

How to Succeed at Accreditation

Work Example

- Illustrates your ability to research, write, execute and evaluate a communications solution to a problem or opportunity.
- Must contain all the elements of the RACE formula and a budget. If you can't provide the actual budget for reasons of confidentiality, at least show what percentage of your budget was dedicated to specific elements in the budget. For example, 10% on research, 20% on evaluation, etc.
- Research does not have to be primary, formal research; the important thing is to show that some research was done.
- You must have played a strategic role in the project, even if you worked with a team, outside consultants or an agency.
- If you can't think of an appropriate work sample from the past two years from actual work experience, look at volunteering for an organization to create a communication plan.
- If you're not sure about whether a work sample would be appropriate, contact the local accreditation chair to get advice.
- The work example should be free of spelling and grammar errors.
- Why people fail: no measurable objectives; evaluations not tied to objectives; plan not tied to business objectives; not properly researched; research does not relate to the objectives.

Written Exam

- Shows the depth and breadth of your skills.
- It is important to manage your time well.
- Markers recognize and honor independent thinking; regurgitation is not rewarded.
- Use clearly expressed, well developed answers.
- Make sure you READ the question and figure out your approach before you start writing. An alarming number of candidates don't read the question – sometimes there are two parts to it. Figure out what has the most weighting and spend the bulk of your time on things that are important.
- Spelling and grammar count.
- Why people fail: not reading the question properly; not leaving enough time to complete the exam; not clearly articulating answers.
- Tips to prepare: form study groups with other candidates; write practice exams; read, read, read!

Oral Exam

- Illustrates how well you express your ideas verbally; poise and original thought are rewarded.
- Will cover the candidate's work example, current events, issues in the field.
- Why people fail: inability to articulate ideas well enough to discuss them.
- Tips to prepare: have lunch with colleagues or other members of the study group and spend the hour discussing a current event as it relates to public relations, or an issue or trend in the industry. The ability to convey ideas verbally is extremely important as advisers to senior management and decision-makers.

CPRS Calgary is piloting a mentor program for accreditation candidates in 2002. Watch for further details. If you're an accredited member and are interested in an aspect of accreditation mentorship, please contact Gay Robinson at 281-8849 or gerobinson@shaw.ca.