



PATRIK SCHOBER

**THE ART OF
LEADERSHIP
THROUGH
PUBLIC
RELATIONS**

**THE FUTURE
OF EFFECTIVE
COMMUNICATION**

Public Relations & Communications Association

PRCA PROFESSIONAL
The Power of Communication

THE ART OF LEADERSHIP
THROUGH PUBLIC RELATIONS

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THE ART OF LEADERSHIP THROUGH PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Future of Effective Communication

BY

PATRIK SCHOBER

PRAM Consulting, Czech Republic



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

'To Francis Ingham, a true leader and advocate for the public relations industry. Your unwavering commitment to promoting ethical practices and professional standards will continue to inspire and guide us as we navigate the future of this dynamic field'.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patrik Schober, the current Managing Partner, started up PRAM Consulting agency in 2002. At that time, PRAM saw an opportunity to provide consultant services in the field of communication to large multinational firms that were entering the Czech market, not knowing the environment and customs. He was awarded as PR Personality in 2018 and with his team he has won several global and local PR awards, such as Sabre, European Excellence Awards, Golden Drum, ICCO Global Award, EFFIE and Lemur – Czech PR Awards.

Patrik graduated from International Relations at the University College Prague and completed internships at Holmes College in Sydney and the University of California Irvine. He began his career at publishing house Computer Press.

Patrik is also well known in his field as a Chairman of the group of independent PR agencies Worldcom through which he shares his observations with other world PR leaders. It enables him to share the guardianship of a client at an international field. At the same time, Patrik was a Chairman of the Board of Directors of Czech PR Association (APRA), which is a professional association whose primary mission is to present the field of public relations to both professionals and general public. Besides that, to promote best practice, set up ethical standards and start discussions among professionals and to promote the good reputation of the industry.

Patrik is passionate about passing by the knowledge of public relations practices. Besides devoting his time to lecturing at the University of Economics and the Charles University Prague he has been hosting his seminars called PR Brunch since 2015. During each seminar he and his guests introduce and discuss new trends in public relations industry. Beside that he advises companies how to

gain so-called leadability through his workshops titled Leadership Lab that presents a unique facility providing training and coaching in all the facets of leadership behaviour.

Patrik and his wife live in Prague and they are proud parents of two teenage girls. When he is not working, you can find him running long-distance trails or climbing mountains.

FOREWORD

There could not be a more timely moment for this compilation of essays from some of the world's leading PR practitioners and commentators. I would urge anyone interested in the future of our profession to read them eagerly and in detail.

COVID has transformed PR. These terrible years for us all have radically changed the way our industry works; its profile as a professional service; and its prospects and composition.

When COVID struck, our industry like the rest of the world reacted with fear and trepidation, but also with resolve. As I write these words, all of the PRCA, ICCO and Provoke data that I see say that we are slightly bigger than we were a few years ago; that the industry is hiring at pace; and that it is buoyantly confident about the future. Which is a world away from how so many of us felt in 2019.

Against that context of a return to growth, it is an opposite moment to take stock of the nature of challenges ahead of us in the coming 20 years. And this book does just that.

To this end, I would make eight key observations.

1. *We know where the main areas of future growth can be found.*

Not everything has changed. Many trends that had been apparent for years have simply been accelerated. So, for example, we know that the key fundamental drivers of growth in our industry have remained constant for over a decade.

- Companies and CEOs in every region of the world are paying more attention with every passing year to corporate reputation. Something which we saw exacerbated during COVID, where companies' reputations and customer loyalty and engagement soared or crashed depending on the decisions they made.

- The blending of disciplines works in our favour, as organizations shift spend from expensive and often ineffectual advertising campaigns to us instead, based on our ability to narrate a story well.
- We continue to expand the range of services on offer, with a move away from simply pure, old-fashioned PR.
- And we own digital. (of which more below.)

Sectorally, there is remarkable consistency. For years now, the big three areas of growth have been IT and technology; health-care; and financial and professional services. There is no reason to expect this to change.

2. *New professional tools need to be embraced constantly.*

Our industry's great strength is the speed with which it adapts to change. As Roger Hurni and Sarah Polak argue, our industry needs to embrace AI, apps, behavioural design and many other tools besides. Our industry knows of all of these tools, but over the coming years, it must embrace them more whole-heartedly. And over the coming decades, it must embrace whatever new tools, now unthought of, become available.

If we are honest, as an industry, we fail to invest adequately in the professional development of practitioners. In part, this is probably down to the old-fashioned view that in an industry with no real barriers to entry, skills can be picked up on the job. But if PR aspires to be a true profession, then that needs to change, and the coming years need to see the development of proper frameworks for organizations and individuals alike – a point made by Jürgen Gangoly when he writes about leadership and standards.

3. *Measurement and evaluation sophistication continue to increase, but far more needs to be done.*

If our industry is to continue to move up the professional services food chain, then it needs to embrace ever-more sophisticated proof of our value, as Richard Bagnall argues in his contribution.

Now we know that much progress has been made here.

- Awareness of, and use of, International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC) tools has never been higher.
- While avess are alive still, their extinction continues around the world. They are almost completely dead in North America and the United Kingdom, for example.
- Clients are increasingly requesting more varied and detailed measurement methods, such as engagement and sentiment metrics.

But if we look forward to where the industry needs to be in 20 years, then it must surely commit to real investment in data-driven insight. Not just gut feel or exceptional writing, key as those two abilities will always be. But advice founded on rock-solid foundations of knowledge. That's the future. Because if we don't do this, then others – for example, lawyers and management consultants – will.

The tools to meet this goal exist now and grow more accomplished every year. We just need to pay for them – and yes, that involves clients and organizations allocating proper budgets here, not expecting post-campaign evaluation done for free or on the cheap.

4. Digital and the embrace of technology and AI are the way of the future.

There is an excellent ICCO video of Peter Chadlington from a decade ago giving this typically forthright advice: 'If your people can't do digital, then train them in it or fire them. Because otherwise, you won't have a business left to run'.

The good news here is that the most recent ICCO World Report tells us that three of the top four areas of agency investment are digital. That needs to continue, and I believe that it will do.

5. Public expectations of purpose as well as profit are simply going to accelerate. This is an area where we can be critically important to colleagues and clients.

Public expectations were already changing fundamentally pre-COVID. But COVID turned this sentiment into something

resembling the default position. Melissa Waggener Zorkin, Fred Cook and others talk about this. Our industry can guide brands to turn well-meaning words into reality, helping to address the societal challenges that people care about.

And in this regard, and as this book notes, we are missing a trick on ESG. We are uniquely placed to own this area in the same way that we own digital. It plays to all of our strengths and insights.

But an ESG strategy is meaningful only if it is measurable, deliverable and embraced wholeheartedly. Points which the Ethical Compliance Initiative in Washington DC and the Institute for Business Ethics in London have made strongly. And that's the truth speaking to power which our industry needs to offer.

6. Talent is a critical threat to our future that must be addressed in the years ahead.

As Alex Aiken and Rich Leigh point out, we need to make our industry a far more attractive place to join and continue in. For years now, industry data have shown us that recruiting and retaining talent is a fundamental problem for us. In fact, many industry leaders say that there is no greater challenge.

In essence, it's about a number of factors, all of them overlapping.

- The industry isn't diverse enough. And it needs to become so. Years of hard work have failed to make much discernible impact here. Far more needs to be done.
- The gender pay gap needs to be eliminated. Again, despite much effort, the picture barely shifts. And this needs to change too.
- Other professional services attract our people – the reverse is rarely true. And if we are honest, much of the reason for this is pay. I would relate this back to the need to prove value – if we could prove better the value that we deliver, then quite simply the industry would be larger, and able to pay people more, and retain more of them.
- And finally, the always-on culture. Exacerbated by COVID, and a major turn-off for many, particularly those with caring responsibilities, or wanting to maintain a decent life balance.

On the positive side, our experience of home working and remote working has shown that it is far from impossible to be effective without permanently being in the office. This may well help us to do two things: offer more flexible working patterns and so keep many of those who otherwise leave our industry; source talent regardless of physical location, but instead based on skills and attitude alone.

7. *As society's ethical expectations have evolved, so too have our industry's expectations of what is acceptable and what is not. But over the coming decades, the existing minority that eschews ethical practice needs to be diminished much further.*

We know from our data that while two-thirds of practitioners feel that their own industry is ethical, a third do not. Which is a pretty striking number. If so many of us don't believe that we ourselves and our colleagues have a moral compass, then how can clients and wider society trust us to represent them ethically?

Wide disparities of ethical expectations exist globally. And if we are honest, wide disparities of ethical enforcement by professional bodies exist globally too. But this situation cannot hold in the future because those public demands of purpose of ethicality are shifting all around the world, albeit from different starting points. A rising tides carries all boats as they say, and the same will surely be true of the PR industry and its attitude towards ethical behaviour over the coming decades.

8. *A final thought*

Having highlighted both the positives and the negatives that I see, I do think that it is important to end this foreword on a positive note. Because the industry that I recognize is a permanently positive one; adaptive to circumstances; and with a track record of growth in size, salience and importance that few if any other professional service sectors can match.

So, looking forward 20 years, I hope that we will see a PR community that is significantly larger even than the one we have

today. More diverse. Even more structured. Even more respected. And I truly believe that we will see all of these things.

Francis Ingham

Director General, PRCA

Chief Executive, ICCO

Who is Francis Ingham

Francis Ingham had been in the professional communications industry for over 20 years. He studied Politics, Philosophy and Economics at Oxford University before starting his career as an advisor to the British Conservatives and the Confederation of British Industry. He was Director General of the Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA), the largest and most dynamic professional body for PR and communications professionals in the world. For the past seven years he held the position of Chief Executive of the International Communications Consultancy Organisation (ICCO) which represents 41 national PR associations. Francis Ingham was committed to PR education at all levels – he was external examiner at the American University at Richmond and Visiting Lecturer at the University of Westminster. He appeared in both the UK and global selection of the best and most influential PR professionals – PR Week’s PowerBook.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My biggest thanks go to my wife Lucie for her lifelong support and to my two daughters Kateřina and Tereza, because my world is a happier place with them in it. Peaceful family life gives me the space to pursue my business, work, sports and last but not least, it made this book possible. Without my family, I could not have accomplished half of what I have achieved in the last 20 years.

Over the years, I have been influenced by many people who have contributed to my career. I am grateful to them for sharing and giving me their time. This includes past and present colleagues at PRAM Consulting. Without them, the company would not be where it is now. The first, however, was my business partner Karel Kapinus. Even though our entrepreneurial paths diverged over time, without Karel I probably would never have started the business.

Another partner to whom I owe the current success of my company is my long-time mentor Crispin Manners. I met Crispin at the Worldcom PR Group, and he has passed on lot of his knowledge to me. Crispin can shape my ideas into tangible projects and guides me toward overall effectiveness. Thanks also go to Jakub Štefěček, who is pushing me further in the field of business management.

Over the years, I have been greatly influenced by people in the professional organizations I participate in, whether it is APRA, Worldcom PR Group, or ICCO. I am grateful to my fellow competitors who have elected me to be the chairman of the Public Relations Association. Worldcom and ICCO have given me a global perspective on communications and management and provide me with great inspiration for my projects. There are dozens of people, members of these organizations, whom I would like to thank for sharing their experience and friendship. All the

futurologists who have contributed to this book I have met in these organizations. I hereby thank them for the time and inventiveness they have given to their contributions to this book. I would, however, single out two without whom the aforementioned organizations could not operate. These are their Executive Directors, who have been my closest collaborators during my APRA and Worldcom presidencies: Pavla Mudrochová and Todd Lynch.

Public relations is essentially the same anywhere in the world, you ‘just’ have to respect and acknowledge the cultural differences in each country. This general rule ceases to apply the moment you actually start working in a completely different region. Matt Kucharski showed me how to do PR in the United States when he allowed me to work in his agency for almost a month, for which I owe him a big thank you. This internship showed me how ahead of the curve PR, communications and management are in the United States compared to Europe.

Almost 10 years ago, professional journalist Ondřej Aust and I discovered that no platform or person in the Czech market focussed on trends in public relations. So together we invented a series of communications trends meetings for PR professionals and called it PR Brunch. The series of seminars became an iconic and award-winning brand that helped PRAM Consulting become one of the top five PR agency brands in our market. PR Brunch is also the foundation for Leadership Lab (leadershiplabnow.com), a series of leadership training sessions. Both activities served as the springboard for this book. Thank you, Ondřej, for our long-standing partnership!

I couldn’t have written the book you are reading without Kateřina Matesová, with whom I put together most of the text. She has been giving me feedback on my ideas while editing the text into a friendly and readable form.

As we all know, we can be creative through activities where we relax and completely unwind. For me, such activities are various sports. While I clear my head when running in the city and often come up with interesting ideas (like how to tackle a current campaign brief), there are activities, especially extreme ones, that I

cannot undertake alone. My friends may be in other fields, holding various management positions in global companies or running businesses, but they are always a great inspiration to me.

Thank you all very much for being with me!

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INTRODUCTION

It's summer 2000 and I'm having lunch with my friend Thomas LaRocca. We are talking about what kind of business we could run because working for an IT literature publishing house is not very fulfilling.

We both have our degrees in international relations and communications, but we don't apply our knowledge to our jobs. We have travelled almost all over the world. We watch foreign companies coming to the Czech Republic that do not understand the Czech market. We have long conversations about marketing and distribution with them from the position of 'mere' employees of a publishing house, providing helpful, free advice. So, we decided to monetise our knowledge and skills. For we see that while foreign companies hire local managers responsible for product development and sales, they usually outsource marketing and public relations (PR) to external advisors and consultants, including PR agencies.

Thomas and I knew how PR agencies worked in the Czech market, and from our studies, we also know theoretically how they should work. Of course, our ideas at that time differed considerably from the later reality and are probably best summed up by the famous joke about a public relations manager who reads the newspaper in the morning and looks for articles about his clients, goes to lunch with a journalist at noon and in the afternoon figures out which client he will charge for lunch. So, we come to a clear conclusion: having a PR agency can't be that complicated! We agree to run the idea through our heads and come up with concrete steps at the next lunch.

Eventually, Thomas said, ‘We don’t know anything about PR’, and backed out of the project. I didn’t let such a small thing discourage me, and I started a PR agency with another colleague from the office, Karel Kapinus. Together we got the agency off the ground and for over a decade, until our paths diverged, our joint business worked well. We didn’t join a giant global agency that would have shaped us in its image, but perhaps that’s why our novel approach was successful with clients.

We saw a gap in the market, which was based on our reasoning with Thomas – helping global companies coming to the Czech Republic who don’t know the Czech media market, journalists or the language. Aware of their limitations, they knew they needed a partner to create a communication strategy and campaigns to kick-start their business. So, that’s what we did! In the beginning, our work focussed primarily on media relations. Over time, we realized we could deliver much more value and began to look at a wide range of tools and activities.

Twenty years are behind us. We have stayed abreast of changing audience expectations and use communication methods to elicit the desired action. We emphasise the uniqueness of our clients through their ‘WHY’, the reason and purpose of their business. We tell their story in the right way, to the right people.

Our vision has endured – giving international organizations the momentum they need to succeed in the Czech Republic. It works because we proactively communicate for our clients, even in moments when we need to protect them through crisis communication. We have won many prestigious local and international awards. We have become members of the Worldcom PR Group, the largest network of independent PR agencies in the world. This gives us access to global know-how. Together with our partners from around the world, we share our expertise in delivering immediate impact and lasting value to our clients. This is necessary because PR is constantly changing – especially consumer behaviour and the way the media works. And the pace of change is accelerating. But what will it take to lead that change?

What’s in store for us in the next 20 years, and how can we be ready to capitalize on the changes to come? The answer to that question is the reason this book was written. After 20 years in PR, I

see more than ever that every organization needs to be able to navigate the challenges they meet on the way to their destination. Leadership comes from being able to be prepared for the challenges to come, so you can select the most effective path to your destination.

That is why I have approached world PR figures to identify the communications transformations that we will all meet in the next 20 years. Their predictions, which you will read in nine thematic chapters, paint a picture of an industry that is facing dynamic developments, ethical and technological challenges, and above all, growing strategic influence. I then respond to the predictions with practical guidance on how to prepare for such a future. We delve into topics such as reputation, measuring campaign impact, brand activism, talent retention and the impact of artificial intelligence, which will be critical to success. In each chapter, I introduce important tools and processes that will help you not only meet the challenges of the future but even use them to your advantage. Last but not least, I try to summarize how to prepare for them in a way that will enable you to achieve leadership status.

Government and legislative changes, or crises such as the global COVID-19 pandemic, clearly demonstrate the need for a communications method that gives companies market and leadership momentum. Let's look together at what this means for the future of PR.

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WHAT WILL AN AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATOR LOOK LIKE IN THE FUTURE?

Phases of Public Relations and Its Role in Leadership

Warren Bennis, an academic and pioneer of leadership studies, once said: ‘Leadership is the ability to turn vision into reality’. This phrase, in my opinion, perfectly captures the importance that leaders have for the future of professions, organizations and entire nations. They are the ones who shape reality from their ideas and visions. They are the ones who make the strategic decisions that subsequently predetermine their visions to success or failure. They are the ones whose actions influence many aspects of our work and social lives. The attitudes, beliefs and performance of employees, the culture and communication climate of an organization, the perceptions of stakeholders – all of these are in the hands of leaders.

But let’s go back to the beginning: communication as a tool for successful leaders. Of course, even the leaders of the future cannot do without public relations. The American writer James Humes, the author of President Eisenhower’s speeches, famously said, ‘The art of communication is the language of leadership’. This is illustrated by another president at another time, as Paul Holmes argues below.

PRESIDENT ZELENSKY SHOWED EVERYONE WHAT A
LEADER LOOKS LIKE

Paul Holmes

In a nutshell, I could say that the authentic communicator of the future will look a lot like Ukrainian President Zelensky. Right now, as I write these lines, he is showing the world the power of communication in shaping the global agenda.

What makes him so effective? Qualities that all great leaders and great communicators will need in the future. The empathy that makes him understand the emotions, hopes and fears of others. The humility to put the interests of the people he leads ahead of his own personal agenda. Integrity that allows him to communicate honestly and openly, even when times are tough, and messages are difficult. And the courage to speak truth to power, even when doing so may be dangerous.

I would argue that it is courage that divides people into leaders and others – and it doesn't just apply to those who involuntarily find themselves in the middle of a war. Courage means doing things in accordance with your vision, even if it is risky. This is exactly what President Zelensky has shown. Many experts predicted a lightning defeat for his country. President Zelensky has shown them what can happen when a leader stands up for his convictions. As a former actor, he proved the truth of the statement that one is not born a leader but becomes one. All those who predicted his quick defeat had to admit their mistake.

I wish communicators in the field of public relations would show similar boldness when facing uncertainty, such as fears about what artificial intelligence will bring (and take) to the industry; worry about how to confront the pervasive pressure for sustainability; doubts about whether PR can attract and retain increasingly confident talents; dread about the breakneck pace of new social media and its content formats; and anxiety of accepting responsibility for what public relations brings to clients' desks. These are exactly the reasons why many PR professionals still cling to AVE metrics, why they still quantify media outputs and manage media relations in Excel spreadsheets, why the profession has low

credibility with the public, and why the contribution of public relations is usually measured not through the lens of the actual value it offers to a company but by the enumeration of the effort expended.

I am convinced that there is uncertainty behind the scenes. Fear that our work may turn out to be worth less than we think.

In this respect, too, President Zelensky can be an inspiration. In the face of necessity, he has thrown away fears and shown all aspirants to the position of a leader how it is done. Let his story be an inspiration to PR professionals to overcome their own – and often unjustified – imposter syndrome and set out to make changes that will lead their organizations to better results and increase the strategic relevance of the entire industry. The future expects it.

Courage means doing things in accordance with your vision, even if it is risky.

Who Is Paul Holmes

Paul Holmes has spent more than 30 years studying and analysing global public relations. In that time, he has built a reputation as one of the world's foremost experts on professional communications. He began his career working for a local newspaper in the north of England and he became news editor of



PR Week in 1985. In 1987, he moved to New York to launch the short-lived US edition of PR Week, and later joined Adweek. In 2000, he launched the Holmes Group, which provides news, research, analysis and insight on global PR. It also presents the SABRE Awards competition – the most

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important PR awards in the world. The group's flagship title, PRovoke Media (p/k/a The Holmes Report), covers the public relations business in the Americas, EMEA and the Asia-Pacific region. In 2011, Paul Holmes was inducted into the International Communications Consultancy Organization (ICCO) Hall of Fame.

PR as a Discipline of Leaders

Given the above, it is not surprising that mastered communication, and therefore public relations, are among the most important tools of successful leaders. Leadership and communication go hand in hand, as we will see in the following paragraphs. Before we start, please note that these paragraphs contain my own opinion on past and contemporary public relations based on my experience and knowledge. However, I'm not a historian nor media theorist.

For a manager, the ability to communicate well is almost a moral imperative. After all, to be effective, a manager must be able to persuade, express responsibility, delegate work, create and manage a value system and provide support and motivation to his or her team. All this can be achieved through effective leadership, proper planning, monitoring and most importantly communication! In my opinion, effective and accurate communication is the most important among the factors mentioned. It is the manager's communication skills that motivate and inspire team members to work and achieve goals, whether within the team or the entire organization. The importance of communication is matched by the time it requires: According to one older study, a manager spends 70–90% of his or her time each day communicating with his or her teams and others in the workplace. Effective communication then means effective leadership. In other words, anyone who wants to go from being a 'mere' manager, director, or even a minister to a true leader cannot do without learning the ins and outs of good communication and public relations.

Even the Egyptian rulers understood this, which is why the discipline of PR is as old as civilization itself. Pharaohs built an image of divine beings among the people through their lieutenants who spread stories of their fantastic achievements, skills and qualities. Shamans