

SPREAD THE WORD

If you have news or information to share with fellow PRSA members, let them read it in ...*innercom*.

Contact Ray Scroggins at Scroggins Associates, Ltd., P.O. Box 662, Watertown, WI 53094-0662. Telephone (920) 261-7968 Fax (920) 261-7986 E-mail: rscrogg@execpc.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL 18

Getting the Traffic You Need to Your Web Site; Neal Linkon, Communications Director, SpectraCom; at Italian Community Center.

MAY 16

Paragon Awards; at Italian Community Center.

Check the Chapter's Information Line (414-297-9491) or Web site (www.prsawis.org) for up-to-date information on these and future programs. And don't forget that you can register online through the chapter Web site, using your credit card.

NOTE: If your company affiliation, address, e-mail or telephone changes, notify Brookfield Executive at 225 Regency Court, Suite 200, Brookfield, WI 53045-6166, to be sure your directory listing remains up-to-date.

Sept. 11 Attacks, Crisis Communications and an Exceptional Response

By Randi Kreger

The September 11 attacks on the Pentagon and the twin towers of the World Trade Center brought about an outpouring of help from around the world, including Milwaukee. One locally based organization, the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA), responded by providing volunteer assistance in New York and helping its nationwide membership meet needs on a local level.

In doing so – the January PRSA meeting was told – the association not only participated in the healing process, it reinforced the role that funeral directors play in helping family members overcome shock and grief.

Speaking to PRSA members, the association's director of communications, Laura Porfilio Glawe, and its public relations manager, Faye Spano, outlined how NFDA accomplished these goals. Volunteer members from around the country partnered with the medical examiner's office in New York to take care of the many technical and administrative details following the tragedy.

As part of their training, funeral directors also learned how to respond to major crises, the two said.

NFDA members looked to the association for leadership on a number of fronts, from responding to unusual situations (e.g., media attention) to helping the community feel a part of the solution, providing memorial books that citizens could sign at local funeral homes.

The president of the NFDA board of directors served as spokesman for the association and its membership, responding to countless media questions that came into NFDA offices. The board president also visited New York City – hub of the activity – to serve as a resource for the national media, including CNN. Glawe said the results were exceptional because he focused on NFDA's key messages as he answered the media's questions.

"One of our most important accomplishments was keeping our focus," she said. "We had to make difficult decisions very quickly with incomplete information. So we developed key messages and concentrated on these, no matter what issue was the hot topic for the media that day."

By communicating with association members and the media consistently using the latest technology, the NFDA received lots of positive feedback about its work. Also, a national convention scheduled just three weeks after the crisis was well attended. Not only did media compliment the association, even nonmember funeral directors noted that the association represented the industry well.

Potential negative press never materialized, the two women noted, largely because the association followed one of the simplest public relations credos: do good work and let people know about it.

Glawe and Spano had these tips for handling crisis situations:

- Communicate facts clearly and concisely.
- Provide regular updates to staff, even if there is nothing drastically new to report.
- Keep organized.
- Stay focused on your top priorities.
- Show appreciation to those around you who are doing a good job.
- Take short breaks and take good care of yourself so you can stay in top form.
- Recognize that not everything will go perfectly. Expect the unexpected and deal with it the best you can.
- Think ahead and play out potential scenarios.
- Be creative with staff resources and volunteers. ●

Counsel for Today's Job Seekers

By Randi Kreger

The job market for the public relations profession has always been tight in this town. And now it's even tighter. The Feb. 20 PRSA meeting featured four PR practitioners who shared what they've learned about finding a job in tough times. *Innercom* also asked seven other PR pros for advice.

Presenters featured at the February meeting were Michael Pflughoeft, APR, Doral Dental; Wendee Puccetti, Lead Dog Marketing; Colleen K. Dougherty, Right Management Consultants; and Jude Werra of Jude Werra & Associates.

Others interviewed for this piece were: H. Carl Mueller, Mueller Communications; Terry Dorr, St. Francis Hospital; Marilyn Vollrath, Vollrath & Associates; Jeffrey Remsik, Bottom Line Marketing and Public Relations; Evan Zeppos, Zeppos & Associates; David Fantle, Zigman Joseph Stephenson; and Bruce Herz, Bader Rutter.

In general, the group agreed that employers are looking for:

- Recommendations from peers
- Concrete examples of successful work
- Enthusiasm and eagerness
- Writing skills
- Problem solving, critical thinking and decision-making skills
- Creativity
- Organizational skills
- Technical skills
- Team players who enjoy their work
- The flexibility to go from account to account or discipline to discipline
- Growth potential
- Strategic thinking
- News judgment
- Community knowledge

Counsel cont'd

- People who can learn quickly and hit the job running
- A fit with the company's culture
- A "can-do" attitude and the urge to add value to the organization

What advice would our counselors give job seekers? Here's a sampling:

- Visit the Web site of potential employers. Learn as much as you can, and show how you've solved a problem or identified an opportunity in a way that demonstrates your years of experience.
- Get leads from newspapers and online resources.
- Meet with people in the industry you're interested in. Present yourself and your resume, and ask about job leads and referrals for further networking.
- When you find a lead, look for someone who works in the organization who can serve as a referral.
- For the inexperienced job seeker, use nonprofits as an entry point or seek an internship with an agency.
- Change your resume to fit the job description and keep it up-to-date.
- Even if you have a job, keep your eyes open for new possibilities and continue to network.

Remember that the job climate can change in a split second.

- Stay in contact with possible employers, but don't seem desperate.
- Find two or three network advisers and ask for candid feedback about yourself, your resume, your interview skills, and so forth.
- Consider going back to places you didn't get the job and say: "I respect your decision not to hire me. But could you help me become a better candidate by telling me the shortcoming I need to address so I may better prepare myself for the future?"
- Take time to learn about the company – what it stands for, where it's going, things you could do for it. Then apply those lessons that you learned in PR.
- Don't get discouraged. Be the most positive person you know.
- Control your own destiny. Use this time to evaluate your career. Think about what you really want to do and then do it. Manage your career rather than aimlessly taking jobs.
- Remember that even after you get the job, you're still proving yourself and your worth to the company.

Job Hunting Myths

by Jude Werra, Jude M. Werra & Associates

Some job seekers mistakenly believe they're not sufficiently qualified.

People do get hired in industries where they have no experience if they possess the right personal attributes, intelligence and values.

They presume they're no better than anyone else and think of themselves as a commodity rather than a potentially valuable asset to any organization.

If they enter the job environment thinking this way, they will find it difficult to come across as positive.

They believe that progress in life is by chance rather than determination and hard work.

Not so.

Everyone they encounter is regarded as an adversary.

Many people wish to help them in their job hunt.

Credentials will predict who gets hired.

The decision to interview someone is made logically, but hiring decisions often are based on intuition.

Job seekers should be reactive rather than proactive.

Wrong. Network with as many people as possible. Don't just sit back and wait for leads. Be proactive.

Employers can be tricked into hiring decisions by spinning information or misleading them.

Employers are more savvy than that and you will be found out eventually.

A few key reminders for job seekers:

- Men and women are hired from personal meetings, not resumes.
- Those who get hired are passionate about what they do; have a personal career course; and their plan and goals are the same as employers. Passion and conviction impress employers.
- Show confidence. It will come through. If you lack confidence, that will be obvious as well. ●

PRSA JOB BANK NOW ONLINE

Looking to spread the word about a job opening in your company? The Southeastern Wisconsin PRSA chapter has a great opportunity for you. You can post public relations job openings on the PRSA Web site for free! All you need to do is to contact Jennifer Butzen at (414) 276-6237 or by e-mail at jbutzen@zeppos.com and provide her with general information regarding your organization and the position. You then will be able to post a position and description at www.prswis.com for up to 45 days. In turn, any interested person searching the Web site will have access to the most recent public relations positions in Southeastern Wisconsin. Take advantage of this easy, fast and free service now available through PRSA.

NEWS ABOUT MEMBERS

The telephone number for Priya Barnes, APR, should be (414) 223-7500. It was listed incorrectly in the previous issue of *Innercom*. Dave Fantle, who recently joined Kohl's Corp., has now moved on to join Zigman Joseph Stephenson as a vice president.

PRSA...innercom

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