



In this edition:

- **Top Five Blogger Relations Errors**
- **Help a Reporter Out**
- **Community Notes**
- **Scott McClellan Reaction and Lessons**
- **Recap of the PR Awards Season**

Social Media Corner: Top Five Blogger Relations Mistakes

By Todd Van Hoosear

From a PR perspective, working with bloggers can be a risky affair, as anybody who has made it on to one of the PR blacklists that are circulating on the web can attest (see [here](#)). How do you avoid some of the biggest pitfalls in pitching and working with bloggers? Here are the top five blogger relations mistakes, and what you can do to avoid them:

1. **IGNORE BLOGGERS.** This is the biggest mistake a company or agency can make in today's world. Target learned this lesson the hard way (see [here](#)). Blogger relations must be fully integrated into your media relations program. While blogger and media relations still have some distinguishing characteristics, they are quickly merging as the news cycle shrinks and mainstream media outlets learn to become more interactive and social. Ignoring bloggers has led to some of the biggest examples of negative web visibility--most of them dealing with Google searches. Blogs, by their very nature, get a lot of "Google juice," and can quickly rise to the top of searches. If there's an unanswered challenge to your brand, your brand will suffer. However painful it may be, a response *at some level* is very frequently warranted. This is a major departure from many corporate communications policies, especially for public companies. But it's a necessary departure.

2. **SPAM BLOGGERS.** This may seem obvious, but remember, one man's trash is another man's treasure.

Blogger Mistakes Cont. on Page 4



Summer Social & Networking Gathering

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

Take a break from your usual summer routine and enjoy an evening with colleagues on the Terrace at the Oceana Restaurant at the Long Wharf Marriott in Boston!

PRSA Boston invites you to join us for drinks, appetizers and camaraderie as we celebrate summer, our awesome sports teams, and our picturesque waterfront city.

LOCATION:

**The Terrace at Oceana Long Wharf Marriott (On the Waterfront, Next to the Aquarium)
269 State Street, Boston**

Fees: PRSA, Pub Club and PRSSA Members - \$20; Guests or Nonmembers - \$25

To view details and to register, click [here](#).

Former White House Spokesman's Book Sets off Firestorm

Scott McClellan's book, *What Happened*, an account of his days as White House spokesman during the Iraq conflict, has set off a firestorm on several fronts. Both McClellan and the book, in which he claims that he and the Bush administration misled the public about the war in Iraq, have been on the receiving end of criticism from the Bush administration, the media, and public relations practitioners. A CBS legal analyst even criticized the Public Relations Society of America. Later in this issue are pieces about the criticism directed at the PRSA and its response, plus a piece on the public relations lessons learned from the book.

See stories, Pages 3 and 4

Help a Reporter Out: New Way to Reach the Media

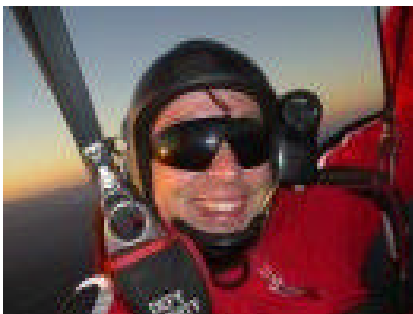
By Courtney Tunney
Syracuse University PRSSA

PR professionals now have a new way to reach out to the media. Peter Shankman, CEO of the marketing and PR firm The Geek Factory, Inc., created the Help a Reporter Out email list serve as a way for journalists to reach out to experts.

The way the service works is fairly straightforward. Journalists submit inquiries online on topics ranging from baby bottles to banking. Shankman sends out inquiries three times per day to PR practitioners subscribed to the email list. The only rule is no off-topic pitching as the service is regulated to fend off those just looking for free exposure. Participating practitioners have landed placements in trade, regional and national outlets, including *The New York Times*, Bloomberg and CNN.

Shankman initially set up the service as a Facebook group. However, as membership expanded beyond 1,200, Shankman opened a separate website and list serve, which currently boasts more than 16,000 members. The service got so popular that retailers started to request sponsorship opportunities and advertising space.

To register for Help a Reporter Out, visit www.helpareporterout.com.



Peter Shankman: CEO, Entrepreneur, Adventurist.

Chapter Notes

Volunteers Needed for Interviews

Several requests for informational interviews from grads, job changers and job seekers alike arrive at PRSA Boston. They often ask “Who can I talk to?” and typically look for any info they can get on PR in Boston, advice on breaking into the field and networking. If anyone has a few minutes to speak with these individuals, many who seem bright and motivated, please contact Beth Bryant at bbryant@bbwrites.com.

Pirozzolo Extends International Reach

Pirozzolo Company Public Relations announced that it is partnering with Vitis Public Relations in London and Kyodo Public Relations in Tokyo to offer clients further international communications services. Currently, Pirozzolo is working with Vitis on U.S. communications for WhiteSmoke, Inc., a grammar- and spell-checking tool that uses artificial intelligence and with Kyodo for the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan to promote Japan’s seafood industry in North America. Pirozzolo, founded in 1981 by Dick Pirozzolo, earlier this year became the Boston Office of HFN Kommunikation GmbH of Germany.



Dick Pirozzolo

Communications Lessons from McClellan's Attempt At Contrition

By Ed Cafasso

There is a big difference between whistle blowing and soul cleansing. Former White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan may have thought his tell-all tome, *What Happened* would be a lucrative act of contrition. The reality has been far different. So far, McClellan has enjoyed mostly scorn and skepticism, along with a date to testify under oath before the House Judiciary Committee.

A “culture of deception” inside the White House? Shocking! McClellan and his publishers should have realized how hard it would be to discredit an administration that plumbs the depths of low expectations on a daily basis.

Because it contained no new revelations about the president’s intelligence, how his administration worked (and didn’t) or how it manipulated public opinion, McClellan’s book ricocheted in ways that have done more to damage McClellan than anyone else. His former colleagues immediately attacked his credibility. And the media has shown no pity for a guy who had played them like a fiddle for years.

In fact, the best questions raised by McClellan’s book are questions only he can answer: Why didn’t he go public sooner? Why didn’t he resign? How could it be that the key communications executive of the United States presidency did not know the truth? Or did not ask the right questions?

So, while McClellan’s so-called “tell-all” book tells us little we didn’t already know, believe or suspect, it does offer five instructive lessons for corporate communicators and executives who care about reputation management for their enterprise.

1. Don’t forget who you work for. When you are the lead communicator for any institution, on the agency or on the client side, you have a

McClellan Lessons Continued on Page 5

Boston PR Award Wins

By Farah Hussain

The 2007 awards season came to a close in June, with both the PRSA and the Publicity Club of New England holding annual awards ceremonies to recognize public relations excellence in the United States and in New England, respectively.

On June 5 in New York City, PRSA awarded 51 Silver Anvils and 57 Awards of Excellence to public relations campaigns implemented by agencies and communications departments nationwide. Three Silver Anvils went to agencies headquartered in the Boston area, including Cone LLC and Racepoint Group, and one to a leading retailer:

- **Cone LLC for the American Heart Association**
Silver Anvil: Public Service – Associations/Non-Profits
Silver Anvil: Integrated Communications – Associations/Government/Non-Profits
- **Racepoint Group for One Laptop per Child**
Silver Anvil: Reputation/Brand Management – Non-Profit Organizations
- **Staples for Staples Invention Quest**
Silver Anvil: Marketing Consumer Products

On June 2 in Boston, the Publicity Club of New England awarded 83 Bell Awards and 106 Merits to agencies and communications departments in New England. The Super Bell Award went to Cone LLC for its American Heart Association Start! community service campaign. Steve and Paula Mae Schwartz of Schwartz Communication received the John J. Mallow Crystal Bell, Lifetime Achievement Award for their service to the public relations industry.

Congratulations to all the winners!

PRSA National Speaks Out on Ethics in Wake of McClellan Book

Former White House spokesman Scott McClellan's controversial new book, *What Happened*, has generated a storm of controversy, engulfing not only McClellan himself but also the Public Relations Society of America.

When McClellan embarked on his book promotion tour, he found himself on the defensive over his claims that he and the Bush administration misled the public about the war in Iraq.

Political commentators challenged McClellan, and CBS legal analyst Andrew Cohen delivered a commentary stating, "Apparently, an industry the very essence of which is to try to convince people that a turkey is really an eagle has a rule that condemns lying...."

"The Public Relations Society of America states: 'We adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of those we represent...' This clause strikes me as if the Burglars Association of America had as its creed 'Thou Shalt Not Steal.'"

Them's fightin' words, PRSA National concluded, firing off a letter to CBS and to PRSA members, blasting the legal analyst and urging members to blog on the CBS website about PRSA's Code of Ethics and how PR practitioners are, indeed, honest. The response generated a second polemic from Cohen, saying he expected the firestorm.

PRSA National also sent out a press release calling for government reform and challenging the 2008 presidential candidates to "adopt a communications policy engaging principles like those in the PRSA Code of Ethics." And PRSA National CEO and Chair Jeffrey Julin posted a video response to Cohen on the PRSA National website.

PRSA Speaks Out Cont. on Page 5

Blogger Mistakes Cont. from Page 1

Many of the people on the PR blacklists made one simple mistake: they grabbed the blog's contact information from a media database and sent a blind pitch to the blogger without either reading the blog or verifying the information in the database (see [here](#)). One of my mentors called this "shotgun PR," and it's very rarely successful, especially when shooting blind. It's important to note that bloggers are no different than other traditional media in their distaste for "spam pitches." The only difference is, bloggers don't have editors who would normally prevent their rants about bad PR to become public. Sure, use your media database to identify potential targets for your pitches. But read the blog (especially the contact information), and apply the more targeted "rifleshot PR" technique of customizing your pitch to each target. It's time consuming, but so is trying to recover from a public rant about your PR practices.

3. THREATEN BLOGGERS. It's tempting when something goes wrong to fall back on the classic "cease and desist" legal model. The AP tried it (see [here](#)), and many other companies have too. When a large computer software and hardware manufacturer threatened one of my former clients with a lawsuit over an alleged misuse of a trademark, it led to nothing but negative exposure for the manufacturer and positive exposure for my client. Legal intervention should continue to be the last recourse. The approach that many of the most successful public companies are taking to social media and blogging policy is simple: bring in the legal team at the beginning to formulate a policy for external communications and blogging that takes into consideration the new realities, and bring them in again only if the process breaks down. The rest of the time, just "be smart."

4. DON'T APOLOGIZE. Everybody makes mistakes. Even bloggers. Even companies. Social media stresses transparency, and this is a concept that bloggers take very seriously. Transparency drives everything from "the link ethic" (see [here](#))

Blogger Mistakes Cont. on Page 5

Blogger Mistakes Cont. from Page 4.

to the use of strikethroughs and other annotations describing changes to blog posts. Bloggers are very receptive when they see companies and PR practitioners embracing the same ethics. If you make a public mistake, and you will, make a public apology.

5. FAKE IT. The Web is great for starting hoaxes, but it's also getting better at sniffing them out, and the blogosphere is no different. Creativity is one thing, but out-and-out deception is another one entirely. The recent cell phone popcorn video hoax is a great example (see [here](#)). "Stealth marketing," as it's sometimes called, may result in buzz. But more than likely, it will result in the negative kind. Sure, be creative. Deception may get you buzz and give your brand an edge, but it's a double-edged sword. Trust is hard to earn and easy to break. A 2007 study from Jupiter Research reported that 85 percent of "viral marketing" campaigns failed (see [here](#)). Most of them fizzle, but some of them go down in flames (remember last year's bomb scare?). Be real, even if you have a few warts.



Todd Van Hoosier heads up the social media practice at Topaz Partners and is co-founder and promotions director of the Social Media Club of Boston.

PRSA Speaks Out Cont from Page 4

Among Julin's statements:

“Public relations is about relationships built on honest communications and trustworthy behavior. That is what the members of the Public Relations Society of America are about, and that is what we bring to our employers, to our clients and our communities.”

McClellan's Lessons Cont. from Page 3

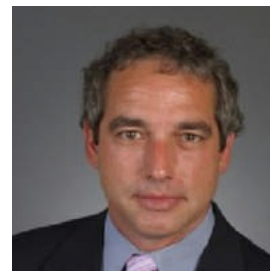
responsibility that transcends your direct report.

2. Don't forget your ethics. If you haven't lately, read the PRSA Code of Ethics. It contains some useful moral reminders, like: "Be honest and accurate in all communications." "Act promptly to correct erroneous communications..." "Investigate the truthfulness and accuracy of information..."

3. Don't think you can get away with it. You can't get away with dishonesty or the willful manipulation of information. The truth will come out. Hire a great, ethical PR person, treat them as trusted advisor and let them help you and your company do the right thing.

4. Don't act only as a conduit; serve as a counselor. If you think your role as the lead communicator for your enterprise is to simply cross your fingers as you repeat the words you are told to say, please re-think your career choice. PR is about research, fact-gathering, brainstorming, scenario planning and smart thinking. Don't be a tree. See the forest.

5. People like Scott McClellan are the exception, not the rule. What McClellan did is not what we do or should do, ever. There's no doubt that PR professionals make mistakes or can be misled. But there is a difference between a weak player and a wicked player. There's a special place in PR Hell reserved for the latter.



A former political reporter, Ed Cafasso is the managing director of MS&L's Boston office and a member of the board of directors of the Boston Chapter of PRSA. This article was adapted from a blog post at <http://prfinishline.blogspot.com/>.

Have an idea for an article? Know about news of interest to your fellow PR colleagues? Contact Christopher Ranjitkar, News & Views Editor at Christopher.ranjitkar@gmail.com