# LIFE IN Armenia

FOR DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES

#### A COLLAB WITH DEEM COMMUNICATIONS

ENGAGING GENERATION N Strategic Communication for Armenia

THE NEW CAREER PLAYBOOK Reinventing One's Profession

TRANSFORMING ARMENIA'S NARRATIVE Using Hope-Based Communication to Inspire Progress

ADAPTING TO CHANGES IN ARMENIA Human-Centric Strategies for Success in Times of Uncertainty

VISUALS FOR AND FROM ARMENIA

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The Spice of Life for Strategic Communicators

DESTINATION BRANDING Putting Armenia On The World's Map-One City At a Time

TIME IS RIPE IN ARMENIA From Strategy to Action Plan and Back

STRATEGIC THINKING FOR CULTURAL DIPLOMACY Thinking Beyond the Borders of Armenia

**SUSTAINING MOMENTUM** Campaigning For Change in Armenia

CONNECTING ARMENIA TO THE WORLD Exploring Virtual Routes and Skyways

## MATTHEW ZEIN

I started Life in Armenia out of passion for writing and for Armenia. But I never realized the magazine would become a responsibility—a responsibility to convey the right message about Armenia to a diverse and sophisticated global audience, especially Generation N.

This magazine has relied on its readers to spread the word far and wide, reaching new audiences in channels and countries I never targeted. For that reason, I had to make sure the magazine would resonate with any reader it might reach, telling the best of life in this lovely country.

For that reason, I approached Raffi for advice on strategic communication, which turned into a full collaboration on this issue of the magazine. This collaboration will change the magazine's outline to communicate its content better to its professional audience, catching their attention visually as well as with the content itself.

As we approach the beginning of 2024, marking the launch of the magazine's second year, I look forward to your straightforward feedback on this new outline.

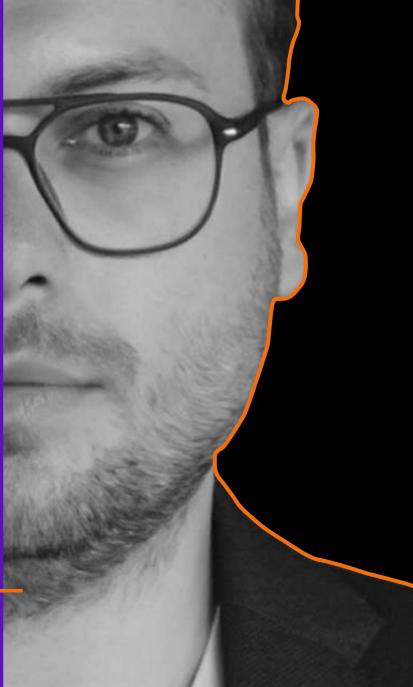


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**Engaging Generation N** 

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOR ARMENIA







## **ENGAGING GENERATION N** Strategic Communication for Armenia

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During my trip to the UAE in October, I wanted to learn about people's perceptions of digital nomadism in Armenia. I held a sign that said "Life in Armenia for Digital Nomad Families" several times near the dancing fountains in Dubai and waited for people to approach me with questions. Those who talked to me knew what digital nomadism was, but many had **misconceptions about Armenia.** Some people thought Armenia was Albania, while others thought it was unsafe, underdeveloped, or not a good destination for remote workers.

Digital nomads primarily use the internet to learn about new destinations, including Armenia, and the majority of them **belong to Generation N,** also known as digital natives—people who grew up with the internet and comfortably use it to find information and connect with others, regardless of age. The professionals in Armenia and digital nomads worldwide are mostly from Generation N. So, we have two groups of people **from the same generation** using the same pool of knowledge.

Why is this important? It's important because it means we need to find a way to communicate Armenia better to Generation N abroad and convey the right message about the country to **attract more digital nomads**. While researching Generation N in Armenia, I learned that Raffi Niziblian, a Canadian-Armenian with over 20 years of experience in strategic communications, has been extensively engaged in this topic.

In November last year, his company, <u>Deem</u> Communications, hosted a signature conference in Yerevan called **Generation N: Decoding Communications** to, as the conference said, Bind Communications and Tech in a Post-COVID-19 Reality.

Close to 80 leaders from the tech, banking, and other sectors attended this conference, which focused on topics of talent, culture, the "Great Resignation," and communicating during a time of crisis. Web3 was discussed under the umbrella of the new notion of "Generation Novel." Tech was the focus because the industry has experienced a "boom" despite the global pandemic in recent years.

Therefore, I interviewed Raffi for two hours to learn how to craft effective messages and strategic communication to connect with Generation N around the world and persuade them to **relocate or even visit Armenia.** I am publishing this interview to show professionals abroad how developed Armenia is and what kind of strategic thinking they can expect to find here. I also hope to provide a guide to effective communication with this segment of the population.



## Why did you choose to talk about Generation N in Armenia last year?

They are the future of the workforce, they are highly skilled and adaptable, they are digital natives, they are values-driven, and they are looking for new and innovative ways to work and live. By understanding and communicating with Generation N, we can create a more prosperous and **sustainable future for Armenia.** 

Many of us are digital-first. That's why we need to be talking to Generation N. This generation of service providers, creatives, and marketers uses technology to consume and communicate information, education, entertainment, and everything in between. It is obvious that **Gen N is our target audience** — the ones who are online generating content and consuming and regenerating information in their own way.

When we started DeeM, we wanted to be pioneers and introduce new things. We began by organizing a seasonal event called WinterFest Armenia, to overcome the otherwise gloomy and gray season and jump start seasonal tourism. We collaborated with hotel and restaurant associations to create strategic actions for tour operators to sell as new products. We positioned ourselves as **thought leaders in society** and the market. To that end, we continued offering new concepts and topics. Eventually, we created a series of PR summits that we ran for four years at the American University of Armenia, a symbol of modernity and Western ideologies. We had PR specialists from the US, EU countries, the Middle East, India, the UK, and all over the world **join us in Armenia to talk about important topics** like media literacy, the importance of understanding content, and social media strategy. Our events specifically focused on communication, and we had around 100-120 participants each year.

For the next step, we wanted something new and challenging, and while we were talking about the new generation and doing our research when we stumbled on Generation N. We realized we were not alone in going through this **digitization process and change** in employee work preferences. What we were struggling with here was the same thing that others were struggling with outside Armenia. We brought approaches, methodologies, techniques, and ideologies to the forefront and invited international and local speakers to attend the conference.

One of the topics we focused on was **communicating during times of crisis.** This was a crucial topic for our times as we are not doing a great job with this both on a national or international level.

Our awareness raising work on Generation N started before and after the event, with TV interviews, articles, and ongoing writing about strategic communication. This collaboration with Life in Armenia is part of our strategy to sustain excitement about Generation N in Armenia.

## What was the reaction to the Generation N conference in 2022?

The overall reaction was positive. It **ignited people to think about a variety of topics.** We often hear something and don't realize how it has changed our behavior. Neuroscience teaches us that this doesn't happen in a day. You hear of an idea, read about another, read something else somewhere else, and then you start thinking about a certain issue differently, and your behavior in that regard starts to change.

This is the kind of change we aim to bring about in communicating with Generation N, which I believe also extends to digital **nomadism**, the main topic of this magazine. When professional societies in Armenia and abroad gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics of this target audience, they can help promote Armenia as a country and destination for travelers and remote workers more effectively and positively. Their messages can evolve over time to become more targeted and constructive. Overall, I can say that the impact in one year was so good that we must keep the discourse around the same topic for a few more years.

As a result of our first Generation N conference including strategic communication, we planned and implemented two nationwide campaigns, one of which was with the UNDP.



At the Gen N conference, you personally raised the method of Hope-based Communications, can you explain why it is an important topic in Armenia?



Hope-based Communications is an approach that focuses on the positive outcome and hopeful aspects of the possible future. It is often used in campaigns and public relations strategies to inspire people to take action, but it **can also be used in other contexts,** such as education, politics, and overall social change.

In Armenia, Hope-based Communication is particularly important because it can help overcome past challenges and build a better future, one we aspire to. Armenia has a long and rich history but has also experienced periods of great hardship. In recent years, Although Armenia has made significant progress, there are still many challenges to be faced. Hope-based Communication can play a role in addressing these challenges and help to promote positive change and development in Armenia. It can definitely be used as a means to **attract digital nomads to Armenia.** 

The Armenian government can use Hope-based communication to **promote tourism and investment in Armenia.** Also, Armenian social organizations can use it to raise awareness of important issues and **inspire people to take action.** We at DeeM are championing Hope-based Communication. The idea is not to just come up with optimistic and positive visuals but to constantly ask the question: why would the audience buy into this?

## Why is Armenia a unique context for strategic communications and Gen N?

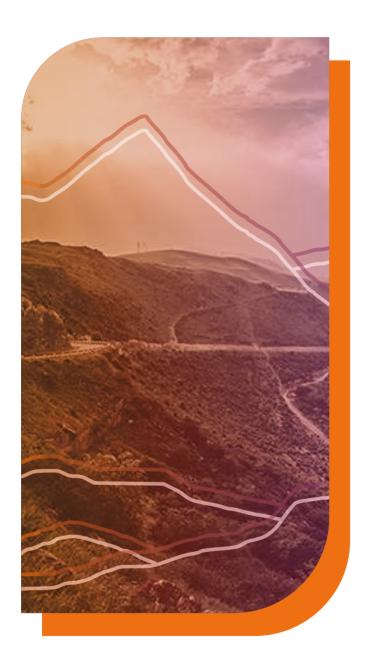
Armenia is in a transition period with an older (post soviet) generation of business people who created businesses after the collapse of the soviet union, and an entirely new generation that's come in with formal education and modern tools and technologies. There is a **clash between the two.** The older generation grasp the fundamentals of the market while the younger generation **seeks to optimize it.** Thus, the new, younger professional is more open to strategic thinking and communication approaches.

Nonetheless, their lack of experience and the struggle for power has created a sense of arrogance as they pretend to be experts in fields they know little about. This also comes from the fact that tons of tutorials are available online about every topic, but that is not how one becomes specialized in a topic - they only become knowledgeable, which is a leap in the right direction. One must learn in the trenches and fail. Mistakes are important for building experience. You make a mistake, you fix it, and the next time you are doing something similar, you pay closer attention and foresee it. Knowing the technicalities means you know the basics but cannot call yourself an expert. This is where we are right now.

Despite being very traditional people, Armenians are quick to adapt to innovation. When the internet came, it came big. There is connectivity almost everywhere in Armenia, even in remote areas, despite the many mountains. Connectivity is a big plus. If you need things fixed or suppliers for whatever you do, you can find talent in Armenia. There is a lot of talent in this country.



## Why would Gen N nomads consider relocating to Armenia?



Besides the predominant native language spoken by all, many people speak Russian and English, especially among the younger generation. Armenia is also a member of the Francophonie countries with a growing number of French speakers. In addition, a remote worker can find everything they need in terms of co-working space, places to chill and do work, while eating good food. Although accessible, It is becoming a bit more pricey. Moreover, the weather is amazing, with four true seasons. Summers are hot, winters are short and cold, and spring and fall are long and amazing.

The government of Armenia has made a huge transition to e-governance with digital and automated tools and support (such as registering a business), an important component.There are **so many campaigns** to reform Armenia's policies and impact social norms and behavior in terms of smoking in public places, health, gender, and the justice sector.

I hadn't intended to make this interview with Raffi public, but after we finished our conversation, I felt compelled to share it with everyone. I wanted the magazine readers to enjoy our conversation as much as I did. Raffi is open to conversation so I suggest you reach out to him on LinkedIn.

The New Career Playbook

## REINVENTING ONE'S PROFESSION

ANI ABOVYAN

#### THE NEW CAREER PLAYBOOK

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Reinventing One's Profession

Finding the right profession and working in a field you enjoy is a real challenge in the modern world, but it's essential for a fulfilling career. Whether your choice is based on market demand or personal preferences, most people feel they will need to change their career path at some point, **either willingly or not.** 

On the one hand, choosing the right profession is like finding your career sweet spot: The intersection of your skills, passions, and values. It's where you feel challenged and fulfilled, make a meaningful contribution to the world, and wake up each morning excited to go to work. Alas, finding that career sweet spot isn't always easy.

On the other hand, choosing the right profession doesn't have to be a lifelong decision, especially **when you belong to** <u>Generation N.</u> This is not an age-specific generation, rather a segment of cross generation that is known for being highly educated, predominantly tech-savvy, and socially conscious. Gen N naturally develops transferable skills and network with people in different industries. This gives them the flexibility to smoothly shift careers if necessary, which brings me to my next point: **Finding passion in Armenia.** 

Why is it so difficult to choose the right profession these days? What factors should we consider? And how can we prepare for a career change?



United Nations

ARMENIA

#### UP AND DOWN IN SEARCH OF SATISFACTION

I embarked on a profession roller coaster when I decided to become a journalist, even though it wasn't my first choice. I made the decision at the last minute in high school after realizing that I excelled in the humanities more than the natural sciences. Perhaps that was my first mature decision in the face of reality. I can mark this as my first experience reinventing my profession because I had envisioned myself as a physician for the previous two to three years. However, I enjoyed studying journalism, writing articles, and interviewing, but at some point, I realized that the field didn't actually fulfill me.

I didn't really know what I was looking for, but I knew that I needed a change. I started by studying Communications and Marketing, which somehow stayed closer to my first profession but was broader and diverse in nature. Though I had no formal education or experience in this field, my academic background in journalism guided me. Finally – I was on the mark! So, to achieve satisfaction in my career, it took me to pass through academic education, relevant certification courses, working experience, and investing 5-6 years that way.

Being a Gen N myself, it was easier for me to make this move and learn the skills necessary from all possible resources, and being in Armenia **meant I had options** to find my way to something I love personally. This experience taught me that it's **never too late to reinvent yourself** and pursue your passions, no matter the obstacles. Looking back, I ask myself, Why? Perhaps I had not known about the field of communications at that time in my life. But why didn't I know about it? It seems that back then this profession was not yet contextualized in Armenia, and therefore, as a profession. I chose Journalism since it catered to some of my needs as a possible diverse, creative, and interesting path for me. Clearly, there is a lack of professional orientation and guidance in Armenia. According to the National Career Guidance report about Armenians from 2021, 62% of youth spend approximately two years finding permanent jobs after getting an education. Only 53.7% work in their professions, though they have spent 4-6 years educating themselves in that sector. This is a very typical issue in Armenia. Perhaps also in many other parts of the world given the fast pace of tech shifts that impact our collective needs and wants.

To achieve career satisfaction, better career orientation programs should be available, especially for **the tech-savvy generation** seeking to develop their skills to explore opportunities beyond borders. Today's **nomad lifestyle has become not only trendy, but a growing subculture.** One can hone their skills, learn about new evolving career opportunities, and network with peers, companies, and organizations beyond the geographic boundaries.

#### THE NEXT ONE

Now, I can hardly find people around me who work in a profession of the first choice. Mostly, people are moving from profession to profession. And sometimes, these are incredible transfers. Upon embarking on my own career path as the Communications Project Manager at Deem Communications, I met such people. Tatevik, who I now call a friend, is a creative and extravagant person. She used to work at the court as she had studied Law, as per her family's guidance. She recently told me: "I didn't love that profession; sometimes I felt that I'm in an alien world."

Tatevik

Much like many other conservative societies, Armenian families traditionally value certain sectors like law and medicine, more than others. They perceive them as prestigious and stable professions. However, the more native generation, the ones using tech and the internet for their shopping, education, health and other information, are gradually shifting away from that mold. More and more, people seem to be pursuing careers based on their passions, even if they don't seem as "prestigious" or lucrative, as their parents would have put it. Today, Tatevik is a graphic designer at DeeM and says "I love designing and creating things that make people happy or inspire them."

Tatevik's story is not unique. Many others are choosing to pursue their passions, even if it means going **against the expectations of their families.** This is a sign that Armenians increasingly value individual fulfillment over traditional notions of success.

# THE NEXT ONE

#### **THE SURVIVOR**

DeeM has been hosting interns from Armenia but also USA, France and so many other parts of this beautiful world, providing us opportunities to discover how others think and work in distant societies. Some months ago, I got into a conversation with a young colleague, interning at the agency. Mary – an amazing person with a soft allure who blasts metal music in her earphones. "Most of all in the world, I like designing and creating," she тне says. At 17, she was set to study International relations at Yerevan State University, due to her family's insistence. She was told that she needed that academic education and SUR later, she could change to whatever she chose.

Again that word – Why? During lunch the other day, with some other colleagues we got into a deep discussion about this exact topic - how and why to choose your career path. The different advice we as Generation N-ers were giving her was in stark

contrast with what she was hearing from her more conventional arguments from her more conservative family. I noticed her internal struggle that was clearly depicted in her expression. It was somewhat painful and hopeful at once. I really do hope that she will make the right choice eventually. Because, as I said earlier, one should be happy to wake up and do the work that they love, not the contrary.

VIVOR

Mari

# WHERE ARE

WE GO ING

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Armenia is a country with a wealth of talent. Nonetheless, its limited resources and geographic location make it difficult for its people to reach their full potential. However, the internet has opened lots of possibilities for Armenians, allowing them to collaborate with others from all over the globe and export their talents to the world. In other words, Armenia gives you a strong foundation, and the world is your oyster through the internet. From tech entrepreneurs to artists and musicians, Armenia is home to many talented young people making their mark on the world. So many Armenian startups are architected with the incorporation of foreign investment, collaborators and remote workers.

Ani

The human oriented working environment has also attracted nomads that despite the country's challenges, have been instrumental in moving Armenia forward. This Generation N are determined to build a better future with a stronger society. Whether they are Armenians or expats living in Armenia, Generation N is opening the path for change and advocating for a more democratic, prosperous, and inclusive Armenia. And I for one, with my new career path, welcome that change and will use my communications expertise to promote it every chance I get. Transforming Armenia's Narrative

## USING HOPE-BASED COMUNICATION TO INSPIRE PROGRESS



## **TRANSFORMING ARMENIA'S NARRATIVE**

Personal agendas and ideologies seem to rule the world. The greater good is often sacrificed in favor of loopholes that make decisions easier to manipulate. People are willing to compromise their values to justify their actions and achieve their goals. However, as the world evolves and cyberspace becomes a platform for individuals to impose change, public opinion becomes increasingly important. Companies and organizations are forced to listen to their customers and publics or risk losing them.

Hope-based communication (HBC) is a strategic approach to communicating social issues that empowers people to take action for a better future by focusing on inspiring stories and solutions. It is grounded in the belief that hope is a powerful motivator, and it never gives up on the possibility of a better world.

Deem Communications has been championing this approach over the past years with its social campaigns in behavior-changing efforts with international institutions, government agencies, and local nonprofits seeking a better future for their society. This practice was visible in the campaign to raise awareness of the importance of the domestic violence law in Armenia some years ago or the "Clean Armenia"<sup>2</sup> campaign with the catchy slogan "The Place of Garbage is in the Bin."

1. The domestic violence law

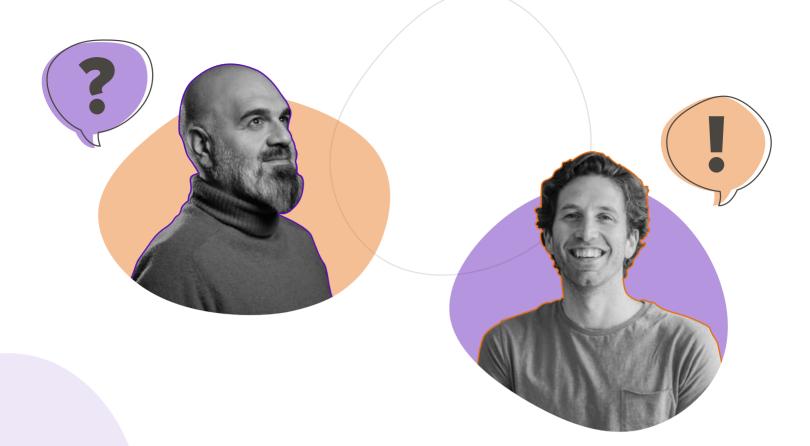


check Thomas on Linke Coon Te An impact strategist and social change consultant, Thomas Coombes founded Hope-based communication. Coombes, branded as "the Hope Guy," has over a decade of experience working with nonprofits and social movements worldwide, helping them develop and implement effective communication strategies. He is passionate about using the power of storytelling and narrative to inspire hope and motivate action for social change.

As part of DeeM's collaboration with Life in Armenia, I recently interviewed Thomas Coombes to learn more about Hope-based communication and how we can use it in Armenia for better communication on all levels.

2. "Clean Armenia" campaign





How can we build Hope-based communication that goes beyond using beautiful words and images to envision a better future?

Hope-based communication is a strategic approach to social change communications that focuses on **showing people the desired future** rather than just the present problems. This is based on neuroscience's finding that humans have a predictive brain and can only support things or do things that they have actually seen.

Hope-based communications is not about making people feel good but about giving them a vision of a better future that they can work towards. It is especially important when people need resilience and hope to keep going during dark times.

How do you convince people that HBC is the direction we should be going right now?



Hope is a radical act that is based on the idea of how things could be **different or better**. While it is important to analyze a situation and see what's wrong, social change work should focus on how we want the situation to be different, and bring that vision to life. We should not be afraid to tell people about our dreams and visions of a better future.

Hope is not about being optimistic or positive - which is about seeing the best in the present situation. Hope is about having a clear vision of how the future could be better, if we act, and working to make it a reality. We can learn from the example of Martin Luther King Jr., whose "I Have A Dream" speech inspired people to fight for a better future.

What are the important aspects of Hope-based communications?

For me, the purpose of hope-based communication is to help people to discover their own vision and values and to **see the hope in every story**. It is not about convincing people of your arguments but rather about helping them to get on the journey themselves. By **deeply listening** to people and helping them to **articulate their core ideas**, we can create a more balanced and hopeful world.

How can we encourage people to adopt the shifts in activism we're proposing, even on a small level?

The first step to identifying and articulating gaps in the story we as social change people are telling is to be **open to admitting that they exist**. Once people can see and articulate the gaps, they can think about solutions. Asking people about the social change they are motivated by can be a helpful way to identify gaps. If people don't know what we're working for, we have a problem. That's why I tell people to **think about changing awareness**, not just raising awareness. We need to understand the underlying causes of the problems we're working on and develop strategies to address them.

How do we build messaging and campaigns around the war?

I believe it is more important to have hope in dark times, especially during conflict. Hope helps us take action, change our minds, and care about others. It also helps us to make sense of the world around us and to create narratives that give us meaning. We developed hope-based communication while trying to find more effective ways to respond to several dire situations at a human rights organization - in other words, it has been developed precisely as a way to cultivate empathy and compassion, and constructive action, in the face of the worst possible situations.

We need to believe in our own **power to make a difference**. We may not have the power of an authoritarian leader, but we have our own ideas and our own values. We need to hold on to these values and keep our solutions alive. We are all saplings in the middle of a storm, and we need to hold on to each other and our hope in order to survive.

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#### Silicon Mountains Tech Summit 2023

20+ Speakers



How can HBC fit into media literacy, especially in the context of misinformation and Al-generated content?



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Attendees

The thing about AI is that it is predictive and generative, and it will generate stories and images based on what is already out there. AI is like a magnifying glass exacerbating problems like bias in society. If we can regulate it we should, but at the same time we need to change the society that the magnifying glass is held over. If AI produces something we do not like, that is a sign that the dominant narrative needs to be replaced with a new one. But it has to be out there in society before AI can be influenced by it. This is why putting out the alternative stories and images we want to see is important. My understanding of AI is that it can only generate stuff based on what already exists. But what remains unique to human creativity is putting something radically new and different into the world. So AI only increases the imperative for 21st century activism to be about showing an alternative world we want to see, rather than the world as it is. As Rebecca Solnit says, imagination is the power of civil society.

How to dissect and choose media critically, considering who said it, why it was said, and the language used?

Institutions and organizations need to be **open and honest** about their values and biases rather than trying to maintain a neutral stance. The audiences can instinctively sense when someone is claiming to be neutral, and they will inherently mistrust someone who tries to pretend they have no perspective or bias.

The key to competing with fake news is to create identity around the values we want to promote. Most people read a source of information that is caught up in their own identity (this is called motivated reasoning). Building a community around shared values is the key to building a successful movement.

#### **Personal Thoughts**

Armenia has faced many challenges in recent years, including political, economic, and social issues. Hope-based communication can inspire and motivate people to take positive actions to address these challenges and work towards a better future. It can help the Armenian people maintain their determination and optimism even in the face of adversity, which is crucial for overcoming some of the most challenging obstacles of our existence. As a communications specialist living and working in Armenia for over 20 years, I have seen the effects of fear-based messages and believe it is time to shift the narrative to a more hopeful and better future discourse.

Hope-based communication empowers individuals by showing them that they have the ability to contribute to positive change. This sense of agency can lead to increased civic engagement and greater responsibility for the country's future. I, for one, have been carrying the torch through my communications agency, Deem Communications, and do not miss the occasion to speak about this approach to anyone willing to listen. And many are sitting up straight and listening. And that – **gives me hope!** 

American University of Armenia

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Adapting to Changes in Armenia

# HUMAN-CENTRIC STRATEGIES FOR **SUCCESS IN TIMES**

## ARMINE ZAKARIAN

#### **ADAPTING TO CHANGES IN ARMENIA** Human-Centric Strategies for Success in Times of Uncertainty

Before diving into this article, I'd like to briefly introduce myself and why I'm the one behind these words. I'm Armine Zakaryan, the CEO of Deem Communications, and I've had the privilege of being part of this unique "human-first" company for the past 14 years.

With over two decades of industry experience, my journey has taken me far from Armenia to work abroad. Still, I **willingly returned to Yerevan**, with my most recent stop being the United Arab Emirates. Why? Because, in my heart, no place allows me to truly be **the professional I would like to be** like right here in Armenia.

Change is an **inescapable facet of our world**. It takes many forms, from technological advancements and shifts in consumer behavior to economic fluctuations and unexpected global events. Following the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing uncertainties around the globe, especially in Ukraine, Karabakh, and now the Middle East, which have impacted the volatility of our business environment, **adaptability is the linchpin** for survival and

success. And when change happens in a small country like Armenia, with too much going on inside and out, it can be overwhelming.

Whether a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) or a towering corporate giant, the ability to respond swiftly and effectively to changes in the marketplace (technology and consumer preferences) is the key to remaining relevant and competitive.

Drawing on my experience and our success at DeeM, embracing **a human-centric approach** to running the business, I'd like to share a few strategies we've implemented to navigate the challenges of uncertain times in Armenia. Our approach has proven effective in weathering many storms.



## Foster Learning Because Guessing Is Not a Strategy

A human-centric company is one that **puts its people first**. This means creating an inclusive workplace culture that values learning and growth. Invest in employee training and development to keep skills and knowledge up-to-date. Embrace technology and digitalization to streamline processes, enhance customer experiences, and stay competitive in this rapidly evolving tech-driven world.

Provide opportunities for employees to **learn** from each other. This can be done through mentorship programs, peer coaching, and team-based learning activities. Companies can also encourage employees to share their knowledge and expertise with others through blog posts, presentations, and other forms of knowledge sharing. In fact, our collaboration with "Life in Armenia" is **part of our learning process**; at least that's how we see it strategically!

#### **STALK YOUR AUDIENCE THE RIGHT WAY**

One client once said that DeeM's ideas "scare me because they're so bold and risky." But we've found that when we analyze the market and think outside the box, we often reap the rewards of taking that calculated risk. Regularly conducting market research to stay closely connected to our target audience is a priority for us. Understanding their evolving needs and preferences is essential, enabling the company to **adjust its offerings accordingly**. We have continually reshaped our offerings from the types of event management to consultancy and design work.

I've learned that we better communicate our ideas to our clients by understanding the current market position in contracts with their actual needs. We assess what they have on hand and study what they want to achieve with the given communications campaign so that we make effective decisions to achieve them. Market research helped DeeM adapt and pivot over time to focus on different aspects of the communication industry, from event/project management and PR to social media and awareness campaigns and strategic communications.

#### Bungee Jump into Business With Safety Ropes Tied

We've come to learn that circumstances are such that they can change drastically overnight, it's essential to have a comprehensive risk management strategy in place, as part of the overall company strategy. This strategy should anticipate and address potential challenges related to market fluctuations and external events. For example, despite the challenges of COVID-19, DeeM remained committed to keeping its team connected and engaged. In short, we worked remotely for a year and even kept the team spirits high like the virtual celebrations of Easter by cracking eggs online and **keeping the spirit alive**. During the New Year celebrations we

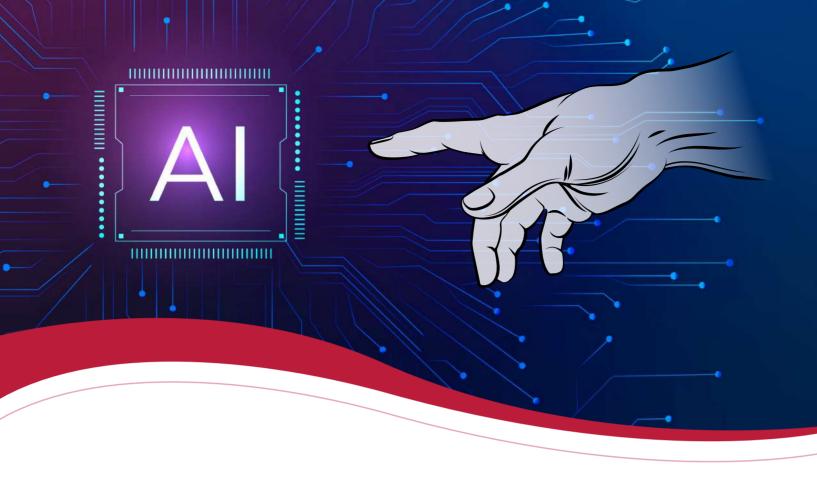
played virtual Secret Santa and used the growing digital services in the market to send gifts to each other. We immediately enhanced our **digital project management tools** to maintain the quality of our service provision. Clients did not feel any interruptions to their business. As the pandemic ended, we understood the needs of the workforce and created opportunities for the work-from-home options as part of our internal policy. This hybrid model provides flexibility and supports creativity, essential to DeeM's success.

#### **DRESS UP, DRESS DOWN**

Fast forward 2 years, this hybrid work model is a major shift in how we approach our work process. It has given our current team the freedom to organize their work-life balance while ensuring organizations increased resilience and **access to a wider talent pool**. To thrive in this evolving landscape, companies should proactively address the challenges and opportunities of the hybrid work model. This topic was extensively discussed during the "Great Resignation" session at our <u>Generation N</u> conference last year.

RESPECT

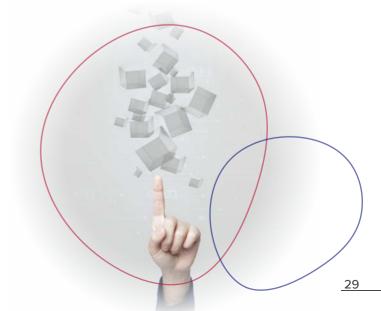
To further foster a human-centric atmosphere, we transformed our space into a hub with many **coworking-style spaces** and several private rooms for private conversations or quiet focus. It also includes a spacious and sunlit kitchen with additional lounge and cozy coworking areas with daily home made lunch offered every day. <u>Raffi Niziblian</u>, the Founder and Creative Director of DeeM, has taught me to use the workspace as a team building opportunity. I relish this message as I have seen him personally make meals, even the Thanksgiving or Christmas turkey for our community dinners. A culture I highly cherish and capitalize on as I advance the leadership of DeeM.



#### THE DIGITAL WORK MAGIC

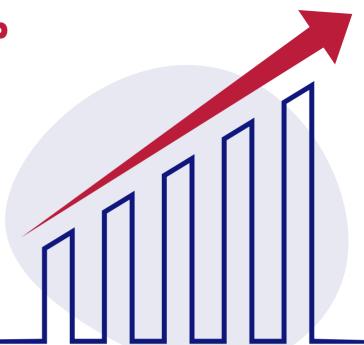
Central to the success of the hybrid work style is the concept of digital transformation. As companies embrace the blend of remote and in-person work, technology plays a pivotal role in facilitating this transition. Digital transformation underpins the hybrid work revolution as companies increasingly rely on digital solutions, cybersecurity becomes imperative. Protecting sensitive data and securing remote work setups are essential components of digital transformation. Robust cybersecurity measures, such as multi-factor authentication, encryption, and regular security audits, are crucial to safeguarding company assets. Automation and artificial intelligence are streamlining workflows and boosting productivity. I believe that we must laugh with the machines, not at them to succeed. Routine and repetitive technical tasks can be automated, allowing employees to focus on more strategic and creative work. Al-powered tools provide valuable insights, enabling companies to optimize operations and improve customer

experiences. It's my opinion that **AI shall not** replace humans but rather augment their work. If everyone generates the same AI content, there is no place for originality and identity. This is where DeeM comes in. We are human-focused professionals that enhance the human-to-human approach.



## Talk, Listen, and Scale Up

Communication is a two-way highway, not a one-way avenue. It's not just about telling the team what you need; it's also about listening to them and understanding their needs and perspectives. This is especially important **in times of uncertainty and change** when everyone faces new challenges and may have valuable insights to share. Digital transformation empowers employees by giving them the tools and information they need to thrive in their roles. Access to training resources, self-service HR platforms, and digital onboarding processes have enhanced the employee experience of our team, regardless of work location.





#### **Customer-Centric Approach**

Digital transformation has enabled us to embrace an enhanced **customer-centric approach**. It's no secret that customer relationship management (CRM) systems and digital marketing platforms enable companies to engage with their customers more effectively, whether interactions occur in person or online. Investing in such platforms enables for growth and efficiency. The digital transformation is essential for the successful implementation of the hybrid work style, as mentioned above. It equips organizations with the tools and capabilities needed to adapt to the evolving work landscape, ensuring they remain competitive, agile, and resilient in a constantly changing world. As businesses continue to adopt the hybrid work model, their commitment to digital transformation will be crucial in shaping the future of work. Companies can successfully navigate the ever-evolving business landscape by fostering a culture of adaptability, investing in technology and talent, and staying attuned to market dynamics. Ultimately, I have learned that it's not the company's size that determines its ability to adapt but its willingness to embrace change as an opportunity for growth and innovation.

#### **ONCE A DEEM'ER, ALWAYS A DEEM'ER**

At DeeM, we never lose touch with our employees, except maybe in rare cases where parting ways is the healthier option. We cherish the memories of all our former team members as we reminisce by resharing photos from the past. **We stand on the shoulders** of those who came before us. When people leave us for other opportunities, they become ambassadors for our business, spreading the word about who we are and what we do. We have reformer employees in Germany, France, Canada, the USA, Australia and other countries. They are all potential sources of new opportunities and networks. In conclusion, I reflect on all the changes and adaptations I have lived through within this innovative thinking agency that has never missed the chance to seize the moment and take the calculated risk in embarking on a new adventure and taking their partners, clients, suppliers and staff along. So you see, it's all about communication. **Do it right**, and

it will work for you!

**VISUALS IN ARMENIA** 

## THE SPICE OF LIFE FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATORS

KARNI KARASARKISIAN

#### **VISUALS FOR AND FROM ARMENIA**

The Spice of Life for Strategic Communicators

Three years ago, I left Lebanon behind and relocated to Armenia, aiming to start a new **chapter of my life.** With my creative talents in tow, I joined Deem Communications as Art Director. Here, besides managing a team of creatives, I spearhead the production of visual aids for a variety of campaigns and platforms.

When Raffi informed me about the collaboration with Life in Armenia magazine, I knew I had to share something that transcends my personal journey in Armenia and captures the essence of Armenia within me, personally and professionally. In doing so, I hope to ignite a spark in those who are considering Armenia as an option for them. Whether you've been to Armenia or are considering traveling here, what comes to mind when you hear the word "Armenia?" It might be a landmark, a person, a street, restaurant, or a tree; it's almost **always connected to a visual element.**  Although often considered as the sidekick of the strategic communicator, visual aids are incredibly powerful tools for getting the message across in a **clear, and engaging way.** They grasp attention, increase retention, simplify complexity, evoke emotions, and persuade action. Visual aids help create a unique identity and style for a brand or campaign.

Allow me to present this niche profession and my reflections on practicing it in Armenia and the impact it has had on my life.



#### **Challenges of Creating**

Visual Aids For Strategic Communications

Upon my arrival to Armenia to fulfill my role as Art Director, I was taken aback to find that our audiences were **more complex than expected.** In addition to the relatively small local population, Armenia hosts a significant international presence. Companies, including DeeM, work extensively with foreign partners and international organizations, making it essential to create visual aids that are both **culturally sensitive yet impactful and effective.** 

The main challenge of creating visual aids for strategic communications is understanding the mindset of each audience segment. What ideas are acceptable in one culture may be rejected in another. It is important to study the market and **psychology of the target audience,** including natives, diasporans (or repats), expats or simply foreign incoming tourists in order to develop customized visualization of **thoughts that are sensitive, heartfelt and memorable.** 

In more recent times, with the rapid tech evolution, I have noticed a decrease in quality of audio-visual content. As a professional who is meticulous not only about the storyline, but also the production value, I am faced with this challenge of offering high quality products within a diminishing budget in a demanding market that seeks to remain competitive. Nonetheless, along with DeeM, I've committed to maintaining the quality by utilizing some of the trending tools while remaining faithful to my camera and equipment.

#### **Trends and Formats**

in Visual Aids

Video and animation content have increasingly gained the upper hand as most popular forms of visual aids. Viewers are busy and have lower attention spans, so choosing the right type of visual aid becomes critical for delivering the main messages. For example, when presenting numbers or data why not use infographic-style visuals? Why not add a video or photos to support that information? In other cases, when my objective is to build an awareness campaign visual content, my go-to format is static images, preferably photos I have conceived and captured. It allows to stay within budget yet deliver more original and customized content. Also, the production of video or animation is more time consuming, something not always available in our field. Nonetheless, all visuals should remain within the campaign visual direction or brand tone of the client.

#### **Creating Visual Aid for The Armenian Market**

After three years in Armenia, allow me to share some tips about the visuals that resonate with the local publics:

Armenians have a **discerning eye for aesthetics,** so use high-quality visuals while campaigning.

Armenia has a **rich and complex culture,** so be respectful of customs and values when creating visual aids.

Armenians have a **distinct sense of humor**, be cautious to use it sparingly, especially when tackling more traditional topics.

Test the visuals with a target audience before launching a campaign to ensure the effectiveness but also the **culturally appropriateness.** 

#### **Directing in Armenia**

Is it that complicated to create visual aids for the Armenian market? Although a small market, Armenia is a **microcosm of the international market.** With DeeM, I have had the opportunity to direct some audio-visual productions and even full on campaigns for international as well as for a variety of segments in Armenia. In the following samples of projects I've directed in Armenia, I want to convey the complexity, diversity, and sophistication of the Armenian market:

#### **ICRC's 30th Anniversary**

Working with ICRC Armenia was challenging given the subject matter they tackle. My task was to demonstrate the vigorous work conducted with the families of the missing while creating a tone of celebration of partnership with the Republic of Armenia. While creating inspirational visual aids we carefully considered the beneficiaries, the audience, the media and everything in between.

In one video, we conceived a minimalistic style utilizing engaging photographs to create an emotional connection between the work of the experts, the families and the general public. We threaded carefully and were sensitive and considerate. That was the only way we achieved a beautifully orchestrated campaign that included outdoor visuals, digital video and animation content, a formal event and media outputs.





#### **U.S. Ambassador's Fund in Armenia**

Producing this video piece was truly a pleasure! My task was to compile all the achievements and impacts of the U.S. Ambassador's Fund in Armenia, that had restored historical and cultural sites in Armenia. My vision was to illustrate an aesthetic that captivates the viewers. The heritage sites and their breathtaking natural environment were demonstrated with aerial captures combined with interviews with the Ambassador and others.

I used extreme close ups of the exquisite detailed restoration work conducted adding value to the results. B-rolls or panorama, and architecture heightened the emotional connection between history, culture and humanity. To package the imagery, a cinematic music, a voice-over narration, and subtitles was also implemented, making it accessible to more segments.



#### **Remaining Authentic and Ethical**

To know who we are going to make the visual content for, I encourage my team to set aside some time and study the target segments, their likes and behaviors. I advise them to look into trending design or editing activities going on around the world. I myself feel like I am constantly in a research mode. One of our daily preferred activities is the brainstorming sessions. This is where we let go of everything and just pour in one idea after another. Once we hone in on the concept, we do a second round of research to ensure that our ideas are not in violation or replicating existing ones. We all know it is hard to always create new ideas, but to be inspired and build on successful trends is how many creatives thrive. Once developed, we regularly test the visual direction with peers and if budget or time permits, with focus groups. This approach allows us to remain ethical in our creative process.

Given that DeeM works on a variety of sensitive topics, we are careful with the choices of visuals we use. We try to be honest, authentic and original in our work. We avoid using clichés, stereotypes, or false claims. We make use of real stories, testimonials, or data whenever possible. We also respect the intellectual property rights of others and give credit where it is due. As part of our team is also freelancers, we have conceived of policies not to impede their ownership without compromising the agency's. A very delicate and a highly important matter. For three years now in Armenia, I have seen a lot of work being copied from other artists, designers, or producers. If we want to succeed, then we need to be original and innovative.

Measuring The Impact of Visual Aids The internet penetration rate in Armenia was 78.6% earlier this year. It means that more than 2.000.000 of Armenia's population is connected to the internet. Due to the country's small size and high internet penetration rate, it is relatively easy to measure the impact and effectiveness of visual content in Armenia when targeting the local market.

On a wider scale in international markets, there are different ways to measure the impact and effectiveness of visual aids. Different tools and methods are used depending on the type of project, platform, and objectives that are being measured.

Some of the common ways we use:

Tracking the number of views, likes, shares, comments, or downloads of the visual aids on social media, websites, or other platforms.

Conducting surveys, interviews, focus groups, or feedback sessions with the target audience or the client to get their opinions and reactions.

Comparing the results of the visual aids with the predefined goals and indicators, such as awareness, engagement, conversion, retention, satisfaction, etc.

Analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data collected from the above methods to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the visual aids and to make recommendations for improvement.

#### **Armenia Welcomes Creativity**

Despite not yet being a popular destination for remote workers and digital nomads, the **Armenian professional community surprised me,** and I know it will surprise anyone visiting the country. The experience I have had here has exceeded my expectations, and the level of professionalism I have seen has been challenging at times. From Armenia, I have targeted audiences worldwide and have been responsible for projects that have had an impact.

As a photographer and experienced production manager back in Lebanon, I am happy to be **adding more spice** to this otherwise multi-faceted country. The landscape, the kind of work and the people I do the work with have been nothing short of life changing for me. From my remote site working trips to delving into some real and challenging issues, I have grown and broadened my horizons beyond expectation. More than ever, I have a growing feeling to create more – more visual communications that will allow me to share my experience.

Karni and his Creative Team

For the past 1,5 years, I have had the privilege of being the photographer of the EU Ambassador in Armenia. It gave me a good opportunity to travel all over Armenia and discover it from diverse viewpoints. This amazing journey makes me feel unbelievably proud. And especially I would like to highlight this photo of the EU Ambassador in Armenia Andrea Wiktorin and the President of the Republic of Armenia Vahagn Khachaturian.

**Destination Branding** 

# PUTTING ARMENIA ON THE WORLD'S MAP - ONE CITY AT A TIME



## **DESTINATION BRANDING** Putting Armenia On The World's Map - One City At a Time



"People come to Armenia with zero expectations, and they leave the country amazed." Said <u>Sisian Boghossian</u>, Head of the Tourism Committee of the Republic of Armenia during a speech she gave recently in Yerevan.

Armenia has long been overshadowed by its tragic past, but recent visitors are discovering that it is a vibrant and beautiful country with a **thriving professional community** and joyful people. However, change doesn't happen overnight. In Armenia, it began at the grassroots level, with Armenians themselves taking the initiative.

#### **Rising on a Global Stage**

Over the past few years, the professional community in the country has hosted numerous conferences, exhibitions, speeches, and panel discussions with international speakers and guests from all over the globe. This proactive approach helped to raise Armenia's profile and **establish it as a potential destination** for entrepreneurship and innovation.

Back to Sissian's words at the top, international participants often arrive in Armenia with low expectations, but they leave as ambassadors for the country, promoting it back home. This is due in part to the high level of professionalism exhibited at many events, from the organization and complexity of the topics to the engagement of the local community. Although professional events contribute significantly to promoting a country, they are just **one pillar** of a comprehensive destination branding approach.

#### **Rising on a Global Stage**

Destination branding is the process of identifying and highlighting a place's unique assets, such as its culture, history, natural beauty, and activities, and then **communicating those assets** to potential visitors in a way that is both informative and inspiring.

Strategic communication is essential to destination branding. It is the process of conveying a destination's **unique identity and value proposition** to target audiences. Regardless of the channel used, effective destination branding communication should be authentic to reflect the destination's genuine identity, compelling to inspire potential visitors to learn more about the destination, and most importantly, **consistent across all channels** and over

time. <u>Raffi Niziblian</u> has talked about this on several occasions, namely during his efforts with <u>Deem Communications</u> when developing a city branding strategy for the second largest city of Armenia, Gyumri, back in 2016-2018.

# **PUTTING GYUMRI CITY** ON THE WORLD'S MAP

The Gyumri city branding began with extensive research that included face to face interviews, social media outreach as well as focus groups. A Yerevan-focused professional phone interview was conducted, allowing the project team to learn more about the needs and the top-of-mind impressions of the public about Gyumri. International experts were consulted, invited to Armenia and joined working groups to develop the strategy of the destination branding work. Local urban planners, architects, designers and artists as well as cultural workers were engaged. Finally a PR Summit was held in Gyumri that allowed for public discourse and engagement in the building of the architecture of the strategy.

This phase lasted about one year. The second phase of creating and testing took about 8 months and finally the presentation and promotion took place on December 6 in Gyumri with the inauguration of the Mayor.



The branding had 6 main directions :









### GYUMRI with talent







#### **NOMADING TO ARMENIA**

Convincing people to relocate temporarily or permanently to Armenia is even more challenging than convincing them to visit as tourists. Digital nomads immerse themselves in the local experience, venturing beyond tourist hotspots like hotels and restaurants. They shop at local markets, subscribe to local services, rent accommodations, drive, attend events, and more. As a result, when targeting potential relocators, you must **introduce the country as it truly is,** without sugar coating anything. Otherwise, they'll feel misled and leave.

When I started Life in Armenia, I knew it wouldn't be enough to write a few articles or publish a few editions. It would take a full approach, a continuous effort over many years, to see a real impact. Incremental results are great, but they're not everything. The real goal is to get people talking about Armenia on their own.

Consistency is maintaining focus on your goal from start to finish, even when you are just at the beginning of your journey. It is visualizing the finish line and continuing to move forward in the same direction. Consistency is paramount in destination branding, as no one would travel to a new destination simply because they saw something online or were intrigued by a post on social media platforms. We cannot expect an American watching the morning news to suddenly see a video about life in Yerevan and make an immediate travel decision.

When potential travelers around the world are repeatedly exposed to the same positive message about Armenia through a variety of channels, it will build up in their subconscious minds. When they decide to travel and plan their trips, Armenia will be a top contender.



The greenhouse of the Yerevan Botanical Garden, Armen as seen from above

#### **SEE YOU IN IJEVAN**

Can Armenian provinces attract digital nomads? The answer is Yes! There are many examples of small towns that have **become international hubs** through consistent promotion and the right on-ground activities.

Creating such buzz about the country requires thoughtful and strategic communications. We must carefully consider what messages to amplify and where to communicate them in order to **convey the country's unique appeal** to digital nomads. I feel extremely happy when someone who doesn't know about the magazine sends me a question saying "my friend recommended your magazine." It means, people are starting to share the magazine with others outside the channels I regularly use.

I recently relocated to Ijevan City part-time to volunteer in promoting it as a digital nomad destination worldwide. I wanted to **experience life there firsthand** so that I could authentically convey its unique value proposition to potential visitors.



I collaborate with governmental and semi-governmental entities to organize events, invite international travelers, showcase the city to a wider audience, and make it easier for those interested in relocating. One main aspect of my work is **communicating the right information** about the city and ensuring that the guests I invite do the same over time.

Similarly, many efforts are going on in Dilijan, Stepanavan and Gymri. Raffi's team at DeeM have elaborated a 5 year plan for Gyumri's place branding and destination strategic communications. The self-motivated project was called Branding Gyumri with a clever hashtag #OpenGyumri that invited guests both as visitors and nomad residents. They had started the efforts of implementation when COVID and then the war put a stick in their wheels. Nonetheless, the machine was set in motion and today, Gyumri has become a brighter, more vibrant city that offers not only cultural, but many leisure and economic benefits too.

For this reason, I invited Raffi to **conduct a professional one-day workshop** on strategic communication. We will welcome interested professionals from Armenia to join us for a full day to learn about strategic communication. Participation in the workshop is free, but only a limited number of applicants will be accepted. If you are interested, please take a moment to register.

To digital nomads considering Armenia as a potential destination, the moment you land at the airport, you are entering a country that welcomes you with open arms, a place where great efforts are being made to ensure your stay is as comfortable as possible and your work is as productive as you want it to be. You will be at **home away from home**, not just a visitor, but an integral part of Armenia's story. Time is Ripe in Armenia

# FROM STRATEGY TO ACTION PLAN AND BACK

## HAIK RAFFI KAZARIAN NIZIBLIAN

<image>

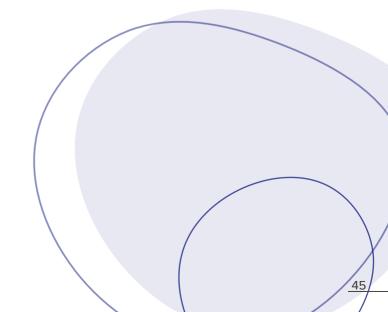
#### **TIME IS RIPE IN ARMENIA** From Strategy to Action Plan and Back

#### **Building a Full Circle**

In an ever changing world of marketing, a brand's success hinges on its **well-structured approach** that combines strategic thinking with actionable plans. Despite the challenges of implementation, strategic planning is essential for freelancers and entrepreneurs, whether they are traveling the world or launching a startup in a remote destination.

As a Canadian Armenian living in Armenia for 17 years, Raffi Niziblian, Creative Director of DeeM, has witnessed firsthand how the country where you reside can **influence your strategic planning** efforts. Many people overlook this factor, assuming it has no impact, but it does.

Armenia's more chill lifestyle can help one to step back from the day-to-day and **focus on the big picture**. Plus, being home to a diverse community of entrepreneurs, professionals, and investors makes it easy to connect with people who can help to develop and implement a strategic plan. Deem Communications has been spearheading strategic communications and **strategic thinking in Armenia** for over a decade. Here is what we have discovered over the years, hoping you can benefit from our experience, and even better, have your own experience here in Armenia someday.



#### **STRATEGY:** The Art of Direction and Purpose

Let's start by defining some terms. **Strategy acts as a guiding map**, outlining the desired direction and goals of the marketing activity, namely a launch or a campaign. It involves strategic thinking, which emphasizes the importance of an analytical assessment of market conditions to identify unique opportunities and challenges. This takes a long-term perspective, considering the overall objectives and aspirations of a company and considers a wider scope of analysis and factors for a sustainable plan.

One of the components of a comprehensive strategy is the **target audience analysis**. Understanding the demographics, preferences, and behaviors of the intended audience which leads to tailored marketing messages that resonate with them. A competitive analysis helps evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of competitors, leading to the identification of competitive advantages and differentiation points. Moreover, a robust strategy accounts for potential changes in the market and provides a flexible framework to navigate evolving trends and consumer preferences.



Captured during the EU4Armenia campaign by DeeM | Syunik

For many companies and institutions such as the All Armenia Fund, a clear strategy was designed to bring about numerous benefits to their communications, image building and marketing efforts. It aligned with the institution's objectives, creating a cohesive approach for the forthcoming years. Another strategy was built recently for the The European Union Delegation to Armenia.

While a strategy lays the foundation for marketing success, it alone cannot guarantee results. The next crucial step is to **translate the strategic direction** into tangible action plans.

#### **ACTION PLANS:** Transforming Strategy into Execution

Another definition here. An **action plan** takes the strategic direction and breaks it down into specific tasks, timelines, and responsibilities. It provides a roadmap for the effective implementation of the strategy. With measurable targets and key performance indicators (KPIs) to track progress and evaluate the effectiveness of marketing initiatives, action plans encompass accountability and collaboration with stakeholders.

Prioritization of tasks becomes very crucial for identifying the most critical activities and sequencing them based on dependencies and available resources. **Resource** allocation ensures that budget, personnel, and other resources are appropriately assigned to each task, resulting in optimal resource utilization. **Timelines** and milestones help establish realistic deadlines to monitor progress and maintain accountability. Finally, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are put in place to track the performance of marketing campaigns against the predetermined KPIs and make adjustments as needed.

The experts at DeeM have had over 17 years of experience in setting action plans and implementing them. Many of the major activities involve major events such as the Francophonie Summit or the Responsible Mining Conference that encompasses complex, controversial or multifaceted activities serving a higher strategy. These and many other projects have generated many lessons learnt, which in turn has empowered our team and provided us with hands-on knowledge that can only be acquired by actual living experiences. Most recently, the team conceived and implemented the Russian Film Festival that exceeded any expectations of the Russian Federation's Cultural Ministry. DeeM's project managers planned the entire project coordinating with local suppliers, venues, audiences, media and international partners. The seamless implementation was due to the effective elaboration of a comprehensive action plan that offered several benefits to this communications project.

Despite the clear distinction between strategy and action plan, clients often fall into common misconceptions, hindering the effectiveness of marketing campaigns and lead to suboptimal results. At DeeM, we understand these challenges and aim to bridge the gap between strategy and execution, empowering our clients to achieve their marketing goals effectively.

#### Now, let's dive into some common

**misconceptions**! To navigate the marketing landscape successfully, it is important to address and debunk common misconceptions that can hinder marketing efforts. Here are three prevalent misconceptions:

#### MISCONCEPTION 1: Strategy is an Optional Extra

A major misconception is that strategy is an expendable element. Some companies seem to prioritize execution over strategy. A well-defined strategy ensures that marketing efforts are aligned with business objectives and provides a framework for decision-making and resource allocation.

We have spent thousands of hours working closely with partners to develop the notion of the importance of customized marc-communications strategies that align with overarching objectives. Our experience has actually been rewarding and effective. Not an easy or cheap task for agencies, but a crucial one for success.

#### MISCONCEPTION 2: Action Plans are One-Size-Fits-All

Clients often expect **cookie-cutter action plans** that can be applied universally to any business or industry. Nonetheless, an effective action plan depends on the uniqueness of the project at hand. We take the time to understand the clients' specific needs and objectives and correlate with market dynamics.

We then design a detailed action plan that translates the strategic goals into executable tasks with clear KPIs. Many elaborate actions have been designed and implemented, where clients were pleasantly surprised. The advantage of a creative strategic communications agency is that it pushes the boundaries of creativity to allow fresh new ideas to be born and new successes to be achieved.

#### MISCONCEPTION 3: Execution Trumps Evaluation

Another misconception in marketing is that once the execution of a marketing campaign begins, evaluation and measurement take a back seat. However, continuous evaluation and measurement are vital for marketing success. Neglecting evaluation diminishes the ability to identify areas of improvement, optimize campaigns, and achieve desired outcomes.

At DeeM, we emphasize the importance of ongoing evaluation and optimization. We leverage data-driven insights to monitor campaign performance, identify areas of improvement, and make necessary adjustments to maximize return on investment. By continuously evaluating marketing efforts against predetermined KPIs, we ensure that our clients' campaigns are on track and deliver the desired results. These key indicators are set forth prior to implementation and are agreed upon with the clients to debunk any misinterpretation of expectations. Many tools exist to measure the success of marcomms activities. Over the past 17 years, DeeM has even **designed some of its own tools** that have been effective for measuring success.

## THE ROLE OF AN AGENCY

Deem Communications is dedicated to helping clients bridge the gap between strategy and execution by building robust customized strategies and designing tailored action plans. We provide KPIs and monitor the activities so we can evaluate and optimize the end results that should ideally meet, or preferably in our case, **exceed expectations**.

Since the beginning of our agency life, we have prioritized a collaborative approach. We believe in fostering strong partnerships with our clients. We have come to understand that successful marketing and communications requires collaboration and an effective communication team of suppliers and experts.

We allocate designated Project Managers and relevant teams to work closely with clients, actively listening to their needs, goals, and feedback. By aligning our strategies and action plans with their vision, we ensure that our marketing solutions are tailored to their unique business requirements. Our collaborative approach fosters **a sense of shared ownership** and empowers our clients to actively participate in the marketing process.



DeeM's cutting-edge and novel methodology in communications, combined with our strategic location in Armenia, has made us one of the most sought-after agencies in the market. In North America, people are constantly bombarded with stimuli and distractions, making it difficult to find the time and space to reflect and think strategically.

A small country with low potential? I agree that it's a small country, but that's a misconception when it comes to its potential. In Armenia, I've collaborated with UNICEF, UNDP, HSBC Bank, Byblos Bank, and many governmental ministries and organizations. This has opened up the doors for more international collaborations.

Besides the obvious CIS or post-soviet bloc, partnerships are forged mostly with European, Middle Eastern and even American entities. These opportunities are ripe and abundant. With the right mindset and skills, an experienced professional can capitalize on the situation and make their marks on this rapidly developing country.

Thinking Beyond Armenian Borders

# STRATEGIC THINKING FOR CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

TATEVIK KHOETSYAN

# THINKING BEYOND THE BORDERS OF ARMENIA

What does an article about cultural diplomacy have to do with a magazine for digital nomads and remote workers? When Raffi told me about the collaboration with Life in Armenia and asked me to write about this topic, I had the same question. But as I started writing, I connected the dots: Cultural diplomacy is a way to communicate to foreigners what our country is like and **what kind of people we are.** This can be helpful for those considering traveling to Armenia, as it can help them decide if it's a good fit. It can also allow the local population to learn more about other cultures and people from other countries. These are defined with culturally packed activities in one's backyard. They are concerts, expos, theatrical performances, and so many more artforms.

#### **DIALOGUING FOR UNDERSTANDING**

Between wars, we need time to rest, reflect, and rebuild. Cultural diplomacy, or the soft power of exchanging ideas, art, and language, can help us do just that. Significant cultural events can bring people out of their comfort zones and **into dialogue,** fostering cooperation and supporting peacebuilding. A practice that exists since forever and utilized by almost all nations around the world.

One of the highlights of my professional career was the multi-component event tailored around cultural dialogue in Yerevan, Syunik and other cities and villages in Armenia. I was happy to have had the chance to participate in the organization of Europe Day in Armenia 2023 last May, in close collaboration with Deem Communications' team and other communications experts.

The event brought together diplomatic missions from European member and non-member states and all other Europe-based and funded organizations operating in Armenia. It was a unique opportunity to celebrate **European culture and values** in Armenia and to foster dialogue and cooperation between people from different backgrounds. It showcased shared values, highlighted priority issues and offered engaging and entertaining activities for the local publics to experience. From young children to the elderly and everything in between, the multi-faceted event provided something for all.





A 6-day European Film Festival held in Yerevan presented 13 films from the EU member states on multiple screens. Round tables, panel discussions, talks and more face to face dialogue was organized for social workers, youth, media and other targeted segments of society. A large-scale event was implemented in the southernmost region of Armenia, Syunik. My favorite part was seeing the hundreds of public from the city of Kapan who had come out to discover some of the representatives of EU-funded projects implementing social and economic projects in their hometown. An interactive expo hosted over 20 such projects. More than 15 foreign delegates visited the region and interacted directly with the attendees allowing a tactical engagement where the exchange of ideas, concerns and other thoughts were realized. Before the final networking reception, a local rock band performed some of their dynamic pieces out on the square for all to enjoy.

These events allow for the media to generate relevant text and visuals that allow for the foreign delegations to then communicate with their own population be that in The Netherlands, Germany, Estonia or Spain. In return, the population of these countries learn more about the beauties of my country and hopefully begin to connect to its story, history and culture.

### **SEAMLESS DELIVERY**

Event Management of such caliber requires a highly skilled team with experience and knowledge of all the risks involved. From technical to time management, stakeholders expect the event management to be flawless. This is where DeeM shines. With its 17 years in the field, they have organized several events, including Europe Day celebrations, Francophonie forums, Responsible Mining Conference, international concerts and expos. Lessons learnt and knowledge gained throughout the year allows for the team to manage a multitude of suppliers, volunteers and performers. They are able to coordinate public and media, participants and stakeholders. In this case, we delivered a seamless experience to the participants and a rewarding experience for the stakeholders. Armenia and the EU member states were able to build stronger relations through this cultural dialogue and diplomacy event.

For those considering visiting or even relocating to Armenia from a European country or a country with a similar culture, I hope the following lines resonate with you and help you in making your decision.

Despite being landlocked, lacking some of the much needed resources for mass overseas travel, and not having enough exposure as a travel destination, Armenia must seize every opportunity to expand its cultural exposure. Cultural diplomacy events like the **Europe Day was one such opportunity**, with a variety of events taking place across the country. Below is the comprehensive list of activities conducted in just one week: European Film Festival in Yerevan

Media outreach and Press conferences in Yerevan and Kapan cities

Public fair presenting Team Europe Initiative projects in and for Syunik

Open air rock concert by local band Red Line in Kapan city's major square

Talks with Social Workers in Goris' Impact Hub building

Ambassadors meeting with students at Goris State University to discuss available opportunities

European Young Ambassadors targeted events for youth across Armenia

Social media conversations



## WE DO IT WITH CARE

We did more than just implement activities and events during Europe Day Armenia 2023; we did them with care. We made sure that there was ample participation from as many segments of the public as possible. We conceived of creative ways to engage attendees in meaningful conversations that touched their hearts, minds and spirits.

We cared for the details and **created positive experiences for everyone.** We wanted to foster communication, mutual understanding, and positive experiences for our stakeholders and the public alike. All of this creates new opportunities for civic development around the country, giving them food for thought and wider networks for real action.

Peace is built through **mutual interests and interdependence,** which renders violence and conflict obsolete. In my perception, for so many years, we have operated under the premise that we must reach end-of-conflict agreements before pursuing long-lasting alliances that rely on and build interdependence. I think it is high time to reconsider this axiomatic notion and to recognize that genuine cooperation is possible even before complete peace is achieved. Ultimately, **peace comes down to shared values,** healthy dialogue, leadership, and listening to the people's choices. To maintain peace, we must foster dialogue, exchange, and cooperation. This is where cultural diplomacy comes in. Armenia gives me the fullest freedom to express myself and to make a meaningful contribution to its development. It is a country where I can truly be myself and **make a difference.** 

So, on a final note, I invite everyone to take part in cultural diplomacy activities in their communities to expand the dialogue and discover new opportunities that will undoubtedly lead to peace and a better future.



Sustaining Momentum

# CAMPAIGNING FOR CHANGE IN ARMENIA



# SUSTAINING MOMENTUM

Campaigning For Change in Armenia

# **A Better Future!**

A better future is a term that we hear quite often in all circles in all countries. With conflicts and crises looming in all parts of the world, **societies call for solutions** that will lead to a better future. Many seek this better future elsewhere, especially more adventurers or explorers such as nomad workers. As such, this mobility and migration has also created new needs in host countries, for example Armenia.

When societies seek to change their future and cater to evolving needs through tools, behaviors or mindset, they set forth **actions that push for policy** and infrastructure change. In many cases, these changes are made uneventfully. However, many others, especially when conflicting with existing cultural norms or beliefs, seem to need a more cohesive and organized action. Campaigns are built to lobby, promote and **enforce that change in a society.** This is not a new phenomena, but one that is quite common in democratic societies.

Armenia has chosen the democratic path after the collapse of the soviet union. This path was not a smooth transition. From economic to political turmoil have loomed over the country for years. Of course COVID-19 and conflict has not enabled it to fully recover and embark on its reforms. Regardless, **change has been quite evident.** 

In Armenia, civil society actors, institutions, media and businesses play a vital role in the country's transition. From gentrification to urbanization, from education to employability, from foreign investment to the empowerment of local SMEs and Startups, **change is visible to the naked eye.** Human rights, collective and individual value changes and other non visible aspects have not been as evident though. Au contraire, these aspects require different types of campaigns.

### **DYNAMICS OF COMMUNICATIONS**

What are communications campaigns? These are strategically crafted sets of activities that combine information, raise the awareness and visibility and provide resources to the target public about an idea, an issue or topic that is of **importance to their well being**.

They use tools such as printed material like outdoor billboards or scrollers, printed articles or interviews, presence on TV or radio talk shows and other thematic programs, digital platforms like social media channels, online TV, podcasts. They can also entail a two-way communication event like talks and discussions either online or face to face. Outreach activities can take place in universities, business environments, malls or other public spaces like parks or streets.

I'll list a few of the cultural and behavior changing campaigns DeeM has organized recently in Armenia. For those who've never been to the country before, such campaigns exemplify the pace of societal development in Armenia. Even considering only our campaigns, let alone the campaigns, the number of initiatives underway highlights the fact that change is happening in Armenia, and it's happening quite fast.

As far back as 2007, we had introduced the concept of seasonal tourism, namely winter. The first **WinterFest Armenia** was launched. We brought together businesses, local governing bodies and civil society around an idea that flourished and was implemented for 10 consecutive years. Winter tourism grew and saw many other activities pop up setting the stage for today's more comprehensive landscape for business and leisure businesses to flourish.

Other national communications campaigns such as support to the awareness raising of the domestic violence law or the **Clean Armenia campaign** were among the widest and most impactful campaigns held in Armenia. In earlier years, DeeM and Kanachastan NGO collaborated on a Non-Smoking campaign that put the topic of non-smoking in public spaces on the agenda. The multi-faceted campaign was called "**Thank You For Non-smoking.**"









## **DYNAMICS OF COMMUNICATIONS**

Last year, DeeM was selected by the UNDP Armenia office to create and conduct a national campaign that focused on reviving the human rights sector. The project was called **Social Innovation to Restart Human Rights.** As a model, it featured the strength of creativity, vigorous teamwork, and a perpetual commitment to securing a better tomorrow for everyone with a general objective of establishing a sustainable future.

It is believed that traditional practices are inadequate to address the complexities of today's human rights issues in a global context. New, effective approaches are necessary to ensure sustainability by incorporating innovative solutions. To meet this goal, DeeM conceived a creative concept that ensured a wide audience participation nationwide.

In line with its **hope-based communications approach,** the experts proposed a team contest incorporating innovative, achievable, and efficient solutions. Each team (of at least 3) proposed a concept to solve an existing Human Rights problem in Armenia. Out of the 38 teams, only 6 were shortlisted. Most were from different regions of Armenia. All the groups shared a common aspiration – to make the world a better place.

Over a span of 5 weeks, the teams were mentored and consulted by field specialists to finalize their ideas into tangible projects. They then prepared for a pitching session in front of an international jury. Throughout the project, the participating teams raised issues about the lack of awareness of fundamental rights affecting their communities.





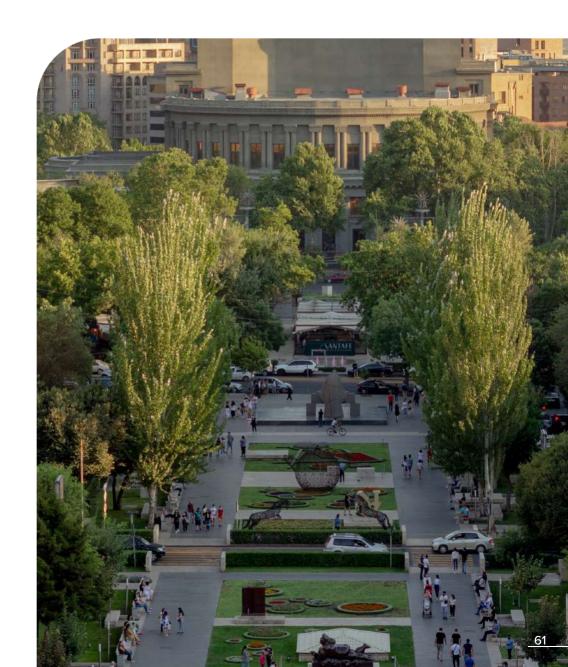
Strategically, the project aimed to mark International Human Rights Day on December 10, 2022, with the launch of the contest. This brought together local authorities, international development agencies, local CSOs, specialists, and participants from the general public. This synergy and collaboration drive the sustainability of such engagement projects as they build networks and bring communities with shared values even closer.

With the ever changing societies that require more intertwined structures to allow for shared values to flourish and create more spaces for collaboration, especially for those growing number of people who chose to travel and work from remote places for clients or employers across the world, more campaigns will need to be carried out to enable such change.

## **A PLACE WHERE CHANGE IS CONSTANT**

Despite the many challenges Armenia has faced and continues to face, the country has **made significant progress** on the path to development. Welcome to a place where change is a constant, and where there is still so much potential.

Nomad or remote workers will increasingly **play a pivotal role in the formulation** of needs but also campaigns that will push for change. And we, the more established and experienced professionals should be ready to learn from them and share past experiences.



Connecting Armenia to the World

# EXPLORING VIRTUAL ROUTES AND SKYWAYS

MATHEW ZEIN

## **CONNECTING ARMENIA TO THE WORLD**

VIIIII

Exploring Virtual Routes and Skyways

Armenia, a country landlocked within its mountainous borders, faces unique challenges in its quest for economic development. Unlike its resource-rich neighbors, Armenia is relatively scarce in natural resources, and its lack of seaports hinders its ability to participate fully in global trade. Despite these limitations, Armenia has demonstrated **remarkable resilience and resourcefulness** in its pursuit of growth.

Years ago, the country faced a critical decision: give up to a slow demise or **fight for its survival.** The first path would lead to a gradual decline, similar to many civilizations in history. However, the more challenging choice, fighting for survival, would require Armenia to **connect and communicate** with the rest of the world by all possible means.

Keeping this in mind, key questions emerge: What routes can Armenia develop to connect with other nations? What strategic advantages can the country leverage to secure its position on the global stage?

#### EMBRACING DIGITAL DIPLOMACY



Digital diplomacy is the practice of utilizing digital technologies and platforms to enhance international relations, engage with global audiences, and shape foreign policy. It involves leveraging **the power of entrepreneurship** and other digital tools to foster cross-border understanding, promote cooperation, and address global challenges.

The emergence of Picsart, Armenia's first unicorn, in 2021, marked a pivotal moment in the country's tech scene, opening **doors to global connectivity** and leading a vibrant startup ecosystem. Since then, the Armenian tech landscape has witnessed a surge in activity, with investors and entrepreneurs joining forces to launch many innovative ventures.

Riding the wave of Picsart's success, several promising Armenian startups are currently poised to **join the unicorn club.** Among these are Service Titans, a cloud-based field service management platform, Podcastle, a podcast hosting and monetization platform, and Krisp, an Al-powered noise cancellation solution.

Needless to say that there are many other industries and infrastructure that develop along with the tech sector as it seeks the professional connectivity with human capital, scientific and technological knowledge and new set of skills, especially in the ever-evolving world of communications. Our partner for this issue of Life in Armenia, Deem Communications has been a pillar for the startup community since its inception. In the early years when the concept of making Armenia a tech hub and generating startups through initiatives like the StartUp Cup in 2016, or the CEED initiatives of securing angel investors, DeeM played an integral role either through mentorship and coaching to promoting and building capacity of the industry.



This being said, the remarkable growth has not gone unnoticed, with influential platforms like Crunchbase taking interest in Armenia's thriving tech scene. In a recent report, Crunchbase highlighted that Armenia has a small but growing tech ecosystem, with **a focus on deep-tech**. The report mentioned how Armenia's tech sector is being fueled by a number of factors, including a strong education system, a supportive government, and a **large diaspora of Armenians** who are working in the tech industry around the world.

Armenia has also been active in hosting a variety of local and international events for several years now, with a focus on technology. These events help to promote the country as a center for innovation and entrepreneurship on a global stage.

One main example is DigiTec, an annual technology event held in Yerevan, organized by the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises (UATE). It is the **largest tech event in the region** and one of the most important gatherings of the Armenian tech community. The event brings together local and international companies, startups, investors, and experts to showcase the latest innovations in technology. DeeM, a member of the UATE, has supported many companies to position their brands and present their products and services at this event. Namely Monitis, Byblos Bank and other well established global brands in Armenia. In addition to the exhibition, DigiTec also features a number of other events, including conferences, workshops, and hackathons.

#### The World Congress on Information

Technology (WCIT2019) was another example of international events held in Armenia. It served as a pivotal platform for exploring the transformative power of information and communication technologies (ICT) in shaping a resilient and thriving future in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The event, themed "Thriving in a Post-Covid World," brought together over 2,000 delegates from 70 countries, along with a vast virtual audience, to engage in thought-provoking discussions, build meaningful connections, and witness the latest advancements shaping the digital landscape.

Inspired by the rapid growth and the growing pains of the tech sector, DeeM strategically organized an international event last fall entitled Generation N: Decoding Communications to help bridge the gap between the tech sector and communications.

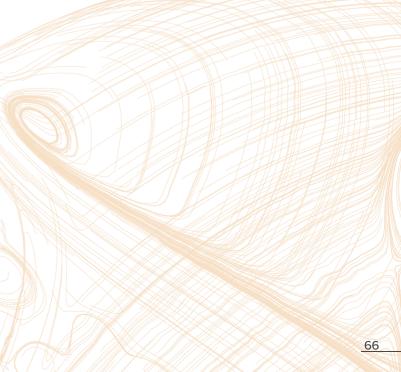
All these efforts have shown the world a different side of Armenia, one that is determined to achieve success no matter what the obstacles. It has made Armenia a place where venture capitalists, experienced professionals, and international investment funds want to be. Simply put, it has built the virtual route to put Armenia on the map in today's world.

## **ARMENIA'S GLOBAL CITIZENS**

The creation of this virtual route involves considering the broader identity of Armenia. Instead of viewing itself as a small country with a population of nearly 3 million. Armenia has begun to embrace its global diaspora of around 8 million people, aiming to become a stronger nation of almost 11 million

Armenians working together to connect their homeland with their adopted homes around the world.

While many diasporan Armenians have previously relocated to Armenia to establish businesses and contribute to the country's development, there has been a significant increase in the number of businesses being opened in Armenia in recent years.



#### **ABOVE AND BEYOND**

Armenia's position between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East has contributed to its economic growth in recent years. The country has established new airline partnerships, expanded its network of air routes, and attracted new tourism destinations. These efforts have created new employment opportunities and **attracted foreign investment.** 

To be more specific, Armenia has established partnerships with several airlines, including Air Arabia, Gulf Air, and Etihad Airways. These partnerships have resulted in the opening of **new skyways to Armenia**, making it easier for tourists and business travelers to reach the country. Additionally, the country now has direct flights to **over 50 destinations** in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

Additionally, Armenia has attracted new tourism destinations from the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These countries have introduced **visa-free travel** for their citizens, making it easier for them to visit Armenia. As a result of these efforts, Armenia's tourism industry has grown significantly in recent years. In 2023, Armenia **welcomed over 2 million tourists.** 

Whether it's the virtual route established by the startup ecosystem and the evolving technology industry or the skyways established by airline collaborations and new tourist destinations, Armenia seems to have found a way to **extend its reach beyond its mountains** without compromising its cultural identity. The decision to embrace globalization was made at a national level several years ago, and in a few years' time, Armenia is poised to become a **major player in the region.** 

If you're considering relocating to Armenia, pack your bags as early as possible because the country is still a place where you can make a significant impact and witness the fruits of your labor with your own eyes.



Unlock Hope with Transparent Armenia Charitable Foundation: Where Impact is Crystal Clear! In the aftermath of the 44-day war, Transparent Armenia Charitable

Foundation (TACF) emerged as a beacon of hope, transparency, and change. Founded by Haik Kazarian and Anush Martirosyan, TACF is not just a charity—it's a core value.

#### **Unprecedented Transparency**

Transparent Armenia Charitable Foundation redefines transparency in charity. Their Fund in Fund out model, coupled with a publicly accessible ledger and photographic evidence, ensures every donor's contribution is a transparent journey. The impact is not just felt; it's seen.

#### **Sustainably Transforming Lives**

Transparent Armenia Charitable Foundation redefines transparency in charity. Their Fund in Fund out model, coupled with a publicly accesTACF is committed to sustainable transformation. Initiatives range from empowering refugees through skill rebuilding and providing essential tools to focusing in part on rural communities by providing farm animals. All this is for enabling refugees to restart earning a living. Each program is a step towards lasting change.sible ledger and photographic evidence, ensures every donor's contribution is a transparent journey. The impact is not just felt; it's seen.

#### **Empowerment Beyond Aid** -

Transparent Armenia Charitable Foundation believes in giving fishing rods, not just fish. They aim to empower individuals to rebuild lives and become self-reliant.

#### - Your Support Matters -

Since 2020, Transparent Armenia Charitable Foundation has assisted nearly 60,000 refugees with over a quarter-million dollars in aid. As they lead projects post-Artsakh, support is crucial. Visit www.transparentarmenia.foundation to witness their impact, and become part of the change.

Turn compassion into action with Transparent Armenia Charitable Foundation. Every donation unlocks hope and transforms lives.

# DONATE NOW!



# IFOR DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES

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