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AN ANALYSIS OF THE SKILL SETS NEEDED TO BE
SUCCESSFUL IN NONPROFIT PUBLIC RELATIONS

by
Hannah Nicole Williamson

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
May 2020

Approved by:

Advisor: Professor Deborah Hall

Reader: Professor Robin Street

Reader: Professor Graham Bodie

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to our sweet Ava Jane Hill, 9/27/11 – 9/16/19. I love you so much.

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.” Hebrews 10:23

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have made it through this process without the guidance and support of so many people.

Thank you, Mrs. Hall, for agreeing to work with me the first time you met me. Your guidance and constant encouragement have been so appreciated.

Thank you, Ms. Street, for helping me find my passion for public relations, which ultimately led to my deciding to research public relations for this thesis.

To Ms. Street and Dr. Bodie, thank you for being willing to be on my thesis committee and take the time to read my work.

A huge thank you is also owed to every individual who took the time to complete my surveys. I am thankful for the students who took the time to provide their input, and I very much appreciate every public relations professional that took time out of their day to complete my survey and provide insightful information.

I am so grateful for all of my family and friends encouraging me on my crazy journey to graduate a year early and still write a thesis, especially my amazing parents. I vividly remember standing in the kitchen at home and telling you both that I decided to stay in the Honors College and write my thesis after taking 15 hours online that summer. We all agreed I was crazy, but look, we made it!

Ultimately, I have to thank my Heavenly Father for his unending love and for giving me strength to push on no matter what comes my way.

ABSTRACT

An Analysis of the Skill Sets Needed to be Successful in Nonprofit Public Relations (Under the direction of Deborah Hall)

The public relations industry is ever-changing, as it evolves to adapt to societal changes. Technological advancements and social media have largely contributed to changes in the way public relations professionals attempt to reach their target publics. In fact, research shows many public relations professionals do not think the term “public relations” will accurately define the work they will be doing in the near future. As the industry changes, the job duties of public relations professionals adapt as well.

This study researched the public relations industry to understand what skill sets professionals should possess in order to be successful. The study’s goal was to determine if the skills sets required of for-profit public relations professionals were the same or different of those required of a public relations professional in the nonprofit sector. Surveys were sent to both nonprofit and for-profit public relations professionals as well as to students. Quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted from those surveys, as there were open-ended questions to allow respondents to give their opinions. This allowed for comparison and contrast between what those in the field expect of graduating students versus what skills students believe they need. Research showed the skill sets were not necessarily different; rather, for-profit and nonprofit public relations professionals must apply their skill sets in varying ways in order to be most effective for their organization.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the early 20th Century, public relations (PR) has been defined in a variety of ways. In 1982, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) said “public relations helps an organization and its public adapt mutually to each other.”

In *Working in Public Relations: How to Gain the Skills and Opportunities for a Career in PR* written in 1998 in the United Kingdom, the author simply says, “At the core, PR is all about communications” (Chester 11). This is still true today, but the definition of public relations has broadened as an ever-changing and steadily-evolving society complicates the communication process.

The modern PRSA definition says “public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.”

In the words of “the century’s most influential PR figure” and founding chairman of Burson-Marsteller Harold Burson, “Communicate, communicate, communicate. And remember that communication is only one function of the public relations professional” (Staff, PRWeek & Burson 208). Burson’s personal definition of public relations encompasses much more than simply communication: “Public relations is an applied social science that helps reconcile institutional or individual behavior in a manner that accords with public expectations and interest and, when effectively communicated, changes, creates, or reinforces opinions or attitudes that motivate target audiences to specific courses of action” (Burson 336).

By the Progressive era, as nonprofits were becoming aware of the effectiveness of PR, it became increasingly popular, especially in its usefulness to fundraising, across “vertical subsectors of the nonprofit sector” (Lee 322). Fast forward to the mid-20th century and public relations had become a common management tool among the entire American nonprofit sector (Lee 329). In the first decade of the 21st century, there were six textbooks on nonprofit public relations published, which suggests growth of the nonprofit sector of PR as well as attention in the classroom (Lee 319).

Preliminary Hypothesis

In 2017, the Global Communications Report found that 87% of public relations professionals believe “the term ‘public relations’ will not describe the work they will do in five years.” As society continues to evolve, the role of a public relations professional changes. Thus, about half of the public relations professionals in this study “believe PR needs to be more broadly defined” in order to encompass everything they do on a day-to-day basis in their profession (2017 Global Communications).

With this notion of the many more functions of a public relations professional, the research for this thesis looked at what other important skills and characteristics, besides communication, are important for professionals in the industry to possess, specifically in the nonprofit sector.

The preliminary hypothesis for this thesis was the skills required for nonprofit public relations would be at least somewhat different than those of public relations in for-profit. This hypothesis came as a result of very basic, common knowledge from the researcher of what nonprofit public relations consists of. The researcher believed at the

start of this study that the skill sets and characteristics of a nonprofit PR professional would differ from that of a for-profit professional; however, results of the research proved to be surprising.

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW

Skills and Characteristics of the Public Relations Professional

There are a multitude of sources available, including research studies, articles by experienced professionals, and more, concerning the broad topic of skills and characteristics public relations professionals should possess. In the following section, sources are summarized and listed from oldest to most recent, as the purpose of this thesis is to examine the profession at its most current state.

For starters, *The Public Relations Strategies and Tactics* textbook lists writing skill, research ability, planning expertise, problem-solving ability, business/economics competence, and expertise in social media as essential career skills in public relations (Wilson, Cameron, and Weber 18-19).

In Harold Burson's *The Business of Persuasion*, he gives an account of "a test that could predict the potential of qualified job applicants" that occurred during his time at Burson-Marsteller in the 1980s (Burson 241). Burson chose a dozen of his employees he wished he could clone, and a professional psychologist conducted in-depth interviews with each individual, finding a commonality of four traits among the employees. First, they were all smart but in different ways. Secondly, "each one had an entrepreneurial mind-set, always asking, 'What can I do next for my client?' and taking action" (Burson 241). Next, they were all good communicators, as they were persuasive speakers and "better-than-average writers -- and liked to write" (Burson 242). Lastly, each individual was a team player, as "they used the pronoun *we* more than *I*" (Burson 242). This process

showed Burson that he needed to give job candidates who possess these four characteristics serious consideration because they are the type of public relations employees he wanted on his staff. Burson summarizes this in the form of advice in the takeaways portion of that chapter: “To achieve success at a public relations firm, demonstrate you are a team player, communicate well above average in speaking and writing, always be thinking about what else you can do for your clients, and take the initiative” (Burson 252).

According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the top five important qualities for a public relations specialist to have are: interpersonal skills, organizational skills, problem-solving skills, speaking skills, and writing skills. These skills would allow a public relations professional to communicate effectively with the public and the media on a regular basis.

In January 2012, a study titled “Attitudes and perceptions of public relations professionals towards graduating students’ skills” was conducted (Paskin). Although the public relations industry has evolved in a variety of ways even since 2012, the study is included in this research because it examines the specific skills PR professionals expect from graduating students. The survey was comprised of 18 open and closed-ended questions, and it received 113 usable responses from public relations professionals. Respondents were asked both in an open-ended and check list format to identify the most important skills a graduating public relations student should have. In open-ended form, the most common response, from 85.8% of respondents, was good writing, but good communication skills and social media were also common answers, with 32.7% and 21% of respondents, respectively (Paskin). When asked in a check list format to identify the

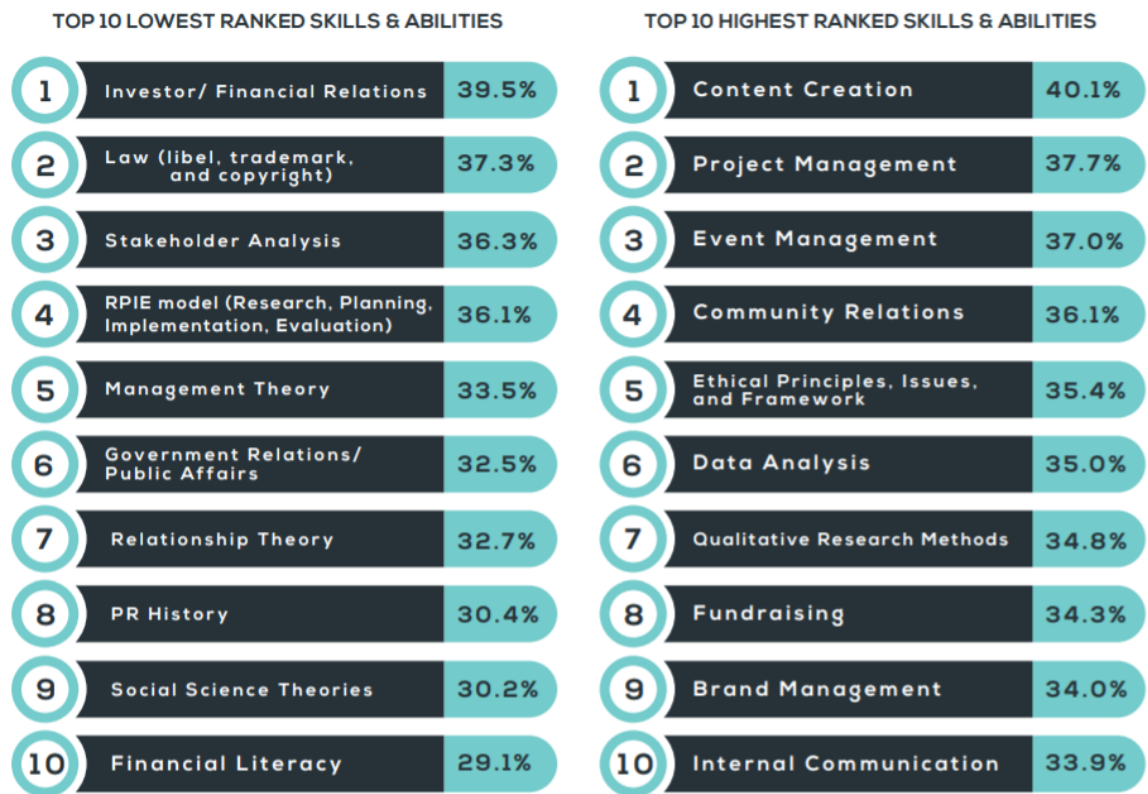
top skills, traditional writing skills and good communication skills were still in the top responses, along with strategic thinking (Paskin). An important takeaway from this study is while only 5.6% of respondents think new technical skills are more important than traditional skills, almost 93% of respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed that it is “very important for public relations college students to learn those new skills” (Paskin). Furthermore, almost 95% of the public relations professionals who responded either strongly or somewhat agreed “that the importance of technology in the field of public relations will keep increasing in the years to come,” and other more current sources of research have proven this to be true (Paskin). For example, an article on Agility PR written in 2019 discusses how technology has been evolving for many years now but is far from done. This requires public relations professionals to strengthen their skills and change their approach “in the form of writing content, to a real-time relationship, because that’s what technology is making available” (Norton).

In 2014, researchers conducting a study titled “Public relations supervisors and Millennial entry-level practitioners rate entry-level job skills and professional characteristics” administered a survey to 109 Millennial PR professionals and 56 supervisors (Todd). Millennial employees with less than two years of experience were asked to rate their job skills and professional characteristics: their ratings of themselves were compared to the supervisors’ ratings of the Millennials’ skills and characteristics. Some of the job skills they were asked to rate included writing skills, research skills, and social media use: a few of the professional characteristics they were asked to rate included time management, accepting responsibility, and willingness to learn (Todd). There were a few specific skills, such as computer and social media skills, that did not

show a significant difference in ratings between the public relations supervisors and entry-level Millennial employees (Todd). However, in regards to the overall ratings of both job skills and professional characteristics, “the public relations supervisors rated the Millennial entry-level employee... consistently poorer” than the Millennials rated themselves (Todd). This shows an inconsistency between what recent graduates believe to be useful in the workplace versus what the public relations supervisors actually value in their employees.

In 2017, the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) and PRSA studied nearly 400 entry-level public relations professionals to analyze their level of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) as they “merge their education with their on-the-job experience” (McCorkindale). When given a list of 34 skills and abilities, respondents rated “their own level of expertise on the following scale: no knowledge, fundamental awareness, intermediate, advanced, and expert” (McCorkindale). The top three highest ranked skills and abilities were content creation, project management, and event management (McCorkindale). Additionally, “one-third of respondents also indicated integrated communications, client management, and marketing were also areas where they had a high level of expertise” (McCorkindale).

Figure 1: Skills and Abilities of Entry-Level Public Relations Professionals



Source: McCorkindale, Dr. Tina. “The 2017 IPR and PRSA Report: KSAs and Characteristics of Entry-Level Public Relations Professionals.” *Institute for Public Relations*, 2017, instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/V5-IPR-PRSA-Joint-Report-1.pdf.

The study also examined the lowest ranked skills and abilities among entry-level professionals, which included investor/ financial relations, law, stakeholder analysis, RPIE (research, planning, implementation, evaluation) model, and management theory (McCorkindale). These lists provide insight into the skills recent graduates working in

public relations feel most confident in as well as the skills they feel need some work in order to be more successful in the industry.

Also, in 2017, the Global Communications Report documented some important information pertaining to challenges in the public relations industry and how to grow in the future. The 40-question survey for professionals was broken down into agency executives and in-house corporate executives. According to those professionals, retaining and recruiting the right talent were the top two challenges for their organization in 2017, which probably played a role in their “lack of relevant skills” challenge as well (2017 Global Communications Report).

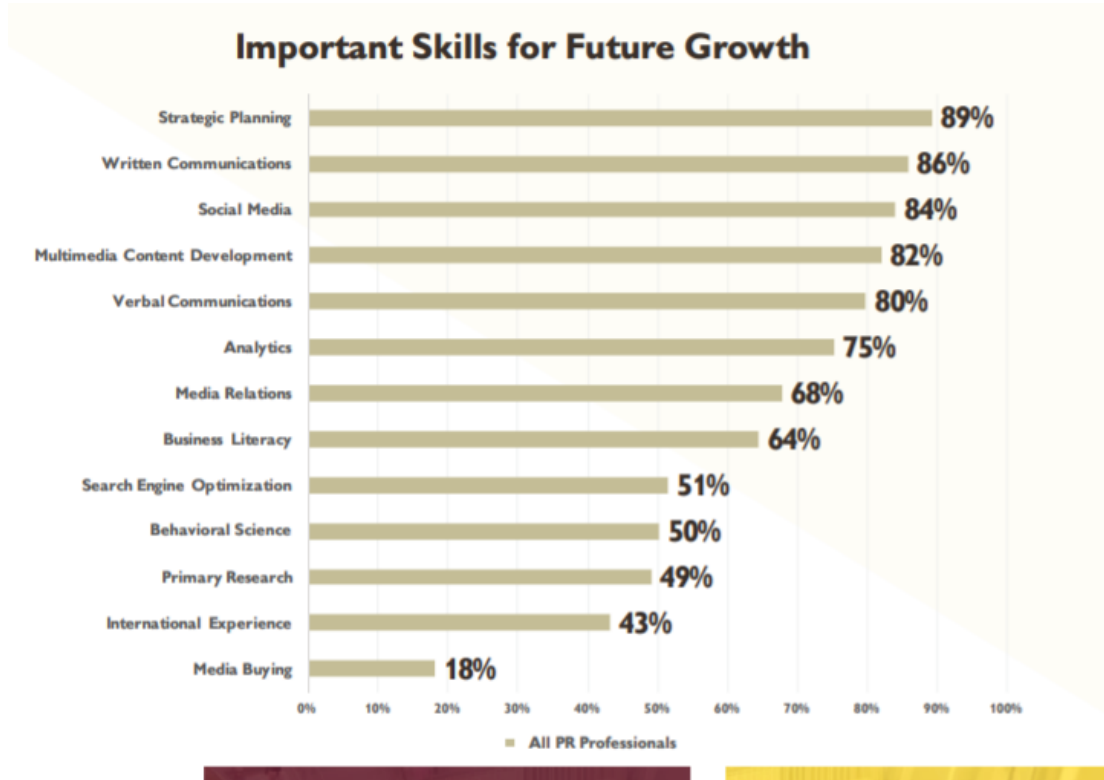
Figure 2: Challenges Preventing Growth of Organizations in 2017



Source: “2017 Global Communications Report.” *University of Southern California (Annenberg Center for Public Relations); The Holmes Report, 2017,* https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/KOS_2017_GCR_Final.pdf

Among all the public relations professionals surveyed for the 2017 Global Communications Report, they ranked strategic planning, written communications, and social media as the top important skills for future growth.

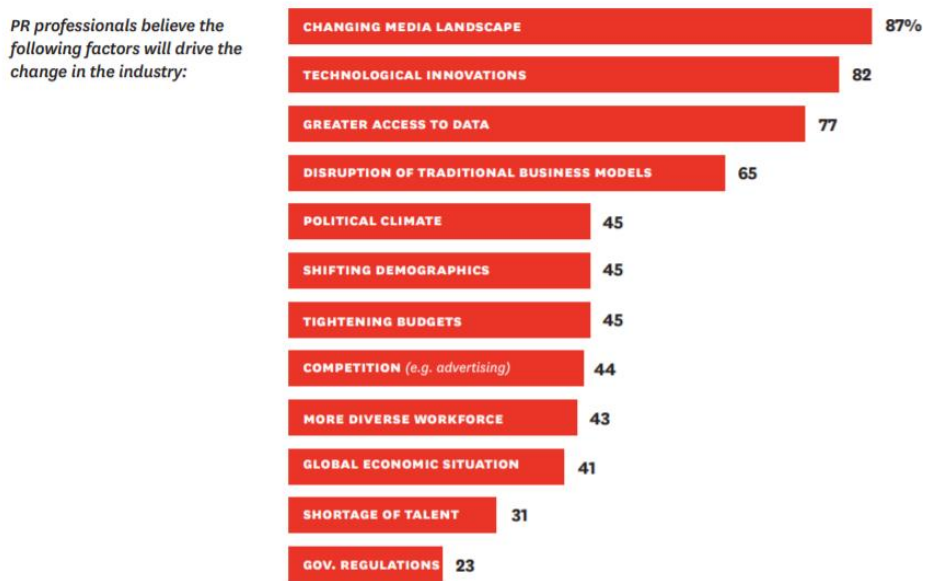
Figure 3: Important Skills for Future Growth



Source: “2017 Global Communications Report.” *University of Southern California (Annenberg Center for Public Relations); The Holmes Report, 2017,* https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/KOS_2017_GCR_Final.pdf

Researchers uncovered insights about what will shape the future of the public relations industry in the 2018 Global Communications Report. The survey for the public relations professionals in this study was completed by 1,001 individuals and asked questions about the changes relevant to the industry. According to survey responses, the top three factors that will drive change in the industry are all technology related: changing media landscape, technological innovations, and greater access to data (2018 Global Communications Report).

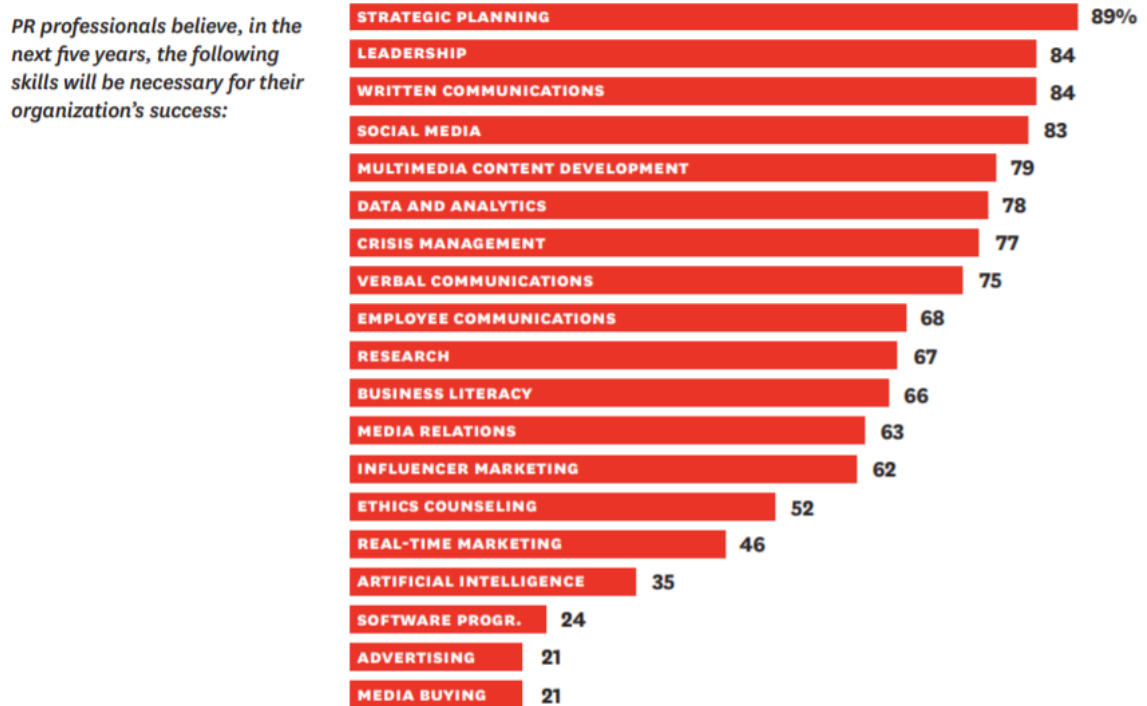
Figure 4: Factors PR Professionals Believe Will Drive Industry Change



Source: “2018 Global Communications Report.” *University of Southern California (Annenberg Center for Public Relations); The Holmes Report, 2018,* <http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/2018-global-communications-report-evolution-of-ethics.pdf>

The top three most valued skills in the PR industry, according to the 2018 Global Communications Report, are strategic planning, leadership, and the traditional written communication. To adapt to industry changes, current PR professionals believe there will need to be a new expertise in social media, multimedia content development, and data and analytics (2018 Global Communications Report). Furthermore, verbal communications and crisis management remain in the top 10 most valued skills (2018 Global Communications Report).

Figure 5: Skills Necessary for Organizations' Success in the Next Five Years



Source: “2018 Global Communications Report.” *University of Southern California (Annenberg Center for Public Relations); The Holmes Report, 2018,* <http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/2018-global-communications-report-evolution-of-ethics.pdf>

In an article from *The Balance Careers* on public relations from August 2019, the author notes that traditional PR skills will always be valuable, but due to technological advances, social media content creation, analytics, search engine optimization, and programming are becoming more and more important. Communication, social media, research, international perspective, time management, and creative thinking were listed as the main skills PR professionals should have (Doyle). Within each of these categories, the article listed more specific skills, such as journalism and editing under the communications section. Lastly, there is a list of more than 25 other skills at the end of the article that are important as well, such as flexibility, event planning, and relationship management to name a few.

A Closer Look at the Nonprofit Sector

The previous material covered the skills that all public relations professionals need, but this section discusses whether more specific skills are needed for professionals in the nonprofit sector.

The job outlook for a public relations specialist in the Occupational Outlook Handbook states that individuals looking to work in public relations will have strong competition at “advertising firms, organizations with large media exposure, and prestigious public relations firms.” However, it is important to note the opportunities that lie in the nonprofit sector with public relations as well. According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics, there were “approximately 1.56 million nonprofits registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in 2015.” In 2016, this created, according to the

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly 12.3 million jobs in nonprofit organizations across the country.

In 2012, over 1,000 participants in the Constant Contact Small Biz Council were surveyed about the “state of nonprofits and the ways they connect with and grow their audience” (Constant Contact). The report included 307 responses from nonprofit participants. When asked to choose what the most effective marketing activities are for their organization, participants rated in-person interactions as 50% effective, compared to a shockingly low 10% effectiveness for public relations.

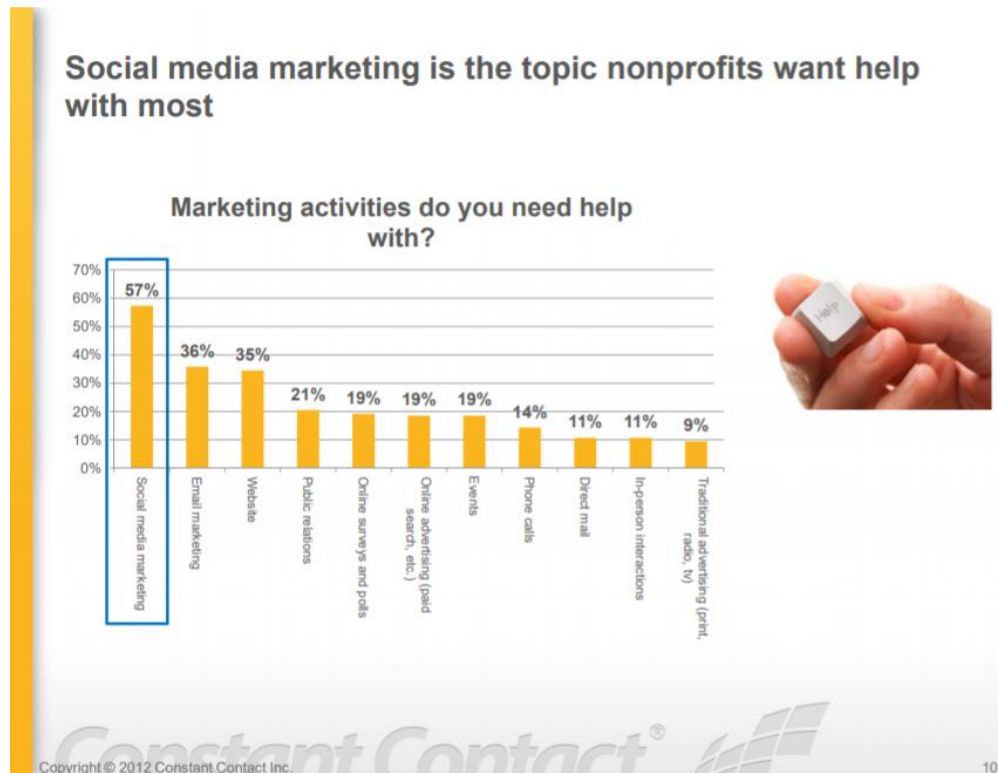
Figure 6: Most Effective Marketing Activity



Source: “Constant Contact Nonprofit Pulse: The Health and Wellness of Small Nonprofits.” *Constant Contact Inc.* , 2012, http://www.ncdsv.org/images/CC_NonprofitPulseTheHealthAndWellnessOfSmallNonprofits_2012.pdf

However, it is also important to note that 21% of respondents admitted to needing help with public relations (Constant Contact).

Figure 7: Marketing Activities Nonprofits Need Help With



Source: “Constant Contact Nonprofit Pulse: The Health and Wellness of Small Nonprofits.” *Constant Contact Inc.*, 2012, http://www.ncdsv.org/images/CC_NonprofitPulseTheHealthAndWellnessOfSmallNonprofits_2012.pdf

This data shows respondents likely did not find public relations effective because they were not practicing it in the most efficient manner. For example, a nonprofit may not have the resources available to hire outside the organization for public relations, so the

individual or individuals who perform the public relations functions may not specialize in the skills required to be successful at public relations, or it is not a priority for them.

Combining the technological advances in society with the rising number of nonprofits, it has become increasingly important for nonprofits to “maintain and enhance their reputation and visibility,” which is where nonprofit public relations professionals come into the picture (Public Relations Specialists).

Most research and many articles on nonprofit public relations do not focus on specific skills those professionals should possess; rather, the primary focus is what types of situations nonprofits face and how public relations fits in. So, for the purposes of this thesis, several sources about nonprofits were viewed and analyzed to understand what important skills are needed for certain practices in specifically nonprofits. Many of the strategies and tactics found in research relate to the public relations industry as a whole, but how these strategies and tactics are applicable in the nonprofit sector is analyzed in the following section.

Fundraising

A major difference for PR professionals working in nonprofits compared to for-profits is the need to raise funds for the nonprofit to operate, and even to cover the PR person’s salary.

Many sources discussing the difference between corporate world and nonprofit public relations almost immediately point out the importance of fundraising, especially with the number of nonprofits growing and widening the possibilities of where people can donate. The Public Relations Strategies and Tactics textbook actually considers fundraising the most time-consuming activity of nonprofits because “without generous

contributions from companies and individuals, nonprofit organizations could not exist” (Wilson, Cameron, and Weber 371).

In an article on Nonprofit Hub in 2014, a marketing/ PR consultant wrote about five mistakes nonprofits need to avoid: number four said, “You Dismiss the Power of PR.” His short, three-paragraph explanation sums up the importance of public relations, especially for nonprofits. First, he talked about how public relations is a vital component in a fundraising campaign because “it generates brand awareness, builds buzz and increases credibility” (Horrigan). To prove public relations generates donations, Horrigan referenced the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, which raised ALS “\$100 million dollars in 2014 vs. \$2.7 million during the same time period in 2013.” Fundraising is such an important component to nonprofit public relations that is crucial for working individuals in the field to understand and master the best ways to go about it for their organization.

Storytelling

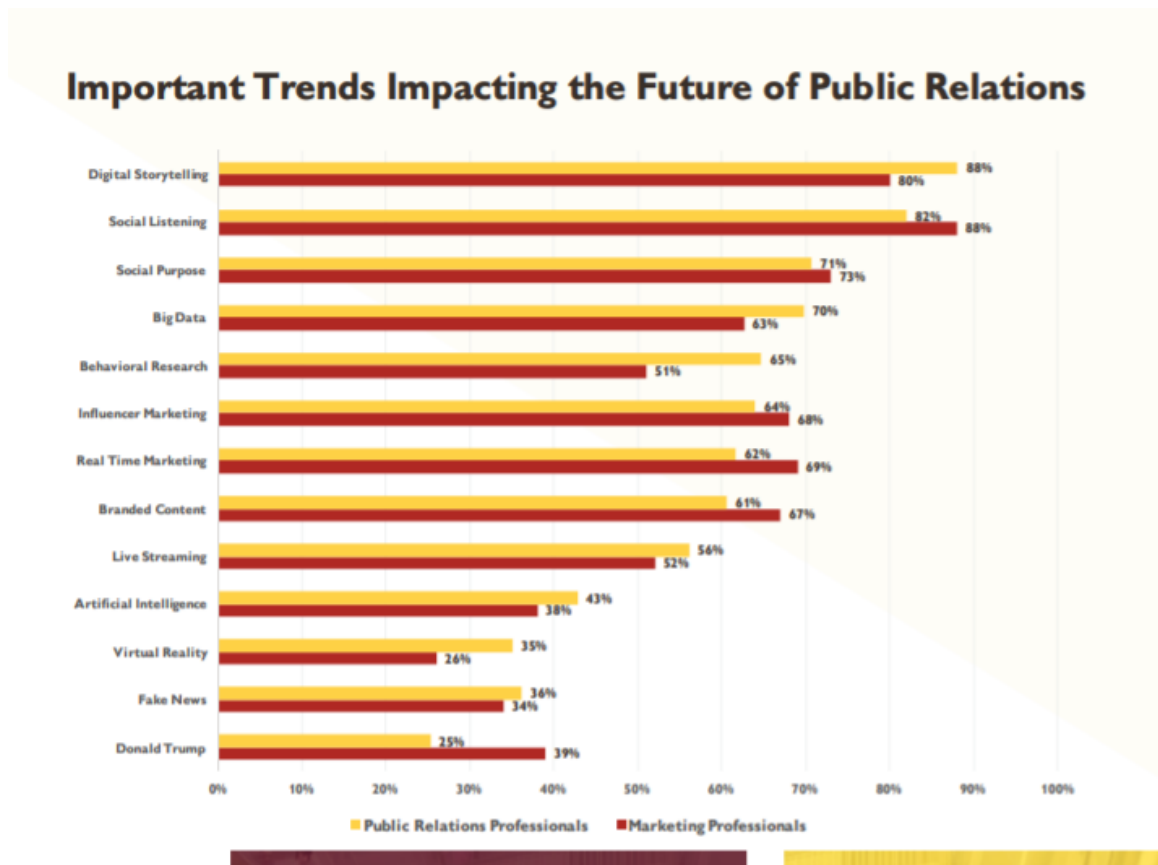
In a survey of 285 senior business-to-business marketing and business leaders in 2015, 81% of respondents ranked engaging and compelling storytelling as the second most important element of effective content (MarketingCharts). Other sources since 2015 have supported this.

In his book about the nonprofit brand, Jeff Brooks, a 25-year veteran to the nonprofit community, talks about how important it is for a nonprofit to have an attitude of thankfulness, which can be done through storytelling. He believes “publish[ing] accounts of individual donors who have done great things to help forward your cause” can communicate the organization’s attitude of thankfulness to donors (Brooks 210). As

Brooks book was written in 2014, he recommended telling stories through a newsletter, but as more recent research has shown, storytelling can be improved through technology.

In the 2017 Global Communications Report, digital storytelling, along with social listening, was ranked by public relations executives as the most important trend impacting the future of public relations. Video storytelling can allow the audience to see and feel the story rather than just read about it.

Figure 8: Important Trends Impacting the Future of Public Relations



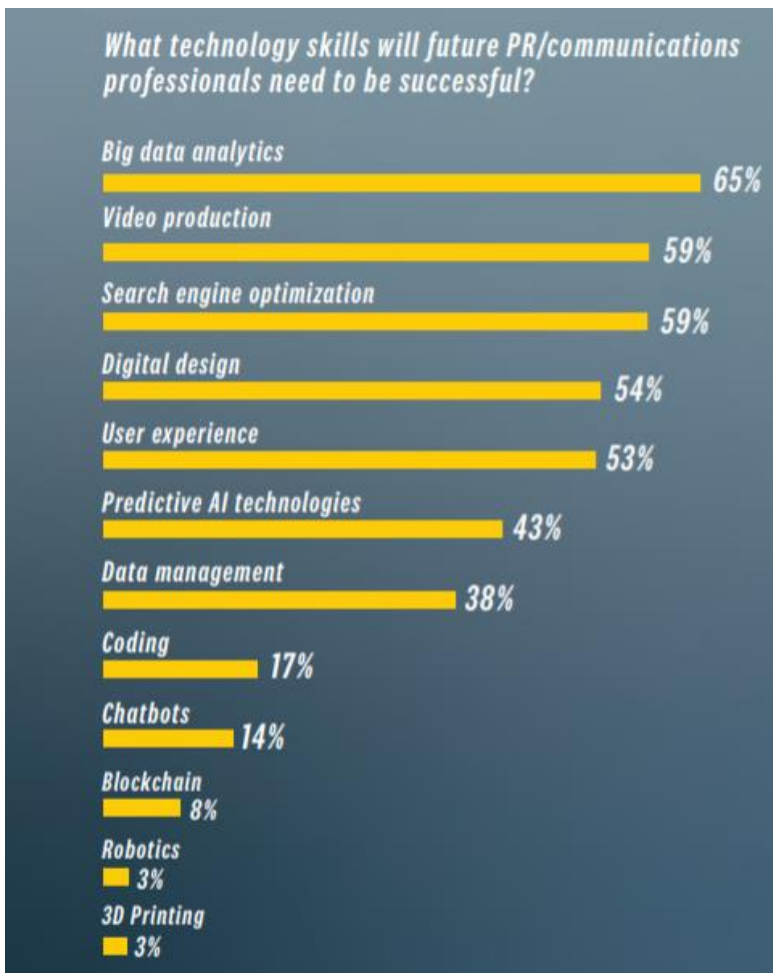
Source: “2017 Global Communications Report.” *University of Southern*

California (Annenberg Center for Public Relations); The Holmes Report, 2017,

https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/KOS_2017_GCR_Final.pdf

The importance of digital storytelling was also addressed in the 2019 Global Communications Report. The study analyzed the future of technology in communication, and results showed that 59% of the nearly 1,600 PR professionals who participated in the study ranked video production as the second most important technology skill that future PR professionals need to be successful.

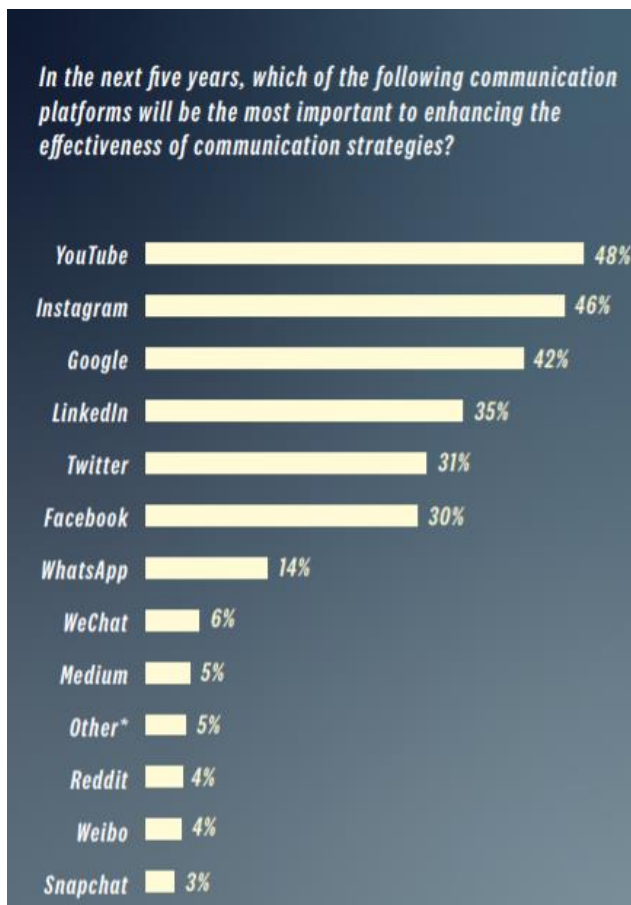
Figure 9: Technology Skills Future PR/Communications Professionals Need



Source: “2019 Global Communications Report.” *University of Southern California (Annenberg Center for Public Relations); The Holmes Report, 2019,* assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/2019-global-communications-report.pdf

Furthermore, 48% of those surveyed said they see YouTube, a video platform, enhancing the effectiveness of communication strategies in the next five years, ahead of several other social media platforms (2019 Global Communications Report). The report explains how visual experiences are coming to rule the scene because they “are projected to be the big winners in an era of decreasing attention span.”

Figure 10: Communication Platforms to Enhance Effectiveness of Communication Strategies in Next Five Years



Source: “2019 Global Communications Report.” *University of Southern California (Annenberg Center for Public Relations); The Holmes Report, 2019,* assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/2019-global-communications-report.pdf

This idea of using a video platform for storytelling is an important component of public relations but more specifically, of fundraising for nonprofits. Video storytelling is especially useful when the videos are well produced and informative for the target audience (Comcowich). If a nonprofit can tell a story of the “accomplishments of real people the nonprofit serves,” it can encourage donors to give to the organization (Comcowich). Through storytelling, the organization’s mission becomes “more than just an abstract idea - it’s a real situation affecting real people” (Kavnagh). People are more inclined to give when they feel connected to the cause or organization, and storytelling can help achieve that desired connection.

In an article written by Daniel Melbye, a digital communications expert who works with nonprofits, tips are given to stress the importance of storytelling for nonprofits. First, it is important to “let people tell their own stories” because there is no better way to hear about their personal experiences than in their own words (Melbye). The importance of inspirational stories is also mentioned in the article: “It is important to understand what inspires donors, and then create a content marketing strategy around that.” Melbye’s entire article is about encouraging nonprofits to understand the benefit of digital communications through storytelling in order to “bring supporters closer to the work their donations are helping to make happen.”

Developing and maintaining relationships

Developing and maintaining relationships in the nonprofit world is crucially important for similar reasons storytelling is becoming increasingly popular: individuals want to feel connected to the cause and the organization, especially if they are considering donating. When addressing the future of technology in communications, the

2019 Global Communications Report said “we need to remember that our job is to build relationships...between companies, brands and people. We know how to listen and we know how to tell stories. Technology will enhance these skills, but it will never replace them.”

The importance of relationships is best told from the perspective of those who desire that relationship with the organization. For example, in an article from January 2018 from *Nonprofit Quarterly*, a story was told about an individual “who wrote a five-figure check to a large nonprofit in 2017” (Moody). After making his large donation, he tried to contact staff members to be more involved and engaged with the organization; however, he “hadn’t heard a word from the nonprofit” until he received his “generic ‘please renew your gift’ year-end email” in December (Moody). The article says there are several other similar stories from donors desiring but lacking a relationship with the organization they have donated to. The same article provided a few tips for nonprofits to follow in building these relationships: create ways for donors to contribute in a more meaningful way beyond writing a check, start building the relationships now because trust takes time, and be open to new ideas of how donors can be involved (Moody). Although building relationships with an organization’s publics requires more time and effort, it is crucial for nonprofits, specifically the communications professional, to develop and maintain relationships with community members.

Communication skills

The role of public relations in a nonprofit is essentially to foster goodwill and serve as beacons of social responsibility, which would be extremely difficult without good communication (Wilson, Cameron, and Weber 370).

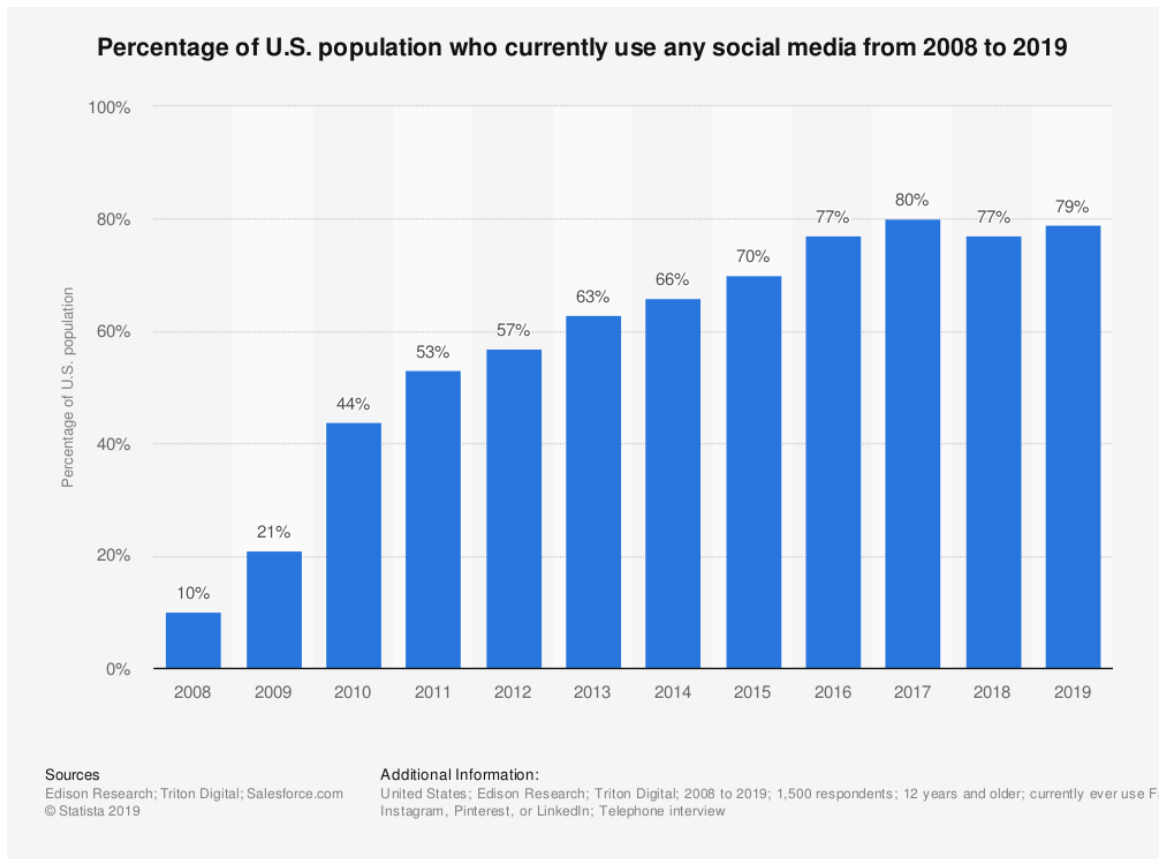
The traditional, important skill of good communication is especially important in nonprofit communications as organizations are trying to reach donors. In a survey of almost 400 nonprofits in the United States and Canada in 2019, the second highest response for the biggest challenge nonprofits were facing was “donor cultivation, acquisition, retention, communications” (Nonprofit Research Collaborative).

In an article from Nonprofit Hub, nonprofit PR professionals are reminded of the importance of communicating with a conversational style of “clear and easy-to-interpret language” so the donor can easily understand (Cuadros). The author of the article urged readers to apply this communication method not just to donors but also to other organization supporters, such as volunteers and staff, by becoming familiar with what they are interested in and how they like to be communicated with.

Social media

Social media has become increasingly important in public relations in the last few years, as more and more people join various platforms. In 2008, only 10% of the United States population had at least one social media profile: in 2019, that percentage rose to 79% (Edison Research).

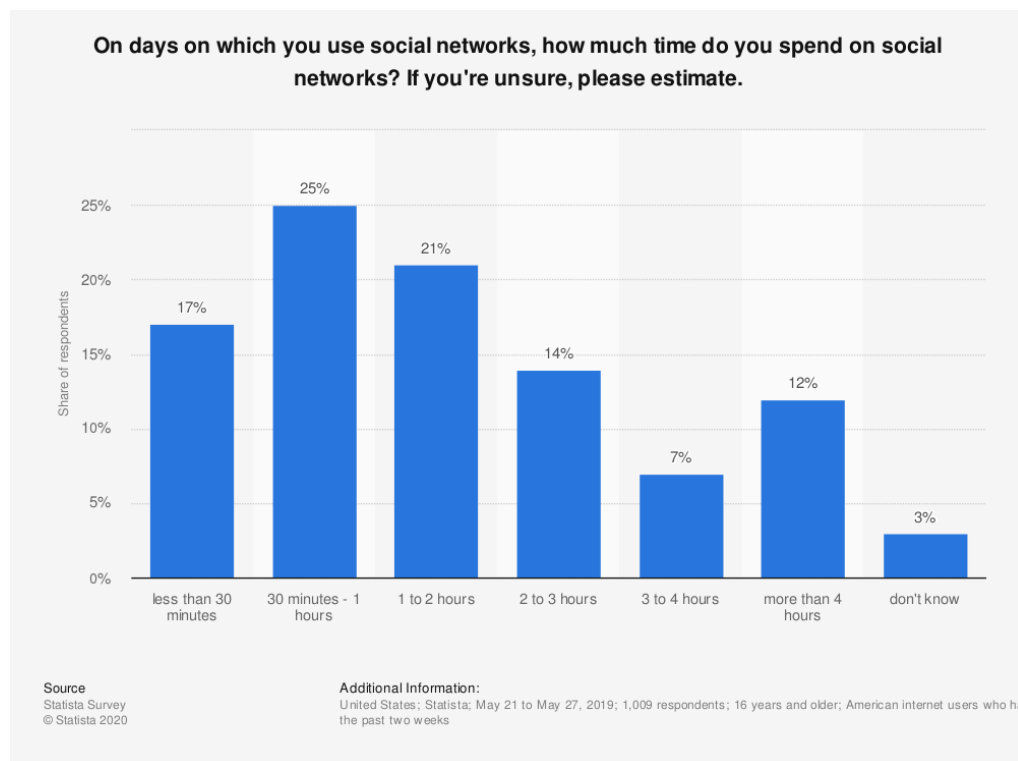
Figure 11: Percentage of U.S. Population Who Use Social Media



Source: Edison Research, & Salesforce.com. (March 6, 2019). Percentage of U.S. population with A social media profile from 2008 to 2019 [Graph]. In *Statista*. Retrieved March 02, 2020, from <https://www-statista.com.umiss.idm.oclc.org/statistics/273476/percentage-of-us-population-with-a-social-network-profile/>

Furthermore, the length of time people typically spend on social media allows for great opportunity for public relations efforts to reach them via a social media platform. In a survey conducted among more than 1,000 Americans in May 2019, 25% of respondents said they spend anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour on social media each day (Statista). On the other end of the spectrum, nearly 20% of respondents spend more than three hours per day on social media (Statista).

Figure 12: How Much Time Users Spend on Social Media

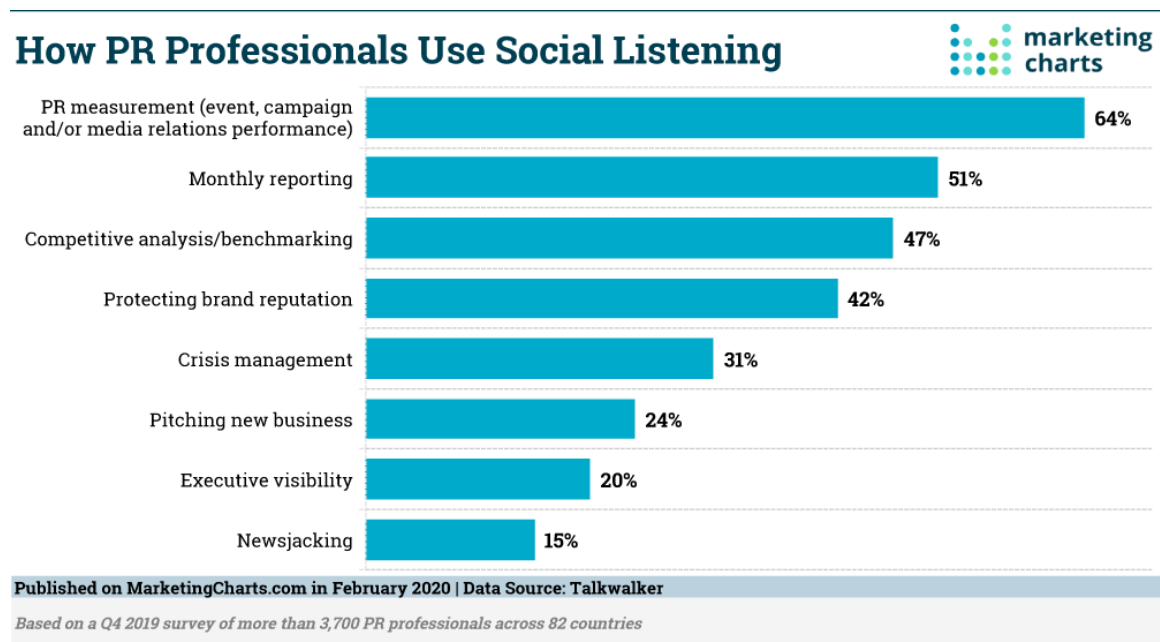


Source: Statista. “On Days on Which You Use Social Networks, How Much Time Do You Spend On Social Networks? If You’re Unsure, Please Estimate..” *Statista*, Statista Inc., 16 Jan 2020, <https://www-statista.com.umiss.idm.oclc.org/forecasts/1088803/time-spent-on-social-networks-per-day-in-the-us>

This significant increase in social media users and the amount of time they spend on social media platforms stresses the importance of meeting the target audience where they are.

Marketingcharts.com provides survey results from 2019 about how public relations professionals are using social listening, which speaks to the increasing importance of social media efforts for nonprofit public relations professionals.

Figure 13: How PR Professionals Use Social Listening



Source: Talkwalker. “How PR Pros Use Social Listening.” *Marketing Charts*, Feb. 2020, <https://www.marketingcharts.com/cross-media-and-traditional/pr-traditional-and-cross-channel-111946>

According to those results, the top way PR professionals are using social listening is for PR measurement purposes, pertaining to event, campaign, and/or media relations

performance (Talkwalker). Nonprofits, for example, can utilize social media to measure awareness of their donor campaigns. Among other responses are monthly reporting, competitive analysis/benchmarking, protecting brand reputation, and crisis management, all of which are crucial components of public relations (Talkwalker). This method of using social listening relates to nonprofits in that social media provides the opportunity to inform the public of their brand and specific events/campaigns. One way they can do this is by ensuring they are posting quality content that tells stories to extend their reach (Comcowich). If quantity is put over quality, the target public will likely not interact with the posts or the organization. Also, setting social media goals and strategies and adding a 'donate now' button on Facebook could be very effective for nonprofits as well (Comcowich).

Secondary Research Conclusion and Recap

Secondary research showed the role of a public relations professional continues to evolve and broaden. There are a multitude of skills all public relations professionals must possess in order to be successful, ranging from traditional writing and communication skills to more technological based skills like social media and analytics.

Many of the useful and necessary skills in nonprofit public relations are fairly similar to those skills required of a public relations professional in the for-profit sector, but the way the skills are utilized can vary between nonprofit and for-profit organizations. As an example, research showed very early on the importance of communication skills in the public relations industry. Both for-profits and nonprofits need to be able to effectively communicate with their target audiences, but the end-goal can vary, which results in variations of how they communicate. For example, nonprofits are communicating to

build relationships with potential donors and promote fundraisers, which requires a different approach from a for-profit organization, say as they increase awareness of a brand or topic.

Here is a quick recap of some of the key findings from secondary research:

- Communication and writing skills have been important since the early days of public relations and continue to be important.
- The new skills that come with technological advances (social media, analytics, search engine optimization, video, etc.) are just as important for upcoming professionals as the older traditional skills (communication, writing, research, strategic thinking, etc.).
- Many skill sets of public relations professionals overlap in for-profit and nonprofit sectors: how those skills are put into practice is where they begin to differ.
- Storytelling is an important component of nonprofit public relations, which requires a variety of different skill sets depending on how the story is told (communication, writing, video, building relationships, etc.).

CHAPTER II: SURVEY RESULTS

Method Introduction

In addition to secondary research, primary research was conducted to understand what skills current public relations professionals and upcoming professionals think are the most important in the industry.

The researcher received Institutional Review Board approval to design three surveys using a University of Mississippi Qualtrics account to survey nonprofit public relations professionals, for-profit public relations professionals, and students studying journalism/marketing/public relations. The survey link was published and distributed via email to each target audience between December 5, 2019 and March 1, 2020.

The for-profit survey included five closed-ended questions and five open-ended questions. The nonprofit survey was the same, except that it had an additional closed-ended question asking about the role their values played in their decision to work in the nonprofit sector. The student survey included seven closed-ended questions and two open-ended questions.

The contacts for public relations professionals were given to the researcher from School of Journalism public relations professors. Additionally, the researcher was given a contact list of recent School of Journalism graduates and contacted those who work in the communications field. The researcher also sent emails to public relations professionals in her home state of Arkansas to receive feedback.

There were 32 responses on the nonprofit survey and 15 responses on the for-profit survey. Eleven of the nonprofit respondents have only worked in nonprofit public relations for a few months to five years, but 12 of the respondents have between six and 15 years of experience in the nonprofit world. Two respondents were in the 16 to 20-year range, and five respondents have been in nonprofit public relations for 20+ years. Two respondents who took the nonprofit survey did not select a year range. In the for-profit sector, the number of individuals in each year range were pretty evenly distributed: four individuals in the zero to five year range, two individuals in the six to 10-year range, three in the 11 to 15-year range, one in the 16 to 20-year range, and four in the 20+ year range. One respondent in the for-profit sector did not select a year range. Figures 14 and 15 found below allow for easier viewing and understanding of this information.

Figure 14: Years Worked in Nonprofit PR

Q3 - How many years have you worked in nonprofit public relations?

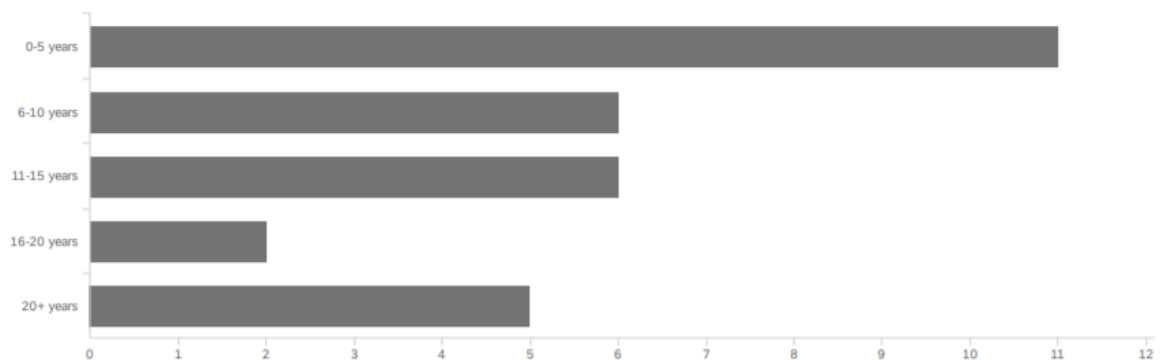
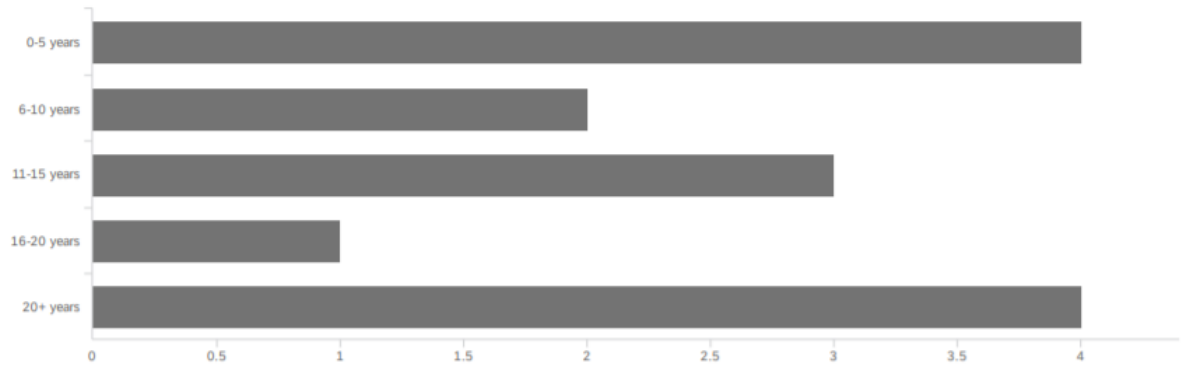


Figure 15: Years Worked in PR

Q3 - How many years have you worked in public relations?



Out of the 47 total responses from professionals, nine responses were considered incomplete, as the survey was exited before answering each question. Survey responses were primarily from the South, except for one respondent who represented New York.

The student survey was distributed via email to peers of the researcher in the School of Journalism and New Media in December 2019 when the survey was first published. On February 17, 2020, the School of Journalism and New Media sent an email to all students inviting them to participate in the survey. There were 100 responses, but only 84 respondents were current journalism/public relations/marketing/advertising students and were able to complete the survey. Thirty-two of the respondents left the survey before answering specific questions about the topic.

Of the specializations listed in the survey, 34 respondents are not specializing in anything, 32 of the respondents are specializing in public relations, and nine are specializing in social media. Of those respondents who chose to specialize in a specific

area, 100% of them ranked their specialization on a one to five scale of significance as a three or higher.

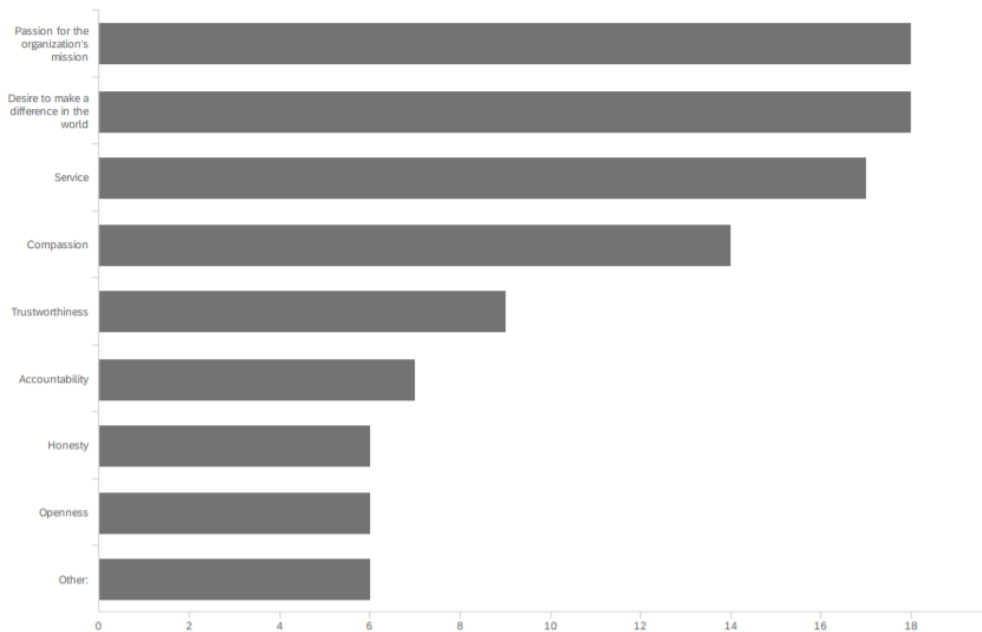
Viewpoint of Nonprofit Professionals

Values

Since the goal of this thesis was to define what skills and characteristics were important for nonprofit public relations professionals, nonprofit respondents were asked what internal or personal values factored into their choosing to work in the nonprofit sector. Passion for the organization's mission, desire to make a difference in the world, and service were the most common responses chosen.

Figure 16: Nonprofit Professionals' Internal/Personal Values

Q4 - What internal or personal values were a factor in your choosing to work in the nonprofit sector? Check all that apply.



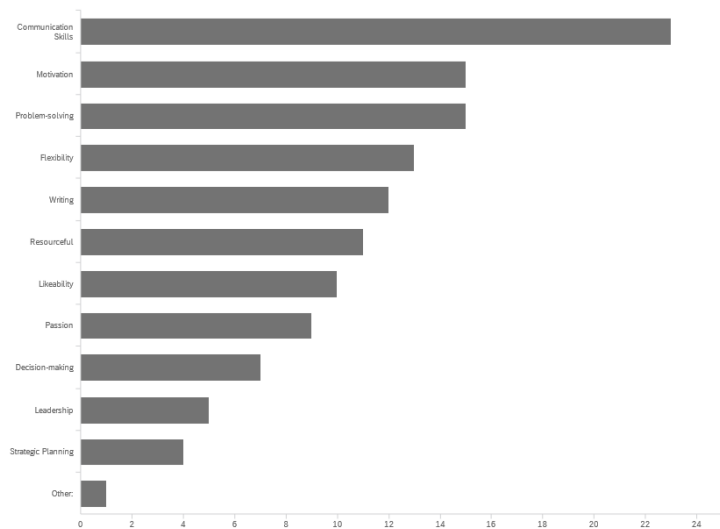
As seen in figure 16, six respondents chose “other” and provided additional input into why they chose working in the nonprofit sector. Three of the respondents referenced the opportunities the job provided them: some others said it did not have anything to do with whether it was a nonprofit or not.

Skill sets

Respondents were asked to select what skill sets were most important at the start of their career and then asked to identify what became more important as they advanced in their career. In support of what several sources of secondary research showed, the most popular answer choice was communication skills, followed by motivation and problem solving. The one respondent who chose “other” stated the ability to take direction as an important skill

Figure 17: Nonprofit Professionals' Opinions on Skill Sets Most Important at Beginning of PR Career

Q5 - What skill sets do you think were most important when you first started working in nonprofit public relations? Check all that apply.

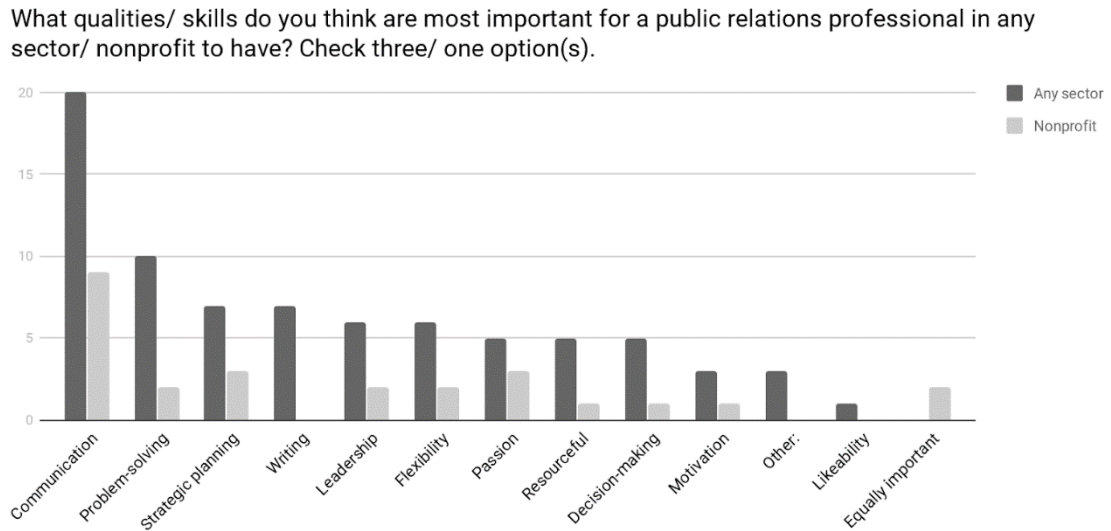


These responses support the findings of secondary research in that communication skills are at the top of the list; however, writing and strategic planning were not as low on the list as they are in this survey. Also, secondary research did not often show motivation as an important aspect of public relations. However, in the sense this question is asking about the early days of a career, it is likely respondents chose motivation because they were eager to find their place in the industry.

Respondents provided the skills they believe gained more importance as they advanced in their career in an open-ended format. Some respondents simply repeated previously mentioned skills while others provided new skills they find of importance. Of the previously mentioned skills, leadership, strategic planning, decision-making, and flexibility were most commonly listed as becoming more important as respondents advanced in their careers. As one respondent put it, “This is likely a natural progression of anyone’s career.” Another respondent who listed those skills said they became more important in a management position. The other skills provided by respondents can be categorized into openness to new ideas/people, community connections, and commitment.

Next, respondents were asked to identify up to three qualities/skills they believe to be most important for any public relations professional to have. The following question then asked respondents to narrow their three chosen skills to only one they believed to be most important for nonprofit public relations. Figure 18 was constructed using the separate data from each question in order to compare responses between the two questions.

Figure 18: Opinions of Nonprofit PR Professionals on Three Most Important Skills for Any Sector Versus One Most Important Skill for Nonprofit Sector



Communication skills were ranked of the most importance in both questions, reflecting the sources of secondary research that placed communication skills at the top of a list as well. Although 10 respondents viewed problem-solving as the second most important in any sector, only two individuals placed it as the most important in a nonprofit. Three respondents each chose passion and strategic planning as the most important.

When respondents were asked in an open-ended format why they chose certain skills as the most important for the nonprofit sector, many individuals provided detailed responses to explain their choice. Among those who chose to elaborate on their choice of communication skills, a common theme was that communication skills “provide a foundation for everything you may need to accomplish.” Those individuals stressed the importance of effectively communicating by knowing what to say, when to say it, and how to say it because “without the ability to convey your nonprofit’s message, everything

else you do is in vain.” One respondent also addressed how communication skills are important for public relations professionals as they communicate messages to people internally and externally.

Each of the six individuals who chose passion or strategic planning explained their choice. The individuals who chose passion wrote about how passion for the work and the organization’s mission will drive everything: without passion, the organization’s mission cannot be effectively communicated. As one respondent put it, “If the passion is there, it will support a drive to succeed, get the word out, meet new connections and always be honest and knowledgeable when representing the organization in the media or speaking engagements.” The three respondents who chose strategic planning explained how there are often limited resources in a nonprofit, which requires careful planning of how those resources will be allocated. It means taking “any situation, need, or set of circumstances and [moving] forward.” As one respondent stated, “Good planning leads to stronger implementation.”

Industry changes

To better understand how society has evolved and changed the role of public relations professionals, respondents were asked what industry changes have prompted their role in PR to change. The most common responses can be categorized as technological advancements and social media. Some of the most relevant quotes from respondents are listed below.

- Social media is the industry that is always changing and you have to stay on top of what is new.
- The most effective ways to get attention for your organization keep evolving.

- The digital transformation for all fields has been intense, but even more so for public relations professionals.
- I often say that social media is a blessing and curse.
- The methods of how to deliver PR messaging continues to change.
- Social media has drastically changed marketing and PR channels and approaches. There is a danger to overemphasize its usefulness and effectiveness.

That is only six short quotes pulled from more than 20 responses on what industry changes have prompted the role of a public relations professional to evolve; many others referenced technology and social media when describing how their job duties have shifted through the years. One respondent even discussed how social media has “afforded EVERY SINGLE PERSON a microphone, via the Internet, to share their thoughts,” which ultimately results in individuals confusing perception and reality. The same respondent spoke to how “our job as PR professionals [is] to help people see true reality and to educate or change their perception if it was incorrect.” Put simply, the rise in advanced technology and social media has prompted public relations professionals to have a more intense focus on reputation management for their organization to combat any incorrect perceptions the public may have.

Respondents also provided insight on how storytelling and building relationships with the public have become crucial components of public relations for nonprofits. Five respondents discussed how their role has become more focused on promoting their organization’s mission and story, and how that now means through graphics or videos versus traditional print methods. Five other individuals wrote about “why relationships with human beings still matter a great deal.” Two respondents explained how their once

traditional PR role has come to include community relations as they attend more events within the community and “communicate directly with individuals.”

What PR means to Nonprofit PR Professionals and their advice to future professionals

The final two questions on the survey were open-ended and focused on the attitudes and opinions of the respondents by asking what public relations means to them and what advice they would give a student considering the PR industry. This question was asked to see if respondents would reference the skills they previously mentioned as important for professionals in the public relations industry. The responses to both of these questions did, in fact, provide additional, useful insight to the day-to-day duties of a nonprofit PR professional.

A handful of respondents mentioned telling stories about their organization in their responses. For example, one individual wrote, “It means sharing the mission, stories, and successes of Girl Scouts to people who are NOT YET engaged with the organization. It means... always striving to promote and connect the organization.” By telling stories, nonprofit organizations are able to build relationships with members of their publics, which ultimately results in support of their organization.

Two commonalities across advice given for students looking to be in the PR industry after graduation were to keep learning and to have passion for the organization/cause. Some of the most relevant quotes from respondents are listed below.

- Adapt to constant change.
- Find something that makes you passionate.
- I would recommend pursuing a career in a field you are passionate about.

- This industry is already worlds different than when I graduated eight years ago, so stay on top of what's current.
- Do everything you can to work in an organization or field that matters to you.
- Always keep learning.
- Decide what is important to you and match it up to a company with those same values.
- School is never over. Keep learning.

These pieces of advice could apply to students seeking careers in many different industries, but it is especially important for an upcoming nonprofit public relations professional to find an organization they are passionate about because it “will provide fulfillment even on difficult days.”

Lastly, the responses provided advice on specific skills upcoming professionals should master, which lined up with the responses they gave in the closed-ended format earlier in the survey. Even if not directly, many respondents wrote about and provided examples of the importance of communication skills, writing, reputation management, and relationship building. For example, one respondent said, “my job is to find ways that my organization or client and their publics (audiences) can benefit from each other,” which includes both relationship building and communication skills.

Viewpoint of For-Profit Professionals

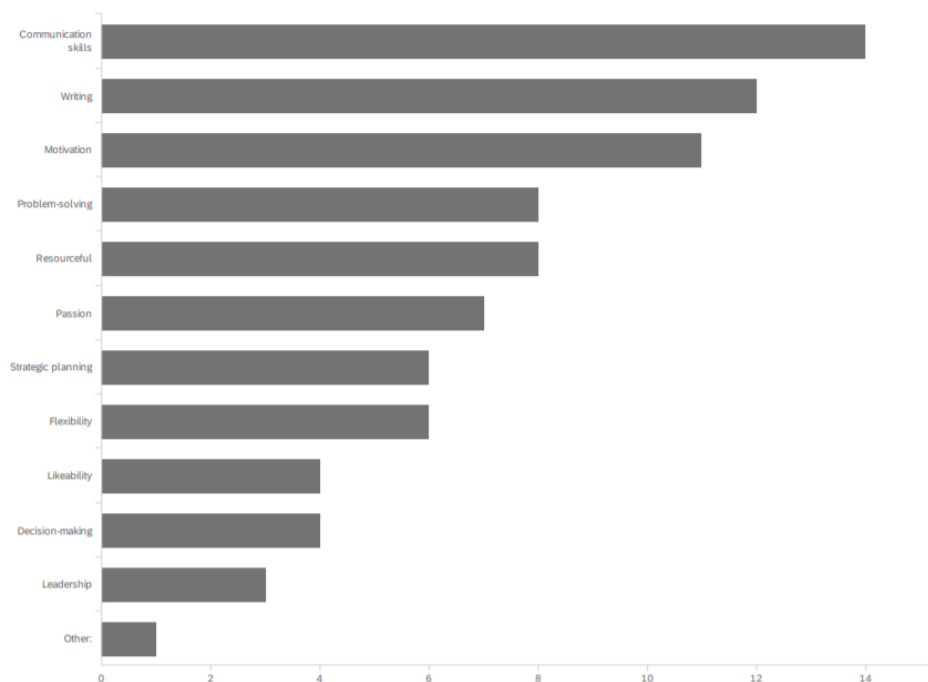
Skills sets

Just as nonprofit professionals were asked to identify important skill sets at the start of their career versus what has become more important over time, public relations

professionals in the for-profit sector were as well. Responses supported some of the findings of the secondary research and were fairly similar to responses of nonprofit public relations professionals. For-profit professionals, listed communication skills as the most important skill when they started their career. The one respondent who chose the other option indicated that photography was an important skill at the start of their career.

Figure 19: For-profit Professionals' Opinions on Skill Sets Most Important at Beginning of PR Career

Q4 - What skill sets do you think were most important when you first started working in public relations? Check all that apply.



As discussed in the nonprofit section, secondary research did not show motivation as important as respondents of these surveys ranked it, but that is likely due to the eagerness of individuals trying to find their way into the industry.

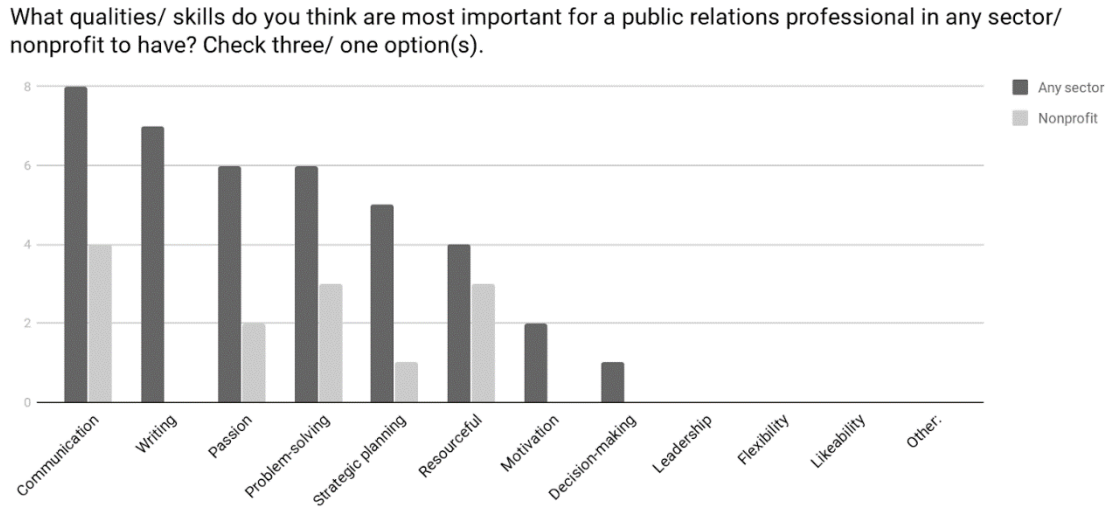
One main difference in the responses of for-profit professionals to those of nonprofits was the placement of writing skills on the skill sets list. For-profit professionals placed writing as the second most important skill, while nonprofit professionals placed it fifth on the list. This is likely due to nonprofit professionals focusing more on problem-solving and flexibility, which were both ranked before writing skills, with their limited resources.

Asking respondents in an open-ended format what skills they believe gained more importance as they advanced in their career allowed for respondents to either simply restate skills listed in the closed-ended questions or provide additional skills they believe to be important. Half of the respondents who answered this open-ended question listed strategic planning as a skill of growing importance. Two of those seven respondents who listed strategic planning referenced needing to see the bigger picture of the organization in order to better craft materials sent to media and to maximize brand visibility.

As with nonprofit responses, the for-profit respondents also listed leadership, decision-making, and flexibility as skills gaining importance in their careers. Other responses include: management skills, responsiveness to constructive criticism, technology, metrics/analytics, ability to set priorities for multiple projects, financial business/literacy, and creativity.

In order to understand the opinion of for-profit public relations professionals about what skills/characteristics are most important in any sector versus the nonprofit sector, figure 20 was formed using data from both sets of responses.

Figure 20: Opinions of For-profit PR Professionals on Three Most Important Skills for Any Sector Versus One Most Important for Nonprofit Sector



In line with what all of the research has shown thus far, the most commonly chosen skill as most important for any sector of public relations was communication skills. When choosing skills for any sector, for-profit professionals chose communication skills, writing, passion, and problem-solving as the most important. Strategic planning and resourcefulness followed closely after. When respondents narrowed their three choices of skills to one for the nonprofit sector, the most common skills chosen were communication skills, problem-solving, and resourcefulness.

Although seven individuals chose writing as one of the top three skills for a public relations professional in any sector, zero of the respondents thought it was the most important for the nonprofit sector.

It is also interesting to make note that none of the for-profit professionals chose leadership, flexibility, or likeability at all; whereas, nonprofit professionals selected each of those skills/characteristics as important in any sector and leadership and flexibility as most important for the nonprofit sector.

Thirteen respondents indicated what skill they believed to be most important in the nonprofit sector in the closed-ended format; twelve of those individuals elaborated on their answer choice in the open-ended question immediately after. As with the responses of nonprofit professionals, for-profit professionals referred to communication skills as the most important, as they serve as a foundation because “if you can’t effectively communicate your goals and your passions to stakeholders, you risk being stagnant in your efforts.”

Among the explanations for why problem-solving was most important, respondents mentioned how nonprofits typically face different types of problems from a for-profit. Due to the limited resources of a nonprofit, respondents believe the ability to solve problems is a highly valued skill. The respondents who justified their choice of resourcefulness as the most important for nonprofits said it is important to “find ways to make things happen with little funding.” The one individual who chose strategic planning as the most important also spoke to the importance of making things happen with little funding by saying, “You have to accomplish a lot with little. Being able to create a strategic plan to maximize the resources you do have is important.”

Industry changes

As nonprofit professionals credited how their role as a public relations professional has evolved over time due to technology advancements and social media, so did for-profit professionals. Respondents discussed how “the world of communications/public relations has completely transformed” as “the internet and social media [have] morphed a lot of how” public relations professionals do their job. A few

relevant quotes from respondents about this idea of technology and social media changing the industry are listed below.

- Social media has always been part of my job, but it's always changing.
- Whether you're doing social for a client or for your own organization, it is important for publics to see as much personality behind the accounts as possible through Live videos, Instagram stories, tweets, and engaging posts on LinkedIn and Facebook.
- Technology has allowed us to speak directly to our audiences in more and more targeted ways, and the perception and value of traditional media has changed dramatically.
- Certainly the biggest change has been the evolution of social platforms, and the most effective ways to reach your target audience with key messaging.

In addition to the comments about technology and social media, respondents mentioned the importance of search engine optimization, analytics, and changes in internal/external communications.

What PR means to for-profit PR professionals and their advice to future professionals

The final two questions of the survey asked about the for-profit professionals' attitudes and opinions pertaining to public relations by asking what the industry means to them and what advice they would give students. The goal of these questions was to allow for more open-ended responses about the industry and see if respondents referenced previously mentioned skills or addressed new skills they believe to be important.

Through asking what working in public relations means to them, respondents opened up about their favorite parts of their job and the industry. Many of the

respondents shared overarching themes, but their quotes, listed below, better speak to what they value.

- Having the power to influence a market through words and graphics holds a heavy weight of responsibility, something not to be taken lightly or without understanding all sides of an issue or topic.
- Everything. It means I have the opportunity to make a difference for my clients.
- It's a passion-driven industry. It's a lot of hard work that has to seem very easy to an outsider.
- I play a role in telling peoples' stories, shaping the news, and working toward common goals with passionate team members.
- Working in Public Relations means being able to connect the dots.
- You are the storyteller, the face and protector of the brand.

In addition to the importance of communication skills, passion, and storytelling mentioned in the above quotes, two respondents mentioned the role they play in building relationships with their target publics.

When giving advice to students who desire to enter the public relations industry, for-profit professionals briefly spoke on important skills but also gave more action tips. In terms of skills/characteristics, respondents primarily mentioned the importance of having passion for the organization/cause, which was also heavily mentioned in the responses from nonprofit professionals. In addition to passion, for-profit professionals referenced the need for strong writing skills, business knowledge, and social media skills. The action tips they provided were focused on gaining experience through internships,

finding a mentor, and joining a professional public relations group because “it’s incredibly helpful to know people to find a job you love.”

Students’ Opinions

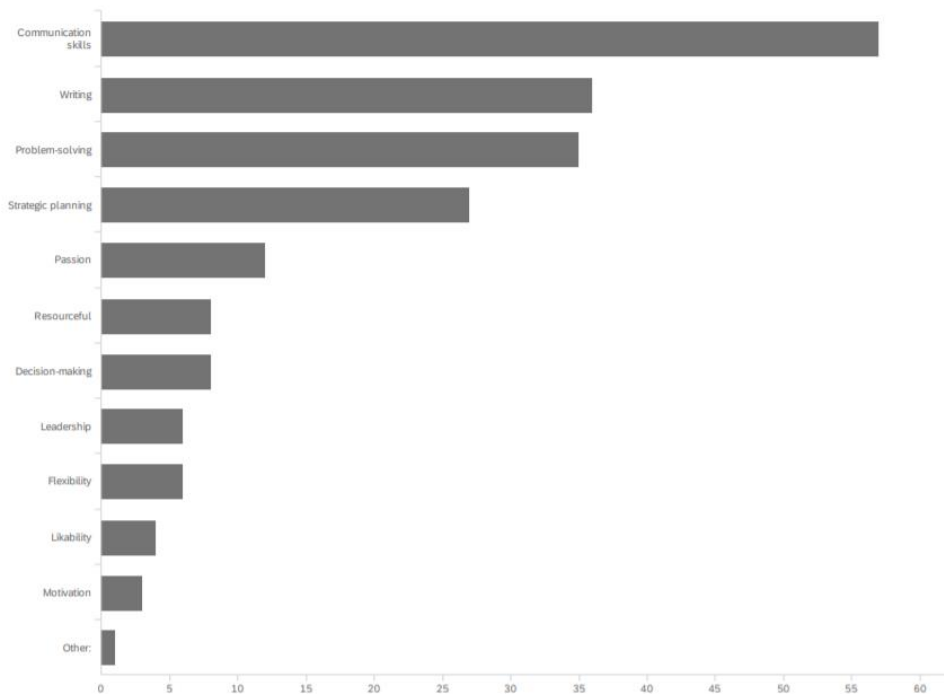
The last section of primary research was the survey administered to students. They were given the same three questions about the topic as the public relations professionals were: identification of three most important skills for any sector of public relations, the one skill most important for the nonprofit sector, and the opportunity to explain why they chose that one skill.

In line with all of the secondary research and the surveys of public relations professionals, students chose communication skills as the top of the three most important for any sector and as the most important for the nonprofit sector.

Figure 21: Students' Opinions on Three Most Important Skills for Any Sector

Q8 - What qualities/ skills do you think are most important for a public relations

professional to have? Check up to three options.

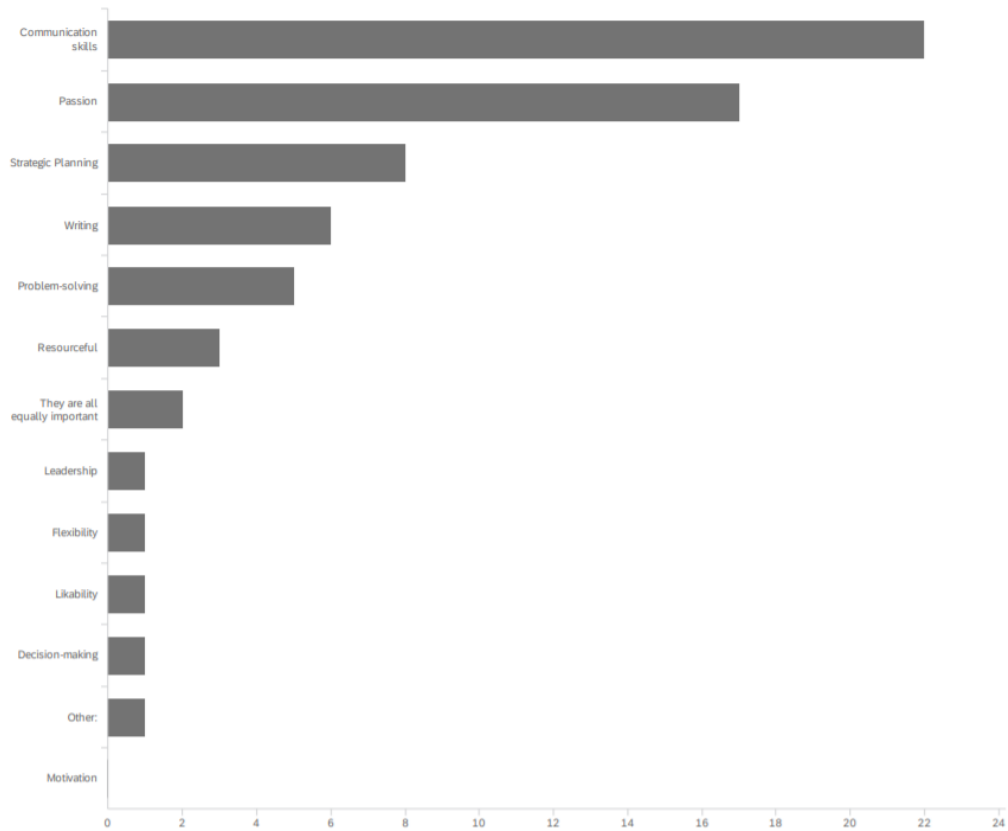


In addition to communication skills, students chose writing and problem-solving as the most important skills a public relations professional should have. The one respondent who chose the other option said non-bias was an important characteristic a PR professional should possess.

As it was in the other surveys, the ranking of writing was pushed down when respondents were asked to narrow their choice of three skills to only one for the nonprofit sector: writing went from the second most important to the fourth. Passion went from fifth most important in any sector to second most important for the nonprofit sector.

Figure 22: Students' Opinions on Most Important Skill for Nonprofit Sector

Q9 - Of the three qualities/ skills you selected in the previous question, which one do you think is the most important for working in the nonprofit sector of public relations?



When students were asked to explain why they chose the skill they did to be the most important for the nonprofit sector, 48 respondents justified their decision. The students who chose communication skills described how they do not think a nonprofit can be successful without effective communication skills because “for organizations that rely strictly on donations, the message has to be communicated well.” One student went as far as to say, “even if you possess all of the skills above, lacking communication skills is fatal to executing any strategy in PR.”

Many students also justified their choices of passion and strategic planning. Students talked about the “need to be motivated by more than a paycheck” when explaining why they chose passion. One student further explained by saying, “I feel like passion is the most important quality for nonprofit because it is HARD, timely, and someone really needs passion about the nonprofit they work for. The person won’t make much money since it is nonprofit, and a lot of time and hard work goes into nonprofit.”

In responses about strategic planning, students talked about the importance of fundraising: those responses are listed below.

- Strategic planning is vital because it goes hand in hand with fundraising which [is] the backbone of non-profit.
- Because you need to be able to plan how to fundraise first and foremost. As well as, planning events, writing news releases, being able to communicate to others, and so on.
- I believe having a successful plan is most important for any PR.
- I think that public relations professionals need to have a strategically planned view of their company [so] that they can better keep the image.

For the final question of the student survey, respondents were asked to explain why they chose public relations, if that is the path they plan to take. This question was asked in hope of students revealing what skills they possess that they believe would be useful to a career in the public relations industry. One student said, “I chose PR because it is a combination of most things I saw my future career being - design, social media, communication, leadership, and creativity.” Among other skills students mentioned included writing, thinking, and crisis communication.

Comparison and Contrast of Professionals with Students

Nonprofit and for-profit public relations professionals were surveyed separately in order to understand what attracted nonprofit professionals to that sector and to allow for analysis between the two, which was done previously. This section combines the responses of nonprofit and for-profit professionals together in order to compare and contrast it to students. Graphs were composed using data from the separate surveys.

What qualities/skills do you think are most important for a public relations professional to have? Check up to three options.

When comparing responses between professionals and students about what top three skills are most important for any sector of public relations, the rankings were fairly similar. Figure 23 provides a visual in their differences in rankings: the numerals represent the number of respondents who selected each option.

Figure 23: Comparison of Opinions on Three Most Important Skills Among Professionals and Students

Professionals	Students
1- Communication skills (28)	1- Communication skills (57)
2- Problem-solving (16)	2- Writing (36)
3- Writing (14)	3- Problem-solving (35)
4- Strategic planning (12)	4- Strategic planning (27)
5- Passion (11)	5- Passion (12)
6- Resourceful (9)	6- Resourceful (8)
7- Flexibility (6)	7- Decision-making (8)
8- Decision-making (6)	8- Flexibility (6)
9- Leadership (6)	9- Leadership (6)
10- Motivation (5)	10- Likeability (4)
11- Other: (3)	11- Motivation (3)
12- Likeability (1)	12- Other: (1)

Both groups overwhelmingly chose communication skills as the number one skill. Additionally, both groups chose problem-solving and writing to complete the top three. However, their orders were different: the choice count of professionals placed problem-solving as second while the choice count of students placed writing as second. (It is important to note here that the ranking of students lacked only one more selection of problem-solving for it to be tied with writing for the number of times it was chosen. Also, the selection of writing only lacked two for it to be tied with problem-solving for professionals. Thus, the top three skills professionals and students believe to be most important for any sector are nearly identical.) This shows students are being well-

prepared for a job in the public relations industry, as their idea of what skills they need in the industry match that of professionals currently working in the industry.

These results also match with a lot of the secondary research. For example, in the “Attitudes and perceptions of public relations professionals towards graduating students’ skills” study conducted in 2012, respondents chose two of the same top three skills as respondents of these surveys did: writing skills and good communication skills (Paskin). The other skill listed as top three in that study was strategic thinking, which was ranked as fourth most important in the professional and student surveys conducted.

Although the question asked respondents to select only three skills, making note of their top five, determined by choice count, is interesting because the choice of skills matches for professionals and students. In addition to communication skills, problem-solving, and writing mentioned previously, respondents chose passion and then resourcefulness.

Of the three qualities/skills you selected in the previous question, which one do you think is the most important for working in the nonprofit sector of public relations?

Again, survey results place communication skills as the most important skill for public relations professionals. However, outside of communication skills, professionals and students had varying opinions on the most important skill nonprofit public relations professionals should possess. Figure 24 provides a visual in their differences in rankings: the numerals represent the number of respondents who selected each option.

Figure 24: Comparison of Opinions on Most Important Skill for Nonprofit Sector of PR Among Professionals and Students

Professionals	Students
1- Communication skills (13)	1- Communication skills (22)
2- Problem-solving (5)	2- Passion (17)
3- Passion (5)	3- Strategic planning (8)
4- Strategic planning (4)	4- Writing (6)
5- Leadership (2)	5- Problem-solving (5)
6- Flexibility (2)	6- Resourceful (3)
7- All equally important (2)	7- All equally important (2)
8- Resourceful (1)	8- Leadership (1)
9- Decision-making (1)	9- Flexibility (1)
10- Motivation (1)	10- Decision-making (1)
11- Writing (0)	11- Likeability (1)
12- Likeability (0)	12- Other: (1)
13- Other: (0)	13- Motivation (0)

The most striking difference in their responses pertains to the selection of writing: six students believe it is the most important skill for nonprofit public relations, while none of the professionals believe that to be true. Although secondary research about nonprofits did not explicitly state writing as the most important skill, writing is a component of other skills research showed to be important for nonprofits. For example, good writing skills are important when nonprofit PR professionals are trying to build relationships with members of their public or communicating about an upcoming fundraiser to the media. Both of these situations require the professional to use a “clear

and easy-to-interpret language” in their writing in order for their message to be communicated effectively (Cuadros).

Please explain why you feel the previously selected quality/skill is the most important for the nonprofit sector of public relations.

As mentioned previously, the responses for why communication skills are the most important refers to how communication skills are the foundation of good public relations. For example, both a professional and a student explained the importance of communicating effectively with donors. A professional said, “Your publics need to clearly see why they should be interested in your nonprofit and how they can participate, whether it’s making donations or investing, and it takes a very skilled communicator to break these concepts down and explain them in a manner that is mutually beneficial for both the nonprofit and the stakeholder.” Similarly, one student said, “I think that anyone can have leadership ability, but if they cannot communicate clearly and effectively, they cannot be good at their job. Especially when you are speaking to donors, you need to be able to persuade and communicate professionally to raise the money.” To summarize the importance of why communication skills are so crucial, one student said, “If you cannot properly communicate, how could you be in an industry that focuses on communication?”

Since passion had the second-greatest number of selections among professionals and students, the justifications for their choice were analyzed. Although the student responses about passion’s importance were related to making less money, there were still some commonalities among the responses. For example, professionals and students talked about the importance of having passion for the organization’s mission, as it “is key

to being able to support and promote the work of the organization through PR.” A student put it this way: “If an employee isn’t passionate or motivated about the cause, they are less likely to go the extra mile for the job,” and according to another student, “If you do not have the passion for your non-profit... you will not be motivated to truly help in any significant way.”

The last skill analyzed from the open-ended question responses was the writing skill: it’s important to understand why students believed writing to be the most important skill since none of the professionals did. Only four of the six individuals who chose writing provided justification for their selection. Two of those individuals based their decision off what they have been taught in the classroom setting: “All of my classes always [taught] us that writing makes up the foundation of good pr.” Another individual agreed that good writing “serves as the basis for most of the work that you do.” The last individual spoke to the importance of effectively communicating and how writing plays into that: “You have to be able to get your client’s story across in the most effective way possible. For nonprofit, you will most likely try to connect with people’s emotions and you should be able to get your emotion across in your writing.”

Overview

The primary research might have been slightly different from secondary research in some cases, but they lined up pretty well. In most cases, the top three to five skills expected of public relations professionals in any sector were the same but ranked/listed in different orders. An example of this is provided in figure 25. Percentages from primary research are rounded.

Figure 25: Comparison of Top Five Skills for Any Sector of PR Among Secondary Research, Professionals, and Students

2018 Global Communications Report	Nonprofit PR professionals	For-profit PR professionals	Students
1- Strategic Planning (89%)	1- Communication Skills (26%)	1- Communication Skills (21%)	1- Communication Skills (28%)
2- Leadership (84%)	2- Problem-solving (13%)	2- Writing (18%)	2- Writing (18%)
3- Written Communications (84%)	3- Writing (9%)	3- Passion (16%)	3- Problem-solving (17%)
4- Social Media (83%)	4- Strategic Planning (9%)	4- Problem-solving (16%)	4- Strategic Planning (13%)
5- Multimedia Content Development (79%)	5- Leadership (8%)	5- Strategic Planning (13%)	5- Passion (6%)

Here is a quick recap of some of the key findings discovered through primary research surveys of professionals and students.

- Passion for the organization’s mission was the top value nonprofit public relations professionals held that led them to a career in the nonprofit sector: passion was also considered of importance among for-profit professionals and students.
- Leadership, strategic planning, decision-making, and flexibility became more important for all PR professionals as they advanced in their careers.
- Public relations professionals credit the widening of their skill sets needed to succeed to technological advancements and social media.
- Communication skills were in the number one position among all respondents, both in the question about any sector and in the question about the nonprofit sector. This is because they “provide a foundation” for public relations.

- Strategic planning, problem solving, and writing remained high on the list for skills public relations professionals need in any sector, but none of the professionals thought writing was the most important for the nonprofit sector (compared to the six students who did).
- Responses to open-ended questions among professionals supported the importance of storytelling, which requires good communication skills, for nonprofits found in secondary research.
- Responses to open-ended questions among professionals and students spoke on the importance of effective communication skills for a nonprofit in order to build relationships with the public and generate donations.

CHAPTER III: LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As with any research conducted, there were limitations in the primary research for this study. First, out of the 147 surveys completed among all public relations professionals and students, 25 respondents exited the survey before completion because they were not the appropriate respondee or decided against taking the survey. Also, it would have been nice to have more than 147 responses, but it was a challenge to get the survey link to the right people.

There was also a mistake in the survey format of the for-profit professional's survey that could have potentially changed some of the results. The researcher mistakenly left off the "They are all equally important" and "I don't know" options on the for-profit professionals survey on the question asking respondents to narrow their choice of three skills to only one for the nonprofit sector. Out of all the survey responses, zero respondents chose the "I don't know" option, so that omission likely did not change results. However, two nonprofit professionals and two students chose the "They are all equally important" option, so some of the for-profit professionals could have chosen that option too if it wasn't accidentally omitted from their options.

Another limitation of the primary research was the length of the list of skills respondents had to choose from. It could have been longer in order to include other skills found to be important in secondary research, such as research, social media, business knowledge, etc. However, the list was shortened in hopes that more respondents would be willing to complete the survey. The researcher did not want the list of options to be too

long and overwhelm the respondent. This limitation also goes along with how the surveys did not have a separation between hard and soft skills: that differentiation might have provided even more useful insight but would have lengthened the survey.

If given more time, the researcher would have liked to personally interview individuals with many years of experience in the industry to gather more useful data. Interviews were originally a part of the research plan for this thesis, but time was limited.

Also, if there had been more time, the researcher would have tried to get the student survey to public relations students at other universities. The student survey was originally worded to ask if respondents were in the School of Journalism and New Media; however, the wording was changed to “are you a current journalism/public relations/marketing/advertising student” to allow for students from other universities to take it. The link was sent by a School of Journalism professor to one other university, but no responses were collected outside The University of Mississippi before analysis occurred.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the researcher's preliminary hypothesis of there being a difference in the skill sets and characteristics of nonprofit public relations professionals to those of a for-profit professional was proved untrue. Instead, it was found that the skill sets are often very similar, but they are applied in different ways. Public relations professionals must possess a variety of skills and apply them as needed, whether they are in the for-profit or nonprofit sector. Both the secondary and primary research, especially the responses to open-ended questions, supported this difference.

Technological advancements and a steady increase in social media have caused public relations professionals to alter how they communicate with their target publics. For example, research showed digital storytelling as one of the 'next big things' across all sectors of public relations. For nonprofits, this means telling a story about those who the organization has impacted through its mission. This new trend requires a variety of skills: passion for the cause that can be seen through the story, communication to effectively tell the story, video skills, and much more. Ultimately, storytelling allows nonprofits to build lasting relationships with members of their target publics, which results in donors to help the organization continue to run.

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APPENDIX

Survey Questions:

For-Profit

1. Are you between the ages of 18 and 80?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. How many years have you worked in public relations?
 - a. 0-5
 - b. 6-10
 - c. 11-15
 - d. 16-20
 - e. 20+ years
3. What skill sets do you think were **most** important when you first started working in public relations? Check all that apply.
 - a. Passion
 - b. Communication skills
 - c. Motivation
 - d. Strategic planning
 - e. Leadership
 - f. Writing
 - g. Flexibility
 - h. Problem-solving
 - i. Likeability
 - j. Resourceful
 - k. Decision-making
 - l. Other: fill in the blank
4. OPEN ENDED: What skill sets became **more** important as you advanced in your career?
5. What qualities/ skills do you think are most important for a public relations professional in any sector to have? Check up to three options.
 - a. Passion
 - b. Communication skills
 - c. Motivation
 - d. Strategic planning
 - e. Leadership
 - f. Writing
 - g. Flexibility
 - h. Problem-solving
 - i. Likeability
 - j. Resourceful
 - k. Decision-making

1. Other: fill in the blank
6. Of the three qualities/ skills you selected in the previous question, which one do you think is the **most** important for working in the nonprofit sector of public relations?
 - a. Multiple choice list of all the options in the previous question as well as “they are all equally important” and “I don’t know” options
7. OPEN ENDED: Please explain why you feel the previously selected quality/ skill is the most important for a public relations professional to possess in the nonprofit sector.
8. OPEN ENDED: How do you think your role as a public relations professional has evolved over time? What industry changes do you think prompted some of those changes in your role?
9. OPEN ENDED: What does working in Public Relations mean to you?
10. OPEN ENDED: If you could give advice to a student considering working in the public relations industry upon graduation, what would it be?

Nonprofit

All questions were the same as the for-profit professionals, but nonprofit professionals were also asked the following question.

1. What internal or personal values were a factor in your choosing to work in the nonprofit sector? Check all that apply.
 - a. Accountability
 - b. Trustworthiness
 - c. Honesty
 - d. Openness
 - e. Service
 - f. Compassion
 - g. Passion for the organization’s mission
 - h. Desire to make a difference in the world
 - i. Other:

Students

1. Are you 18 years of age or older?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Are you a current journalism/ public relations/ marketing/ advertising student?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. Are you doing one of the specializations offered? Check all that apply.
 - a. Media Sales and Management

- b. Magazine Publish and Management
 - c. Public Relations
 - d. Sports Communications and Promotion
 - e. Visual Design
 - f. Health Communication
 - g. Social Media
 - h. I am not specializing in anything.
4. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate how significant you feel your specialization will be in your future after graduation with 1 being very little significance and 5 being very significant.
 - a. Multiple choice of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & the option to say I am not doing a specialization
 5. If you are majoring or specializing in public relations, how likely would you say you are to work in that industry after graduation?
 - a. Very likely
 - b. Somewhat likely
 - c. Neither likely or unlikely
 - d. Somewhat unlikely
 - e. Very unlikely
 - f. I am not specializing in public relations
 6. What qualities/ skills do you think are **most** important for a PR professional to have? Check up to three options.
 - a. Passion
 - b. Communication skills
 - c. Motivation
 - d. Strategic planning
 - e. Leadership
 - f. Writing
 - g. Flexibility
 - h. Problem-solving
 - i. Likability
 - j. Resourceful
 - k. Decision-making
 - l. Other: fill in the blank
 7. Of the three qualities/ skills you selected in the previous question, which one do you think is the most important for working in the nonprofit sector of public relations?
 - a. Multiple choice list of all the options listed in the previous question as well as “they are all equally important” and “I don’t know” options
 8. OPEN ENDED: Please explain why you feel the previously selected quality/ skill is the most important for the nonprofit sector of public relations.

9. OPEN ENDED: If you are specializing in public relations, please leave a few comments or thoughts about why you, personally, chose that path and what you hope to get out of it in relation to your future. (I.e. What are your plans?)

Survey Information Sheets

For-Profit, Nonprofit, & Student

Description

The purpose of this research is to identify the skill sets necessary to be successful in nonprofit public relations. We would like to ask you a few questions about the field and your opinion on the skills public relations professionals need. You will not be asked for your name or any other identifying information.

Cost and Payments

It will take you approximately five to ten minutes to complete the survey.

Risks and Benefits

There are no inherent risks or benefits taking this survey.

Confidentiality

No identifiable information will be collected from this survey; therefore, you cannot be identified from this study.

Right to Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this study, and you may stop participation at any time. If you start the study and decide that you do not want to finish, you may click out of the survey. You may skip any question that you prefer not to answer.

IRB Approval

This study has been reviewed by The University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at (662) 915-7482 or irb@olemiss.edu.

If you have any questions concerning this research, contact the principal investigator or research advisor.

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Statement of consent: I certify that I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above information. By completing the survey, I consent to participate in the study.

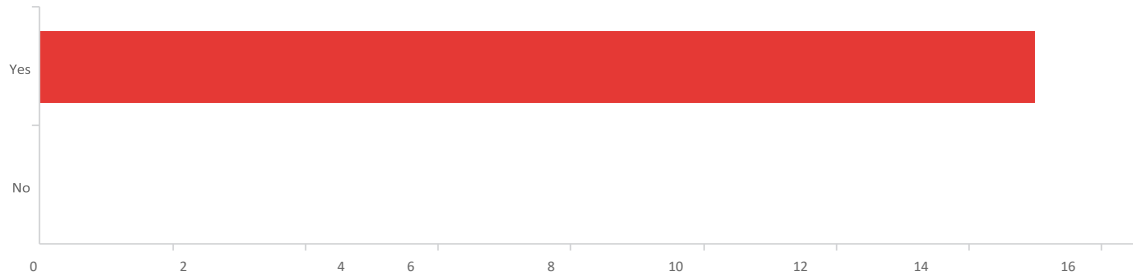
Qualtrics Reports

For-Profit Professionals

Default Report

Public Relations For Profit Survey
March 3, 2020 9:45 AM MST

Q2 - Are you between the ages of 18 and 80?



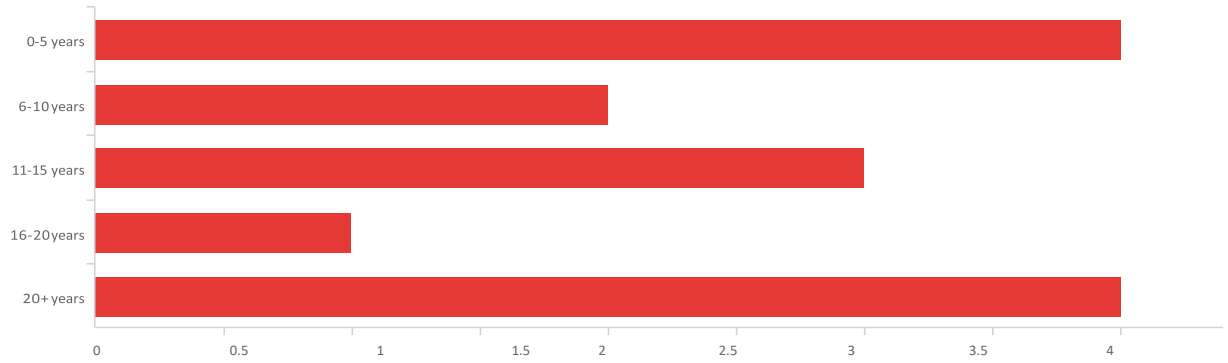
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Are you between the ages of 18 and 80?	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	15

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Yes	100.00% 15
2	No	0.00% 0

15

Showing rows 1 - 3 of 3

Q3 - How many years have you worked in public relations?

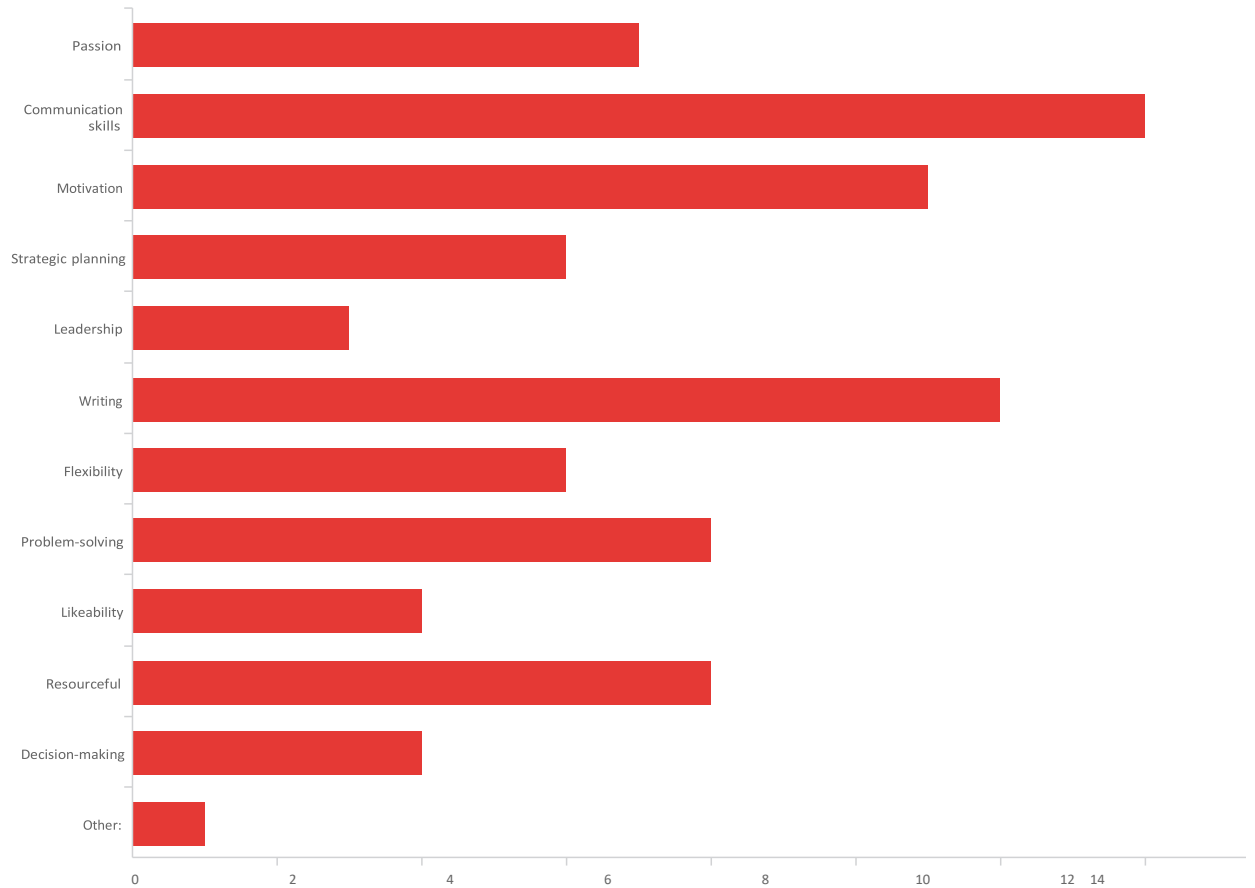


#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How many years have you worked in public relations?	1.00	5.00	2.93	1.58	2.49	14

#	Field	Choice Count
1	0-5 years	28.57% 4
2	6-10 years	14.29% 2
3	11-15 years	21.43% 3
4	16-20 years	7.14% 1
5	20+ years	28.57% 4
		14

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q4 - What skill sets do you think were most important when you first started working in public relations? Check all that apply.



#	Field	Choice Count
1	Passion	8.33% 7
2	Communication skills	16.67% 14
3	Motivation	13.10% 11
4	Strategic planning	7.14% 6
5	Leadership	3.57% 3
6	Writing	14.29% 12
7	Flexibility	7.14% 6
8	Problem-solving	9.52% 8

#	Field	Choice Count
9	Likeability	4.76% 4
10	Resourceful	9.52% 8
11	Decision-making	4.76% 4
12	Other:	1.19% 1
Showing rows 1 - 13 of 13		84

Q4_12_TEXT - Other:

Other:
Photography

Q5 - What skill sets became more important as you advanced in your career?

What skill sets became more important as you advanced in your career?

Writing

Writing; strategic planning; resourcefulness; decision-making

Passion, leadership, problem-solving, strategic planning

Strategic planning became more important as I advanced in my career. Being able to see the bigger picture of the organization I work for and figuring out creative ways to advance the goals of the organization is what my career ultimately has morphed into.

Writing, Decision-making, and leadership

Strategic planning, management skills, problem-solving.

Flexibility certainly became more important as I advanced in public relations, as I had to mold my graduate school schedule around working at an agency part time. Making that adjustment in my own schedule was something I would not have been able to do as a younger student, and it definitely comes with learning from your own experience balancing internships and workloads. The most critical skill that became more important is responsiveness to constructive criticism.

technology, metrics/analytics, flexibility

Written communication skills Ability to work on multiple projects at the same time (setting priorities)

Strategic planning, financial/business literacy, leadership, problem-solving, decision-making, communication skills, writing, flexibility.

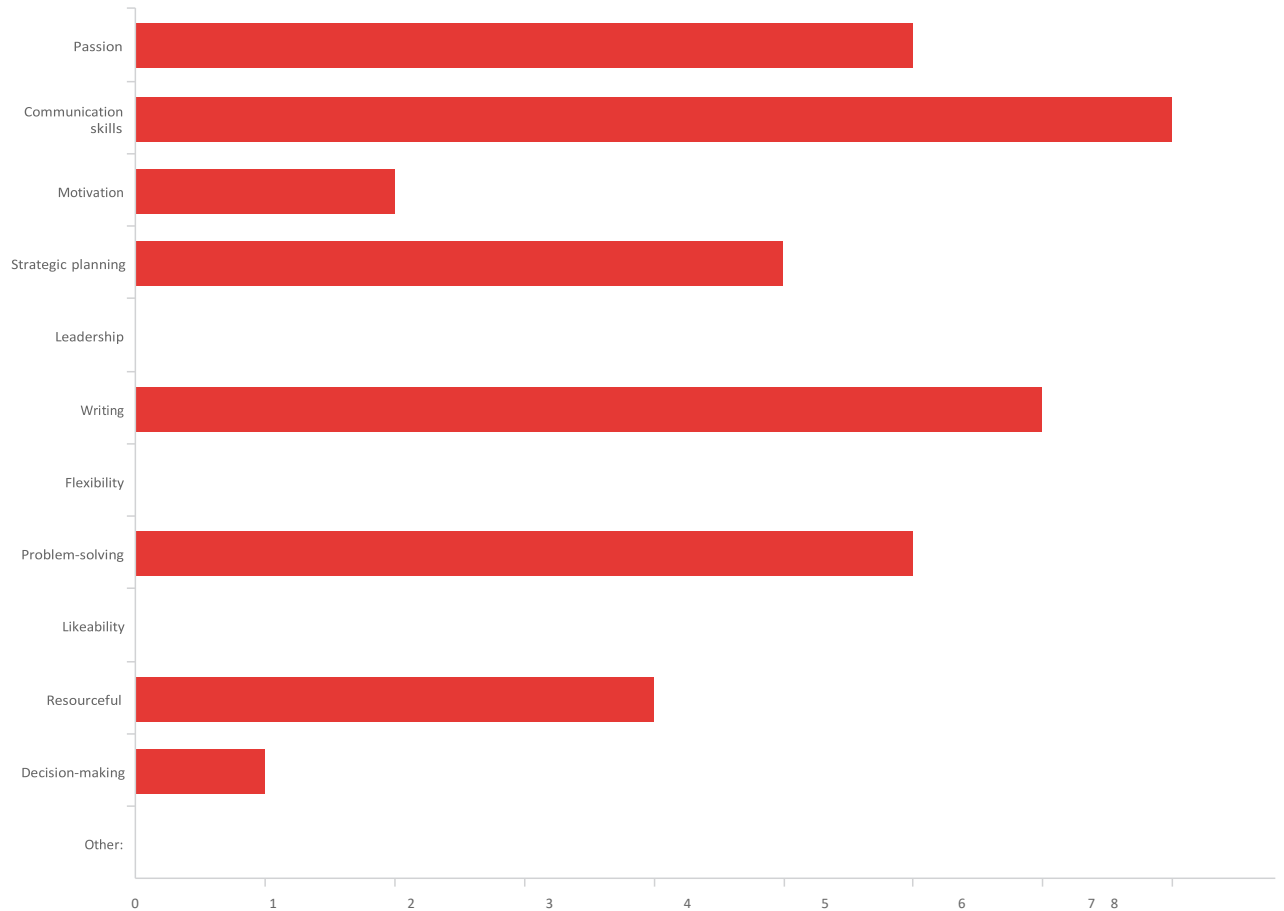
strategic planning, leadership, problem-solving and decision-making

Strategic thinking has become much more important throughout my career. Thinking strategically and more importantly, bigger picture, when putting together media plans, sending out pitches, and the overall brand visibility.

Motivation, passion, flexibility and creativity

I think they all remain important regardless what stage of your career you are in. I didn't check leadership under the previous question, but certainly I would add that to the skills you need as you advance in your career. In fact, it is an important one.

Q6 - What qualities/ skills do you think are most important for a public relations professional in any sector to have? Check up to three options.



#	Field	Choice Count
1	Passion	15.38% 6
2	Communication skills	20.51% 8
3	Motivation	5.13% 2
4	Strategic planning	12.82% 5
5	Leadership	0.00% 0
6	Writing	17.95% 7
7	Flexibility	0.00% 0
8	Problem-solving	15.38% 6

#	Field	Choice Count
9	Likeability	0.00% 0
10	Resourceful	10.26% 4
11	Decision-making	2.56% 1
12	Other:	0.00% 0

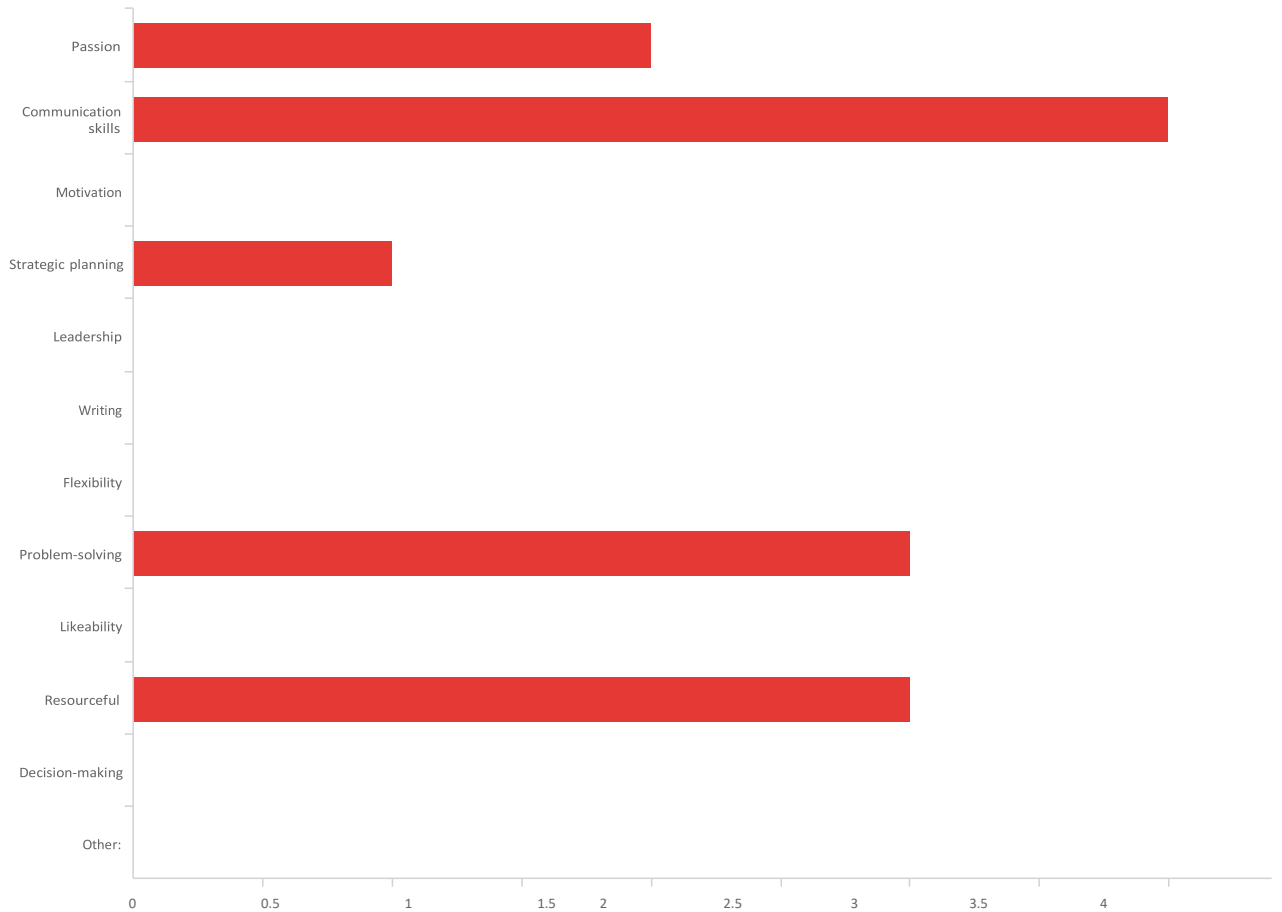
Showing rows 1 - 13 of 13

39

Q6_12_TEXT - Other:

Other:

Q7 - Of the three qualities/ skills you selected in the previous question, which one do you think is the most important for working in the nonprofit sector of public relations?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Of the three qualities/ skills you selected in the previous question, which one do you think is the most important for working in the nonprofit sector of public relations? - Selected Choice	1.00	10.00	5.23	3.62	13.10	13

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Passion	15.38% 2
2	Communication skills	30.77% 4
3	Motivation	0.00% 0
#	Field	Choice Count
4	Strategic planning	7.69% 1
5	Leadership	0.00% 0
6	Writing	0.00% 0
7	Flexibility	0.00% 0
8	Problem-solving	23.08% 3
9	Likeability	0.00% 0
10	Resourceful	23.08% 3
11	Decision-making	0.00% 0
12	Other:	0.00% 0

Showing rows 1 - 13 of 13

13

Q7_12_TEXT - Other:

Other:

Q9 - Please explain why you feel the previously selected quality/ skill is the most important for a public relations professional to possess in the nonprofit sector.

Please explain why you feel the previously selected quality/ skill is the m...

Communication skills transfer over various platforms and serves as a foundation on which to establish one's career and garner experience.

If you have passion you will acquire and develop the skills needed to succeed.

Non-profits often have issues arise that a for-profit organization would not. And, despite whatever issues arise, the organization still has goals to meet.

When a curve-ball is thrown your way, you need to be able to think on your feet and solve the issue while still maintaining the goals of the organization.

Every day is different and you need to be able to tackle the problem at hand.

The nonprofit sector is often underfunded, and PR pros must find ways to make things happen with little funding.

While passion was an extremely tempting answer, I had to go with communication skills. You can be the most passionate person in the world for your cause or for your organization, but if you can't effectively communicate your goals and your passions to stakeholders, you risk being stagnant in your efforts. Your publics need to clearly see why they should be interested in your nonprofit and how they can participate, whether it's making donations or investing, and it takes a very skilled communicator to break these concepts down and explain them in a manner that is mutually beneficial for both the nonprofit and the stakeholder.

Non-profits depend on public engagement, and you have to connect with those audiences - communication (from donor relations to internal comms) is critical, along with storytelling, etc.

Non-profit sectors typically have limited resources, therefore creativity and the ability to solve problems are highly valued skills.

Communication skills is very important to have in general. I have worked in the nonprofit sector and in the private sector. In the nonprofit sector, sometimes the lack of communications skills can hurt the brand.

Having previously worked in nonprofit PR, being resourceful is a huge skillset to have. Budgets are often left to other departments/efforts of the business so you've got to be as resourceful as possible when trying to gain exposure.

Nonprofit work can really take a toll on someone in public relations. Not only does it often not involve a great deal of income, but you also tend to see and hear about some heartbreaking things when working with nonprofits. It can be very easy to get burnt out, but passion is what keeps people in nonprofits going. Its the foundation for every other skill/quality. If you are not passionate, you will lose motivation. Being passionate about what you are communicating also tends to create a much better message :)

Often times in the nonprofit sector you are limited on budget, and you have to accomplish a lot with little. Being able to create a strategic plan to maximize the resources you do have is important.

Q10 - How do you think your role as a public relations professional has evolved over time? What industry changes do you think prompted some of those changes in your role?

How do you think your role as a public relations professional has evolved o...

The world of communications/public relations has completely transformed over the 40 years I have been working in the industry. Technology and digital communications made public relations (earned and owned media) the leading source of influencing and educating audiences vs. advertising (paid media) that included advertising campaigns and media placement.

PR has evolved from traditional media relations to social/digital media, SEO, advertising, internal/external communications and more. As media outlets scale down their staff, there's less of an opportunity to connect 1:1 with reporters and editors, and the industry is becoming more focused on paid rather than earned.

I've learned to be more flexible and to stay focused on the mission.

The internet and social media has morphed a lot of how I do my job. Just being in the industry for eight years social media has always been part of my job, but it's always changing. The way people interact with organizations online is always changing. You always need to be aware of the latest trends and regulations to make sure you can advance the goals of your organization and keep in contact with your ideal consumer.

As I gain more knowledge, I have started taking on a more strategic and analytic role - using data to drive action and back up the decision.

It's grown to encompass so much more than traditional public relations, including corporate social responsibility, external communications among various channels, larger and more specific target audiences.

Social media has become increasingly important over time. Whether you're doing social for a client or for your own organization, it is important for publics to see as much personality behind the accounts as possible through Live videos, Instagram stories, tweets, and engaging posts on LinkedIn and Facebook. Similarly, I've even seen journalists transition from wanting to receive pitches on their emails to their social media accounts, which I think will continue evolving in that direction. Within the larger industry, two trends really stick out to me that relate to that change in my role. First is brand awareness -- publics want to see an identity and a purpose behind a brand, and much of that identity takes shape through social media presence. Second is the necessity of cohesion within the public relations industry. Too often, the many sectors within the umbrella of public relations (i.e., nonprofit, financial, healthcare) can isolate themselves from each other, so the general role of what a public relations practitioner even does can become muddled. The increasing demand for social media presence will certainly play a role in redefining how professionals from different industries can collaborate and interact.

PR is a lot more measurable, technology has allowed us to speak directly to our audiences in more and more targeted ways, and the perception and value of traditional media has changed dramatically.

Mine has evolved greatly as I work primarily in media relations and changes in the media and the evolution of social media have greatly impacted what I do. Also, as I've advanced in my career, strategic thinking, leadership and business literacy have become ever more critical to success.

Technological advancements have definitely changed the field of public relations. Social media has completely prompted these changes. In today's environment, you have to be a jack of all trades. Writing, technological skills and management is crucial.

My role has moved from the granular 'hard skills' (putting together media lists, pitching, etc.) to softer skills that involve creativity, resourcefulness, flexibility and composure. Definitely being in an in-house position requires more softer skills. You've got to keep your mindset current and forwardthinking for whatever industry you are in. Always aiming to be an expert in what's current and relevant is one of the most important things to keep in mind when going into a role.

My role was communications director for a nonprofit, but it actually involved a great deal of social media. You might think the title of director meant I was constantly meeting with the board, communicating with press or developing new campaigns, but really I spent a lot of my time communicating via social media. Though this could have been due to the size of my organization, I think the move towards social media as a main form of communication has changed what PR roles look like.

How do you think your role as a public relations professional has evolved o...

Certainly the biggest change has been the evolution of social platforms, and the most effective ways to reach your target audience with key messaging.

Q11 - What does working in Public Relations mean to you?

What does working in Public Relations mean to you?

Having the power to influence a market through words and graphics holds a heavy weight of responsibility, something not to be taken lightly or without understanding all sides of an issue or topic. The focus of The Cirlot Agency is to make our community, state, nation and world a better place than we found it through the work we conduct on behalf of our clients.

Everything. It means I have the opportunity to make a difference for my clients. To push back when I feel a different strategy will help them accomplish their goals. To provide consumers with information that's both engaging and truthful.

Working in public relations means meeting a need that could be a positive life-changing experience for everyone involved.

It's a passion-driven industry. It's a lot of hard work that has to seem very easy to an outsider. Oftentimes, compensation will not match the amount of work and thought put into the job. But, seeing your organization thrive, a nonprofit you work for have a successful fundraiser, or having good client interaction ... it all makes you want to come back for more. It's exciting, and fun, and exhausting. But, if you love it, you love it. And, you won't want to leave it.

Helping organizations relate to their customers and helping customers relate to organizations

It's about building relationships and affecting outcomes.

On its surface, working in public relations means achieving communications strategies that are mutually beneficial for an organization and its stakeholders. When you put this thought into practice, it means that I play a role in telling peoples' stories, shaping the news, and working toward common goals with passionate team members.

One of the greatest rewards of this field is shining a light on people who are doing great work, the unsung heroes, across a lot of industries.

Working in Public Relations means being able to connect the dots. Communicating is key but knowing your audience is just as important.

Informing people in an authentic way.

It means creating a meaningful and consistent image of your client.

You are the story teller, the face and protector of the brand.

Q12 - If you could give advice to a student considering working in the public relations industry after graduation, what would it be?

If you could give advice to a student considering working in the public rel...

Roll up your sleeves and get to work. It is not Hollywood and it is not easy. However, it can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life.

The advice that I would give to a student considering the public relations industry is to go for it and learn from every experience. Also, make sure you thoroughly understand the company's mission and how you fit in achieving success.

While in college ... intern! Intern as many places and for as long as you can. After graduation, use those internship contacts. They'll help you find a job. This industry is a lot about who you know, not what you know. You just need to get your foot in the door. Also, join community organizations. For me, that was Junior League, Rotary, and a young professional group through my local chamber of commerce. Meet as many people as possible and don't be afraid to ask them about communications related jobs or network with the other communications professionals in the group. In Little Rock particularly, the communications sector is a pretty tight-knit group of people and we all know of or personally know each other. It's incredibly helpful to know people to find a job that you love.

Get a good internship now to gain experience and then don't be afraid to try out different organizations until you find one you are passionate about.

Take any and all internships, entry level jobs that interest you - in different media fields - but only those that are paid. You're worth it.

I would tell a student interested in public relations that the future looks bright! You can truly find your place in public relations because the field encompasses so many sectors that can be of interest to almost anyone -- whether that's government, agency, in-house, healthcare, or investor relations. The demand for knowledgeable public relations practitioners is increasing, so jump headfirst into the many areas of PR and find what inspires you.

Gain as much experience as you can through internships and other opportunities, and focus on honing your skills as a writer. Everything else is essentially a commodity, at this point.

Find a mentor, and after two or three years of working professionally, get your accreditation in public relations. Join a professional public relations group, like the Public Relations Association of Mississippi, so you have professional connections outside of your workplace that can help you advance your career. As you gain experience, pay it forward by mentoring someone who is starting out.

I would advice them to take all of the classes about the industry that they can. I would advise them to take business classes, classes about PowerPoint presentations, social media classes, etc.

Start out at an agency who has clients across the board. You will really get a feel for different aspects of PR, what you're good (and not so good) at and what areas spark your passion. Find someone you trust to give you good advice as you grow in your career.

Be ready and up for anything. You never know what you'll end up doing as a PR pro. During my time in the industry I have of course written many news releases and done the traditional job roles, but being a PR pro is more than that. I have mediated between two families who wanted to adopt the same dog, written countless pet obituaries and transported (empty and

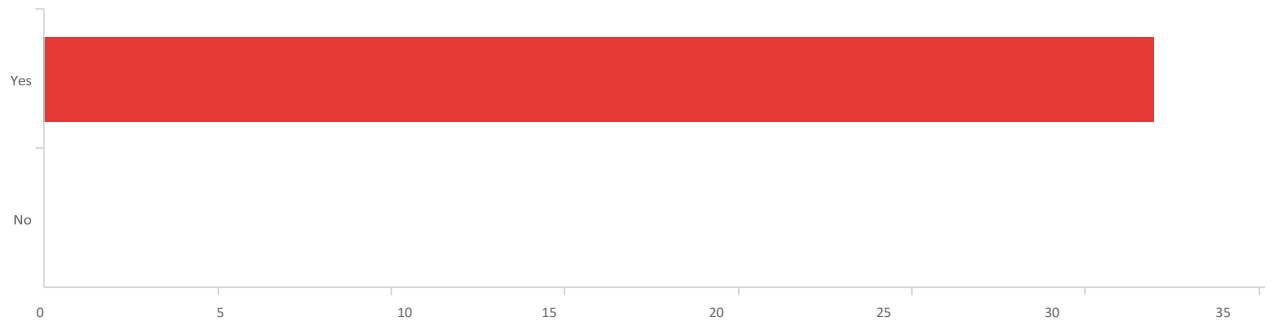
unused) urns in my passenger seat from a funeral home to a photographer. You truly never know what will come next in this industry but that's why most of us love it.

While you are in college, build your resume and your experience. Go work for a marketing firm, television station, private entity in the sector you think you are most interested in (healthcare, retail etc). When you graduate, there will be many other people graduating with the same degree, do what you can to separate yourself out and stand out

Default Report

Public Relations Nonprofit Survey
March 3, 2020 9:48 AM MST

Q2 - Are you between the ages of 18 and 80?



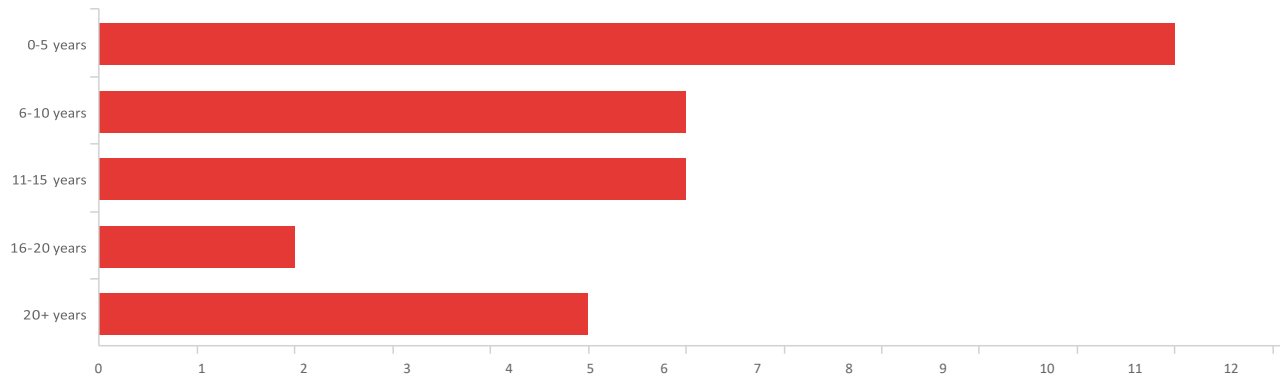
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Are you between the ages of 18 and 80?	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	32

#	Field	Choice	Count
1	Yes	100.00%	32
2	No	0.00%	0

32

Showing rows 1 - 3 of 3

Q3 - How many years have you worked in nonprofit public relations?

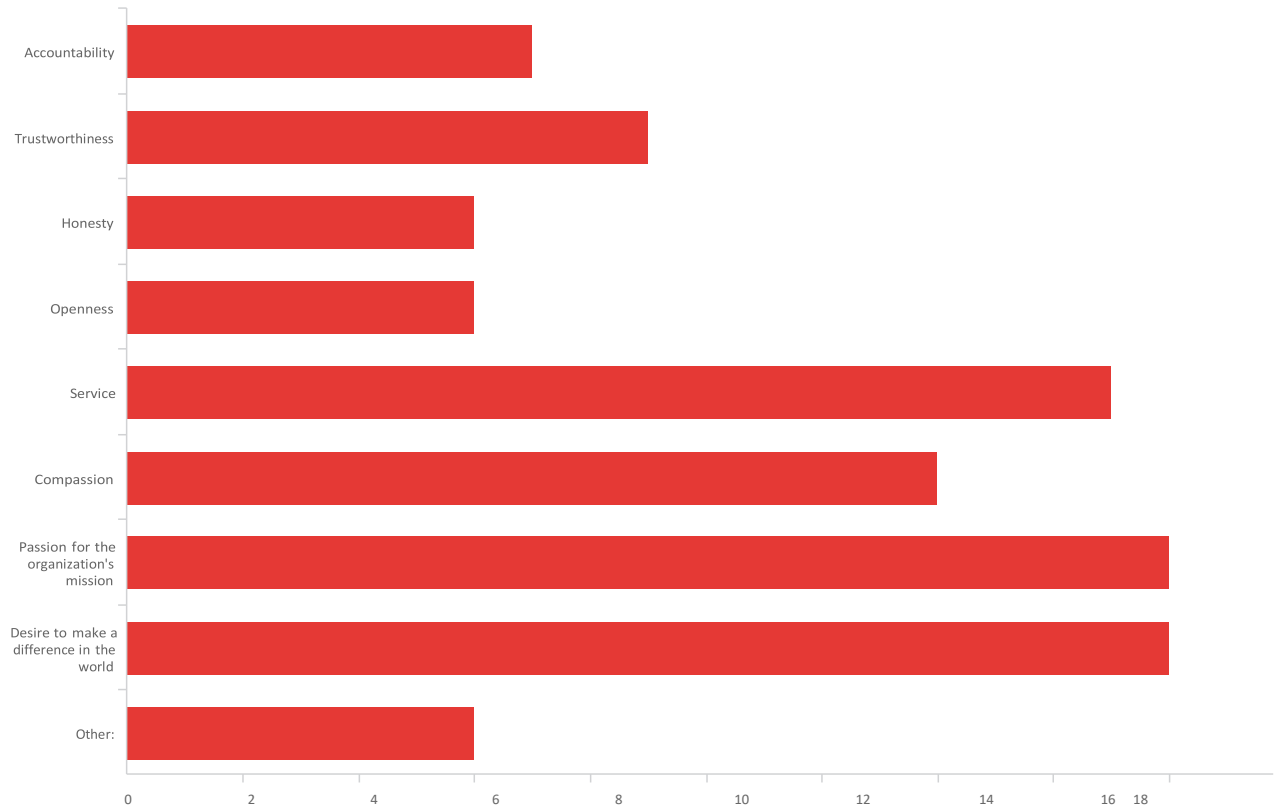


#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How many years have you worked in nonprofit public relations?	1.00	5.00	2.47	1.45	2.12	30

#	Field	Choice Count
1	0-5 years	36.67% 11
2	6-10 years	20.00% 6
3	11-15 years	20.00% 6
4	16-20 years	6.67% 2
5	20+ years	16.67% 5
		30

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q4 - What internal or personal values were a factor in your choosing to work in the nonprofit sector? Check all that apply.



#	Field	Choice Count
1	Accountability	6.93% 7
2	Trustworthiness	8.91% 9
3	Honesty	5.94% 6
4	Openness	5.94% 6
5	Service	16.83% 17
6	Compassion	13.86% 14
7	Passion for the organization's mission	17.82% 18
8	Desire to make a difference in the world	17.82% 18
9	Other:	5.94% 6

Showing rows 1 - 10 of 10

Q4_9_TEXT - Other:

Other:

job opportunity

Open nature of the job - able to do more

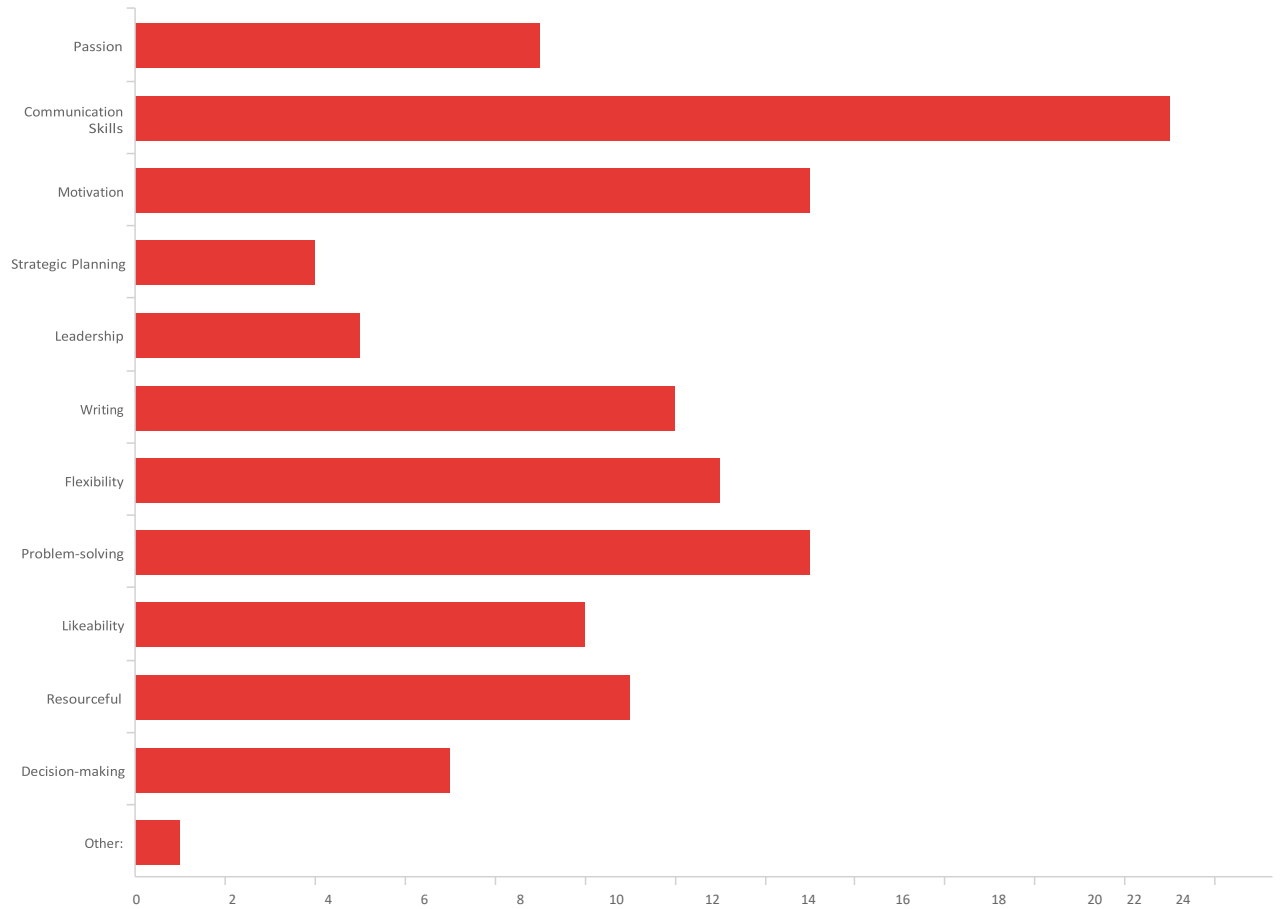
Diversity of experiences, speed and pace of organization,

Started out as a job but became a mission

I do not work in nonprofit.

My current job is my first job in the N/P sector. I was attracted to the job responsibilities. They seemed like a good fit. The fact the potential employer was a non-profit was irrelevant.

Q5 - What skill sets do you think were most important when you first started working in nonprofit public relations? Check all that apply.



#	Field	Choice Count
1	Passion	7.20% 9
2	Communication Skills	18.40% 23
3	Motivation	12.00% 15
4	Strategic Planning	3.20% 4
5	Leadership	4.00% 5
6	Writing	9.60% 12
7	Flexibility	10.40% 13
8	Problem-solving	12.00% 15

#	Field	Choice Count
9	Likeability	
8.00%	10	
10	Resourceful	8.80% 11
11	Decision-making	5.60% 7
12	Other:	0.80% 1

Showing rows 1 - 13 of 13

125

Q5_12_TEXT - Other:

Other:

Ability to take direction

Q6 - What skill sets became more important as you advanced in your career?

What skill sets became more important as you advanced in your career?

Leadership, strategic planning

Strategic planning; writing; leadership

Strategic Planning, Leadership, Writing, Flexibility and Decision Making grew as my title changed.

Leadership and strategic planning became more important as I advanced in my career. The other skills remained important, but those two made the jump as responsibilities and duties expanded. The remaining option (likability) is important, but I don't feel it warranted "most important" status and there was not a pronounced increase in importance like the leadership and strategic planning.

Communication Skills

Understanding processes of traditional business models and economic drivers

Being resourceful on a limited budget and flexibility to wear multiple hats throughout the course of a day.

fundraising, grant writing

Communication skills became more important, particularly the ability to be tactful and the ability to understand others' points of view before framing any message or response.

Leadership

Passion/compassion, communication, team building, VISION, trustworthiness, ability to deliver as promised, ability to see things/people/relationships in non-traditional ways, ability to help people connect

Flexibility Resourceful Leadership

Leadership, motivation, commitment to service, organization, and time management

Strategic Planning, flexibility, problem solving, resourceful, decision-making, leadership and communication skills

I feel like being resourceful became more important, as we went through some budget cuts, and problem-solving, as new situations came up that I wasn't responsible for earlier on in my career. Leadership and decision-making also became a more important skill set as I advanced.

This is likely a natural progression of anyone's career, but leadership skills have become increasingly more important.

Motivation and decision-making

Flexibility and Communication Skills

Passion, leadership, decision-making and problem-solving are important aspects of a PR career, especially in a management position.

Flexibility and problem-solving, strategic planning, decision-making.

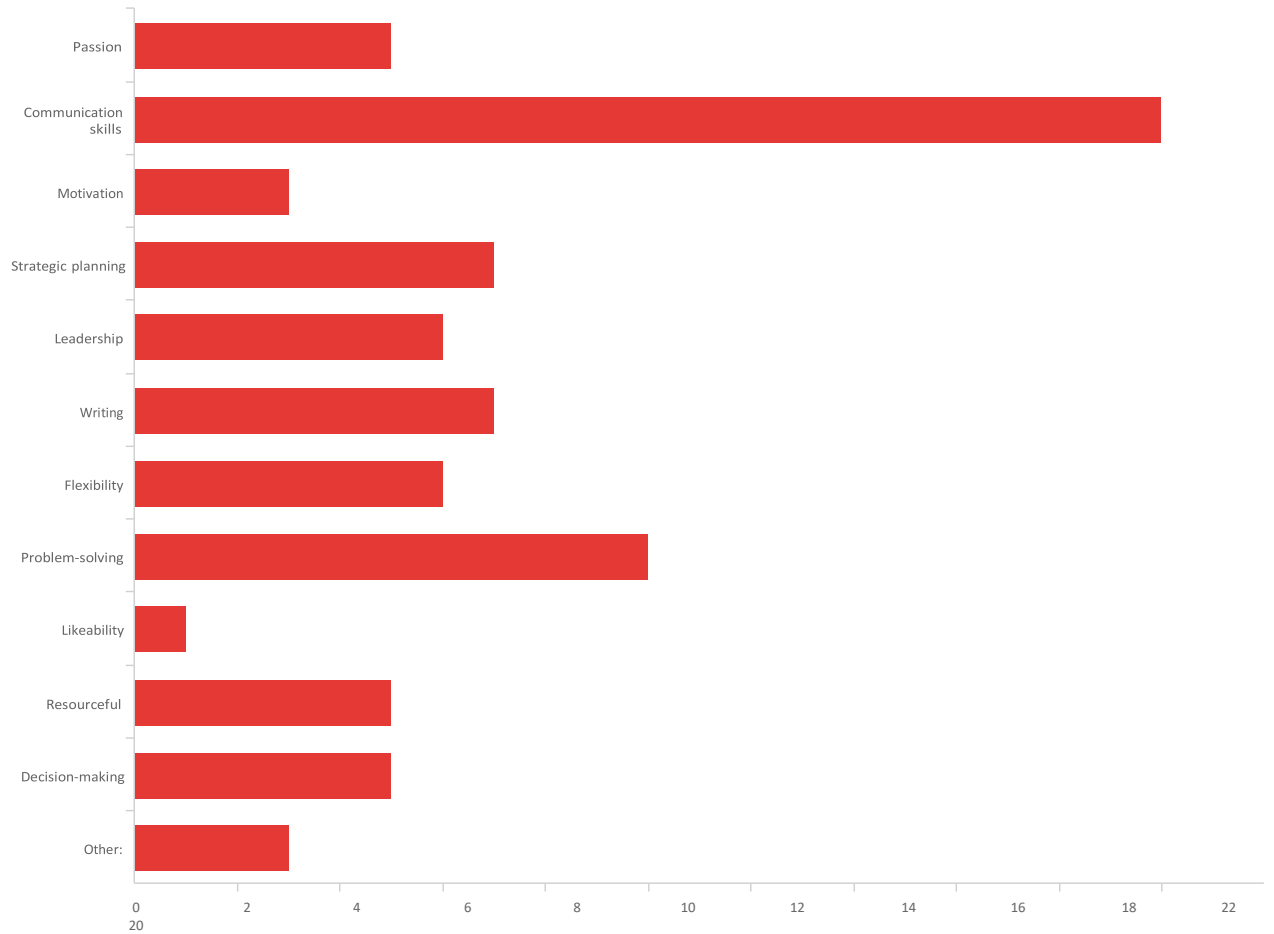
What skill sets became more important as you advanced in your career?

Strategic Planning and Community Connections

Strategic planning, leadership, continued education in new PR methods/media

Leadership, Strategic planning, problem solving

Q7 - What qualities/ skills do you think are most important for a public relations professional in any sector to have? Check up to three options.



#	Field	Choice Count
1	Passion	6.41% 5
2	Communication skills	25.64% 20
3	Motivation	3.85% 3
4	Strategic planning	8.97% 7
5	Leadership	7.69% 6
6	Writing	8.97% 7
7	Flexibility	7.69% 6

#	Field	Choice Count
8	Problem-solving	12.82% 10
9	Likeability	1.28% 1
10	Resourceful	6.41% 5
11	Decision-making	6.41% 5
12	Other:	3.85% 3

Showing rows 1 - 13 of 13

Q7_12_TEXT - Other:

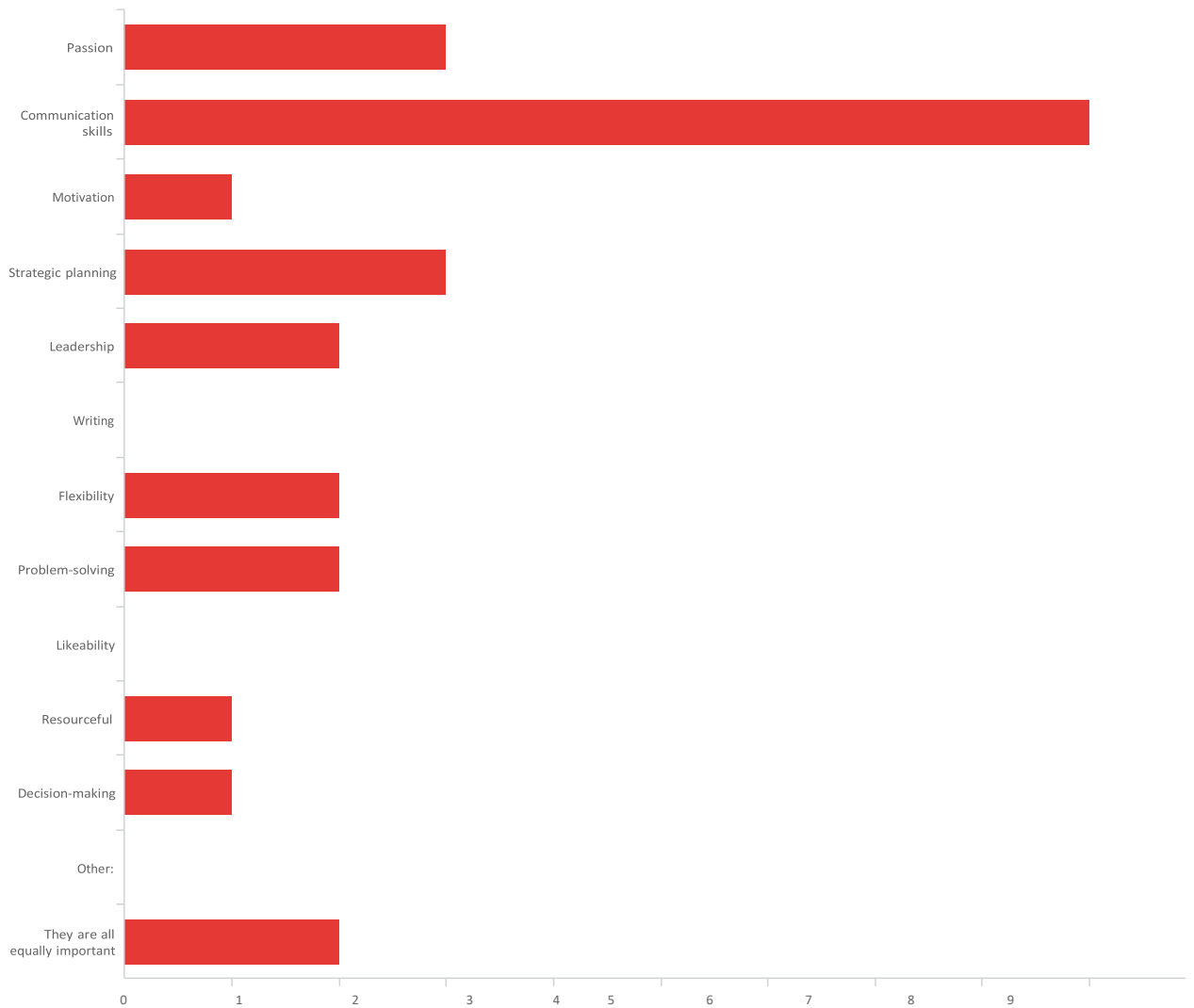
Other:

Ethics

Vision

Networking

Q8 - Of the three qualities/ skills you selected in the previous question, which one do you think is the most important for working in the nonprofit sector of public relations?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
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1	Of the three qualities/ skills you selected in the previous question, which one do you think is the most important for working in the nonprofit sector of public relations? - Selected Choice	1.00	13.00	4.73	3.66	13.43	26
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#	Field	Choice Count
1	Passion	3
11.54%		

#	Field	Choice Count
2	Communication skills	34.62% 9
3	Motivation	3.85% 1
4	Strategic planning	11.54% 3
5	Leadership	7.69% 2
6	Writing	0.00% 0
7	Flexibility	7.69% 2
8	Problem-solving	7.69% 2
9	Likeability	0.00% 0
10	Resourceful	3.85% 1
11	Decision-making	3.85% 1
12	Other:	0.00% 0
13	They are all equally important	7.69% 2
		26

Showing rows 1 - 14 of 14

Q8_12_TEXT - Other:

Other:

Q9 - Please explain why you feel the previously selected quality/ skill is the most important for a public relations professional to possess in the nonprofit sector.

Please explain why you feel the previously selected quality/ skill is the m...

Strategic planning allows you to take any situation, need, or set of circumstances and move forward. It also means that your chosen strategies and tactics are not "pie in the sky" (just theory) but based on the actual environment you're dealing with. If you're not able or willing to deal with your board of directors or involve your staff leadership, for example, any decisions you make about communication may be nil if they decide to take a different route. Or if you don't understand cause and effect, behavioral science, and available tools, your communication skills may be good but will be less effective.

Without the ability to properly convey your nonprofit's message, everything else you do is in vain. You must create the desire for others to help you in order to succeed.

They are all important, but if you cannot properly communicate, your resourcefulness and problem-solving capabilities will not be as impactful.

You have to "want" to do this. It would be easy to slack off and forget about your responsibilities.

Budgets are not always focused on public relations for non profits - having the ability to explore and define alternative steps to engage, reach, and document the role of the non-profit to their area of service takes problem solving skills

Most non-profit organizations are small, with limited funding. Passion for the work and the organization's mission will drive everything.

As the ED of a non profit you have to lead your board members in helping them make decisions on your non profit.

Being able to communicate effectively in a variety of formats really smooths out the path for the rest of one's work as a public relations professional. It provides a foundation for everything you may need to accomplish.

You need to be able to lead everyone.

Resourcefulness, to me, incorporates many of the other skills. Seeing/doing things in unexpected, yet effective, ways.

Things change daily and being able to adapt and pivot around those demands is extremely valuable in the PR field.

I think communication skills are one of the most important skill sets for any individual to possess no matter what sort of business they're in.

Communication skills apply to both communicating with people in (co-workers) and outside (clients, referrals, community contacts, general public) of the company

You have very limited resources when working in the nonprofit sector, in order to be successful you must be strategic. Strategic planning can limit the problems that arise at several levels of your campaign/project. Additionally, in order to be

successful you need goals and you need to know how you are going to achieve these goals. In order to make sure your team is performing to their highest potential everyone must be bought into the goals and understand their role in achieving them. This all comes with different levels of strategic planning. Honestly, every part of your job involves advance planning to be successful.

I think that strategic planning is the most important skill set for a public relations professional to possess in the nonprofit sector because resources are sometimes limited and staffs can be small, so you need to make the most of your time and resources. Also, good planning leads to stronger implementation; when you've done your research, etc., you will work smarter, not harder and pick the right mediums to use, the right messages to send and so forth.

These are all equally important in my opinion because writing is the foundation of PR, and problem-solving and decision-making allow practitioners to achieve their goals effectively. I would say that this would be the case in all areas of PR - not just the nonprofit sector.

Please explain why you feel the previously selected quality/ skill is the m...

Nonprofit PR requires a passion for your organization's mission.

Many people think that because they are in PR they have good communication skills. That is not necessarily true. Excellent communication comes from knowing what to say and when to say it... and honestly, HOW to say it to someone. It's not always about the choice of words used, but also the compassion and consideration with which you say something that can make the difference to someone. For example: If you are going to correct the tardiness of employees, you are not really effective by sending out blanket emails. The reception of the person who is caring for a loved one ill with a terminal disease will not be the same as that of a person who missed their alarm clock one morning. Therefore, understanding how and when to say something to be effective stretches way beyond the words or message used, but extends to the perception with which your audience receives the message as well. It's also critical for senior PR professionals to help senior management to understand the perception with which their messages are received as well. PR is not just about external communications, but is vital to the internal well-being of a company. Often managers are not taught that their communication, or lack thereof, sets the tone for how external parties perceive the company as well.

Passion is important, but to be effective you need excellent communication skills (verbal and written).

I chose flexibility because a non-profit, like a for-profit, needs to constantly reevaluate its mission and its ways to remain relevant and useful.

Having passion for the organization's mission and efforts is key to being able to support and promote the work of the organization through PR. If the passion is there, it will support a drive to succeed, get the word out, meet new connections and always be honest and knowledgeable when representing the organization in the media or speaking engagements.

No matter the sector, a PR professional's main task is to communicate about their organization. That communication includes writing, speaking, relationship-building, and so much more. Without good communication skills (or team members with those skills), PR is very hard to do effectively.

As a non-profit PR professional, you don't always have access to the same luxuries as someone in a firm or for profit business. Building relationships and partnerships through networking is often key to pulling off a successful campaign. As you build partnerships, flexibility comes into play because you may not always get exactly what you want for your cause. Resourcefulness is key for the same reason. You have to get to know your community and think outside of the box for the good of your cause.

Q10 - How do you think your role as a public relations professional has evolved over time? What industry changes do you think prompted some of those changes in your role?

How do you think your role as a public relations professional has evolved o...

The role of the public relations professional has changed mostly in response to the changes in media over the last 20 years. Traditional media, especially the local newspaper and TV stations, are becoming less influential. And media of all kinds have undergone a change in the level of professionalism and methods used by journalists or writers. It is even more important for the PR professional to make sure all the facts are checked and the true story gets through, and that the PR pro is able to write and communicate these stories in a way that makes a less capable reporter able to use the information well.

As the industry evolves, so too must any role in public relations. Social media and digital news sharing makes it ever important to be vigilant and accurate when sharing information.

In my career, I began as a promoter of our mission. Over time, my title evolved to include fundraising and philanthropic support. As far as the PR industry changes that I've seen during the past 10 years in the nonprofit sector, there has been a wave of new nonprofits that have arisen. My job has evolved to reinforce the strong message of stability and the long standing need that my nonprofit's mission has. Not to discount other nonprofits but to remind the public of the challenges we face and how we cannot continue without their support. That message was needed 10 years ago but it is even more evident now.

There has been significant evolution in regards to how we communicate as well as communications in general as technology advancements and how people decipher information have significantly changed over the years. Print media is less important in many instances as the ability to disseminate information online through graphics, videos, text, etc. has caused less reliance on others in conveying content and messaging. The immediacy of information and the ability to better control how content is distributed have contributed to the aforementioned evolution.

I think it's evolved in the sense that you have to keep up with what is trending and continue to build relationships. Social media is the industry that is always changing and you have to stay on top of what is new.

Only the large non profit organizations have a public relations /marketing person. Most small non profits has a director or development professional that handles these issues. This is a task that shapes how they address other parts of the duties the non profit staff person has but is not the sole task they are charged with on a daily basis. Technology has been the largest factor in having leaders and staff understand public relations, messaging, and continuity of message

When I graduated with my masters, I had big plans to work for an international public relations firm or large company in corporate relations. I even took a step back from public relations for a while before I fell back into it at the UM Museum. There were a lot of changes, both professional and personal, that lead me to this role. I believe my role is still evolving, I'm learning new things every day and finding new ways to reignite the passion that brought me here in the first place.

This is my fifth year, I definitely have more confidence in my role.

While I don't think the fundamentals of the profession have changed that much, the most effective ways to get attention for your organization keep evolving. The constantly changing technology landscape drives much of the evolution. That's why relationships with human beings still matter a great deal: people are still people, no matter what form of technology they're using to convey their message.

Technology, social media, plethora of non-profits, go-fund-mes, etc. There is a general lack of trust toward the nonprofits (and all other industries as well) these days. There is a huge lack of understanding about nonprofits and how they conduct business. The concept of nonprofit should actually be tax-exempt. If nonprofits don't raise more money than they did the year before, senior staff should soon be out of their jobs. I hope the concept of "administrative costs" are changing, but it seems that people still believe that nonprofit staff should basically be volunteers. They don't understand that it requires graduate level degreed individuals to do the work that is required.

Definitely response time and the speed of news to market. Social media and instantaneous reporting have caused PR pros to often times give a much less measured response to requests for info and/or communicating with the public.

How do you think your role as a public relations professional has evolved o...

In the last two years, my role as a public relations professional has grown to entail more crisis management. As our campaign has grown, I've had to learn to not only prevent crises from occurring, but also how to handle the aftermath once a crisis occurs. These crises have taught me how to react quickly and strategically and the importance of planning. You can prevent a lot (not everything) from happening if you plan first. Additionally, my job entails more community relations to bring our organization publicity. I have switched from writing/sending news releases and media kits, to actually getting out in the community to attend events, programs and speaking opportunities.

In the beginning of my career, I was someone who implemented tactics assigned to me (photograph events, write press releases, etc.), but over time, I became someone who also helped come up with campaign ideas, story ideas, etc., and helped with the "big picture" and the main goals.

I have become more proactive as I've worked for the university. In my newest role at the DeSoto regional campus, I've found that implementing new ideas and jumping on new trends helps us increase enrollment and therefore continue to do the work that we do.

When I started with MHA 20 years ago, I was hired to create a weekly newsletter that was printed and mailed to our members. The digital transformation for all fields has been intense, but even more so for public relations professionals. We now operate mini-newsrooms for our employers.

I often say that social media is both a blessing and curse. It is now, quite often, the very bane of my existence. At one point, PR was more about pumping out good messages for the public to read through traditional sources. And while word of mouth was extremely effective, it was also isolated. If there was ill-will it was limited in its sphere of influence and limited to the most terrible of situations. People who had what I call "grumble complaints" (things people don't like, but aren't really problems) were not considered worthy of spreading in major publications. If you worked hard and kept your nose clean, you did not have to fear negative publicity and the messages you sent out could easily counter-act any negative word of mouth that was out there. Not so these days. Social media has afforded EVERY SINGLE PERSON a microphone, via the internet, to spread their thoughts. What this does is it allows people to state, as fact, what they PERCEIVE to be truth. My PR instructors used to hammer in our heads that perception was reality, even if it wasn't. Our job as PR professionals was to help people see true reality and to educate or change their perception if it was incorrect. The problem with that idea today is that it's almost impossible to stay in front of every single perception that is out there. It often requires high-end software or services for reputation management which have been priced out of reach for many non-profit organizations such as ours. I have continuously priced these services on an annual basis and it consistently comes in at \$75,000+ to manage all of our campus facebook pages and other social media profiles. That is unrealistic! So I am left to monitor this as best as I can in addition to all of my regular work! Again, that is an impossible role to play. I spend an abnormally high amount of time speaking with people in private facebook messenger in order to keep private issues out of the eye of the public. In addition, these changes are reflected in the way a younger generation approaches their work persona. They often apply for jobs via facebook messenger rather than filling out application in our careers portal or going through traditional methods of contact. Again, as the main contact for these social media pages, I am left to point these people to the proper way to apply. It slows down regular PR work and muddies up the statistical response times we covet for prompt response online as the HR people are not authorized as admins on our social media accounts. This hands down has been the single largest impetus for change in the PR field during my tenure and has wrought many questions and issues that are still unanswered for non-profits as they work on a shoestring budgets and can rarely afford the technology or personnel to properly address these viral issues.

Basic principles of public relations have remained the same, but the methods of how to deliver PR messaging continues to change.

Social Media has drastically changed marketing and P.R. channels and approaches. There is a danger to overemphasize its usefulness and effectiveness. It pits younger generations who think Social Media is the new Holy Grail against veteran communicators who appreciate personal contacts and connections, thoughtful articles and news stories, letters to the editor and letters to constituents and professionally produced videos and ads.

Social Media has been a huge factor in changing the way we do things. It's literally an open market for getting your message out there any time and to any audience. The ability to target messages to a particular population is incredible! For example, with Girl Scouts, we can target Mothers, ages 24 to 35, in particular areas with promotions to get their daughters involved.

My role has become much more strategic over the past two to three years. I have learned to create larger-scale strategies to guide my PR and communications work to accomplish more specific goals. In my specific industry, changes in philanthropic giving have prompted most of these changes. For United Ways in particular, payroll deduction, which has long been the overwhelming majority of our fundraising, is losing ground. We have had to adapt to communicate directly with individuals, rather than relying solely on relationships with employers in order to reach our donors. This change has meant revamping how we communicate our story to reach individuals in places other than at work.

There is no more 24 hour news cycle, it's a constant news cycle. A PR professional has to have a quicker reaction time now and the ability to convey it appropriately on many different platforms. Certainly the ever evolving digital and social media world along with the disappearance of traditional print (especially in small markets).

Q11 - What does working in public relations mean to you?

What does working in public relations mean to you?

I don't work as directly in the field as I used to, but the meaning to me is the same, and pretty much the textbook definition: "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics." (PRSA). Whether for an agency or for a nonprofit, my job is to find ways that my organization or client and their publics (audiences) can benefit from each other. Nothing is forced or coerced, and nothing is done unethically or with undue persuasion. Basically, it's my job to bring the right people together to make things happen. More here: <https://www.prsa.org/about/all-about-pr>

I enjoy being the voice of my company. Sharing news, stories, information and promotional info about the good that happens at PCSSD makes every day worthwhile.

My PR role combines the training and passion for which I feel equipped and receive the most reward. PR involves creativity, challenges, out of the box thinking and strategizing. It is never dull. You are constantly learning new things and meeting/working with new people in the process. During the age of "influencers", I think the role of PR professionals is more critical than ever because it proves that people love to have their needs vetted before making decisions. It adds value in age where it is appreciated.

Working in public relations means portraying your organization, business, etc. in a favorable light while also maintaining an ethical and moral obligation to the public.

It means that I get to promote my department in a positive and resourceful light when traditional media would rather focus on the negative stuff in our industry.

I spend 10% of my time on public relations

It means getting to connect with people and tell them stories. It takes a large concept or idea down to a personal level, especially in a small, non-profit setting like the Museum. I knew nothing about art or antiquities before starting this role, but I love that there's something new to learn and share every day.

Being able to be a voice for non profits in our community.

To me, working in public relations means representing the best of an organization I believe in -- and, in times when that organization isn't at its best, communicating about the situation in ways that preserve credibility with the organization's various constituencies. Keeping a steady hold on institutional values and priorities, and using them as the primary filters through which information flows, provides consistency and the ability to be forthright even in difficult situations.

As the CEO of nonprofits, my idea of public relations tended to be more global than the ideas of other professionals.

It means you are part of the picture that helps communicate the values and mission of a brand or organization to internal and external audiences.

For me, working in public relations means bringing awareness and funds to an organization that provides lifesaving dollars to the community. Because of the limited resources in the nonprofit sector, public relations is incredibly important. You have to be creative and strategic about the resources you do have in order to bring your organization to the forefront of the community.

It means being the person who establishes mutually beneficial relationships with all of an organization's publics.

Working in PR is meaningful to me because it allows me to provide service and support for organizations that I am passionate about.

Putting my communication skills to use as a service to society

What does working in public relations mean to you?

It's an opportunity to communicate critical messages to target audiences, educate audiences of your mission and ministry as well as present your best image to the mass populace in general. To me, it means a way of helping my organization communicate its passion and ministry to serve others in a way that makes others want to be served or join our ministry to serve others. Because I get to "talk" to so many different audiences, potential clients, family members, employees, donors, volunteers, and generally unaffiliated people, I have a chance to make sure that what they see and hear about this organization is the truth. To me, truth and education are critical things missing in the world. I am honored I get to deal in areas that mean so much to me.

My undergraduate degree was in Radio/TV with a minor in broadcast journalism. I made the shift from newspaper reporting and editing early in my career and have worked in several areas of PR. I have been very happy with and proud of my life's work.

Presenting the organization in a positive, honest, transparent and trustworthy manner to a wide audience, not just constituents and donors.

It means sharing the mission, stories and successes of Girl Scouts to people who are NOT YET engaged with the organization. It means highlighting the good, minimizing the negative and always striving to promote and connect the organization.

For me, public relations means telling the story of my organization. Working with a nonprofit means that our story is one of changing lives and our community, with the help of our donors, which is a great story to get to tell everyday.

Making a difference. I've been the Communications Director and Director of Community Outreach for the Central Arkansas Library System and now the Director of Community Outreach for a community college. You aren't working for a bottom line, you are working to help real people who are directly impacted by your outcomes. That's a very important bottom line. I think you realize what impacts you make in the non-profit sector.

Q12 - If you could give advice to a student considering working in the public relations industry upon graduation, what would it be?

If you could give advice to a student considering working in the public rel...

Even before graduation, get involved with your local PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) chapter, even if you weren't involved with the PRSSA (student version) chapter at school. (And of course, I recommend doing that as well.) Just go to the monthly meetings, usually lunch with speakers from the industry or media. It's an amazing opportunity to network and learn from PR pros who are out there really doing the thing! I did this before graduation and still benefit 20 years later from those continued relationships. Plus, the pros at the meetings will notice that you are the only student(s) who bother to come to the professional meetings and will take note. From those PRSA meetings, seek out internships and work from those who you find interesting. Don't be afraid to work for free to find the right place, but don't get run over, either. Find a balance between knowing your place as a newbie but also not getting abused as a young (especially female) professional. At some point in your career, do some agency work (it's a madhouse but you'll learn things you can't anywhere else) and do some nonprofit work (the pay is terrible but you'll get to run the program and stretch your legs as a leader). I would recommend starting with working for a business or agency and then doing nonprofit when you know more about what you're doing, but follow whatever opportunities come your way, even if they don't follow that pattern. When you've worked in the business 5 years, even as a low-level PR person, take the APR exam. Don't wait, don't second-guess yourself. Just do it. Your local PRSA chapter will help you. Not only will it identify you as a real PR pro, you'll learn a lot from the process that will stay with you throughout your career.

Be willing to adapt to constant change. Don't get offended if someone criticizes your work, your writing, your product. There are 20 more people who love it behind the 5 who are vocal about not liking it!

Don't think you must find your fit today. Don't feel like you must plug into a specific sector and get stuck there. The world is big and you may find your calling and gift in very unexpected places. I certainly did. Find something that makes you passionate. Find something that makes you feel that your voice in the world is making a difference. If you find that, your soul will continue to be filled and you will grow in your field and as a person. Always remember, you need people and lots of them to successfully broaden your perspective that will be needed in your field. Find good counterparts you can lean on who will be open and honest with you. Don't isolate opinions of others and learn to value and appreciate feedback even if you don't use it.

If you choose to work in the public relations industry upon graduation, I would recommend pursuing a career in a field you are passionate about and that will provide fulfillment even on difficult days.

Intern as much as possible (or possibly work) for different industries.

That only large firms have \$ for public relations -

Get all the experience you can, in all the ways you can, from all the places you can. Apply for internships, take the minimum wage job, work in customer service, don't be afraid to do the smaller things. Don't limit what you learn through experience, no two paths are same. This industry is already worlds different than when I graduated 8 years ago, so stay on top of what's current, stay connected to friends from school, be involved in your wider community.

Communication skills and self-motivation are vitally important. Flexibility and not too strong of a personality.

Do everything you can to find work in an organization or field that matters to you. Don't compromise your values for a job, and if you discover too late that you've done so, be prepared to make a change. Consistency between your own values and the values of those you represent goes a long way toward making a meaningful career path.

STOP! Just kidding. Learn to learn, change and adapt. Turn everyone you meet into a mentor even if it is only for a moment.

Always keep learning and take time to invest in yourself and future professional development. Find a couple mentors. Also don't be afraid to build a team of people different than you or with other strengths.

My advice would be to decide what is important to you and match it up to a company with those same values.

If you could give advice to a student considering working in the public rel...

Make connections! Get involved in your community and never turn down a meeting or the opportunity to meet a new face. You never know who the person you are meeting with knows and has connections to. Stay up to date with the trends both locally and nationally. Finally, research your competitors and watch how they are successful and unsuccessful. You can learn a lot from others.

I would encourage any student who enjoys writing, oral communication and relationship-building to go for it! It's also important to have a diverse skill set, so work on photography skills, some graphic design skills, know Associated Press Style and continue to sharpen written and oral communication skills. There are so many different sectors you can work in and so many different positions with communications/PR departments, so you can always find the best fit for you.

Seek a position where you are valued as a PR practitioner AND find a team that you enjoy working with. Work environment is so important!

School is not over when you're out of school. School is never over. Keep learning. Stay curious.

This generation has basically grown up with social media. I encourage new PR professionals to utilize their expertise in the new media to create a template for addressing reputation management that is more accessible and affordable for all. It's an area that is artificially inflated because the people who have the technology and expertise can charge for it and gouge those who don't have those skills or knowledge. As with everything, it will change. Computers used to be outrageously expensive, but the minute the knowledge and parts were accessible to many, the costs went down. This too will become achievable as new generations prove they won't be gouged because they can build their own monitoring systems. So I encourage younger PR professionals to specifically take these skills and apply them to advancing this area of the profession. I would also encourage new PR professionals to see every piece of communication as a way to change the image of the company you work for. Memos to employees should be person-centered rather than blanket messages. PR should work with other departments to find the best forms of communication with all constituents. This may mean moving away from traditional letters, memos, direct mailers and newsletters to digital delivery formats such as texts, calls, emails or social media platforms. The challenge you will have as you advance these areas, is to keep your communication human and compassionate rather than uniform and emotionless.

Find ways to utilize the new communication forms in a way that still creates connection and motivates people.

Find your strengths. Build on those.

Really, really know the fundamentals of good writing and speaking. Set high standards with respect to spelling, grammar and vocabulary. Don't "be like" and don't misuse "I" as an objective pronoun, "Thank you for inviting the staff and I" --- no, no, no, no, no. Be well rounded. Read the daily paper, not just Facebook trends, pay attention to the news. Do learn as much as you can about Social Media and digital marketing, but treat it with humbleness and respect. Know that it can do, and has done, a lot of damage.

Always be transparent and forthcoming with the truth when crisis occurs. The truth is always correct.

I think that PR is a great industry in which to work! I did not leave college intending to end up in this field, but I am glad that I did. My best piece of advice is to surround yourself with gifted professionals who can share their knowledge with you. If you can, join a public relations association (PRAM Public Relations Association of Mississippi is excellent). Build those relationships and learn as much as you can from veterans. Additionally, attend conferences or online workshops where you can continue to

learn and keep in front of the trends and changes in technology and how people communicate and receive information. It is so much fun and a great challenge.

You don't know everything (I thought I did, too!). Soak in all the advice that your senior colleagues give you. Watch how they move, how they operate. Get involved with organizations that need your help! Experience is EVERYTHING!

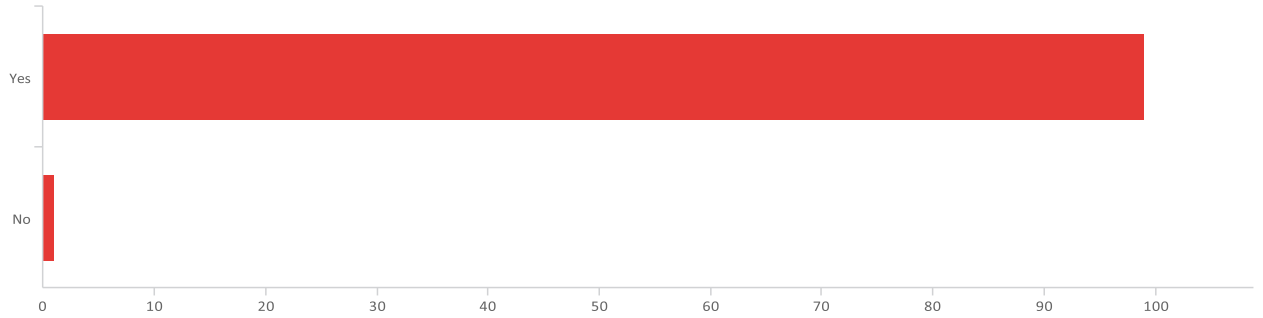
Students

Default Report

Public Relations Student Survey

March 3, 2020 9:50 AM MST

Q3 - Are you 18 years of age or older?



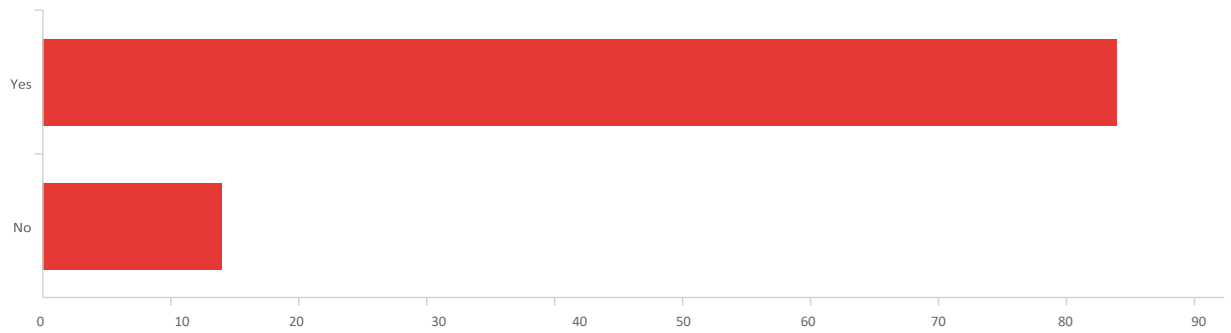
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Are you 18 years of age or older?	1.00	2.00	1.01	0.10	0.01	100

#	Field	Choice	Count
1	Yes	99.00%	99
2	No	1.00%	1

100

Showing rows 1 - 3 of 3

Q4 - Are you a current journalism/ public relations/ marketing/ advertising student?



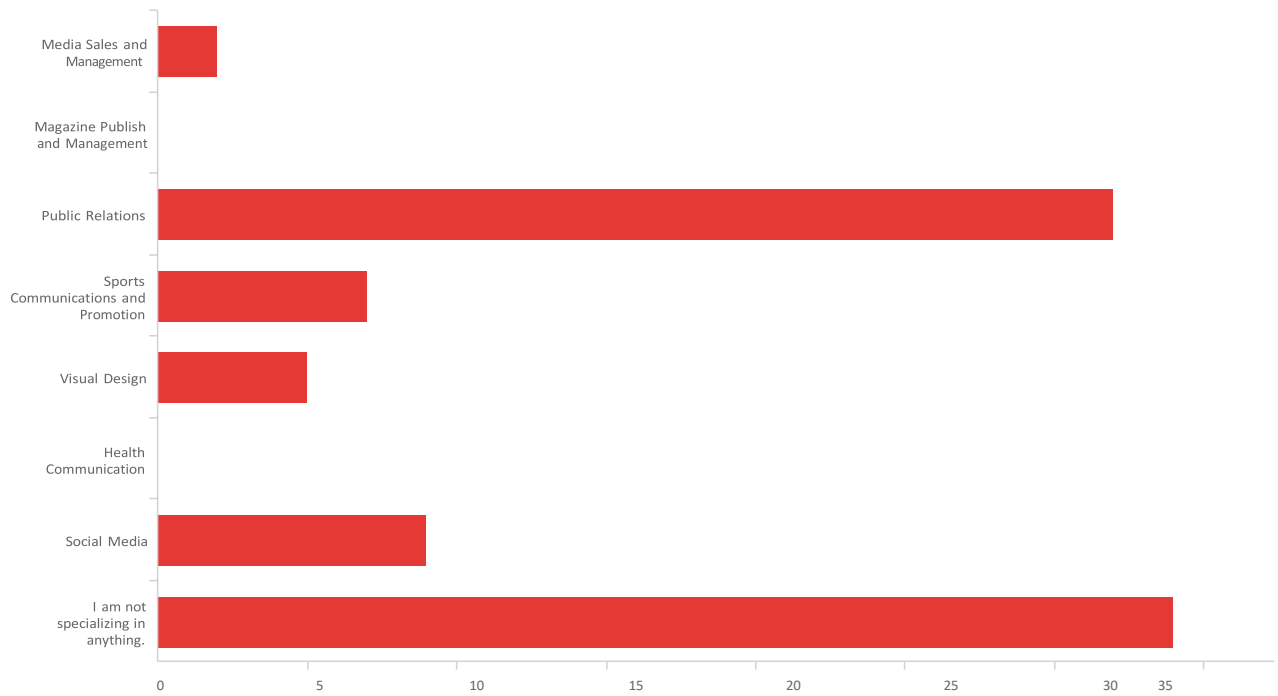
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Are you a current journalism/ public relations/ marketing/ advertising student?	1.00	2.00	1.14	0.35	0.12	98

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Yes	85.71% 84
2	No	14.29% 14

98

Showing rows 1 - 3 of 3

Q5 - Are you doing one of the specializations offered? Check all that apply.

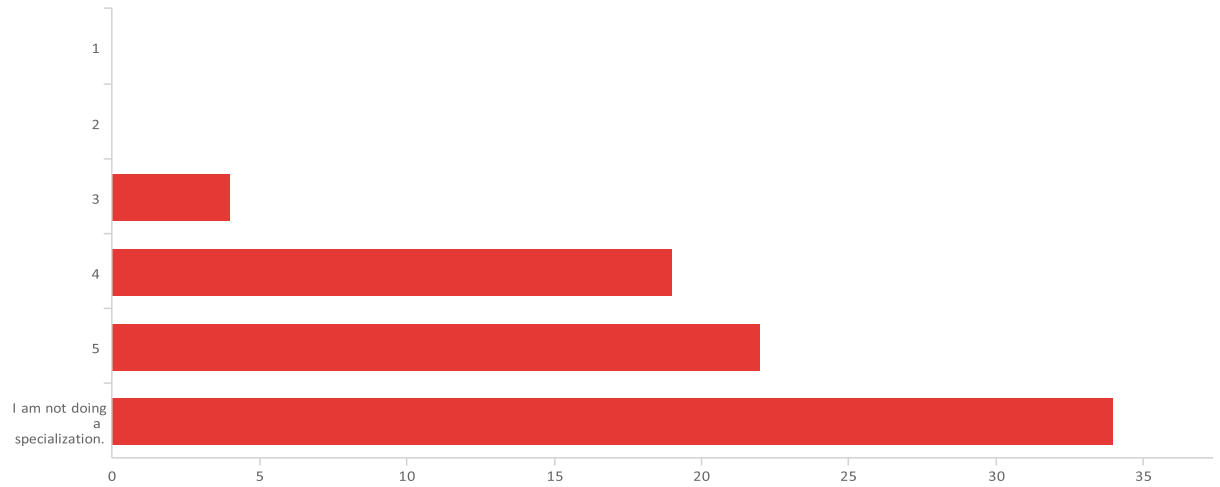


#	Field	Choice Count
1	Media Sales and Management	2.25% 2
2	Magazine Publish and Management	0.00% 0
3	Public Relations	35.96% 32
4	Sports Communications and Promotion	7.87% 7
5	Visual Design	5.62% 5
6	Health Communication	0.00% 0
7	Social Media	10.11% 9
8	I am not specializing in anything.	38.20% 34

89

Showing rows 1 - 9 of 9

Q6 - On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate how significant you feel your specialization will be in your future after graduation with 1 being very little significance and 5 being very significant.



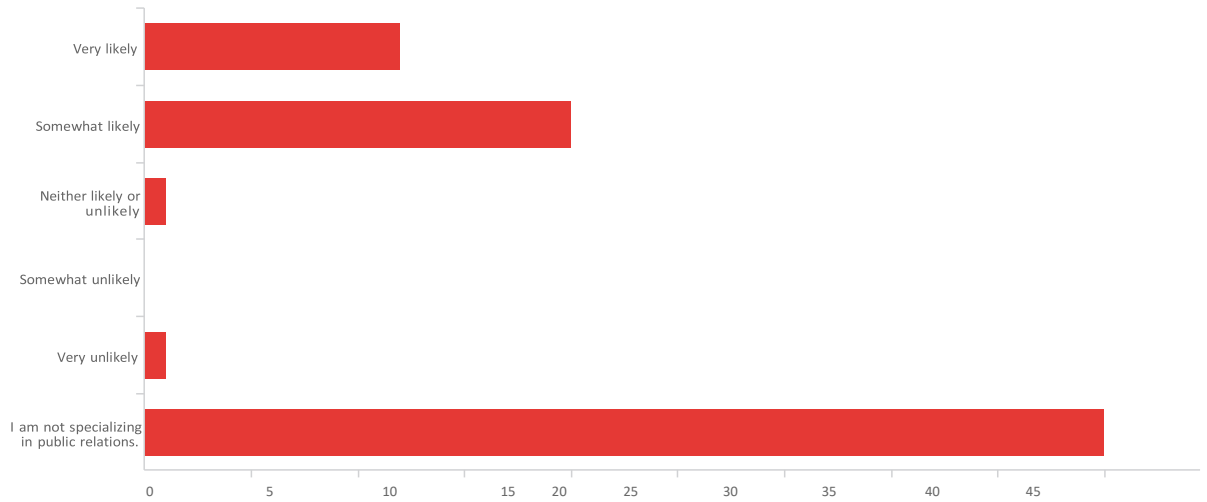
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate how significant you feel your specialization will be in your future after graduation with 1 being very little significance and 5 being very significant.	3.00	6.00	5.09	0.93	0.87	79

#	Field	Choice Count
1	1	0.00% 0
2	2	0.00% 0
3	3	5.06% 4
4	4	24.05% 19
5	5	27.85% 22
6	I am not doing a specialization.	43.04% 34

79

Showing rows 1 - 7 of 7

Q7 - If you are majoring or specializing in public relations, how likely would you say you are to work in that industry after graduation?



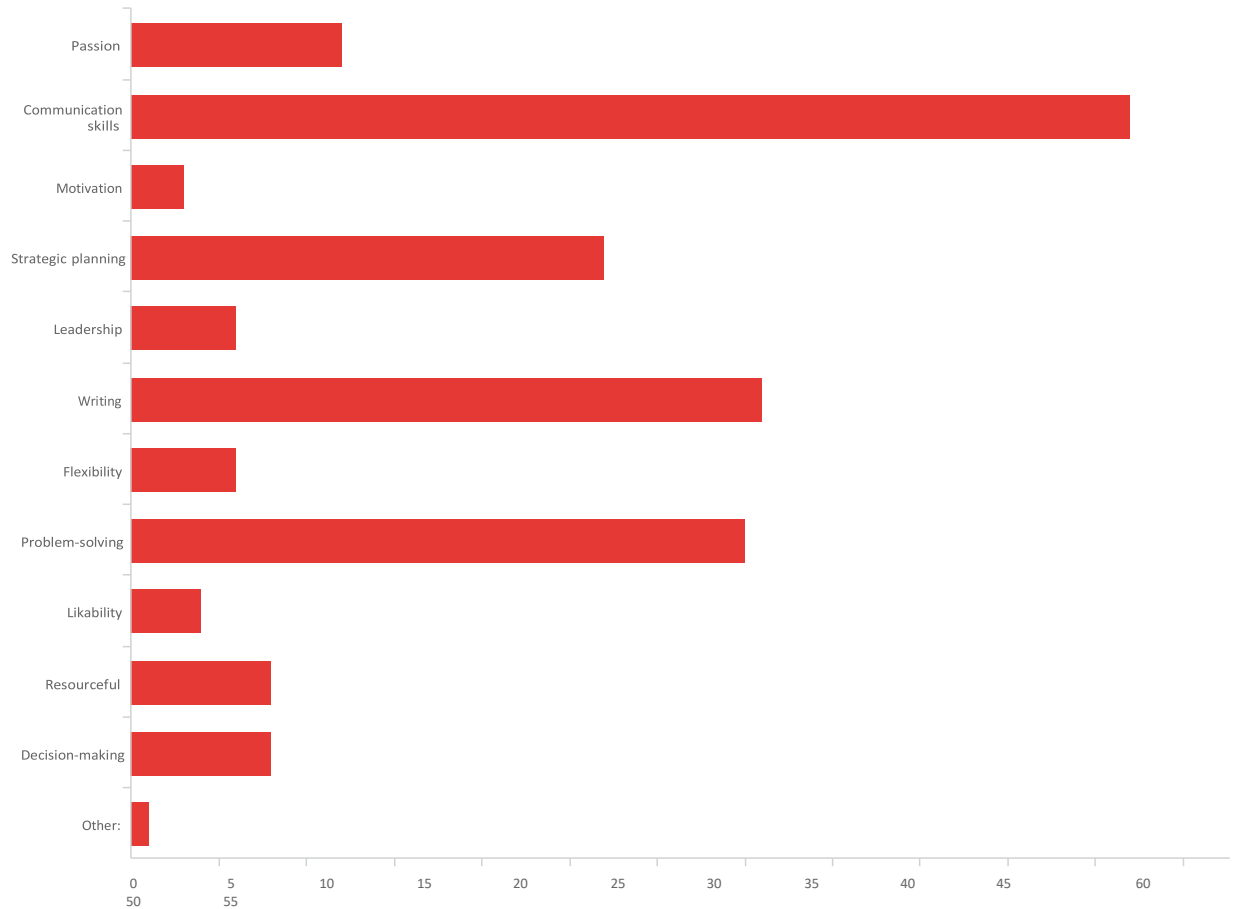
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	If you are majoring or specializing in public relations, how likely would you say you are to work in that industry after graduation?	1.00	6.00	4.18	2.16	4.65	79

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Very likely	15.19% 12
2	Somewhat likely	25.32% 20
3	Neither likely or unlikely	1.27% 1
4	Somewhat unlikely	0.00% 0
5	Very unlikely	1.27% 1
6	I am not specializing in public relations.	56.96% 45

79

Showing rows 1 - 7 of 7

Q8 - What qualities/ skills do you think are most important for a public relations professional to have? Check up to three options.



#	Field	Choice Count
1	Passion	5.91% 12
2	Communication skills	28.08% 57
3	Motivation	1.48% 3
4	Strategic planning	13.30% 27
5	Leadership	2.96% 6
6	Writing	17.73% 36
7	Flexibility	2.96% 6
8	Problem-solving	17.24% 35

9 1.97% #	Likability 4 Field	Choice Count
10	Resourceful	3.94% 8
11	Decision-making	3.94% 8
12	Other:	0.49% 1

Showing rows 1 - 13 of 13

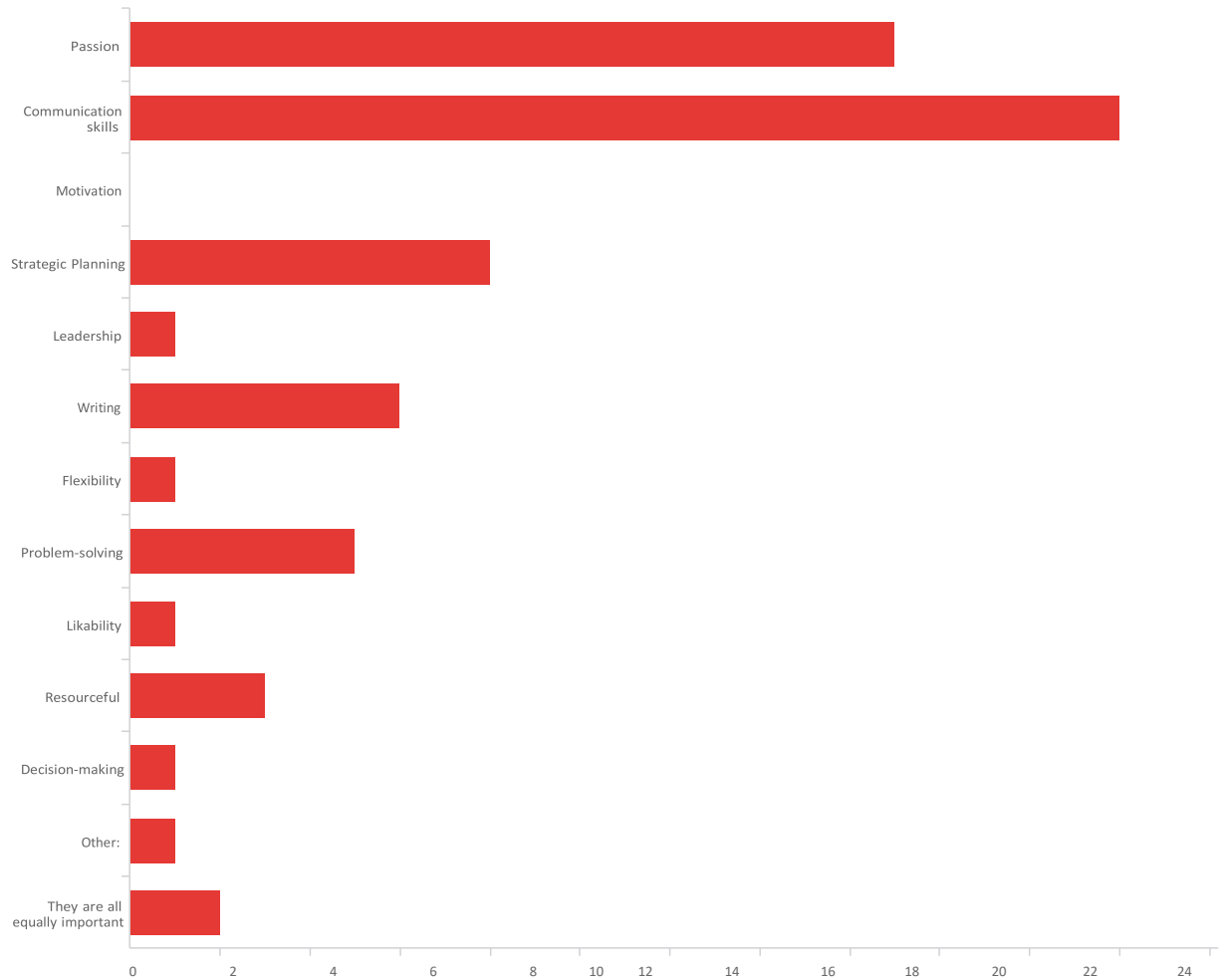
203

Q8_12_TEXT - Other:

Other:

Non-bias

Q9 - Of the three qualities/ skills you selected in the previous question, which one do you think is the most important for working in the nonprofit sector of public relations?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Of the three qualities/ skills you selected in the previous question, which one do you think is the most important for working in the nonprofit sector of public relations? - Selected Choice	1.00	13.00	3.96	3.35	11.22	68

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Passion	17
25.00%		
#	Field	Choice Count
2	Communication skills	22
32.35%		
3	Motivation	0
0.00%		
4	Strategic Planning	8
11.76%		
5	Leadership	1
1.47%		
6	Writing	6
8.82%		
7	Flexibility	1
1.47%		
8	Problem-solving	5
7.35%		
9	Likability	1
1.47%		
10	Resourceful	3
4.41%		
11	Decision-making	1
1.47%		
12	Other:	1
1.47%		
13	They are all equally important	2
2.94%		
		68

Showing rows 1 - 14 of 14

Q9_12_TEXT - Other:

Other:

Non-bias

Q10 - Please explain why you feel the previously selected quality/ skill is the most important for the nonprofit sector of public relations.

Please explain why you feel the previously selected quality/ skill is the m...

You have to be passionate to do a job in non-profit since it often pays less money

Public relations has to be able to communicate with several audiences

Ms. Street said it was

Writing is the most important because you have to be able to get your client's story across in the most effective way possible. For nonprofit, you will most likely try to connect with people's emotions and you should be able to get your emotion across in your writing.

it's difficult to plan for non profits

All of my classes always thought us that writing makes up the foundation of good pr.

I feel that this is the most important skill for the non profit sector because you will be wanting to persuade an audience that is not necessarily looking for your message to listen to you and take action and I think that it would help a lot if they really trusted you and liked you as a person.

Non-profit PR is the least sought after section of PR so in order to adapt to the lack of resources, problem-solving is the most important for nonprofit specifically

In the nonprofit sector is like any other business you essentially have to be able to solve any problem.

I believe that passion is the most important for the nonprofit sector of public relations due to the fact that it pays less than other public relations jobs.

You need to like it

Leadership is a beneficial trait to have in any field of study or work. When it is a nonprofit sector, leadership and being the person whom others can look to is a must.

Being able to communicate a message to an audience is extremely important. For the nonprofit sector communicating an event is important or why the nonprofit is important is crucial

I think that writing is the most important skill in Public Relations because it serves as the basis for most of the work that you do.

Because working for a nonprofit does not always have the immense backing that more monetarily and personally motivated corporations do

PR requires a lot of time and energy

Nonprofits often operate with low budgets, so being flexible is very important.

You have to be passion to make it work in a nonprofit.

Strategic-planning is vital because it goes hand in hand with fundraising which it the backbone of non-profit.

Please explain why you feel the previously selected quality/ skill is the m...

The Ole Miss PR classes are taught in a bias way. I think it's extremely important to see what the teachings are wrong.

I think that anyone can have leadership ability, but if they can not communicate clearly and effectively they can not be good at their job. Especially when you are speaking to donors, you need to be able to persuade and communicate professionally to raise the money.

I feel like passion is the most important quality for nonprofit because it is HARD, timely, and someone really needs passion about the nonprofit they work for. The person won't make much money since it is nonprofit, and a lot of time and hard work goes into nonprofit.

I feel that communication skills, no matter what field you are in are the most important

Because if you do not have passion for it then there is no reason for it

You must be able to communicate clearly and effectively the mission and purpose of your nonprofit. You would most likely be relying on donations for your nonprofit, so being able to communicate well what you are pursuing can be the difference in a donation or not.

PR is very dependent on those who can come up with quick, effective solutions to issues that come up.

My knowledge of nonprofits is limited but in my opinion a nonprofit cannot raise any money without effective communication skills to get key messages across.

To work in a non-profit sector, being passionate about your organization is important to any role. If an employee isn't passionate or motivated about the cause, they are less likely to go the extra mile for their job. I know if I don't care about something, I usually don't give above & beyond my effort to complete the task - I do the minimum amount I need to do to be successful, but rarely more. However, if I am passionate about something, I am more likely to pour my time and energy into the project.

If it's not about profit I feel you have to have a lot of passion

Because non-profits cannot use product promotion to gain attention, professionals in the industry must be able to efficiently and effectively communicate the brand's message.

If you do not have the passion for your non-profit, the rest of the skills will not matter. You will not be motivated to truly help in any significant way. Nonprofits tend to operate on tight budgets. If you aren't willing to give extra time and love (these only come when passion is involved) then you cannot excel at your non-profit which in turn means your non-profit cannot excel either.

Non-profits can get a bad reputation for where their money goes, so being good at problem-solving is important for maintaining communications about possible crisis.

It's a nonprofit, so you need to be passionate about it.

I think in the nonprofit sector of PR, it's most important to have communications skills in order to properly communicate the nonprofit's mission to their audience. I've interned for two nonprofits, and it is so important for them to make sure their wording is correct so that they don't communicate the wrong message about the people they help and the cause they serve. I was with one nonprofit when they had recently undergone a rebranding, and the simple switch of using different words in their messaging made a big difference in the organization's success and communications tactics.

Because you need to be able to plan how to fundraise first and foremost. As well as, planning events, writing news releases, being able to communicate to others, and so on.

If you cannot properly communicate, how could you be in an industry that focuses on communication?

I believe having a successful plan is most important for any PR.

I think that public relations professionals need to have a strategically planned view of their company that they can better keep the image.

Please explain why you feel the previously selected quality/ skill is the m...

Non profits are all about passion and what you believe in which will motivate you to work harder.

They go hand in hand. It is critical that anyone in PR, regardless of the non-profit sector or not, be an effective communicator, problem solve effectively, and decision-make efficiently!

The Nonprofit sector of public relations will likely deal with causes that are beneficial to a certain group of people, yet this sector doesn't see the same pay levels as others. If one chooses to work for nonprofit, they need to be motivated by more than a paycheck.

Nonprofits often require more work in the planning and communications process, so being able to communicate well with others is an essential skill to have.

If you cannot effectively communicate with a target audience, the message will not be clearly delivered and the marketing will not thrive in the way that it should.

Because Ms. street said it's the most important. 70% of PR work is writing

If you can not communicate properly you won't be able to get your message across to people.

Even if you possess all of the skills above, lacking communication skills is fatal to executing any strategy in PR.

Nonprofits often have limited resources, so being resourceful as a Public Relations professional would be very important.

Nonprofits have to be incredibly influential and need to have the ability to communicate well, in general. For organizations that rely strictly on donations, the message has to be communicated well.

Q11 - If you are majoring or specializing in public relations, please leave a few comments or thoughts about why you chose that path and what you hope to get out of it in relation to your future? (I.e. What are your plans?)

If you are majoring or specializing in public relations, please leave a few...

I was not sure what type of marketing job I wanted and honestly did not know about PR but I did some research and realized that's the type of career I want! I hope to do crisis communications or work in the non-profit sector

I want to do crisis communications after taking 510 with y'all I know how well I plan for every little thing and handle myself very well under pressure

I'm not specializing in anything

I would like to work in communications at some capacity. More and more, companies are realizing how valuable it is to have a public relations person to work in the best interest of the company and be its voice.

i like pr

Not specializing in anything.

I chose this path because I loved the first Public Relations class I took with Ms. Street. I also felt that it was the specialization I would learn the most in while in school. I firmly believe that ones writing can always get better. I hope that through my specialization I will stand out among other applicants trying to get jobs out of college.

I chose the public relations path because of the writing and communications. I feel as if those are my best skills and I want to perfect them. I would prefer to work at a school district or for a small company. I would also like to work for a university or university department.

I chose to be a public relations specialist because I really enjoyed my classes with Mrs. Street. I also chose it because I have done a couple of internships in PR and enjoyed my experiences in both.

N/a

not specializing

I choose public relations because I love writing, being around people, talking to people and I love the fact that not every day is the same. I would get bored if I did the same thing at work day to day, and with public relations, you never ever know what will happen that day.

N/A

I came to college as an English major and switched to IMC later on. Communications I feel is my strong suit and I wanted to learn how to use those skills in a business setting. One day I would love to work in public relations for a museum or aquarium.

I chose PR because it is a combination of most things I saw my future career being - design, social media, communication, leadership, and creativity.

My plans are to enlist in the Navy--while I value my degree and the skills I've learned in the course, I'm not very interested in working in the industry.

If you are majoring or specializing in public relations, please leave a few...

I choose PR because I enjoyed the structured writing and being able to plan campaigns. In the future I plan on doing event planning. While this isn't exactly PR, the skills I've been taught in PR go hand in hand with it. For example, sending out a press release about my event or making sure it aligns with a larger campaign.

n/a

I chose it because it was the specialization I was most interested in pursuing and felt like I could receive great experience from. I've always liked to write so I thought PR was a great option for me. After graduation, I'm hoping to work in a PR agency. My PR classes have given me great experience and knowledge of the PR industry. I feel prepared to pursue a career in PR after graduation.

I am a Broadcast Journalism major and originally wanted to be a Reporter, but decided to randomly take the intro into PR course and fell in love with the field. So, I decided instead of switching my major to IMC, I would just specialize in PR. I hope to work for a big company and be able to work my way up to a high position. I am very open to all industries, but am most interested in fashion, entertainment, or tourism/hospitality.

I love the public and public eye. I would love to do PR for large corporations or politicians.

I think there are a lot of jobs in public relations with the rise of social media, so I feel that a specialty in that area will help me on the job market.

I want to work in client services or account planning. I feel like this specialization will help my thinking and communication.

I chose Public Relations because I am very interested in going into business and knew PR would be a valuable skill regardless of the career path I chose. In today's society, it is so important to understand the value of strong communication, authenticity, and ensuring company's are always putting their best foot forward.

I chose public relations because of the diverse and exciting future it offers. No day will be the exact same and there is huge potential for exciting projects in this field. In my immediate future, I hope to work in any public relations role to gain experience with the ultimate goal of being a publicist for a publishing company.

I thought that it would give me a leg up when I enter working environments after I graduate.

Everything in today's media world is public relations whether we wish it to be or not. I think that the public relations specialty will help me start my career in media, even if I am not working in public relations specifically.

I've always been interested in public relations. I hope to eventually work in crisis communications for a major corporation.

