

Sunday Keynote Address

Written by: Dr. FitzGerald

December 2024

Special Edition 1

Several members of the College of Fellows addressed PRSSA students at ICON in Anaheim, California at its initial meeting. The Fellows addressed the topics of leadership and mentorship. They discussed the idea of buoyant leadership which includes: sweat for your mind, trust in yourself, and secure your relationships.

Starting each day with some type of exercise helps not only your body, but your mind. In just 20 minutes, sweat for your mind helps your memory, sleep and mental health.

Trusting yourself—having confidence in your training and your abilities is essential. You have 275,000 PR professional colleagues in the country. Although critics suggest it's PR, not ER, the speakers suggested that it can be lifesaving. PR folks are often the ones sending safety messages out to all audiences in crises, in difficult circumstances and in chaos.

Lastly, securing your relationships is critical to success in this industry—with peers, colleagues, supervisors, the media and even your friends.



Sunday Keynote Speakers Jane Dvorak and Colin Wylie.

According to research, 75 percent of American CEOs suffer from imposter syndrome, not believing in themselves. So, securing and maintaining relationships with management and others will boost your buoyant leadership.



Here are some bullet point suggestions:

- ♦ Find a mentor,
- ♦ Self reflect,
- ♦ Determine an end objective,
- ♦ Pivot—be flexible,
- ♦ Be authentic,
- ♦ Build a reputation of integrity,
- ♦ Laugh often,
- ♦ Be a lifelong learner, and
- ♦ Create an ethical online brand.

Navigating Fashion PR

Written by: Brenna Lamon

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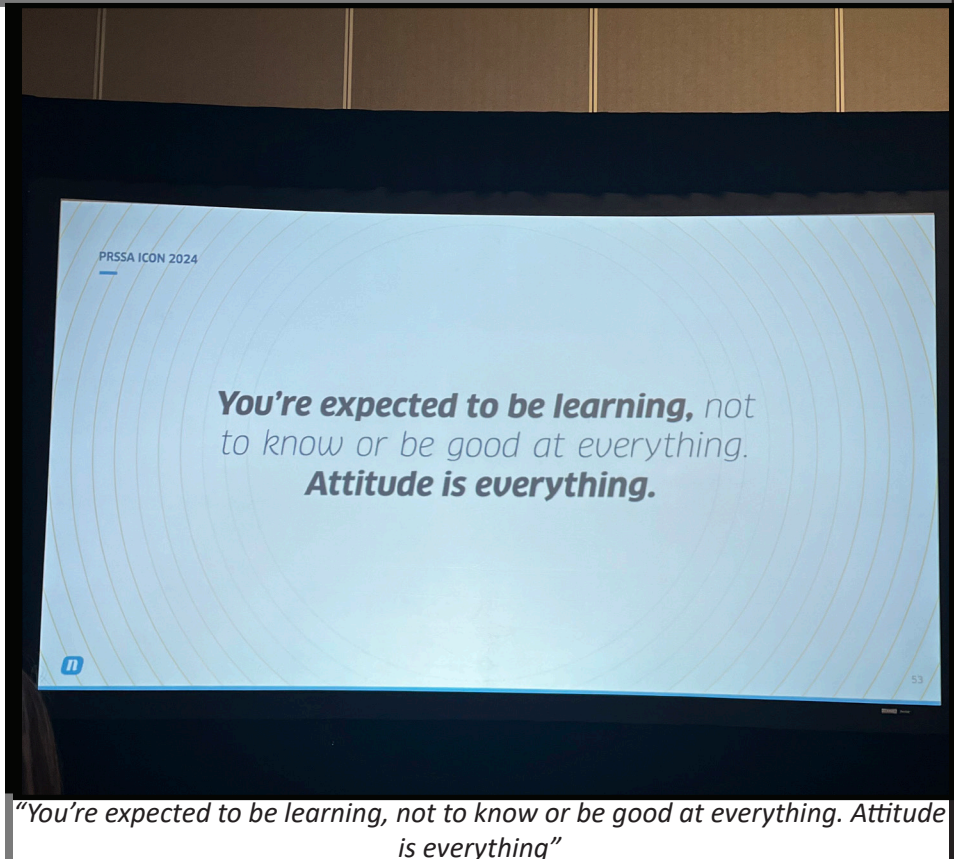
Special Edition 1

I had the pleasure of attending a session titled “Stepping into Style: Fashion PR as a Beginner” with speaker Diane Vara, the Director of PR & Marketing at Runway 7 Fashion in New York City, NY, at PRSSA’s annual ICON conference in Anaheim, California this past October.

Vara began her presentation with a little background into her life and career. A single mom, entrepreneur, Latina, realtor, creative director — the list goes on — Vara wears many hats. With an extensive background in marketing and PR, especially in the fashion industry, Vara provided us with her best tips and advice for young professionals in today’s job market.

For starters, Vara emphasized the importance of gaining experience. She noted how experience offers new opportunities, and how asking our current managers for new jobs/more responsibilities could get us to where she is today. In addition, attending workshops and industry events was a key part of her opening remarks.

As the session progressed,



“You’re expected to be learning, not to know or be good at everything. Attitude is everything”

Vara leaned into the idea of “building your personal brand.” She listed seven core concepts to build one’s brand, including Purpose, Values, Clarity (set goals), Strengths, Energy, Legacy and Ownership.

Throughout the entirety of the session, I’d say this is the part I enjoyed most. Hearing about Vara’s experiences in her career journey and her life, too, opened my eyes to the possibilities that await me. After that, Vara dived into how we all must master crisis

management, for bad publicity can ruin one’s image or brand. Although it requires some media training, Vara highlighted how issuing a carefully crafted message or statement can save a brand’s image from destruction. And before we knew it, Vara wrapped up her presentation and opened the floor for a Q&A session with the remaining time.

Overcoming Blind Spots

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During the first set of major sessions, Jarno Oostingh presented “Conquering your fears: Overcoming Blind Spots as Emerging PR Professionals.”

Oostingh, originally from the Netherlands, is the Senior Director of Social and PR at Nebo, a human centered agency. Agencies work with several different brands at once while being the point of contact for them. Brand PR works only for one brand, but gets access to brand items such as copywriting. Oostingh later went on to say that no matter whether you work for an agency or a brand, PR is a constantly changing field and requires new knowledge and skills gained at all times.

The key parts of this presentation are the importance of learning and knowing hard and soft skills. Hard skills are skills that can be job-specific, while soft skills are how you manage your interactions with other people. The hard skills Oostingh mentioned were writing skills, understanding of spreadsheets, and understanding of social media. The soft skills mentioned were



Conquering Your Fears Title Slide.

organizational skills and understanding if you drive or crash under pressure.

Oostingh heavily emphasized how important it is to continue your learning by asking questions, learning how to effectively conduct watercooler talk, and how important networking is to making connections and exploring the industry. As explained to the audience, trauma bonding is very real at work, and it helps create experiences that allow for

more networking opportunities.

To wrap the presentation up, Oostingh expressed how forgiving people in the industry can be and to not let your anxiety prevent you from meeting new people or taking new risks. In the ever-evolving world of technology, this field is constantly changing, and letting your anxiety get in the way will only make it harder to progress in the field.

Influencer Alchemy

Written by: Mairead Markel

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At PRSSA ICON, I attended a special session called “Influencer Alchemy: Turning Relationships into PR Gold” hosted by Nicole Dye-Anderson, Head of Media Relations and Influencer Strategy at Wells Fargo, and Trell Thomas, Founder and CEO of The Black Excellence Brunch. This session was all about building and maintaining relationships in PR, specifically with influencers, and how to use those relationships to your advantage. The speakers put a strong emphasis on being your authentic true self, stating that that’s the true key to success in your career. They discussed how the industry is forever changing and ways to keep up with evolving trends. They also made sure to highlight the need to stand out among others in not only your professional career but your personal life too. Nicole Dye-Anderson ended the session with a quote that really stuck out to me; “you feel like you don’t fit in because you are called to stand out.”



Award given to Rowan University.

“Publicity is absolutely critical. A good PR story is infinitely more effective than a front-page ad.”
-Richard Branson

“If I was down to my last dollar, I would spend it on public relations.”
-Bill Gates

Game Plan

Written by: Camille Wells

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During “Game Plan: Strategizing Major Team News Releases in Sports PR,” PRSSA members heard from three public relations professionals in the sports industry. Seth Burton, Sr. Vice President of Communications & Content for LAFC, Adam Chodzko, Senior Director of Communications LA Angels, and Steve Brown, Media and Communications Manager for the Anaheim Ducks, these professionals provided members with tips, direction, and ideas surrounding sports public relations. All three panelists emphasized community-minded storytelling.

Community-minded storytelling means relating players and the organization to the community they are a part of.

This type of storytelling connects the organization and the community it serves and benefits the organization and the community. Another tip was to know the players you are working with. By knowing players and their passions, you can generate content that players wish to participate in. Asking players how they



Camille Wells Presenting an NODAC Award at the Induction Brunch.

would like to do something and what they want to talk about makes it easier to get them to come to you. When you cultivate these player relationships, public relations efforts become easier as you get people who want to be highlighted.

But, something that may be difficult is to highlight unpopular players in traditional media. For example, Adam Chodzko Spoke about how the media wanted to highlight Shohei Ohtani when

he was with the Angels, and the media did not care for other players. If an organization wants to get as many eyes as possible on a story, it may want to turn to social media. Social media and influencer marketing have become more popular over the past couple of years, and utilizing these now can only benefit your organization.

Keynote Speaker Gio Benitez

Written by: Alaina Meier

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ABC News reporter Gio Benitez brought excitement and insight to this year's PRSSA ICON conference. Gio Benitez is the recipient of three national Emmy Awards and two regional Emmy Awards. Benitez is also the transportation correspondent for ABC News based in New York. He covers aviation, space, railroads and the auto industry across all ABC News programs and platforms, including "20/20," "Good Morning America," "Nightline," "World News Tonight with David Muir," ABC News Live and ABC News Radio. Known for his work on ABC, Benitez shared his experiences with PR professionals and students from across the country.

In his speech, Benitez discussed the big changes in news and social media, highlighting how quickly information spreads today. He emphasized the importance of truth and transparency in both journalism and public relations, stressing that building trust with the public is essential.

Benitez also spoke about the power of social media, explaining how it allows people to connect instantly but



Gio Benitez on stage on a projector screen.

"Next to doing the right thing, the most important thing is to let people know you are doing the right thing."

-John D. Rockefeller

also requires responsibility. He encouraged PR professionals to stay true to their values and focus on sharing honest stories, even as they adapt to new media trends.

Many who attended the conference said Benitez's talk was inspiring and a reminder of how PR can positively impact the world. His message encouraged everyone to keep learning, stay ethical, and work towards building a trustworthy media environment.

Consulting to Corporate

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“PR isn’t a topic, it’s a skillset.” PR Pros in Action: From Consulting to Corporate and Beyond featured three speakers with Carolyn Bartoo, Jennifer Heinly and Tara Smith showcased these fascinating individuals and their journey on how they got where they are today. A majority of this session revolved around how these speakers got to where they are today; lots of internships, hard work, and connections.

Internships are experience, as explained by Smith. Internships help build more connections, whether your internship is for a non-profit organization or a for-profit organization. Heinly suggested to the audience to consider calling a local non-profit in your college town to gain an understanding of the field from the organization’s perspective. Make sure to do proper research on marketing internships and jobs, as the three stated some jobs can be scams. Use PRSSA’s website to help find jobs and internships that can be remote or in person near you. Lastly, Smith explained the importance of building connections



Members of PRSSA standing for a photo shoot.

in all companies, those people may move to another company and refer you to the hiring managers. This is why it is crucial to not burn bridges in this field.

While internships took a higher priority in this session, Bartoo led the discussion about how to position yourself to hiring brands and companies. Promoting yourself is the number one skill any PR professional should have. As Bartoo remarked, if you can’t promote yourself, you can’t

promote a brand. Keep up with the work, no matter how hard. Hustle, hustle, hustle! While it’s important to work hard and do your best at any job, if you feel uncomfortable or not safe in your position, leave that job. There is always work to be found.

Competitive Entertainment

Written by: Emma Engle

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This year I had the privilege of attending PRSSA's annual ICON conference in Anaheim, California. During the conference, I had the amazing opportunity to attend the session titled "Strategic Creativity in the Competitive Entertainment Industry" with speakers Mercy Castro, Tim O'Day, and Gary Mioreanu. Mercy Castro is Manager of Partner Marketing at NBCUniversal and offered insights into the public relations and marketing field. Tim O'Day is the Principal of TO'DAY Group PR and provided his expertise in communications strategy and innovative multi-platform tactics. Gary Mioreanu is the President of GT Marmots/PR, Inc., with a significant background in animation realms for film and television products and sports promotions and events. The conversation provided by all three panelists touched on cultivating strategic creativity amidst fierce competition in their entertainment industry.

Professionals touched on the importance of persistence when applying for a job and embracing trial and error throughout work. Additionally, the panelists discussed the challenges of the entertainment industry, including fluctuations in budget, learning curves, and a consistent need for creativity and new content in an

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industry that is defined by saturated media, rapid diversity, and constant change. Throughout the session, the most insightful and valuable advice provided happened at the end when the panel opened for a question and answer portion. It was here that each panelist offered their recommendations for students looking to diversify themselves among their peers when applying for jobs. These recommendations included playing to your strengths, acquiring a mentor or apprenticeship to learn from, and

consistently looking to gain new skills in all aspects of the industry in order to appear more adaptable to future employers. Overall, the session was extremely informative and impactful. Each and every panelist provided significant insight into the industry and offered amazing advice on how to prepare for entering not only the entertainment industry, but the work force as a whole.

Upcoming Events

December 2024

Special Edition 1

***First ProfAgency Meeting of 2025:
1/29, 5PM***

Located at Victoria Room 200

***First PRSSA Meeting of 2025:
2/5, 5PM***

Located at Victoria Room 200

Speed Networking: 3/5, 5PM-6:30PM

Organ Donor Day: 4/8

Spring Gala: 4/26