



## **April Is APR Month** ***Do you know what that means?***

April is APR Month — but APR Month has nothing to do with Annual Percentage Rates. A second, less recognized, definition for APR is Accreditation in Public Relations.

In the world of communication professionals, Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) is a credential earned by public relations practitioners who commit to the profession through ethical practices and sound judgment, strategic perspectives, knowledge of best practices and the use of the research-planning-implementation-evaluation (RPIE) process.

Unlike other professions (e.g., physicians and attorneys), the field of public relations does not require licensure or certification to practice the craft. But it does require expertise, knowledge and training to be a successful and strategic public relations professional and counselor. The decision to pursue the APR is both personal and professional.

So why should a company or organization care if its public relations employees have earned their APR?

Accreditation is a mark of distinction. The APR is earned through a rigorous process. Practitioners are required to present their knowledge to Accredited peers for review. This is followed by a comprehensive examination that tests candidates' knowledge of the field. Perhaps most importantly, the credential signifies an understanding and commitment to a Code of Ethics, and ability to think and plan at the strategic level.

In today's business climate, it is critical that an organization's public relations function adheres to ethics. The complexities associated with technology, societal change and instantaneous news make ethics more important than ever as the profession matures.

As evidenced in a recent study completed by faculty at Baylor University\*, Accredited public relations practitioners possess more confidence in providing ethical counsel to senior leadership than their non-Accredited peers. In today's business climate, a solid understanding of ethics is critical to an organization's success.

The public relations field has moved far beyond the stereotype of spin doctors and press agents of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today's PR practitioners play a vital role in reputation management, crisis communications and issues management. A seasoned public relations pro operates at the strategic level, focusing on target audiences and measurable results, not just flashy media coverage and publicity tactics.

But how do companies and organizations know they are hiring the right person? The APR credential signifies that a professional possesses the competence necessary to operate at a strategic and ethical level in an increasingly complex communications world. Hiring managers and clients who choose Accredited public relations professionals know that they have chosen competent individuals committed to providing strategic and insightful advice and counsel.

There's no better time than April to start the conversation. Does your organization have any APRs? Maybe it's about time you either encourage them — or hire them. Learn more about the APR at <http://www.praccreditation.org>.

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Nine participating professional organizations have endorsed the APR, including the largest professional PR organization in the United States, the Public Relations Society of America, along with the Asociación de Relacionistas Profesionales de Puerto Rico, California Association of Public Information Officials, Florida Public Relations Association, Maine Public Relations Council, National Association of Government Communicators, National School Public Relations Association, the Religion Communicators Council, and Southern Public Relations Federation.

*\*Writer's note:*

The article detailing Baylor's study, "Accredited vs. Non-Accredited: How Accreditation impacts perceptions and readiness to provide ethics counsel," is published in in the 42<sup>nd</sup> volume (2016) of *Public Relations Review*.