

Networking:

How to come out of the weeds without being a toad (Bufo obnoxios)

By Monique Chenier

There are few who aren't familiar with the children's tale The Frog and the Prince, where the princess has to kiss the frog to turn him into a prince. What do frogs and princes have to do with networking? Well, it is the basis on which a newly released book on networking for business and life is quite entertainingly written. Author and Managing Director of The Vancouver Board of Trade, Darcy Rezac, recently presented "The Frog and Prince – Secrets of Positive Networking™" at the Calgary Chamber of Commerce.

According to Rezac, the first secret of networking is "You have to kiss a lot of frogs to find a prince. Positive networking is all about jumping in and getting your feet wet. In the world of frogs, that is a good thing. You have to do a lot of it, and your chances of being a better networker improve the more frogs you meet. You'll happily kiss more frogs and find more princes or princesses."

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The Bottom Line on Community Investment

By Jylian Russell

Bottom line. Brand imaging. Exchange of goods and services. Work for Free? Calgary's Professional Marketing Research Society (PMRS) recently gathered a panel of communications specialists from varying industries and sectors to discuss the ideas above and how they have become a common practice and foundation for partnership between the private and not-for-profit sectors. More definitively, the pros and cons of pro bono and contra services were examined from both professional and personal viewpoints. Panelists included Brian Singh, Cameron Strategy; Grant Burns, Calgary Folk Festival; Mark Szabo, MacLaren McCann; and Mark Pigott, Ogilvy and Mather West. Throughout the discussions, one common thread emerged: the issue of giving to the not-for-profit sector is one that affects each and every one of us.

First to speak was Brian Singh of Cameron Strategy, a leading research firm where he specializes in government and municipal policies as well as research for the tourism trade. Speaking on behalf of his organization, Brian clearly defined Cameron Strategy's grounds for supporting the not-for-profit sector. First off, because of Cameron Strategy's involvement in the tourism trade, giving to non-profits compliments his organization's operations (i.e. sponsoring tourism-generating events such as festivals). Next, by attaching one's brand to a not-for-profit of similar operational mentality, the profile of this brand is increased in the community. While a definitive ROI is not always easy to determine after giving and working with non-profits, by choosing involvement in the non-profit sector an organization is able to leverage its brand amongst its peers. As Brian suggests, practitioners must "try to look at the overall economic impact benefited" from giving to a non-profit such as a local festival, and consider the exposure an organization's brand will gain simply by bringing more bodies into town.

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Networking: The Frog and the Prince (continued from page 1)

We've all seen and been envious of those natural networkers who work the room seemingly without effort. How can we be more like them? It is surprisingly simple by following *The Network Dance: N.E.T.W.O.R.K.*™.

N: Never Leave Home Without Them

Business cards, that is. Never, ever leave home without your business cards. The author even goes so far as to say that if you have left for an event without your cards, turn around and get them, even if you will be late for the event. Business cards are that important.

E: The Four E's – Establish, Extend, Exchange, Engage

The four steps in making a good first impression are relatively simple for anyone to master: *establish* eye contact, *extend* your hand, *exchange* business cards then *engage* in conversation. To further make a good impression Rezac suggests focusing on one person at a time by really listening to what they have to say.

T: Travel In Pairs

Tag-teaming in your networking efforts will provide a sense of support and security. Tag-teammates can help by providing glowing introductions of their colleague and assisting their teammate in a number of ways. For example, if your teammate is delaying introducing you, chances are he/she has forgotten the person's name. Jump right in and introduce yourself, then you'll both know the person's name. Likewise, a teammate can help extract you when you are trapped with an overly talkative person.

W: Working the Pond – Positively

The most successful networkers use the philosophy of "what can I do for the people I meet" rather than "what can everyone else do for me". Rezac suggests acting like a host at each event attended. Princes and princesses of networking will open the circle of conversation for new people to join, and introduce these people to others in the circle.

O: Opportunity Is Everywhere

Networking opportunities are everywhere: recognize them, maximize them and create your own opportunities. Organizations such as the Canadian Public Relations Society offer countless networking opportunities including attending events, speaking at luncheons, volunteering on committees and mentoring students.

R: Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

Simply stated, the more networking you do, the better you get at it. And the better you get at it, the more positive the results. If you go to just one event per week and set a goal of meeting at least seven people, in three years you will have expanded your network by more than 1000 people.

K: Keep It Going

To get the most out of networking, follow-up is important. This doesn't mean sending the "drive-by email blast" to everyone you meet. It means discovering what you can do for someone else, then doing it. Rezac sees networking as a contact sport where you need face-to-face contact on a regular basis to build connections and ultimately relationships.

So, don't be a toad. Jump in and get your feet wet. Live by the philosophy that networking is not about you – it's about discovering what you can do for someone else. With a little effort and practice, anyone can become a prince or princess of networking.

Monique Chenier is an independent communications consultant helping organizations solve business challenges through effective communications. She is a CPRS member working her way up the frog chain by practicing her networking skills. If there's anything Monique can do for you, she can be reached at mpchenier@shaw.ca.

Have you recently attended an interesting event or read a thought-provoking relevant book you would like to share with your fellow CPRS members? Email your 500 word article to Maxim Chair, Bonnie Elgie, APR @ bonnie@openminds.ca

The Bottom Line on Community Investment (continued from page 1)

Shifting perspectives, Grant Burns, Resource Development Director of the hugely successful and local non-profit, The Calgary Folk Festival, took the stand. Speaking on the inner workings of the not-for-profit sector, Grant noted that the driving force behind his type of organization achieving its objective, lies in the question, “how do I get that for free?” While this may not be the most desirable of way to operate a business, sometimes it is the only way.

This means of generating operational funds is not only time consuming, and at times draining for those involved, but requires a vigorous combination of ingenuity, creativity, resourcefulness and sometimes luck. The first three are required to discover and develop sources to align with, and the fourth – luck – to gain unexpected sources that seek work with non-profits many times for personal interest.

Moving on, Grant highlighted the differences between contra and pro bono work. The barter system of sorts that exists between the non-profit and corporate sectors; the trade of goods and services, is what contra work entails. Pro bono, a term often used in the inner wrangling of the legal world, on the other hand, means exactly as it translates, for free.

Offering an agency’s perspective, Mark Szabo of MacLaren McCann illustrated the achievable balance between meeting organizational objectives, hitting target profit levels, while giving back to the communities in which we operate. The key here is to align with not-for profits of similar operational, ethical, and philosophical mentalities and standards to your own organization. By doing so, the union between your brand and that of the brand you sponsor will be recognizable and conceivable to your target publics.

Mark went on to discuss how partnerships between agencies and not-for-profits provide unmistakable tangible and intangible benefits for all involved. The most obvious tangible being the free, agency quality work obtained by the non-profit, as well as the funds generated from this work. For the agencies, these types of services can provide showcase opportunities that can be later used to strengthen a portfolio. The intangible benefits, while not as definable as far as matching dollar figures to, are what make community investment truly invaluable. For the non-profits, after monies raised have been distributed, they can realize the end product of what they work so hard to achieve – addressing the social issues of our society. The benefits to practitioner and company engaging in this type of work often result in experiences full of emotional rewards.

Finally, Mark Pigott of Ogilvy and Mather West offered his perspective. Mark suggests eliminating the terms pro bono and contra from the context and replacing them instead with a more user-friendly substitute – apprenticeship. Explaining that the idea of free work should be viewed as a “vessel of change” and not as a “vessel of charity”. From a strong social standpoint, Mark said that for individuals to grow, we must shift our approach from achieving success as singular units and instead learn to grow as a whole primarily. We can no longer rely upon our government to tackle our social problems, and instead ‘we must pick up the torch dropped by the government’, take accountability for the issues that surround us and strive to fix them. Then and only then can we as individuals say that we are truly working towards success. While Mark notes that he cannot recall any profitable windfall he has reaped from giving and working with non-profits, the benefits he received in the forms of pride, dignity and commercial advantage has made his endeavors truly rewarding.

Wrapping up the session, moderator John Spittal of the CBC asked, “How do you persuade senior management that community involvement is important?” Panel responses varied, but all held a similar theme. If management holds high ethical standards on community involvement, while at the same time places importance on the happiness of its employees, they will see the rewarding benefits that getting involved in the not-for-profit-sector can provide for the company, its employees and surrounding community. Not all aspects of contributing to the community are beneficial to an organization, considering that valuable paying client time is lost when taking on non-profit clients, and defined ROI’s are difficult to measure. However, as all panelists emphasized, the benefits far outweigh the losses. Excellent networking opportunities, the potential to increase brand profiles in the community, personal satisfaction and the reward from helping to develop the surrounding community are just a few of the rewards. Stronger communities are key to our continued success, because the more balanced our societies become in terms of humanitarian issues, the more we will excel economically.

Whether you or your organization engage in pro bono, contra or apprenticeship, one theme remains constant. Take accountability for our community’s social problems, invest in those programs that make our society a more cultured one and we all stand to gain a far stronger, partnered community than any amount of one-sided corporate success could hope to achieve.

Crisis Communications: A Case Study of the Strathcona-Tweedsmuir Tragedy

By *Samantha Pavey*

Crisis communications was the hot topic at the November CPRS event. A full house came to listen to Beverly Reynolds, APR speak about the Strathcona-Tweedsmuir tragedy and the crisis communications details that were involved.

Beverly's experience spans more than 30 years, during which time she has dealt with a number of crisis situations from an outside council perspective. Being a part of the Strathcona-Tweedsmuir team during the avalanche crisis last year, Beverly experienced first-hand the devastation of the small Alberta school community when seven students perished on a backcountry ski trip.

Using Strathcona-Tweedsmuir as a case study, she outlined a crisis communication approach. A solid team is what will get through a crisis. The people involved have to work together, understand each others' boundaries and respect each others' skills.

Always have an experienced public relations professional on board, one who understands the crisis, the environment, the media and all other audiences.

A dusty binder is not the way Beverly faces a crisis, she prefers to tackle a crisis thinking, acting and feeling according to her experience, the advice of those involved and that of her team. Know who to contact and where they can be reached quickly is crucial. Know who your team is, and try to get people who you have worked with in the past. By knowing them, you are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and can use them accordingly.

Visit www.cprscalgary.org for upcoming events.

Student Event Recap

By *Curtis Kjinserdahl*

On October 8th, 2003, the CPRS student liaisons held a student event in which students could talk with public relations professionals in Calgary. The event was held at Bass Bros. next to Mount Royal College with close to thirty students participating.

The event was set up like a speed-dating scenario. Three students talked to a professional for five minutes discussing any topic they found important and when a bell was rung signaling the end of the five minute allotment, the students went to the next professional for a new conversation. Since the student attendance was so high, the event was held in two separate rounds, allowing for a smaller group of people.

This event proved to be a fun experience for all involved. Sneh Seetal, one of the professionals present, said that "the speed dating event was a great way to meet and interact with Communications and Public Relations students from the U of C and MRC. Not only was it beneficial in terms of increasing student membership, it was also a creative and fun way to promote the CPRS and meet future practitioners."

It was also fun from the students' perspective as well. Dena Uncles, the University of Calgary student liaison, said "I thought that our first CPRS student event went really well. Students from both the University of Calgary and Mount Royal, as well as the PR practitioners, seemed to really enjoy talking with one another. Comments from the event were quite positive and I think everyone had a pretty great time."

Attendance at the event was also impressive, with the amount of students exceeding the goals that the student liaisons set out. Mona Gauvreau, a professional in attendance, said, "I was very impressed with the number of students that attended from both the University of Calgary and Mount Royal College. The event was well organized and judging by the numbers, is something we should do more often."

The five professionals that attended the event were Mona Gauvreau APR, Sneh Seetal, Henry Stevenson APR, Alison Pidskalny and David Annesley, APR, representing perspectives from all over the public relations field.

The student liaisons that organized this event were Sally Collins and Sara Schwarz from Mount Royal College, and Curtis Kjinserdahl and Dena Uncles from the University of Calgary, with a special recognition to Sally and Sara who developed the concept. The student liaisons are already busy planning another student event that will be as dynamic as this past event for the winter semester and hopes to beat this event's student attendance.

A Winning Accreditation Work Sample Starts With the Basics

By Melissa Rolfe, APR

Experienced CPRS members who've chosen not to pursue their accreditation often cite the required work sample as the main barrier, saying they're unsure of what's expected or doubt they've got a project that meets the criteria. In fact, a successful work sample is one that's built on the basics, which includes the RACE formula of research, analysis, communication and evaluation.

The deadline for this year's accreditation candidates to submit their work samples to the CPRS national office is approaching, and CPRS Toronto offers these suggestions to help current candidates prepare—and prospective applicants plan ahead.

- ✓ Read the CPRS Accreditation Handbook, paying careful attention to the RACE formula. Examiners are judging less on layout than on the content you provide.
- ✓ Specify objectives and identify ways of measuring performance. Refer back to the objectives in your evaluation.
- ✓ Review at least two samples of recently successful work samples, available through the CPRS national library housed at Mount Royal College in Calgary.
- ✓ Choose your sample carefully. It doesn't need to be a high-profile event. Examiners are looking to gain insight into your ability to strategize, plan, execute, and analyze as a senior practitioner.
- ✓ Select a manageable topic. If it was one segment of a larger initiative, briefly explain it in context in the introduction and focus on what you were responsible for.
- ✓ Choose a project that's as current as possible, in the unlikely event you have to defer a year.
- ✓ Prepare an outline first and review it with an accredited mentor.
- ✓ Ask one or more accredited practitioners to review your work sample before submitting it.
- ✓ In your evaluation, include recommendations. No matter how successful the event or campaign, there must have been things that could have been improved or modified and you should comment on what changes you would make and why.
- ✓ You must include a budget (percentages or actual figures) and indicate whether you kept to it.

If preparing a good work sample is relatively straightforward, why are some failed or disqualified? Even accomplished practitioners can miss or err in some of the requirements. The CPRS national office instructs examiners to follow strictly the criteria set out for candidates and to disqualify candidates for any of the following:

- ✓ Failing to follow the guidelines for the submission, such as omitting an abstract or exceeding the word limit
- ✓ Having an insufficient role in the chosen project, or failing to be significantly involved at every stage
- ✓ Missing any component of the RACE formula.

Low scores should be expected for infractions such as:

- ✓ Providing inadequate budget information; for example, saying simply that sufficient resources were provided or that money was requested on an as-needed basis during the course of the project
- ✓ Showing inappropriate or insufficient research or evaluation methods
- ✓ Failing to show coherence or a strong connection between the results of the research performed, the objectives set, the approach taken, the vehicles used, and the outcomes obtained
- ✓ Failing to relate the evaluation with the project's objectives.

The Calgary chapter of CPRS offers members who are enrolled in or considering the accreditation program a number of supports as they prepare for the process, such as a general information session that explains what's required overall, a work sample workshop, and the help of mentors. For more information, contact accreditation Chair Diane Rennie, APR at Drennie@creditcounselling.com.

It's Independent's Day – Accelerate Your Business

By Monique Chenier

Professional public relations practitioners know the most successful communication campaigns drive home relevant key messages to segmented audiences. A key audience within the CPRS Calgary membership is independent consultants. In fact, nearly 25 per cent of Calgary members are "Indies". As such, CPRS Calgary is steering an initiative to develop specific benefits of membership for this group.

As would be expected, the first step in the excursion was to do research. A little spin around cyberspace identified what other associations offered their independent consultants. Thanks to the volunteer efforts of Gord Hawker, APR of Hawker & Associates and Monique Chenier of Chenier Communications, telephone interviews were then conducted with a cross-section of consultants to learn which programs would be most valuable to them.

The result? Indy500.

The goal of the Indy500 program is to provide resources to help CPRS Calgary's independents accelerate their businesses. Numerous ideas have been flagged: business development opportunities, online consultant directory, business management support, online resources, networking and problem-solving support. PR practitioners make their living by billable hours therefore all programs offered will be cost effective and an excellent investment of time. Several key components of the program are already zooming ahead.

Indy500 Online Resources

A password-protected, members-only section of the CPRS Calgary site is on track through Simon Whitfield, Chair of the Website committee. An Indy500 area would provide resources and links specifically targeted at consultants. Topics suggested by Indies have included: a listing of contract opportunities, financial/legal/business planning resources, management resources and info on disability and liability insurance. Please email any suggestions for online resources to mpchenier@shaw.ca.

Indy500 Events

Informal, free events are being planned to provide Indy500 members with access to experts to help them race to the front of the pack in managing their business. Suggested topics include accounting, legal, time management, insurance, project management and self-marketing. These coffee breaks would also serve as a forum for advice and recommendations – like a virtual office of peers – which is not readily available to consultants. And from a business development perspective these events will allow consultants to connect with each other to pursue joint projects, share business leads and provide referrals. Ultimately, building a strong network of like-minded professionals is valuable both for business and personal reasons. Watch your inbox for upcoming event announcements.

Indy500 Online Consultant Directory

A recent addition to the Calgary consulting scene, Susan Elford APR of Elford Communications, has offered to help compile information for an online "Find a Consultant" service. The ultimate goal is to connect consultants with opportunities. Only CPRS member consultants will be offered the chance to be profiled at www.cprscalgary.org. And since the service will be targeted at the overall business community, not just CPRS members, we are currently developing tactics to drive traffic to the site. Keep an eye open for an Indy500 email early in 2004 to kick-start the process of submitting your contact info and company profile to post to the site.

If you would like to join the "pit-crew" helping drive the ongoing development of this initiative, please contact Monique Chenier of Chenier Communications at mpchenier@shaw.ca.

First Student Completes U of C Management Certificate in Public Relations

By Andrea Conway

In 2002, thanks to the collaborative efforts of IABC and CPRS, the University of Calgary offered its first course in a new Management Certificate in Public Relations. In 2003, the Certificate reached official course status as the University included the certificate in its catalogue and this month another milestone will be achieved – Marlene Windsor will become the first student to complete the Management Certificate in Public Relations.

Originally trained as Marketing Associate in the oil and gas industry, Marlene entered the Management Certificate program to develop the background she had in international communications from time spent in Brazil and in Europe. Here are her thoughts on the program.

Taking the Public Relations Management Certificate at the University of Calgary has been an enlightening experience right from the beginning. Each instructor challenged me to look at communications in a different way. The in-depth course material heightened my understanding to a level where I began having “Ah Ha” moments consistently as pieces of the communications puzzle fell into place.

My strongest learning from the courses was realizing the need to develop an ability to think strategically in a variety of situations. Whether it was in a community relations class, planning an event, or developing a comprehensive strategic plan for an organization, I learned to think in a way that ensured corporate key messages aligned with internal priorities while considering the needs of external audiences.

The Management Certificate has directly impacted the direction my life career has taken. Today I have moved from the oil and gas industry and moved full time into the media industry. I am actively exploring ways of further expanding into the areas of Issues Management and Crisis Communications. There are many different career paths to be pursued and the best “Ah Ha” moment for me is to realize the only limitation is how far my imagination can reach.

Register now for the U of C Public Relations Management Certificate Winter courses including Employee Communications (taught by Wendi Gramantik, ABC), Public Relations (taught by Elaine Dixson, ABC, APR), and Strategic Communications Planning (taught by Glenna Cross, ABC and Elaine Dixson ABC, APR).

For more information, or to register, please visit www.cted.ucalgary.ca



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Public Involvement in a Mega Project: A Summary of Doug Ford's Presentation

By Pam Purnell

During our first Calgary blizzard this year, communicators attended the October 30, 2003 CPRS event, Public Involvement in a Mega Project. Doug Ford from Communica Public Affairs Inc. shared about the changing face of public consultation including unique challenges, arising issues and keys for success.

The presentation began with Doug joking that he left Anchorage, Alaska on a warm sunny day only to arrive in Calgary the same day during a cold, blustery storm. "What a change I saw in the weather in such a short time," said Doug. "Yet change is the very reason why I'm here today."

Setting the stage, Doug provided an interesting overview what may be the most significant era of capital project development in Canadian history. During the next 10 to 15 years, \$54 billion worth of projects are planned for the Alberta oil sands. Four noteworthy upcoming pipeline projects include the MacKenzie Delta, the Alaska Producers pipeline, the Enbridge Project Gateway and Terrasen BC Option, combined worth of total more than \$20 billion.

For the success of these mega projects the need for public involvement and consultation is crucial, but the amount of necessary consultation places a strain on regulators, project applicants and of course, impacted stakeholders. Doug identified five key stakeholders in the mega projects: Aboriginals, landowners, environmental interest groups, local government and the public in surrounding communities.

Today, public consultation specialists have the unique challenge of managing expectations among all stakeholders. Adding to this challenge, Doug said that most stakeholders view regulators as being industry-focused and merely rubber-stamping all projects without regard to the surrounding community. As a result regulators are struggling to regain public confidence.

Currently regulators have started to send strong signals that consultation is a critical element of any project applications. "Standard notification is acceptable only in the most benign projects," said Doug. "We have seen the pendulum has shift to a much more interactive participatory consultation."

The most significant change within consultation has been with Aboriginal stakeholders. Arising issues relating to Aboriginal consultation include Aboriginal communities insisting upon developing relationships first – accords second. Project schedules take second place to community schedules. Also Aboriginal stakeholders have the power to significantly delay, if not scuttle, any project that doesn't meet their criteria for social, environmental and economic expectations. Finally, capacity funding is on the rise and setting a dangerous precedent for companies.

With capacity funding, industry finds itself funding projects normally provided by government. This is not an easy spot for companies to be in and can lead to potential backlash from other stakeholders. "With Aboriginal involvement front and centre, it's critical not to develop tunnel vision to the exclusion of other stakeholders," said Doug.

Other impediments in mega projects include balancing stakeholder expectations with project economics, remembering that community schedules are defined by a much different pace than industry's, and ensuring that communities are not feeling overwhelmed by the amount of consultation being conducted.

Doug stressed that the key to planning for success lies in our ability as communicators to identify issues early on. By jumping into a consultation process too early, you run the danger of shooting for the wrong target. Having a solid grasp on the main issues will define your strategy and tactics approaching stakeholders. Taking the time for early consultation will allow the concerns of stakeholders to be dealt with early on, often changing facets of a project. As a result early consultation will save time, money and avoid heartache later on when delays in projects occur due to lack of initial consultation. In fact, inadequate or poorly designed consultation programs can cost a company its project!

What lies ahead for consultation in mega projects? According to Doug, consultation programs will require greater substance and timeframes in the future, capacity funding will become more and more prevalent, communities and stakeholders will dictate if and how they want to be consulted with, and early engagement is becoming the model, not the exception.

CPRS Governance Update

A dozen CPRS Calgary members came together in late November as a focus group to discuss the proposed changes to how CPRS is governed. The group heard from Colleen Killingsworth, APR, ABC -- a Governance Review Task Force Member -- and then looked at the recommendations. Concerns were aired, and feedback and suggested changes provided. The information from the focus group will be put together with input received from individual CPRS Calgary members and other governance discussion activities held by other member societies. Updates have been promised. If you need more information, the Governance Review Task Force documents are still available for review on the national CPRS web site @ www.cprs.ca.

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If you like writing or editing and would like to become involved in *maxim*, contact Bonnie Elgie, APR at bonnie@openminds.ca

*Seasons Greetings from the
Calgary CPRS Board!*

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