

The Outstanding PR Professionals

Ivy Lee heads the list of leaders as determined by a University of Michigan study

BY DAVID L. LEWIS



1. Ivy Ledbetter Lee (1877-1934)

Ivy Lee and Associates, New York City

Father of public relations . . . Set truth standards which have survived as practical code . . . Business success dramatized public relations' possibilities.

IVY LEDBETTER LEE, regarded by many as the "father" of modern-day public relations, has been rated the most outstanding public relations figure of the 20th century in a study based on a four-part survey of the membership of the Public Relations Society of America and its Past Chairmen's Council.

The study, believed to be the first of its kind, was conducted by The University of Michigan. Similar Michigan-sponsored studies have rated the most admired persons in world history and the greatest figures in American busi-

ness, labor, and black history.

In addition to Lee, public relations figures who received votes in each of the survey's four parts were, in order of their overall ranking: John W. Hill, Pendleton Dudley, Carl Byoir, Edward L. Bernays, Earl Newsom, Arthur W. Page, Milton Fairman, W. Howard Chase, Paul Garrett, George Creel, Rex F. Harlow, Harold Brayman, Thomas J. Ross, Kalman B. Druck, Bert C. Goss, Leone Baxter, Clam Whitaker, and William Ruder.

Individuals who received votes in three of the survey's four parts were, in order of overall selection: G. Edward Pendray, Denny Griswold, James W. Hagerty, Philip Lesly, James P. Selvage, James W. Irwin, Allen H. Center, Ben Sonnenberg, Phelps Adams, Ed-

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2. John W. Hill
(1890-)
Hill and Knowlton,
New York City

Established highly professional firms . . . Set standards for the practice of public relations . . . Made his influence felt throughout the business spectrum.



3. Pendleton Dudley
(1876-1966)
Dudley-Anderson-
Yutzy, New York City

Pioneer . . . Formidable innovator . . . Set guideposts for public relations . . . Got results for clients through original techniques within an ethical framework.



4. Carl Byoir
(1888-1957)
Carl Byoir and Asso-
ciates, New York City

Uncanny prescience. Highly creative. . . . Established one of the best organizations in profession . . . His firm produced more outstanding people than any other.



5. Edward L. Bernays
(1891-)
Public relations coun-
sel, Cambridge

Gave profession its theoretical underpinnings . . . First to emphasize social role of public relations . . . Made field respectable; elevated it to profession.



6. Earl Newsom
(1897-)
Earl Newsom & Co.,
New York City

Gave dignity to our work . . . Raised level of public relations . . . High standards of performance earned business' respect for public relations counseling.

ward Gottlieb, Ed Lipscomb, Scott M. Cutlip, and Ward B. Stevenson.

The leading vote recipients in each part of the survey and their vote totals, based on a formula of 10 points for a first-place vote, nine for a second-place vote, etc., are cited in the accompanying lists. Composite lists, based on overall rankings of those who received votes in all or at least three parts of the survey, also are presented.

As to study methodology, of PRSA's 7,004 members, 640, or one in 11, were polled, as were the 24 past chairmen who are still carried on the rolls of the society. Half of the members and past chairmen were furnished ballots listing the names of 119 leading public relations personalities; half received ballots without names.

Names placed on the checklist were those which appeared with the most frequency in 18 leading texts, reference works, and other books on public relations published between 1938-69. This method of building a checklist was admittedly not perfect, nor was the checklist itself. One could legitimately complain—and several persons did, vigorously—that certain names should have been included or excluded. "Any list . . . which does not include the name of _____," wrote one loyal and indignant secretary, "does not seem to me to be worth the paper it's printed on." Conversely, a few names on the list were greeted with "you're kidding."

Still the checklist—built on the profession's literature over a period of three decades, rather than on my or contemporary practitioners' judgment—was probably more objective than

any comparable list that might have been compiled. It also provoked, according to expectation, a considerably greater response among the membership (65 or 20.3 per cent of the sample completed questionnaires) than did the plain ballots (28 or 8.8 per cent). Ten of the 13 past chairmen who were furnished a checklist voted, as did eight of the 11 non-checklist past chairmen.

WRITE-INS ENCOURAGED

Although write-in votes were encouraged among respondents who received a checklist, individuals not named to the list admittedly were at a disadvantage in the balloting. Even so, 41 persons received write-in votes from interviewees furnished checklists. Foremost among them was Harold Brayman, Du Pont's director of public relations from 1944-65, who finished 17th in the past president-checklist poll and 29th in the membership-checklist sample. Brayman undoubtedly would have been rated much higher in both polls had his name been on the checklist, as indicated by his fifth and 11th place rankings in the non-checklist samples of the past presidents and membership, respectively.

An evaluation of the survey's four parts suggests that Brayman's name was the checklist's most, and perhaps only, serious omission. But it is probable that four other men—Allen Center, Ed Lipscomb, Scott M. Cutlip, and Ward B. Stevenson—would have been ranked higher in the overall standings had their names been on the list.

In voting, respondents were instructed to define the term "most outstanding" in any way they wished, but were asked to keep in mind "individuals' overall abilities, innovative talents, ethical standards, and their contributions to the improvement of attitudes toward their employers and/or clients and toward public relations as a profession." Interviewees were asked to rank the 10 greatest public relations people and to state why they rated their top two choices as they did.

Among the 19 practitioners who received votes in all four parts of the study, six are deceased—Lee, Dudley, Byoir, Page, Creel, and Whitaker. Of the 13 living figures, most are active in the field, while some are semi-retired, and at least one has taken on an important post-retirement job. All of the 13 persons who received votes in three parts of the study are living.

The lists of outstanding public relations practitioners are dominated by consultants, as opposed to corporate or association executives. Three times as many consultants as company executives were ranked among the profession's leading figures, including all of the five top vote-getters. One can only hypothesize as to why. Consultants, perhaps by the nature of the profession, are in the limelight more than those whose talents often are blended into corporate team efforts. Also, consultants, for business reasons, may find it to their advantage to publicize themselves, discreetly or otherwise, while company executives more frequently do not or cannot because of employers' anti-cult-of-personality policies. In any event, a substantial majority of pub-



7. Arthur W. Page (1883-1960)
Vice President, American Telephone & Telegraph Co.

Wise and effective . . . First to recognize primary interest of the public . . . Left a tremendous heritage to his company and public relations profession.

8. Milton Fairman (1904-)
Editor, *Public Relations Journal*, New York City

Ethical, top-flight public relations executive . . . Has made varied and consistently admirable contribution to public relations . . . Complete professional.

9. W. Howard Chase (1910—)
Partners for Growth, Inc., New York City

Has excellent grasp of whole field . . . Extremely effective in directing attention to changing trends . . . Constant leader in advancing state of the art.

10. Paul Garrett (1891-)
Public relations counsel, New York City

One of first to think in broad terms of the public problems of industry . . . Helped to gain acceptance for public relations at highest management levels.

11. George Creel (1876-1953)
Chairman, Committee on Public Information, 1917-1919

Pioneered government public relations . . . First to appreciate impact of massive publicity, propaganda . . . Led unique campaign to win public backing for war.

12. Rex F. Harlow (1892-)
Author, editor, publisher, Palo Alto

Pioneer in application of the social sciences to public relations practice . . . Publications and seminars have had a highly beneficial impact on profession.

13. Harold Brayman (1900—)
Public relations consultant, Wilmington

14. Thomas J. Ross (1893—)
T. J. Ross & Associates, Inc., New York City

15. Kalman B. Druck (1914—)
Harshe Rotman & Druck, Inc., New York City

16. Bert C. Goss (1907—)
Hill and Knowlton, New York City

17. Leone Baxter (1906—)
Whitaker & Baxter, San Francisco

18. Clem Whitaker (1899-1961)
Whitaker & Baxter, San Francisco

19. William Ruder (1921—)
Ruder & Finn, Inc., New York City

20. G. Edward Pendray (1901—)
Public relations counsel, Jamesburg, N. J.

21. Denny Griswold (1911—)
Editor, *Public Relations News*, New York City

22. James W. Hagerty (1909—)
Vice president, American Broadcasting Company, New York City

23. Philip Lesly (1918—)
The Philip Lesly Company, Chicago

24. James P. Selvage (1902—)
Selvage, Lee & Howard

25. James W. Irwin (1902—)
Consultant, Northfield, Ill.

26. Allen H. Center (1912—)
Vice president, Motorola, Inc., Franklin Park, Ill.

27. Ben Sonnenberg (1901—)
Publicity Consultants, Inc., New York City

28. Phelps Adams (1902—)
Litchfield Park, Arizona. (retired)

29. Edward Gottlieb (1910—)
Edward Gottlieb & Associates, Ltd., New York City

30. Ed Lipscomb (1906—)
National Cotton Council of America, Memphis

31. Scott M. Cutlip (1915—)
University of Wisconsin, Madison

32. Ward B. Stevenson (1920—)
Hill & Knowlton, Los Angeles

Public relations' top-rated figures are those who specialize in advising clients, rather than administering public relations staffs. Elections to a future public relations hall of fame likely would reflect this voting pattern.

The study also suggests that public relations is a man's world. Only two women—campaign specialist Leone Baxter and publisher Denny Griswold—were rated among the profession's most outstanding practitioners. Only one other woman, Rockefeller Center's Caroline Hood, was awarded votes in at least two of the survey's four parts.

Fifteen of PRSA's 34 past chairmen received votes in the study. Members cast ballots for 13 former heads of the

society. Past chairmen voted for 11 of their own, and rated their peers slightly higher than did the society's rank and file. The familiarity of chairmen with their peers seems to have bred admiration, rather than contempt—a testimonial, perhaps, to the quality of PRSA's leadership.

The past chairmen revealed themselves as more knowledgeable in their voting than the membership; and this conclusion is based more on an analysis of the rationale for selections, rather than on the selections themselves. It stands to reason that ex-chairmen should be in a better position than the average member to evaluate the outstanding figures. Almost all of the

past chairmen were seasoned practitioners before being elected to their office. Moreover, as they occupied the society's top post, they perforce had to concern themselves more with history and broader aspects of the profession than the average member.

Past chairmen and members' voting patterns have more in common than otherwise, but there were vote variations, and one can make of them what he will. Ex-chairmen, for example, rated Dudley, Fairman, Brayman, Baxter, Whitaker, Ruder, and Pendray appreciably higher than the membership. Conversely, the membership rated Lee, Byoir, Bernays, Creel, Griswold, Hagerty, Lesly, Steve Hannagan, Daniel

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J. Edelman, Anthony G. De Lorenzo, Gerry Swinehart, Russell Birdwell, Herb Klein, and Louis M. Howe higher than did the past presidents.

The voting pattern also revealed a tendency for consultants to cast more ballots for consultants than for corporate and association executives, and for corporate-association practitioners to give more support to their counterparts than to counselors.

Most of those who received write-in votes were or are public relations practitioners by vocation. But there was a smattering of ballots cast for statesmen with a deft public relations touch, including Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt, and for business executives identified with good public relations practice, among them AT&T's Theodore N. Vail.

Several advertising executives received votes, notably Mary Wells Greene, Marion Harper, and Leo Burnett. Numerous presidential press assistants and journalists-turned-government information officers also won support, among them Hagerty, Klein, Howe, Edward R. Murow, Pierre Salinger, Carl Rowan, Murray Snyder, Steve Early, and Joseph P. Tumulty.

One wishes that space permitted comment on all of the study's top-rated figures, for each of these practitioners has made an important contribution to public relations, received high praise from study participants, and deserves special mention in this report on the profession's leaders. But lacking space, let's merely sketch the career highlights of the dozen most outstanding figures.

THE TOP TWELVE

Ivy Lee, who received the highest number (22) of the survey's 111 first-place votes, is generally regarded as the first public relations practitioner in the present sense of the term. After serving four years as a reporter, he plunged into publicity work in 1903, and was named publicist for the anthracite coal industry in 1906. At that time he sent to city editors his "Declaration of Principles," which announced his plan to "supply to the press and public of the United States prompt and accurate information" about his clients. Lee also was retained by the nation's largest railroad, the Pennsylvania, in 1906, and by the Rockefellers in 1915.

John W. Hill, after 12 years as a Cleveland journalist, moved into public relations in 1927. He became public relations counsel of the American Iron and Steel Institute in 1933, and formed Hill and Knowlton the same year. Having built his firm into one of the world's largest and most successful

public relations organizations, Hill now is chairman of its policy committee.

Pendleton Dudley was the dean of public relations until his death at age 90 in 1966. He established his own firm, Pendleton Dudley & Associates, in New York, in 1909, and served as Dudley-Anderson-Yutzy's senior partner after 1949.

Carl Byoir served as associate chairman of George Creel's World War I Committee of Public Information; in 1930, he organized Carl Byoir and Associates, Inc. Before his death in 1957, Byoir, like Hill, had built his firm into one of the world's principal public relations organizations.

Edward L. Bernays, who received 16 first-place votes in the survey, has been a publicist since 1913, a public relations counselor since 1919. "Bernays," as historian Eric F. Goldman wrote in 1948, "moved along with the most advanced trends in the public relations field, thinking with, around and ahead of them." He was the first to teach a course in public relations, at New York University, in 1923. He also authored the first important book on the subject, "Crystallizing Public Opinion," which disassociated public relations from either press agency or publicity work, and introduced the phrase, "public relations counsel."

Earl Newsom, senior partner in Earl Newsom & Co. since 1935, has counseled many important companies, Jersey Standard, Ford, and General Motors among them. In his chapter "Newsom: Duplex Suite in the Clouds," in "The Image Makers," Irwin Ross accurately stated that "the goal of a good many public relations men is someday to attain the lonely eminence of Earl Newsom. His fees are high; his clients include some of the most august names in the corporate roster; and his work involves pure 'consultation.'"

Arthur Page was an AT&T vice president from 1927-47. He is credited with formulating many of the public relations guidelines which have helped the huge utility to survive and prosper during the past four decades.

Milton Fairman, a Chicago newspaperman from 1925-34 and a federal government press relations officer in 1935-36, joined Borden Inc. in 1937. Retiring as a vice president of the company in 1967, Fairman became editor of the JOURNAL. He served as president of PRSA in 1951, and was president of the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education, Inc. from 1961-66. He was rated higher in this survey than any other past president.

W. Howard Chase was a founding member of the PRSA, chairman of its first executive committee, and its president in 1956. His career includes

teaching at Harvard, Drake, and R. Cliffe; editorship of the *Des Moines Register and Tribune* and the *Fore Letter*; and directorships of the public relations departments of General Motors and General Foods. He was a partner in Selva, Lee & Chase, president of Communications Counselors, Inc., and founded his own business, in 1959.

Paul Garrett, after working for government agencies and a New York newspaper for 16 years, joined General Motors as its first director of public relations in 1931, and served as vice president in charge of public relations from 1940-56. Since retiring from GM, he has been a consultant.

George Creel edited newspapers in Kansas City and Denver, then made his mark in public relations as chairman of the landmark Committee on Public Information during World War I.

Rex F. Harlow in 1939 formed the American Council on Public Relations and headed that organization until 1947, when it merged into the newly organized PRSA. Since 1948 he has headed the Public Relations Institute of the West. He has been editor and publisher of the *Social Science Reporter* since 1953; of the *Public Relations Research Review* since 1958. Harlow has authored more than 40 books, several of them on public relations. Founder and first editor (1945-47) of the PUBLIC RELATIONS JOURNAL, he has twice received PRSA's citation for Professional Attainment—in 1952 and in 1969.

IN SUMMARY

Summing up the study, the findings reflect considerable knowledge of past and present public relations practitioners on the part of respondents. The rankings themselves support such conclusions—there isn't a pygmy among those rated among the most outstanding—and the reasons presented for the rankings reinforce the selections. A carping critic could, it is true, ask why certain individuals, including some whose names are on the "checklist," were not rated higher, or lower. The best answer is that any exceptional omissions in the balloting were just that—exceptional omissions. In the main, PRSA's membership and past presidents chose wisely; those named to their lists abundantly combine vision, ability, dedication, and integrity, plus the key element of greatness—superior achievement. Any fairminded person, while perhaps finding the several lists of outstanding figures less than perfect from his own point of view, would find it difficult not to agree that the top-rated practitioners are worthy of the profession's respect and admiration. □