

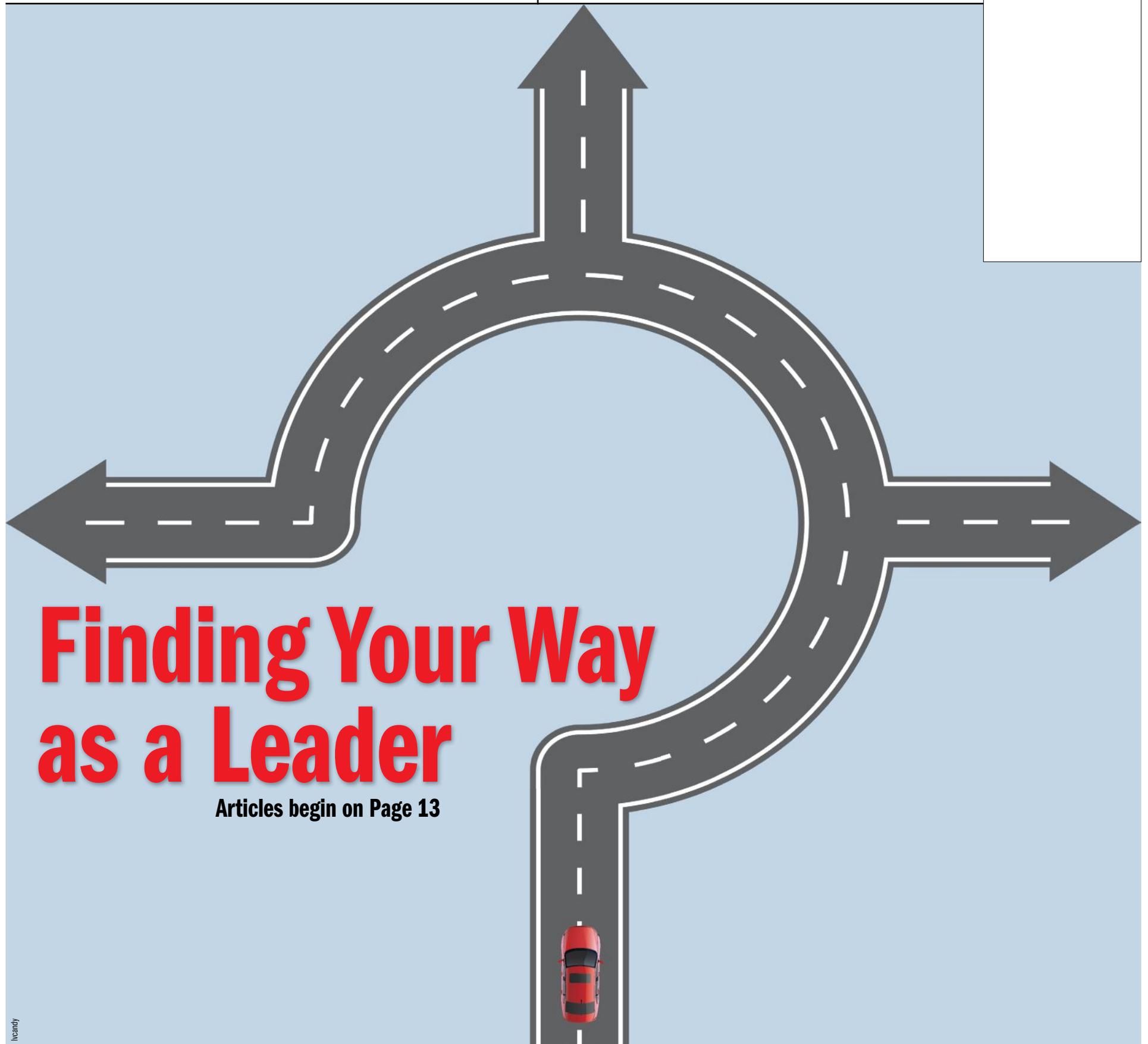
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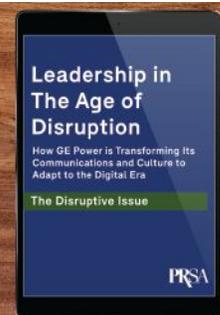


**Finding Your Way
as a Leader**

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Career Development for ‘Accomplished’ New Professionals

By Hanna Porterfield

As a new professional, knowledge and skills specific to your first five years working in public relations help build your career. But at such a crucial point in your professional development, there can be a large gap in the support that each new pro needs.

For example, a recent college graduate is often practicing interviews and settling into their first full-time position. Meanwhile, new pros in their third, fourth or fifth year of work are beginning to manage staff, negotiate salary raises or promotions, and accept positions at new companies.

Needless to say, a new pro starting out in their career and a new pro continuing to grow strategically have different professional development needs. As career advice for new pros often focuses on the workplace transition after college, I'd like to share a few options for new pros settling into their careers who want to continue to grow.

1. Do pro bono work.

Are you passionate about a sector in public relations besides the one you currently work in? If so, then explore doing pro bono PR work for an organization in need. Or, join a nonprofit board and take on a communications chair position.



This is a win-win, as a deserving person receives professional work for free, while you can add this to your résumé and practice new skills that you might not utilize at your current job.

2. Apply for professional awards.

From PRSA campaign awards to Chapter-level “30 under 30” awards, there are many places to obtain recognition for your hard work. Look into competitions related to young professional boards you may be involved with or awards honoring professionals in the specific sector of communications you work in. Also check to see if your alma mater recognizes alumni that have accomplished big projects early

in their career — this is a great place to showcase your work.

3. Pass along your knowledge as a mentor.

New pros arguably learn more in their first few years of work than during any other time in their career. It's never too soon to put your knowledge to use through mentorship. Did you have unique interview experiences, land an international PR gig, or negotiate a compensation package at your first job? If so, then mentor a college student. Whether it's one-on-one or presenting in front of university classes, students appreciate hearing stories of successful new pros who were just in their shoes.

Conversely, try out a reverse mentorship. Currently a hot topic in communications, this setup allows you to teach a seasoned professional how to use new tools — usually technology-related — and adapt to the changing PR landscape.

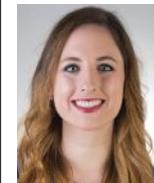
4. Further your education.

The PR profession is always evolving, so it's crucial to keep your finger on the pulse of new developments. If you're looking to brush up on a specific skill, then

learn a few tips relating to a project you're working on. To edge your way to that next promotion, check out free or low-cost classes on websites such as Coursera and Lynda. Or, seek professional certifications. If you have aspirations to teach public relations one day or work in-house for a highly specialized sector, then grad school may also be an option to consider.

5. Start to earn your letters.

Becoming Accredited in public relations is a great way to demonstrate your personal and professional commitment to excellence. After reaching the five-year career mark, professionals are eligible to apply to earn their APR certification, which consists of a panel presentation and a computer-based examination. Once you earn your APR, there are opportunities for continued learning and participation at industry events to maintain your commitment to the sound and ethical practice of public relations. **T**



Hanna Porterfield is chair-elect of PRSA's New Pros Section and a senior account executive at Development Counsellors International in New York. She is a graduate of Michigan State University. Connect with her on Twitter @citygirlhanna.

What Hurricane Harvey Can Teach Us About Continuity Planning



Tim O'Brien, APR

When Toni Harrison, president of Houston's Etched Communication, returned to her house after the flooding from Hurricane Harvey late this past summer, it was bittersweet. Her home was among the few in her neighborhood that survived with minimal impact; all around her was devastation.

One thing Harrison did not have to be concerned about, though, was her company, as she had a business continuity plan in place.

“Before the storm, I went through hurricane preparedness and met with everyone I work with,” she says. “We focused on the basics at first: Charge every device to the maximum and have batteries.”

Because Harrison's business uses a cloud-based system and a shared drive, both of which are not located in Houston, important data was not at risk.

She had a strategy for staying connected, too. “I made sure that I could use my devices to create a Wi-Fi hotspot, and I even had two smartphones on separate networks — T-Mobile and AT&T,” says Harrison. “If one was down, I had access to the other.”

Harrison also made sure all her emergency contacts and source material were in printed form so that when batteries on her devices died, she still had access to the information.

As Harvey approached, she met with her colleagues to conduct a formal document review for emergency planning and to ensure as much continuity as possible. Then, the floods came. Harrison, her husband and all three of their dogs were rescued from their home by air

boat. They spent a few nights in a shelter.

Harrison is satisfied with her preparations, and she says there was a silver lining in the end.

“In working on the cleanup and recovery, I have neighbors who are friends now and we may



have never spoken had this not happened,” says Harrison. “You realize how unifying this experience can be.”

Exercising extreme precaution

Elizabeth Fordham, founding principal at Quill & Ink, did not have to evacuate her proper-

ty. It didn't suffer any flood damage, either. Still, she was forced to make hurricane and flooding preparations.

She backed up her computer files to external hard drives and brought electronic rechargers. She also made sure her important papers, documents and contact information were stored in waterproof, carry-all containers.

Even though she was not impacted in the same way as many others, she feels the whole experience left a strong impression on her.

“Social media is beyond powerful,” she says. “It played a tremendous role in Hurricane Harvey communications. Initially, social media communicated what was going on and where. As the devastation began to unfold in Houston, we saw firsthand that it would take everyone rolling up their sleeves and getting to work helping others as soon as it was safe to

do so.”

To ensure that her business was only minimally interrupted, she called clients before the rains hit.

“I checked to see if anyone needed anything written before we signed off for what we thought would be a few days,” she said. “I was in touch with clients during the storm, primarily to make sure everyone was safe.”

The main business lesson Fordham learned was to be diligent about putting important backups and copies of certain papers and documentation into a safety deposit box. But like Harrison, the larger lesson for her was an even greater appreciation for the “goodness in people and the greatness that is rising from the ashes.” **T**

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