

Ryan D. Thompson

Strategic Communications Leader

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Communications leader with 20+ years of experience developing and executing high-impact communications strategies that drive awareness, engagement, and action. Proven expertise in developing innovative content, storytelling, digital media, and strategic messaging, with a track record of leading high-performing teams and delivering impactful communication solutions for global mission-driven organizations.

Key Achievements

- **Communications Strategy and Leadership:** Led communications teams of 40+ staff and consultants for USAID programs with a combined value of \$77M over the past four years, implementing strategies that reached thousands of USAID staff and partners worldwide.
- **Content Strategy and Development:** Directed the publication of 80+ knowledge products, including reports, toolkits, case studies, and multimedia assets, driving 8,600+ annual views across USAID platforms and exceeding engagement benchmarks by 5%.
- **Digital Media Production:** Produced and hosted 50+ episodes of Apotheosis, a podcast exploring ancient wisdom and modern knowledge to help impact leaders tackle complex issues, achieving steady 10% month-over-month download growth and reaching listeners in 16 countries.
- **Human-Centered Communication and Design:** Integrated human-centered design principles across 50+ USAID activities, developing user personas and communications plans based on the real needs of target audiences. Authored "Getting Past the Gatekeeper," a widely used guidebook applying emotional intelligence to enhance engagement with target audiences.
- **Agile and Adaptive Leadership:** Designed and implemented agile project management systems that boosted team productivity by 17% and improved effort forecasting accuracy by 20%.

Core Skills

- Strategic Communications
- Integrated Content Strategy and Storytelling
- User Experience and Human-Centered Design
- Podcast Production, Video Production, and Digital Media
- Agile Project Management
- Website Analytics and Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Climate and Environmental Advocacy
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Media and Public Relations

Education

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| 2016 | Master of Science,
Environmental Conservation
University of Wisconsin-Madison |
| 2000 | Bachelor of Science,
Psychology
<i>Minors in Spanish, Business
Administration</i>
University of Florida |

Recent Work Experience

10/2024 –
2/2025

Deputy Chief of Party and Communications Director

DAI – USAID Advancing Capacity for the Environment (ACE), Bethesda, MD

- Led the development and implementation of a multi-channel communications strategy for a \$42M portfolio supporting 11 USAID operating units, including Natural Climate Solutions, Biodiversity, and Land and Resource Governance.
- Directed a team of five communications professionals and a roster of 15+ cross-functional consultants to produce high-impact storytelling content, graphic design, and video production to support USAID's content strategy.
- Supported the publication and launch of USAID's 2024 Biodiversity Policy, managing multiple design revisions, supporting social media toolkit development, and strategizing outreach tactics to drive global engagement.
- Spearheaded the design and implementation of an agile project management system to streamline content development and maximize team efficiency.

3/2021 –
10/2024

Director of Communications and Knowledge Management

DAI – USAID Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM), Bethesda, MD

- Developed and implemented multi-channel communications plans for a \$35M portfolio, increasing internal knowledge-sharing among over 5,000 USAID staff and external stakeholders.
- Led a team of four communications professionals and 20+ cross-functional consultants to publish 82 knowledge products, resulting in over 8,600 views per year across USAID platforms—surpassing engagement benchmarks by 5%.
- Led the creation of a website analytics dashboard, leveraging data-driven insights to provide recommendations to USAID on optimizing outreach effectiveness.
- Authored and designed "Getting Past the Gatekeeper," a widely used USAID guidebook integrating psychology and human-centered design principles to enhance audience engagement. Delivered two presentations to over 100 USAID staff in 2022 and 2023.
- Established an agile project management framework, increasing team productivity by 17% and improved team effort forecasting by 20%.

11/2019 –
present

Podcast Producer and Host

Project Indra Media, Frederick, MD

- Designed website and branding for Project Indra, an online platform that explores the best of ancient wisdom and modern knowledge to help leaders reach their peak and make a positive impact.
- Produced and hosted 50+ episodes of the Apotheosis podcast, with steady 10% month-over-month download growth and reaching listeners in 16 countries.
- Published e-book "Five Mindsets to Transform Your Leadership," compiling insights from two years of Apotheosis into a practical guide for impact leaders.

4/2018 –
3/2021

Communications Team Manager

Rainforest Alliance – Accountability Framework Initiative (AFI), Washington, DC

- Directed and implemented content strategy for a multi-stakeholder coalition advancing responsible supply chains in agriculture and forestry, producing over 20 blog posts, case studies, webinars, and podcasts.
- Led the design and development of an online platform delivering the AFI's technical guidance in four languages, improving user experience through extensive UX testing.
- Directed and produced a series of 50+ videos featuring stakeholders from the private sector, NGOs, and Indigenous communities, enhancing public engagement and awareness.
- Drafted pitch and supported media outreach for the launch of Framework, leading to a [piece](#) in Fast Company's "World Changing Ideas" column.

9/2016 –
3/2018

Synthesis and Outreach Specialist

Environmental Incentives – USAID Measuring Impact, Washington, DC

- Planned and managed a visual storytelling series showcasing conservation initiatives in the Philippines, Nepal, Uganda, and Guatemala, amplifying awareness of biodiversity conservation.
- Led an initiative to incorporate human-centered design principles into USAID's communications strategy, developing user personas to optimize audience engagement and knowledge transfer.

5/2016 –
8/2016

Video Producer and Visual Storytelling Consultant

Amazon Conservation Association, Madre de Dios, Peru

- Directed, shot, and edited a series of storytelling videos about a sustainable livelihoods initiative in Madre de Dios, Peru, supporting efforts to protect rainforests and communities in the Manu-Tambopata conservation corridor.
- Produced four short videos featuring the stories of participants in cacao farming, fish farming, ecotourism, and sustainable logging initiatives.
- Co-planned a launch event with over 50 local community members and government representatives to screen videos.

Prior Experience

- Founder and Director, Sustnrs, Chicago, IL, 2012 – 2015
- Founder and Digital Media Creator, Helix River Media L3C, Chicago, IL, 2008 – 2016

Languages

- English: Native speaker
- Spanish: Professional proficiency
- Portuguese: Elementary