

Imagine. Create. Inspire

PRSA International Conference

Orlando, Florida

Oct. 15 -18

By Julie Spechler

My Personal Faves

Saturday, Oct. 15

I started off the [PRSA International Conference](#) in Orlando by attending the **Educators Academy Research Roundtable and Poster Session**. If you've never attended a research roundtable, you should. Authors of studies reveal their research and findings at roundtable sessions. Five different sessions occur at five tables during 20 minute sessions. One rotates to each table after hearing the researchers discuss their findings for 20 minutes. Time allows me to attend 4 of the 5. One that I attended was "A First Look at Delivery of Multi-country Public Relations Global Curricula" by Elizabeth L. Toth, University of Maryland and Marianne D. Sison, RMIT University, Australia.

The research asks the questions 1) How do universities offering public relations integrate international public relations course in their curricula and 2) How and in what ways are global public relations shaped by Western influences? The researchers describe their methodology, influences, interviews, etc.

The conclusion is that international public relations programs reflect predominantly Western, American/British influences; that International curricula is not globally connected; that there is increasing demand for regional, culturally nuanced public relations scholarship. The research finds that globalizing public relations curricula must include:

- Mobility (study, tours, exchange, study abroad)
- Joint degrees
- Collaborative research
- Comparative regional program focus

Other topics and presenters included: *Examining graduate online education and its application to public relations: A deeper look into computer-mediated instructional immediacy, self-efficacy and self-satisfaction* by Lisa T. Fall and Stephanie Kelly, University of Tennessee; *Public relations at the micro level: Connecting with customers on Twitter* by David Kamerer and Pamela Morris, Loyola University, Chicago; *Testing a perceived authentic index with triangulation research: The Case of Xcaret in Mexico* by Juan-Carlos Molleda and Rajul Jain, University of Florida and *Assessing the skills needed in the PR curriculum: A survey of educators and practitioners* by Jennifer M. Keller, Western Washington University.

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Sunday, Oct. 16

The **Opening general session** keynote speaker was [Soledad O'Brien](#), anchor and special correspondent from CNN. She spoke about the importance of a story.....the “*need to focus on the humanness of stories.*” Who is this character in this story and what does he mean to us? A character may start as a statistic but he/she ends up being a hero. Change stats to stories she says. Good story telling is very important. Before pitching Soledad a story know who he is [the story] and what kinds of stories she likes to tell. Make sure the story has passion, authenticity, emotion. The passion is what makes her want to do a story. Start with inspiration. *It's all about the story.*

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Sunday, Oct. 16

I then attended the session, **Cracking the Code: Isolating the Impact of PR, Ads, Events and Collateral with Angela Sinickas**, ABC, IABC Fellow, president Sinickas Communications. I was a little disappointed in this session as it dealt more about conducting research with surveys as opposed to what the title implied. Nevertheless, the presenter gave us things to consider such as how to conduct research and with whom, and to ask actionable questions that lead to changes and to focus on business outcomes from communications. She said to isolate the impact of different kinds of customer communication on achieving those outcomes.

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Sunday, Oct. 16

I found the next session on **The Changing MO of the CMO: A Holistic Point of View with MaryLee Sachs**, former U.S. chairman and worldwide director, consumer marketing, Hill & Knowlton to be very interesting. She talked about the merging of public relations and marketing and said that 75 per cent of organizations today are restructuring, looking at their marketing and pr functions. MaryLee says that as silos between communications functions continue to fall, PR experts have new opportunities as chief marketers. Do you put all earned media together under PR (i.e. traditional, online and social media)? Or does social media fall under Marketing? Advertising is often done online and not necessarily through payment. Are there three jobs here or just one? Or, perhaps there is a totally new job forming?

MaryLee recommends following **blogger [Brian Solis](#)** who knows a lot about social media and the brand sphere. Solis is globally recognized as one of the most prominent thought leaders and published authors

in new media. A digital analyst, sociologist, and futurist, Solis has studied and influenced the effects of emerging media on business, marketing, publishing, and culture. His current book, Engage, is regarded as the industry reference guide for businesses to build and measure success in the social web.

MaryLee Sachs has just written a book, "[The Changing MO of the CMO – How the Convergence of Brand and Reputation is Affecting Marketers.](#) *Definitely on my buy list after hearing her speak.*

Monday, Oct. 17

Think like a reader, the reader is the story

"Think Like a Reader" presented by Ann Wylie, president of Wylie Communications was another great session. It's not like she told us anything new, really, but she reframed it and is a great presenter so she got me excited about getting our message out there. She says the secret to persuasive writing is to position your messages in your audience's best interest. She thinks we should change our 'template' for a press release. She has a four-step process:

- 1) WIIFM- What's in it for me? Focus on what they care about not what you care about.
- 2) FAB- Feature Advantage Benefit. If feature is what it is --- what does it do? What is the benefit for me? "The verb is the story". Lead with the benefits. Leave with the benefits.
- 3) YOU – Use with employer, not with media relations. Need a more objective voice. Take a look at how often you use the company name vs. the client name. Formula for releases: If you can't or don't want to use YOU X (users) will now be able to Z (benefit) thanks to A (product or service). *USA Today* put You in the News. "Find intersections of news and your reader's life," Wylie says. Again, it's all about the story.
- 4) If no WIIFM, No FAB, No YOU ask what is in it for me? or what is the benefit to me?

If the answer is no to all these things then why are we bothering reporters with this message?? (If VP or client or others demand it, it is your job as a consultant to let them know why it is not a story).

Wylie offers free writing tips. Sign up on her website at: <http://www.wyliecomm.com/resources/wylies-writing-tips/>

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Monday, Oct. 17

How to Develop the Mind of a Strategist

Another great session held at the conference on Monday was led by **PR guru James E. Lukaszewski**, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA, CCEP, president, Lukaszewski Group, a Division of Risdall McKinney Public Relations. With a name and credentials like that who the heck cares what he speaks about?? He happened to speak about **How to Develop the Mind of a Strategist**. His was one of my favorite sessions. Please read about him on his [website](#) . He is a well known and respected PR practitioner. Below are some my notes from his session and you can also find more details in his book, [Why Should the Boss Listen to You.](#)

How to Develop the Mind of a Strategist, from his session on Monday, Oct. 17, 2011

He gave the following advice on how to convince bosses to communicate

- Ask different kinds of questions before those you might normally raise
- Provide sound managerial reasons for communicating or not communicating
- Avoid the usual pro-press arguments/excuses
- Ask managerially relevant questions
- Put yourself in management's shoes operationally and non-operationally
- Identify what is doable, achievable
- Don't whine, be inspirational
- Candor – with an attitude; it is the basis of trust because trust is based on communication
Know your personal value system and how you package yourself i.e. 1) your core values 2) virtue 3) personal lexicon 4) personal progress credit

Leadership is a state of mind

- Get to the 95/5 rule – 95 % of what we focus on doesn't matter; what's the 5 % that does ?
- Listen to all different people's ideas
- Intentionally look at the wrong end of the telescope or purpose
- Be intentionally memorable
- Develop a list of stories you like to tell and apply them to various circumstances
- Conduct a personal audit – what did I learn today? What did others learn from me?
- Be inspirational and meaningful in others' lives
- All management problems are leadership problems
- Leadership is about maintaining followers
- Staff functions to help the leaders and managers do a better job.
- If the boss won't bite after a week, give it up. Whose bus are you? It is their bus to do what they want.
- Our job is to provide concepts, ideas and suggestion in building of solutions.
- Make progress in constructive ways....incremental progress every day.
- Constantly suggesting ideas is not always good.
- Use people's time wisely

Trusted Advisor

- Study leaders from famous people and get a sense of leadership, similarities
- Become a student of leadership. You can then talk about these things. Good examples include William Manchester's books about Winston Churchill, Jack Welch also a great leader
- Most leaders have/had powerful relationships with their mothers.

Why bosses fail

- Failure to perform
- Over optimism
- People trouble
- AWOL – out making speeches, not running the business
- Being stuck in the mind; can't get it going

The number one role of the leader is to be chief strategist. Go over the horizon and find new places to go said Lukaszewsk. Leaders are people of tomorrow. Managers make your plan work. They are people of today and yesterday.

For a new vision bring people in to make your vision work

What matters with your boss:

- 1) How is your advice? Talk about what you are going to talk about in 60 words or 3 minutes.
- 2) Analysis – Review your 60 words. Why does what you are saying matter? What is the urgency? What is the threat?
- 3) Goal – where are we headed? Get to the point. Get to the point.
- 4) Money – Get in the habit of giving three options:
 - a. 0 % option – doing nothing
 - b. 100 % option – doing something to respond
 - c. 120 % option – doing something more
- 5) Need more than 1 idea. If only one idea you will be shut down
- 6) Recommendation – have a recommendation ready.
- 7) Justification- Why A over B or C? Need to do this routinely

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Tuesday, Oct. 18

Maximizing Press Release Performance Online

The last session I am reporting on was titled **Maximizing Press Release Performance Online by Laura Sturaitis, executive vice president, media services and product strategy, Business Wire and Greg Jarboe, president and co-founder, SEO-PR: member, Rutgers faculty for the Mini-MBA; Digital Marketing program.** They talked to us about maximizing press releases to increase traffic and engagement with key landing pages and website.

Professor Jarboe used specific examples from his three-month Mini-MBA campaign. Some of the most important points involved tagging your releases, websites, etc and then tracking results. Marketing

once took credit for any increase in attendance, enrollment, sign up, etc. but now there are ways to track and show how your press release – for FREE – procured increased attendance, sign ups, etc. *Call to Action: use press release to measure results and prove ROI.* Study Google Analytics. Use value of SEO to get your release out in quantity previously not available or imagined. Use data to learn about your customer or potential customer. How many are fist time visitors? How did they get there? Where are they going? Jarboe recommended signing up for **Avinash Kaushik's** blog to learn more (<http://www.kaushik.net/avinash/>) and to read his book [**Web Analytics 2.0**](#).

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The conference was great for remedial work, new learnings and of course for networking. I am grateful to the Ft. Lauderdale PRSA chapter for providing me with most of the scholarship and to my boss for picking up the rest of the tab. I am happy to share what I learned and to apply them to my current job. Win- win for all.

Best regards,

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