

CAREER PROFILE: PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST



Kristin Rabas says the best part of her job as a public relations specialist is interacting with people. **Sherry Stuart Zuege/For the Press-Gazette**

In public relations, image is everything

Rabas says outgoing personality important in her career

BY SHERRY STUART ZUEGE

Press-Gazette correspondent

Kristin Rabas came from business-owner parents. Her dad has a trucking business and her mom owns a hair salon.

Rabas wasn't leaning toward either business but knew she wanted to go to college. She started with general studies and took a couple of communication classes because they looked interesting.

Then she fell in love with communication and followed that path.

She worked as an intern with Charter Communications and continued there as a public relations coordinator for the Minnesota and Nebraska regions. She started at Leonard & Finco Public Relations in July of last year.

A public relations specialist performs a variety of duties to create and promote a positive image for a business and to familiarize the public with that business. Public relations specialists are also called media specialists or communication specialists. They must be sensitive to the needs, attitudes and opinions of the business and their audience.

Most companies have a public relations department or person in charge of public relations, while

other businesses combine it with their advertising department. Schools, hospitals, churches and government organizations use public relations specialists to inform the public of activities, services and special accomplishments. Not-for-profit groups use public relations to inform the public of events and fund raisers. Some companies hire a public relations firm to be their voice. The firm may inform the public of new products and services.

Public relations specialists arrange speaking engagements, news conferences, meetings, fundraising campaigns and appreciation events. They prepare speeches, news releases, magazine articles, scripts, fact sheets, and newsletters. They work on image campaigns. The public relations specialist works closely with businesspeople, co-workers, media people from radio, television, print and advertising and the public.

Rabas may have to drop everything to take care of an issue or for crisis management. For example, if a company has a large layoff, it may need her to communicate with employees, customers or the media.

A big portion of Rabas' job is spent working on social media. She monitors Facebook, Twitter and many other sites on behalf of her clients. She also makes posts for their businesses.

"Social media is really catching on," Rabas said. "Young people got it right away. Now the older crowd is growing rapidly. Social media can be set up to be efficient and work for you. It's really changing the way people want to be communicated with. It's just a new way to get information out there.

"Traditional media is not dead, so don't just drop everything that you're doing. Simply integrate social media into the plan."

On a large staff, duties may be directed to one

area of interest. In smaller companies a worker is more likely involved in all aspects of the job.

■ **Highlights:** According to Rabas, the best part of the job is interacting with and building relationships with a variety of people in different businesses.

■ **Lowlights:** The worst part of the job is when you have to drop everything else to handle a crisis.

"But that can be an exciting challenge, too," she said. "You could be thinking about a grocery store and at the drop of a hat have to handle a crisis for a financial client."

■ **Advice:** "The sun rises and sets the same way on Saturday as Monday, so take advantage of it."

■ **What's needed:** Rabas says to get into public relations you must be a strong writer and a very outgoing people person. Training in communication and journalism is helpful. If you're working for an agency, you have to be able to switch your train of thought quickly and in an organized manner because you handle a variety of clients.

■ **Aspirations:** "The future is out there. I want to pursue my MBA, continue to build relationships, continue networking and improve my skill set."

Kristin Rabas

■ **Age:** 25

■ **Residence:** Kelly Lake

■ **Hobbies:** Volleyball and reading

■ **Employer:** Leonard & Finco Public Relations Inc., 1039 W. Mason St., (920) 965-7750 [lpublicrelations.com](http://publicrelations.com)

■ **Education:** Bachelor of Arts in communication and enrolled to begin an MBA program with an emphasis on corporate communication