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**THE PLANK CENTER**  
FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

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## DEAR EMERGING LEADER,

You are the future of the public relations profession. As the leading international resource for those passionate about advancing their careers and the public relations profession, The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations is pleased you are taking the next step to develop and strengthen your leadership skills.

From the classroom to the boardroom, leaders play crucial roles in all groups and at all organizational levels, and The Center wants to empower, elevate and inspire you to lead with purpose.

This toolkit is a free resource filled with best practices in leadership, mentorship, and diversity & inclusion; lessons from leaders; scholarship opportunities; and much more.

We hope this toolkit informs and inspires you to discover the emerging leader within.



Karla K. Gower, Ph.D.

Director, The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations

# ABOUT THE PLANK CENTER

The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations is the leading international resource for practitioners, educators and students who are passionate about advancing their careers and the public relations profession. Along with its pillars of leadership, mentorship, and diversity & inclusion, The Center seeks to bridge the gap between education and practice through its research, programs and initiatives, and assist organizations in adopting best-in-class practices.

The Center has a variety of free resources for public relations students, educators and professionals, including:

## LESSONS FROM LEADERS

More than 100 leaders have shared personal messages of counsel, wisdom and experience for countless generations of PR pros.

## WEBINARS

With more than 10 on-demand webinars online, the time to discover and explore relevant topics is now. The most popular is "Getting a Job in PR."

## PLATFORM MAGAZINE

Industry professionals stress the importance of good writing skills. Pitch your article or blog post to Platform Magazine. It's the perfect way to advance your writing skills and add published work to your résumé.

## RESEARCH

Focused on leadership, mentorship, and diversity & inclusion, 35 completed studies explore the truths of the PR industry through a global lens.

# LESSONS FROM LEADERS

From the classroom to the boardroom, leaders are needed at all organizational levels. More than 100 public relations leaders have shared lessons on leadership, mentorship, diversity & inclusion, ethics and more.

## INTERVIEWS WITH PR LEGENDS & LEADERS

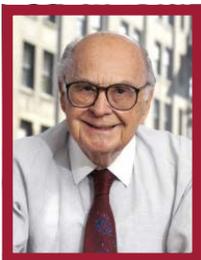
More than 25 video interviews with distinguished PR leaders have been conducted to highlight their views on leadership qualities, practices and experiences. We hope you find inspiration from the legends and leaders. These interviews remind us to keep learning, dreaming and, of course, leading. More interviews can be found on The Plank Center website under [Interviews with Public Relations Leaders](#).



### **RON CULP** - Consultant and educator

Before joining the world of academia, Ron Culp held senior public relations positions at four Fortune 500 corporations and two major agencies. He says that to develop leadership skills as a student, you "just have to find ways to get involved. And if you just stick to the coursework, it's not going to happen."

[Click here](#) to access more from Ron Culp.



### **HAROLD BURSON** - Agency

Harold Burson is one of the most influential practitioners in the world. Burson stresses the importance to "get along with all kinds of people."

[Click here](#) to access more leadership advice from Harold Burson.



### **DR. NILANJANA BARDHAN** - Educator

Nilanjana Bardhan, a recognized and awarded educator, shares messages of counsel by saying it's important "not to judge people based on differences but to understand how to build relationships despite differences."

[Click here](#) to access more leadership advice from Dr. Nilanjana Bardhan.



### **OFIELD DUKES** - Advocacy

As a hero in our profession, Ofield Dukes had a passion for advocacy. He organized the first congressional caucus and served on the boards of the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Non-Violent Change and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. Dukes explains it's "important to develop a passion, not to be good, not to be outstanding, but to be excellent, not once a week, but every day."

[Click here](#) to access more from Ofield Dukes.



### **BRIDGET COFFING** - Corporate

Bridget Coffing has more than 35 years of experience working in public affairs, issues management, corporate marketing communications, public relations and advertising agencies. When reflecting on leadership styles, Coffing says that "one of the primary things is to be a great listener."

[Click here](#) to access more leadership advice from Bridget Coffing.



### **ALICIA THOMPSON** - Agency

Alicia Thompson has more than 20 years of experience developing and implementing marketing, corporate and crisis management communications strategy. Thompson believes that young professionals should "first and foremost become students of leadership."

[Click here](#) to access more leadership advice from Alicia Thompson.

## **LEGACIES FROM LEGENDS IN PR**

In 2007, The Plank Center, with direction from Betsy Plank, began work to recognize PRSSA's 40th anniversary year of 2007-2008. We asked legendary professional honorees to write brief personal messages of counsel, wisdom and experience for publication as a gift to students. Thirty-four of those honorees answered that first call – a remarkable response and reflection of caring for students. The success of the first edition of "Legacies from Legends in PR" prompted this edition as an ongoing and unique project that captures messages and insights. It's a proud roster of respected leaders whose work has strengthened the public relations practice and education. To continue Betsy's legacy **the Plank Center is offering a complimentary download (PDF)**. We hope this book informs and inspires those who will shape the next generation of public relations leaders.

**FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION, CONSIDER USING THESE RESOURCES AS ADDED PROGRAMMING.**

# WEBINARS

Each year, The Plank Center hosts a series of free webinars to add to its collection. With more than 10 webinars on-demand, the time to discover and explore relevant topics is now. Favorites include “Getting a Job in PR,” “Hidden Figures in PR” and “Things I Wish I Knew Before Entering the Workforce.”

**GETTING A JOB IN PR** - Are you ready to get a job in public relations? Are you hungry to learn how to set yourself apart from the thousands of applicants? This webinar examined the characteristics and traits in demand for public relations positions, offered helpful tips on how to stand out from the competition in your job search, and provided insight on how managers attract, retain and develop top performers.

**THINGS I WISH I KNEW BEFORE ENTERING THE WORKFORCE** - Public relations students, are you eager to graduate and begin your career? Position yourself for even greater success. The webinar provided 10 insights on how to impress your colleagues from day one and offered applicable tips to overcome perceptions of the millennial generation.

**WOMEN & LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS** - According to The Holmes Report, women make up about 70 percent of the PR workforce, but they only hold about 30 percent of the top positions in the industry. The Center’s 2017 Leadership Report Card found that being successful in the field is still challenging for women — the pay gap is real; the opportunity gap is real; and the being-heard-and-respected gap is real. The webinar discusses how to bridge those gaps, including action items for current leaders at all organizational levels.

**HIDDEN FIGURES IN PR: PUTTING A LONG-OVERDUE SPOTLIGHT ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN PR PIONEERS** - When you think of the pioneers of the public relations profession, who comes to mind? Our textbooks taught us the pioneers of our profession – Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays – but this webinar shines a light on those the textbooks missed — the “Hidden Figures in PR.” The webinar provides deeper insight and understanding of the history of our profession.

**FOR ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR YOUR ORGANIZATIONS,  
PRESS PLAY ON ANY OF THE CENTER’S WEBINARS.**



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# PLATFORM MAGAZINE

Add “published writer” to your résumé. This online magazine offers students an outlet to pitch articles and blogs. Published work can enhance any résumé and help build connections. Along with content creation opportunities, Platform Magazine offers free online **AP Style quizzes** and **PR Terms quizzes** so anyone can become a writing pro.

## CONTRIBUTE

Become a published writer by pitching your work to Platform Magazine. **Visit the website** for tips and guidelines on pitching your article. The article or blog will be reviewed by the editorial team; topics should focus on industry trends, timely news reports, or pieces that represent leadership, ethics or creative perspectives. To pitch your story, email [platformmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:platformmagazine@gmail.com).

## PLATFORM ARTICLES YOU MAY BE INTERESTED IN:

**You Are More Than Your Job Title** - by Maret Montanari

Mark Harris and Taylor Shelnett are two examples of how to be a leader in the public relations industry. Both describe the ways that you can determine your leadership role throughout your career path. Discover what Harris believes is the difference between “Leadership” and “leadership,” while hearing how Shelnett found her way to a leadership position early in her career.

**Q&A With Jon Iwata, Former IBM Executive** - by Skylar Spencer

Jon Iwata, one of the most respected leaders in corporate communication, discusses his role with IBM and his accomplishments with the company. This in-depth Q&A serves as a tool in learning about global leadership. Check out our Facebook live video with Jon Iwata [here](#).

**5 Ways to Gain Trust** - by Baylee Akins, contributing writer

Amanda Sapp, vice president of planning for Edelman, talks about ways to be strategic in times of change. Sapp touches on five ways to stay ahead of the ever-changing world, and she encourages people to adopt these and be ready to use them in the workforce.

**ENCOURAGE YOUR ORGANIZATION TO FURTHER THEIR PITCHING AND WRITING SKILLS.**

# RESEARCH

Leaders exert significant influence on the success, future and image of their profession. Yet only a few public relations studies have explored this important topic. One goal of The Center is to build a research-based foundation of knowledge regarding the values, qualities and dimensions of excellent leadership, mentorship and diversity & inclusion in public relations.

## FIVE STEPS FOR BETTER LEADERSHIP

How would you grade yourself as a leader? The Plank Center's **Report Card**, a biennial study on leadership in PR, suggests leadership in the public relations industry is average. However, you can start your journey to become an outstanding leader right now. Dr. Bruce Berger, professor emeritus at The University of Alabama, shares five things you can do to improve both your leadership skills and your team.

1. **Humanize:** Small changes in your language and behavior can help personalize your leadership style. Leadership is about "we," not "I." Dr. Marshall Goldsmith, author, teacher and executive coach to Fortune 500 CEOs, advises leaders to stop saying "no" and "however" when responding to others' ideas.
2. **Equalize:** As a leader you have the power to eliminate inequalities, especially among people of diverse backgrounds. The extent to which equality is practiced and perceived strongly influences trust, engagement, productivity and retention.
3. **Self-reflect:** Self-awareness stemming from reflection is the foundation of great leadership. To continuously improve as a leader, take a few minutes each day to think about your communication and behaviors: what you did, why, how and to what effect on others. Could you have done it better or involved others?
4. **Listen:** Becoming a more active listener is hard work and takes time. However, the less we listen, the more we misunderstand, weaken relationships, impair engagement and tilt toward poor decisions. Attend a workshop or webinar on active listening. Ask trusted colleagues for candid feedback. Practice, practice, practice.
5. **Enrich:** You can enrich your team's attitude, work and growth in many ways. Share performance feedback regularly. Celebrate, reward and recognize accomplishments. Bring positive energy that inspires, motivates and builds commitment. If you don't do this, then don't expect your team to do so either.

## MENTORSHIP

Did you know that Betsy Plank's mentor directed her to pursue a public relations position? Years later Betsy said, "mentoring is one of the strongest ways to spell success in public relations." After dedicating more than 60 years to the industry, her legacy is most visible in the countless public relations professionals, educators and students who credit her with taking the time to mentor them. Take a page out of Betsy's book: mentor and be mentored.

Mentorship is when a mentor, or someone with experience in a certain field, creates a bond or relationship with a mentee, an individual looking to grow his or her expertise in that field. Whether in a personal or professional setting, mentors guide and advocate for their mentees, while the mentees provide their mentors with a different perspective.

*-Get the most out of your mentorship relationship. [Click here](#) to see *The Plank Center's Mentorship Guide* – one of the free resources for students, educators and professionals.*

Mentorship programs can allow mentees to advance in their fields faster, earn higher salaries and develop more satisfaction in their jobs than individuals who don't have mentors. In addition, employers get better performance from employees and have greater success in recruiting, training and keeping top talent.

**Ten best practices for mentorship** - Check out [this link](#) for detailed information on these best practices.

- Identify the purpose and available resources, then set clear goals and expectations
- Demonstrate management's support
- Provide training
- Hold all parties accountable
- Provide time for mentees to watch, do, interact and learn
- Encourage mentors to model professionalism
- Be helpful, transparent and honest
- Maintain consistency and know that mentoring takes time
- Don't forget to mentor leaders
- Provide an "out" for mentoring relationships that do not work

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Be a champion of diversity and inclusion.

It's your job to communicate effectively to a broad and inclusive audience. Every organization can benefit from having diverse perspectives. As Ron Culp said, "It's right, and it's smart."

Along with its pillars of leadership and mentorship, The Plank Center is a catalyst for other

professional organizations to help identify and bridge gaps and assist organizations seeking to adopt best-in-class practices in the area of diversity and inclusion.

Through its diversity and inclusion **research**, The Center has identified ways to incorporate diversity and inclusion into the classroom, boardroom and workplace. Take these lessons, ideas and values and incorporate them into all aspects of your leadership now and throughout your career.

- Hire qualified employees who are diverse based on race/ethnicity, and include them, as well as Caucasian women, at top levels.
- Create a mentorship program and other opportunities to advance the careers of diverse practitioners.
- Establish a multicultural group that can work on improving diversity in the classroom and workplace.
- Inspire a culture that promotes micro-affirmations and discourages micro-inequities.
- Change attitudes toward diversity in the classroom and workplace. Build alliances across identity groups. People from all backgrounds should understand the importance of diversity.
- Promote diverse, qualified practitioners to senior positions.
- Ensure equal workload despite identity makers.
- Intermix work to get a better understanding of cultures.

# SCHOLARSHIPS

Below are some opportunities to help advance educational opportunities.

## **The Plank Center Summit Scholarship**

The Plank Center's Summit is an annual event that is held in Chicago to help students, professionals and educators gain a deeper understanding of the profession and learn best practices within the field. It offers a unique opportunity for public relations students to gain professional insights and to see, hear from and network with successful professionals and their peers. The scholarship includes roundtrip air travel (or other transportation), a one-night stay at the Union League Club, one ticket to the Milestones in Mentoring Gala and one ticket to the Plank Summit, totaling an estimated \$1,500.

## **Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA)**

Each year PRSSA presents more than \$30,000 in scholarships and awards to members and Chapters who exhibit outstanding merit in public relations. Apply for a scholarship, submit your best work or enter one of the many national competitions to find out how PRSSA can enhance — and help fund — your education.

## **PRSA Foundation**

The PRSA Foundation invests in the next generation of public relations practitioners by awarding scholarships and grants to students active in PRSSA campus Chapters, as well as other deserving undergraduate and graduate students.

## **Institute for Public Relations**

The winner receives a \$2,000 grant. The winner's faculty advisor receives a \$1,000 cash grant. The winner and advisor will each receive a complimentary ticket to attend the IPR Annual Distinguished Lecture & Awards Dinner on November 28, 2018. Makovsky will pay for travel and hotel arrangements for the winner only. IPR awards an outstanding master's thesis.

## **The LaGrant Foundation**

The LAGRANT Foundation (TLF) awards multiple scholarships each year. The scholarship recipient receives a trip where he or she participates in career building activities. This includes a welcome dinner with a keynote speaker, two day-long career development workshops, and a scholarship and donor recognition reception. During these activities, students meet industry professionals, and network and gain exposure to the advertising, marketing and public relations world.

**SHARE THESE SCHOLARSHIPS OPPORTUNITIES WITH YOUR STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS.**

# OTHER RESOURCES

## LEAD A SUCCESSFUL TEAM

An important key to being a great leader is often the most overlooked — self-reflection and self-awareness. Take the **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator** to discover your own **personality type**.

Learn and cultivate your leadership skills. **This website** helps you identify personal, interpersonal, leadership and learning skills, along with much more. Take quizzes to help classify your leadership style.

**ENCOURAGE TEAM MEMBERS TO BE SELF-AWARE. UNDERSTANDING YOUR TEAM MEMBERS WILL PAY OFF IN THE LONG-RUN.**

## BRIDGE TO CAREER

According to The Center's co-sponsored research study on **Millennial Communication Professionals**, millennials have a passion for strong leadership, are digital savvy, and place high emphasis on diversity, social corporate responsibility and transparency.

Making the transition from student to young professional can be exciting and terrifying at the same time. When making that transition, remember:

- The habits you develop during college are the same habits you will exhibit in the workforce, so make sure your habits are good ones.
- Establish a routine to help you get and stay on schedule.
- The real world is ever-changing, so "public relations people need to be eternal students."
- Similar to communication, interviews are two-way. You are interviewing the organization just as much as the organization is interviewing you.
- Find a company culture that aligns with your moral compass.
- Don't be afraid to seek out mentors and mentor others.



# MEET BETSY PLANK

## WHO IS #BETSYPLANK?

Known as the First Lady of public relations, Betsy Plank created a legacy during her 63 years in the field as a professional who inspired, educated and advocated. After graduating from The University of Alabama in 1944, Betsy built a public relations career in corporate, agency and nonprofit settings. She spent the majority of her professional life in Chicago, discovering the importance of mentorship, leadership and eternal learning. In May 2010, Betsy passed away, but her legacy spans the countless generations she mentored along the way and continues on through The Plank Center's programs and initiatives to develop public relations leaders and advance the profession.

**Betsy gave many speeches and her words are as relevant today as they were during her career.**

## BETSY PLANK'S BAKER'S DOZEN

Betsy was a pioneer for public relations education — she was the co-chair of the 1987 national commission to develop guidelines for the undergraduate public relations curriculum, served on accrediting teams at many universities and spoke to numerous student groups and classes. In several speeches, she referenced her "Baker's Dozen for Public Relations Students."

### BETSY PLANK'S BAKER'S DOZEN for public relations students

**1. Make sure that you are grounded in the liberal arts.**

**2. Minor in business.**

Whatever institution with which you are associated, remember that it is a business, disciplined by business objectives.

**3. Get practical experience.**

As much as you can - internships, student agencies, for pay or by volunteering.

**4. Write. Write. Write.**

Writing - in all its dimensions - is and always will be the sine qua non of public relations practice.

**5. When you're seeking that first entry level job,**

consider it to be one of the most challenging public relations assignments you'll ever face.

**6. Prepare for interviews.**

•Research your market. •Execute it.  
•Develop a plan. •Evaluate it.

**7. Leave a trail of thank-you notes.**

Certainly at the beginning, but throughout your career, too.

**8. Build a network of contacts.**

Most certainly join PRSA and its chapter in the area in which you plan to practice.

**9. Your best opportunity may be in the faster growing sector of the economy - the medium or small firm. Second, remember that the non-profit field usually gives you more initial opportunity to practice the full range of your craft.**

**10. Seek out and cultivate a mentor.**

#### AND WHEN YOU'RE LAUNCHED ON THAT CAREER...

**11. Get out there and learn your client's business first-hand.**

Build your insider contacts up, down and sideways.

**12. Pay your dues.**

Mentor other young professionals. Return to your alma mater and be a role model to the next generation of public relations students.

**13. Be an eternal student!**

When it's practiced at its best, public relations is a lifelong adventure in learning.

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# BETSY PLANK'S LESSONS LEARNED

In a speech, Betsy referred to her lessons learned, stating, "if I were starting my career all over, these are the lessons that would have the most currency."

Betsy lived almost two career lifetimes in public relations. It's "pretty ironic since when I was in college, who had ever heard of it? And my mother, bless her, always thought public relations sounded like something no nice girl should be involved with." She went on to add that she "cannot recall ever having consciously planned one single step of the career way," but she did have her own professional commandments:

1. Be an eternal student.
2. Learn your client's business.
3. Learn your client's business culture.
4. Embrace client problems because they give us tenure.
5. Say yes to every opportunity.
6. Consider work as grown-up play.
7. Factor personal values into every career decision.
8. Leave a job when it doesn't challenge you.
9. Invest something in the profession you practice.
10. And – if wedlock is part of your life, make sure you marry a saint.

## Lessons Learned

"What lessons learned would have currency if I were starting all over again today? Among the many I remember and value..."

- Ethics and Integrity**  
are not simply a professional "code." They are one's here-and-now character and compass.
- Mentor**  
Upperclassmen to younger students, new alumni to classrooms and interns.
- Know the Business**  
of clients and employers.
- Computer Miracles**  
never replace face-to-face encounters.
- Community Service**  
hones leadership skills, develops new contacts and insights, and helps solve community problems.
- Read and Reread**  
newspapers and periodicals, of course. But also research, history, contemporary and classical literature.
- Professional Organizations**  
provide unique opportunities to learn and develop leadership skills and make unique contributions to the profession's progress and promise.
- Public Relations**  
is populated by many of the brightest, most creative, caring "can-do" men and women. Traveling in that spirited company is a great adventure!

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## **ARE WE MISSING SOMETHING?**

We'd love to hear from you! If there's something that would be beneficial to you as a student or to your organization, please reach out at [plankcenter@gmail.com](mailto:plankcenter@gmail.com)



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