



**Public Relations Society of America
Arkansas Chapter
Strategic Plan 2014 - 2016
December 2, 2013**

Background

Located in Little Rock, Ark., the Arkansas Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is dedicated to developing and enriching the professional lives of public relations practitioners. The chapter seeks to build an understanding and support for public relations throughout the business community and within the academic community for future practitioners. From monthly meetings and professional development seminars to awards competitions and promotion of the profession, the chapter provides a number of opportunities to enhance professional growth and network throughout the year.

As of November 2013, the Arkansas Chapter of PRSA comprised of:

- 92 Active Members
- Ages: 22 - 74 years old
- Females: 70; Males: 22
- Membership
 - Active Member for 20+ Years: 16
 - Active Member for 10-19 Years: 12
 - Active Member for 5-9 Years: 20
 - Active Member for 5 Years or Less: 44
- Industry
 - Agency: 24
 - Corporate: 8
 - Education: 7
 - Government: 11
 - Healthcare: 8
 - Independent Practitioner: 9
 - Nonprofit: 25
- Accredited in Public Relations (APR Credential): 24

Attrition and Growth Rates

	2010	2011	2012
Attrition	28.3%	23.7%	22.2%
Growth (includes new and reinstated members)	26.7%	25.3%	27.7%

Budget

Over the past three years, the board of directors has made significant strides in improving the chapter's financial situation. The treasury has nearly doubled in size due to several factors including hiring an outside bookkeeper to maintain the chapter's account, offering members four different ways to pay both their national and local dues and updating the bylaws to address delinquent or past due invoices by members. All of these factors have resulted in better fiscal responsibility by the board of directors on behalf of membership.

Public Relations Industry

The public relations industry in Arkansas continues to progress positively due to several factors. The most important is the upswing of the economy since the Great Recession of 2009. This has led to more communications positions becoming available, particularly entry-level positions, due to an overall increase in public relations and communications budgets in all sectors.

A second reason for progress is that social media platforms are creating new opportunities for public relations professionals including increasing engagement among organization's stakeholders and solid measurement capabilities.

Last, but not least, significant strides have been made by chapter leadership to help members prepare and pass the Examination for Accredited in Public Relations (APR). By adding more APRs to the profession, our chapter has the opportunity to provide a greater understanding of public relations as a vital management function.

Despite the increase in entry-level positions in the marketplace, there are still only a small number of mid-level and director/executive communications and public relations positions. Often times, these are highly competitive positions with many of our members vying for the same job.

Chapter Offerings

The chapter offers a variety of professional development and networking opportunities to our members including monthly meetings, Prism Awards program, professional development seminars and Accredited in Public Relations "Ready to Roll" educational program. Research indicates that membership would like to see more "after-hours" events to further engage members outside the monthly chapter meetings.

The chapter currently offers the following committees for members to volunteer their time and participate in beyond the monthly meetings:

- Accreditation
- Communications/Hospitality
- Compass Award
- Diamond/Crystal Award
- Membership
- Past Presidents' Council
- Prism Awards
- Programs
- PRSSA

Bylaws and Governance

In July 2011, the bylaws for the Arkansas chapter were revised and are reviewed by the incoming board of directors each year. The governing body of this chapter is the Board of Directors, which consists of the President, the President-Elect, the Vice President, the Secretary, the Treasurer, the Assembly Delegate, the Immediate Past President and three Directors-at-Large.

Research Findings

In 2012, the board of directors engaged Emily Reeves, director of digital innovation and insight planning at Stone Ward, to conduct research among the Arkansas Chapter of PRSA members and develop a three-year strategic plan.

Methodology

Past Presidents and Board Member Focus Groups

- 4 groups held, Feb 27 - March 6, 2013
- 14 participants

Member Focus Groups

- 2 groups held, April 10 and April 11, 2013
- 7 non-active member participants
- 4 active member participants

Online All-Member Survey

- Comments option on every question
- 13 questions taking less than 10 minutes to complete
- Distributed to the entire PRSA membership via email
- Fielded July 8 - 15, 2013
- 46 respondents

Key Findings

- Through PRSA, members are seeking a sense of community.
- Availability and workload are the key factors keeping members from attending events more frequently.
- The majority of members have their dues paid by their employer.
- The greatest values of PRSA membership are: networking, professional development, and education.
- Respondents are split on the desire for after-hours events.
- Members recognize they only get out of PRSA what they put into it.
- The perception is that if you are going to be in the PR business, you need to be a part of this organization.

Requests for the Future of the Organization

- Meeting venue options
- After-hours events/social opportunities
- Affinity/niche groups for networking and sharing
- Programs about digital and technology
- Organized mentorship

Mission

As the preeminent association for public relations and communications professionals, PRSA empowers a diverse community of members at every stage of their career with the knowledge and resources to advocate for the profession, achieve ethical and professional excellence, and drive the strategic outcomes of their organizations.

Vision

Public Relations is a lead discipline in driving strategic goals and achieving excellence in every organization.

Strategic Pillars

- Community
- Professional Development
- Communication
- Growth
- Stability

Overall Goals

- Maintain attrition rate of no more than 20%. (Date: 2016)
- Increase annual growth rate of membership to 30%. (Date: 2016)
- Increase number of chapter members with the APR credential to 35%. (Date: 2016)

Strategic Pillar:
Community Development

Goal

Create a sense of community among PRSA members that encourages conversation, engagement and participation, as well as a general feeling of being a part of something bigger than the members individually.

Strategies

- Use more specialized committees to encourage group collaboration. For example, a digital content committee: social media, newsletter, Facebook group, etc.
- Establish opportunities and events for socialization outside the official monthly meeting.
- “Own” a community outreach project that members can choose to participate in and be proud of PRSA for the work that it does.
- Create a public-facing communications platform for PRSA members to contribute thought-leadership articles.
- Utilize award events for building a community feel.

Strategic Pillar:
Opportunity for Education

Goal

Position PRSA as an organization that fosters constant education about the communications industry in general.

Strategies

- Offer program educational opportunities through the regularly scheduled monthly meetings.
- Provide strong programming in public relations specializations (e.g., crisis communications, public affairs, internal communications, reputation management) and industry-specific public relations (e.g., healthcare, travel and tourism, sports).
- Seek, guide and publish thought leadership concerning public relations that extends beyond the profession.
- Become a bank of resources for education opportunities through and outside PRSA with information about the opportunities and reviews from those that have utilized them.
- Establish a scholarship or grant program that members can apply to receive for ongoing education opportunities.

**Strategic Pillar:
Professional Development**

Goal

Structure the organization in such a way that allows members to feel like they are actively gaining knowledge and experience related to the practice of public relations, with a focus on the APR.

Strategies

- Establish a structured mentorship program that pairs new members with established members throughout their entire membership duration.
- Develop, support and champion programs that allow professionals to have their knowledge recognized, such as certification programs, the Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) program, and extensions of the APR program.
- Create milestones that can be acknowledged each month in the official meetings for those that are working towards an accreditation program to help encourage them through to the end.
- Incorporate game theory elements and a sense of competition into the APR education program throughout the year to push more participation and quicker acceleration to completion.

**Strategic Pillar:
Organization Communication**

Goal

Build channels of two-way communications among the organization members to keep them connected to each other and to the organization.

Strategies

- Utilize the availability of mobile technology to send reminders and important messages to members monthly (i.e., text night before meeting to remind people not to wear jeans, etc.).
- Share research and board notes with members to provide a sense of transparency and proof of progress (i.e., show the board has done due diligence on other meeting locations, etc.).
- Provide members with a sense of pride in their longevity of membership (and to establish a trigger for renewal) by acknowledging member anniversaries in a public and special way.
- Learn more about the PRSA membership to better target communications and address specific needs (gender, age, industry, hobbies, etc.). This may be done by pulling database information from the national organization or ongoing surveys to build onto the existing membership database.

**Strategic Pillar:
Organization Growth**

Goal

Increase membership of the organization.

Strategies

- Establish a dedicated committee for membership growth with specific goals and actions to report back on regularly. These might include personally asking people to participate, selling membership as a benefit to your personal job growth, etc.
- Work as a board to establish the target audiences for membership recruitment that includes job titles, industries and specific companies.
- Create a scholarship program for PRSA students to continue their membership after graduation though they salaries may not be able to support it.
- Create a scholarship program for those that can no longer pay dues if their job changes or for other personal reason. Consider including a commitment to serve on a committee in return for the scholarship.

**Strategic Pillar:
Organization Stability**

Goal

Build structure into the organization that allows institutional knowledge to be shared and provides members with the opportunity to leverage their strengths to the betterment of the organization.

Strategies

- Hire third party organizations to assist in administering some aspects of the organization structure.
- Develop an organizational guide that can be distributed to each new member and housed in an online format for easy access.
- Create a guide for board members that require a certain level of participation that allows member leadership to set the example for expected participation and information sharing.
- Establish a formal board succession plan.
- Develop a set of committee requirements for participation as formal documents that can be distributed to committee members, allowing them to understand what is being asked of their time and outlines what they should accomplish and report back on monthly.