

The Power of Storytelling in PR: A Conversation with Kate Smith

In the fast lane of public relations, the art of storytelling is the fuel that drives press releases and media pitches towards success. For Kate Smith, a PR specialist at Beyond News Austin, crafting compelling narratives is not just a job- it's a passion that has powered her career from the very start. In our interview, Kate shared insights into her journey, the challenges of the industry, and gave advice concerning the essential skills that make a PR professional successful.

"Growing up, I was always writing in my journal, creating newsletters for my friends, or organizing school events- anything that involved communication and storytelling," Smith recalled. Her early passion for media and storytelling eventually led her to an internship at a local Austin news station during college, where she was captivated by the fast-paced environment of public relations. "I loved the challenge of communicating messages clearly and effectively, and I knew PR was the right path for me."

As a publicist at Beyond News Austin, this publicist's role involves crafting press releases, managing media relations and developing social media content for clients.

"I spend a lot of time researching media trends, pitching stories to journalists, and responding to inquiries," Smith explained. "My day-to-day responsibilities also include overseeing the execution of our major PR campaigns."

Despite her success and enthusiasm for her position, Smith has not gotten to where she is today without overcoming obstacles along the way. One of the biggest hurdles she encountered was learning how to balance client expectations with the realities of PR.

"When I first started, I didn't always know how to manage those expectations, and sometimes it felt like there wasn't enough time to achieve everything the client wanted," she admitted. Over time, she was able to develop a clear approach to guiding clients through what's realistic, setting expectations early and ensuring goals are both strategic and achievable.

A defining moment in Smith's career came when she worked on a high-profile product launch for a tech company early on.

"It was a fast-paced project with tight deadlines, but seeing the media coverage and the impact it had on the brand's visibility confirmed that PR was the right path for me," said Smith.

For aspiring PR professionals, Smith emphasized the importance of gaining hands-on experience. "Even if it means doing freelance work, building your portfolio now is crucial," she advised. She also stressed the need to stay up to date with industry trends, especially with the rapidly evolving media landscape. "There's always a new platform or tool to learn, and the best way to stay ahead is by committing to lifelong learning."

Looking to the future, Smith hopes to collaborate with brands that focus on sustainability and social impact. “I admire companies that not only sell a product but also have a purpose and actively contribute to their community,” Smith said, referencing Patagonia as an example of a brand she’d love to work with.

As our conversation came to a close, our PR pro reflected on what it takes to thrive in the vast realm of public relations, emphasizing the importance of adaptability, creativity and communication skills as an indicator of a successful publicist. “Being able to think on your feet and adjust just strategies as new information arises is key in this field,” she said. “ building strong relationships is also essential to PR professional success.” Smith continued.

With a passion for meaningful storytelling and a drive to make a difference, Kate Smith is leaving her mark on the PR world- one story at a time.



Otter transcript & audio recording included in submission

Medium: Zoom Conference

My Pretend Digital ID: My name is Kylie Lane, I am an account executive PR professional for Michele Marie Public Relations agency, a fashion PR firm. I graduated in 2018 from UT Austin, with a degree in PR. I have experience in both the fashion and entertainment industry. I interviewed Kate Smith, a PR specialist at Beyond News Austin, who also graduated in 2018 with a PR degree.

Interview Questions

- Can you tell us a bit about your current role and what your day-to-day responsibilities are?
- How did you get started in the PR/communications field? What led you to this career or what inspired you to pursue a career in PR and communications? Was there a specific moment or event that influenced your decision?
- What were some of your interests or hobbies growing up, and do any of them tie into the work you do today?
- Why did you choose to work for this company specifically?
- Have you had any challenges, personal or professional, that had to overcome on your journey to reach the success you have today?
- What was the most important turning point in your career? Was there a moment when you realized that PR/communications was your true calling?
- What advice would you give to a college senior preparing to enter the PR/communications industry today?
- What do you think is the most challenging aspect of working in PR, and how would you plan to tackle it?
- What social media platforms do you think are most important in the coming age of PR and why?
- If you could collaborate with any company or brand what would it be?

- In your opinion, what makes a strong PR professional? What characteristics or habits do you think contribute most to long-term success?