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SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT RAPIDLY GAINING IMPORTANCE FOR CANADIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONALS: SURVEY FINDING

TORONTO, August 18, 2014 – A majority of Canadian public relations and communications professionals say managing their organizations' social media has become one of their most important functions. This was one of several key findings included in two new research studies on public relations in Canada released today by the Communications + Public Relations Foundation (CPRF). CPRF funded both studies.

Infographic link: <http://CPRFoundation.ca/infographic0.png?v=1u1k0ciz6txs77>

Conducted in partnership with the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) and Halifax's Mount Saint Vincent University, the *CPRS GAP VIII: Canada Report 2014* provides Canadian communications practitioners and their employers the first national picture of the Public Relations industry and the primary issues it faces.

The study also illustrated principal difference between Canadian and American communications professions. When compared with similar studies undertaken south of the border, it becomes clear that a higher percentage of Canadian communications professionals are employed in government and non-profit sectors as opposed to U.S. data which indicated a higher concentration in corporate public relations.

The second study, conducted by McMaster University, *Do They Have What it Takes?*, found that writing skills are still the number-one desired competency in public relations and management communications, followed by strategy, leadership and competence in information and communication technologies.

"These studies demonstrate the high degree of relevance for public relations practice in Canadian business today," said Bruce MacLellan, APR, FCPRS, Chair of the Foundation. "As new forms of media and digital publishing blend with trusted traditional channels, the need for credible, authentic, engaging, and high-quality communications is more important than ever. Our Foundation will continue to provide insights for the PR profession and demonstrate the growing role and importance of public relations and communication in the workplace."

The *CPRS GAP VIII* study, led by Amy Thurlow, PhD, APR, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, is part of a larger international study that reflects public relations trends and practices. The international study includes USA, Brazil, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand in addition to Canada. Results of the study, co-ordinated by the University of Southern California, will be released in September in Madrid, Spain by the Global Alliance for Public relations and Communications Management.

The McMaster study, *Do They Have What it Takes?*, led by Terry Flynn, PhD, APR, FCPRS, focused on the views of entry-level public relations professionals and senior business executives regarding the competencies, skills and knowledge needed by young professionals to succeed in today's demanding and complex public relations workplace.

GAP VIII – A Foundational Study for Future PR Research

Completed in March 2014, the Canadian component of the study provides new and valuable benchmark data about PR in Canada and includes four key insights:

1. Public Relations and Communications is perceived as valuable by the C-Suite by 75 per cent of respondents and as contributing to financial growth by 52 per cent of CEOs.
2. Public Relations and Communications professionals are considered the dominant players in the strategic use of social media by organizations, well ahead of Marketing and Sales, Information Technology, Human Resources and Customer Relations.
3. Social Media is the top tool for measurement and evaluation for PR. However, the majority of respondents (55.7 per cent) use tools developed in-house for measuring and evaluating PR, 35.2 per cent don't measure PR at all, and 27.9 per cent use standard or proprietary tools used by consultants.
4. As in the US, media relations continues to be the core responsibility of public relations and communications, cited by 95.9 per cent of respondents.

McMaster – Do They Have What it Takes?

The McMaster study, with a focus on the competencies, skills and knowledge required by entry-level PR practitioners to succeed in today's PR workplace is a snapshot of the public relations workplace at a particular point in time. It offers insights affirming known trends and highlighted gaps in expectation and performance. Four key findings:

1. At 95 per cent, the overwhelming majority of participants hold a positive outlook of the PR profession in Canada in terms of growth and development.
2. Junior and entry level public relations practitioners are reasonably well-educated with 29 per cent holding a university undergraduate degree and 22 per cent holding a university graduate degree in public relations and communications.
3. There is a gap between junior entrants' estimation of their knowledge, competencies and attributes (higher) and that of their employers (lower).
4. Writing is still the number-one desired competency in public relations/management communications, followed by strategy, leadership and competence in information and communication technologies. Based on the study results, senior business executives clearly want to hire passionate, creative, professional and enthusiastic candidates who demonstrate excellent writing, critical thinking, creativity and confidence. They want individuals who can manage multiple demands in a constantly changing environment.

To access the complete GAP report, visit <http://cprs.ca/education/research.aspx> or <http://cprfoundation.ca/thepresent.html#anchor-research>. For the McMaster study, visit <http://cprfoundation.ca/thepresent.html#anchor-research>

The Communications + Public Relations Foundation is a national organization that unites business, academic, and public relations leaders in the advance of public relations education and research. It has been advancing education and knowledge about the value and power of public relations in Canada since 1979.

The Canadian Public Relations Society is the only national membership public relations organization in Canada. It establishes and encourages high levels of professional standards, ethics, and studies in the public relations discipline.

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