



# *2026 Edward L. Behrns*

## **Mark of Excellence Awards**

———— **Call for Entries** ————





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# PRSA SD/IC President's Letter

**Elena Gomez**

Dear PRSA San Diego-Imperial Counties Board Members,

As some of you may know, my first job in communications began in journalism. I started as an editor at NBC 7 San Diego working the 2 a.m. shift, editing dozens of videos a day while on a tight deadline. Eventually, I moved my way up into my dream position as an on-air reporter, albeit still on the early morning show.

It was during this time that I had my first interactions with public relations professionals. Sleep-deprived and on a tight deadline, the PR professionals I worked with for morning show segments were truly pros – helping make my live shots interactive, seamless and full of visuals– everything you need for a solid morning show segment. They understood what journalists needed to tell the story while sharing their clients' work at the same time.

When I contemplated my next move after journalism, it was a no-brainer that I wanted to explore PR, using the PR pros that I worked with as examples to guide me along the way. But, I realized if I made the switch into PR, I would need to rebuild my network. That's what led me to PRSA.

From the beginning, I was welcomed. Members met me for coffee to share insights into the industry, connected me with their network and made me feel at home at events.

Years after those interactions, I have had the honor of serving as the president of the PRSA San Diego-Imperial Counties chapter. With a much smaller Board than when I joined PRSA years ago, my goals when I took this position were to host more events to get our chapter re-connected again, find strong Board members to continue the legacy of our chapter and encourage more PR pros to see the value in being a member again, or for the first time.

In just a few months, I'm happy to share that we have been able to host an event nearly every month that has led to new connections, new interest in being a part of PRSA and candid conversations on where our industry is going. We've discussed AI's impact on public relations, how to land a communication job in today's market and learned how to pitch newsrooms better. Our "Coffee with a PR Pro" series has also allowed our members to have intimate conversations with local PR leaders and, in turn, has re-connected some of our veteran PR pros with the chapter again.

We have also been able to grow our leadership to include nine Board members who have had a significant impact in ensuring that our Board is moving in the right direction. They ask the right questions, volunteer to take on new challenges and always have our chapter's members' interests at the forefront. Working alongside this team has allowed me to grow as a leader and I'm immensely grateful to volunteer alongside this group and make our chapter the best it can be.

# *PRSA SD/IC President's Letter*

**Elena Gomez**

While there will always be new challenges as we work to re-connect our members, I believe our chapter has developed positive momentum to continue growing. But, it will ultimately be up to all of us members to continue to uplift the chapter. We need support more than ever. With dwindling membership across the country, it is up to all of us to lend a hand to volunteer when we can, attend events to connect with others and support the Board's efforts, pitch ideas to help our Board grow and encourage a new PR friend to join as a member, or attend the next event.

When I moved into a PR role more than six years ago, it was the relationships I developed with PR professionals that kept me excited about the craft. I encourage everyone to re-ignite your love for public relations by focusing on new and old connections. Take a call from a new member to help get them involved in the chapter just like those did for you— it can make all the difference. I believe the best way we can continue to grow our community is through these small connections that can make a big difference in that PR professional's life and maybe, one day, they'll be inspired to lead the chapter.

# About the Awards

The Edward L. Bernays Mark of Excellence Awards recognize the expertise and dedication of public relations and communications professionals within San Diego and Imperial Counties. The Public Relations Society of America San Diego/Imperial Counties Chapter (PRSA SD/IC) presents the Silver and Bronze Bernays Awards annually to recognize public relations programs and tactics incorporating research, planning, creativity, technical excellence and evaluation.

The awards are named after Edward L. Bernays, referred to as the “father of public relations.” Entries for the Bernays Awards must meet the highest standards of performance, and winning entries demonstrate creative vision and capture the best of the best in our profession.

Our members have so much great work to recognize. We hope you will join us to celebrate your creative, innovative and inventive work - and that of your colleagues. The Bernays are a celebration of the San Diego and Imperial Valley public relations community and award winners will be kept confidential until the event.

## 2026 Bernays Awards Contacts

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# Helpful Program Reminders

## Why Submit a Bernays Entry?

PRSA awards honor outstanding contributions to the public relations profession. By entering your best work, judged by your peers, you earn recognition, raise your industry profile, enhance your brand recognition, celebrate your team's accomplishments, grow your business and become part of public relations history.

A PRSA SD/IC Bernays Mark of Excellence Award is a third-party peer validation of the best work in the chapter and can be used to gain competitive advantage when seeking both new business and attracting industry talent.

Additionally, with submission and judging criteria aligned with the PRSA Silver and Bronze Anvil Program, entrants to the local San Diego/Imperial Counties award program can rest assured that their entry can be easily repurposed for participation in the national program.

Bernays Award winners receive recognition in an announcement media release distributed locally and online, as well as acknowledgement among peers, and by current and prospective clients. The Best of Show winner will be submitted as a representation of our chapter at the PRSA Western District Conference's Best of the West award program in 2026.

## How to Prepare a Winning Entry

Learn some tips and tricks of the trade shared from past Bernays award winners in the tips sheet at the end of this document. Read through the tips as you prepare your entries to ensure you are following the guidelines and submitting award-worthy work.

## Submitting Your Entry

PRSA SD/IC is again utilizing online submissions and judging through OpenWater to manage all submissions and judging. We advise you to closely review the Submitting Your Entry section for more details that align with this year's program and the OpenWater platform.

## Judging Criteria

There are two types of Bernays – the Silver and the Bronze. All entries are judged by professional and distinguished members of a partner PRSA Chapter.

- The Silver award recognizes complete public relations programs incorporating research, planning, execution and evaluation.
- The Bronze award recognizes public relations tactics, consisting of individual items or components of campaigns. Bronze submissions are judged on research, planning, execution and evaluation as well.
- The Chapter awards an Award of Excellence (first place) and an Award of Merit (second place). Only one first place award may be awarded in each category or subcategory unless there is a tie, even after a third judge review. There may be up to two second place awards (if judges feel a tie is merited). If, based on scores, no entry in a particular category is deserving of an award, no winner will be named.

# Helpful Program Reminders

## Scoring

Silver Bernays entries are judged in four categories: research, planning, implementation and evaluation with a 100-point scale.

Bronze Bernays entries are judged in five categories: research, planning, implementation, creativity and evaluation with a 100-point scale.

## Judges' Comments

Judges' scores and comments will be accessible after the awards program ends.

## Best of Show

The Best of Show Awards will be presented to the entries with the highest total overall scores in the Silver Bernays and Bronze Bernays, respectively. In the event of a tie, judges will determine the winner based on a third review with scores averaged, and the highest average score will receive the award.

## Submission Period

The submission period will be open from July 6 to Sept. 4 at 5 p.m. PT, with varying late fees for receipt of entries:

- Early Bird Deadline: Friday, July 24, 2026, at 5 p.m.
- Deadline: Friday, Aug. 21, 2026, at 5 p.m.
- Late Deadline: Friday, Sept. 4, 2026, at 5 p.m.

## Fees

Entry fees are as follows for Silver and Bronze Bernays Awards:

- \$100/PRSA member (\$80 for Early Bird Deadline)
- \$120/non-member (\$100 for Early Bird Deadline)
- \$80/501c(3) nonprofit (contact Awards co-chairs about nonprofit entries)
- \$60/late fee applies to entries received after Aug. 21, 2026, at 5:01 p.m. PT, and \$80/late fee applies after Aug. 31, 2026, at 5:01 p.m.

Payments are made online through PayPal when entries are submitted, and PRSA SD/IC accepts Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover. While online payments are preferred, please contact Chapter Manager, Blake Nelson, at [BlakeNelsonAPR@gmail.com](mailto:BlakeNelsonAPR@gmail.com) if other arrangements need to be made.

# Special Awards

One of the highlights of the Edward L. Bernays Mark of Excellence Awards is the presentation of the Special Awards. Each year, PRSA SD/IC honors individuals who have made significant contributions to the public relations profession in San Diego and Imperial Counties. These awards, outlined as follows, cover a wide range of individual and team achievements.

## Otto Bos Hall of Fame Award

In 2019, the Chapter founded the Otto Bos Hall of Fame award, which recognizes an experienced practitioner for lifetime achievement in the public relations arena. This special award recognizes leaders with significant accomplishments in the public relations field in our region.

This award, originally named the Otto Bos Lifetime Achievement Award, was created by the PR Club of San Diego and is named after the late Otto Bos, a press secretary and strategic confidant of former California Governor Pete Wilson. Bos was a San Diegan whose career achievements in public relations made a significant impact on the profession and served as a model for others.

All past Otto Bos Lifetime Achievement Award winners are recognized as Otto Bos Hall of Fame Inductees on the PRSA SD/IC website in perpetuity.

### *Nomination Criteria:*

- Thirty or more years of distinguished accomplishments in the PR field
- Demonstration as a visionary leader within the industry has made a significant positive impact on the PR industry
- Demonstrated dedication to the PR profession and its professionals
- Has given back to the PR industry via mentoring or other means
- Has led by example and has served as an inspiration to the next generation of PR professionals
- Worked in the San Diego/Imperial Counties region for at least 10 years during their professional career
- Is a current PRSA SD/IC member

### Nominations should include:

- A synopsis explaining why this person is being nominated (600 words max)
- A PDF resume (up to two pages)
- Two PDF recommendations (two pages max for each letter) from two professional references other than the nominator. Nominees can be actively employed or retired.
- Nomination should be emailed to Elena Gomez at [elena.cristin.gomez@gmail.com](mailto:elena.cristin.gomez@gmail.com).

### Past Otto Bos Award winners include:

- David Glanzer
- Jorge D'Garay-Pallares
- Scott McGaugh



# Special Awards

## Deborah Baker PR Professional of the Year Award

This award was initiated by the PR Club of San Diego as the PR Professional of the Year Award and came into the Mark of Excellence Awards structure after the merger of the two organizations. In 2003, it was renamed the Deborah Baker PR Professional of the Year Award in honor of Deborah Baker, APR, who passed away just months after being selected to receive the honor in 2002. Baker was the director of communications for the Girl Scouts San Diego-Imperial Counties Council and was honored, among other things, for her work initiating "Operation Thin Mint" to send Girl Scout cookies to troops deployed overseas.

### *Nomination criteria*

An individual who, in the previous year, has achieved an outstanding public relations accomplishment in strategic planning, product or service introduction, issues management, advocacy or crisis.

Past PR Pro Award winners include:

- Michelle Brubaker
- Arika Daniels
- Sandy Young

## Eva Irving Community Service Award

This award recognizes a public relations professional whose volunteer efforts for nonprofit, philanthropic or public service organizations reflect the best traditions of volunteerism. It honors the memory of the late Eva Irving, a distinguished public relations practitioner whose career included countless hours of volunteer service on behalf of numerous community organizations.

### *Nomination criteria*

A lengthy record of volunteer activities on behalf of a variety of organizations, other than those related to his or her primary employer. Up to 25 percent of the volunteer activities cited may be PRSA-related at local, regional or national levels. All volunteer work must be performed by the nominee, not by staff. The nature of the community service may or may not involve public relations activities. To be eligible, a nominee must be a PRSA chapter member.

Past Community Service Award winners include:

- Denise Scatena
- William Lopez
- Jeanna Vazquez

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) PR Pro of the Year

The award recognizes a BIPOC, LGBTQ+ or public relations professional with a disability who used their platforms to call attention to issues affecting their communities, supported inclusive initiatives, and made contributions to initiate change within their field.

# Special Awards

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) PR Pro of the Year (cont.)

### *Nomination criteria*

A minimum of 2 years as a PR professional and identify as BIPOC, LGBTQ+ or person with a disability.

Past DEI PR Pro of the Year Award winners include:

- Lt. Jarred Reid-Dixon
- Carin Canale-Theakston

## Diogenes Award

The Diogenes Award is named after the ancient Greek philosopher who carried a lantern through the streets of Athens searching for an honest man. This award recognizes a local news maker who has demonstrated a remarkable and commendable understanding of the need for candor when dealing with the public and the news media, regardless of any potential negative outcome from the resulting publicity.

### *Nomination criteria*

An individual who can direct or conceal the flow of information to the organization but cannot be an elected official or public relations professional. A nominee does not need to be a member of PRSA to be eligible. A PRSA member, however, must submit the nomination.

Past Diogenes Award winners include:

- Christynne Lili Wrene Wood
- Dr. Wilma Wooten
- Michael McConnell

## Submitting a Nomination for a Free Special Award

Nominations should include:

- A cover page, including the nominee's name, organization and position; award category; your name, address, telephone number and email
- A 250-600 word maximum description about the nominee, including why he or she meets the criteria for the award and would be the best choice
- A letter of recommendation/support of no more than two pages from a PRSA SD/IC member, employer or associate (two letters of recommendation are required for Otto Bos Hall of Fame nominations)

If you are nominating a person for more than one special award, please submit separate nominations and letters for each award. Similarly, if you are nominating more than one person for the same award, please submit separate nominations and letters on behalf of each nominee. Self-nominations for all awards are welcome, as long as a separate letter of recommendation is included with the entry.

# Special Awards

## Submitting a Nomination for a Free Special Award (cont.)

Entry fees are as follows for Special Awards.

- Otto Bos Hall of Fame – Free
- Deborah Baker PR Pro of the Year – Free
- Eva Irving Community Service Award – Free
- Diogenes Award - Free
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) PR Pro of the Year - Free
- New Pro of the Year - \$80
- PR Team of the Year - \$100

## New Pro of the Year (\$80)

The New Pro of the Year Award recognizes an exceptional public relations professional with five or fewer years of experience in the industry.

### *Nomination criteria*

An individual who is strategically building their career through professional work, education and leadership (50 percent of activities documented), as well as advancing the public relations profession through volunteer service to the PRSA chapter (50 percent of activities).

Past New Pro Award winners include:

- Karlene Sanchez
- Monica Gil dos Santos
- Mariah Hugo

## PR Team of the Year (\$100)

This award honors a public relations team — be it a PR/Communications agency, a corporation, a government organization, an educational institution or a nonprofit organization — that has demonstrated excellence and outstanding achievement in their work as evidenced by teamwork, results and/or contributions to the field of public relations, their constituents, community or society at large.

### *Nomination Criteria*

A “PR Team” under this award must include a minimum of three practitioners, one of whom must be a PRSA member. Please provide a brief overview of the extraordinary public relations accomplishment for which the team is being nominated for and consider areas of strategic planning, research, implementation and evaluation. Please highlight the teamwork philosophies, strategies or qualities that contributed to success. How did this particular team’s approach make a difference in the quality of work produced or overall accomplishments? The nomination should also identify each team member by name and provide a brief explanation of their role that contributed to the accomplishment with a majority of elements occurring between July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2026.



# *Special Awards*

## **PR Team of the Year (cont.)**

Past PR Team of the Year Award winners include:

- (W)right On Communications
- Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California San Diego
- San Diego County Office of Education Communications Team

## **Submitting a Nomination for a Paid Special Award**

Nominations should include:

- An overview, including the nominee's name, organization and position; award category; your name, address, telephone number and email
- A 250-600 word maximum description about the nominee, including why he or she meets the criteria for the award and would be the best choice
- A letter of recommendation/support of no more than two pages from a PRSA SD/IC member, employer or associate

## **Submitting Your Entry**

Special Awards should be emailed to the PRSA SD/IC Chapter at: [prsasdic.adm@gmail.com](mailto:prsasdic.adm@gmail.com).

Please note: If selected as a winner, all or a portion of the entry description or letter may be used in the script or audio-visual presentation at the Bernays Awards, included in the news release for the award winners or posted on the website as a case study of top honorees for 2026. Nominators may also be contacted for additional assistance with the script. Additionally, if you, as the nominator, would like to present the award, please include that with the submission. Otherwise, awards will be presented by last year's winner or a chapter supporter, as deemed appropriate by the special awards committee.

## **Judging for Special Awards**

Judging for each of the Special Awards is conducted by an elite panel of practitioners from PRSA SD/IC.

## **Deadline for Special Awards**

Deadline for nominations is Friday, Sept. 18, 2026, at 5 p.m. PT

# Silver Bernays Awards

PRSA SD/IC presents the Silver Bernays Awards each year to recognize complete public relations programs or campaigns incorporating the highest standards for research, planning, implementation and evaluation. Exemplary professional skill, creativity and resourcefulness are reflected in each award. Only one Award of Excellence may be awarded in each subcategory. Up to two other entries in each subcategory may be awarded an Award of Merit. No awards are given in categories where judges' scores determine that the entries do not merit them.

Competition is open to both PRSA SD/IC members and non-members. Work must have either been physically performed in San Diego and/or Imperial Counties or served a San Diego/Imperial Counties-area event, organization, company or client. At least some part of the program must have occurred between July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2026. Programs tend to have better chances of winning near their completion, when evaluation against initial objectives can be better determined. All program entries require a two-page maximum summary using Arial 10-point font that details the research, planning, implementation and evaluation of the campaign.

## Silver Bernays Award Categories

### **Community Relations: Business:**

Programs/campaigns for a business seeking to win the support or cooperation of, or that aim to improve relations with, people or organizations in communities in which the business has an interest, need or opportunity. "Community" in this category refers to a specific geographic location or locations.

### **Community Relations: Nonprofit/ Association:**

Programs/campaigns by a nonprofit or association seeking to win the support or cooperation of, or that aim to improve relations with, 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.

### **Community Relations: Government:**

Programs/campaigns by a government or quasi-government agency seeking to win the support or cooperation of, or that aim to improve relations with, 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.

### **Reputation/Brand Management:**

Programs/campaigns 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.

### **Events and Observances (Seven or Fewer Days) Business:**

Programs or events scheduled for one to seven consecutive days (not including planning and preparation). Events may be commemorations, observances, openings, celebrations or other special activities for which the sponsoring organization is a business. Events must occur within the time span of one week.

# *Silver Bernays Awards*

## **Events and Observances (Seven or Fewer Days) Nonprofit/Government/Association:**

Programs or events scheduled for one to seven consecutive days (not including planning and preparation). Events may be commemorations, observances, openings, celebrations or other special activities for which the sponsoring organization is a nonprofit, government agency or association. Events must occur within the time span of one week.

## **Events and Observances (More than Seven Days):**

Programs or events that take place for longer than a one-week period, such as a yearlong anniversary or activities, as well as commemorations, observances, celebrations, etc., lasting for longer than one week.

## **Public Service:**

Programs/campaigns 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 in Category 3: Reputation/Brand Management.)

## **Public Affairs:**

Programs/campaigns specifically designed to influence public policy and/or affect legislation, regulations, political activities or candidacies – at the local, state or federal government levels – so the entity funding the program benefits.

## **Marketing: Consumer Products and Services:**

Programs/campaigns designed to introduce new or promote existing products or services to a consumer audience.

## **Marketing: Business to Business:**

Programs/campaigns designed to introduce new or promote existing products or services to a business audience.

## **Marketing: Content:**

Programs that effectively demonstrate a strategic program that includes creating and distributing valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage target audience(s). Include examples and metrics.

## **Marketing: Influencer:**

Program to expand awareness and/or sales utilizing influencers that have the highest brand relevance and resonance on the spectrum of influencers, with influence driven by their personal experience and strength of relationship with their networks.

## **Crisis Communications:**

Programs undertaken to deal with an unplanned event, requiring immediate response.

# Silver Bernays Awards

## **Social/Digital Media:**

Program that effectively communicates with an external audience using only social or digital media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, YouTube, websites, etc. Include screen grabs or copies of key pages in a storyboard in your supporting materials.

## **Issues Management:**

Programs undertaken to deal with issues that could extraordinarily affect ongoing business or organizational strategy.

## **Internal Communications:**

Programs/campaigns targeted specifically to special publics directly allied with an organization (e.g., employees, members, affiliated dealers or franchisees).

## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Communications:**

This award recognizes campaigns that are inclusive, diverse, and represent historically marginalized groups.

## **Corporate Social Responsibility:**

A program that enhances a corporate reputation and demonstrates a business approach to initiatives that positively impact society. Campaigns to highlight the positive impact that they have had delivering economic, social and environmental benefits to stakeholders.

## **Integrated Communications:**

Programs/campaigns that demonstrate leadership of public relations strategies and tactics in a creative and effective integrated campaign, along with other marketing or communications. Programs must demonstrate clear leadership of public relations, along with its integration with other disciplines.

## **Definitions Used in Categories**

The categories listed in the above coincide with the definitions below. Please utilize this to help you decide the most appropriate category based on your program's objectives and audiences.

**Business:** Business refers to all profit-making entities.

**Government:** Government refers to all government bureaus, agencies, institutions, or departments at the local, state and federal levels—including the armed forces, regulatory bodies, courts, public schools and state universities.

**Association:** Association includes trade and industry groups, professional societies, chambers of commerce and similar organizations.



# Silver Bernays Awards

**Nonprofit:** This subcategory is specifically intended for health and welfare organizations, as well as educational and cultural institutions not included in other subcategories. This subcategory is not intended for organizations that may have nonprofit status but function as business organizations. Nonprofit organizations that function as governmental or quasi-governmental should be entered in the government category.

## Preparing Your Silver Bernays Entry

Each entry must include a concise summary of the project, providing an overview of the project and detailing the research, planning, execution and evaluation for the program. The two-page summary is the single most important component of a Silver Bernays entry. Judges evaluate the program on the merit of the four criteria included in your summary.

The two-page, one-column summary will be uploaded into the OpenWater entry platform and needs to be in Arial 10-point font. Your summary can be in a Word document or PDF and must be divided into the following four sections:

**RESEARCH (20 points)** — Research is the systematic gathering of information to describe and understand a situation, check assumptions about publics and perceptions, and check the public relations consequences. Research is the foundation for effective strategic public relations planning.

Analyze or describe the situation on which the program is based. When addressing the actual research component, describe who specifically initiated the research. Was it in response to a problem or to examine a potential problem? Did research help to redefine the situation in any way? How was the research relevant to shaping the planning process? How did the research help define the audience(s) or the situation?

Research can be identified as:

- Primary or secondary
- Formal or informal
- Qualitative or quantitative

Primary Research: Investigation or data collection you do yourself or you hire someone to do for you.

Secondary Research: Using research findings of others or collecting information secondhand.

Research methodologies include:

- Focus Groups
- Surveys (phone, mail, online, email)
- Interviews (phone, intercept, in-depth)
- Tracking (calls, purchases, hits, actions, placements, etc)
- Media and content analysis
- Observations, visits, field reports
- Complaint reviews



# Silver Bernays Awards

## What you will be judged on:

- Purpose – Is the purpose of the project clearly stated?
- Research methods used – Research methods used for the project are mentioned AND identified as primary or secondary research.
- Types of research – At least two types of research should be mentioned for maximum points.
- Research impact – How research results affected the creation or implementation of project objectives, strategies or tactics.

**PLANNING (30 points)** — Successful public relations programs require proactive, strategic planning. This planning includes measurable objectives grounded in research and is evaluated for return on investment.

Describe how the plans correlate to the research findings. Who was involved in the planning? In general terms, what was the plan? For example, what were the specific objectives of the program? Who were the target audiences? What was the overall strategy employed? What materials were used? What was your budget?

## Planning includes:

- Goals: Statement that spells out the overall outcomes of a program, often related to one aspect of the mission or purpose. Example: To increase public use of mass transit.
- Objectives: The measurable results that must be achieved with each public to reach the program goal. Objectives should be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-specific) and may establish milestones toward a goal. Example: To increase ridership of public transportation in the Los Angeles metropolitan area by 8% among workers earning less than \$25,000 per year within the first six months of the communication program.
- Strategies: The overall concept, approach or general plan for a program designed to achieve objectives. Example: Use communication vehicles that can be understood by a public with limited education to demonstrate that riding public transportation to work is an attractive alternative to driving.
- Audiences: Identify and differentiate the different audiences that were targeted by the campaign.

## What you will be judged on:

- Four-step RPIE process – How complete 4-step process is clearly stated; how many steps do you address?
- Target audience – Target audiences or publics are easily identified.
- Identification of Goals – Provide a statement clearly outlining the overall outcomes of a program, mission or purpose.

# Silver Bernays Awards

## What you will be judged on:

- Purpose – Is the purpose of the project clearly stated?
- Research methods used – Research methods used for the project are mentioned AND identified as primary or secondary research.
- Types of research – At least two types of research should be mentioned for maximum points.
- Research impact – How research results affected the creation or implementation of project objectives, strategies or tactics.
- Identification of Objectives – For maximum points, two or more objectives are stated.
- Identification of Strategies – For maximum points, two or more strategies are listed that contain the overall concept, approach or general plan for a program designed to achieve objectives.
- SMART Objectives – For maximum points, all stated objectives include at least 4 of the following criteria: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-specific.

## **IMPLEMENTATION (30 points)**

Executing the plan and communicating tactics: The exact activities and methods used at the operational level to implement a strategy and reach an objective. Example: Conduct a “Why I’d rather be riding” essay contest. Tactics are specific ways you will use your resources to carry out your strategy and work toward objectives. A budget may include staff time, volunteer energy and out-of-pocket costs (expenses for transportation, images, materials and fabrication).

Explain how the plans were executed and the results. In general terms, how did the activities flow? Were there any difficulties encountered? If so, how were they handled? Were other organizations involved? Were other non-traditional public relations tactics (e.g., advertising) employed?

## What you will be judged on:

- Timetable – Starting and ending dates of the project are listed.
- Identification of Tactics – For maximum points, at least 5 tactics are identified and note specific ways used to carry out strategy and work toward objectives.
- Use of Resources – An explanation is included describing how resources were used to carry out a strategy and work toward objectives.
- Creativity or Innovation – Tactics that show creativity or innovation are highlighted.
- Overcoming Challenges – For maximum points, at least 2 challenges (internal or external) are described, as well as how they were overcome.

**EVALUATION (20 points)** — Evaluation: Measures effectiveness of the program against objectives.

## Evaluation:

- Verifies that public relations efforts were effective (because they met objectives)
- Demonstrates return on public relations investment
- Provides information for refining future public relations strategies

# Silver Bernays Awards

Provide details on what methods of evaluation were used. How are results related to research findings? How are results related to strategic objectives? (Note: Media circulation figures are not acceptable as the only means of quantitative measurement.)

## Examples of measurement methods include:

- Employee surveys
- Phone interviews
- Surveys (phone, online, mail, intercept)
- Content analysis
- Media analysis
- Tracking (calls, purchases, etc.)
- Focus groups

## What you will be judged on:

- Examples Provided – Evidence is presented of how ALL objectives were exceeded, met or not met.
- Measurement Methods – Specific methods of measurement are listed or described (examples at left).
- Lessons Learned – For maximum points, at least 2 ways to improve this project (if it were done again) are presented.

## The Supporting Materials:

Each of the four above criteria must be clearly marked with supporting material to back up your two-page summary. For example, if you state that your campaign resulted in an increase in XYZ purchases, you could include the research report documenting that change in your supporting materials. Acceptable supporting materials include reports, plans, news clippings, letters, news releases, magazines, newsletters or brochures.

Supporting material files must be less than 50Mb. You may submit one file or split them up per category into up to five files. For example, like past years, you could upload one file with sections labeled for research, planning, implementation and evaluation. Or you could split up the sections and upload them individually labeled by the file names.

## Other Items:

In less than 500 characters, you'll be asked to provide one fact about your entry that could be shared with the Chapter. Get creative!

Lastly, please upload one image to be shared with the Chapter in a JPEG, PNG or PDF file no larger than 50Mb.

# Bronze Bernays Awards

PRSA SD/IC presents the Bronze Bernays Awards each year to recognize outstanding public relations tactics, consisting of individual items or components of programs or campaigns. Exemplary professional skill, creativity and resourcefulness are reflected in each award. Only one Award of Excellence may be awarded in each subcategory. Up to two other entries in each subcategory may be awarded an Award of Merit. No awards are given in categories where judges determine that the entries do not merit them.

Competition is open to both PRSA SD/IC members and non-members. Work must have either been physically performed in San Diego and/or Imperial Counties or served a San Diego/Imperial Counties-area event, organization, company or client. Tactics produced in part or whole between July 1, 2025 to July 1, 2026 are eligible. Tactics tend to have better chances of winning near their completion, when evaluation against initial objectives can be measured. Bronze entries require a two-page summary in Arial 10-point font to be uploaded (Word documents and PDFs are accepted). It is possible that an entry could be appropriate for more than one category. Bronze entries can be submitted in multiple categories.

## Bronze Bernays Award Categories

### Media Relations: Consumer Products and Services:

Tactics, programs and events driven entirely by media relations for a consumer product or service. Submit press releases, media advisories, pitch letters, requests for coverage, etc., along with the summary that includes measurable objectives and results, such as evidence of the resulting media coverage. Provide YouTube/Vimeo links to any television or radio coverage in your supporting materials, or coverage can be visually documented.

### Media Relations: Business to Business:

Tactics, programs and events driven entirely by media relations for business to business. Submit press releases, media advisories, pitch letters, requests for coverage, etc., along with the summary that includes measurable objectives and results, such as evidence of the resulting media coverage. Provide YouTube/Vimeo links to any television or radio coverage in your supporting materials, or coverage can be visually documented.

### Media Relations: Associations/Government:

Tactics, programs and events driven entirely by media relations for an association or government agency. Submit press releases, media advisories, pitch letters, requests for coverage, etc., along with the summary that includes measurable objectives and results, such as evidence of the resulting media coverage. Provide YouTube/Vimeo links to any television or radio coverage in your supporting materials, or coverage can be visually documented.

### Media Relations: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI):

Tactics, programs and events driven entirely by media relations that are DEI focused and are inclusive, diverse and represent historically marginalized groups. Submit press releases, media advisories, pitch letters, requests for coverage, etc., along with the summary that includes measurable objectives and results, such as evidence of the resulting media coverage. Provide YouTube/Vimeo links to any television or radio coverage in your supporting materials, or coverage can be visually documented.

# Bronze Bernays Awards

## Media Relations: Nonprofit:

Tactics, programs and events driven entirely by media relations for a nonprofit or public service organization. Submit press releases, media advisories, pitch letters, requests for coverage, etc., along with the summary that includes measurable objectives and results, such as evidence of the resulting media coverage. Provide YouTube/Vimeo links to any television or radio coverage in your supporting materials, or coverage can be visually documented.

## Media Relations: Press Conferences:

One-time events specifically to announce news to target media about a product, service, issue or organization. A series of events or a multi-day effort does not belong in this category (see Silver Bernays categories #4, #5 or #6). The summary should address logistics, execution and quantifiable measures that demonstrate how the press conference achieved its stated objectives.

## Media Relations: Press Kits/Media Kits:

News releases, photographs and other background information compiled for an organization, product or issue (print or digital). Include a copy of the press kit or photographic and/or video representation of the kit in your supporting materials.

## Media Relations: Satellite Media Tours:

Live broadcasts offered to, and aired by, television stations to inform target audiences about an event, product, service or organization. Provide YouTube/Vimeo links to any television or radio coverage in your supporting materials, or coverage can be visually documented. The summary should include statistics or other means of quantified measurement to support stated objectives.

## Shoestring Budget:

"The Shoestring Budget" award will recognize the best tactic planned and implemented on a budget of \$1,000 or under by a nonprofit in-house team and/or a group or individual's grassroots organizing effort.

## Editorials/Op-Ed Columns:

Opinion articles written as an editorial, guest column or letter to the editor. Submit text of article and documentation of publication in your supporting materials.

## Executive Communications:

Positioning of an executive at any level across earned, owned and shared platforms. Entry should include information about the executive and stated objectives, quantification of results as well as copies of significant placements, social media, posts or memos.

# Bronze Bernays Awards

## Websites:

Use of a website as part of a public relations program for an internal or external audience. Website entries should include the URL (if still live), screen captures of the website or copies of key pages from a storyboard in your supporting materials.

## Social/Digital Media:

Use of social or digital media including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok, etc., as part of a public relations program. Include screen grabs or copies of key pages in a storyboard in your supporting materials.

## SEM:

Use of a successful paid search campaign across one or more search-based advertising platforms, which demonstrated improvement and a positive return on investment through metrics and results.

## New Digital Platform:

Launch of a new website, newsroom, App or other digital platform, detailing launch, risk, platforms, value for the end user.

## Blogs:

Blogs that communicated either a corporate, public service or industry position. Include rationale for blogging strategy, target audiences and statistics, or other means of quantifiable measurement to support stated objectives. Include screen grabs or copies of key pages in a storyboard in your supporting materials and include blog URL.

## Videos:

Pre-produced videos or video programs to inform target audiences of an event, product, service, issue or organization targeted either toward internal audiences such as employees, members, etc. or directed primarily at external audiences. Provide links to video(s) or include screen grabs or copies of key pages in a storyboard. The summary should include usage statistics or other means of quantified measurement to support stated objectives.

## Podcasts:

Media files distributed over the Internet using streaming media technology, which can be live or recorded. Include rationale for strategy, statistics or other means of quantifiable measurement to support stated objectives in the summary, and provide links, as well as the site URL and/or include screen grabs or copies of key pages in a storyboard.

# Bronze Bernays Awards

## Creative Tactics:

Unconventional, creative tactics or approaches used as part of a public relations program. Include documentation of how the tactic specifically contributed to the measurable results of the campaign. Photographic and/or video representation of any physical objects should be included in your supporting materials.

## Word of Mouth:

Tactics that get key audiences talking or provide an avenue for conversation through the use of different techniques, such as viral marketing, sampling programs, loyalty programs, etc. Where appropriate, include screen grabs or copies of key pages in a storyboard in your supporting materials.

## Public Service Announcements:

Single productions or a series addressing the same issue distributed as unpaid public service announcements. Video, audio and print PSAs may be entered. For print PSAs, copies of the actual print PSA should be included in the supporting materials. For video/audio PSAs, provide YouTube/Vimeo links, or videos can be visually documented in your supporting materials. The summary should include documentation of results and airing/printing.

## Newsletters:

Publications (either print or digital) 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 as part of your supporting materials, if available.

## Brochures:

Pamphlets, booklets or other small publications (either print or digital) designed to inform a target audience about an organization, product, service or issue. Include a copy of the publication in your supporting materials.

## Magazines:

Publications 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. Include samples of three consecutive issues in your supporting materials.

## Collateral:

Pamphlets, booklets, small publications (either print or digital) and posters designed to inform a target audience about an organization, product, service or issue. Include a copy of the publication in your supporting materials



# Bronze Bernays Awards

## Annual Reports:

Publications (either print or digital) that report on an organization's annual performance. Submit a digital copy of the publication along with your entry. This may be uploaded separately from the PDF file of your entry.

## Direct Mail/Direct Response:

Communications designed to solicit a specific, immediate response from the target audience. This can be a single communication or a series. Quantifiable, specific actions by the target audience recipients resulting solely from the sponsor's communication should be detailed. Include a copy of the publication in your supporting materials. (Entire communications programs should be entered in the Silver Bernays awards competition rather than in this category.)

## Research/Evaluation:

Research that provides a meaningful contribution or input to a public relations program, or an evaluation documenting the value or benefit of a public relations program or tactic. Sample of the methodology and findings of any research should be included in your supporting materials. Summaries for evaluations should detail how and why this method is unique and valuable.

## Definitions Used in Categories

The categories listed in the above coincide with the definitions below. Please utilize this to help you decide the most appropriate category based on your program's objectives and audiences.

**Business:** Business refers to all profit-making entities.

**Consumer:** Consumer refers to products or services targeted to individuals who pay for their own transactions. Business to Business: Business to business refers to items targeted to organizations or individuals acting on behalf of organizations.

**Government:** Government refers to all government bureaus, agencies, institutions, or departments at the local, state and federal levels—including the armed forces, regulatory bodies, courts, public schools and state universities.

**Association:** Association includes trade and industry groups, professional societies, chambers of commerce and similar organizations.

**Nonprofit:** This subcategory is specifically intended for health and welfare organizations, as well as educational and cultural institutions not included in other subcategories. This subcategory is not intended for organizations that may have nonprofit status but function as business organizations. Nonprofit organizations that function as governmental or quasi-governmental should be entered in the government category.



# Bronze Bernays Awards

## Preparing Your Bronze Bernays Entry

Each entry must include a concise summary of the tactic. The summary is perhaps the most important component of a Bronze Bernays entry. The two-page, one column summary – two column submissions are no longer allowed – all entries will be uploaded into OpenWater as either a Word or PDF document and must be divided into the following five sections:

**RESEARCH (10 points)** — Research is the systematic gathering of information to describe and understand a situation, check assumptions about publics and perceptions, and check the public relations consequences. Research is the foundation for effective strategic public relations planning.

### Research can be identified as:

- Primary or secondary
- Formal or informal
- Qualitative or quantitative
- Anecdotal

### What you will be judged on:

- Purpose – Is the purpose of the project clearly stated?
- Research methods used – Campaign research methods impacting the tactic are mentioned and identified.
- Research Impact – Information is included on how research results affected the creation or implementation of this tactic based on campaign objectives or strategies.

**PLANNING (20 points)** — Successful tactics require proactive, strategic planning. This planning includes measurable objectives, is grounded in research, and is evaluated for return on investment.

### What you will be judged on:

- Identification of Goals: Statement that spells out the overall outcomes.
- Identification of Objectives: The measurable result that must be achieved with each public to reach the goal. Objectives should be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-specific) and may establish milestones toward a goal.
- Identification of Strategies: The overall concept, approach or general plan designed to achieve objectives.
- Identification of Audience(s): The key targets reached by the tactic.

**IMPLEMENTATION (30 points)** — Implementation: Executing the plan and tactic.

### What you will be judged on:

- Timetable – Starting and ending dates of the project are listed.
- Use of Resources – An explanation is included describing how tactic was used to carry out a strategy and work toward objectives.
- Overcoming Challenges – Describe challenges (internal or external), as well as how they were overcome.

# Bronze Bernays Awards

**CREATIVITY (30 points)** — Tactics are afforded points for how creative the piece was developed and used. Technical Quality is demonstrated in the developer's artistic ability to design or write a tactic that is visually appealing. Content is based on how well the tactic's writing and art targets its specified audience. Writing ensures the copy or text is properly written, understandable and consistent with writing standards. "Creative Appeal" addresses the tactic's overall uniqueness in its category. Did the entry go above expectations and was extraordinarily creative in its presentation and use?

## What you will be judged on:

- Technical Quality – The composition, artistic design and presentation are very attractive.
- Content – The text or artwork targets its specified audience.
- Writing – Proper grammar, punctuation and AP Style (unless a separate style is noted) are used in the composition, headlines and other text in the tactic.
- Creative Appeal – The tactic was very unique and creative. It was also used in a creative way.

**EVALUATION (10 points)** — Evaluation: Measure effectiveness of the tactic against objectives.

## What you will be judged on:

- Examples Provided – Evidence is presented of how objectives were exceeded, met or not met.
- Measurement Methods – Specific methods of measurement are listed or described.
- Lessons Learned – Ways to improve this tactic (if it were done again) are presented.

## The Supporting Materials:

Include required and additional supporting materials to backup the judging criteria categories and summary content. The supporting materials should be organized by appropriately labeled sections either in one separate PDF entry or you may split them up per category in up to five files. All supporting material files must be less than 50Mb.

For example, if you state that your campaign resulted in an increase in XYZ purchases, you could include the research report documenting that change in your supporting materials. Acceptable supporting materials include reports, plans, news clippings, letters, news releases, magazines, newsletters or brochures.

## Other Items:

In less than 500 characters, you'll be asked to provide one fact about your entry that could be shared with the Chapter. Get creative!

Lastly, please upload one image to be shared with the Chapter in a JPEG, PNG or PDF file no larger than 50Mb.

# *Sponsors*

## **Available Sponsorships**

### Bernays Event General Sponsor – \$3,500

- One Table of Eight at awards ceremony reserved near the stage
- Company logo placement on Bernays event collateral, awards presentation and signage
- Company collateral and marketing materials provided to guests at event check-in
- Company logo and website link on Bernays Awards event page
- Official acknowledgement as sponsor from the stage
- Opportunity to present one special award at sponsor's choosing
- Recognition as an event sponsor in three separate Facebook, Instagram and Twitter posts on PRSA SD/IC social media pages

### Wine Package Sponsor - \$2,500

- Company logo placement on each bottle of wine offered at bar service and tables for the awards ceremony
- Company logo and website link on Bernays Awards event page
- Official acknowledgement as sponsor from the stage
- Recognition as an event sponsor in two Facebook, Instagram and Twitter posts on PRSA SD/IC social media pages

### Floral Package Sponsor: \$2,000

- Company logo placement on each floral arrangement
- Company logo and website link on Bernays Awards event page
- Official acknowledgement as sponsor from the stage
- Recognition as an event sponsor in two Facebook, Instagram and Twitter posts on PRSA SD/IC social media pages

### Champagne Toast Package Sponsor: \$1,500

- Offer a celebratory toast to all attendees at the end of the awards ceremony
- Company logo and website link on Bernays Awards event page
- Official acknowledgement as sponsor from the stage
- Recognition as an event sponsor in one Facebook, Instagram and Twitter post on PRSA SD/IC social media pages



# *Sponsors*

## **Available Sponsorships (cont.)**

### Friends of PRSA SD/IC Event Sponsor: \$500

- Company logo and website link on Bernays Awards event page
- Three complimentary tickets to awards ceremony
- Official acknowledgement as sponsor from the stage
- Recognition as an event sponsor in one Facebook, Instagram and Twitter post on PRSA SD/IC social media pages

To sponsor the 2026 Bernays event contact Jeanna Vazquez at [jeanna.b.vazquez@gmail.com](mailto:jeanna.b.vazquez@gmail.com).

For more information about other Chapter sponsorship opportunities, please contact PRSA SD/IC Board President Elena Gomez at [elena.cristin.gomez@gmail.com](mailto:elena.cristin.gomez@gmail.com).

# *Tips for Award-Winning Entries*

When considering entering the Bernays Awards, assign a project leader to oversee and manage documentation, preparation of the entry and writing of the summary. There are two categories in which to submit entries: Silver (Campaigns) and Bronze (Tactics). Upon picking your submission category (or categories), allocate enough time to put together a winning submission. Some part of your entry must have been executed between the dates of July 1, 2025 to July 1, 2026, and it is easier to enter a project that is completed or near completion, as you will be better able to document your evaluation and show how the entry reached your goals and objectives.

## **Silver Bernays Award Entries**

### Writing Your Summary.

A Silver Bernays award recognizes a complete public relations program/campaign, including research, planning, implementation and evaluation that meet the highest standards of performance in the field, and the two-page summary is the single most important component of a Silver Bernays entry. Yes, your summary is that important — don't underestimate it.

Your summary should be able to win the award for you. Make it succinct and engaging. Make sure it outlines your key objectives, and make sure those objectives are measurable. Show how your research drove planning and execution. Directly tie your results to your objectives. And don't forget to include your budget! Use the following questions to help you prepare a strong summary (and the rest of your entry).

### Research:

- What prompted the research? Was it in response to an existing problem, or does it examine a potential problem?
- What type of research did you use — primary, secondary or both? Primary research involves original research, including focus groups, interviews and surveys. Secondary research involves searching existing resources for information.
- How did the research shape the planning process?
- How did the research help define or redefine the audience(s) or the situation?

### Planning:

- What was the plan in general terms?
- How did the plan correlate to the research findings?
- What were the specific, measurable objectives of the plan?
- Who were the target audiences?
- What was your budget?

### Execution:

- How did the activities flow? What was your timeline?
- What were the key tactics?
- Were there any difficulties encountered? If so, how were they handled?
- Were nontraditional public relations tactics used?

# Tips for Award-Winning Entries

## Evaluation:

- What were your results?
- How did you evaluate your results? What methods did you use?
- How did the results compare to the specific, measurable objectives identified in the planning section?
- How well do the results reflect original strategy and planning?

## Pulling Together Your Backup Materials:

It's important to provide backup materials to your summary. It will give the judges a chance to see your real work and how you translated your plan into action. If you talk about something in your summary, include the documentation for it. The judges want to see evidence of your hard work, so be sure to show it off! Create an outline for research, planning, implementation and evaluation. Keep track of supporting documents to pull from the summary. Take your time and put the most compelling facts first. Include headers for judging categories. Make it easy for judges to find the essential elements of a winning entry. Here's a list of possible items to include:

- Research: focus group findings, stakeholder interview notes, internet research, survey/study results
- Planning: PR plans, timeline, emails, notes from brainstorming sessions
- Execution: press releases, media kits, social media pages, collateral (fact sheets, FAQs), pitches, storyboard with screenshots
- Evaluation: feedback received, media coverage secured, number of attendees, social media analytics

But don't overdo it. You don't need to include every email or every news clip. Just include the most important elements to telling your campaign's story.

## Review your Entry:

Now that you've put in all that work, don't let it go to waste. Proof and reproof. Remember that judges aren't from San Diego – remove any jargon and explain anything they may need to know about the local market. Go through the writing checklist again – are you meeting all the requirements? Let your entry sit for a day, then look at it again. Anything you can delete? Anything you missed?

## **Bronze Bernays Award Entries**

### Writing Your Summary:

A Bronze Bernays Award recognizes outstanding public relations tactics, consisting of individual items or components of programs or campaigns. Exemplary professional skill, creativity and resourcefulness are reflected in each award. Once again, it's all about the summary. Judges evaluate the entries on four key areas — planning/content, creativity/quality, technical excellence and assessment/results.

Your summary should include specific, measurable objectives, target audiences, budget and any other specific information requested in the individual category (hint: be sure to reread your category description when you get ready to write).

# *Tips for Award-Winning Entries*

Remember that areas of judging are worth different points and include more information in higher scored categories. Why is your work unique? Why did you choose this campaign or tactic? Why was it the best way to reach or influence your target audience? What elements did you use to set your work apart? How does this fit in with, and support, your more comprehensive strategic plan?

Make sure to bring up your results — qualitative, quantitative or both — to provide evidence of how the objectives were met and how the entry impacted the success of your broader public relations program.

## Pulling Together Your Backup Materials:

When looking at tactics, it's important to keep your entry straightforward and to the point. Give the judge a good overview of your organization, issue and approach, but don't get lost in the weeds. Provide a sampling of supporting materials, not every single thing. Judges are reading through a lot of entries. If you mention a particular piece or clip, include it. If a certain piece really shows off your great work, include it. (And again with the hint: reread your category description to see what you must include).

## Review Your Entry:

Just like with Silver Bernays, now that you've put in all that work, don't let it go to waste – proof your work! Reread your summary – is it concise? Is it understandable? Review the category description and judging criteria again – are you meeting all the requirements? Let your entry sit for a day. Anything you can remove? Anything you missed?

# Submitting Your Entry

It's now time to submit and pay for your entry through the OpenWater platform.

<https://prsa-sandiego.secure-platform.com/a/>

Here's a checklist of the materials and information you'll need handy:

- Award Type – Silver (listed as Campaigns in OpenWater) or Bronze (listed as Tactics in OpenWater)
- Award Category – Subcategory name within the Silver or Bronze award type
- Summary content – Two pages uploaded into OpenWater
- Supplementary material file(s), no larger than 50Mb
- Entry title (For example: Mobile Green Juice Campaign Helps Mojarro Juice Co. Take Over the World)
- One results-oriented image, no larger than 50 Mb
- Entry description – one fun fact! – about your award entry in no more than 500 characters with spaces
- Award Engraving – Entry title with 60-character limit including spaces (For example: Reilly Juice Takes Over the World with Green Juice Campaign)
- Award Engraving – Entrant name/organization name with 60-character limit including spaces (For example: Lemons PR and Sierra Juice Co.)

GOOD LUCK!