

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS INDUSTRY MUST WORK HARDER TO GROW AND DEVELOP A DIVERSIFIED WORKFORCE

By: PRSA Foundation

Why this research is important:

This study explores the progress of diversifying the public relations industry, and the experiences, opportunities and challenges of younger professionals of Hispanic and African American ethnicity—revealing a more concentrated effort is needed to cultivate a stronger multicultural workforce. For full results of the study, click on the title at the top of the page.

Method:

This study consisted of qualitative research with more than one dozen interviews, two focus groups, and two separate online surveys. All 18 focus group participants were young PR professionals working full-time and identified as Hispanic or African American. The first survey targeted young Hispanic (42.6 percent) and African American (60.4 percent) PR professionals, garnering 108 completed surveys from participants who graduated from 2008 to 2014, all between the ages of 23 to 30. The second survey was aimed toward employers of young Hispanic and African American professionals, and was completed by 111 employers. Out of the second survey respondents, 24

Key Findings:

- Of both young professionals and employers, five out of six survey respondents think the PR industry has not demonstrated much success in recruiting a diverse workforce. Most participants said the industry was 'somewhat successful', but not showing enough meaningful change to be 'successful'.
- About two-thirds of young professionals were satisfied with their job. Less than 10 percent of young professionals felt their racial or ethnic identity was seen as a liability in the organization where they were first employed. However, nearly 43 percent of young professionals sampled said colleagues do not treat them with genuine respect.
- Mentorship is seen as very important, regardless if both parties are of the same ethnicity, yet only one in three of young professionals reported they had an adviser who understood their needs as an aspiring African American or Hispanic PR professional.
- One-third of respondents felt they have to spend longer in entry-level positions, and must be more qualified than their Caucasian counterparts in similar positions.