

Achieving Excellence in Organizational Communication

The following article was written by Jan W. Henderson, APR and Maureen Healey, ABC as part of an ongoing effort to promote the value of hiring accredited communications practitioners. The article is scheduled for publication in the June 2001 edition of *Perspective*, a newsletter published monthly by the Human Resources Association of Calgary.

The next time you recruit an intermediate or senior communicator, consider giving preference to candidates who are accredited. Not only will this credential help you separate the wheat from the chaff as you sift through dozens of responses to your ad, it will lead you to seasoned communicators who have successfully completed a rigorous, peer-examined process designed to measure their expertise and experience in the field of communication.

Professional communicators may seek accreditation through either the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) or the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). While there are minor differences in process, both CPRS and IABC accreditation programs are aimed at practitioners who

have developed the well-rounded experience necessary for effective communications management. Eligible candidates must have:

- ❑ membership in the organization from which he or she is seeking accreditation
- ❑ a minimum five years of full-time communications/public relations experience
- ❑ an understanding of the goals and philosophy of public relations and/or organizational communications
- ❑ the knowledge to plan, direct and implement a broad range of communications programs
- ❑ a reputation for abiding by the CPRS or IABC codes of ethics and the principles of accuracy, truthfulness and sensitivity

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CPRS • Member Profile

Trish Exton-Parder

by Jodi Westbury

Trish Exton-Parder believes she has the best job around. As a long-time CPRS member and prominent figure in the Calgary communications industry, Trish has spent the past 16 years (and counting) working with the Calgary Zoo. Over the years, she has enjoyed many unique career opportunities, but the Calgary Zoo seems to be her destiny.

At a young age, Trish became interested in the advertising and communications world. As a fan of the television show *Bewitched*, she was particularly fascinated by the character of Darren (the husband) and more specifically, his career as an advertising guru. The television show

inspired her to research the industry and evaluate her own abilities. She recalls, "That's when I got the creative urge to sell."

Trish began her university studies at the University of Calgary and transferred to the Mass Communications Honours program at York in her second year. During the summer breaks, she sought out positions within



Trish Exton-Parder

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Excellence at the town criers

by Melissa Rolfe APR

For nearly a quarter of a century, the Town Crier Awards program has shown that exceptional minds can shape ideas that become creative communications solutions. The CPRS Calgary Town Crier Awards recognize excellence in the communications field.

The awards were this year judged by CPRS-accredited professionals in Winnipeg. The criteria include the elements of a good communication plan: research and analysis; planning and implementation; evaluation and results. The overall presentation of the entry is also evaluated, along with the entrant's explanation of his or her role in the project and the challenges faced.

The winners of the 2001 Town Crier Award in the student category are **Brita Harrison, Allyson Zarowny and Dawn Earle of Mount Royal College**; Client: Alberta College of Art and Design.

Brita, Allyson, and Dawn developed a strategic communication plan and media strategy for Alberta College of Art and Design centred on the college's 75th anniversary. The project began with a communications audit, and the strategic plan the students developed capitalized on the college's already positive media relations. The judges called the entry a detailed, professional plan, well thought out, insightful and creative—and were particularly impressed with the team's research and analysis, and planning and implementation.

There are two winners in the Individual Products category: **Karin Holmgren of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta**; and **Susan Soprovich for Gulf Canada**.

Karin Holmgren's communication plan tackled the revamping of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta's newsletter to increase relevance, increase coverage of the issues its readers most requested, introduce new columns, and maintain exceptionally high reader satisfaction – all on a non-profit budget. Karin's plan made effective use of volunteers, and was based on thorough research, careful analysis, and measurable objectives. Her evaluation showed she met or exceeded all of her objectives, and her client received the added benefit of increased member participation in the association. Congratulations Karin.

The judges in this category wanted to award extra points for the "wow factor" of Susan Soprovich's entry—Gulf Canada's 1999 annual report. The annual report was prepared at a time of low commodity prices, high exploration costs, and negative

public opinion towards the petroleum industry. It was a particularly challenging time for Gulf, which had undertaken a huge disposition program and laid off 40 percent of its employees the previous year. Although the share price was not affected, the liquidity of Gulf's stock increased after the release of the annual report and annual general meeting. Formal and informal evaluation from target audiences received through a variety of channels was overwhelmingly positive and proved the success of the annual report in communicating the company's direction and growth strategy.



Susan Soprovich with the Town Crier Bell

The winners of the 2001 Town Crier Award in the Local or Regional Programs category are **Lisa Frizzell and Lyall Samaroden, TransAlta**.

Lisa and Lyall are winning for an entry the judges called simply "excellent". Their program supported the concept and launch of a pilot project to give employees a say in the company's corporate donations program. The project was called TACT – TransAlta Community Transformers. These 'transformers' are
It is with great pleasure that I am able to announce the premier of the new national Web site for the Canadian Public Relations Society, Inc.

Identified as a key priority among members for several years, your National board of directors and executive committee made a commitment to upgrade and enhance the National Society's Web site this year. The first phase of a multi-phase project has been completed and is now available at www.cprs.ca.

Led by Gordon Eckert, presiding officer for the Electronic Communications Task Force and president of the Edmonton Member Society, significant progress has been achieved to

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CPRS unveils new national web site

by Sarah Jones, APR

Identified as a key priority among members for several years, your National board of directors and executive committee made a commitment to upgrade and enhance the National Society's Web site this year. The first phase of a multi-phase project has been completed and is now available at <http://www.cprs.ca>

Led by Gordon Eckert, presiding officer for the Electronic Communications Task Force and president of the Edmonton Member Society, significant progress has been achieved to create a dynamic new Internet presence for your professional society in Canada. The new National Web site also provides the foundation for improved communications between the National society, its members and prospective members, and member society leaders.

In addition to budgetary constraints, other challenges included the creation of a new "look" and "feel" for CPRS in the 21st century that not only translated well into both official languages, but is also uniquely Canadian. The new site's design and structure makes use of current Internet technologies to enhance communications, information sharing and networking among members and society leaders across the country. Guiding the design of the new site are four core objectives:

1. to enhance membership value
2. facilitate resource sharing among member societies and local boards
3. encourage interest and membership in the Canadian Public Relations Society, and
4. maximize revenue generation through banner advertising and sponsorships.

The design of the new site will feature "public" and "members-only" sections. Today's announcement is for the first phase of the project the public section of the Web site. In the public pages, visitors are able to navigate intuitively through a vast array of information on the professional society, its programs and services.


The second phase, slated for release near the end of June 2001, is the "members-only" section. The "members-only" section will provide inside information on National Society

news and events, links to a vast array of resources, and opportunities to interact as a community. While inclusion of a fully interactive online membership directory is being explored, issues surrounding cost and privacy protection still need to be resolved. However, another interactive feature that will be included will be a "boutique" where members can shop, order and purchase a wide selection of CPRS merchandise online. This component is being supported by an e-commerce pilot project sponsored by CPRS Edmonton.

The third phase will involve further development within the "members-only" section focusing on the needs of chapter leaders and member societies across Canada. Development and introduction of this section is planned for the upcoming year 2001-2002. This section will provide additional opportunities for member society leaders to interact, share best practices, and access resources and tools to help in the administration and operation of their local member society. Ensuring the strength and vitality of member societies is an important priority of the National Society, and this section will help accomplish this objective.

All combined, work to upgrade and enhance the National Society's Web site this year establishes a strong foundation for CPRS National to enhance its communications and responsiveness to its members, and establish stronger links within the public relations community in Canada. In addition to the accomplishments of the Task Force in this area, special recognition should also be awarded to Jon Semchuk of Backstreet Communications. Backstreet, an Edmonton-based graphic and web design firm, provided over a 150 hours of technical expertise and more than \$8,000 as a gift-in-kind to the advancement of CPRS and the public relations profession in Canada.

I invite you to visit the new CPRS National Web site and help celebrate a stronger professional society for the 21st century. Your feedback is also greatly appreciated and welcomed.

Sarah Jones, APR
National President
Canadian Public Relations Society. 

Benefits of global alliance to CPRS members

Last year following four years of preliminary discussions, CPRS became a founding member of the Global Alliance of Public Relations and Communications Management. This new federation of PR associations acts as a clearing house for sharing resources and undertakes specific global projects on behalf of the profession. See http://www.cprs.ca/english/aboutcprs/e_aboutcprs_global.htm for more information

So what does it mean for you?

You have already heard that, through this alliance, CPRS has concluded eight formal reciprocity agreements which, for example, allows for portability of your membership credentials to signatory associations. We are currently reviewing two more applications for reciprocity.

Another benefit of the Global Alliance is the pooling and sharing of reference resources offering members access to the best information available on specific areas of practice.

UK offer

I am pleased to announce that one of our partners- the IPR UK and the PRCA (Public Relations Consultants Association in the UK) have launched a web-site resource designed to help PR Decision Makers and PR Practitioners get to grips with Planning, Research & Evaluation (PRE). Here is the link:

<http://www.pre-fix.org.uk/welcome/>

PRE is key to successful campaigning. It helps practitioners refine strengths and define weaknesses, and enables PR

effectiveness to be demonstrated to internal, external and potential clients.

This UK industry-wide project includes a guide to PRE methodology and application, case-studies, downloadable slides for presentations, and FAQs.


The IPR- UK would also like your ideas on how the Global Alliance could build the resource in the future, perhaps by including international case-studies. Any ideas? please email: NigelO@ipr.org.uk

The web resource is a preliminary to the second edition of the IPR Public Relations Planning, Research & Evaluation Toolkit which will be published at the end of June 2001.

Copies of the new edition Toolkit (available to all Global Alliance members at IPR member rates plus postage with discounts available for bulk purchases) can be pre-ordered by accessing the following link:

<http://www.ipr.org.uk/Products/productsframeset.htm>

As your CPRS presiding officer on the Global Alliance, I encourage you to surf the PRE site. The case studies are freely accessible, extremely useful and well presented. I know you will agree with me that 'membership has its privileges' and that the benefits of this Global Alliance are only beginning to bear fruit for CPRS members.

Jean Valin, APR
Presiding Officer
Global Alliance 

achieving excellence...


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Qualified candidates submit a work project or portfolio of communication projects and undergo written and oral examinations designed to test their knowledge of the field of communication or public relations, including practice, theory, ethics, professional conduct and history. CPRS members who are successful are entitled to carry the initials APR (Accredited Public Relations) after their names; successful IABC members earn the credential ABC (Accredited Business Communicator).

What do Calgary employers think about this issue?

Melissa Rolfe, APR, Senior Communications Advisor at Husky Energy, sums it up this way: "When I am in a position to hire either an employee or consultant, I look immediately for

accredited practitioners. While references and work history provide good indicators of a person's experience and skill set, accreditation tells me more about the *quality* of the candidate's capabilities. You can be assured he or she has met the standard of a good, all-around practitioner who is committed to professional development. In a nutshell, I know what I'm getting. That's important in a discipline like public relations that doesn't require formal training."

Tony Pargeter, ABC, Director of Corporate Communications at Petro-Canada agrees. "My preference is to hire communicators who are accredited. It assures me that these practitioners are highly skilled - strategically, tactically and analytically. Why would I want anything less?" 

Extreme learnings @ whistler

The "Extreme PR @ Whistler" conference was great! Three fun-filled days in beautiful Whistler provided an excellent environment to learn about trends and ideas in the field of public relations. For those of you unable to attend, conference-goers share what they learned.

"I think the most useful bit of knowledge I picked up was related to dealing with lawyers. It has mostly been my experience that lawyers are at the other end of the spectrum compared to PR practitioners. They usually want to communicate as little as possible to as few audiences as possible. The session I attended talked about how to develop a relationship with lawyers and helped me understand better the 'tight' relationship that lawyers often have with the CEO."

Sari Shernofsky APR
Sari Shernofsky Corporate Communications

"One point that really got me thinking concerns the growing recognition of the value of public relations activities. During the workshop "Research Measurement - Effective Application of Research in Public Relations", a trend was identified in which financial analysts are seeing the real value of non-financial assets such as branding, reputation, and research and development. The word is getting through to senior executives that these "non-tangible" assets are every bit as important as the traditional ones, even if they are harder to measure.

The workshop speakers also stated that today's successful companies all share these qualities:

1. Clarity of purpose
2. Effective interface between management and employees
3. Effective information sharing
4. Consistent leadership behaviour

These are largely public relations functions, or areas in which public relations has expertise to offer, so there's a huge opportunity for people in our field. However, the "Future of PR" panel speakers had a lot to say about this. The point was made that we should be concerned that the value of PR as a field of expertise is NOT fully appreciated. Where there are opportunities within a company, there is competition, and PR may have to fight for its rightful piece of the action. There is a danger that PR practitioners will be passed over for senior roles in favour of business's traditional counselors: lawyers and

accountants. Therefore, we may be seeing a genuine window of opportunity, but it will take quick timing and persuasion to

"stake the claim". Otherwise, the longstanding lament of PR as a tactical function will go on."

Pat Hammond
Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre

"Dr. Mark Kingwell provided the keynote address to kick off the conference and had some very thought-provoking ideas to communicate. The one concept that struck home is that we all have to deal with other people. We have to think of their needs and desires. How do we make sure others get what they need? Dr. Kingwell stated that it is often a question of scale – we feel so small. His message was this: "There are places where you are big. Where you loom large. Where you make a difference. Think about how you can make a difference to make this the world we want." These are words definitely worth putting into practice."

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Visit our Web site at www.cprscalgary.org

exton-parder...


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the advertising world. For two consecutive summers she worked for a small Calgary advertising agency. "I was a jack-of-all trades and learned a lot about agencies over those summers." Most notably, Trish determined that the agency business might not be exactly what she was looking for.

The following summer Trish secured a job with the Calgary Zoo. She was hired to work with the Community Relations Manager, who went on vacation shortly after Trish started. "I was thrown in and had to learn it all, hands-on", she remembers. While it was not easy, Trish thrived with the experience and realized that Public Relations was her calling.

Upon graduating from York University, Trish returned to Calgary. Unfortunately, there were not any positions available with the Calgary Zoo so she accepted a position with 66 CFR, a brand new—and very hot—radio station in Calgary. At 66 CFR Trish did a little of everything, with a strong focus on promotions. She really enjoyed her work, but when the Calgary Zoo called to let her know that there was an opening, she jumped at it. "The Zoo is a cause I really believe in...a product that I like selling", she says.

Looking back on her career, Trish points to 1988—the year Calgary hosted the Winter Olympics and the Calgary Zoo received pandas on loan from China—as a highlight. "In 1988 the Zoo achieved an international reputation and the stage was set for it to evolve into more of a business," During this year, the Calgary Zoo also saw record attendance, international media visits and its first real foray into sponsorship.

Today, Trish continues to love her work at the Calgary Zoo. She also does the best she can to save some time each day to spend with her three-year-old child. "I've had to step away from extra commitments over the past couple of years in order to ensure I give full attention to my top two priorities: my family and my work with the Calgary Zoo." While the pace is hectic, Trish's role continues to fascinate and challenge. Her key professional goal is to get the Calgary Zoo conservation message out – a story that she believes hasn't received its due yet, but one she looks forward to sharing. 

Members on the move

New Members

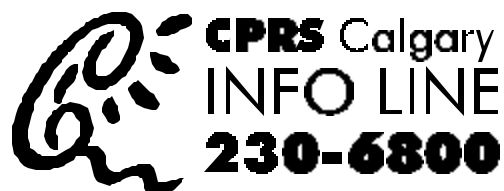
Joslyn (Jody) MacPherson, ABC
Eastwind Communication

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
Jim Wood, Membership Chair
jwood@mtroyal.ab.ca

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

town crier awards...

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a group of employees who volunteer personal time to administer the corporate donations budget in Wabamun Lake-area communities, which represent 27 percent of corporate assets. The program included a range of internal and external communication. Launched during a time of uneasy union negotiations, the program included the involvement of a labour relations specialist. TACT met or exceeded the benchmarks established at the beginning of the project. TransAlta's local donations program in the Wabamun area is now more visible to the community and the company's local employees. TransAlta and its local employees are being publicly recognized for the donations TACT makes.



Lyall Samaroden and Lisa Frizzell with their Town Crier Awards

The success of the Town Crier Awards depends on the quality of the entries, which was high, our generous sponsors, and the commitment and time of the volunteers who organize, market, promote, and judge the entries.

Thank you to those public relations professionals who judged the 2001 Town Crier Awards.

Winnipeg judges:

Robin Alford, APR
Ruth Drew, APR
Ted Holland, APR
Kent Morgan, APR
Bob Drain, APR
Carolyn Rickey, APR 

Calgary judges:

Shirley Popadiuk
Lisa Rushka
Henry Stevens

Thank you to our sponsors who helped make the 2001 Town Crier Awards our best.

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Volunteer opportunities

Program & Professional Development

Looking for a junior to intermediate pr practitioner to assist in the planning and execution of events.

Contact Lisa Rushka at 531-0331 or lrushka@national.ca


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@home.com

Archives

Assist with cataloging, organization and maintenance of CPRS Calgary's Archives - representing 40 years of history.

Two to three hours a month are required. Contact Eileen Dooley at eileen.dooley@home.com for further details. 


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 Jim Wood APR

Membership Chair

jwood@mtroyal.ab.ca

or by fax at 240-6563. 

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