35TH ANNUAL EXCALIBUR AWARDS

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S MASQUERADE

CELEBRATING THE MANY FACES OF PR

Houston Chapter
PRSA

2020 CALL FOR ENTRIES

EXCALIBURAWARDS.ORG

35TH ANNUAL EXCALIBUR AWARDS

CELEBRATING THE MANY FACES OF PR

PRSA Houston's Excalibur Awards honor outstanding public relations professionals, programs and tactics. 2020 is particularly special for our chapter, as we're kicking off a yearlong celebration to commemorate 70 years in Houston. With that, we will acknowledge and cheers to those that accomplished great measures in 2019.

One outstanding public relations team will receive the 35th Annual Grand Excalibur Award, an engraved steel sword symbolizing that the highest standards in the public relations profession have been achieved.

The Excalibur Awards ceremony and gala provides attendees with the opportunity to network with Houston's top PR professionals while celebrating the best work of 2019 with food, fun and good times. At the same time, this is your chance to earn recognition for the outstanding work you do. Please take this opportunity to enter this year's Excalibur Awards.

Houston Chapter
PRSA

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Entry Requirements and Rules

1. Eligibility

All communicators in the Houston area are eligible to submit as many entries in as many categories as they choose. Entrants must submit only their original work or work they directly supervised. The work entered must have been primarily completed or produced in the Greater Houston Area during the 2019 calendar year. Identical entries in multiple categories will not be accepted.

2. Entry Deadline and Fees

Entries must be submitted with payment in full by one of the dates listed below.

	Early Entry Fee (Jan. 31 – Feb. 21*)	Standard Entry Fee (Feb. 22 - March 13*)	Late Entry Fee (March 14 – March 27*)
Member	$80	$115	$175
Non-Member	$130	$165	$225
Student **	Free	Free	Free
Special Awards	Free to members. $35 for non-members.		

*Awards are due by midnight CST on the date indicated to receive correct pricing.
**University Student Campaign Category Only

3. Payment Options

Payments will be accepted by credit card at prsahouston.org or by check. If paying by check, confirmation email of award entry must be submitted with payment.

4. Entry Requirements

All Campaign and Tactical Category entries must include and will be judged on the following:

- **Promo:** 100-word description (to be used for promotional purposes)
- **Overview statement/summary:** A clear and concise overview of the entry (600-word limit)
- **Research:** Summarize research conducted or gathered for the project, and show how that research helped define your goals, objectives, strategies and target audiences.
- **Planning:** State the goals and measurable objectives of the program or project, along with the intended impact on the target audiences and, by extension, the organization.
- **Implementation:** Describe the strategies, techniques and tools used to meet the objectives. What key messages did you convey, and why? What, if any, challenges did you overcome? Include the project's timetable and budget. What extraordinary circumstances did you overcome?
- **Evaluation:** Detail success by matching outcomes to the objectives. Discuss the impact of the program on the target audience and organization. How did you measure results? Did you meet the timetable and budget? If not, why not?
- **Supporting Materials:** Claims made in your summary must be substantiated by supporting materials included with your entry. Supporting materials are limited to one (1) PDF document, not to exceed twenty (20) pages or 15 MB. The PDF can include a combination of photos, samples, drawings, graphics, maps, videos*, and printed collateral. *Upload videos to YouTube and provide a link in your pdf document.*

5. Submitting Your Entry

Each entry, along with the summary and all supporting materials, must be submitted electronically at https://prsahouston.secure-platform.com/a/.

      a) Create a new account here and complete the user profile.
      b) Login with your email address and password.
      c) Go to **Entry Form** found in the top navigation bar and start your entry submission.

You may save your work and return to this site as often as needed as long as you complete and submit all parts of the entry submission by March 27 (by Feb. 21 for early bird discount fees). You can edit your submission at any time as long as it is not in your "cart". If you have already placed your submission in the cart, simply click "remove" and then you can click on "edit" to access your submission. All entries will be evaluated by a panel of judges made up of PRSA members from another PRSA chapter assigned by PRSA National.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Campaign Categories

The campaign categories recognize complete programs that incorporate sound research, planning, execution and evaluation. Winning entries will reflect the highest standards for strategic thinking, ethical practice, and measurement that are consistent with the [Barcelona Principles](). Identical entries in multiple categories will not be accepted.

Programs from categories 1-13 are eligible for consideration for the Grand Excalibur Award.

1. Community Relations
Includes programs that aim to improve relations with, or seek to win the support or cooperation of, people or organizations in communities in which the sponsoring organization has an interest, need or opportunity. "Community" in this category refers to a specific geographic location or locations. (Campaigns designed to promote products should be entered in Marketing Consumer Products or Services.)

2. Reputation/Brand Management
Programs designed to enhance, promote or improve the reputation of an organization with its publics or key elements of its publics, either proactively or in response to an issue, event or market occurrence. (Campaigns designed to launch or promote a specific product or service's launch or sales/marketing effort should not be entered in this category. Instead, refer to Category 6 or 7).

3. Events and Observances
Includes programs or events such as commemorations, observances, openings, celebrations or other special activities. These events or observances may be as short as one day or as long as one year.

4. Public Service/Non-Profit Campaigns
Includes programs that advance public understanding of societal issues, problems or concerns. (Similar programs conducted principally to enhance an organization's standing, or to otherwise serve its interests directly, will fall under Category 2: Reputation/Brand Management.)

5. Government/Public Affairs
Includes programs specifically designed to influence public policy and/or affect legislation, regulations, political activities or candidacies — at the local, state or federal government levels — so that the entity funding the program benefits.

6. Marketing Consumer Products and Services
Includes programs designed to introduce new products or services or promote existing products or services to a consumer audience.

7. Marketing Business to Business
Includes programs designed to introduce new products or promote existing products or services to a business audience.

8. Crisis Communications and Issues Management
Includes programs undertaken to deal with an unplanned event that required an immediate response and programs undertaken to deal with issues that could extraordinarily affect ongoing business strategy.

9. Internal Communications
Includes programs targeted specifically to publics directly aligned with an organization, such as employees, members, affiliated dealers and franchisees.

10. Investor Relations/Financial Communications
Includes programs directed to shareowners, other investors and the investment community.

11. Multicultural Public Relations
For any type of program, such as institutional, marketing and community relations, specifically targeted to a cultural group.

12. Integrated Communications
Includes any program that demonstrates leadership of public relations strategies and tactics in a creative and effective integrated campaign, along with other marketing or communications. The program must demonstrate the clear leadership of public relations, along with its integration with other disciplines.

13. Most Effective Campaign on a Shoestring Budget ($5,000 or less)
Successful campaign despite constraints of a small budget. This does not include staff time and overhead. Campaign can cover any topic. Identical entries in multiple categories will not be accepted.

14. University Student Campaign
Successful campaign produced by a student group, class or organization from an accredited four-year institution in the Greater Houston Area or affiliated PRSSA Chapter. Campaign can cover any topic above. Identical entries in multiple categories will not be accepted. This category is not eligible for the Grand Excalibur Award. If students wish to compete for the Grand Excalibur Award, they must enter their submission(s) in categories 1-13 at the member rate.

Tactical Categories

These categories recognize excellence in the tactical elements that contribute to the success of larger public relations campaigns. Though these tactical elements cannot be reasonably held to the same standards as public relations campaigns, winning entries still must demonstrate sound effort in research, planning, implementation and evaluation.

1. News Release
Traditional written news release or video news release. May also include multi-media news release.

2. Feature Stories*
Feature articles that have been written by a practitioner and submitted and published through his/her efforts. Submit text of feature article, as well as documentation of publication and placement. *Entries must be written in their entirety or substantively by the entrant, and not merely "pitched."*

3. Editorials/Op-Ed Columns*
Opinion articles written as editorials, guest columns or letters to the editor. Submit text of article and documentation of publication. *Entries must be written in their entirety or substantively by the entrant, and not merely "pitched."*

4. Podcasts
Audio or video programs/shows produced solely as podcasts, downloadable for play on portable media players (e.g., iPods, MP3 players, etc.). The entry must provide a link to the podcast.

5. Websites
Use of a website as part of a public relations program. Include screen grabs or copies of key pages to support your summary. Additionally, include the website URL for external sites.

6. Webcasts
Media files distributed over the Internet using streaming media technology. May be live or recorded. Submit the actual site URL.

7. Social Media
Use of social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, etc. as part of a public relations program. Include screen captures or copies of key pages to support your summary. Additionally, include the website URL for external sites.

8. Blogs
Web-based journals, or blogs, that engage key stakeholders and/or communicated either a corporate, public service or industry position. Include screen captures of the blog being entered, as well as the actual site URL.

9. Creative or Unconventional Tactics
Unconventional, creative tactics or approaches used as part of a public relations program. (If the creative/unconventional tactic included props or other objects, document those items with photos or videos.)

10. Video
Created for internal or external use to publicize products, services or issues, shape public opinion or promote awareness. Include a link to your video.

11. Newsletters
Publications (either printed or electronic) designed, written and published periodically to provide brief and timely information to target audiences while supporting an organization's overall objectives. Submit three consecutive issues with the entry.

12. Brochures
Pamphlets, booklets or other small publications (either printed or electronic) designed to inform a target audience about an organization, product, service or issue. Submit one copy of the publication with the entry.

13. Magazines
Publications (either printed or electronic) designed to provide in-depth information about an organization or topic on a regular basis. Magazines typically differentiate from newsletters by the number of pages and length of articles. Submit three consecutive issues.

14. Special Publications
Single-issue publications (either printed or electronic) designed for a special purpose. Books, posters and other publications not eligible for consideration in other categories should be entered here. Submit one copy of the publication along with the entry.

15. Annual Reports
Publications (either printed or electronic) that report on an organization's annual performance. Submit one copy of the publication along with the entry.

16. Speech Writing/Speeches
Writing for oral delivery of a presentation that best communicates the speaker's messages, position or desire for action.

17. Grass Roots Program/Guerilla Marketing
Use of guerilla marketing or grass roots programs to achieve an organization's PR goals.

18. Special Projects
Other common public relations tactics that are not otherwise listed, including public service announcements, press conferences, satellite media tours, trade shows, etc.

Special Awards

Special Awards will be presented in the following categories: PR Agency, Individual Performer and Communications Team.

PR Agency Categories

The **PR Agency of the Year Award** recognizes an outstanding PR firm for exceptional growth and accomplishments during 2019. Entries for PR Agency of the Year Award should be submitted in one (1) pdf document not to exceed 10 pages or 5 MB. If you choose to include a video, upload the video to YouTube and provide a link in your pdf document.

All entries in the PR Agency special award category will be judged on the following criteria:
- Evidence of financial growth
- Client list growth
- Client retention
- PR innovation

Entries should include the following:
- Agency summary
- Three client testimonials
- Key client roster for last two years
- Staffing (split executive, account and support staff)
- Financials (two years' annual income including mark-up on disbursements as a separate line item)
- Achievements during the entry period
- An overview of the firm's practice areas, offices, and capabilities
- A breakdown of how much business falls into each of the firm's practice areas
- A list of any long-term accounts
- Review of exceptional client work during the entry period, such as campaign or product launch, help with crisis, etc.
- Details of account wins and losses within the entry period
- Information about new products, partnerships, and innovations within the entry period
- Details of HR programs and staff initiatives that moved forward during the entry period
- Information about agency involvement in professional organizations, such as PRSA Houston, the Council of PR Firms, etc.
- Information about charitable, community and educational efforts by the firm

If the agency is a subsidiary, or has been spun off from a parent company, the entry must include details of sources of start-up finance and a full explanation of the relationship with the parent company, including ongoing financial and infrastructure support (e.g. access to training, HR, financial management, etc.)

Note that certain information, including client wins and profitability/revenue (can include a range) can be marked confidential and will not be published. Omitting this information could affect how judges score your entry.

SA-A1) New PR Agency of the Year
Open to any agency which has been in business for less than 24 months as of December 31, 2019. The CEO of the firm is required to certify in writing the firm's current annual communications income, as well as date of incorporation (or DBA filing) and number of employees.

SA-A2) Small PR Agency of the Year
Open to any agency with verified annual revenue less than $350,000 in 2019. The CEO of the firm is required to certify in writing that the firm has a current annual PR income (consisting of fees plus mark-up for disbursements as a separate line item) of less than $350,000, as well as date of incorporation (or DBA filing) and number of employees.

SA-A3) Mid-Size PR Agency of the Year
Open to any agency with verified annual revenue between $350,000 and $999,999 in 2019. The CEO of the firm is required to certify in writing that the firm has a current annual PR income (consisting of fees plus mark-up for disbursements as a separate line item) between $350,000 and $999,999, as well as date of incorporation and number of employees.

SA-A4) Large PR Agency of the Year
Open to any agency with verified annual revenue more than $1 million in 2019. The CEO of the firm is required to certify in writing that the firm has a current annual PR income (consisting of fees plus mark-up for disbursements as a separate line item) of more than $1 million, as well as date of incorporation and number of employees.

Note: Judges also have the option to select an overall PR Agency of the Year award from the agency submissions received. This accolade is determined by comparing the best of the four agency categories.

Individual Performer Categories

Entries for the **Individual Special Awards** should be submitted in one (1) pdf document not to exceed seven (7) pages in length and should not use less than a 10-point font size. If you choose to include a video, upload the video to YouTube and provide a link in your pdf document. Award entry elements are detailed below for each category. Individuals may nominate themselves or be nominated by others.

SA-I1) Young Public Relations Professional of the Year
The Young Public Relations Professional of the Year Award recognizes a relative newcomer to public relations for demonstrating exceptional leadership and professional achievements during his/her initial years in the profession.

The Young PR Professional of the Year demonstrates the following characteristics:
- Shows emerging leadership and outstanding achievements in public relations
- Has a good grasp of PR strategy and tactics
- Makes specific contributions to the community, the PR profession and his/her employer(s)/clients
- Displays traits and qualities that distinguish the nominee and his/her accomplishments, such as business savvy or creativity.

All PR professionals who have been in full-time practice for less than three years (began full-time practice Jan. 1, 2017 or later) are eligible (this period excludes internships and part-time employment while working on a degree.).

Please include the following in the entry:

- Bio of the nominee/brief résumé/education background
- Accomplishments achieved during the entry period
- Activities outside work, including charity work, industry associations, etc.
- 200-word statement from nominee on why he/she should be considered
- If entry is submitted by the nominee, include one letter of recommendation written by a current manager, supervisor or client

SA-I2) Public Relations Professional of the Year
The Public Relations Professional of the Year Award recognizes an established practitioner for exceptional leadership and professional accomplishments during 2019, as well as career achievements. All PR professionals who have been in full-time practice for more than three years (began full-time practice prior to Jan. 1, 2017) are eligible.

The PR Professional of the Year demonstrates the following characteristics:
- Exceptional account/company leadership
- Outstanding achievement in public relations
- Knowledge of PR strategy, tactics and budgeting
- Makes specific contributions to the community, the PR profession and his/her employer(s)/clients
- Displays traits and qualities that distinguish the nominee and his/her accomplishments

Please include the following in the entry:
- Bio of the nominee/brief résumé/education background
- Accomplishments achieved during entry period
- Activities outside work, including charity work, industry associations, etc.
- 200-word statement from nominee on why he/she should be considered
- If entry is submitted by the nominee, include one letter of recommendation written by a current manager, supervisor or client

SA-I3) CEO Communicator of the Year
The CEO Communicator of the Year Award honors the outstanding performance of Houston area chief executive officers in their roles as chief communicator. The role of the CEO has evolved. Not only do they encourage and adapt to changing business models, but frequently the CEO must take the lead in communicating with employees, shareholders, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders to achieve success for their organization.

To qualify, nominees should demonstrate effective communication as part of their leadership, whether in a crisis situation or in day-to-day operations. Supporting examples may include the CEO's appearance in the media, before industry or community groups or through a leadership role in civic, religious or business organizations.

Nominees must be chief executive officers or hold equivalent positions in the Greater Houston Area. Nominators should provide details about the nominee and his/her qualifications with reference to the period between Jan. 1, 2019 and Dec. 31, 2019. Please also include:
- Bio of the nominee/brief résumé/education background
- Accomplishments achieved during entry period

SA-I4) Solo Practitioner of the Year
Open to any individual PR professional who has worked independently for at least 24 months and not employed by, or affiliated with, a corporate entity.

- Practice summary (must not exceed two pages, single-sided in length and should not use less than a 10-point font size);
- Key client roster for last two years;
- Financials (two year's fees and profits, annual income including mark-up on disbursements as a separate line item) *.
- Achievements during the entry period
- Three client testimonials

Communications Team Categories

The **Communications Team of the Year Award** recognizes an outstanding communications team for exceptional professional accomplishments during 2019. Individuals may nominate their own team or the team may be nominated by others. Entries for the Communications Team Special Awards should be submitted in one (1) pdf document not to exceed five (5) pages in length and should not use less than a 10-point font size. If you choose to include a video, upload the video to YouTube and provide a link in your pdf document.

Entry submissions should include:
- Number of staff employed in PR function (please split professional and support staff)
- Annual communications budget for 2019 (broken down into areas of marketing activity directly under the team's control)
- Outline of goals for the organization as a whole and the role of the communications team in fulfilling those goals
- Outline of PR-related issues and objectives during the entry period
- Achievements during the entry period
- Use of internal/external resources, including agencies and other companies
- Where appropriate, details of work with other departments within the organization

The judges will look for evidence of success in executing PR campaigns or programs during 2019 as part of an overall communications strategy. They will also look for cost-effective use of both in-house and external resources.

SA-T1) Government Communications Team of the Year
Open to any in-house communications department within local government, government agencies, health authorities, trade unions and trade bodies. Where relevant, details should be included of success in meeting Government regulations or standards (e.g. e-government and consultative clauses in the Local Government Act).

SA-T2) Non-Profit Communications Team of the Year
Open to any in-house communications department within a charity, non-profit or not-for-profit organizations. Where relevant, details should be included of success in meeting the organizations goals of engagement, volunteerism and fundraising.

SA-T3) Corporate Communications Team of the Year
Open to any in-house private sector PR department.

Judging

Judges – All entries will be judged by professional and distinguished members of a partner PRSA Chapter. Entrants are strongly encouraged to review the judging criteria and scoring on page 14 when preparing entries.

Awards – As merited in each category, Gold, Silver and Bronze Excalibur Awards will be awarded to first, second and third place winners, respectively. Judges reserve the right to declare no winners in a category if they determine that no entry has met the minimum qualifications for a professional program or project. Judges will only award up to one Gold winner in each category but may award up to two Silver or Bronze in a particular category.

Notification – All finalists will be informed that they have met the minimum score to qualify for an Excalibur Award. Whether a finalist has actually won a Gold, Silver, Bronze Excalibur Award will not be disclosed until the night of the gala. It is possible that a qualifying score may not win depending on the number of first, second or third place winners in a given category. The Grand Excalibur will not be announced until the night of the awards gala; however, finalists will be notified if they've met the minimum score to qualify.

Average Minimum Scoring (Campaigns) – Campaigns will be scored on a 100-point scale. The average score by the judges will be used to help determine if an entry qualifies for an Excalibur Award. The average minimum scores for each award level for the campaign categories are as follows:

>   **Bronze** – average minimum score of 70
>   **Silver** – average minimum score of 80
>   **Gold** – average minimum score of 90

Receiving a minimum score does not guarantee a particular level of Excalibur Award. The average minimum score only qualifies the entry to be considered for an award. As merited in each category, Gold, Silver and Bronze Excalibur Awards will be awarded to first, second and third place winners, respectively.

Average Minimum Scoring (Tactics) – Tactics will be scored on a 55-point scale. The average score by the judges will be used to help determine if an entry qualifies for an Excalibur Award. The average minimum scores for each award level for the tactics categories are as follows:

>   **Bronze** – average minimum score of 35
>   **Silver** – average minimum score of 45
>   **Gold** – average minimum score of 50

Receiving a minimum score does not guarantee a particular level of Excalibur Award. The average minimum score only qualifies the entry to be considered for an award. As merited in each category, Gold, Silver and Bronze Excalibur Awards will be awarded to first, second and third place winners, respectively.

The Grand Excalibur Award will be presented to the **campaign entry** deemed the "Best of Show." The minimum score needed to be considered by the judges for the Grand Excalibur Award will be 95. If your campaign qualifies for this award, entrants must be prepared to provide a video describing their campaign (not to exceed 2 minutes).

Grounds for Disqualification/Reclassification – Judges retain the right to reject any entry that is either incomplete or improperly prepared according to the guidelines. Entries that are incorrectly classified may be reclassified or disqualified at the discretion of the judges. Entry fees will not be returned in those cases nor will entrants be notified.

Judging Criteria & Scoring

Research
The methods applied in identifying a problem or opportunity as well as in supporting the planning and program.

Planning
The original statement of objective(s), audience(s), establishment of measurable criteria, the originality and judgment employed in choosing strategies and techniques, the relationship of the program plan to research and objectives, and the accuracy of budget and staffing projections.

Implementation
The caliber of materials, activities, writing, publications and other tools and techniques applied in executing the program.

Evaluation/Measurement
Demonstrated efforts in identifying, analyzing and quantifying results to determine if and how well a program accomplished its goals and objectives.

Scoring – Campaign Categories

Research (15 points)
Poor 0 to 5; Fair 6 to 9; Good 10 to 12; Excellent 13 to 15

Planning (25 points)
Poor 0 to 10; Fair 11 to 16; Good 17 to 22; Excellent 23 to 25

Implementation (40 points)
Poor 0 to 20; Fair 21 to 30; Good 31 to 35; Excellent 36 to 40

Evaluation (20 points)
Poor 0 to 6; Fair 7 to 11; Good 12 to 17; Excellent 18 to 20

TOTAL: 100 points

Scoring – Tactics Categories

Research (10 points)
Poor 0 to 4; Fair 5 to 6; Good 7 to 8; Excellent 9 to 10

Planning (10 points)
Poor 0 to 4; Fair 5 to 6; Good 7 to 8; Excellent 9 to 10

Implementation (25 points)
Poor 0 to 10; Fair 11 to 17; Good 18 to 21; Excellent 22 to 25

Evaluation (10 points)
Poor 0 to 4; Fair 5 to 6; Good 7 to 8; Excellent 9 to 10

TOTAL: 55 points

Houston Chapter
PRSA

HOUSE OF BLUES

6.25.20