



Carolyn Owen
Senior Account Executive
EuroPR Group
Politics and International
Management graduate

"Make sure there are no spelling and grammar mistakes in your CV and covering letter. This may sound simple, but PRs have an eye for detail and your CV could end up in the bin if you don't check it thoroughly."



Caroline Howlett
Account Director
Nelson Bostock Communications
Business Studies graduate

"I moved into PR having spent five years working on IT titles at Dennis Publishing and the move from journalism to PR was a natural one. I strongly believe that all PR executives should spend some time working in an editorial office to fully understand how a magazine is put together. It also provides an interesting insight into social anthropology. Have you ever spent the day in a small car with four IT journalists?"

APPLY HERE: HOW TO GET THAT JOB IN PR CONSULTANCY

This section gives you the all important advice on securing that job in PR consultancy. As the third most popular career choice for graduates, PR is an extremely difficult career to break into, and competition is fierce for places at the best consultancies. But do not let this deter you. The PR industry is driven by the quality of the people that work within it, and no consultancy can afford to overlook an opportunity to recruit the stars of tomorrow.

Do your research

Do think carefully about the type of consultancy you would like to work in. You may be attracted to accounts held by the firm, or have been impressed by the company's work and reputation in a particular sector.

Contributors to this guide put research at the top of any job hunter's action list. Most consultancies have a website so this is a good place to start. It's also where you start applying for jobs too as 63% of PRCA member consultancies use the web to recruit staff.

Even before securing an interview it is important to establish which clients consultancies work for and what type of work is carried out on a client's behalf. The *PRCA Yearbook* is a useful resource for finding out current client lists for member consultancies while *Hollis UK Press and Public Relations Handbook* has lists of most UK PR agencies, and the accounts they hold. The more considered and targeted your application, the better your chance of being noticed and singled out.

Don't forget to read the marketing and trade press in your university library or regularly visit the on-line sites of such publications. *PR Week* is the best source of agency news but there are a growing number of publications covering the industry like the Guardian's on-line site www.mediaguardian.co.uk. For a full listing of places to visit, turn to the useful addresses and links section at the back of this guide.

A growing number of consultancies offer graduate training schemes, although competition is fierce. Many of these will fast-track the careers of recruits and will usually include periods working in different sectors of the consultancy, training courses and external secondments, if appropriate.

Work experience

As most employers want proof of your interest in PR, work experience is a very sensible option and many consultancies offer work experience placements throughout the year, or summer internships. Be prepared to start at the bottom, prove yourself to be a valuable extra pair of hands, and in return you'll get an insight into the industry as well as a fantastic talking point at your next interview.

Sign here

As you will generally apply for a job with a CV and covering letter, you have a great opportunity to demonstrate the core skills you need in PR, namely the ability to make your message relevant and communicate it effectively to your target audience.

Set out below are tips from Liz Fraser, Head of Human Resources at Edelman PR Worldwide and Chairperson of the PRCA Human Resources Forum. Use it as a checklist when applying for jobs.

1. Find out the correct name and title of the person who is responsible for graduate recruitment.
2. Start early. Large consultancies will be interviewing in the autumn or early in the New Year and offering places by Easter for the following September.
3. Check your application and CV for spelling/typing errors. When a company has several hundred applications to wade through, a spelling mistake is enough to put your application straight in the bin.
4. Use a PC to produce your CV and application letter. Anyone entering into PR is expected to be computer literate.
5. Present details of relevant work experience. Consultancies are more interested in people who have demonstrated an interest in PR through holiday jobs and work experience in a consultancy, or work on local radio or a university newspaper.

6. Be concise. PR is about identifying key messages and getting them across succinctly. The same goes for your CV. Allow two pages maximum and a one-page covering letter explaining why you want a career in PR and what you have to offer a prospective employee.
7. Don't send lots of press releases, or articles you have written, with your application. There'll be time to show these off when you get an interview.
8. Be creative in the presentation of your CV. Present it clearly and include a photo of yourself. PR, after all, is about presentation but don't let it get in the way of communicating serious content.
9. Persevere. PR is highly competitive and there are not many places for graduates, but if you really want to work in PR, you'll get there in the end.

The interview

So what happens if, following your application, you are called in for an interview? Here are some useful tips from those who've done it before:

1. Preparation

Swot up on the company, its culture and people. Knowing the name of the MD and where he/she came from is a big advantage. Know the company's mission statement and any reasons it may have been in the news recently. Also research the company's clients, and the industries it specialises in and, of course, know its competitors.

2. Presentation

Look polished, professional, and confident. Sometimes it pays off to do a little research like checking out what current employees wear to work. This is also a useful insight into the company culture. Remember, if in doubt, it's always better to dress up than dress down.

3. Enthusiasm

Show you want the job. Explain why you want to be in the company and why you want to work in PR. Compile a list of reasons highlighting why you are perfect for the job, the company and for a career in public relations.



**Tricia Boyd, Human Resources Director,
Key Communications**

"Graduates wishing to get in PR must be interested in the broader business environment as well as the excitement of the day-to-day PR work. We do not ask for specific degrees as we believe the skills and intellectual ability that should result from successful completion of a degree course will provide the raw material we are looking for. Pertinent work experience is useful, as is some active extra-curricular work at university."



**Katherine Nicholls, Human Resources Manager,
AUGUST.ONE COMMUNICATIONS**

"The graduates we are looking for are those who can communicate through writing and public speaking with great presentation skills. Confidence, and a love of the media and current affairs are important too. It's a definite advantage if people can show they have a dedicated interest in PR, either through a post-graduate diploma in public relations or through former work experience in PR consultancies or the media."



**Becky Wood
Senior Account Manager
VLP
Politics graduate**

"I got into PR using a couple of tried and tested tools, perseverance and a bit of patience. After sending out letters to every London-based PR agency listed in the PRCA Yearbook and replying to a good few ads in Media Guardian, my current consultancy, VLP, offered me the chance to gain some work experience with them. While work experience doesn't pay much (often only expenses, if anything at all) it is an ideal way to try out a career without committing yourself and decide if it's what you really want to do."



**Siobhan Abernathy,
Board Director,
Nexus Choat**

"The key quality we are looking for in graduates is hunger. Hunger to learn, to develop, to thrive. We also increasingly need to see that people are really comfortable with 'selling' – selling news, ideas and themselves. These are the candidates who are fast-tracked and very successful."