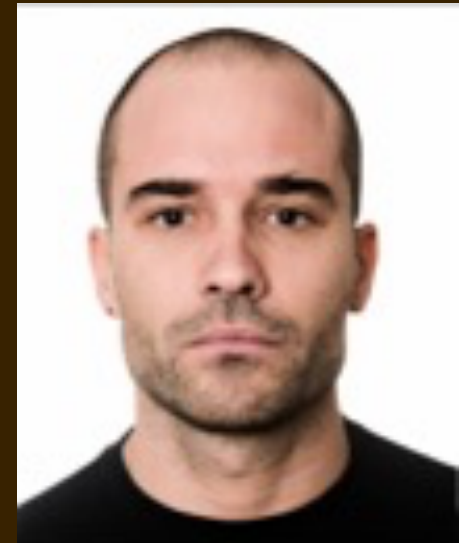


**SUCCEEDING IN PUBLIC
RELATIONS IS NO CAKE
WALK.**

**YOU HAVE TO BE
WILLING TO WORK HARD
AND TO DEAL WITH THE
PROFESSION'S
CHALLENGES**

The profession has weaknesses
that challenge the public's trust
in it and in its practitioners.



WEAKNESS #1 DEFINITION

There are more than 500 definitions of public relations. You can try to work with that or join others in finding a simpler, clearer definition, like PR is the practice of influencing behavior. Why not? Lawyers practice law. Accountants keep records. If you can't define what you do, you can't measure what you do. If you can't measure what you do, you can't evaluate what you do. If you can't evaluate what you do, no one will pay for what you do.



WEAKNESS #2 PROMISES

Too many people in the profession promise more than they can deliver. The practice is pervasive and could happen with your own staff. You can try to ignore this, but you would be ignoring what is causing an erosion of trust of the profession and its practitioners. Or you can work with other PR professionals to heighten the industry's resolve to promise only what it can deliver.

You cannot **promise** or **guarantee** results—publicity, turnout, share of market, a winning vote, etc. PR is not a science. Further, there are too many variables over which you have little, if any, control.

You can promise that a campaign will be designed to generate publicity, produce a turnout, affect market share or a vote. You can show how the profession draws on bodies of knowledge in the social sciences to create plans to influence behavior through strategic communication.

You can promise performance—that every activity in a public relations plan will be professionally executed, and in a timely manner.



WEAKNESS #3 BILLING

Clients of public relations, as well as law and other service firms are not all that happy with the practice of hourly billing. There clearly needs to be a better method of charging for services. You can work through the market resistance to billing by number of hours worked and the value of the person doing the work. Or you can work with others in the profession to explore alternative methods of billing. It's past time for hourly billing to be replaced by a method more acceptable to clients.

Consider, for example, the concept of "pay for performance," not to confuse this with pay for some level of results. Pay for performance can be putting the activities of a PR plan into the form of a critical path or PERT chart, calculating a cost for executing each activity and charging the client for performing all of the activities on the chart in a timely, effective manner. Results derived from a plan could be regarded as a bonus to clients for investing in a plan and the profession.

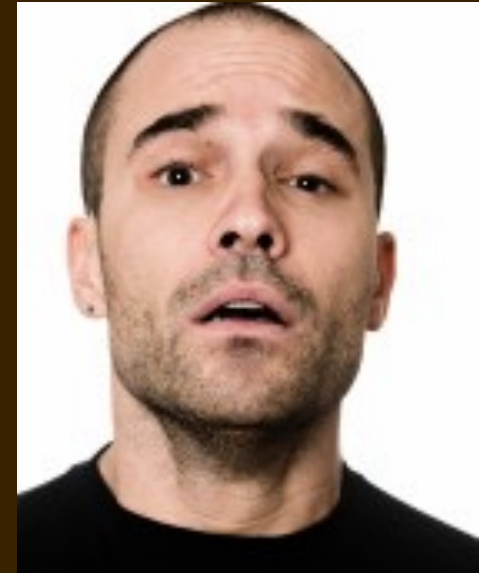


WEAKNESS #4 LICENSE

Anyone putting flyers under the wipers of cars in a shopping center parking lot can call themselves a PR person. You can brush this aside, but your credentials will wither along with the profession's. Or you can work with PR colleagues to raise the bar for getting into the public relations profession.

Professional status should include some combination of requirements, such as:

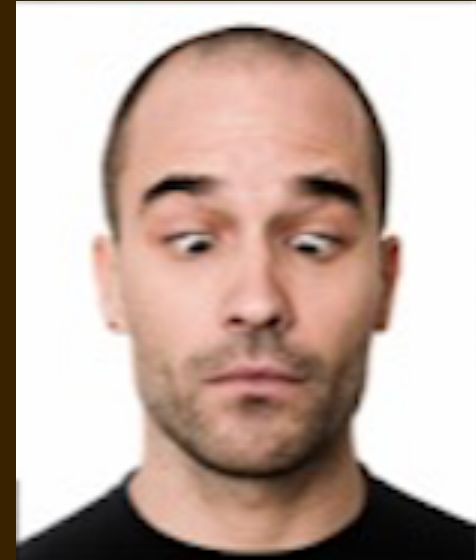
- a college degree;
- years and types of professional practice;
- accreditation in public relations (APR) by Public Relations Society of America;
- contributions to the profession as an educator.



WEAKNESS #5 TOOL BOX

You can work out of a toolbox, as too many PR practitioners do. For example, "We can solve your PR challenge with two brochure mailings, some social media, pocket point cards and one news release." Then they throw the tools, like darts to a board, and hope they hit a couple bullseyes to call results.

Or you can join other professionals in approaching public relations challenges in a comprehensive manner with credible research, depth of experience and strategic thinking.



WEAKNESS #6 SERVICE

Unfortunately, some public relations firms fall into a cost-driven position. Their overhead cost of operating—for office rent, auto leases, communication, and travel, etc.—puts a priority on paying bills over providing service. The condition for some can be so serious that these firms seek ways to get income by hook or by crook, for example, padding client invoices with excess hours, which is a felony as was showcased with a law firm in the movie, "The Firm."

Best to set your sights on service. Provide clients with outstanding service, a depth of expertise, high quality resources for graphic arts, photography, research, etc., assertive project management, attention to client direction, flexibility to serve as an extension of a client's staff when requested, and dedication to work until a client's expectations are met.



WEAKNESS #7 EDUCATION

The public relations industry is short of educators—teachers, instructors, professors. Students enter the profession giving little thought to teaching public relations for various reasons. That's OK, but it needs to be understood and remembered that to grow, the profession depends heavily on a dynamic foundation of education and training.

The challenge here is to keep in mind the possibility of teaching somewhere in your career future. If that's a possibility, collect case materials—photos, illustrations, memos, letters. Maybe keep a detailed journal of experiences to share some day with students. Take photos for later use in class presentations. Save comments from clients. You will be so glad that you took such initiatives in preparation for teaching.



**ARE YOU UP
TO THE
CHALLENGE?**

**IF SO,
WELCOME
TO THE
PROFESSION!**

