

News & Views

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Five Questions with Mimi Segel, Producer *CEO Corner*, New England Cable News



NECN's *CEO Corner* takes an analytical view of many of New England's leading industries and the businesses that drive them. On the program, more than a decade old, host Maryanne Kane

regularly speaks with many of the region's top executives. This month, we got a chance to speak with *CEO Corner* producer Mimi Segel about the program and the best way for PR practitioners to pitch their clients and companies.

How did you come to NECN and the *CEO Corner*?

I was originally a producer at Channel 5 before I took time off to raise a family while my children were younger. Phil Balboni, who I had worked with at Channel 5, moved over to NECN and wanted to expand the network's business programming. He contacted me and brought me on board to the station, where I started producing *This Week in Business*. About a year and a half ago, I also started producing *The CEO Corner* and have been working with the program ever since.

Who do you envision is the primary audience for *CEO Corner*?

Anybody who is interested in business is our primary target audience - this can range from executives to investors, small business owners, community leaders, right down to the average person. We have always been interested in getting to the heart of the most interesting companies in the region, and especially since the beginning of the recession, we have been interested in finding out what is helping the local business community get through this

From the Editor

We certainly experienced a bit of the winter chill this month -- a sure sign that frigid weather is not far away. Now that everyone is deeply into their fall activities, we've put together some great content for your reading pleasure.

This month, we speak with Mimi Segel of *CEO Corner*, as well as next year's chapter president, Meghan Gross. We also hear from HARO's Peter Shankman and include his top rules for communicating in the social media age.

Happy reading!

Chris Ranjitkar
News & Views
Editor

PRSA Annual Chapter Meeting

**November 19, 2009,
6:00-9:00 p.m.
Foley Hoag, Seaport
World Trade Center West,
155 Seaport Boulevard,
Boston, MA 02210**

Save the date for our yearly chapter membership meeting, held at the offices of Foley Hoag in the seaport district. We'll announce the Diane Davis

tough time.

What are your pet peeves about PR people? What makes good PR people 'good?'

My biggest pet peeve is when PR practitioners view the show as a commercial for their client. A good PR person, and one that will be successful in pitching his or her client to us, is a practitioner who understands the difference between the subject matter that will make a good half hour show versus what will be more appropriate as a short, several minute feature.

What is the best way to pitch someone for the program?

Practitioners should try to understand what we will need for the show and send an email to me. If I have worked with you in the past, reference the story for me. The program is meant to be educational and informative, so it is critical for a PR practitioner to be able to explain why their client or company belongs on the show.

How do you think social media will affect the *CEO Corner* and programming in general at NECN?

Everybody wants their program's footage to be out there. We encourage people and companies who have been on our show to send and distribute links to the show everywhere to increase the exposure of our program. We are still working on ways to get better feedback for the program and improve our relationship with our viewers.

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PR Rules from the HARO Guru

High points of the chapter's luncheon with Peter Shankman



Help a Reporter Out founder Peter Shankman (left) considers his response to comments about a Poken "social media business card," being displayed by chapter president Jack Jackson.

These days, everyone in the public relations world knows Peter Shankman and his Help a Reporter Out (HARO) emails. In the span of a couple years, Peter, a PR and marketing expert who also runs The Geek Factory, has become one of the most well-known and talked-about practitioners.

PRSA Boston brought Peter to town to address a large and attentive group of practitioners about PR and marketing in the age of social media. The event, a luncheon program at the Seaport Hotel, attracted over 100 attendees. For

those who couldn't join us, here are Peter's four major guidelines for communicating in today's environment.

Maintain Complete and Utter Transparency

You know it's going to be a bad day when you're a topic of discussion on Twitter, especially when all the talk is around a mistake or an unplanned event. The best way to diffuse a situation is to admit your mistake and then move on. A prime example of this was immediately after the failed nomination of Tom Daschle to an Obama cabinet position. After the scandal forced Daschle to decline the nomination, President Obama was very frank about the situation, admitting his mistake, which left many Sunday morning political show hosts scrambling to fill air time. They had not expected him to be so upfront with the situation and had planned to use the time to grill him about the situation.

Maintain Relevance

Your content needs to pertain to your audience, otherwise you will lose them. Don't be afraid to ask your audience about what kind of content they want and how they would like to receive it. Asking and finding out this information will help you produce material that is relevant and meaningful.

Maintain Brevity

Good writing is concise and gets your point across in as few words as possible.

Beacon Award for lifetime achievement in PR, and elect new officers for 2010. More details on the way! Keep current by visiting www.prsaboston.org.

Quick Links

Stay connected with chapter members



facebook

Visit PRSA National's blog



Social Media is Customer Service

One of the main goals of PR used to be to get journalists and other major third parties to recommend and gush about their clients' or companies' products and services. Now, it seems that focus has shifted to get individuals to favorably speak about products and services in their own social circles. Peter referred to the time he was delayed on a Delta Airlines aircraft for hours. He kept sending tweets about the situation, but the only response came from Delta rival Southwest Airlines, who offered to get him a seat on one of their flights at a nearby airport and fly him where he needed to go. When a customer can communicate this easily with peers about a negative experience, companies should use social media tools to listen and respond before it's too late.

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Q&A with Meghan Gross, 2010 PRSA Boston President



From social media and Steve Quigley to Peter Shankman and HARO, 2009 has been a busy but memorable year. Now that the season is about to close as we prepare for the annual meeting and PRSA gets ready for 2010, we thought it would be a good time to sit down with next year's chapter president Meghan Gross, to reflect on the past year and preview the year to come.

In your opinion, what are the main challenges of PR practitioners in Boston today?

I think PR practitioners are dealing with an industry and an economy in flux. As a result we are seeing challenges as activity in some sectors decreases.

However, there are also opportunities that present themselves as new sectors, like clean tech take off, and new technologies change the way we relate to our audiences. More than ever, it is incumbent on marketing/public relations practitioners to demonstrate that they add value and keep ahead of trends affecting their companies' and clients' industries. It's actually an exciting time if you're someone comfortable embracing change.

What are some initiatives you have for next year as PRSA Chapter President or areas you'd like to work on?

One of the most important functions a membership organization can do is to provide a wide range of relevant educational opportunities to its constituents. I'd like to launch 2010 with great programming and to continue it each month so by year's end, our membership has a new "toolkit," so to speak, of case studies. I'm interested in finding members who have lapsed, because I think there is a great untapped network we may be able to bring back into the fold.

What has PRSA Boston done particularly well this year that you'd like to continue?

I think we've done well by enhancing the newsletter this year, and hope that I'll be able to continue that work. So many of the things we do in PRSA - programming, membership, communications - all intersect and are dependent on one another. I think there is always room for us to take our past year's successes and bring them to the next level.

What do you think will drive growth in the industry, specifically in Boston?

As I mentioned before, for industries, I think clean tech is a growing sector. Many editors and reporters are still figuring out how much time and energy and staff to devote to it, and I think we'll see opportunities for PR practitioners who can tell the traditional "startup" story but who also can grasp the unique elements of that sector. I think education and healthcare/life sciences will always provide Boston-based PR practitioners with opportunity. Functionally, though, I think there is a huge opportunity for public relations practitioners to stretch into what was traditionally under the heading of "marcomm" and become content creation experts who help their companies and clients provide added value to their audiences. We've clearly moved beyond the traditional model of PR people working with journalists exclusively, so I think practitioners who are nimble and eager to learn new ways of presenting information will have a whole new world open to them.

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Leveraging Social Media for Your Business

Social media expert Debra Murphy conducts IPN workshop



Most of us know how to use social media to build our individual online presence, expand our networks and even generate discussions to obtain feedback, but how many of us know how to really leverage LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter to our full advantage, to establish and manage our reputation and grow our PR consultancy or business?

Last month, the PRSA Boston Independent Practitioners Network (IPN), a special interest group of the chapter that includes members who own their own PR agency or practice, hosted a workshop led by social media expert, Debra Murphy, entitled "Promoting Your Business With Social Media -- Making it Work for You and Your Clients." The workshop offered tips on how to integrate social media tools strategically and effectively into your company's or your client's marketing plan and leverage them to educate prospects on why they want to do business with you.

Debra started the workshop by pointing out that with social media marketing, the emphasis should be on "social," not "marketing." With social media tools, you have the opportunity to connect with people and build relationships, so you should use that opportunity to give by contributing information, genuine conversation, humor, insight and sharing, rather than push your message. You should listen and learn, then talk once you understand the culture of the social network. You want to establish trust, as people only do business with those they trust, and you want to position yourself as an expert, a community builder and someone to follow.

The "basic ingredients" for engaging in social media marketing are valuable content, such as weekly blog posts, presentations, video posts, an eBook and advice; a quality picture that projects YOU; 8-10 key words (you need to do your research on this); and a keyword-rich profile that sets you apart and projects your human side.

The social media sites you most want to establish a presence on are Google, LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. YouTube, Flickr and Slideshare are optional. While you want to establish prominence for you and your company on these sites, you want your Web site and blog to be set up as your "home base" and have all your social media marketing activities tie back to them. You should be blogging regularly and publicizing your RSS feed to further establish and draw attention to your expertise.

Debra provided a great deal of information on how you should set up your profiles on these sites and participate effectively - far more information than we have space for in this newsletter. The chief take-aways I had from her talk were:

- A Google profile will best help you get into the search engines
- Profiles need to be 100 percent complete and compelling, as well as loaded with keywords
- On LinkedIn, a separate company page should be created for your agency, company or practice
- On Facebook, you want to create a Fan Page for your company
- You can integrate Facebook with Twitter, so tweets show up on your FB profile and FB updates go directly to Twitter

Some important tips on participating effectively in social media sites:

LinkedIn

- Start, join and participate in discussions and Q&A
- Create events
- Add applications to your profile
- Give recommendations willingly - and when you get one, give one back

Facebook

- Create a Fan Page for your business and add Fan Box to your Web site and blog
- Start discussions so fans can interact with you and one another
- Acknowledge fans when they write on your wall
- Create discussion groups focused on specific interests, causes, etc.

Twitter

- Comment on other tweets
- Re-tweet other's tweets
- Use hash tags (#) for tweets on a specific topic, like at a conference or regarding an ongoing conversation
- Use TweetDeck and Seismic to follow people tweeting on a specific topic

General

- Use FriendFeed to integrate all your social networking profiles and conversations/threads and send information to your network that you tag to share in Google Reader
- Develop a system for social media that helps you keep a consistent flow of information (scan, save and share, focus on high impact messages, use tools that simplify the process)

[Beth Bryant, APR](#), administrator of PRSA Boston and its Independent Practitioners Network, is principal/owner of BBWrites Strategic Communications in Marlborough, Mass.

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Earning an APR May be Easier Than You Think

Many public relations professionals have earned their Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) designation, which shows they have successfully demonstrated the knowledge, skills and abilities required to practice public relations effectively in today's rapidly changing marketplace.



Yet while many professionals have earned the designation, to others it can appear to be a daunting task -- especially when juggling a busy workload and active family life. If you fall into this category, you should realize that there are many resources and personal support systems available through the Boston Chapter of PRSA. In fact, getting your APR could be easier than you think.

Why become accredited?

In today's increasingly competitive job market, the APR designation can differentiate you from other qualified candidates. Take a look at the article included here to learn what other PRSA members are saying about the computerized exam, and the amount of time it takes to succeed in this important endeavor.

Who is eligible?

The APR computerized examination is for PR professionals with a Bachelor's degree and at least five years of paid experience in a full-time PR-related position.

How to apply?

You can begin the process by downloading and completing the application available online at www.prsaccreditation.org.

How do I prepare for the exam?

Study-- You can download study aids or participate in one-hour teleseminars throughout the year to help you prepare for the test. Individual coaching is also available through the Boston Chapter. Contact Elise Lapham, Accreditation Chair at elise_lapham@millipore.com for more information.

Readiness Review -- After you have studied for the exam, you will move on to the Readiness Review, which includes a written questionnaire, followed by a Readiness Review meeting with three APRs from the local chapter. You will need to create a portfolio of your work to review with the Readiness Review Committee and they will evaluate your knowledge and overall preparedness to take the exam.

The Exam -- Once you have completed the Readiness Review, the final step in the process is taking the computer-based examination, which is a multiple-choice question format and takes approximately three hours to complete. You can take the exam at your convenience at more than 300 testing centers throughout the U.S.

What others have to say about the APR accreditation process

Elise interviewed Karen Lavariere-Sanchez, APR, and Jackie Lustig, APR, who recently took the exam and invited them to share their thoughts on the process.

EL: Why did you decide to pursue your accreditation?

KLS: I was eager to develop myself and to help my organization understand the influential role that I can play. I feel the APR will help my organization understand the possibilities of my role and the value I bring to the organization.

JL: Although I've been in PR for 20+ years, I never had any formal PR or journalism education. I thought studying for the APR exam would be a good way to acquire that knowledge more formally.

EL: How has earning your APR helped you?

KLS: The very fact that receiving the APR designation is contingent on passing the examination based on a standard body of knowledge and expertise gives me credibility in my role and helps the profession gain greater respectability.

JL: The designation per se isn't what's important to me. It was the content that I studied that I think made me a better PR practitioner and able to serve as a better role model for younger professionals.

EL: Can you comment on the APR process - was it difficult and time consuming - and helpful hints or recommended reading for PRSA members who are considering it?

KLS: The Readiness Review questionnaire and presentation helped me through the process and once my portfolio was completed everything else fell into place. What helped me most was the guidance I received from the online instructors and peer groups.

JL: The study guide, recommended reading and PRSA webinar were very important. The Readiness Review and oral presentation were fun to prepare for and I enjoyed them because I got to interact with my peers. Personally, I don't like multiple choice exams and found that part of the process painful. I think the exam itself is geared toward professionals with about five years' experience. I would advise candidates to join a study group. I did it by myself and it probably would have been easier and more fun to do it with others.

To learn more about the APR designation, visit the [PRSA website](#) or contact [Elise Lapham](#), 978-715-1343.

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President's Letter

Impressive, No Matter Where You Stand

Dear Colleagues:

By the time you read this note, we'll be just days from PRSA's National Assembly -- and its ultimate up-or-down vote on proposed changes to our organizational bylaws.

If you're like me, you can endure only so much reading or talking about policy and governance matters. This stuff is *very* inside baseball -- manageable if taken in small doses. Throughout 2009, I struggled to understand the issues and participate in the run-up to November's vote.



But don't mistake my inclination to leave policy to the policy-wonks as any indication of merit. The issues being considered are important -- like whether APR accreditation should be required to hold national office; or to weigh revisions that would open membership in PRSA to a broader array of PR and marcomm practitioners; or whether to set term limits for national Directors. What's decided in San Diego next month is significant and will color PRSA for years to come.

For weeks now, assembly delegates, district officers, chapter reps and national staffers have met regularly by conference call to examine every facet

of these issues. They've communicated various proposals, offered amendments and lobbied emphatically for one position or another. All the material they generated (including audio recordings and transcripts of the calls themselves) has been made available via forums on PRSA.org.

Not only has this been a superbly organized effort, I was struck by its positive and productive tone. People argued their opinions and perspectives *hard*. There was no pulling punches. But given the tenor of public debate in our country the past few years, you wouldn't have recognized these deliberations. No rancor. No accusations. No polarizing rhetoric. Just a sincere effort on the part of everyone involved to cover all sides of an issue. And a uniform motivation to *get it right* when deciding.

The discourse, and the professionalism under which it's been conducted, have been impressive -- no matter where you stand on the issues. It's been a privilege to participate in the process. I hope you're as eager to see the outcome as I am.



Jack Jackson
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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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To contribute articles, news or information on upcoming events, please contact the *News & Views* at info@PRSABoston.com.

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