



## Communication Management 101: Learning from the University of Minnesota

Whether it's handling crisis communications during the University of Minnesota's men's basketball scandal, organizing a massive campaign to create public support for the funding of the University or managing the exchange of information with the school's 80,000 students, staff and faculty, Sandra Gardebring, vice president of university relations, is at the helm.



**Sandra Gardebring**

At Minnesota PRSA's June meeting, Gardebring shared some of the challenges she has faced in her time at the University. Gardebring is responsible for fostering good relationships at the University through public relations, alumni relations, media relations, development and community relations.

Gardebring explained that the University is unique because it's decentralized, and therefore it is often difficult to form a single communications message. For example, the University offers 582 different degrees, so trying to bundle it all up into one brand message is often impossible.

"Controlling the institution's many messages becomes not just an issue of 'Brand A' but more like 582 brands that all have their own agendas," said Gardebring. "The University has a faculty of 300 people who have a long tradition of independence and academic freedom. There is not one person in charge, but

many people with varying degrees of authority."

Gardebring quoted University President Mark Yudof's saying "Being president is like being the director of a cemetery — there are lots of people under you but nobody is listening."

According to Gardebring the 1999 men's basketball crisis had all the hallmarks

of a PR crisis: illegal activity undermining the core values of the institution, political heat, internal dissent, charges of racism, and competition between the two local newspapers. "The day before the scandal broke, the president's office received a phone call from the *Pioneer Press*," she said. "The reporter said a story would run the next day that quoted a former employee of our academic counseling program as saying that she had written more than 400 papers and essays for more than 20 current and former U of M basketball players."

Gardebring said the difficulty in handling the release of this story was it took place during the spring so the vice president of athletics, the coach, the basketball team and anyone who knew anything about the scandal were all out of town for the NCAA tournament.

When handling this crisis there are several things that Gardebring and the University refer to: "We tell the truth, we do it as soon as possible, we acknowledge error and apologize,"

### Important dates to remember

*NOTE: No monthly meeting in August*

### August

Skills Seminar registration deadline

### September

Skills Seminar

Classics workshop

Deadline for 2002 Board of Directors nominations

Fall APR exam

Monthly meeting

### October

Classics award entries due

World Congress in Atlanta

### November

Deadline nominations for Padilla Public Service award

Annual meeting

### January

Classics banquet

What's new on [www.mnprsa.com](http://www.mnprsa.com)  
Volunteer opportunities

**Gardebring continued on Page 2**



## Moving research online

Each year, public relations professionals are expected to do a little more magic with tight budgets.

The focus of the industry has shifted in the past year to showing more tangible results than just clippings. Industry leadership, such as the Council for Public Relations Firms and the Institute for Public Relations, have recently developed guidelines for measuring public relations results.

Again and again these experts point out that research is essential in any successful program. For example, to demonstrate an increase in awareness, researchers must establish a baseline at the outset to determine how much awareness has risen. Traditional methods for research, such as phone or mail surveys, are falling by the wayside in favor of online surveys in many organizations. For about half the cost of conducting a phone survey and about half the time of completing a survey by mail, online surveys are gaining a significant share of the research market.

Online surveys can take several forms, from the instant polling on some Web sites which let you see how your opinion compares to everyone else's, to a more advanced survey you receive via e-mail.

### Step One: Know your audience

It goes without saying that conducting a survey online requires your desired respondents to have access to either the Web or e-mail. You will also usually need to have e-mail addresses to launch your survey, though some allow you to distribute through a Web site, which anyone can connect to.

In an office setting, e-mail is checked regularly and employee e-mail addresses are readily available. Even in a factory or plant environment, workers with access to a computer terminal can participate by logging onto a Web site.

*Guidelines for measuring public relations results, developed by the Council for Public Relations Firms and the Institute for Public Relations, are available at [www.instituteforpr.com](http://www.instituteforpr.com) and [www.prfirms.org](http://www.prfirms.org).*

### Step Two: Choose a vendor

Once you have e-mails or another way of distributing the address for the Web site, the next step is to find an online survey vendor. Vendors such as NetReflector, AskEmployees.com and Zoomerang allow you to sample their wares with a free, basic survey tool.

There is a definite learning curve with building online surveys. Each vendor has its own layout and features, so being proficient with one doesn't always transfer to other vendors. There is no obligation when you register with these sites and you need little more than an e-mail address.

### Step Three: Put your survey online

Each survey vendor has step-by-step directions for launching and managing your survey. Once the questions are put in, assigning possible responses can be a little tricky. While some allow only for straightforward multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank type answers, more advanced programs allow for options like check boxes, where multiple answers can be given, and randomization, where the order of the questions is rotated to prevent bias.

Depending on your recipients and the survey, you may decide the survey stays open anywhere from a few hours to a few months. However, lengthening the period of time that a survey is open does not necessarily guarantee more respondents. With an e-mail survey, respondents tend to take the survey when they first open the e-mail invitation. Once the recipient has skipped over the e-mail, statistics say he or she is unlikely to go back to the e-mail invitation without a reminder.

To combat this problem, many vendors provide the option of building in a reminder into the survey. This allows you to choose the text that will accompany the initial e-mail and see when it will be sent. The system is designed to ensure that those who completed the survey do not receive the reminder.

### Step Four: Report the results

Each of the vendors listed allow for "real time" reporting. You can log on and see exactly how many people have responded, who has taken it and preliminary numbers.

Once the survey is closed, the data is tabulated by the system and sometimes available through an HTML link. Depending on the vendor, the raw data can be downloaded into Excel or SPSS programs.

### Wrapping it all up

Just as e-mail reconstructed inter-office communications, Web-based surveys threaten to turn the field of communication research on its side. Online surveys offer a fast and inexpensive way to incorporate high-quality research into your public relations program.

— Jessica Powell  
Padilla Speer Beardsley Inc.

*Editor's Note: The Member Communications committee would like to recognize Jessica Powell and Padilla Speer Beardsley Inc. for their complimentary assistance in the implementation of the recent Member Communication committee survey using NetReflector.*

## Time to start thinking about Classics 2002

Each year, Minnesota PRSA sponsors the Classics Awards, which honor public relations practitioners who, in the judgment of their peers, have successfully addressed a communications challenge with exemplary professional skill, creativity and resourcefulness. Last year's Classics was a huge success, attracting more than 300 communications professionals. This year's program is sure to be another great opportunity for entrants to gain recognition among their peers.

It can be difficult to capture the true essence of such efforts in an awards application process. Even the most exceptional work will benefit greatly if it is packaged as a thoughtful, well-planned entry. When it comes to putting together such an entry, many don't know where to start. Now is the time to start thinking about the award-winning potential of the past year's work — and how to package that into a successful entry.

With this in mind, the Classics committee presents the "How to Put Together a Winning Classics Entry" workshop to be held Thursday, September 6, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., at the University of Minnesota School of Journalism and Mass

Communication Conference Center, 111 Murphy Hall, 206 Church Street SE, Minnesota PRSA President Stephen Dupont, APR, will be the featured speaker at this event.

This free workshop is perfectly timed to help participants meet the 2002 deadline for Classics Award entries, which is scheduled for early October. Attendees will learn how to put together winning entries, gather tips and suggestions from past winners, and have an opportunity to view a display of award-winning entries from previous years. All PRSA members are welcome to attend.

For more information or to register for the workshop, please contact Classics committee member Michael Ziskin at (612) 376-7979 or michaelz@bizwire.com.

— Brooke Benson  
Weber Shandwick

### Mark your calendar

Sept. 6 — Classics workshop

Oct. 15 — Award entries due

Jan. 24 — Classics banquet

### Gardebring from Page 2

whole new realm of challenges for Gardebring and her communications team. "The University proposed to the governor and the legislature that it receive \$220 million in new money. When the governor's recommendations came in at less than a quarter of that, we decided to treat our response as a political campaign," said Gardebring.

### Yudof's rules for a crisis:

- Tell the truth and do so succinctly and clearly
- Place institutional goals and interests above politics and parochialism
- Believe in the institution
- Avoid meaningless abstractions and platitudes
- Don't duck the hard questions
- Don't take sides until you know all the facts
- If you did something wrong, apologize
- Use the art of persuasion
- Don't just react. Frame the issues and resolve them
- Lighten up

By creating a grassroots effort, the University sought to create an outpouring of citizen support for the University directed at the legislative leadership. The University formulated several tactics to achieve this, including presentations by President Yudof, phone calls to legislators, direct mail campaigns, op-ed pieces in the two Twin Cities daily papers, and the support of past governors.

"I don't know how many legislative contacts the phone calls generated, but one of the things it did for us was to create an internal sense of collaboration that we really hadn't experienced before," said Gardebring. "People got a sense that for the first time we really were all in this together and the feedback that we got from the legislature was that there was one message delivered by many people. Which of course sums up what we were working toward."

Although the University did not receive the funding, Gardebring said as far as communications is concerned, the 2001 legislative session was a success because it showed Minnesota that the University could unite behind a common cause and send a single and powerful message.

— Ryan May  
Strother Communications Group

## How you can serve PRSA

This is the time of year the Minnesota chapter of PRSA begins to consider the people who will lead our chapter in the coming years. The Nominating committee is seeking interested members who are accredited to serve on the chapter's board of directors.

Each year, we get many questions and inquiries about the process. How do people get on the board? What's the time commitment? What does one get out of it? Why is the process so mysterious? Can someone run against the slate of candidates?

There's no real mystery to the process, other than the fact that for a chapter of about 550 members — which makes Minnesota among the largest of all PRSA chapters in the country — we have a low number of accredited members from which to draw our board leadership. It's a chapter bylaw that to be nominated to the board, a member must be accredited, much the same as those seeking national elected office must also be accredited.

The chapter's Nominating committee is charged with presenting a slate of candidates to the membership prior to the annual meeting. Historically, the committee is chaired by the immediate past-president of the chapter, who

chooses chapter members to serve on the committee, (any accredited or senior members who have been active in the chapter, are familiar with the committee leadership, and are generally active in PRSA). Our bylaws require a committee of at least five people.

Where do the nominees come from? Interested members can put their own name forward. Others nominate friends or colleagues they believe will be good leaders of the chapter. Many have been active on committees or served in committee leadership, and are interested in extending their involvement to chapter leadership. In some cases, long-time members who have served previously in leadership roles, come back for another stint on the board. Still others become involved because previous jobs prevented them from being active. In no way does active participation in chapter activities guarantee board nomination. Other than accreditation, there are no requirements to serving the chapter in a leadership role. The officers of the chapter — the president, president-elect, treasurer and secretary — generally come from the ranks of the board, since they have been active in chapter leadership, have made a commitment of time and effort to serve on the board, and are most familiar with the

operations of the chapter.

What's the time commitment? A board meeting once a month, serving as a liaison to one of the standing committees, several calls a month with committee leadership, attending a committee meeting monthly, interest and enthusiasm is what is required.

The deadline for receiving names of individuals interested in serving on the chapter's board is Wednesday, September 12. All that is required is that you make your interest known, either to the PRSA office, to a board member, or to me as Nominating committee chair. No application forms!

The Nominating committee will then meet and consider all eligible candidates and make a recommendation to the board of directors. Following board approval at its September 26 meeting, the chapter will forward the slate of candidates to the membership by October 16.

Leading our chapter is important. It's a way to give back to your profession. It's an opportunity to build your own leadership skills. It's a chance to network and learn from other public relations professionals. And it's important to do.

— David Hakensen, APR  
Immediate Past-President

### Save the date: Skills Seminar and September monthly meeting

The 2001 Skills Seminar and September monthly meeting will be held on September 5, 2001, at the Radisson Hotel South and Plaza Tower in Bloomington. Entitled "Your PR Toolbox," this year's theme reflects the importance of keeping your toolbox stocked with the latest tools and knowing how to choose the correct tool for the task at hand. In the PR world, your skills are considered to be your most valuable tools. A well-stocked toolbox enables you to do a better job and to bring more value to your clients. This year's gathering focuses on gaining new skills and improving the ones you have — in short, adding to your PR toolbox.

The event's luncheon entitled, "Have You Read Any Good Books Lately?," will feature a panel discussion and also serve as the chapter's September monthly meeting. Fees for the full event are \$165 for members, \$185 for non-members, \$110 for non-profit practitioners and \$75 for students. For those interested in attending only the luncheon, fees are \$30 for members or students, \$35 for non-members. The registration deadline for the Skills Seminar and the September monthly meeting is Wednesday, August 29, 2001.

For more information, visit the Web site at [www.mnprsa.com/skillsseminar2001.cfm](http://www.mnprsa.com/skillsseminar2001.cfm) or look for a brochure and registration form in this month's Minnesota PRSA mailing.



# Announcements and Opportunities

## Minnesota members win Silver and Bronze Anvils

### PRSA Silver Anvil Awards

- Alliance Pipeline with Padilla Speer Beardsley Inc. in the Community Relations category
- Citizens to Stop the Coal Trains with Weber Shandwick Worldwide in the Nonprofit Public Affairs category
- ING/Reliastar Financial with Carmichael Lynch Spong in the Marketing Communications — New Services category

### PRSA Bronze Anvil Awards

- Department 56, Inc. with Carmichael Lynch Spong in the Interactive Communications — E-Zines, Newsletters and Other Online Publications category
- General Mills with DKY in the Press Kits/Media Kits — Events category
- ING/ReliaStar Financial with Carmichael Lynch Spong in the Press Kits/Media Kits — Services category

## Local agency honored

LaBreche Murray Public Relations was recently selected by *The Holmes Report* as one of the “50 Best Agencies to Work For.” Organizations honored were selected based on survey responses.

### Member kudos

Congratulations to **Kristi Fuller, APR**, for her promotion to Director, Marketing Communications at Guidant Corporation.

Congratulations to **Mary Haugen** for her promotion to account supervisor and **Liz Bjorklund** for her promotion to account executive at Bozell Kamstra.

### Members who have recently changed positions include:

**Thomas Hayes** has joined the Hennepin County Medical Center as director of Public Relations. His new address, phone and e-mail are: 701 Park Ave., Mpls., MN 55415; (612) 347-3337; and tom.hayes@co.hennepin.mn.us.

**Douglas Kline** has joined Target Stores as manager of Public Relations. His new address is 33 6th St. S., Mpls., MN 55402.

**Rick Naymark, APR**, has formed Naymark Branding Resources. His new address, phone, fax and e-mail are: 4517 Tower St., Edina, MN 55424; (952) 926-0938; (952) 926-8057 (fax); and ricknaymark@qwest.net.

**Kimberly Olson, APR**, has joined General Mills. Her new address and phone are: 1 General Mills Blvd., Golden Valley, MN 55426; and (763) 764-7600.

**Paul Omodt** has joined Padilla Speer Beardsley Inc. as vice president, Media Relations. His new address, telephone, fax and e-mail are: 224 Franklin Ave. W., Mpls. 55404; (612) 872-3732; (612) 871-7792 (fax); and pomodt@psbpr.com.

**Deborah Puff** has joined Medica as communications manager. Her new address, phone, fax and e-mail are: 5601 Smetana Dr., #80368, Minnetonka, MN 55343; (952) 992-2129; (952) 992-3377 (fax); and dpuff@allina.com.

**Larry Teien, APR**, has retired from the Duane Arnold Energy Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and has formed Ty N Communications. His new address, phone, fax and e-mail are: 9853 Dellridge Rd., Mpls. MN 55425-2617; (952) 888-8093; (952) 884-7540 (fax); and lteien@aol.com.

**Beth Zimmerman** has joined Watson Wyatt Worldwide as an associate consultant. Her new address, phone, fax and e-mail are: 8400 Normandale Lake Blvd., Ste. 1500, Mpls., MN 55437; (952) 842-6439; (952) 842-6439 (fax); and beth.zimmerman@watsonwyatt.com.

## Welcome new members

Welcome to new Minnesota PRSA members who have joined recently. They include: **Dean Beckman**, St. Mary's University; **Laura Blankley**, Padilla Speer Beardsley Inc.; **Elizabeth Child**, U.S. Bancorp Piper Jaffery; **Liz Conmy**, MN State University Moorehead; **Julie Craven**, Hormel Foods Corporation; **Patty Hoffman**, Padilla Speer Beardsley Inc. and **Jennifer Weidauer**, CNT.

## PRSA today

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