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the newsletter for public relations minors

## Words of wisdom for a PR crisis

By Katherine Hull

In the words of Grandpa Dan, "Don't squat with your spurs on!" With those words, crisis management was on Michael L. Herman's agenda Thursday, Sept. 29, when he spoke at the PRSA Central Illinois program. In this case, avoiding the crisis!

Herman, APR, fellow PRSA, spoke to approximately 60 PRSA and PRSSA members and guests at Alexander's Steakhouse in Normal, sharing words of wisdom from his Grandpa Dan. The event started at 6 p.m. with a networking social, followed by dinner and the presentation.

Attending from Eastern were PRSSA members Breanne Chapman, Angela DeLong, Daphne Dunham, Katie Hull, Lauren Lowery, Katie Skaggs, Kristin Wargo and Jake Woelfel; and faculty Dr. Brian Sowa, Terri Johnson, Craig Dalton (Parkland) and Marta Ladd (retired).

Herman attributed his philosophy and his quotes to his great-grandfather, Dan S. Welsh, one of the first postmaster's in the Indian Territory of Oklahoma.

Herman opened the presentation with a quote from Grandpa Dan: "Good judgment comes from experience and a lot of that comes from bad judgment."

Herman said that when you ask people in their organizations if they have a crisis plan, most make up excuses or say they will get to it. Herman made it known that the



*Michael L. Herman, a PRSA member, spoke about crisis situations in PR at the Central Illinois PRSA meeting Sept. 29.*

one thing you need in any organization is a plan—in place, in advance.

"So what is a crisis?" Herman asked. A crisis depends on the timing, circumstance, environment, and how prepared you are for the event, Herman said. His own definition is "any abnormal situation that interrupts the normal operations of your organization or your life."

Crises have elements that are commonly shared, Herman said. They usually surface as a surprise, resulting in loss of control by you, and attract public attention or scrutiny. Also, they pose a threat on reputations, stability, finances, *crisis continued on page 4*

### A few of Herman's "Rules of the West":

**1. Have a plan for every crisis and every issue. And make sure you have 'em before you need 'em.**

**2. Make sure your Public Relations people are your best saddle pals. Bring 'em in early and often.**

**3. Tell the Truth — but if you're going to go like hell and you're mind isn't completely set...don't use your spurs.**

**4. Don't feel the need to fill a silence...wait for the next question.**

# One internship turned into two

by Myla Bradford

For some students, completing one internship can lead to the opportunity of a second round. This is the case for Jess Caudle, a senior journalism major, who is in the middle of her second internship with Consolidated Communications in Mattoon—after interning at Consolidated this summer.

“My work at WEIU-TV and The Agency prepared me for the writing and editing skills I use at this internship,” Caudle said.

Caudle interviewed for the spring internship last winter, but she did not get the internship until she interviewed for the summer position.

Her boss, Sarah Greider, liked the fact that she had experience at WEIU-TV, as well as The Agency, but also appreciated the three years she spent at Cracker Barrel.

“That really showed my people skills and that people wanted to keep me around,” Caudle said.

The internship requires her to work a minimum of 18 hours a week, but Caudle’s boss, Greider, is very flexible, especially if her attendance and work effort is good.

Other interns may agree to work a different numbers of hours, depending on their class schedules and the employers’ needs.

Caudle works on news releases for service anniversaries, new hires and promotions, on keeping the media contact list up to date, on covering feature stories for the company newsletter, the Connection, and on e-mailing reporters to give information. She handles media relations, which includes reading the paper for stories about Consolidated and logging articles that have been printed or aired.

In addition, Caudle has been involved with preparing for the Special Olympics



Family Festival, keeping track of service anniversary luncheon RSVPs, as well as comments for the yearly booklets for Illinois and Texas.

By interning at Consolidated Communications, Caudle found she likes the corporate setting.

“I have learned that PR can be a fast-paced world at times and at other times be pretty slow and mellow compared to the television environment, but that is why I like it,” Caudle said. “I love the rush every now and then, but it is always nice to have plenty of time to get things done.”

“Internships do more than give you experience, they can foreshadow the direction your career will go, introduce you to people who can help you network for other internships or jobs, and help you develop skills you learned in classes,” said Terri Johnson, Caudle’s internship adviser.

Johnson also said many internships are paid, many are not. A student can find a paid internship in the state of Illinois and

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*Jess Caudle, a senior journalism major, works on a flier to recruit more members to the Agency in a Buzzard Hall lab one evening during a meeting.*

*Photo by Jake Sweet*

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**—Terri Johnson**

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## Full classes on the rise for EIU

by Jake Sweet

More students are attending Eastern this year than any other year in the past, making it more difficult for communication and journalism students to get into the classes they need to graduate.

The Communication Studies Department alone experienced a 10 to 15 percent increase in transfer students, which made it harder for students to register for upper-level classes.

Some professors noticed a higher number of students trying to get enrolled in courses that were already at the maximum capacity. The department knew it would have a larger number of students enrolling this year and encouraged professors to have increased class sizes and the number of sections offered for specific courses.

One of the major causes of full classes is that some students register for classes they do not plan to take in order to maintain their financial aid. In many cases, this leads to classes being closed to those who need them. By the time the students

drop the class, it is often past the date that other students can register for the courses.

Another cause is the University dropping the registration due to a hold placed on the students' accounts. This commonly comes from fees being owed to the school, and students often do not find out until they show up on campus and try to pick up their textbooks. After the hold is taken off their accounts, it leaves little time and room to rebuild their schedules because most of the classes are full.

Also, many students do not register for the right classes. According to student surveys, less than two-thirds of Communication students meet with their adviser before registering. Again, when students realize their schedules are not right, it is hard to make changes for the next semester.

The department does make adjustments during the summer, based on student enrollment, but many students wait until the summer or near the beginning of the semester to register for classes. This year, three upper division classes were canceled due to low enrollment.

### Can't get into a class? Try:

1. Registering for it and other sections of the course.
2. Talking to the professor. They are usually willing to try to work with students.
3. Showing up to the desired class the first week to show interest.
4. Taking an interest and the professor will be more willing to let you in a full class.

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apply for additional grant funds. During the school year, the only paid internships available near campus are Consolidated and Lake Land College.

Caudle is receiving some funds from the Illinois Board of Higher education grant, in addition to her pay at Consolidated.

"Because of this, these internships are very competitive. Mrs. Greider was so pleased with Jess' work that she gave her both the summer and the fall internships," said Johnson.

**"I have learned that PR can be a fast-paced world at times and other times be pretty slow and mellow compared to the television environment, but that is why I like it."—Jess Caudle, on her experience while interning at Consolidated.**

### Registration tips from Dr. Mark Borzi : (communication studies department chair)

1. Make sure to have financial obligations covered.
2. Meet with an advisor before registering for classes.
3. Register during the regular registration window.

## Talk of crisis PR on career day

by Jake Sweet

Instead of attending classes on Wednesday, Oct. 12, many students were given the opportunity to go to the Communication Career Day on the third floor of the student union.

Starting at 10 a.m., the career day kicked off with a panel, "Networking and Job Seeking." The career day lasted until 3 p.m. and featured seven panels.

Another panel at 1 p.m. focused on communication during crisis situations, and Anita Sego from the American Red Cross and Ramona Tomshack, an Infection Control nurse at Sarah Bush Lincoln hospital, spoke on behalf of their experiences and why communication is so important during a crisis situation.

Sego talked about her experiences

during Sept. 11, and the incredible amount of phone calls she received which shut down the lines at the local Red Cross office. She also discussed how the company restructured its rules and guidelines after this public relations nightmare.

Tomshack discussed how the advances in technology have made it easier to communicate the health problems of a patient with Coles County and the state of Illinois. Instead of communicating information on the phone, she can now fill out a form on the computer and a copy goes to all the required parties. Tomshack also spoke of the need to run crisis simulations to get an idea for what can go wrong in a crisis situation. She said that Sarah Bush runs two crisis simulations a year, one on campus and another in the area where the crisis could take place.

EIU grads, Sarah Greider, communications coordinator, Consolidated Communications, and Jennifer Stoops, assistant director, Jasper County Chamber of Commerce, spoke at the PR Careers panel, led by Dr.



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competitive positions, project viability, and even existence of the organization.

According to Grandpa Dan, "runnin' from problems is a sure way of 'runnin' into problems."

Herman said that crises can include: natural disasters, legal or financial difficulties, government activities, criminal activities, employee/volunteer incidents and high-profile events.

Herman added that there are two different types of crises. The first is a sudden crisis that explodes on the scene and needs immediate attention. The second is the smoldering crisis, which begins building and continues to gain "legs" over time.

Grandpa Dan described this saying, "When you see a turtle on a fence post, you may not know how it got there, but you can be damn sure it had help!" He also used

"If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging!"

Herman said crises come upon organizations like thunderstorms on the prairie. The signals may be subtle, but they are there.

In some cases, crises may be the result of neglect, just not taking the time or investing in the assets to assure that proper crisis planning and organizational support systems are in place, said Herman.

"You can't manage a crisis, but you can manage your response to it," said Herman, describing the proven rule for crisis management.

He made five additional points: Focus on the crew first — always let your trailhands know what is going on; When snake bit, cut swiftly, drain the poison and be honest about your chances; Don't flirt with honesty... Be married to it! Get the bad news out fast... before rumor spreads; and Stick to the facts... and never miss a good chance to shut up!

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