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Contact: Tom Gable
tom@gablepr.com
(619) 284-1714

Carolyn Marr
carolyn.marr@prsa.org
(212) 460-1420

**PR Industry Leaders See Authenticity, ROI, Social Media Mastery
as Top Three Issues Facing the Profession in 2009-10**

*Respondents More Interested in Client Results Than the Economy
In Survey Conducted by PRSA Counselors Academy*

NEW YORK (July 1, 2009) — In an era dominated by millions of corporate, institutional, government and other voices clamoring for attention through every communications channel possible, members of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Counselors Academy responding to a national survey, ranked “providing authentic strategic counsel,” “demonstrating return on investment” and “mastering social media” as the top three issues to be addressed in helping their clients and advancing the future of the public relations profession over the next two years.

The online survey was conducted in April and May among 450 members of Counselors Academy, a Professional Interest Section of PRSA dedicated to providing principals and senior counselors of public relations firms with the resources to grow their firms and the counseling skills of their people. Membership is limited to Accredited counselors (PRSA or Canadian Public Relations Society) or consultants with 10 or more years experience in the profession. Eighty-nine responded, or almost 20 percent of those surveyed.

“The top issues are related to how agencies must focus on providing value and ethically-driven, strategic and authentic client service,” said Sydney Ayers, APR, chair, Counselors Academy. “The results indicate the kind of forward thinking going on among senior counselors throughout the United States and bode well for the future of our profession.”

The survey asked respondents to rank from 1 to 5 their impressions of different internal and external issues facing the profession in 2009-10 in four major categories, with 1 being “Very Unimportant” and 5 being “Very Important.” The top four issues in each category include:

- **Client Relations:** providing authentic, strategic counsel, 4.66 (No. 1 overall); demonstrating return on investment, 4.54 (No. 3 overall); measuring results, 4.4; and connecting public relations to the C-suite, 4.22).
- **Media and Technology:** mastering social media, 4.65 (No. 2 overall); enhancing technology capabilities, 4.43 (No. 4 overall); decline of traditional media, 4.24; and the 24/7 news cycle, 4.21.
- **External Issues:** the economy, 4.44 (No. 5 overall); government regulation, 3.28; losing business to consulting firms, 3.24; and dominance of the biggest multinational firms, 3.12.
- **Partnerships and Resources:** values and ethics management, 4.27; developing strategic partnerships, 4.26; recruiting and retaining talent, 4.25; and expanding agency services, 4.12.

Respondents represented a cross section of agency sizes: under \$500,000 in annual billings, 37.3 percent; \$500,000 to \$999,999, 16.9 percent; \$1 million to \$4.99 million, 34.9 percent; \$5 million to \$9.99 million, 6.0 percent; \$10 million to \$19.99 million, 2.4 percent; and more than \$20 million, 2.4 percent. Not all respondents answered all the questions.

Those responding were largely senior practitioners: less than 10 years in the profession, 3.5 percent; 10 to 15 years, 4.7 percent; 16 to 20 years, 11.8 percent; 21 to 30 years, 48.2 percent; and more than 30 years, 31.8 percent.

The results were initially released only to attendees of the 2009 Counselors Academy Spring Conference in La Quinta, Calif., held May 31–June 2, during a panel discussion featuring five members of the Strategic Advisors for Growth and Excellence (SAGE).

The panel was chaired by Tom Gable, APR, Fellow PRSA, who designed the survey. Panel members included Tom Amberg, APR, Fellow PRSA; Steve Cody; Gwin Johnston, APR, Fellow PRSA; and Eric Morgenstern, APR, Fellow PRSA. A major discussion point was how agencies can provide authentic counsel to their clients and counter perceptions about public relations being based on hype and spin, rather than building reputations for the long term.

One approach suggested by Davis Young, newly inducted SAGE counselor, was to provide values and ethics management services to agency clients and community organizations. Build educational programs based on the PRSA Code of Ethics and add components incorporating reputation management, corporate social responsibility and incorporating image as a part of corporate strategy — walking the talk.

More information on Counselors Academy and results of the survey are available at www.counselorsacademy.org.

About Counselors Academy

Counselors Academy (www.counselorsacademy.org) is a Professional Interest Section of PRSA dedicated to providing principals and senior counselors of public relations firms

with the resources to grow their firms and the counseling skills of their people. Drawing from the considerable talent of its membership, Academy programs are designed to encourage networking, mentoring and peer support. Benefits include the annual spring conference, monthly teleseminars, and interactive discussions of the issues of the day through a members-only e-Group and monographs from the thought leaders of the public relations profession. Membership is limited to PRSA-Accredited counselors or consultants with more than 10 years experience in the profession.

About the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)

The [Public Relations Society of America](http://www.prsa.org) (www.prsa.org), headquartered in New York City, is the world's largest organization for public relations professionals with nearly 32,000 professional and student members. PRSA is organized into 109 Chapters and 10 Districts nationwide, and 20 Professional Interest Sections and Affinity Groups, which represent business and industry, counseling firms, independent practitioners, military, government, associations, hospitals, schools, professional services firms and nonprofit organizations. The Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) has 303 Chapters at colleges and universities throughout the United States, and one Chapter in Argentina.

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