

## Breaking into PR

### The Right Approach and Preparation Can Make All The Difference

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“Leaving the freedom and pleasures of college life can be intimidating, but the “knowledge quest” of a career in public relations can be even more exciting.”

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#### **Building Your Experience Portfolio**

If you're really a "stand out," your résumé will reflect it. Don't wait until your senior year to get serious, especially if you're trying to find your career path. Here are some suggestions:

- 1) Join student organizations like PRSSA, and participate, hold office, go on trips
- 2) Write for your school or local newspaper (build writing samples, make media contacts)
- 3) Internships with diversity — try an agency, company and non-profit before graduation
- 4) Work on a political campaign (a life experience in and unto itself!)
- 5) Volunteer for non-profit programs (build your character while you gain experience)
- 6) Read the PR trade publications (PRSA, Ragan, O'Dwyer, PR Online etc.)
- 7) Take key courses (writing, psychology, research and especially business)
- 8) Do your own research (contact organizations; search the Web for PR case files etc.)
- 9) Learn the Internet as a PR tool (newsgroups, websites and how to target audiences)
- 10) Find mentor(s) to take you under the wing and show you the ropes — stay in touch!

#### **Tips Especially for Seniors**

- *Finding the Perfect Opportunity* — Hold on to your ideals, but be sensible about your options. It may not be the right time to land the job you really want... so find a good "stepping stone" where you'll reap the benefits of experience so you'll be more marketable for when the time is right to achieve your goals... timing really is everything!
- *Network, Network and then go meet more people* — There is no substitute for good references. They can help open doors and make sure that you're welcomed inside. Attend professional functions, introduce yourself and ask lots of questions. *Anyone* you meet could be signing your check next month or 10 years from now!
- *The Informational Interview* — Identify several companies that interest you and contact the PR director to ask if they'll share their insights. Anyone worth working for will give you 10 minutes of their time to help. But be prepared with good questions and genuine intent. "Oh, and by the way, here's my résumé if you hear of anything..."
- *The Résumé* — No college graduate should be more than a page. Keep it clean and error-free. Leave room for questions and leave the nonsense out. Make it "different" only if your personality correlates. Save creativity for the cover letter. Bring whatever portfolio samples (mainly writing) to bolster your credentials.
- *The Aftermath* — Rejection is not personal (usually, it's just business), so don't take it that way! *Always* send a thank you letter or hand-written note after a job or informational interview. After thanking a missed opportunity... don't sulk... go right after the next one!