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## FROM THE PRESIDENT, NANCY STERLING, APR

Dear Fellow PRSA Members:

We kicked off the year with a top-notch event--our annual Tools of the Trade Show at the Fairmont Copley Plaza. Vendors and attendees mingled and learned about the latest innovations to help us do our jobs more efficiently, effectively and creatively.

The Program Committee followed that strong start with an innovative panel on the communications aspects of natural disasters. Unfortunately those acts of nature and/or man seem to be occurring with increasing frequency and ferocity and communicating in times of turmoil is more necessary than ever.

Speaking of programming, we are trying to expand our program offerings to members in a new and different way. Beginning this month we are going to try hosting some of PRSA National's excellent webinars at central

downtown and suburban locations. For a fee of \$25.00 (\$35.00 for non-members) PR practitioners can participate in webinars that would cost \$275.00 at their own offices.

If we receive the right level of response we will plan to host a different topic every month. So weigh in with Board Member at Large Jen Bien (who has graciously offered to spearhead this initiative) or our Chapter Administrator (and newly Accredited!) Beth Bryant, APR. Check out the webinars on national's web site and tell our local team what topics interest you. Offer to host a session at your office and you and your fellow employees can participate for free! Take advantage of this chance to brush up on your skills or learn new ones and network with your chapter colleagues at the same time.

Hope to see you there!

Nancy

## COMMUNICATING IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

*By Kirk Hazlett, APR*

An attentive audience ranging from seasoned professionals to students/budding practitioners enjoyed a rare opportunity last month to hear from the “trenches” the challenges and rewards of conducting effective public relations programs in the face of disaster situations.

Communications professionals from some of Massachusetts’ leading nonprofit organizations and the media shared “war stories” and situation-tested tips for minimizing the impact of a crisis on the organization itself and the publics served by that organization.

Peter Judge, Public Information Officer for the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, and no stranger to crises/disasters, moderated a panel of communications experts including Hugh Drummond, Director of Communications for the American Red Cross of Massachusetts Bay, David Trueblood, Director of Public Relations for the Boston Foundation, and Coleen Marrin, News Director for WCVB-TV.

The evening was a free-flowing sharing of information, advice, dos and don’ts, and lessons learned, with time at the end for questions from the audience.

Not surprisingly, *relationship building* as a proactive step in effective crisis communications was cited by all panelists. “Relationships are very important,” noted Hugh Drummond. “Know who else can help you in and with your story.”

David Trueblood offered this sage advice regarding disaster communications: “Think it through so you know how you are going to

respond in a disaster or crisis. Understand both your own and your organization’s critical strengths and stay within your boundaries.”

In speaking to his organization’s role in disaster response, David said, “The Boston Foundation can leverage the wealth, experience and philanthropic resources to assist. We can call on donors we know and relationships we have to help other organizations get the job done.”

Finally, regarding preparing for crisis or disaster communications, he advised: “Make *sure* you have the answers on hand. The time to organize this information is *before* the fact, *not* after!”

Coleen Marrin spoke from her vantage point at one of New England’s top television stations. “It is sobering to think of the incredible, significant responsibilities we all have in responding to disasters. All of you have a very serious role in getting valuable information to your publics.”

Coleen offered practical advice for anyone preparing a crisis/disaster communications plan. “How will you get your client to a TV station for a news interview?”

“What steps do you take to gear up for a disaster?”

At WVCB-TV, said Coleen, “We gather everyone involved in coverage, both in front of the camera and behind, for strategic meetings. We contact everyone who we will need for reports (MEMA, ARC, and others). There is a *lot* of activity and preplanning going on behind the scenes. And, you...as

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PR people, should be proactive in getting your company's or client's information in the databases of all media."

Speaking from the "on-the-scene" perspective, David advised practitioners to "know what visuals you have available for the media" as they are covering your situation.

Building on David's advice, Hugh emphasized that the successful communicator must "be able to differentiate between print, television, and radio media needs and your story availabilities. Don't waste their time. Know your media and their requirements. I must care about my credibility...if I call the media with a story, *I want to be believable.*"

"How about the safety and security of your employees?"

"That is very important," said Coleen. "The safety of our employees is *more* important than a 'picture.' Also, remember your employees are people. They have emotional needs and spiritual needs. *Don't forget your people.*"

"It's not just your publics who are affected," added Hugh. "It's your employees. Also... take time out for yourself."

"What role does the Internet play in crisis communications?"

Speaking first, Coleen noted that, at WCVB-TV, "We have streaming video. The Web is totally integrated into all operations relating to a crisis or breaking news. The Web is an integral part of today's communications."

David continued the thought by adding: "The most important thing in using the Web is knowing how you can take advantage of it to further your purposes." But, he cautioned, "...test it before you go live!"

Speaking from the nonprofit communications angle, Hugh observed that "the Web, for organizations with limited resources, can be the best way of reaching out to and responding to their publics."

"The Media...a help or an obstacle?"

"They're *not* an obstacle," said Peter. "You *need* the media to get your information out."

In addition, said David, "You must think creatively. Don't just go for the major dailies; look at your community newspapers or local cable outlets."

"What advice for students in the audience?"

Coleen: "Internships and networking."

David: "Think strategically; interview for the 'next job.' Look ahead to where you want to be in the *future.*"

Hugh: "The American Red Cross has volunteer PR opportunities in disaster response. Volunteers get hands-on training and are given numerous opportunities to *learn.*"

Excellent advice from the professionals who "walk the walk and talk the talk" each and every day of their lives!

## ACCREDITATION CORNER... 'YES, YOU CAN!'

### BETH BRYANT, APR, AWARDED PRSA ACCREDITATION

PRSA Boston's own Beth Bryant, APR, a Watertown public relations professional and senior public relations consultant, has been awarded the designation of "Accredited in Public Relations" (APR) by the Public Relations Society of America. Beth's career has spanned from journalist and political campaign strategist to agency principal and coordinator of the Public Relations Society of America's Boston Chapter.

With over 25 years of professional experience, Beth is principal and founder of BBWrites Strategic Communications of Watertown launched in 2001. Bryant is best known for her work in nonprofits, political campaigns and causes, professional services, technology and manufacturing.

"Beth is a dedicated professional who has given many years of service to the Boston Chapter, and this new designation simply reinforces what we already know about Beth's professionalism and expertise," said Nancy Sterling, APR, PRSA Boston Chapter President. "Beth truly exemplifies the high

standards measured by this examination."

The APR designation signifies the highest professional level of experience and competence. Successful completion of a comprehensive examination is required for Accreditation. The written and oral tests measure a candidate's knowledge of public relations practice, communications theory, management science, ethics and general understanding of the public relations profession. Some 6,000 public relations professionals achieved the APR designation since the program began 33 years ago.

A member of PRSA since 2001, Beth held numerous industry leadership positions before serving as Boston Chapter coordinator in 2003. She also coordinates PRSA/Boston's Independent Practitioners Network and is an active member of Business Network International and the International Association of Business Communicators. She earned her master's degree in communications from Suffolk University and a bachelor's degree in English from the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams, Mass.

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### Earning the APR Designation: An Inside Look

Newly-accredited PRSA Boston member Beth Bryant, APR, Boston Chapter Administrator and principal of BBWrites Strategic Communications, shares her APR experience with *News & Views* and provides her perspective on the exam, what it takes to study, and the overall value of earning the APR:

Why did you decide to pursue the APR and when did you commit to taking the exam?

I decided to pursue the APR designation because I have a lot of respect for the people who have it and I felt it would be good for me professionally and for my business. I committed to taking the exam in the summer of 2002.

How did you study for the exam and what resources did you find most helpful?

I read the Cutlip, Center and Broom book, "Effective Public Relations," and took an APR prep workshop that Ann Getman, APR, and Kirk Hazlett, APR, coordinated in the

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summer of 2002. I also used the on-line study guide. I didn't get a chance to take any of the teleseminars offered by national, but they looked like they would be helpful.

What was the readiness review process like?

It was what I expected. I presented a client's public relations campaign from start to finish. I spoke in the beginning and took questions from the readiness review panel, which included the APR chair at the time, Ann Getman, and two other people who are chapter members and APRs themselves. The questions were somewhat grueling, but they were certainly fair. The panel wants to make sure you know all the elements involved in a PR campaign and are prepared to move on to the written exam.

Was the exam as difficult as you thought it would be?

Yes. The questions are cleverly worded so you really need to focus on what they're asking. The exam is almost 4 hours long. Most of the questions start out with "You are the PR director for a nuclear power plant in Hoochie, TN..." giving you a scenario that

you need to respond to or act on, and asking you for an action plan via multiple choice questions.

What advice would you give others considering pursuing their APR?

Make sure you have plenty of time to prepare for the Readiness Review and to study for the written exam. This is something you plan out over several months, not just weeks.

It's a worthwhile process. You build a stronger foundation of knowledge of the practice and it reinforces what you already know. I feel a tremendous sense of gratification now that I have the APR and made the effort to pursue it.

For more information...

If you are interested in learning more about the APR exam or accreditation process, contact Elise Lapham, APR, [eliselapham@verizon.net](mailto:eliselapham@verizon.net) or Diego Sanchez, APR, at [dsanchez@aac.org](mailto:dsanchez@aac.org). Information can also be found in the professional development section of the National PRSA website [www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org).

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS YOU CAN USE

### MARCH NEW MEMBER PROMOTION

From now until March 31, 2006, PRSA is offering an advantageous new member promotion. For new members joining in this timeframe, PRSA is waiving the \$65 initiation fee from its standard \$290 full member fee (\$65 initiation fee and \$225 annual dues) and offering a \$20 voucher toward a future professional development program or for use at the PRSA store. Joining is easy. Go to [www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org) and click on Membership. Be sure to enter promotion code Taste 2006 to receive this special offer.

### PRSA BOSTON MEMBERSHIP

When you join PRSA National, we encourage you to join PRSA Boston, one of the country's largest regional Chapters. PRSA Boston has more than 400 members in the Boston area and offers a wide range of benefits that compliment PRSA National such as:

- Local monthly programs, professional development sessions, and social events
- *News & Views, our monthly, online newsletter*
- Special member interest groups including the *Independent Practitioners Network* and the *Young Professionals Group*

### PRSA GROUP MEMBERSHIP

As one of the area's largest public relations firms, you may be interested in PRSA's Group Membership Program. The Group Membership Program is an ideal way for an organization to give its public relations professionals access to PRSA's vast resources, expertise, and networks while enjoying savings on membership fees and conveniences such as one yearly payment and transferable memberships.

If you are interested in the latest professional trends, current national and local PR research projects, professional development, and networking with peers, join PRSA today.

For more information, contact PRSA Boston Membership Vice President Julie Lear, APR, at (617) 388-8112 or [jglear@comcast.net](mailto:jglear@comcast.net). You can also learn more about PRSA offerings, benefits, and membership at [www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org).

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### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

The Brain Tumor Society, a national 501(c)3 nonprofit headquartered in Watertown, is hosting its annual "Ride for Research" 5K on May 21 and is ramping up marketing and PR activities. The organization needs public relations volunteers to assist in prioritizing and pitching local media and other promotional initiatives. While there is

already an enthusiastic PR committee in place, these volunteers lack actual PR experience and could use a few hours a month of expert support to help them do the necessary outreach. In exchange, the Society will happily recognize the firm or individual practitioners who lend their support. Contact Lindsay Rubin, 703-855-4312, for more information.

## PREVIEWS OF COMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ATTRACTIONS

Societal Trends and Their Implications for Communications  
(Teleseminar hosted by PRSA Boston)

When: Tuesday, March 21, 2006 / 12:00 Noon – 1:30 pm

Where: CBS4 News, 1170 Soldiers Field Road, Boston, MA 02134

Visit <http://cbs4boston.com/info> for directions

Free parking located in front of the building

Cost: PRSA Boston and Pub Club Members - \$25; Non-members - \$35

A 90-minute, fast-paced teleseminar with Darryl Salerno, president of Second Quadrant Solutions, an organization dedicated to helping professional services companies maximize their financial health by focusing on the critical issues, including staff development, organizational positioning, strategic planning, operations assessment and succession planning.

The world is changing at an increasing pace, creating immense new challenges, and opportunities, for our clients, and our industry. Nobody wants to be left behind trying to apply old paradigms to a rapidly shifting future, and this seminar will address some of the most relevant issues and their implications for communications.

In the past 15 years, we have seen the largest corporate scandals in history, leading to increased corporate governance and consumer backlash; a dramatic rise in life expectancy, creating a rapidly aging population; proliferation of fiber optic cabling, giving consumers across the globe an unfettered ability to communicate with anyone, anywhere; and vast economic reforms in China and India, creating the

single largest new consumer markets the world has ever experienced. While these changes have been unprecedented, all indications are that these trends will all accelerate.

Issues/Topics:

- 1) The Aging Population
  - Convergence of boomers and increasing longevity
- 2) Changing Demographics in America
  - Diversity
  - The next wave
  - Recruitment challenges
- 3) Corporate Citizenship in the New Age
  - Changing consumer attitudes
  - Our potential impact on society
- 4) Colossal Convergences – The Past 15 Years
  - Implications of the boom and bust
  - Emergence of new markets
  - Workflow advancements
- 5) Impact of the East – India and China
  - New markets
  - Knowledge process outsourcing

PRSA Health Academy

Consumers, Industry and Government:  
Preparing for America's next great challenge in health care public relations

Are you prepared - as a health care communicator - to provide the communications solutions that impact the key constituents you serve? The PRSA Health Academy can help you answer that question and manage the cutting-edge issues confronting the world of health care public relations at the...

17th Annual PRSA Health Academy Conference / April 5-7, 2006 / Washington, D.C.

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Benefit from the strategic sessions that include a pre-conference seminar, concurrent tracks, and outstanding plenary presentations. Highlights include:

- \* Pre-conference seminar at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- \* Keynote speaker Judy Woodruff, former host of CNN's Inside Politics, will speak about the political climate in Washington today and how it is likely to affect health care issues.
- \* Moderator Bill Griffeth, host of CNBC's Power Lunch, will lead a panel discussion on "Dealing with Seismic Change - Communicating Medicare Part D. Lessons from the Frontlines" (Plenary)
- \* Plenary session featuring key insights and lessons learned from media and public relations experts who lived through some of 2005's scariest crises
- \* Concurrent sessions in three key areas: Pharmaceutical, Payor/Insurers and Hospitals/Providers
- \* Media lunch - "Meet the Health Care Media"

Don't miss this premiere event for public relations, communications and public affairs executives in the health care industry. Visit <http://www.healthacademy.prsa.org/> to register and for program details.

The PRSA Health Academy - where health care and public relations intersect

## **American Marketing Association / Boston Chapter**

### **(1) Speak their language: Persuade in ways that makes sense to your customer**

Do you get frustrated when you receive a four paragraph email that could say the same thing in a few bullets? Do you dread calling someone because you know they will

talk 10 minutes longer than necessary? If you want to learn how to avoid situations like these, you don't want to miss this workshop presented by the AMA/Boston Chapter.

Using "The Communications Diagnostic," a tool she has developed that has been used by over 4,000 managers to improve their effectiveness with individuals and teams, Mary Shapiro, widely regarded expert and executive trainer on interpersonal communications, will teach you how to communicate with your customers across the four communication styles.

Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2006  
Location: Fisher College, 118 Beacon St, Boston, MA  
Time: 7:30 - 10:00am (breakfast will be served)  
Cost: \$20 AMA members/ \$35 non-members/ \$10 students

### **(2) PowerPoint Tips and Tricks**

Want to create winning presentations? Join AMA/Boston Chapter for a powerful presentation that *can* be the difference between getting people to sit up and take notice or simply tune you out or even fall asleep! Want to spice up your slides with powerful graphics or even a movie clip? If so, you don't want to miss this information-packed workshop! Improve the way you create, present, and collaborate on presentations. Use enhanced multimedia capabilities to deliver presentations with more impact.

Date: Wednesday, April 5, 2006  
Location: Microsoft Corporation, 201 Jones Road, Waltham, MA  
Time: 5:00 - 8:00pm  
Pricing: \$20 members; \$35 non-members; \$10 students

For more information, visit [http://www.amaboston.org/html/Events\\_72.htm](http://www.amaboston.org/html/Events_72.htm)