

imPRessions

A monthly MSU PRSSA newsletter

March 2010

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Coming up...

- March 23: General Meeting
- March 25: Detroit PR Tweetup - Ye Olde Saloon, Royal Oak, Mich. 6-9 p.m.

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

PRSSA
Public Relations
Student Society
of America

President's Letter

Hello,

If this your first meeting or this is your fourth year, welcome! We are so glad you are here today and that you are taking this important (and necessary) step to start your career in public relations the best way possible.



Even though one of spring semester's most prized possessions happens in March (spring break) shortly before or after it, there is a panic that sets in among students: internship/job hunt time! Every year I get a pit in my stomach thinking about the long journey of job postings, resume submissions, cover letters and interviews. This year, for me, the hunt has turned from solely internships to full-time jobs too.

Have no fear, PRSSA is here! While I am currently jobless after graduation, I have been putting my PRSSA resources to use; the contacts I've made over these four years, the tips and tricks I've learned and the experience I have gained through different clients and committees are all working together to help make me the most marketable I can be while searching for that coveted j-o-b.

I really encourage each one of you to use PRSSA to your advantage. That's why we're here! We work as hard as we can to bring you insightful speakers to meetings, useful topics to professional development seminars, experience-gaining Hubbell Connections clients and other committees and a little fun too!

A summer internship (or winter, spring or fall) is crucial to your career path. If you have not started looking for one, start. Tap in to the resources and contacts you have (even if that's only some PRSSA members) and start asking questions about summer opportunities. Don't limit yourself to the postings on My Spartan Career either. If you don't think you have enough experience for an internship yet, don't be afraid to reach out to your favorite non-profit, or other kind of company, and offer your assistance. You can gain experience in the industry and also start building more relationships with that company's employees. You never know what could happen in the future.

Just remember you're not alone in this process. Look around; everyone in this room is currently in the process or has done it in the past. Don't be afraid to ask questions!

Truly yours,

Christina
2009-2010 President

Stay Connected

Visit our Web site: msuprssa.org

E-mail us: prssa@msu.edu

Follow us on Twitter: @MSUPRSSA

Join our Facebook group: PRSSA... it's a mouthful!

Become a fan on Facebook: Michigan State University PRSSA

Five Things

Every PR Student Should be Doing

By Clare Perreault

As students, we receive so much career advice; do's, don'ts and everything else in between. While you may feel bogged down, just remember these five things to stay on top of no matter what.

1. Connecting with Professors

Professors were in our shoes at one point, too! They understand what it's like being a student and they are there for help. I feel like this is a student's biggest untapped resource. Talk with your favorite professor after class or shoot them an e-mail. How did they break into the PR world? Maybe they have a hobby or organization you're interested in getting involved with. Professors can offer unbiased advice, give surprising networking opportunities and one day help with that letter of recommendation if need be.

2. Actively attending and participating in professional networking events

Are we all busy? YES. Can we all work

on being a little better at this? YES. PRSSA gives endless opportunities to attend networking events such as the CMPRSA luncheons, PR Links and of course our Regional Activity. Being in a room full of professionals is a little intimidating, but you have to start somewhere and it might as well be with fellow PRSSA members!

3. Participating in social media

This is an easy one. Now that we know of and probably have some combination of a Facebook, Twitter or YouTube account, it's important to utilize these tools professionally. Start paying attention to what your favorite products and organizations are doing and take note: how can you use this one day in your own job setting?

4. WRITING WRITING WRITING Aside from regular homework, it's important to brush up on general writing skills. Why else would we include an AP style tip every month? A really good and easy way to start is by blogging. Think of your favorite thing to talk about. It can be

cooking, fashion, music, puppies, anything at all! If you have a passion, then others are bound to share it with you.

5. Having a LIFE

It's important to be you. Cheesy as it may sound, stay true to what you believe and don't be afraid to be involved in other activities outside of school. Professionals want happy, well-rounded, individuals who can hold a conversation and have something to talk about with their clients. A good example of this is when I met a PR professional who had worked with a Fortune 500 company and had started her own successful branding company. Out of pure, dumb luck we ended up talking about a brand of health food we've loved for years and she personally emailed me later that week asking for my resume. Our common interests helped spark a professional relationship and now she's a person I can go to for amazing advice.

What Does Tomorrow's PR Pro Look Like?

by Arik Hanson

Seasoned communications professional and principal of ACH Communications, Arik Hanson, APR, blogged about the advice he gave to the University of St. Thomas PRSSA Chapter members. Read more at arikhanson.com.

* Hone your traditional PR skills: storytelling, media relations, time management and communication skills. These are skills you'll need no matter where you work and what you do in this industry.

* Work on developing the "evolving" skills of tomorrow's PR pro. In my view, these include search skills, digital strategy, ability to "speak geek" and an understanding of how to effectively communicate with mobile customers and stakeholders.

* Of course, there are a number of time-tested PR skills that aren't going anywhere. Not now. Not ever. Among them: Strategic planning, writing skills, creativity/ability to brainstorm the "big idea", and leadership skills.

* How do you develop the "evolving" skills? Work on your social media MBA. Today. For free. My professors:

Amber Naslund, Todd Defren, Dave Fleet, Jason Falls, Adam Singer, Sarah Evans, Shel Holtz and Jay Baer. Not remotely possible to list everyone who has influenced me over the last few years, but that's a good start. And, I encouraged the students I spoke with to do the same.

* What advice did I give the students? I left them with 5 tips in 5 words:

- Read. Not only blogs, but news sites, industry publications, non-fiction and newspapers. Reading not only makes you smarter, it makes you a better writer.

- Ask. One of the lessons I've learned from attending industry events: Always ask at least one question. It transforms you from a passive attendee to an active participant. Which leads me to...

- Curiosity. I don't know too many PR pros who aren't curious. Not sure how you practice or learn this one—usually more of an innate quality. But, I wanted

to convey how important it is to have an insatiable curiosity as a means to learning and expanding your world.

- Relationship. Everything we're talking about here comes back to relationships. Business, projects, speaking opportunities, friends, learning opportunities and just about everything else positive that happens in your professional life can typically be traced back to personal relationships. Work hard to cultivate and develop these relationships and you will reap the rewards down the line. Such a key skill and concept for younger PR pros.

- Indispensable. Getting that first job is just the beginning. Once you walk in that front door, do everything in your power to be indispensable to your employer. Develop new skill sets. Go above and beyond. Volunteer for new projects. Whatever the case, if you can make yourself indispensable, you will never struggle for a job.

How to be a Survivor in the Current Economy

By Yue Lv

“What are your professional goals?”
“Does your current position allow you to pursue your goals?”

Recently I was inspired by these two questions from Courtney Vaught’s article on the PR New Pros blog (prnewpros.prsa.org). They made me think about how to be a survivor in this economic climate.

In fact, as a student with great passion for public relations, it might not be so hard to set up professional goals for your career. Maybe after several internships, you find out that you have interests in brand identity and want to cultivate the skills in the domain. You may possess the capability of analyzing, which enables you to become an expert in the field of customer analytics. Or you may just stick with the area you have been always enthusiastic about and persistently work on it. Some people may argue that I can’t know my professional goals if I haven’t been working in a professional field. And even though I have set up the goal, it doesn’t mean it won’t change or the reality allows me to realize it, especially in this kind of economic situation.

That’s right. All these concerns lead us to think about the second question that who we are, where we are and how to accomplish.

Looking around us, generally there are two kinds of people in our lives, the one who has various incredible experiences on their resumes and solid materials in their portfolios; and the other who just gets ordinary backgrounds as any other does. Unfortunately a lot of the time, most of us fall into the second category but still want to climb the top of the pyramid. So as

the people who are not so outstanding, how can we stand out in such fierce competition?

First of all, we shouldn’t only focus on how many internships we have had, but need to pay more attention on how we brand ourselves. Actually the reason we’ve heard of the importance of internships thousands of times is because we can gain experiences, polish skills and build networks from there. However, the biggest question is how can we obtain those chances? As a matter of fact, Brittney Gillison used her personal experiences to show us that there is a way to success in finding an internship, even though you may have failed before. According to her article “Personal Branding...My Personal Branding Experience” on the PR New Pros blog, she didn’t have any internships before she graduated from college. To make up for the experience that she lacked, she decided to promote herself through networking. She joined the PRSA and the local PRSA chapter, actively engaging in as many events as possible, throwing herself into conversations with PR professionals, and exchanging business cards with them. Gillison’s tip is to bring your own business cards all the time. It’s an impressive and convenient way for people to remember and reach you. She not only got a lot of interviews and volunteer positions which were great enough to put on her resumes, but also gained a job in a PR department of an advertising agency at the end of the summer after she graduated.

If things can happen for Brittney, it can also happen for us. Our resumes might be average right now. But if we can take advantage of PRSSA and do everything to maintain networks and

build new relationships, there will be tons of opportunities waiting for us to explore.

However, to those who have beautiful resumes and portfolios, getting an internship or an entry-level position is still not simple, and is just the beginning of your professional journey. Just like Brain Camen wrote in his article, “Career Advice---The Mistake I Stopped Making,” “Your skill set isn’t going to develop overnight and no matter how many internships you have, you never stop learning in this industry because Public Relations is continually evolving.”

That’s true. You can never stop learning how to be a better writer, listener and practitioner in this field.

In the tough economic times like this, no one is safe no matter how good you are. If we are not so excellent as we’ve expected, then it’s the time for us to stop complaining about the environment and step out to “develop our own brand to show companies just a taste of what you can do for them.” If you have already gotten success at some point, don’t be arrogant because there is always something for you to improve on. No matter what, as long as you have a clear professional goal and work hard to realize it, nothing can overshadow your talents in the crowd.

Diversity Digest

By Patrick Goulet

Would you consider yourself cultured? The term is broad and ambiguous. People may begin a quest to “become” cultured. You yourself have started on a similar pursuit toward cultural competency. We all have ways to better ourselves, with the hopes that the end results will leave us a better person.

For this column I have compiled a list of questions. The list was taken from a journal article written by a non-profit organization called FIRN or Resources for the Foreign Born. The article is titled “Tips for Working in a Culturally Competent Manner.” The author asks the reader several questions, all which incorporate aspects of the overall theme of the article, How culturally competent are you? Things to ask yourself...

If someone asked you, what is “culture,” what would you say?

Would you say that people from the same culture behave the same way? Why or why not?

What are some of the things people

say about the group(s) you identify with or the group(s) others believe you belong to?

Can you think of a time when you found yourself challenging negative ideas or beliefs someone expressed to you about a particular racial/ethnic/cultural group?

After reading this, I began to develop some ideas on how one could use this list as an outline for simple ways to expand your perspective daily. Some ways can be as simple as reading more. Aside from all the required reading for class, pick up a book from a genre you usually shy away from. Or maybe something as simple as reading another section from the newspaper, one from that pile you just recycle.

Think about checking out one of the many events offered here on campus. The majority of them are free of charge or offer discounted pricing for students. Ranging from guest speakers, plays, exhibits, and independent films, groups like

RHA, UAB, SAF and your favorite student organization, PRSSA, are offering plenty of ways to get involved.

If you are not a part of the (as-tounding) graduating class of 2010, you might want to consider working in a sociology class into one of your semesters. You are required to take one if you are a communication major, but I would recommend take at least one more. I am enrolled in one now and the discussions that take place every week our very opened-minded and respectful.

These are just a few ways I think might help broaden your sense of culture on a day-to-day basis. I am sure you can think of ways that might suit you better and I encourage you to do so, for becoming “competent in a cultural manner” cannot be learned by reading a journal article, though it can help get you started.



The newly elected 2010-2011 PRSSA National Committee: Therese Kuster, VP of Professional Development, University of Northern Iowa; Danielle Dupree, VP of Public Relations, Utica College; Jemalyn Chavez, VP of Membership Services, San Diego State University; Kimberly Ciesla, VP of Chapter Development, Rowan University; Adam Joseph Aisner, VP of Advocacy, Hawaii Pacific University; Rachel Sprung, VP of Regional Activities, Boston University; Nick Lucido, President, Michigan State University.

AP Style Tip

March Madness!
(via @apstylebook)

Some basketball tips:

- alley-oop
- foul line
- free-throw line
- full-court press
- hook shot

Go green!

When I Grow Up...

As told to Melissa Hackett

Monica Fineis is a 2009 MSU graduate and PRSSA alumna. She is currently an Account Executive at Martin Waymire Advocacy Communications, where she interned before being taken on as a full-time employee. During her time at MSU, Monica served as the 2009 Bateman Case Study Competition Director, leading the team to a second place victory - the highest ever placement for MSU Bateman. Monica also played an instrumental role in leading a large-scale student support effort for MSU's bid for the Facility for Rare Isotope Beams in 2008. She coined the slogan "Bring FRIB to our Crib!"

1. Please explain your position with Martin Waymire Advocacy Communications.

We're not big on titles here so everyone kind of does it all! But for translation purposes, I have a role similar to any account executive at a PR firm. I've have my hand in almost every level of business we do—from bringing in a new client, pitching media, getting my written work published, being interviewed on camera, developing proposals, running conference calls—to very character-building experiences such as transcribing audio files, handing out fliers, directing people to parking and stuffing envelopes.

2. What tips do you have for members currently looking for internships or full-time positions?

I'm sure it's nearly impossible to give advice that this group hasn't already heard, but I'll try:

1. I know most people really just want any kind of experience from their first internship and they might not be picky trying to land their first job. However, tell us why you want to work for US. Show us that you understand our niche in public relations.
2. Rather than going for the CEO or the president of the company, reach out to the most junior level staff person, or the employee that you have something uniquely in common with. Junior staff might have more pull than you think in the company and more time to deal with such requests. Ask that person if they ever need volunteers for an event or help passing out

materials that you'd be happy to help. One of our current interns helped out at one of our client events and hadn't reached to us previously. We were so impressed by his professionalism and how he handled a stressful situation he was pretty much hired right away! We were just in your position not too long ago so we want to make things happen for you.

3. Follow-up, follow-up, follow-up! The people who do take the time to write thank you notes DO stand out. The people who get their thank you notes in right away stand head and shoulders above others.

4. Proof your resume, people. We still get several resumes with typos. Sometimes text in all caps, small caps or other styles get skipped by spellcheck.

3. What was your most valuable experience in PRSSA?

Absolutely the Bateman Case Study Competition. It's the best, most complete exposure a student can get on how a real public relations campaign operates because you're actually executing it—and living, breathing, sleeping it! You'll find out really quickly with a challenge like this whether or not PR is for you.

4. You attended PR Links on behalf of Martin Waymire Advocacy Communications. Based on your interactions with MSU's public relations students, what advice do you have for them for future career fairs and networking events?

First of all I'd like to say I was really impressed with everyone. Other than



Monica Fineis Associate Account Executive Martin Waymire Advocacy Communications

what I said above, I would reiterate that doing your homework on the firm goes very far. Reading a company's Web site is great, but the most up-to-date information can be likely be found on their Twitter or Facebook pages. "I saw you posted an article yesterday, what do you think about how A affects B?" "I saw you promoting an event on X, I'm interested in how you might deal with the Y and Z."

5. Any parting words of wisdom?

Overall, I think everyone who I met at PR links has a bright future ahead of them. Go to as many networking events as possible and don't be scared to go alone! Much of the time it's knowing the right person at the right time especially when there are so many qualified applicants vying for the same opportunities.

