



# PR Success

Fall 2015 Edition





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# Semester Events



Annual Pumpkin Carving  
with Ad Club and American  
Marketing Association



PRSSA National Conference  
in Atlanta, Georgia



Annual PRSSA  
Thanksgiving



# Five Genius “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” Partnerships

By: Gentry Bennett // @Gen\_\_andTonic

The most anticipated film of the year is “Star Wars: The Force Awakens.” In preparation for the first Star Wars film to be released in 10 years, Lucasfilm and Disney paired up with some amazing brands to create partnerships. Here are the top five:

## 1. Target’s “Share the Force” microsite

Target launched “Share the Force” to invite Star Wars fans to share their favorite memories about being a fan. This microsite is referred to as a “galaxy of memories” that is being added to every day. The memories were also turned into a two minute video to share some of the top pictures and videos. This microsite and video tap into the nostalgia that Star Wars fan’s experience for the movie series.



*Target Advertisement, Target.com, 2015*

## 2. Launching a Star Wars Google experience

At [google.com/starwars](http://google.com/starwars) you will find the option to choose your side, and customize your Google apps to fit your choice- will it be the light side or the dark side? Instead of a loading bar, Gmail utilizes a lightsaber filling up. When you log into Google Maps, your car will be transformed into a TIE fighter or X-Wing. With Google being such a large part of people’s lives through Waze, YouTube and more, these changes are sure to delight any Star Wars fan.

## 3. HP’s “Reinvent Romance” spot

This spot from HP appeals to the teenage crowd, showing a teenage boy building his own version of R2-D2 in order to ask a teenage girl on a date. This is a smart move by Lucasfilm/Disney as the current teenagers and young adult bracket were in their youth when Episode III came out.

## 4. Verizon’s take on virtual reality

Last, but certainly not least, is the partnership with Verizon, which released a “The Force Awakens” themed set of Google Cardboard virtual reality viewers. They are to be used with the Star Wars app. Google Cardboard is one of the most praised products of the year, certainly leaving all of the self-proclaimed geeks in the world very happy.



CoverGirl Stars Wars Makeup collection, Covergirl.com, 2015

## 5. Partnering with CoverGirl to appeal to the female fan

CoverGirl has launched movie-themed makeup lines before, so this one comes as no shock. The line offers limited edition mascara, nail polish and lipstick. The mascara tubes feature different quotes, with the campaign encouraging consumers to collect all of them. This partnership appeals to the female Star Wars fans and those just looking to broaden their makeup horizons.

Overall Lucasfilm and Disney did a fantastic job of choosing partnerships to appeal to a wide variety of consumers. Only box office

# Pitching PRSSA: Tips for Talking About the Society

By: Gary Bridgens // @garingiscaring

As communicators, we're often responsible for helping people understand things. Whether you're seeking an internship, job, or just working on your elevator pitch, how you describe your PRSSA membership experience could be what makes the difference. In this article I'll explain three essential things to remember when pitching PRSSA to potential employers:

### PRSSA is not a club.

When networking, do not tell people that PRSSA is a club. The Public Relations Student Society of America is the nation's foremost pre-professional society for students interested in public relations and communications. By paying your membership dues and attending meetings, **you're surrounding yourself with ambitious, like-minded people that can teach you new ways to be great.** Be proud of your

PRSSA membership and value the integrity of your organization. If people ask, it's a student society - or at the least - an organization.

### The experiences matter

If you attend weekly meetings, regularly network with speakers and participate in Chapter projects, you're well positioned to talk about your experiences with PRSSA. Talk about what those experiences mean to you. Did attending weekly meetings give you an insight into the various practices of public relations? Did networking with speakers provide you with the confidence and connections to land an internship? I bet it did. **Most importantly, talk about the things you've done.** PRSSA's Scripps Chapter gives members the opportunity to sit on any number of subcommittees and tackle different projects throughout the year. Particularly,

be sure to measure and discuss these opportunities.

### PRSSA is national

If you're seeking a job in the public relations industry, odds are that your potential employer is a PRSA member or was also a PRSSA member. **Often times, they can relate to you more than you realize.** This mutual connection can serve as a talking point while networking or provide you with some insight into your potential employer's background and character. When networking, don't forget to ask about other people's experiences with PRSSA. People remember mutual interests, and pitching PRSSA this way could possibly land you the interview you want.

Want to learn more about how to talk about PRSSA? Interested in PRSSA member benefits? Reach out at [garybridgens@gmail.com](mailto:garybridgens@gmail.com).

# The National Football League: An on-going PR nightmare

By: Hayley Baldzicki // @hayleybaldzicki

From domestic violence cases to marijuana possession to concussion lawsuits, the National Football League has been the brunt of communication crises. For several years, the NFL has been living a PR nightmare, but how do they brand themselves in a way to maintain the fan's and media's positive interest?

The media and the fans continuously question the NFL's response to off-the-field scandals and many believe the NFL isn't strict enough with their players when it comes to punishments.

In the Ray Rice domestic violence case, the NFL initially suspended him for only a couple of games. **This caused an outrage** with not only NFL fans, but also women. This, to many, seemed like Rice was getting off "easy" because of his value to the Baltimore Ravens. However, in response to public outrage, the Baltimore Ravens terminated Rice's contract and NFL commissioner, Roger Goodell,

suspended Rice for the entire year as opposed to a couple of games.

The recent Deflategate scandal was another that left a bad taste in fans' mouths. The New England Patriots' quarterback, Tom Brady, was accused of under-inflating footballs in

the 2014 AFC Championship Game in order to gain an advantage.

Facing a four-game suspension, Brady was off the hook after U.S. District Judge Richard Berman overturned his suspension.

Whether you love or hate Brady, **many**

**felt this was another unfair decision that was made just because of Brady's worth** to the Patriots as reigning Superbowl Champions.

The NFL is also constantly dealing with concussion lawsuits from past players who were on the field 30+ years ago. In addition, the league



*National football league, NFL.com, 2015*

also deals with players' DUI and marijuana/drug cases. With an organization as big as the NFL, the question becomes, how does an organization manage so many scandals?

The NFL has failed to handle their scandals efficiently, becoming a target of negative headlines and stories from various media outlets. On the following page are some suggestions for the NFL when dealing with all these various

## 1. Make a statement; Act immediately

Even if the information has already hit the public, the fans and media are waiting for what the organization has to say. After the Ray Rice video was leaked it took Goodell, commissioner of the NFL, a couple weeks to release any kind of statement. An organization must, at the very least, immediately acknowledge the crisis and address the steps they plan to take to fix it. The longer an organization waits to make a statement, the more credibility they lose in the long run.

## 2. Take action

We all know actions speak louder than words. Instead of coming out with a statement with unrealistic promises, an organization needs to do something about their crisis. Change the rules, create stricter consequences and visit local communities. When a domestic violence scandal breaks, address the women fan base acknowledging the gratefulness of female fans. When DUI scandals leak, create an advertisement about driving sober. Organizations, especially the NFL, need to act in result of scandals to maintain their integrity.

## 3. Make unbiased decisions

The NFL is loaded with talented players and with no surprise, as it is the NFL. However, these players who don't play by the rules need to be held accountable regardless of how talented they are. Especially with cases as serious as domestic violence and DUI's, players need to have serious punishments and should be held to a higher standard for the specific reason they are in the public's eye 24/7. Performances on the field do not matter if they do not measure up to actions off the field and the NFL will gain integrity by recognizing this.

Overall, the NFL needs to do a better job of realizing their brand is only as good as the players that make it up. The NFL brand is not invincible by any means and is functioning on a foundation with a huge lack of leadership. Americans love their football and fans are a very forgiving group, however these are scandals that will leave a mark on a brand for years to come. Transparency, empathy and compassion can help in statements regarding the scandals to help minimize the damage of the NFL's reputation. For the future, the NFL needs to hold themselves accountable to refrain from even more negativity brought to their brand.



# Humans of New York Creates Societal Awareness

By: Jess Carnprobst // @jess\_carnprobst

I'm sure most of us are familiar with Humans of New York, but incase you aren't, I'll give you a little background. One man named Brandon started Humans of New York in 2010, and originally wanted it to serve as a catalog showcasing the people in New York. However, as he started getting pictures, he also started collecting stories, turning Humans of New York into what we know today. He shares stories of these people along with their pictures, helping others talk about some of their deepest thoughts and memories, while creating a community online.



*Humans of New York, Humansofnewyork.com, 2015*

From a communication standpoint, Humans of New York is absolutely genius. They've managed to capture a "newsworthy" story and share it with the world. They've been able to ask the right questions and find compelling answers, and turn it into something that more than 16 million people choose to follow along with on Facebook. Social media can be such a powerful outlet for companies to gain business or awareness, but it's so easy to forget that it's also extremely powerful to create societal awareness.

Most recently, Humans of New York expanded abroad to Jordan and Turkey where Brandon spoke

to Syrian families who were finally cleared for resettlement in America.

**"These families have just reached the finish line of a multi-year screening process, and it was quite an emotional experience to meet with them at this juncture. The life of a refugee in America is by no means easy. But for these families, their resettlement has finally brought the possibility of an end to years of intense hardship,"**

Brandon posted on Facebook. With all of the news and talk

recently centered around refugees and crises in the Middle East, this is an extremely important topic to generate awareness to. We only see and hear one side to the story, and Humans of New York showed us all the other side, as well as a humanized version to the story.

That is powerful and *that* is social media. **As public relations professionals and passionate human beings, we have the power to make an affect such is this one.** We have the power to show someone's story, and give them the voice that they would have never had before. We can



# Industry News

By: **Morgan Borer** // @MorganBorer

## Everyone likes a good scandal.

Scandals in the PR industry are interesting because, typically, people or brands are thrust into the limelight and opened up to a flood of criticism from the press and online. PR pros work to protect a brand's reputation, but, as 2015 has shown us, things don't always work out. Let's look back on some of this year's faux pas:

## Airbnb and racial discrimination

While a widely-advertised Airbnb billboard states "We imagine a world where you can belong anywhere," studies suggest the company doesn't practice what it preaches. In September, the company received some nasty backlash after a Harvard University study was released, showing that "names that sounded African-American were about 16% less likely to get a positive response to a request for a room when compared against white-sounding names" (adweek.com). The company fired back by releasing a statement to the NYT, reassuring the public of their commitment to equality. Unfortunately, numbers don't lie, Airbnb.

## Brian Williams' suspension

In January, NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams was suspended for six months without pay after he miscommunicated his experiences during the

Iraq war during an on-air broadcast. Viewers found several inconsistencies with his stories about Iraq, including one about riding a helicopter in a war zone. The Internet jumped on the story and was quick to join the conversation, issuing Twitter polls with questions like, "Does Brian Williams deserve another chance at NBC?" He later issued an on-air apology about the remarks in attempts to set the record straight and restore the public's trust and respect.



*Kylie Jenner for Interview Magazine, Interviewmagazine.com, 2015*

## Kylie Jenner's wheelchair backlash

In November, Kylie Jenner received waves of criticism after a photoshoot she did with Interview Mag. While the Kardashian clan has done countless photo shoots for a variety of magazines,

this shoot was a little different. Dressed in a tight, black bodysuit, she posed sitting in a wheelchair. The internet immediately went into an uproar. Ophelia Brown, a disability activist who is also wheelchair-disabled, fired back with one tweet to Jenner: "@bandaidknees: @KylieJenner wow being in a wheelchair is so fun and fashionable! #Ableism is the ultimate fashion statement!" Her tweet received nearly 30,000 retweets and was one among thousands more, claiming the shoot was offensive, insensitive and crossed the line. Interview claimed that their intention "was certainly not to offend anyone" (justjared.com).

## Washington Redskins Twitter controversy

The Washington Redskins' social media team fell into hot water earlier this month when a reporter from the Washington Post caught an error from the brand. The reporter noticed the same tweet sent from the official Redskins' account @Redskins and an "unaffiliated" account: @RedskinsFacts simultaneously. The unaffiliated account is claimed to be run by passionate fans and alumni. However, it looks like this isn't the case, as the Tweets likely came from the same deck. Burson-Marsteller, a Communications firm hired by the team, made a serious blunder. Hopefully the team doesn't strike out like their social media team did.

**We want your feedback!**

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**Thank you for reading the  
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