

SEPTEMBER 2008

PRAM^eGram

~ September's Membership Meeting ~

Chuck Abadie

Director of Public Relations at Pearl River Community College

This fall, Pearl River Community College opens its doors for the 100th year of service to the citizens of Mississippi. As Mississippi's first two-year institution of higher learning, Pearl River has been a leader in providing quality and innovative educational opportunities. A century of service and providing opportunities for those who desired to seek higher education has given the institution a special place in the history of our state.



The centennial year provides the College with a special opportunity to showcase not only its unique history, but also its current programs and services. A Centennial Celebration Steering Committee has been at work since the summer of 2007 and has developed a year-long agenda of special activities. Three major Centennial Celebration events are being planned. The first of these events was Sept. 8, 2008, with a parade and other ceremonial events that will commemorate the first day of class that occurred in 1909.

Mr. Abadie will discuss what has been done from a public relations standpoint, to promote the Centennial and the upcoming events. One item is a 140-page history of photos of the school.

Tuesday, September 16, 2008

Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center

Networking 11:30 a.m. • Meeting Begins at 12 Noon

Lunch - Members \$11 and Guests \$15

RSVP to Julie DeFatta at 601-268-5765 or

rsvp@pinebeltpram.com for an accurate lunch count.

2009 PRAM BOARD NOMINATIONS

The nominating committee for next year's board has been formed and is preparing the slate of officers who will guide our organization through the next year. If you wish to serve, please contact nominating committee chair Kristy Gould via e-mail at secretary@pinebeltpram.com or call her at 601.584.3100.

LUCKY BUCKS WILL BE PLAYED DURING THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM.
plan to participate • plan to participate • plan to participate
DONATIONS GO TO THE PRAM FUNDED SCHOLARSHIPS.

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First Call for Award Nominations

Take advantage of this opportunity to recognize excellence.

Take a few minutes to nominate a fellow PR professional for their effort, skill and talent. Nominations are being taken for the Bud Kirkpatrick Practitioner of the Year Award and the Professional Promise Award. Qualifications and entry guidelines are below.

Practitioner of the Year recognizes achievement in the field of public relations and service to the chapter during the calendar year. To qualify, the nominee must:

- Be a member in good standing with the chapter.
- Have practiced in the field of public relations for no less than three years.
- Have contributed to the success of the chapter, state and/or SPRF during the calendar year.
- Have realized successes in the practice or teaching of public relations during the calendar year.

This award is different from the **Professional Achievement Award**, which recognizes an individual for career achievements, etc. over a period of years and which places the individual in competition for the state Professional Achievement Award and possibly the SPRF title.

Professional Promise Award recognizes promise in the field of public relations. To qualify, the nominee must:

- Be a member or student in good standing with the chapter.
- Have practiced in the field of public relations for less than three years or be a student currently enrolled in a public relations curriculum.
- Demonstrate considerable promise in the field of public relations.

Other factors may also be considered for both awards such as:

- Participation in other professional or pre-professional organizations,
- Professional development such as continuing education, seminars, conferences, etc.,
- Public relations community service,
- Respect for peers may be evidenced by awards conferred, etc.

The guidelines for nominations and selection of awards are as follows:

- Only members in good standing may make nominations or be nominated for awards.
- To nominate a person for any award, a member must submit a brief paragraph, not to exceed 200 words, stating why the recipient deserves the award. The following must be included
 - Nominee's name
 - Award for which he/she is nominated
 - Nominator's name
 - Nominator's phone number

Nominations must be received by October 31.

Awards will presented at a special event in January.

Email nominations to Joanne Marsh, Awards Chair at joannem@pbmhr.com

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

In the promotion of your business through public relations, there are a number of “fatal” mistakes you can make that will kill or distort your coverage. Of these, there are “Seven Deadly Sins of Public Relations” that will ruin your chances of success, and probably lead to bad press.

1. No Comment

The worst thing you can say to a reporter is “No Comment” — that has become a tacit admission of guilt. And while the reporter may not know what you’re guilty of, this is like a red flag in front of a bull.

Practice saying something like this:

“We are in the midst of delicate negotiations right now, and are not at liberty to discuss that question in detail. However, I can assure you that as soon as the negotiations are concluded, I’ll be glad to answer that question.

2. Spin Control

Even professional political spinmeisters are having an increasingly hard time persuading the press that what they think they heard (or read, or saw) isn’t what was really said (or printed or acted out). If your corporate chairman’s wife likes to go skinny-dipping in public fountains at 3 a.m., you are not going to spin your way out of the embarrassment — especially if the reporter has witnessed this. Better to have her admitted to Betty Ford then explain she’s had a rough time recently, but is being helped then try to pretend what they saw isn’t what was really there.

3. Disinformation

As with spin control, providing the press with disinformation has become increasingly discredited — and a righteously media actively seeks out and punishes the disinformants. One common form of disinformation is to talk about your competitors. You cannot be objective in this case — and the more bitter the rivalry, the more your honest emotional outrage will color anything you say.

4. Baffle Them With Bull

When information is technical or hard for a layman to follow, it is easy to use jargon or techno-babble to confuse the reporter and try to make you appear larger-than-life and far more knowledgeable. This is a poor strategy with a huge potential for public relations boomeranging.

5. Playing Media Favorites

One reporter’s been good to you. One has been stern-but-fair. You’d rather feed a good story to the nice reporter, right? Short-term, that’s a good idea. But long-term (and long-term can be short in this day of instant communications), it can hurt you. You may not be able to really curry favor with your favorite reporter — but you can bet you will earn the disfavor and of the reporter you snub.

6. Demanding Media Coverage

This is one of the worst failings of amateurs. Some think they deserve public relations coverage because:

– Their story is devastatingly important (or, it’s vital to help launch a new product, etc.).

– The big boss is demanding it.

Reporters and editors have what is called “editorial judgment” — which means that absent libel and slander, they can write and publish (or ignore) just about anything they want — and they do not have to answer to anybody.

7. Just Following Orders

“I was only following orders ...” (doing what you are told, rather than what is right).

If you are doing your company’s public relations and are answering to someone else (a Chairman, a Board, a CEO), you may find that they are asking or expecting you to do things that your gut instincts and these brief lessons tell you to steer clear of. Do not be tempted to follow bad advice just because it comes from the top. However, if you do as your told, take the heat with integrity. Almost all reporters and editors respect that, if only because it’s so rare.

Written by Ned Barnett, Group Director of high-tech PR specialist agency UpStart Communications (a Fleischman-Hillard company), as well as the Managing Partner of Barnett Communications in Las Vegas, Nevada — has, for two decades, been a leader in high-tech, healthcare, Internet and corporate/product start-up public relations, marketing and strategic planning. He has authored eight books, and has taught at three colleges and universities.

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