

My rookie year:
Growing along with a growing profession

By Hazel Resurreccion

What's the secret to making it big in the PR profession?

That's a question I asked myself one year ago after graduating college. I was the only PR student who graduated summa cum laude from my university. I had three well-rounded internships that included agency, nonprofit and corporate experiences and writing samples to my name. Because of these accomplishments, I always expected to do well and break ground in the profession.

You can imagine my surprise when I landed my first job and realized I had a lot more to learn. The profession I studied in college is not the profession it is today, nor will it be again. Thankfully, under the guidance of my current managers, as well as my own experiences, my freshman journey turned into a lesson in professional development that gave way to opportunities, including working on the National Diversity Committee for PRSA.

The first few months out of college did not start off well. I stayed just three months at my first job due to incompatibility with the company's management style. Although I would have wanted to stay for the sake of longevity, I knew I could not grow with this company and apologetically gave my two weeks notice.

I did stay long enough, however, to learn a few things, one of which was blogging. I had never heard of this prior to my first job. The trend for our generation was instant messaging and text messaging, which were hardly strategic phenomenons, let alone worthy of academic implementation. So, I learned the PR fundamentals and built my portfolio and résumé through internship experience.

I did the most one could do to prepare for the post-college work world, but, unbeknownst to me, the world had moved on while I was in my college bubble. I found myself in the swell of media consolidations and agency affiliations, and reaching a target market had evolved to a more specified approach than the ROPE method.

Fortunately, leaving my first company was the best thing I could have done. It left open the opportunity to accept an entry-level position with my current employer, Howland PR, a diversity agency in Dallas. I was the fourth member of the team, the first being President and CEO Lyria Howland, who happened to be the chair for the National Diversity Committee of PRSA.

I became a member of several journalists' organizations including the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association; two important organizations that helped me learn more about our audiences. I also became an associate member of PRSA.

My company's time management and financial support created opportunities that rarely come easily to recent graduates who are typically paying back student loans. It also demonstrated the importance of continued and self-motivated learning. I now dedicate part of my day to reading about trends in the marketplace and company moves. I also spend time researching new media and determining what that means for our clients, our company and the PR profession.

Though I have yet to discover the next big thing, I think I've found the answer to my question. The secret to making it big in this profession is career development. Graduation is only the beginning of a lifelong process of establishing opportunities through continued growth and learning.

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