

# Can Science Communication Take You Places?

written by Saarani Vengadesen | 11/04/2023



Suppose you are a science graduate and do not intend to stay in the lab or don the lab coat, safety helmet or boots for the rest of your career life; fret not. With a [STEM](#) degree, an exciting and colourful career in [science communication](#) might be on the horizon.

When I started school in the late 70s, little did I know I would be a science communicator. That job and the field were non-existent then. Not even when I completed my Master in Biotechnology in 1997, so if anyone tells you that your future in STEM is all gloom with disruptive technologies and you will work in a non-existent field, solving a problem that has not arisen, stop worrying. This is not new, and it has happened for all generations.

I am a science communicator whose job is non-routine and takes me around the globe. I have travelled to every continent except for [Antarctica](#). I have engaged with politicians, policymakers, students, media, teachers, scientists, farmers, religious scholars, investors, industry players, non-governmental organisations, the general public, and doctors as my audience.

I still remember how nervous I was during my first presentation. Today, I even spoke at the European Parliament. This is the life of a science communicator. Our job is to speak to and

engage non-technical audiences to simplify and make them understand science. Why do we do this? We want policymakers and politicians to develop science-based policies and regulations that will support the development of new technologies.

We want teachers to understand the latest developments in science so their classrooms are not based on just textbooks. We want farmers to adopt new agricultural practices. We want mass media to write about science accurately and not spread misinformation. We want religious scholars to clear doubts about science. Remember the “halal” issues about vaccines during the pandemic and the infodemic or misinformation about [COVID-19](#). These are just some of the reasons why science must be communicated to various members of the public.

There are many careers one could choose in science communication. Hollywood engages science consultants when making sci-fi movies. [Sean Michael Carroll](#), an American theoretical physicist, is one of them. He was the scientific consultant for [Avengers: Endgame](#), which features time travel in the pursuit to reverse the action of a character that plans to destroy planet Earth.

Carroll had to ensure the movie depicted a more accurate and logical scenario of how time travel would look and that it was entertaining enough. Imagine advising directors and actors and working with them. What’s more, your name appears in the movie. [National Geographic](#) also hires science consultants and reviewers. These jobs will take you places.

Having a clown, stand-up comedian, dancers, or other performers is common at parties, weddings and corporate events. How about someone who could perform science tricks and explain interestingly? Creative STEM graduates could start their own event companies and provide this service.

One could also be a science journalist, editor, TV producer and host for science programmes and media. You will be in the limelight, travel to different places and meet new people every time. I am an editor-in-chief for a newspaper I founded, [The Petri Dish](#).

I am also a trainer where I train scientists, journalists, teachers, industry players, and policymakers on how to communicate science. I have trained in different parts of the world and enjoy meeting new people. You can start your consultancy to do this. My PhD supervisor, a science communication consultant, gets invited to speak about science in cruise ships to keep the passengers entertained. He did this on an Antarctic cruise – all paid for on top of his fee. I am waiting for your invitation!

With the rapid advancement of science and technology, there is fear among many people, including politicians. Agencies like [NASA](#) have a team of science communicators. International research organisations, too, have science communicators. All UN agencies related to science hire science communicators. They communicate the research, new products and technologies in their agencies to dispel fear and create public awareness and acceptance. I was a consultant to the [UN Food and Agriculture Organisation](#) for three years, working with the [Sri Lankan government](#).

These are just a few examples. The opportunities are limitless. Now, you may have a question. How do I become a science communicator? Have a strong passion and interest in science. Brush up your language skills. It can be any language you wish to communicate science. The English language takes you across the globe. There is no basic degree in science communication. With any degree in STEM, you can acquire science communication skills through short courses or by pursuing a Master’s in this field. One can also be a science

communicator with a mass communication or journalism degree.

While my PhD is in science communication, most of my skills were acquired through practice, reading journals and articles on science communication. Science communication can also be carried out while having a career as a scientist, working in the STEM corporate sector, teaching, or even being a technopreneur. So, it is just for anyone who is a great storyteller fascinated with science. Once you engage a greater audience, you will be hooked on this. Try it!