

Public Abstract

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Title:A qualitative analysis of strengths and liabilities of former journalists in public relations

Since the birth of the public relations industry, journalists have filled much of its ranks. Following the introduction of James Grunig's general theory of two-way symmetrical public relations, various corollaries have questioned how well the background, training and worldviews of journalism prepare a public relations practitioner for the role of strategic communications manager prized by Grunig's theory. This project surveyed public relations managers at a broad cross-section of largely for-profit companies, most of them US-headquartered, on the skills, abilities and limitations former journalists bring to the profession and in particular to strategic communications roles and responsibilities. Writing, story-pitching and analysis were the most appreciated skills and abilities even for strategic roles, qualities that some corollaries to Grunig's theory have tended to relegate to with technical rather than strategic functions in public relations. However, some managers expressed concerns over transfer of certain journalistic worldviews, or at least aspects they attributed to news backgrounds, traits that they saw as complicating former journalists' adaptation to a corporate world.