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If you don't enter, you can't win! Why the Pinnacle process is worth every minute

Deirdra Redden, Liliana Busnello

The month of March is an exciting time of year, with spring just around the corner and the warm weather approaching. There are a number of award shows and events on TV, such as the Genies, the Oscars and the TV Land Awards. But for communicators in the Hamilton area, the premium awards event is the Pinnacle Awards on March 30. Like the award shows that recognize excellence in different areas of business, the Pinnacle Awards salute high-quality work in public relations and communications management.

In anticipation of the upcoming Pinnacle Award event, PR Link is profiling four Pinnacle Award "gurus," or multiple award winners. Jane Allison, APR; Joanne Emerson, APR; Tony Iavarone, APR and Cynthia Janzen, APR share their perspectives on the value of entering work for the Pinnacle awards and their experiences in the process.

What do you believe is the value of submitting an entry (or several entries) for the Pinnacle Awards, and why is this important to you?

Jane: The actual process of creating an entry package is so beneficial. You get to review your work and really absorb what worked and what didn't. We don't often have the time or opportunity for reflection. I think it is a highly valuable exercise to submit an entry.

Joanne: Awards are important for a number of reasons. They show value to your work, they are an important element to show value to your clients or employers, and they add credibility to the profession. The value of submitting one's work is important even if you don't win, as you get evaluation comments from professionals that have been in the industry for a long time.

Tony: I am very selective and I do not enter unless I think the work is worthy of consideration. I also enjoy having peers review it. The feedback you receive on your work from the judges, who are some of the best in the profession, is very important.

Cynthia: Submitting for the Pinnacles is an excellent way to reflect on the achievements of the past year. When you consider what projects may be entered, you can re-evaluate their strengths and areas for improvement. That in itself is a learning opportunity.

What are your thoughts on the process?

Cynthia: The PR folks who started the Pinnacles should be proud, as the awards process has a lot of integrity to it. It does take time to submit. The process is challenging and is scored against a potential score of 100.

Tony: The process has evolved over the years and CPRS has created a process that is long on integrity and honesty.

(Please see Pinnacles, p. 3)

President's message



With Canada's stellar performance at the Torino Olympics still fresh in our minds, the theme of excellence is an apt one for this edition of PR Link. To this sports enthusiast, nothing says "excellence" more than a Canadian record of 24 medals at an Olympic Games.

For most of us, achieving excellence - in whatever field or endeavour - usually involves years of focused dedication and hard work and a dogged determination to achieve a clear goal. It may also require some flexibility and a willingness to change course in the face of adversity or outright defeat.

Speedskater Cindy Klassen, dubbed "woman of the games" by International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge after collecting five medals for Canada in Torino, could have given up her dreams for athletic success when she was cut from the Canadian women's hockey team in 1997. She chose instead to follow a new path, personifying the old cliché that when one door closes...

What I especially like about Ms. Klassen's brand of excellence is her spirit of humility and take-it-all-in-stride perspective on

her incredible achievement. Canadians will define this "Olympic legend" - so called by the media - by her triumphs on the oval. But Ms. Klassen, undoubtedly proud of her medals, likes to talk as much about other priorities in her life, such as working to help others in less fortunate parts of the world - priorities that stem from a deep faith and desire to make the world a better place.

It's a wonderful thing to behold someone who is at the pinnacle of her sport or profession and is a decent, generous, and altruistic person too. It seems to me Canada produces more than its share of such people.

How's that for a segue into the upcoming CPRS Hamilton Pinnacle Awards on March 30? I look forward to seeing you then at the Niagara Culinary Institute as we honour our members for their excellent work during the past year. Board members Frank Florio and David Rowney have been working hard to ensure this year's event will be an outstanding success. You won't want to miss it!

Regards,

Darrell Neufeld, APR
 President

Time capsule

New in this issue of *PR Link*, this section examines the practice of public relations throughout the ages. We hope you learn something new . . .



☞ In ancient Rome, the force of public relations was evident in phrases such as vox populi, vox Dei ("the voice of the people is the voice of God"), and res publica ("public affairs"), which means "republic." Julius Caesar carefully prepared the Romans for his crossing of the Rubicon in 49 B.C.E. by sending reports such as "Caesar's Gallic Wars" (52 B.C.E.) on his epic achievements as governor of Gaul.

☞ Most historians agree that he also wrote his Commentaries as propaganda for himself. Recognizing the power of news to mold public opinion, Caesar published a daily paper called Acta Diurna ("daily acts" or "daily records") that continued for 400 years.

Source: Instituteforpr.com
 "MINI-ME" HISTORY - TO INFORM AND PERSUADE: Public Relations from the Dawn of Civilization
 By Don Bates, APR, Fellow PRSA
 Copyright by the author, 2002

(Pinnacles, from p. 1)

Jane: When I am writing an entry, I am usually cursing the process. It's too detailed, why only four pages, what are they trying to do, kill me?! I feel it all... but I am so grateful for the challenge of the process because it really is a true reflection of good work and all that it means.

Joanne: The process has been improving over the years. The judges are practising PR professionals who evaluate the entries using a set of criteria. The process is objective. The challenge is understanding the process and keeping entries focused and succinct.

How do you feel about your achievements, especially winning a Pinnacle award?

Jane: Joy, joy, joy. The work itself needs to be the reward... the process must be the prize. I've been really lucky in this regard - I have always been aware that the road can be winding so you had better enjoy the scenery.

Tony: Winning is gratifying, but I tend to shy away from personal recognition. I prefer deflecting credit to where it most belongs - the organization and team.

Joanne: A major achievement is being able to develop communication strategies and work with the client from beginning to end. Going out on my own was one of my greatest achievements. Pay cheques are an excellent performance evaluation; however, my achievements come from the work itself. The Pinnacles are a bonus.

Cynthia: A high point of my career was receiving the Award of Excellence in 1996. Another high point was coming to work at Hellingman, as I was reunited with past colleagues.

What do you enjoy most about your work?

Tony: The variety of the field - everyday is different. Things change constantly. I also like working with people and creating communications programs that impact behaviours.

Jane: I enjoy solving problems and making a difference. To me, public relations is a blend of business strategy and creative approach, with a good dose of psychology thrown in. You have to know your audience and to know them, you have to study them. I really love that kind of analysis...what makes people tick?

Cynthia: I enjoy being a consultant because of the diversity of clients we have and the issues they present us with.

Joanne: I enjoy the variety, creativity and diversity of the business, and I enjoy working for myself. It's important to stay up to date and I enjoy all aspects of professional development. The Pinnacles are an important part of that education process.



What challenges have you faced in your career?

Joanne: As much as organizations need PR, convincing them about the importance of all elements of RACE, especially research, is a challenge. Because PR covers such a broad spectrum of activities, I'm continually challenged to stay focused, that is, being more selective about which projects I take on. Saying "no" is difficult for me.

Cynthia: Sometimes a PR practitioner knows and recommends a course of action that isn't followed by an organization. This can be frustrating. A practitioner may recommend best practices for communications but not have control over whether best practices are actually followed.

Jane: For me, the biggest challenge is always educating organizations about the benefits of public relations.

Tony: There have been quite a few along the way: Y2K, CEO departures, downsizing, but a memorable one was communication in support of a merger.

What suggestions do you have for others who are considering submitting their work for the Pinnacle Awards in the future?

Jane: Do it! Take the leap, you don't know how it will turn out. The process is very educational and really enhances your professional development. And if you don't enter, for sure you won't win!

Joanne: Go for it! Remember though, only submit if you have solid objectives and good evaluation. Follow the RACE formula and understand the judging criteria. Look at other award winners' work. If you don't win, learn from it and try again. Don't be discouraged.

Tony: Keep track of your work as it happens. Be mindful of the timelines and use the RACE process. Don't wait until the last minute or you might miss something valuable that should be included in your submission.

(Please see Pinnacles, p. 6)

When a crisis strikes, process is key

Review of February 16 luncheon and PD session

Travis Eede

The best way to successfully manage a crisis is to have an established process and ensure it is communicated to all audiences. How and when you communicate key messages and implement strategies (both internally and externally) will help to maintain and may even improve your company's reputation.

This was the focus of Susan Sommers and Kim Taylor's presentation on Crisis Communications: Managing Your Reputation, held February 16 as part of the CPRS Hamilton luncheon/PD series.

Ms. Sommers and Ms. Taylor are seasoned communication strategists and bring a wealth of experience in media training, emergency preparedness, interviewing techniques and crisis communication/coaching.

Ms. Taylor explained that the first step in producing an effective crisis management plan is research. A risk and threat analysis can identify issues and help a company anticipate and prepare for a potential crisis.

The next step involves forming a crisis management team with specific roles and responsibilities and a crisis communication plan with step-by-step procedures for distributing messages to the various publics. It is crucial that all employees within the organization understand and buy into the process. In addition to the importance of media training for the spokesperson and front-line staff, Ms. Sommers discussed how and when to get information out to the media during and after a crisis. Whether you choose a news conference, news releases, website or other print and electronic communication methods, the timing is

key. "Contact the media as soon as you know about a crisis and can confirm information. Do this within 24 hours of a crisis - two hours is ideal. Then let the media know when and how you will be communicating throughout the crisis," said Ms. Sommers.

Throughout the seminar, Ms. Taylor and Ms. Sommers provided examples of incidents where a solid crisis communication plan helped mitigate the crisis: the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the SARS outbreak in Toronto and Quebec's ice storm. In the case of 9/11, Mayor Giuliani of New York City kept the public informed with timely updates and explanations ranging from evacuations to the rescue efforts of New York's emergency services. By following the process and keeping the public updated as new information became available, everyone involved in the rescue effort was able to focus on the task at hand and avoid public panic.

Ms. Sommers concluded the seminar with another important concept: practice. No crisis will play out the same way twice, so it is pivotal for companies to not only have an emergency response plan but to hold regular practice simulations.

"Practice makes perfect and in times of crisis a company has to be at its absolute best," she added.

Travis Eede is a student in the Journalism and Communications Media Program at Mohawk College who is currently interning with JEM Communications. He plans to enroll in the post-graduate Public Relations Program at Mohawk in September.

Positions open for 2006-07 board of directors

Would you like to become more involved in CPRS Hamilton, but aren't sure how?

Positions are now open for the 2006-07 board of directors. The new board will be announced at the annual general meeting to be held at the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce on April 26 (event details to come shortly). If you're interested, please contact the current president, Darrell Neufeld, before April 26 at dneufeld@niagarac.on.ca.

On the move

This section features CPRS Hamilton members who have recently taken on new roles. Congratulations to:

- ♦ Jane Allison, APR, who is now the manager, Community Partnerships at The Hamilton Spectator
- ♦ Liliana Busnello, who has taken the position of communications specialist at Halton Region
- ♦ Sandra Manners, APR, who is now the director, Corporate Communications at Hamilton Utilities Corporation

If you'd like to be featured in this section, please contact Liliana Busnello at liliana.busnello@halton.ca.

Pinnacle Awards gala

Pinnacles tickets deadline March 23

Time is running short to be part of the most anticipated PR event of the year in Hamilton-Halton-Niagara.

The 17th Annual CPRS Hamilton Pinnacle Awards gala will be held on Thursday, March 30 at the fabulous Niagara Culinary Institute. But tickets are moving quickly and the deadline is March 23. To reserve your place, call the CPRS Hamilton Hotline at **905-546-8017**.

Please note that we are introducing a terrific deal - **\$500 for a table of eight**. That's a huge saving from the **\$75** cost for a **single ticket**. The **student rate is \$45**.

This year's Pinnacles attracted a large number of entries. In fact, they increased by nearly one-third from last year. If one of them was yours, there could be a trophy or

certificate with your name on it, so don't delay any further to reserve a ticket.

We acknowledge with thanks the participation of our Pinnacles title sponsor, CNW Group, and our other sponsors, which include Canadian Press, AMEC, CUMIS, Acuity Options, The Hamilton Spectator, and JEM Communications.

Directions: To reach the Niagara Culinary Institute, take the QEW Niagara, over the Garden City Skyway bridge and right at the Glendale Avenue exit, to the traffic lights at Taylor Road. Then turn left into the parking lot.

We are starting a bit later this year to allow people plenty of time to arrive.

The **cocktail reception starts at 6:15 p.m.** and the **dinner and awards at 7:15 p.m.**

See you there!

Is your PR team frazzing or functioning?

Rick Mauro, APR, MBA

A few weeks ago, the Globe and Mail's Social Studies column announced a new word, frazzing. It means frantically multi-tasking.

There are many public relations practitioners who could be the poster child for frazzing. We've all met them, maybe even seen them in the mirror. They're always busy, busy, busy, sometimes nearly at the point of panic. They'll typically tell you they're over-burdened and under-resourced and that the boss just doesn't understand.

Sometimes the situation is legitimate, but frequently the situation results from practitioners who focus too much attention on outputs and too little on outcomes. This approach to managing the public relations function within any organization is fraught with danger.

While superficially, the PR department might look very valuable, cranking media releases, producing publications and organizing special events, a more critical assessment of the department's contribution to the organization could quickly bring it to its knees. All it takes is a simple question from the chief financial officer: "Why do we spend all this much money on PR and what does it do for us?"

Let's face it: outputs are relatively easy for any practitioner. As long as you have the time, the talents and money, we can all produce reasonably attractive communications tools. But is

this activity just keeping you busy, continuing tradition or really helping advance your business?

Don't hide behind that old excuse that public relations work can't be measured. True, it's not always easy, and often the effect accumulates over a long period of time. But the reality is that public relations efforts can, and must be, measured. If we fail to measure, when the time comes for that critical senior management or CEO review, you're caught with your pants down around your ankles.

The solution lies at the planning stage: the planning of your PR department's function, long-term PR strategy and tactical PR initiatives. And good plans include goals -- measurable ones. To underscore the value of your PR department, your goals should align with the organization's strategic goals. Let's say your organization wants to improve employee productivity ratios by addressing sick time and absenteeism. Then make those your PR goals too. Fashion your communications plan, both strategies and tactics, with those goals in mind, develop the measurement tools, and execute the plan. Chances are this approach will get you noticed and better yet, valued at the senior management table.

Remember, measurement doesn't always require sophisticated methodology and lots of money. It just needs to

(Please see Frazzing, p. 7)

(Pinnacles, from p. 3)

Cynthia: Enter projects with well-defined goals and measurable results. Take your time and start in January looking at the entry form. Following the entry form instructions is very important. Think like a judge and connect the dots so that they can follow what you did and why you did it.



The Pinnacle Award submissions are open to all members of the Hamilton CPRS chapter. Awards are given for public relations programs and tactics. Good luck to all those who submitted entries. This year's gala will take place on March 30 at the Niagara Culinary Institute. For ticket information, please contact the CPRS Hamilton Hotline at: 905-546-8017.

Deirdra Redden has 20 years sales and marketing experience, and is currently completing her post-graduate certificate in public relations at Mohawk College. She hopes to pursue a career in public relations and event planning.

Liliana Busnello is the editor-in-chief of PR Link, and is on the marketing committee for the CPRS National Conference in Niagara Falls. She currently holds the position of communications specialist at Halton Region.

Featured in this profile:



Jane Allison, APR, has been a public relations practitioner since 1988 and assumed the role of manager, Community Partnerships at The Hamilton Spectator in the fall of 2005. Prior to joining the Spectator, Ms. Allison was a public relations officer with the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. Ms. Allison won Pinnacles in 2005 in the categories of Corporate Identity and Regular Publications.



Joanne Emerson, APR, is the owner of JEM Communications in Oakville. Her 25 years of experience in the field include the roles of director of PR at McMaster University, and director of Communications at Sheridan College. Ms. Emerson won Pinnacles in 2004 in the categories of Communication Planning and Tactics.



Tony Iavarone, APR, is the director of Corporate Communications with the CUMIS Group Limited in Burlington. He has been with CUMIS for 15 of his 16 years in the field, taking a year to work with Hamilton Police Services. Most recently, Mr. Iavarone won the Pinnacle Award in 2005 in the category of Website.



Cynthia Janzen, APR, has been working in the industry since 1987 and joined Hellingman Communications as vice president in 1999. Previously, she was the director of Public Relations and Marketing at Mohawk College, and has worked in communications at Chedoke Hospital. Ms. Janzen received the Pinnacle Award for Excellence in 1996.



Beyond Borders
Canadian Public Relations
Conference, Niagara Falls

Au-delà des frontières
La Conférence Canadienne des
Relations Publiques, Niagara Falls

The Hamilton chapter of the Canadian Public Relations Society is honoured to be hosting the twentieth annual CPRS National Conference, Beyond Borders, to be held June 11 to 13 in Niagara Falls, Ontario. The conference boasts a spectacular lineup of internationally recognized keynote speakers and thought-provoking plenary sessions and workshops.

The 2006 conference features three stimulating plenary sessions with topics like [From Baby Duck to Reserve Chardonnay: The Transformation of the Ontario Wine Industry](#), [Journalism 2010 from a Global Perspective](#), and [The World of Public Relations - Is it the same everywhere?](#)

The workshops promise to offer delegates with even more valuable information, with sessions such as [The Case of the Missing Mexican Moosehead: Building A Brand and Generating Ongoing Positive Publicity When Adversity Strikes](#); [Non-traditional Branding: Development and Marketing of the Canadian Military Police](#) and [Talking to Ourselves: Keeping Internal Communications Relevant and Effective](#), to name but a few.

If the selection of workshops and plenary sessions isn't enough to lure practitioners from across Canada - and beyond - to the conference, then the list of keynote speakers certainly is. Stephen Lewis, Executive Director of UNICEF and the United Nations special envoy on AIDS in Africa, joins Joel Bakan, law professor and author, Chantal Hébert, political raconteur and columnist, Colin Farrington, Director-General of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations and Professor Emeritus Dr. Larissa Grunig as this year's group of outstanding keynote speakers.

To top it all off, attendees will have the opportunity to explore one of the Natural Wonders of the world. The theme of the conference was inspired not only by geographical location but also by the goal of challenging practitioners to consider public relations on a global scale. The conference will explore social, economic, and organizational issues affecting Canada, North America and the world, and the ways in which these issues challenge PR practitioners.

Fittingly, the Public Relations Society of America in Western New York has been working in conjunction with CPRS Hamilton to help make this year's conference a success.

The extra early bird deadline has passed; however, you can still take advantage of the early bird savings by booking before April 21.

For full details on keynote speakers, plenary sessions, workshops and other information about the conference, please visit www.cprs.ca and click on the Beyond Borders logo.

~ *Kassandra Killman, Liliana Busnello*

(Frazzing, from p. 5)

be dependable, grounded in facts and timely. Some things as simple as a paper-based survey, random phone calls, or anecdotal observations can be great measurement tools when applied consistently.

If your approach or your corporate culture has focused on PR outputs or tactics, the shift to strategic outcomes won't necessarily be easy. But in the long run, it offers you the opportunity to assess your current PR program, potentially scale back unproductive activity, and then focus only on those initiatives that really have measurable value.

Take a few moments now to think about what's keeping you (and your staff) really busy. Could they be eliminated without having a negative affect on the organization and perhaps a positive effect on the budget?

With any luck, you might eliminate frazzing from your vocabulary.

Rick Mauro, APR, is the vice-president of marketing for CAA Niagara. He holds an MBA in public relations and communications management from Royal Roads University and has been an active practitioner since 1986.

Add impact to employee communications

Good communication has direct impact on your company's bottom line. Effective word choice increases motivation, sales and success. Communication departments know this. Marketing departments also know this. And researchers are confirming this. According to a recent Wall Street Journal article, a study by two University of Michigan researchers revealed that well-chosen words in company documents create a positive perception of employers by their employees.

Questions to consider:

1. Do your business letters get right to the point, or does the reader have to wade through several lines to find out why you are writing?
2. Do the articles in your company newsletter meet the WIIFM requirement? That is, do they let the reader know "What's in it for me?" "Why should I read this?" "What impact does it have on me?" "Why should I care?"
3. When you announce policies and regulations, do you use a benefits-oriented tone? Do you let your employees

know how policies will benefit/affect them? If the policies will be unpopular, acknowledge the difficulties - and be sincere.

4. Do your training and procedures manuals explain why employees must follow certain rules? Most people are rational and are more likely to do something if it makes sense to them.

Key messages for employees:

- ◆ This is our mission and here's how you fit in.
- ◆ What you do is important.
- ◆ Let me tell you how you're doing.
- ◆ Let me help you do your job better.
- ◆ We'll help you with personal problems.
- ◆ We made a mistake, and here is how we're going to fix it.
- ◆ Here's how we did this quarter.
- ◆ What are your ideas?



PR Link survey results

Thank you to all members who filled out the survey for *PR Link* last fall. In total, 31, or about 15 per cent of members responded.

Here is a list of some of the key results:

- ◆ General satisfaction: 80% are either very satisfied or satisfied with PR Link
- ◆ More than half of respondents were satisfied with the current method of distribution of the newsletter.
- ◆ What respondents enjoy most about PR Link:
 - tips, advice
 - attractive design, easy to read
 - feedback about events, upcoming events

- current topics
- quality of writing, articles
- variety

- ◆ Topics/areas that respondents would like to see featured more frequently:
 - CPRS Hamilton events/news
 - communication management/strategy
 - communications theory and trends
 - media relations

Your comments and suggestions about *PR Link* or any other member service are always welcome. Please contact the editor-in-chief, Lilianna Busnello, at liliana.busnello@halton.ca.

Board news

This section gives members with an insight into monthly board of director meetings, including new initiatives, decisions made and regular updates from directors and chairs.

Treasurer's report

- ♦ - The current bank account balance is approximately \$9,000.

Mentorship program

- ♦ A sub-committee of the board (Dave Rowney, APR, Holly Angus, Emilija Businkas and Sarah Megens) has begun work on this exciting new initiative for CPRS Hamilton members. More details about the program will be available in upcoming weeks.

Accreditation update

- ♦ The Accreditation chair, Carleen Carroll, APR, announced that two members are currently pursuing their designation. She maintains contact with Accreditation chairs at other chapters, and provides support to the two applicants.

Membership

On behalf of CPRS Hamilton, our Membership Chair, Ivy German, welcomes the following new full-time members:

- ♦ Anji Husain, Manager, Corporate Communications, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

- ♦ John Friesen, Executive, CJA Communications
- ♦ Tori Reep, Health Promotion Manager, Heart Niagara

A warm welcome also goes out to the five new student members:

- ♦ Jessica Wilkes, University of Western Ontario
- ♦ Derek Johnstone, University of Western Ontario
- ♦ Frances Gail Manlucu, University of Western Ontario
- ♦ Jessica Wilkes, University of Western Ontario
- ♦ Marlene O'Brien, Student, Humber College

Electronic communications

- ♦ Michael Lund, the Electronic Communications chair, continues to liaise with the website developer to implement improvements to the website. More details to come soon.

Student liaison

- ♦ Holly Angus, Student Liaison, has distributed a survey for students in PR programs at local colleges.

Strategic planning session

- ♦ The board of directors will hold a special strategic planning session on March 25 to discuss organizational goals and to provide suggestions for the next board.

Newsletter committee 2006

Liliana Busnello	Editor-in-chief, writer, desktop publisher
Heather Elliott	Writer, editor
Alexis Higginbotham	Writer, editor
Jumoke Isekeije	Writer, editor
Ann Lamanes	Writer, editor
Alan Major	Writer
Michael Marini	Writer
Liisa Morley	Writer, editor
Jennifer Murphy	Writer, editor
Lesley Peppin	Writer, editor

Zoe Siskos	Writer, editor
Lukas Wesolowski	Writer, editor

Graphic Designer: Sandie Drzewiecki

Special thanks to Carleen Carroll, APR for editorial assistance.

To advertise in PR Link,
or to contribute a news item, please
contact Liliana Busnello at
liliana.busnello@halton.ca.