

The Public Relations Professional in 2015

September, 2011

White Paper – “The Public Relations Professional in 2015”

Background

In 2009, when the role of the PRSA Leadership Assembly transitioned from that of a strictly governance group into a thought leadership group, several concurrent discussions about the future of public relations were initiated. These discussions were based on a profound recognition that communications platforms are rapidly changing and the broad conviction that PRSA needed more information from its members to better understand these changes and their implications for public relations professional practice.

PRSA’s leadership saw tremendous value in involving these key stakeholders in these discussions. In addition to their vested interest in the subject matter, these stakeholders were in a unique position to provide diverse viewpoints based on their broad professional experience—diversity of both practice area (e.g., risk communications, crisis communications, social media, measurement and evaluation) and industry experience (e.g., corporate, agency, not-for-profit, government and education).

In the course of this information-gathering process, Chapters, Districts, Sections and individual members from across the country responded enthusiastically and provided valuable insights as to how they perceive the changing landscape of public relations.

Pre-Assembly Surveys

The decision was made to distribute a survey to capture the information from stakeholders and discuss the findings during the 2010 PRSA Leadership Assembly, during which members could help assess where public relations professional practice is headed. Delegates to the Leadership Assembly were assigned to distribute the survey to their constituents prior to the Assembly and submit a report summarizing their constituents' responses. The feedback from the surveys then provided information for the Leadership Assembly discussion.

The surveys administered to Assembly delegates before the Assembly meeting — and the ensuing discussions — revolved around four questions:

1. What role will public relations professionals play in 2015? How is this different from their role today?
2. What other knowledge, skills and abilities are necessary for success in the future?
3. Moving toward 2015, how will knowledge, skills and abilities be impacted by:
 - a. Social media?
 - b. Integrated marketing communications?
 - c. Globalization?
 - d. Disintegration of traditional media?
 - e. Demand for results — focus on measurement and evaluation?
 - f. Other?
4. How will knowledge, skills and abilities differ by:
 - a. Career stage?
 - b. Industry?
 - c. Organizational setting?
 - d. Other?

Prior to the Assembly, the survey responses were gathered and analyzed and were then presented to Assembly delegates at the Assembly meeting. The purposes of introducing that discussion were to:

- Help delegates (and ultimately, the general PRSA membership) understand the perceived trends and changes in our profession and how these will shape the future of public relations.
- Utilize the thoughts and ideas of our Chapters and Sections as well as the strategic thinking of the Assembly delegates to better prepare public relations practitioners for their future roles.

Leadership Assembly Discussion and Follow-Up Survey

A significant amount of time was spent at the 2010 Assembly discussing the public relations professional of 2015 — what roles practitioners will fill, what opportunities they will have within the next five years and how our profession can best prepare for both new roles and new opportunities.

An additional survey was administered during the first quarter of 2011 to enable Assembly Delegates to offer additional ideas in the context of the Assembly discussion. The survey presented the general concepts that had been identified during the 2010 Assembly and gave members an opportunity to confirm that the analysis is on track.

Next Steps

In addition to informing the content of this White Paper, the data from the surveys and discussions and the conclusions reached through the discussion and analysis that took place at the Assembly will serve two other important purposes:

- Inform the content of future PRSA professional development programs and offerings.
- Provide information for use in development of higher education curricula (adding to the body of information found in the 2006 report by the Commission on Public Relations Education, *The Professional Bond*).

Ten team members volunteered to lead the effort to synthesize the responses to the four survey questions mentioned earlier and develop the White Paper content:

- Mary Deming Barber, APR, Fellow PRSA, Principal, The Barber Group, Inc.
- George Couch, APR, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Services
- Christina Darnowski, Director, Research and Project Management, Public Relations Society of America
- Terri Lynn Johnson, ABC, APR, Associate Professor, Journalism Department, Eastern Illinois University
- Dr. Dean Kazoleas, Associate Professor, Communications, California State University, Fullerton
- Dr. Dean Kruckeberg, APR, Fellow PRSA, Professor of Communication Studies and Executive Director, Center for Global Public Relations, University of North Carolina at Charlotte
- Joyce Lofstrom, MS, APR, Director, Corporate Communications, HIMSS
- Jim Streed, MS, APR, Manager, Internal Communications, Integrys Energy Group, Inc.
- Dr. Joe Trahan, APR, Fellow PRSA, CEO/President, International Media Relations Trainer, Trahan & Associates and PRSSA Faculty Advisor, Georgia State University

- Susan Walton, MA, APR, Associate Chair, Department of Communications, Brigham Young University and PRSSA Faculty Advisor, Brigham Young University

Key Takeaways

Although the respondents were diverse in their thoughts and responses to the four survey questions, several commonalities emerged:

The “essence” of public relations will remain the same: Though the public relations profession will continue to evolve, the “essence” of public relations will be tomorrow what it is today.

Core skills will remain essential: Senior and mid-career practitioners will need to update their knowledge, skills and abilities to remain competitive and to help their organizations do the same.

Emphasis areas might change: Public relations practitioners will need greater flexibility in their skills and abilities, regardless of career stage, industry or professional environment because only those individuals who can navigate the media landscape will be able to provide sound and beneficial counsel to their organizations.

Specialization is growing: Public relations will become more specialized, thus driving future careers in the profession. While basic writing and research skills will remain vital, the value of generalists in public relations will diminish because a specialized knowledge base will be required to meet company and/or client demands.

Constant learning is key: As the industry evolves, professionals in public relations will need to be more knowledgeable, adaptable, open-minded and flexible to manage ongoing change at every career stage, regardless of industry or public relations specialization.

Distinct tactical, planning and strategic roles will continue to evolve: Senior professionals will continually need to adapt to the changing role of the public relations professional. In general, tactics will be for the entry-level professional; planning for the mid-career professional; and strategy, negotiation and interpersonal skills for the veteran.

Growing the profession and supporting specialization will increase in importance: Advanced career stage professionals need to understand the direction communication and public relations professional practice are going to better manage colleagues in early career stages who will be supporting new media tasks.

Because PRSA is, at its core, an individual member-based professional association rather than an association of organizations, these responses are as individual as the PRSA members themselves. In many cases, the one (and sometimes the only) common denominator is that all those who responded work in some area of public relations. Beyond that, each individual has different views, experiences and needs that are reflected in the data.

Specific Responses to the Four Questions

The following is a summary and analysis of the responses to the four questions. Appendix A contains additional detailed responses to question 1, and Appendix B contains additional response to question 2.

Question 1: What role will public relations professionals play in 2015? How is this different from their role today?

Authors and facilitators: Dean Kruckeberg and Joe Trahan

Summary Response:

Respondents believed that the public relations practitioner of 2015 will have six primary roles: facilitator, relationship builder and maintainer, communicator, influencer, strategic thinker and counselor and integrated marketer. The data revealed specific ideas about each of these roles:

FACILITATOR

- The emphasis on being *facilitators* of information will increase while the emphasis on being *disseminators* of information will decrease. The pervasiveness of social media and increasing direct engagement with publics will contribute to this.
- Public relations professionals will be more integrated into the daily routine of all functions within their organizations.

RELATIONSHIP

- “Public relations” will always be defined by its name: Establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with valued stakeholders or “publics.”
- The essence of public relations will still be tomorrow what it is today.

COMMUNICATION

- Public relations practitioners will work more as gatekeepers and less on proactively disseminating their own content.
- Public relations professionals will need to adapt to the changing media landscape, especially in online news and social media.
- Expertise in the basics of good writing, pitching, communications and crisis management will remain vitally important, although the skill set needed to strategically implement these basics may become more technical.

INFLUENCER

- Practitioners will need to understand and leverage the fact that their public’s preferences are changing from being consumers of traditional channels of communication to social media formats (e.g., blogs).
- The rapid speed of the delivery of message content will be vital.

- Practitioners will need to understand different kinds of communication, such as advertising, crisis communication and digital media, as well as public relations.

STRATEGIC THINKING/COUNSELING

- Practitioners will play an increasingly critical role in providing strategic thinking and counsel for organizations.
- Practitioners will also assume a greater role as trusted advisors to their CEOs as the landscape by which reputation is enhanced and protected becomes increasingly complex and challenging.
- Practitioners will need to prove ROI relative to public relations strategies and campaigns.
- Practitioners will serve as guides and counselors for ethical behavior.

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION (IMC)

- Public relations professionals will see a continued blurring of public relations and marketing, without discrete specialists within either role.
- Public relations professional practice will see integration between branding and public relations, with public relations playing an elevated role in branding across multiple media.

Question 2: What other knowledge, skills and abilities are necessary for success in the future?

Authors and facilitators: George Couch and Jim Streed

PRSA defines 10 areas of knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) as necessary for success in the profession. These are the same 10 KSAs on which the APR is based:

1. Business literacy
2. Communication models and theories
3. Researching, planning, implementing and evaluating programs
4. Media relations
5. Ethics and law
6. Management skills and issues
7. Crisis communication management
8. Using information technology efficiently
9. History of and current issues in public relations
10. Advanced communication skills

The specification of “other” in this question, however, suggests KSAs beyond these 10. Results from the feedback yielded suggestions for “other” KSAs, which were examined against two factors:

1. Where did the feedback results amplify any of the existing 10?
2. Were there any other emerging themes?

A Summary of “Other” KSAs

Six additional areas of focus were emphasized by those responding to the survey. Some of them amplified the existing KSAs; others suggested emerging areas of focus, as found below, and expanded upon in subsequent pages:

EXPANDED BUSINESS LITERACY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Public relations professionals need to have business skills to succeed, but respondents offered differing definitions of what it means to have business skills. The takeaway is that having public relations/ communication KSAs is not enough. The skill set of an effective public relations professional must also include business literacy, financial education, international experience, and organizational management skills. As one respondent stated: “Organizational management will be important in the future. I think that public relations professionals are more and more being looked at as organizational leaders because of the skills they bring to the organization.”

WRITING SKILLS

While writing is not a new KSA, many public relations professionals in the survey believe that writing ability within the public relations profession is suffering. One potential reason for this is increased use of social media and the resulting imperative for brevity. One-fourth of

respondents indicated a need for the ability to write concisely, with many noting that this skill is essential in both online and print media.

TECHNOLOGY

Respondents clearly felt that the days of public relations professionals relying on the IT Department are – or should be – over. As one noted, “The public relations professional increasingly needs to have technical knowledge about how the Web and new Web-based applications work.” Another added, “As print media continues to decline, it's becoming more essential to broaden skills and knowledge to include segments such as SEO strategies and basic HTML coding.”

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EQ)

This is often defined as a broad area composed of five competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy and team/social skills. Respondents clearly feel this is an area in which future practitioners will need to be proficient: more than half of survey respondents said EQ would be of more or much more importance in 2015 than it is today.

Coupled with many respondents’ strong agreement that qualified and competent public relations practitioners should be considered as potential CEO candidates within their organizations, emotional intelligence emerges as an important quality for leadership beyond the practice. As one survey respondent said, “Interpersonal skills – EQ – listening, customer focus, will be more important than ever.”

SOCIAL SCIENCES

This includes knowledge of psychology, sociology, anthropology and philosophy, and the skills necessary to apply them to public relations practice. Survey respondents suggested multi-lingual skills, understanding of diverse cultures and “cultural literacy” would be important to future practitioners. Nearly half of respondents said awareness and consideration of the traditions and belief systems of other cultures would be more important in 2015; more than one-fourth said it would be much more important.

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

This includes an understanding of the ways advertising, marketing, public relations and investor relations work together and the ability to lead or manage those relationships for a client. Respondents’ thoughts on business literacy were linked to their belief that understanding the ways advertising, marketing, public relations and investor relations work together and the ability to lead or manage those relationships for a client are important to the future practitioner.

Business literacy emerged as a key skill in the responses to this question as well. As one respondent noted, “Understanding business finance . . . [and] how stakeholder behaviors, driven by perceptions of value, translate into revenue and profits . . . will be critical.”

Question 3: Moving toward 2015, how will knowledge, skills and abilities be impacted by:

- a. Social media?
- b. Integrated marketing/communications?
- c. Globalization?
- d. Disintegration of traditional media?
- e. Demand for results – focus on measurement and evaluation?
- f. Other?

Authors and facilitators: Terri Johnson and Dean Kazoleas

SHIFTS IN STRATEGIC MEDIA VIEWS AND REQUIRED TECHNICAL SKILLS

Respondents indicated that shifts in media development, usage patterns and technology would require practitioners to have enhanced strategic and tactical skills. These skills will focus on learning to select and use a wide array of traditional, new and emerging media and that advanced knowledge of technology-based tools may be necessary for hiring and/or promotion. The feedback indicates that future practitioners will have to do the following:

- Learn to use and work with both traditional media and new media.
- Be more flexible and adaptive to changes in technology and stakeholder usage patterns.
 - The vast majority of respondents indicated that the ability to flexibly reach stakeholders directly, as well as through traditional, social and other media, would be more important/much more important in 2015 than it is today.
 - A majority of respondents also indicated that the ability to write clearly across communication channels would be more important/much more important in 2015 than today, with the remainder of respondents indicating it would be equally important in 2015 as it is today.
- Achieve a better balance of updated technical skills and strategic skills. In their responses, many noted the ongoing importance of:
 - New technological tools, such as social media.
 - Electronic publishing skills. More than half the respondents said that electronic publishing skills would be more important/much more important for being hired and/or promoted in 2015 than they are today, and nearly one-fourth of respondents indicated that they would be of equal importance.
 - Knowledge of technical programs. Nearly one-fourth of respondents indicated that advanced knowledge of technical programs such as Adobe InDesign, Photoshop or Illustrator would be more important/much more important in 2015 than they are today, with an additional one-third indicating such skills would be equally important in 2015.

A SHIFT TOWARD INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS

There was wide agreement across respondents that the growing trend toward integrated communications will continue, and that the lines between public relations, advertising and marketing would continue to blur. Based on these results, future professionals will have to:

- Learn to work with advertising and marketing professionals to achieve strategic goals.
 - A strong majority of respondents indicated that these skills would be more important/much more important in 2015 than they are today.
- Embrace IMC to reach highly distracted publics in a competitive communication environment.

GLOBALIZATION

The consensus across surveys and respondents reflected an increasing trend toward globalization, which will require an ability to segment target publics, understand culture and belief systems and communicate in other languages. In short, the results indicate that future professionals will have to:

- Learn to be adaptive to stakeholders from different cultures.
 - Three-fourths of leadership survey respondents indicated that an understanding of cultures and belief systems would be more important/much more important in 2015 than it is today.
- Be prepared to communicate with stakeholders in their primary language.
 - More than half of leadership survey respondents indicated that the ability to communicate in a stakeholder's primary language would be more important/much more important in 2015 than it is today.
 - The remainder indicated that the ability to communicate in the stakeholders' primary language would be equally important in 2015 when compared to today.
- Learn to segment both physical and virtual communities that may cross borders and cultures.

DEMAND FOR RESULTS

The statistical data and respondent comments stressed an ever-increasing need for public relations professionals to focus more on being able to demonstrate results through careful measurement and to be able to demonstrate and articulate the value and/or ROI of public relations. Based on these trends, future professionals will have to:

- Develop better measurement tools and better understand scientific measurement.
- Be more focused on results.
 - Nearly all respondents indicated that a focus on results would be more important/much more important in 2015 than today.
- Be better able to demonstrate and explain the ROI of public relations.
 - Nearly all respondents also indicated that the ability to articulate the value of public relations would be more important/much more important in 2015 than today.

Question 4: How will knowledge, skills and abilities differ by:

Career Stage?

Industry?

Organizational Setting?

Other?

Authors and Assembly Facilitators: Mary Deming Barber and Joyce Lofstrom

CAREER STAGE OR EXPERIENCE

- **Public relations professionals must develop and maintain new and existing skills throughout their careers.** With the evolving media world presenting challenges at all stages of a public relations career, younger professionals may have more experience using new tools, such as social media, while senior practitioners will continue to serve as advisors and counselors with advanced knowledge, maturity and strategic skills.
- **Writing and research are two core competencies vital to success in public relations – at any stage of a professional’s career.** Solid writing skills are considered mandatory for public relations professionals at all career levels, including a knowledge of grammar, spelling and style and the application of research abilities in both developing and evaluating public relations plans in support of corporate objectives.
- **As public relations professionals advance in their careers, critical thinking and overall strategy and strategic planning become more expected and required.** Completion of APR accreditation is a good process for acquiring much of this knowledge and learning many of these skills and abilities. In essence, younger professionals will be charged with learning the technical fundamentals of the profession, but should not be considered as tacticians only. Their more experienced peers need to provide guidance and encouragement to them relating to critical decisions, while also providing younger professionals the opportunity to do so.
- **As practitioners move into the managerial track, understanding globalization, finance, measurement, etc. become more important, a process that should begin in the early career stages.** More experienced professionals need to have a fundamental knowledge and understanding of social and emerging media as well as an understanding and appreciation of how new technology and emerging media affect their organization, customers and the public which their success depends upon.

INDUSTRY:

- **The public relations practice is likely to become more specialized in certain sectors – e.g., health care, government and investor relations** – especially those sectors in which an understanding of industry regulations is paramount. Despite the movement toward specialization, *basic* public relations skills (e.g., research, strategic focus, writing, measurement) will remain the core in all industries.

ORGANIZATIONAL SETTING:

- As noted in the “Industry” review, **public relations professionals typically draw on the same basic skills and knowledge in all industry and organizational settings, but often in a different mix.** Multinational global corporations will require the highest levels of sophistication, with agencies continuing to play a dominant role. Assuming the communications landscape continues to evolve at the current pace, public relations as a profession will thrive with firms, agencies, academia and not-for-profits hiring individuals who understand emerging media platforms.

Gaps and Implications of the Responses to the Four Questions

Gap in KSA Analysis by Career Stage, Industry and Organizational Setting

The research results reported in this White Paper primarily focused on new practitioners or senior-level practitioners in public relations. Some responses pointed to the need for more middle management or mid-career guidance, with some also pointing to mid-career as a disappearing segment of public relations. It might be helpful to have more information on this, such as a question on the department structure and the type of staff members included.

On a related note, the responses made the strong point that public relations professionals must be aware of ongoing changes at all career levels because versatility spawns career progress to public relations management positions. Specifically, a high number of the comments about KSAs mentioned the need for senior professionals to learn and understand new media tools. This appeared to be a significant gap when compared to the perception of the skill level of entry- to mid-level public relations professionals.

Implications of the Research

These findings have major implications for both professional development and public relations education. They suggest the need for PRSA to explore additional professional development opportunities to offer its members. In addition to those skills that have already emerged as professional development imperatives – e.g., social media – one of the strongest sentiments expressed in these responses was the conviction that public relations professionals can, in fact, aspire to organizational management and CEO positions – but that they must have the business, financial, multicultural and emotional awareness to do so.

These findings also suggest additional avenues for curriculum development in public relations education, adding, as has been previously noted, to the body of information found in the 2006 report by the Commission on Public Relations Education, *The Professional Bond*.

As the collection, analysis and reporting of these findings draws to a conclusion, the eight White Paper authors and facilitators are struck by the optimism expressed by the respondents. To be sure, needs exist, gaps have arisen, management expectations have intensified and economic pressures remain. Nevertheless, the members of PRSA and the other stakeholders who provided input for this initiative clearly believe they can be a tremendous force for the betterment of society and for the advancement of the public relations profession and the professional – in 2015 and beyond.

Appendix A

This appendix contains additional observations collected for question 1.

Additional observations for question 1: What role will public relations professionals play in 2015? How this is different from their role today?

- Increasing involvement with social media and online publications, as well as with traditional media.
- Growing number of both niche and multi-function positions.
- Writing will continue to be a cornerstone.
- Listening to what's happening outside the organization will be more important since anyone can change the landscape so quickly.
- Increasing social media integration and newer models of it.
- Anticipating, reacting to changing developments in the Web world.
- Growing volume and faster speed present new challenges.
- Decreasing power of paid media and earned media is becoming crucial for survival with the explosion of social media.
- Listening to your audience and talking with and to them and about them, which is the lens from which public relations people view the world is also the lens that social media is based on.
- Understanding world markets, cultures.
- Monitoring stakeholder perceptions in multiple traditional and social media channels.
- Requiring higher levels of tech savviness.
- Continuing evolution of public relations is expected along with evolution of social media; the two might end up becoming synonymous.
- Increasing challenges for older public relations professionals, who will have to work to adapt since blogs, Tweets and Facebook postings may have priority over traditional media.
- Connecting with customers and stakeholders directly and sharing information with those parties will not change, but tools and tactics are evolving with changes in communication on social media and engaging the public.
- Building a presence in social media and branding.
- Taking leadership in creative directions for current fields.
- Narrowing and specialization of role will continue since generalist roles are uncommon in practice; social media use and monitoring are new, but do not really change the role of the profession.
- Embracing social media has pushed the profession into a corner that has ignored traditional skills. Ignoring historic grammar and spelling will

remove one of the areas of our traditional expertise and value to senior management.

- Staying on top of technology. Continued writing emphasis. More diversity awareness.
- Improving certain skill sets needed right now that public relations professionals didn't have before. The most obvious is social media relations experience.
- “Using information technology efficiently” will become a basic communication skill necessary for face-to-face engagement with key stakeholders.
- Understanding how their (public relations professionals’) actions impact their constituents.
- Managing the social media space an increased focus for the public relations professional. That role will dominate over traditional public relations functions.
- Integrating social media is completely changing the way we do our jobs. It's not just a tactic.
- Being a voice for their C-suite bosses
- Becoming partners to our clients, working hand-in-glove with the CEOs.
- Serving as strategic advisers for senior leadership in all organizations.
- Increasing degree of fragmentation over today.
- Speaking directly to the public rather than going through print, TV and other outlets.
- Engaging audiences through grassroots social media initiatives.
- Speaking as leaders directly to employees and the public in a transparent manner.
- Relinquishing control of what goes out externally is needed, as is educating and engaging (and trusting).
- Helping our internal audiences become accurate and eager disseminators of news and information.
- Identifying and engaging separate and distinct audiences with which public relations professionals will have to communicate directly and in detail.
- Recognizing that media will continue to become more fragmented and audience-focused with more attention paid to bloggers and hyper-local online publications.
- Getting back to the basics and incorporating social media into public relations professionals’ plans.
- Determining how to decipher quality outlets in social media on global and crisis communication.
- Translating messages across the globe.
- Becoming their (public relations professionals) own webmaster.

- Predicting what the "next big thing" is.
- Focusing more on the concept and science of the industry and less on its delivery. Movement to get "back to the basics" of public relations.

“Influencer” Role

- Managing the image and working with the various publics of an organization is a very important role. I don't see that changing in the future.
- Influencing the thoughts and behaviors of our target audiences.
- Adjusting the perceptions of the role of public relations to achieve corporate goals.
- The playmaker. He/she will use technology to manipulate the message for a favorable outcome.

Strategic Thinking/Counseling Role

- Increasing demand by companies for well-rounded public relations pros, not just tactical order takers.
- Becoming knowledgeable about trends.
- Making sure each professional's knowledge base is – or should be – constantly evolving.
- Being strategists/developers/consultants and implementers.
- Evolving away from press agency and more toward management consultancy.
- Acquiring business literacy will be important.
- Having a sophisticated understanding of business, global markets and politics.
- Placing more value on public relations and reputation management.
- Managing crises deftly through solid advice and counsel.
- Providing antenna, voice and conscience of organizations will serve in new and exciting ways.
- Creating and implementing effective strategies.
- Obtaining corporate social responsibility expertise.
- Developing leadership skills and developing leaders.
- Acquiring new skills to adapt to changing business environments.
- Guiding clients or their companies through social media issues and miscommunications.
- Guiding ethical corporate behavior if companies take public relations seriously.
- Addressing important ethical and critical issues – before they are issues.

Integrated Marketing Role

- Blurring of public relations and marketing will continue without true professionals of the discipline within each role.
- Increasing integration between branding and public relations with public relations, with public relations playing an elevated role in the brand departments across multiple media vehicles.
- Melding general marketing with public relations roles will continue.
- Regarding pay-to-play (advertorial) strategies, public relations professionals seem to be finding themselves playing dual roles.
- Increasing integration of public relations with other communications activities.
- Incorporating public relations into an "Integrated Marketing Communications" model will continue, rather than public relations remaining as a stand-alone discipline.

- Increasing cross-branding and co-branding demands more collaboration.

Appendix B

This appendix contains additional observations collected for question 2.

Additional observations for question 2: What other knowledge, skills and abilities are necessary for success in the future?

Business Literacy – Additional Insights

- Developing specialized knowledge for business/industry/media niches such as science, health care and technology.
- Entering public relations professionals should minor or double major in the business field of their choice as students.
- Increasing requirement to understand the business. Leadership development and gaining the trust of executives.
- Gaining financial literacy is part of the total business literacy package. Public relations professionals need to understand the bottom line financially, and they will be most effective when they know precisely how stakeholder behaviors, driven by perceptions of value, translate into revenue and profits.
- Understanding measurement – meaningful measurement of public relations in relationship to ROI and business goals.
- Improving understanding of how other cultures prefer to receive news, in a global economy, is key for public relations experts. International experience is a huge asset.
- Improving potential exists for public relations professionals to not only lead their profession, but also to be able to lead their business or industry.

Writing Skills

- Maintaining (or obtaining) writing skills (while not a new KSA), or the lack thereof, could not be ignored in the survey. Though it seems old-fashioned, writing skills are needed and will be more important than ever in the future.
- Understanding the audience is an important part of one's writing ability.
- Writing is essential whether online or in print, particularly as technology changes and evolves.

Technology – to include websites, social media and SEO

- Relying on the IT Department is a mistake for public relations professionals. Public relations professionals increasingly need to have technical knowledge about how the Web and new Web-based applications work.
- Gaining skills in social media and Web content management systems (WordPress, Joomla and Drupal, or open source systems) will allow public relations professionals to communicate without relying on IT.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

- Gaining understanding of new concepts and competencies, such as “Emotional Intelligence.” This is often referred to as “EQ” to distinguish it from general intelligence, or “IQ.” The basic definition of emotional intelligence found in the 1990 article “Emotional Intelligence” by Salovey and Mayer is “...The ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions.” [1]

Social Sciences

- Gaining multi-lingual skills and understanding of diverse cultures and “cultural literacy” was suggested by survey respondents as being important to future practitioners. This comes through study of social sciences such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and philosophy.

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)

- Having an extensive knowledge of IMC will be required to function as an effective practitioner, according to over three-fourths of the survey respondents.
- “Understanding business finance . . . [and] how stakeholder behaviors, driven by perceptions of value, translate into revenue and profits . . . will be critical.”

1. Salovey, P., & Mayer, J.D. *Emotional intelligence*, Baywood Publishing Company, p. 189, Amityville, New York, 1990.