

Career Opportunities in Public Relations

Public relations specialists build, maintain, and promote the reputation and image of individuals, organizations, products, issues and events. PR specialists also study the attitudes and opinions of various publics or markets. Problems are identified and efforts made to improve relations between a client and its publics.

PR today is regarded as a subdivision of marketing along with 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 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 2003, the salary range for full-time jobs in public relations extended from \$30,000 to more than \$150,000 with a median annual salary of \$49,000. Higher level positions result in higher salaries, and entry-level professionals should expect the lower end of the salary continuum, especially if experience is limited.

Qualifications Necessary/Application Procedures to Enter 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 for technical accounts, data analysis, spreadsheet knowledge and graphics experience are required. Language fluency (including colloquial and technical vocabularies as well as foreign languages) is increasingly required.

Sample Employers

Wherever there is a newspaper, television or radio station, private enterprise, government office, or non-profit organization, there will be ample opportunities. The larger the city, the more the demand for PR specialists, but below is a sampling of some of the more well-known PR firms:

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

Demand and Future Challenges of Profession

Competition for jobs is stiff. While forecasts by the Department of Labor show that public relations will grow an average of 28% in the immediate future, the field draws an abundance of applicants.

The prominence of web pages 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 increase staff to meet the demands of a large project and downsize at the end more easily.

Resources For More Information

Associations/Websites

- Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), www.prsa.org
- Sales and Marketing Executives International, www.smei.org
- Association for Women in Communication, www.womcom.org
- International Association of Business Communicators, www.iabc.com
- Institute for Public Relations, <http://www.instituteforpr.com>
- International Public Relations Association, <http://www.ipra.org>
- Council of Communication Management, <http://www.ccmconnection.com>

- Council of Public Relations Firms, <http://www.prfirms.org>
- Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), www.prssa.org
- Women Executives in Public Relations, <http://www.wepr.org>
- Arthur W. Page Society, <http://www.awpagesociety.com>

Directories

O'Dwyers Directory of PR Firms, www.odwyerpr.com/

Publications

- PR News, www.prnewswire.com
- Opportunities in Public Affairs, www.opajobs.com

Internet Resources

- Careers in Marketing: Advertising and Public Relations - www.careers-in-marketing.com/ad.htm
- Careers in Public Relations (PRSA) <http://www.prssa.org/ Resources/profession/>
- PRSSA JobCenter Resources, <http://www.prssa.org/jobcenter/resources/>
- Wetfeet - <http://www.wetfeet.com>

Vault - <http://www.vault.com>