Public Relations: Profession

JOURNALS

Spin doctors are used extensively in both the United States and Britain in the presentation of politicians. But in the United Kingdom, two such spin doctors, authors Alistair Campbell and Amanda Platell, have rather interesting backgrounds for political operatives. Campbell advises the Labor Party and once wrote soft porn articles, and Platell, who works for the Conservative Party, wrote a novel featuring explicit sexual encounters throughout the book. It is supposed that people with these types of backgrounds are being hired to help politicians broaden their appeal.

Conducted to determine the prevailing attitudes toward planning, strategies, and expenses about and methods of effective programs, this survey showed that clients do not always value communications planning to the extent they are encouraged to by their PR practitioners.

The Bronze Anvil Awards are presented for the best tactical solutions to public relations challenges. This articles lists and briefly profiles each of this year’s 30 winners.
This article lists the 10 worst public relations blunders of 1998, according to PR’s Michael Fineman of San Francisco, even though some of the companies on his list assert that what he labels as blunders were actually victories. The events listed include Abercrombie & Fitch for posting drinking side-bars in its quarterly magazine, the Oprah Winfrey beef lawsuit, the NBA players’ strike, the Internal Revenue Service’s (IRS) threat to tax people who catch balls hit by McGwire or Sosa, and the Professional Golfers’ Association of America Tour versus Casey Martin and his use of a golf cart.

This article builds on the body of literature about public relations practitioner roles by examining the relationship of workplace socialization and formal public relations education to idealized practitioner roles. Data come from an exploratory survey of public relations students and practitioners. Two main practitioner roles, corresponding to the communication manager and communication technician roles, are identified. Formal public relations education was associated with the manager role type, but professional socialization in the workplace was not.

A marketing budget can become burdened by trade show involvement, therefore, careful planning is required to garner an effective return on these dollars. Promoters should have a clear plan of what they want to accomplish, including objectives, messages, and budgets. Once the trade show date is established, measures should be taken to promote the companies’ participation and to schedule activities.

The theory of accommodation in public relations was surveyed in this study that encompassed 18 interviews with public relations professionals. There is support along a wide spectrum from pure accommodation to pure advocacy and for a matrix of variables affecting the continuum. The practitioners’ positive responses offer validity to the contingency theory and suggest further theory development is in order.

In this day and age of technological data gathering regarding the buying styles and demographics of consumers, some marketers find themselves too focused on the task of data collection and sorting and disregarding the task of actually using the data to market their wares. The focus could revert back to a previous approach where marketers presented the product in its best possible light and let the consumer decide, rather than trying to determine in advance what the consumers want and then catering to that. The new approach is criticized as being stifling for creative new ideas.
There is a growing awareness of the importance of public relations in the selling of commercial goods in the United Kingdom. This awareness is responsible for another good annual showing by PR firms, whose earnings from consumer PR posted an increase from £95 million in 1997 to £129 million in 1998. This growth is indicative of the companies' increasing awareness placed on commercial PR.

Tips on how to win a Silver Anvil award, an award given by industry professionals, are 1) start early; 2) big ideas can bomb; 3) stick to the facts; 4) include photos; 5) have results that match your program’s objectives; 6) show results, not clips; 7) submit a well-written, two-page proposal; and 8) read the instructions.

The 30 1999 finalists for the Reggie Awards, which spotlight the best promotions of the year, are listed. Entries shot up 55% this year, and the U.S. Postal Service garnered four of the positions.

Many companies will at one time or another find themselves hosting a company barbecue, and this seemingly innocuous event can raise some tricky problems. The company should make arrangements for attendees with special dietary concerns and for vegetarians. It is also advisable to provide entertainment during the event to act as an ice breaker. Typically, a company cook-out is a more cost-effective method of employee relations than other more traditional methods.

Downsizing has become standard operating procedure in corporate America and is offering some interesting challenges to public relations practitioners. Companies make two basic mistakes with these communications: they establish guilt rather than dealing with the grief inherent in downsizing, and they emphasize change rather than transition. A shift in emphasis is needed to humanize this corporate practice.

Seven distinct types of framing applicable to public relations are the framing of situations, attributes, choices, actions, issues, responsibility, and news. Potential applications for public relations practice and research are discussed.
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Public relations practitioners and marketing executives must learn to coordinate their efforts into an overall effective strategy. If possible, it is a good idea to have a public relations person working in the marketing department if the company is large enough to warrant the expense. Problems that might otherwise go unforeseen might be averted under this system, and it reduces the chance of PR mismanagement and assists in crisis management.

A PR practitioner in Silicon Valley, Sabrina Horn, APR, discusses the approaches she has found effective when dealing with this specialized niche of American commerce.

The field of public relations has remained amorphous in its core structure and paradigm. This has left the field vulnerable to other professions that are encroaching on PR and to critics who are establishing the definitional paradigm on their own. Although the profession can flourish, PR will remain lacking until it develops its own central thesis and definition. In this article that definition is proposed under the heading managing strategic relationships.

“Isn’t That Special?” Promo, v12n3, pp. 64(2), February 1999.
Averaging $11 billion per annum, the promotional products industry is evolving. The Pennsylvania-based firm of Sight Promotions, one of the nation’s largest distributors of promotional products, has instituted the Creative Ad Specialty Awards to informally note each season’s most innovative approaches. This year’s winners are listed.

Experts on searching for executive positions state that the Internet is the new attention grabber for PR career fast tracks. On-line related PR jobs abound, and PR pros looking to specialize can turn to the Web to find a niche for themselves.

In today’s e-climate, more and more large businesses are using the Internet to market their products and services, but a growing number of small businesses are discovering that the Internet tends to level the playing field among the large and small competitors. Small companies may not be able to market through radio and television because of the increased costs, but the Internet is an economical means. Establishing a public relations Web site can go a long way toward presenting the small company as a viable, credible entity

Reports from practitioners and prescription-oriented academicians about emerging developments in media coverage of government and the attendant public relations counter-strategies being adopted by public administrators are summarized.

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Salaries for promotional marketers are at an all-time high, and marketers who are Internet savvy are commanding top dollar. This article reports on the findings of *Promo's* 10th Annual Salary & Workplace Trends Survey, showing the extent of the cutthroat competition for the best talent.


The New York Chapter of the PRSA has selected 37 public relations projects and campaigns as the best in their categories from a total of 189 entries. The awards are known as the Big Apple Awards and were chosen by a group of judges from 65 New York-based public relations firms. The PR companies that received the most honors include Noonan/Russo Communications, Ketchum Public Relations, Fleishman-Hillard, Inc., and Hill and Knowlton.


This article lists and briefly profiles the winners for effective promotions in the year 1998—CDNow, Mervyn's California, Simon Brand Ventures, Yoyodyne, Harley Davidson, McDonald's Corp., Packard Bell, Aurora Foods, Nickelodeon, and M&M/Mars. These companies have a strong idea, an eye for execution, and a sense of the brand.


Women in public relations need to have an extensive understanding of both the traditions of the field and the tools that are available to the modern worker. A careful blend of support for the established format combined with an independent but not too feministic stance seems to be most effective. The successful female PR practitioner gets ahead by promoting her own interests while encouraging the interests of those around her.


According to poster specialist Concord, advertising dollars spent on poster advertising increased 5% during the first 6 months of 1999 over the same period in 1998. But even given this increase, the core stock of 48-sheet roadside posters dropped significantly by 10.8% to £80.6 million, whereas competing formats, such as transport and ambient advertising, showed improved growth.


Self-help books proclaim that companies do not need to hire PR professionals, but can do the job themselves in 12 easy steps. Public relations professionals should be aware that companies could be trying to use do-it-yourself books instead of them, and should be prepared to counter with stronger facts and track records.
Because of the wide range of PR job functions, it is difficult to give a simple definition of public relations. In this article PR directors discuss their unique but typical work day in these associations—a cremation association, a university, the school of Wicca, an Indian tribe, *Sports Illustrated*, Dollywood, the Hemlock Society, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Harley-Davidson, the Girl Scouts, and the FBI.

This article profiles new PR products and services: Y2K software, production and distribution services for publicity photos, editorial search Web site, electronic clipping database, a service showing who is accessing press releases, an expanded business wire, and a new search engine for Video Monitoring Services of America.

Modern job protection tactics have changed drastically. Jobs are less well defined, and supply and demand demographics for workers have changed. More project-by-project employment opportunities will arise. PR professionals who do not want to be left behind should abandon traditional notions of jobs, be multitalented and multiskilled, develop project management skills, market themselves as a product, and act like a consultant.

Top public relations stories of 1998 included 1) the Lewinsky scandal, 2) the relaunch of the Volkswagen Beetle, 3) Microsoft’s continuing favorable image, 4) Oprah Winfrey’s beef battle, 5) McGwire Sosa homerun race, 6) Seinfeld signing off, 7) incidents further eroding press credibility, 8) Casey Martin’s victory over the Professional Golfers’ Association of America Tour to ride in a golf cart, 9) water safety issues, and 10) Viagra.

To take the guesswork out of agency searches, 1) know your business needs, 2) know who you are inviting, 3) look for a fit in size and expertise, 4) consider chemistry, 5) ask hard questions, 6) do not assume the work you see is the work you will get, 7) realize that agencies are suspicious of spec work, 8) set a reasonable retainer, 9) set a schedule to reevaluate, and 10) consider a search firm.

Procter & Gamble’s Director of Customer Marketing, Jim Bechtold, discusses strategies on database marketing, loyalty programs, and retail partnerships. Bechtold is concentrating his focus on broadening the company’s approach to meeting needs, for example, not just giving moms coupons for diapers, but to finding ways of providing moms with clean bathrooms, an in-store nursery, escorts in the parking lot, and baggers to load the car.

New Spalding CEO Jim Craigie, who has brought innovative promotional ideas to the sports merchandiser, is profiled in this article. Spalding has introduced Spaldeen to capitalize on the renewed trend of stickball. Spalding is attempting its own renewal by conducting new market research to reposition itself among the current fierce competition.


After suffering under the hybrid structure, Chicago-based Foote, Cone, & Belding reorganized its promo agency, discarding the hybrid promotion/direct marketing/ad agency and reforming as a general ad agency. Foote, Cone, & Belding advertising staffers are being assigned to “brand groups” in an attempt to form a reputation as branding experts within the discipline of promotion rather than as promotions experts.


Domino Pizza’s Dave Brandon, president and CEO, discusses his unusual rise to the top of a quick-service restaurant chain. Brandon wants to develop the infrastructure, brand image, and operational expertise to be able to compete fiercely with other companies, and he states that plans for a public offering may be in the making.


This article is a listing of the top 100 agencies as selected by *Promo*, magazine, with short profiles of each company.


Here is a list of 2000’s sampling chart, describing companies various promotions, the dates thereof, costs, and other statistical information.


Urbanski profiles the agency chosen by *Promo*, as the top agency of the year—Upshot. The company has been reaping the rewards of a philosophical overhaul done by the new owners and has increased revenues significantly, becoming the lead agency for Coke. Clients say Upshot is smart, young, and aggressive.


Agencies must now review resources and goals because clients have begun to conduct longer, more intensive searches for long-term marketing partners. Now clients are asking for hard numbers on a shop’s internal costs to standardize the rates they pay for the creation of their promotional materials. Agencies are selling themselves for services and as agents.
Samuel L. Waltz, Jr., is PRSA’s first chief executive officer and chairman of the board. In this interview, he discusses his vision for PRSA in the coming year, including his personal motivation, strategies to communicate with the membership, growth and changes of PRSA, and views on the society going global.

The highlights of the Best Practices in Corporate Communications of the Public Affairs Group survey of 539 companies with sales in excess of $1 billion in 26 industry sectors include, 1) communications/PR budgets average $3.8 million for 104 companies; 2) communications/PR staffing averages 5.2 professionals per organization; 3) communications as a department name ranks first, with public relations at second; 4) vice president as a title ranks first, with senior vice president second; 5) 51% of top communications officers report to the CEO; 6) one third of top communications officers are women; 7) media relations ranked first in job functions, with corporate communications second.

Fragmentation in the PR industry is growing, and students need to be educated about the problem. Terminology relating to the industry needs to be standardized. This article suggests the term pr management for the following reasons: the word management provides a common thread, using PR instead of public relations will train the public to recognize the acronym, management represents the strategic role of modern practices, and the new term positions PR curricula to assist in business schools.

BOOKS

This book focuses on writing and getting published in your target market’s trade magazines, newspapers, and journals.

The messages and incentives customers receive, rather than what marketers send out, which differentiates brand communication management from advertising management, is the focus here.