specific groups and connections on LinkedIn can also enhance visibility and networking opportunities within the PR community.

3. Enhance Your Skill Set

Embrace continuous learning by enrolling in online courses that cover essential PR skills like social media management, content creation, digital marketing, and analytics. These courses keep you updated with industry trends and enhance your practical knowledge and proficiency in key areas sought after by employers. Additionally, consider pursuing certifications from reputable institutions in PR and related fields. These certifications validate your expertise and demonstrate your commitment to professional growth, thus making you a more competitive candidate in the evolving job market.

4. Develop a Niche Expertise

Specialize in a niche area within PR, such as crisis management, influencer relations, or healthcare PR, to distinguish yourself as an expert in that field. Doing this can make you highly valuable to employers. Furthermore, actively engage in content creation related to your niche. This includes writing articles, producing videos, or hosting webinars that showcase your insights and expertise. In addition, sharing relevant content not only establishes credibility but also attracts the attention of potential employers and industry peers, further solidifying your reputation as a thought leader in your chosen specialization.

5. Seek Mentorship and Guidance

Seek mentorship from seasoned professionals in the industry to gain valuable insights, feedback, and connections that can advance your career. A mentor can guide you in navigating the complexities of the field and offer advice on career progression. Additionally, consider joining reputable professional associations. These associations provide access to resources, networking events, and professional development opportunities such as workshops, conferences, and certifications.

When you maintain these approaches and stay aware of industry developments, you will strategically position yourself and eventually succeed in the PR profession.



6. Update Your CV

Updating your resume is essential for preparing to enter the PR industry. When doing so, make sure to highlight your relevant journalism experience in the following ways:

- **Media Relations** - Highlight your roles involving interactions with journalists, and content creation. For example, describe how you built relationships with PR professionals to secure interviews and how you managed reporting during a breaking news event.
- **Deadline Management** - Highlight your experience managing tight deadlines, conducting in-depth research, and collaborating on projects. For instance, mention how you consistently met tight publishing deadlines while ensuring the accuracy and quality of your reporting.
- **Achievements** - Showcase notable achievements like awards, significant stories, and high-impact articles to demonstrate your expertise and credibility. For example, if you received an award for investigative journalism, detailing the story's impact and the recognition it garnered is crucial.

Showcasing Transferable Skills

- **Writing and Editing** - Highlight your ability to create clear, compelling content. Mention specific articles or series that gained high readership or praise. Include raw and edited versions of your work in your CV to show the editing process and final product.
- **Research and Analysis** - Emphasize your skills in conducting thorough research and synthesizing complex information. For instance, discuss a major investigative piece where your research uncovered significant findings.



- **Media Relations** - Highlight your experience building and maintaining relationships with media professionals. Provide examples of how these relationships led to exclusive stories or prominent media coverage. Additionally, demonstrate your access to a wide network of journalists. Obtaining a membership in a media network is crucial, as potential employers will want to assess your potential as an effective media liaison.
- **Crisis Management** - Illustrate your capacity to handle high-pressure situations and deliver accurate information swiftly. Describe a situation where your quick and effective reporting helped manage a crisis.
- **Social Media Management** - Detail your experience managing social media accounts and engaging with online audiences. Include examples of successful social media campaigns executed, or posts that significantly increased audience engagement. Potential employers want to know how to leverage your social media skills and networks to drive a campaign.
- **PR Campaigns** - Include projects where you developed PR strategies or campaigns, even if they were part of coursework or freelance work. For example, describe a PR campaign you created for a non-profit during a communications course.

Additional Tips

- **Network actively:** Attend PR events, join professional organizations, and connect with PR professionals to build your network.
- **Stay Informed:** Keep up-to-date with PR trends and best practices to show your commitment to the field. Mention attending webinars or taking up short courses.
- **Seek PR Certifications:** Consider obtaining certifications in public relations to strengthen your credentials and demonstrate your dedication to the transition.

About the Author

Hi there! I'm Hezron Ochiel, an avid storyteller and a global peak coach with a talent for blending strategic communications, best practices, and life skills into actionable strategies that drive extraordinary success. For over 15 years, I have thrived in guiding startups, large corporations, and individuals in growing their brands. I began my career as a journalist, gaining experience in creative and technical writing.

My extensive brand storytelling experience led me to the Corporate Communications and Public Relations industry, where I have been a catalyst for change.

As an experienced writer and commentator, I have appeared in many global publications, including Reuters.com, TheNewHumanitarian.org, Standardmedia.co.ke, TheGuardian.com, and one of my proudest achievements is leading a media advocacy campaign with Amref.org that culminated in the recognition of Community Health Workers (CHWs), now called Community Health Promoters, within Kenya's formal health workforce.

Additionally, I have elevated health journalism in Africa by pioneering the Health Communication and Journalism program at Amref.ac.ke and establishing the Africa Media Network on Health to spearhead media advocacy across the continent.

I have contributed to more than 50% growth of global brands such as Amref.org, HIV-Free Generation, Ichooselife, global, Goodcheckup.com, and KMTC.ac.ke through impactful PR and social media campaigns.

In 2023, as part of my Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, I launched 'Hezron's Weekly Insights' and 'Hezron Insights' to provide resources and tools for startups, large corporations, and individuals seeking to grow their brands.

My best-selling book, "Strategic Insights: A Practical Guide for Excelling in Public Relations," highlights my commitment to sharing expertise and driving success.



info@hezroninsights.com



www.hezroninsights.com

Hezron Ochiel