

PRSA

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A Look at Influencer Marketing



First Person Page 8



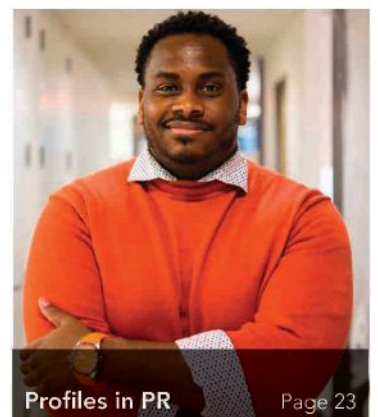
Conference Preview Page 18



Media Relations Page 20



Education Page 21



Profiles in PR Page 23

What to Consider Before Pursuing a Master's

By Kerry O'Grady

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared on PRSA's Tri-State District blog.



As a professor in the M.S. in Public Relations and Corporate Communication program at NYU's School of Professional Studies, people assume I'm unanimously pro-master's degree. In fact, some even think encouraging others to get one is a function of my job.

However, this couldn't be further from the truth. Continuing your formal education shouldn't be an easy decision. There's a lot to consider, including:

- **Cost:** Education is not cheap. Whether you're paying your own way, others are paying, or you're considering aid, it's important to make sure you understand the investment required.
- **Time:** Adding even part-time classes to your schedule as an adult can be a lot different than college. Odds are you're working, maintain a busy social life and may even have family commitments.
- **Energy:** There's a myth about graduate school instructors. Students

think we are super flexible; for example, some believe they can skip a class or hand in an assignment late because of a work or family commitment. In fact, I've been asked during admission events if we let things "slide." The answer is no. We expect that if you're in school, you're going to put in the work required (and depending on the program, that can mean up to 20 to 30 hours per week of assignments).

The next thing you need to consider are your goals. Why, *exactly*, do you want to get an advanced degree? Here are three strong reasons:

- 1. You intend on changing careers:** If you don't have PR experience but want to work in the profession, then a master's would be helpful to gain necessary background, insight, hard skills and soft skills.
- 2. You can't perform parts of your current job:** If you currently work in public relations but have been told you need improvement in specific areas, then an advanced degree may be a good idea.
- 3. You've always wanted to get an advanced degree:** If you've always dreamed of a master's in public relations, then you should absolutely go out and get one.



And here are three not-so-strong reasons to get a master's:

- 1. You don't know what else to do with your life:** You should never embark on earning a degree just because you're confused or want something different (yet, don't know what that "different" is). Take the time to first figure out why you don't feel fulfilled or happy.
- 2. You want a raise:** Unfortunately, earning a master's does not guarantee a raise. It's nice to have, but it won't necessarily yield a larger paycheck — at least not at first.
- 3. You want a promotion:** Like the dream of a salary bump, a promotion isn't

guaranteed after earning your master's, either. However, the degree will absolutely make you more specialized, which in turn will make you more qualified for more responsibilities. In short, you'll perform better at work (and thus possibly earn a promotion).

Earning a master's takes a lot of time, money, sacrifice and energy. If you do think an advanced degree is for you, then make the effort to research the jobs you want, the skills they require and the schools that match.

Yet, if you decide heading back to school isn't for you, then that doesn't mean you should stop learning. Continuing your education through professional development will always make you more attractive to your current — and future — employer. ❖

Kerry O'Grady is a full-time clinical assistant professor of public relations at the NYU School of Professional Studies, Division of Programs in Business. Past positions include roles at *Women's Health*, *Parents* and *American Baby* magazines. Connect with her on Twitter @OGradyKL.

3 Hacks to Declutter Your Digital Professional Life

By Hanna Porterfield



Many PR and communications pros are organized, Type-A people. Even if that's not you, you probably still have a system for being productive — whether it's using to-do lists on Post-it notes, calendar reminders or recurring conference calls. But amid "getting things done," we often forget to make sure we're working the most efficient way we can.

In the spirit of reverse spring cleaning, here are some tips to help you declutter your digital professional life this fall.

Email autopilot

If you're using folders to organize your emails by project, client, deadline or other subject, then take it a step further by having your email software filter messages into those folders for you. If you receive daily digests or Google alerts, for example, you can direct them to client-specific folders. To track whether a recipient has read your email before you follow up on it, try the Streak plug-in for Gmail.

When traveling, I often fall behind on my well-intentioned attempts at organizing my inbox. So when I return

from a vacation or business trip, rather than let old emails pile up I enter a search query for a particular subject and then drag large quantities of related emails to their respective folders at once. For example, I search by domain (the part of the email address following the @ sign) to quickly find all the messages I've received from people at one company, rather than just from one specific person.

Social media sweep

There are two types of people on Facebook — those who have hundreds of friends, and those who regularly click "unfriend" to keep their social media feed personal. Which ever kind you are, I encourage you to clean up your company's social media presence by unfollowing accounts that are no longer active or relevant to your mission.

Some social media users consider a high-following to low-follower ratio a sign of a poor-quality profile. Combat that perception by making sure the social-media

pages you manage for your company or clients aren't wasting follows on inactive accounts. The apps ManageFlitter for Twitter and Followers Pro + for Instagram help you sift through and review the social media accounts you follow to see whether they're still active.



Similarly, if your company maintains public lists on Twitter, then update them every few months. If your company account has a public list that includes staff members, make sure it only lists current

employees. Your Twitter lists of journalists covering particular beats should also be kept current, to make sure they're still reporting on subjects you find relevant.

Task refresh

Are you a task-management hopper? Maybe you keep losing Post-it notes or have a digital memo on your phone that's too long to scroll.

If notification bubbles from countless apps are getting lost on your phone, then you can set up an "if this, then that" (ifttt.com) command to text yourself 24 hours before events scheduled on your Google calendar. The software connects and automates apps, devices and services from different developers.

Whatever the case, keep looking for new productivity hacks. Let me know how you declutter digitally by tweeting me @citygirlhanna and including the hashtag #PRSA. ❖

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