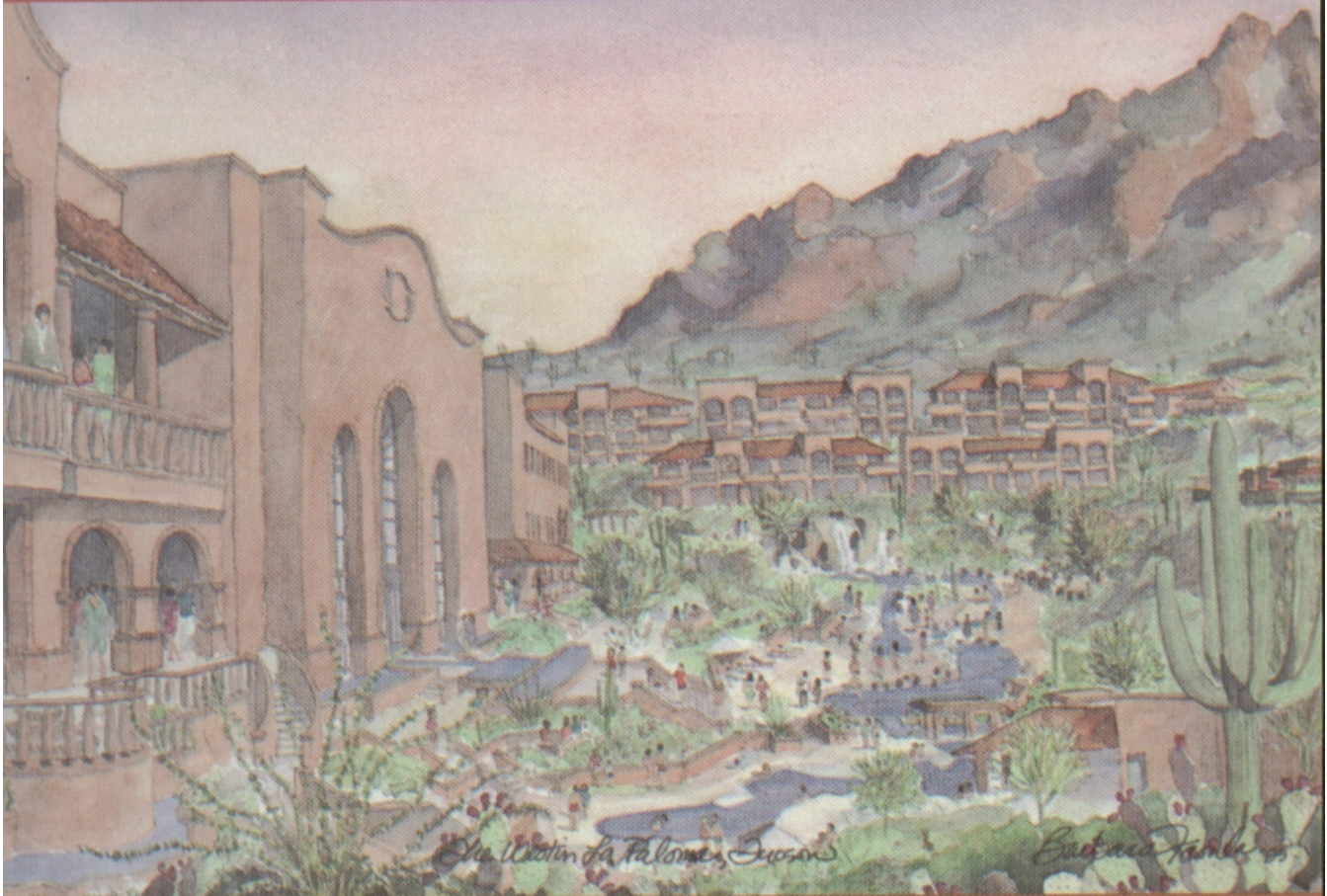




SPRING CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS



The Changing Dynamics of Leadership

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Overcoming PR Limitations to Reach Our Potential

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Top 10 Limitations to Public Relations' Potential

- 10) PR's negative portrayal in and by the media
- 9) Over-reliance on traditional media, inattention to new media
- 8) Spin and other lapses in and enforcement of ethical practices
- 7) Subordination by advertising and corporate marketing influences
- 6) Inadequate mentoring for, development of young professionals
- 5) Poor measurement credibility, perceived accountability
- 4) Ineffective PR for PR, inertia among practitioners
- 3) Lack of mutual business/PR education
- 2) Fragmentation, disunity and inconsistent nomenclature
- 1) Unfocused leadership – a common thread at the foundation

Top 10 Limitations to Public Relations' Potential

10) PR's negative portrayal in and by the media

"The fact is, for journalists, truthfulness remains the objective, even if it's not always attained. In PR, truthfulness is rarely even on the radar screen as a value, except perhaps as a convenient option or legal consideration. Hence, the deep distrust between these professions that are, lamentably, joined at the hip."

***Business Week* reporter Marilyn Harris, August 17, 1998 issue**

"As in any profession, there are some PR people who do not maintain high ethical standards. But Harris has chosen to paint all PR people with the same brush, in the same way that some people would smear the journalistic profession by pointing to the unethical practices of tabloid journalists. *Business Week* should know better than to smear the thousands of hardworking PR people who have assisted them in putting out an accurate magazine every week by helping reporters check facts, arranging interviews with executives, and in some cases even providing interesting story ideas."

Bernard J. Kilkelly, Enhance Financial Services Group Inc., *Business Week* Readers Report, August, 27, 1998

"Given recent examples of journalists caught writing columns with invented characters or filing false stories. Viewed through the prism of these unfortunate experiences, media might want to think twice about throwing stones at PR people from their glass houses."

Robert W. Pickard, Environics Communications, *Business Week* Readers Report (8/27/98)

Based on 100 random print articles, the news media's use of the public relations term was inaccurate more than 95 percent of the time. Only 7.4 percent (of 254 references) were judged as positive, while more than five times that, 37 percent, were judged to be negative. In fact, 92 percent of the references to "public relations" came directly from the reporter without quotation. This reveals that journalists themselves are the ones harboring animosity and promoting misunderstanding.

Excerpts from "Negative Connotations of the Term 'Public Relations' in Print Media," Julie K. Henderson, *Public Relations Review*, Spring '98

"Overall [of 16,000 articles in a one month period in three newspapers], there were three references to the term "PR," no mentions of the terms press relations, public information, government information, press officer or public relations. There were 121 references to 'publicity.' This sample illustrates that public relations is equated solely with publicity. The lack of recognition for other areas of expertise may account for the distorted view which many have in and of the field."

Robert L. Bishop, "What Newspapers Say about Public Relations," June '97

9) Over-reliance on traditional media, inattention to new media

"If there isn't leadership in the technology area, we could lose the chance to sit with the top executives and help them with shaping their reputation with their constituencies. We have to understand the power of the technology platform and how to move messages through that."

Larry Weber, Weber Public Relations Worldwide

"Public relations leaders in the new millennium will have to plan, execute, and adjust at the speed of cyberspace. Strategic plans made in the morning may be obsolete by the afternoon. The leaders of the profession will be found at the cutting edge, constantly learning, molding agile, swiftly-moving teams."

Steve Wynkoop, The PR Network

8) Spin and other lapses in and enforcement of ethical practices

"Spin is to public relations what pornography is to art."

Robert L. Dilenschneider, *Wall Street Journal* editorial, "Spin Doctors Practice Public Relations Quackery"

"Voluntary ethics codes are largely ineffective because there is no enforcement mechanism and the codes are only as good as the people who subscribe to them. Public relations never will be any more ethical than the level of basic ethical morality of the people who are in public relations. The structure of moral values of American practitioners is based on socio-economic morality, religious morality, basic morality, puritanical morality, basic social responsibility morality, and financial morality."

Donald K. Wright, Ph.D., APR, Fellow PRSA, University of South Alabama

7) Subordination by advertising and corporate marketing influences

"There are many individual leaders but there is no unified front [or] monolithic approach to issues in the field. The demand for accountability has shifted many top PR executives to become subordinate to marketing management, legal affairs or to human resources."

Prof. Glen Broom, San Diego State University, co-author of "Effective PR"

"Seventeen of the world's top 20 PR operations are owned by advertising parent companies. Almost nobody has talked about what this means to PR."

Jack O'Dwyer, publisher of numerous PR industry periodicals

"True PR has only been thriving for a generation, which is a very brief time. The profession will need strong leadership as it enters its second generation, especially to prevent being usurped by other disciplines. These leaders need to recruit MBA-types, various consultants and lawyers as PR advocates. As more CEOs give credence to PR, we must tap their credibility to most effectively educate their peers."

Larry Weber, Weber Public Relations Worldwide

6) Inadequate mentoring for, development of young professionals

"To be a true leader, we must deliver. Deliver wisdom, professionalism, knowledge, organization, creativity, and most of all, leadership by example. We must do what we expect of others. But, we also must receive. How can we possibly be leaders if we aren't attuned to the environment around us, and if we don't hear what our co-workers, our clients and our external partners are saying to us? If we don't understand them, we can never provide leadership to them."

Sandra Clary, APR, Clary Communications

"There seems to be a need for leadership and mentoring within the industry. Because of high turnover rates in the field, PR associates seem to be missing out on this important aspect of professional development and advancement (mentoring that is). This is especially important for women in terms of advancement, as detailed by the Catalyst group's annual surveys."

Alison Stateman, Managing Editor, *PR Tactics*

"True professional development to raise people's horizons about their potential future and their role in creating it is the best kind of professional development there is."

Patrick Jackson, APR, Fellow, Jackson, Jackson & Wagner

"Leaders in our field need to continually educate corporate America about what public relations is, how and why we execute programs and most importantly, their benefits to a variety of audiences. Given how fast the field is growing and the resulting shortage of talent, it's important that we also mentor those interested in becoming public relations practitioners. In short, we need to communicate better with all those important to our success!"

Betsy Nichol, Nichol & Company

"Definitions of mentoring range from an informal relationship to formal programs assigning younger employees to more experienced executives. It can involve once-a-week lunch dates, regular phone calls or occasional consultations. Mentoring can mean successive mentors as individuals move through stages in their careers, or an ongoing relationship with several mentors, similar to a personal board of directors.

"Mentoring requires both sides to be clear about their objectives. Too many people go into a contact with the point of view, 'Please do something for me'. That's a one-way street; that's not a relationship. Less formal mentoring opportunities present themselves more than most people realize. It's very important to be open to opportunities that present themselves and always be open to learning. The value of mentoring is best shown by the fact so many proteges end up being mentors themselves."

Lisa Benavides, *Nashville Daily Tennessean*

5) Poor measurement credibility, perceived accountability

“We’re still practicing antique PR and relegating our role to a staff function for messaging and getting out information. For 20 years now, corporations have sought ways to evaluate performance and return on investment beyond financial measurement, which can be so misleading. At least half of a company’s value is in its non-financial assets. PR possesses the perfect tools to develop auditing mechanisms for values like: employee morale, brand recognition, productivity, customer loyalty, and social responsibility standing. Our leaders should be sitting down with CEOs, auditing firms and the like to develop them. If we step up to the plate, we’ll be golden.”

Patrick Jackson, APR, Fellow, of Jackson, Jackson & Wagner

“PR practitioners must make a concerted effort to understand broader objectives and profit systems of the companies we represent so our communications activities focus more on supporting them. Put simply, we must practice what we preach, especially when it comes to accountability. A renewed emphasis on measurement will be critical to making our value more tangible. A modern practitioner must be accountable to the bottom line and convey the value of non-financial assets supported by PR management practices.”

J. David Pincus, Ph.D., APR, University of Arkansas

“The industry leaders who are redefining the profession in the new economy are those who are establishing measurable goals and benchmarking the effectiveness of their work. There’s a misconception that CEOs only care about the bottom line and therefore judge PR’s worth only in dollar terms. But CEOs have every right to expect accountability from their communications counselors — whether results are quantified in terms of sales figures, intellectual capital, public policy outcomes or barometers of public sentiment. Businesses live and die by accountability.”

Jenny Sullivan, Editor, PR NEWS

“There has been an increased volume and quality of research supporting the importance of PR in leading the management team. The convergence of important ideas such as integration, branding, reputation, and other areas has given PR a stronger base for its move from a staff to management role. One, very important piece of research that is growing is the National Credibility Index. The work thoroughly documents the complexity of the PR manager’s challenge to identify which spokesperson should speak to which audience on which topic at a level of specificity never known before.”

Dr. Clarke Caywood, Medill School, Northwestern University

4) Ineffective PR for PR, inertia among practitioners

"Few frustrations match that of trying to convince top executives of the strategic value public relations has to offer their organization's well-being. We have the constant challenge of winning over those who control our professional destiny."

J. David Pincus, Ph.D., APR, University of Arkansas

"The PR profession has to make its indelible mark on every CEO, COO and marketing director in the country. The most important thing is that we work together to educate and change those views over time."

Adam Leyland, editor-in-chief, PR Week, U.S. edition

"People are doing more with less, which means they have less energy [and] resources to devote to the profession ... that's a sad commentary."

Prof. Glen Broom, San Diego State University, co-author of "Effective PR"

"Uncertainty and a lack of exactness has prompted a steady erosion of public relations' reputation as a profession and scholarly discipline, and threatens to stunt its continuing advance as a crucial strategic organizational function."

J. Pritchitt (Public Relations Quarterly, 1992)

3) Lack of mutual business/PR education

"In a nationwide study of more than 50 MBA program directors, 70 percent of the programs require no communication-related courses and about a third don't even recommend one. Even more disturbing is the fact that three out of four don't include communications strategy topics or basic communications skills training in any conventional MBA courses. The effect on us: when MBAs — potential business leaders all — hear nothing about communication while learning the ABCs of management and business, they assume it isn't important."

"We as a profession must commit to the cause by caring about educating business executives and training them about the role and function of public relations and organizational communication. Changing the face of MBA curricula today could yield a new generation of executive decision makers who, unlike their forerunners, would begin careers already understanding and appreciating public relations' purpose and value within organizations."

J. David Pincus, Ph.D., APR, University of Arkansas

Lack of mutual business/PR education (cont'd)

"As public relations has become more than publicity, it has drifted from journalism. Strategic thinking, planning, interpersonal and group communication, financial relations, employee communications, research, evaluation and organizational decision-making have become essential components of the public relations process. Many of the theories and laws public relations students now study are different from those emphasized in journalism education."

Donald K. Wright, Ph.D., APR, Fellow PRSA, University of South Alabama

"Public Relations has evolved into a management discipline, and the curricula needs to reflect that marketplace reality. More exposure to business courses is needed for students planning careers in private industry, and all students should be exposed to practicums and a heavy dose of case studies in their course materials. That is the best way to develop thinking skills."

John Guineven, University of Nebraska

2) Fragmentation, disunity and inconsistent nomenclature

"The primary purpose when PRSA was founded was to unify the profession. That's probably the one goal that hasn't been achieved ...organizations like IABC, Arthur Page, PR Seminar ... all these fragmented groups. But acting together is natural because we share common goals to communicate the value of public relations."

Ray Gaulke, President/COO of PRSA

"Only six of the top 50 agencies and 75 of the Fortune 500 companies use the traditional "public relations" term to represent themselves."

Daniel J. Edelman, APR, Fellow PRSA

"Only 16 percent of 539 companies with sales in excess of \$1 billion use the public relations term in department titles."

Study by Best Practices in Corporate Communications (BPCC) of the Public Affairs Group (PAG)

"As PR professionals, you'd think we could come up with a sound bite to describe ourselves. When someone says they're a lawyer, doctor, janitor, computer technician, bug terminator, actor, salesman and so forth, we all immediately get a mental picture of what they do. But even when we *explain* what we do, people still look at us with their head cocked, and say, 'Oh I get it, you put ads in the paper...'"

Jolene Crowley, comment on the PR Forum

1) Unfocused leadership – a common thread at the foundation

"While there is a vacuum of PR leadership, we must cast out assumptions that people want to lead. Being a leader comes from within individuals who possess the vision, initiative, credibility, intellectual relevance and a degree of presence. They must be risk-takers able to see and hear what others can't, or choose not to, and be willing to assume an implicit responsibility and accountability to lead."

John F. Budd, Jr., APR, Fellow, Chairman/CEO, Omega Group

Aristotle's observation that good judgment (and, if we can extrapolate, counseling ability) comes a step at a time "from many notions gained by experience" seems instructive. Start today sifting your experience for relevance to be applied to the changing course of challenges. The counselor who shapes the success of clients becomes respected by clients, and by peers, and the word spreads, a step at a time.

E. Bruce Harrison, Arthur Page Society

"We don't have a lack of leaders, we have a lack of the defined traditions and cultural norms that help us decide who among today's outstanding practitioners have earned the right to be called our leaders. Unlike individuals in other professions who advance through rites of passage, PR people have no such guides or guidebook."

Jack Bergen, President, Council of PR Firms

"A company's reputation is crucial to its ability to effectively compete in today's marketplace. It determines whether the company is a desirable investment, business partner, employer, community leader and how well it sells its products. Now translate that reputation philosophy to our profession, and you gain a better sense of the impact of this issue."

Howard Paster, Hill & Knowlton

"It's ironic that an occupation with an emphasis on reputation and relationship management has fallen short to effectively manage its own. Until we achieve consensus about addressing leadership and related issues, our ability to convey our value, earn respect and create appropriate demand for our services will be limited. Meaningful advancement can only occur if it is endorsed and actively pursued by a critical mass of practitioners. We need qualified leaders to develop a long-term vision and a common agenda to which every PR practitioner can contribute."

Matthew S. Zinman, APR

Note: Comments may be forwarded by e-mail to: matt@Zcommunication.net