

A Look at our Profession

By Monique Chenier

On April 25th, thirty CPRS members gathered in a Calgary Chamber of Commerce meeting room. A quick survey would likely have confirmed that their job titles were composed of a wide range of terminology including public relations, corporate communications, public affairs, media relations, investor relations, communications, community relations and reputation management.

APR. "And does it even matter?" The CPRS National President and a presenter at the Calgary chapter's most recent professional development event believes this lack of consistency says a lot about where we, as a profession, are today. Most professionals explain rather easily what they do: they practice law or medicine, for example, which makes them a lawyer or doctor. They may explain further that they specialize in a particular aspect of their professional such as tax law or pediatric medicine.



Tony Iavarone, APR
CPRS Canada
President

"Why can't we agree on one name?" asked Tony Iavarone,

"So it should be with public relations," says Iavarone. "A practitioner can

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CPRS • Member Profile

by Terry Beeler

Lisa Rushka, APR

Lisa first became interested in public relations after organizing a conference while studying at the University of Saskatchewan, where she majored in marketing and human resource management. She met several public relations professionals while working on the conference and saw that public relations offered a number of things she was interested in and good at – writing, strategic planning and project management. She also felt that her Bachelor of Commerce degree would provide a strong business foundation for a career in PR.

Lisa entered Mount Royal College in 1995 and received a certificate in public relations, giving her practical, hands-on PR skills.

While taking the Mount Royal course, she got her feet wet in event planning and conference management. Two years



Lisa Rushka, APR

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Our profession...

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specialize in one of the many different facets of public relations, such as strategic communication, employee communications, etc., but the field they work in is public relations. In my mind, what we do is a professional practice.”

Iavarone defines public relations professionals as those who “build two-way symmetrical relationships with an organization’s or client’s publics or stakeholders.” Over the last 20 years, there has been significant advancement in the recognition and value placed on the role of public relations in supporting an organization’s strategic goals.

How can practitioners foster that recognition in their own organization? According to the National President, public relations practitioners must prove themselves as a business partner in the success of an organization and not merely as a service provider. The first step is to learn everything they can about the corporation or client they work for, particularly its goals and strategic plan. Public relations will receive recognition at the management table by contributing to the achievement of those corporate goals.

“How we refer to our profession does matter,” concluded Iavarone. “And we need to be clear on what we do as a profession before we can expect others to understand it.”

Involved with CPRS for many years, Tony Iavarone, APR is currently serving as the CPRS National President for the 2001-2002 term. As if his CPRS activities weren’t enough to keep him busy, Tony is the Director of PR and Communications with The CUMIS Group Limited in Burlington, Ontario. As a result of the work Tony and his team have done to support the organization’s corporate strategies, the company has been ranked among the top 50 companies to work for in Canada for three consecutive years. Feedback or further questions on his presentation can be directed to tony.iavarone@cumis.org.

Making the Grade

By Maureen MacDonald, ABC
IABC/Calgary President 2001/2002

Shawn Kelly, APR
CPRS Calgary President 2001-2003

Beginning in September, the University of Calgary will be offering new courses in public relations with the guidance of IABC and CPRS Calgary. Initially offered as stand-alone courses that can be taken as options in the University’s existing Management Certificate Program, these courses will form the foundation of a new Management Certificate in Public Relations that is currently going through the University’s approval process.

For many years, the Calgary chapters of CPRS and IABC have struggled with achieving a balance between providing hands-on experience for entry-level members while offering rich and meaningful professional development opportunities for intermediate and senior practitioners. As a result, the two organizations formed a joint committee nearly two years ago to look at existing local education programs and determine how to best provide programs and services to meet the needs of their growing memberships.

After establishing a steering committee, the first order of business was (of course) to conduct research. A group of students from the Public Relations applied degree program at Mount Royal College were brought in to determine whether there was interest in a new part-time education program in Calgary; if so, these students would also identify the potential audience, price and content.

This research, in fact, confirmed that there was significant interest among practitioners. Those surveyed indicated that they wanted to see a series of courses designed to provide the practical skills necessary for public relations practitioners to succeed in their jobs, regardless of previous education or level of proficiency. Respondents wanted to achieve new, meaningful credentials and/or receive instruction in topic-specific areas.

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Making the Grade...

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Calgary chapters of IABC and CPRS develop and endorse Management Certificate in Public Relations Program

With the need for a new education program identified, the steering committee began discussions with the University of Calgary. As it turned out, organizations could work with the University to offer courses as part of the Management Certificate Program IABC and CPRS wanted to ensure that the new program did not duplicate existing courses offered in the city, and that students had the opportunity to either take stand-alone courses or achieve a meaningful credential. The group decided to pursue developing a new Management Certificate in Public Relations, working hand-in-hand with the University of Calgary.

Students will be able to either take the individual public relations courses, instructed by accredited practitioners with at least ten years of industry-related experience, as part of their own professional development regime or can work towards the Management Certificate by completing a minimum of 300 hours including 120 hours of core courses, 110 hours of public relations courses and 70 hours of options. And while the new program will be run and operated by the University of Calgary, IABC and CPRS will stay involved as an Advisory Committee to the University, providing recommendations for course modifications and additions as well as instructors for specific courses.

So don't forget to register! The Fall 2002 course will sell out quickly. To get specific information or pre-register for any of the above-noted courses before the calendar is mailed, contact 220-2988. 

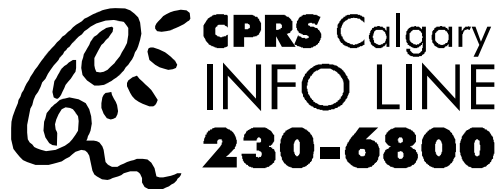
The new courses include:

| Confirmed Courses | | |
|---|----------|-------------------------|
| Introduction to Public Relations | 40 hours | Currently being offered |
| Community Relations | 20 hours | Fall 2002 |
| Managing the Public Relations Function | 10 hours | Fall 2002 |
| Strategic Planning | 40 hours | Winter 2003 |
| Community Investment | 10 hours | Winter 2003 |
| <p>*The University of Calgary's Management Certificate Program Calendar will be mailed to IABC and CPRS members and will include course details including recommended proficiency levels, pricing and registration information</p> | | |

Upcoming events

Contact the CPRS Info Line for all the details on upcoming events

Or visit the CPRS Calgary Web Site at
www.cprscalgary.org



Rushka...

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later, she landed a position as Communications Coordinator for Calgary Vocational Services. There, she pretty well did it all.

“I was responsible for all functions of the communications role. I was the only communications person that they had ever had, so I was cutting new ground in terms of internal and external communications and media relations.”

During her tenure at Calgary Vocational Services, Lisa developed key messaging for the organization, and wrote and designed their brochures and Web site. She is particularly proud of the internal communications strategy she developed that helped unite employees geographically spread over 11 offices.

The most challenging part of the position was trying to demonstrate the value of communications to an organization that had never employed a public relations professional before. “I think they thought it was an easy task and by hiring a public relations professional, everyone would immediately know about the organization.”

In 2000, National Public Relations beckoned and Lisa heeded the call. Her role as a consultant brings her in contact with a number of companies ranging from the pharmaceutical industry, to oil and gas and non-profit. She enjoys the variety and challenges of working with different industries, juggling different interests and priorities.

Lisa has also served as a volunteer with Calgary's chapter of CPRS, because she wanted to be involved with her professional organization. “I have strong feelings about the profession and the value of it and I wanted to contribute back to it.”

She joined the CPRS Professional Development Committee four years ago, and eventually became the Chair—a position she has held for the past two years. In that role, her main wish is to offer CPRS members professional development opportunities that challenge them to see a different perspective, and to learn from

their peers in the profession.

Lisa gained her APR designation recently, saying she approached the process with enthusiasm and some hesitation. “At first I wasn't sure if I had an appropriate work sample. After I submitted that, I began to worry about the exams. In the end it all worked out. I'm glad I pursued accreditation.” Her advice for those planning to become accredited is to take the practice examinations to gain an understanding of what will be expected and how the candidate will be graded. She also advises APR hopefuls not to procrastinate; do the required reading sooner, rather than later.

As she looks ahead, Lisa plans to explore the management aspect of the public relations function, learning how to manage teams of communications professionals. ■

World of Opportunity for APR's

By Lily Nichols

The formation of the *Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communications (GA)* means a world of opportunity for members of the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS), particularly for those who have earned their APR designation!

Established in October 2000, the GA is made up of representatives from 23 national public relations associations, including CPRS. It was established to help unify the profession, and share resources and knowledge between public relations associations in countries around the world. Current GA projects include the benchmarking of codes of ethics, accreditation and professional development activities, and the launch of a common web site.

The advent of the GA coincided with CPRS's plan to launch "reciprocity agreements." Jean Valin, APR, Fellow CPRS is a senior public relations executive with the Government of Canada. He led Canada's efforts on a GA task force on behalf of the CPRS, and explained the relationship between the GA and global reciprocity.

"The CPRS planted the seed of the GA by suggesting reciprocity in 1996. This type of activity made everyone realize the potential for co-operation," says Valin.

The GA provides an excellent forum for CPRS to contact new groups who meet standards set for reciprocity. To date, CPRS has signed a total of ten reciprocity agreements, with IABC, PRSA, United Kingdom, Ireland, Ghana, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Slovenia and Puerto Rico.

These agreements, which are formally signed documents, state (among other things) that the associations share "commonly held values such as a code of ethics, admission standards, a body of knowledge, an accreditation program for individuals, curriculum standards and new communication channels." Not all of the 23 associations in the GA currently meet these minimum standards.

"I know of three cases already, where members from three different countries took advantage of the professional recognition these agreements gave them. One accredited South African member now lives in Vancouver, another from Ghana lives in Ottawa and one from Toronto moved to Ireland," says Valin.

Valin led the task force to benchmark codes of ethics on behalf of the CPRS. That report is now available.

"Because of the great similarity found in the codes, we were asked to draft a first-ever universal code of practice," says Valin. "This work is proceeding as we speak and a draft will be tabled at the next GA meeting this summer in Slovenia. Here again, CPRS held the pen with help from five other countries."

Valin says the same type of work is taking place with accreditation. The benchmarking was done last year and the Accreditation Council has been given a copy. "So far," says Valin, "the GA has not moved to explore a universal accreditation scheme, but that day may come soon."

For more information on the Global Alliance, see the new website at www.globalpr.org. To learn more about reciprocity partners, go to the national CPRS website, under "Global Alliance," at www.cprs.ca.

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The World at your Doorstep

By Lily Nichols

Even if you don't have a burning desire to work in another country, it's still in your best interest to understand how business is done in other parts of the world.

"The world is becoming more integrated and it is important for communications practitioners to understand how this affects their organizations and their profession. This could involve working transnationally or in a multicultural environment here in Calgary," says Lisa Falkowsky, APR.

Earlier this year, Falkowsky organized a new group for CPRS that brings practitioners interested in transnational communications issues together to learn more about how communications is practiced outside of Canada.

"There are quite a number of Calgary PR professionals who have worked in other countries and who are interested in sharing and learning. We're organizing a series of meetings to bring people together who want to pursue these interests," she says.

"An understanding of cross-cultural communications and working in other countries are important contributions public relations practitioners can bring to the management table," continues Falkowsky. "This group will help expand our understanding and interest how transnational communications can affect us both professionally and personally."

The first meeting, held in April, focused on how media relations differ in a variety of countries including England, Hong Kong, Australia and Japan. The next meeting will be held on June 3rd, and the topic and location will be sent to everyone on the CPRS fax list (call Lisa at 294-9592 to be added to the list). The group will meet approximately eight times a year in total.

PR practitioners whose organizations operate outside of Canada or communications professionals who have or want to work overseas, are all welcome. Meetings are informal, and are limited to approximately 24 people so they can be held in restaurants offering international cuisine. There is no charge – just cover the cost of your food and/or beverage.

For more information, call Lisa Falkowsky, associate vice president, Weber Shandwick, at 294-9592, or check the Calgary CPRS website for the next meeting date.



Members on the move

- The following CPRS Calgary members recently made the move from FWJ Advertising Public Relations to National Public Relations Calgary:
 - Henry Stevens, APR, Senior Public Relations Consultant;
 - Allison Kalmakoff, Public Relations Consultant;
 - Colleen Killingsworth APR, Senior Public Relations Consultant

- Bonnie Elgie APR has returned to Venture Communications as Public Relations Manager

Do you know someone who isn't a member of CPRS, but should be? This is your chance to help us inform and recruit potential new members.

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

Volunteer Opportunities

Membership Committee

If you are interested in volunteering for CPRS - Calgary Chapter, the Membership Committee has a number of available positions. With a new chairperson on board, this is the perfect opportunity to help plan new strategies to build and increase the benefits of CPRS membership. If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact [Sandra Sweet](#). All members and student members are welcome.

Sponsorship and Promotion

No, you don't have to ask for money! We need enthusiastic people to liaise with other committees, help write promotional literature, strategize, assist in correspondence, etc.

Contact: Janet Bliss APR at 249-6084 or blissj@cadvision.com


Maxim newsletter – Writer

We're looking for writers to develop news articles of interest to CPRS Calgary members.

Contact: Simon Whitfield at 716-4086 or simon.whitfield@shaw.ca

Maxim newsletter – Layout

We're looking for someone to assist us monthly with the layout of Maxim. You don't need to be a graphic artist! If you know your way around Microsoft Word, you can do this!

Contact: Simon Whitfield at 716-4086 or simon.whitfield@shaw.ca 

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 Sandra Sweet
Membership Chair
sweets@bethanycare.com
or by fax at 284-1992. 

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