

## Practicing PR at 30,000 feet

### By FPRA State President

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I had pulled out my iPad Mini intent on drafting this month's column when the lady to my right became interested in how small it was. She couldn't believe someone could touch type on something that small.

After showing her the little wonder, it became clear I wasn't going to get much work done, because "Danielle" turned out to be a talkative little thing and her husband was engrossed in watching a movie on his laptop wearing some pricey headphones.

Eventually, the conversation turned to "what do you do?" and, as all of us are often required to do, I got to explain public relations. And then I got to defend us when she said "I think I get it. Spin."

I had that momentary desire to say something like "no ... you obviously don't know Jack," but instead I realized I had an opportunity to make a positive impact, to create understanding and to persuade someone that what we do is valuable and meaningful -- to actually practice public relations strapped into a seat at 30,000 feet.

So I told her I was actually about to write a column to my colleagues in the country's oldest professional society for public relations practitioners and that because it would appear in December I needed to blend holiday wishes and business. "That's just one of the things we do all the time," I explained.

"And I want to thank these people for all they do for our association, including that many of our chapters found really creative ways to inspire members to renew their memberships and recruit new PR people to the organization," I told Danielle ... proud to share with her that FPRA is running well ahead of last year in membership renewals and new members. "People in our profession are called upon all the time to help their organization's leaders craft messages like that ... to emphasize positives and progress and give credit to people who do good work."

"But," I added, "There's more I have to write about. I have to give credit to my incredible executive committee and board of directors -- all of whom have really challenging, responsible 'day jobs' - who are giving so much, including time away from their families for multi-day weekend board meetings and serving on important committees and task forces to plan for the future and drive the success of this group of more than a thousand people statewide."

She began to nod. "You see ... we are people who communicate important, often complex stories and help create understanding and two-way communication, develop support for important causes, inject creativity into sometimes dull topics and work to create consensus on important issues."

"By the way, to people in our business, SPIN is a four-letter word, because we have a code of ethics that requires us to communicate in the public's interest and to uphold the truth," I told her. "And this Thanksgiving, as their president I am really thankful for the Florida Public Relations Association, because I get to work with so many really honorable, creative and talented people." She smiled and said "I'm sorry. I didn't get it until now."

I said, "I wasn't offended...and there's no need to apologize. I enjoyed having the time to tell you about those people, and how they differ from those who may pretend to be in our business but who are really just working to confuse others for their own self-interest.

"Those are the people who don't take the time to belong to an organization like ours, because it stops them from spinning."

**So to all of you ... thanks for all you do for FPRA and our profession. I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving and that your holidays will be full of joy!**

**Happy Hanukkah! Merry Christmas! And here's to a very Happy New Year!**

