



Having had the opportunity to experience agency life over the last several months, I have found that one word nearly always follows the mention of Public Relations (PR) – "stressful." Tight deadlines, unrelenting clients and long hours are just some of the challenges that these employees face. So, when I had the opportunity to sit down with **Shannon Blood** – one of Off Madison Ave's resident **PR experts** – I was admittedly nervous. How was she going to feel about taking time out of her hectic schedule to meet with the "new guy" in the office? Would she check her phone incessantly, scared to miss the latest email? Was she going to share horror stories that would leave me running from

the office and advertising industry altogether? My nerves, however, were soon calmed. Shannon has worked in PR for nearly a decade, starting her career in Las Vegas and relocating to Seattle before finally settling down in Phoenix. Over the course of an hour, she shared stories and insights on how to survive in the feverish world of PR.

tip #1: spin, spin, spin!

When something goes wrong for a client, it has traditionally been the role of PR to weather the storm. With the **rise of social media**, more and more businesses are taking this job into their own hands by interacting directly with customers; regardless, there are **countless examples** of brands who've made headlines for their response to what could have otherwise been a quickly resolved complaint or problem, so for those entering PR, knowing how to navigate the difficult challenge of **crisis management** will continue to be a valuable skill.

Shannon's clients had their fair share of crises during her time working in Las Vegas, often requiring rapid response time during hours when others were finishing their last drink out on The Strip or in bed dreaming of hitting of the jackpot. While each situation was unique, her approach remained fairly constant: ensure that the media was receiving the right information and hearing both sides of the story. By doing this, Shannon explained, PR teams can proactively shift the narrative to one that is more positive. And, what about that old cliché? If she's done her job well, Shannon says there truly is "no such thing as bad publicity." The public will hear what her client is doing to recover from any given incident, and general perception will ultimately be positive at best and unaffected at worst.

tip #2: build bridges (don't burn them).

One of the keys to being successful in pitching your clients' stories is **fostering genuine relationships with those in the media** that you deal with on a consistent basis. For Shannon, this starts with something as simple as finding out if they prefer a phone call or email, press release or pitch paragraph, and other gestures like these that may seem insignificant, but show that you respect that these professionals, too, are crunched for time.

This also means providing content that is relevant to that journalist or reporter, as well as to the current news climate. Often, those in PR will find themselves in the role of salesperson, having to find a way to connect their story to a trending topic, beloved celebrity, or popular industry. While it may be tempting to think quantity over quality when it comes to pushing a story, focusing on the latter will lead to building mutual respect and generate long-term benefits for you and your client.

tip #3: "P" is for "passion."

As I absorbed all of the information that I could from Shannon, I couldn't help but notice how positive and energetic she was when speaking about the industry. I asked: "Aren't you scared of burning out? It seems like you have a lot on your plate." It was then, ten minutes before our interview concluded, that Shannon shared with me her most important advice. "I think it takes a certain personality to be in PR," she began. "I have seen countless people burn out, but that's not unique to PR. It happens in every department at every job. I love what I do, and if you don't love what you do or have the personality for it, you're going to burn out."

Being able to explore the **various services** that integrated marketing agencies provide is one of the greatest benefits to being an intern at Off Madison Ave. The information, stories and advice that have been shared with me were invaluable as I transitioned into a full-time role.

From my meeting with Shannon, I took away a message that applies to anyone on the brink of starting their career: love what you do, and even jobs that look like the most intense, demanding and time-consuming to an outsider will be rewarding, exciting, and – sometimes – fun. My brief look into the world of PR was informative, interesting and most surprisingly, not that scary after all.

Want to learn more tips on surviving agency life? Apply for an Off Madison Ave internship!

about the author: james skinner



As an account coordinator, James assists with many accounts by preparing competitive analyses, conducting market research and managing client projects. As a recent graduate of Arizona State University, with a Bachelor of Science in Marketing and Bachelor of Arts in Design Management, he has a passion for traveling, sustainability and urban and interior design.

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