PR Day 2017: Building Campus Relationships:
Awareness and Participation for Multidisciplinary Interaction

A Senior Project presented to
The Faculty of the Journalism Department
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Science in Journalism

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ABSTRACT

The following study investigates the building and maintaining of sustainable relationships between different on-campus department and entities through the collaborative efforts and execution of PR Day. The event was both an awareness and educational campaign aimed at demonstrating what can be done with public relations. The public relations concentration within the Cal Poly Journalism Department, along with the student run PR firm, Central Coast PRspectives (CCPR) are for the most part unknown on campus. The revival of PR Day was developed to raise awareness amongst students on an interdisciplinary level of what public relations is and how it’s relevant to them, regardless of their industry. Additionally, by implementing the two-way symmetrical communication theory (Hunt and Grunig), PR Day 2017 paved the way for the establishment of long term relationships with other departments on the Cal Poly campus.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Public Relations is the largest focus within the Journalism Major and Department at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, yet the efforts, visibility and relationships with other on-campus departments and entities are largely nonexistent.

For most students on campus both within and external from the Journalism Department, when the Journalism major is brought up in conversation, it is largely associated with Mustang News Editorial or Broadcast only. As new students to the school and major, Public Relations is for the most part unknown or misinterpreted as an option for study or professional pursuit, as is the existence of the on-campus, student-run PR Firm, Central Coast PRspectives (CCPR).

The students within the Public Relations courses and involved with CCPR made the decision to bring PR Day back to the Cal Poly Campus in order to raise awareness for the Public Relations course of study. In addition, as a Polytechnic University, PR students intended to demonstrate to students outside of the department how public relations is crucial and valuable to each and every person, no matter their area of study and professional pursuit.

Background of the Problem

PR Day was last hosted in 2010 with some success, however the event in the years following morphed into more of a Career Day or Job Fair Event and the initial mission of PR Day was lost in the changes, as was the framework itself. While Job Fairs are beneficial and
offer value to students and the school as a whole, in keeping with the mission to reach
students beyond the Journalism Major and Department, the planning committee decided to start
small by going back to basics and seeking to raise awareness for CCPR and several of the core
values of public relations today and to ultimately be in communication with our external publics
in the hopes of further establishing long-term relationships.

With Cal Poly’s Journalism Department so focused on Editorial and Broadcast pursuits,
it’s crucial for the Public Relations sector to assert itself and be actively engaging with internal
and external stakeholders.

Purpose of the Study

As is evident in today’s climate of fast-spreading news and the power of social media, it
is more important than ever for organizations to be transparent both inwardly and outwardly. By
striving to educate CCPR and the Department’s publics on the values and intentions of public
relations, we can further encourage stakeholders—especially externally—to value and invest in
public relations.

Setting for the Study

This study was completed by collecting data and implementing strategic marketing and
event coordination at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, as a Senior
Project. The event consisted of an informational booth offering free professional headshots and
an hour-long keynote presentation on personal branding. The planning committee was run by
Public Relations students who were involved with both CCPR and the Cal Poly Chapter of
PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America), which is also where most volunteers were recruited. The target audience for PR Day was the Cal Poly student body, with an emphasis on students outside of the Public Relations area of study. One local company was responsible for donating catering items.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were developed to help analyze and understand if and how the campaign and event were successful amongst the target audience.

1. How do you increase awareness that fosters interest and curiosity about public relations to an audience that may not know what public relations is?
2. How do you establish and maintain long-term relationships with surrounding entities?
3. How do you gauge success of an event?
4. How can a foundation be built for future annual events?
5. How do you measure/determine areas of an event that can and should be improved upon?
6. How do you clearly communicate/establish a message strategy that explains the purpose of an event?

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are presented to the reader to clarify repeating topics of the study and assist in further knowledge of personal branding and public relations efforts of an organization in events.

*Personal Branding*- a perception or emotion, maintained by somebody other than you, which
describes the total experience of having a relationship with you (Speak and McNally, 2012).

**Outreach Program**-a consumer-based program that creates awareness of a social cause, actively promotes the organization’s support of the cause, and identify the consumer as key to keeping that support available (Edwards & Kreshel, 2008).

**External Publics**-those an organization is seeking to impact or reach/an audience outside of an organization (Smith, 2009).

**Internal Publics**-an organization’s board members or employees. Internal PR does not involve mass media (Miller, 2016).

**Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Theory**-can be seen as understanding a public’s opinion and attitudes and then using public relations communications to accomplish mutually beneficial outcomes (Eller and Sturm).

_____ Organization of Study

Chapter 1 includes a background of the study, a purpose of the study and a definition of terms. Chapter 2 will analyze strategies and tactics of developing an events to raise awareness and foster long-term relationships with an organization’s publics by reviewing scholarly literature related to the topic. Chapter 3 will focus on the methodology of the study. Chapter 4 will measure the outcome of the event with evaluating participation. Chapter 5 will summarize the end of the study and include recommendations for future PR Day events and successful implementation tactics for a community outreach event.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The review of the literature outlines the use of public relations to effectively forge long-term relationships for an organization’s internal and external publics.

Maintaining Relationships with External and Internal Publics

In understanding effective communication and relationship management, it is important to consider the roles and responsibilities of an organization’s manager. When evaluating what successful PR is, the first step is often considering the quality and success of relationships external to the organization (Cardwell, Williams & Pyle, 2017). While external relationships are undoubtedly crucial to organizational success, the importance of internal relationships must also be taken into consideration. Practitioners are responsible for communicating policy and strategy of the organization and collaborating with other members of the organization and external partners to develop cohesive messaging (Cardwell, Williams & Pyle, 2017). In forging these relationships and striving for cohesion, the organization’s members will be able to understand the mission and values of the company they represent, and the external publics will in turn be able to perceive that organization’s values more clearly. Public relations success also requires core public relations competencies, the creation of shared expectations about public relations, and fostering a participative culture regarding public relations endeavors (Eller & Sturm). In planning an event that involves both internal relationships amongst other entities and external publics, the internal participative culture becomes even more crucial in order to present a cohesive front to external publics.
Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Theory in Public Relations

The two-way symmetrical communication model focuses on true transparency and incorporating feedback from the agency’s constituencies or publics (Eller & Sturm). This model requires both internal and external efforts to provide for a collaborative working effort. Rather than relying on a reactive approach, this two-way symmetrical theory which encourages a feedback loop, is taking the proactive public relations route, which provides for more opportunity to build and maintain long-term relationships. Building on the two-way symmetrical theory is the idea of dialogic communication in order to maintain ongoing communication. The five tenets of dialogue are:

1. Mutuality-focuses on inclusion and collaboration
2. Propinquity-consulting publics on what may affect them
3. Empathy-support and acknowledgment of the other
4. Risk-vulnerability and unanticipated consequences
5. Commitment-working towards mutual benefit rather than exploitation

In implementing these dialogic communication values, an organization is working towards building and emphasizing relationships (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Cardwell, Williams & Pyle, 2017)
Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter will discuss the methods of planning and execution of the event, presentation of the information and delimitations of the outreach and execution of the day’s different facets.

Data Sources

For this study, participants at the one-day event were invited to take part in both a keynote session and visit the general information booth in the UU Plaza. Other on-campus entities were invited to host booths at the UU Plaza as well, and Urbane Café, a local business, sponsored the catering.

Participants

The participants for this one-day event are based almost exclusively in the 18-25 year-old age range. Both volunteers and attendees will be composed of Cal Poly students. The main booth was hosted by CCPR and PRSSA and was run by student volunteers. Photographers also volunteered to take professional headshots at the booth as well. The American Marketing Association (AMA) club hosted their own booth, as did The Brock Center. The focus of these booths was to allow each entity to promote themselves and the importance of public relations in their efforts. Keynote speaker was Amber Karson of Karson Butler events, and she spoke on the importance of personal brand and the ability to set oneself apart.
Limitations

There are limitations to this study based on the amount of time available to conduct this project. The project timeline is assigned to follow the California Polytechnic State University quarter system, which is ten weeks long for each quarter. Extensive research on the subject was limited due to time constraints. Financial difficulty was also another limitation that was carefully handled. The event was funded through CCPR’s budget, so numbers were closely monitored.

Delimitations

Due to time and financial constraints, as well as the target audience, delimitations were also present in this study in terms of the scale of the event. Event activities were held on campus in order to reach the maximum number of students and due to the space that is available free of charge. The start time of the event was in agreement with the Associated Students Inc. (ASI) conditions. Due to time constraints in planning, catering sponsorship and promotional materials all had to be made and organized locally.
Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Chapter 4 will provide explanations on how the strategy was implemented for the study and outreach event. The data will summarize the outline of the public relations campaign and measure the amount of awareness reached in the community by utilizing social media for promotion.

Public Relations Action Plan

The intention behind the PR Day 2017 Campaign was to build an understanding of the value and purpose of the public relations industry. The event itself took place on May 4, 2017, with a booth in the University Union (UU) Plaza from 10-3 and a keynote speaker session from 11-12PM, where the food donor delivered and set up their station. The UU Plaza setup allowed for other campus entities to set up spots themselves, reinforcing the purpose behind the event.

The planning and execution was led by Dr. Dan Eller, Jackie Steele, Allie Schwartz, Rachel Gasparini, Shelby Dewberry, Abby Cavanaugh and Alexandra Gray. Sub-committees consisted of marketing, outreach and operations chairs. While initially the sub-committees were more involved, their contributions waned as the day got closer and the event planning and execution was led more by the core team listed above.

PR Day’s motto was “Make Every Connection Count,” which was established with the intent of encouraging students to seek and maintain genuine, long-lasting professional relationships. The mission statement of the day also falls in line with this, which was to “educate Cal Poly students, faculty and local professional about what public relations is and why it is so
important in today’s society.” The vision for the day was to encourage multi-disciplinary involvement and build relationships between on-campus organizations (Cavanaugh and Gray, 2017). Ultimately, public relations and its ethical standards are at the core of this statement and motto, and by encouraging and seeking out involvement from other clubs on campus, the day aligned with its core values.

**Tactics and Tools**

The public relations plan for PR Day 2017 implemented several strategic communication tactics. According to Smith, there are four categories of tactics that build a public relations plan to successfully reach audiences. Smith’s tactic categories are interpersonal communication, organizational media, news media and advertising/promotional media (Smith, 2009). The PR Day 2017 public relations tools included social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram, print media, advertising media and word of mouth.

The first stage of promotion for PR Day 2017 focused on effectively implementing social media and word of mouth to increase awareness amongst Cal Poly students, the study’s primary target audience. A Facebook event was created from the CCPR page and served as the main source of communication throughout the campaign. In addition to this event, $40 of the CCPR Budget was allocated for promoting the event to students throughout SLO. Refer to Figure 16 to find information on the Facebook advertising campaign. The Facebook event page was only created approximately two weeks before PR Day itself, in order to invite students closer to the actual day and keep the event fresh in their minds. This page was used to keep people updated on what would be happening the day of the event; speakers, the sponsored food and opportunity for
free professional headshots at the UU booth.
Chapter 5

Discussions and Recommendations

Summary

The PR Day 2017 campaign was developed by several Cal Poly public relations students and faculty who saw the need to promote and raise awareness for public relations in both an academic and professional setting. The purpose of the study and campaign conducted over the past six months was to bring attention to the efforts of the public relations organizations on the Cal Poly campus.

After a nearly ten-year hiatus from hosting this on-campus event, students within the department felt a need to bring it back in order to reach out to other campus organizations and their fellow public relations students to increase involvement and build relationships with their publics, primarily those of the on-campus PR Firm CCPR and the Cal Poly chapter of PRSSA. PR Day was a platform to showcase both of these organizations while also raising awareness for the general significance of public relations itself.

Timeline

The following plan is the timeline of the plan leading up to the event.

3 WEEKS BEFORE THE EVENT

❖ Inform Mary Glick of the details of PR day in order to spread the word to journalism professors

❖ Contact IFC and Panhellenic to determine whether they would like to participate in PR day and how to get their organizations involved
❖ Get information about passing out flyers during farmer’s market
❖ Contact PR professionals to participate in the event
❖ Confirm with Urbane Café that they will cater

2 WEEKS BEFORE THE EVENT
❖ Send out Facebook invite and post cover photo
❖ Contact organizations within Greek life to present the event in their meetings
❖ Mass e-mail to the journalism students
❖ Start posting pictures on Instagram
❖ Post flyers and posters around campus

1 WEEK BEFORE THE EVENT
❖ Contact all participants in the event to confirm
❖ Confirm the space we need on campus
❖ Determine any weather precautions in case other arrangements need to be made
❖ Make surveys to hand out before and after the event
❖ Make announcements in greek life meetings about the event
❖ Print out any materials needed for the event
❖ Go to farmer’s market to promote PR Day
5 DAYS BEFORE THE EVENT

❖ Confirm volunteer duties and who their contact is for the day
❖ Publicize heavily on social media platforms and encourage the pre-survey
❖ Follow up with participants with any questions/concerns they might have

4 DAYS BEFORE THE EVENT

❖ Publicize event on social media

3 DAYS BEFORE THE EVENT

❖ Publicize event on social media

2 DAYS BEFORE THE EVENT

❖ Publicize event on social media

1 DAY BEFORE THE EVENT

❖ Publicize event on social media by specifically posting a reminder
 Confirm all materials for the event
 Ensure that all volunteers are fully informed of their duties

DAY OF THE EVENT

 Check in with participants
 Make sure event runs smoothly
 Take videos and pictures as event is going on

DAY AFTER THE EVENT

 Send thank you to all those who participated and volunteered
 Send post survey to participants and attendees

WEEK AFTER THE EVENT

 Post video on social media
 Analyze survey results and success of the event

Findings
PR Day 2017 was considered a success by in large. Though attendance wasn’t maxed out, the Facebook promotion reached 5,900 people, received 1,200 views and 242
reactions/responses. Based on the data from the Facebook campaign and the attendee demographic on the day of the event itself, the campaign primarily reached females aged 18-24. While the sponsored advertisement campaign gained a lot of traction and helped spread awareness, the campaign team found that actually speaking with people in person about the event made a much larger impression and impact on attendance than the event popping up on their Facebook timeline did.

Though the Facebook campaign reached a lot of people, the event was still confined to a small population of only students because of the event being hosted on campus, and due to the classroom capacity of 60 people. While promotional materials were made and posted, the efforts to publicize the event definitely could have been more widespread and frequent in order to really gain additional visibility amongst students.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Based on initial survey results (Opinions of Public Relations, 2017), most people who responded understand basic concepts and ideas behind public relations, which the campaign team hoped to hone in on in planning the event itself. The organizations behind PR Day 2017 (CCPR & PRSSA) also sought to connect with and build relationships with their respective publics.

Upon completion of the event, a survey was created and sent to attendees to gauge the effectiveness of the event in keeping with the two-way symmetrical communication theory (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995). In establishing goals for future PR Day events, it would be very important to have a more rigorous survey process to ensure the campaign team is understanding the needs of their publics. As for the additional booths set up in UU Plaza during
the event, it would also be helpful to use two-way symmetrical communication more to get thoughts and recommendations on how the day could’ve been run more effectively from their perspective.

While the event was a success after not having taken place on campus in ten years, there is certainly room for improvement on both the execution and planning side of things. In planning, it would likely be more effective to have a smaller campaign team in order to ensure everyone has plenty of responsibility and is fully committed. The larger the planning committee became, the harder it was to delegate and keep track of which member was in charge of what.
References


Opinions of Public Relations (Responses). (n.d.). Retrieved from https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1DsYQ9g5OTiP0U0cTEGXE3zsfUMf3ZKnaEanVKw3KQ7M/edit?usp=sharing


Budget

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<td>Sticker Mule Order</td>
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List of Professors Contacted

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Glick</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mmglick@calpoly.edu">mmglick@calpoly.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Eller</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td><a href="mailto:deller@calpoly.edu">deller@calpoly.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brady Teufel</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bteufel@calpoly.edu">bteufel@calpoly.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yan Shan</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td><a href="mailto:yashan@calpoly.edu">yashan@calpoly.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitney Szentesi</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wdiaz@calpoly.edu">wdiaz@calpoly.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm Borin</td>
<td>Marketing Chair</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nborin@calpoly.edu">nborin@calpoly.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Hendricks</td>
<td>EIM Department Head</td>
<td><a href="mailto:whendric@calpoly.edu">whendric@calpoly.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marni Goldenberg</td>
<td>EIM</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Greenwood</td>
<td>EIM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pgreenwo@calpoly.edu">pgreenwo@calpoly.edu</a></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Figure 1: PR Day Logo used for stickers and buttons at booth.
Figure 2: Facebook Event Banner Art
MAKE EVERY CONNECTION COUNT

PR DAY 2017

Thursday, May 4th | 10AM - 3PM | UU Plaza

FEATURING AMBER KARSON FROM KARSON BUTLER EVENTS

“PLANTING SEEDS FOR FUTURE GROWTH”

WHAT DOES YOUR PERSONAL BRAND TELL AND WHERE WILL IT LEAD YOU?

FREE URBANE CAFE SANDWICHES | FREE HEADSHOTS

Figure 3: Full promotional flyer
Why do **YOU** need public relations?

“Long gone are the days when a good resume alone will get you attention. Having a strong personal brand matters: what you say, how you say it, where you say it... what is YOUR story and how are you sharing it to stand out in the crowd?”

- **Amber Karson**, Owner of Karson Butler Events
  
  @karsonbutler

“Shape your online image or it will shape you.”

- **Ellen Curtis**, Director Of Marketing and Communication
  
  @ellenkcurtis

“Become a thought leader in your discipline. At the minimum, actively share ideas and engage others in the social media network that is most relevant to your niche. Or go all in and become a content creator: Publish target-audience appropriate content on your own blog, or even better, on an online platform where you collaborate with others to maximize impact.”

- **Dr. Joachim Scholz**, Assistant Professor of Marketing
  
  @JoScholz

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**Figure 4:** Quarter page promotional flyer
Figure 5: PR Day Letterhead

Figure 6: PR Day Planning Committee
Figure 7:

Snapchat

Filter 1
Figure 8: Snapchat

Filter 2
Figure 9: Snapchat filter in use.
Figure 10: PR Day Committee at booth.
Figure 11: PR Day Committee Celebration.
Figure 12: Keynote speaker session.
Figure 13: PR Day
Booth
Figure 14: CLA Advising Center’s Promotional post

CLA Advising Center - Cal Poly

Make every connection count. Attend PR Day and listen to keynote speaker Amber Karson talk about "Planting Seeds for Future Growth." Keynote starts at 11 a.m.

PR Day 2017
FREE HEADSHOTS • KEYNOTE SPEAKER • FREE URBANE

MAY 4, 2017 | 10 AM - 3PM
INFORMATION BOOTH IN UU PLAZA & KEYNOTE IN 26-104
Figure 15: Cal Poly Panhellenic promotional Instagram post.
Figure 16: Summary of PR Day’s sponsored Facebook campaign.
Figure 17: Sponsored PR Day Facebook Post

Come join us on May 4th to celebrate PR Day! This event will showcase public relations and teach you how to use PR to enhance your professional skill set. It will include FREE headshots in the UU from 10-3 as well as guest speaker, Amber Karson, (which will include FREE Urbane). You won’t want to miss this awesome event!
Figure 18: Demographic reach of sponsored Facebook post.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82.1%</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 18-24 years: 82.1% Women, 17.9% Men
Figure 19: Facebook sponsored post preview
Figure 20: Facebook event overview
Details

PR Day is coming to Cal Poly's campus! Curious as to what public relations is and how it can benefit you in your future profession? Well we have the answers for you as you prepare your personal brand!

For more information on PR Day's free headshots, free resources, free food and keynote address, read below:

Various organizations on campus have volunteered to host booths explaining what PR does for them and to give YOU information on how you can use PR to enhance your skills and grow professionally.

Other features of the event will include FREE headshots anytime between the hours of 10am and 12pm in the UU Plaza. So come looking sharp and professional!

In addition, our keynote speaker, Amber Karson, will be in building 26 room 104 from 11am -12pm to speak about personal branding and how you can build your own brand. Her address is titled, "Planting Seeds for Future Growth." Amber is a local and very successful event planner who has mastered the art of social media and branding.

Also, did we mention, FREE FOOD? Urbane Cafe has generously donated sandwiches for this event. So come hungry and leave filled with personal branding knowledge!

10am - 3pm I Booths, networking & music @ UU Plaza
10am - 12pm I Free headshots @ UU Plaza
11am - 12pm I Keynote: "Planting Seeds for Future Growth" @ 26-104
(Food provided at keynote address only)

Figure 21: Facebook event description
Figure 22: Post-event survey

PR DAY 2017 Post Survey

Prior to PR Day, how would you rate your knowledge about Public Relations?

- Very Little
- Little
- Neutral
- Knowledgable
- Very Knowledgable

After your experience with PR Day, how would you rate your knowledge of public relations?

- Very Little
- Little
- Neutral
- Knowledgable
- Very Knowledgable

Are there any suggestions for next year?

Your answer

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.
Figure 23: Post-event survey responses