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I have often been asked to share tips that junior PR practitioners can use to further their careers. Of course, maintaining a good work ethic is always important, but I will have to say that there is one thing I learned many years ago that still challenges and encourages me to grow.

Stretch yourself and embrace the uncomfortable. It's scary, but only by facing fears will you grow. So, to excel in your career – even your life – take risks, commit to lofty goals, and stand up for your beliefs. Build relationships by giving the best of yourself to others. Is it easy? NO, but in the end you will have the satisfaction of knowing that people you admire trust you. Your opinions will count and leaders will seek out your advice. More importantly, you will like who you are, you will continue to grow and learn, and you will be an inspiration to others.

The decision to become accredited in public relations (APR) was, for me, one of those stretches. I will have to say it was not easy – which made the victory so much sweeter. And the rewards were great – a new appreciation for the profession; personal satisfaction with my knowledge and expertise; and earned respect and trust from admired peers and executives. Over time, it has become easier to overcome the fear of taking on a new challenge. Earning the CPRC was much easier and less time-consuming.

Beyond the personal satisfaction, accredited and certified PR professionals bring great value to employers, clients and the publics they serve. As more professionals earn their APR and CPRC, more businesses will come to recognize and demand these advanced credentials.

If you're looking to challenge yourself and be recognized by your peers as FPRA celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at annual conference in August, now is the time to begin preparing. Start by letting your local Vice President or Chair of Accreditation and Certification know your intentions and he/she will help get you started.

A few hints:

- The Universal Accreditation Board, which oversees the accreditation process, maintains a website full of great resources – [www.praccreditation.org](http://www.praccreditation.org).
- Get a study buddy – it's really a great help to have someone who can listen to your presentation (APR Readiness Review or CPRC oral presentation) and give some feedback.
- Quizzing each other or talking through case studies can be invaluable.
- Take advantage of local APR workshops and reach out to APRs and CPRCs across the state for advice. FPRA members are great at supporting the professional development of other members.
- Certification is really experience-based. Reading and discussing case studies helps, and revisiting and clearly knowing how to apply RPIE (research, planning, implementation and evaluation) is critical. CPRC candidates must have earned their APR and have at least 10 years professional experience. More information on earning the CPRC can be found on the FPRA website – [www.fpra.org](http://www.fpra.org).

Stretching and stepping outside your comfort zone may carry some risk of failure, but the payoff is well worth it. Plan on joining the ranks of FPRA's accredited and certified professionals at conference.

Note: To ensure full recognition at the FPRA 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference, APR and CPRC exams should be taken by June 30.