

Career Profile

A weekly series devoted to providing information on career exploration

Do You Like

- Talking to others to convey information effectively?
- Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience?
- Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, and asking questions as appropriate?
- Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems?
- Actively looking for ways to help people?

Then This Could Be The Career For You!

The Type of Work

- Respond to requests for information from the media or designate another appropriate spokesperson or information source.
- Study the objectives, promotional policies and needs of organizations to develop public relations strategies that will influence public opinion or promote ideas, products and services.
- Plan and direct development and communication of informational programs to maintain favorable public and stockholder perceptions of an organization's accomplishments and agenda.
- Establish and maintain cooperative relationships with representatives of community, consumer, employee, and public interest groups.
- Prepare or edit organizational publications for internal and external audiences, including employee newsletters and stockholders' reports.
- Coach client representatives in effective communication with the public and with employees.
- Confer with production and support personnel to produce or coordinate production of advertisements and promotions.
- Consult with advertising agencies or staff to arrange promotional campaigns in all types of media for products, organizations, or individuals.

Pathways to Success

Many entry-level public relations specialists have a college degree in public relations, journalism, marketing, or communications, but some do not. Some firms seek college graduates who have worked in electronic or print journalism. Other employers seek applicants with demonstrated communication skills and training or experience in a field related to the firm's business—information technology, healthcare, science, engineering, sales, or finance, for example. Courses in advertising, business administration, finance, political science, psychology, sociology, and creative writing also are helpful. Specialties may be offered in public relations for business, government, and nonprofit organizations.

What Employers Look For

Individuals who possess knowledge of:

- Communications and Media - media production, communication, and dissemination techniques and methods. This includes alternative ways to inform and entertain via written, oral, and visual media.
- Sales and Marketing - principles and methods for showing, promoting, and selling products or services. This includes marketing strategy and tactics, product demonstration, sales techniques, and sales control systems.
- Customer and Personal Service - principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
- Computers and Electronics - circuit boards, processors, chips, electronic equipment, and computer hardware and software, including applications and programming.
- Clerical - administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology.

Job Outlook

There were approximately 275,200 individuals employed as Public Relations Specialists in the United States in 2008. Employment of public relations specialists is expected to grow 24 percent from 2008 to 2018, adding 66,200 jobs, much faster than the average for all occupations. The need for good public relations in an increasingly competitive and global business environment should spur demand for these workers, especially those with specialized knowledge or international experience. Employees who possess additional language capabilities also are in great demand. The recent emergence of social media in the public relations is expected to increase job growth as well. Many public relations firms are expanding their use of these tools, and specialists with skills in them will be needed. Employment in public relations firms is expected to grow as firms hire contractors to provide public relations services, rather than support more full-time staff when additional work is needed.

Earnings Potential

Location	Year	Pay Period	Low	Median	High
United States	2009	Yearly	\$30,500	\$52,000	\$96,600
Ohio	2009	Yearly	\$31,200	\$48,200	\$80,600
Cleveland Elyria-Mentor, OH MSA	2009	Yearly	\$34,000	\$52,600	\$82,600

O*Net Online, <http://online.onetcenter.org>.

DEFINITION: Plan and direct public relations programs designed to create and maintain a favorable public image for employer or client; or if engaged in fundraising, plan and direct activities to solicit and maintain funds for special projects and nonprofit organizations.



PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST

NAME: Denise Roe

JOB TITLE: Development Specialist (Fund Raiser)

COMPANY: Easter Seals Northern Ohio

LOCATION: 41641 North Ridge Road, Elyria

Q. How did you become interested in your particular field?

A. It was truly by accident. Back in 1988 my husband became totally disabled due to a cerebral hemorrhage. After some time in the hospital I was told that my husband was stable enough to be discharged and that I should start looking into which nursing home I wanted to place him in since he would require round the clock care. I chose to take him home to care for him. I soon found out that our medical insurance did not cover the things I needed to take care of my husband at home. I was ready to give up and place him in a nursing home when someone told me to call Easter Seals. After explaining to them what had happened to my husband and what items I needed to take care him at home they told me that they could help. Once I got situated with taking care of my husband at home I wanted to do something to give back to Easter Seals for the assistance they were providing to my husband so I started volunteering at their office. The next thing I knew I was helping at a golf fundraiser driving a golf pro around the course thinking I could do this for a living. That following week I saw an ad in the paper that Easter Seals was looking for a part-time fund-raiser; since I knew what Easter Seals was about I applied for the position. I have been with Easter Seals now for 23 years, 21 of these years as a full time Development Specialist aka fundraiser. I can honestly say I love my job.

Q. Who or what influenced your decision the most and why?

A. My husband and Easter Seals. Since I met my husband right after I graduated from high school I did not have any idea of what career path I wanted to take. At that time I chose the restaurant field so that I had a fluctuating schedule and a lot of free time. After my husband became disabled and I learned about the services Easter Seals provided, as well as having the chance to volunteer and help with a fundraiser, I knew I had found the career that fit me.

Q. How did you get to where you are today?

A. My path started with a need for assistance for my husband to an appreciation of help and a want to give back through volunteering, to a career as a Development Specialist. I now realize that every dollar that is raised will make a difference in a life of a person with a disability.

Q. What skills or certifications do you think are needed to be successful in this field?

A. I was fortunate that my boss back in 1989 decided to take a chance on me since I did not meet the job requirements of a bachelor's degree and/or a few years of fundraising experience. I do think in most cases non-profits do require past experience as well as some background in marketing and communications. As for the skills, a fund-raiser really needs to be able to make a request whether it is for a gift card or large sums of cash to support the event and non-profit. You do need the ability to communicate the importance of your non-profit within your community since the person you are asking probably has been asked 20 times before to support another cause.

Q. What is the best part of your job?

A. Meeting people in our community and knowing that when I coordinate and run a fundraising event that the proceeds will help off-set the cost of services Easter Seals provides to children and adults in our community with disabilities.

Q. Do you have any words of advice for someone considering a career in your field?

A. You have to believe in the services and programs that are provided by the non-profit or you will not be successful in fundraising.

Sources: Occupational Information Network, O*Net Online, <http://online.onetcenter.org>. *U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, <http://stats.bls.gov/oco>