

Rodrigo Azevedo

Comunique-se



“ I saw an opportunity to connect companies with journalists. ”

COUNTRY	Brazil
INDUSTRY	Technology
EMPLOYEES	74
YEAR SELECTED	2006
WEBSITE	www.comunique-se.com.br/

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Rodrigo began his entrepreneurial career at age 12 in a poor district of Rio de Janeiro by selling horse manure to teachers to use as fertilizer in the school's vegetable garden. Today he is the founding partner of Brazil's first 100% online corporate communications company linking top Brazilian corporations with journalists in an innovative interface with high-value service offerings — bringing value to both parties. He also created the prize that is today considered to be the Pulitzer Prize of Brazilian journalism.

Comunique-se offers high quality online corporate communications solutions that link top companies to Brazilian journalists. By doing so, it has filled a significant gap in the market. Before Comunique-se, the flow of information between business people and journalists was chaotic. When the Internet first arrived, media people received hundreds of daily emails, many of them of no interest at all. On the other side, companies had difficulties getting genuinely important news into the media in an efficient manner. Comunique-se facilitates communication for both sides. It offers: (i) to companies, results in corporate communication, with a segmented and qualified audience; and (ii) to journalists, targeted quality content, and a portal for access to segmented news stories that can be used by media professionals only. The system boasts dozens of employees; hundreds of companies including public relations agencies, as clients; offices in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo; and sales revenue in the millions with high net margins.

Founder Rodrigo Azevedo is not a journalist. Yet, he has succeeded in creating the first and only mutually loyal and cohesive premier online community of 70,000 Brazilian journalists (almost 100% of all Brazilian journalists). The success of Comunique-se despite Azevedo's lack of a journalistic background speaks highly for his talent as an entrepreneur. Rodrigo began his entrepreneurial career at the age of 12. In a poor district of Rio de Janeiro, he sold horse manure that he picked up in the public square in front of his school to teachers, who used it as fertilizer in the school's vegetable garden.

Following his first entrepreneurial venture making money out of manure, 12-year-old Rodrigo developed an eye for spotting opportunities. He noticed that street traders in his neighborhood used tiny pieces of chalk to write their prices on boards. Buying boxes of 50 pieces of chalk, retail, and reselling them individually in the street market allowed him to make a substantial profit while also satisfying clients. After finishing school, he went on to receive training as a Systems Analyst. In 1994, following many information technology courses, he accepted his first job in the IT area of Jornal do Brasil, one of the most influential newspapers of Rio de Janeiro. He contributed to the "JB" by, creating a BBS (bulletin board system). In 1996, he left his first job to work for FSB, one of Brazil's largest press offices. It was at FSB that Rodrigo developed the idea for Comunique-se after witnessing the journalists deal with their day-to-day problems. In 2004, the risk capital fund Invent invested millions to help Rodrigo launch Brazil's largest portal for press relations. Although the fund's exit period ran out before the organization reached breakeven, Rodrigo succeeded in bringing together six angel investors and buying the business for several hundred thousand dollars. Without using a cent from his own pocket, he increased his stake by 25 times, and acquired the decision-making power he needed to turn the business around.

Comunique-se creates a united and mutually loyal community out of a group of strong-egoed individuals, who are accustomed to working independently rather than cooperatively. 80% access the Comunique-se portal at least three times a week. At 70,000 members, it forms the world's largest journalistic community. The major step in establishing the success and value of the business was to couple this rich bank of Brazilian opinion formers – a group of people who are always up-to-date – with the powerful online communication tools that supply the needs of large companies. The result is a high quality online corporate communication service that is appropriately segmented and that guarantees a qualified audience.

ENDEAVOR AND COMUNIQUE-SE

As the company continues to professionalize, Rodrigo has benefited from an Immersion Tour and Entrepreneur Summit, as well as the local PEG program. Local mentors helped design the firm's sales process and have counseled on expansion strategy.

Rodrigo demonstrates commitment by speaking often on Endeavor's behalf, and using his connections in the journalism world to promote the organization.