

The best job in the world

PR professionals work with talented people and important issues in a range of fascinating fields

We have heard a lot about 'the best job in the world', thanks to award-winning work by Tourism Queensland. But I think the best job in the world has nothing to do with tropical islands.

This may surprise recession-pounded, physically exhausted and emotionally drained fellow practitioners, but I think we in PR have the best jobs in the world. We engage at the most senior level with brands, companies and issues across a fascinating range of sectors. We help products win distribution and sales, support great corporations in communicating with their many stakeholders, and address knotty societal issues in important areas such as health and climate change.

The mix of talents needed in PR – a good intellect and quick, street-wise mind to assimilate masses of information quickly – also makes for some very special people for us to work alongside.

You need to be obsessively inquisitive with a sponge-like passion for absorbing news or issues and spotting trends early. And you have to be a salesperson par excellence – selling your clients, your ideas and yourself.

Fascinating client work, wrestling with important issues and working alongside talented colleagues all adds up, I think, to the best job in the world. And when we are at our best, I have no hesitation in saying PR is the senior service of all the communications disciplines, holding the ring in the big tent of integrated communications.

In reality things can look a little different. With their big budgets, advertising and media often take centre stage by default, laying claim to strategy as well as all the latest tools and channels – digital/social media, sponsorships, branded content and events.

But when things get serious (takeovers, crises, strikes, bet-the-company decisions), to whom do CEOs (and prime ministers) turn? PR professionals.



Views in brief

Which three words best describe the perfect account manager of the future?

Bright, inquisitive and digital-savvy.

What were/are the essential elements of your most productive client relationship?

Trust, honesty and professionalism are givens. Genuinely caring about the brand/corporation and feeling part of the in-house team in terms of the thrill of winning market share and out-thinking competitors – sharing the gain and the pain in the ruthlessly competitive environments in which clients operate.

Senior clients want wise advice that informs all the organisation's comms channels – and we are best equipped to deliver this. We need to ensure an ongoing supply of rounded professionals.

One obstacle is a growing trend for new entrants to PR to specialise too soon. Of course, all of us over time develop certain preferences, but this is very different from wrapping yourself in the comfort blanket of the specialist. PR leaders of the future need cross-sector experience and to soak up all the

business and popular culture news and trends they can.

People whose specialism leans them towards the corporate or b2b side still need to know about Jay-Z and Dizzee Rascal, follow *The X Factor/I'm a Celebrity/Strictly*, and listen to Chris Moyles or Johnny Vaughan. Equally, people whose specialism is brands/consumer marketing need to know something about quantitative easing, listen to the *Today* programme, and get beyond the colour supps of the *The Sunday Times*.

The French composer Hector Berlioz said of his contemporary Camille Saint-Saëns that he 'lacks inexperience'. Those of us who seek to advise business leaders also need to lack inexperience. In an industry increasingly polarised between tactically driven stunt/consumer agencies and strategy-led consultants long on advice and short on action, we need people who can deliver both pearls of wisdom and beads of sweat.

What a demanding yet endlessly fascinating business we are in. And what a time to be in it. The ancient Greeks said a town should grow no larger than the size of a crowd that could hear the voice of one man. By harnessing digital comms, we can now fit almost all of humankind into our virtual town. Just think of all the opportunities that open for us in PR to 'own' digital, shape opinions and grow global markets for our clients.

Yes. This is the best job in the world.

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