

Cultural Profits: How Museums Communicate through Nonprofit Public Relations

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Public relations is an obscure or unfamiliar field to the average American. Often confused with marketing and advertising, most people associate PR with large corporations trying to manipulate the media. What people don't realize is that PR is all around us, fulfilling a great variety of functions and influencing many publics, not the least of which includes nonprofit PR. Although not at the forefront of the public's image of PR, nonprofit public relations is a totally different animal typically including a small budget and lots of hands-on work. My research includes a foundation of nonprofit PR and how it differs from the corporate setting, and then builds to focus on museums as a specific nonprofit institution. Through both articles on the subject and a collection of interviews with museum PR professionals ranging from small local museums to a large national museum, I have identified goals and methods of museum PR as a reflection of the larger and ever-expanding sector of nonprofit public relations. As a rapidly growing field, research on nonprofit PR is in its fledgling stages and therefore it is important to identify and highlight these key concepts such as cultural worth, free media maximization, and nonprofit networking.

Information about the Author:

Erika Wagner is a senior communication major with a focus on public relations. She has a great deal of nonprofit experience through her heavy involvement in both the Valparaiso Women's Ultimate team and the national organization, USA Ultimate, as the Great Lakes Women's regional director. She looks forward to pursuing a career in nonprofit PR and hopes to work in a firm that handles museum accounts as a way into that specific field.

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