



**For Immediate Release**

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## **NATIONAL SURVEY OF MULTICULTURAL PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS REVEALS BARRIERS TO DIVERSITY**

### **Women Owned/ Managed Agencies Lead the Way Achieving Diversity**

**New York, NY, June 9, 2005** -- A 2004-2005 study of Black and Hispanic public relations (PR) practitioners in the United States reveals significant dissatisfaction with the PR profession's commitment to diversity, perceived pervasive discrimination, and widespread concern that multicultural practitioners are relegated to a slow professional track. The findings also indicate that women-owned / managed firms have a significantly greater commitment to and success in retaining multicultural practitioners, compared to their male counterparts.

The on-line survey was conducted in October 2004 and January 2005 by Lynn Appelbaum, APR, Associate Professor, Chair, Department of Media & Communications Arts at The City College of New York, and Rochelle Ford, Ph.D., APR, Assistant Professor, Advertising and PR Sequence Coordinator, Howard University. RF Binder Public Relations was the underwriter.

“This is a wake-up call for the PR industry to take significant steps to address diversity,” said Professor Appelbaum. “While we have begun to talk about how to diversify our workforce, industry professionals and HR staffs must take action if we are going to effect meaningful change. The industry may want to look to women-owned firms for leadership in this important area.”

“This study gives a snapshot of practitioner perceptions and experiences, and while the news is not all bad, organizations need to work to alleviate the double standards and racism practitioners feel they face in order to attract and retain talent,” said Dr. Ford.

### Job Satisfaction

Survey results indicate that job satisfaction among Black and Latino professionals is lower than job satisfaction among the general PR practitioner population, with only 45.8% of the respondents feeling satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs, all things considered. Additionally, Hispanic practitioners experience significantly lower levels of job satisfaction than Blacks.

### Work-Related Racism

Respondents consistently report that they have experienced incidences of racism in their careers - 54% experienced subtle discrimination by current or past employers and 40% experienced overt discrimination. The most common problem (reported by 62%) was having to be more qualified for positions than Caucasian American counterparts. Additionally, 60% feel multicultural practitioners are put on slow moving career tracks, and 56% feel that multicultural practitioners are frequently relegated to menial tasks.

Nearly half of all respondents reported that they are treated unfairly in the workplace. In 9 of the 18 racism measures, Hispanic practitioners reported significantly higher levels than Black respondents.

### Workplace Integration

Despite these negative experiences, multicultural practitioners feel that they are integrated in the workplace and do not see themselves as being relegated to only multicultural clients. Two thirds note that their projects receive a lot of attention outside their organizations, 72 % interact professionally outside their ethnic group, and 58% interact socially with Caucasian Americans.

### Mentoring

Importantly, nearly two thirds agree or strongly agree that they have been mentored by one or more PR practitioners, who made a difference in their success; nearly 84% had at least one white male mentor and 87% had at least one white female mentor.

### Recommended Action Steps

Multicultural practitioners identified several strategies for professional organizations and employers to take to improve the industry's diversity initiatives: provide diversity and management training for staff and managers, actively recruit at universities with high minority enrollment and at conferences and job fairs that target minorities.

Survey respondents identified three major areas for PR associations to play in promoting diversity: create a campaign geared toward recruiting multicultural practitioners getting the message out earlier to youth; offer development opportunities to diversity professionals; and assist businesses with recruiting competitive diverse candidates.

### Survey Design

The survey was designed to provide feedback on multicultural PR practitioners' experience in the workplace, assess discrimination issues and the PR industry's diversity initiatives, and identify strengths and weaknesses of membership in race-

neutral professional organizations, such as the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), compared to racially-based membership groups, such as the Black Public Relations Society (BPRS) or the Hispanic Public Relations Society (HPRS). The survey also sought ideas from multicultural practitioners to help the industry chart a plan of action to improve diversity within the PR industry.

The sample includes members of multicultural PR organizations: National Black Public Relations Society and its New York, Washington, DC, Chicago and Atlanta chapters; Hispanic Marketing Communication Association Miami Chapter; and PRSA's multicultural communication section members. Recipients were invited to forward the survey to non-member multicultural practitioners. Findings are based on 132 completed surveys, about a 10% response.

The press conference is a major initiative of the Diversity Committee of the Public Relations Society of America- New York Chapter (PRSA-NY). The committee's co-chairs are Lester Davis, Executive Director of Marketing at CommCore Strategies, Inc and Lilly Loh, Director of Business Development & Marketing at Hill & Knowlton.

Complete survey findings and analysis can be obtained at the City College of New York web site: [www.ccnycuny.edu/prsurvey](http://www.ccnycuny.edu/prsurvey), or [www.prsany.org](http://www.prsany.org).

## **Survey Highlights and Recommended Actions:**

### **Top barriers to attracting diverse PR practitioners, according to respondents:**

- PR industry's lack of persuasive recruitment campaign to attract multicultural employees.
- PR recruiters don't know how to find multicultural candidates when jobs become available.
- Qualified candidates don't know about opportunities in the PR profession.

### **Recruitment:**

- 61.6% of respondents say the PR industry is somewhat successful in recruiting a more diverse workforce
- 1.2% identify the industry as successful, and 24.2% feel the industry was not successful.

### **Retention:**

- 56.6 % describe the industry as somewhat successful in retaining diverse practitioners,
- 35.6% believe the industry is not successful in retaining a more diverse workforce.
- 36% agree that management is not committed to their success.

### **Job Satisfaction:**

- 45.8% of respondents express a high level of job satisfaction.
- Black and Hispanic satisfaction levels are lower than those of the general population.
- Overall job satisfaction declined among Black practitioners from their 1999 levels as compared to Larkin's 1999 study.
- Importantly, Black practitioners report a significantly higher level of job satisfaction (3.45 mean on a scales of 1-5) compared to 2.67 for Hispanics.

## **Gender and Diversity**

Women-owned/managed organizations accounted for 40.7% of those surveyed, but have a significantly larger percent of multicultural practitioners employees with 75% of employees representing multicultural groups, compared to male owned/managed organizations with only 34% of the employees from multicultural groups.

Multicultural practitioners at male-owned/managed organizations feel management was not committed to helping them succeed within the organization (mean 3.30).

Practitioners at female-owned/managed organizations felt management was more committed to helping them succeed within the organization (mean 2.66).

## **Racism:**

- 53.7% of respondents feel that some employers do not want diverse practitioners working for them.
- 27.9% feel that clients do not want a multicultural professional working on their account.
- 44.6% feel they have experienced overt discrimination by employers and employees.
- 53.4% feel they have experienced subtle discrimination.
- 63% feel they have to be more qualified than a Caucasian American to do the same job.
- 55% feel they are not afforded the same opportunities in the PR field as their Caucasian counterparts.
- Multicultural practitioners at mainstream organizations/firms were more likely to be assigned to mainstream clients (mean = 3.55) than they were to be assigned to race-ethnic accounts. (minority organizations/firms mean = 2.88)

## **Professional Membership**

- About 32% of the respondents belong to PRSA; 33% belong to BPRS; and about 5% belong to HPRA.
- 67% of respondents feel joining race-neutral PR professional organizations, such as PRSA, IABC was valuable for the following reasons:
  - Networking
  - Professional Development
  - Accreditation
- However, the three greatest barriers to joining race-neutral PR professional organizations are:
  - Cost of annual membership dues
  - Lack of diversity among membership
  - Insufficient amount of time to participate

- Even more respondents (80.9 %) said that race-based membership organizations are valuable for
  - Networking
  - Mentoring
  - Professional Support

### **Survey Sample**

- 81.9% of the sample was female; 16.9% was male; 2.3% didn't respond
- Ages ranged from 21-69; with 30-39 year-olds representing 28.4% of the respondents
- 75% of the respondents were Black/African or Caribbean; 22.7% were Hispanic and 1.1% were Asian
- The USA was the most frequent country of origin (72.8%) followed by Cuba 5.7% and Puerto Rico (2.3%). Each of the following had 1% represented in the study: Argentina, Canada, Columbia, England, Jamaica, Mexico, Trinidad, Venezuela and Zambia.
- Salaries ranged from under \$20,000 (1%) to over \$100,000 (10%); 20.5% had salaries between \$30,000-40,000 (mode).
- The majority of the respondents (54.5%) focused on media relations as their job function.
- 29.5% worked for public relations agencies; 18.2% worked for corporations, 19.3% were independent consultants; 10.2 worked for educational institutions; and 22.7% worked for non profits, associations or the government.
- 38.6% considered themselves middle-management; 29.5% were senior management; and 27.3% were entry-level.
- Practitioners have worked in public relations between 1 and 38 years with a mean of 12.52 years.
- The age when practitioners learned about public relations ranged from 8 years old to 47 years.

### **Recommended Actions for Industry Recruitment:**

- Recruit at colleges with large multicultural populations and at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's). Create partnerships with career counseling offices at these institutions. Conduct outreach to PRSSA multicultural student members. Recruit multicultural students majoring in English, history, social science and communications.
- Do not create a policy of quota hiring for its own sake. Instead, foster a corporate culture that values and supports diversity. Forget about hiring "token" minorities. Hire the best qualified candidates, but seek out and be genuinely open to recruiting multicultural practitioners.
- Hire more people of color to do outreach. Focus on building multicultural middle and upper management ranks with key positions, not just entry level trainee jobs with no support.
- Partner with multicultural professional organizations, such as Black Public Relations Society and Hispanic Public Relations Society on recruitment efforts.

- Advertise in multicultural magazines/media.
- Consistently offer internships and mentoring programs for multicultural students/practitioners.

### **Recommended Actions to Retain Multicultural Practitioners**

- Make diversity recruitment and retention part of the institution's objectives.
- Create a work environment that is truly supportive of diversity. Diversity initiatives do not mean "affirmative action."
- Educate supervisors and employees about fostering good working relationships with everyone in the company, including multicultural practitioners.
- Make HR staff accountable for industry diversity recruitment and retention.
- Demonstrate your commitment to multicultural employees by giving them comparable pay and due consideration for real advancement in the company.
- Establish a strong mentoring program to support multicultural practitioners that begins Day One and continues throughout their professional advancement.
- Promote multicultural practitioners to highly visible leadership posts to serve as role models.
- Assign multicultural practitioners to high profile accounts or projects, especially mainstream projects.

### **Recommended Actions for PR Industry Associations**

- Recruit more people of color in visible general leadership roles within the association.
- Set up a speaker's bureau of multicultural practitioners to increase diversity outreach.
- Membership drives should actively target multicultural practitioners.
- Since dues are a major barrier to multicultural practitioners joining a mainstream professional organization, look for ways to partner with racially-based PR organizations to provide discounts on professional development and networking opportunities.
- Cultivate professional associations with other multicultural organizations, such as the Urban League, to better understand diversity issues and to help publicize public relations opportunities.

- Create an awareness campaign for the PR profession, including high visibility of multicultural practitioners, geared towards high school students. Make diversity one major focus of the campaign.

### **Recommended Actions for Multicultural Practitioners**

- Do your homework on a company/agency before interviewing or accepting a job. Find out how long it generally takes to move up through the ranks and what is required for advancement to gauge your expectations.
- Visibly and consistently demonstrate your value to the company through your professionalism and productivity.
- Find a mentor in the company to help you understand the corporate culture and give you advice on how to advance. Be proactive in seeking out the best person to help you.
- Observe what makes other people successful, and try to emulate the positive qualities—dress, verbal, interpersonal and professional presentation. Think about every aspect of yourself in a professional light. Recognize that you may well be judged more critically than a white counterpart.
- Seek out Human Resources to support you if you experience overt racism.
- Seek additional support outside your company through other practitioners, perhaps through a racially-based professional organization, and through other mentors.

### **Recommended Actions for Academic Institutions**

- Develop a strong internship program with agencies and corporations.
- Create a mentoring program that pairs students with PR professionals.
- Cultivate networking opportunities for students, faculty and public relations executives and recruiters through the university's career office.
- Incorporate lessons on professionalism, demonstrating value to supervisors and colleagues and coping skills for dealing with uncomfortable scenarios in the workplace.