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Management Consultants  
In Communications

# FINDING YOUR FIRST JOB IN PUBLIC RELATIONS



*prepared by*

**The Lukaszewski Group Inc.**  
100 South Bedford Road, Suite 340  
Mount Kisco, NY 10549  
Office: 914.681.0000  
Facsimile: 914.681.0047  
E-mail: [tlg@e911.com](mailto:tlg@e911.com)  
Web Site: [www.e911.com](http://www.e911.com)



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Greetings and welcome to *Finding Your First Job in Public Relations*.

Over the years, many aspiring practitioners, even those who have gone through collegiate public relations programs, have come forward with questions about what a public relations career is all about. The same questions are asked by those seeking to make a career transition into public relations.

This document was originally developed for a non-credit course at New York University. My goal was to help launch aspiring practitioners by answering the most important questions prospective and new practitioners have. Hundreds of course evaluations indicated that this information was extremely helpful.

The course was also designed to help those not yet sure of their life goals to select another career, once having a better understanding of what public relations is. Nearly one quarter of those who took the course decided to go into another field, and all were grateful for the discussion and information that helped them come to this decision so early in their career selection process.

Here are some of the questions this document answers:

- What is public relations all about?
- What do clients and PR employers expect of a practitioner?
- What are the different areas of public relations?
- If I work in an agency, how do I get paid?
- What's the difference between working in a corporation and working in an agency?
- What do agency job descriptions look like?
- How do I interview effectively for the position I'm looking for?

We hope you find this document very useful as you move your career forward. I'm indebted to my colleague Helen Ostrowski, Global Chief Executive Officer of Porter Novelli, for sharing some of her career insights as well.

All of us at The Lukaszewski Group wish you the best of luck!

Sincerely,

James E. Lukaszewski, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA  
Chairman and President  
The Lukaszewski Group Inc.

## Some Helpful Thoughts for the New Public Relations Professional

*From Helen Ostrowski, Global CEO, Porter Novelli*



Dear New Public Relations Professional,

My first job landed me in a public relations department of a *Fortune* 100 company. It didn't take long for me to understand two things.

First, I *really* liked the work. I loved the idea of all the writing, loved the possibility of interaction with community and union leaders, investors, legislators, media, and consumers. And my company, whose basic industries were chemical and pharmaceutical, always had a major crisis every week or two that kept things really interesting.

Second, I found that the people I worked with were not only seasoned professionals and very smart, but were very willing to teach and mentor me – provided I was ready to work hard. Often that meant going beyond the confines of my job description.

As my career progressed, some professional imperatives emerged:

- Ethics and reputation are crucial. Your personal reputation is everything no matter what you do in life, but is essential in our profession.
- We must view ourselves as global citizens from a local culture. We need to understand differences of every shade and color – and that boils down to something as simple as translations. Coca-Cola's nearest translation in Chinese was 'ke-kow-ke-la,' which meant "bite the wax tadpole." More than one global communications campaign has gone down the tubes when someone didn't take the time to check how things translated into other languages.
- Proof of results is more important than ever before.
- A diverse mindset is a must. Keeping ourselves open to the possibilities of other viewpoints and life experiences makes for a more enriching environment. This is what our profession is all about – understanding different audiences and stakeholder needs.

Recently I had the chance to meet with some of Porter Novelli's mid-level professionals. We talked about what they would like to have studied during their college training, before entering the profession. Here's where they wish they had placed more emphasis before entering public relations:

1. Public Speaking in small and large groups: While many new employees don't often have to worry about speaking in front of many groups in their first year or so, eventually they are faced with a presentation to a client or new business prospect – or even a short talk in front of their colleagues.
  2. Pitching: Most staff feel this is critical for media, which is certainly true, although pitching is also a necessary skill for presentations of programs or new business proposals.
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3. Business education: OK, knowing how business works is essential knowledge if we are to relate our programs to business results. Many students who come to us say they have little idea about how business works.

One question I am asked more than any other is about discussing the factors that I believe contributed to my success. Here they are. I hope they might be helpful to you:

1. Know yourself. You can develop skills and learn to be a better listener, for example, but you can only improve if you have self-awareness.
2. Learning new skills requires more work. Practicing them takes work. Volunteer for assignments that will help you build your skills base, gain new contacts, or get you noticed. But be sure to make time for yourself and your personal life.
3. Keep your commitments. If you say you are going to do something, do it.
4. Anything worth doing is worth doing well. We have only so much time in our lives, so make sure that you spend it in a quality way.
5. Get comfortable with compromise. By that I don't mean compromising your principles or values. But there will be days when you miss that all-important party, or maybe your son's first words because you were working; equally, you will miss things at work because you left early for your class or your mother's birthday, and worry that you'll be excluded.
6. See the glass half full. One of the biggest attributes of leadership, as well as the marker of a happy life, is optimism, which helps you persevere through a lot of things that might otherwise drag you down.
7. The journey of our lives is measured in minutes and days. Enjoy each and every one of them.

Good luck.

Sincerely,

Helen Ostrowski  
Global Chief Executive Officer, Porter Novelli  
450 Lexington Avenue, 31st Floor  
New York, NY 10017  
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Porter Novelli is one of the largest and most highly regarded Public Relations firms in the world, providing a broad range of communications services to clients in over 50 countries and 100 cities.

Porter Novelli's top-ranked global Consumer, Corporate and Public Affairs, Health Care, and Technology practices provide clients with access to the broadest and deepest intellectual capital, available no matter where or when they need it. Client-service teams are built with expertise found throughout our global organization, regardless of geographic boundaries.



450 Lexington Avenue, 31st Floor • New York, NY 10017 • 212.601.8000-Main • 212.601.8101-Fax

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### What Public Relations Is All About

- Four Sectors of Public Relations ..... 2
- Kinds of Public Relations Activities ..... 3
- Areas of Practice: Sections of the PRSA ..... 4
- Professional Organizations ..... 5

### How Agency Billing & Salaries Work

- Calculating Billable Hourly Rates in an Agency ..... 8
- Why Do They Bill Me Out at a Lot More Than I Make ..... 9
- How Agency Salaries Are Determined ..... 10
- Agency Job Descriptions ..... 11
  - Assistant Account Executive..... 11
  - Account Executive ..... 13
  - Account Supervisor ..... 15
  - Senior Vice President, Director of Media Relations ..... 18
  - Chairman and Chief Executive Officer ..... 21

### How to Prepare for Interviews

- The Job Seekers' Four Most Important Tools ..... 24
- Snail Mail vs. E-mail: How to Put Your Best Foot Forward, First ..... 25
- Tailor Your Resume to Achieve a Marketable Success ..... 26
- Marketing Resume Worksheet ..... 27
- Sample Cover Letter ..... 28
- Crib Cards ..... 29
- Marketing Resume Example ..... 30
- Chronologic Resume Example ..... 31

### Navigating the Interview

- Specific Interview Preparation ..... 33
- Be Prepared to Answer These Kinds of Interview Questions ..... 33
- Having a Successful Interview ..... 34
- Useful Reading About Interviewing ..... 35
- The ABCs of Interviewing ..... 36
- Job-hunting Strategies for Working With Recruiters ..... 39
- Northwestern Financial Review Article ..... 42

### Tips & Resources

- Make the Right Impression ..... 45
  - Getting the Most Out of Your Summer Internship ..... 48
  - Twelve Ways to the Top ..... 50
  - Other Helpful Resources ..... 52
-