

David Eisenstadt

YOCOM PROFILE



David Eisenstadt

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David Eisenstadt's PR career has spanned almost 60 years, working across the technology, real estate, foodservice/hospitality, professional services, travel/tourism, retail, and the not-for-profit sectors.

He is one of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)'s first two elected Canadian Fellows and the first of two Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) Fellows.

Agency life

He formed The Communications Group Inc. (tcgpr), a Toronto, Canada-based public relations and marketing communications consulting firm in 1973, after managing the ad agency Goodis Goldberg & Soren's PR divisions in Toronto and Montréal.

His IBM Canada Ltd. corporate PR experience was the basis for tcgPR becoming the pre-eminent tech firm in Canada through Y2K. That tech career saw him launch Dell in Canada in 1989. Over the years, he and Rhoda Eisenstadt (his Partner in life and business) and their Team represented many other Canadian subsidiary tech and consumer electronics clients including Amdahl, Chubb Fire & Security, Cisco Systems, Data General, Digital Equipment, Honeywell, IBM, Kodak, McAfee, Philips, Samsung, Sharp. Sun Microsystems, Symantec/Norton, among others.

In other sectors, the firm was the Agency Of Record (AOR) for The Daniels Corporation, Brookfield Developments for BCE (now Brookfield) Place, Heathwood, Monarch, Mattamy Homes and many others. Air India, Fox Harb'r Resort, Pizza Nova, New York Fries/ South Street Burger, Manchu Wok, and Cora's Breakfast & Lunch have also benefitted from his thoughtful counsel and the work of his Team.

He has also represented numerous high-profile law firms such as McMillan LLP, Blaney McMurtry LLP, and WeirFoulds LLP. His firm has an impressive scorecard of “firsts”. For example, they managed the launch of Canada’s first 24-hour All Sports Radio Station, The Fan 1430 (today Sportsnet’s The Fan 590) on September 4, 1992, and opened Canada’s first Ruth’s Chris Steak House in Toronto, June 1995 and later their first restaurant in Mississauga and Markham, ON.

Much of their firm’s work included providing clients with proactive, and sometimes reactive crisis communications counsel in most sectors served.

Joined two global PR agency networks

As a strategy to compete for new business in Toronto and across Canada, tcgPR offered its clients global outreach and assisted international clients who needed Canadian communications know-how. Early on they knew it was important to align themselves with a network of strong and reputable independent PR/Marketing agencies. Their objective was to provide better and more personal senior level service to clients than what was offered by the handful of multinational PR and Marketing agencies in Canada and around the globe. To their delight early on, The Communications Group Inc. was invited to become the Exclusive Canadian Partner firm in two different public relations/communications networks – IPREX Global Communications from 1988-2015 and Pinnacle Worldwide from 1976-1998. David was on Pinnacle’s Executive Committee from 1990-1991, and President from 1992-93. One of many business challenges faced by PR firms not so connected is to be able to compete on a relatively level playing field. So, their involvement with many talented agencies around the world was one of the best business decisions they ever made.

Public Relations Association Awards and Service

Over the years, Eisenstadt received several major PR industry awards including the CPRS Philip Novikoff Memorial Award in 2004, and the CPRS Shield of Public Service in 2017. He received his CPRS Life Membership in 2013.

He has served as International Chair, PRSA Counselors Academy’s Executive Committee, is a Past-President, CPRS’ Toronto Consultants Institute and the CPRS National Accreditation and College of Fellows committees.

A Senator (Ret.) and Member of the Order of the University of Calgary, where he graduated with a Political Science degree, he earned a post grad degree from Carleton University’s School of Journalism.

He has authored six books - all in his MUSICIANS UNDER THE RADAR – NOTABLE CANADIAN JEWISH PERFORMERS series featuring 108 talented artists including Maureen Forrester, Ofra Harnoy, Corey Hart, Moe Koffman, Sharon, Lois & Bram, The Diamonds, The Travelers, Nick St. Nicholas (Steppenwolf), and Zal Yanovsky (Lovin’ Spoonful).

Pro bono work

His pro bono and not-for-profit work included counselling The MIKEY Network, Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies, the Canadian Society of Yad Vashem, and Ve'Ahavta.

[The Mikey Network](#) works to promote heart healthy lifestyles and is committed to placing MIKEYs (Automatic External Defibrillators) in high-risk locations to help people affected by sudden cardiac arrest. The various communications programs provide education, training, and life-saving defibrillators. To date, over 2,700 MIKEYs have been placed in publicly accessible areas across Canada. Units are portable, user-friendly devices which automatically diagnose life-threatening heart rhythms and can increase someone's chance of survival by up to 50 per cent.

[Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies \(FSWC\)](#) was established in 1989 and is one of Canada's leading human rights and social advocacy organizations. Inspired by the legacy of Simon Wiesenthal, FSWC works to build a more inclusive and respectful Canada by sharing the lessons of the Holocaust, advocating for human rights, and combating antisemitism and hate in all its forms.

[The Canadian Society of Yad Vashem](#) was established in 1986 in Toronto. Its mission is to disseminate the universal lessons of the Holocaust across Canada through commemorative and educational activities.

[Ve'ahavta](#) is a Toronto-based Jewish humanitarian organization dedicated to promoting positive change in the lives of people of all faiths and backgrounds who have been marginalized by poverty and hardship.

If you look back over the years you've been working in public relations, what would you consider your crowning achievement for a client/your organization? Why? When was that?

"As a proud PR practitioner, the reality is that our firm is still in business after nearly 60 years and that I am still learning stuff after six decades, hoping I have earned the respect of family, friends, and those of whose paths I have crossed along the way."

How do you think ethics as a fundamental principle of communication and issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity have evolved in your view?

"Being truthful and transparent has always been at the core of clear communications by PR professionals, in my experience. Integrity, respect for individuals be they employees, clients, prospects, suppliers, news media, elected government officials, and public servants... frankly our list includes everybody."

Respecting confidentiality, declaring (and avoiding) conflict of interest, and adhering to professional industry standards outlined by the Canadian Public Relations Society and the Public Relations Society of America, are cornerstones of our business and my career.”

“***Being truthful and transparent has always been at the core of clear communications by PR professionals, in my experience.***”

If you look back over the years you’ve been working in public relations, what would you say your worst moment was? Why? When was that?

“We’ve worked on a few hundred campaigns since 1973, and most were successful. However, the two worst moments were both learning experiences.”

“While always standing up for our team members, I once confronted the VP Marketing of a major multi-national client in Toronto (whom we repped for seven years), for his unacceptable behaviour aimed at one of our admin employees. It was about an issue of which she wasn’t even aware. Background: I returned from an outside meeting to our office and our receptionist was crying. I asked what happened, she explained. I called the client, politely and without hesitation asked him to never again treat any of our staff with anything less than respect, good faith, and courtesy. While I reacted quickly by calling him, I should have not handled this over the phone. I should have scheduled an immediate appointment to see him in person to discuss his concern (and disrespectful behavior). While conventional wisdom is that the client is always right, he wasn’t, and he didn’t apologize to our staffer and, 90 days later, we lost this major account and what had been a happy, positive and productive agency-client relationship.”

“A major automobile manufacturer in Vancouver, BC retained us to launch their new line at the Montréal International Show back in the 1980s. We recommended they show off their vehicle after a cross-Canada drive thru, bursting upon the scene through a large logoed banner, in real time. No bright and shiny car but a proven unwashed workhorse. We hired two female race car drivers who journeyed on a tight time schedule across the country with tech backup. The auto show organizer booked us in for a weekday 11am arrival.... problem was we didn’t realize that many Québec-based media don’t go to work until after mid-day and the turnout was small (a handful of Ontario, US automotive and business journos attended ...still, the turnout was disappointing for our client and for us. While our strategy, planning and execution was flawless, we should have better understood the market. Client wanted lots of journo bodies....and we didn’t deliver enough.”

Is AI a boon or threat?

“The reality of AI in today’s marketplace is that it should not be considered a replacement for any practitioners’ capabilities. It won’t automatically replace creativity, empathy, and connectivity to human beings. Hopefully, PR professionals won’t be losing their jobs to this phenomenon of our time.

“What goes ’round, comes around. Definitely parallels here.”

“I joined IBM Canada Ltd. As an Information Representative in January 1969. IBM didn’t use the words Public Relations in their titles for PR folks at the time. With three others, I was hired with no technical background, and that was a plus in getting the job. Why? Back then, computers were starting to have an impact on people’s lives and the concern on the street was that “computers are going to take my job.” A valid concern but one which IBM clearly addressed with the mantra... computers are not going to replace you, but rather displace you, so one better learn about computers before the train leaves the station.” A big part of our job as to communicate about the benefits of this emerging “revolution” in the idiom of the marketplace — making everything understandable a series of plain English, not tech-speak business cases. And here we are with AI, ChatGPT, and so on. All activities - from Media Relations and Employee-Internal Communications to Issues Management and the skills PR folks need to have, are already being impacted.”

What advice would you give as a mentor to a young person entering the public relations field?

“Learn, listen and understand emerging technologies. Learn the basics of the profession by taking relevant community college diploma or university degree courses. Take any internship assignment you can get that makes sense. Don’t get overwhelmed by burying yourself in social media. Spend time listening to the radio, watching TV and actually read newspapers — before they all disappear. And you can learn plenty from relevant podcasts. Get involved with CPRS as a student; then become a full member and get Accredited early in your career. It should pay off!”

Where do you see the public relations profession heading?

“A PR career path in a turbulent world for those who are bright and curious can provide lifetime job satisfaction, providing one never forgets to ensure work-life balance.”