Public relations (PR) specialists create and maintain a favorable public image for the organization they represent. The media releases they design shape public perception of their organization and increase awareness of its work and goals.

According to the Public Relations Society of America, “public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and the public.” This nearly $9 billion industry manages and builds company and individual reputations by aiming specific information at target audiences, such as the public, investors, partners, or employees, to introduce or maintain a particular perception of the company or individual.

As online reputation management grows in the changing climate of social media, this industry flourishes. With high amounts of content being pushed out by organizations, they need image and spin experts on the defense (public relations experts).

The structure of companies or departments in the industry varies depending on the size and kind of organization. Large organizations usually have their own public relations departments. There are also stand-alone public relations agencies that represent companies and individuals. Public relations specialists may work on staff or as freelance consultants for companies, nonprofit organizations, hospitals, colleges, or other institutions. Public relations specialists also work for government agencies.

Public relations specialists usually work in offices, but they also deliver speeches, attend meetings, community activities, and occasionally travel.

Most public relations specialists work full time during regular business hours. Long workdays are common, as is overtime.

The median annual wage for public relations specialists was $56,770 in 2015. Employment of public relations specialists is projected to grow 6 percent from 2014 to 2024. Candidates can expect strong competition for jobs at advertising and public relations firms and organizations with large media exposure.

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.
A Career in Public Relations

Skills & Experience Needed

Resume
Demonstrate your strong writing abilities by ensuring your resume is clear, concise, and grammatically flawless. Writing samples are often required. Linking to your blog or portfolio is appropriate. Display your social media savvy, ensuring that your social media brand represents your professional interests and expertise.

Skills Required
• Communication Skills
• Social Media expertise
• Writing Skills
• Creativity
• Interpersonal Skills
• Research Skills

Experience
Get involved early so you can begin building your skill set and understanding of the field. Public Relations & Advertising generally does not provide compensation for interns, so prepare for that. Outreach to campus departments for additional opportunities. Any opportunity to write press releases, guest blog, or provide social media support can be invaluable experience.

Hiring Process and Timelines
Traditional hiring processes exist. After applying you may be interviewed over the phone, followed by an in-person interview. There is no set recruiting timeline for this industry.

Sample Job Titles
• Media relations specialists
• Communications specialists
• Community relations professionals
• Press secretaries
• Account coordinators
• PR coordinators
• Account executives
• Account supervisors
• Public relations officers

UMD Campus Resources
• UMD PRSSA
• Undergraduate Communication Association

Other Resources
• Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)
• Washington Women in PR

Where are UMD Alums?

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