



## How to develop the mind of a strategist

According to the guest speaker at the October Minnesota PRSA meeting, PR professionals are yearning for a place at the management table to express “their own” ideas. But as James E. Lukaszewski, APR, Fellow PRSA, and Chairman of the Lukaszewski Group Inc., expressed, “it’s not about us, it’s about them (our client or boss).”

Jim started with the basics. “People think that they have something strategic to offer and deserve to be at management’s table without really knowing what strategy is.” He defines strategy as “a unique mixture of mental energy verbally injected into an organization through communication, which results in behavior that achieves organizational objectives. Strategy is a big-picture activity. It is always outcome focused. Too often public relations and other staff functions get bogged down in what happened yesterday or last budget cycle. We spend far too much time trying to figure out how we got to where we are. That’s not strategy. Strategy is about the future.”

Jim expressed the importance of strategy very simply, “A company without a strategy is doing everything else first.”

Lukaszewski said he spends a fair amount of time counseling COOs and CEOs whose perspective might be surprising to PR practitioners. They rhetorically ask, “How do I manage all these people who are constantly yacking at me, who know virtually nothing about my business ... but want to tell me how to run my business ... they’re all clamoring for a seat at the table, a place that is already

Lukaszewski defines strategy as “a unique mixture of mental energy verbally injected into an organization through communication, which results in behavior that achieves organizational objectives.”



over-crowded with folks who don’t know how to help me.”

Lukaszewski continued to explain that, strategy begins with how one thinks about: issues, problems, management’s concerns; how management analyzes and approaches its problems; and about a translation process so that management can understand the insights you intend to share. He recommends that business problems are approached from a business perspective, adding, “Separate yourself from the strictly media and the media relations solutions. If all you can think of is what the press release ought to say, you’re of virtually no value in strategic situations.”

Strategists have exceptional verbal skills, they communicate effectively in real time and on the spot, because that’s how management make decisions. They are a force for positive, forward thinking. They also focus on what is truly and

### Important dates to remember

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#### December

*Annual meeting at the Doubletree in Bloomington*

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#### January

*Classics banquet at the Minnesota History Center, St. Paul*

What’s new on [www.mnprsa.com](http://www.mnprsa.com)  
PRSA Today issue archive

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## 2000 – the year that was for Minnesota PRSA

It seems odd to be writing this a scant 11 months after I banged out my first column for *PRSA Today*. I must confess that I approached my year as president with high expectations, probably like every president before me. Hopes to accomplish a lot of things for Minnesota PRSA during my tenure.

Unfortunately I ran into one problem — it's a volunteer job and I still have a full-time job to do. You know, one that gives me a paycheck.

Fortunately, that's my one and only frustration with Minnesota PRSA. That it's a volunteer organization and we're living in an age where asking people to give of their time is a big order.

There is an upside, however: one of my goals was to move us toward accommodating the wishes and needs of all members. I think we're on our way, but there's much to be done. Spoken like the optimist I was last January.

Actually, we accomplished a great deal this year. And I mean we. The board and committee chairs and their very committed members all contributed to helping achieve many things. Let me recap some of the highlights.

**1. Newsletter** – Perhaps the most visible change of the year was a long overdue updating of *PRSA Today*. Not only did we give it a fresh look, but we expanded the size and added more photos of monthly meetings, seminars and other events.

**2. Web Site** – Our chapter Web site was updated and relaunched earlier this year, the third such incarnation for Minnesota PRSA. The updated graphics and navigation tools make it easier to use. A "members only" section was created where the member directory can be found. In the future, professional development tools will be offered here, and we are moving toward secure online meeting registration by credit card.

**3. Classics Banquet** – We tried something new this year by having the event at Planet Hollywood. Although it was a very different venue for the chapter, it was an important evolution for the event, which attracted 330 people.

**4. Monthly Meetings** – The committee has worked very hard to create a series of events that appeal to a broad range of interests.

**5. Skills Seminar** – Our members look to this event to give them a solid day of professional development programming. We have positioned this seminar as a cost-effective way for organizations to send employees for skill-building and training.

**6. Member Involvement** – Our newest effort at learning more about your interests and needs, the Member Involvement committee took the member survey a step further, distributing two surveys that looked more closely at the qualitative issues of membership. This feedback will be important in guiding programming in the future.

**7. Accreditation** – Our chapter is one of the leaders in helping prepare its members for this important exam, and we've seen it in our success rate.

**8. Membership** – The true mark of a successful organization is whether its membership is growing. We reached 580 members this year - an all-time high for Minnesota - ranking us 8th in the nation.

**9. Public Service** – Working with (MAP), we created a not-for-profit track as part of our Skills Seminar, which was a success. And to recognize individual achievement, the PROS program - Public Relations Oriented Service - continues as our way to recognize the efforts of members who give their public relations talent on behalf of other organizations.

**10. Student Relations** – Our student relations committee has been humming along for a number of years. Last year the chapter made a commitment to our six PRSSA chapters by increasing the amount of the Willard Thompson Scholarship.

**11. Public Relations** – It was one of my goals to elevate the visibility of Minnesota PRSA. Due to an incredible committee, we did just that. They placed a number of stories throughout the year in local media positioning public relations in a positive way.

Now that I've looked at the list, we did a lot this year. Of course, there are many more things to do, and the new leadership will carry these on and add new goals to the list.

As for you, our members — volunteer for a committee if you have the time. We can accomplish more in greater numbers. Participate in our professional development offerings and tell us what you'd like to see if we're not providing it. Let us know how we're doing. I suppose "no news is good news," but feedback is what volunteers live for. We're all ears.

Last, thank you for letting me serve the profession this past year. I hope in some small measure we moved public relations forward, not only for us, but for those who can benefit most from our counsel.

– David Hakensen, APR

Note: Please visit Dave's Digital Dialogue on the Minnesota PRSA Web site — [www.mnprsa.com](http://www.mnprsa.com) — for an expanded version of this column.

## Members expand their horizons at Skills Seminar

Minnesota PRSA held its annual skills seminar on Nov. 8. Nearly 200 professionals attended the “Expanding Horizons” seminar, which covered a variety of topics. Here are just a few insights from members on the daylong seminar.



*Nearly 200 public relations professionals attended the seminar at the Radisson Hotel South & Plaza Tower.*

### Web casting

Although Web casting is new to many, it is where public relations is headed, according to John Gorski of Juntunen Media Group. Because the Web offers worldwide instant communications at multiple locations, Web casting can be an extremely effective learning and business tool if managed properly. The most important recommendations given are as follows:

- Always work with pros (because your reputation depends on it).
- Plan, Plan, Plan (without a plan even the most flexible of budgets won't suffice).
- Know and understand your audience.
- Make some assumptions (some things you just can't plan for).
- Just do it!

Gorski pointed out that an interactive

Web cast can only be effective if there is an audience, so event registration and advertising are critical. Most Web casts can be done on a relatively tight budget, ranging from \$10,000 to \$40,000.

### Web sites are not rocket science

Starting with the basics, Sheldon Mains of the Management Assistance Program (MAP) for Nonprofits, discussed how to create a Web site that works. He laid out the essentials to starting a Web site, which included:

1. Know your audience, what you want them to do, and what information they need to do it.
2. How to register a Web address by visiting [www.networksolutions.com](http://www.networksolutions.com).
3. The good, the bad, and the ugly Web site on the Internet.
4. The essentials of email and how and why to create a functioning list serve.

Citing that many Web sites are created with a focus on design instead of substance, Mains stressed that site content is as important as a site's look. He also reminded practitioners of an important point that is often overlooked, making a site accessible to all in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### Public relations and political implications

The morning after a nail-biting, deadlocked presidential election, Hubert H. (Skip) Humphrey III spoke on the changing role of public relations and politics. Humphrey stressed the importance of getting involved at the local level. There are many opportunities to get involved in issues and network, he emphasized that the connections made today could pay off for a client tomorrow.

### Surviving the comma trauma

Patricia Francisco of Writing Consultants, Inc., presented “Proofreading for professionals.” The workshop, designed to increase the speed and accuracy of proofreading skills, offered techniques for enhancing proofreading skills, including reading copy backwards, proofing copy one line at a time, and remembering to examine the layout not just grammar problems. Francisco recommended a six-step approach to proofreading.

- Cool off—proofread later what you work on now.
- Get a preliminary overview of purpose and content.
- Check for all non-text parts.
- Check text, looking for errors in these areas. Use a card or ruler to slow yourself down.
- Read the communication backwards—from bottom to top, right to left—to pick up any typographical mistakes you may have missed.
- Ask someone to do a final check for perfection.

— Ryan May  
Strother Communications Group



*Skip Humphrey spoke on the changing role of public relations in politics.*

# Transforming culture – a journey of change

“A company may need to change its culture to compete in the ever-changing marketplace. Actually changing the culture involves a commitment of all employees — from entry-level to CEO,” explained Margaret Hennen, APR, second vice president, Fortis Financial Group.

Hennen presented the Fortis Financial Group (FFG) case study at this fall’s PRSA World Congress 2000. During the past three years, FFG has systematically changed its culture to enhance its competitive position in its industry.

According to Hennen, a critical element is commitment and investment by senior management. “FFG has been able to change significantly over the past three years because of our senior management. Not only did they believe in the need to change, they were willing to make a personal commitment and investment in the change. They also committed to time for employee involvement at all levels of the organization.”

FFG’s senior management committed resources to the culture change. In addition to the financial commitment required by change of this scope, two employee teams were created to drive the change. One team oversees the change by aligning FFG’s systems and structures. The other focuses on management training.

## Beginning with research

Using traditional public relations techniques, FFG began with research on the current state of the culture.

“It’s so tempting to move right into tactics, assuming that you know your own organization,” said Hennen. “Besides, one’s creativity shines through in the tactics. It’s the part that gets people excited. However, it’s also one of the easiest ways to trivialize a program. Employees easily detect tactics without a research-based plan as gimmicks. Invest the planning time initially. It pays big dividends throughout the program and provides a roadmap for reaching your goal.”

Through a structured approach, FFG determined where the culture was initially and where it needed to be to remain competitive in the financial services industry. The gaps between these two extremes formed the opportunities for the culture transformation program. The desired cultural attributes were identified. The competencies to achieve those attributes, both the competencies that existed and those that needed to be introduced to the employees, were also pin-pointed.

## Creating the roadmap

Once FFG understood its needs, the group developed a plan to achieve those goals. Planning involved designing a realignment and modification of the existing structures and

systems which form the infrastructure of the company. This alignment allows the organization to reinforce the desired behaviors that will create the change needed to succeed. The plan to develop the new culture relied largely on communication with employees and consistency of key messages delivered by different people in different settings.

## Implementing the plan

Manager support is critical to changing the culture. Research shows that all levels of employees want to hear messages from their direct managers. Preparing managers for their role is an ongoing program element.

One of the employee teams focuses on creating materials to reinforce existing competencies and to teach all managers those new competencies needed for the new culture. The managers, in turn, reinforce and teach the new competencies to their staffs.

Another tactic used throughout the implementation has been cascading communications. Cascading communicating brings information from one level of the organization to the next and keeps the immediate manager as the information source. At quarterly manager meetings, tool kits are provided to assist in taking the message back to all employees.

## Evaluating progress

A benchmark employee opinion survey was followed 15 months later with a second survey. Participation rose from 51 percent on the first survey to 86 percent on the second survey. Scores improved in each of the ten categories measured; however, not all categories reached the minimum desired score of 80 percent favorable responses.

The culture change was undertaken to improve business success. And it’s working. Sales have increased significantly in the past two years and new products are introduced on a faster cycle with greater internal cross-functional involvement.

“We haven’t filled all the gaps. This is a dynamic process. We revisit the current and desired cultures annually, monitor our progress, adjust our plan and implementation tactics to correspond with the desired results. We’ve experienced many changes, but we also know that we need to keep changing to be competitive,” concluded Hennen. “Change is a journey, not a destination.”

– PRSA Today staff

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indisputably important, versus unimportant past issues or time-wasting whining executives.

How do you know if an idea is strategic? Lukaszewski recommends you run it through this simple test. "Does the idea help the boss and organization achieve objectives and goals? Will some aspect of the business fail, or fail to progress, without acting on the strategy recommended?"

How can you tell if you, or someone you work with, is a strategist?

Lukaszewski outlines the following characteristics. Strategists are purposefully inconsistent because every situation is different and strategies must fit each situation. They recommend conclusive actions and provide substantive intensity. They are pragmatists who focus on the top executive's goals and perceptions and go for positive increments, as opposed to the grand plan. Strategists also realize that not all news is good news.

Can we fail as strategists? Yes. Lukaszewski explains practitioners fail as strategists because, "PR solutions aren't necessarily a critical part of every management decision or problem scenario. Media concerns are rarely management's first concerns and that even though we may notice management's blind spots or prejudices, we are often powerless — or idealess — to make a useful, doable, meaningful recommendation to correct management misperceptions."

Lukaszewski believes that PR professionals are challenged when it comes to developing the mind of a strategist because our thinking methodology, expectations, and vocabulary are so different from management's. "PR folks 'do stuff.' We get it done now. We are predominantly intuitive spontaneous people. Successful management gets things done over the long term." This fundamental difference is why PR professionals must learn, study and figure out what a client's business is about. "But what we do have going for us is our perspective that nothing is unrelated — no other industry looks at issues like we do."

So how do we help our clients or boss strategically? Lukaszewski recommends making recommendations in an operational context by giving them focused, accurate, and complete information from which to choose a course of action. He offers this one page, Executive Decision-Making Process.

Step #1: Situation Description

Step #2: Analysis/Explanation/Interpretation (impact of the problem)

Step #3: Options (pathways to a solution) Give three, one being the predicted impact of doing nothing.

Step #4: Recommendation(s) (If I were you, here's what I'd do.)

Step #5: Negative unintended consequences

Lukaszewski urges us to remember that the product of unbiased strategic thinking is a range of options and approaches, plus the assumptions and the rationale that support them. Management expects a menu of decision options to consider. He added, "When we understand a client's business well enough to offer insightful and strategic ideas beyond the CEO's current thinking, we will earn a seat at the table."

– Jolanta Urosevich  
Business communications freelancer

## **How can you tell if you, or someone you work with, is a strategist?**

Strategists:

- Are inconsistent
- Recommend conclusive actions
- Provide substantive intensity
- Believe in laggship and entropy, as strongly as you search for action and solutions
- Are pragmatists
- Focus on the top executive's goals and perceptions
- Go for the positive increment, as opposed to the grand plan
- Realize that not all news is good news



***PRSA members, as well as chapter president David Hakensen, learned practical tips and advice, such as "... strategists have exceptional verbal skills, and communicate effectively in real time."***



## Announcements and Opportunities

### BusinessWire creates PRSSA scholarship

BusinessWire has created a special scholarship program in support of 23 PRSSA chapters. PRSSA students attending universities with affiliated Minnesota PRSSA student chapters include Moorhead State University, University of Minnesota, University of St. Thomas, St. Cloud State University, University of North Dakota and North Dakota State University.

To qualify for the \$1,000 scholarship award, students must be a member of PRSSA, possess an overall GPA of 3.0, prepare an essay detailing future goals and aspirations, and submit exhibits of writing ability, research capability and grasp of public relations functions. Deadline for submission is August 15, 2001. Winners will be announced in October 2001.

### Members who have recently changed positions include:

**Peg Buchheit** has joined Carmichael Lynch Spong as a counselor. Her new address, phone, fax and email are: 800 Hennepin Ave., Mpls., MN 55403; (612) 334-6000; (612) 375-8501; and pbuchheit@clynch.com.

**Nan Farnsworth DeGonda** has joined Andersen Windows as public relations manager. Her new address, phone, fax and email are: 100 4th Ave. N., Bayport, MN 55003; (651) 264-4254; (651) 264-5485 (fax); and nan.degon-da@andersencorp.com.

**Kristi Fuller** has joined Guidant Corporation's Cardiac Rhythm Management Group as manager of Marketing Communications. Her new address, phone and email are: 4100 Hamline Ave. N., St. Paul, MN 55112-5798; (651) 582-4000; and kristi.fuller@guidant.com.

**Sara Mulder** has joined Carmichael Lynch Spong as an associate. Her new address, phone, fax and email are: 800 Hennepin Ave., Mpls., MN 55403; (612) 334-6000; (612) 375-8501; and smulder@clynch.com.

**Katie Welch Peterson** has joined Padilla Speer Beardsley as a senior account executive. Her new address, phone, fax and email are: 224 Franklin Ave. W., Mpls., MN 55404; (612) 872-3756; (612) 871-8877 (fax); and kpeterson@psbpr.com.

### Welcome new members

Welcome to new Minnesota PRSA members who have joined recently. They include: **Jacquelyn Betz**, Padilla Speer Beardsley; **Emily Jo Ero-Phillips**, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board; **Haley Marconett**, Snow Communications, Inc.; **Lori Ann Vicich**, University of Minnesota; and **Michael Weinbeck**, University of Minnesota.

### Correction

**Rose McKinney's** phone was incorrectly listed in the November issue. She encourages members to call her at (612) 338-8000 with suggestions for upcoming monthly meeting topics.

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### Don't miss this inauguration!

Lobbying, pandering, partisan politics? Nope. The votes will already be tallied. All that's left is for you to celebrate the best in Minnesota public relations and have a great time with your colleagues.

Minnesota PRSA Classics 2000  
Inaugurating a New Era in Public Relations  
Thursday, Jan. 25, 2001  
5:30 p.m. registration  
6 p.m. reception  
7:15 p.m. program  
Minnesota History Center, St. Paul



# PRSA today

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