

Charting The Industry: State Of The PR Union: Survey Sheds Light On Trends, Challenges And \$\$\$ In The Bank

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The PR industry has divided and conquered in recent years, abruptly ending the "seat at the table" conversation and capturing the attention of the C-suite by demonstrating its many functional skill sets: media relations, community relations, marketing, brand management ... the list goes on and on. Now, a recent survey conducted by the Public Relations Society of America and Bacon's Information - the 2006 State of the PR Profession Opinion Survey - reaffirms this upward mobilization, highlighting key statistics relative to every facet of the profession.

The survey, which polled nearly 1,500 practitioners, revealed that respondents most strongly agreed that top management believes in PR's contribution to the organization in the area of reputation. This falls in line with the common theme of communicators' responsibilities to manage and maintain the reputation of an organization through consistent messaging, media relations, crisis management and CSR initiatives. However, strong results in the "financial success/sales" category imply that advanced measurement techniques have bolstered management's knowledge of PR's impact on bottom-line results (*see figure 2*).

As far as trends go, the top three in terms of importance to polled practitioners were: proliferation of new communications channels; integrated marketing communications; and the globalization of PR. Communicators have adapted to these trends gracefully in a number of ways (for example, see both features on new media measurement and integrating PR into global communications). But the positive direction of the industry and its role in an organization has been a double-edged sword for some: 41% of respondents cite upholding credibility within an environment where the lines between PR, advertising and journalism are growing increasingly vague. One could point to integration efforts gone too far, perhaps, or certainly to the swell of consumer-generated media and "citizen journalists." Either way, this merging remains a challenge - and an opportunity - for professionals to manage.

And managing both challenges and opportunities is no small feat when the job requires practitioners to be jacks *and* masters of many trades. Respondents rated 15 responsibilities, the most time-consuming of which was media relations (24%). Surprisingly (or perhaps not, considering the challenge listed above), the second in line was marketing communications, traditionally an activity that was separated from PR with the force of an iron wall (*see figure 1*).

Finally, it's no secret that everyone's got money on their minds. To satisfy this curiosity, the findings include:

- The median salary is \$71,480 overall;
- \$64,460 in small companies;
- \$68,800 in medium companies; and
- \$82,300 in large companies.
- For executive-level practitioners, the median is \$94,800;
- For managers, \$71,600;
- For account executives, \$47,500; and
- For entry-level, \$26,000.