



## **2018–2020 Strategic Plan**

### **2017 STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

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## SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Central Iowa Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is a professional association working to help communications professionals become smarter, better prepared and more connected through all stages of their careers. Central Iowa PRSA serves as a forum to connect communications-focused individuals and foster an educational environment with networking and leadership development opportunities to support public relations practices and thought leadership in our business communities.

Throughout the year, Central Iowa PRSA provides educational opportunities, recognition, networking, accreditation and student support. The Chapter typically hosts a monthly professional development event, distributes a monthly e-newsletter to members, interacts with members on social media and hosts Institute – Iowa’s strategic communications conference and the PRSA PRIME Awards.

Over the past five years, the Chapter’s membership has fluctuated between approximately 160 and 200 members. In addition, attendance at monthly member events and social activities is sporadic, resulting in a feeling of some lethargy among Chapter members. There are several other professional development organizations that are competing for members’ attention and involvement.

Although Central Iowa PRSA is the state’s only professional development organization solely dedicated to serving the public relations profession, the Chapter lacks a strategic plan and both short-term and long-term direction of how to best serve its membership. In assessing the direction of the Chapter and a desire to establish measurable goals and objectives, the Chapter leadership placed a priority on taking steps to develop a strategic plan for the Chapter.

### **Research**

To gain a more thorough understanding of the status of the Chapter and opportunities for future direction, quantitative and qualitative surveys and a strategic planning session with Board and Committee members were conducted in the first quarter of 2017. The surveys – combined with findings of recent annual membership surveys – and working session yielded many valuable observations.

### *Qualitative Survey*

The qualitative survey was conducted by a Chapter member who is an APR and does not currently serve on a board or committee. The information was gathered via one-on-one confidential interviews. High-level findings include:

- The Chapter lacks true insight into the needs, wants and desires of members; research to offer actionable intelligence is sorely missing.
- As a result, there are no measurable objectives to give the Chapter direction. As the board transitions from year-to-year, board and committee members often have little understanding of the goals and purpose of the Chapter.
- Members who are involved are also engaged; however, there is a desire to increase engagement among more members.
- A lack of goals and purpose negatively impacts all aspects of the Chapter – people do not have the time to belong to something if they don’t believe the Chapter will make a difference.

- People value the relationships that come with membership and involvement, particularly among members of the board; however, this does not appear to extend beyond leaders to members at large.
- Leadership is optimistic about the future of the Chapter. The key is to have this sense of worth and pride permeate every level of the Chapter, from the most engaged to those who have just joined.

#### *Board and Committee Planning Session*

A two-hour working session was conducted with the 2017 Board and Committee Members. Based on the qualitative survey and board planning session, the survey facilitator suggested the following priorities should be considered for the Chapter.

1. Gather additional research
2. Establish Chapter objectives
3. Broaden Chapter reach
4. Improve Chapter visibility
5. Re-energize Chapter with member engagement
6. Espouse the values of the profession

#### *Quantitative Survey*

Approximately 20 percent of the membership participated in the quantitative survey. Forty-three percent of survey participants have been Chapter members for 11 or more years; 63 percent have worked in the PR/communications industry for 16 or more years. Several of the initial questions were asked using the Net Promoter Score methodology and an 11-point scale of 0 to 10.

#### *Key Findings*

- As people progress to senior-level practitioners, the professional development and networking opportunities being provided by the Chapter are less valuable.
- Based on opportunities provided to Central Iowa PRSA members, accreditation opportunities and classes, communication from the Chapter and Institute – OctoPRfest ranked the highest. The mean scores were strong with opportunities to move monthly luncheons and networking opportunities from the high 7-range into the 8- range and the Promoter Level.
- Based on the Central Iowa PRSA membership benefits, strong scores were noted across the board with accreditation, professional development – luncheons and networking opportunities ranking the highest.
- Ninety-seven percent of survey respondents plan to renew their membership.

*Please see the Appendix for additional data points from qualitative and quantitative research findings.*

#### **Summary**

The surveys and working session revealed that although there are some challenges – perhaps most notably in perception and a lack of strategic direction – the Chapter has momentum, and members are optimistic about the future of the Chapter. There is a consensus that it is time for the Chapter to re-energize its brand by improving name recognition and inclusiveness of what public relations entails in today’s world.

The board structure was frequently discussed in surveys – both in terms of size and functional operation. Opportunities to restructure the board were examined, and it was determined that the

Chapter's bylaws already provide a strong foundation for board responsibilities and expectations. The Chapter President and President-Elect concluded that a stricter adherence to the bylaws and some slight restructuring in committee reporting assignments could foster a strong execution of the strategic plan. A complete overhaul of the board structure is not necessary now.

With this data, the Central Iowa PRSA has developed a three-year, forward-thinking strategic plan to position the Chapter for sustainable growth and success through education, thought leadership, and leadership development.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

To best understand where we have been and where are going as an industry organization, it is important to understand our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Below is a SWOT analysis created by the research and strategic planning committee members.

### Strengths

- Networking opportunities
- Leadership opportunities
- Professional development
- Accreditation program
- Student chapter support
- Communications from chapter
- Access to industry best practices

### Weaknesses

- With public relations in our name, it's hard to recruit those who don't see themselves as full-time PR practitioners
- Our chapter is not as "fun" as other communications and marketing organizations
- Senior-level members and communicators don't see the value in attending professional development sessions
- Lack of data on members
- Unorganized/ineffective board and committee structure

### Opportunities

- Create strategic plan and gain momentum with forward-thinking mission and vision
- Community outreach (develop a PR plan for local nonprofit, etc.)
- Organize joint programs with other local communications groups
- Form special interest groups to foster more networking and mentoring relationships among members (nonprofit group, social media group, sole proprietorship group, new communicators group, senior practitioners group, etc.)
- Encourage members to refer a friend or colleague (hold a contest or promotion)
- Start surveying and collecting data on a regular basis
- Increase sponsorship opportunities beyond Institute and extend donor pool
- Reach out and recruit mid-level communicators in Central Iowa
- Hold professional development meetings at different times of day and different days of the week so more can attend
- Motivate members to bring colleagues to professional development sessions and other chapter events
- Continue to encourage members to renew their annual memberships

### Threats

- American Marketing Association Iowa (AMA), Iowa Chapter of the National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA), American Advertising Federation of Des Moines (AAF) and other organizations like Central Iowa PRSA competing for similar audiences
- Companies cutting professional development budgets for communications staff

- Lack of understanding and awareness of public relations
- Easier access to online educational materials from non-PRSA sources
- Changing job market
- Personal priorities
- Work priorities

# TARGET AUDIENCES

## PRIMARY

### Students and Emerging Leaders

- Experience: College degree – four years of professional experience
- Education: Bachelor’s degree in public relations, journalism or communications
- Ages: 22 to 26
- Income: \$48,000 to \$50,000\*
- Titles: Public Relations Assistant, Communication Coordinator, Public Affairs Specialist
- Generation group: Millennials
- Gender: Majority are female
- Family: Likely single
- Goals:
  - Full-time employment in public relations
  - Gain experience and build a portfolio
  - Volunteer and give back to the local community
  - Maintain a good work-life balance
- Concerns:
  - Finding full-time employment after graduation
  - Debt from college education
  - Identifying a mentor at work or in the local business community

### Mid-Level Professionals

- Experience: Five – 15 years of professional experience
- Education: Bachelor’s degree in public relations, journalism or communications, marketing
  - Master’s degree in communications
- Ages: 27 to 37
- Income: \$60,000 to \$75,000\*
- Titles: Public Relations Supervisor, Public Relations Manager
- Generation group: Mostly Generation X, some Millennials
- Gender: Majority are female
- Family: Married, likely younger children
- Goals:
  - Job stability and continued growth
  - Accreditation
  - MBA, Master’s degree in communications or related field
- Concerns:
  - Advancement opportunities at work
  - Training opportunities at a local level that are affordable
  - Balancing work and personal responsibilities
  - Supervising and managing a team of professionals

### Senior Professionals

- Experience: 16+ years of professional experience
- Education:

- Bachelor's degree in public relations, journalism or communications
- MBA or Master's degree in communications
- Some may even have a PhD
- APR
- Ages: 38 to 70
- Income: \$80,000 to \$125,000\*
- Titles: Public Relations Director, Executive Director of Public Relations, Chief Communications Officer, Agency President
- Generation group: Mostly Generation X, some Baby Boomers
- Gender: Majority are female
- Family: Married, children; some may be empty nesters
- Goals:
  - PhD in communications or related field
  - MBA
  - Saving for retirement
- Concerns:
  - Justifying public relations and communications to the C-Suite
  - Supervising and managing a team of professionals
  - Diversity of knowledge base
  - Understanding generational differences and harnessing the value of multiple generations
  - Finding qualified candidates for job openings
  - Costs related to raising a family (e.g., college tuition)
  - Do I have enough money to retire?

\*Salaries are based on information provided by Salary.com

## **SECONDARY**

Business leaders

Central Iowa PRSA board members

Colleges and universities

PRSSA chapters

Retired PR and communications professionals

## GOAL

To create an exceptional member experience that educates, inspires, guides and galvanizes a diverse community of ethical, strategic communications professionals in the state of Iowa.

## OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES and TACTICS

Based on qualitative and quantitative data gathered in 2017, the strategic planning committee identified four key areas that will give direction and opportunity to the Central Iowa PRSA Chapter. By focusing on the following objectives, strategies and tactics, the Chapter will be better positioned to cultivate an environment of success.

**OBJECTIVE 1: Retention – Implement a comprehensive member retention program to retain 87 percent of current members per calendar year.**

### **Highlight accreditation as a professional development tool**

- Provide a robust curriculum to mentor professionals through the Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) process.
- Investigate options for APR prep course delivery and implement one new program based on participant input/survey.
- Provide opportunities for APRs to earn maintenance credits through chapter activities.
- Move at least 80 percent of APR candidates to accreditation through prep course, mentoring, coaching and online courses.
- Increase Iowa's national APR ranking one level within the next three years.

### **Create professional development opportunities for segmented audiences**

- Create customized opportunities per target audience to increase the relevance of educational programming. Potential areas of focus: Accreditation, senior level professionals, recent college graduates, solo practitioners and past presidents. Could also segment by industry, such as financial communications, insurance or agriculture, public and private sector.
- Provide exclusive, member-only events and/or networking opportunities.

### **Identify opportunities to utilize board and committee member experience during planning and transitions**

- Onboarding and Transition Work
  - Focus on succession planning of the board by meeting individually or in small groups with board members twice a year to gauge interest/satisfaction with the board and determine development opportunities.
  - Measure board satisfaction on a yearly basis through qualitative and/or quantitative research.

- Strategic Planning/Visioning
  - Examine the current board size and structure as well as committee positions to establish a productive and engaged board team.
    - Discuss creating a membership committee to be led by the Membership Chair.
    - Discuss creating a paid chapter administration position and define the responsibilities of this role.
  - Examine frequency of board meetings and obligations of board and committee positions.
  - Review strategic plan on a regular basis as determined by the Chapter.
    - Create new plan every three years.
    - Report plan to board and committee members.
- Leadership Development – Committee Chairs and New Structure
  - Create a board or committee position to lead ethics and diversity for the Chapter.
  - Become a Chapter ambassador that welcomes and engages new, current and potential members.
  - Create a commitment form to ensure each member is committed to their board or committee position, including attendance goals. *To be distributed yearly at the December board meeting.*

#### **Increase member communications**

- Create and send timely, informational emails and newsletters for professional development programs, events, Chapter information and other relevant topics.
- Develop an annual report for the membership.
- Evaluate ways to enhance the careers section of the website while making sure job opportunities are kept up-to-date.
- Create exclusive, member-only content and publish on website and/or email.
- More frequent communication with added and dropped members/contacting each dropped member and letting them know we'd like them to renew their membership.

#### **Create mentor/mentee program**

- Create opportunities for connections among members.
- Develop a systematic process for connecting members.

## OBJECTIVE 2: Recruitment – Expand visibility of Central Iowa PRSA and member benefits to increase new membership by 15 percent per calendar year.

### **Define and elevate PR through increased communication**

- Establish a media relations plan for communicating programming and events as well as positioning the Chapter as a communications leader in Iowa.
- Maintain an engaging Chapter website that informs primary and secondary target audiences of Chapter news, events and other timely topics.
- Execute a successful social media strategy that informs and engages the Chapter's target audiences.
- Establish a monthly blog to position our Chapter members as public relations thought leaders in Iowa.
- Post innovative tools, resources and ideas related to the PR industry on social media sites.
- Monthly spotlight on members who have surpassed a specific period of time involved with PRSA (5 years, 10 years, etc.).
- Educate professionals about the broad definition of public relations today, which often includes elements of marketing, advertising, content strategy, social media and other related facets.
- Promote the Facebook page quarterly to increase likes, and if possible, increase budget for promotion of events.
- Get Facebook page verified to help the page show up in search ranking.

### **Expand opportunities to include ethics and diversity in Chapter events**

- Stay up-to-date on research and information provided by the PRSA Board of Ethics and Professional Standards (BEPS) and report back to membership.
- Institute best practices as advised by the BEPS.
- Focus on ethics month and discuss strategy.
- Monitor diversity initiatives and research from the PRSA Foundation.
- Review materials from PRSA on their website, as well as Central Iowa Chapter website to audit existing materials.
- If no survey data exists, conduct an electronic survey of Central Iowa Chapter members to assess ethics-related content interests/opportunities.
- Incorporate survey results into future plans for Central Iowa Chapter communication.
- Research potential ethics-related speakers, topics for Central Iowa PRSA Chapter meeting and propose to program chair.
- Research potential ethics-related speakers, topics and/or panel and propose to Central Iowa Chapter Institute planning team.
- Review PRSA ethics resources and develop tweets/links for use by Central Iowa PRSA Twitter account.
- Review ethics resources and develop at least four articles that can be featured in Central Iowa PRSA Chapter newsletter.
- Take part in relevant PRSA webinars related to ethics, proposed changes in PRSA, little-known resources, etc., and share relevant information with Central Iowa Board and/or membership.
- Monitor news to consider what topics may serve as conversation starters, examples, lessons learned for communicating with Central Iowa Chapter members, for example as table topics at Institute and/or regular meetings.

- Take part in relevant PRSA national meetings/events/webinars, representing Central Iowa Chapter and advocating for our positions.

#### **Increase community engagement**

- Create a philanthropic plan that focuses on helping a local nonprofit organization by providing members with exclusive volunteer opportunities that are focused on public relations efforts.
- Leverage media relations and other channels of communication to promote the nonprofit organization and our Chapter.

#### **Increase member and industry engagement with awards**

- Review and restructure current award categories to determine what changes can be made for the 2018 awards program and discuss award name change based on this restructure.
- Provide award ceremony attendees with visual examples of work, including why specific recipients won.
- Increase awareness of award winners by including them in future programming, posting on social media and including as newsletter features.
- Send post-event survey to determine satisfaction.

#### **Identify opportunities to serve communicators statewide**

- Offer programming in alternative methods for those outside of Des Moines.
- Connect members with national programs and educational opportunities.

#### **Collaborate with statewide Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapters**

- Create PRSSA engagement strategy.
- Engage PRSSA chapter liaisons to frequently connect with their specific chapters.

OBJECTIVE 3: Education/Professional Development – Create regular and varied public relations education and professional development opportunities that garner a minimum 80 percent satisfaction rate on participant surveys per calendar year.

**Increase attendance at and satisfaction with Institute**

- Book engaging speakers that provide education on a variety of communications topics.
- Consider panel discussions, breakout sessions or working groups to get hands-on experience.
- Conduct post-event survey to determine satisfaction.
- Review survey responses from previous Institute events and determine what elements worked well or should be modified.

**Expand member programming**

- Create criteria to determine appropriate speaking topics and a briefing guide for speakers in order to foster a strong understanding among speakers of presentation goals.
- Diversify program topics that focus on best practices for a variety of communications areas including media relations, measurement, issues management, social media and other relevant topics based on member input, making sure to focus on different levels of experience.
- Define what constitutes a “meeting” and what programming means to Chapter members.
- Host four educational meetings for members annually.

**Increase networking opportunities**

- Create opportunities for networking connections through fun events such as coffee meetings, happy hours, holiday gatherings, reverse mentorship, and other web and social media connections.
- Offer discounts and incentives to encourage current or potential members to attend programming.
- Inform target audience of networking events through several channels such as the website, newsletter, emails and social media.
- Assign responsibilities for board and committee members at networking events.
- Send personal thank you emails or cards to new program attendees, potential members or others, as appropriate.

## OBJECTIVE 4: Operations – Establish and maintain Chapter policies and procedures that advance the financial solvency of the organization.

### **Increase understanding of Chapter financials for board members**

- Adhere to all local, state and federal rules and requirements to maintain local, state and federal compliance.
- Construct a board procedure for approving use of annual profits and earnings.
- Design an investment strategy to maximize financial growth of cash reserves.
- Ensure the Chapter's financials are appropriately and accurately managed and invested in order to expand Chapter opportunities.
- Provide board members with a sound understanding of the Chapter's financials.

### **Identify opportunities for sponsorship growth**

- Increase Chapter revenue by reviewing, revising and expanding sponsorship (and in-kind) opportunities for programming, networking and special events.
- Create protocol for comprehensive sponsorship fulfillment to ensure rights and assets are fully leveraged as promised/agreed to and captured for reporting.
- Develop benchmarks for engagement to effectively and efficiently gauge sponsor satisfaction and identify strategic enhancements to sponsorship inventory.

### **Ensure compliance with Chapter bylaws and procedures**

- Review Chapter's bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order regularly and ensure each board member is trained.
- Review and standardize contracts, bylaws and procedures as needed to establish structured protocols and processes.