

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION  
IN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR MANAGERIAL ROLES

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The undersigned appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled,

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION  
IN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR MANAGERIAL ROLES

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and hereby, certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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## DEDICATION

This research paper represents an effort that was made possible only by the love and support of my family and friends, and is dedicated to them.

To my husband, Terry; my brother and sister-in-law, Steven and Rachel Dearing; my mother-in-law and father-in-law, Robert and Frances Neill; my parents, John and Ruth Dearing; and retired Baylor University administrator, Dr. Richard Scott.

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This work is also dedicated in loving memory of my grandparents, Archie and Virginia Dearing.

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ABSTRACT

While undergraduate programs do include elements of theory and goals of developing students' critical thinking and problem solving abilities, an underlying purpose in higher education is ultimately to prepare students for the workforce. In public relations, much of the workforce training involves developing technical skills such as writing, editing, and publication design. While these skills are critical for entry-level positions, how well are universities preparing public relations students to advance to managerial positions?

This study focused on practitioners with 5-10 years experience, because it represents a point in their careers when practitioners are both seeking and achieving career advancement. Participants were first screened through a questionnaire to determine whether they are primarily fulfilling managerial or technician roles in their organizations. Those selected for the sample were then asked to participate in depth interviews. This study provides practical suggestions for how education can better prepare students for career advancement. While practitioners can gain managerial skills later through job experience, observation and professional development programs, researchers and practitioners suggest some skills should be taught at the undergraduate level. These practitioners provide steps that students and recent graduates can follow to help them move up the career ladder.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

While undergraduate programs do include elements of theory and goals of developing students' critical thinking and problem solving abilities, an underlying purpose in higher education is ultimately to prepare students for the workforce. In public relations, much of the workforce training involves developing technical skills such as writing, editing, and publication design. While these skills are critical for entry-level positions, how well are universities preparing public relations students to advance to managerial positions? The IABC (International Association of Business Communicators) Research Foundation sponsored a 15-year study on excellence in public relations and communication management in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada. Researchers, L. A. and J. E. Grunig together with Dozier, found that public relations is best practiced when the function serves a managerial role in an organization (2002). One of the managerial skills found to be most lacking among public relations graduates is financial and budgeting skills (Turk, 1989). In a survey involving 561 members of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) in four southwestern states, 66.6% identified these skills as lacking in public relations managers. While public relations students could acquire these skills in elective courses taught in business schools, Turk (1989) said, "public relations educators should not default on their obligations to students by passing the buck." She suggests that these skills can be taught in public relations management courses, as part of a campaign class or an internship (Turk, 1989).

When studying the responsibility of public relations education in preparing students for career advancement, it is appropriate to begin with a look at the definitions

and enactment of the technical and managerial roles in the workplace and factors impacting their enactment. It is also advantageous to examine potential barriers that prevent practitioners from advancing to managerial roles in their organizations particularly those that may be addressed through education.

This research utilized depth interviews with mid-level practitioners; those with 5-10 years of professional experience, to determine the barriers to career advancement and how to overcome them. It was appropriate to interview both practitioners who have successfully advanced to managerial positions and those who are still fulfilling technical roles in their organizations. These practitioners offered valuable insight into questions such as what types of managerial skills are lacking among new public relations practitioners, what types of training resources do they personally utilize, what is the best format for delivering that training to working professionals such as teleconferences, weekend seminars, night classes, or online courses. Do they recommend a minor in business or advanced degrees for those seeking to advance to managerial roles? What are some of the barriers they must overcome to seek additional training such as time or financial constraints? What role have mentors contributed in helping them grow in their careers? The answers to these questions can provide valuable insight for educators, students seeking careers in public relations, new practitioners, and for professional organizations such as the IABC and PRSA, which offer professional development programs.

### **Defining the Managerial Role**

An appropriate place to begin is by defining what exactly is excellent public relations. Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 9) described public relations as fulfilling a

boundary role, “they serve as a liaison between the organizations and the external groups and individuals. They have one foot in the organization and one outside.” One of the most commonly cited definitions for public relations is “the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006).” An in-depth study of the literature provides insight into what exactly is meant by mutually beneficial relationships, and the process by which practitioners determine whether or not a relationship is tied to an organization’s success or failure. However, an examination of the definition of public relations must logically begin with the study of its role in management.

Researchers have offered solid support for the view that undergraduate curriculum should be training public relations students to eventually assume managerial roles. The concept of role theory in public relations began with a 1979 study by Broom and Smith, who conducted an experiment involving both undergraduate and graduate students to study the client relationship experience based on various role enactments. From their research, emerged a typology composed of four dominant roles. At the more advanced level were the roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator. Broom (1982) described the expert prescriber as a practitioner who researches and defines a problem, develops a program to address it, and takes responsibility for implementing the solution; the communication facilitator serves as a “liaison ...between the organization and its publics;” and the problem-solving process facilitator is a member of the management team who collaborates with other managers to define and solve problems. At the entry level of the profession is the role of

communication technician. These practitioners are responsible for “preparing and producing communication materials (Broom, 1982).” Researchers have also suggested the existence of minor roles such as a media relations specialist or communication liaison as suggested by Broom & Dozier (1986) or an agency profile, (Toth, Serini, Wright & Emig, 1998) to describe the role of a public relations agency. However in more recent years, much of the research primarily focuses on just two of the major roles.

In their 1995 study, Dozier and Broom combined three of the four major roles to form one role referred to as the public relations manager with the second role being the communication technician (Dozier & Broom, 1995). The practitioner is commonly classified based on the role he or she practices predominantly. In several studies, this has been measured by asking practitioners about whether specific tasks are part of their regular job responsibilities (Broom, 1982; Culbertson, 1985; Dozier & Broom, 1995; Toth et al. 1998). Through factor analysis, the practitioner is then classified by the role with the highest loading. The significant distinction for the public relations manager role is that it includes “making communication policy decisions and being held accountable for program success or failure (Dozier & Broom, 1995).” Some of the specific responsibilities that have been used to define the managerial role include counseling management, making communication policy decisions, evaluating program results and planning public relations programs (Toth et al., 1998). A communication technician is described as “a creator and disseminator of messages (Dozier & Broom, 1995).” Some of the specific responsibilities that have been used to define the technical role include writing, editing and producing messages; making media contacts; and implementing event planning and logistical activities (Toth et al., 1998). Another key distinction is the

communication technician performs activities in support of goals and objectives determined by others, but the public relations manager participates in management policy decision-making including setting goals and objectives (Dozier & Broom, 1995).

What makes role theory personally significant for public relations practitioners is the fact that enactment of the managerial role is correlated with higher salaries (Broom & Dozier, 1986; Dozier & Broom, 1995). In 1991, practitioners enacting a managerial role earned an average salary of \$73,620 compared to \$51,050 for technicians (Dozier & Broom, 1995). This was consistent with a survey six years earlier in which public relations managers earned \$62,568 and technicians \$40,297 (Broom & Dozier, 1986).

### **Managerial Role and Its Correlation to Excellence**

The strength of the managerial role performed by the person in the highest position in the public relations department does impact the power of that function within the organization. In their 15-year study, L.A. Grunig et al. found excellence in public relations is dependent on the department's membership or access to the dominant coalition, "the group of individuals within the organization who have the power to determine its mission and goals (2002, p. 141, 240-241)." The reason this access is crucial for organizations is because the managerial role in excellent public relations involves scanning the environmental for potential stakeholders who might be impacted by the organization's decisions. Public relations represents the concerns of stakeholders in the decision making process. J.E. Grunig described the role of environmental scanning, "...organizations must scan their environment to identify stakeholders who are affected by potential organizational decisions or who want organizations to solve problems that

are important to them (Grunig, 2006).” He said the IABC excellence study, which included interviews with chief executive officers, identified several ways environmental scanning contributes to a company’s bottom line. This list includes “reduced costs of litigation, regulation, legislation, and negative publicity caused by poor relationships; ...or increased revenue by providing products and services needed by stakeholders (Grunig, 2006).”

Closely related to environmental scanning is the situational theory of publics. It is a “means of segmenting a general population into groups relevant to public relations practitioners (Grunig, 1997, p. 8, 11).” Grunig said some of the crucial aspects to consider when developing segment categories include mutual exclusivity, measurability, accessibility, pertinence to the organization’s mission, and maintaining a size that is large enough to be substantial. These publics can be defined by such categories such as geography, demographics, psychographics, covert power, position, reputation, membership and role in the decision process (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006, p. 322); or by their likelihood to become involved in a particular issue. This later method of segmenting publics involves defining categories Grunig refers to as nonpublics, latent publics, aware publics, and active publics. At the lowest level are nonpublics, people whose involvement is so low they have no significant impact on the organization. At the opposite end of the continuum is active publics who not only communicate with others about the situation, but also organize efforts to address their concerns (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006, p. 321).

In their excellence studies, L.A. Grunig et al. (2002, p. 11) suggest public relations managers should practice communication that is two-way and symmetrical,

which involves balancing “the interests of the organization with the interests of publics on which the organization has consequences and that have consequences for the organization.” Symmetrical communication is based on a four-part model developed by Grunig & Hunt (1984, p. 24), which includes press agency/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric. The press agency/publicity model is referred to as the “propaganda function (Grunig & Hunt, p. 21).” Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 24) write there is little need for research with this model other than observing which publicity materials have been published in the media or how many people attended an event. They describe the press agency/publicity model as being appropriate for sports, theatre and product promotion. The public information model is common in government, non-profit agencies and business. Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 21-22) suggest the goal of practitioners using the public information model is the distribution of information rather than persuasion. They further describe this model as requiring little research activity, because “public information specialists have little idea of what happens to the materials they prepare (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 24).” At the more advanced level is two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric, which both describe communication models based on information about publics obtained through research. The key distinction between the two models is that two-way asymmetric is focused on understanding audience attitudes and behaviors in order to better persuade them to accept an organization’s point of view, but two-way symmetric is focused more on listening to the concerns of significant publics and considering possible accommodations to address those concerns (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 24-25). The two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric models tend to

be practiced in businesses that face fierce competitive or regulatory environments (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 22).

Some researchers have suggested excellent public relations is better depicted by a continuum which ranges from advocacy to accommodation (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot & Mitrook, 1997). Cancel et al. suggest advocacy would involve a public relations practitioner communicating his or her organization's viewpoint to the public on a particular issue; and accommodation would involve listening to a public's viewpoint and to consider making changes to accommodate any concerns. This is consistent with Grunig's situational theory of publics. Cancel et al. (1997) suggest that an

“organization may be more willing to accommodate an external public that...is likely to greatly affect an organization, such as a government regulatory organization, than a public that is unlikely to have a great effect on an organization, like a small group of protesters outside an organization's building.”

They also point out that even a small group can become a greater threat to an organization if they petition government officials or successfully gain media attention. Based on the continuum model, a public relations manager must evaluate the various publics to determine which type of communication approach is appropriate. Cancel et al. (1997) also list some factors that may impact the potential power of the public relations department to make these types of decisions. This includes the experience of the public relations practitioners in dealing with external conflicts, the location of the department in the company hierarchy, and physical proximity of the department to the offices of the chief executive officer or company president (Cancel et al., 1997).

Moss, Warnaby and Newman (2001) identified four factors that may explain why some public relations practitioners are promoted to more influential managerial roles than

others. This includes the “people factor” which is described as the personal credibility and standing of practitioners with senior management. This credibility can be achieved through longevity of service with the same company or organization, perceived quality and expertise of the practitioner’s work, as well as a thorough understanding of the business and the pertinent issues impacting the organization. The second factor is top management’s understanding and expectations of public relations. This often is the result of good working relationships with the chief executive officer and senior management personnel throughout the company. The third factor is organizational and industry context. The public relations role was more valued in organizations operating in rapidly changing or extremely competitive industries and in organizations that faced higher governmental regulations. The fourth and final factor identified was the nature of the strategy-making process. In organizations where strategy making was highly associated with financially oriented goals, practitioners who had difficulty providing evidence of public relations’ contribution to the bottom line were less likely to be included in the decision-making process. Based on these findings, Moss et al. (2001) concluded that practitioners desiring to fulfill managerial roles are “likely to need a broader business education and experience that embraces the areas of operational and financial management.”

## **Managerial Role & Threats of Encroachment**

In organizations where the managerial role is not enacted by the person in the highest position in the public relations department, the function risks being overtaken by departments fulfilling related roles. Lauzen (1991) found enactment of the managerial role by public relations practitioners can protect the department from threats of encroachment and imperialism by other internal departments. She defined encroachment as the “assignment of non-public relations professionals to manage the public relations function (Lauzen, 1991).” This type of encroachment could occur through both authority encroachment, which is described as assigning someone without public relations experience to oversee the public relations staff; or through structural encroachment, which might involve placing public relations under other departments such as marketing in the organizational hierarchy (Kelly, 1993). In practice, this could involve defining public relations as mere publicity and considering its use only in terms of generating publicity to increase sales. A third type of encroachment defined by Kelly is functional encroachment, which is referred to as imperialism by Lauzen. It involves “one department intruding on the activities traditionally in the domain of the other (Lauzen, 1991).” In a survey involving 168 public relations practitioners, Lauzen (1991) did find evidence of encroachment by the marketing department. Some of the dangers in an organization where the public relations function is led by marketing would include a lack of listening to the viewpoints of various stakeholders beyond customers, lack of attention to non-consumer publics, and an under emphasis on organizational behavior (Grunig & Grunig, 1998).

The strategic contingencies theory of intraorganizational power suggests that if public relations is to fulfill a more powerful role in an organization and avoid encroachment by other departments such as marketing, it must demonstrate that it fulfills a role that is central to the organization, not easily substituted by another department, and can cope with uncertainty (Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck & Pennings, 1971). A survey of 262 public relations practitioners did offer support that the enactment of the public relations manager role is negatively related to the occurrence of encroachment, (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992), meaning that a more powerful public relations department can prevent encroachment by other internal departments. In a study on influence in public relations, Berger and Reber (2005) listed two sources of power, which are consistent with the strategic contingencies theory of intraorganizational power. This includes expert power, which is based on specialized knowledge; and information power, which involves access to important information. Some of the areas where public relations can exercise the most influence are issues management and crisis communication. Issues management is the “early identification of issues with potential impact on an organization” and involves developing a “strategic response to mitigate or capitalize on their consequences (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006).” This is accomplished by environmental scanning and can be considered a source of information power. Lauzen and Dozier write that environmental scanning addresses both the substitutability and uncertainty components of the strategic contingencies theory of intraorganizational power (1992). In further support of public relations role in coping with uncertainty, Berger and Reber (2005) conducted depth interviews with 162 public relations practitioners and found that 43% of the respondents said they had the most influence in crisis situations. They stress that even though crisis

communication can be considered more of a “fire-fighter role, it can serve as a catalyst to the desired access and attention of management (Berger & Reber, 2005).”

### **Weaknesses of Role Theory**

While the distinctions of the roles of public relations manager and communication technician have been supported through factor analysis by numerous studies (Culbertson, 1985; Broom & Dozier, 1986; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992; Toth & Grunig, 1993; Dozier & Broom, 1995; L.A. Grunig et al., 2002), some researchers have suggested that this dichotomy fails to fully describe the experience of women in public relations. In 1985, when Broom and Dozier followed up with the original participants in a 1979 survey, they discovered that women in public relations were not advancing to managerial positions. The total number of managers among the survey participants had increased by 10% when compared to 1979. However, only 19% of the managers were women, representing only a 1% increase after six years (Broom & Dozier, 1986). They also found that while women were performing some managerial duties they also engaged in more technical role activities than men. Toth and Grunig suggested what really is occurring is that women are “doing it all” and for less money than men (1993). Specifically, they found that women were fulfilling “middle or direct management activities intermingled with the more senior counseling and policy-making roles (Toth & Grunig, 1993).” As for male practitioners, Toth and Grunig found that men scoring high on the scale for the managerial role were performing primarily managerial roles, and men with high loadings on the technical role performed at least some managerial activities. This differs from women who scored highly on technical role measures and clearly practiced these roles

exclusively (Toth & Grunig, 1993).” Creedon writes that a side effect of role theory is “the trivialization and devaluation” of a role predominately fulfilled by women (1991, p. 69).

While role theory has its weaknesses, it still offers a valuable distinction between entry level and advanced practices in public relations. In addition, studies have shown excellence is dependent on the public relations practitioners’ abilities to perform advanced managerial activities such as environmental scanning and carefully segmenting of publics. For this reason, it is crucial that students learn about role theory and participate in courses that prepare them for career advancement.

### **Obstacles to Overcome**

While researchers have suggested universities have a responsibility for training public relations students to become public relations managers, a critical component of achieving this goal is recruitment of high quality students. In a qualitative study involving students in two entry-level public relations courses, Bowen (2002) found that most new students majoring in public relations perceived the profession as involving only media relations and special event planning (2002). Some of the misconceptions students held about public relations involved using the terms “spin” and “image” to define the function. Most of the students attributed the media as their source for information about the public relations industry (Bowen, 2002).

These perceptions should come as no surprise, since research studies have shown some journalists have negative perceptions of the public relations industry. The studies include “Images of Public Relations in the Print Media” by Spicer, and “The Portrayal of

Public Relations in the News Media” by Jo. Both studies utilized content analysis as their methodology. Spicer studied 84 articles using the term public relations or PR. Some of the themes Spicer used to categorize the use of the term publicity included public relations as a “distraction, disaster, challenge, hype, merely public relations, war and smooze.” In his view, 83% of the examples portrayed public relations in a negative tone (Spicer, 1993). Jo’s (2003) content analysis found some interesting adjective pairings with the term public relations in news articles. The news organizations serving as sources for the content analysis were the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and three major television networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC. A sample of some of the negative terms includes PR disaster, PR problem, PR liability, PR debacle, PR stunt, PR mistake, PR ploy, and PR flop (Jo, 2003). Out of 303 references to the term public relations, Jo found 124 negative references, 142 neutral descriptions and 37 positive uses. Jo (2003) suggests that in the majority of these news stories, the role of public relations was defined as publicity, image, persuasion, and marketing.

Another study found that incoming public relations students did not think mathematical skills were necessary for advancement in public relations (Mitrook, 2005). Mitrook compared results of a national survey of public relations students in 1994 and 2004. He said this view “blinds students to the management function in public relations where mathematical skills are needed for developing and balancing budgets and making statistical calculations involved in research for public relations communication plans (Mitrook, 2005).”

A recent online survey involving juniors and seniors majoring in public relations offered evidence that suggests students today do not have the financial skills necessary to

assume managerial roles. The results included 31% of the students who described themselves as not very prepared or unprepared in the area of financial and budgeting skills, and 38% responded they were not very prepared or unprepared to work with revenue and expense reports (Gower & Reber, 2006).

Another significant finding concluded that male students had a stronger predisposition for management activities when compared to female students (Mitrook, 2005). Studies have found the managerial role is consistently associated with higher salaries, so this inclination has financial implications for students (Dozier & Broom, 1995). Female students also ranked job enjoyment as a higher priority than salary and expected to take a leave of absence within the first 10 years of their career to start a family (Mitrook, 2005).

Researchers have also found that female students have lesser career expectations. In a survey involving members of chapters of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), Farmer & Waugh (1999) found that female students had lower expectations for starting salaries and how long it will take them to receive their first promotion and move into management positions. A focus group involving public relations practitioners in Portland, Oregon; New York, New York; and Washington, D.C. offers some insight into this issue. The respondents suggested women “lack the negotiation and knowledge necessary to request higher salaries (Aldoory & Toth, 2002).” The focus group participants also said that women are socialized early in life not to be too aggressive or demanding (Aldoory & Toth, 2002).

Recruiting male students to major in public relations has been a challenge (Hunt & Thompson, 1988). Rutgers University responded to this disparity by making program

changes. Hunt and Thompson said at the time they began their efforts, the membership in chapters of PRSSA were predominately female by a 10 to 1 ratio (1988). The program changes included selecting assertive, confident, managerial type teachers; selecting clients for class projects that would interest males; and pairing male students with male role models in the field (Hunt & Thompson, 1988).

Researchers have cited concerns about the feminization of public relations and how it could result in lower salaries and prestige, and lead to the absence of public relations practitioners fulfilling managerial roles (Mitrook, 2005). Recent research provides both evidence of advancement opportunities for women in public relations and areas for improvement. In 1991, Dozier and Broom found that 55% of the men they surveyed were in managerial roles compared to 39% of women. This was actually a sign of progress as compared to 1979 when only 28% of women were in managerial roles (Dozier & Broom, 1995). Wrigley (2002) conducted a qualitative study involving women in public relations regarding their perception of the “glass ceiling,” which was defined by the U.S. Department of Labor as “artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions (as quoted in Wrigley, 2002).” One of the participants in Wrigley’s (2002) focus groups said, “There cannot be a glass ceiling in PR! It’s all women.” However, as recent as March of 2002, a PRWeek Salary survey showed women earned 75% of the salary earned by men (as cited in Wrigley, 2002). Wrigley (2002) found that many women tended to believe they could advance to managerial positions through efforts such as mentoring, working harder, changing jobs, or even starting their own business.

Selecting the appropriate mentor can impact the likelihood of a practitioner's advancement into managerial roles. Tam, Dozier, Lauzen and Real found that practitioners under the supervision of female superiors scored much lower on career advancement than those with male superiors (1995). This led the researchers to conclude that young practitioners should seek mentors that are influential and powerful in managerial circles (Tam et al., 1995).

### **Curriculum Recommendations**

There have been a number of studies aimed at developing curriculum standards for the public relations industry. Some of the early studies included work by the Commission on Public Relations Education, sponsored by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) and PRSA, in 1979; and the International Public Relations Association Commission's Gold Paper in 1982. Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 78-79) summarized the major findings:

- 1) A broad liberal arts education,
- 2) Courses to develop student's communication skills,
- 3) Communication theory to prepare students for public relations management,
- 4) Business literacy,
- 5) Practical experience through internships.

Other significant recommendations in more recent studies have included public relations students should minor in business as suggested by the 1987 study by the AEJMC and PRSA; and the challenge noted about training students for entry level jobs and preparing them for managerial positions, as highlighted in the 1990 IPRA Gold Paper No. 7 study (Fischer, 2000).

Some best practices in public relations management curriculum were identified by Kinnick and Cameron in a 1994 study involving a content analysis of the syllabi for 18

public relations management courses. These researchers made three recommendations including:

- 1) management content be taught in public relations curriculum rather than in the business school to insure that all students receive the training;
- 2) the public relations management course should include such management skills as budgeting, scheduling, and monitoring program implementation;
- 3) instructors should educate students on the consequences of failing to develop managerial skills such as salary potential and career advancement (Kinnick & Cameron, 1994).

The researchers described several examples of managerial programs that appeared to meet these objectives including a course at Rutgers University. During the course, students were matched with a client to address a real-life public relations problem. The students then developed a public relations plan and supervised the execution of the program by overseeing a staff of students enrolled in a public relations campaign course. The public relations management students were also tasked with evaluating the campaign and the students' work (Kinnick & Cameron, 1994). Another example of innovative curriculum was identified at Appalachian State University. Students developed a one-year administration plan for a public relations department and developed policies for selecting, supervising and evaluating staff; developed and monitored a departmental budget; and set objectives for their individual departments (Kinnick & Cameron, 1994).

While the previous recommendations address undergraduate education, researchers have also studied post-graduate education such as creating an MBA in public relations. In an opinion column, Murray writes the strength of an MBA is its "generalist, broad character (2002)." He recommends the public relations industry lobby business schools to include public relations topics in the MBA curriculum to improve the industry's prestige in the business community (Murray, 2002). Pincus, Rayfield and Ohl

(1994) agree with this view and point out that business students can benefit from training in media relations, public affairs, and community relations. Their survey of 63 MBA programs found 70% of the programs did not offer a required communication course for their students. When asked to rate the importance of business communication, MBA program leaders ranked the skill 5.3 on a scale of 10, with 10 representing the highest score. Pincus et al. (1994) offered several approaches that MBA programs can use to address this deficiency including integrating communication theory and application into existing business courses, scheduling guest lectures to address these topics, and through research projects and team teaching.

### **Literature Review Summary**

The literature provides solid evidence that excellent public relations can only be practiced when the most senior practitioner in an organization fulfills a managerial role. Excellent public relations involves being a member or having direct access to the dominant coalition, those with the power to set goals and objectives for the organization. Enactment of the managerial role can also prevent encroachment by other departments such as advertising and marketing into the realm of public relations. This is crucial for organizations because it allows the concerns of significant publics beyond customers to be considered prior to making critical decisions. A practitioner is identified as a public relations manager based on his or her primary job duties.

Some of the personal factors that can impact a practitioner's advancement to a managerial role include personal credibility in the eyes of senior management, longevity of service, perceived quality and expertise, a thorough understanding of the business and pertinent issues impacting the organization, and ability to demonstrate public relations'

contributions to the bottom line. Research has also suggested public relations practitioners may have weaknesses in the areas of financial and budgeting skills that may prevent them from advancing into managerial roles. These weaknesses may be addressed through education both through curriculum changes by faculty members and by students through their selection of elective courses.

While the literature provides much insight into the responsibilities of a public relations manager and the factors that can determine a practitioner's influence with senior management, what is lacking is anecdotal research on how practitioners today are overcoming barriers to advancement. Specifically, what types of training are they pursuing to overcome any personal weaknesses? What recommendations would they offer to educators and students to better prepare practitioners for career advancement into managerial roles?

### **Limitations of this Study**

While L.A. Grunig et al. (2002) focused on the enactment of the managerial role at the departmental level, a more appropriate level of analysis for this study is the individual practitioner. The reason for this approach is the purpose of this research to uncover the barriers to career advancement that practitioners are facing and how they are overcoming them. Due to the unit of analysis, this study will not address questions of encroachment of other departments into the realm of public relations. Other issues that will not be covered in the depth interviews will include recommendations to address student recruitment issues or ways to improve the image of public relations in the media. However, these issues are included in the literature review to give a full picture of the

challenges that the public relations industry is facing and because of their relevance to the enactment of the managerial role.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The purpose of this study is to determine how education can better prepare practitioners for advancement into managerial roles. This study focused on practitioners with 5-10 years experience, because it represents a point in their careers when practitioners are both seeking and achieving career advancement. This typical career path is supported by a guidebook prepared by PRWeek in 2007. The publication suggests a typical career in a public relations agency would involve working in an entry-level position for approximately three years, then being promoted to an account executive position. Practitioners should expect to stay at this level for two to three years and then be promoted to an account manager position by the time they have at least 5 to 7 years of experience (PR Week, 2007). The corporate career path suggests an entry level position would be a public relations specialist or public relations coordinator position. Corporate public relations practitioners should expect to advance to a public relations manager position, by the time they have 5 to 10 years of experience (PR Week, 2007).

Due to the desire to achieve a diverse sample of practitioners assuming both managerial and technician roles that includes both male and female participants and to select practitioners with 5-10 years of experience, a purposive sampling technique was used. Purposive sampling is defined as including “subjects or elements selected for specific characteristics or qualities” and eliminating “those who fail to meet these criteria (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 91-92).” To locate participants for this study, a snowball sampling technique, an approach known as referrals, was used (Wimmer & Dominick,

2006, p. 99-100). Presidents of PRSA chapters in Texas were contacted for referrals of potential members who fit the criteria of 5-10 years of experience.

To properly apply the research to role theory and achieve a purposive sample, participants were first screened through a questionnaire to determine whether they are primarily fulfilling managerial or technician roles in their organizations. Consistent with previous research on role theory (Culbertson, 1985; Broom & Dozier, 1986; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992; Toth & Grunig, 1993; Dozier & Broom, 1995; Grunig et al., 2002), a list of job responsibilities representing both roles was prepared, and the participants were classified based on which role they perform predominately. The questionnaire included demographic questions such as gender, salary, education and years of experience in order to correlate enactment of the managerial role with these factors.

Those selected for the sample were then asked to participate in depth interviews estimated to last 30 minutes to one hour. The interviews were audio-recorded so that transcripts could be made to assist with data analysis. The names of the participants are confidential in the final report due to the sensitive and personal nature of the research. Davis (1997, p. 198) suggests interviews are an appropriate method when the subject matter is highly confidential and when there is a need to acquire a detailed understanding of complicated behaviors and decision-making patterns. This criterion definitely seems to apply to career decisions and advancement, which can be highly sensitive and personal. Depth interviews have additional advantages including the fact that researchers can “often obtain unexpected information that other forms of research might not discover (Berger, 1998, p. 57).” Another advantageous characteristic of depth interviews is the flexibility it provides. Although basic questions are prepared in advance, the researcher

is free to ask follow-up questions (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 116). Finally, depth interviews allow researchers to obtain “multiple perspectives on a given topic (Jensen & Jankowski, 1991, p. 101).”

Depth interviews as a research method also have limitations. Because it typically involves small, nonrandom samples, the results cannot be generalized to a larger population (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 136). In addition, researchers must be cautious to avoid inadvertently communicating their own attitudes concerning the issues through “loaded questions, nonverbal cues, or tone of voice (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 136).” Finally, data analysis poses a challenge because it is more subjective to researcher bias (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 136).

When conducting depth interviews as with any research method, participants should be treated with dignity and respect. Scholars suggest the quality of the research is strongly correlated with ethical treatment of participants. Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 374) write, “as long as many researchers continue to treat respondents as unimportant, faceless individuals...the answers we, as researchers, will get will be commensurable with the questions we ask and with the way we ask them.”

While much of the early research on role theory utilized surveys, depth interviews have been selected in recent years by researchers studying career advancement issues in public relations. This includes a study aimed at uncovering the factors behind inequities in salary and status for female practitioners involving 34 participants (Hon, 1995); and a study on public relations influence in an organization involving 162 practitioners (Berger & Reber, 2005). Depth interviews have also been used to study how women perceive the existence of a glass ceiling in public relations in a study involving 10 depth

interviews and three focus groups (Wrigley, 2002). Finally, interviews were one of two methods employed in the 15-year study on excellence in public relations, which included both a survey of 327 organizations in the United States, Canada and United Kingdom and interviews with chief executive officers and practitioners in 25 of those organizations (L.A. Grunig et al., 2002).

Once the data has been collected, one appropriate technique for analysis is the constant comparative technique developed by Glaser and Strauss. It involves four steps including 1) the assignment of responses to categories, 2) refinement of the categories as necessary, 3) a search for relationships and themes among these categories, and 4) simplifying and integrating the data into a theoretical structure (as quoted in Wimmer & Dominick, 2006).

The literature provides strong support that depth interviews are an appropriate method for research on career advancement issues. Through the use of a questionnaire that identifies specific practitioner roles followed by depth interviews, this study contributes to the understanding of what barriers practitioners are facing to career advancement and how to address these issues through education.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DATA**

#### **The Sample**

The research sample included 10 practitioners with 5-10 years of experience. The practitioners represented the sectors of health, non-profit organizations, government, education, college athletics and a public relations agency. The participants included seven female and three male practitioners. While ethnicity was not one of questions included on the demographic questionnaire, one of the female participants who happened to be bilingual did indicate to the researcher that she was Hispanic. The other nine research participants were Caucasians. While a purposive sampling technique was used to recruit the participants, the sample is consistent with the demographics in a 2005 PRSA Membership Study. A total of 2,206 members completed the survey, representing a 13% response rate. According to this membership study, 69% of the respondents were female and 31% were male, which is practically identical to the composition of this sample. The membership composition included 93% Caucasians, 3% Black/African American, 1% Asian (PRSA, 2005). In an additional question, 3% of the respondents indicated that they were of a Latin or Spanish origin. This research sample is also consistent with the composition of the industry as a whole. In 2000, PRSA and IABC conducted a salary survey, which showed that 70% of the practitioners were women (as quoted in Aldoory & Toth, 2002).

**Table 1: Participant Occupations**

<b>PR Sector</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Health	3
Non-Profit	2
Government	1
Education	2
College Athletics	1
PR Agency	1

The sample was also analyzed to determine whether or not the participants were fulfilling managerial or technical roles in their organizations. The participants were presented a list of job responsibilities and asked to indicate which tasks they predominately fulfilled, using a Likert scale. The managerial job responsibilities included the following:

- 1) I counsel management on how to address public relations problems.
- 2) I make communication policy decisions.
- 3) I conduct research to learn about the views of significant publics for my organization.
- 4) I prepare the budget for our department.
- 5) I conduct research to evaluate the outcomes of our public relations programs.

After calculating the mean for each of the participant's responses to the 10 job responsibilities, there were no significant differences among the participants. Although some participants clearly indicated they did have management responsibilities, they were still assigned some technical tasks. For this reason, the mean was then calculated for responses to only the managerial roles.

**Table 2: Job Classification**

<b>Participant ID</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Salary Range</b>	<b>Experience in Years</b>
F-001	2.4	Technician	\$40,001-\$50,000	7.5
F-002	4	PR Manager	\$80,001-\$90,000	10
F-003	3.4	PR Manager	\$50,000-\$60,000	10
F-004	2.2	Technician	\$40,001-\$50,000	5
F-005	5	PR Manager	\$80,001-\$90,000	9
F-006	4	PR Manager	\$80,001-\$90,000	7
F-007	4	PR Manager	\$60,000-\$70,000	7
M-001	4.4	PR Manager	\$40,000-\$50,000	6
M-002	3	Technician	\$30,001-\$40,000	5
M-003	4	PR Manager	\$30,001-\$40,000	9

Based on the responses to the managerial responsibilities, seven of the participants can be classified as public relations managers, and the other three as technicians. The sample was also analyzed to determine whether or not enactment of the managerial role is correlated with higher salaries. With the exception of the practitioner working in college athletics, all the managers earned significantly higher salaries. This respondent explained the reasons behind the lower salary during the depth interview, which will be discussed in the next section. He described a highly competitive job market, which not only made it difficult to find a job in the sports information sector, but also to advance into managerial positions. When excluding the college athletics

participant's salary, the median salary for public relations managers was \$70,000 compared to \$40,000 for technicians.

To further support the correlation between the enactment of the managerial role and salary, a T-test was conducted. Results showed there is a statistically significant difference in salary based on role enactment  $t(7) = 2.7225, p < .02$ . Participants enacting managerial roles were more likely to earn higher salaries ( $M=70.0, SD=17.6$ ) when compared to those enacting technical roles ( $M=40.0, SD=8.66$ ). While the T-test is useful for analyzing this sample, due to the small sample size and the use of a nonprobability sampling method, the results cannot be generalized to the larger public relations workforce.

When analyzing the salary responses, it is appropriate to mention that this sample included participants from three different market sizes in Texas. Using figures from the 2000 Census, the smallest city's population was approximately 110,000, the second city had a population of approximately 700,000, and the largest city had a population of more than one million. Despite this range in population, the salaries were quite comparable across the three different market sizes. In fact, the three participants earning the highest salary of \$80,001-\$90,000 come from three different market sizes.

## **Depth Interviews**

The analysis of these depth interviews began with the constant comparative technique developed by Glaser and Strauss. The responses were initially assigned to 10 categories (see Appendix C) and then narrowed to six. Then individual responses to the

research questions were selected that represent the major themes that emerged through this study.

### **Education & Preparation for Career Advancement**

A total of 10 depth interviews were conducted with public relations practitioners in Texas with 5-10 years of experience. The interviews were conducted in person and averaged 34 minutes in length. Each of the participants was assigned a participant identification code to preserve confidentiality. The research participants were each asked the same 15 questions and follow-up questions were asked to clarify or expand on some of their answers.

The public relations practitioners were asked about how education is preparing them for career advancement from two different perspectives. First they described how well their own education prepared them to advance into managerial positions, and then how well recent graduates are prepared for the workforce. Most of the participants described their education as preparing them well for entry-level positions, but then they had to learn more advanced skills through on the job training, observation, and professional development training programs.

“So in terms of preparing me for career advancement, I don’t know that it was all that helpful. I think most of that is on the job training and learning from your mentors and people above you that have more experience. I think it did a really good job of preparing me for other ways, but not for career advancement per se (Participant #F-005).”

“I think that education in public relations does provide you with the fundamentals, so that you come in and you’re familiar with terminology and important historical case studies that help you on the job, but I think at the end of the day, so much of practice of public relations is on the job training, you learn by actually doing it (Participant #F-006).”

When asked if undergraduate education should be preparing students for career advancement, some of the participants did see a need for certain topics to be included in the curriculum.

“You know I do in the sense that I think that a lot of people coming out of school, myself included, I think you need to have an idea what it means to work for someone, and then what it means to work towards something. So I think it should definitely be something that’s included because there’s a lot of people, especially the generations the way that they’re gearing now, you see people entering the workforce, they’re an entitlement generation, and they really feel like they should just be given things and they don’t understand hierarchy and structure and what it means to work for something. So I think having some sort of emphasis on that in those capacities would be helpful to people coming out of school and those of that are in the workforce now as people are working for us (Participant #F-007).”

“But I definitely ...you have to hit on those types of things in college. Because if not, you’re sending someone out or going out to the work world with no experience whatsoever or an idea when you’re looking at a lot of strategic types of activities, managerial stuff. And one of the things I would say, looking back at mine is really focused more on business area. You know, I have a very strong journalism background, which is great and definitely essential, but I think you have to look at the business world, corporate world. You know when you get into things like finance, operations, logistics, that type of deal, you know all those things come into play (Participant #M-001).”

The participants were also asked about what types of public relations skills they saw lacking among interns or recent graduates working in their organizations. Some of the most common responses included confidence, ability to multi-task, attention to details, time management, and writing skills, particularly maturing in their writing and knowing how to write for specific audiences. Consistent with previous research, financial skills such as budgeting were also considered as critical skills, which are lacking among students and new practitioners.

“You know it’s easy to come up with some grand plan with no budget limitations, but once you put budget limitations in front of some people they have no idea what to do and then kind of working through some real life scenarios...Because everything has a real cost to it. Whether you’re placing something in the

newspaper, TV or working on brochures. I mean at some point you've got to get those things printed and have a plan for how you're going to distribute them and just being aware of what those costs are... having a way to back up what you've done and prove – show that there's a return on – even if it's just the time invested, investment. You know to be able to put some of that information together and pull that data and do something with it to show whether it was successful or unsuccessful (Participant #F-002).”

“A lot of people enter this industry, because they don't like math, they don't like numbers, and I've got to tell you anybody who thinks that is absolutely wrong. This industry's all about numbers, it's all about math. Every organization has to fight for PR dollars and the only way you can get it is to show how it impacts the company's bottom line. So you have to be able to understand business, you have to be able to understand how to plan a budget, how to meet a budget, how to budget people's time, how to measure PR results and tie them back to company's objectives so that, if we really want the conversation to be at the C-level (one practitioner's term for management- such as C.E.Os or C.O.O.s), they're going to say, what is PR going to do for our numbers, so need to be able to talk that talk (Participant #F-006).”

A few of the participants expressed a need for more professionalism among recent graduates such as wearing proper business attire when meeting clients and using more formal language in e-mail communication.

## **Overcoming Barriers to Advancement**

As mentioned earlier in the demographic portion of this report, seven of the 10 research participants have advanced to managerial positions in their organizations. The most common barriers to advancement mentioned by the participants were lack of opportunity and the organizational structure of their employers. The organizational structure was primarily cited as a challenge for those working in non-profit organizations.

“I find that a barrier that exists that within a non-profit organization, things aren't as structured as ... they would be at a major corporation. So my husband used to work at (name of employer), and they had a whole science to how you promoted to this next, you had the same title, but you had a different number next to it, and once you got to the next number and then you were out of those numbers and then

you went to a different letter with a new set of numbers, and it was whole kind of structure and it was hard for him to understand why I couldn't, when we would talk about my frustrations with wanting to advance and there not being opportunities to advance within a non-profit, even a well known national non-profit like I work for... I don't know that is necessarily on the forefront of the leaders of the organization to advance their employees or to have opportunities for them to advance. A lot of it is we're all here because of the good cause and there's definitely a reason why people who work for a non-profit work for non-profits and I know that I prefer to work for a non-profit because of that kind of fulfillment aspect of what it brings. At the same time, I want to advance in my career just like the next person who's down the street at a corporation (Participant #F-003)."

"I've been here almost five years, and the first several years that I was here, the executive team and the structure of the organization was very flat. There wasn't a lot of middle management opportunities. There were entry level and then it would jump to a management role, but you would be in a management role for several years before that would jump to a director and then again there was kind of a gap and a barrier between that and a vice president role and then the C-level role. And so for those people that have solid three to 10 years of experience, there really wasn't a lot of room for growth. While your role would kind of change, and you could take on increased responsibilities within your role, structurally there just wasn't a lot of movement that happened... But I think now they've done a good job of providing professional advancement and opportunities, but for several years here it was a different story (Participant #F-007)."

The practitioner in the college athletics sector described a competitive workforce as a major obstacle to employment and advancement.

"But if I look at taking this same position at a different school, it's tough to come by. When you get in this position, these positions are like gold and you don't want to let them go... Prior to 30, there's a lot of people who want to get into this. This is what they want to do. Post 30, they start to settle down, the travel starts to wear people out, the long hours start to wear people out, people start filtering out. But there is an allure especially for young males, many of whom played sports their entire life until at some point entering into or coming out of college, to be involved with sports.... A lot of entry-level positions, but you're coming out of college and you have school loans to pay, \$15-\$16,000 a year is not very much money and the full time positions, the assistants positions, the associate positions, those are the ones that are very competitive and you're just not going to get those coming out of college (Participant #M-003)."

The research participants did offer some advice for new practitioners seeking to overcome barriers to advancement, such as communicating your desire to advance with your manager and being willing to work extra hours.

“In my current position, I have taken steps to try to overcome those barriers by meeting with my manager and expressing my desire to advance and to have more opportunities offered to me, so that then when the time arose that there was an opportunity, she would know of my interest and then be able to fill the position with me. And so that recently has happened. We lost someone from our department who left the foundation for various reasons and took another job (Participant #F-003).”

“I think there have been many times in my career when I’ve been asked to do more than I’m kind of physically capable of doing in an 8-hour day. So maybe there’s times when your workload is 40 hours a week and you get asked to do another project that might add another 10 hours to your week. You either decide to take it on knowing what that means for your personal time or you decide not to. And I have chosen to, I have not turned down any projects that have come my way. Although, I will say that at some point, I will probably start rethinking that... I think when you’re a person who doesn’t say no, you become a bit indispensable to an organization because they know they can always count on you (Participant #F-006).”

The research participants suggested that on the job experience and observation have helped prepare them to assume managerial responsibilities.

Like I’m in a... somehow ended up in a parks and recreation field. Obviously, I’ve had to educate myself on that industry. And I think industry specific jobs often that can delay an advancement. You know if you’re PR out of college, journalism background or whatever, and you go into communications, you might not have any idea about the business you’re working in. So there’s a learning curve there where you’ve got to immerse yourself in the culture of that business. If I went into healthcare, I would haven’t any idea about healthcare, so that’s going to be a 3 year lag before I could really think someone should deserve to get into a managerial position (Participant #M-001).”

“So every other weekend, I’m in someone else’s press box and seeing how they’re handling the media, seeing what their game notes look like. See how they run their press conference. That is the most beneficial thing as far as professional development because you gain from that, you see things (Participant #M-003).”

“I’ve seeked to learn from various people that I’ve worked with from observation. Just watching people whether they were more experienced or less experienced,

higher or lower title, I mean I try to learn from everybody I work with. And I can look at the person we just hired out of college who's 22 and I'm going to be able to learn just as much from her as she's going to be able to learn from me (Participant #F-006).”

The research participants were also asked about professional development programs that they had recently participated in and the barriers they faced to seeking additional training. Topics of interest included new media issues, direct marketing, leadership and management skills, and media pitching tips. The most significant barrier to training was time. When asked about the best format to deliver training, several of the participants preferred conferences, full day or half-day workshops that allowed them to leave work behind, as well as learn and interact with colleagues.

“...sort of an emersion session like an all day session or 2 or 3 day session where you are allowed to let everything else on your mind on hold and to really focus on the topic. I think an hour here, an hour there is frankly worthless. And I think that those sessions where you're both listening and participating where you get to break out into groups, where you get to share your own experiences, where you get to maybe interact with some role playing situations have been really beneficial. And I think where people just give you really practical things that you can keep at your desk and so when you find yourself in a situation, you can go back and reference it and there's a real practical action that you can take. It's not instilled in you yet, but a reference guide that you can actually do something with (Participant #F-006).”

The practitioners consistently said that their employers do budget for professional development training. They also preferred for the training to occur during weekdays, so as to not conflict with personal time. Several of the practitioners said they travel with their jobs or work weekends occasionally, so many were not willing to give up weekends or evenings for professional development.

While these practitioners have filled some of the gaps in their undergraduate education through on the job training, observation and professional development, they

also offered some advice for educators on how to better prepare students for the workforce and recommended electives for students to consider including in their degree plan.

### **Advice for Educators & Students**

The research participants provided some general suggestions for educators such as inviting practicing professionals to visit the classroom as guest speakers, and strongly endorsed group projects as part of the curriculum.

“And you really don’t understand how important that is until you get into the workplace, everything is a group project. You’re never going to be doing anything for the rest of your life completely on your own and so I think, not just forcing people to do a group project, but help them understand the dynamics, how to overcome a person who doesn’t care or isn’t interested, how to help people work on components that play to their strengths. If you try hard enough, you will find something that everybody can contribute to and that they’ll be happy contributing to (Participant #F-006).”

When asked about an example of best practices in curriculum, several practitioners described either an advertising or public relations campaign class. The students were assigned a real life client and had to prepare a plan and present it to the client. The key suggestion from one research participant is that the assignment should include a limited budget.

“I think that made such a big difference to actual work with real companies in a real situation ’cause it’s so easy to do case studies where you do absolutely do anything that has unlimited budget and we did some of that, but that wasn’t as helpful as a very specific company, with a specific budget and a specific need (Participant #F-002).”

Another participant suggested educators assign the students various roles to fulfill to teach them about organizational structure.

“...it would be kind of interesting to say ok, we’re going to treat this like you’re working at an agency ok and here’s the different aspects of how an agency works, there’s a creative person, there’s maybe a media relations person, and your account executive. These are all the different roles. Ok, I’m going to assign all of you roles and this person’s the account executive, this is what the account executive is responsible for. This is what...you’re the media relations, this is what you’re responsible for. And kind of maybe letting those, giving them a little bit of a taste of that and figuring out how that all works together. And then maybe really executing something (Participant #F-004).”

Two more examples of innovative curriculum included an assignment to produce a special event, and a partnership with a video production class. Both courses proved invaluable for this practitioner, who now oversees special events for a municipal parks and recreation department.

“...we had a whole semester where I had to produce an event. And I ended up, I had to produce an Earth Day event complete with scientists, kids, hands-on learning, free event at our science building, had entertainment as well, refreshments. You know, at time, I thought that’s pretty far from, I didn’t really understand how much that involved, but the PR person, if you’re looking at any type of event, you’ve got to make sure all your logistics are covered, so once again, it’s that hands-on learning...we had basically split up four people per committee and you split them up and there was I think a total of five different events that were put on by that class, public events, all free of charge, but you had to look at sponsorships in order to offset your costs and boy, I think that was critical.... And you know when we did media campaign deals, well I did a publicity campaign for a movie. Did a partnership with the RT- radio, television and film department, to where you had your students making the productions and then this class was involved in doing the promotional aspect of that, the media kit, pitching it out. It was real life stuff (Participant #M-001).”

The practitioners were also asked what types of electives they would recommend for students to prepare them to eventually assume managerial positions. The most common responses included public speaking, management classes, accounting, and a range of journalism, advertising and marketing classes. One of the more unusual recommendations was for students to learn to play golf.

“Something else that I wish I would have done that really has made a difference in this job that I hold now, but would have made a difference in a previous job

that I held was being able to play golf. When I was at the bank, I did marketing for a bank and I was responsible for organizing the annual, several golf tournaments. So I always knew how to do that and I knew about find the mulligans and I understood all that kind of stuff and I knew that certain people like to drive the beer cart and I knew how all the worked. But I really didn't understand the game of golf. And had I, I probably would have been able to participate more on some of those scrambles that were really important, with the important kind of people, and I just think that is a really important, that is something that they don't teach you. And I've heard it a million times, but yes the biggest business decisions are usually made on the golf course (Participant #F-005).”

While there was no consensus among the participants, a few suggested that students consider selecting courses to prepare them to practice in a particular public relations sector such as healthcare.

“...I think it was helpful to have a little bit of a specialization and I chose healthcare just because that's an area has always been very important to me...I think it is important to have a niche, a little bit of a specialty in something. You always hear it's, obviously you want to be great at a lot of things, but you don't want to just touch the surface on many, many little things, because I don't know that you'll get very far. I think you need to focus on one to two areas that you're really passionate about because I think that that comes out in your job (Participant #F-001).”

“In my case, I took a lot of science courses, because that is what I was interested in and I've worked in the healthcare field. So I think, I always kind of knew that from a communications aspect that I was interested in healthcare and I took things like medical terminology, and basic anatomy, or basic biology, and I took a science writing course on how to break down complex, taking research and turning it into something that people could read. So that was from when I was there, I knew I had an interest in something and looked for electives to match that...and I really think that being a general communicator is fine, but if there's someway to tie it to something that you love or something you have an interest for then I think you should try and do that. If it's art, if it's business, if it's in my case, it was healthcare. There might be, if it's politics and you want to go into public affairs, you might want to be taking some classes on political campaigns or something like that, fundraising. I think, you really should just tailor those things to what you like (Participant #F-004).”

Another research participant said it was unrealistic for students to select a particular sector, so she preferred more of a generalized educational approach that includes components of public relations, advertising and marketing.

“I think that’s great if you absolutely know that that’s what you want to do. But I think that for a lot of students what you want to do when you’re in school and when you first get out of school could really change between then and later on. I know it did for me... So I almost think that while the specializing is great if you know what you’re looking for, the kind of broader understanding of all the different things that are there, that are kind of related to what you think you want to do, is even more important, because it just shows you that with this degree, I can do this advertising, that I think I want to do, or I can do PR, because it’s kind of related and it has some kind of similar principles, and there’s some obvious differences, and they complement each other and here’s how. Or I can do marketing communications and here’s where kind of those kinds come into play. And I think that is even more effective because it’s just a more realistic, in my experience it’s a more realistic preparation for what’s likely to happen (Participant #F-003).”

While there was no consensus on a specific degree plan, educators and students should consider the reasons given for both the specialization versus generalized approaches and determine which seems more appropriate for a particular student.

### **Advanced Degrees & Accreditation**

While much of the focus of this research is on the role of undergraduate education in preparing students for career advancement, practitioners were also asked about the value of advanced degrees and accreditation when seeking promotional opportunities. The responses to both areas of training were mixed. Those who valued advanced degrees said it could improve your standing in the corporate world.

“That one’s kind of hard because I think it really depends on what industry that you choose. I started off in ad agencies and I felt like it wasn’t important, but more in the corporate world. I just think it helps, especially like an MBA. It just helps put you a little bit higher up in that stack of resumes that they get on their desks so in a sense, I do think for a management position or higher level position

that having an MBA or any kind of advanced degree just helps you stand out a little bit more. It's a tough choice to choose whether you're going to go to school or get experience. In my case, I feel like the experience that I have still puts me higher up on that list of resumes. And if I had spent those years going to school, then I wouldn't have the same experiences (Participant #F-002)."

"...you're working with other executives that have other backgrounds and disciplines, I think having a graduate degree is very helpful, because you're now speaking the terms that they understand, because a lot of the people that work at the finance level have MBAs. And a lot of the people that are in the C-suite just have that kind of background and I think it shows the commitment, I think it shows your personal commitment to your professional advancement that you've gone the extra step to do that, so I think it is important... I think having credentials again it does show that you have taken some extra steps to be more familiar with your field, so I definitely, I think it may give you an extra look, but I don't think it's a deal breaker (Participant #F-007)."

Another benefit associated with advanced degrees is financial rewards such as stipends. The research participants said the value associated with advanced degrees and accreditation is not consistent throughout the industry.

"The only way we do offer stipends for employees that have master's degree and or doctorate level degrees, but not certifications. And in this industry, in education, most of the superintendents don't understand what APR is and they don't really care (Participant #F-005)."

"I've seen advanced degrees highly valued and I've seen them undervalued. I've seen people get recognition for them just verbally, and then I've seen people get rewarded for them financially. And it's so different everywhere you go. I think you have to understand that our profession doesn't naturally reward an advanced degree nor do we reward the APR accreditation, the PRSA accreditation. I think the industry as a whole doesn't. There are pockets, there are organizations that do, and so a person that has an advanced degree or an APR accreditation should seek out employment with an organization that has someone else who's in their same situation. So the best way I think you're going to get rewarded for that or recognized for it is go find somebody to work for that has one too, because they know what it took, they have an appreciation of what it means (Participant #F-006)."

Even though the rewards for advanced degrees and accreditation are not perceived as consistent throughout the public relations industry, several of the research participants suggested there were personal growth reasons for seeking the additional training.

## **Roles & Characteristics of Mentors**

When considering the factors that can contribute to career growth and advancement, mentors should not be overlooked. The practitioners suggested several characteristics that new practitioners should consider when seeking a mentor. These include time, willingness to teach, experience, success, and integrity. Other recommendations included seeking someone in a managerial position who is willing to share both the successes and learning experiences.

“Find someone who’s been not only successful in terms of title and money, but someone who’s been successful in that they’ve been able to do the accomplishments that they’ve had or have made, the projects that they’ve worked on. And what that translates to in terms of skill and knowledge. For instance, one of the things that I enjoyed most about working with (name of previous supervisor), she had been there during the Wedgewood shootings. When the guy went into the church and shot everybody up... She was there when the tornado hit downtown Ft. Worth and the buildings were just demolished and people were just running to the emergency room. And she had to work those events and so knowing that she had been there during crisis situations was attractive to me, because I knew that I could learn those skills from her, which I did (Participant #F-005).”

Another participant suggested that new practitioners should consider approaching mid-level practitioners to serve as mentors rather than senior practitioners.

“I would say, look for someone that’s accessible. You know if you’re right out of school, it may not make sense for you to try to be mentored by a CMO at a company, because they may be in the industry for 15 and 20 years, and they probably have a really different perspective than someone that’s been working for 5 to 7 years, who would probably provide you really good immediate growth. And then because as you mature in your career, your mentors mature, so I think that would be something to don’t go out and try to run down a C-level person,

'cause I don't think they're going to provide you the perspective that you need at the point that you're at. So you know, find someone that you feel comfortable with, that has time for you, and that has enough experience to provide you with obviously some mentorship, but that you can get to and you understand what they're talking about. Because it doesn't make sense for you to have a mentor that is 15 levels above you and can't talk your language (Participant #F-007)."

One of the participants pointed out that the mentoring relationship should not be one-sided. She said she passes news articles of interest on to her mentor from time to time as a way to further the relationship. Another word of caution is to be respectful of a mentor's time.

"Well, I guess maybe one piece of advice would be what I just mentioned - try to learn something from everybody. I think that it's a huge mistake to put the burden on one person in any type of relationship in your life to try to expect one person to fulfill all of your needs. And I look around our office and I see a lot of young people here feeling, I've seen them feel frustrated in the past because they didn't get the time or the attention that they may have wanted from our CEO or from a specific supervisor, and I've tried to help set their expectation by saying that's a huge burden if one person has to be a mentor to 20 people that work underneath them. That's a lot to ask of someone, so take it where you can get it (Participant #F-006)."

One of the most valued roles of a mentor is being able to offer objective advice when practitioners are faced with career decisions, particularly when marriage or family issues are involved. In these situations, a mentor outside of your immediate employer can be crucial. One practitioner described such an experience.

"...this is where my mentor came into play because she talked me through a lot of this. I really knew that in my heart I wanted to stay here, but I felt like for our family, you know our finances and we want to add onto our house, we want to have a baby soon, we want to do all these types of things, but I needed to at least explore if I wasn't going to get opportunity to advance here, I needed to explore what else was out there. And what her advice that I ended up taking was that, she said, if you guys weren't looking to have a family soon, I would say, yeah, go off and interview and start one of these new jobs ...and excel through the ranks there and take this promotion, and make that part of your volunteer life, and so on. But she said, you know you've been here for a number of years and you've established your identity here at the organization, they know what to expect from

you, and she said, if I get pregnant soon, and I'm starting a new job at the same time, it's probably not the time that I'm going to be showing my best work and so that was one of the factors that went into me deciding to stay here... For me, this was the right choice to stay (Participant #F-003).”

The majority of practitioners participating in this study discussed the tough decisions they've made in order to have both successful careers and family life, and steps they've taken to achieve that balance. At the same time, some of the participants were still seeking the right personal solutions.

### **Career & Family – Achieving Balance**

During the depth interviews, eight of the participants responded that they were currently married. Among the married participants, three were also parents. One of the participants described the challenge of achieving work-life balance when recalling her experiences as a newlywed working at a public relations agency.

“When I was on the agency side, when I started there, I was single. Of course working long weeks, working lots of hours and some travel and what not. I actually, after leaving that agency position, returned to that agency, that same agency in a higher position as a married person, fully expecting that, no problem, I'll be able to just do it the same way and quickly found out that didn't work. So much to the point that it actually was creating a lot of stress with my relationship at home and later found out that I needed to figure out how to make my career work with the marriage and with a family. And so, the only way I could do that was to change positions. It kind of, I guess opened my eyes to what ... It wasn't good to be at work for 70 hours a week and traveling for you know, one week out of the month or more than that sometimes (Participant #F-003).”

This practitioner and her husband jointly decided to move to another city and accepted jobs that were more conducive to family life. There are other means of achieving balance without changing employers. Two of the practitioners told stories about how they had coordinated their work life with their spouses in areas of travel and work hours.

“I think it’s just by finding a job that better suited the time that I was willing to give to my career. It better suited my and my husband’s travel schedules. We both travel quite a bit with our jobs and so having a child just made us both be more aware of that and try and not be gone at the same time – some of those things. But luckily, in my position and in his, we’re both high enough up that we can really control our schedules. It would have been harder had we had a family straight out of school, but at least the way it’s worked out it’s worked out pretty well (Participant #F-002).”

“Most of the people that I work... tend to work 9 to 9:30 to 6:30 or 7 at night. If I work on their schedule, I won’t get home until 8 o’clock at night. So I have shifted my lifestyle to come into the office earlier than I used to and I leave earlier. And that enables me two hours in the morning that are completely uninterrupted and that is when I’m most efficient. And so all of those materials that the team sort of cranks out the night before, I review them the next morning. And so I think, that’s probably been the biggest thing that I’ve done that’s helped me, because my husband also goes to work early and comes home earlier. So I’ve tried to align my schedule more with his, so that we are waking up at the same time, going to work at the same time, and coming home at the same time (Participant #F-006).”

As these two participants have suggested, the support and sacrifices of both spouses in a marriage can be a key to achieving that balance. Another practitioner described a team effort that allowed her to accept a dream job in less than ideal circumstances, a month after giving birth to the couple’s first child.

“...when I got this job, when I started the job, she was four weeks old. When I interviewed for the job, she was 10 days old. I had no intention of looking for another job, when I applied. In all honesty, I applied because the money was good. I didn’t think I would be a viable candidate at all. And so my husband took two years off, the first two years of my oldest daughter’s life to stay at home and be with her, so that I could have this job. Since then he’s gone back to work and again he’s in radio, and we’ve had a second daughter who is six months old (Participant #F-005).”

As a mother of two young children, this practitioner said in addition to the support of her spouse, she also needed some outside help, in the form of a housekeeper.

“The only way I’ve been able to balance it is by, this may seem shallow, but having somebody come and clean my house every week. For working moms, it’s very difficult. Some people are very lucky to have husbands who are great cooks

and great house cleaners or housekeepers...But mine tries. Mine unloads the dishwasher and he wants a party thrown in his honor, because he did it once every two weeks. When I get home, my heels come off, my suit and jacket gets put on a hanger and I'm in the kitchen trying to figure out what we're going to eat for dinner. I'm throwing stuff in the dishwasher, I'm unloading the dishwasher, I'm ok let's go, let's get your clothes off, let's get in the tub it's bath time. Let's take a bath...ok let's dry your hair...let's get your jammers on... and it's non-stop. And now with two, it's exhausting and so I put them to bed at 8:30 and I sit down at 9 o'clock and I can either go run the vacuum or do the laundry or I could just sit there and decompress. And because the responsibilities that I have in this job for my own mental health I have succumbed to sitting down and just decompressing or else I won't make it for the next day (Participant #F-005)."

As in this example, several other practitioners provided very practical suggestions for achieving this balance. This included making time for personal interests such as a dance or aerobics class, using vacation days, setting aside family time, and communicating with your boss when facing burnout. While these tips may sound fairly easy to implement, at least one of the practitioners considering parenthood for the first time was struggling with the choices she would face.

"I'm now kind of at that phase where I want to start thinking about having a family and so I wonder, can I have a family and continue to do the job that I'm in right now. I don't know that I can. I think about it every day. What am I willing to give up. Can I do this job in less hours, what will it take for me to continue to be successful here if I can't give the same amount of time or mental energy. So I think part of that question is still a big question mark for me (Participant #F-006)."

While the answers to these questions are never easy, the reality is all of these practitioners seemed to be facing similar issues - how to achieve excellence and success in their careers and at the same time have time for a personal life. Through qualitative studies such as this, practitioners can receive some reassurance that they are not alone in their struggles and learn from the experiences of others.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS**

This research study has provided some encouraging insights into the public relations industry. First of all, seven of the 10 participants in this study had advanced to managerial roles in their organizations. While this study used a purposive sampling method and the results cannot be generalized to the industry as a whole, the fact that practitioners in three different market sizes are advancing in the profession after 5-10 years of experience is still a significant finding. In addition, the three practitioners earning the highest salaries were females from three different market sizes. This is also a positive finding considering that in previous research women were earning considerably less than men. Consistent with previous research, higher salaries were associated with enactment of the managerial role. When excluding the college athletics participant's salary, the median salary for public relations managers was \$70,000 compared to \$40,000 for technicians.

Some of the research participants were facing barriers to advancement such as lack of opportunities in the industry and the structure of their organizations. However, the practitioners said they are overcoming those barriers through good communication and relationships with their managers, observation, experience, and professional development. While training can help practitioners overcome barriers to advancement, time is a major barrier to participating in professional development opportunities. The majority of the research participants preferred conferences or full day workshops that allowed them to leave work and other distractions behind, so they can more fully focus on the training and at the same time network with other professionals.

Several of those who have advanced to managerial positions did so by agreeing to take on additional projects and working extra hours. This presented a challenge for practitioners with children and those considering parenthood. Some of the research participants provided tips as to how they are balancing career and family. This included adjusting travel or work schedules to coordinate with a spouse, hiring a housekeeper, taking vacation time, and making personal time a priority to enjoy activities such as an aerobic class.

The research participants also provided recommendations for educators and students regarding practical ways that education can prepare students for career advancement. The participants described specific class projects they had participated in as students and supported including group projects and guest speakers as part of the curriculum. The advice for students involved recommendations on selecting elective coursework and advice for choosing a mentor. The electives included public speaking, management classes, accounting, and a range of journalism, advertising and marketing classes, as well as golf. The characteristics they recommended students look for in a mentor included time, willingness to teach, experience, success, and integrity. Other recommendations included seeking someone in a managerial position who is willing to share both the successes and learning experiences.

The research participants were also asked about what types of public relations skills they saw lacking among interns or recent graduates working in their organizations. The most common responses included confidence, ability to multi-task, attention to details, time management, and writing skills, particularly maturing in their writing and knowing how to write for specific audiences. Consistent with previous research, financial

skills such as budgeting were also considered as critical skills, which are lacking among students and new practitioners. Financial skills can be addressed through the curriculum and elective recommendations provided by the research participants.

The practitioners were also questioned about the value of advanced degrees and accreditation when seeking advancement opportunities. Those who valued advanced degrees said it could improve your standing in the corporate world, and financial rewards such as stipends are also possible. However, the research participants said the value associated with advanced degrees and accreditation is not consistent throughout the industry. One practitioner suggested seeking out employers who have advanced degrees or credentials and understand the value of this additional training.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

While the insight and advice from these public relations practitioners is useful for educators, students and new practitioners, this study involved a small sample due to time and financial limitations. A larger sample using participants from different states or regions would provide further insights into the experiences of mid-level practitioners. In addition, a study focused solely on the experiences of minority practitioners seeking career advancement would also be worthy of further research. The findings of this study could also be utilized when developing a quantitative study on career advancement issues. Other topics of study covered in the literature review that merit further study included student recruitment issues and ways to improve the image of public relations in the media.

Another encouraging aspect of this study is the response of these practitioners to this topic. When recruitment e-mails were distributed by PRSA chapter leaders, several

practitioners willingly forwarded the e-mails to friends they thought might be eligible. Several of those who did volunteer expressed an interest in reading the results of the study. These practitioners want to succeed in their careers and learn from others who have been successful. The topic of career advancement offers many themes that merit further study.

In conclusion, this study has provided practical suggestions for how education can better prepare students for career advancement. While practitioners can gain managerial skills later through job experience, observation and professional development programs, researchers and practitioners suggest some skills such as budgeting should be taught at the undergraduate level. The advice provided by practitioners participating in this study provides steps that students and recent graduates can follow to help them move up the career ladder.

## APPENDIX A

### Pre-Interview Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a study on the role of education in preparing public relations practitioners for career advancement. The answers you provide to this questionnaire will be used to determine how job responsibilities are correlated with gender, education, experience and salary.

To preserve the confidentiality of your responses, you have been given an identification number. Only the researcher will be able to match the identity of the respondents participating in this study with the questionnaire and interview transcripts. Participation is voluntary, meaning you have the right to accept or decline this invitation. By completing this questionnaire, you are consenting for your answers to be used in this study. Thank you in advance for your participation.

**Participant identification number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mark with an “X” which description best identifies your predominant job responsibilities:**

Job Responsibility	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am responsible for producing brochures, newsletters or other types of publications.					
I counsel management on how to address public relations problems.					
I am responsible for writing and placing news releases.					
I make communication policy decisions.					
I conduct research to learn about the views of significant publics for my organization.					
I coordinate the logistical activities for special events.					
I prepare the budget for our department.					
I write and edit communication materials.					
I conduct research to evaluate the outcomes of our public relations programs.					
I execute the specific activities in a public relations campaign.					

**Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Years of Full Time Job Experience:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Length of Service with Current Employer  
(please indicate whether years or months):**

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**Highest Level of Education:**

\_\_\_\_\_ No College.

\_\_\_\_\_ Some College.

\_\_\_\_\_ A bachelor's degree.

\_\_\_\_\_ Some graduate study.

\_\_\_\_\_ A master's degree.

\_\_\_\_\_ A doctoral degree.

**If you attended college, what was your major:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Salary range:**

\_\_\_\_\_ \$20,000 to \$30,000

\_\_\_\_\_ \$30,001 to \$40,000

\_\_\_\_\_ \$40,001 to \$50,000

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50,001 to \$60,000

\_\_\_\_\_ \$60,001 to \$70,000

\_\_\_\_\_ \$70,001 to \$80,000

\_\_\_\_\_ \$80,001 to \$90,000

\_\_\_\_\_ \$90,001 to \$100,000

\_\_\_\_\_ More than \$100,000

**Please check which sector of public relations describes your organization:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Agency \_\_\_\_\_ Government/Military \_\_\_\_\_ Education

\_\_\_\_\_ Healthcare \_\_\_\_\_ Corporate \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Profit Organization

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please list): \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Transcripts F-001

Job Responsibility Classification: Technician

Age: 29

Experience: 7.5 years

Years of Service with current employer: 3.5 years

Education: Bachelor's degree

Major: Community Health

Salary range: \$40,001- \$50,000

PR Sector: Healthcare

1. How well do you think your education prepared you for career advancement?

F-1: I have to say that I have a bachelor's degree and my degree is actually in community health so going through college, I have to say I kind of used the second education – learned a lot in the classroom about healthcare and obviously did have to do a lot of strategic planning with that, but it was more strategic planning for health systems. So going through I learned a lot through my program, my program was actually was a 4 ½ year program, where you took four years of classes and then you actually did an internship that last semester. So I would say that internship and the classes leading up to the internship were actually probably the most critical because you were getting out in the workforce and each one of the internships was chosen by the student and also you worked obviously through a professor for a specific site location. But the internships ranged anywhere from someone working at a non-profit to someone working at a pediatric hospital in volunteer services. Some people actually decided that they wanted to take the healthcare one step further, but it was also kind of help in sports education so they went and did a student teaching somewhere at a local high school, so that they could coach also. But I would say, my education as far as for PR, we did definitely have to learn how to write and very much I would say the social skills that you need to actually work in a public relations field. As far as writing, in my degree plan, I did not have to take any business classes, which I think would have very, very helpful. I believe I did take one upper level management class, which I think was very important, which actually I took it because the professor was very well known at the university, so I think I learned a lot in the class, but it was also just to be able to be in the presence of this particular professor who was very, very knowledge in the business world.

Q: Is there anything in particular that you felt like they did really well at your school or you teachers in particular?

F-1: I would have to say really the importance of the internship and we actually had the semester before you did the internship, you actually had a class that was called internship preparation and it really did, you went out, you did the interviews, you actually had to interview the location where you were doing your internship so I feel like it helped with the importance of actually going out and I would say even just confidence level, knowing that you can get out there, you can look for a job, knowing what you need to do as you

are going out to look for that job. I would say because I didn't go the traditional route, I'm sure had a I gone between communications or more public relations route in college I probably would have had a whole lot more writing experience, but because I chose the healthcare route, I didn't have that. But I did definitely have that post college when I went to work for a non-profit, which I'm sure is down the line.

2. What types of barriers have you faced to advancement?

F-1: I would say, because I was not a full-fledged business major or a public relations kind of major, I would say sometimes you do get questions about questioned, I guess about what is knowledge on writing, do you, are you really able to write a press release, do you know what a backgrounder is, do you know what a long lead is, what a short lead is. As far as advancement, actually I feel like I'm still learning, but I do think sometimes if I were looking for another job in the PR field, I very much, I don't know if I lucked out, I was very qualified for the position that I currently have, but it as also my education didn't get me there, it was kind of post college that I actually learned how to write well, I learned how to have the confidence to pitch to the media. I haven't had a lot of barriers, I think it vary by what institution you were working for. I think there is probably a, I would say in the PR field, I feel that you do definitely have to prove yourself to advance up. It's not just going day by day writing the press release, going through several, several variations of it, I would say you definitely have to put yourself out there to learn the skills, attend various conferences so that you can learn and get to know your peers and figure out what you need to do to advance.

3. What steps have you personally taken to overcome any obstacles to advancement?

F-1: I have. I am a member of PRSA and a member of Press Club for my local community and have taken classes within my institution where I work. I have actually taken classes in customer service, which I've never felt like that's an area where I'm lacking in, but at the same time, I figure everyone needs good customer service skills, so I went to this class, it was not the most helpful in the world because it was very much lower level. I felt like they should have created a customer service for this particular population within where I work and then more of an upper level management customer service. But I think I always try and better myself by learning from my peers and learning from we do work with a PR agency to help us out also and just kind of learn from them as new members come in to work at the agency, as well as other members who go onto other positions and just kind of learn from them, what did they do, what can I learn from what they taught me.

4. What role have mentors had in helping you advance in your career?

F-1: I would say my first career out of college, it focused very much on fundraising, and I would say 75% fundraising, 25% actually PR and I would say that was kind of my first time that I was really out there pitching stories. And we did the agency, that I worked for was part of a larger national organization, so they would send us "swiss cheese" press releases where really we just had to fill stuff in. But that was kind of my first forte into

ok, here's writing and now I've got to pitch this out there and I have to get the local newspaper or larger local newspaper to try and run these recruitment ads. And I actually had a wonderful, when I first joined that organization, had a wonderful boss, a wonderful director, who was able to kind of teach me the steps. And know that I've moved to another, a new job, I've been able to, I would say my manager and director have both tried to mentor me, tried to kind of take me under their wing and go, oh, you know what we know that you're new at this, why don't you take a stab at writing at this, or take a stab at taking this project and then bring it to us, and let know how, let us know what questions you have along the way, but then we'll kind of put in our two cents and we can sit down and discuss it. So I would say, they've definitely tried. I probably would say in most institutions as well as here, sometimes there's time factors as far as people trying to move, trying to get their job done and making time to actually mentor you, which I think most people find in most institutions or most places where you do have to find balance. And I have to say, I've mentored people before who have come in and maybe they've taken another position within the agency or within the department and come to me and said listen if ever an opportunity to move over to this team, I would definitely be interested and what do I need to do to do this. And would say, through my university, I have been able to, they have a very good alumni, job bank, alumni mentoring program is not the right word, but everyone who works in a particular field is listed in a database, so that if someone lives in that area of the country, they can call up and say hey, how did you break into this, what did you do to get this type of job, and what do you think about it, what do you not like about it, where do you see it going in the future. But the place I've been lucky enough those would be places that I've worked have really have tried to pave the way and at least tried to help out along the way and say listen this what I think you need to do to get to this next level.

Q: Is there any particular characteristics that you think are valuable to look for in a mentor?

F-1: Someone who has the time and has the willingness to teach and to take, I don't know that under their wing is the right phrase, but definitely someone who's willing to do that. Someone who is open-minded. Someone who is well educated in the field, who's made mistakes in the field. Because I feel like, the people who have learned the most are the ones who have the mistakes, and gone, oh, you know what really I did it this way, but looking back hindsight I really should have done something this way. And I think it's hard to, I know I'm always willing to help other people, but at the same time, sometimes it has to fit into my schedule or the mentor's schedule too. So I think as far as finding good qualities in mentors, someone who's very open, someone who's willing to share their past successes and their weaknesses.

5. What advice would you offer a new practitioner when seeking a mentor?

F-1: If someone were looking for someone to help mentor them, I would definitely give them the advice to seek out those who when you're first looking or when you're starting a new job, those people who come up to you on the first, second days who truly are, who come by and say listen let me know if you have any questions, because there are

instances where people come by and go ask me any questions, I'm up on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor or the 5<sup>th</sup> floor and then you can never actually find that person. But I think I'm a pretty good judge of character and you can kind of tell when people are sincere in the beginning, those people who stop by the first couple of weeks and just say hey, did you find everything? What's going on, please come by with any questions and if you are working on a project or if you do look stumped, someone who comes over and goes how hey, how's it going, instead of...I do know that many people fail, you learn a lot from failures, but a good mentor is someone who can see what road you're going down and maybe stop you before you get to that failure point and just kind of say, you know what if we try it this way, or what do you think about maybe looking at it from this angle.

6. How has marriage or family life impacted your career decisions?

F-1: I would say the career path that I chose, my family always said as I was growing up do not go into education, do not go into education, only because I had a family member who was in education and unfortunately at the time, they were not paid a whole lot. So what did I do, I went into non-profit and PR, which I would say, you have to put food on the table, you have to be able to definitely pay the bills, so the decision to go into a field where there was the potential for advancement as opposed to hitting a glass ceiling. I would certainly say that factors in. I'm not money driven at all, but at the same time, you want to be able to care for your family. And I would say, there's always a public relations or media relations job out there, it's just finding the right fit and finding the best agency or the best institution to work for that fits both your needs as far as growth as well as family needs and being able to find a place that has great benefits. I have been lucky enough, the places that I have worked have had very, very good benefit systems where certainly in PR, you are never getting a 9 to 5 job. Sometime you wish for the 9 to 5. And I have been lucky enough where I've worked that it is not flexible hours, but you're able to come in get your job done. Some days I'm here till 8 o'clock at night, other days I leave right at 5 o'clock, because I have other things that I need to get to. I would say the institutions that I work at have always been aware of that, and have definitely worked with the employee's schedules.

7. Have you participated recently in any professional development programs? If so, please describe the types of training you've sought?

F-1: Unfortunately, I wish that I had taken more advantage of some of the webinars and luncheons. I went to a luncheon a couple of months ago, maybe a couple of weeks ago, that actually focused on blogging in the social arena and it actually was quite helpful. I would say the luncheons that I go to are, I always try and find topics that are of interest, but I feel like you learn a whole lot more from the people at your table. And just kind of the networking that you do there, regardless if you're looking for a new position, just finding out...the public relations world is so diverse in what people can do. Everything from people who are writing the press releases to people who doing the web, and people who are focusing on certain event, this or that. I have also...I think you have to take advantage of the opportunities that are given to you. I have attended several PRSA conferences, which I think are helpful. It's definitely helpful to find out what everyone

else is doing and some of sessions pertain to you, others don't. I always go to a session, regardless of if it pertains to me just because I thought, well you know, I may get a little snippet of information that could help me with my job.

8. What is the best format to deliver additional training to working professionals, like you? (If no response, suggest examples such as weekend seminars, night classes, online courses or conferences?)

F-1: I would say, honestly due to family life and wanting to honestly have weekends where you don't have to work, conferences during week and/or, I do find that luncheons work really well, because sometimes it's nice to get out of the office for a little while, go socialize, go network with like-minded professionals. I do enjoy webinars also, I feel like I do learn a lot and lucky enough with most webinars, you pay for it, the one spot, you can have as many people in the room as possible. Depending on how large your conference room is. But I would say, I enjoy doing them during the week, I do every once in awhile go to conferences out of town, but for the most part, I think I try and separate work life from family life and social life as much as possible. Although, in the area that I'm in, there are a lot of evenings. There are a lot of weekends, but I try to keep them to a minimum as much as possible.

9. What are some of the barriers to seeking additional training?

F-1: I would imagine sometimes, I'm lucky enough that the institution that I'm at does pay for professional development and does actually pay for additional education, as long as it pertains to your field. So if I decided to go get my master's and my Ph.D., the institution actually reimburses at the public state levels, whatever the state university level is, they will actually reimburse you. For me, there are no barriers, but time. Just finding, which I'm sure you understand, finding the time to sit down, take the graduate level exams, and actually finding the time to, the application process I don't think is as difficult, I feel like you can sit down and get that done, but just making the time to further your education. Which I do feel like is very, very important. And when I say making the time, making the time to not only to apply to the school, and get admitted, but also making the time every Tuesday, Thursday to attend the classes and I feel like it's really important as you are getting graduate degrees, I feel like you're working with a lot of your fellow students and making the times to go to those group sessions and work on the group projects so that it's not each individual coming together, oh, here's my part, oh here's my part. I would imagine for some people money is probably a factor. But I feel like as you get into the upper levels, you make the time, you find the resources, if you're willing to do it, because I think as you go on to get graduate degrees or graduate training, you are trying to better yourself, so that you can advance. Advance to a better career, advance in life.

10. What types of public relations skills do you see lacking among interns or recent graduates working in your organization?

F-1: I think of a blanket statement. I find that just in general, that people's writing skills, learning how to write appropriately. I think technical writing is absolutely something that

everyone can learn from. I would say writing skills are very important. For some people, social skills. I was lucky enough that we kind of had the second education at the university that I went to where you went to classes, but then I happened to be very involved on campus. And every single club or organization that you joined at my particular campus, you had to interview for, which was really helpful, because going in as a freshman, and somewhat breezing through high school, never had to interview for anything. It was just mostly a written application, but in school, you actually did have to everything that you applied for there was a written application and you interviewed and so the person could actually see some of your social skill set. I think those would probably be the two big ones, just social skills and writing skills.

11. What are the most critical skills that you believe are necessary for students to master to have successful careers in public relations?

F-1: I would say. I can't say absolutely. In my mind, I think you definitely, and I'm using the areas I work most with. You need to have people skills. You need to have the confidence to schmooze a little, be able to have the comfort level at least if you are not able to walk up to people, walk up to reporters, which I think is always a growing skill, I think you're always learning from it. You need to definitely surround yourself with people who are able to do that then, so that you are able to get the information that you need to write the press release, get the appropriate social picks that you need. You definitely have to have a level of confidence to be able to, confidence in yourself to know that you're doing a good job as you writing, as you are pitching, and building relationships is absolutely a must. You need to learn to speak the language of those that you are working with and those that you are pitching to.

12. Are there any electives that you would recommend that undergraduate students should take to prepare them to advance into management positions?

F-1: Of course, I'm thinking back to my own academia, many years ago. I think it's critical for you to take some type of upper-level management class and strategic planning so that you can see how one instance can impact so many other areas. I think public speaking, even if you are not going to be the face of your institution, I think you need to have the comfort level to be able to step into that role if necessary. Maybe even a creative writing class, most I would say, most PR, most press releases things like that that I find are pretty straight forward, the media doesn't really want a whole lot of fluff, but I think it's helpful to be able to pull that out, even if it is more of a conversation as opposed to actually written word, but I feel like it helps keep you creative, is not the words that I'm looking for, but it helps you be imaginative, which I think is helpful as you are working in this type of profession.

13. What recommendations would you offer to public relations educators to help them better prepare students for career advancement?

F-1: Be open with your students. Have doable office hours that are convenient and obviously, your office hours are never going to be convenient for every single student,

but I will never forget my senior year, I had one professor, in particular who we got into his class, he handled syllabus and said this is what you do to make an A in my class, this is what you do to make a B, the difference between an A and B was a 20 page research paper and there were many people in that class who took a B, just because it was the last semester before you were finishing out. Before you were about to do your internship and at that point in time, I think a lot of people just went a difference between an A and B, that's great, but he also, he was great, he was very upfront with students. I found a lot of freshman, sophomore level classes it is very much weeding through the prerequisites, but I really really enjoyed I would say starting the second semester of sophomore year going forward, because you got to know your, your classes were a little bit smaller, you got to know your professors on a personal level and this particular professor that I'm speaking about earlier, you essentially chose what your grade was and I think it was helpful as you were going out into the world that you're making your decisions, I'm not going to make these decisions for you anymore, I'm going to teach you as much as I can teach you, but I'm also teach you about real life and he was I can't remember how many people were in our class, but he said I'm not only going to teach you about health systems in this class, but we're going to learn you're generation is lacking culture from what I see. So every opportunity that we have where some type of performance is coming through our town, we're going to go to it. You all will buy the tickets, but I'm going to host a wine and cheese party at my house beforehand. Or we're all going to meet beforehand and go to dinner and then we'll go to this, because it's not just the education that you're getting at the university, it's the outside education that you're also getting, which I took that to heart and I still obviously remember that. And think that was great of him to do.

Q: Any other tips for educators?

F-1: I would say poll your students. Find out what, obviously you have to go by what you have to teach at the university. If it's chemistry, obviously here these are the things that you must learn to advance on here. But just being honest with your students and just finding out, if it is a smaller setting, what are they looking to learn. What are they looking to get out of the class, so that they can advance in their career or to find their first job.

14. From your work experience, how critical do you think advanced degrees such as a master degree in public relations or an MBA are for practitioners seeking to advance to managerial positions?

F-1: I would say I don't think that they are absolutely critical, but I think that they are helpful. I think it helps with advancement. I would say especially for myself who went into a healthcare field if I chose to decide to continue in the public relations field, I think that I do need to get a some type of business degree only because I do think you learn most things outside of the classroom, but at the same time as you are getting into upper-management, upper-level, I think it's just knowledge of what you learn in the classroom through case studies and just knowing what works for companies, what doesn't work for companies. I would recommend to most people that they do get an advanced degree just because I think it helps on your resume, I think it shows growth, it shows that you are a

hard worker and you're not just someone who is willing to skate by on the coattails of other people. It shows initiative, I guess.

15. How much does your organization value credentials such as accreditation when considering employees for promotional opportunities?

F-1: I don't know to be honest. I think they definitely look at during your annual review what have you done to better yourself, have we been able to offer you classes or further development to advance your degree. I think it's definitely helpful to have those letters behind your title or that you are a part of PRSA or AFP. I think it absolutely helps because going back to the...it shows initiative, and it shows that you're willing to go beyond the 9 to 5 job. And think that's something that a lot of employers look for. You don't want to hire someone who is truly is just going to come in and do the bare minimum, you want someone who is interested in growing in their career, you want someone who wants to learn.

Q: You mentioned that you majored in the health area and went into public relations. Now some of the other people that I've talked to suggested that it's good even if you major in PR that you consider specializing in a certain area. What's your thoughts on that? Do you think it was helpful for yourself to come at it from a different angle? You know as far as specializing.

F-1: For me particularly, when I was in college, I don't know that I thought that I would be doing the public relations route. I thought about allied health, I was not interested in being a physician or a nurse, only because I was not a huge fan of blood, but I always have really enjoyed the math and the science and I think looking at the careers that I have had post-college, they have always circulated, I was a health major, even though I've done fundraising and I'm now doing media relations and PR, they have always circulated around healthcare and I have to admit, I think it was helpful to have a little bit of a specialization and I chose healthcare just because that's an area has always been very important to me. And I think even though I'm not in the trenches working in the operating rooms, I still have the opportunity through that I'm doing to see healthcare in action if that makes sense. I think it's to each his own. I think it is important to have a niche, a little bit of a specialty in something. You always hear it's, obviously you want to be great at a lot of things, but you don't want to just touch the surface on many, many little things, because I don't know that you'll get very far. I think you need to focus on one to two areas that you're really passionate about because I think that that comes out in your job. Because if you're not passionate about what you're doing, it's not a lot of fun to come to work.

## Transcripts F-002

Job Responsibility Classification: PR Manager  
Age: 33  
Experience: 10 years  
Years of Service with current employer: 4 years  
Education: Bachelor's degree  
Major: Public Relations  
Salary range: \$80,001- \$90,000  
PR Sector: Healthcare

### 1. How well do you think your education prepared you for career advancement?

F-2: I think it actually prepared me really well. The class that I had, the internships that I did, all of the real life scenarios that we went through in PR classes. I think that they prepared me very well.

Q: Is there anything that stands out as far as any best practices you think they did particularly well?

F-2: Internships – that just made a huge difference to me. I participated in those and I did several. Also, just real case studies- you know we have to choose a particular company and actually go through an entire PR plan and we even at some point presented that to that company and I think that made such a big difference to actual work with real companies in a real situation 'cause it's so easy to do case studies where you do absolutely do anything that has unlimited budget and we did some of that, but that wasn't as helpful as a very specific company, with a specific budget and a specific need.

### 2. What types of barriers have you faced to advancement?

F-2: I guess the main thing was being so strictly just PR. I started off working in an advertising agency and PR is hard because there wasn't necessary a lot of budget toward it. It was more something else that the agency did. And so I felt, not as equal to the other account executives who had paying clients. And so actually, I kind of switched. I still did PR as PR director for clients worked with all of our clients on PR, but I actually had paying accounts as well. That was something that we tried to get over to where we didn't really pitch PR as free and so that helped a lot. We kind of got closer to where we needed to be. But from the beginning, I just felt like I was kind of a stepchild at the agency because I wasn't a revenue - and of course agencies are so revenue – pay attention to where you are and where you stack up as an account executive. That was something I kind of changed a little bit to fit that agency mold. And we also changed the agency a little bit so that we could charge for PR.

Q: Any other barriers that you've faced?

F-2: That would be the main one I guess is getting past the idea that is PR is free. That's always a big barrier, but that's all.

3. What steps have you personally taken to overcome any obstacles to advancement?

F-2: That's one I really opened to advertising, marketing – marketing was my minor so that certainly helped. I felt like I had that piece of the puzzle as well. And even some ag (agriculture) communication classes that I took I think really helped. It helped me work in a bunch of different industries and kind of see best practices for different industries and I think that really helped to open all of the different avenues, all of the different mediums that are available for companies whether it be marketing, advertising, PR – and helped me put of the complete pieces together to come up with a comprehensive plan for a company. And certainly when I was doing ad agency we had a bunch of different industries and it helped to see something that may have worked for a dairy association or a financial institution or a hospital and kind cross promote those different avenues.

4. What role have mentors had in helping you advance in your career?

F-2: Mentors have played a big role. And those mostly came about through the internships. Certainly from the very first internship that I got, a mentor that I had there helped me get the next one, who helped me get the next one so it has definitely played a big role. And I would say, mentors through internships more than anything.

5. What advice would you offer a new practitioner when seeking a mentor?

F-2: Try and find somebody who has been around a long time who has done a lot of things and who's really willing to share that information with you. Somebody you feel like you can keep in touch with through your entire career. Kind of look for somebody who feel like is going to be a long-term mentor to you and it doesn't have to be specifically in your industry. If you're an ag person it doesn't have to be an ag person because a lot of those practices can be shared. So I don't think it's even so specific that it be someone who's exactly in your industry, just somebody who you feel is successful and can point you into the right direction and help you out with things.

6. How has marriage or family life impacted your career decisions?

F-2: It certainly has impacted it some even moving here came about because of my family. My husband had a job offer here. So I would say it's positively impacted it even though I may not have known that at the time. Certainly, having the stability of a marriage helped me go off and start my own ad agency at one point. It helped me a little bit more of an entrepreneur than I could have been just one my own because I knew that he had a stable job that would help support that. And it was also having a family has also kind of changed what career path that I wanted. Where I was an agency which very time consuming and demanding, now I'm more in corporate life, which certainly is demanding, but it's in a different way. It's not an every day demand 5 o'clock TV spot that's due or newspaper ad that due. It's a little less demanding in some ways.

Q: So how have you balanced it?

F-2: How have I balanced family and career? I think it's just by finding a job that better suited the time that I was willing to give to my career. It better suited my and my husband's travel schedules. We both travel quite a bit with our jobs and so having a child just made us both be more aware of that and try and not be gone at the same time – some of those things. But luckily, in my position and in his, we're both high enough up that we can really control our schedules. It would have been harder had we had a family straight out of school, but at least the way it's worked out it's worked out pretty well.

7. Have you participated recently in any professional development programs? If so, please describe the types of training you've sought?

F-2: Professional development – I attend the Direct Marketing Association every other year. And I recently attended that in October. And it's really focused on direct marketing, but there's also some PR certainly that takes place within that. I just went to a bunch of different classes on a lot of different things from catalogs to PR and successful PR on the web, e-mail marketing, web marketing, all of those kind of things. So that's the biggest thing that I do every year. And then I also participate in the Advertising Federation and so we'll have some speakers. We recently had one on PR actually. But it's primarily all facets of marketing.

8. What is the best format to deliver additional training to working professionals, like you? (If no response, suggest examples such as weekend seminars, night classes, online courses or conferences?)

F-2: I think webinars, 'cause it's something that I can do during the workday and they tend to be an hour, hour and half, so it's a nice amount of time to be able to focus on one thing and still be able to get my job done. And then I like big conferences like DMA where you can go and get a whole bunch of different courses on a lot of different topics and you can pick the ones that are best suited to your particular company or your particular interests. And that's nice too, because I think a lot, at least the employers that I've had the privilege to work with have allowed a lot of professional development. I know that's extremely expensive, especially DMA that seems to be on one coast or the other and up to a weeklong classes. But those are some that I've been to that I've enjoyed.

9. What are some of the barriers to seeking additional training?

F-2: It would certainly be expense if you happen to work for an employer who doesn't see the benefit of it. And then just having the time to put toward it. Because by the time you travel out there, wherever it might be and it's several days. It does take away from family life or even from work that you may need to be doing. So that wouldn't be the main barrier it would be expense if the employer wasn't willing to pay for it and a lot of them are so expensive if you were paying for it personally, you may choose not to do that with your money.

10. What types of public relations skills do you see lacking among interns or recent graduates working in your organization?

F-2: I think just having real life skills. You know it's easy to come up with some grand plan with no budget limitations, but once you put budget limitations in front of some people they have no idea what to do and then kind of working through some real life scenarios. As interns, hopefully that's what they're trying to do is get experience. But that would be one thing that just kind of stands out is having – 'cause even if they're working on things in school, it's nice to know. Because everything has a real cost to it. Whether you're placing something in the newspaper, TV or working on brochures. I mean at some point you've got to get those things printed and have a plan for how you're going to distribute them and just being aware of what those costs are.

Q: You said specifically, some budgeting skills?

F-2: Yes, some budgeting skills would be big. Even excel, having a way to back up what you've done and prove – show that there's a return on – even if it's just the time invested, investment. You know to be able to put some of that information together and pull that data and do something with it to show whether it was successful or unsuccessful.

Q: You've got some good thought there. So I want to stay on that for just a minute. You've mentioned budgeting, return on investment, which can also be called evaluation research. Anything else that you would recommend?

F-2: I guess just some general – PR practitioners do so many things. I mean you need to be great at headlines and you just got to be a good creative writer, just some of that creativity. It's not all this perfect formula of how to put something together that's going to get noticed. You've got to have some creativity to it. And so that be something that if a person isn't creative and doesn't enjoy that, then they're probably not going to be very successful at getting their items placed wherever they're trying to get them placed.

11. What are the most critical skills that you believe are necessary for students to master to have successful careers in public relations?

F-2: One of them would also be networking. The people that you have in your classes are people that are the same age as you, they are probably going to advance at about the same timeframe and so you really end up hopefully working for some powerful companies or non-profits or wherever want to go and it's nice to know those other people. So that would be one – networking skills and really working on those. Because it's just amazing how far you can get just networking your way through and meeting exciting people, working with them as mentors and those are all things that can be powerful. Networking. Some of the software skills – just keeping those up to date as far as if it's Publisher or Photo Shop or any of those kinds of things that can help you if you're interested in smaller businesses that may not have 10-20 person PR department. You're really more of a one-man show where you may be doing PR and marketing and something else. So if you're thinking that might be your career path then I would really open up to if it's different software packages, taking more journalism classes, or any of those things that could kind of help you be a little more well rounded.

12. Are there any electives that you would recommend that undergraduate students should take to prepare them to advance into management positions?

F-2: I would say photography is a nice one. Certainly journalism, even more journalism classes. I wish I would have taken more journalism classes. My husband was an ad com major and he took much more journalism. He was required to take much more than I had to and I wish that I had more of that and other classes. I didn't take any advertising classes and I wish that I had because that's actually where my career started off. And I think that's good because PR and advertising can go hand in hand in a nice campaign.

Q: How about specifically, though for someone interested in the management track?

F-2: Ok. If they're interested in management then certainly, any type of business classes so that you understand how to read a balance statement, a PNL, all of those kinds of things that I learned, the business owner or someone in management that you're going to see, you need to understand how to read those and understand how what you do can effect those different numbers. Any of those business classes that you can take and also accounting. It's very important to be able to put together a budget and learn how to stick to that budget and really interface with your accounting people because usually, hopefully marketing, PR, advertising, is a big part of the company's budget and so you really need to be sitting down with your accounting department and be able to understand the numbers that they're putting together and able to understand how what you're doing effects those. Because that's the only way you're going to prove that you need more money or even some cases show that you need less to do your job effectively.

13. What recommendations would you offer to public relations educators to help them better prepare students for career advancement?

F-2: I would say as many real life scenarios that they can put in front of a person or allowing them to work with real customers, real companies, any internships that they can really push. To let the students know about and really focus on how important those can be. And then also any speakers that they can have come in that might be great mentors to students. They really are interested in students and can come in and are interested in being a mentor, and not just a one time speaker and off they go.

14. From your work experience, how critical do you think advanced degrees such as a master degree in public relations or an MBA are for practitioners seeking to advance to managerial positions?

F-2: That one's kind of hard because I think it really depends on what industry that you choose. I started off in ad agencies and I felt like it wasn't important, but more in the corporate world. I just think it helps, especially like than MBA. It just helps put you a little bit higher up in that stack of resumes that they get on their desks so in sense, I do think for a management position or higher level position that having an MBA or any kind of advanced degree just helps you stand out a little bit more. It's a tough choice to choose whether you're going to go to school or get experience. In my case, I feel like the experience that I have still puts me higher up on that list of resumes. And if I had spent

those years going to school, then I wouldn't have the same experiences. So it's kind of hard. Looking back, I probably, I would still do things the same way. For a student who's just starting out, I would certainly look into getting an advanced degree or some kind of dual degree, or any of those kinds of things that they can do to help them stand out. Especially if they're doing internships where they can also be getting experience at the same time.

15. How much does your organization value credentials such as accreditation when considering employees for promotional opportunities?

F-2: Our specific organization really doesn't value that, that much. And that's really because we don't have. I mean, one person isn't specifically you are doing PR or you're doing this. We're more of a molded department of marketing, sales, customer service. It's more meshed together than that. So it's not as important to our company.

Q: I'm going to stray briefly from one of the questions that is something that you touched on and I don't want to miss the opportunity to ask about it. You mentioned the need for skills in marketing, public relations and advertising. As far as the direction that you would recommend for students or even educators...would see going more a straight PR model or do you think there should be some kind of integrated curriculum?

F-2: I think an integrated curriculum would be wonderful. So few jobs that are that specific where you are just PR or you are just marketing person or you're just sales or any of the things. It's really melded together no matter what industry you're in. Large companies just don't, at least what I've found, they don't have you are the PR person and that's your title. It's just so few and far and between. And even when I held the title of PR director, probably 60 % of my time was doing true advertising and 40 % doing PR and it's not because there wasn't enough PR to do. There was, but the revenue source was more in advertising or marketing and PR was a part of that and in some cases was a very important part, especially for non-profits or people who didn't have the budgetary dollars to put toward more traditional advertising. At least in my career, it's always melded together. And in my current job, I actually do very little PR now. It's a part of what I do, but for some companies PR doesn't make as much sense as some of the other avenues that they may choose to market their company. So, at this particular company, we have 160 employees, we sell products all over the world. We do not have a dedicated PR person either on staff or out of house. It's something that we do some of, but we do it internally as part of other jobs.

### Transcripts F-003

Job Responsibility Classification: PR Manager

Age: 31

Experience: 10 years

Years of Service with current employer: 2 years, 5 months

Education: Bachelor's degree, plus some graduate study

Major: Advertising

Salary range: \$50,001- \$60,000

PR Sector: Non-profit organization

1. How well do you think your education prepared you for career advancement?

F-3: Well, I graduated with an advertising degree from UT and worked in advertising for three years, then worked in PR pretty strict PR and communications for the Komen Foundation. I spent a small bit of time doing kind of marketing communications and internal communications at the American Heart Association here in (name of city), their Texas affiliate, and then joined the (current employer) about 2 ½ years ago and even here my career has kind of changed, I'll get to the point of the answer to your question, but even here my role has changed from being initially strictly PR to then kind of marketing PR, and now with my most recent promotion just last month has taken me to marketing communications, so I'm really still involved in the messaging aspect and in our main marketing department includes PR, marcom, design, web, communications, and so being involved in the integration of all those things, but not nearly as much of the strict kind of PR communications as I was doing before. Back to your original, I tell you all that just so you can kind of see the difference in where I started and where I am now and kind of what's changed in between. Now I'm not doing any PR, a lot different from when I was living in Dallas at Komen doing almost entirely PR and where I started with advertising, so back to your original question about how my education prepared me for advancement, regardless of what kind of role I have within an organization, I would say that my education in the advertising department at UT prepared me for an entry level position. It definitely inspired me to want to attain more than just an entry level position and I know I remember one of the last projects of my final advertising class where have to do kind of a campaigns class and go through and pretend your campaigns and everything. One of the last things was for our instructor asked us to do is our final project was to kind of say what do you see yourself doing in 1 year, 3 years, 5 years, and I created my little ladder and said I wanted my first job to be an entry level at an advertising agency, and then I wanted to be an A.E. at an advertising agency, and then I wanted to have my own agency and in 5 years, I was doing something completely different from when I graduated than what my ladder had said. You know and even now, I'm now involved in advertising from a different perspective as being part of marcom. I'm working with my designer and different opportunities that come about here at (name of employer), but such a vastly different kind of place than where I kind of saw myself going.

Q: Do you see that as a responsibility for your undergraduate education to prepare somewhat for career advancement or do you feel like you get that kind of training on the job?

F-3: I think that it would be nice to have some preparation for career advancement in school, particularly in undergrad. Because I think until you're in the real world, you have such as skewed idea about how things are going to go and a lot of it I think you just obviously, we all just learn just from being on the ground and kind of living it. But I think some preparation of just what to expect in terms of career advancement I think might be helpful for students. I know it would have been helpful for me to have more realistic expectations of what was in store for me. But I should say, based on my education, I built my little ladder and within the year and half, I had been promoted to an account executive position, and it was only after that that I decided I didn't want to do agency advertising anymore and pursued non-profit and other things, so initially just a few years out of school, if I would have been asked the question I would have thought, well yeah, I'm just trekking along just like I thought I would. So it's only with perspective of being out of school for 10 plus years that I think that kind of understanding comes about.

2. What types of barriers have you faced to advancement?

F-3: With the career path that I've chosen now working in communications, marketing communications for a non-profit, whether it be PR or internal communications or the different kind of roles that I've held at three different non-profits, I find that a barrier that exists that within a non-profit organization things aren't as structured as in corporate necessarily as they would be at a major corporation. So my husband used to work at (name of employer), and they had a whole science to how you promoted to this next, you had the same title, but you had a different number next to it, and once you got to the next number and then you were out of those numbers and then you went to a different letter with a new set of numbers, and it was whole kind of structure and it was hard for him to understand why I couldn't, when we would talk about my frustrations with wanting to advance and there not being opportunities to advance within a non-profit, even a well known national non-profit like I work for. I don't know that there's necessarily that kind of structure in place, and even if there is a structure in place I don't know that is necessarily on the forefront of the leaders of the organization to advance their employees or to have opportunities for them to advance. A lot of it is we're all here because of the good cause and there's definitely a reason why people who work for a non-profit work for non-profits and I know that I prefer to work for a non-profit because of that kind of fulfillment aspect of what it brings. At the same time, I want to advance in my career just like the next person who's down the street at a corporation. And I think sometimes I noticed that leadership may not recognize that need for their junior and mid-level employees that that's something important to them too.

3. What steps have you personally taken to overcome any obstacles to advancement?

F-3: In my current position, I have taken steps to try to overcome those barriers by meeting with my manager and expressing my desire to advance and to have more

opportunities offered to me, so that then when the time arose that there was an opportunity, she would know of my interest and then be able to fill the position with me. And so that recently has happened. We lost someone from our department who left the foundation for various reasons and took another job. And so her leaving, opened up an opportunity for me, so I'm glad that I had those conversations with my manager, so that then my hard work could pay off in such a way that she could promote me into a position that would be a higher level for me that would achieve those advancement goals and give me the project manager and other responsibilities that I was looking for as well. That being said, a previous position that I held I expressed those same concerns to my manager and things being what they were leadership there, the structure and how everything was going there, opportunities didn't open themselves up and so my commitment to the job and the level of my work was the same, but it kind of didn't manifest itself in that way.

Q: Any other steps that you would say you've taken other than expressing your interest to your managers?

F-3: I think taking opportunities to kind of step outside of my written job responsibilities to show an added level of commitment to the organization and to kind of stretch my legs and show that I can do more than what my job description says, so that then when opportunities did arise, I would be seen as someone who goes above and beyond, you know, hard worker, dedicated, does whatever it takes to get the job done and so, trying to exhibit those kinds of leadership qualities. Not just through the work that I do, but all just in kind of how I carry myself throughout the organization with my peers.

4. What role have mentors had in helping you advance in your career?

F-3: I have a good friend who I met at my very first job out of college, when I was working for an ad agency and I never worked for her, but she became my mentor and we've stayed close friends since she left and I left, we don't live in the same city now. But she has always been the person who I call when an opportunity is offered to me or not and kind of helping me think through what steps I need to take and she has played kind of sounding board role for me. And we may not talk for months and then I know that if something comes up, then I'll call her and kind of just get her counsel, because she's got a really good, she's done phenomenally in her career and so I admire the work that she's done and how, she's a totally different personality than I do. She'll just go into an office and blow in and say what she wants, and somehow she'll walk out and get it, and I don't think I could pull that off, but a lot of the principles and her kind of rational explanations for her counsel always makes a lot of sense to me and always helps me kind of think things through.

5. What advice would you offer a new practitioner when seeking a mentor?

F-3: I think that in identifying a mentor, some of it is just organic, to find someone who you just sort of click with. I'll give you an example. Through the PRSA chapter here, we were matched up with newly graduated or people just in school who were part of PRSSA and I was matched up with a sweet, sweet girl and she was going to be my mentee and I

was going to be her mentor and our experiences were completely different and I had nothing to offer her. I mean, maybe not nothing to offer her, but for the type of career that she wanted to have, which was very policy specific, and I had never done any kind of communications work around advocacy or policy, except maybe peripherally, and so I had nothing really specific to her kind of career path to really offer her. And I felt like that was pretty forced, so I think my advice would be seek out a mentor that makes sense for you rather than just getting matched up through a mentor service with someone who doesn't know either of us kind of matching people up based on what somebody's major is and what someone else does in an organization. I felt like we went to lunch once and we never really talked again, and I felt it wasn't a fit. I think she would have reached out to me also if she felt like something resonated with her.

Q: Are there any particular characteristics that you think they should look in a mentor?

F-3: Someone who is, can kind of provide kind of the outside perspective and not get wrapped up in the kind of emotion. So my friend (name of friend), who's my mentor, I'm sure if I wanted her to, she could get right into - oh, can you believe she did that, oh, and it's so annoying. Yeah, that makes me so mad, I just want to leave early or whatever the case may be. Or wow, that's so exciting. She'll get excited for me, but she's more providing that outside perspective without getting so emotionally involved in it. I think that's important for a mentor to be able to provide feedback outside of the emotion that can go that can be intertwined in your job. Particularly for me, with an organization like this, I'm very passionate about the cancer cause, and so everyday I come into work I'm very passionate about my work and when I need her to help me decide what career choices to make tied to the organization, I need to be able to see beyond that and that's hard for me to do on my own, but someone on the outside can. In addition, someone who is accessible, and has some type of...her career choice is completely different than mine too, so when I say about the girl who when we went to lunch and then we never talked again, if there had been something else that had connected us, I think there has to be some type of connection. So if it's not the type of work that you do, then it has to be some other type of connection that makes your two experiences relevant to each other so that that mentor can provide counsel and can be a trusted source on the subject.

6. How has marriage or family life impacted your career decisions?

F-3: Family life has come into play with decisions that I make. Most recently when I was offered a promotion here, I had also decided to start interviewing at a couple of other places and that was a really big step for me because I love my job here, but I just felt like you know what nothing is going to happen for me here, and I need to at least see what else is out there and see maybe this becomes my volunteer life instead of my professional life and in the midst of applying for jobs and getting calls to schedule interviews for positions that are higher than the level than I was promoted to here, I was offered a promotion here and I was traveling at the time and so the timing was just kind of such that it was good that I got a chance to really sit back and kind of think about what I wanted to do. I didn't have to rush into interviewing or accepting a job or anything like that. But because, and this is where my mentor came into play because she talked me

through a lot of this. I really knew that in my heart I wanted to stay here, but I felt like for our family, you know our finances and we want to add onto our house, we want to have a baby soon, we want to do all these types of things, but I needed to at least explore if I wasn't going to get opportunity to advance here, I needed to explore what else was out there. And what her advice that I ended up taking was that, she said, if you guys weren't looking to have a family soon, I would say, yeah, go off and interview and start one of these new jobs and kick a \_\_ and excel through the ranks there and take this promotion, and make that part of your volunteer life, and so on. But she said, you know you've been here for a number of years and you've established your identity here at the organization, they know what to expect from you, and she said, if I get pregnant soon, and I'm starting a new job at the same time, it's probably not the time that I'm going to be showing my best work and so that was one of the factors that went into me deciding to stay here, because I know, I kind of know the drill. And I got what I wanted, I asked for a promotion and I got it, and it seemed like at this time in my life when I'm looking to start a family, my husband and I are looking to start a family, that it made more sense to stay here, accept the advancement opportunity that was offered to me rather than go off and try to start something new even if it might have been more money, higher level. For me, this was the right choice to stay.

7. Have you participated recently in any professional development programs? If so, please describe the types of training you've sought?

F-3: Through PRSA (local chapter name), last year I was one of the professional development co-chairs, my friend and I were co-chairs of that committee together and we coordinated a professional development kind of day for PRSA, well really for any communications professionals here in the (name of city)-area. And so I participated in that both from a logistical-planning perspective as well as a participant in the event. And the areas that we focused for the event were kind of storytelling as a part of as a way of messaging, and online media, kind of social networking, blogging. We did one of kind of effective brainstorming, and one more. I can't remember, oh, media pitching. We had kind of a media pitching 101 for any junior practitioners who came to the event. So that's probably the most recent formal professional development experience that I've had of late and that was last fall.

8. What is the best format to deliver additional training to working professionals, like you? (If no response, suggest examples such as weekend seminars, night classes, online courses or conferences?)

F-3: I prefer something that is either a breakfast or a lunch or even a half-day event. I think it's hard to take off an entire day to go to a professional development kind of training. I think a conference is even more difficult and so conferences that are out of town, I have to consider them pretty heavily if I know that it's going to take me away from my work here for a number of days, plus travel and the expense and everything that goes along with that. For me, online courses, I think that I have the best intentions to take part in those kinds of things, but when life really takes hold and things are crazy at work

and I'm work late hours, the last thing I want to do is spend an extra hour on that, I want to go home and spend time with my husband and my friends. So, in a perfect world, I think it you really worked 8:30 to 5 and you always took an hour for lunch, maybe you would use that hour for one of these online things, but the reality is that work never really turns out that way. It's just kind of crazy and we're working on a million projects at a time. So for me the online format isn't quite as effective. And then as far as weekends go, I feel like again in a perfect world if I had a perfect work life balance during the week then maybe I wouldn't mind giving up part of my weekend for something professionally development related, but as it is, I enjoy my weekends because during the week, I'm working so hard and often long hours and travel and business related and so forth.

9. What are some of the barriers to seeking additional training?

F-3: I think fitting in additional training into an already packed day full of meetings and work that you need to get done. I think travel, not just the expenses that go along with travel and lodging and doing something out of town, if that was PRSA and IABC organizations offer these conferences and things. But it's not just the expense, it's also the for someone who already travels a decent amount professionally, do you really want to take one more trip, I mean sometimes it's nice to just not take a trip because it's just so nice to be home. And so, I think kind of working it into your already established work kind of cycle is a little bit of a challenge. Also making it a priority, I think it's easy to, I think it's important, additional training I think is very important, but I think it's easy to say well, that's important long term, but the most important is this deadline that I'm facing and the deadline will most often win.

Q: I did not touch on one thing I wanted to earlier when we talked about marriage and family. Just advice that you have for other practitioners in how to balance that, because you talked about and some other people have mentioned that too when I talked about training, that they don't want that time away from family. So how do you achieve that balance?

F-3: I would consider training as part of the job rather than kind of an extracurricular activity. So if I say, I'm going to dedicate 40 hours a week, or however many hours a week, it's usually more than that, obviously, but how ever many x number of hours a week to work and rest of that time I'm going to spend with my husband, then to me that training should fit into that 40 hours a week, because it's all professionally focused. And so if you're able to fit that into the other work that you're doing, then that would be my advice. To consider it professional rather than personal time.

Q: So overall you have the set time of how much you want to work a week and you try to achieve it within that and the still have your set time.

F-3: In a perfect world, I mean it doesn't usually always work out that way. I take my laptop home and we sit on the couch and I work while I watch TV, but yeah, my advice would be, I don't follow my own advice.

Q: And so what do you really do?

F-3: What I really do is work extra hours than what our offices are open. I take my computer home, I check e-mail until I go to sleep at night, and I check it first thing when I wake up in the morning, and sometimes it makes my husband a little bit crazy, and sometimes he's doing his own thing. He's checking his own e-mail or he's playing guitar or he's watching something on TV or he's out running and so it doesn't affect him.

Q: But do you really try to set the weekends aside as much as possible? It sounded like that's kind of a priority for you.

F-3: Not exclusively, I will take my laptop home over the weekend and I'll probably do a bit of work over the weekend, but I usually try to relegate that to just Sunday evening or Saturday morning when I first get up and then step away from the laptop for the rest of the day. I try to, for me it's easiest to kind of compartmentalize the work part of my life and then have the rest of the time for my personal life. Because otherwise, I find that I'm not effective in achieving my own work life balance, because I'm just, I'll just sit on the computer all day long and that's no fun for him. I'm a workaholic, it's sounding like.

10. What types of public relations skills do you see lacking among interns or recent graduates working in your organization?

F-3: PR specific? Well, a skill that I recently saw lacking in one of my interns who was, she was more of a marketing intern, but she had taken some PR classes, but she was graduating with a marketing degree. At the time, I was doing PR and marketing, so her internship was going to be just whatever work I was doing, she was going to support. I saw, I don't want to say lack of initiative, because I think that she tried to take initiative and be proactive, but kind of a fear of moving forward without me telling her exactly what next step to take. So I don't know what you would call that, but kind of a hesitation to act without specific direction where as what I would have loved to have seen was initiative in that she knew what I wanted the end goal to be and I would have liked to have seen her take every step to getting to that goal seeking counsel from me instead of seeking specific direction from me.

Q: Anything else?

F-3: PR specific, the interns that I've had, often when they intern with me is the first time that they are actually making calls to media outlets to get information to gather to put together media lists or reaching out by e-mail to respond to a media inquiry from a reporter and that's kind of scary that the first time that they're doing it is for me and that what they say is going to be on the record for that journalist and so there's some scariness around that, so what that does is cause me to have to provide a lot more direction or a lot more training than I would like. I would like for these PR students to come in already knowing how to kind of conduct themselves in a professional, not that they don't conduct themselves in a professional manner, but already kind of know what the appropriate protocol is for drafting a response e-mail or calling a TV station to find out the fax

number of their assignment desk and they do fine, but I wouldn't have as much kind of apprehension around it, if I already knew that they had a little bit of that training coming in out of school.

Q: How would you label that, media relations skills?

F-3: Yeah, I guess media relations skills. I think that would cover it. I don't let them do a lot of like heavy duty media relations stuff anyway, because a lot of times they're not with me that long and I don't have that much time to train them, and there's just a million other things going on I could give them instead. But I think it's an important skill for them, so I do try to build that into their internship, so that they do get some experience calling strangers and asking them about information and conducting themselves, representing the foundation in a professional, intelligent way.

11. What are the most critical skills that you believe are necessary for students to master to have successful careers in public relations?

F-3: I think that they need to be, they need to have the confidence to take a project from their supervisor, understand the expectations from their manager, and the end result that we're looking for and then be creative, have the confidence to kind of be creative and get to that end point in whatever way makes sense to them. It's an opportunity for them to be creative in how they get to achieving a goal. So if we are doing an outreach project and we're sending materials to cancer survivors in x, y, z area, how you get to that point doesn't really matter to me, but I want to know that you have thought a plan, that you've got the planning part down, you've got the resources pulled together that you need to make it happen, and that the stuff gets out by a given deadline and if there's some type of evaluation aspect to that as well, then that's also very important. But for me to say, ok, first put together your plan, then figure out that you've got all your, do you have envelopes, do you know how you're doing to do the postage, that for me as an intern mentor, that's just absolutely zapping my energy and I would love to see an intern come in and have the initiative to kind of say, ok, I see what you're saying, I see what the goal is, you want to get these things out to this area, I'm going to do the research, I'm going to find out resources and then it's done, and that is like a shining star intern in my eyes. So that's one skill. And I think a lot of that confidence just comes from doing it and being successful at it and so a lot of times we get green interns who haven't had any experience before and so their first experience is here. So every time I hire new interns, I feel like I'm getting better and better at hiring and sometimes it just kind of depends on who you get a semester. I also think that the ability to carry oneself in a professional manner and represent the foundation in a way that is appropriate, especially in our business where we're dealing with a very sensitive issue. I think that's really important and I think that would come into play if you were selling widgets you want to represent your widgets in the best way possible. For us, it's something that's a little bit more personal, since we're talking about a disease that affects people, but that type of being able to carry oneself in professional manner. Also I think, the writing skills I think are really important. I think that anyone coming out of school should be able to put together a decent newsletter article or decent letter from a representative of the organization and should be able to

write that without having to it have to be written for them. So I think the writing skills, just some basic writing skills, that of course can be refined over time, but just having the kind of the basic understanding of what something that is well written is compared to something that's not and the grammar and spelling. And that kind of attention to detail I think is really important.

12. Are there any electives that you would recommend that undergraduate students should take to prepare them to advance into management positions?

F-3: Gosh, I didn't take nearly enough electives when I was in college, I got out early. Well, this isn't really probably the answer you're looking for, but I think because I did, I graduated in three years, I didn't take hardly anything that was just fun. I just blew through school 'cause I wanted to get into the real world and shame on me, because I missed out on just getting to take fun classes that were fun just for me. So I think my advice would be to not do that and take electives, because all they do is enrich your educational experience and although, taking additional art history classes, because it's something that's interesting to me may not have come into play directly with my career, there's so much about networking and establishing relationships with colleagues or with colleagues within the community at large, so for me within the cancer community, that far outweigh just the work that we're working on, but it just enriches someone's kind of pool of information that they have to talk about with someone and it establishes connections. That being said, specific to communications, I think any, I'm not sure how to answer that because, you mean if I could just make up any electives around anything I wanted to or based on elective classes that I know exist or ones that may have been offered to me?

Q: Well, in particular, is there any areas where you see some weaknesses where some coursework might be helpful as far as just topics or themes. You don't have to know the actual names of the classes.

F-3: Ok. I think a lot interns come in and get elective credit for doing an internship, but I think every student should do that, because it kind of requires you to get that real world experience before you graduate. Aside from that, some of the, I know now at UT there's a whole kind of path for people who want to do kind of communications in the non-profit arena. And were I to be in school now, I would definitely take classes out of that kind of, and this is at UT where I've heard this, but I think other schools are probably doing the same thing. Non-profit wasn't even a concept when I was in school. I never knew that you could actually get paid to work in a non-profit. I just thought it was what people did to volunteer. So if that's something that in college someone thinks that they might be interested in doing in the future, to learn about kind of the nuances of the non-profit world and how policy and how these different organizations work together and how they're funded, that probably wouldn't be something that was required, as required coursework, but to be able to get that kind of basis of understanding about the non-profit world, I think that would be, I would recommend that.

Q: There's a couple of questions I still have related to some things that we've talked about in connection with the curriculum. The first one I have is, now you've talked about more the integrated marketing communications side of things. Do you recommend that students take classes in all of those different areas marketing, advertising, public relations?

F-3: Oh yeah, I do. Based on my experience, I do because my experience has been so varied. That being said a lot of people come out of school doing PR and they've done PR and they work for an agency or they've done in house PR and that's all that they've ever done. But even still I think having a good understanding of those other areas of an organization that will undoubtedly work with PR, you know everything we do know is so integrated, it's not anymore that PR is doing this, advertising is doing this, online is doing this, it's all part of this integrated kind of marketing or communications effort, so I think so. I would recommend having kind of a basis of understanding for those different ones. It's kind of like when I was in school when I was advertising, we had to take a class in all the different elements of advertising, so media buying and creative and account management and research. And I knew I never wanted to do advertising research, but having that basis of understanding I felt like was really important if I were to have stayed in the advertising area, and even though I didn't so I think similarly, having kind of a some particular understanding of that I think would be good.

Q: Kind of related to something that you just touched on a moment ago, you talked about a non-profit tract. There's a few of the people that I talked to that suggested that it might be good to specialize in certain area of public relations such as non-profit, you know take courses, or if you were going into the hospital track, you know if you're going to be working in a hospital in marketing that you maybe take some medical classes to give you an understanding. What's your thought as far as specializing as far as your electives in a certain area if you know that you want to go into non-profit and that type of thing?

F-3: I think that's great if you absolutely know that that's what you want to do. But I think that for a lot of students what you want to do when you're in school and when you first get out of school could really change between then and later on. I know it did for me, so just from my perspective had I focused even more on advertising in a specific area I don't even do that anymore and I might have not. I can't say whether non-profit communications would have been something that I would have wanted to specialize in then at the time or not. But I would imagine it would, because I know me and if that would have been offered to me, it probably would have been something interesting to me, but who knows, because you change so much between when you're in school and you're making these decisions and later on. So I almost think that while the specializing is great if you know what you're looking for, the kind of broader understanding of all the different things that are there, that are kind of related to what you think you want to do, is even more important, because it just shows you that with this degree, I can do this advertising, that I think I want to do, or I can do PR, because it's kind of related and it has some kind of similar principles, and there's some obvious differences, and they complement each other and here's how. Or I can do marketing communications and here's where kind of those kinds come into play. And I think that is even more effective

because it's just a more realistic, in my experience it's a more realistic preparation for what's likely to happen. I don't know obviously, any statistics around between people who come into school and study a certain thing and then end up doing that for the rest of their lives, versus people who come into school, study something, do it maybe for a little while and then change and do something completely different or even just moderately different. But I would imagine, a lot of people come into school and they don't know what they want to do, so they pick a major based on any number of different things. My boyfriend in college was an advertising major, and I was one already going in, but I'm sure that that had something to do with me staying there, even though I was interested in journalism and PR. And I'm not even with him, that lasted only a year out of college, and so look at the choices that I've made not just because of that, but I'm sure that had something to do with it. And so, I think, I guess that I'm trying to say is to try to put the pressure on a student making those decisions when they're there in school, I think is unnecessary.

13. What recommendations would you offer to public relations educators to help them better prepare students for career advancement?

F-3: I think to give them as much real life exposure and experience as possible whether it's through internships or through having panelists from the real world coming in and speaking to their students. And not, just as kind of a nice to have kind of superficial add on to the class curriculum, but really integrating that into the class curriculum, because once you leave the classroom, it's a totally different ballgame and the better prepared the students are for that, that's really what instructors and professors are there to do is prepare people to be successful when they get out into the real world and instill kind of the fundamentals and basics of whatever the given course might be. I think also encouraging them to seek additional opportunities outside of just formal internships maybe through volunteer work for an organization or maybe this is being very tactical, but maybe it being a class project that they work on something for a organization to offer that type of real life experience in different ways. Specific to career advancement, I think it's important to realize that every organization has a different type of structure and career advancement at one job will look very different from career advancement in another job just given how their HR department kind of structures those kinds of things. And so, I think a lot of that can come through with providing that kind of real life exposure to students when they're still in school.

Q: Did you have any particular best practices from your days as a student that stands out that instructors may have done?

F-3: Our final class in advertising, I think PR probably had to do this same kind of thing, was to have a real life client and we had to get together in groups and put together our advertising plan and it pulled on all the different classes that we had taken up until then. And I know that when I was interviewing for jobs, I felt like I had done it all, and that I was prepared to take any job because we had the Austin Zoo as a client and we had pulled together our advertising plan and so whatever they were going to throw at me, I had already experience in that. Well, clearly when I got to my first job I realized that

wasn't at all the case. But it did give me the confidence to know that we could pull together an advertising plan or in the PR world, a PR communications plan or a marketing plan. That I think was a really great final project, final class for us after going through all the kind of coursework leading up to graduation.

Q: Tell me a little more specifics about how that particular project worked.

F-3: So we split up into groups within the class, a semester-long course, and we, each person in the class was kind of in charge of a different discipline of advertising. So there was someone who was the account manager person, there was someone who was media buying person, there was someone who was the creative, and we were given a client, and so our client was the Austin Zoo. And so then as group project, we had to pull together an advertising plan that pulled in creative, we had to do creative and write headlines and do graphics and make billboards or whatever our plan was going to look like and we had to do a media buy, so we had to research different media that would be appropriate for the zoo, and determine I guess we were given a budget, how we would spend the money on media and we had to research, and we had to present our plan to the client. So someone from the zoo came to our class and all the different groups presented to the client and it made us have to stand up in front of someone for probably the first time and present our work to someone the way that you would image you would do once you got out of school.

Q: And they gave you a set budget for that?

F-3: I think so. It was just a good preparation to say ok, you've taken all these classes in the last however many years and now put it all together.

14. From your work experience, how critical do you think advanced degrees such as a master degree in public relations or an MBA are for practitioners seeking to advance to managerial positions?

F-3: I don't know because I don't have one. I've thought about getting a master's in PR, but then I'm not even doing PR now, so I wonder if.

Q: But you said you've been working on a master's degree in general. Just in general, how valuable do you think an advanced degree is for career advancement?

F-3: My master's degree won't help me at all with career advancement. It's purely for fun. It's a master in liberal arts degree, so I'm basically taking all the electives that I never took in college because I graduated early. So it's really just, and they're master's level and it's a great program, and I'll be really proud to have my M.L.A when I finish my last three classes, but I don't think it's doing anything to prepare me for career advancement. I think that, I guess it depends on the type of position. If I were, and I'm just speculating because I've never worked for PR agency, but I wonder if I worked at a PR agency and I were looking to advance to a more kind of strategic account or agency management role would my master's come into play there, possibly. In the position that

I'm in here now, now doing marketing communications, would my PR master's come into play with career advancement, no because the other factors would still be in place.

Q: Such as?

F-3: Such as the lack of opportunity unless someone leaves basically, or unless everything gets turned upside down and the structure changes, and those are things that you can't really plan for.

15. How much does your organization value credentials such as accreditation when considering employees for promotional opportunities?

F-3: PR specific?

Q: Just credentials, there's different ones in different fields.

F-3: Sure. I think the APR specifically, wouldn't come into play very much here. However, as we're a health organization, master's in public health, master's in policy type work I think those are very heavily considered and weighted when they're looking for hiring as well as promotions, advancement opportunities.

## Transcripts F-004

Job Responsibility Classification: Technician

Age: 28

Experience: 5 years, 8 months

Years of Service with current employer: 1 years, 3 months

Education: Bachelor's degree

Major: Public Relations and Spanish

Salary range: \$40,001- \$50,000

PR Sector: Healthcare

1. How well do you think your education prepared you for career advancement?

F-4: I don't know that my education prepared me for career advancement. I think it was a good, here's the basics and the nuts and bolts of things. But as far as going over here's what to expect or here's how you can expect to grow as a PR practitioner in the five to 10 years of your experience, I kind of was in for a little bit of a shock, honestly.

Q: What do you think your educators could have done a little bit better on...is there anything in particular?

F-4: You know I think that it would have been... I think it would actually be helpful to even if there was a core course that was just on management skills. I think that a lot of times as with any profession when you're first starting out, you're really just trying to get a grasp of what it even is. What does it mean to be this and a lot of what happens is you grow in that profession is that you...there's a lot of other skills that you really learn on the job and I've found, though, as I've gone through my career, that there have been other opportunities to learn a little bit more about some of those management things that are things that can take your practice up to the next level. Because that's kind of...through things like PRSA, or just some of these basic professional development types of things. I think that, I know at the university level, we're very focused on the education piece. But it's almost like at that point a lot of people are even starting to do internships, they're already being exposed to kind of the workings of either an agency or a corporate marketing or PR department. And I think that that's not to early to start introducing some of those professional skills that I think carry through as you go on. Because it does seem like it is a very fast paced environment and you are expected to take on a lot of responsibility very quickly and kind of just jump in there. I moved a lot of the last five years and had a lot of different PR jobs in different areas and it's always that way.

Q: Do you feel like it should be the responsibility of colleges to prepare you to move up, or do you think that it's just the basic skills that they need to be teaching?

F-4: I think it is the basic skills, but because that's such a, because you're in that environment, it's such a receptive environment and you are there to really kind of..it's like a stepping stone to begin a career. Once you get into the workforce, you're so overwhelmed with...ok this is what working life is really like. You know, it's almost

like you're...before you get into the game and you're running to catch up with yourself, I think that there's some opportunity at the up front to kind of just have a little bit more know how, maybe or a little bit more preparedness as far as kind of where to go next. Even if there was some kind of...it's almost like you need like an entry to the real world. And there were even some PR skills or communication skills in the core coursework that I kind of felt like weren't completely drilled in. For example, I think what my first shot out of college was with an agency. The first or second day that I got there and I had two or three internships going to into this first job and I was put on the phone with a press release given a national media list to start pitching and they called. And I just remember sitting there and almost bursting into tears because I was kind of like wait a minute, it's my second day. I've never done any of this and there was no...and it wasn't like I got on the job and they're like, ok. This is how you're going to do it today and this is what's going to happen. It was just kind of here you go, here's your room, here's your phone, I'll see you in three hours. So you can image, a 23 year-old. I was on the verge of tears thinking is this really what it's going to be like. Where do I go next? I think that, I don't know. I just think that there's...I just remember thinking, they didn't talk about this in school. We didn't do any of this. I was like what am I doing. So again, I don't know exactly where you draw the line as far as what the educators responsibility is versus when you're out there on the floor just running with things. But I do think that, and I remember thinking that we didn't talk about this or what's next. How do I, where do I go from here.

Q: Are there any specific gaps that you would identify in particular?

F-4: I think honestly, I went to (name of university), and I appreciate a lot of what they focused on – a lot of strategy, designing campaigns. We did a lot of communications management and very practical campaign building types of things, but what I found once I got into the workforce was media relations was huge part of what I was doing and I felt like that was one thing that really didn't, as an undergraduate, I kind of knew that was what we were doing. The whole point is to get press and figure out how to communicate with the public, but that particular component of it, I felt like was very lacking. In fact so much that, the job after the agency position, I took was, it was a media relations specialist and I honestly feel like, I took that job thinking that probably the area of my skill set as a young PR professional that I just didn't have that I needed to develop and felt that. You know what, I'll just go and do it 8 hours a day for however long and really kind of hone that skill. And that was kind of how I looked to fill the gap, was I really kind of took, I didn't go and take that position because I was. I didn't know how to pick up the phone and sell a story, you know, I kind of took it with the thought that god, you know what, I really am not comfortable doing this and I would really like to be. So this is how I'm going to get over it.

Q: What was your major in college?

F-4: PR and also Spanish.

2. What types of barriers have you faced to advancement?

F-4: I don't know that I...I actually don't know that I faced barriers in my advancement . But again going back to the preparedness, I kind of felt. Like I said, I kind of advanced pretty quickly. I went from an A.E. (account executive) position to a media relations specialist to a senior A.E. position to Marketing and PR Director. So I kind of moved along very quickly as I kind of talked about, but found myself again feeling overwhelmed a little bit and over my head as far as what kinds of things I was expected to do in that position. And when I was in Senior A.E. position, I was completely in charge of accounts, managing million dollar budgets, managing a team of entry-level practitioners and I had maybe three years of experience. And that was something, that was something else that would probably be good even exposure as we were developing would be budgeting. That was something that I had done a little bit of it as entry-level PR practitioner, but as far as from an educational standpoint, we did a lot of campaign development, but I had no idea what it took to hold a press conference or even to plan out a whole year long campaign. What kind of money does it take to do all of that and that was somewhere where I kind of found myself again in a position where learning on the job just kind of going with it. But again I think that's probably a skill or something that could easily be incorporated into curriculum. And we used to kind of say, you know here's some steps to take that I would have dug into my box and maybe pulled out whenever I was presented with that opportunity.

3. What steps have you personally taken to overcome any obstacles to advancement?

F-4: Professional development. I found some really good mentors and I kept up some relationships with folks at different levels of the practice. There's some folks, one or two that are very seasoned, more than 20 years of experience. And of course, there's other colleagues that I've met and grown with along the way. And you know bouncing things off of them or ideas and I really think that that's one of the things that has been very helpful. I think is really kind of rely on that network of professionals and kind of say, hey you know, have you ever done anything like this before. I'm doing this for the first time. Do you have any suggestions of how I might approach that problem.

4. What role have mentors had in helping you advance in your career?

F-4: I think as far as the role in advancing my career, I don't if they have specifically. They've definitely have been there. I think actually they have actually been more of a proponent or maybe push when maybe I thought I wasn't ready for something. Maybe when I thought, maybe I was a little scared to try something. I'm not sure about this, what do you think. Go for it. You'll never know until you try. And here's some things where you might turn to for help. You can always call me if you need anything. So from that aspect I think, I think that's probably be their role.

5. What advice would you offer a new practitioner when seeking a mentor?

F-4: You know, I think that. I'm trying to think. When I think about my mentors, I think that they're all people that I've some kind of interaction with. Now, there's one or two that I have not worked with directly that I've just develop a relationship with them

through just professional – just knowing them or knowing them even socially and knowing they're in the same field. But I think it's so important to have advanced knowledge or access to it. Because you can always open up a book or go on a website and look up something, but the difference is that when you're talking to a person that has actually done it or has experience with it, it's a completely different perspective that you wouldn't get otherwise. And I think it's a good way to kind of support your things that you may be thinking already, because you may be thinking this is how approach it, but you're just not sure if, it's just kind of nice to have another take on it sometimes and I really that the professional organizations are a great way to kind of develop that if you're in...being in a workplace you can always rely on your boss, but that's a different relationship. I've found that my previous bosses to be more mentors once I've moved on to other positions and so I think that those professional organizations, and even reaching out to past professors and things and sometimes those relationships can be pretty strong as far as mentoring.

Q: Are there any particular characteristics that you think are valuable in a mentor?

F-4: Really I think it's that coach mentality. They may not always have the answer to every thing, but they may know. They're a resource on where to send you. They may have no idea, but they have a friend here, give them a call. I saw this great article, I'm passing it along to you. I thought you might enjoy it too. I mean, just those. It can be at a very. It's not like a hand-holding thing, but it's just someone to kind of push you in that direction and be kind of receptive to where you are in your career and kind of remember where they were at that time and thinking when I was doing that I really wish I would have known this...so here you go. You know, here's some words of advice or you know here's something that you mentioned you were thinking about doing this and just kind of...And vice versa, I mean I do the same things with my mentors, too. I will see an article or I'll read something and you know we'll pass information back and forth. And so it's not a one-sided relationship, it's not like sending God sending beams down and saying here's the answer...it's really kind of a working relationship.

6. How has marriage or family life impacted your career decisions?

F-4: That's a good one actually. I'll just give you a little background. When I was on the agency side, when I started there, I was single. Of course working long weeks, working lots of hours and some travel and what not. I actually, after leaving that agency position, returned to that agency, that same agency in a higher position as a married person, fully expecting that, no problem, I'll be able to just do it the same way and quickly found out that didn't work. So much to the point that it actually was creating a lot of stress with my relationship at home and later found out that I needed to figure out how to make my career work with the marriage and with a family. And so, the only way I could do that was to change positions. It kind of, I guess opened my eyes to what the... I guess I just thought I could do that and it would be great and no problem. And like I just said, found out that environment wasn't good for a family. It wasn't good to be at work for 70 hours a week and traveling for you know, one week out of the month or more than that sometimes.

Q: Did it involve a change within the agency, the employer itself, or a change of a completely new employer?

F-4: It was a completely new employer. I actually changed and we moved to a different city. We changed our life, pretty much. It was a big change and since then I've really learned kind of the importance of finding that balance and figuring out what to look for in a position in order to keep that. Which now, I'm moving to Houston, so I'm kind of on that I'm seeking that out again and am hesitant because I'm going back to the big city to Houston, where it's fast paced and feel like I'm going to need to jump back into that 80 hour work week, but I'm just going to just approach it very cautiously.

Q: To follow up on a phrase, you said, "I've learned what to look for in a position." What do you look for?

F-4: Well, I think that time is very important and looking for an organization that values. I'm probably looking for somewhere where the other people that are working have families. Knowing that they probably are not wanting to work weekends and be there from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day. Also, I think that knowing that value is there, there's also an understanding of spending time with family as far as staying home, having a baby, and coming back after 6 weeks rather than I think the agency job, I think I had one week of maternity leave if I were to get pregnant and everything else was unpaid. So that just kind of gives you an idea. So those are the types of things that I think I'm looking for. And I think I've grown a little bit in that I enjoy what I do and I'm looking for. I've kind of done different things in PR and I know that there's certain aspects of it that I enjoy much more than others and so I will probably will look for those types of positions where I feel like I have the experience and the know how and actually enjoy doing it and I can probably do it easier and quicker than say other things.

Q: Any other tips as far as balancing family and career?

F-4: You know, I think really just trying to leave it at work – leaving work at work. I know that's a hard thing to do sometimes. And even my husband will catch me some days when I'm home and I'm a little snippy, but that's really I think the best thing to do and also having some other interests other than just work and home, I think. Sometimes you need a little bit of a diversion. I started teaching dance and teaching aerobics and that has been a god-send for me because it's an opportunity to get away from everything else, all these other commitments and just kind of do something that's just for me and I think that's really helped as far as divvy up the time commitments as far as feeling, I'm not at home, or I'm not at work being responsible to this, and I'm not at home being responsible to this. I'm right here for me right now. It works.

7. Have you participated recently in any professional development programs? If so, please describe the types of training you've sought?

F-4: I took an online course and it was copy-editing. This position I'm in right now is a writing position, so it's very heavily focused on writing and editing other folks and I had actually pursued that class after I started working with our nursing group on the newsletter and started editing other people's work and needed to learn how to be a little more working with the writer than editing the whole thing and saying ok, this is how it's going to look. So, that was something that I did online and it was great. There were people from all over the country that were taking the same course and kind of learned a little bit about what other people were doing and why they were taking it. And there was some good dialogue as far as a learning atmosphere. It was the first time, I had ever done an online course. I'm very much more of a go to the seminar, or go and hear this speaker talk and asking questions and what not, but this was kind of different experience. I would do it again.

Q: Any other topics?

F-4: That one and I went to the PRSA meeting, I think it was in March when we had an online PowerPoint presentation on communication strategy. There was a lot of, it kind of brought me back to that classroom feel, that university professor/student environment and I really do enjoy that and that was a great presentation. I came back and shared with my peers and kind of reminded me about measuring PR efforts and ROI and that sort of thing that I don't think we don't do enough of. And is very important and so that also a good seminar.

8. What is the best format to deliver additional training to working professionals, like you? (If no response, suggest examples such as weekend seminars, night classes, online courses or conferences?)

F-4: I think is great because it's convenient, but I think do you lose something from not being in that classroom setting. It's a little more dynamic to be able to turn to someone next to you after a lecture or something and say, hey you want to grab a cup of coffee and talk about this. There's opportunity to have a little more conversation about it. And that's something that, that's a hard thing because if you think it, you've really just got...there's not a lot of opportunities to keep growing that's why I'm really interested in the APR process because I think that's an opportunity to kind of get back into a learning setting with other folks that are interested into going to the same place I am with my career professionally and also I know that there's some, it's not completely formal classroom setting, but there's some training, additional training that would happen there. Otherwise, you're attending a one off seminar here and there, which is great and I think you need to do that. But I just wish there were a little bit more opportunity to find some consistency with kind of advancing, I guess continuing to grow as a professional because I'm such a learner and I love to hear about what other people are doing and figure out better ways of doing things. And I don't know. Sometimes I just wish I had a date on the calendar to go and do that. And I love the PRSA meetings. I think they're fabulous, but I would love to set aside an afternoon once a month to do something like that rather than feeling rushed in and out of lunch and sometimes you can't even stay the whole time and hear everything they have to say. And a lot of times it's really helpful. I think that's part

of your job. I think you have to be committed to not only going in from 8 to 5, but figuring out how you can be better, a better PR practitioner because that's what it's all about.

Q: You said you like online classes, you said that you like seminars from time to time, anything else as far as preference for delivery of professional development programs?

F-4: I don't think so. I think if I were to pick one, I would definitely prefer to go somewhere and sit there and even have an assignment. That's the other thing too is a lot of times with seminars you'll go and learn how you apply it back to what you're doing.

9. What are some of the barriers to seeking additional training?

F-4: Money. That's a big one. It's hundreds of dollars and if your company won't pay for it, then it's an out of pocket expense. I would say that's probably the biggest fear. And time, if you're working 40 hours a week, depending on where you are, that may be possible to get away for half a day to go and do any kind of training or program. So those are probably the two biggest fears. And also making it a priority personally, because if it's a priority personally, those other things may not be such a barrier, but they would just be excuses.

10. What types of public relations skills do you see lacking among interns or recent graduates working in your organization?

F-4: That's an interesting question because here we've had four different interns over the last 16 months. Two of them were PR majors, two of them were marketing and business majors. And I didn't mean to sound awful but some of the interns that we've had I just remember myself as an intern, and I think I would never do that. I was there on time, I treated it like a job. I was there. I wanted to know what to do. If I didn't have anything to do I was asking for things or do or saying could I help with this or that or the other. I've been a little disappointed with the interns that we've had as far as taking initiative to learn. A lot of times I always ask when we interview interns what do you want to get out of this internship, why are you coming here, what are you hoping to learn, what do you feel like you're not getting in the classroom that you'd like to get here. And I always get well, you know I just want to apply my classroom knowledge in a practical setting. Which is fine, they probably don't even know what to expect as far as from a job, but I think that even if there was some education from whoever is advising that person to go out and find an internship, this is what you're getting in the classroom, when you're looking for an internship, these are some qualities in an internship you might want to look for as far as getting off on the right foot in your career or developing that skill set. So I think the initiative and a little bit of direction on where they want to go.

Q: Anything else besides initiative and direction that you see lacking?

F-4: That's hard to say, from my perspective, on the writing side I'm really working with them more on a writing project or something like that. I'm not working with them as far

as any kind of campaign strategy or development or project or things like that. I did try that once with an intern, to try and give them a project and it didn't really happen. I kind of went with them at the outset to kind of get it going and kind of gave them some next steps and there wasn't really follow through on their part and I never figured out. Their internship ended before that project came to any conclusion and I was never able to figure out if they didn't keep going because they felt they didn't have enough guidance. I gave them 1, 2, 3 here's the next steps or if because they just didn't feel like they didn't have the skills set to do it. I'm not sure. But that was the one time. Like I've said, we've had four. I've tried that once and I haven't tried that again with another intern. So, I don't know. A couple of interns that I worked with as far as from the writing perspective, they're writing skills were pretty good. They followed A.P. Style. Of course, that's always knick-knack little things with that you're always learning. But there's one in particular, who I feel like his writing skills were pretty good.

11. What are the most critical skills that you believe are necessary for students to master to have successful careers in public relations?

F-4: Multi-tasking is a good one. Learning how to balance a lot of different things and I guess another one is being very detail-oriented. I remember when I first started out there was so much going on that if I did not carry a notebook around with me everywhere I went and wrote down everything that people said, I forgot, I just couldn't keep up with it. And that was kind of...I'm a pretty on top of it kind of gal, I've got things together, but I would just, I found that I just had to write everything down. So that's a good thing. And then also, I just think that they just need to feel like a part of the team. I think that one of things, not with everybody, but you kind of feel like you're new and you're just entering and you don't know anything. When really sometimes that fresh perspective can kind of rejuvenate a meeting or brainstorming session or whatever is going on and I think that you need to be a little more assertive maybe, people that are coming into the profession and knowing that they're there to learn, but they're also there to offer something to the team, that's why they were brought on and that's kind of a great way to jump in there and not feel like an outsider. Just get in there and offering something even if it's something just hey did you see such and such. I was watching ABC and I saw this, have we thought about and could we do something like that. Or whatever it might be, I think just feeling more of a part of the team. Just kind of jumping in there with both feet. And also, not being afraid to ask questions is a good thing too. You're coming out of a college setting and it's meant to develop this knack for questioning things and figuring out how they work and all of this. And all of the sudden you get in the professional world, I've found when I work with younger PR folks that are coming out, they don't ask enough questions. They take direction very well, but a lot of times you can save days of work sometimes by just asking that one thing that you might not have asked before. I think that's something else that really needs to...But again I think it goes back to that integrated that idea of being on an integrated team and working with, coming in to a work setting and working with someone other than just taking direction or here I need a press release on this and sending them away, there's got to be some feedback as far as. And I would say that when I was working with, when I was at the agency and had about three. We were at kind of a growth phase and had hired a bunch of folks and I always told them I said. I would give them a project and I would let them know come back and ask me questions, I'm sure

there's something I didn't tell you, and so I think we can probably do a better job of encouraging that too, but I think that we need to take the fear away from some of those new folks and they need to not hold that fear here either because it happens all the time.

12. Are there any electives that you would recommend that undergraduate students should take to prepare them to advance into management positions?

F-4: It depends on what you want to do. Business courses are always good. I think it's great to have a basic understanding of that. That's something that I didn't do, because I didn't have time in my schedule to do that. But, because the nature of communication is so tied and is becoming more and more so tied to business objectives, showing some kind of ROI and how it's effecting sales or market share or whatever it might be, I think it's definitely a plus to have some understanding of that. In my case, I took a lot of science courses, because that is what I was interested in and I've worked in the healthcare field. So I think, I always kind of knew that from a communications aspect that I was interested in healthcare and I took things like medical terminology, and basic anatomy, or basic biology, and I took a science writing course on how to break down complex, taking research and turning it into something that people could read. So that was from when I was there, I knew I had an interest in something and looked for electives to match that. Which if you like, it depends on what your interests are, but I think that there's so much opportunity with PR. There's some many different places that need communication. And so you can really go anywhere with it, and I really think that being a general communicator is fine, but if there's some way to tie it to something that you love or something you have an interest for then I think you should try and do that. If it's art, if it's business, if it's in my case, it was healthcare. There might be, if it's politics and you want to go into public affairs, you might want to be taking some classes on political campaigns or something like that, fundraising. I think, you really should just tailor those things to what you like. Because you never know when you're going to pull it back out. When I set out at the outset, I was working on the agency side, but from there moved to a hospital position so all that education from college, I pulled out my medical dictionary, and I pulled out some of the things that I had done before to reference.

13. What recommendations would you offer to public relations educators to help them better prepare students for career advancement?

F-4: I think we talked this, looking for ways to kind of integrate some of those just professional skills that we all need and use whether we're a PR practitioner or whether we're working on the business side or whatever it might be, looking for opportunities to kind of integrate that into just classroom setting and I think there's a lot of ways. You don't necessarily need to dedicate an entire semester of coursework to something like that, but I think there's ways to kind of use that within some of the classrooms that we're already doing. I know that we did a lot of group work and things like that. It would be great if there were some ways to even do some role playing or figure out working in those groups on projects for our PR class looking at that as kind of a nuclear dynamic of people working together and maybe figuring out how some of those professional skills play into that group setting as far as if you're working on developing a campaign, which I

know there's a campaign course probably the last semester of your senior year, and that would be a great opportunity to do some of that and kind of assign roles from different perspectives 'cause I think one of the things you, it depends on where you go do work, but a lot of times you come in and you're not coming in as a new professional and writing a PR plan, you're coming in and taking maybe one aspect of the PR plan and executing it. And it might be kind of interesting to maybe even give roles like that among the group and kind of switch them around and let feel like what gall it takes to pick up a phone and pitch a story. All those things I think maybe bringing some of that practical experience back into the classroom.

Q: Can you describe how you see that working in a classroom setting, your concept again?

F-4: Sure. For example, I know my senior year, we had a campaign course and I think we had a group of like 6 or 7 of us and we were each assigned a client and we had to come up with a campaign for them. I think ours was a cookie company that sold, she baked hot fresh cookies and delivered them anywhere on campus and then she had just recently opened up a kitchen on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, which is like the downtown nightlife. And they were baking hot fresh cookies, so at 2 o'clock in the morning, if you wanted hot fresh cookies you would go there. So we had to come up with a campaign to maximize her business. And I remember, I just remember being in a group, but it wasn't so much organized. We all just, it's all kind of a mish-mash of things and we did brainstorming and what not, but it would be kind of interesting to say ok, we're going to treat this like you're working at an agency ok and here's the different aspects of how an agency works, there's a creative person, there's maybe a media relations person, and your account executive. These are all the different roles. Ok, I'm going to assign all of you roles and this person's the account executive, this is what the account executive is responsible for. This is what...you're the media relations, this is what you're responsible for. And kind of maybe letting those, giving them a little bit of a taste of that and figuring out how that all works together. And then maybe really executing something. I thought that, that was one of the things that I liked about that campaign is because it was a real person, it was a real problem. We actually presented it to the client after we were done. But I still think it would have been neat to kind of take it one step further and actually. Again it was all planning, and we didn't get to actually make something happen and I think that if we would have had some of those roles assigned that would have been a little bit more doable. And then you don't have people fighting over who's in charge and what do you do and what do I do or kind of getting a bit more of an aspect. And I mean the same thing works that way in a corporate setting often, people are very compartmentalized. So you have very distinct roles when you're working on a project.

14. From your work experience, how critical do you think advanced degrees such as a master degree in public relations or an MBA are for practitioners seeking to advance to managerial positions?

F-4: I really don't. I don't see a lot of value from an advancement perspective as a communicator. It seems to me that if you're interested in teaching an MBA or Master's in PR would be very helpful. But it seems to me that it's experience again. It's always

touted, as that's what we're looking for, that's what we want. When I was looking for stuff in Houston and I had a freelance opportunity and someone said we're really looking for seasoned professionals. You know I have almost six years of experience, I think I'm pretty seasoned, but it was the number of years that they seemed to value more than any of the other kinds of requirements.

15. How much does your organization value credentials such as accreditation when considering employees for promotional opportunities?

F-4: In this setting, in this organization, I would say probably not that much. I can see where it would be of value on the agency side, I think, probably having an APR and being the Director of Marketing or PR ... Director of PR that would probably be a plus. And I think even when we were in the interview process like I mentioned we were growing pretty quickly at the time, that was something that we looked at when we were hiring senior level candidates at the agency, but I would also think that would be valuable in a corporate setting also, which is why I think I'm interested in doing that. I think that it is something that kind of says that you're committed to your profession and that you have solid understanding of not only the basic in PR, but maybe a little bit beyond that or that you're willing to go beyond that in order to figure it out. So I think it makes you competitive. I hope that it will make me more competitive, you know that's kind of what I'm going for.

## Transcripts F-005

Job Responsibility Classification: PR Manager

Age: 32

Experience: 9

Years of Service with current employer: 3.5 years

Education: Bachelor's degree

Major: Journalism/ Public Relations

Salary range: \$80,001- \$90,000

PR Sector: Education

### 1. How well do you think your education prepared you for career advancement?

F-5: For career advancement. You know, I don't know that I really understood what career advancement meant when I was going through school. You know, especially in our program at (name of college), It was a little bit more focused towards the agency route or the non-profit route. There really wasn't a sequence, but really wasn't an avenue for us to see how it works in the governmental/ public information perspective. So in terms of preparing me for career advancement, I don't know that it was all that helpful. I think most of that is on the job training and learning from your mentors and people above you that have more experience. I think it did a really good job of preparing me for other ways, but not for career advancement per se.

Q: Do you think that is a role of education or should be a part of your education?

F-5: I don't know if that's something that you can teach. I don't know, you know, I don't think that there's one formula, I mean, you know, they would say things like, you know where I think it made the most impact is when we had guest speakers. And they would come in and say well I work for an agency for this many years and after that one of clients...but I went to work for that company and that's how I got into corporate PR and then from there... I see having someone speak to you gives you a little bit more perspective and you can kind of translate that and transpose it on how you think it's going to effect your career. But I don't know that there was ever a textbook or program or syllabus or anything that ever generated that for me.

### 2. What types of barriers have you faced to advancement?

F-5: I don't know that I have faced any. I got this job at 27, very unusual. When I became a director at 27, the director I had replaced was retiring and she had been with the district for 17 years. When I took the job as the director at 27, my daughter was four weeks old, and I came in making \$76,000 a year. So I don't know that I encountered barriers. I think I'm probably one of the lucky ones.

3. What steps have you personally taken to overcome any obstacles to advancement? I know you said that you don't think that there's been any barriers, but what kind of things did you do that helped you succeed?

F-5: Well, I can tell you that I was told by the superintendent that hired me that one of the reasons why I got the job was because of my internship experience and my experience. Yes, I had only been out of school seven years and I got the job, but one of my internships was with the Department of Energy in Washington, D.C. I attended the Institute of Political Journalism at Georgetown. And so I worked at the press office at the DOE and Undersecretary Peña in the press office. And so I got to see public information act requests coming in, government work, accountability to the taxpayer, the politics and the politics and the politics and the politics of it. And I think that was probably something definitely in my favor. And my previous post was at (name of previous employer) in Ft. Worth and that's the county hospital system and since we're in the same county, I had worked with the same county commissioners who I think it comes down to politics. I understood the politics of the county, I understood what was going on with the movers and shakers and got to see it first hand. And then I think one of the other things that very beneficial to him that made me attractive was that I do speak Spanish. And I have a really good working relationship with Spanish language media. I can do interviews on Univision, Telemundo without a problem. I have a good working relationship with reporters who do speak English, but they write in Spanish, but there's more of a cultural understanding. And that was probably attractive.

4. What role have mentors had in helping you advance in your career?

F-5: I think being able to learn from them first-hand. With my boss at (former employer), She's been in the business for umpteen number of years, just to be able to see her manage the media. Everyone talks about the "it factor." And when you're working with television crews, you got to just know how to work the room. You got to know how to talk with one of the guys when you're dealing with a bunch of cameramen. And they don't teach you that in school. Seeing her remember things about that cameramen, and knowing it's more important to have a better relationship with the camera guy than with the guy asking you the questions, because he's the one that's actually really building the story. And these guys come and go. These little reporters they come and go and come and go, it's a revolving door. But the cameramen are the ones who you really have a relationship with and that's not something they teach you in school either. So I think that she taught me a lot with regard to how to have relationships with the television reporters. And then other ways, just seeing, being able to observe awkward situations, being able to decipher what politicians are really saying in their board meetings. They say one thing in front of the cameras and they say one thing when the meeting is being recorded or there's people attending a public meeting. But you walk into a closed meeting and here something completely different and so being able to translate that and have a understanding how important it is for you to be able to distinguish when they're putting on and when they're not.

5. We could probably talk for hours, just on that. What advice would you offer a new practitioner when seeking a mentor?

F-5: Find someone who's been not only successful in terms of title and money, but someone who's been successful in that they've been able to do the accomplishments that they've had or have made, the projects that they've worked on. And what that translates to in terms of skill and knowledge. For instance, one of the things that I enjoyed most about working with (name of previous supervisor), she had been there during the Wedgewood shootings. When the guy went into the church and shot everybody up. All of those patients went to (name of hospital). She was there when the tornado hit downtown Ft. Worth and the buildings were just demolished and people were just running to the emergency room. And she had to work those events and so knowing that she had been there during crisis situations was attractive to me, because I knew that I could learn those skills from her, which I did.

Q: Related to that, I wanted to ask the characteristics that you would have them look for in a mentor.

F-5: Someone who's successful, who is proud of what they do. Someone who is passionate, and someone with integrity. There are a lot of people in this business that don't have integrity and are very successful in what they do, but they're honest about it. And that's unfortunate when you start working under people like that and it makes it difficult for you to learn how to be good at it.

6. How has marriage or family life impacted your career decisions?

F-5: I'm very lucky because my husband is someone who is in the business who's in radio. So we understand how that works. We have a mutual understanding of the demand and the hours and the calls five minutes before they go on air and I need you to confirm this, and baby's screaming and so he's really good about that. Like I said when I got this job, when I started the job, she was four weeks old. When I interviewed for the job, she was 10 days old. I had no intention of looking for another job, when I applied. In all honesty, I applied because the money was good. I didn't think I would be a viable candidate at all. And so my husband took two years off, the first two years of my oldest daughter's life to stay at home and be with her, so that I could have this job. Since then he's gone back to work and again he's in radio, and we've had a second daughter who is six months old. And it's been challenging, but my situation is unique in that I'm in education so I get a week off at spring break, two weeks off at Christmas, two weeks vacation and every day that the kids are out of school, we're closed and during the summer we only work Monday through Thursday 7:30 to 5:30, Fridays off. My contract is for 243 days a year, that's all I work. I think that if I was in healthcare, or certainly if I was in the private sector, I don't know that I could do it. I don't know that I could be a director. I think that it would be too much responsibility and it would leave me no time for my family. So I think, education it's very unique.

Q: How have you balanced it, do you have any advice or tips on that?

F-5: The only way I've been able to balance it is by, this may seem shallow, but having somebody come and clean my house every week. For working moms, it's very difficult. Some people are very lucky to have husbands who are great cooks and great house cleaners or housekeepers and who are willing. But mine tries. Mine unloads the dishwasher and he wants a party thrown in his honor, because he did it once every two weeks. When I get home, my heels come off, my suit and jacket gets put on a hanger and I'm in the kitchen trying to figure out what we're going to eat for dinner. I'm throwing stuff in the dishwasher, I'm unloading the dishwasher, I'm ok let's go, let's get your clothes off, let's get in the tub it's bath time. Let's take a bath, take a bath, ok let's dry your hair, dry your hair, ok let's get your jammers on, let's do this, let's do that, and it's non stop. And now with two, it's exhausting and so I put them to bed at 8:30 and I sit down at 9 o'clock and I can either go run the vacuum or do the laundry or I could just sit there and decompress. And because the responsibilities that I have in this job for own mental health I have succumbed to sitting down and just decompressing or else I won't make it for the next day. So if at all possible, make whatever sacrifices you need to make to make your home as functional as possible so that you can enjoy your family. Because I used to be really organized and a clean-freak at home, and everything had it's place and shoes did not get kicked off and just thrown by the door. You put your coat up, you just don't throw it across the chair and that's how I wanted my household to be. And that's not what it is, it's not realistic for us. You just have to learn that things are going to be a mess.

7. Have you participated recently in any professional development programs? If so, please describe the types of training you've sought?

F-5: Nope. I have not.

8. Do you have any preference for how you would like it to be delivered, to make it more convenient for you (If no response, suggest examples such as weekend seminars, night classes, online courses or conferences, what do you prefer as far as delivery?)

F-5: The less time consuming the better. If I were to do professional development, last summer was the last time I did anything and it was the TSPR Conference (Texas Schools Public Relations Association), I'm sorry the NSPR, the National Schools Public Relations Association. It was in Chicago. So it was over a year ago, and luckily my husband is from Chicago, so it became a family vacation and I just went and did my sessions during the day while my daughter hung out with her little cousins. But this summer I couldn't do any professional development because I just had baby. And unless it's family-friendly, it's really difficult to do. And even online, that's not family-friendly to me, because that's me sitting in front of a computer away from my kids.

9. What are some of the barriers to seeking additional training?

F-5: Taking time away from your family. I say that is the barrier for me. That's the reason I haven't done my APR. It's the only reason why I haven't.

10. What types of public relations skills do you see lacking among interns or recent graduates working in your organization?

F-5: Writing skills.

Q: Anything else?

F-5: No, I think that's the big one.

11. What are the most critical skills that you believe are necessary for students to master to have successful careers in public relations?

F-5: Well, I think it depends on what sequence you follow. In my position now as a director, I've got a communications specialist that works me, she does the majority of writing. I have a full time event planner, so she handles all the logistical things. I have held jobs in those capacities before, so it was important to me then for me to having writing skills if I were doing all the press releases, event planning all the logistical skills, the details. Now as a director, if you're asking me that in my position now, I would say the most important skill is diplomacy, being able to interpret the political climate, knowing when not to say anything, probably being able to work a room. I mean, you don't want your public relations officer sitting on a wall when there's a room full of state legislators in there talking about school finance. You want that person to be able to go up to them, shake hands, introduce themselves, have something to say about something. You know I understand your daughter goes to so and so, I graduated from there. What's she studying? Literally, the political part is probably the most important in what I do. But in my previous post, writing was imperative and before that event planning, logistics. So I think it depends on what you're most interested in doing.

12. Are there any electives that you would recommend that undergraduate students should take to prepare them to advance into management positions?

F-5: Time management. Budget classes, learning how to make a budget work. I think now I'm doing a lot more administrative duties than I ever envisioned for myself. Not that I didn't know that that was part of being in upper-management, but it didn't occur to me how much time it took to facilitate that. To facilitate evaluations, being able to evaluate your employees, sitting down with an appraisal tool, working them through the tool. Being able to understand that everyone has skills that they've mastered. So only give them tasks that they can do. Don't give them tasks that are not in line with the skills that they are not good at. Because it is just not efficient for you or your office. The writer should be writing. The customer service expert should not be writing. She should be on the phone answering questions in the ever-friendly phone voice that she has. And the event planner should not be doing graphic design, if that's not what her skills are.

Q: Any other types of course that you would recommend?

F-5: You know what would probably be helpful. I don't know if it's an elective-type, but business etiquette. Understanding which fork to use at the table. You know that kind of stuff happens. Something else that I wish I would have done that really has made a difference in this job that I hold now, but would have made a difference in a previous job that I held was being able to play golf. When I was at the bank, I did marketing for a bank and I was responsible for organizing the annual, several golf tournaments. So I always knew how to do that and I knew about find the mulligans and I understood all that kind of stuff and I knew that certain people like to drive the beer cart and I knew how all the worked. But I really didn't understand the game of golf. And had I, I probably would have been able to participate more on some of those scrambles that were really important, with the important kind of people, and I just think that is a really important, that is something that they don't teach you. And I've heard it a million times, but yes the biggest business decisions are usually made on the golf course. And my first job out of college was at a country club and that's where I learned a little bit more about it.

13. What recommendations would you offer to public relations educators to help them better prepare students for career advancement?

F-5: Give them more insight into your experiences, what were your challenges or your obstacles. As a student knowing what I knew now, I would not take a class from someone who hasn't been out there recently. I had a professor too that maybe worked at an agency for a year or two and then got their master's and went right into teaching. They had absolutely no on the job experience that was useful to me at all. They understood it, they read it in a book. They taught, they understood it, they knew the theory, they could tell you all the different kinds of communication models and how that doesn't matter at the end of the day when you're doing what I'm doing. But it's those professors that said you know I worked at an agency for 12 years, here's some really great projects that I worked on, you know, this was one of my clients. The city of Dallas was one of my clients, let me tell you how we handled this crisis that they had. Those were the things that were most useful to me.

Q: Any other advice for educators?

F-5: Maybe to show them all the different kinds of public relations that there are. It's not just agency, it's not just non-profit, it's not just government. There is a whole 'nother, there's a slew of corporate communications out there that is not even addressed in education, I don't think. That would be useful. Fundraising for instance, you know sometimes foundations and the fundraising overlap in small organizations and so the PR people are doing the fundraising too. There aren't fundraising classes, and I think that would be helpful.

14. From your work experience, how critical do you think advanced degrees such as a master degree in public relations or an MBA are for practitioners seeking to advance to managerial positions?

F-5: I think it's important. I don't have an advanced degree. And I think it would probably behoove me to get one if I ever want to move up further.

15. How much does your organization value credentials such as accreditation when considering employees for promotional opportunities?

F-5: I don't know that accreditation in our agency, don't have any warrant in terms of compensation. The only way we do offer stipends for employees that have master's degree and or doctorate level degrees, but not certifications. And in this industry, in education, most of the superintendents don't understand what APR is and they don't really care. Traditionally, the public information officers came out of the education ranks, the principal, a former assistant principal, a counselor with some marketing experience. Traditionally, it was not a PR person that was brought in and trained at least. That's shifting significantly and it has in the last five to 10 years in education. Because I think that superintendents now see the value and boards to the value of having someone having absolutely no educational experience whatsoever, I mean primary education, teachers.

## Transcripts F-006

Job Responsibility Classification: PR Manager

Age: 32

Experience: 7 years

Years of Service with current employer: 6 years, 2 months

Education: Master's degree

Major: Public Relations

Salary range: \$80,001- \$90,000

PR Sector: Agency

1. How well do you think your education prepared you for career advancement?

F-6: I think that education in public relations does provide you with the fundamentals, so that you come in and you're familiar with terminology and important historical case studies that help you on the job, but I think at the end of the day, so much of practice of public relations is on the job training, you learn by actually doing it. There's so many theories out there, you can learn theories in the classroom, but at the end of the day, that's not what people are thinking about when they're making decisions. There's so many variables to what we do that you can't control, so all of what I think you need to move forward in this career is based on your day to day experience, not a classroom learning, setting. And I think because of that, what I've seen since I've been out of college more and more college programs are going to more of a case study model or a project model so that students are learning day to day, not just lecture, textbook theory.

2. What types of barriers have you faced to advancement?

F-6: If there are any barriers I have faced, I'm unaware of them. I think I had possibly an exceptional experience moving up in my organization. And I think that's probably related to several things. I think one opportunity. Sometimes when you have opportunities to work on certain types of projects or experiences, it propels you forward, where as someone else who may not have had that opportunity may not get that particular experience to move them forward in their career. And I think two, I think work ethic. I think that it is valued in the profession that we work in. It's 24-7 news cycle, so it never will be again a 9 to 5 job, so I think people are valued and move up in their career because of their work ethic, so you have to kind of decide, make limits for yourself on how much you're willing to give beyond sort of the 9 to 5 hours.

3. What steps have you personally taken to overcome any obstacles to advancement?  
If there haven't been any, what do you think you've done that you think maybe opened up some opportunities for you? Things that you have done to make that possible?

F-6: I think there have been many times in my career when I've been asked to do more than I'm kind of physically capable of doing in an 8-hour day. So maybe there's times when your workload is 40 hours a week and you get asked to do another project that

might add another 10 hours to your week. You either decide to take it on knowing what that means for your personal time or you decide not to. And I have chosen to, I have not turned down any projects that have come my way. Although, I will say that at some point, I will probably start rethinking that. So I don't know that, I think when you're a person who doesn't say no, you become a bit indispensable to an organization because they know they can always count on you. But then I think also another part of it is I never realized how important chemistry is working with all the different people that you work with on an everyday basis. Whether it's your team members, your clients, reporters, vendors, there's a lot of audiences that you work with as an individual and the relationship that you have with those people on the chemistry can make or break a situation for you. And while no one person is going to get along well or work well with everyone they interact with, the more flexible you are as an individual the better those relationships can be, and that's only going to enhance your career. I've seen colleagues who are very talented and very strong and very smart choose not to have that flexibility and because of that, I think it's held them back in their career. They've been asked to be taken off certain projects here or there, because there isn't the chemistry with the person they need to work with, and eventually that becomes a barrier for them. While I certainly don't, I think you just have to be very flexible, an open mind in order to be able to constantly juggle with, work with so many different people of so many different personalities and so many different competing agendas.

4. What role have mentors had in helping you advance in your career?

F-6: I would say very little. I had a very strong mentor in college that I do keep in touch with. But I don't know that that type of mentorship from that experience is what I really benefit from in my day-to-day job. And I don't really know that I have had. I may have to just start over answering the question. I think that, I guess I maybe would just say, I don't feel like I have a formal mentor, but I've sought to learn from various people that I've worked with from observation. Just watching people whether they were more experienced or less experienced, higher or lower title, I mean I try to learn from everybody I work with. And I can look at the person we just hired out of college who's 22 and I'm going to be able to learn just as much from her as she's going to be able to learn from me. So maybe that's more where I try to seek mentorship is from something from everybody that I interact with including my clients. I think that early on in my career, several of my clients who were clearly well established in their roles and who I supported them in a very tactical level, they needed my arms and legs to do the work they couldn't physically get accomplished. I was able to because they relied on me for that, they were able to act as mentors to me in a way that I maybe hadn't expected. So I think I actually learned a lot from some of my clients. The way our organization is structured, there's not a whole lot of people above me to serve as mentors to me. So that's leading me back to I try to learn something and get something from everybody I interact with. So that's it.

5. What advice would you offer a new practitioner when seeking a mentor?

F-6: Well, I guess maybe one piece of advice would be what I just mentioned - try to learn something from everybody. I think that it's a huge mistake to put the burden on one person in any type of relationship in your life to try to expect one person to fulfill all of your needs. And I look around our office and I see a lot of young people here feeling, I've seen them feel frustrated in the past because they didn't get the time or the attention that they may have wanted from our CEO or from a specific supervisor, and I've tried to help set their expectation by saying that's a huge burden if one person has to be a mentor to 20 people that work underneath them. That's a lot to ask of someone, so take it where you can get it. I also think it's a really good idea to have someone that is outside of your organization. They don't even necessarily have to be in the same profession, but can just be someone who is willing to serve as a sounding board for you and help you put your experiences into context with what they observed in life.

6. How has marriage or family life impacted your career decisions?

F-6: Well, I think it's been the other way around. I definitely wanted to have a career, and it was very important to me to establish myself in a profession and financially before I got married. So I did that, and I actually just got married recently. And the hardest part about making, one of the challenges to making the decision to get married is knowing I have to scale back on the time I give my job. And I don't necessarily love it that much, it's a hard choice. But it all goes back to what I talked before, the expectation and the job is this isn't a 9 to 5 job anymore and you need to be available when you need to be available, and sometimes it's on the weekend or sometimes it's in the evening or sometimes it's a 5 o'clock in the morning. So I think, you have to find a balance and I've tried to establish that and set boundaries for myself in the past year and now I'm now kind of at that phase where I want to start thinking about having a family and so I wonder, can I have a family and continue to do the job that I'm in right now. I don't know that I can. I think about it every day. What am I willing to give up. Can I do this job in less hours, what will it take for me to continue to be successful here if I can't give the same amount of time or mental energy. So I think part of that question is still a big question mark for me.

Q: So how are you balancing it right now? Because you have of course said you have gotten married in the past year or so? What kind of things do you do to try to achieve that balance?

F-6: Most of the people that I work with in my office, so my team members that rely on me for daily feedback, most of them tend to work 9 to 9:30 to 6:30 or 7 at night. If I work on their schedule, I won't get home until 8 o'clock at night. So I have shifted my lifestyle to come into the office earlier than I used to and I leave earlier. And that enables me two hours in the morning that are completely uninterrupted and that is when I'm most efficient. And so all of those materials that the team sort of cranks out the night before, I review them the next morning. And so I think, that's probably been the biggest thing that I've done that's helped me, because my husband also goes to work early and comes home earlier. So I've tried to align my schedule more with his, so that we are waking up at the same time, going to work at the same time, and coming home at the same time.

7. Have you participated recently in any professional development programs? If so, please describe the types of training you've sought?

F-6: I participated in probably two or three programs in the last 18 months that were geared toward leadership roles, supervisory roles. And have really tried to, have been able to take those programs to strengthen my supervisory skills. Try to really essentially make the transition from being a tactical worker in my organization to becoming a supervisor. I think that it's really interesting, I read this, there was a Business Week article about two or three years ago that talks about, they followed a class of MBA students and they started studying them, it would have been about 12 years ago, and they did this poll, profile on these people 10 years into their career after getting their MBA. And the one thing that all of these people said is that area where they were the least prepared was managing people and supervising and leading a team that is completely void in our education system. Nobody teaches you how to do that. And a good person who's good at their job gets promoted up to management, but there's this clear misunderstanding that just because you can do something, doesn't mean that you can teach it, or doesn't mean that you can oversee other people doing it well. And so reading that really helped me understand why I was feeling so overwhelmed. And so I just worked with my organization to identify programs that were both sponsored by my organization and outside programs to go and share experiences with other people and learn some best practices I guess.

8. What is the best format to deliver additional training to working professionals, like you? (If no response, suggest examples such as weekend seminars, night classes, online courses or conferences?)

F-6: I think the formats that I've been through that I think work the best for me, I think everybody is different. But sort of an emersion session like an all day session or 2 or 3 day session where you are allowed to let everything else on your mind on hold and to really focus on the topic. I think an hour here, an hour there is frankly worthless. And I think that those sessions where you're both listening and participating where you get to break out into groups, where you get to share your own experiences, where you get to maybe interact with some role playing situations have been really beneficial. And I think where people just give you really practical things that you can keep at your desk and so when you find yourself in a situation, you can go back and reference it and there's a real practical action that you can take. It's not instilled in you yet, but a reference guide that you can actually do something with. There are so many books out there on leadership, how to be a great leader here, navigating change, how to work with difficult people, I just don't know that you really get the same experience reading that book versus being in a emersion seminar, even if it's the person that wrote the book, they're leading it and having you do these activities is so much more effective.

9. What are some of the barriers to seeking additional training?

F-6: Cost and time; time being #1. My organization is very good at allocating budget for us to do things we want to do. I haven't really experience a cost barrier, although I know that it is a huge barrier for a lot people.

10. What types of public relations skills do you see lacking among interns or recent graduates working in your organization?

F-6: It's not PR skills; it's the attitude. It's the, I don't know we talk about it a lot, and we're starting as a culture to read about it a lot, the 20-something worker. The sense of entitlement, the coming out of college and thinking you are an expert. I don't know what changed, but I just remember coming out of college when I did, it so professional and so formal and you were so, we were all so worried about the image that we were putting out there. We wore suits to any opportunity to interact with a professional and network. We always had our resume with us, we always asked questions, we never thought we knew enough about anything to think we could just go run a program. And I see kids coming out of college and they're very smart, and we hire people right out of college, right out of our internship program from college. Most of our hires intern with us first, and that's a good testing ground. But so many of them, sometimes are just, they dress very casually, they give no thought to a sense of professionalism with regard to how they talk, how they dress. I think many of them think they're going to walk into a PR situation and be in charge of it and just run it and know how to do everything. And I think they're oftentimes very surprised that they're going to have to do some grunt work and cut their teeth. So I think that can be a little bit, I think people who think that they are ready to go, they're not going to be hired, they're not do well in my organization. We want people, we tell them, we want you to just come and be a sponge. We don't expect you to know everything, and we want you to be open and we you to just soak it up. And then we also point to them, to teach us the things we don't know like technology related things, MySpace, all that. We make sure they know there is something of value that they're bringing, but on the basics of what we do, listen and learn.

11. What are the most critical skills that you believe are necessary for students to master to have successful careers in public relations?

F-6: Writing, but it isn't always just about writing. I think that one thing that's a huge misunderstanding and it's unfortunate. It's not just about AP Style anymore, so many organizations write for different audiences now. They're not just writing press releases for reporters. They're writing them to be sales tools, they're writing them to be search engine optimizable. And that can sometimes conflict with AP Style. So I like to tell people, it's not about being a good writer, it's about being able to understand how to write in different scenarios and how to follow directions in order to get it right for each one of those different scenarios. I write press releases for six different types of audiences and each one of them is a very different style, so I have to be able to adapt to different styles for different audiences. So understand AP Style, but also understand how things are changing, how the world is changing and how the Internet is changing the way we write and how we receive information. And I think secondly, skills that people need out of college, understanding how to read the news and identify trends. We certainly never

talked about this in school and it took me awhile to really get it. But being able to understand what a reporter is really looking for. It's really easy to go into an organization, drink the Kool-aid, try to go out there and tell the world, but if you can't tell your story in context to the bigger picture, your story's never going to get told. It's never going to be heard by the media the right way. You need to be able to understand a reporter who's looking at many companies, many organizations and looking for trends across them and being able to play into that. I think that is something that there's a huge weakness at the college level, or certainly was when I was there. And what we're hearing from our interns, they don't even touch on it.

12. Are there any electives that you would recommend that undergraduate students should take to prepare them to advance into management positions?

F-6: Management positions. I think if there were any kind of courses on leadership or even just a management class, maybe sociology, but not just the history and theory of sociology, but being able to understand how people think, what drives people, maybe being able to understand how you can leverage tools to better understand what motivates your employees like the Myers-Briggs type tests. Those are always really interesting, you really learn a lot about co-workers when you go through that exercise. And then also accounting and budgeting. A lot of people enter this industry, because they don't like math, they don't like numbers, and I've got to tell you anybody who thinks that is absolutely wrong. This industry's all about numbers, it's all about math. Every organization has to fight for PR dollars and the only way you can get it is to show how it impacts the company's bottom line. So you have to be able to understand business, you have to be able to understand how to plan a budget, how to meet a budget, how to budget people's time, how to measure PR results and tie them back to company's objectives so that, if we really want the conversation to be at the C-level, they're going to say, what is PR going to do for our numbers, so need to be able to talk that talk.

13. What recommendations would you offer to public relations educators to help them better prepare students for career advancement?

F-6: I always wanted to end my career teaching PR. I started my career teaching and I always wanted to end it and it seems so much more formidable now than it did 10 years ago. It seems overwhelming. Knowing, having worked full time for 10 years now, how would I go teach it. I think the first thing I would do, I would never rely on myself to have all the knowledge that students need. I think you have to constantly stay updated on your industry and let me tell you, it's not by reading "PR Tactics." Go to the PRSA trade shows, that's not where you're going to get the real day-to-day knowledge. Invite real professionals in constantly to talk about the decisions they're making today that are going to affect PR tomorrow. That is where the real learning is and that would be how you I would think best stay on top of the profession and you can't move up or progress in your profession, if you're not able to see what's coming. If you're out there right now and you're not thinking about digital media or online media, you're not going anywhere, you're not moving in the right direction, you know. It doesn't mean you have to be doing it, just be aware of what other people are doing. There's something else out there right

now that's going to be the next big thing that I probably don't know what it is, but somebody in my organization is looking at that right now and I think that's how you always stay ahead and move forward. Do you want to repeat the question, did I answer that.

Q: You did and I don't know if you had any other thoughts, but we were talking about educators. And one of the things I wanted to ask related to that. I don't want to stop you if you had any additional thoughts related to this first part you said, but is there any best practices that you had from your time at (name of college).

F-6: From Best practices in teaching?

Q: Something that you experienced that you think was a really good example.

F-6: So a couple of things. I think one other thing I would encourage or I would do if I was a professor today or I would encourage professors to do in addition to constantly bringing professionals in, is really help people understand the logistics of networking. One of my professors said the single best thing you can do is network, but he never really explained what that meant or how to do it and it was always sort of this, we kind of laughed it off. And I go back and speak to his class about once every other year and I went last fall and he and I went and had lunch afterwards. And he asked me what was the best thing that you got from my class or did I say anything that now you look back and think was foolish. I said actually we always used to laugh at you talking about networking and these windows of opportunity. And I said you were absolutely right, it's the single most important thing you can do throughout your career. You have to be able to network and build relationships with all of these different constituents that impact your PR program. And it doesn't come naturally for everybody and it's hard for a young person to understand just how many politics are in an organization that can impact those things. So I would almost think talking about that and again bringing real world professionals in to talk about it, I think would really help students to just be aware of that this is going to be a challenge you're going to face in your job and here are some tips. I mean certainly, no one ever, I never would have gotten the impression that just the internal politics of your own organization how that can propel you forward or hold you back. If you're working with a client or a partner or a vendor, understanding that their decision of yes or no, may have absolutely nothing to do with your organization, it can have a million things do with things that are going on, on their end that you have no visibility into. It's just understanding how many variables can impact decisions that get made.

In terms of any best practices that I did, the one thing that was a huge eye-opener for me is the group project concept. Students when I was in school, we always had to do these group projects and everybody hated them, because there was always somebody who didn't pull their weight. And people always complained about it. And I actually, spent sometime teaching in other countries where the culture was the exact opposite, and the students didn't want to do anything that was an individual project. They were used to working in groups. And so I found this very different dynamic and I never really

understood sort of why people hate group projects until I saw why people loved them. It really helped me have a better understanding of that. And you really don't understand how important that is until you get into the workplace, everything is a group project. You're never going to be doing anything for the rest of your life completely on your own and so I think, not just forcing people to do a group project, but help them understand the dynamics, how to overcome a person who doesn't care or isn't interested, how to help people work on components that play to their strengths. If you try hard enough, you will find something that everybody can contribute to and that they'll be happy contributing to. But if nobody ever tells you, you can do that, or teaches you how, you'll never be able to do it. So I mean, I think one of my key jobs is trying to understand what motivates the different members of my team. They're all motivated by something very different, and how to delegate tasks out so that I can get the job done, but get it done the most efficiently by assigning it to the right person and positioning it to them in the right way. That's a really important skill that I feel like I'm just starting to really understand and I've been having to manage a team for three years now and I feel like I still have so much to learn on that front.

14. From your work experience, how critical do you think advanced degrees such as a master's degree in public relations or an MBA are for practitioners seeking to advance to managerial positions?

F-6: I honestly don't know. I think it is very different in different markets, in different types of organizations, in different industries and I've seen advanced degrees highly valued and I've seen them undervalued. I've seen people get recognition for them just verbally, and then I've seen people get rewarded for them financially. And it's so different everywhere you go. I think you have to understand that our profession doesn't naturally reward an advanced degree nor do we reward the APR accreditation, the PRSA accreditation. I think the industry as a whole doesn't. There are pockets, there are organizations that do, and so a person that has an advanced degree or an APR accreditation should seek out employment with an organization that has someone else who's in their same situation. So the best way I think you're going to get rewarded for that or recognized for it is go find somebody to work for that has one too, because they know what it took, they have an appreciation of what it means. Someone who actually attended a PRSA event this summer where we talked about APR accreditation and we talked about if PRSA doesn't take a leadership role in helping to explain to executives, C-level executives the value of the APR that it's never going to move forward that they need to have some thought leadership pieces by filing some articles in publications that executives read because I see so many PR people, they report directly to CEOs or C.O.O.s or C.M.O.s, so it's really we don't need to preach it our profession, we need to preach it to the people who are hiring our profession that's where we need the buy-in on the advanced degrees and the accreditation.

15. How much does your organization value credentials such as accreditation when considering employees for promotional opportunities?

F-6: It's not proactively stressed. There certainly isn't any kind of, I'll put it this way, an advanced degree and APR is not mentioned on our job descriptions or our performance review evaluation forms. So we're not evaluated on those types of things. Now if someone was interested in pursuing one or the other, I do think my organization would be open to discussing budget to support them. I have seen a few people in my organization you know get their APR process compensated. As an organization, because we do see the value in understanding the business side of what we do, we are starting to hire people with business degrees, MBAs, so I think that, say for example, I think if I decided I wanted to go get an MBA, I think my organization would support that and possibly support it financially. Like support if I needed to go to half time work or part time work, I think that they would be pretty accommodating.

## Transcripts F-007

Job Responsibility Classification: PR Manager

Age: 29

Experience: 7 years

Years of Service with current employer: 4 years, 3 months

Education: Bachelor's degree

Major: Journalism

Salary range: \$60,001- \$70,000

PR Sector: Non-profit organization

### 1. How well do you think your education prepared you for career advancement?

F-7: In terms of career advancement, I would actually say that my education hasn't really contributed that far, because I've had my degree for nearly seven years, and so much has changed in the field of public relations since then. And then also, the way that my degree plan was structured for my undergraduate education, there was not a lot of emphasis on management-type classes. It was actually the 12 hours we got farmed out to the college of business was focused on marketing, so there's really not a lot that's put into that. So I would actually say that on the job education and then professional development opportunities that come through my organization have been what have prepared me.

Q: Ok. Do you think it should be a role?

F-7: You know I do in the sense that I think that a lot of people coming out of school, myself included, I think you need to have an idea what it means to work for someone, and then what it means to work towards something. So I think it should definitely be something that's included because there's a lot of people, especially the generations the way that they're gearing now, you see people entering the workforce, they're an entitlement generation, and they really feel like they should just be given things and they don't understand hierarchy and structure and what it means to work for something. So I think having some sort of emphasis on that in those capacities would be helpful to people coming out of school and those of that are in the workforce now as people are working for us.

### 2. What types of barriers have you faced to advancement?

F-7: I think just the structure at my organization has contributed to that. I've been here almost five years, and the first several years that I was here, the executive team and the structure of the organization was very flat. There wasn't a lot of middle management opportunities. There were entry level and then it would jump to a management role, but you would be in a management role for several years before that would jump to a director and then again there was kind of a gap and a barrier between that and a vice president role and then the C-level role. And so for those people that have solid three to 10 years of experience, there really wasn't a lot of room for growth. While your role would kind of change, and you could take on increased responsibilities within your role, structurally

there just wasn't a lot of movement that happened. So if you're looking at titles, those would remain pretty flat, so that was something coming from a PR agency that was an adjustment for me, not in a bad way, because I'm at this point, I'm not very title driven, but I definitely found when you come from an agency environment, you tend to be. Because an agency, they kind of have, you get promoted kind of on a yearly track and there's a lot of levels. And so when you're at an organization that doesn't necessarily have that much, those many steps, it can be kind of strange to feel flat for a while. But I think now they've done a good job of providing professional advancement and opportunities, but for several years here it was a different story.

3. What steps have you personally taken to overcome any obstacles to advancement?

F-7: Personally, I've always strived to always have a really good relationship with my manager because that person is directly responsible for my advancement and that's the person needs to know my desires and my wants, my career path, and needs to be my partner in helping me achieve that. And I've been very fortunate that my managers have always shared and understood that. I know that there's other people that aren't necessarily as fortunate as having managers that understand the managerial role in professional advancement, so I think personally, I've just benefited from having good managers that seek for that, and that go to bat for me, and that go to bat against the organization to say there is a disparity among middle management opportunities at the organization and strides need to be made. So I think that's just been something that has been good, so personally working with my manager and then also seeking professional development outside of my organization. I'm a member of professional associations and then also networking with my colleagues that are in my same field, but then also outside of my field that different perspectives on their experiences, which I think all contribute to my having better dialogue with my manager, and then now that I am in a manager role making sure that I'm addressing needs that my direct reports may have.

4. What role have mentors had in helping you advance in your career?

F-7: I think mentors have been huge and again that goes to, just like I talked with the networking, you know going outside of my field. I think it's important to have mentors that don't necessarily have the subject expert matter expertise that I have, but are in roles at their organization and have responsibilities that I would strive to one day have. So, I think mentors have been hugely important, much in the same way of having a good manager and the networking, which is someone that can provide different perspectives, objective advice, and just someone that can be a solid sounding board that isn't emotionally tied to the situation, but can just really be objective and someone that cares about me personally and cares about the goals that I want to have. You know, they're just that good guide along the way to help keep me on task, and just again that sounding board, where I just can't go back to how valuable they are in that role.

5. What advice would you offer a new practitioner when seeking a mentor?

F-7: One, I would, if you're new in the field, I would say it would be important to look for someone that is in your field, because I think you need a combination of professional guidance along with that personal support, and so I think it would be important to find someone that can offer you that. And then as you grow as a professional, and you start understanding what types of things you may want to grow into and you start seeing opportunities outside of your initial field, I think it's important then to seek mentors in different subject matter areas. But I would say, right off the bat, look for someone that has the expertise that you're seeking, but that also, I would say, look for someone that's accessible. You know if you're right out of school, it may not make sense for you to try to be mentored by a CMO at a company, because they may be in the industry for 15 and 20 years, and they probably have a really different perspective than someone that's been working for 5 to 7 years, who would probably provide you really good immediate growth. And then because as you mature in your career, you're mentors mature, so I think that would be something to don't go out and try to run down a C-level person, 'cause I don't think they're going to provide you the perspective that you need at the point that you're at. So you know, find someone that you feel comfortable with, that has time for you, and that has enough experience to provide you with obviously some mentorship, but that you can get to and you understand what they're talking about. Because it doesn't make sense for you to have a mentor that is 15 levels above you and can't talk your language.

Q: And you've touched on this to some degree already, but are there any other types of characteristics that would say to look for in a mentor?

F-7: You know, I would actually, I would also say, diversity. Because a lot of times in this growing world, there's a book that's come out that a lot of us are cycling around reading. I think it's actually on this bookshelf over here maybe. No, I think it's cycling around, but "The World is Flat." And that fact that people that are outside of your social background have different opinions on careers and such, and so if you are a male in the career, maybe seek a mentor that's a female that can provide perspective of you of what they're gender faces, and also different ethnicities and backgrounds. And then also, I think mentorship, diversity within your field, but amongst the types of employers, because you know there's non-profit organizations, there's corporate, there's PR agencies, there are PR divisions within maybe advertising shops, so there's diversity amongst the field as well. And so diversity is as diverse as the name implies. And I mean, that can be my sex, by ethnicity, by your job, so and even size of city, size of market that you work in I think that also contributes to the view that a practitioner has on their field.

6. How has marriage or family life impacted your career decisions?

F-7: I am married and I think I'm actually in as far as I know, kind of a different marital situation than a lot of people that I know, because I'm actually the bread winner for my family. So I actually I, my career hasn't had to be put on hold, because my spouse might have a different opportunity than me. Our marriage has been dictated by my career and

the things, the opportunities, that are presented there, so in that way I've been fortunate. But then also, I view, there have been struggles with myself because I am very career driven, and so there's definitely struggles with my spouse of making sure that he understands that if I'm putting in extra hours it's not because I don't want to be with him, but I see that as my contributing to the security and the growth of our family. So, and that's just a personal difference with him, he's a very laid back individual and enjoys flexibility and those kinds of things, and so doesn't have a schedule that ever makes him work late. So he's very punch in, punch out, kind of mentality, whereas so he's very job oriented, where I'm very career oriented. And so that's something that different. But again just going back to I haven't really had to sacrifice or make decisions about my professional path due to geographic impacts that may happen with my spouse's job.

Q: A related question that I've been asking everyone else on this, is how do you achieve that family and work life balance?

F-7: You know, it's a bit interesting, I actually got married, I was still in school when I got married. And so as our marriage has matured and my career has matured, it's all just kind of been happening on the same path just because it had to. I didn't have a groove with work for several years before I got married, so that's kind of just been balancing it as it's gone. And the first several years were really hard, because I was a newlywed and you want to contribute to the advancement of your marriage, but also I was very new in my career and I was fighting tooth and nail to learn as much as I could, be recognized for my work, grow professionally, so those first few years were challenging. I think we've hit a good stride now, because we've been married almost seven years, so that's been, we as a couple have grown and matured through the process and I think the fact that we're both in journalists, I think he has an understanding for my discipline, which is helpful. I don't know how since we are in such similar fields, you know I don't know how difficult our marriage and that balance would be if he didn't have an understanding or respect for the type of work that I'm in. So I think that has also helped some of that.

Q: So are there any tips that you would have for a young practitioner just starting out and how to achieve that balance?

F-7: I think it's important to set your boundaries right away with a work life balance because your boss needs to recognize that, but then also don't be so inflexible of ok, I'm trying to have this work-life balance, so I only need to work 45 or 50 hours a week. Sometimes you just have to realize and suck it up, you're going to have 60 hour work weeks, and your spouse needs to understand that as well, but knowing that that's not the norm, and setting that expectation for that. So I think you need to, I'm one of those persons, if it takes 80 hours a week to get something done, then that's what it takes, and if it takes 80, if I need to put in 90, that's what I'll do. But I do recognize that I'm very, it's very important to really communicate when you are facing a burnout. Because you can't be a good worker if you don't recharge yourself and you're not being good to your team if you don't communicate that. So your team needs to know if you're about to have a mental breakdown and they need to pick up the slack for a day so you can leave and go have lunch or go to Target on your lunch break, because you can't stare at your computer

anymore. Because I think in taking care of yourself, that's important, but also the impact of you taking care of yourself and the impact it has on your team, I think that's even more important. So it's not just about you anymore, it's about other people that depend on you.

Q: So how have you handled that when you get to that point?

F-7: You know I think again, by just product of circumstance where I've been very fortunate with the people that I do work with, especially at the environment of my organization being mainly women, we're communicators, we talk to each other and we work hard and play hard and you walk in and you've got pair of shoes on, and oh my gosh, I've love your shoes and bam, you get to your meeting and you go. Or you can tell when people look tired and when you've just got through a big push of a project, and ok, yeah, you know I'm going to come in at 10 o'clock this morning, but yet I'm still going to leave at 5:30 or 6, so I think all of us communicating and having that respect so we're not trampling on each other's, so there's still coverage at the office, but everybody's still getting their own time to handle things.

Q: So there is some flexibility in your job.

F-7: You know there is. Yeah, there is flexibility. And I think it's important also for the people that report up to have flexibility as well and for them not to ever see themselves being perceived as work horses, just because they're in lower positions than managerial staff. I think it's important for people of all of levels to have that to have the flexibility, because they need to feel valued as an employee. And I think having that flexibility of schedule as an adult is something that makes you feel like you're valued. I know that's something the first several years in my career in the agency world, it was totally different and I definitely did not feel that flexibility. And it does make you feel a little like a minion, which makes you feel like you're contributions are less significant. So I think the environment that I'm in now on all levels has been, I think it's great. I think our team our team has a really healthy approach to that, which I've just been fortunate the people that I work with.

7. Have you participated recently in any professional development programs? If so, please describe the types of training you've sought?

F-7: Goodness, this year I actually have not. Last year, I was able to participate more in PRSA functions, you know monthly luncheons that they have, networking opportunities, but I've started traveling more this year and so that contributed to kind of my lack of being able to participate in things in my city. But you know, while they haven't been formal opportunities, professional development-wise, I feel like I still while I travel, I have the opportunity to meet with other people and that sort of thing. And so while it's not a formal professional development, I think it still contributes to that. And then, let's see, what was the other part of that question?

8. Well if there was any particular topics. The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of that question I have is What is the best format to deliver additional training to working professionals,

like you? (If no response, suggest examples such as weekend seminars, night classes, online courses or conferences?)

F-7: I myself am still, I think this kind of touches on our conversation right before we turned the recorder on about your online learning, I still prefer seminars, and you know hearing from a live speaker, because I feel like with online classes and teleseminars, and webinars and all the things happen, there's still a lot of disruptions that happen to take your attention, conference calls and those kinds of things and so when you're at a seminar, you're totally removed from your distracting environment and you're able to completely focus on something at hand. And so I for one prefer those half day or one day workshop type things. And then, although, actually I am participating in a professional development opportunity in a couple of weeks, but it's actually something that my organization is planning and putting on, so it's more of an internal kind of class, but it's still I think just shows that my organization's commitment to professional development, which is I think is nice.

Q: What kind of topic?

F-7 : It's actually on management skills.

Q: Oh, good.

F-7: Which is something that again, kind of talked about over the past year that our organization is finally gotten more opportunities structurally and the commitment that they've made to that is investing in someone that is in the HR department that is strictly focused on their employee professional training and development. And so there is now whole person, a two person team actually that's dedicated to that topic, and so this is one of the first things that this team is putting on, so I'm excited to see the opportunities that are going to come from having that expertise in house. And then how those opportunities compare to my field oriented professional development things, because that's also been, I think that will be different for me with this professional development opportunity than ones that I've had in the past, because this is going to be pulling people from all business areas of this organization versus just being in a room with public relations, marketing communications professionals.

9. What are some of the barriers to seeking additional training?

F-7: I think time. It's probably time and budget. Again, I'm lucky at my organization that each department we budget for professional development activities, so my professional memberships are paid for by my organization and workshops that I choose to participate in are paid for by the organization. But then the time becomes the biggest factor of that, there were actually several things towards the end of the last calendar year that I was very interested in being a part of and had planned in being a part of them for some time, but then given the nature of the business that I'm in, you know a certain month rolls around and wasn't able to do the things that I had planned on doing and wish

I would have been able to, but again the time factor is a big barrier to that. And I'm sure that's part of what you've probably heard on every other answer for the most part.

10. Pretty much. That's ok, though, that's what we're here to talk about. The next question I have is what types of public relations skills do you see lacking among interns or recent graduates working in your organization?

Q: That's interesting. I would say attention to detail, because I think technology makes it too easy to do things. And I find that sometimes if information's not right in front of their face, they don't know how to find it anymore. And so I think that, I think technology is almost becoming a crutch in our industry. And I sort of wish that some of the interns and the people that come right out of school, had to deal with standing at a fax machine for three hours sending things out, to have an appreciation for how easy it really is now. And so when you push back on them and say ok, now need to find this information, it's really not that difficult for them to understand that they have to go and do a few additional searches that really is kind of easy. So again, I think it comes back to entitlement as they come out and they just expect things to be handed to them, so I wish they had a little bit more understanding of how technology has contributed to the advancement of our field, but also have a respect that it can't be used a crutch. I think that would be one of the biggest things, that and then we're facing a generation that is very conversational and doesn't understand the need of formal correspondence of a business, I would say a business mind-set when communicating externally. How to in the sense of back in the old days of writing letters and writing correspondence and understanding that e-mails are a form of correspondence and should be treated accordingly and it's not a hey, how you doing? So just I think just stepping up the maturity a notch and understanding that you're in the business world.

11. What are the most critical skills that you believe are necessary for students to master to have successful careers in public relations?

F-7: Critical skills, I would say, actually touching on what we just talked about, I would say having a maturity in your writing. I think writing is definitely critical. I think a little bit of a thick skin, and then also a little bit of an understanding of psychology because you deal with so many different personalities and you need to be able to effectively communicate with people in ways that they understand. And in order to do that, you need to swallow what your personal beliefs and background may be, and be able to communicate unbiased. And sometimes that's hard for people, right off the bat, so that would be some of the main things.

12. Are there any electives that you would recommend that undergraduate students should take to prepare them to advance into management positions?

F-7: Business accounting. That is actually something that I now wish I would have taken. I think some people that choose to enter the communications field do so because of fear of math, myself being included, because you tend to consider yourself to be stronger verbally, and so you probably shy away from things. But you know when you work in

communications field, you may clients or may end up in house at an organization where you're communicating financial data and information, and if you don't have a understanding how an annual report is read, how the heck are you going to communicate it. So I would say taking business accounting, I would also say take a photography class, take a RTDF class, because a lot of times you'll get thrown into an editing bay, to put together a video packages, and those kind of things. And remember that you are working with media and I think I was lucky where my undergraduate degree, it was a journalism degree and it focused on all spectrums of journalism, but now I know that PR is growing, we finally are having more public relations type classes to offer, which is great, but it takes away the old requirements of maybe having some of basic journalism classes that used to be offered. So you know being familiar with an AV board, and all those types of things. I mean all that knowledge that you'll be surprised what you end of using. So I think those would be the things that in my time I've found have been helpful having that background and then some of the things I wished I had more background on.

13. What recommendations would you offer to public relations educators to help them better prepare students for career advancement?

F-7: I think it's a responsibility of educators and educational institutions to require internships. Don't make it, so you can take a special project class or do an internship because I think that a lot of public relations, you learn by working. While there's some of the academic that needs to be applied, because you need to have a basic general understanding of principles, until you know how you interpret those principles or how the organization you're with interprets those or other professionals interpret those and how you react to that, I don't really think you can be a good professional, so I think requiring that internship opportunity and I would almost say even two internships, because in two different types of mediums, you know say that an in house type and then maybe an agency type, because it's two totally different approaches to the field. So I would say that would be helpful. And then also, well I mean students just, until they experience it themselves, they're not going to listen to you preaching about those things, so you can talk about what it's like to work in the field, as far as some of the things that we've discussed earlier with how to be a part of the team and how to communicate with the manager and how to ask for your own professional development, until you're in those situations and you feel beat down about it sometimes enough to make a change, or you're in a situation where you're in bad situation and you have to work yourself through it to make it better, I don't think that's something you can learn. So if I had to say one requirement of educators, I would say that all curriculum should have an internship component.

Q: Were there any best practices from your days in college that you remember back that you found were just really helpful or maybe something that you didn't have that you think should be implemented as a way to prepare students for advancement?

F-7: I think one of the best practices that we had were working groups within our classes, which I think was really helpful and the fact that all of the working groups that I got put into were not ones that we were allowed to pick, we were assigned into and it was kind of

randomized, which is great because you just have to deal with the cards you're given. And you have to learn to work with different personalities to succeed. So I think that was really helpful and then one of the things I wish would have appreciated, it took me a while to appreciate and understand, in one of my PR cases classes, we would review and get case studies to read and go over and I don't think I had as much of an appreciation for the case studies, because I think I was still a little too naïve in strategies that were being applied to really fully understand the scale and scope of the work that was involved in some of the case studies and really understanding some of the hurdles that they crossed to get the success and results that they received. But now after being in the field for several years, I now think back to some of those case studies and I'm like ok, I remember some of those things and what they did and I have more of an appreciation for them now as my skills as a professional have grown. But I don't think I had the depth to understand them in the way that they were presented when I was back in school.

Q: Any other advice for educators?

F-7: I think you can't always determine this, but I think it's helpful for educators if they've been in the real world prior to going to academia. Because I'm actually, I don't know what your personal situation has been with grad school, but I am of the mindset that I don't as a PR professional that you can straight from your undergrad straight into a grad program and then work. I feel like you have to have some kind of professional experience to help guide your graduate studies, because I think you're doing yourself a disservice if you go straight through. Much like a college professor, if you've gone straight through from undergrad, to your master's, to a PhD program now your teaching in the field, how can you possibly teach people about the field of public relations if you haven't work in it. So I would say, for educators to have real world experience, so because it works the same with students, until you have that internship experience, you don't really fully understand any of the academic applications, so unless they have that real world experience.

14. From your work experience, how critical do you think advanced degrees such as a master degree in public relations or an MBA are for practitioners seeking to advance to managerial positions?

F-7: I think if you work in an organization that is not, I think if you're part of a marketing communications function within an organization, so you're working with other executives that have other backgrounds and disciplines, I think having a graduate degree is very helpful, because you're now speaking the terms that they understand, because a lot of the people that work at the finance level have MBAs. And a lot of the people that are in the C-suite just have that kind of background and I think it shows the commitment, I think it shows your personal commitment to your professional advancement that you've gone the extra step to do that, so I think it is important. If you're at a PR agency, probably within the agency, I've not seen it make as much of a difference, but to your client, I think it does make a difference because again, I think the outside world really looks at people that take the extra step to get advanced degrees. I think they see that as a sign of discipline, and as a sign of interest in your own knowledge and your own

advancement, to be able to better serve the people that you work with. So I think it speaks highly of you as a person when you seek that out.

15. How much does your organization value credentials such as accreditation when considering employees for promotional opportunities?

F-7: My organization I believe because we do have people in many different disciplines, we've got marketing function, we have finance function, we have health function, and I know especially in the health function here, it's extremely important I think to our organization. Our hiring managers in the marketing function I don't think look at that as highly, not as highly or as closely as other department do because I think again it's all about how you can present yourself, but I think having credentials again it does show that you have taken some extra steps to be more familiar with your field, so I definitely, I think it may give you an extra look, but I don't think it's a deal breaker.

## Transcripts M-001

Job Responsibility Classification: PR Manager

Age: 29

Experience: 6

Years of Service with current employer: 5 years, 10 months

Education: Bachelor's degree

Major: Journalism

Salary range: \$40,001- \$50,000

PR Sector: Government/Military

1. How well do you think your education prepared you for career advancement?

M-1: I think it prepared me very well. I was fortunate enough to be in program at the University of North Texas to where we had a great deal of training in crisis situations, strategic management, those types of areas. However, you don't get to utilize those skills fresh out of school and one of my biggest issues is it depends on the job. Being in city government there's a lot of bureaucracy, red tape, often in structure to the organization to where a lot of times those skills aren't able to be implemented in the first couple of years, but I feel like over time, getting to know my co-workers, I've been able to advance maybe not so much job description-wise which I have, but just as far as my involvement within the management team of our area.

Q: Do you think that should be a role of ...undergraduate education should prepare you not only for the entry-level jobs, but for positions higher up later on?

M-1: Oh yeah, it's crucial. It's constantly evolving type of deal. In the six years since I've been out, you know the world of PR has changed dramatically. Obviously, one of the bigger ones would be in technology and the Internet. And so you're also always looking at changing. I mean crisis communications changed with every big crisis, you know there's new areas and tactics that are implemented. But I definitely you have to hit on those types of things in college. Because if not, you're sending someone out or going out to the work world with no experience whatsoever or an idea when you're looking at a lot of strategic types of activities, managerial stuff. And one of the things I would say, looking back at mine is really focused more on business area. You know, I have a very strong journalism background, which is great and definitely essential, but I think you have to look at the business world, corporate world. You know when you get into things like finance, operations, logistics, that type of deal, you know all those things come into play. You know PR is a jack-of-all trades, I feel like, or at least in my scenario. It's rare that you're pigeonholed into your going to be writing press releases and newsletters and that's it. I think one of the advantages of the education I received is I was well trained to go into other areas and provide some insight. Once you're able to provide some insight, management then goes, this guy knows what he's talking about. Let's hear some ideas that he has.

## 2. What types of barriers have you faced to advancement?

M-1: Obviously, and I said this before the structure of the organization. And once again, I think you look at some business type skills when you look at finance-type issues. I don't know if that's kept me from advancing any, but areas I'm not as strong in as other areas. And you look at a lot of operational things, you know I think a lot of it depends on the job that you're in and whether it allows for advancement. Like I'm in a somehow ended up in a Parks & Recreation field. Obviously, I've had to educate myself on that industry. And I think industry specific jobs often that can delay an advancement. You know if you're PR out of college, journalism background or whatever, and you go into communications, you might not have any idea about the business you're working in. So there's a learning curve there where you've got to immerse yourself in the culture of that business. If I went into healthcare, I would haven't any idea about healthcare, so that's going to be a 3 year lag before I could really think someone should deserve to get into a managerial position. Now it's hard because obviously in college, you're getting your basic skills down. You're not looking for a specific area and when you graduate you're looking for a job. But once again, I think going back to the issue of the business training is very crucial.

Q: I'm going to just go ahead and while we're on that theme. One of the things that has come out of my previous interviews is that there have been some that would recommend maybe choosing a specialty along with your basic classes and focusing on maybe one or two areas such as healthcare, such as political science. Would you recommend that kind of path for a student?

M-1: Yeah, I would. But I forget the statistic, but by the time you're 30, you're not even in the same major. I think it's very critical to get those skills down. Maybe not instead of focusing on a specific area, I would think a specific track within public relations whether you want to go into non-profit, whether you want to go more of the promotion/publicity side of things, entertainment areas, obviously Web site, audio-visual, those types of specific skills. You know that's one thing I think in my college experience, it was a broad range of skills without a specialization in any one skill besides writing. But you know you look at it now, I think a lot of PR people rely so heavily and rightfully so sometimes on an agency or a special audio-production firm, video production doing their spots or what not. Well, if you can have those specialized skills, I think the end product is a lot more successful because you're able to get from point A to point C, without having to go through B.

## 3. What steps have you personally taken to overcome any obstacles to advancement?

M-1: I think one, you're networking. Regardless, if you're got somebody in your business or organization, that's got a total different job, you've got to come with a level playing field realizing that they have your strengths, you have your strengths and you've got to get along at some point. In the industry, I think we can be isolated at times, secluded into one area, sort of narrow vision. You have to look out for the whole vision of an organization and what's the end result or the goal. You know, I think realizing that

you're not specifically hired to do. You know PR is so broad, but it's not specifically one job that you're looking at doing. You've got to do other things that might not be in the job description. You know you've got to sit down and look at other areas, you know look at programming or planning when it comes to park areas, look at park planning. You know I didn't go to school for that, but at the same time that's helped me. It enables you when you go into the staff meeting, board meeting to be able to throw that in. You know I never realized that I would be working so heavily, my job centers heavily around events. You know and you're working with all types of people in the business that come to you. Like it said, you've got to come in with a clear mind and say hey, these people have their strong suites and you sort of have to mesh that together. You know, one of the things, I think I've done to overcome barriers as well is just staying on top of the game. You know whether you're looking at keeping up on current events, keeping up on trends, keeping up on different things that are out there, it's easy to become stale and do your job, but you've got to look for ways to stay ahead of the curve. Because it's so easy to get passed up right now. You know, you've got people graduating that are prepared with a better set of skills than you were, now you have the work experience, so how do you make the work experience become a determining factor in advancement is key.

4. What role have mentors had in helping you advance in your career?

M-1: Mentors. To be honest, not a lot as far as PR mentors. I'm in an organization that does not have a lot of employees. Pretty much what I do is a one-man, two-man show. I feel like I've been able to be more of a mentor to people that have worked under me. However, I look at our head superintendent of Parks & Recreation, he's been an extreme mentor to me because he teaches a lot of the business angles, you know a lot of the managerial of things, seeing how people manage people, handle conflicts. I think that's been very crucial. It is important to have close relationships with people in the work world. You know looking outside, I have a brother who's been in the industry 10 plus years now, an APR. Obviously, that's somewhat of a mentor – total different area a lot more serious nature than planning events and concerts and doing parks and recreation things. But, I think you have to look at someone and see how they operate, not that it's going to all be good and you're going to agree with what they do, but I think really, I think observation is one of the big things that I've worked with and has helped me. Observing how other people operate, observing whether that be managerial, whether that be staff. You know we've got a parks crew of 20 guys that we've got to manage and they've got to work for you and when you want to get something done, you have to be able to, you've have to be the leader. And think observation is critical in becoming a good leader to see what makes tick, what turns people off. You know, I really pride myself in being the person where I may be in a leadership role, but at the same time, I sit there and shoot the bull with the guys. You've got to be on that level. You know I think that's crucial with PR is to be when you get out to the community, out with your employees, you can be isolated. You can be PR, media person, and I don't want to mess with them. You've got to be that team player and I think that's crucial in an organization.

5. What advice would you offer a new practitioner when seeking a mentor?

M-1: You know. I think maybe look at someone... find someone that you might have something in common with, you might be able to relate to. You know business is business, but at the same time, you spend more time with your business friends and associates than you do with your family and your friends. And I think that's crucial to be able to find a relationship with someone outside of what you do on the work wise, and I think that's key, because we all have to strive, we all have to find a way to be happy, be comfortable and go to work. And it all doesn't come down to boy, she's a great media relations person, you've got to find other ways and find someone who truly enjoys their job would be the other thing. You know it's tough, every day's a struggle, especially with our industry. A lot of times, it's a lot of repetitive serious, deadline-oriented, you can go down the list of things that make the job stressful and I look people who I graduated with and it's amazing the turnover rate in jobs trying to find that area that they're comfortable in and finding that position. You know it can be completely opposite sometimes. But at the same time, I don't know if there's a better field to go into that gives you a broad range of experience and preps you for the world. I think someone can come out with a journalism, public relations degree and be prepared to do an endless amount of things.

Q: Are there any particular characteristics that would note for them to look for in a mentor?

M-1: Personally, I would say make sure they understand the importance of journalism. That's one of my cornerstones and foundations. Make sure the person has a good knowledge of not just writing, but other forms of media and the role that media plays. I think that's a good characteristic. And then look for someone, I think a supervisory role. A lot of industries, organizations like the PR person with one person, I think in a mentor, look for someone who has a team underneath them, because I think if you're going to advance, it's that leadership skill. You can be the greatest computer dork in the world, and sit there and type away and hammer at the keyboard all day, but if you can't sit there and talk and network and have a relationship with your workers, you're in big trouble. So I think finding someone that's a leader is key.

#### 6. How has marriage or family life impacted your career decisions?

M-1: Pretty heavily. I'm not the norm, I would say by any means when it comes to public relations. I graduated went to work in the Metroplex, working for a four-star hotel company in their corporate office doing the whole commute thing, suit and tie work. And I found a job that was a lot more in parks and recreation that was suited to what I wanted to do, a more relaxed atmosphere. And I think when you go to the family and friends factor, that's of extreme importance to me. More than my job, it weighs heavily, I live out in the country, you know. I'm disconnected a lot in those ways, which can be pros and cons. But I tell you, I can't imagine now going back into the corporate world, in the middle of downtown. Opportunities have presented themselves like crazy and sometimes I've gone what the heck am I doing, I could be making twice the amount of salary, I could have a prestigious job, but I think personally, my personal life is a lot more important. I can pay my bills, pay the house payment, I'm all right, and I think that's a

personal decision. I do think it's quite hard for someone in the field, if you're in a smaller community or even a mid-size community. There's just not as much opportunity for advancement. You know, there's jobs that open all the time that I could have advanced up the ladder, but because I'm comfortable in my personal life and with my marriage, I've stayed in this area. And said hey, here's my situation, let's make the best of it. You know, sometimes you have to depend on other income opportunities, but at the same time, I think you have to really have to determine what you want your life to be and how you want to go for that. But I would say, graduating and looking at what you're doing, I think looking at the big city, a larger city, a metroplex type area, is crucial for someone just graduating, because you get great experience. You know my first year, I really found out how the business world works, and I don't know if I would have got that if I would have came straight into this position. So I think that's crucial for someone looking at...get your feet wet, find out how it works, take a couple of years and get that experience and then go from there. Like I said, I came out and knew I didn't want to work for an agency. There was a lot of things that were strictly off my list that I didn't want to go in. I've been fortunate to get into a lot of the entertainment, community relations type deals to where. You know, I think it's a great job to be able to plan events. You know, this plays a huge role in PR now, it's not for big firms here, we're doing it for a municipal government. But at same time, it's experiential marketing is one of the powerful marketing and powerful PR tools. If you can go out and put a smile on somebody's face, that's doing a heck of a lot more than an advertisement.

Q: Related to that, how do you balance...you know everybody talks about the demands of working in PR...how to you balance family and career?

M-1: How do I balance it. I don't know, it's weird. You know, I refer, I'll take my brother as an example, you know extreme opposite. You know, just from my personal experience with some family members, you know looking at what stress levels can do, what work loads can do, I place an emphasis on not letting that take over things, you know. That's not why I'm here on this earth, I don't feel like it's to do my job and to get that paycheck. You know, it's the personal feeling that you've got to take care of yourself. Balance is hard, you know, I'll go certain...this weekend I'll go eight straight weekends where I'm having to be at the office at some point. You got to make sure you enjoy it. You got to make sure you got good staff underneath you, which unfortunately, I don't have any right now. You know, and weigh the benefits you know, there's so much that we do, it can be done tomorrow. It can be done next week. You know, if it doesn't, somebody says something, so what, it's not going to change the world. And I think a lot of my drive, where I fill up my list everyday of things to do, is from that journalism background. It's an every day affair, every hour, there's a deadline. And so, deadlines are crucial with everything you do, but it's that prioritizing of what can be done and what can't be done. You know different jobs are different and I know there's jobs out there to where you're going to have a boss that's going to slam you and the possibility of termination and firing if you're not getting your job done, you know, that's a severe issue, especially when you're looking at the corporate world and agency life, and you're turning in 60 hours. I've decided to make my 60 hours while I'm out in the park mingling with people, saying hi, making sure things are taken care of. I don't believe in

the 40-hour week. You know the way things are now, it's constantly checking the Blackberry, constantly on the Internet, that type of deal. But once again, I'm a firm believer in you get an amount of vacation for a reason, to take that vacation. You don't work on the weekends for a reason. But it is a balancing act. You know, my wife will yell at me at times and say, hey drop it, you're at home now, come home like a tornado, she always says. But, you know, when you get home, you've got to drop it and I think, hopefully that will help with some longevity and it's sort of what keeps me around in this position.

7. Have you participated recently in any professional development programs? If so, please describe the types of training you've sought?

M-1: Training. Yeah, like I've said I've gone into this niche sort of area of public relations in events, special events and festivals. Just was at a conference, I try to make two conferences a year dealing with events. I tell you, I feel like I have some good training and good knowledge of public relations of how those specific areas work. So this whole festival and events thing, I had a little training in it. Fortunately at college, we did do some event stuff. But it's a whole different area that I've gotten into. And so, that was just three weeks ago that we were down there. It was four days of conferences. I'm also enrolled in the Texas Event Leadership program, which is based out of Texas A&M. And basically, attending those sessions, looking to get that certification. But once again, I think you know, the key word right there is leadership. You know, and Texas Event Leadership program it's...no matter what you do, you've got to be able to train yourself, because if you're not aware of how an industry operates, there's no way you're going to be a leader in that industry. And what else, training works, I went to a writing workshop that was sort of a personal thing that was back in May.

8. What is the best format to deliver additional training to working professionals, like you? (If no response, suggest examples such as weekend seminars, night classes, online courses or conferences?)

M-1: I prefer the conference setting, because it's getting you away from the office. You can do a web seminar, or teleconference type deal, but that's still. You know, I'll sit there and I've got work going through my head, so I take an hour of my day to go to a meeting I've still got work things going through my head. I think getting away from your office environment and getting into a complete different mode of mind that's sort of where that training aspect is. You know, I haven't done much night training, so I wouldn't say that. But I definitely feel, a conference is a good time to pick on those things, because you're able to get around industry professionals like yourself, away from everything to where you can go out socially and get to know each other on a social level and at the same time, you're still picking one's brain and observing how they operate.

Q: Any other preferences, or is that primarily your main one?

M-1: It would be primarily the main one. You know another training deal I think is just Internet. And I myself learn. I feel I don't have to get involved with class, pay a

registration. Boy, every day's a training. Getting on there and just researching. You know seeing what other people are doing. You know and if you have a training, there's websites out there have training areas, training materials. And boom, you can do it on your own time, own pace and I still think you're sucking that information in, so I find that very beneficial.

9. What are some of the barriers to seeking additional training?

M-1: Time. I think time's a barrier. Knowing that we all have a heavy workload and there's other things that we can be doing. And like I said, and I think it's very easy to get into the rut of your everyday job and it's that short-term goal that you're focused on. And it's hard the further you get away from your education to keep in sight that long-term goal. And I just think that's one, you get caught up in the day to day instead of the year to year.

10. What types of public relations skills do you see lacking among interns or recent graduates working in your organization?

M-1: I think there's definitely a lack from what I've seen coming in basic writing skills. I don't know if, it could depend on your school or whatever. But I do think there is a shift away from there as far as basic writing. I think writing is the cornerstone of other communication areas. And I don't know I've seen a lack of emphasis being placed on those core communication skills. I still think another big skill lacking is web stuff. You know, we've got college graduates coming out PR/journalism, I mean they should...Being a webmaster as you know is part of most jobs out there now. Not necessarily, the Webmaster, but you're going to have to be able to get on there and update and at least think in that mode graphically. Think of navigational type aspects, so I think that's a big lacking skill that I've seen of some people coming in as they've got an idea, but I don't think people realize that. I mean, you know, that that's going to be full time deal and that's where everything's at right now. And so many of us are still so far behind in that area that I think PR-wise people need to catch up to the curve on that.

Q: Anything else on that particular topic?

M-1: People lacking skills. I would say, and you know this is a skill that you've got...you know like a public speaking, media relations type skill. And you know, that's a thing that comes with experience. Obviously, fresh out of school, you're not going to have much experience dealing with the media or looking at how you're going to craft messages. I think that's crucial is teaching students how you can craft something, how you can say something without saying nothing. You know something like that. Looking at those key points and those talking points and getting those messages across. I don't know if people realize the power of words and how you craft them. But I think that's one thing that comes with experience. You know, I've seen some people come in and they're definitely afraid to do a camera interview and it's like, hey man, that's the number one, one of the number one things of your job right here. You might be a low man on the totem pole, but you've got to gain your respect and show people that you can be a quality

spokesperson for the department. You know when I came on board, my boss saw me starting to line up some media stuff, and he was like what's going on here. But then you show him, you show him results and they see some what the messages you're getting out there and that's crucial.

11. What are the most critical skills that you believe are necessary for students to master to have successful careers in public relations? (overlooked question, related to #10.)

12. Are there any electives that you would recommend that undergraduate students should take to prepare them to advance into management positions?

M-1: Electives. I think business management. Obviously, you're throwing in web design stuff. And I would really say, take your Spanish serious. You know, the Spanish market is so huge right now and just growing and growing, and I mean and I think we were all required to take foreign language in college. Lord knows we didn't pay attention to it and it didn't stick. So I think that's crucial, when you're a step ahead of somebody if you can be bilingual and maybe not so much bilingual, but be aware of the culture and not just the Hispanic culture, looking at other cultures. You know, it's all one now, and I think marketing-wise, cultural specific is key. It's like there's different things that work with different markets, in different ways and different behaviors. And you have to be aware of that, so I think that's crucial.

13. What recommendations would you offer to public relations educators to help them better prepare students for career advancement?

M-1: Public relations educators. I think incorporating people into either case studies or in class interviews people with real world experience. I was fortunate at UNT being so close to Dallas, we had a lot of one-on-one type things where we were able to come down and sit with people, talk to them about what they do and get an idea of that. You know, the internship is always crucial. You know, obviously, I think it should be mandatory, but at the same time, you can make it a mandatory credit, that doesn't insure that someone's going to get all out of it that it needs to. You know they could just go for a classwork, so I think it's more stressing the importance of that of getting that experience. Instead of taking a part time job at a bar, you know or a restaurant, go take a part time job working for this company, even if you're working in the mailroom, like I said, you get to see how that works. And the other thing is just, I think you've got to slam students, I mean, I feel a lot of what I see coming out, you know, they're just not prepped in every day work and the rigors of the industry. You know, obviously school is a lot different, but I think you've got to be critical of the work they do, because lord knows you're going to have supervisors and other people...it's that constructive criticism. But I think you just have to be tough on the students, 'cause they're going into a tough industry.

Q: Were there any particular best practices that you recall from your days at North Texas?

M-1: I think one thing that really helped me and one that sticks out in my mind and didn't realize it at the time, but going back to the events theme, we had a whole semester where I had to produce an event. And I ended up, I had to produce an Earth Day event complete with scientists, kids, hands-on learning, free event at our science building, had entertainment as well, refreshments. You know, at time, I thought that's pretty far from, I didn't really understand how much that involved, but the PR person, if you're looking at any type of event, you've got to make sure all your logistics are covered, so once again, it's that hands-on learning. You know getting someone out working with people, calling people, setting things up, I think just that hands-on experience was really good.

Q: And was that a real event that was executed?

M-1: Oh, yeah.

Q: It wasn't just an exercise?

M-1: No, we had basically split up four people per committee and you split them up and there was I think a total of five different events that were put on by that class, public events, all free of charge, but you had to look at sponsorships in order to offset your costs and boy, I think that was critical.

Q: Wow. That did come in handy, I'm sure.

M-1: Yeah, at the time, I didn't realize it. You know I did it and it was enjoyable, but yeah, it sort of gave me an introduction to what I would be doing now.

Q: Anything else that stands out from North Texas?

M-1: From North Texas, the public relations area was very, very concentrated on the journalism side of things and once again, I think that's a basic foundation that you've got to build. I don't think people should be able to just come in with a couple of journalism classes. I think they need a couple years of journalism classes and then they can go on into their PR specialization areas. So that was really one thing that was key and the projects. Like I said, there was a couple other examples of actual implementation of a project, not just coming up with a theory, but putting it to work. And you know when we did media campaign deals, well I did a publicity campaign for a movie. Did a partnership with the RT- radio, television and film department, to where you had your students making the productions and then this class was involved in doing the promotional aspect of that, the media kit, pitching it out. It was real life stuff. You know, students are making films, but how many times of you heard where that student film somebody breaks it and it gets picked up. And so, I think that real life work load is good, if you can find a way to incorporate that into the classroom.

14. From your work experience, how critical do you think advanced degrees such as a master degree in public relations or an MBA are for practitioners seeking to advance to managerial positions?

M-1: It's definitely not going to hurt. It's tough because, I'm a little different mold than your standard PR person. I think you can definitely get by. And I don't think that can be a determining factor, but it can only benefit you. But I know way more people who've come straight out with a bachelor's degree and have gone on to be extremely successful without any of the additional degrees. But you know, like I'm saying, it's not going to hurt. I think it would be crucial, I would recommend for someone to get out into the work field, find out what they are best suited at, what they enjoy before you take that next step. You know when looking at a corporate level and a business level, there's definitely some skills that you can pick up in higher education that would be very beneficial based as an undergrad.

15. How much does your organization value credentials such as accreditation when considering employees for promotional opportunities?

M-1: I don't know. Once again, I don't know if it's a determining factor, but it sure helps. I know for my supervisor's always stressing, you know, put some letters behind your name. You know, now true the person, if you're looking at you know, advancement, those people most likely aren't going have any idea or much of an idea what those letters entail or what they mean. But at the same time, it shows that you have that extra initiative and that extra training. I mean, I think it's crucial, you're always trying to look...but once again, I think if you've got the skills, you've got the track record, you've got the personality and the characteristics, I don't think it's going to hold you back from a job. But you know, it's never going to hurt.

## Transcripts M-002

Job Responsibility Classification: Technician

Age: 27

Experience: 5 years

Years of Service with current employer: not provided

Education: Bachelor's degree, some graduate study

Major: Communication - Broadcast News

Salary range: \$30,001- \$40,000

PR Sector: Education

1. How well do you think your education prepared you for career advancement?

M-2: Fairly good.

Q: Can you elaborate on that a little bit more?

M-2: Well, I originally wanted to go into broadcast news. So I looked around at the different. I wanted to be a news reporter or news anchor ever since I was a little kid so when I went to high school I used to hang out at the local ABC affiliate down in Seattle. I got to do a lot of cool things and since knew some one who knew someone who was an executive at the ABC affiliate there, I was able to get in and even got to ride in their helicopter one time. I asked them where I should go to school and they said not to go to just a good journalism school, but a good broadcast news school. It just so happened that Washington State University, the Edward R. Murrow School of Communication is there and I was in state, so that's why I moved to Washington State, which did prepare me very well for the broadcast news world. From there, I got an internship which I parlayed into a job and then that was basically my foot in the door and I just worked up the ranks on camera stuff.

2. What types of barriers have you faced to advancement?

M-2: Are you talking news or PR? For news it was just so subjective. I could be better than the person the next resume tape is coming in, but that person may like me over them or they make like them over them. I mean, you've just got to be at the right place at the right time and have what the person is looking for. And you know, in news specifically, they have to fill roles. You have a white female, you have a white male, you have a Hispanic female, African American male, and so if the reporter you're taking the position from, who left. If there was an African American male in that position, chances are they're going to be looking for that African American male. You know, those are something you just have to hit at the right time and just send out tons of stuff.

Q: How about public relations?

M-2: Public Relations – I'm new in this. I've only worked in public relations now for a year and a half. So, I guess it would be a little too early for me to tell any barriers that...I just don't have it.

3. What steps have you personally taken to overcome any obstacles to advancement?

M-2: When I did reach an obstacle, I guess I just asked a lot of people moving up the industry chain or market size. You can't care on where you move with the news industry because I was moving from up north to (city), Texas. A lot of people questioned that, but you know it was a good career move. So you can't care where you move, you just got to be patient with all of that.

Q: Is there any thing additionally that you would say you have done to try to open doors for yourself?

M-2: Learn from the people who've done it for a long time. There are people in the business who have done it for 30, 40 years and I'd ask them for help and pointers and stuff like that. That's when in the news business you have to have a thick skull, but you also have to be open to suggestions and constructive criticism and all that. And I took that and I got better because of that and I moved up the ranks. Because I started off as a producer in a small market, became a reporter. Then moved from a reporter in a smaller market then came up here. And I probably would have stayed in the news business but it just came to a point where I was getting job offers from places I really didn't want to move. My wife was pregnant and we wanted to start to lay down grounds so that's why I stopped and (current employer) opened up. Now I love what I do in a PR job.

4. What role have mentors had in helping you advance in your career?

M-2: A lot. Everything from when I started off in college. My mentor in college got me basically my first producing job because he knew the news director and thought that I had potential and that potential as a producer worked to more on camera stuff at that station. And collected their advice and started to employ that and got to be a full time reporter there. And got moved to a full time position. Well, I took another full time position in an area I wanted to move geographically so I went there for a year and there I didn't get too much mentoring, but then came and worked for three years and got a lot of mentoring from the anchors and news director and what not and just improved. Specifically, it was to write to video, incorporate more natural sound into your stories that people actually care about, what does the greater public care about this, getting stories that more people care about.

5. What advice would you offer a new practitioner when seeking a mentor?

M-2: Wow. Somebody you respect who doesn't criticize and doesn't have hidden motives I guess. Someone who you obviously connect with but also be able to respect. Someone whose been in the business for quite a long time who has quite a bit of experience and knows what they're talking about.

6. How has marriage or family life impacted your career decisions?

M-2: Greatly. I would have still been in news if I wasn't married. News is definitely tailored toward the single life. And I love, but there's a lot of baggage that comes along

with that. Long hours, low pay, all the fun stuff. Obviously, my wife got pregnant, we got pregnant, we didn't want to keep moving around. Before I probably would have ended up in a city where I really didn't want to stay. There was probably at least two or three more moves in this industry I would have had to make before I got to a city where I wanted to that would pay me a reasonable amount and stuff like that. So it factored greatly.

7. Have you participated recently in any professional development programs? If so, please describe the types of training you've sought?

M-2: My current boss and I went in June to a how to get your professors out to mainstream media on the national and regional level. And there were some very good tips there – pitching tips on everything from how to write your subject line in an e-mail pitch, different stories that national publications are looking for versus what the national TV stations are looking for, versus the regional TV and publications, just good insider tips about that. Not write long press releases, is the press release dead, the evolving world of news, and all of this was addressed in this 4-day workshop.

Q: Any other training?

M-2: Yes. What my boss has given me. Not formal workshops, conferences, but training, hey, this is a way to make your press release or pitch a little better.

Q: Is that what you'd describe as on the job training more so?

M-2: Yes

8. What is the best format to deliver additional training to working professionals, like you? (If no response, suggest examples such as weekend seminars, night classes, online courses or conferences?)

M-2: All of the above. For me personally, probably not online classes or night classes or anything like that. It's more of a workshop in a kind of place where I can leave work, we can never leave work here, we're always connected, but leave the physical setting of work and going some place I can devote time and get away from here and go somewhere else. For me personally, it would be a workshop in Baltimore or workshop in Seattle, somewhere like that.

9. What are some of the barriers to seeking additional training?

M-2: Money. Funding, time. That's basically it, money and time.

10. What types of public relations skills do you see lacking among interns or recent graduates working in your organization?

M2: Experience. PR and news are so experience. A lot of times some college professors even tell you that you don't go get your master's in journalism, but go out and get experience because that's really your master's. To be a good PR professional, I would

really think you'd have to work in the news business just to see the other side of it. To see what they're facing, the deadlines, all of the baggage that they have to deal with and it's hard to explain that to someone. You really have to go through an initiation process of doing news, what the news director wants, what different news directors want, you've got to speak their language.

Q: Are there any skills in particular lacking that you see among these students?

M-2: I don't know. I guess that would be a skills set. I don't know. Everything is with experience – the skills all that. I don't know.

Q: There's nothing that stands out in particular?

M-2: No. I'm not involved in the hiring process. I don't know specially what – I'm not maybe the best person to answer that.

11. What are the most critical skills that you believe are necessary for students to master to have successful careers in public relations?

M-2: How to write the best pitch. To know what TV, what news is looking for I guess.

Q: Anything else?

M-2: How to get a story. A drive to go out and really. Chances are the professors who's calling you saying hey, I've got the next best thing a lot of times doesn't have the next thing that can be promoted. It's the professor who is locked away, not locked away, but who is not seeking publicity because they are so busy doing cool stuff, you know, it's this drive that you just you have to get up out of your office. You have to go over there and you have to A: Identify that they do have something cool and then B: You have to persuade them that working with us and working with the media and getting it out is in their best interest, not in just the university as a whole, but in their best interest too. Positive for everybody.

12. Are there any electives that you would recommend that undergraduate students should take to prepare them to advance into management positions?

M-2: In PR or News. Elective classes. I don't know I guess if you get a degree in journalism or a degree in something else PR or whatever, they should take a lot of management classes.

Q: Such as?

M-2: So they learn management 101. Don't micromanage, the saying praise in public, scold in private. If you become a manager, don't scold employees in public. Just basic management 101 type things, this is how you be a good manager. I don't know enough about college classes, but I assume probably if you get a degree in journalism or communications. Now I took management classes because my minor was in business administration. But if your minor is in English, you're not going to be taking

management classes. So if you really want to strive to be a manager, you should probably take management courses.

Q: What were some of the courses that you took that you found to be particularly helpful?

M-2: Management.

Q: That was the name of the course?

M-2: Management 301. Washington State had a really good business school program. Just like (name of business school at current employer). Really good, established business school. I took economics classes, management classes, business law classes, stuff like that for my minor, and that provided a good base from the workings of just business in general. Because obviously public relations and journalism is a business just like everything else.

13. What recommendations would you offer to public relations educators to help them better prepare students for career advancement?

M-2: Well this is a change world, news and PR are changing, so they've got to be on top of it. Everything from the way you deliver news, press releases not by fax any more obviously, is the press release dead. I don't know. What about viral videos and YouTube. What about in education the news Web site on any given university. And what about video press releases? Blogs. How does all this play into the press release or pitching or PR work. I don't have the answers to that. But the professor better teach for the future because that's definitely what the future is definitely going to hold when they get out there five years from now.

Q: Any other recommendations?

M-2: I can't think of anything.

14. From your work experience, how critical do you think advanced degrees such as a master degree in public relations or an MBA are for practitioners seeking to advance to managerial positions?

M-2: In PR, news. You know, I've heard arguments on both sides of the fence on that one. It seems like a lot of the senior management positions that job offers, it doesn't say master's required, but it says master's preferred. I think if you someone with bachelor's and a master's degree, you're probably going to favor the master's degree. Now is that fair and right, maybe not. Because experience specifically in this area marketing, communications, news, outweighs a lot. I mean, a lot of what you learn is from experience, it can't be really taught in the classroom. I'm really on the fence about that. I'd say it probably would be good to get your master's. It would definitely set you apart. And it would be a wise career move. But I don't necessarily think that's right.

15. How much does your organization value credentials such as accreditation when considering employees for promotional opportunities?

M-2: I work in academics, an academic institution. It's huge here. Which is why I'm going after my master's. I'm right in the same boat as you are.

Q: In public relations, they have the APR. Is there any focus on that in the job descriptions that you're seeing?

M-2: No.

## Transcripts M-003

Job Responsibility Classification: PR Manager

Age: 31

Experience: 9

Years of Service with current employer: 7 years, 2 months

Education: Bachelor's degree and some graduate study

Major: Journalism

Salary range: \$30,001- \$40,000

PR Sector: College athletics

1. How well do you think your education prepared you for career advancement?

M-3: For me extensively. I went to school at Louisiana Tech and studied journalism and although that was home for me, I lived there as a young child and there was that pull. I looked at five or six schools and the thing I liked most about Louisiana Tech was it was a small, hands-on department and the ability from day one to get detailed one-on-one instruction in the art of writing from a journalistic standpoint was so beneficial from mastering the A.P. Style to mastering strict elementary journalistic writing style. Within a year, I was getting extensive hands-on layout and design skills or teaching, both of those things. Being able to get hands-on experience and education right off the bat. By the time I got out of college, I was where most people were when they were two or three years removed from graduate school and because of that, I had a five or six year head start on most people. That was far and away the most beneficial thing for me as far as the advancement of my career.

Q: Is there anything in particular that stands out that they did particularly well?

M-3: Very, very good with really just the basics. I've worked at three other schools and encounter several journalism students or people who have degrees in journalism from other schools and am just appalled at the lack of knowledge of basic A.P. Style, of basic writing structure, and inverted pyramid. It's something that we were taught in the first week of school and it just seemed like they did a much better job of basic elementary stuff of hammering it home and they would not let you proceed until you had that as second hand, until it was second nature. I just don't see that a lot of other places and that's something that has always made me value the education I got very much.

2. What types of barriers have you faced to advancement?

M-3: Opportunities. This is a pretty competitive field. Advancement for me is a little bit different than other people in this field. I have no desire to be a director. I am right now where I've always wanted to be and am very happy and could never climb anymore and that would be fine with me. But if I look at taking this same position at a different school, it's tough to come by. When you get in this position, these positions are like gold and you don't want to let them go. And then if I did want to advance, which there have

been times when I thought about it, as a white male, even in the athletics world, as it's becoming increasingly so in the athletics field, opportunities are stacked against you. I would say more so early on in your career and then as you progress, at least two-thirds of the entry-level positions in my field, they're looking for a female or a minority. And that's usually coming from an administrative level and not from a managerial level and so their hands are as tied as yours. I've been fortunate that my experiences helped me overcome that boundary, but it exists and I've seen it more for other people than I have for myself.

Q: What it is about, because I'm not as familiar with the sports information industry...is it just a lot of people willing to go into it? What are you seeing?

M-3: I would say talk about inverted pyramid, it's probably that way as far as getting into this. Prior to 30, there's a lot of people who want to get into this. This is what they want to do. Post 30, they start to settle down, the travel starts to wear people out, the long hours start to wear people out, people start filtering out. But there is an allure especially for young males, many of whom played sports their entire life until at some point entering into or coming out of college, to be involved with sports. And in way, I guess entities like ESPN and Sports Illustrated have just perpetuated that desire because it is so prevalent in young male society right now that people want to get into that. They want to be involved and be a part of a team still. Because that's what is familiar to them. For me it was more, I just wanted to write and design. And fortunately found an area where I can do that and it's second nature. I could work for a newspaper or a magazine easily, but this is what I was always around and so I fell into it. And I think that's what happens with a lot of people that are in this profession, it's what they've always been around, so it's easy for them to fall into. There's a lot of people that fall into that and just not that many jobs open. A lot of entry-level positions, but you're coming out of college and you have school loans to pay, \$15- \$16,000 a year is not very much money and the full time positions, the assistants positions, the associate positions, those are the ones that are very competitive and you're just not going to get those coming out of college. Kind of going back to your first question, unless you have excessive amounts of experience coming out of college, which I did. And that's what is so beneficial about it.

Q: You said it was second nature for you, you fell into it, did you have someone else in your family that was in this business?

M-3: No. Not even close.

Q: I didn't know what you meant by that.

M-3: I just played baseball my whole life. I'd always been around athletics. From four years on, three years on, I'd always been involved in athletics. Either athletics, choir, or piano. And there aren't many PR jobs for choir and piano. Once I realized my playing days were done, it was easy to fall into this because I was a writer. I was going into journalism and why not write about this.

3. What steps have you personally taken to overcome any obstacles to advancement?

M-3: I don't want to say hard work. But more honing the strengths that I have. Making sure that my strengths are as stronger as anyone else's so that if I am in a situation like that where they're like man, we rather hire someone who fits more of a gender or ethnic role, but we've got this person who's really, really good. I've try to do that so that...I didn't want my own efforts to handicap me any more than the social aspect would handicap me. So that's been the most, and being versatile probably more than anything. Making sure I can do a lot of things. Making sure that I can write, I can edit, I can layout, do design work, I can do graphic design, I can do radio, broadcasting, just making sure that there's a lot of things I can do so that anything anyone needs, I'd be available.

4. What role have mentors had in helping you advance in your career?

M-3: Normal, I suppose. Just showing, not so much showing things, but you just learn from how they do things. Whether it's the right way to organize a press conference or whether it's the right way to speak with the media. When is it the right time, not to say anything. Mainly just from the experience of being around them. There's never been a sit down talk or anything, just even learning things that I disagree with that they do. Learning that I don't want to do things that way. I think about my boss right now, I known him for 13 years, I've worked with him for 8 years and he's very meticulous and organized and seeing that and seeing how well things flowed because of that made a very strong impression on me to be the same way and that's been very beneficial.

5. What advice would you offer a new practitioner when seeking a mentor?

M-3: Don't expect them to be perfect. Don't expect them to be exactly the way you want it. Don't be afraid to disagree with them on some things. I think too often we look at mentors as I want to be just like him or I want to be just like her. You have to learn both positive and negative that's by far the most important thing. Don't be afraid to say, I disagree with you. I mean you don't have to say that to the person, but in your own mind, view it, ok I would do things differently, but have a reason for it. And don't be afraid to discuss that with that person at the right time. Because it's good to balance your idea off of that person because you may see them do something in certain way and say well I would do things differently. Well, if you discuss it with your mentor, maybe then you'll realize that you shouldn't do things differently. So, but more than anything don't try to be a clone. Take the good and the bad.

Q: Any particular characteristics that you think are good to seek out in a mentor?

M-3: In this field, definitely trustworthy. And usually you can tell that in the PR field by someone who's not going to tell you everything. And that sounds contradictory, but there are certain times when you're going to need to be privy to information, and certain times when you're not. And if you have a boss or someone in a higher position who just tells you everything, odds are they're telling other people everything. And in this profession, that's not a good role model to follow. Because there are going to be times when you

have to be skilled in the art of revealing as little information as possible without telling a lie and someone who is very open in sharing of things probably is not very strong in that area.

6. How has marriage or family life impacted your career decisions?

M-3: (asked to skip the question)

7. Have you participated recently in any professional development programs? If so, please describe the types of training you've sought?

M-3: That was awhile back. I was about six years ago is that recent enough? I had basic rudimentary experience in PhotoShop and graphic design and took some continuing education classes here at (name of employer) on working in PhotoShop to get better at that. In my profession, most of our development types areas like that just come from seeing how other people do things. Like I work with the baseball team here at (name of employer) so I travel everywhere they go. So every other weekend, I'm in someone else's press box and seeing how they're handling the media, seeing what their game notes look like. See how they run their press conference. That is the most beneficial thing as far as professional development because you gain from that, you see things. Oh, I like the way that person did that and then that's the most beneficial area of professional development.

8. What is the best format to deliver additional training to working professionals, like you? (If no response, suggest examples such as weekend seminars, night classes, online courses or conferences?)

M-3: Probably conferences. We have a convention every year and they do a pretty good job, our national committee does of...there's probably 70 or 80 conferences seminars where you can go and learn new ideas. Those are usually very helpful for...that's probably the best thing. The weekend seminars, our weekends are so tied up anyway that if you get a free one, you don't want to spend it in a seminar. And online stuff, I don't think would be very beneficial because you need, I think in the PR field you need that one-on-one, face-to-face discussion time more than anything.

9. What are some of the barriers to seeking additional training?

M-3: For us we're very seasonal depending on which sport you work. I work football and baseball. I'm lucky if I have time to wash my clothes during baseball season. Getting additional training, and then I could do it during the off season, but July and December when you're working 80, 90 hours a week, the last thing you want to do is spend your downtime on something like that. So time is definitely the biggest barrier.

10. What types of public relations skills do you see lacking among interns or recent graduates working in your organization?

M-3: I kind of touched on this earlier, but basic writing skills. Basic knowledge of how to prepare a press release so that whatever newspaper or media outlet gets it. Especially newspapers, they're not going to have to change it. They're not going to have to go in and correct A.P. Style errors and stuff like that. And so it's important, I believe that little things like that help you become respected and trusted by the media and that is the hardest part of our job is getting the media, which in a lot of cases is almost an adversary or can be, to trust us and know I can go to this person and get what I need. And that seems like a minimal thing, but if you're sending out press releases that they have to spend 15, 20 minutes changing, you're not getting off to a very good foot and that's been the most disappointing thing to see is just the lack of writing development in young practitioners. Cause they're real good at this at this the interaction and the talking to people. To me that's not work that's just relating to people. Writing is a skill and it's frustrating to see people that are in this field that have not learned that art.

Q: Anything else that you'd like to mention?

M-3: I guess I see that one so much. Everyone does a pretty good job with everything else.

11. What are the most critical skills that you believe are necessary for students to master to have successful careers in public relations?

M-3: Writing to an extent, but probably the most important thing is to be able to, It's kind of 1 and 1A. Be versatile and you have to be able to multi-task. That is something I struggled with very much early on. I'm very much an ok, here's my project let me get into it, let me get it done. And in my mid-20s, I realized I'm not get very much further than where I am right now, unless I learn to multi-task and that's definitely very, very important. And self-sacrifice. You have to be willing to put in the extra hours. You can't be a clock-watcher. But at the same time you have to balance that. You can't make your work your entire life or you will get burned out so it's work to balance that.

Q: How do you balance that?

M-3: It's a paradox. You have to be versatile, but you have to learn how to say no. You have to learn how to not volunteer for extra stuff. Just like you have to work to prove anything, your writing, your people skills, your listening skills, you have to work to improve your time management. About 2 ½ years ago, I went through a month where I forced myself to not work more than 50 hours a week. Ok, I still had 70 hours of work to get done, but if you have a good work ethic and if have pride in your job and what you do, you're going to push yourself to get more done in less time. By the end of that month, I was looking for things to do that last five hours of the week. You just have to do whatever exercises are necessary, whatever works for you to improve your time management. And just learn to balance, learn to say you know I could do that, but I've got enough on my plate right now. And then that's hard a lot of times.

12. Are there any electives that you would recommend that undergraduate students should take to prepare them to advance into management positions?

M-3: That's a good question. Outside of journalism, that's what you're saying. Obviously, public speaking. That's usually not an elective for journalism. Take a class that, you don't want to hurt your G.P.A., but sit in on a class if you have that opportunity, audit a class that you have no knowledge, understanding or interest in whatsoever. Put yourself in an uncomfortable situation. Because in this field, there are going to be a lot of uncomfortable situations that you have to learn how to remain composed and keep your cool and say the right thing and do the right thing. I think that would be beneficial. I hated biology, hated it, but having to take 6 hours of it probably was very beneficial to me. It definitely teaches you stick-to-it ability, which is very important in this field.

Q: Any other recommendations for electives?

M-3: It depends, if you're wanting to do PR for a political candidate or a government agency, take some political science classes, take some history classes. If you're wanting to work for a record label, take music classes. Whatever area you're wanting to go into, make sure to take some classes in that field so that you have a working knowledge of that and not just of PR or journalism. For me that was working with athletics teams.

13. What recommendations would you offer to public relations educators to help them better prepare students for career advancement?

M-3: I don't know. Can we come back to that.

Q: Let me phrase it just slightly, was there anything in particular that stands out from your experience at Louisiana Tech...any experiences from there that really stand out of something that they did well?

M-3: Being strict. I don't know if that's the right way to put it. I just talked about how they would not allow us to proceed until we knew it as second nature. I think there's probably a lot of teachers that are like, ok, you got it. You're close enough. Don't accept that, whatever it is. Pay more attention to whether or not, the student knows it or has just memorized it for that specific time. I would recommend a lot of discussion time. It could be about anything. Just develop that person's ability to listen to other ideas, to express himself or herself. I'm a big fan of open dialogue and discussion and I think college-age people, if you will, learning or being able to have that open discussion and dialogue with a teacher, with someone at a different level would be very beneficial when they get into this because then they'll know how to carry on that with an administrator or someone in a higher position. And having that ability will catch their eye that ok this is someone who could, who is mature enough professional to move up.

14. From your work experience, how critical do you think advanced degrees such as a master degree in public relations or an MBA are for practitioners seeking to advance to managerial positions?

M-3: We're told that it's beneficial. I don't believe it is. I believe experience is much, much, much more beneficial. There is nothing you can learn in a classroom that is more beneficial than you can learn in this field doing. Nothing in the classroom is going to prepare you to handle a journalist calling you and asking you a question that you're not prepared for. There's nothing in the classroom that will help you do that. I think in this field having an advanced degree is more of a sign of, I don't want to say being a company man, but in a lot of ways that's what it is, or a company want. There's just such a divide in public relations and media relations between practitioners and management. Because practitioners they are actually doing, they are actually out there hands-on. They are carrying out the policies that someone else has made. And a lot of times, those that are making the policies have forgotten what it's like to carry out those policies. So maybe someone with a higher degree is a sign to management more of, I can't imagine how it would be a sign of well, this person now has a master's or doctorate they're going to know how to handle a situation. No, they're going to know how to handle people maybe, they're going to know how to be a better manager of people is what I'm getting at. It helps you be a better manager of people, it doesn't help you be a better manager of situations. It only took me three minutes to get around to it! And for me, I'd much rather handle the situation than the people. But that kind of falls into me not having a desire to be in management.

15. How much does your organization value credentials such as accreditation when considering employees for promotional opportunities?

M-3: A good bit. We don't necessarily get accredited by a group or organization. But I'll give you an example. When we interview someone or look at a resume, one of the things that we look at is graphic design abilities. Well you can list that you are proficient in Quark Express or InDesign or PhotoShop. You'll be accredited based on the work that you present to us. And if you're work is not clean, you may know how to work the program, but if you're not skilled at that, accreditation for us comes more from the product that you produce. We do have publications contests. Placing consistently in those helps you a lot. But if you don't place in those, that's necessarily going to hurt you as long as your product is still good. So for us, accreditation comes from two things, it comes from the product that you produce as far as graphic design work and from a public relations standpoint, it comes from word-of-mouth. And if you've been fortunate enough to be in work-setting before, then we already know what your capabilities are. And you're writing is going to speak for itself as well. So it's very, I mean our accreditation is little bit different, but it is very important.

## APPENDIX C

### Constant Comparative Technique Initial Categories

#### Advice for Educators/Best Practices in Education

- F-001- Internship Preparation class – interview the location where you were doing internship
- F-002 – case studies, go through entire PR plan and present to actual company. Recommends using a specific budget limitations. Also choose guest speakers that could be great mentors to students. Supports integrated curriculum – advertising, marketing, public relations
- F-003 – Best practice – advertising campaign course, guest speakers, encourage students to do volunteer work for experience
- F-004 – idea to assign students roles in group project representing the roles in an organization such as a PR agency
- F-005 – likes guest speakers, talk about real life work experiences, prefers educators with recent work experience, introduce students to different areas of PR, need fundraising classes
- F-006 – invite real professionals in the classroom, teach networking skills, group projects – great quote
- F-007- require internships, likes group work with random assignments, case studies
- M-001 – had to produce an event over the course of a semester, teamed with Radio/TV/Film class on publicity campaign for movie.
- M-002 – interest in new media issues – teach for future
- M-003 – be strict, class discussion,

#### Role of Mentors

- F-001 – boss at workplace, issue of time
- F-004 – more of a push to take risk
- F-005 – learn from first-hand observation
- F-006 – learned from observation – co-workers and clients
- M- 003 – normal, learning from observation, learn from positive and negative

#### Characteristics of Good Mentors

- F-001- Time, willingness to teach, open-minder, well educated in the field, made mistakes and learned from it, willing to share past successes and weaknesses, stop you before you get to failure point
- F-002 – experience, willing to share information, seek long-term mentor, successful
- F-004 – coach mentality, not a one-sided relationship

- F-005 – successful, had been through crisis experiences (specific example), passionate, integrity
- F-007- seek mentors in high roles, objective advice, look for someone in your field early in career with 5-7 years of experience, then seek mentors in different areas, accessible, diversity
- M-001 – find someone who you can relate to who enjoys job, understand importance of journalism and role of media, someone is supervisory role
- M-002 – choose somebody you respect, no hidden motives, experience
- M-003 – trustworthy

### **Marriage & Family**

- F-001 – not money driven, but want to care for family, seeks good benefits and flexible hours
- F-002 – find right job, has some travel, but coordinates with husband’s job.
- F-003 – made job decision based on plans to have a family soon, takes work home
- F-004 – personal story had to change jobs, stresses of agency impacted marriage, what to look for – organization that values family, good benefits, balance – make time for self – dance, aerobics
- F-005- personal story – child 4 weeks old when started job, husband took time off work to help, hires housekeeper to allow time to decompress
- F-006 – newlywed, struggling with balance issues now, has adjusted work schedule to match husband’s
- F-007 – was married while in college, set boundaries and communicate when facing burnout
- M-001 – family and friends are extremely important, good staff underneath you, prioritize deadlines, take vacation time, leave work at work.
- M-002 – left news business for family reasons,

### **Professional Development Preferences**

- F-001 – Luncheon meetings, conference, webinars, barrier – time, topic - blogging
- F-002 – webinars, conferences, topic – direct marketing
- F-003 – topics – storytelling, new media, brainstorming, media pitching; prefers breakfast, lunch or half-way events
- F-004 – topics – copyediting and ROI, likes PRSA meetings, afternoon workshops, barrier to training – money and time
- F-005 – less time consuming the better, prefers conferences, need to be family-friendly, barrier – taking time from family
- F-006 – emersion sessions – all day or 2-3 days, reference guides, leadership training

- F-007 – seminars, half day or full day workshops, management skills – internal training opportunity
- M-001 – prefers conferences – special events and leadership training, writing workshop, likes self learning online, barrier – time
- M-002 – pitching tips, news industry topics, prefers out of town conferences – can leave work behind, barriers- money, time
- M-003 – PhotoShop, graphic design, prefers conferences, no weekends. Biggest barrier- time

### **Skills for Students**

- F-001 – writing, social skills, people skills, confidence
- F-002 – real life skills such as budgeting, show return on investment, networking – begins in the classroom, software skills
- F-003 – confidence, writing skills, attention to detail
- F-004- media relations (horror story, first job), budgeting, initiative, multi-tasking, detail-oriented, be a part of team, ask questions
- F-005 – understand politics, bilingual, writing
- F-006 – writing for specific audiences, identifying trends
- F-007 – attention to detail, maturity in writing and communication
- M-001 – writing, core communication skills, web design training, public speaking, crafting messages
- M-002 – how to write best pitch , how to get a story
- M-003 – basic writing skills, versatile, able to multi-task, self-sacrifice, time management (good quote)

### **Electives for Students**

- F-001 – management class, strategic planning, public speaking, creative writing, recommends specialization in certain field
- F-002- photography, journalism classes, advertising classes, business classes- accounting
- F-003- range of advertising, marketing and PR classes, broad understanding
- F-004 – business courses, ROI, supports specialization
- F-005 – time management, budget classes, learn to play golf
- F-006 – leadership, sociology, accounting, budgeting, good quote
- F-007 – business accounting (good quote), journalism classes
- M-001 – focus on specific track in PR, business management, web design, Spanish, culture
- M-002 – management – economics, business law
- M-003 – public speaking, recommends specialization

### **Advanced Degrees/ Accreditation**

- F-001 – helps with advancement, shows growth, shows initiative
- F-002 – helps put on a bit higher on stack of resumes, APR not important to organization
- F-003- not beneficial for career advancement
- F-4: experience is more important than advanced degree, but APR shows commitment to profession, makes you competitive
- F-005 – advanced degree is important, APR not important in education, but advanced degrees are – stipends
- F-006- mixed experiences in industry – good quotes
- F-007 – graduate degree is helpful, accreditation may get an extra look, but not a deal breaker
- M-001 – advanced degrees – not going to hurt, can only benefit you, APR – supervisor supports – shows extra initiative and training
- M-002 – advanced degrees – on the fence – would be wise career move, credential – huge in academic world.
- M-003 – experience is more beneficial, focus is more on end-product of work, awards

### **Training on the Job for Advancement**

- F-005 – says you learn from on the job training, mentors, supervisors
- F-006 – learns by observation
- F-007 – from on the job and professional development
- M-001 – challenge – don't use management skills in entry level job, suggests learning about industry for at least 3 years before advancing, stay current in skills and issues, observation is key
- M-003 – learns from observation, visiting other organizations press boxes

### **Barriers to Advancement**

- F-001 – lack of training in journalism, have to prove yourself
- F-002 – was doing PR in ad agency, showing value, began using advertising and marketing skills
- F-003- structure and opportunity, can overcome through talking with management and stepping outside job responsibilities
- F-004 – preparedness, did advance quickly, overcome through professional development
- F-005- no barriers
- F-006 – no barriers, good quote about taking on extra work and chemistry

- F-007 – structure of organization, better now, overcome through communication with manager and managerial support
- M-001 – structure of organization, need to learn about specific industry
- M-002 – too early to tell
- M-003 – opportunities, competitive field

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