

Book Review

**A Modern Guide to Public Relations:
Unveiling the Mystery of PR**

Reviewed by
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Author: Amy Rosenberg
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A Modern Guide to Public Relations: Unveiling the Mystery of PR provides a practitioner's perspective on how to conduct effective media relations using traditional methods to generate publicity and newer SEO-driven approaches to garner attention online. Author Amy Rosenberg, founder and president of Veracity, a PR firm in Portland, OR, draws from a wealth of professional experience to guide the book's articulation of how to generate effective story ideas, distribute content to the appropriate news outlets, and connect with journalists in order to earn placement. Rosenberg also incorporates her observations on the most important qualities for public relations professionals to possess and how to find one's fit in the industry. Public relations is an intriguing career path in this telling.

Content and Scope

Rosenberg champions public relations as a career with an encouraging sensibility that demystifies the business for aspiring professionals. She writes in a relatable style and addresses early-on some common questions that arise among public relations students. These include the following: How is PR different than marketing? What is the value of earned media? What skills do I need for a career in public relations? What jobs opportunities are available to me?

The book wisely highlights the importance of internal communications and acknowledges some misperceptions of public relations professionals before delving into a detailed accounting of how to pitch stories to professionals working in print and online formats, television, radio, and podcasts. The author's instructions incorporate granular details that reveal her industry experience, such as like the most effective times of day to engage with journalists. Later in the book, readers learn practical tips about modern practices including search engine optimization, content marketing, and appropriate uses of social media to connect with journalists.

The centrality of writing and organizational skills to the profession are evident throughout the text and serve as a strength of the title. The continuous presence of practical insights, including developing an informed cynicism toward newswires, also stand out for their value.

Overall, the conversational tone of the writing and the industry-informed content make reading *A Modern Guide to Public Relations* akin to having a seasoned public relations professional as a guest speaker in the classroom. Students are likely to enjoy the real-world perspective and the light-hearted delivery of the instruction punctuated by occasional breezy profanity. They may even delight in deviations from their everyday instruction such as Rosenberg's gentle prodding about the continued use of Associated Press Style in public relations. She writes, "I'm constantly surprised how after 20 years of fretting about AP style I can still forget the rules. While many of the rules don't matter, some will scream your beginner status if broken" (p. 32).

Critique

PR instructors are likely to experience greater concern with the author's advocacy for the use of advertising value and publicity value to enumerate the impact of earned media placements. With its call to "Multiply each advertising value by the industry standard of 3 - 5 to add the credibility factor that PR brings" (p. 179), the book advocates for the use of Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE), which runs counter to common warnings against the practice. Acknowledgement of these advisements, and other ethical considerations within the industry, are notably absent from this tactics-heavy edition.

Beyond ethics, a clear comparative discussion of the respective benefits and drawbacks of media types could enhance the volume. Inclusion of the PESO Model would elucidate these core concepts more effectively within a changing industry landscape and therefore strengthen the text's value as an instructional tool.

Rosenberg is transparent in acknowledging that she speaks from her own experience. She even states in her discussion of media relationships that “I don’t know what I don’t know” (p. 174). Nevertheless, there are multiple places in the book where additional information such as image quality requirements and fine distinctions between professional titles within the media industry is knowable with minimal outside research.

The book’s overall reliance on a first-person telling, evidenced by the absence of an index or reference section, ultimately proves to be a shortcoming. Rather than incorporate outside perspectives and concepts, the text guides readers to Rosenberg’s podcast to learn more about the topics presented. This is problematic for anyone wanting to use the book in an educational context.

Audience and Conclusion

The easy readability of *A Modern Guide to Public Relations: Unveiling the Mystery of PR* and its incorporation of industry-informed insights make the text a helpful resource for the educator seeking a quick primer or a refresher on media relations. The book is less useful as an assigned textbook for students given the absence of key concepts within public relations education and the inclusion of advice that runs counter to common teachings. While it is important to challenge conventional wisdom, one must articulate the thinking behind that wisdom to provide an effective counterargument. Given these realities, the text could serve as additional recommended reading for students alongside other industry resources like trade journals and blogs.