

**PRSA** Public Relations Society of America  
Charlotte Chapter

# COMMUNICATIONS SYMPOSIUM

## Register Today: 2026 PRSA Charlotte Communications Symposium

PRSA Charlotte's Communications Symposium returns this spring, bringing together communications professionals from across the region for a morning of insights, learning and networking. Attendees will hear from industry leaders, explore emerging trends and gain practical strategies they can apply in their organizations right away.

Our program includes workshops, panels and presentations including:

- **GoDaddy's Vice President of PR Greg Efthimiou, APR**, will present: "You Need to Fail More: How High-Volume Experimentation Can Make You a Better Communicator." In this session, Greg will showcase how the Go Daddy culture includes "experiments" to test ideas to determine whether they'll produce measurable outcomes and clear metrics, and how you can apply the test and learn approach that resonates with executives.
- Resilience expert and performance coach **Chris Vasami** will present "Fearless Edge." This inspiring and actionable session will help you unlock the next level of personal greatness and leadership through resilience, mindset and purpose-driven habits.

### Event Details

**Date:** April 29, 2026

**Time:** 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**Location:** Dubois Center at UNC Charlotte Center City  
320 E. 9th St., Charlotte, NC 28202

### Registration Rates

- PRSA Members: \$125
- Nonmembers: \$175
- PRSSA Student Members: \$115

Seats are limited and this event is expected to draw a strong crowd of communications professionals from across the region.

We look forward to seeing you for a morning of professional development, meaningful connections and conversations that will help shape the future of communications in Charlotte.

[REGISTER NOW](#)



Your crisis plan won't save you.



A PRSA Charlotte Interactive Simulation



Charlotte Chapter

# Crisis Doesn't Wait for Comfort: Inside the PPressure Chamber

In February, PRSA Charlotte did something most communication training avoids: we removed the safety net.

In The PPressure Chamber, communicators didn't sit in rows taking notes. They stepped into a live crisis scenario with incomplete information, competing priorities and a clock counting down. No prepared talking points. No safe answers. Just real decisions made in real time.

That's the work, isn't it?

## The Real Insight Wasn't the Scenario

Watching professionals debate strategy, challenge each other's assumptions and navigate ambiguity together revealed something powerful: crisis communication requires serious judgment. Not templates. Not perfect statements. Judgment under pressure, made by people who have to own the consequences.

Cheron Porter, PRSA Charlotte vice president and president-elect, created The PPressure Chamber because theory wasn't cutting it anymore. Here's what she observed:

"The PPressure Chamber was exactly what I hoped it would be: a room full of communicators thinking critically, challenging each other and making decisions in real time. Crisis communications is not theoretical work. It requires judgment under pressure, and this experience gave professionals a chance to practice that skill together."

The energy in the room proved one critical truth: **communicators want spaces where they can sharpen their instincts, not just listen to panels.**

## Crisis Communication Is About Leadership, Not Perfection

The best statement means nothing if it comes too late. The most carefully crafted message rings hollow if it misses what stakeholders actually need to hear in that moment.

This is why practice matters. You can't make better decisions under pressure if you've never made any under pressure.

## The PPressure Chamber Returns: April 8

If you were there in February, you felt the difference. If you missed it, this is your chance to step into the room and practice before you have to perform.

Because here's what we know: when crisis communications is about leadership under pressure, the best preparation isn't another article. It's practice.

The PPressure Chamber is just getting started.

**Date:** Wednesday, April 8, 2026

**Time:** noon - 1 p.m. ET

**Location:** Zoom, with limited spots to keep it interactive

If you are ready to practice before you have to perform, join us in The PPressure Chamber.

[REGISTER NOW](#)

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## Learn About the APR: Join PRSA Charlotte's APR 101 Virtual Lunch & Learn

Have you thought about earning your Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) but aren't sure where to begin? PRSA Charlotte is hosting a virtual APR 101: Lunch & Learn designed to introduce communications professionals to the accreditation process and the many benefits it can bring to your career.



This informative session will walk participants through what the APR credential represents, how the process works and the resources available locally to help candidates succeed. Whether you are just beginning to explore the credential or actively considering starting the process, this session will provide helpful guidance and answers to your questions.

### Event Details

**Date:** March 18, 2026

**Time:** Noon - 1 p.m.

**Location:** Virtual (Zoom)

Meeting link will be provided after registering.

### What You'll Learn

- What the APR credential represents and why it matters
- The step-by-step process includes application, Panel Presentation and exam
- Timeline expectations for candidates
- Mentorship and preparation resources available through PRSA Charlotte
- How APR can elevate your career and professional credibility

APR remains the profession's only post-graduate credential demonstrating strategic expertise, ethical practice and a strong commitment to the public relations profession. PRSA Charlotte is committed to supporting candidates with mentorship, preparation resources and guidance throughout the process.

Bring your lunch, your questions and your curiosity as we explore the path to accreditation together.

Registration closes on March 18.

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## Diverse Dialogues: She Built It

PRSA will host an engaging conversation highlighting women who have helped shape the public relations industry during **Diverse Dialogues: She Built It**.

This virtual panel will feature founders and CEOs of leading PR firms who built successful agencies and led impactful campaigns across sectors including health care, entertainment, public affairs and social change. The discussion will explore the decisions that shaped their careers, the barriers they faced and the leadership lessons they have learned along the way.

Moderated by a PRSA leader, the conversation will offer candid insights on leadership, resilience and entrepreneurship. It will also provide practical advice for communicators interested in leading teams or launching their own agencies.

### Event Details

**Date:** March 18, 2026

**Time:** 3 - 4 p.m.

**Location:** Virtual event

### Moderator

Natalie Ghidotti, APR, Fellow PRSA, CEO, Ghidotti

### Panelists

Priscilla Clarke, president and CEO, Clarke PR Global LLC

Grace T. Leong, APR, Fellow PRSA, CEO, HUNTER

Maria J. Rodriguez, president and CEO, Vanguard Communications

The session will highlight the experiences of women leaders who have built organizations, guided teams and helped redefine leadership in the communications profession. Attendees will gain insight into the realities of building and leading an agency as well as lessons that can help guide the next generation of communications professionals.

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## Member Spotlight



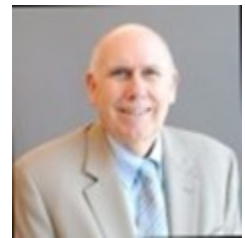
PRSA Charlotte recognizes **Samantha Knight, vice president with Cardea Group**, for her outstanding volunteer leadership and commitment to the chapter. For the past 2 years, she has served as membership chair, bringing a strategic mindset and an unwavering willingness to do whatever it takes to support the board and strengthen the organization. Samantha approaches every responsibility with energy, enthusiasm and professionalism, helping ensure the chapter continues to grow and thrive. In addition to leading membership efforts, she is often the first to raise her hand to secure speakers, pursue sponsorships or step in wherever support is needed.

A public relations professional with experience across communications, marketing, research and strategic planning, Samantha is known for navigating the ever-changing digital communications environment and leading impactful initiatives for her organization and its clients. Her work spans communications strategy, branding, employee and customer relations and corporate citizenship. Her professional achievements have also been recognized across the Charlotte community, including PRSA Charlotte's New Pro of the Year award and Charlotte's 10 Under 10 honor.

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## Ray's Corner

*Ray Jones retired as director of executive communications for Atrium Health and is a former board member of PRSA Charlotte. He now operates a freelance writing agency called "Media Ink Communications." You can reach him at [raycharlesjones@yahoo.com](mailto:raycharlesjones@yahoo.com).*



### Media relations folks used to be 'first among equals'

By Ray Jones

When I first got into public relations, the "fair-haired boys" (and women) were those who were really good at media relations.

Success was almost guaranteed for those who did their homework and knew which reporters were most likely to be interested in a given story. Success also came more easily to those who earned the trust of the media by delivering worthwhile story ideas not junk.

Not surprisingly, many PR folks were former reporters. They knew how news organizations functioned. They understood deadlines. They knew how reporters and editors made news judgments. Perhaps most importantly, they understood the importance of not trying to mislead or manipulate the media.

**The good old days are pretty much gone**

As I look back now, knowing how radically the practice of media relations has changed, I realize how fortunate I was to do this work during "the good old days."

One of our chapter members, Philip Tate, APR, Fellow PRSA, has practiced public relations with extraordinary success for decades. I asked him to share a few thoughts about how and why the practice of media relations has undergone such a dramatic transformation.

He still believes the most important skill is the ability to build mutually beneficial relationships with media professionals. However, because the industry is now so volatile, with far more turnover, that has become increasingly difficult.

Another challenge, he says, is that the definition of success has changed substantially.

### **Front-page stories used to be gold**

Success once meant achieving a prominent placement in a publication or broadcast segment reaching a broad audience. When The Charlotte Observer was in its heyday, for example, a front-page story with a positive slant was almost worth gold. You knew that key business leaders, government officials and opinion leaders throughout the Charlotte region would see it.

But where, Philip asks, would you place something today to guarantee that type of reach?

The media world is now so fragmented, and so niche-oriented, that achieving true "mass exposure" is increasingly difficult. As Philip puts it, "Even when you successfully pitch a story, the bigger question today is: Who actually ends up seeing it?"

The old game of media pitching, he says, has evolved into a more complex challenge that some communicators now call "visibility engineering."

### **Visibility Engineering**

The phrase "[visibility engineering](#)," which has been popularized by communications strategist Gini Dietrich through her [Spin Sucks](#) platform, captures the reality of how the profession has evolved.

Instead of relying primarily on pitching stories to traditional media outlets, communications professionals now have to think more broadly about how ideas and expertise become visible across a wide range of channels. That may include traditional news coverage, but also industry websites, newsletters, podcasts, social media platforms and even trusted voices who have built their own audiences.

In other words, success today is less about landing a single prominent placement and more about intentionally building a system that helps important ideas surface wherever people are paying attention.

### **Contact lists aren't what they used to be**

Putting together a media list, for example, used to be relatively straightforward. Today, it almost requires the skills of a magician or a mind reader. Even then, that list might have to be re-invented every time you use it, depending on topic.

It's not enough, therefore, to simply know who's who in the traditional media. It may involve identifying the right blogger, the right website, the right newsletter or even the right influencers. Who are these people? How do you reach them? And how do you keep track of their constant comings and goings?

Still, Philip emphasizes that there's one essential skill that never changes: the ability to build relationships with the people who gather and circulate "news," whatever their definition of news might be. "The tools and channels may keep changing," he says, "but the ability to build trust with the people who shape and share the news will always remain at the heart of our profession."

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## Job Bank

PRSA Charlotte's Job Bank provides our members with a comprehensive list of recently posted public relations (and other affiliated) jobs in the Charlotte region. We are also now including internship opportunities for our young professionals.

National Gypsum	Integrated Marketing Manager	<a href="#">More Info</a>
Ronald McDonald House Charities of Greater Charlotte	Associate Director of Marketing & Events	<a href="#">More Info</a>
ATI Inc.	Communications Manager	<a href="#">More Info</a>
Ascent Strategic Communications	Account Director	<a href="#">More Info</a>

To check out the latest job and internship postings, please visit our website: <https://www.prsacharlotte.org/job-bank/job-listings/>

### PRSA Charlotte

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