Leadership is Communications

By Ani Chakmakian

“The way I look at it: overlook communications at your peril. You can’t keep your finger on the pulse of the organization from afar. You can’t assume you know what people are thinking, saying or feeling. You have to ask them, listen to them, work alongside them.”

Mr. Leech recognizes that leadership in communications is more than saying the right thing at the right time. “It’s also important to lend the necessary executive support to your organization to ensure that everyone can do the same,” he continues.

And when it comes to reaching out to external stakeholders, Teachers’ philosophy is to maintain a commitment to open and honest communications.

“I want every one of our stakeholders to know that we are not an anonymous monolith, but a living, breathing group of professionals who strive to be best in the world at what we do on members’ behalf,” Mr. Leech notes.

As its president and CEO, Mr. Leech has effectively refined and communicated Teacher’s strategies and vision with an enviable breadth and depth of sustained strategic communications programs.

Teacher’s is an example of how top companies manage their reputations systematically and with deliberate care through building positive relationships with stakeholders over time through proactive and sustained strategic communications programs. In this way, success is translated into business terms, as we’ve seen with this year’s awards recipient.

“Entries for the ACE awards have increased more than 70 per cent in the past two years,”

The growing popularity of the ACE awards is reflective of the significant increase in submissions. “Entries for the ACE awards have increased more than 70 per cent in the past two years,” said Heather Agnew, ACE Awards Co-chair. “This demonstrates the value Toronto practitioners are placing on the ACE Awards. We’re looking forward to seeing the best PR campaigns practitioners in Toronto have to offer.”...continued on page 6
I’m not going to say goodbye – at least not yet. However, I am, as I am sure many of you know, heading into the final months of my term as president. These days, I measure it by eblasts and right now I have about three left...

Much has happened in the nearly two years I have been serving CPRS Toronto. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone and say how much I’ve enjoyed meeting and hearing from you – and learning!

When I became president in May 2009, the economy and our industry were slowly starting to rebound from what we now call the Great Recession. No one can say it wasn’t a challenging time, however among the positive outcomes are the fundamental changes we’ve experienced in our profession.

Gone are the days when media relations – or should I say publicity, for those of you who read my blog – reigned supreme. We have, as an industry, begun to understand and embrace social media. Of course, some grudgingly accepted it. But all of us know what a game changer it is and many of us are integrating it into our communications programs.

I am an optimist and I hope that we’ve come to see social media as a relationship-builder it is.

It enables us to return to basics in the best possible way. And we can rid ourselves of needless jargon, superfluous news releases, and an overabundance of communications that we used to distribute just because we could.

We’ve learned to think more strategically and analytically. Tell better stories. Understand that not everyone wants to hear from us. Tailor our news to the people who do.

CPRS Toronto is in transition too. Over the next couple of years, we have an opportunity to redefine the organization in such a way that it engages young, middle and senior practitioners with ideas, knowledge and friendship. I guess that’s a challenge for the new president and board.

I hope you’ll enjoy the latest edition of our newsletter. We’re profiling AVW-TELAV, one of our sponsors, presenting highlights from our recent CEO Award lunch and offering a perspective on the key elements of an online newsroom.

Thanks again to the volunteer newsletter team for all their efforts. And, as always, thanks to Lois Marsh and the rest of the CPRS Toronto board.

I hope to see all of you at the ACE Awards; to reconnect and celebrate our milestones together.

President’s Message:

Public Relations in Transition

By Martin Waxman, APR

PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT YOUR BRAND.
ARE YOU LISTENING?

Torchia Scholarship Now Receiving Applicants

The Torchia Scholarship, honouring a student who has chosen to study public relations/communications in one of Canada’s two official languages that is not his/her first language or mother tongue, is now accepting applications. The student must be entering his/her second year of undergraduate study in public relations/communications at a Canadian university or college, in either a degree program or a multiyear diploma or certificate program that meets recognized standards of education. The scholarship is valued at $1,500 and is for one year only.

End applications to the Communications and Public Relations Foundation, Suite 1515, 73 Widdicombe Hill Blvd, Toronto, Ontario, M4R 4B3. A jury chair and three bilingual public relations professionals and/or educators will review submissions and determine a successful candidate. The jury may require a telephone interview in either English or French. Deadline for applications is April 30, 2011.

For more information please contact: foundation@prmediaconnection.com

Conversations about your brand are happening online and in the media around the clock. These conversations can impact your brand, your corporate reputation and your bottom line. Stay on top of it all with MediaVantage, the premier web-based application for media intelligence and public relations management.

Ask about our low-cost Internet and Social Media Monitoring application for only $560 a month!

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A Profile on AVW-TELAV

By Maryjane Martin, APR

Today, there are more ways to communicate than ever before. That’s why, when planning an event, you need an audiovisual partner who understands the changing technology and how to make the most of it.

CPRE Toronto gold sponsor, AVW-TELAV, is recognized as an innovator of audiovisual technology and a leader in the meetings and events industry. This September, the company launched its newest audiovisual solution offering, ImaginAction®, which debuted to rave reviews at the Canadian Society of Association Executives’ (CSAE) annual meeting in Quebec City.

“ImaginAction is the latest in multi-media technology that combines multiple projectors and other display devices with standard computer and network technology to give presentations maximum impact and dimension,” explained Heidi Welker, VP Marketing, AVW-TELAV. “While a wide, multi-screen display fills much of the audience’s peripheral vision and immerses the viewers in the presentation, rich, extreme-resolution images add to the impact of the presentation and create a sense of interactivity. In fact, ImaginAction can literally take audiences anywhere in the world—or beyond—by creating a dynamic ‘virtual set’ for presentations of any size, any shape or form,” said Welker.

“As a strategic partner, AVW-TELAV works with public relations practitioners to provide key messaging platforms to reach their audiences,” said Mark Hartshorn, Account Executive, AVW-TELAV Toronto. “We can suggest solutions to help transform a meeting room to suit the theme of your event.”

Hartshorn explains with an example. “We know that by using two key ingredients, you can create almost any theme, in almost any ballroom,” he said. “Colour and texture are the two key elements of control. For example, if we light a room with fall colours, and use gobos of branches and leaves in a colour representing sunlight, we can create the illusion of a nice fall morning, under the shade of trees filled with changing leaves.”

AVW-TELAV provides a complete range of audio visual and presentation technology services throughout North America. These services include audio visual and computer equipment rental, event staging, simultaneous interpretation, digital services including presentation management, audience response, video capture and webcasting, multi-microphone discussion systems, exhibit and tradeshow solutions, press conferences and technical coordination for meetings, conventions, corporate events and trade shows. The company can also design and install permanent audio, visual, and videoconferencing equipment for your location.

For more than 50 years, AVW-TELAV has built a reputation on integrity and professionalism. Last year, the company was awarded InfoComm International’s (the global trade association of the professional audio, visual and information communications industries) Green AV award for implementing environmentally sustainable business practices, and was also the only Canadian company to qualify for Systems Contractor News’ (SCN) industry-recognized-and-anticipated Top 50 Integrators 2010 list.

For more information on how AVW-TELAV can help you engage your audiences and give your presentations maximum impact and dimension, visit its website at www.avw-telav.com.

Maryjane Martin, APR, is Principal at MJ Martin and Company. Contact her at mj@mjmartinandco.com.

How Well do You Manage Your Online Identity?

By Joanna Nicholson

Social media has changed the world of communications. Most of us are swimming in a sea of Tweets, Digg, Podcasts and wall posts (plus thousands of others, many of which we haven’t heard of yet). It’s clear that social media helps organizations create a cohesive brand, easily generate an online presence, deliver messages efficiently and allow for dialogue with almost any desired audience. But there are challenges. For instance, how do you successfully manage an online identity? Like any identity, it needs to be monitored and protected. Here are some tips to help you cultivate your personal and professional identities and secure your reputation.

Get Online

Consider your professional and personal online presence as a resume. Be careful what information you share—and remember that anyone can access it. Buying a dot-com domain name can help you centralize yourself or your brand. “Establishing and maintaining an online brand is critical for today’s communicators as more companies are considering experience with social media to be a requirement, rather than an asset,” she said. “I increased my use of social media to enhance my personal reputation for my job search. By expanding my LinkedIn profile and connections, regularly Tweeting and following other PR professionals and commenting on news articles and blogs, I’ve established myself as a person of credibility and interest.”

It’s a good idea to create an account in at least one of every major category—such as Twitter for microblogging, YouTube for videos, Delicious for links and LinkedIn for a profile. It’s an easy, effective way to gain presence and establish your brands. When contemplating an account name, KnowEm is a helpful resource. It allows you to check for the use of your brand, product, personal name or username in a large database of emerging social media websites.

Funneling these services through a life-streaming tool, such as FriendFeed, allows you to use each of your social media personas in one convenient place. These tools are also useful for participating in discussions that are relevant to your brand and marketplace. For example, if you work in communications, follow the industry blog sites on Twitter and tap into conversations with them (#PRt2 is an excellent one to follow on Twitter).

…continued on page 5
A 180-Degree Career Turn

By Christian Hasse

Have you ever asked yourself, “Is this really the career for me?” If you have, you are not alone.

People from all walks of life are asking themselves the same question everyday regardless of their age, seniority level or profession.

Sure, making a career transition at any stage in life can be a daunting task. It means: letting go of the past, the “neutral zone” where the past is gone but the new isn’t fully present, and making the new beginning.

Introspective questions arise: “Can I really do it? What will my peers, family, friends think of me for leaving a secure position to pursue my passion? What do I need to do to make the change? Where and how do I begin the process?”

But, as an example of how common-place transition is these days, William Bridges, the internationally-known expert on business and change, has suggested that in the future our “careers” will really be a series of on-going projects.

Sound confusing? It’s not supposed to. There is no one formula anymore. This can be incredibly liberating. My advice to anyone considering a career change is first, know what you’re passionate about, take inventory of your skills, align them with your values, and begin the process of designing your life – free from the constraints of the opinions of others, no matter how well meaning they may be. Remember, this is your life, your career, and your journey. Don’t let others detract you from following your ultimate dream.

If you, or someone you know, are thinking of a Career-180 degree turn, keep the following in mind:

Prepare now

In addition to long-term savings, plan now to build a cash reserve equal to about six months’ salary. This will take some sacrifice but will give you more options.

Network with people within your newly targeted area of interest. Who you know is just as important as what you know.

Broadly define yourself

If you work in PR, your new career may use old skills in a new way. Do you do something as a hobby that could become a job?

Add training

Your saving may allow you to go back to school with only a part-time job. Don’t be afraid of the temporary struggle. “Short-term pain for long-term gain,” is the mantra that bears repeating. A fulfilling new career is worth the sacrifice. It’s wise to check with the school’s counseling center, or by doing your own independent research, to ensure your field has job growth potential.

Market yourself

Be confident and be creative. What do you have that others need? How could you make an already successful business more successful? Is there a market need that no one is addressing? Your training and enthusiasm can convince a smart investor to give you a chance.

Modify expectations

Be willing to modify your expectations as you begin a new career. Things need not turn out exactly as planned to be successful. Give your new job a chance. Put up with the things you do not like in order to enjoy those you do, and be hopeful; many are finding new midlife careers the most fulfilling yet.

Remember, there may be some bumps along the way but in the end, if you decide to pursue your ideal role, the journey will have been well worth the ride.

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Advice For Anyone Who Wants to Start a Blog

By Parker Mason, Manager, Community Cultivation, Radar DDB

Recently, a friend of mine, currently in PR school, asked for advice about what to do for the blog she was obligated to write for one of her classes.

My recommendation? Avoid starting a blog altogether. Instead, I told her she should start a Facebook page.

Right from the start, she can populate this Facebook page with information about herself (or her project) and what the page is about.

Since I’m pretty sure students in these PR classes are encouraged to read each others’ blogs, she can then ask her fellow students to ‘Like’ the page (a much easier task than subscribing via RSS).

Instead of daily blog posts, she can write daily status updates for the page. Facebook’s newish tagging ability makes it easier to link to other pages, and isn’t really that different than the traditional HTML links you’d include in a blog post. These tags have the added ability of ensuring your post is visible on the page that you tagged, potentially increasing your audience. Interactions on these pages (Likes, Comments, etc.) will be spread across her social network, encouraging further interaction and becoming much more visible than if these same interactions were made on a blog.

If she does all this, she’ll have the framework for a ‘blog’ that has the potential to be more popular than any of her classmates. She’ll also learn a lot about an increasingly relevant tool in the communicators’ kit.

She’ll still have to ensure her posts are interesting, resonate with her audience and encourage interaction. A supporting website with basic contact information and encouragement to ‘Like’ the Facebook page couldn’t hurt, either.

For the Crohn’s and Colitis campaign, Fitch worked with Rob Hill, a Crohn’s sufferer who raises awareness by climbing mountains. He’s actually set his sights on climbing the seven highest peaks on seven continents. In addition, he has a strong online presence and actively tweets, blogs and posts videos of his exploits.

“It was a natural decision for us to include Rob as part of our SMR.” Because he visits children’s camps to talk about living with his condition, we decided to target adventure and outdoor bloggers – people who are well versed in the area of mountaineering.

“It made sense to introduce them to Rob to tell our story.” According to Fitch, a standard SMR might include a news release, one or two videos, one or two photographs, a couple of audio clips and supplemental web links. Depending on whether they need to be created or already exist, basic SMR costs can range from $800 to $2,000, depending upon the broadcast method.

As with any release, targeting is essential. Creating a database of the “right people to reach out to” is critical, says de Wal. “You need to look at who your influencers are in the online media space. This is not a case of how many followers they have; it’s a case of how often they blog. The online marketing tools that are valuable these days are the ones where you can get insight into the ‘currency of the content’ and the true status of the online influencer.”

Fitch concurred and stressed that when it comes to online influencers, PR practitioners can’t use the “throw the mud on the wall and see if it sticks” approach. “There are millions and millions of people online who are talking and not talking. Always know your audience. Go online first and do your research.”

“The changing nature of the environment means media relations are a bit more exciting these days,” says Fitch. Flexible blogger deadlines, reporters sharing beats, and different ways of measuring results contribute to the excitement. “I would say we’re learning all the time. Every situation is different. So, just knowing your audience, knowing the landscape and what you’re trying to achieve is important. The more targeted you are, the more successful you’ll be, especially in the online space.”

Christine Smith, principal, Christine Smith Communications. Contact her at ChristineSmith@bell.net.

Brown Bag PD Event Nets Expert Insights

By Christine Smith

Brown Bag PD event nets expert insights.

Twelve CPRS Toronto members spent their lunch hours on December 16 in a novel way. From the comfort of their own offices, they participated in a “brown bag” PD event via a teleconference that explored how social media strategies can enhance traditional media relations.

Ably moderated by member Natalie Bovair, APR, the event featured speakers Stephanie Fitch of Fleshman-Hillard and Ernie de Wal, business development and sales at Cision Canada. At the end of the hour-long event participants learned it pays to include social media tactics. In fact, according to the featured presenter, it’s a rare organization that doesn’t include some social media tactics as part of its media outreach.

“In this day and age, it’s becoming more and more important to have visibility online. It’s almost an oddity to be a large company without an online presence,” said Fitch. She described how she incorporated these tactics during an awareness campaign about Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) during an awareness campaign about Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

Fitch pointed out that, with traditional media sources diminishing and web-based publications increasing, media strategies have to change. “New communications sources are being generated by way of bloggers. They’re not traditional media, as professional writers or journalists. But, in some cases they’re actually more knowledgeable than some journalists.”

Increasingly, as PR practitioners plan their campaigns, they must consider the changing nature of the communications environment. As with any news release, targeting is essential. Creating a database of the “right people to reach out to” is critical, says de Wal. “You need to look at who your influencers are in the online media space. This is not a case of how many followers they have; it’s a case of how often they blog. The online marketing tools that are valuable these days are the ones where you can get insight into the ‘currency of the content’ and the true status of the online influencer.” Fitch concurred and stressed that when it comes to online influencers, PR practitioners can’t use the “throw the mud on the wall and see if it sticks” approach. “There are millions and millions of people online who are talking and not talking. Always know your audience. Go online first and do your research.” “The changing nature of the environment means media relations are a bit more exciting these days,” says Fitch. Flexible blogger deadlines, reporters sharing beats, and different ways of measuring results contribute to the excitement. “I would say we’re learning all the time. Every situation is different. So, just knowing your audience, knowing the landscape and what you’re trying to achieve is important. The more targeted you are, the more successful you’ll be, especially in the online space.”

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The best strategy for PR success?

Access to all media.

News Canada can provide you with earned editorial online, on-air and in print.

The best strategy for PR success? Access to all media.
“Building consensus for a post-crisis recovery strategy was a huge challenge, given the diverse roles and perspectives represented within the peanut industry, from growers to shellers to manufacturers,” Dan explained. “But good crisis management often means enunciating a case for change. If change is going to come, try to lead it.”

By all measures, the campaign was a success. Within three months of the crisis, 60 per cent of Americans had resumed purchasing peanut products and peanut butter sales reached a new all-time high by year-end. The post-crisis strategy session produced sky-high member satisfaction ratings and, more important, an industry-wide consensus to review agricultural and manufacturing processes, enhance FDA collaboration and improve training and education.

Encompassing all the basic tenets of a successful crisis communication campaign, with a particular emphasis on learning from the crisis and facilitating positive change, there are definitely some lessons to be learned from this campaign. More information about this and other crisis communications and issues management case studies is available in the CPRS National Resource Library.

By Kathleen Garrett, APR

ACE Awards 2011 Gala

Wednesday, April 27, 2011 at 5:15 pm

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401 Bay Street
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Give your team the chance to shine like legendary jazz musician Louis Armstrong and swing to the music at this jazz-themed gala event!

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For more details visit www.cprstoronto.com or contact Lois Marsh at 416-360-1988.