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## Public Relations Review



# Do you see what I see? An examination of perceptions between advertising and public relations professionals

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Article history:*

Received 2 October 2015  
Received in revised form  
22 December 2015  
Accepted 20 February 2016  
Available online xxx

*Keywords:*

Advertising  
Public relations  
Integration,

### ABSTRACT

This study represents an initial step in the empirical understanding of integration as it relates to the advertising and public relations fields. Using a survey of practitioners (n = 1076) it finds that while many practitioners are aware of integration efforts within organizations, they may be less than enthusiastic about the concept. The results offer suggestions both for the practice and education of professional communication.

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## 1. Introduction

Of late, the conversation surrounding advertising and public relations seems to be centered on the concept of integration. Recent popular web posts, for example, have included titles such as “Integrate or Die,” (Campbell, 2015) or “The New Frontier: Public Relations and Advertising working together” (Jeffrey, 2015). Whether or not this is simply the latest salvo in the IMC debate (which continues today) or if this is a new phenomenon remains to be seen. Clearly it is a topic of interest to both fields, and one which could benefit from empirical research.

As such, the purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of integration between public relations and advertising in terms of the perceived relationship between professionals in the fields, how each is managed (or should be managed) within organizations, and how education or training in the fields should be addressed. Another topic of particular interest is to determine who should be responsible for specific communication-related tasks within organizations. To accomplish this task, a survey of advertising (n = 384) and public relations (n = 692) professionals was conducted to determine the current state of the relationship between advertising and public relations.

The goal of this study is to establish a baseline for research that examines the relationship between the professions. It ultimately hopes to inform both the professional and academic disciplines of each field as to how practitioners are engaging (or not engaging) in integrative practices. While substantial research has examined the effect of integrated campaigns in both public relations and advertising, none have explored how practitioners in each field perceive the concept of integration from the perspective of the relationship between the fields.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2016.02.007>  
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Please cite this article in press as: Supa, D.W. Do you see what I see? An examination of perceptions between advertising and public relations professionals. *Public Relations Review* (2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2016.02.007>

### 1.1. Literature review

The discussion of how, why, and when advertising and public relations can or should be integrated has long been a topic of interest to both fields. As early as 1928, Edward Bernays addressed the integration of the two disciplines and he indicated that challenges in both fields could be problematic for professional communicators, “To advertise on a scale which will reach fifty million persons is expensive. To reach and persuade the group leaders who dictate the public’s thoughts and actions is likewise expensive.” (p.37). He went on to describe the relationship between the fields as:

The counsel on public relations is not an advertising man but he advocates advertising where that is indicated. Very often he is called in by an advertising agency to supplement its work on behalf of a client. His work and that of the advertising agency do not conflict with or duplicate each other (Bernays, 1928, p. 39)

Baus (1942, p. 236), a publicity director and lecturer at the University of Southern California, echoed Bernays’ statements by stating “Business publicity. . . requires an understanding of advertising and selling. Often the publicist must co-operate with the advertising program”. John Hill, chairman of the board of Hill & Knowlton, wrote in 1958 with a slightly different take on the relationship between the fields. He stated:

Advertising, in the usual sense, is the use of paid space in newspapers, magazines, or on the air or billboards for the selling of products or services. Public relations, as a function, differs basically in that it is designed, mainly, to promote understanding and public acceptance of an idea or cause. Public relations has many techniques, one of which is the use of the technique of advertising whereby the “public relations message” can be placed before the desired audiences in exactly the desired phraseology (Hill, 1958, pp. 4–5).

So, though Hill took a slightly different approach to “integration” of advertising and public relations, it is clear that early thought leaders in the communication field had been at least considering the relationship between advertising and public relations as an important matter of interest.

These early thought leaders were not alone in their approach to combining public relations and advertising (along with other professional communication disciplines). Considered to be among the first marketing classes in the United States, the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania introduced a class in 1904 entitled “The Marketing of Products.” The course catalog at the time described the course as:

The methods now practiced in the organization and conduct of the selling branch of industrial and mercantile business. The principal subjects in the field are publicity, agency, advertising, forms and correspondence, credit and collections, and terms of sale (Maynard, 1941, p. 383).

Maynard (1941, p. 383) concluded that the course was indeed a marketing course, “but one distinctly in the area of advertising and sales promotion rather than basic principles”. Likely without much consideration of the debate between the independent fields of advertising and public relations within the matrix of “integrated marketing,” the Wharton School became a very early progenitor of the question – where do public relations and advertising belong in terms of both practice and education, and what is (or should be) the relationship between the fields?

Kotler and Mindak (1978, p. 13) questioned whether marketing and public relations should be “partners or rivals.” At the time, they found that both disciplines attempt to satisfy the needs of outside groups, but that both “normally operate separately, at some loss in overall effectiveness”. Their research concludes that:

It may be that the best way to solve a marketing problem would be through public relations activities. It is also possible that the best way to solve a public relations problem might be through the disciplined orientation that marketing provides (Kotler & Mindak, 1978, p. 17).

This approach to the integration of public relations with other fields of professional communication had not (and has not) gone unnoticed. Bishop (1974) was one of the first academics to begin looking at how public relations was being studied in combination with a variety of fields, including advertising. His comprehensive bibliography’s third edition (covering 1964–1972) revealed that nearly 300 scholarly articles, books and dissertations had already explored how the two fields might be integrated in terms of scholarly research and professional practice, though Cutlip (1974, p. xii) stated that the investigation revealed that “scholarly research. . .is urgently needed” . Multiple scholars have since taken up this call to action.

Newsom (2009, p. 474) indicates that a 1993 report to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication’s advertising and public relations divisions recommended “integrated curricula to prepare students for a more unified practice” based on a two year study conducted among advertising and public relations educators and professionals. Newsom goes on to say:

The concept seemed workable, but the plan ran into difficulties at both the professional and academic levels. At the professional level, the economics of advertising and public relations are different. Whereas public relations charges for professional services on a fee as well as an hourly basis. . .advertising billings are based on media placements. . . (Newsom, 2009, p. 475).

The emerging concept of integrated marketing communications (IMC) gained support starting in the early 1990's (Miller and Rose, 1994), with several major universities developing graduate programs which focused on IMC principles (Phelps, Harris, & Johnson, 1996). As a research concept, IMC gained much traction in business journals, often using exploratory research to inform how to best achieve integration (Hartley & Pickton, 1999; Nowak & Phelps, 1994), though Beard (1996) indicated that the IMC approach would likely not lead to new roles expectations for those in professional communication.

The IMC concept for public relations practitioners and educators was met with skepticism. Hutton (1996, p. 155) stated that “of the three key disciplines involved in the debate. . . public relations has been on the defensive”. Hutton goes on to say:

The greatest conflict has been felt by public relations educators and practitioners who claim that IMC represents a form of marketing imperialism insofar as it seeks to subordinate much or all of public relations under the umbrella of IMC. (Hutton, 1996, p. 155)

Some scholars did explore the IMC concept within public relations and found that the value (Harris, 1993), accountability (Gonring, 1994) and outcomes (Stewart, 1996) outweighed the potential negatives of IMC. Duncan and Caywood (1996, p.18–19) argued for the idea that IMC had evolved to a unique set of definitions that “moved away from the literal integration of major communication functions” and “expanded the concept of audience”. Newsom (2009) reaffirms this approach of IMC as a unique form of professional communication by indicating separate definitions of IMC and public relations, but that public relations campaigns will often (if there is a budget to do so) purchase advertisements, so that the end result of a public relations campaign might appear similar to an IMC campaign.

Gronstedt (1996) took a slightly different approach. Recognizing that communication professionals hold a variety of expertise, including both traditional public relations tactics and advertising, the IMC term might be replaced simply by referring to it as “integrated” communications—with a stronger emphasis on support through coordination and integration between advertising and public relations. This idea of coordination and support between the two disciplines gained much more traction in the public relations sphere than did the IMC approach.

Much of the literature surrounding advertising and public relations has addressed the impact of advertising versus editorial in terms of consumer perception and action (Hallahan, 1999; Jeffries-Fox, 2003; Jo, 2004; Michaelson & Stacks, 2007; Perkins, Algren & Eichorn, 2009; Smith, 2007; Vercic, Vercic & Laco, 2008), the role of integrated marketing communication in professional settings (Kitchen, Kim, & Schultz, 2008; Nowak & Phelps, 1994; Rose & Miller, 1994; Swain, 2004), and establishing hybrid messaging strategies for specific campaign purposes (Balasubramanian, 1994; Salmon, Reid, Pokrywczynski, & Willett, 1985).

There has also been a fair amount of investigation into the impact of integration on curriculum in higher education (Griffin & Pasadeos, 1998; Johnson & Ross, 2000; Kerr, Proud, & Beede, 2007; Larsen & Len-Rios, 2006; Moody, 2012) as well as what skills organizations are looking for with regard to graduates coming out of communication programs (Kerr & Proud, 2005; Todd, 2014).

However, as Kerr (2009, p. 119) points out, there has been “a particular sparsity of empirical investigation” with regard to the integration of advertising and public relations. In the way of empirical research directly investigating the relationship between the advertising and public relations professions via those who practice in the field, no extant literature was found to inform this study. Much of the research to date has either portrayed the relationship in terms of an adversarial nature or has examined specific cases which are not generalizable.

This study hopes to fill this gap in the literature by establishing a baseline for the relationship, or the perceived relationship, between advertising and public relations through the lens of those who are working in the field today. Establishing a baseline is an integral part of examining how integration might (or might not) work in both the academic and professional fields. Trends in professional communication tend to change over time, and prevailing attitudes within the field change as well. For as much as Edward Bernays was a proponent of public relations *not* conflicting with advertising in 1928, by 1982, his opinion had changed:

When public relations was first outlined. . . it was envisioned as other professions functioned: that is, as an art applied to a science, in this case social science, and in which the primary motivation was the public interest and not pecuniary motivation. . . An advertising agency, on the other hand, is not a profession. It is strictly a business, governed by the bottom line (Bernays, 1986, p. 115).

The establishment of baseline, empirical evidence is necessary to better understand not only the current professional climate, but to gauge how that climate might change in the future.

## 1.2. Research questions

Because no academic research found has sought to explore how public relations and advertising professionals view each other, research questions rather than hypotheses are appropriate for this study. Therefore, based on the current state of the field, related literature and anecdotal information of the advertising and public relations fields, the following research questions are posed:

**Table 1**  
 Participants self-described work environments.

Environment	n	(%)
Agency	148	13.8
Corporate/Other for-profit organization	527	49
Non-profit organization	169	15.7
Educational Institution	106	9.9
Other <sup>a</sup>	126	11.7

<sup>a</sup> Respondents were asked to describe their current work environment; responses included hospital, library, social media, marketing organizations and museums. Responses which were easily identifiable as fitting into one of the established categories were reclassified as such.

RQ1: What perceptions do advertising professionals have of public relations (and vice-versa) with regard to the state of the relationship between the fields, organizations’ management of advertising and public relations, and education/training in both fields?

RQ2: What perceptions do advertising and public relations professionals hold with regard to credibility of their own field, and the credibility of the other field?

RQ3: What tasks do advertising and public relations practitioners feel primarily belong in one field (either advertising or public relations) versus being shared or belonging to another organizational function?

**2. Methods**

To answer the research questions, an online survey was distributed to advertising and public relations professionals working in the United States using Qualtrics software. Contact information for 25,000 practitioners was garnered (split evenly between public relations practitioners and advertising professionals) through a survey sampling firm.

The questionnaire sought to ask the participants’ perceptions of advertising and public relations in terms of the relationship between the professions, management of each field within organizations, and education and training within the fields. Because there are no extant studies with appropriate scales to measure the relationship between public relations and advertising professionals, statements were constructed using face validity, and asked respondents to indicate their agreement with the statements on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale. Study participants were also asked to indicate their perceptions of the overall credibility of twelve professions, which included advertising and public relations. Finally, participants were asked to indicate whether they felt advertising, public relations, both or other should be responsible for various professional communication tasks. Open ended comments for each set of statements were elicited, though not required.

A total of 18,874 emails were sent to the contact list, with a total of 6126 contacts kept aside as backup in the case of incomplete or otherwise unusable responses. The survey was initially launched in December of 2014, with data collection taking approximately four weeks. One email was sent which included an introduction to the study and a link to the online survey. No follow-up emails were used. Participants were offered an executive summary of the results for their participation. A total of 11 respondents requested the summary.

**3. Results**

A total of 1449 surveys were started, for an overall response rate of 7.6%. The study had a completion rate of 80%, for a total of 1154 completed responses. Of those, 78 responses were excluded for not meeting the criteria of working in either the advertising or public relations professional field (educators and those who indicated their job was primarily in another field, such as marketing, or indicated they worked in multiple fields of professional communication) for a total of 1076 valid responses, an ending response rate of 5.7%. This was determined to be an acceptable response rate (Sheehan, 2006).

**3.1. Study demographics**

A total of 384 (35.7%) of the respondents indicated their primary field was advertising, while 692 (64.3%) stated they worked in public relations. Respondents were asked to indicate how long they had been working in their present position. The majority (n = 751, 69.7%) indicated they had held their current position for ten years or less, while 164 (15.2%) stated they had been in their current job for 11–20 years. A total of 160 respondents (14.9%) had held their current position for either less than one year, or for more than 20 years.

Most of the respondents (n = 779, 72.4%) described their current job as managerial, with 264 participants (24.4%) indicating their current position was not. A small group (n = 33, 3.1%) indicated they were either unsure, or that the statement was not applicable. Most of these respondents filled in a response indicating they were sole practitioners.

Finally, respondents were asked to indicate which environment best described their current employment. Table 1 contains a breakdown of where participants indicated they worked.

Please cite this article in press as: Supa, D.W. Do you see what I see? An examination of perceptions between advertising and public relations professionals. *Public Relations Review* (2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2016.02.007>

**Table 2**

Mean Scores for Advertising & Public Relations professionals with regard to overall professional relationship (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

	Adv. Mean	PR mean	Sig.
An organization needs both advertising and public relations to effectively communicate to the public.	4.30	4.23	0.236
Public relations and advertising often compete with each other.	2.66	2.40	0.000 <sup>a</sup>
Advertising and public relations share a good working relationship.	3.77	3.81	0.372
Public relations and advertising are equal in status to one another.	3.01	2.86	0.022 <sup>a</sup>
Advertising and public relations must work together in order for an organization to communicate effectively.	4.36	4.42	0.325

<sup>a</sup> Indicates a significant between-groups difference.

**Table 3**

Mean Scores for Advertising & Public Relations professionals with regard to organizational management of the fields (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

	Adv. mean	PR mean	Sig.
Public relations and advertising should be managed separately.	3.04	2.95	0.230
Advertising and public relations should be given similar resources to accomplish their tasks.	3.37	3.56	0.005 <sup>a</sup>
Advertising and public relations should be equally valued by an organization.	3.94	4.09	0.012 <sup>a</sup>
Both public relations and advertising should be involved in organizational decision-making.	3.98	4.13	0.009 <sup>a</sup>
Public relations and advertising should work under a combined management structure.	3.62	3.80	0.005 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Indicates a significant between-groups difference.

**Table 4**

Mean Scores for Advertising & Public Relations professionals with regard to education/training within the fields (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

	Adv. mean	PR mean	Sig.
Public relations and advertising require similar skill sets.	3.26	3.11	0.035 <sup>a</sup>
Advertising and public relations students should be trained in both fields.	3.87	3.76	0.057
Public relations and advertising is best used in collaboration.	4.10	4.15	0.348
Advertising and public relations have separate organizational roles.	3.50	3.55	0.468
Organizations often use both advertising and public relations to reach target audiences.	4.15	4.34	0.000 <sup>a</sup>

### 3.2. Research questions

Research question one sought to determine what perceptions advertising and public relations practitioners held of each other's field with regard to the overall professional relationship, management within organizations, and education/training within the fields. Tables 2–4 indicate the results garnered by the study. An independent samples *t*-test was used to calculate between-groups significance.

With regard to research question one: *What perceptions do advertising professionals have of public relations (and vice-versa) with regard to the state of the relationship between the fields, organizations' management of advertising and public relations, and education/training in both fields?*, it seems as though advertising and public relations professionals generally have very similar views. Although there was a significant difference between the groups with regard to several of the statements, the results show little difference between the professionals surveyed, with some notable exceptions.

For the relationship series of questions, a notable difference for the statement “*public relations and advertising are equal in status to each other*” showed advertising professionals answering as “neither agree nor disagree” while public relations professionals were more likely to answer “disagree.” The difference was significant at the 0.022 level. This was juxtaposed with public relations practitioners having a significantly higher level of disagreement with the statement “*public relations and advertising often compete with each other*,” though respondents from both professions generally disagreed with the statement.

With regard to organizational management of advertising and public relations, all of the differences in means were significant except for the statement “*public relations and advertising should be managed separately*.” However, the latter statement is noteworthy, because it is the only statement where the respondents had no clear agreement or disagreement.

For the education/training series of statements, “*public relations and advertising is best used in collaboration*” had a fairly high level of agreement from both professions, though the statement “*advertising and public relations students should be trained in both fields*” had only moderate levels of agreement, and tended more toward the neutral response. While these two statements are not necessarily directly related, the difference in the responses is notable.

Research question two asked: *What perceptions do advertising and public relations professionals hold with regard to credibility of their fields, and the credibility of the other field?* To gauge the perceived credibility, study participants were asked to independently rank twelve professions in terms of credibility as either *very low*, *low*, *average*, *high*, or *very high*. Those professions were: advertising professionals, auto mechanics, car salespeople, clergy members, college professors, journalists, judges, medical doctors, members of congress, nurses, public relations professionals and police officers. To provide a visually parsimonious result, responses from study participants are displayed in Table 5 in terms of either low (combined *low* and *very low*) or high (combined *high* and *very high*) by profession.

**Table 5**  
 Perceived credibility of professions among study respondents.

	Adv Low%	Adv High%	PR Low%	PR High%
Advertising Professionals	6.6	51.8	11.9	33.9
Auto Mechanics	23.4	20.8	26.9	15.1
Car Salespeople	70.0	5.7	71.1	3.5
Clergy Members	11.0	58.8	8.4	59.7
College Professors	2.3	80.7	1.5	81.9
Journalists	9.9	49.0	9.6	52.2
Judges	2.6	78.2	1.8	78.3
Medical Doctors	1.0	89.3	.5	89.0
Members of Congress	54.4	22.2	47.6	21.9
Nurses	.5	84.3	.4	87.7
Public Relations Professionals	9.1	40.7	6.2	47.9
Police Officers	11.7	51.9	9.8	41.0

**Table 6**  
 Advertising professionals' responses to task responsibility (by percentage of respondents).

Task	Tasked to Adv.	Tasked to PR	Tasked to both	Tasked to other
Account Management <sup>a</sup>	46.9	2.9	40.1	7.3
Communicating during a crisis <sup>a</sup>	1.0	75.0	20.6	0.5
Media Buying <sup>a</sup>	84.4	2.9	9.1	0.8
Publicity	4.2	68.0	25.0	0
Social Media management	14.6	20.3	60.7	1.6
Organizational Website management <sup>a</sup>	24.0	14.6	47.1	11.5
Consumer/Stakeholder research <sup>a</sup>	24.5	17.2	43.8	11.7
Branding <sup>a</sup>	42.7	4.9	46.9	2.6
Communicating about CSR practices	1.3	47.7	45.3	2.9
Employee/Internal communication <sup>a</sup>	1.8	45.3	25.8	24.2
New product/service communication <sup>a</sup>	20.8	6.8	68.8	.8
Graphic/Package design <sup>a</sup>	65.6	3.6	19.3	8.6
Reputation Management <sup>a</sup>	2.3	50.8	43.2	0.8

<sup>a</sup> Indicates a significant difference in means between advertising and public relations professionals.

Overall, the responses from study participants are very similar, but the particular item of interest is how professionals from each field (advertising and public relations) rate both themselves and each other. Both groups ranked their own professions moderately high, though nowhere near the rankings of nurses, doctors, college professors or judges. Both advertising and public relations professionals ranked themselves sixth in terms of credibility. Advertising professionals ranked public relations practitioners seventh, while public relations respondents ranked advertising professionals eighth. Therefore, research question two can be answered that both advertising and public relations professionals hold their fields, and those of each other's fields, moderately high in terms of credibility, though each holds its own field above the other.

Research question 3 asked: *What tasks do advertising and public relations practitioners feel primarily belong in one field (either advertising or public relations) versus being shared or belonging to another organizational function?* To answer this question, respondents were given a series of thirteen tasks that might be considered to be a function of the professional communication for an organization. Tables 6 and 7 indicate responses from each group of participants. ANOVA was used to determine if there were significant differences between group responses.

Some of the tasks for research question three clearly fell into one field or the other, both based on respondent answers and on traditional practices. For example, media buying is generally considered to be an advertising tactic, while publicity is generally the job of the public relations practitioner. Some of the major differences between respondents are of interest, for example, 46.9% (n = 180) of advertising professionals felt the responsibility for branding should fall to both fields, while 64.5% (n = 446) of the public relations practitioners felt that it should be a function of both fields. Of the 13 communication tasks presented, respondents differed significantly between the groups for ten of the tasks. Therefore, research question three can be answered that, overall, there is a significant difference between the fields in terms of how they perceive task responsibility among many of the tasks commonly associated with professional communication within an organization.

**4. Discussion**

This study marks the first foray into the empirical understanding of the relationship between advertising and public relations and as such, had some notable findings. In particular, the study found that professionals from both fields generally agreed on how they perceived the relationship between the fields with regard to organizational management, education/training and the overall perception of the relationship. Similarly, respondents in this study were also fairly con-

**Table 7**  
 Public relations professionals' responses to task responsibility (by percentage of respondents).

Task	Tasked to Adv.	Tasked to PR	Tasked to both	Tasked to other
Account Management <sup>a</sup>	23.3	6.4	57.1	11.6
Communicating during a crisis <sup>a</sup>	0.1	86.6	11.1	0.4
Media Buying <sup>a</sup>	78.0	2.5	16.6	1.2
Publicity	2.3	70.8	25.1	0
Social Media management	1.4	54.0	40.0	2.7
Organizational Website management <sup>a</sup>	9.2	32.7	43.4	13.0
Consumer/Stakeholder research <sup>a</sup>	21.4	12.7	55.1	9.1
Branding <sup>a</sup>	22.4	7.8	64.5	3.6
Communicating about CSR practices	0.6	51.2	44.9	1.6
Employee/Internal communication <sup>a</sup>	0.4	65.6	15.3	16.9
New product/service communication <sup>a</sup>	9.7	12.1	75.6	0.9
Graphic/Package design <sup>a</sup>	60.0	1.4	26.9	10.0
Reputation Management <sup>a</sup>	0.1	68.4	28.8	1.0

<sup>a</sup> Indicates a significant difference in means between advertising and public relations professionals.

gruent when it came to perceived credibility of both their individual field, and the credibility of the other profession. However, there was substantial and statistically significant disagreement among respondents from both fields when it came to task responsibility of communication within an organization.

#### 4.1. Implications for practitioners

As more and more organizations move toward integration of the communication function, the results of this study provide a basis for understanding between the professions. While there generally seems to be a mutual respect between the professions, as well as an understanding that each field *can* work together to the maximum benefit of the organization, there also seems to be a certain level of territorialism with regard to specific tasks within the organizational communication matrix. Research by Grunig and Grunig (1998, p. 145) suggested that “. . .integrating all communication functions through the public relations department enhances the ability of the communication function to participate in strategic management”.

The results here do not directly support nor counter the benefits of collaboration, though it seems the practitioners who participated did see an overall advantage to the concept of combining communication efforts between advertising and public relations. The respondents seemed less enthusiastic about the idea that cross-training in both fields was a necessary component.

Overall, advertising and public relations practitioners seem willing to embrace the *concepts* behind integration, such as collaboration and combined decision-making, though were less sure about the execution of that integration. For example, advertising professionals were fairly neutral on the idea that the fields should operate under a combined management structure, or that each discipline should be given similar resources to accomplish their tasks. Public relations practitioners tended to disagree that the two fields were equal in status, while both fields were neutral on the idea of having separate organizational roles.

Davila (2012) states, “Social media is central to an integrated approach. Many advertising and creative agencies don’t have the capabilities to develop messaging platforms, content calendars and engagement-based digital plans, which is where the PR function comes in.” Clients of many agencies are looking for more options to choose from, including: “. . .advertising, marketing, interactive and social media techniques. . .” which helps contribute to the recent rise of PR agencies being acquired by other agencies (p.17).

Therefore, organizations seeking to integrate their advertising and public relations efforts might benefit from the results of this study, which show that while professionals from both fields understand the advantages of collaboration, they may be less than enthusiastic about being forced into a single silo. Some of the qualitative responses contained the phrase “separate but equal,” which seemed to be a common thread. In the space for comments, on participant stated:

I think you need to separate out the disciplines from the personalities involved. PR and advertising absolutely can compete with each other, but they can also be highly complementary if everyone involved understands how each contributes to the greater good. When there is disagreement over the hierarchy and how the two interact, then it all begins to fall apart.

Many of the respondents indicated that the integration of advertising and public relations was highly dependent on the company. One exemplar statement from a respondent was

I’ve seen it go both ways. I’ve worked in organizations where PR never even spoke with advertising, we had no idea what the other was doing, and it all seemed to work out okay. I am currently in a much smaller organization where I work very closely with advertising, and it’s nice to have that relationship as well. I can help push their advertising campaigns using PR strategies, and we can make sure that the messaging that we’re both putting out there is on the same point.

Management within organizations must take careful stock of their communication practices, including its personnel, prior to engaging in the integration of advertising and public relations. The respondents in this study while for the collaboration of the disciplines also recognize that a fully-integrated approach (including resource and task sharing) may not be a realistic possibility for every organization.

#### 4.2. *Implications for curriculum*

Many colleges and universities have moved toward a more integrated curriculum, particularly in schools that are more traditionally focused on journalism or speech communication. The results in this study do not necessarily support nor deter that initiative, but one goal for this study was to provide data that could be used by faculty in both advertising and public relations to better inform their curricular decisions. Overall, while respondents in the study were agreeable that advertising and public relations are best used in collaboration for an organization, they were fairly neutral about formal cross-training in the fields. However, some of the respondents felt strongly that cross-training is vitally important. One participant stated,

I know personally that I was given a promotion in my company because I had a strong advertising and marketing background and the Vice President of Marketing saw great value in that experience for his PR specialist. Advertising professionals have a creative mind and I believe that can translate very well to PR situations. Crisis Communication is not the only thing that a PR professional has to deal with.

However for the majority of respondents, full integration of education/training was not needed, rather an understanding of each field was necessary. One respondent stated:

I think the skill sets are radically different—but can't (and shouldn't) be learned independently. A student can be just a PR person or an advertising person; but a GOOD student learns the skills necessary to be able to execute on both, as the strategy development comes from the same place. . .it's only the tactics that are different, as is how and when to use them.

Another respondent stated, "A student need not be 'fully trained' in both fields but should have the basic knowledge of its use and when it should be used within a campaign or crisis management." The other end of the spectrum was also represented in the comments, where one stated, "As a PR professional, I am not excited about getting instruction from the sales manager."

Taken as a whole, the results indicate that there should be some level of understanding (though as one respondent stated, it should be more than a "passing knowledge") of both fields incorporated into education of students in each discipline, though total integration may not be necessary or even desirable. Respondents did indicate a need for graduates to develop strong writing skills, managerial abilities, graphic design, and knowledge of persuasion and marketing, which seems to verify many of the skills and courses emphasized both in the literature and accrediting bodies. For example, Fullerton, McKinnon & Kendrick (2014) discovered ". . .many university programs are combining their advertising and public relations degrees into one major; however, students still tend to identify themselves as advertising or public relations students" (p.3). Students tend to become members of either the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) student chapter or the American Advertising Federation (AAF) student chapter depending on their aspired profession. Many of the respondents also indicated a strong need for experiential learning, either through on-the-job training or via internship experience.

#### 4.3. *Limitations and future directions for research*

This study had both the advantage and disadvantage of not having a significant amount of extant literature on which to base hypothetical assumptions on the relationship between the professions. As such, one of the limitations of this study was its exploratory nature. Future studies might find it useful to verify the reliability of the results found here.

The sample, while fairly large, was not a random sample of practitioners. While contracting a survey firm to generate a list of advertising and public relations professionals resulted in a much larger swath of professionals to draw from than could have been obtained by the researcher, it was fairly limiting in terms of potential respondent pre-selection. Future research might look to smaller, more purposive samples, such as specifically seeking out those practitioners who are members of a professional organization, such as PRSA or AAF. Also, while the study participants were overwhelmingly in management positions, it might benefit future research if senior-level executives were studied to see how they view integration, and also the individual disciplines.

The study might have benefited from using pre-established scales on relationship measures, instead of constructing the questionnaire based on face validity, particularly for the series of statements regarding the overall relationship between the professions, management structures, and education/training. Future research might look at these dimensions independently, which would allow for greater depth of understanding.

Future research might also examine the different industries professionals in advertising and public relations work, for example, a look at in-house versus agency, profit versus non-profit. A preliminary review of the results of this study indicated there may be some differences in response based on industry, though there was insufficient data to definitively establish those differences. Future studies might also look to specific fields, such as healthcare, technology, etc., to see if there are differences in how those professionals view collaboration or integration.



Finally, this study only examined advertising and public relations, which, while both major components of integrated communication, are not the only parts. Many of the respondents indicated in their qualitative responses that marketing also held much responsibility in the communication for an organization. Future studies might include marketing alongside advertising and public relations in order to get the most accurate responses possible.

## 5. Conclusions

This study represents a first, small step toward understanding how integration of communication within an organization can best benefit the organization. While the “IMC” concept may be less popular (at least in terms of using that particular vernacular), it does seem that for a multitude of reasons, professional communication is moving towards more integration, particularly in the areas of new communication technologies (i.e., mobile, social). Scholars in public relations need to conduct more research in this area, as we strive to best serve both our students and the profession.

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