

imPRessions

February 2011

A monthly MSU PRSSA newsletter

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Coming up...

- February 17: PR Links
- March 1: General Meeting
- April 15-16: Relay for Life

President's Letter

Greetings members,

Welcome! Just like the semester is in full force right now, so is PRSSA. We have a lot coming up for the rest of the semester that I hope you will take advantage of. This coming Thursday, February 17 we have our annual PR career fair with more than 16 companies attending. If you're looking to get an internship or network with potential employers you do not want to miss this opportunity!

In addition to PR Links we also have the monthly CMPRSA luncheons that we can send five members to for free, Chicago firm tours in March, Relay for Life and plenty more. I encourage you to take advantage of all of the opportunities we have for you to enhance your professional development.

If you're not headed anywhere for spring break I have a few suggestions for you to look into that can help you prepare for interviews and network. One is to use the time to put together your portfolio. Get a nice binder and collect all of your writing samples and related work. I know it doesn't sound like the most exciting spring break but you'll be happy you did it when the time for interviews rolls around!

A few years ago I spent my spring break putting together my portfolio. In addition to that, I set up a few job shadow days with some firms I was interested in. Most agencies and companies are happy to let a student come and shadow an employee for a few hours – and it's a great way to network and get your foot in the door! If this sounds like something you may be interested in doing feel free to reach out to me and I can tell you more about how I set my job shadows up.

Enjoy the rest of the month, spring will be here before we know it!

Cheers,

Julia Wendzinski
Chapter President



PRSSA
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of America

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When I Grow Up...

As told to Emily Tschirhart

Malorie Kersten is the Chief Communications Officer at Michigan Works! Association

Please describe your current position.

At the Association, we work hard to form strategic, lasting relationships with partners, community members, lawmakers, media outlets, and other interest group representatives in order to establish effective communication partnerships.

As Chief Communications Officer for Michigan Works! Association, I am responsible for strategic oversight and management of internal and external communications, to ensure that our members, staff, partners, and other audiences are informed about and engaged in the Association's practices, challenges, and opportunities.

Some responsibilities include developing and implementing short and long range communications strategies for improving public understanding of the Association and the Michigan Works! System.

Social media is a large focus for our organization and I am responsible for overseeing the Association website content and social media outlets, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Flickr to ensure accuracy and consistency of information.

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

When I first started college, I was unsure of what I wanted my major to be but always knew I wanted to do something where I could utilize interpersonal and writing skills. As my preschool teacher once wrote on my progress report 'Malorie needs to tone down the socialization with her neighbors' – I can't help it, I love people.

After choosing a major (advertising) and talking with an advisor, I was convinced I needed an internship in order to help set myself apart from the rest

of the crowd. There were abundant resources available through MSU and I accepted an internship with Michigan State University School of Music.

This position helped me fuse my lifelong passion of music and my newfound love for public relations. During my six months internship, I learned a lot of basics that provided me a glimpse into what true career in the field looks like. I was also very lucky to have an internship coordinator who had a real interest in my internship takeaways – I was thrilled to be able to do real work and not have to cart around lattes and make copies. Through this internship and I was able to not only gain valuable experience, but was able to take away material for my portfolio.

During my senior year I attended as many job fairs hosted through MSU that I could, and was able to land a great job with a medical device start-up company in Ann Arbor. I spent over a year at the organization. I was extremely fortunate to have a supervisor who had an interest in our marketing team's individual successes – she made sure we were always building our resumes and encouraged us to step outside our comfort zone as entry-level staff.

I later moved on and accepted a position at Michigan Works! Association. My experience at the Association has been incredible, as we have a culture that fosters leadership and lifelong learning. In addition, I am a part of a team that is committed to supporting each other and focused on continued improvement. The best part about my job is, as cliché as this will be, is that the sky is the limit. This organization fosters creative thinking and ideas, and supports suggestions for change and improvement. What can I say? I love my job.



Malorie Kersten
Chief Communications Officer
Michigan Works! Association

How have you found the area you work in to be different than the other areas of PR?

My position mostly focuses on messaging and communication which allows me to utilize a variety of marketing and public relations functions. Because we're a small organization, we all have a very broad range of responsibilities and I am not pigeonholed into performing just one public relations or marketing function, I get to experience the full spectrum.

What do you know now that you wish you would have known in college?

While I was in college, I wish someone would have told me that the professors are more than willing to share insight and support students in their journey. These people are the real experts in the field and are professors for a reason - most are happy to provide resources, possibly even a reference or job lead.

Something else to consider would be joining groups outside the public relations/marketing realm. As a member of the MSU Stars for the Make a Wish Foundation, I was able to utilize my education and public relations skills through a different outlet. Think outside the box regarding ways to gain real world experience.

Detroit Firm Tours

by Jeanette Conklin

On Friday, January 28th, I attended the Detroit firm tour with three other MSU PRSSA members and two Wayne State PRSSA members.

This being the first firm tour I attended, I did not know what to expect. Our itinerary consisted of a busy day with three stops: Airfoil PR, lunch with GM and Franco PR.

Airfoil PR was a very fun environment. They were very welcoming and organized. They informed us about the company and what they specialize in. We learned about some of their clients, including Microsoft and Halo 3. Most of Airfoil's clients sell technical products or services.

After a brief introduction, we broke down into small groups and had the opportunity to talk to different employees. I especially enjoyed speaking to the women in event planning, Kaitlin Slattery. She told us her favorite part of the event planning process was the rush she felt the morning of an event once all the details pull together.

We then went to the headquarters of GM, at the Renaissance Center in Detroit. We met Mary Henige, Terry Rhadigan and Jocelyn Allen, all who work in communications. Over lunch we discussed new tactics they are implementing to change America's negative perceptions of GM. For example, they recently developed a campaign called "Drive Thru Finals". GM sent fleets of cars to universities like USC with drivers to take students to fast food restaurants during the stressful week of finals. They gave students flip cameras to film their experiences and testimonies, which they put online. It was especially interesting to see how they are using the Internet in new ways for their corporate setting.

The Franco Public Relations Group office was also located in the Renaissance Center. During our meeting we were introduced to various employees of theirs, from their most recently hired associate to the president and co-owner. Each shared how they began working in public relations, specifically Franco. Genna Young, a former Franco intern and was hired upon graduation, talked about how much she loved working for an agency because when she grew bored with one project, she could flip to another.

I highly recommend taking the opportunity to go on at least one firm tour. Never seeing an actual agency before, I fell in love with the environment. I realized I would love to intern in a setting like Airfoil. Because I had the opportunity to speak to them about what they look for in an intern, I can work on building my resume so I can apply to their program in the future.

Interacting with these professionals built vital connections and provided many opportunities. For example, Airfoil invited us to job shadow for a day. Keeping in contact with them will benefit me when trying to land an internship in their company.

The Detroit firm tour was informative and provided many opportunities for me. I know I will continue to take advantage of the tours PRSSA organizes. Even as a sophomore, I feel like it was crucial to get this experience as I try to get my foot in the door. Do not hesitate to attend future tours and recognize them for the wonderful opportunities they are.

"Never seeing an actual agency before, I fell in love with the environment."

Bateman Blurb

The 2011 Bateman Team has been hard at work reaching out to Lansing residents in attempt to bring them to our financial literacy sessions. Each session is focused on targeting 5 different types of audiences with one repeated general session at the end. Our game, "Wheel of Finance" is a financial scenario game that is meant to be fun, yet informational to all participants. Since finance is not usually the most interesting topic to discuss, the team worked hard to develop a way to present the necessary information in a way that would be intriguing to those that participated.

Please make sure to visit www.wheeloffinance.com to take a look at our campaign in addition to informational surveys and testimonials from participants. Also, check out our Facebook page "Wheel of Finance" and make sure to become a fan so you can receive updates on events and the latest campaign news!

Growing a Business while Expanding my Experience

by Clare Liening



As an Account Executive for Hubbell Connections, this year has been one of building from the ground up. One of my team's clients, The Wanderer's Teahouse & Café on Grand River, was acquired in the fall. At the time, Wanderer's had a simple website and a Facebook page that had to be "friended," but as for media, had done fairly well. With the help of executive director, Katie Heck, I created initial goals for the Teahouse through Hubbell Connections. Among them were increasing awareness through promotion with students and community members, improving social media outlets, and gaining more media coverage in the Greater Lansing region.

Since that time, we created a Facebook fan page – which through efforts in promotion and awareness has reached 300 fans in just two months, with daily interactions from fans. Through Google Analytics, we have determined that the Facebook page drives about 10% of website traffic, behind only Google searches and direct traffic. We have revamped the website with more photo content, event information and community items. Through Google Analytics, it is evident that overall website traffic has increased since the beginning of our efforts. The first ever Wanderer's e-newsletter went out in January to almost 200 email contacts. The newsletter includes information about upcoming events and other special topics.

Gaining media coverage has proved to be a bit of a challenge for our team. At first, it seemed that Wanderer's was a media darling, having extensive coverage from local papers. However, it seems that much of the coverage was about the opening of the Teahouse, and how unique of a business it was. The challenge became one of recreating interest in the Teahouse, not as a new business, but as an active one. The first press release that went out about an upcoming event received little coverage, although we pitched to many local contacts. However, the most recent release about their Valentine's tea has done much better. My team took an intensive approach, pitching to multiple journalists at each outlet, and has received numerous hits throughout the area. Moving forward, co-owner Elizabeth Marazita would like to achieve at least one article per month, which will prove to be an exciting challenge in the coming months. The owners of the Teahouse have noted the direct results of media coverage on sales, claiming that each time they are mentioned in a local paper, there is a visually evident boom in business. In order to continue to achieve the goals that were laid out in the beginning, there will be many developments in the near future. We plan to have an event at the Rock, providing hot tea to cold students and increasing foot traffic to the Teahouse. We have also incorporated Wanderer's into an upcoming event with our other client, the YMCA of Lansing. At the YMCA's Pump & Run in April, Wanderer's Teahouse will be providing tea for the reception following the 5K, which will ideally increase awareness of the Teahouse in the Greater Lansing community.

All in all, having real world clients with real world goals and demands has been the most exciting part of Hubbell Connections. I can honestly say that I feel prepared to go out into the business world with knowledge of the field of public relations, and the hands-on experiences needed to back it up.

MAKE YOUR INTERNSHIP WORK FOR YOU

by Veronica Kieffer

Congratulations, you have finally landed an internship. Chances are you're unpaid or are getting paid little. The real test of a good internship experience is whether you can make it work for you. A good public relations internship is an opportunity to build your resume and your repertoire of skills. It also gives you an insight into the daily life of a PR professional. Remember everyone you come into contact with are potential assets to your professional network.

Monitoring your progress or projects by keeping a personal blog or journal will help for reference when working on your résumé or preparing for future interviews. Keep track of the programs you use and make copies of the projects you complete. An internship is a great opportunity to familiarize yourself with templates and technologies used daily in an agency. The same goes for essential PR documents and agency protocols.

Networking can be comparable to writing skills in public relations, it is imperative. Attend as many social events or media meetings with your colleagues as possible. Any opportunity to exchange cards and start building a contact list will only benefit you in the future. Interactions with the media will help you understand how the media works.

While making the most out of your opportunity is important, make sure you know your limits as an intern. Meet with your advisor to figure out if the projects you are working on are confidential and what you are allowed to use for your portfolio. You don't want to leak something and lose the contacts you have worked hard to build.

Don't limit yourself while you are interning. Keep growing in your professional development through professional associations or trade publications. An internship can help you acknowledge hard truths about your strength and weakness. Don't be afraid to set up performance evaluations or ask for feedback, an internship is about growth. Take these things into account as your interning and hopefully you will maintain a well rounded experience.

Beauty or Brains?

by Cherry Lv

Here's a hypothetical scenario for all future PR practitioners. Imagine you are the client and this is your first time to meet two PR representatives from prospective firms. One of them has the gorgeous face just like Blake Lively. The other one looks ordinary but has extraordinary professional skills, which you might not be able to find out during the first meeting. Which one would you choose?

This question was brought to my attention when I read a discussion on LinkedIn couple of weeks ago. Nahim Choudhury, head of E-commerce & Channel Marketing at a computer ltd. in United Kingdom, posed the question, "Do good looking people enjoy more success in PR & Communication?"

Award-winning PR and Marketing specialist, Graham Parker, pointed out that being charming, attractive and being able to smile are good attributes in any like of work. But does it mean those God-gifted faces have be predestined to win the game? Without a doubt, PR is about marketing an image. Just as what Patty Davis, a dynamic Marketing and PR/ Communications specialist, pinpointed, a beautiful appearance can allow you access to people and situations that may be closed to others and, perhaps, even to the top of a short hiring list, but when it's time to deliver, you can't just stand there and pose. If you don't know what you are talking about, it might be the time to pack your bag. According to Davis, a stunning face may inevitably set a higher expectation for you to match. And if you fail to live up to it, it would take a long time for your audiences to forget. In other words, earning a good first impression might be important, but what you could offer afterward is the match point. The real deal is down to whether you are able to sustain a strong relationship, provide professional skills and possess appealing personal traits, because clients are asking for profit. However, it's not saying that good-looking people could not be savvy at the same time. There are still myriads of attractive, smart, competent women in this business.

But back to the very first question, only relying on the good packaging would not be the guarantee to march to victory. By contrary, speaking to what the field of public relations really mandates, having the "gifts" inside is the key to be crowned.

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Red Wings 24/7

by Ellina Stein

This past fall I landed an internship with the Detroit Red Wings. Sports, especially hockey, have been a huge part of my life and one aspect of PR that I have fallen in love with. What I love most about the hockey industry and the Red Wings is, the relations the players and coaches create with the fans don't end when they get off the ice. That also means that my responsibility of being a representative of the historical franchise does not end when the buzzer calls a close to a game.

The Detroit Red Wings, an original six team, have won the most Stanley Cup championships of any NHL franchise based in the United States. The Red Wings have a remarkable reputation and with such a historic reputation, it is expected that their workers keep that in mind.

During the games, I do my routine intern duties. I pass out credentials to media as they come in before the game, make sure the media lounge has enough copies of stats, rosters and game info sheets, and set up the press box. During the game I am either in the press box running scores of other NHL games to the general management of the away team and the Red Wings or I am in the public relations office sending out fan packs, organizing media clips and logging donations.

When people find out that I am an intern for one of the greatest NHL teams and the heart of Detroit, they always want to ask more questions. With every question they ask I have to treat it as I would an interview. When you are talking about a client or the company, you represent them. Every word you say acts as a representation of the company.

Another aspect to think about is the person you are talking to. For myself, I have a lot of friends that are journalism majors and they are always looking for stories. I have been interviewed for their class projects in the past and every time I think of how to represent the places that I work for. Even when it is not an official interview, they remember things that I say especially if it is a negative comment. They can utilize that information in a paper that will not reflect well on the company. Think, do I want this possibly on the Internet or in a paper where everyone can see? If that is even a question you are thinking about, you probably shouldn't be saying it.

Beyond talking about the company itself and the words you say about them, as a person you are a representative of the company. How you act in general upon meeting people can represent the company. For the Red Wings, people expect you to be a notable, kind person so act that way. Always try to have a smile on and think before you speak!

Public relations is about building, maintaining and repairing companies' images. Your clients and employers need to know that you have a good personal image before you represent them. Since you represent the company and your clients everywhere you go, they trust you to speak well of them.

