

# Values trust

Bill Adams/Edelman Luncheon  
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**PAGE SOCIETY**  
sends  
**BUILDING TRUST**  
to all members

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## Remarks from Betsy Plank on behalf of the Arthur W. Page Society

Dan Edelman, the chairman of our host company today, is a Hall of Fame member of the Arthur W. Page Society, an organization focused on corporate public relations. There are several of us here today who are also members. . . . This luncheon is an appropriate and timely occasion to make this announcement.

In the face of those disappointing, unacceptable scandals involving unethical corporate behavior, the Page Society has undertaken an unprecedented initiative – the editing and publishing of this unique book – BUILDING TRUST, or to quote the expanded title, “Leading CEOs Speak Out – Building Trust – How they create it, strengthen it, sustain it.”

For the first time, it brings together personal statements of more than 20 CEOs of highly respected major corporations – GM, IBM, Verizon, Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, to name a few – addressing the subject of corporate character and integrity, ethical and trustworthy behavior, how to achieve, nurture and maintain that in ALL relationships – with employees, customers, shareowners, the community at large. It’s a remarkable testimony, and it makes the Page principles of PR practice come alive.

As we meet today, the hardcover is coming off the press – and will be in bookstore pipelines and press reviews this month and next. Because the Page Society understands that PR educators are deeply concerned about ethical public relations and business practices and are responsible for preparing the next generation of its practitioners, many of whom will be corporate employees, the Society will be sending a complimentary copy to each of the 600 or so members of AEJMC’s PR Division and PRSA’s Educators Academy – as well as to colleagues in business schools. This . . . is an amazing, informative read, representing a major investment and contribution to PR education.

This Bill Adams/Edelman Luncheon brings a first heads-up to each of you that the hard-cover edition will be in your hands as you begin the academic year ahead. I commend it for your reading as a resource in your courses in ethics and the corporate practice of public relations.

Speaking of building relationships, I hope that you’ll please consider a special initiative of your own. The Page Society is just beginning to forge and expand significant relationships with public relations education. As many of you know, this spring – thanks to efforts by its immediate past president, David Drobis, chair emeritus of Ketchum – Page applied and was elected to membership on the Accrediting Council, joining lonely PRSA around that influential table. Ward White, senior communications counsel to Northwestern Mutual, immediate past chair of the Institute for Public Relations, a Page and PRSA member, will be the Page representative. Last month, the Society joined AEJMC and the PR Division. Strong progress.

My hope and “mother-suggestion” is that, when you receive the book, you drop a note or e-mail to the Page Society – the address will be on the transmittal – thanking its leaders for this good faith initiative. They need and will welcome feedback that their outreach efforts have value to you and your students. And indeed, your positive reinforcement may encourage them to do even more in the future to partner with public relations education. Please think about that.

Meantime, look for your copy of BUILDING TRUST to arrive at your desk soon. And look forward to a great, reassuring and enlightening read!

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# EDELMAN embraces VALUES

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the responsibility  
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a true industry leader  
and made a  
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## Keynote Remarks from **Greg Powers** EDELMAN CANADA

Last year in Kansas City, John Edelman spoke to you about his commitment to “Building the Edelman Brand for the Next 50 Years.” John walked you through the challenges we face as a mature organization in a dynamic industry. Edelman chose to meet these challenges with a renewed and bolder expression of our heritage as the leader and innovator in public relations and by providing our people around the world with the tools and support they need for success. One year later I am happy to tell you everything John spoke about is in place and contributing to make Edelman the agency of choice for PR professionals in Canada.

I mention this because John is in the audience and his name is on the door I walk through every morning, but also because no firm invests as much as Edelman does in exploring our identity as an agency, evolving our philosophy of working together and promoting the real value PR brings to clients. Edelman has embraced the responsibility that belongs to a true industry leader and made a conscious decision to live our values as an organization and have them speak loudly and clearly for our profession.

As I considered what I could speak about today, one theme dominated everything, and anything, I would want to share with you about the practice of public relations and that is the importance of values – professional and personal – as the bedrock for any and all success we have had at Edelman Canada.

My career path has included stops in journalism, marketing, corporate communications and now public relations. Along the way I have learned at least two things: One, you never stop learning and, usually, just when you think you know something, you experience something new and, surprise, you knew nothing. And two, we graduate from university with high ideals that, honestly, can be hard to apply when we begin working, but it’s these ideals, moulded into values, that will matter most to success in our professional lives.

As educators and students – and who is not always both – you have a fabulous opportunity to help chart the future course of the professional discipline you choose and its contribution to society. You also have a responsibility to enlighten and enrich the dialogue about the principles and values that guide your decisions, and ultimately protect the reputation of your industry, and ensure it contributes to the public good.

This is a time of unprecedented change in the lives of our clients, the media who cover them, and those of us in PR who build bridges between them to the public. If you are a brand manager at Unilever or P&G, for example, your world has shifted dramatically in the last couple years. You’re desperately trying to come to grips with what *Business Week* calls the “Vanishing Mass Market.” One-size-fits-all marketing is dead and the 30-second spot on TV is on life support. Old formulas for success simply do not work with an audience that is culturally diverse, with access to TiVo, video games and the Internet.

Through necessity and opportunity, today’s brand managers must redefine their dialogue with consumers to more personal and intimate marketing based on values that truly touch their audience. More and more, consumers are asking not just about product benefits but the reputation of the company that stands behind them to ensure those values align to their own.

Journalism faces its own set of challenges. In a very short time, esteem for our news media has slipped from Lou Grant and thousands of students who flocked to journalism schools to become either Woodward or Bernstein to a situation where *Advertising Age* is the latest publication to write a scathing review of the profession, citing a survey that ranks journalists with ambulance-chasing lawyers in terms of public disapproval. (He unfortunately only targeted American media – it’s a Canadian thing.)

Last week in Toronto’s *Globe and Mail*, Lawrence Martin, the paper’s former Washington Bureau chief, wrote a stinging mea culpa about the failure of the news media to uphold the public interest. He cited the *CBS News* and *New York Times* for their coverage of debate over war with Iraq and chastised his colleagues to remember their responsibility to challenge authority and fight to ensure perspective and objectivity in reporting.

Twenty years ago the biggest complaint about news media was the inability to get your voice heard because of the iron grip of gatekeepers. Not such a

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problem today. But the tremendous explosion of news media and new digital media has put journalism on a collision course with credibility. In a 500-channel universe, who can agree on what is objective or fair? In its place, the news media is returning to its roots as hotbeds for unabashed partisanship. The question is whether it can remain relevant to the public and enjoy the protections it needs to be effective if it loses sight of the values that built its reputation throughout the last century.

And while it’s hard to believe, we also have our own challenges in PR. For years, we have told clients that bigger is better without offering credible measurement of the impact of our work – if 20 million media impressions is good, then 200 million must be great. There is a place for crowing about big numbers in some campaigns but, frankly, that’s not what clients need or want. What’s important is targeting the people who are likely to make positive decisions about a client’s product or service or reputation and influencing those decisions.

The premium placed on narrower channels of outreach to more targeted audiences, however, highlights the fact our industry still needs to develop a widely accepted consensus on appropriate measurement for the results of our work. We all know it works, but the science has not caught up with us as yet. We have to solve this if we want clients to see us as a credible equal with advertising.

We also suffer as an industry when some practi-

tioners replace effective communication with “spin.” Our reputation with media goes down the drain if we attempt to hide the truth behind an impenetrable wall of key messages. It might be a good idea for someone to tell Martha Stewart to just say, “I made a mistake and I’m sorry.”

I chose these three examples – marketing, media and PR – because it’s the world I live in and because I believe all three professions contribute immensely to our quality of life as a society despite any perceived shortcomings.

I fear, however, that all three professions will be unable to credibly deliver a message if the public lacks confidence in the source. Our professional values must be clearly communicated and upheld if we are to be respected by the audiences we seek to serve. We can only do that by living those values.

I would like to shift my focus to PR exclusively and share with you how we at Edelman Canada strive to make “Our Values” the centre of everything we do. From my experience, agencies are very fragile creatures. They often fall into two camps: confident and growing or intimidated and shrinking. It’s a dynamic environment with little room for status quo. If you are not working hard at achieving something, you are probably sliding away from it. And you must be especially vigilant about living your values.

Edelman Canada is made up of 80 PR consultants in Toronto and Montreal with affiliates across the country. Our Edelman Toronto head office has been Office of the Year in the Edelman global network three of the last five years. It’s a measure of meeting your revenue targets, client satisfaction and living the Edelman mission, vision and values. Our approach to nourishing and living those values is expressed in three fundamental management philosophies. First, take pride in your identity and make it aspirational. Second, create the cultural glue that binds your people and your values together. And the third, be honest with yourself and aggressively seek the truth about how others see you, and course correct when you must.

As the world’s largest independent public relations agency, Edelman has a truly unique heritage. Our brand experience is deep, rich and personal. Our 80-years-young-founder, Daniel J. Edelman, still comes into work each day and fires off some pretty insightful e-

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mails about our industry and the direction of the firm. From the beginning, we have been passionate advocates that PR is the most powerful channel for communicating to and persuading the public.

We reject the notion of PR as the tail on the advertising dog. So we invest in creating the “thought leadership” and the strategic toolkit to merit our profession having the strongest voice on a client’s strategy. You’ll see our point of view expressed in publications, bylined articles, executive roundtables, interviews and, most importantly, experience it constantly as a member of the Edelman global community. The result is a clear communication of the high expectations our firm has for the professional contribution of every employee.

We celebrate our corporate identity and our record for independent thinking, innovation and leadership.

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We also make the greatest effort to live according to our values of Quality, Integrity, Respect, Entrepreneurial Spirit and Mutual Benefits that guide our policies and procedures. When you look at leadership throughout the Edelman network, you find senior people have been here for 10-25 years. Those are “dog years” in the life of an average agency. People stay where there is a passionate commitment to shared beliefs and pride in their profession.

Edelman’s commitment to stand for something and be the leader in our industry fuels our desire to talk, and then walk the talk. Our annual Trust Barometer is a “must read” for governments, business, media leaders and NGOs as a yardstick to measure global reputations and stakeholder relations. It is also a powerful authentication of our profession as opinion leaders score an 8-to-1 advantage on trust for a message reported in the news media over an ad.

Our 2003 survey of moms around the world showed how rapidly the Internet is overtaking all other media as the most influential channel for today’s busy, multi-tasking mothers and how third-party endorsement is critical to brand choice. On the issue of PR measurement, we are aggressively moving towards research-driven PR targeting a self-directed public, and in the process creating a new level of partnership with our clients. If you distill our brand DNA to its primal essence, you will discover a bold commitment to independent thinking.

Celebrating our Edelman identity is the first step in how we frame messages to staff about the importance of our values. The second step, culture, is much more personal in expression.

I have always believed that, if you want something, the surest way to get it is to give it away. If you want respect, give respect. If you want commitment, give it. The best people will love working for you. In PR, the real assets go up and down the elevators every day.

People make the difference. It is their ideas, talent and determination that drive our success. It’s incredibly important to harness all that energy in a way that places the focus on our values and directs personal ambition to the greater benefit of teamwork and client service.

In the Edelman Canada consumer and technology group, we have developed a management philosophy we call “Clusters of Light.” It is a direct response to the “star syndrome” at some agencies – that sense of first among less than equals – that hinders teamwork and achievement. At Edelman, we define leadership in terms of service and, therefore, real stars are people who create a cluster of light that makes the whole shine brighter than all the parts.

A real star at Edelman knows they will receive recognition by taking responsibility for brightening the five points of the star, which are:

- (1) A real star understands that principles and values drive our success.
- (2) A real star delivers measurable results that contribute to a client’s business objectives.
- (3) A real star believes in the power of independent thinking, creativity and innovation. Always.
- (4) A real star is strong and mentoring, welcoming responsibility and sharing credit.
- (5) A real star makes everyone around them shine brighter.

If you want to know if you are doing well at Edelman, just look around you. If the people you work with are better because you’re there, you’re doing great!

I’m sure it sounds lofty and a little too touchy-feely, but believe me, it is a rock-solid approach to building a team and getting behaviours that lead to the results you seek. It is also an uncompromising expression of your values and how you expect people to live that is clear, understood by all and easy to manage. The end result is a team guided by a culture that is rooted in your identity that expresses your values.

And what is really neat about this is the best clients will adore you for it. The great clients – like Expedia Canada, Pfizer or Cranium – want partners who share

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their entrepreneurial roots and values because that is how you win their trust. You’ll win business because clients hire people they believe in. And you’ll keep your best and brightest because Edelman is a value-added

environment where they want to grow professionally.

The third and final key to living your values as an agency is managing quality. We believe, if you want to be understood, seek to understand. You will not truly

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understand your image as an agency unless it is clearly reflected back to you in the judgment of your clients. It is always better to have someone other than you commend you for living your values.

The Edelman client satisfaction survey is one of the most rigorous internal scorecards in the industry. The process is policed (a fair word) by our global head office. Clients receive their survey from our global quality queen (she has another title, but that's what we call her), who objectively and dispassionately reviews the results. She doesn't just report, however; she manages the issue. All Edelman offices are graded and challenged to leap high buildings to exceed global quality goals. As an agency, we know how well we are performing across the world in various offices, industries, practices and clients. We know the common issues, who is doing a better job meeting the challenge, and we share. We also have a solid background for meaningful discussion with clients about the value we bring to their business.

I might also add at this point that Edelman

Canada leads the Edelman world in the latest quality report with an overall score of 8.38 out of 10 – but who's counting? The global quality initiative enables us to measure our performance and how our values are put into action.

Living your values is one of the most important predictors of future, sustainable success. At Edelman, we promote and express our values by celebrating our identity, applying them to the way we work together and managing quality to measure our values in action. It is always a work in progress, but it's vital to be committed to the work. All true success flows from living your values.

I don't want you to think we're perfect. We're far, far from it. but I would feel less than honest to speak to you today and not share my absolute conviction that it is values that matter and describe what we are doing at Edelman Canada to act on those beliefs.

In closing, I would encourage you as you prepare for, or prepare others for, a career in marketing, journalism or public relations to approach your task with a love and passion for the highest ideals of your profession.

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Living those values as your career grows is the surest path to success, respect and the ability to make a difference in society.

*in the spirit of*  
**Bill Adams**  
*The PR Prof*