

programs to the web and to e-mail.

What will digital communication look like in five years?

The focal point will be a device that fits in the palm of your hand. This device will primarily be wireless and will interact with other equipment such as a printer or HDTV. The desktop will probably be gone as a mainstream tool over the next few years and the primary work system will be a notebook that is under three pounds.

How will public relations change?

Public relations has changed dramatically and will continue to do so. It will be crucial for practitioners to become multidisciplinary, rather than specializing in only one area of marketing communications. However, what will continue to be important is the value of relationships. The landscape and the way we communicate has changed, but even with tools like Facebook and LinkedIn, there is nothing more effective than meeting people face-to-face both inside and outside a company. No previous communication method such as U.S. Mail, telephone, or fax replaced meeting people and I don't expect that to change with whatever else comes along.

As you rejoin the PRSA Boston Board as PRSSA Chair, what are your plans to increase communications and maintain the relationship between PRSA and PRSSA?

I have always had an interest in mentoring and helping others out with their career plans. I am currently a mentor for my alma mater, Syracuse University. Ultimately, I will work to develop a stronger two-way relationship between PRSA Boston and local PRSSA chapters, getting PRSSA students involved more with PRSA and assisting these student groups in obtaining resources. **CR**

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President's Letter

A Season to Savor: Arena PR

Dear Colleagues:

OK, temperatures in June were 10 degrees cooler than normal. We were drenched by five times the usual amount of rain. But no matter the weather, June to August is my favorite time of year. It's Arena PR season.

During these three months, proportionally more scandals -- sexual, fiscal, political -- enter the Public Arena than any other point on the calendar. It's prime time for elected officials, business people and their attorneys to first deny and then attempt to explain various indiscretions.



Unlike most news viewers or readers, PR folks are uncommonly savvy at judging these performances. For us, Monday morning quarterbacking isn't asking, "You think he's guilty?" or "Can she be elected?" In Arena PR, we debate overall communication strategy. We argue optimal ways of handling the press blitz. And we trade views on which PR plays are ideal or too risky under present circumstances: "Does this get him out in front of the problem?" or "Would you make the disclosure sooner?" or "How would you word his 'my supportive wife forgives me' statement?"

If you're skeptical that June-July-August represents the height of Arena PR season, consider the timing of some recent events:

- Presidential candidate John Edwards admits his affair with videographer Rielle Hunter -- August 2008.
- Feds indict Alaska Sen. Ted Stevens for receiving undisclosed gifts from a construction firm -- July 2008.
- News breaks of Idaho Sen. Larry Craig's "wide stance" in an airport men's room -- August 2007.
- Louisiana Sen. David Vitter holds a news conference about his ties to a prostitution ring -- July 2007.
- Justice Dept. investigates White House leaks of CIA operative Valerie Plame Wilson's identity -- July 2005.

Need I remind anyone that Monica Lewinsky was a *summer intern*? The all-time classic among Arena PR seasons was the Senate Watergate hearing. Broadcasting live, Sen. Howard Baker electrified TV audiences when he demanded a witness inform the nation: "What did the President know and when did he know it?"

Today, that's a pop culture catch-phrase. But in August 1973, the question served as an exquisite object lesson in PR. It deconstructed the entire scandal in just 11 words. (For the record, the question was drafted by Baker's aide, future senator and actor, Fred Thompson.) It also put PR practitioners on notice about the critical importance of anticipating and preparing for damning questions similar to it in the future.

That's why Arena PR is so engaging and why I'm such a big fan. In appraising others' game plans we're reminded of the stakes involved every time we provide PR counsel. In following current scandals, we hone our skills at responding to situations and developing tactics.

Like this year's lineup:

- Nev. Sen. John Ensign admits an affair with a campaign staffer.
- South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford's "hiking the Appalachian Trail" turns out to be a liaison with his Argentine mistress.
- Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin resigns, provoking wide speculation on the "real reasons" behind it.

Did Sanford grant one too many interviews -- "I had met my soul mate ... This was a love story: a forbidden one" -- after the crisis was largely behind him? Did Palin shoot herself in the muck with a rambling -- "Only dead fish go with the flow" -- and oddly timed news conference?

Sure, a lot of this summer's weather has sucked. But, *whatever!* The 2009 Arena PR season is off to a fabulous start.

Jack Jackson
President 2009-2010
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Local Firm Wins Silver Anvil

Schwartz and Fiserv Recognized for Technology PR Campaign

Schwartz Communications has won a 2009 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence from PRSA along with its client Fiserv, Inc. (NASDAQ: FIVV). The Silver Anvil Award of Excellence, which recognizes outstanding strategic public relations planning and implementation, was presented to Schwartz and Fiserv for the "Go Green and Save Campaign" in the Marketing Consumer Services: Technology category.

By highlighting the environmental benefits of paying and receiving bills online, and educating consumers on how to protect themselves from identity fraud, Fiserv and Schwartz Communications were able to accelerate behavior change and attract new users. Through a multi-pronged media and social media campaign, the company attracted more than 127,000 new users and planted trees across the country for each one via the Arbor Day Foundation programs.

"The Award of Excellence recognizes top public relations programs in our industry," said James J. Roop, 2009 Silver Anvil committee chair and president of Roop & Co., Cleveland, Ohio. "To receive an Award of Excellence, programs must be of Silver Anvil caliber and represent some of the finest strategic and creative thinking in our profession."

Schwartz Communications has won two Silver Anvils and two Awards of Excellence for its work with Fiserv (the account team led by our own District Chair - Mark W. McClennan, APR) over the past seven years. Fiserv and CheckFree, acquired by Fiserv in December 2007, have been Schwartz clients for more than 10 years.

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U.S. Census Bureau Taps Local PRSSA

Group tasked with increasing awareness of census

by Ashley Myers

Several college public relations programs across the country have student-led agencies that provide services to local businesses and organizations. These programs provide budding practitioners with a chance to hone their skills and gain real-world client service and program management experience.

As integral as these programs are to college public relations and communications programs, it isn't every day that a major government agency taps a local student group to drive awareness of a major government initiative.

However, the United States Census Bureau did exactly that when it recently enlisted the help of the Public Relations Student Society of America's Salem State College Chapter.

Last fall, the Census Bureau came to Salem State's PRSSA with the task of educating the community about the U.S. Census, especially the student population. The Census is taken every ten years, with the results often helping to redirect funds for government programs and initiatives to appropriate areas. This is especially true for educational institutions, where headcounts have a direct impact on the amount of money available to students in the form of Pell Grants. Failure to fill out the Census forms results in a decrease in the amount of money distributed to the institution for students. The amount of money distributed based on the Census remains the same for the next ten years until the Census is issued again.

"What college student wouldn't want to increase the free money they're receiving?" said Yanique Shaw, president of Salem State's PRSSA. "PRSSA is here to help the Census Bureau relay its message to the public, especially fellow students here, who have the power to help our institution secure its fair share of federal money."

The U.S. Census Bureau met with PRSSA members to discuss potential ideas for distributing this key information and how current methods could be changed to better reach college students.

The campaign will feature new branding and marketing materials created by Salem State's PRSSA. The campaign will launch this September and will run through the beginning of 2010.

Ashley Myers is a public relations student and secretary of Salem State's Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA).

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Yes, We Can Beat the Recession

IPN Meeting Tackles Surviving as an Independent Practitioner

by Dick Pirozolo

While it's no secret that public relations firms, like most businesses, have been hit by the economic crisis, there are keys to beating the recession, according to Curtis N. Bingham, President of the Predictive Consulting Group of Littleton, Mass.

Bingham, who spoke to PRSA Boston's Independent Practitioners Network (IPN) in June told the group, "it has all happened before," underscoring events that lead to previous economic downturns. Among them, said Bingham, were the oil embargo of 1974, the savings and loan scandal of 1981, the Iraq War in 1990 and the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center. "While these events marked the beginning of previous recessions, in every case, the recessions lasted about 11 months."

"Real sales are up, the construction industry has stabilized and people are beginning to spend on technology," which, Bingham pointed out, are signs that we are emerging from this recession.

However, Bingham, a champion of the corporate CCO or Chief Customer Officer whose mission is to build customer loyalty, warned that in difficult times, public relations practitioners and other professionals cannot hide from clients hoping to avoid bad news.

As a first step to weathering the recession he stressed that you keep your customers from leaving by finding out what they want. Agencies need to change the value proposition by eliminating costly services that clients no

longer value.

He pointed out, for example, that everyone is trading down - Wal-Mart and Dollar Store sales are up, while sales at high-end retailers like Nieman Marcus are down.

"Clients who used to want Madison Avenue are looking to trade down."

While it is tempting to venture into new services or markets to generate income, do not sacrifice the core business by doing so, warned Bingham. He cautioned public relations firms to change only one thing - expand into new markets with existing products or offer new products in your existing markets. Don't try to offer new products in new markets during difficult economic times.

Bingham suggested that independent practitioners seek out clients who want less costly services than those offered by larger agencies and to collaborate on client projects with other professionals. Other ways to survive the recession include pursuing "green" businesses, pitching companies receiving stimulus money and those that have been awarded new patents. With a little bit of planning and innovating, any independent practitioner can weather the economic storm.

Dick Pirozzolo is Principal & Founder of [Pirozzolo Company Public Relations](#) of Wellesley, Mass.

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News & Views is a monthly newsletter by and for members of New England's largest association of PR professionals.

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