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## COMM 321.50: Introduction to Public Relations

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*University of Montana - Missoula*

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# Introduction to Public Relations

Fall, 2012



**Course:** Introduction to Public Relations COMM321

**Instructor:** Kathryn D. Hubbell, APR, MS, Fellow PRSA, Adjunct Professor

**Phone:** 406-531-9355

**Office Hours:** Live chats and Skype calls available by appointment in addition to those scheduled

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## Course Description:

An individual interested in a public relations career must cultivate a great number of communication skills, including many you may have developed in other courses: interpersonal communication, organizational communication, small group communication, negotiation and conflict, to name a few. We'll add media relations and social media to the mix, go into the legal issues of public relations, and examine theories about public opinion and persuasion, and what motivates all of us to behave as we do. All of our work will be based on a foundation of applying ethical principles to the practice of public relations and of understanding the role of the First Amendment in our work. Our focus will be to understand the role of the public relations practitioner, to begin to practice the skills necessary for success in the field, and to understand the larger societal and historical frameworks in which public relations practitioners work today.

**Suggestion:** Due to the writing-intensive nature of COMM 321, students should seriously consider waiting to enroll in this class until they have passed WRIT 101 (formerly ENEX 101) or its equivalent and one additional writing course with a C or better. Ideally, you would have also passed the UDWPA with a score of 33, 34, 44, 45, or 55. I do not have time to teach the fundamentals of English to students who are about to graduate. It is unfair to expect me to do so, and it is unnecessarily frustrating to you. Also, you owe it to yourself to ensure you are a proficient writer upon completion of your degree. You'll find you'll get more out of the class if you have a solid foundation in basic grammar and English composition.

## Textbook and Materials Required

### Course Learning Outcomes

### Notes about Taking an Online Class

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### Grading and Assignments

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### Class Routine

### Course Outline

### Submitting Assignments

### Technology

### Academic Integrity

### About the Instructor

## **Textbook and Materials Required**

All are available through the UM bookstore

1. *Public Relations: A Value-Driven Approach* (5th edition). Guth, D. W., & Marsh, C. (2012). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
  2. *Associated Press Stylebook*, 2011, Associated Press.
  3. *The Everyday Writer*, Fourth Edition, Andrea A. Lunsford, Franklin E. Horowitz, 2009, St. Martins. ISBN-13: 9780312594565 ISBN-10: 0312594569
- OR
- A Writer's Reference*, Sixth Edition. Diana Hacker. 2009, Bedford/St. Martins  
ISBN-13: 978-0-312-59332-2

Additional required articles available online and will be posted as the term progresses.

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## Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Have developed an understanding of the public relations profession, its history, and its legal and ethical underpinnings;
2. Have practiced writing for the media and practiced using the *AP Stylebook*.
3. Have practiced applying a four-step process to a public relations problem;
4. Have learned to understand the role of values in PR and work to incorporate them into the public relations process;
5. Have learned to consider and evaluate a wide variety of communications channels, including social media;
6. Have learned about the various specialties in public relations, and the various types of careers the profession offers.

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## Notes about Taking an Online Class

### ***If this is your first online class:***

The rhythm of an online course is very different from on-campus courses. Rather than one class meeting per week, the course activities are distributed over a week to allow for flexibility in participation. Students and instructors may make postings to the course around the clock. Regular participation in discussion board assignments and in all other parts of the course is mandatory. Though work may be posted at any time of day or night, students need to be accountable to assignment deadlines spelled out in course assignment pages and the course syllabus. All classes will include weekly discussion board assignments in addition to papers, case studies and/or any specific projects assigned.

### ***For those who have taken an online course before:***

Students report that if they've had a bad experience with an online class, it's usually due to one of two major reasons: either the instructor was not engaged and rarely present online, or expectations and instructions were not clear. You'll find you won't have any trouble here; I'm online every day. And if expectations and instructions are not clearly spelled out, please let me know. I'll do all I can to clear things up immediately.

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## Teaching Philosophy and Methodology

This is a very results-oriented class, because that's what counts for PR professionals in the field. Each session is meant to give you a framework through which to think about the material, theory or concept presented, and then to bring it all down to earth with real-life examples and questions.

I have found the more contact students make (both with their peers and with their instructors) the more successful they are in the course. You'll have multiple opportunities to communicate and multiple formats for participating; I encourage you to interact and engage as fully as possible.

I'll be asking you to fill out a survey – which stays private between you and me – about your background, any difficulties you've had with other online classes, your learning style, and other things.

**Deadlines:** Although many time constraints have been released for you in this course, deadlines are still inevitable. To keep you caught up in the course there are deadlines by which each assignment must be completed. Assignments may always be completed earlier than the deadline, but any assignment that is not up-loaded to the website by **8 p.m. in your time zone on the date due** will receive a 10% grade deduction or more for **each hour** the paper is late. (Discussion board comments are due by 10 p.m. on the due date.)



**Flexibility:** I understand the needs of working adults: I earned my bachelor=s degree while a single parent with two young children, and my master=s while running a public relations consulting firm. I try to be as flexible as possible in accommodating your needs.

However, in an emergency, you need to contact me a minimum of 24 hours in advance if you anticipate some problems, or as soon as you realize an emergency is taking place that will disrupt your life. Emergencies in this class do not include your involvement in university sports or the large number of classes you are taking. It is up to you to manage your time well. If you tell me after the fact, there will not be the same leeway. Example: don't tell me two weeks later that your computer crashed and ask if you can make up assignments. I'll tell you no, because it's not fair to the students who did turn in their work on time, when you should have gone to a public library, or a computer lab on campus, or borrowed the use of a friend's computer to complete your work.

**Consideration:** The overall atmosphere in the class should be that of respect – for yourself and everyone else in the class. Help foster an atmosphere where a priority for education and a respect for all students are valued by engaging in comments that relate to course content and show tolerance for opinions different from your own.

If you decide to work in a communications field, you need to learn both compassion and respect for others who may differ greatly from you; you'll always be speaking and writing on behalf of someone else in public relations, and learning to walk in another person's shoes is an extremely important skill in this profession. It almost goes without saying, then, that harassment of any kind is both inappropriate and intolerable; disciplinary action will be taken should it occur.

Your attitude matters in this class, because it matters in public relations. If you whine and complain about the work load, you are more than welcome to leave the class. If, however, you get through any needed re-writes with a cheerful attitude; if you participate each week with a positive outlook; if you encourage your classmates and work to clear up anything that's confusing to you rather than waiting until the last week of class – these things will all be factored into your final grade.

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### **Grading and Assignments**

Grading Components	Possible Points
<a href="#">Quiz on Syllabus, Fair Use Doctrine, UM Writing Standards</a>	20
Discussion Board Assignments 1 discussion board each week, 10 points each, 13 weeks	130
Press releases (2: 25 points each)	50
First essay: project choice, target audiences, fact sheet	35
Second essay: legal and ethical issues	35
Third essay: research results on your project/organization	35

Mid-term exam	50
Fourth essay: goals, objectives	35
Fifth essay: Strategies, tactics and timeline	35
Final exam	75
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500</b>
Extra credit essay: Crisis communications	35

**Contesting Grades:** I am willing to go over any assignment or exam with you to discuss your concerns. Please wait 24 hours after receiving an assignment back before you contact me. When you do contact me, please write down your specific concerns and your backing for these concerns, and I will research your situation. We'll take it from there should further discussion need to occur.

#### **Extra Credit Options:**

- Participation in any of the scheduled live chats or Skype calls - 5 points. MUST RSVP 24 hours in ADVANCE.
- One extra-credit essay is available at the end of the term for 35 points.

**An extra-credit observation:** Too often, those who end up needing extra credit don't take advantage of the opportunities as they come up in class; and those who **don't** need the extra credit cover their bases and go for it anyway. Let me suggest that you all go for it anyway. It's a great buffer zone that will help take stress out of your studies.

Grading is not done on a curve, but by a strict percentage of the total number of points possible, plus any earned extra credit:

A: 95%-100%	C+: 77%-79%	D-: 60%-63%
A-: 90%- 94%	C: 74%-76%	F: Anything below 60%
B+: 87%- 89%	C-: 70%-73%	
B: 84%- 86%	D+: 67%-69%	
B-: 80%- 83%	D: 64%-66%	

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#### **How Essays are Graded**

**NOTE:** See the "Checklist for turning in assignments" and "Instructions for Writing a 500-Word Essay" on the class site in the same folder as the syllabus. You will be held to the standards in each of these documents; consider them additions to this syllabus.

Each essay is read twice before grading: the first time is for content, and the second time is for sentence structure, AP style, grammar, spelling and punctuation. Points are docked heavily for errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, AP style, and the like. For the most part, suggestions are provided if there is a problem with content, unless the content has no relevance to the assignment. *If the basic assignment wasn't followed, and/or it's obvious that instructions have not been read, you will receive 0 points for not following instructions.*



**Special Note:** If you make an error on one assignment – say, you don’t have singular/plural agreement between your nouns, verbs and pronouns, or you don’t understand the difference between “its” and “it’s” – and I correct that error and let you know what’s wrong, be sure you look it up in your writer’s guide, in the AP Stylebook, or in the dictionary (whichever applies) and learn how to avoid it in the future. If I see the same error (the same type of error) on the next assignment or the next discussion board, you may well be docked two points instead of one; if the error occurs a third time on yet another assignment, you may be docked three points, and so forth. It will make a huge difference if you look up the errors as you go and learn not to make them. If, for example, you make four errors on a 35-point essay and two of those errors are repeats, the means you lose six points out of 35 immediately, taking you from a possible A to a B-.

Written assignments will be graded and returned within five days or less unless you are notified otherwise. From time to time grading may take a day or two longer.

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### **How tests are conducted and graded**

Tests are a mixture of multiple choice, true-and-false, fill-in-the-blank, essays and short answers. There will always be one or two questions asking how you would best *apply* a certain concept from the text, so be thinking about that as you read the assignments each week; i.e., try to think of examples in the news or in your own life that might illustrate the concept or principle.

Some questions are graded automatically by the computer, and some are graded manually by the instructor. ***The score you see when you finish the test is not your real score: it’s just what the computer has added up so far, before I do my own grading.*** You will always have feedback when your exam is returned, both for correct answers and for those you missed.

All exams are, of course, open-book exams; a list of topic areas to be covered will be posted a minimum of one week in advance. During the exam time period, you will have a 96-hour window in which to log in; usually this is scheduled from 8 a.m. Thursday to 8 p.m. Sunday of exam week. The final exam is the only thing on the schedule final exam week, so you can choose to take that exam any time from that Tuesday at 8 a.m. to Friday at 8 p.m. You can log in anytime during that time period, but you will then have just the allotted time to take the test – usually 90 minutes for quizzes, and 2 hours for exams. You are given **much** more time than you should need so that all different learning styles and reading styles are accommodated.

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### **Discussion Boards: How they work**

The discussion boards and any live chats or SKYPE calls are our virtual classroom. They also serve as evidence of your attendance and participation. Throughout this class you are expected to treat each other and your instructor with respect. Everyone will be given an opportunity to take compelling positions on issues and topics, persuade others with appropriate rationale, and identify alternative perspectives while maintaining positive, productive, and professional discussion environments.

Your discussion board postings will be evaluated by the following criteria:



- **Quality:** Postings should reflect a strong understanding of the topic and should include substantive ideas supported by course readings, personal experience or additional research. Posts should extend or deepen discussion in a relevant way.
- **Timeliness:** Initial responses are made early in the discussion period. Replies to fellow students are presented in a timely manner to allow for robust discussion and reflection. Must meet deadlines to receive credit.
- **Visibility:** Actively involved 4-5 days per week.
- **Quantity:** Post a first response plus a minimum of 2 additional discussion responses to classmates for a passing grade. Responses must be posted over several days.
- **Readability:** Posts are visually attractive and understandable to your readers, e.g. break text into paragraphs, space between paragraphs.
- **Clarity:** Ideas are communicated in clear, grammatical English. Goal of post writing is business writing that is clear, concise, direct and professional.

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### **Class Routine**

**Monday mornings:** Check for the postings of the reading assignment for the week, along with any written assignments, the weekly discussion board, and the drop box for your written assignment.

**Fridays:** Initial discussion board comments are due by 10 p.m. your time. You cannot post your initial comments on Saturday; that day is the deadline for responses only.

**Saturdays:** Your responses to **two** of your classmates are due on the discussion board by 10 p.m. your time. Respond first to someone who doesn't seem to have a response from anyone posted yet; if everyone has had a response, then you're free to post where you like. Your responses should never be as simple as "I agree," or "Good idea!" That encouragement is welcome, but you should take the discussion one step further by posting suggestions or asking relevant questions to carry the discussion further.

Tests will not be visible until the day of the test.

**Sundays:** Written assignments are due by 8 p.m. your time. Take note of the extended deadline on Thanksgiving week.

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### **Course Outline**

**Week 1: Aug 27-Sept 2** Introductions; What is PR?

**Readings:** Chapter 1

Public Relations Defined (from PRSA):

<http://www.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/PublicRelationsDefined>

**Aug. 31, Friday:** Discussion board introductions due; surveys due (both are mandatory but ungraded)

**Week 2: Sept 3-9** Jobs in PR; and the differences between public relations, marketing and advertising

**Readings:** Chapter 2 (Jobs in Public Relations)  
Chapter 13 (Public Relations and Marketing)

### **Sept 3 Labor Day**

**Sept. 7:** Initial discussion board comments due

**Sept. 8:** Discussion board responses due

**Thurs., Sept. 6, 8 a.m. – Sun., Sept. 9, 8 p.m.** – Window open for quiz on syllabus, Fair Use Doctrine of Copyright Law, University of Montana writing Standards, and posted instructions for writing a 500-word essay.

### **Week 3: Sept 10-16** History of Public Relations

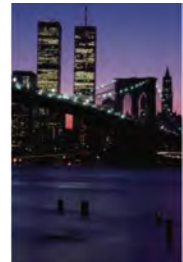
**Readings:** Chapter 3

Edward Bernays video posted on class site

**Tuesday, Sept. 11: 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11**

**Sept. 14** Initial discussion board comments due

**Sept. 15:** Discussion board responses due



### **Week 4: Sept 17-23,** The Publics in Public Relations

**Readings:** Chapter 4

**Sept. 21:** Initial discussion board comments due

**Sept. 22:** Discussion board responses due

**Sept. 23:** First essay due: choice of project -- description, target publics, public relations challenge

### **Week 5: Sep 24-Sept. 30** Ethical and Legal Issues

**Readings:** Chapter 6 – Ethics and Social Responsibility

Chapter 15 – Public Relations and the Law

**Sept. 25: Mid-term exam topics posted (exam is next week)**

**Sept. 25, 26 or 27: Optional live chats,** 4 pm or 7 pm Mountain Time

On the agenda: review for the mid-term; open Q & A

Time and date to be confirmed -- Must RSVP one day in advance

**Sept. 28:** Initial discussion board comments due

**Sept. 29:** Discussion board responses due

**Sept. 30:** Second essay due: ethics, legal issues

### **Week 6: Oct 1-7** Research and Evaluation

**Readings:** Chapter 7

**View:** Public Relations Theory

<http://www.slideshare.net/Brett509/public-relations-theory-537389>

**Oct. 5:** Discussion board comments due

**Oct. 6:** Discussion board responses due



**Thursday, Oct. 4, 8 a.m.- Sunday, Oct. 7, 8pm – Mid-term exam  
(window open to take exam)**

**Week 7: Oct 8-14** Communications Theory and Public Opinion

**Readings:** Chapter 5

Online article to be posted

**View:** Public Relations Theory

<http://www.slideshare.net/Brett509/public-relations-theory-537389>

Please note: Prof. Hubbell will be available on a limited basis Oct. 12, 13 and 14 this week due to attendance at the international PRSA conference.

**Oct. 12:** Initial discussion board comments due

**Oct. 13:** Discussion board responses due

**Oct. 14:** Third essay due: research results for your project; any changes in the public relations challenge you'll address are to be noted

**Week 8: Oct 15-21,** Planning: Strategies in Public Relations

**Readings:** Chapter 8

Please note: Prof. Hubbell will be available on a limited basis Oct. 15 and 16 this week due to attendance at the international PRSA conference.

**Oct. 19:** Initial discussion board comments due

**Oct. 20:** Discussion board responses due

**Oct. 21:** Fourth essay due: Research summary, goals and objectives

**Week 9: Oct. 22-28,** Tactics of Public Relations

**Readings:** Chapter 9

**Nov. 4:** Initial discussion board comments due

**Nov. 5:** Discussion board responses due

**Nov. 6:** Fifth essay due: Strategies and tactics for your project

**Week 10, Oct. 29-Nov. 4** Multimedia Message Development; Media relations

**Readings:** Chapter 10 / selected readings from the Desk-Top  
Media Relations Manual

**Wednesday, Oct. 31: Happy Halloween!**

**Nov. 2:** Initial discussion board comments due

**Nov. 3:** Discussion board responses due.

**Nov. 4:** Traditional press release due

**Week 11: Nov. 5-11,** Cyber-Relations in the Digital Age

**Readings:** Chapter 11

Online readings will be posted.



**Nov. 9:** Initial discussion board comments due

**Nov. 10:** Discussion board responses due

**Veterans Day: Sunday, Nov. 11**

**Week 12, Nov. 12-18:** Social Media and Public Relations

**Readings:** Online readings will be posted

**Nov. 16:** Initial discussion board comments due

**Nov. 17:** Discussion board responses due

**Nov. 18:** Social media press release due

**Week 13, Nov. 19-25** Crisis Communications

**Readings:** Chapter 12 / Online cases will be posted

**Thanksgiving: Nov. 22**

No discussion board this week

No written assignment this week

***This week's readings do form the basis for the extra-credit essay should you choose to write it.***



**Week 14, Nov. 26-Dec. 2** Cross-Cultural Communications

**Readings:** Chapter 14

**Nov. 27:** Final exam topics posted

**Nov. 30:** Initial discussion board comments due

**Dec. 1:** Discussion board responses due

**Week 15, Dec. 3-9** Your future in Public Relations/Tweak Week

**Readings:** Chapter 16

**Dec. 5 (Weds.)** – Live chat for final exam review (voluntary)

**Must R.S.V.P. one day in advance**

**Dec. 9** – Initial discussion board comments due

**Dec. 10** Discussion board responses due

No written assignments this week, but you may tweak (revise) and re-submit one already-graded essay for a higher grade; it must be an essay that was turned in on time in the first place.

**Dec 10-116 Final exam: window open 8 a.m. Tuesday-8 pm Friday**

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### **Submitting Assignments**

**Please save all work in a Microsoft Word file, if at all possible.** If you do not have access to Microsoft Word, you must save the file in rich text format, or “.rtf” – although your formatting might not come through, this should guarantee that your content does make it through cyberspace.



Be very careful in submitting your work. You are responsible for making sure that the assignment you send is correctly uploaded and readable before the due date. This requires some double checking on your part, but is necessary. Assignments that are unreadable will not be accepted; you will not receive credit and will not be able to re-submit such assignments. Any assignment that has not been put through a spell checker and grammar checker (usually the same thing in the Word program) will not be graded. It's very obvious when this has not been done; Word kindly reminds you by underlining misspellings in red and grammatical problems in green.

All of your assignments will either be submitted to the discussion board or directly through your digital drop box.

**Do not turn assignments in through e-mail without specific permission from the instructor.** The digital drop box and discussion board are the ONLY places assignments will be accepted. The assignment information will always be clearly indicated in the instructions.

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### **Technology**

A known fact of technology is that it sometimes fails. Computers crash, printers run out of ink, Internet connections falter. In order to control for these failures, since the Internet is your only main link to the class, your guiding principle should be to think ahead and be prepared. Save your work often, and in several places. Leave yourself time before assignments are due, and before live chats and Skype calls, to allow for connection errors, and familiarize yourself with communication resources (public libraries, perhaps) in your area in case you need to use them as a back-up to complete your assignments.

The only acceptable technology-related excuse for not meeting the requirements of this course is a documented failure of the UM Moodle system. If you find the system is not working, I'll have most likely figured it out at the same time, or we'll all have received an e-mail notice about it. Nevertheless, you should notify me, and then contact the help desk at CIS (Help Desk: 406.243.4357, [helpdesk@umontana.edu](mailto:helpdesk@umontana.edu)). You should also continue attempting to access the system – any failures in the system are usually resolved within an hour. If documented failures of the system occurred when an assignment was due, you will not be docked late points, but it is expected that you will try again to get an assignment in as soon as the system is up again.

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### **Academic Integrity and UM Writing Standards**

All students taking this course must adhere to the University of Montana's academic dishonesty policy as presented in the Student Conduct Code (SCC). As noted in the code, students are expected to practice academic honesty. Any actions that include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors are reasons for pursuing academic and university sanctions: plagiarism, copying another student's exam, allowing another student to copy from your exam or work, sharing information with another student during testing sessions, acquiring or possessing an exam without the instructor's permission, tampering with course materials or resources (including library references) submitting false information (data, quotations, citations, etc.), representing someone else's work as your own, etc. Anyone caught in any act of academic dishonesty will, at the very least, receive 0 points for the assignment. In addition, steps will be taken to initiate University sanctions, as provided for in the SCC. You are responsible for reading and understanding this code – if you have any



questions, please contact me or the department chair. The SCC can be viewed at [www.umt.edu/studentaffairs/sccAcademicConduct.htm#9](http://www.umt.edu/studentaffairs/sccAcademicConduct.htm#9)

**Original Work** – I expect all the work you do in this class to be completely original. No work that has been done by classmates (current or previous) may be used by you, in whole or in part, for your work in this class. No work that you have done (for any other course, or in this course if you have taken it previously) may be submitted to fulfill the assignments in this class. Finally, absolutely no plagiarism (from the web, from organizations, from any other source) will be tolerated – be sure that everything you write in this class is completely your own creation. ***I will be checking the hot links in your documents as well as your sources; and you should know that I am very sensitive to writing style.*** If something in your paper is completely different from the way you normally write, it'll raise a red flag and I'll start looking for the actual source.

Bottom line: do your own thinking. Ask me tons of questions – there is no such thing as a stupid question, ever – but stretch your own brains and come to your own conclusions. These things will bring out your own individual personalities and unique traits, and when it comes to public communications those are highly valuable attributes to have.

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### About the Instructor

Kathryn D. Hubbell, APR, M.S., Fellow PRSA, and owner of AdScripts, Inc. ([www.adscripts.com](http://www.adscripts.com)) has 28 years' experience in public relations and advertising. She holds a degree in journalism with a focus in public relations from the University of Oregon, is accredited in public relations (APR) through the Public Relations Society of America, and holds a Master's in Communications Management from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University in New York. Stories she has written for her clients have appeared in local, national and international publications and broadcast outlets, and she has won awards for her work in advertising as well as for her work in public relations.

Kathy has specialized expertise in research and strategic planning, marketing, media relations, crisis communications and interview training. She has worked in fields as diverse as tourism, healthcare, commercial real estate development, the quick-lube industry, professional services, the wood and paper products industries, public utilities, government services, law enforcement, manufacturing and performing arts.

Kathy was the original founder of the Missoula Businesswomen's Network in 1984, an organization still going strong with approximately 300 members; and she founded the Montana Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. She served as 2001 Chair of PRSA's North Pacific District, encompassing eight western states, and served on the national PRSA Board of Directors from 2008-2009. She was inducted into PRSA's College of Fellows in 2006.

On a personal note, she loves annual trips to Glacier National Park, respites at the Oregon Coast, music, theater, hiking, sailing, writing and reading, and spending time with her grandchildren.

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