

KALEIDOSCOPE

EXPLORING THE MANY FACETS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Spring 2009



"I'm Sorry" Doesn't Cut It Anymore

by Anne Sceia Klein, Fellow PRSA

"I apologize. I made a mistake." There was a time when those words meant something.

Public relations counselors urge clients in crisis to take responsibility for their actions or errors and apologize to the people who may have been harmed. The public wants to know that those involved are sincerely sorry for what happened. And usually, after the person or organization takes corrective action, the situation passes and everyone moves on.

I don't know about you, but when I hear apologies these days, some are ringing quite hollow. After listening to a litany of apologies from politicians and business leaders in recent months, I found it hard to believe their apologies were sincere. Their glibness in rolling those words out of their mouths was unconvincing.

Having done my fair share of crisis communications counseling over the years, I thought about the advice and counsel we have given our clients. And then I realized what was bothering me. Apologies don't work when they are insincere.

(Continued on last page.)

Transitions

AKCG MOVES TO NEW OFFICES



Atrium I, at 1000 Atrium Way, Mount Laurel, N.J., is AKCG's new base.

AKCG has moved! This year's spring cleaning became a much bigger task than in years past, as we moved out of our old office and settled into our new space at 1000 Atrium Way in Mount Laurel, N.J.

Our new home, also known as Atrium I, is a mile and a half away from our former location. We are still conveniently located in the heart of the business corridor, now even closer to the two main regional arteries, Interstate 295 and Exit 4 of the New Jersey Turnpike.

We invite you to stop by and visit us whenever you are in the area!

Our new address is:

**1000 Atrium Way, Suite 102
Mount Laurel, NJ 08054**

Our new telephone and fax numbers are:

tel 856-866-0411

fax 856-866-0401

Awards

HARRAH'S AND AKCG WIN PEPPERPOT AWARD

AKCG and client Harrah's Entertainment, Inc., received a Pepperpot Award from the Philadelphia chapter of PRSA for a media relations project entitled, "Setting the Standard in Green Gaming." The program publicized Harrah's Atlantic City's achievement as the first casino company to receive an Environmental

Quality Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2. Maureen Adams, vice president of National Casino Marketing, and Ulrico Izaguirre, director of Political Affairs and Regional Communications for Harrah's Entertainment, attended the annual awards banquet with the AKCG team.

GROSS IS PRESIDENT-ELECT FOR PRSA PHILLY; LUKACH HONORED

AKCG co-owner Mike Gross has been elected President-Elect of the Public Relations Society of America's Philadelphia chapter – one of the largest chapters in the country. Mike has served as the chapter's membership committee chair and most recently as its treasurer. He is expected to succeed to the chapter presidency in 2010.

Meanwhile, associate Brooke Neifert is serving on the chapter's 2009 Membership Committee. She is involved in planning networking events, recruitment activities and member retention initiatives.



Mike Gross (left) and Anne Klein present the inaugural "Anne Sceia Klein Award for Professional Promise" to Rowan University senior Gregory Richter at the Peppercot awards dinner. The award was established by AKCG to recognize a college senior who has demonstrated his or her dedication to advancement in the public relations field through internships, public service and course work.

AKCG'S COMMITMENT TO HEART HEALTH

AKCG was a Circle of Red sponsor for the third annual American Heart Association Southern New Jersey Go Red for Women luncheon held on Feb. 24. Our firm has taken an active role in supporting heart health for women. More than 460,000 women die annually from heart disease and stroke, the No. 1 and No. 3 killers of women.



Ulrico Izaguirre (left), director of Political Affairs and Regional Communications for Harrah's Entertainment, accepts a Peppercot Award from the Philadelphia chapter of PRSA, as AKCG co-owner Chris Lukach looks on. See story on front page.

LUKACH TO HALL OF FAME

Chris Lukach will be inducted into the Rowan University Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) Hall of Fame. A graduate of Rowan's College of Communication, Chris was president of the PRSSA chapter, which was recognized as the Outstanding Chapter in the Nation. The induction will take place at the PRSSA graduation dinner on April 19.

Also at the dinner, Lauren Cibelli, a senior at Rowan University, will receive the Anne Sceia Klein Gold Medallion for Professional Public Relations. To qualify for the medallion, a student must achieve at least a 3.6 academic GPA, hold a PRSSA leadership position, have significant internships and have performed community service.

SOCIAL MEDIA BOOT CAMP

AKCG co-owners Mike Gross and Chris Lukach presented a program in February for the National Association of Women Business Owners' South Jersey chapter about the ins and outs of social media. The training session, attended by more than 40 small business owners, focused on how social media have a

direct impact on business results (see Chris's recent article, next page). The two gurus explained the tools, demonstrated real life examples and offered tips for optimizing time spent online. Mike and Chris are taking their social media show on the road, with sessions already scheduled for the Burlington County (N.J.) Chamber of Commerce and the New Jersey Emergency Preparedness Association.

ANNE FEATURED IN NEW AD NEWS COLUMN

Anne Klein authored an article entitled "Crisis Communications — New Challenges in a New Era," featured in a new section of *Ad News* entitled "Toolbox Topics." In the article, Anne talks about the public's increased need for organizations to be held accountable for their actions and communications in a crisis. She addresses how technology has mandated rapid communications and what organizations can do to adapt to the new environment and maintain relationships with stakeholders. *Ad News* is a monthly magazine of the non-profit Philadelphia Advertising Club. Anne's article appears in the March edition.



Anne Klein (second from left) was one of three panelists who spoke on the topic of "personal reflections on leadership" at the Women's Business Enterprise National Council's executive leadership luncheon in Philadelphia in December. Anne shared her thoughts on her own leadership style, challenges along the way, standards she has set for taking AKCG into the future and words of wisdom for women business owners.

FACING THE FACEBOOK REVOLUTION: WHY PR EXECS AND STAFF SHOULD GET WITH THE PROGRAM

AKCG co-owner Chris Lukach has been singing the merits of social media for business communications. He published "Net-working" in the January issue of Ad News – the publication of the Philadelphia Ad Club – and later adapted the article for The Firm Voice, a publication of The Council of PR Firms (CPRF). Response to the article, reprinted below, has been overwhelmingly positive. According to Matt Shaw, director of communications for CPRF, "when all is said and done, [Lukach's article] will likely be the most read 'My Opinion' piece this year (over 48 issues)."



Chris Lukach

Despite PR firms across the globe espousing the value of Web 2.0, precious few executives at these firms have actually begun dipping their toes into social networking. At the same time,

many of the junior staff who already are active with social networks limit their application to keeping up with friends and family.

That's about to change, and that's a good thing. People in business have taken to scanning their Rolodexes to send out "friend requests," and all social networks have blossoming professional networking audiences. I should know. Social networking for business caught me by surprise, too.

Though I have been active on both Facebook and MySpace since taking my first PR job (yes, they've been around that long), it was only six months ago that one of my active clients first extended a "friend" invite. I was surprised, and a little torn. Despite being a social-networking evangelist for years, I had limited myself to using it for keeping up with hometown friends and college buddies.

With reluctance, I accepted—then the floodgates opened. Several more clients became friends, plus other professional colleagues. I even began joining groups supporting my professional associations.

Soon, my social-networking dynamic had completely changed.

I feared overexposing myself, and crossing some self-imposed professional boundary. I've listened to critics who cite building Facebook relationships with business contacts as getting too personal, and I was pleased to find this really isn't the case.

CONNECT—PERSONALLY, EFFICIENTLY, EFFECTIVELY

There's no question that e-mail and the Web ushered in a new age of business communication—one where civility is often absent; humor is dangerous; and the sign-off "sincerely" doesn't really resonate. In our business landscape, too often business relationships begin with just a phone call or e-mail trail; the well-known advantage of "putting names to faces" is often lost.

But increasingly, the proliferation of social networking sites is hinting at the potential to fix the damage done by our e-mail-driven world over the last two decades. Building relationships with business contacts on a social networking site is a way to use a virtual environment to connect more personally—to share common interests, learn about each other's backgrounds and personal lives, and much more. Social networking sites are not exactly face-to-face communication, but they can go a long way toward restoring some benefits of face-to-face communication when used appropriately.

Ten minutes on Facebook (or another social networking site of your choice) during a slow point in the day is an easy, efficient way to re-connect with and stay informed about your professional contacts. It's cheaper than lunch and with less awkward silence than an unsolicited phone call. (Plus, it gives you much more to talk about the next time you do connect face-to-face.)

GET STARTED—TAKE YOUR PICK

There are plenty of social networking sites from which to choose—from Badoo to Xanga, and every letter in between—so find the one that's a right fit for you. Currently, MySpace, Facebook and LinkedIn are far and away the market

leaders, and a great jumping off point. Facebook, once only open to college students, now boasts 124 million members of all ages; MySpace, an unbelievable 246 million; and LinkedIn, 30 million.

LinkedIn is marketed as the social networking site for business professionals, but critics (including this author) can't help but find it a bit stuffy. Its primary benefit, the ability to pair with your professional contacts, is interesting, but limited and impersonal.

MySpace enjoyed market dominance for some years, and it claims a majority of its members are over the age of 35. But, in recent years, Facebook has been gaining significant steam. I'm of the set that prefers Facebook for professional networking. It strikes the right balance of personality and professionalism.

You will need to exercise a little restraint when building a social network presence. Young professionals especially, take note: When you commit to using social networking sites for professional reasons, err on the side of caution. That means take down the photos from that last bar crawl.

Be smart. A good maxim is, "Don't post anything you wouldn't want your parents to see." Use common sense. Avoid heavy political commentary, talking about how much money you make or how much you may hate your boss or your employees.

But beyond that, the rest is easy. Just be yourself.

My guess? It probably won't be but a few years (months, perhaps) before the day when you log onto Facebook (or the social network of record for that time) to touch base with a client or colleague, instead of reaching for your Rolodex or shooting off an e-mail. So why wait? Start building your social network now. And don't be afraid to introduce your contacts to social networking; they'll be glad you did.

It's clichéd to say we're "people" people, but it's true—we wouldn't be in communications if we weren't. So let's take advantage of social networking sites, our renewed opportunity to put personality back in our personal interactions.

"I'm Sorry" Doesn't Cut It Anymore

(Continued from front page.)

Apologies don't work if the only reason you make them is that you got caught. Apologies don't work when there's a lack of integrity and ethical behavior, when you dismiss a significant misdeed – one that lesser folk would be held accountable for – as simply an "honest mistake."

Apologies need to be more than just nice words. Apologies don't work unless you have an action plan of correction to ensure what happened doesn't happen again.

As we write crisis communications plans for our clients and offer them

advice and counsel on what to say and do if a particular event occurs, we are keeping these thoughts in mind. An apology, standing alone, is not enough.

Organizations and their executives will suffer serious consequences when they act unethically but think they can slip by just by mouthing words like, "I apologize. I made a mistake." We need to hear more ... a lot more.

To quote Peter Sandman, a noted risk and crisis communications expert, "If you don't visibly mean your apology, if it looks calculated, brazen and unashamed, it doesn't count." — *A.S.K.*

Client News

Over the past few months, AKCG has been working together with **Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries** to develop a new online community for participants of the Diakon Adoption & Foster Care (AFC) program. The community provides a much-needed resource for Diakon's families to connect, share stories, ask and answer questions, and give advice. It has been designed with input from two groups of AFC participants. So far, the feedback from beta testers has been very positive, and we plan to open the site to all Diakon AFC participants soon.

Anne Klein Communications Group is a public relations consulting firm based in the Philadelphia region, with clients throughout the United States. It is a member of **Pinnacle Worldwide**,



a network of leading independent public relations firms around the world.

KALEIDOSCOPE is published by Anne Klein Communications Group, LLC
1000 Atrium Way, Suite 102
Mount Laurel, NJ 08054-3903
856-866-0411

e-mail: newsletter@annekleincg.com
WWW: <http://www.annekleincg.com>



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AKCG is certified as a Woman Business Enterprise (WBE) by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) and as a Small Business Enterprise (SBE) by the State of New Jersey.



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Our new phone number is 856-866-0411
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PLEASE NOTE
OUR NEW ADDRESS



1000 Atrium Way
Suite 102
Mount Laurel, NJ 08054

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ANNE KLEIN
COMMUNICATIONS GROUP