

imPRessions

A monthly MSU PRSSA newsletter

December 2009

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Coming up...

December 1: General Meeting
January 15: Chicago Firm Tours
January 19: General Meeting

**All general meetings are held at 7 p.m. in
147 CAS**

President's Letter

Welcome to the last meeting of the fall semester!

It flew by so quickly. We have had a jam-packed ten or so weeks with great speakers, successful Hubbell Connections client events, informative professional development seminars and more.

Between all executive board members, we have heard from a lot of you that you want to get more involved. We're so glad you are inspired to want to gain more experience for yourself and also help continue to make our PRSSA Chapter even better. There will be plenty of different committees, events and clients for you to become involved in next semester. We are adding a few new Hubbell Connections clients, hosting our Regional Activity, more firm tours, PR Links (our own career fair for public relations careers)-the list goes on!

So as you are starting to plan your winter break plans and New Year resolutions, also think about how you can add more experience to your resume.

As always, please don't hesitate to approach me or any of the other executive board members with any questions you have.

All the best,

Christina



PRSSA
Public Relations
Student Society
of America

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Recapping National Conference

Though we are at the tail end of one of the worst economic downturns in the history of our country, you would not have been able to tell it in San Diego. More than 1,000 students traveled from all across the country to attend the PRSSA 2009 National Conference, which exceeded the registration limit.

This speaks to the drive and determination of the future of public relations. Attending Conference is not cheap, yet the professional development value is worth so much. Here are some numbers to recap the Conference:

- o 8 Chapter Development Sessions hosted by Chapters and presented to members on ways to enhance various aspects of PRSSA Chapters
- o 28 professional development sessions on topics ranging from green communications, to health care public relations and to crisis communications
- o 2 general sessions with PRSA
- o 40 high school students who were educated by PRSSA on the public relations industry

- o \$2,000 raised for local San Diego schools for school supplies by PRSSA Chapters
- o 26 exhibitors reaching out to PRSSA members

In addition to the numbers above, there were several emerging themes worth noting:

Collaboration is king

In the public relations industry, a general trend to note is more and more collaboration; collaboration between agencies and companies, marketing disciplines, employees within a company, and organizations. This Conference is based on collaboration. Not only did two schools collaborate together to plan the Conference, but also in many sessions, competitions and programs, people were working together. This is a skill PRSSA members will undoubtedly need to develop in their careers.

Social media is everywhere

When I first started attending National Conferences two years ago, there appeared to be “social media” sessions and the other sessions the featured traditional

public relations practices. Now, you can't find a session that didn't mention social media. This goes to show that social media is ubiquitous in today's public relations profession and those who do not understand the strategic importance of these tools are far behind.

Connecting the present with the future The “horror stories” of bad interns and lazy millennials often paint an ugly picture of our generation, yet PRSSA guides its members to value ethical and professional behavior. With PRSA's guidance and connection, the transition from PRSSA to PRSA is helping to create a lifelong professional development experience for the public relations professional.

The future of the profession is bright This year in particular showed the future of public relations is bright. The energy and fresh perspective students offered during the sessions and programs suggest the profession is headed in a new and dynamic direction. Though it is not determined yet, the leaders of this new group will be able to take the profession into newer and higher echelons than ever before.

View from the top: *How young talent can stand out*

By Courtney Siekirk

Learning how to stand out as a young public relations professional is something that cannot be taught out of a textbook. Many young PR pros learn the dos and don'ts of professional behavior in an office setting while working at an internship. Although you many know the basics, do you realize all of the little things that you can do to make yourself stand out? Ron Culp and Kevin Saughy from Ketchum shared their insights at PRSSA National Conference on how to stand out as a young professional. They interviewed both senior and entry-level professionals to figure out what matters the most. Here are some highlights:

How to stand out in an organization?

- Be a team player
- Ask for feedback to find out what you can do better
- Take pride in your work

What example comes to mind of a young professional who has advanced quickly?

- Know the business inside and out
- Produce quality work
- Go the extra mile
- Present smart ideas
- Do not confuse activity with results

How have employees hurt themselves by trying to raise their profile?

- Don't become overly cynical

-Never take credit not deserved

- If you are doing a good job, senior management will recognize it
- Don't follow your own agenda, work as a team player

Top 10 Things to Avoid While Advancing Your Career:

10. Don't offend your boss
9. Don't hog credit, Be a team player
8. Don't throw coworkers under the bus
7. Don't be a Debbie Downer
6. Don't lose sense of curiosity
5. Don't let the world pass you by
4. Find needs and fill them
3. Everyone must pay their dues
2. Don't confuse activity with results
1. Quality matters most

Media Failure

By Chris Mahar

OR Successful Representation?

Palm trees and sunshine were not the only benefits of PRSSA's 2009 National Conference. This year I had the pleasure of traveling to sunny San Diego, Calif. for five days of sunshine, palm trees and public relations. Here I joined PRSSA members from across the country, in fact even some from around the globe, to make connections, learn skills and participate in professional development seminars.

One such seminar I attended was about managing media relations, presented by Dr. Joseph V. Trahann, III, APR, Fellow PRSA; the former media relations trainer for the United States Department of Defense. As the former man in charge of training all the men and women employed in media relations with the DOD; he had a few tricks and hints to share with us upcoming professionals. I'd like to share his points on what I feel is one of the most important and often overlooked parts of media interviews – preparation.

Before you get on the scene:

- o Find out about the format of the interview, will it be live or taped? Remember that a taped interview can be edited out of context, requiring a more cautious approach.
- o Find out the deadline. Any reputable media organization is going to have deadlines, and knowing theirs allows you to both stay in their good graces, but also enables you to evaluate the depth you'll be able to go into. Remember, they will probably publish the story with or without your input!
- o Develop any command messages or key talking points. Explain to your spokesperson what points you want the audience to remember and what your position on the matter is. These ARE NOT generic messages make them sincere and original.

Research the questions:

- o Much like in the previous section, find out what sort of questions the

reporter has a tendency to ask. Furthermore, to keep control, develop your own questions.

- o When preparing your spokesperson, be the devil's advocate. Ask them the tough questions, the reporter definitely will.
- o Find a subject matter expert. If the interview is about a new technology you're releasing, don't send an accountant as your representative, stay in your lane and talk about what you know!
- o Anticipate! Anticipate! Anticipate! Use the 5x5x5 approach; come up with at least 15 questions and replies: five good things, five bad things and five ugly things. Better yet, overshoot and do 30 questions and replies.

One last tip if you have the chance; allow one hour of prep time for every minute of airtime. This means a thirteen minute news conference should have thirteen hours of preparation put into it.

By Courtney Curran

The Perks of an E-portfolio

As a public relations professional, it is important to have a portfolio. A portfolio is an ever changing collection of important work which shows the owner's professional skills and is considered an important asset while job searching. Just like traditional print media, paper portfolios are slowly losing their significance as more and more professionals turn to the Internet to create an online portfolio, or E-portfolio.

E-portfolios are a great way to showcase your work and show, rather than tell, potential employers what you are capable of creating. An E-portfolio shows concrete evidence of your talent and abilities and also shows that you are capable of creating a simple Web site.

An E-portfolio is beneficial because you can change and update the content

quickly and easily. It displays your invested interest in what you've done and what you hope to accomplish. Here are a few things you can include:

- o Resume
- o Personal Code of Ethics
- o Research
- o Writing Samples
- o Creative Work

E-portfolios highlight experience, identify career interest, and build a personal brand all of which are important during a job search.

Some free sites to try are www.webs.com and www.leadyou.com, which were recommended by PRSSA students from Indiana State University at the 2009 PRSSA National Conference.

AP Style Tip Winter Edition

Nativity scene: capital N, lowercase s

Christmas: Never abbreviate it to Xmas or any other form.

New Year: New Year's, New Year's Eve, New Year's Day

When referring to it simply as the "new year," both n and y are lowercase. Ex.: *What will the new year bring?*

Snow-: snowdrift, snowfall, snowflake, snowman, snowshoe, snowstorm are all one word

Diversity Digest

By Patrick Goulet

When I was reading through blogs this past week, I clicked on a headline that caught my attention. It read “USA-RiseUp.com Gives Racial and Ethnic Groups a Way to Share and Enrich Customs.” It was a press release about an online magazine and the unique niche it had carved out for itself. The site, USAriseup.com, offers a forum for discussion about racial relations and provides ways for ethnic groups to communicate their cultural customs with one another.

The Web site’s goal is to shed light on racial issues in America. It does not focus on one racial group more than another. The writers pick a racial issue and post a blog with their opinion, with the objective of creating a dialog between themselves and their readers. This approach has gained the site a respectable following with some heated discussions to prove it. Readers can submit their own views and cultural customs in an environment free of “political incorrectness” accusations.

A representative from USAriseup.com commented that “America is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, but it often keeps racial dialogue at arm’s length. This can lead to a loss of customs and so much of what makes a multi-cultural society so great.”

A section that stood out is one about race relations on campus. It offers a place for students to post their thoughts and feelings of race and ethnicity at universities all over the nation. They ask the question “What is the state of ‘color’ on your campus?”

The site may be run by the staff writers, but it is built by people like you and I.

Interested in joining the conversation? Head to USAriseup.com for more information.

My First American Firm Tour

By Yue Lv

As an international student, having the opportunity to visit real American PR agencies, meet seasoned PR experts, and listen to their career advice was definitely the most exciting experience I’ve had since I coming to America. Among the three firms we visited in November, John Bailey & Associates was the first stop of our tour and also the most unforgettable to me.

Just like what I have pictured in my mind, John Bailey & Associates was a modern agency which was located in the heart of down town Lansing. Once you walked into the office, you immediately sense a cozy but professional feeling. As soon as we settled ourselves with delicious muffins and warm coffee, Emily, the managing director, began to introduce the agency, their clients, their jobs and some suggestions about how to be a qualified PR practitioner. After hearing her lecture, it was like a beacon which totally enlightened me on my career plan for the future.

Writing was absolutely the most emphasized criteria to becoming successful in PR. In fact, no matter how broad a social network you have, or how eloquent you are, if you are not capable of finishing a qualified article during a required time, you won’t make it far in the industry. One might wonder then, what kinds of articles and writing styles are PR agencies looking for and how can students meet that standard?

Emily addressed in her lecture many times the importance of AP style writing. As you may know, much of PR writing is based around media releases. So, learning AP style is a useful and convenient tool that you will be using throughout your career.

On the topic of writing, Emily mentioned that “the more you write, the better you get.” If you want to stand out in PR, now is the best time to start practicing as much as you can to build up your skills.

While Emily explained the importance of writing, she also reminded us that there are other aspects we needed to pay attention to. First, know what’s going on in the news. Without a doubt, the 21st century is an information-explosion era. Everything varies minute to minute. As a future PR practitioner, in order to be successful, it is important to stay current with the news. At the same time, we also need to have a positive attitude towards our jobs. No matter you have a full-time position or are an intern, when you first enter into an agency, you will likely be assigned to do something that you’re not thrilled about. However, any journey starts with one step. It’s the perfect time for us to learn and gather experience. Chance always favors the prepared mind. As long as we work hard, we are destined to shine in the future.

Last but not the least, in PR, first impression is essential. Whenever you are out, you not only represent yourself, but also the image of your agency and clients. So no matter the appearance, the manners of our talk or how we behave should, it should always be professional.

As a matter of fact, how to be a good professional is a wide-range topic which is hard to be fully covered in an hour. However, what I have experienced at John Bailey was like a window for me to explore the American PR firms in the real world. And what I have learned from those PR experts made me believe that good tools are prerequisite to the successful execution of a job. If you have a big dream, then start now.

When I Grow Up...

So-Jin Seibold
Account Executive, GolinHarris

As told to Melissa Hackett

Q. Please explain the work you do for GolinHarris.

A. Our Chicago office, which is the headquarters for GH, consists of three primary groups: consumer, healthcare and corporate. I work in the corporate communications group on the Dow Chemical and Underwriters Laboratories accounts. I get asked a lot about the difference between the consumer and corporate groups. The easiest way to explain it is that the consumer group focuses on building campaigns with the goal of changing consumers' behaviors. So say you're on the McDonald's team – it's likely your task will be to promote the latest Angus burgers with the goal of getting more people to buy more burgers. However, the corporate group focuses on changing people's perceptions. When we say the word 'McDonald's' we want you to immediately think of us as 'the leading global food service retailer in the world.' Changing people's perceptions is a lot different than changing their behaviors. Ultimately, this means I work on a lot of corporate reputation, issues management and stakeholder communications work. It sounds glamorous and sometimes it is (case in point, I just got back from NYC to work on a media campaign with Keri Russell a.k.a. the star of *Felicity*) but at times it's the furthest thing from it (this summer I found myself sawing a piece of lumber in a Home Depot parking lot on Long Island for a set we were building for *The Early Show*).

Q. What steps did you take to end up in your current position?

A. Before I graduated I knew that I wanted to pursue a career in PR and I wanted to live in Chicago. I had absolutely zero connections in Chicago so I literally Googled "Public Relations Agencies in Chicago." I must have e-mailed about 30 companies requesting informational interviews, which ended up being extremely valuable. One of the e-mails I had sent was to Scott Farrell, who was at the time the managing director of GH-Chicago. He put me in touch with our HR re-

cruiter and the next week I came to the office for what I thought was an informational interview but ended up being a real interview. A week after that I was offered a position and the rest is history. I should probably also mention I had an internship the summer before I graduated with an agency in New York. Internships are key. A lot of companies won't even look at your resume unless you've had some related real world experience.

Q. How has your experience in PRSSA helped you in your career thus far?

A. I cannot even express how much PRSSA has helped me. My senior year I was involved in the Bateman Competition, which was honestly the best "real world" PR experience I had before graduating college (even more so than my internship in New York). Also, just getting involved with PRSSA at both a local and regional level can really set you apart from some of your peers when you go to apply for jobs, especially if you take advantage of the opportunities to get involved in the real PR campaigns going on around campus. The thing with PR is because it's such a hands-on field it's hard to really "know" what PR is by reading a textbook or attending a lecture. The only way to truly know if this field is for you is to actually work on a campaign, build the plan, write the press release, plan the event, pitch the media and evaluate your successes. My experience in the MSU PRSSA group inspired me to stay involved with the organization and now I'm part of the e-board for the PRSA Young Professionals group here in Chicago.

Q. What advice do you have for PRSSA members who are just starting out in the field?

A. Like I said before, it's crucial to get some real life experience under your belt in order to figure out if this is the field for you. Our field is incredibly demanding but also incredibly rewarding. You have to be able to work with all different types of personalities and always do your

work with a smile on your face even if you're having a bad day. Honestly though, get an internship (GH offers a great one!) and/or get involved with a PRSSA campaign or on the e-board. Look at every opportunity as a networking opportunity. Don't be afraid to initiate contact with someone who has your dream job! Most of the time people are more than willing to talk to you about how they got where they are today. And once you make contact with that person, stay in touch with them. You never know when they could help you out.

Q. What advice do you have for PRSSA graduating seniors?

A. There's a lot of pressure to get a full-time job after you graduate but don't be afraid to take an internship. Our internship program at GH is specifically designed for graduates and I would say on average we hire 75-80% of our interns on full-time. It's honestly the best way to get your foot in the door especially with a large agency like GH, Weber Shandwick or Edelman. Also, be proactive in your job search. Our field isn't like finance so it's likely you won't have a full-standing job offer before you graduate. I would recommend starting to send out resumes and making follow-up emails/calls around April if you're graduating in May. You'll likely have to send out 50 resumes in order to get 2-3 responses so don't be afraid to cast your net wide. When I first started to send out resumes I was only interested in consumer PR positions but honestly I love my work in the corporate group at GH. Finally, learn how to market yourself. Evaluate your strengths and pitch yourself to the companies, much like you would pitch to the media. Why should companies want to hire you? What sets you apart from your peers? What kind of assets do you bring to the table? These are all questions you're likely to get asked in that initial interview so you want to have answers prepared.

Interviewed by Ragina Smith

Professional Profile

Kate Tykocki, APR

Chief Communications Officer, Capital Area Michigan Works!

Q. How did you get into PR?

A. When I was a junior, I went into my advisor and said, "How can I graduate next year?" She looked at my transcript and gave me a few classes to take to complete an Interdisciplinary Humanities degree. So I said to her, "What can I do with that?" and she just sort of stared at me. We started talking and I described to her my dream job as planning parties at the Metropolitan Museum of Art so she advised me to get a PR internship. I did, and realized it was about a lot more than party planning. I'd always been a good writer, and I really grew from that internship experience. My internship led to a part-time job, which led to a full-time job at an agency and I went from there getting my APR and a Master's degree and eventually ending up at Capital Area Michigan Works!, where I've been for the past six years.

Q. Describe a typical day at the office.

A. I focus more now on strategy and overall direction than on tactical execution. We have an assistant communications officer, interns and other staff who all do outreach efforts so really I don't do much tactical stuff anymore like newsletters and event planning. As a result, I'm much more involved in the actual programs and management of staff and our resources. That means I spend a LOT of time in meetings and putting out fires. I've always thrived under pressure and as I've advanced in my career that's really become an asset.

Q. With Michigan's unemployment rate at 15%, how is your organization helping people find employment? How do you help as the Chief Communications Officer?

A. At this point, it's really about culture change. People aren't always willing to accept that they aren't qualified or that to get a job today, you HAVE to have an education, and then some. We still engage in the day-to-day activities

of helping businesses develop recruiting retention strategies and helping job seekers enhance education and career opportunities, but the longer I've been here the more it's become about shifting attitudes and really embracing the young, smart and global movement. Services like resume-writing and tuition assistance for job seekers or job expos and businesses development for companies are the easy stuff to "get" but it's a lot harder to wrap your head around these huge issues our state is facing like, "How do I help people understand that what they've believed their whole life about working hard to get ahead is no longer true... that they have to have an education in a certain field and work hard to get ahead now?" or "What can we do to keep talented people here in Michigan?" How do you answer those kind of questions, and then communicate it to the masses? It's fascinating.

Q. What's the best part of your job?

A. I love having a job that can make a real impact on peoples' lives and our region as a whole. That's something I struggled with early on in my career: the whole, "what does it really matter if this press release goes out" kind of syndrome where I was working for clients that I didn't find engaging or that were focused on their bottom-line. The corporate environment has just never resonated for me, and I learned that the longer I stayed in agency work. Being in government, where I'm representing the tax-payers and trying to do what's best for citizens and the community... that's something I get passionate about.

Q. The worst?

A. Seriously? I mean, I work in workforce development in Michigan in the worst recession most people in our state have ever lived through. As much as there are a lot of bright spots in our regional economy, there are still a lot of hurting people out there who are frustrated and just don't know what to do with themselves. I focus on the positive a lot in my job, which I think is all you can do. I've actually been criticized for being too positive. A lot of



our clients think we don't "get it" but I've been through job loss with two of my immediate family members... I know all about the struggle and the guilt and the shame and the stress and all you can do is get through it. It's hard to help people realize that.

Q. Since entering the professional field, what's the most important thing you've learned? (That a textbook could never teach you)

A. That the old adage, "It's not what you know, it's who you know" is so true. It's amazing what you can learn from your peers and colleagues and how much they bring to your career. If you can surround yourself with people you love to work with, it makes the day fly by.

Q. Were you involved in PRSSA in college?

A. I didn't get involved in PRSA until I was a young professional. It has been so valuable to my career. When I was just starting out it's how I made friends and had a peer network to commiserate with about the difficult transition from college to career. I've been involved ever since and have served as president of the local chapter.

Q. Any words of advice to college students interested in PR? Where do they start?

A. Get an internship. Then get another internship. Then get another internship. When we hired our assistant communications officer I wouldn't even consider someone with less than two internships because I didn't HAVE to. When we have a student turn us down for an internship, or even an interview, because the position isn't paid I just want to shout, "WAKE UP!" That experience at Starbucks is not going to get you a break in this highly competitive industry. Even if it's interning from home on the weekends or going in for a few hours a week, those contacts and that experience are essential to getting a job.

Voyage to Visions

Travel and Tourism from a PR Standpoint

By Julia Wendzinski

When going on vacation, there are two things that typically happen: you travel – often by plane – and you seek out destination spots in whichever city or country you are visiting. There is a lot of public relations work that is done in the travel and tourism industry to make sure customers are satisfied with your service and keep coming back. Brad Hawkins, Public Relations Manager for Southwest Airlines, and Christina Simmons, Public Relations Manager for the San Diego Zoo, presented the session “Voyage to Visions” at the 2009 National Conference and gave some great insight on how to succeed when doing public relations in travel and tourism.

“Always capitalize Customer, and always capitalize Employee”

During his presentation, Hawkins put heavy emphasis on the importance of putting “internal customers,” meaning employees, first, external customers second, and investors last. At Southwest Airlines they describes themselves as a customer service company who just happens to fly planes, which is a smart way to put it when your main focus is people.

What I took away from Hawkins is that when you’re working for a company, such as an airline, where your employees are interacting face-to-face with your customer, you better make sure you employees love their job. If you fail to communicate well with your employees and show them that they are valued at your company it will not reflect well in their work, which will result in a trickle down effect to the customer.

Follow Your Mission

Believe it or not, zoos don’t exist just so people can come watch the pandas and the monkeys – there’s a whole other side that involves conservation and education. Simmons discussed the excitement and struggles that come with doing public relations at one of San Diego’s hottest tourist spots – the San Diego Zoo.

Aside from bringing in visitors, Simmons explained that the zoo has a strong focus on educating people, conserving wildlife outside of their location and encouraging patrons to donate to animal-related causes. When working for an organization with so many objectives, it is important to recognize that you need to communicate with a variety of audiences, and often times in different ways.

For the San Diego Zoo their audiences range from local year pass holders, to out of town tourists, to foreign governments.

Another interesting public relations tip that Simmons explained was the importance of finding “zen PR.” Zen PR is finding a communications balance and especially comes into play when you’re facing a situation where you’re not sure how much information to release, or if there’s an opportunity to gain coverage for your company but you’re not sure how it will benefit you. An example Simmons gave was when a soda company wanted to film a commercial involving a person riding a bike next to a cheetah and then tackling the cheetah. Although the zoo would gain a great deal of exposure by doing this commercial, the public relations team decided against it because it did not follow any of the zoo’s mission values.

Both Brad and Christina offered some valuable tips that can be applied to nearly every sector of public relations. The next time you’re hopping on a plane or headed out to check out the coolest spots in town, remember the public relations efforts that went into how you got there!

By Julia Wendzinski

Bored During Break?

As much as this may seem impossible to you right now, there is a chance that over winter break you’ll find yourself twiddling your thumbs with nothing to do. Here’s some ideas of what you can do if you catch yourself in one of these moments:

Start a blog

The three or so weeks that we have off from school offer a great opportunity to develop an idea for a blog and get started with it. Wordpress.com or blogspot.com are good host sites to use.

Polish your resume

Many PR agencies looking for interns

start accepting resumes for summer positions in January. Use your time off school to update your resume before you send it off to companies. Don’t forget, our career fair PR Links is in February!

Read a book

There is a huge array of public relations related books out there! Some good authors to check out include David Meerman Scott, Chris Brogan, Al and Laura Ries and Jeff Jarvis.

Read a blog

If you don’t feel like going out and paying for a book, blogs are an excellent way to stay current in the PR industry as well

as learn good professional skills. Some blogs to look into:

dailywritingtips.com
badpitch.blogspot.com
copyblogger.com
prbreakfastclub.com
davidwmullen.com
culpwrit.com

Have fun

Of course, don’t forget to take time to relax and enjoy your time off!

