



consultancy management standard/what it means to clients

“*The Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply welcomes the introduction of the PRCA Consultancy Management Standard. Such a standard will provide a solid basis for good supplier/buyer relations to be developed between clients and PRCA members - supplier relationships being a key element of good purchasing and supply management practice.*”

Carolyn Munton

Director of Marketing & Communications

Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply

> The PRCA Consultancy Management Standard

- When you employ a public relations consultancy you expect it to be a sound business, well-managed and capable of doing a great job for you. You expect it to comply with a professional code of conduct and to perform according to best practice.

The Public Relations Consultants Association **Consultancy Management Standard** provides you with this assurance.

The Standard is an independently-audited set of eight tests which a consultancy must pass before it is eligible for membership of the Public Relations Consultants Association.

PRCA members must furthermore be able to show annual fee income of £200,000, employment of five or more full-time staff, and a successful, audited, three-year-minimum trading record.

The **Consultancy Management Standard**

combines elements of ISO 9000 and Investors in People with criteria specific to public relations consultancy. It was introduced in 1997 as the industry's first quality certification system for public relations firms, and is now being adopted worldwide.

There are over 2,000 public relations firms in the UK. Only 120 hold the PRCA **Consultancy Management Standard**. These consultancies account for 70 per cent of all public relations services, by value, in the UK. These are the consultancies which are certified by the Standard to deliver professional management, professional performance and measurable ROI.

“*The PRCA Consultancy Management Standard provides instant assurance to clients that the agency's commitment to excellence is guaranteed. The CMS stamp marks professionalism of the highest order.*”

Iain Burns Head of Corporate Communications British Airways

➤ **The Professional Standard**

Leadership and Communication

The assessors require evidence that the consultancy is well-managed. Responsibilities at all levels must be clearly defined and all employees must both understand their accountabilities and know how and when they will be judged on their performance.

What it means to you:

Your account team will be highly-motivated, clear and confident in the execution of their responsibilities, and have constant access to the leaders of the firm in delivering PR results which make a difference to your business.

“ *The PRCA CMS is a welcome instrument for a profession which has, for many years, seemed notoriously hard to measure in terms of both performance standards and results. The more widely this standard is adopted as a benchmark the better.* ”

Steve Painter Head of Corporate Communications **Bayer**

Business Planning

Consultancies must prove that their Business Plan is a realistic, long-term programme based on a clear view of the firm's direction and potential. It must define business goals which are specific, measurable, achievable, viable and time-framed. The plan must be used systematically by management to run the business.

What it means to you:

The PRCA **Consultancy Management Standard** is an assurance that your public relations consultancy is a well-run business with long-term objectives. You can rely on it to behave professionally and to treat your assignment as an important part of its business development.

“ *The Standard is very important to our relationship with consultancies as agreed targets are measured regularly.* ”

Caroline Walker Group Communications Manager **Premier Farnell**

Continuing Business Improvement

The **Consultancy Management Standard** demands that consultancies operate a programme of continuing business improvement. The assessors require to see long-term goals and the steps which the consultancy is taking to achieve them.

The Standard's key values are trust, excellence, professionalism, growth, development, enthusiasm, commitment and ownership. All these affect the quality of the consultancy's service to clients and must be measurably enhanced over a three-to-five year timescale.

Financial Systems

The assessors audit consultancies' systems for financial forecasting and managing their financial fundamentals. They require to see that checks and balances are in place to enable the consultancy to withstand periods of low or negative economic growth. They scrutinise the key financial ratios to make sure that the consultancy can and does invest in its future.

What it means to you:

Your consultancy will be searching for ways to improve every element of its delivery as a professional communications resource. It will not be content to rest on its laurels. It will be investing continuously in its future.

“*The Standard is very rigorous and for our consultancy to meet the Standard means it has pulled out all the stops. It is frequently looking to improve the services it provides and the way it reports on its activities is second to none.*”

Alexandra Walker Head of PR **Detica**

What it means to you:

A PRCA consultancy has demonstrated financial stability. It has the systems and resources to provide you with a consistent quality of service. Its financial dealings with you will be accurate, timely and reliable.

“*The PRCA Consultancy Management Standard gives us the assurance that high standards are being met by our PR agency. This 'kitemark' means that we have confidence in our agency's business processes, leaving us to concentrate on our own business.*”

Brenda Crosby PR and Planning Manager
Toshiba Information Systems (UK)

Campaign Management

Consultancies must prove to the assessors that they have systems in place to plan and manage programmes against agreed targets, and to measure and evaluate results in terms of ROI.

What it means to you:

There is no single measurement tool for public relations results, but there are a number of proven and effective techniques for evaluating public relations outcomes. A PRCA member will build in performance measurements appropriate to your own ROI criteria in any programme it undertakes for you.

“ *From our point of view the PRCA Consultancy Management Standard is a badge of reassurance and recommendation, it says a lot about a public relations company before one has even met them.* ”

Paul Madden Brand Manager **Innkeeper's Lodge**

Client Satisfaction

The assessors require consultancies to show evidence of tracking client satisfaction on a consistent and continuing basis.

What it means to you:

A PRCA member understands that improving its professional competence depends in part on methodically investigating clients' opinions of its performance. You will know that your consultancy makes a priority of client feedback and will use the information you supply to enhance its capabilities..

“ *Quality and management standards can only be a good thing for clients. It's good to know that PRCA members are rigorously and regularly inspected.* ”

Patrick Hamilton

Corporate Communications & Public Affairs Manager **Motorola**

New Client Procedures

The assessors require evidence that consultancies conduct negotiations with new clients, and arrive at service agreements with them, which reflect the high standards developed by the PRCA and comply with current best practice in the public relations profession.

What it means to you:

The PRCA client contract is fair, rigorous and comprehensive. It is supported by the PRCA's Professional Charter, containing 26 clauses setting out the required standards of professional behaviour, and is enforced by the PRCA's Professional Practices Committee, which has the power to suspend or terminate membership of the Association.

“ *Management standards are essential for any professional services organisation, and the PRCA, in applying such tough and routine inspections for all members, is assuring a level of professionalism and quality.* ”

Graham Goulden Public Relations Manager **Fujitsu Services**

Development of Professional Staff

A PRCA member must have a clearly-defined and universally-understood system for appraisal, training and career development of all employees. The assessors require evidence that high standards and an appropriate level of investment are in place at every stage from recruitment onwards.

What it means to you:

The PRCA **Consultancy Management Standard** is hard evidence that everyone involved in your programme will be dedicated to developing their skills as a PR practitioner and will be receiving continual, industry-standard, professional training.

“ *The PRCA's Consultancy Management Standard is one of the most important developments to have come out of the industry in the last decade. The continuing revision of the Standard also sends out a very important message to the business world at large.* ”

Kate Nicholas Editor **PR Week**

For further information about the PRCA
Consultancy Management Standard:

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