

Public Relations Specialists

At a Glance

Public relations specialists serve as advocates for businesses, nonprofit associations, universities, hospitals, and other organizations. They work to present a good public image of their clients. Their job is to spread the clients' good news far and wide and to put a positive "spin" on the bad news. Public relations specialists do more than "tell the organization's story." They must understand the attitudes and concerns of community, consumer, employee, and public interest groups and maintain cooperative relationships with them. They write press releases and speeches and set up "photo opportunities" of their clients doing good things.

Career in Focus: *Press Secretary*

In government, public relations specialists are also called press secretaries, information officers, public affairs specialists, or communication specialists. Their job is to keep the public informed about the activities of agencies and officials. For example, public affairs specialists in the U.S. Department of State keep the public informed of the government's positions on foreign issues. A press secretary for a member of Congress keeps potential voters aware of the representative's accomplishments (especially as elections get closer).

Where and When

Public relations specialists generally work a standard 40-hour workweek, but overtime is common, especially if there is an emergency or crisis. Public relations offices are busy places, and workers are commonly under pressure to meet deadlines, give speeches, and attend meetings.

For More Information

- ✦ Public Relations Society of America, Inc., 33 Maiden Lane, New York, NY 10038-5150. Internet: www.prsa.org
- ✦ International Association of Business Communicators, One Hallidie Plaza, Suite 600, San Francisco, CA 94102.

Data Bank

Education and Training: Bachelor's degree

Starting Salaries: \$26,000

Average Earnings: \$34,000–\$62,000

Total Jobs Held: 188,000

Job Outlook: Above-average increase

Annual Job Openings: 38,000

Related Jobs: Advertising, marketing, promotions, public relations, and sales managers; demonstrators, product promoters, and models; news analysts, reporters, and correspondents; lawyers; market and survey researchers; sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing

Personality Type: Enterprising

Did You Know?

When people are being skeptical, they might refer to a public relations specialist as a "spin doctor." The phrase originated in the 1980s and refers most often to government press secretaries and public affairs specialists, though it can apply to anyone in public relations who tries to give a persuasive slant to information. Though people disagree whether the origin of the phrase goes back to "spinning a yarn" or the "spin" you might put on a ball when playing pool, the idea is that the public doesn't get the whole truth—just the prettiest version of it.