

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.

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?”

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