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Rowan College of New Jersey

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A STUDY TO RESEARCH THE FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING
A SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY CHAPTER OF THE
PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF AMERICA

by
Joanna F. Bruschi

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division
of Rowan College
December 18, 1996

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved Dec 18, 1996

ABSTRACT

Bruschi, Joanna F.

A Study to Research the Feasibility of Establishing
a Southern New Jersey Chapter of The Public
Relations Society of America
1996
Thesis Advisor: Dr. Don Bagin, Public Relations

The purpose of this study was to research the feasibility of establishing a southern New Jersey chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

Some major findings included: (a) more than fifteen southern New Jersey members of PRSA are interested in joining a southern New Jersey chapter; (b) more than thirty public relations practitioners, not holding membership in PRSA, are interested in joining a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

The findings of the author's survey concluded that establishing a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA is feasible.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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The author wishes to thank her adviser, Dr. Don Bagin, for his patience, inspiration and guidance. Also, to professors, Dr. Steven Shapiro and Anthony J. Fulginiti, Jr., for their lessons in: writing, speaking and thinking, but most of all for their inspiration to have courage. Also, for their patience. A most precious gift.

Thanks also goes to a dear friend, and fellow practitioner, Frank X. Long.

Thanks also goes to my husband Eugene and beautiful daughters Ashley and Heather; sister and mentor Anna Maria; and parents John and Josephine, who encouraged me to learn....always to learn.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A front-page story in the Sunday edition of *The New York Times* blares the headline *On the Battlefields of Business, Millions of Casualties: The "rightsizing, downsizing, restructuring..." of corporate America.* Corporations named: Delta, Sears, IBM, Boeing, Lockheed Martin. They, among others, lay off tens of thousands of workers to streamline operations and increase profits. The corporate cost-cutting leaves a most intensive sting among middle management and senior executives.

A rising mid-level public relations executive is excused from a management meeting by the CEO after reporting an increasing trend that customers are dissatisfied with the way their financing is handled by the company's business manager. Although the information is extrapolated from more than 400 customer interviews, the executive is treated as though the report is "insignificant." The CEO and management team discount the report as insignificant to the corporation's overall sales performance. The management team view the on-going dialogue between customers and the corporation as a necessary evil and minimize customer feedback.

In the following weeks, the public relations position appears as though looked at by the CEO as "non-essential" and "unimportant." "We need to look at profit sheets only!" says the CEO to the practitioner. Sales and marketing plans are reviewed without the benefit of public

relations counsel. Dismayed and disappointed, the practitioner forges on...only to be restructured out of the corporation during the next downsizing wave.

For the CEO, eliminating the position temporarily raises the balance sheet. For the remaining employees, a sense of fear paralyzes their normal routine. Production slows to a crawl as the workers grapple with the question "Who will be next?".

With temporary employment figures soaring to record figures and an abundance of low-skill level employment opportunities, the southern New Jersey job outlook for highly skilled public relations practitioners remains fiercely competitive. Few corporate opportunities exist in this region. Recruitment firms report hundreds of applications for each available position. Yet, new career opportunities emerge in virtually every business sector. Competitive intelligence positions become a profitable career alternative for many and others look at sales or marketing careers.

Competing in the foray to locate employment, public relations practitioners many times join professional associations to network with fellow practitioners and enhance career objectives. For practitioners seeking employment, continuing education or professional support — affiliation to a professional association provides an essential piece of framework for a successful career.

For new graduates association affiliation offers opportunities to volunteer for committee work and to learn from possible mentors. Volunteer work empowers the developing professional with another avenue to enhance skills and experience. The work provides the opportunity to practice new skills under the watchful direction of

a dynamic and established public relations leader.

For others -- caught in a downsizing spiral, with massive budget cuts personnel restructuring, associations provide a network of professional relationships. These precious relationships serve as a "life-line" connection to the outside world.....particularly when the gales of a corporate storm begin to gust in the wrong direction. Contacts, developed through association networking, instinctively comprehend and share information with fellow practitioners. Association-developed contacts assist their fellow practitioners when searching for new jobs, new ideas, or simply to lend a sympathetic ear to a newly "right-sized-out-of-a-job" comrade.

Southern New Jersey practitioners have several choices of professional communications associations that they may join. Among them: Public Relations Professionals of Southern New Jersey (PRP).....a group that recently changed its name to the Professional Communicators of South Jersey to expand membership to include marketing, advertising, promotion, direct marketing and graphics disciplines.....Women in Communications, (WICI), the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), a Philadelphia or Trenton Chapter of PRSA, Women in Communications, (WICI), the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), a Philadelphia or Trenton Chapter of PRSA,

One association -- the largest national group of practitioners -- is the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Though PRSA grants charters to chapters on local and state levels, Southern New Jersey practitioners are limited to either a Philadelphia chapter or the Trenton chapter of PRSA.

As the number of public relations practitioners working and residing

in southern New Jersey increases, the question of establishing a local chapter arises. Is there a need? Will practitioners support a southern New Jersey chapter? Judging by demographic studies, the population is continuing its growth trend. More New Yorkers and Northern Jersey natives continue to migrate to southern New Jersey to relieve economic strains associated with living in and around Manhattan.

Rowan College of New Jersey continues, under the leadership of its strong public relations faculty, to educate many award-winning public relations practitioners. Many practitioners look for opportunities to join a professional association. During the normal course of balancing work and study routines, the opportunity to affiliate with standing public relations associations may not prove feasible.

Though many practitioners have a strong desire to join a public relations association for professional development local opportunities remain limited. Local PRSA chapters provide opportunities for customized programs that specifically appeal to members.

When a chapter holds memberships over a large geographic area, it can not customize programs to meet the local needs of its members. The larger, more global, issues are covered, but the small local nuances are lost. The dialects and mannerisms of the local communities are lost during larger, more structured business meetings.

Public relations practitioners function best when they're armed with information that addresses the needs of the communities that they live and work in. Professional development seminars and workshops ensure continuing education and career growth.

Professional development seminars and workshops serve

practitioners best when scheduled at the right time, place and location. A seminar that is difficult to attend attracts few and leaves members unsatisfied with their level of membership service. Opportunities for networking, learning and sharing are lost. Conversely, when meetings are scheduled at convenient locations during optimum times, practitioners can quickly get to the meeting and return to work. This opportunity for professional growth and quality service reinforces the value of joining the professional group.

A local affiliation to a national group, like PRSA, assists public relations professionals in gaining credibility and respect for their profession. As the corporate world continues to "restructure" itself, practitioners must establish their positions as viable communication links with direct bottom-line impact.

In southern New Jersey, the need for a local chapter grows with the increasing need for practitioners to gain recognition for the public relations profession. As new companies emerge and the population expands, a local chapter of PRSA will support the efforts of practitioners who live and work in southern New Jersey. A local chapter will help practitioners to continue their professional development in a way that will: maintain minimal competency and high standards of expertise in the field (particularly as technology continues to rapidly change communication vehicles); assist them to strive toward accreditation; define their roles in local businesses; assist them to network and share information with other professionals. Most of all a chapter will assist professionals to promote the practice of highly-skilled public relations counsel in southern New Jersey.

For practitioners working and residing in southern New Jersey,

associations provide networking opportunities to evaluate local trends and "feel the pulse" of one's own community. The purpose of this study is to determine the potential for establishing a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Never before has the need to address changing trends in professional associations proved so vital to survival. Associations face technological changes, population increases, downsizing, out-sourcing, diversity issues and fierce competition in today's work environment. To stay competitive, associations must routinely survey members so they can provide optimum service to meet the needs of a rapidly changing workforce. Many of these initiatives will dictate the way a practitioner contributes to his or her professional association.

Practitioners seek opportunities to join associations to develop professionally and to increase their own visibility. For many, associations provide an opportunity to develop public speaking or special event skills when serving on a particular committee.

Don Bagin writes:

Join the right associations and organizations. When others see you do a good job making a presentation or serving on a key committee, they'll look your way the next time they have an opening in their organization.¹

¹ Dr. Donald Bagin, "Here Are Practical Ways To Help You Get Ahead," communication briefings, June 1988, Vol 7, Number 8, 8a.

Associations offer opportunities to network. In the recently released *The Wit and Wisdom of PR Success*, a compendium of advice for public relations practitioners, Pam Bailey states:

You'll never walk alone if you make networking a PRiority.²

According to National School Public Relations Association advisory board member Peg Lawlor, "Public relations counselors benefit by attending association meetings. Because of downsizing, many are responsible for wearing two and three hats. You can become isolated from the field pretty quickly. Meetings provide an opportunity to network and see what's actually going on in the trenches."³

"Though the Philadelphia chapter provides outstanding opportunities for professional development, it doesn't address local needs. The local element is missing. You lose touch with other local professionals and don't get the chance to see what's going on with them."⁴

For many Southern New Jersey professionals the question of whether or not to attend a meeting is evaluated based on how many hours they'll spend away from their desk. Excessive travel time to and from the meeting generally means the practitioner will "for go" this month for "well maybe I'll make the next meeting". Practitioners look at today's deadlines. They continually evaluate the benefit of attending the meeting in relation to the deadlines on their calendars.

²*The Wit and Wisdom of PR Success*, 1995 National School Public Relations Association, Rich Bagin ASPR, APR, NSPRA Executive Director, (Arlington, VA, 1995), 145.

³Peg Lawlor, NSPRA Advisory Board, telephone interview, February 5, 1996.

⁴Theresa Gill, APR, telephone interview, December 5, 1995.

"For me, Philadelphia at night means a baby-sitter. After a long day at work the thought of driving in to Philadelphia for a meeting is dreadful. I have to think twice about whether it's worth the drive, the meeting fee and the cost of a baby-sitter.....I just wish there were more opportunities to network in this (Southern New Jersey) area."⁵

Other associations for southern New Jersey practitioners are: the Professional Communicators of South Jersey, Women in Communications, (WICI), the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), a New Jersey Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) and the Public Relations Counsel of Greater Atlantic City.

Geographically, PRSA's Philadelphia chapter covers southern New Jersey and the greater Philadelphia area. The Trenton chapter covers central New Jersey and small portions of Pennsylvania. WICI and IABC have Philadelphia chapters, similar to PRSA, for southern New Jersey and Pennsylvania communicators.

The National School Public Relations Association has a state-wide chapter for New Jersey school public relations counselors. The Public Relations Counselors of Greater Atlantic City welcomes practitioners living or working in the Atlantic City region. PRP invites members from Southern New Jersey extending from Burlington county down through and including Atlantic County.

Faced with severe reductions in membership renewals and seminar attendance figures, PRP leaders began to examine how they serve local practitioners. "Members complain that the meetings are too basic," said PRP

⁵Gill, December 5, 1995.

President Peg Luscko. "PRSA is probably the right way to go for most of our members. For others, it's marketing and advertising..... It's difficult to please everyone." ⁶

For many public relations practitioners, PRSA provides the most appropriate opportunity for professional development. "Though we have opportunities to network, we don't get journals and newsletters like PR Tactics from these other groups. They don't provide the resources you need to practice. It's truly a catch-22. You join a local group to network, but to stay ahead you need the kind of professional development only a chapter of PRSA can give you. We desperately need our own (Southern New Jersey) chapter," said PRP board member Pam Sweeney. ⁷

For members of PRSA and the former PRP group now known as the Professional Communicators of Southern New Jersey, a southern New Jersey chapter represents growth and change. "Though many of us are quite content with the Philadelphia chapter, new practitioners may find joining a Southern New Jersey chapter appealing," said executive board member Frank Long. Public relations people gain recognition for their expertise and good deeds when they work with their own association. PRSA provides proper venue."⁸

"To form a new chapter, you need a base of ten PRSA members in good standing who show a genuine interest in establishing a new chapter."⁹

⁶Peg Luscko, telephone interview, December 7, 1995

⁷Pam Sweeney, telephone interview, December 12, 1995.

⁸Frank X. Long, APR, Fellow PRSA, telephone interview, January 9, 1996.

⁹Dorothy McGuinness, director Membership Development, PRSA Headquarters, telephone interview, January 12, 1996.

It is hypothesized that potential members who have not cultivated long-standing relationships in the Philadelphia chapter of PRSA will show an interest in establishing a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Public relations practitioners working and residing in southern New Jersey face many challenges. Though the number of qualified professionals continues to rise, many local businesses remain uneducated about public relations. Many practitioners are viewed only for their abilities to attract "publicity." Their expertise in communications is not fully appreciated, nor completely understood. Only the ability to generate "publicity."

Coupled with this lack of knowledge about the profession is the increasing trend where practitioners are redefining their own work environments. Faced with downsizing or restructured positions, many start their own business. Others freelance to balance work and family issues.

With increasing numbers of practitioners working from small businesses and home offices, the need to network with others proves crucial to business development. PRSA offers practitioners an opportunity to learn from other practitioners. Members need convenient meeting sites. They need meetings that address their diversity. They need customized programs that speak directly to the problems they encounter every day. They need the opportunity to continue to develop their skills and to seek accreditation in accessible methods. Only through accreditation will the practitioners earn the recognition of the southern New Jersey business population.

For more than ten years, Southern New Jersey practitioners have met on a monthly basis at PRP meetings to exchange information that is pertinent to the area. For many, this group serves as an introduction to the Philadelphia chapter of PRSA. For others, the newly formed Professional Communicators of South Jersey will address the diverse needs encompassing public relations, marketing, advertising and graphics disciplines.

Forming a base to address the feasibility of establishing a southern New Jersey chapter, this study seeks to provide answers to whether there is potential to establish such a chapter. It will address the concerns of today's changing public relations work force that ponders how it will act in ways to promote its own profession through research, accreditation, continuing education and communication.

Public relations practitioners working or residing in southern New Jersey will know whether or not a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA is a feasible goal. From there, with assistance from PRSA, other chapters and their leadership, steps can be initiated to establish a southern New Jersey chapter.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this paper the following definitions of terms will be used:

Association - A group of public relations practitioners who meet to exchange timely information pertinent to the public relations profession.

Public Relations - "...the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which serve both the organization's and the public's interest." (approved at the World Assembly of Public Relations in Mexico City in 1978 and endorsed by 34 national public relations organizations).¹⁰

Public Relations Practitioner - the individual charged with the primary responsibility of carrying out public relations functions.

Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) - "...is the largest national group of public relations practitioners with about 16,000 members in 108 chapters in 1996."¹¹

Roster - A list of public relations practitioners who work and/or reside in one or more of the following New Jersey counties: Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem.

¹⁰ Dennis L. Wilcox, Philip H. Ault, Warren K. Agee, Public Relations Strategies and Tactics, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 6.

¹¹Dorothy McGuinness, APR, director of membership PRSA, New York, telephone interview, January 12.

LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

This study will focus on the potential for establishing a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA. Limitations to this study are that:

As members of another group, public relations practitioners may respond negatively to a survey that may appear competitive with their own group. Practitioners may not express honest opinions.

Established associations may view the study as competitive and may not cooperate with the researcher. This study is limited to establishing the feasibility of establishing a new chapter only and therefore will address that feasibility only. Actual chapter formation recommendations will follow.

Public relations professionals – not affiliated with other associations but interested in joining PRSA – may be difficult to identify and survey. The study is limited to those practitioners identified by the author through networking, telephone inquiries and those listed in the PRSA's 1995-96 Register.

The sample of practitioners is not random. Conclusions are based solely on the responses of practitioners identified by the author as those most likely to join a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA. The author compiled a list based on practitioners who fit at least one of the following criteria: a.) PRSA members listed in 1995-96 PRSA Register under southern New Jersey locations; b.) students, alumni and some faculty of the Public Relations program at Rowan College; and c.) practitioners working in southern New Jersey, who are not members of established associations and identified by the author through various networking sessions.

The sample was compiled this way to identify at least ten PRSA members with an interest in joining a new chapter and at least fifteen potential new members. This sample selection method conformed to PRSA requirements for initiating a new chapter.

Plan

To research the feasibility of establishing a southern New Jersey chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the author reviewed the area's existing public relations associations. This review was coupled with a preliminary needs assessment to determine whether practitioners needed a new association. The study assumes public relations practitioners living or working in Southern New Jersey desire an association specifically targeted to public relations practitioners.

Preliminary research for the study was performed at The Library of Rowan College of New Jersey, Glassboro, New Jersey. No published studies were located that address the feasibility of establishing a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

The author interviewed leading practitioners from the southern New Jersey area to detect association trends and establish the need for further research into the project's feasibility.

PRSA's membership officers were interviewed via telephone.

The author surveyed the prospective chapter members, tallied results and summarized the feasibility to establish a southern New Jersey chapter.

In addition, recommendations for initiating the chapter and follow-up studies were submitted for review.

CHAPTER II

This chapter presents the value of association affiliation to public relations practitioners and guidelines provided by PRSA to research the feasibility of establishing a chapter of PRSA.

To gather related information, the author reviewed journal articles and text books. A computer search was performed at Rowan College of New Jersey. Using the Library's ProQuest system, journals under the ABI Global index provided resources on professional associations.

With key words: *membership, association, PRSA, and public relations* the author located myriad articles on association management. None provided information on the feasibility of establishing a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA. The author could not locate any other published attempt at establishing the feasibility of a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

Using the same key words, the author located articles that devote space to the importance of joining a professional association. This chapter will review the importance of joining a professional association and how doing so will benefit both developing and seasoned public relations practitioners.

Growth in associations has mirrored the changes in society, with organizations developing to represent new job types and industries. ¹²

¹²Meghan A. O'Meara, *Association Growth*, Association Management, May 1996, Vol. 48, Issue 5, 109.

Association Roles

As quickly as work and business environments change, associations play traditional roles by: establishing standards through licensing, certification or accreditation; providing opportunities for continuing education and professional development; and by promoting their industries or professions.

Accreditation, Licensing and Certification

Most associations focus on the development and enforcement of professional standards through education and testing for certification, accreditation and licensing. To maintain credentials, practitioners and professionals must continue to learn about the newest innovations or technological advances in their fields.

Associations institutionalize innovations by setting new standards of product safety, professional ethics and service, and organizational certification to protect consumer interests.¹³

With a continual cycle of new ideas and innovation, associations foster professional development among practitioners. That continual learning cycle ensures quality among one's profession through maintaining a particular competency level among public relations practitioners.

Today, almost every association's members expect it to find and communicate to them the "best practices" that will help them be more efficient and effective in reaching their goals.¹⁴

¹³Thomas E. Rugh, Innovate or Die, Association Management, May 1996, Vol. 48, Issue 5, 50.

¹⁴Rugh, 50.

Businesses and professions flourish when professionals create and exchange ideas that serve to increase effectiveness and efficiency among workers.

Association members expect their organization to be a "learning organization" that gathers information through research that will help to identify problems, or new markets needing new services, or new products. Innovative associations gather relevant information both from members and from their social, economic, and political environments and communicate the information through useful and accessible venues.¹⁵

Grunig and Hunt, in their *Managing Public Relations*, write about the largest and probably best-known association for public relations practitioners the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Founded in 1947 and headquartered in New York, the association publishes a journal and newsletter for members to stay abreast of communications research. The Association also conducts written and oral exams for members who wish to earn the designated status APR (Accredited Public Relations) after their name.¹⁶

In his view of what public relations practitioners might expect in the year 2000, Art Stevens believes:

...accreditation in its current form will become meaningful only when prospective clients say PR counselors must be accredited and when prospective employers say their PR staffs need accreditation. ¹⁷

¹⁵Rugh, 50.

¹⁶James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, Holt, Reinhart and Winston, Inc. New York, N Y, 1984, 70.

¹⁷Public Relations Quarterly, *Public Relations in the Year 2000*, Summer 1996, 20.

With accreditation, public relations practitioners uphold standards of behavior. These standards, outlined by the Public Relations Society of America, provide the framework for acceptable professional behaviors. Not only does the accreditation status ensure professionalism among practitioners, but guarantees a minimal level of competence. To maintain the coveted credential, practitioners pledge to continue their education and research in the field.

Professional Code

Outlined by the Public Relations Society of America, this Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations states:

In serving the interests of clients and employers, we dedicate ourselves to the goals of better communication, understanding and cooperation among the diverse individuals, groups and institutions of society, and of equal opportunity of employment in the public relations profession.

We pledge:

To conduct ourselves professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness and responsibility to the public.

To improve our individual competence and advance the knowledge and proficiency of the profession through continuing research and education;

And to adhere to the articles of the Code of Professional Standard for the Practice of Public Relations as adopted by the governing Assembly of the Society.¹⁸

¹⁸Doug Newson, Alan Scott, Judy Vanslyke Turk, This Is PR The Realities of Public Relations, Fourth Edition, Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, California, 1989, 461.

Through this pledge, practitioners maintain the highest standards of public service and ethical conduct. And through these standards professionals gain positive recognition for the public relations profession.

Continuing Education

One way that PRSA guides practitioners through continuing education standards is with a career guide that outlines a critical learning path. The path, a four-tiered guide, describes competency levels and suggests courses and books for skill building.

In their *Managing Public Relations*, Grunig and Hunt write about these very levels. They are:

Level I

Beginning Professional.

Introductory training, junior staff, Basic skills application.

Level II

Staff Professional. Junior management.

Initial supervisory role. Basic craftsman, specialist.

Eighteen to twenty-four month's experience at Level I.

Level III

Professional Manager. Middle management.

Directs staff and departmental operations, research, planning, budgeting, personnel, communications, and evaluation programs.

At least five years' experience at Level II.

Level IV.

Senior Professional. Top management.

Runs public relations operation. Adviser, policy-maker.

Has superior knowledge of public affairs, public opinion, issues management. Up to ten years' experience at Level III.¹⁹

¹⁹ James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, Holt, Reinhart and Winston, Inc. New York, NY, 1984, 81.

Following along this path, continuing professional development sessions, serves to strengthen the abilities of the practitioner as a consultant on the leading edge of communication. With technological and social changes advancing so rapidly, the ability to communicate and persuade audiences remains at the core of the profession.

Public relations practitioners offer highly-skilled, sophisticated levels of counsel that differentiates professionals from non-professionals. Professionals of other distinctive disciplines such as law or medicine are just beginning to appreciate the value of a savvy public relations practitioner. And as new technologies emerge, the necessity to monitor communication vehicles expands with new products and service. With the Internet and other cyberspace elements, public relations practitioners have begun to assume new ethical responsibilities. Savvy practitioners watch and monitor information about clients so that erroneous information about a client does not perpetuate into false rumors or accusations.

James B. Strenski writes:

"News on the New...may be bogus, error-ridden or just plain wrong," *Time* magazine reported recently....."Cyberspace is like the Wild West before law and order came into it," said Dave Butcher, APR, president Shareholder Communications.

A key area in which public relations professionals must lead the way is to take responsibility for monitoring the on-line services, including bulletin boards and the thousands of newsgroups that exist.²⁰

²⁰James B. Strenski, "The Ethics of Manipulated Communication," in Public Relations Quarterly, Vol. 40, Issue 3, 33.

Professional public relations people are sensitive about ethics. Many people assume that public relations people routinely engage in unethical behavior.....it's just part of the position. For this reason, true professionals go out of their way to prove that they are ethical.²¹

A 1995 study of leading public relations firms by Lobsenz Stevens, New York, revealed that two-thirds would not take on tobacco company clients. Also, a majority said that their firms would not work for clients involved in gambling , alcohol, euthanasia and animal rights or for hate groups or labor unions. ²²

Grunig and Hunt view the solution in "the training of future public relations practitioners--and continuing education for current practitioners-- in skills and knowledge that will help them be an ethical force in the organizations for which they work."²³

Strenski writes:

....the basic "rules" of quality public relations are no different in cyberspace. Those who survive in our field will be those who are unquestionably honest and professional, whether on-line or using more traditional forms of communication.²⁴

Well-trained practitioners inherently know what's right and what's wrong....and perhaps one of the best things that affiliation with PRSA

²¹Grunig and Hunt, 72

²²Art Stevens, "Public Relations in the Year 2000,"in Public Relations Quarterly , Summer 1996, 21.

²³Grunig and Hunt, 70.

²⁴Strenski, 35.

would do is to position southern New Jersey's highly-trained practitioners as this area's leaders.²⁵

One of the area's most prominent public relations educators, Anthony J. Fulginiti, Fellow PRSA former president of the Philadelphia chapter and advisor to Rowan College of New Jersey's student chapter, views the feasibility of establishing a chapter as an extension to PRSA's Philadelphia chapter.

"I think the need exists for an extension to the Philadelphia chapter, perhaps a branch where accreditation preparation could take place at the College. It's a natural location.....But, if you truly want to establish a chapter, I think one of the best things is to gather together the leadership of PRSA and put it before them to discuss."²⁶

In his forecast of *Public Relations in the Year 2000* Stevens believes the best way to encourage more of the 18,000 members to seek accreditation is to limit it to those just entering the field, and even there he sees enforcement a problem. ²⁷

According to Stevens a mere 4,000 of the 18,000 members are accredited. ²⁸

As the profession gains accredited practitioners, the association will have additional manpower resources and funding to promote itself.

In their *Power Public Relations*, Saffir and Tarrant write:

It's time for the industry to use its power and skill to make the public

²⁵Pam Sweeney, telephone interview, May 20, 1996

²⁶Anthony J. Fuginiti, Jr. interview, Rowan College of New Jersey, April 8, 1996

²⁷ Stevens, 20.

²⁸ Ibid.

at large better acquainted with the true nature of the discipline. People fear what they don't understand. They rebel at the thought that unseen forces may be manipulating them. While public relations was still growing, general ignorance about its nature was irritating but not all that harmful. Now it is damaging and can be disastrous. Public relations professionals need to pool their formidable resources to influence the perceptions of PR held by people in business, people in government, and the public in general. They say the shoemaker's children go barefoot; public relations has done a poor job of PR on itself. As the power and stature of the discipline grow, it is essential to do better. The public relations industry must take itself on as a client.²⁹

Establishing the Chapter

Following Protocol

According to Rosa Paulsen, assistant to the Director of Membership Development, a New Chapter Formation kit provides the basis to organize researching the feasibility of establishing a new PRSA chapter. A copy of the kit is included in the appendix.

The kit suggests researching whether or not a chapter is needed in the area. In formulating the research, suggested questions are: Is a new chapter needed? How will formation of a new chapter resolve problems such as travel time from the nearest PRSA chapter? What are the proposed geographic boundaries of the new chapter?³⁰

²⁹ Power Public Relations How to Get PR to Work For You, Leonard Saffir with John Tarrant, NTC Business BooksLincolnwood, Illinois, 1994, 252.

³⁰New Chapter Formation Kit, courtesy PRSA, 1996, 2.

After answering the basic research questions, contact a list of prospective chapter members to determine their interest in forming a PRSA chapter. Send a letter to PRSA members and public relations professionals, within the proposed chapter boundaries, along with a questionnaire.³¹

³¹Ibid

CHAPTER I I I

Procedures and Methods

Phase I - Informal Research Gathering

Public relations practitioners provided preliminary information during: networking sessions at professional development meetings; telephone conversations; and graduate class sessions at Rowan College of New Jersey. Practitioners shared their knowledge of existing associations for public relations practitioners. From these sessions the author was able to compile a list of potential members.

Also during these sessions, key figures were named frequently as a recommended source of information on the feasibility of this project. The following practitioners were contacted and interviewed on the feasibility of this project.

Don Bagin, Ph.D., *chairman*, Public Relations/Advertising Department;
thesis advisor; Rowan College of New Jersey

Anthony J. Fulginiti, APR, Fellow, PRSA
professor; Rowan College of New Jersey

Theresa Gill Cirillo, APR

Carole Gorney, APR, Lehigh University

Peg Luscko, president PRP

Frank X. Long, APR, Fellow, PRSA

Dorothy McGuinness, *director*
Membership Division; PRSA

Charles C. Volpe, *f ounder* PRP

Pam Sweeney, *assistant director*,
Public Relations; Paolin & Sweeney

Michelle Chierici-Fritz, APR,
director, Public Relations; Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center

Phase II -- Conforming to PRSA Requirements

The author requested assistance from PRSA headquarters on procedures for forming a new chapter. One option that PRSA membership officials reported was the possibility of what is termed "rolling" an existing public relations association in to a chapter of PRSA. To accomplish this, the leadership of the existing chapter is charged with communicating the virtues of PRSA membership to the associations members. The members then vote to accept the new guidelines. Also, other local PRSA chapters and chair persons are brought in to the approval process to ensure that membership recruitment efforts are not duplicated.

The author reviewed this possibility with leaders of the Public Relations Professionals of Southern New Jersey, the group now known as the Professional Communicators of Southern New Jersey. Other local communication association leaders were contacted and questioned on their interest in reorganizing into the ranks of PRSA.

Of existing associations, leaders expressed no interest in reorganizing as a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA. When approached with the idea to present the question to their members of voting on a reorganization to a southern New Jersey Chapter, association leaders reported that their members were satisfied that their associations met their needs.

The author again requested assistance from PRSA headquarters in New York on protocol and procedures for new chapter formation. PRSA membership officials then provided to the author a new chapter formation kit. The kit provided step-by-step instructions for researching new chapter feasibility. Among the recommended research questions were many which had been previously addressed. In addition, new questions

began to arise about the anticipated effects on an existing chapter. This study will address only the feasibility to establish a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

The next step was to identify prospective members. Southern New Jersey PRSA members, graduate students, and alumni of Rowan College of New Jersey and other practitioners living and working in Southern New Jersey served as the base from which one-hundred survey names were selected.

Phase III - Identifying the sample.

The author compiled a list of names of one-hundred public relations practitioners who live or work in southern New Jersey. The list represents PRSA members and potential members.

The list of PRSA members was compiled during a review of the geographic section of the 1995-96 PRSA Register. Sixty-two PRSA members were identified under southern New Jersey counties from Burlington southward to Cape May. Due to geographic constraints, nine names were eliminated because of distances needed to travel to a central point.

During graduate and undergraduate sessions at Rowan College of New Jersey, the author identified forty students, alumni and educators who fulfill the definition of public relations practitioner living or working in southern New Jersey. During other business contacts, the author identified another seven leading practitioners who live and work in southern New Jersey and may be interested in joining a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA. This list was compiled by the author to select a sample that would most closely represent the opinions of those most likely to be affected by establishing a new chapter of PRSA.

Using this method, the sample was selected based on the premise that these practitioners exhibit characteristics favorable to joining a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA. This sample is not random and can only be generalized for the purpose of researching the feasibility of establishing a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

The sample represents practitioners employed in the following sections offered by PRSA: association, corporate, counselors, educational organizations, educators, environment, financial communications, health care, professional services, public affairs and government, social services, technology and travel and tourism.

Phase IV - The Instrument

An eleven-question instrument was developed and mailed to one-hundred prospective chapter members to determine their interest in forming a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

Five questions were structured and six open-ended. The first two questions were designed to differentiate PRSA members from non-members.

The third question was designed to measure interest in joining a southern New Jersey chapter.

Other questions covered advantages/disadvantages of forming a southern New Jersey chapter; recommendations for establishing a chapter; meeting preferences in the areas of location, time and day; presenters/topics of interest; and a section for additional comments. The questionnaire was designed to be completed in ten minutes. A copy of the instrument is included in the appendix of this study.

A cover letter of explanation accompanied each questionnaire. Respondents were directed to mail or fax completed surveys to the author. Each cover letter was personalized with a post-it note. The note explained that an enclosed post card was provided as a gift for completing the survey, or could be used to request the results. A copy of the cover letter is included in the appendix of this study.

The instrument was pretested by five graduate students and Dr. Don Bagin, professor during a Seminar II class at Rowan College of New Jersey on March 12, 1996. The pretest ensured that the questions read logically and were free of bias. The cover letter was reviewed for clarity and syntax. Changes were made based on the suggestions offered. A return-addressed postage-paid envelope was mailed with each questionnaire.

Phase V

The information collected from the surveys was tallied and recorded.

CHAPTER IV

Mailed to one-hundred public relations practitioners, seventy-five surveys -- representing three out of four practitioners surveyed -- were returned. This chapter represents the results of those responses.

(Q. 1.)

Are you a member of PRSA?

Yes	33
No	42

Nearly half (44%) of the respondents are members of PRSA. Slightly more than half (56%) are not members of PRSA.

(Q. 2.)

Do you currently belong to a PRSA chapter?

Yes	31
No	15

Nearly two-thirds (67.4%) of those responding to this question are members of a PRSA chapter.

Of the seventy-five respondents, forty-six answered this question. Thirty-one belong to a chapter of PRSA. Fifteen responded that they do not belong to a chapter of PRSA.

(Q. 2.)

Which chapter?

One-third (33.3%) or twenty-five responded the Philadelphia chapter. One responded AJF student chapter at Rowan. Less than one-tenth (9%), or seven, who responded that they currently belong to a chapter, left this space blank.

(Q. 3.)

Would you be interested in joining a SNJ chapter of PRSA?

All respondents	Yes	53	No	15	Not Sure	5
PRSA members	Yes	20	No	9	Maybe	3
Non-members	Yes	33	No	6	Not Sure	2

Of those responding to this question, most (71%) reported that they would be interested in joining a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA. Of those, twenty are PRSA members and thirty-three are not members of PRSA.

Less than one-fourth (20%) responded no interest in joining a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA. Nine of the fifteen negative responses are PRSA members and six are not members.

Note:

On questions four and five, several respondents listed more than one specific thing as an advantage or disadvantage.

(Q. 4.)

Advantage of establishing a southern New Jersey chapter .

Nearly one-fourth (24%) of PRSA members who answered this question cited convenience and ease of attending meetings as the top advantage to establish a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

Other advantages listed included networking capabilities close to home and the opportunity to address local issues.

One said, "It would promote the profession in this region."

Among practitioners who are not PRSA members, most frequently mentioned, by nearly one-third (29.3%) was convenience and accessibility to meetings.

Also mentioned by nearly one-third (27%) was the ability to network with other practitioners.

(Q. 5.)

Disadvantages listed by PRSA members:

Most (23%) felt that there would be too few potential members and limited opportunities to network with other practitioners at a southern New Jersey chapter.

Also, nearly one-fifth (15%) reported that a southern New Jersey chapter might conflict with other established chapters and the same number wrote that this chapter would not have a strong history behind it.

(Q. 5.)

Disadvantages listed by non-members.

Slightly less than one-fifth (15%) reported the proximity to the Philadelphia chapter as a disadvantage. Also strong was the sentiment that a southern New Jersey chapter might conflict with other established associations.

Less than one-tenth (11%) reported fewer opportunities to network with other practitioners as a disadvantage of establishing a chapter.

(Q. 6.)

What is one key thing you think should be done to establish an excellent chapter?

Nearly half (46%) of all respondents wrote that chapter initiators should identify leaders/ superstars in other chapters and to recruit them in to leadership positions in the new chapter.

The next most popular suggestion was program development. Almost one-fifth (15%) viewed quality programs as vital for establishing an excellent chapter.

Also, equally as important (15%) was promoting the chapter and professional development programs.

(Q. 7.)

Location

Cherry Hill	31
Glassboro	14
Marlton/Evesham	12
Deptford	9

Slightly less than one-half (41%) prefer Cherry Hill followed by almost one-fifth (19%) reporting Glassboro as a preferred location.

(Q. 8.)

<i>Day</i>	
Wed	23
Tues	12
Thur	11
Fri	10

Nearly one-third (31%) prefer Wednesday for meetings.

(Q. 9.)

Time for meetings.

AM	8	14
	Non-specific AM	9
PM		
	Noon (lunch)	18
	5-7	17
	Non-specific	7

Almost an equal number of respondents cited noon or between the hours of 5 PM and 7 PM as an optimum time.

The next most popular time mentioned was 8 AM.

(Q. 10.)

Presenters/topics recommended.

The most frequently mentioned topic was computer/internet/web workshops followed by working with the media/reporters/editors of publications.

Presenters most frequently mentioned were Anthony Fulginiti and Pat Jackson.

CHAPTER V Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

The major purpose of this study was to research the feasibility of establishing a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

Public relations practitioners who live or work in southern New Jersey were interviewed in person and via telephone about their opinions of the feasibility of establishing a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

Membership officials of the Public Relations Society of America were contacted for assistance on protocol and research procedures.

One hundred public relations practitioners who live or work in southern New Jersey were asked to respond to a survey designed to determine the potential to establish a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

A search for benefits of joining a professional association was made. Benefits were divided into the following areas: accreditation, professional development, ethics, and promotion of the public relations profession.

Findings

Twenty PRSA members expressed an interest in joining a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

Thirty-three public relations practitioners expressed an interest in joining a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

Eighteen PRSA members listed convenience and ease of attending meetings as the top advantages of establishing a southern New Jersey chapter.

Twenty-two non-members listed convenience and reduced travel time as the top advantages of establishing a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

Twenty non-members also listed networking as an advantage.

Both PRSA members and non-members look to initiators to seek strong leadership as a driving force for establishing a southern New Jersey chapter.

Possible disadvantages listed were: too few potential members to form a sufficient membership pool; reduced networking opportunities; and a possible conflict with established associations.

Practitioners most prefer Cherry Hill as the best meeting location.

Practitioners most prefer Wednesdays for meetings.

Practitioners most prefer the times: noon; followed by a meeting between the hours of 5 and 7; followed by 8 AM.

Practitioners are most interested in topics covering: working with the media, journalists and editors and internet and world wide web sessions.

Practitioners named Anthony Fulginiti and Pat Jackson as preferred guest speakers.

Conclusions

The author found that, according to the guidelines provided by PRSA, there exists enough documentation to establish a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

The author found that at least twenty southern New Jersey PRSA members responded that they are interested in joining a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

The author found that there exists a sufficient interest and therefore a rationale to establish a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA.

The author found that a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA would promote the public relations profession in southern New Jersey and help practitioners to earn accreditation.

Recommendations

The author recommends further research in the area of discussions among Philadelphia and Trenton PRSA chapters to evaluate competition among existing PRSA chapters.

The author recommends further research in the area of discussions with PRSA membership officials.

The author recommends that further research be conducted to establish a branch of the Philadelphia chapter of PRSA.

The author recommends further research in the area of initiating accreditation studies at a southern New Jersey location.

Appendix A
Cover Letter Accompanying Survey

March 19, 1996

Mr./Ms. Public Relations
Cherry Hill, N J 08003

Dear Mr./Ms. PR:

As a graduate student at Rowan College of New Jersey, I share with my colleagues a strong desire to network with other public relations practitioners. For my thesis, I'm studying the feasibility of establishing a southern New Jersey chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

As you know, PRSA is the major professional organization for public relations practitioners. Although 110 chapters exist across the country, no chapters currently exist in southern New Jersey.

Please complete the enclosed questionnaire and fax your response to me at 609-983-5349. If you prefer, seal it in the addressed stamped envelope and drop it in the mail. Please complete the survey and send it to me by April 1. If you have questions please call me at 609-983-1598 or 609-983-5349.

For a copy of the results: place a stamp on the enclosed post card, write your name and address on the opposite side and drop it in the mail. Results will be mailed in December.

Thank you for your time and opinion.

Sincerely,

Joanna F. Bruschi

Enc: Questionnaire
Post card

Appendix B
Survey

This survey is designed to determine the potential to establish a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA. Your response will be anonymous. Please complete this survey and fax it to 609-983-5349 or drop it in the mail on or before Monday, April 1.

Thank you for your thoughts and your time.

1. Are you a member of PRSA?

(If yes, go to Question 2. If no, skip to Question 3.)

Yes No

2. Do you currently belong to a PRSA chapter?

Yes No

(If yes, which chapter?)

3. Would you be interested in joining a southern New Jersey chapter of PRSA?

Yes No

4. What one thing do you see as an advantage to establishing a southern New Jersey chapter?

5. What one thing do you see as a disadvantage?

6. What is one key thing you think should be done to establish an excellent chapter?

7. If you could choose a specific meeting place, which town would you prefer?

(Please circle one response.)

Cherry Hill

Glassboro

Deptford

Marlton/Evesham

Egg Harbor

Somers Point

8. Please circle the day you prefer for meetings.

Mon. Tue. Wed. Thur. Fri.

9. Please fill in the time you prefer for meetings.

AM _____

PM _____

10. Are there presenters/topics that you would like to recommend? Please list them here.

11. Please list additional comments here.

Appendix C
Chapter Formation Kit

New Chapter Formation Kit

Contents

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INTRODUCTION

This procedures kit has been prepared to guide you in forming a new chapter. We hope the information will make your task easier.

PRSA's requirements for forming new chapters are outlined in the step-by-step instructions. Also included are some suggested models for various procedures, and other materials to help you organize your efforts.

Your questions, comments and suggestions are always appreciated.

Research: ASKING ALL THE APPROPRIATE QUESTIONS

Research is an important first step in clarifying whether or not a chapter is needed in your area. To get you started, here are some questions others have found helpful:

1. Is a new chapter needed? Why?
2. How will formation of a new chapter resolve problems such as travel time from nearest PRSA chapter?
3. What are the proposed geographic boundaries of the new chapter? Refer to the attached list of current PRSA chapter locations and presidents.
4. Will a new chapter weaken an existing chapter? Remember that in forming a new chapter, you will be taking some members -- possibly strong leaders -- from existing chapters. Keep these chapters informed and cooperative. The District Chair will be helpful in this process.
5. How many current PRSA members in the proposed boundaries belong to an existing chapter? How many do not belong to a chapter? The Public Relations Register includes a geographical listing of all members. Headquarters can help you ascertain this information.
6. What is the potential for recruiting new members from the total public relations profession in the proposed geographic area?
7. Will a new chapter be able to sustain itself once the excitement of formation has worn off? Are the potential members willing to make a commitment and take responsibility for the success of a new chapter? Have you identified future leaders?

Interest: IDENTIFYING PROSPECTIVE CHAPTER MEMBERS

At this stage the first move is to contact your selected list of prospective chapter members to determine their interest in forming a PRSA chapter and working to make the chapter successful. Below are simple and inexpensive steps for personalizing the contact and yielding important data essential for planning purposes.

1. Write letters to prospective chapter members. Samples are enclosed:
 - o Letter to PRSA members within the proposed chapter boundaries. Enclose the questionnaire discussed below with this letter.
 - o Letter to public relations professionals within the proposed chapter boundaries who do not currently belong to PRSA. Enclose a PRSA information brochure and membership kit. If interest is expressed, follow up with the questionnaire discussed below.
2. Develop a questionnaire to send to all prospective members. Use general questions such as what committee they would serve on or in which city they prefer to hold chapter meetings. Would they volunteer to hold office? A sample follows.
3. Make a sincere effort to contact all those who were sent the letter and questionnaire. Call those who respond negatively or who do not respond. A three-week waiting period is sufficient before making follow-up telephone calls.
4. Tally results of questionnaire and follow-up calls (see sample master worksheet). This will:
 - o provide prospective slate of officers and committee chairmen;
 - o provide information on most advantageous time and place for meetings.
5. Send follow-up letter with summarized results of questionnaire; include plans to go ahead with new chapter formation. A sample letter follows.

SAMPLE LETTER
TO PROSPECTIVE CHAPTER MEMBERS
(Current PRSA Members)

Date

Dear PRSA colleague:

Many of us in the _____ area have considered establishing our own local chapter of PRSA. I am writing you now to determine your interest in taking that big step into new chapter formation.

You are a member of PRSA, which has many benefits. You may also be a member of a neighboring local chapter. You already know about the additional advantages -- networking, exchanging ideas, solving of mutual problems, and overall professional development programming, to name but a few -- that such local affiliations can provide.

We feel that a new chapter in our area could benefit two groups: those who do not now belong to a local chapter, and those who, for geographic or other reasons, may find a new chapter to their benefit.

We know we have enough PRSA members in our area to form a new chapter. But it takes more than numbers for success. We must also be willing to assume substantial responsibilities in order to share the rewards of a new local affiliation. We must make a commitment to be active; to serve as officers or to volunteer for committee work.

Please take a moment to complete the enclosed survey. I look forward to your favorable response.

Sincerely,

Enclosure: Questionnaire

**SAMPLE LETTER
TO PROSPECTIVE CHAPTER MEMBERS**

(nonmembers who are eligible for PRSA membership)
Note: enclose current PRSA membership kit with letter.

Dear Public Relations Colleague:

I am writing to let you know of our interest in forming a new, local chapter of the Public Relations Society of America in the _____ area.

As you may know, PRSA is the major professional organization for public relations practitioners. With almost 16,000 members, PRSA is the largest association of its kind in the world. For your information, a membership information kit is enclosed.

At this writing, there are 108 chapters located across the country. Chapters provide a wide variety of benefits for public relations practitioners on the local level - - networking, exchanging ideas, solving of mutual problems, overall professional development, among others.

If you would like to join your local colleagues in the formation of a new chapter of PRSA, please complete the form below and return to me. I will keep you abreast of progress regarding our new chapter.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Enclosure: Questionnaire

Please clip and return to: _____

- Yes, I am interested in PRSA and a new, local chapter of the organization. Please send me more information.
- Yes, I am interested and would like to become actively involved in the formation of a new chapter.
- No, I am not interested at this time.

Name _____ Title _____
Organization _____ Phone _____
Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

SAMPLE FORM

QUESTIONNAIRE TO ALL PROSPECTIVE CHAPTER MEMBERS

1. Are you currently a member of PRSA?

Yes No

2. Do you currently belong to a PRSA chapter?

Yes No

3. Would you participate in forming a new chapter in the area by attending organizational meetings?

Yes No

Not at this time.
(Please continue to send me information.)

4. Would you serve as an officer?

Yes No

If yes, what office(s)?

president secretary
 president-elect treasurer
 vice president director-at-large

Assembly Delegate
(must be APR)

5. Would you serve on a committee?

Yes No

If yes, what committee(s)?

Accreditation professional development program
 eligibility publications student liaison
 honors and awards publicity other _____
 membership

Would you serve as a chair?

Yes No

6. Please list the city or cities you prefer for meetings.

7. I would not want to travel more than _____ miles to attend meetings.

8. Please check one preferred day and time for meeting.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Monday	<input type="checkbox"/> morning
<input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/> noon
<input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/> evening
<input type="checkbox"/> Thursday	
<input type="checkbox"/> Friday	

Name _____
Title _____
Organization _____
Address _____
City _____
Business phone _____

Please return form no later than ____ / ____ / ____ to:

SAMPLE LETTER
RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE AND PLANS TO PROCEED

Dear Colleague:

Based on the attached results of the questionnaires, we have determined that enough interest exists for us to establish a new PRSA chapter in _____. Thank you for your positive response.

As a charter member of the new chapter, you will be in on the ground floor of what we hope will be an extremely dynamic and progressive association.

Among the many orders of business yet to be completed are the selection of a name for our new chapter, and selection of pro tem officers. In most cases, new chapters are formed at other-than-normal times for election of officers, so it is appropriate for us to name officers on a pro tem basis until our first regularly scheduled elections can be held in accordance with PRSA's bylaws and our own chapter bylaws.

You will find attached:

- Request for suggestions for chapter names. Please return to me by _____.
- Suggested slate of officers. The matter of officers will be taken up at our first meeting, at which time nominations also may be made from the floor.
- Results of questionnaire mailed to prospective members which includes people who have expressed an interest in chairing or working on a committee. Please let me know if there are further additions.

The first chapter meeting is a very important one. We will have much to discuss and some basic steps to take in order to fulfill the requirements for new chapter formation. We should all individually sign the chapter petition, approve the chapter bylaws, elect a pro tem slate of officers, and, if all goes well, appoint committees.

The all-important first meeting is tentatively scheduled for _____, at _____ (A.M./P.M.). You will receive confirmation of this meeting soon. Please make every effort to attend.

I look forward to seeing you.

Sincerely,

Enclosures

SAMPLE FORM
CHOOSING A CHAPTER NAME

As part of the formation of a new PRSA chapter in _____, we must select an appropriate name.

A quick glance through the PRSA *Register* indicates that many of the 108 chapters are named after the cities in which they are located.

Other chapters encompass regions. Still others incorporate the state's nickname (the Volunteer Chapter for Knoxville, Tennessee), or a name indigenous to the general area (the Pikes Peak Chapter for the Colorado Springs area in Colorado).

There are, obviously, many possibilities. Please make note of your first and second choices of those listed, and feel free to make your own suggestions. Remember, however, recognition is easiest when geographical location is considered.

<u>CHAPTER NAME</u>	<u>FIRST CHOICE</u>	<u>SECOND CHOICE</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Other(s) _____

Please return your ballot to me by ____/____/____.

Mail to:

**SAMPLE FORM RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE
MAILED TO PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS**

Committee Participation

The following people have expressed an interest in chairing or working on a committee.

<u>Committee</u>	<u>Chair</u>	<u>Member</u>
Accreditation	_____	_____
Eligibility	_____	_____
Membership	_____	_____
Program	_____	_____
Professional Development	_____	_____
Publicity	_____	_____
Student Liaison	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____
No preference for committee:		

Chapter Meetings

Results of the questions concerning chapter meetings are as follows, with number of votes in parentheses:

	<u>First</u>	<u>Second</u>	<u>Third</u>
City	_____	_____	_____
Day of Week	_____	_____	_____
Time of Day	_____	_____	_____
No Preference	_____	_____	_____

Maximum Travel Distance

_____ respondents indicated an average of no more than _____ miles (one way).

_____ respondents had no particular problem or preference.

SAMPLE FORM
SUGGESTED SLATE OF OFFICERS

The following slate of officers is presented for your consideration:

<u>Office</u>	<u>Nominee</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
President	_____	_____
President-Elect	_____	_____
Secretary	_____	_____
Treasurer	_____	_____
Assembly	_____	_____
Delegate	_____ APR _____	_____
Director-at-Large	_____	_____
(three)	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

Each of the proposed candidates has agreed to take on the responsibilities of office on a pro tem basis for the purpose of initiating a chapter. Their terms of office will continue for the balance of the year.

Election of next year's officers will be held at the new chapter's annual meeting, which will be conducted early next year in accordance with the provisions of chapter bylaws.

Mechanics: TOWARD THE FIRST MEETING

Once it has been determined there is strong interest in your area for forming a PRSA chapter, several steps must be taken to finalize formation. By following the easy steps below, you will ensure a successful start.

1. Choose a chapter name.
 - o Send memo to interested parties with brief "history" of how chapters get their names. It is suggested that the name relate to a geographic area for easy identification. A sample survey is provided under the "Interest" Section of this kit.

2.
 - o Identify potential (and willing) officers.

 - o Identify those willing to accept responsibility. The questionnaire discussed in the "Interest" Section of this kit is one way to identify initial leadership.

 - o Call to confirm willingness to serve in particular capacity.

 - o Send memo to prospective members with proposed slate of officers. All officers will serve on a pro tem basis until next regularly scheduled election is held. A sample slate is provided under the "Interest" section of this kit.

 - o Forward list of willing committee members to proposed president so they'll be set and ready to go after first meeting.

3. Hold a first meeting.
 - o Select a time and place for initial meeting.

 - o Send invitations to all prospective members including those who were reluctant to join, officers of neighboring PRSA chapters, district officers, and other appropriate PRSA officials.

 - o Follow up with telephone call or note to remind prospects to attend important first meeting.

4. Set an agenda for the first meeting.
 - o Have charter petition signed and forwarded to PRSA Headquarters. Be sure to make extra copies for your chapter files. A petition is enclosed.
 - o Distribute and approve the chapter bylaws. These can be amended later, if you wish, based on recommendations from your bylaws committee. Model chapter bylaws are enclosed. Forward bylaws to PRSA Headquarters for approval by the PRSA Board of Directors.
 - o Solicit suggestions for new members as a means of strengthening your chapter. These recommendations can be used as a basis for the list to be sent to PRSA. New chapters must demonstrate potential of recruiting at least 15 members during the first year after formation.
 - o Determine local chapter dues.
 - o Elect pro tem officers and directors. At this point your new president takes charge of the meeting.
 - o Introduce new committee chairs (appointed and confirmed ahead of time by new president, based on results of initial questionnaire). Have committee chairmen give brief overview of what they intend to accomplish.
5. Publicize the formation of the new chapter to local media. Be sure to include the list of new officers.
6. A chapter charter is granted by the PRSA Assembly at its annual meeting in the fall. Once you submit the requirements, the PRSA Board of Directors has power to determine original chapter boundaries, which are subject to Assembly ratification. The Board may change such boundaries with Assembly approval. Bylaws of a chapter must be approved by the Board of Directors in order to become effective.
7. You should also be in close contact with your District Chair, who can be of great assistance to you.

P E T I T I O N

Board of Directors
Public Relations Society of America, Inc.
33 Irving Place
New York, New York 10003-2376

Ladies and Gentlemen:

1. We, the undersigned members of the Public Relations Society of America, Inc., in good standing, hereby petition the Board of Directors of the Society for grant of an organization Charter as:

_____ Chapter
of the
PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

2. We further petition that the territorial jurisdiction for the newly organized group, if granted Chapter status, be approved as encompassing the (state, counties, city, area) of _____

3. A copy of our proposed chapter bylaws is submitted for Board approval or recommendations.

Signed (at least 10 PRSA members):

Please Print

- | | |
|-----------|-------|
| 1. _____ | _____ |
| 2. _____ | _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ |
| 4. _____ | _____ |
| 5. _____ | _____ |
| 6. _____ | _____ |
| 7. _____ | _____ |
| 8. _____ | _____ |
| 9. _____ | _____ |
| 10. _____ | _____ |

Date approved _____ by _____

SAMPLE BYLAWS FOR PRSA CHAPTERS

Revised December 1994

These sample bylaws are guidelines to assist chapters in bringing their bylaws up to date. Chapters may adapt or modify them to suit local circumstances, so long as there is no conflict with the PRSA Bylaws. All chapter bylaws and amendments must be submitted to the Board of the Society for approval.

BYLAWS OF THE _____ CHAPTER OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this nonprofit professional organization shall be the _____
Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, Inc. (PRSA).

ARTICLE II - OBJECTIVES

In accordance with the objectives of the Public Relations Society of America, the objectives of this Chapter shall be to advance the art and science of public relations in the public interest; to encourage research, discussion and study of the problems and techniques of the public relations profession; to strengthen and maintain the highest standards of service and ethical conduct by all members of the profession; to exchange ideas and experiences and collect and disseminate information that may enhance or improve the professional knowledge, standards, ethics and standing of the membership; and to promote fraternalism within the profession.

ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. **Eligibility.** To be eligible for membership in the Chapter, a person must be a Member in good standing of the Society. Any such Member of the Society is eligible for membership in the Chapter.

Section 2. **Admission to Membership.** Admission to membership in the Society shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of the PRSA Bylaws. Any person admitted to membership in the Society shall become a member of the chapter, if eligible, upon payment of Chapter dues.

Section 3. **Retirement Status.** Any member of the Chapter who has been a member of PRSA in good standing for at least five years and is gainfully employed for less than 50 percent of the time is eligible for retirement status. Members on retirement status shall enjoy all the rights and privileges of membership.

Section 4. **Termination of Chapter Membership.** Any Member who for any reason ceases to be a PRSA Member or is dropped from the Society's membership for non-payment of dues shall cease to be a member of the Chapter and shall be dropped from Chapter membership.

Section 5. **Rights and Privileges of Membership.** Subject to the PRSA Bylaws, the right to serve as an Assembly Delegate or Alternate Delegate or as professional advisor to a PRSA chapter shall be limited to Members who are Accredited.

Section 6. **Non-discrimination.** The Society shall in all deliberations and procedures subscribe to a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of race, creed, religion, disability, sex, age, color, national origin, or sexual or affectional preference.

ARTICLE IV - DUES

Section 1. **Amount.** The amount of Chapter dues shall be fixed annually by the Chapter's board of directors and shall be payable in accordance with Chapter fiscal policies.

Section 2. **Nonpayment of Dues.** Any member whose chapter dues are unpaid for three months shall be considered not in good standing and shall not be entitled to vote, hold office or enjoy other privileges of Chapter membership, provided such member shall have been duly notified.

Section 3. **Fiscal Year.** The fiscal year of the Chapter shall be the calendar year.

ARTICLE V - BOARD OF DIRECTORS (or Trustees)

Section 1. **Composition.** The governing body of the Chapter shall be a board of directors consisting of the President, President-Elect, Secretary, Treasurer, the immediate past President, the Assembly Delegate(s) and three Directors -at-large.

Section 2. **Assembly Delegates.** The Assembly Delegate(s) shall serve as the Chapter's representative(s) at meetings of the PRSA Assembly and shall be elected by the Chapter membership for a three-year term in accordance with provisions of the PRSA Bylaws.

Section 3. Directors (Trustees)-at-Large. On the first board of the Chapter one director shall serve three years, one director shall serve two years and one director shall serve one year. Thereafter, one director shall be elected each year by the Chapter membership at its Annual Meeting to serve a term of three years beginning January 1st (or July 1st) and until his/her successor is elected and installed.

Section 4. Vacancies. In the event of death, resignation, removal or expulsion of any officer, director, or Assembly Delegate, the board of directors shall elect a successor who shall take office immediately and serve for the balance of the unexpired term or until the next annual election.

Section 5. Removal. Any director who misses more than three consecutive board meetings without an excuse acceptable to the board may be given written notice of dismissal by the Chapter President and replaced in accordance with Section 4 above.

Section 6. Board Meetings. There shall be at least four meetings of the board of directors at such times and places as it may determine. It shall meet at the call of the President or upon call of any three members of the board of directors. Notice of each meeting of the board shall be given to each director personally or by mail at least seven days in advance.

Section 7. Quorum. A majority of the board of directors shall constitute a quorum for all meetings of the board.

ARTICLE VI - OFFICERS

Section 1. Chapter Officers. The officers of the Chapter shall be a President, President-Elect, a Secretary and a Treasurer. The officers shall be elected by the Chapter membership at its Annual Meeting for a term of one year and until their successors are elected and installed. No officer having held an office for two successive terms shall be eligible to succeed himself/herself in the same office.

Section 2. President. The President shall preside at all meetings of the chapter and of the board of directors. He/she shall appoint all committees with the approval of the board of directors and shall be ex-officio member of all committees except the Nominating Committee. He/she shall perform all other duties incident to the office.

Section 3. President-Elect. The President-Elect shall, in the absence or disability of the President, exercise the powers and perform the duties of the President. He/she also shall assist the President and perform such other duties as shall be prescribed by the board of directors.

Section 4. Secretary. The Secretary shall keep records of all meetings of the Chapter and of the board of directors, send copies of such minutes to Society Headquarters, issue notices of all meetings, maintain or cause to be maintained the roll of membership, and perform all other duties customarily pertaining to the office.

Section 5. **Treasurer.** The Treasurer shall receive and deposit all chapter funds in the name of the Chapter, in a bank or trust company selected and approved by the board of directors. He/she shall issue receipts and make authorized disbursements by check after proper approval by the President or board of directors. He/she shall prepare the Chapter's budget, make regular financial reports to the board of directors, render an annual financial statement to the Chapter membership, and perform all other duties incident to the office.

Section 6. **Compensation and Reimbursement.** No elected officer of the Chapter shall be entitled to any salary or other compensation. The board of directors may reimburse elected officers or Assembly Delegates or their alternates for their expenses incurred in connection with the performance of their duties.

ARTICLE VII - NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

Section 1. **Nominating Committee.** There shall be a Nominating Committee of no fewer than three Members who are Accredited, appointed by the President with approval of the board of directors at least sixty days prior to the Annual Meeting of the Chapter.

Section 2. **Nominations.** The Nominating Committee shall name a qualified nominee for each office and for each Assembly Delegate and director whose term is expiring. It shall ensure that each nominee has been contacted and agrees to serve if elected. Additional nominations, if any, shall be accepted from Members at the Annual Meeting provided the nominees have been contacted and agree to serve if elected.

Section 3. **Notice of Membership.** At least thirty days before the Annual Meeting of the Chapter, the Secretary shall mail to all Chapter members the list of nominees prepared by the Nominating Committee.

Section 4. **Elections.** Officers, directors and Assembly Delegates shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of PRSA Chapter. Election shall be by majority vote of the Members in good standing present and voting. Balloting in contested elections shall be by secret ballot.

ARTICLE VIII - COMMITTEES

Section 1. **Standing Committees.** In addition to the Nominating Committee, there shall be standing committees on Program, Eligibility, Membership, Professional Development, Accreditation, Awards, Public Relations, and Public Service, Student Chapter Liaison, and Foundation Academy Member.

Section 2. **Special Committees.** Special committees may be established and appointed by the President with approval of the board of directors.

Section 3. **Committee Reports.** The chairman of each committee shall report its activities regularly to the Board of Directors. All committee activities shall be subject to approval by the board of directors.

ARTICLE IX - CHAPTER MEETINGS

Section 1. **Annual Meeting.** There shall be an Annual Meeting in October or November each year at such time and place as may be designated by the board of directors.

Section 2. **Regular Meetings.** In addition to the Annual Meeting, there shall be regular monthly meetings at least ten times a year at such times and places as may be designated by the board of directors.

Section 3. **Special Meetings.** Special meetings of the Chapter may be called by the President, the board of directors or on written request by 25 percent of the Chapter members.

Section 4. **Notice of Meetings.** Notice of the Annual Meeting shall be mailed to each member at least thirty days in advance. Notice of a regular meeting or special meeting shall be mailed to each member at least ten days in advance.

Section 5. **Quorum.** A majority of the members of the Chapter shall constitute a quorum at any meeting of the Chapter.

ARTICLE X - AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any meeting at which a quorum is present, provided such proposed amendment(s) has been approved by the Chapter's board of directors and at least thirty days' notice has been given to all members of any proposed amendment(s). Amendments adopted in accordance with this provision become effective only after approval by the PRSA's Board of Directors.

**SAMPLE FORM
PRO TEM OFFICERS**

Date: _____

To: PRSA
33 Irving Place
New York, NY 10003-2376

From: _____

Pro tem officers of the newly formed _____ Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, Inc., to serve from _____ until _____, _____ at which time the first formal elections of the new chapter will be held.

President _____

President-Elect _____

Secretary _____

Treasurer _____

Past President (not applicable) _____

Assembly Delegate _____ APR (three-year term)

Directors-at-Large _____ (three-year term)

_____ (three-year term)

_____ (two-year term)

_____ (one-year term)

POTENTIAL CHAPTER MEMBERS

Date: _____

To: PRSA
33 Irving Place
New York, NY 10003-2376

From: _____

The following is a list of potential members of the newly formed _____ Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, Inc. The chapter understands that it must demonstrate its ability to recruit and maintain at least 15 new members in addition to its charter members during the first year after formation.

Potential members are:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>AFFILIATION</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____
11. _____	_____	_____
12. _____	_____	_____
13. _____	_____	_____
14. _____	_____	_____
15. _____	_____	_____

Sustenance: KEEPING IT GOING

The new chapter's membership committee will have a most important task during the first year – recruiting new members for the new chapter. It is very important to:

- o follow up on the list of PRSA national members in the geographic area who did not initially join the chapter;
- o follow up on the list of public relations professionals in the new chapter's geographic area who do not belong to PRSA;
- o obtain a commitment from each charter member of the new chapter to bring in one new member during the first year.

PRSA offers added incentive for new chapters to recruit members. During their first full year of operation, a new chapter is entitled to receive 50 percent of each newly acquired member's initiation fee.

Checklist: REQUIREMENTS FOR ESTABLISHING A PRSA CHAPTER

- () Petition signed by 10 PRSA members in good standing;
- () Chapter named, boundaries defined in petition;
- () Chapter bylaws drafted;
- () Officers elected (must include an Assembly delegate who is a Member who is Accredited); Provide list to PRSA;
- () List of potential chapter members (in addition to the 10 petitioners) to demonstrate that the chapter will have the impetus to grow to at least 25 members within a year after formation.

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BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Name: Joanna F. Bruschi

Date and place of birth: September 2, 1959
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

High School: Maple Shade High School
Maple Shade, New Jersey
Graduated 1977

College: Camden County College
Blackwood, New Jersey
Graduated 1983

College: Rowan College of New Jersey
Glassboro, New Jersey
Graduated 1994