

Building a crisis communications dream team

By Monique Chenier

Most of us are familiar with the "Dream Team" introduced at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics as superstars Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, Michael Jordan, Charles Barkley and Scottie Pippen, among others, were combined to enter a basketball team of unprecedented talent and experience.

How can PR professionals create a Dream Team for crisis communications? Garth Rowan, of Allaire Rowan Communications Counsel, offered an animated explanation in his May 5th presentation to nearly 70 CPRS Calgary members at the Palliser Hotel. Research has shown crisis communications as one of the most valued services that communicators can provide to their organizations. Mr. Rowan, with more than two decades of experience as a specialist in crisis, media and risk communications, offered practical skills to successfully navigate the "Dos and Don'ts" of crisis communications.

What is the difference between an average team and a

Dream Team? "An average team understands their role, has an adequate briefing structure, is somewhat motivated and has an understanding of the big picture," explained Garth. "A Dream Team takes the team to a whole new level with each member being familiar with all team roles. A strong leader and very tight briefing structure make a Dream Team much more motivated and effective than an average team. The members are all flexible, aware of the needs of the other team members and are self-critical so are always looking for ways to improve."

The team members for a Dream Team will come from a variety of disciplines: executives and lawyers; operations and field personnel; human resources and environment, health and safety experts; customer, government, and community relations; and, of course, public relations and communications professionals. "The lawyer is there to ensure the company stays out of legal trouble;

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CPRS • Member Profile

Brent Shervey

By Sneh Seetal

"In 1995 I became a headhunter." These are not the words we expect just anyone to say. But then, Brent Shervey isn't just anyone. He's a headhunter, HR specialist, executive assistant, CPRS member, volunteer, and corporate, government and public affairs specialist.

Shervey started his career in human resources. After graduating from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Commerce, he worked with the RCMP hiring civilian staff and then with Alberta Transportation hiring engineers and technologists from across Canada. The following years were all about politics. Shervey was

the Executive Assistant to the Minister of Public Lands and Wildlife and he worked for Peter Lougheed. "I learned about PR from politics since formal courses just weren't available when I was in school." An MBA in organizational behavior, labour relations and investor relations has supported his real-life experience.



Brent Shervey

Real-life experience is essential, especially in

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Upcoming events

**ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM:
Developing a Sophisticated Response**

Date: Thursday, June 7, 2001
Venue: Hyatt Regency, Imperial Ballroom 1
Time: 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Speaker: Stuart Parker, NATIONAL Public Relations - Vancouver
 Former Leader, BC Green Party
Costs: Members \$65 Non-members \$90
 In support of the pursuit of an education in public relations, CPRS Calgary offers this seminar to students at no cost. Students are asked to follow normal registration procedures to ensure seating capacity.
Registration: CPRS Info line 230-6800 or events@cprscalgary.org


Environmental activism will be a significant factor in the activities of virtually any corporation that works in the resource sector of our economy for the foreseeable future. As long as a significant portion of society is concerned about the state of our natural environment, public advocacy groups will continue to wage media campaigns to address issues of concern.


An effective response to environmental activism requires more than simply changing behaviour. It means incorporating environmental agendas into corporate communications plans and addressing issues proactively. It also means learning to differentiate between public concern and genuine problems, as well as maintaining the ability to set your company's agenda in the face of pressure.

In this half-day seminar, Stuart Parker, former leader of the BC Green Party, will offer new ways for corporations to address environmental activist campaigns, providing strategies to increase corporations' understanding of the groups, and to respond to their tactics. He'll answer questions such as:

- Who is the environmental movement?
- How do environmental groups operate and how are they structured?
- What do environmental groups want?
- How should one respond to environmental groups?

The second half of the seminar offers a unique opportunity to examine the "what ifs" that your corporation or industry might face. In this interactive segment, pose your concerns and questions, and gain an expert's perspective on the situation. What are the best ways in which to deal with activists who may be targeting your company? Apply the strategies you learned earlier in the day to your company's specific circumstances.

Stuart Parker was an active campaigner in BC's environmental movement from 1987 to 2000, serving as the leader of the BC Green Party, as well as being a spokesperson for successful issue-driven environmental campaigns. He joined NATIONAL Public Relations in February, 2001. Stuart's unique perspective on the environmental movement will provide insight and practical solutions to companies at risk of becoming a target of environmental activists. 



Town Crier Awards
CPRS CALGARY

MARK YOUR CALENDER
Annual General Meeting and Town Crier Awards Ceremony


When: Wednesday June 27, 2001
Cocktails at 5:30
Dinner at 6:00

Where: Jack Singer Concert Hall
Speaker: Patricia Pitsel, PhD

Ticket Prices:
\$40 Members
\$55 Non-members
\$35 Student members
\$40 Student Non-members

RSVP to the CPRS Info line at 230-6800 or events@cprscalgary.org by June 20, 2001

Special Thanks to the
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Where are we on accreditation maintenance?

By Janet Bliss APR

A good question – especially since Sept. 1 2001 is just around the corner, and that's the date when participation in the CPRS Maintenance of Accreditation Program was to become mandatory for members who have earned the APR designation.

Unfortunately, there is no easy answer. Officially, the mandatory maintenance program has neither been dropped nor deferred – but technically, its future appears to be in doubt since the National Board dropped mandatory accreditation from its agenda last year.

On behalf of the Calgary CPRS Accreditation Committee, I placed a few calls to National Office and wrote a few e-mails to senior National members to check on the status of mandatory maintenance. Admittedly, this was not a comprehensive or official survey, but the response was discouraging in revealing that the future of the program has not yet been decided.

It appears to boil down to this: if mandatory accreditation is no longer a policy of National, what is the driver behind mandatory – or even voluntary – maintenance of accreditation?

This issue must be decided at the National level, and should no doubt be a topic of discussion at the upcoming Annual General Meeting in Whistler. National President-elect Tony Iavarone APR has confirmed that the Executive Committee recognizes the dilemma and is seeking input from the Accreditation Council. Of course, any possible changes will require consultation with local boards, accreditation chairs and the members at large.

But where does all this leave those CPRS Calgary members who have been either pursuing voluntary maintenance of accreditation or preparing a plan for earning points once the mandatory maintenance program comes into effect?

"Anyone who is accumulating and recording maintenance points is already benefiting from personal and professional growth as a public relations practitioner," says Lorelei Piatto, APR, Chair of the CPRS Calgary Accreditation Committee. "Until we receive confirmation of how the program will continue and whether or not the mandatory component is

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Members on the move

On the Move...

Andrea Timmer has moved to the Salvation Army as their Public Relations coordinator

Nadine Walz has joined TransAlta as a Media Relations Specialist

New Members

Trish Carter, Communications Supervisor, Calgary Real Estate Board

Leone Bechard, APR Senior Consultant, National Diamond

Toni Beck, Communications Specialist, Westcoast Energy

Barbara Meens Thistle, Director of Communications, Westcoast Energy

Heather LaCroix, Westcoast Energy

Allison Kalmakoff, PR Coordinator, FWJ

Janet Laurie, Marketing & Communications Specialist, TeraGo Networks

Chris Dawson, Senior Media Advisor, Petro Canada

Cherry Holand, APR Senior Public Affairs Advisor, Syncrude Canada Ltd.

Affiliate Members

Jennifer Lussier, Principal, Artichoke Design Ltd.

Graduate Student Members

Paula King, Mount St. Vincent

New Student Members

Allyson Zarowny, Mount Royal College

Calling all MRC public relations alumni!

by Andrea Timmer


You've probably heard by now that June 2 is Mount Royal College's 90th Anniversary reunion. Throughout the day, the college will hold reunion celebrations, including an open house for the Centre for Communication Studies at 10 a.m., and a barbecue at noon. For more information on the college activities visit

www.mtroyal.ab.ca/alumni/reunioninfo.html

PR grads have planned a reunion party of our own. You are invited to join fellow Mount Royal College PR grads for a casual evening mixer on Saturday June 2, 7:30 pm at Mescalero's Blue Room, 1315 – 1 Street SW. A great

collection of Latin, jazz and blues tunes will accompany Mescalero's awesome tapas menu. There is a cash bar, great door prizes (tickets to the Edmonton Fringe Festival and the 'Elephant Bath' behind the scenes tour at the Calgary Zoo), and the chance to catch up with old friends. Tickets are available at the door. More details are available online at

<http://communities.msn.ca/MRCPRGrads>.

If you are interested in attending, or if you have any questions, please email mrcprgrads@hotmail.com and we'll get back to you. We hope you can make it! 

Dream team...

from page 1

communications is there to manage long-term reputation," explained Rowan. One of the most proactive tips offered to communications practitioners was to build relationships with each of these groups now and involve them in the crisis communications planning process.

On a Dream Team, communications professionals serve the role of strategist and liaison between team members. The functions include media relations, telephone response, Web site and internal relations among others. Getting to know the technical people now who can provide answers for you during a crisis was a strong suggestion from the presenter.

An exercise program is critical to ensure the team is prepared to execute their plan in a crisis. The first step is to review the current plan. "Most companies have an informal manual – one that is locked up tight in someone's head," explained Rowan. "Just get it down on paper!" When the informal plan is formalized, conduct a needs assessment – start with the three worst things that could happen. After that, define the exercise scope, select the exercise type and address the costs involved. The first exercise type would be a simple orientation – provide a copy of the manual to everyone on the team to read then meet to discuss. The next step is a crisis drill where the team takes a case study and executes their plan. In this scenario there is no time pressure and takes perhaps half a day. The next level involves executing a case but throwing in unforeseen glitches to complicate the exercise. From there, executing full scale, full-day exercises assures the team has the

appropriate experience to deal with an actual crisis.


An audience member asked the definition of a crisis. "A crisis is in the eye of the beholder," stated Rowan. "Often a situation may be elevated to that of a crisis with the public, more so than with the organization involved." A Level I crisis was defined as internal to the organization. Level II was a situation that has moved externally where the organization doesn't have control but control is imminent. A Level III crisis was one in which control was far from imminent for the organization and is beyond their ability to gain control.

SOME DON'Ts

- Wing it
- Unclear roles
- Tasks falling through cracks
- Assume understanding

SOME DOs

- Right people in the right roles
- Plan – include stakeholders
- Strong manual
- Technical training
- Motivate
- Exercise
- Keep the vision of the Dream Team

The bottom line, according to Rowan: "It pays to be prepared to provide timely information." 

Report of the task force on accreditation


At the last CPRS annual general meeting in Ottawa, Elizabeth Hirst, APR and Jack Yocom, APR, Fellow CPRS, moved: "That a task force made up of experienced accredited and non-accredited members of CPRS be struck. This task force is to address the issues that were brought up at the AGM, particularly around mandatory accreditation, eligibility for accreditation and the financial elements related to these activities. The task force is to report back to the National Board of Directors at their February 2001 meeting." The motion carried with strong support and the task force was formed under the leadership of Colleen Killingsworth, APR, Calgary.

Over the course of the past year, the task force carried out a comprehensive examination of these and other issues associated with accreditation. Issues were carefully considered and discussed, and a report that includes a number of recommendations for improvements was compiled and forwarded to the national president.

The full report of the task force, including recommendations,

has now been reviewed by the national executive and will be shared with the general membership at the AGM in June 2001 for information and dissemination. From there the goal is to have the report and proposed recommendations widely shared across the country within all local member societies, where it can be reviewed, discussed, and debated. The Board, the task force and the National Office will actively search out and receive feedback.

Improvements to the accreditation process identified by the task force are expected to be pursued immediately, gradually improving the accreditation process for members. Recommendations or new directions detailed in the report that require the support of the general membership, and which could require by-law changes, are designed to come back to the AGM in 2002.

*Respectfully submitted by the Task Force on Accreditation
Colleen Killingsworth, APR; Jeff Vallentin; Bart Mindszenty, APR, Fellow CPRS; Patrick Brownlow; Don LaBelle, APR, Fellow CPRS; Deanna Drendel, APR; David Magil, APR; Nadine Walz; Mary Barker, APR; with input from Pierrette Leonard, APR, Chief Examiner English. *

CPRS National update

The agency responsible for managing the role of the National Office for CPRS, Base Consulting and Management, has recently undergone some changes to the CPRS account team. Following is an updated list with contact information for the current team:


Ruth Abrahamson: rabrahamson@base.onramp.ca
(416) 496-2010 x231: Interim Executive Director

Sheryl Lipton-Burke: slipton-burke@base.onramp.ca
(416) 496-2010 x251: all aspects of CPRS: general queries, membership, conference, accreditation, subscription, college of fellows, limited info on awards

Janna Regina: jregina@base.onramp.ca
(416) 496-2010 x246: awards, conference logistics

Lara Bulloch: lbulloch@base.onramp.ca
(416) 496-2010 x228: accreditation

Aileen Silang: asilang@base.onramp.ca
(416) 496-2010 x248: bookkeeping

Please feel free to contact these individuals with questions about the Society's day-to-day affairs or special projects. 

maxim team

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Advertising

Please contact Simon Whitfield at 229-3887 or simon.whitfield@home.com for details or to book space. Next deadline is June 15, 2001.

maxim is distributed monthly to over 200 CPRS members and professional communications practitioners in Calgary and area.

Visit our Web site at: www.cprscalgary.org

Brent Shervey...

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Government Relations says Shervey. "In GR, regardless of which party you belong to, you've got to get involved – you can't do GR from the sidelines."

Shervey left politics the same day as Peter Lougheed and became the executive assistant to Jack Macleod, CEO and president at Shell Canada. He stayed with Shell for ten years acquiring a solid, well-rounded portfolio of projects and experiences including Shell's 75th Anniversary celebrations and the Caroline gas hearings. A highlight from his time with Shell Canada was the company's sponsorship of the 1988 Winter Olympics. During his tenure with Shell, Shervey managed the public and government affairs group in Toronto and later the corporate communications group in Calgary.

More recently, Shervey's career has come full circle as he is back doing what he started at the beginning of his career – recruiting. More specifically, conducting executive searches for senior communications people. Shervey says this allows him to combine his two loves. "I love communications and I love HR," he says.

Shervey believes the skills he learned in communications are invaluable to what he does now. "PR taught me how to ask questions and how to listen. And in the executive search business, it's about getting clients to tell me what they are looking for, understanding what they want and giving it to them. PR also taught me to be patient. The search process takes a lot of time."

Shervey is candid when asked about what he looks for in a senior communications professional and why an APR isn't always an important qualification.


"I look for the best, top quality candidate who can add value. If that person happens to be accredited – great," he says. "And what makes a person the best person is determined by how they add value to the shareholders and stakeholders. In my opinion, in order to be better positioned for more senior roles, as communications people, we need to show how we measurably add to the bottom line."

On the more personal side, Shervey invests his time and lends his expertise to a number of organizations including

the United Way and Theatre Junction. "Yes, it's a big time commitment," concedes Shervey. "But I've always been active in the community." Shervey has been on the board of the United Way for the past three years and was recently elected for another three years. He's also been a board member of Theatre Junction, where he served for three years, including two years as Chair.

With such diverse experiences in his career, can there possibly be new career challenges on the horizon?

"Well, I really like doing search," says Shervey. "And I think there's a need for it. However, I'd like to be more involved in not-for-profit organizations and I'd like to spend some more time golfing with my wife."

Who knows, maybe someday Shervey will add golf pro to his list of careers. 

APR

**leaders in
communications
management**

accredited in public relations




Susan Elford, APR
TransCanada PipeLines

The Canadian Public Relations Society of Calgary is pleased to announce the recent professional accreditation of an outstanding public relations practitioner.

CPRS accreditation is the certification program for public relations professionals in Canada. The APR designation aims to unify and advance the profession by identifying people like Susan who demonstrate a high level of leadership, professional judgement and communication skills to manage and strengthen relationships between an organization and its stakeholders.

The Canadian Public Relations Society is the professional association dedicated to serving Canadians through the establishment and maintenance of high professional, educational and ethical standards in public relations.



**the canadian public
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www.cprscalgary.org
(403) 230-6500

Communicator advises creating opinion leaders program

By Terry Beeler

Sarah Jones APR, national president of CPRS and director of the Communications services branch of the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, spoke to a group of CPRS-Calgary members on April 6 at the Mount Royal College downtown campus. During her speech, Jones spoke about the lessons learned by a Toronto church.

The Case Study: A church in downtown Toronto sought funding for restoration. Officials approached a developer interested in building a condo unit on the site of the church's parking lot. Without prior communication or consultation, the plan was announced from the pulpit during a Sunday service. After that, all proverbial hell broke loose.

There were several points of contention for the congregation and the provincial government. The parking lot was built on the site of a former cemetery where victims of the War of 1812, as well as victims of historic typhus and cholera epidemics were buried. In addition, many of those buried in the cemetery were ancestors of congregation members.

Furthermore, representatives of the provincial government body that regulates cemeteries were furious they were not informed of the plan. Health officials had concerns about the dangers of unearthing graves containing cholera and typhoid victims. Historians, genealogists and local politicians were also upset that they were not consulted. Not only did the media have a field day with the story, the whole matter is going to court.

Jones' Advice: "You never want your project to wind up in court – or in the court of public opinion," says Jones who stresses the importance of planning and maintaining an Opinion Leaders Program.


Jones says a key responsibility of the public relations professional is to identify the opinion leaders of the organization and develop relationships with them. The

opinion leaders could be customers, clients, employees, suppliers, business leaders or department regulators; anyone who feels they have a stake in your organization. A successful Opinion Leader Program must encompass the viewpoints of diverse groups and take them into consideration when structuring a communications program.

Jones advises researching what people are saying about your organization, analyzing all opinions and using the results to decide whether the relationship with any of these opinion leaders needs nurturing. Your analysis will also help you tailor your messages to meet expected feedback.

She stresses that one of the most important Opinion Leader groups is your own employees. Employees are considered to be opinion leaders about your organization by friends, relatives, neighbors and the clerk in the supermarket checkout. If they are not properly informed about what is going on in their workplace, they can inadvertently cause a lot of grief.

Jones says there are many different research tools available. You can monitor Internet discussion groups, analyze e-mails, surf websites of advocacy groups, and read the annual report of your organization's regulators to see what they said about you or your industry. A more informal method is to buy a drink for a friend or colleague to get their feedback before you go public.

For Jones, the bottom line is simple: "any organization or government that doesn't know what its stakeholders think, and who to count on for support...is looking for trouble. 

Going to the CPRS National Conference?

Attend for at least 2.5 days and you've earned 1.5 units under your Maintenance of Accreditation Program. That's half the units you need to collect each year!

For more information on the CPRS Maintenance of Accreditation Program, call Lorelei Piotto, APR at 234-5650.

Attention all members!

Do you have new contact information? Have you changed your job, location or your name? Please send us a note and we'll update our records so that you'll receive timely notices of our upcoming events and all issues of *maxim*.

Contact Mona Gauvreau APR
Membership Chair by fax at 269-7874 or
mona@prworkscanada.com

Accreditation maintenance

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still in effect, I recommend members with their APR continue to keep track of the points they have earned.”

Members who have questions about the Maintenance of Accreditation Program and how points are earned are welcome to contact Lorelei by e-mail at: lpio@chevron.com

Maintenance of Accreditation in a Nutshell

1. CPRS introduces a voluntary Maintenance of Accreditation Program in September 1996 to record qualifying activities of accredited members that will “demonstrate the accredited member’s continuing training and professional development as well as leadership in the discipline, thereby ensuring the APR designation retains its relevance and value in an every-changing world.”
2. Members participating in the voluntary program are required to earn a minimum of 15 units over five years in three categories: training, professional activities and community service. They are given the option of tracking maintenance activities retroactive to December 1993, with a first filing date of December 1998, or beginning in December 1996, with a first filing date of December 2001.
3. Implementation of a mandatory Maintenance of Accreditation Program is set for September 2001. Under that program, all accredited members must demonstrate continued development and leadership over a five-year period by earning a minimum of 15 units OR write the APR examination again.
4. In 2000, the National CPRS Board drops the policy of mandatory accreditation, raising questions about the accreditation maintenance program.

“Anyone who is accumulating and recording maintenance points is already benefiting from personal and professional growth as a public relations practitioner,” says Lorelei Piotto, APR, Chair of the CPRS Calgary Accreditation Committee. “Until we receive confirmation of how the program will continue and whether or not the mandatory component is still in effect, I recommend members with their APR continue to keep track of the points they have earned.”

If you have questions about the Maintenance of Accreditation Program and how points are earned contact Lorelei by e-mail at: lpio@chevron.com. 

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