

Here's January N&V at a glance:

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From the President

Welcome to a year I am confident is going to be filled with great opportunities and great experiences for every member of the public relations profession in Boston. It is my honor and privilege to serve as your PRSA Boston president for 2007.

Thanks to the leadership of Nancy Sterling and many others over the past year, the chapter is in strong condition. The PRSA Boston officers and board of directors have already met, and I can promise you that this is going to be an outstanding year.

My goals are simple. To take the tag line of PRSA National "Advancing the Profession and the Professional" and make it mean something to all the members of our Boston Chapter.

I have a lot of small goals, some of which I am sure will not get done. But I have three significant goals I wanted to share with you.

- **Continue the outstanding programming—** For the past few years PRSA Boston has consistently put together some amazing programs, and we have a few interesting ones already planned for this year. We are also looking at broadening our offerings and creating programs designed

to serve members who may have been underserved in the past (young professionals, senior practitioners, etc.) While we have a good deal of our programs charted out, we are still flexible, and if you have any ideas – please contact either myself or our VP of Programs, Karen Kennedy.

- **Create new ways for our members to interact and learn from each other—** Reading wonderful newsletters and getting emails from PRSA National is not what keeps you as a member year upon year. It is the programming and what we can learn from each other and how we can help each other that brings the true value of membership. The programming is well underway, but we will look at creative approaches to networking, young professionals nights and using technology more effectively to best serve the needs and desires of our PR community.
- **Better serve our agency members—** Historically, I believe PRSA Boston could have done a better job in meeting the needs of the agencies in our area. I have some ideas for changing that and I have already begun to contact many of the

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MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

From Julie Lear, PRSA Boston, VP Membership

Happy New Year. Before launching into 2007 membership programs, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on PRSA Boston's flourishing 2006 membership development. This year we welcomed nearly 100 new members to our organization. These members heralded from a variety of industries and drew participation from corporations, public relations agencies and consultancies, universities, financial institutions, non-profits, and hospitals. We are thrilled the Chapter is expanding each year and that we are able to maintain our long-time members as well as attract new professionals. Thank you for your participation and support!

In June, I welcomed the new members that joined the Chapter from January to June. I'd now like to welcome our newest members who have joined in the past six months. It is

truly an honor to be a part of such a talented group of professionals.

On behalf of everyone at PRSA Boston, I would like to take this opportunity to formally welcome and introduce our new members. We look forward to meeting you in person at upcoming programs.

New Members – June 1, 2006 through December 31, 2006

Hazel Butters, Prompt Communications
Kirstin M. Cloutier, Public Strategy Group
Courtney Curzi, Manning Selvage & Lee Public Relations
Robin L. DeCarlo, Indevus Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
Danielle H. Eccleston, Manning Selvage & Lee Public Relations
William C. Ecevido, NW Management
Pam Erickson, E*Trade
Christina Feeney

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agencies in our area to discuss what we can do for them. If are an agency principal and you haven't heard from me, don't worry, you will.

Most of all, this year we need you. The Boston Chapter is almost 400 members strong, and it is its members that make it great. The only way we can provide the high level of quality programs our members deserve and expect, or the content they want, is with your help. It doesn't matter if you have just a few hours a year, if you have been doing PR for one year or for 40, there is room for you and we welcome your participation. If you have volunteered to help in the past and haven't yet been taken up on that offer, that is my fault. But we are listening now. If you haven't been to an event in a while, try it.

We would love to provide more content for young professionals, senior practitioners, diversity, non-profit, you name it. So please email me at markm@schwartz-pr.com and let me know what interests you.

There are so many more points I would like to make. But in the interests of space, I will simply say...hang on to your hats. This is going to be a great year!

Note: You don't need to wait until next month to find out what is going on with PRSA Boston. Late last year I launched the PRSA Boston Blog (www.prsaboston.blogspot.com) where I will be posting weekly updates. Check it out and let me know what you think.

Mark McClennan, APR
President, PRSA Boston

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David N. Giguere, Boston Research & Communications, Inc
Alexis Guthrie, Manning, Selvage & Lee
Erika Majorie Haskins
Kristina Helb, New Balance Athletic Show, Inc.
Steffi A. Karp, Strategy Analytics, Inc.
Lauren D. Kauffman, New Balance Athletic Show, Inc.
Jason Kauppi, Kauppi Communications, Inc.
Thomas E. Keane, Schwartz Communications, Inc.
Zoe Keller, TERC
Maribeth A. LeBeau, Text 100
Paul D. LaBelle
Allesandra N. Lanza, American Student Assistance
Michele E. Lemos
John M. Lewis, Cognex Corporation
Caitlin Marshall, Hyatt Regency Boston
Caitlin S. Melnick, Schneider Associates
Alyssa Mikiko DiPasquale
Michael D. Morrison, Boston Museum of Science
Catherine Olofson, Harvard Business Review
Sara M. Radkiewicz, Thomson
Jackie Rubin, Boston University, School of Dental Medicine
Amy P. Techtmann, Idenix Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
Meghan L. Washington
Kristen Janet Wylie, Nuance Communications

Not a PRSA Member Yet?

Stay tuned for information regarding winter PRSA membership promotions. If you have any questions or would like more information on applying for single or group memberships in the meantime, contact PRSA Boston's Vice President of Membership, Julie Lear, APR, (617) 388-8112 / jglear@comcast.net.

Brain Tumor Society Seeks PR Volunteers

The Brain Tumor Society (www.tbts.org), a national nonprofit based in Watertown with a mission of research, education and support, currently seeks committed volunteers with experience in public relations to:

- Place event listings with print, broadcast and online outlets
- Identify PR-positive personal stories from constituents
- Develop press releases / pitch letters
- Draft and/or review marketing materials

Short-term projects are available for various events throughout the year, and longer-term volunteers will help to outline a general publicity strategy for local and national media coverage of the brain tumor problem and BTS solutions. Please contact Director of Communications Dawn Grenier at grenier@tbts.org or 617-924-9997 ext 16.

The Emergence of the Social Media News Release

By Jennifer Jewett, SHIFT Communications

On May 23rd, 2006, SHIFT Communications debuted the first-ever template for the “social media news release.” Cymfony and Novell followed suit over the summer and issued their own social media releases. Companies such as Chevrolet, SpiralFrog (in association with Universal Music), Bechtel and Walt Disney’s Buena Vista Pictures have also jumped on the bandwagon.

The inclusion of new media tools in traditional media services proves that PR pros have to become intimately familiar with these tools and how they can boost press release distribution and publication beyond the usual suspects. Delivering press release headlines in RSS format also shows that the good ole press release has become a direct marketing and SEO (Search Engine Optimization) vehicle that goes way beyond its original purpose. As PR professionals, we should be the ones pointing out the various options to our clients when disseminating a “simple” press release.

As the social media news release will become more and more widely used, here are some tips to go along with it:

How does the social media news release look?

The press release of tomorrow eliminates the much dreaded marketing and PR-speak

(“Company XYZ, a leading provider of...”) allowing journalists to editorialize more and put their own spin on the original news.

An example of the release template is available at: <http://www.shiftcomm.com/downloads/smprtemplate.pdf>

(Note, since May 2006 the template has been downloaded more than 50,000 times!)

When is it appropriate to use?

At first one may think that a consumer tech company may be more open to issuing a “social media” news release than a technically-focused company, but that is not always the case as Novell recently proved.

This is an opportunity for public relations professionals to demonstrate their expertise of old and new media by making recommendations on when to use one versus the other, or why to use both.

Generally speaking, a social media release is never inappropriate as it includes all the viable information a journalist needs.

Additional information about the PR 2.0 release from SHIFT Communications can be found at:

http://www.pr-squared.com/MT_Virtual/mt-search.cgi?IncludeBlogs=1&search=Social+media+press+release

Your 2007 Resolutions

If your local sports clubs, diet classes and smoking cessation clinics are crowded, it must be just after New Year's. Every January, the faithful (and hopeful) once again solemnly pledge to lose weight, improve their fitness and kick all sorts of bad habits.

Do public relations practices warrant the same sort of New Year's resolution making? A number of ethical "hangovers" still linger from 2006, so the answer should be a resounding yes. With 2007 PR programs now underway, we'd all do well in resolving to avoid last year's pitfalls in our current work.

There are no automatic answers, and plenty of ethical questions to consider. Two of the higher profile issues still in play include the following.

If the Blog Fits ...

Global PR powerhouse Edelman (ironically, after being named "Large Agency of 2006" by *PR Week*) created its own public relations crisis while promoting its client, Wal-Mart. Edelman established several blogs purporting to shower the mega-retailer in political backing and grassroots love. Headlining names like "Working Families for Wal-Mart" and "Wal-Marting Across America," the blogs carried anonymous praise that ultimately was traced back to Edelman employees.

When, Edelman's role in creating artificial word of mouth was uncovered, the Word of Mouth Marketing Association summarily threw the agency on a six month probation. Edelman ultimately apologized for not properly disclosing the blogs' origins or their funding, and promised to improve their transparency in the future.

Ethical considerations – When establishing any kind of Web presence, what does the target audience expect as the likely source of information? Where does a PR program draw the line between the anonymity that a Web posting typically expects and the need to identify client sponsorship?

Television's Dirty Big Secret

In 2006, Video News Releases continued to garner national attention. Self-appointed watchdogs like *Free Press* and the *Center for Media and Democracy* traced television "coverage" about renewable energy to a VNR funded by a company with financial stakes in the ethanol industry. These groups filed complaints with the Federal Communications Commission and proposed regulations that would force TV stations to disclose sources of information used in their news programming.

Fresh accusations of "fake news" – and threats of government intervention – provoked an industry counter-offensive. Acknowledging that the controversy had hurt their bottom line, VNR producers established the National Association of Broadcast Communicators to lobby against government presence in newsrooms.

A founder of one of the nation's largest VNR shops was quick to point out how a video news release appearing in a TV broadcast is "in every significant respect identical to the process by which any news story finds its way into any medium: a reporter, editor or producer decides that it is newsworthy, based on the merits of the story." So long as no payment, sponsorship or quid pro quo was involved, a VNR should be treated no different than a standard press release.

Create and Reinforce the Right Mindset

By Meghan Magner, Public Relations Manager, Foley Hoag LLP

(Note: This article was published in the December 2006 issue of *Women's Business*.)

If you work in a marketing discipline, chances are this will happen during your career: You will pursue an initiative on behalf of your company that is new or unusual. It could be completely unfamiliar territory for your organization. You may propose something so different from the status quo that there is resistance to change.

If your company is consensus-driven, which many are compared to the traditional corporate hierarchy, your challenge is even more difficult. In such a setting, success is rooted in the ability to sell ideas, build teams and be a change agent. It is when what you propose becomes secondary to how you propose it.

Communicators spend a significant amount of time crafting the right messages for the right audiences. But they often overlook the most important audience – the internal stakeholders – and plunge fearlessly ahead, only to find later that the organization was not wholly on board and their efforts fell flat.

How to remedy the situation?

By creating and reinforcing a marketing mindset.

Drink your own Kool-Aid. Enthusiasm is contagious. People like to get behind causes with passionate leaders, and business is no different. Believe success is possible and deliver that message with conviction each time you have the opportunity.

What's in it for me? Good communicators, whether speaking to a crowded room or a single journalist, know to follow the WIIFM (“What’s in it for me?”) principle. Be cognizant of your message and who it is directed toward.

As you would create a client-focused message when launching a new service offering, think about your internal constituencies and create messages that resonate with each. What will participation in your proposed activity do for them? Will it bond them to the organization, give them deeper touchpoints with their clients, provide greater visibility in the community?

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Ethical considerations – Are the visual or audio portions of a VNR equivalent to those which a broadcast news organization might have recorded itself (given the opportunity or budget)? Is the footage so unique or constitute such a clear form of advocacy that its source needs to be identified?

Most of the gym clubs packed with post-New Year’s crowds (I’m told by people who exercise regularly) retreat to their normal

levels by February 15. Ethical resolutions related to our PR practices need to survive a lot longer in 2007.

Jack Jackson, ethics officer for PRSA Boston, is president of On-Message Public Relations. Ethics resources from PRSA are available at http://www.prsa.org/aboutUs/ethics/preamble_en.html. To discuss these topics in ethics or raise any questions, please contact Jack at ethics@On-Message.com.

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Whatever the benefit is, communicate it clearly up front.

Identify champions. Nothing builds support for an initiative faster than aligning thought leaders around it. That is why successful political campaigns enlist economists, former public officials and business leaders. Increase your chances of success and take a page out of the political playbook. Approach a handful of key individuals who are likely to benefit from your idea. Once your champions are on board, you will have a group of persuasive, influential voices to support you as you move the initiative or proposal throughout your organization.

See the big picture. Be aware that other forces are at play in your organization and gauge your own approach accordingly; it may not be the right time to introduce a new concept. Be sure that your internal audience is fully primed to receive your message and free of other distractions.

Share the successes. One of the biggest mistakes people make is completing a project without communicating the results. Take every occasion to share the good news story, display the terrific advertisement, or congratulate the award winner throughout

the implementation, and especially at the close, of an effort. Seeing results makes a company feel good and whets its appetite for more.

Savor the small victories. Occasionally, take a step back and view your progress with a fresh perspective. You will likely be pleased with the result. People close to a situation have a tendency to be more critical. Remember the point at which you began and enjoy how far you have come. Take pride in the small victories: Over time, they add up to the big win.

Meghan Magner is public relations manager at Foley Hoag LLP, Boston, and is an adjunct instructor of public relations in the Communication Department at Boston College.