

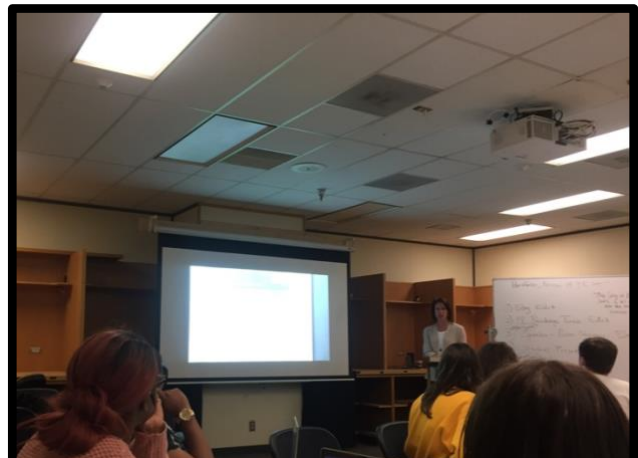
## Through the agency lens

*Industry professional educates students on working in PR agencies*

By Alexia Johnson

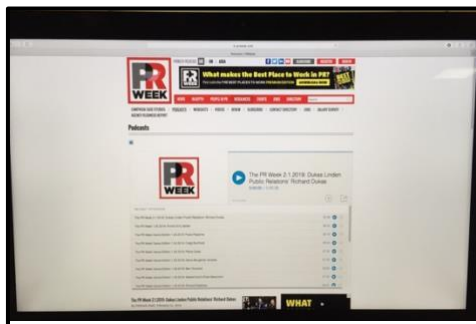
On Tuesday, Jan. 29, me and other students enrolled in PR Communications at the University of North Texas learned the best practices from Renee Cossman, an industry professional. Cossman has years of experience working in public relations for Weber Shandwick as an account supervisor for Consumer Brands, FoodMinds as a public affairs consultant, FleishmanHillard as the vice president for corporate reputation and she now works as a senior public relations communications consultant at her own PR firm: Renee Cossman Public Relations.

She gave us information about what a day as a PR intern would look like and also implored that each of us apply for the opportunity to be an intern at a firm. As she spoke to us, she highlighted a few skills that would benefit us as students if we chose to work for a public relations agency.



*Students listening attentively to Cossman's presentation about succeeding in the industry.*

## Writing effectively for public relations



*PR Week's thirty-minute podcasts are a great way to learn more about the PR industry from professionals.*

In an [article by PR Week](#), 'the ability to write effectively' was listed as the highest skill viewed as important to PR and communications professionals. According to Bret Werner, the president of MWWPR, "[We] want people who can produce content." Cossman used this quote to emphasize the need for strong writing abilities at an agency level. She attributes strong writing skills to excellent listening skills combined with creativity; "a lot of the work you will do will be probing into what your clients want," said Cossman.

As Cossman spoke about the purpose of listening to be a better PR writer, she highlighted a few publications and podcasts that she listens to stay up-to-date. She reads *The Huffington Post* and subscribes to *PR Week*; she also listens to podcasts such as *Hustle Sold Separately*, *PR Week Review* and *Better PR*

Now with Mark Phillis. According to [an article by HuffPost](#), reading more positively influences your writing skills.

### **Creating a digital footprint**

Cossmann also focused on the importance of monitoring your digital footprint. It is easy for college students to be caught up in following trends on social media and disregard the fact that professionals monitor social media accounts for people who hope to work at their companies. She suggests doing damage control on all platforms by reviewing timelines for any unsightly posts that may contain curse words or inappropriate photos. She also mentioned controlling tagging, making profiles private and, if necessary, closing social media accounts.

### **Growing your network**

Her last important skill for success in PR was networking. She recommended that students do research on the companies that they hope to work at and the people they want to meet. She says that students can use LinkedIn searches to find people and can often use professors or other professionals to connect with people that they want to meet. She also suggested that students attend career fairs and industry networking events. When attending those events, she recommended asking questions and being respectful and responsive with the people that you meet.

Overall, I genuinely enjoyed her presentation. I was particularly intrigued by the information that she provided because I knew that she formerly worked at FleishmanHillard, a PR agency that I want to internship at. The tips that she gave us were beneficial and I am extremely excited to use them when working in the public relations field.

#### ***About Alexia Johnson***



*Alexia Johnson is a senior majoring in public relations at the University of North Texas. She is skilled with PR writing and is heavily interested in performing research for companies. She aspires to work in a public relations agency as a PR or social media specialist.*

## Reference

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