

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Office of Career Services

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CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Description of the Field

Public relations (PR) 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 publics or markets.

PR today is regarded as a subdivision of Marketing and/or Advertising. However, a public relations assignment differs 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, non-profit organizations rely heavily on public relations specialists to promote issues and events because they rarely have much of an advertising budget. 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.

Career Paths and Entry Salaries

Typical entry to the field is through internships at PR consulting firms 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. Writing skills along with an internship or related experience in public relations are practically a condition for full-time employment.

Campus activities promoting university-wide events and helping with a fund raising campaign may well win you points, since entry level jobs often involve telemarketing, organizing mailings, inviting guests to special events, preparing news releases, assembling press kits, drafting articles and talking points, and arranging a myriad of logistics such as hotel or catering services. In 2004, the salary range for full-time jobs in public relations extended from \$35,000 to more than \$150,000 with a median annual salary of \$49,000.

Demand

Employment in the industry is projected to grow 22% between 2004 and 2014. However, even with the projection for faster than average growth, the competition for entry-level jobs is 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 atmosphere, to regroup quickly 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. Presentation, writing, and editing skills are essential; desktop publishing is highly valued, and data analysis, spreadsheet knowledge, and graphics experience are required for technical accounts. Creativity, initiative, and the ability to communicate effectively are essential. Language fluency (including colloquial and technical vocabularies as well as foreign languages) is increasingly required.

Sample Group of Employers

Wherever there is a newspaper, television or radio station, private enterprise, government office, or non-profit organization, there will be ample opportunities. Larger cities have a higher demand for PR specialists, and New York,

Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Washington DC abound with PR activities. A few recognizable names in PR include:

- APCO Worldwide <http://www.apcoworldwide.com>
- Bliss, Gouverneur, and Associates <http://www.blisspr.com>
- Brodeur <http://www.brodeur.com>
- Burson-Marsteller <http://www.burson-marsteller.com/pages/home>
- Carter, Ryley, Thomas <http://www.crtpr.com>
- Cooper Katz and Company <http://www.cooperkatz.com>
- Cubitt Jacobs & Prosek <http://cjpcom.com>
- Edelman <http://www.edelman.com>
- Fleishman-Hillard <http://www.fleishman.com>
- Gibbs & Soell <http://www.gibbs-soell.com>
- The Global Consulting Group <http://www.hfgcg.com>
- Golin Harris International <http://www.golinharris.com>
- Hill and Knowlton www.hillandknowlton.com
- Horn Group <http://www.horngroup.com>
- Ketchum <http://www.ketchum.com>
- Lippe Taylor <http://www.lippetaylor.com>
- Manning Selvage and Lee <http://www.mslpr.com>
- MWW Group <http://www.mww.com>
- Ogilvy <http://www.ogilvypr.com>
- Padilla Speer Beardsley <http://www.psbpr.com>
- Porter Novelli <http://www.porternovelli.com>
- Publicis Dialogue <http://www.publicisdialog.com>
- The Rogers Group <http://www.rogerspr.com>
- Schwartz Communications <http://www.schwartz-pr.com>
- Solomon McCown & Company <http://www.solomonmccown.com>
- Stanton Communications <http://www.stantoncomm.com/flash.html>
- Weber Shandwick Worldwide <http://www.webershandwick.com>

Future Challenges of the Profession

The prominence of the Web as a primary source of information about an organization or enterprise has created a demand for persons with a high level of technical skills, in both web design and PR. Also, the nature of special events and publicity campaigns that characterize PR work has led to a reliance on temporary personnel to meet the demands of short-term projects, allowing small shops to compete effectively with larger PR firms by using freelancers. They can staff up to meet the demands of a large project and downsize at the end more easily.

Resources for Additional Information

Associations

- Arthur W. Page Society <http://www.awpagesociety.com>
- Association for Women in Communication <http://www.womcom.org>
- Council of Communication Management <http://www.ccmconnection.com>
- Council of Public Relations Firms <http://www.prfirms.org>
- Global Public Affairs Institute <http://www.gpai.org/mission.html>
- International Association of Business Communicators <http://www.iabc.com>
- International Public Relations Association <http://www.ipra.org>
- Institute for Public Relations <http://www.instituteforpr.com>
- Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) <http://www.prsa.org>
- Public Relations Student Society Of America (PRSSA) www.prssa.org
- Sales and Marketing Executives International <http://www.smei.org>
- Women Executives in Public Relations <http://www.wepr.org>
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Internet Resources

- Careers in Marketing: Advertising and Public Relations - www.careers-in-marketing.com/ad.htm
- Careers in Public Relations (PRSA) [http://www.prsa.org/ Resources/profession](http://www.prsa.org/Resources/profession)
- Council of Public Relations Firms: Career Center www.prfirms.org/career/default.asp
- Jobweb article on PR Careers - http://www.jobweb.com/Resources/Library/Careers_In/Network_Into_45_01.htm
- PRSSA JobCenter Resources <http://www.prssa.org/jobcenter/resources/>
- Vault - <http://www.vault.com>
- Wetfeet – <http://www.wetfeet.com>