

# PR professionals now become strategic advisers, reputation captains of companies

By **PANCHO SANTILLAN**

**S**TRATEGIC communication has always played an important role in how businesses and their respective consumers and audiences exist together in harmony. Even in difficult times, the first thing that brands and organizations do is to find ways to utilize communications to convey what they really stand for.

Since its founding in 1957, the Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP)—the oldest organization in PR and communications in the country today—a lot of things have already changed in terms of how Public Relations is practiced. Throughout the decades, Public Relations has faced so many challenges, yet it continues to be a testament of how strategic communications remain relevant in our era today.

Take for example the introduction of new media platforms today, which if compared to the early days of PRSP, has created an intricate and complicated ecosystem. Back in the day, PR professionals only had to deal with print and broadcast (television and radio) media. Today, we have a variety of online and social media platforms, and even these two are still considered as separate entities by the industry.

“We now have a vast playing field for Public Relations today, and this has only made the role of PR



**METROPOLITAN** Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chairman, Atty. Romando S. Artes (left photo, 4th from left) formally inducts the newly elected officers of the Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP) for the year 2023-2024, led by Harold Geronimo, APR, of Megaworld as PRSP President (4th from right). Also shown in the photos are (L-R) Norman Agatep, APR, of Grupo Agatep as Adviser; Michelle Bayhon, MPA, also of Grupo Agatep as Secretary; Leah Huang of Ogilvy

within organizations a lot more relevant and complex at the same time. This is why this year, one of our many goals at PRSP is to find ways to advance the role of Public Relations in businesses beyond just media relations, in which the practice is commonly identified with,” says Harold C. Geronimo, President, PRSP.

## A GUIDING FORCE FOR BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS

The role of PR in organizations today, Geronimo says, encompasses two very critical aspects every organization must take to heart: reputation management and strategic counseling to the top management.

These two roles highlight the important contribution that PR plays in helping businesses continue to thrive beyond just the need to deal with the media when the occasion calls for it.

“Right now, media relations is just 10% of what we do. While it is still very much a part of the

fundamental practice of the profession, Public Relations will always be focused on managing reputation, no matter which facet of the organization it may come from. PR professionals in organizations must be able to provide counseling and advice on matters involving how reputational risks may affect the sustainability of businesses and the directions that they go,” Geronimo explains.

An example that can illustrate this point is the way sales and marketing groups push products and services to consumers. If the way they sell would impact how customers will see the brand, then it is the role of PR to rectify it because it influences the kind of reputation that will be associated with the organization. If certain business decisions will paint a bad image to the brand, PR should also come in and find ways to turn the situation around because the ultimate goal of the practice, Geronimo emphasizes, is to build and sustain a positive



Philippines as Vice President-Internal; Lady Ochel Espinosa of Isentia as Vice President-External; Cheer Mae Ecarma of Divina Law as Trustee; and Joe Zaldarriaga of Meralco also as Trustee. Attending the induction ceremonies virtually were (right photo, top to bottom L-R): Aye Ubaldo of UR Solutions as Treasurer; Steve Dailisan of AirAsia Philippines as Internal Auditor; Maria Yolanda Crisanto of Globe Telecom Inc. as Adviser; and Dan Mejia of H&M South Asia as Trustee.



**HARNESSING** the passion and potential of this generation towards content creation and storytelling, PRSP aims to promote the institutionalization of Public Relations as a bachelor's degree in various colleges and universities.

reputation for businesses.

## STORYTELLING IS KEY FOR PR'S SUSTAINABILITY

Today, a lot of brands go the route of storytelling—a practice that stems from how the young generation consume and utilize the different media platforms available to them.

“While there continues to be a lot of people interested in pursuing careers in advertising, young people nowadays are more inclined to create and consume content that tells stories, and storytelling is the job of PR. Beyond just slogans and taglines, the role of PR also includes giving life to the products and services that organizations offer through the stories that we tell,” Geronimo shares.

A closer look at how PR is practiced across business and organizations from different industries today reveals that—apart from media relations, reputation management and strategic counseling—a lot of other aspects of communication have now been integrated into the profession. This includes content management, media production, events management, measurement, trainings,

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President, Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP)

internal communications, advocacy communications, sustainability communications, community relations, investor and analyst relations, government relations, stakeholder management, digital and social media management, and many more.

“All of these are the various fields of expertise that every PR professional can pursue. This is why one of our goals at PRSP this year is really to institutionalize Public

Relations as a bachelor's degree in college. Gone are the days when PR was taught in schools under marketing courses. We are not marketing; we are Public Relations,” Geronimo continues.

This is also why in today's business landscape, there are a lot of companies that now have PR professionals as their Chief Reputation Officers (CRO). Organizations like the Aboitiz Group, for example, have their own CRO. The Globe Group prominently has a Chief Sustainability Officer, a function that is currently being handled by former PRSP President and current Globe Group Corporate Communications Head Maria Yolanda Crisanto.

Indeed, Public Relations has now grown to become a more complex profession than it was 66 years ago when PRSP first established its circle of distinguished PR practitioners in the country. Its identity may have evolved over time, but it continues to occupy a significant space among organizations today—a role that is only poised to become stronger and more dynamic as we march forward towards a data-driven future.



**THIS YEAR'S** Anvil Awards will start accepting entries in October, with the Gabi ng Parangal scheduled early next year.

# Around 500 delegates to attend PR Congress in September

By **MARY ROSE MALANTIC**

**T**he Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP) is excited to announce the highly anticipated 2023 National Public Relations Congress, the largest gathering of public relations and communications professionals in the Philippines. This milestone event, celebrating three decades of impactful executions, will take place on September 14 to 15, 2023, at the prestigious Fairmont Hotel in Makati City.

Themed “GNOMON: Championing PR from Intention to Impact,” this year's congress promises to be a momentous occasion,

paying homage to the past, celebrating the present, and envisioning the future of the public relations industry in the Philippines. It aims to elevate industry practices, foster collaboration, and inspire professionals to navigate the ever-changing landscape of PR with unwavering principles and rising trends.

The 2023 National Public Relations Congress will bring together esteemed professionals from various sectors, including reputation leaders, storytellers, key opinion leaders, and communication experts. Attendees will have the opportunity to network, engage in insightful discussions, and gain fresh perspectives from a lineup of

compelling speakers who are pioneers and thought leaders in the field.

Through thought-provoking presentations and interactive sessions, subject matter experts will delve into topics such as cross-cultural communication, multigenerational and sectoral diversity, and the future of the PR profession. By bridging the gap between institutions and the communities they serve, the congress aims to extend its impact to a global scale.

“GNOMON: Championing PR from Intention to Impact” is a testament to PRSP's dedication to advancing the PR industry and empowering its practitioners. By bringing together the best of 30 years,



**PR PROFESSIONALS** and practitioners from top companies and agencies gathered at the Rigodon Ballroom of The Peninsula Manila to attend last year's National Public Relations Congress and listen to insights from international PR experts including and Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management Asia Pacific Council Chair Jaffri Amin Osman (3rd from left), PERHUMAS Chairman Boy Kelana Soebroto (4th from left), ASEAN PR Network President Dr. Prita Kemal Gani of Indonesia (4th from right), and former chair of PR Institute of New Zealand Fiona Cassidy (3rd from right).

this congress serves as a homecoming for the industry's caliber speakers, providing a platform for knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and professional growth.

We invite all public relations and communications professionals, industry

leaders, and aspiring practitioners to join us at the Fairmont Hotel in Makati City on September 14 to 15, 2023. Registration for the congress is now open, and teams are encouraged to register together through the online registration

form available at <https://bit.ly/2023PRCongressRegistrationForm>.

For more information about the 2023 National Public Relations Congress, please visit our official website at [www.prsp.ph](http://www.prsp.ph) or contact our secretariat at [secretariat@prsp.ph](mailto:secretariat@prsp.ph)