CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Description of Field
Public Relations (PR) today is a highly sophisticated discipline that entails the management of an organization's communication with all of its stakeholders, in support of organizational goals and objectives.

Public relations specialists build, maintain, and promote the reputation and image of individuals, organizations, products, issues, and events. PR specialists identify problems and make efforts to improve relations between a client and its public, in part by studying the attitudes and opinions of various communities or markets.

Public relations assignments differ from an advertising assignment in that the PR firm utilizes free opportunities for media exposure, disseminating or creating newsworthy publicity of interest to radio, television, and the press instead of producing ads or commercials and purchasing media time or space. While some clients have both public relations and advertising strategies in place, nonprofit organizations rely heavily on PR specialists to promote their issues and events because they often have limited advertising budgets. For example, Amnesty International is an organization that reaches a large number of people through a combination of news releases to the media, direct mail, and lobbying activities.

The prominence of the Internet as a primary source of information about an organization or enterprise requires that PR and communications specialists be tech savvy and knowledgeable about the myriad uses of the web as a tool for communicating with the public and reaching targeted audiences.

Career Paths
Typical entry into the field is through internships at PR agencies or PR departments within corporations. This experience is highly valuable in landing a position in public relations after graduation, since experience counts heavily in this industry. In addition to internship experience, anyone interested in full-time employment in PR must have strong writing and editing skills for an array of formats.

Campus activities promoting university-wide events and helping with fund raising campaigns may well win you points, since entry level jobs often utilize similar skills. These activities include writing for the campus newspaper, organizing mailings, planning events, preparing news releases, assembling press kits, drafting articles, and talking points.

Demand
Employment in the industry is projected to grow 22% between 2004 and 2014. However, even with this projection for faster than average growth, competition for entry-level jobs will be stiff as the field draws an abundance of applicants.

Qualifications Necessary to Enter the Field
The qualities needed to be successful in PR work include the ability to work in a news room environment, to react promptly when faced with sudden changes in events, to speak comfortably with upper level management and media personalities, and a willingness to stay after normal hours in order to meet tight deadlines. PR specialists are expected to have strong presentation, writing, and editing skills. Experience working in digital and social media is a necessity, while data analysis, spreadsheet knowledge and an understanding of visual design are highly valued. Creativity, initiative, critical thinking skills, and the ability to communicate effectively are essential.
Language fluency (including speaking comfortably both in formal and casual situations, but also in a foreign language) is increasingly required.

**Sample Group of Employers**
Wherever there is a newspaper, television or radio station, private enterprise, government office, or nonprofit organization, there will be ample opportunities for public relations. Larger cities have a higher demand for PR specialists; New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Washington DC abound with PR activities. A few recognizable names in PR include:

- Weber Shandwick Worldwide - webershandwick.com/
- Edelman - edelman.com/
- Hill and Knowlton - hillandknowlton.com/
- Ketchum - ketchum.com/
- MSL Group - mslgroup.com/
- Ogilvy - ogilvypr.com
- Bliss, Gouverneur, and Associates - blisspr.com/
- PadillaCRT - padillacrt.com/
- Cooper Katz and Company - cooperkatz.com/
- Gibbs & Soell - gibbs-soell.com/
- Fleishman-Hillard - fleishmanhillard.com/
- Golin Harris International - golinharris.com/
- Horn Group - horngroup.com/
- Lippe Taylor -lippetaylor.com/
- MWW Group - mww.com/
- Publicis USA - publicis-usa.com/
- Solomon McCown & Company - solomonmccown.com/
- The Finn Partners - finnpartners.com/
- Grayling - grayling.com/
- Porter Novelli - porternovelli.com/
- Stanton Communications - stantoncomm.com/
- Prosek Partners - prosek.com/
- APCO Worldwide - apcoworldwide.com/
- Brodeur - brodeur.com/

**Resources for Additional Information**

**Associations**

- Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) - prsa.org
- Sales and Marketing Executives International - smei.org
- Association for Women in Communication - womcom.org
- International Association of Business Communicators - iabc.com
- Institute for Public Relations - instituteforpr.com/
- International Public Relations Association - ipra.org/
- The Communication Leadership Exchange - ccmconnection.com/
- Council of Public Relations Firms - prfirms.org/
- National Association of Government Communicators (NAGC) - nagc.com/
- Public Affairs Council - pac.org/
- Public Relations Student Society Of America (PRSSA) - prssa.org
- Arthur W. Page Society - awpagesociety.com/
Internet Resources

- Careers in Public Relations (PRSA) - prsa.org
- O'Dwyer's PR Firms Database - odwyerpr.com/
- PRNews - prnewsonline.com/
- PRNewser - mediabistro.com/prnewser/
- PRSA Job Center Resources - prsa.org/jobcenter/resources/
- PR Week - prweek.com/
- Wetfeet – wetfeet.com
- Vault - vault.com