

Final Campaign Report

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COMM 460: Public Relations Campaigns

Dr. Betty Farmer

Executive Summary

The key problem that our client, the Western North Carolina chapter of PRSA, faced is a lack of growth and new memberships. Our biggest opportunity for growth is COVID-19 cases decreasing in the area, allowing for more in-person events.

Our research mainly focused on the client's biggest competitors, their platform, and previous events that they have hosted. We found when researching the organization that their social media platforms are not as active as they should be. Their website was also quite bland and not very user-friendly.

Our target audience was communication professionals in the WNC area, whether they work in government, healthcare, sports, or hospitality and tourism. An integrated PESO strategy is important to use because it allows us to reach our target audience through different channels while remaining consistent in the key message.

We primarily focused on shared and owned media as we did not have sufficient resources to use paid media strategies. Our shared media tactics were mostly through emails and social media and our owned media tactics were mainly through brochures, programs, etc.

We recommend that they capitalize on the momentum of the April 21 event and announce future events soon. This will keep new members engaged and hopefully spread more awareness of the chapter. While we did not implement all of our tactics nor did we reach all of our goals, the campaign and event were ultimately a success. The chapter gained five new memberships as that number of individuals expressed interest in joining. The April 21 event went off without any problems.

Our key takeaways are the importance of time management and communication when running a campaign and planning an event. Even though the event was a success, had we started earlier we might have been able to accomplish even more.

Research

The PRSA organization was established in 1948, but the Western North Carolina chapter was established in 2019. Its mission is to: “Make communications professionals smarter, better prepared, and more connected through all stages of their career.” PRSA is the nation’s largest professional organization serving the communications community.

As a member of the PRSA community, the Western North Carolina chapter's mission is consistent with PRSA, namely, to advocate ethical behavior in the PR industry, and also explore best practices and methods to benefit all PR practitioners. Its main mission is to improve the communication environment and to help the PR industry progress as a whole.

PRSA provide conferences, connections/networking, job diversity, and professional development to members. The main services provided by the chapter are the latest relevant professional resources and high-quality learning and practice opportunities for its members. Sharing contact information for other PR professionals and helping to build networks and appropriate communication channels are also what the chapter offers to its members.

The main problem that our client faces is a lack of new membership and growth. According to research and the interviews with the client, one of the main issues facing the organization is expanding brand awareness. This chapter is not very established on social media. This is not ideal for the subsequent development of the organization. They need to spread awareness to gain more new members and keep the chapter alive. The pandemic has undoubtedly

affected some of the organization's communication plans and activities. These issues can be seen on the chapter's website, which is filled with outdated information.

In the age of technology, it is imperative to see a PR association like PRSA form more of an online presence to reach those younger prospective members. COVID-19 has brought on the unique issue of prospective members being alienated, especially in instances where the prospects can't make it to in-person networking events.

The organization has hosted many virtual and in-person events over the past few years. These are designed to help the organization communicate and interact with existing members. Not only are the events appealing to existing members, but they also help to recruit new members. There has not been much positive or negative publicity for the chapter, but events help to spread awareness.

Key activities that the chapter previously did include a kickoff informational and networking event in the HHS building at WCU in April 2019. They have also held webinars and virtual events during 2020 due to COVID-19. Since then, they have had several networking and meet-up events held at various breweries in the Western North Carolina region throughout 2021.

The organizational goals of PRSA WNC are: "We aim to serve a diverse community of professionals, empowering them to excel in effective, ethical and respectful communications on behalf of the organizations they represent and the constituencies they serve."

This includes lifelong learning, vibrant, diverse, and welcoming professional communities, recognition of capabilities and accomplishments, thought leadership, ethics, and professional excellence. Additionally, collaborative environments for sharing best practices across markets and industries, open discussion of industry happenings and issues, and mentorship and knowledge transfer for PRSSA members in the chapter's jurisdiction.

As public relations professionals, there is an ethical and moral obligation to examine and evolve industry best practices for the benefit of the national communication landscape and future PR practitioners. PRSA WNC strives to cultivate relationships between PR professionals and students in all areas of WNC to ensure the sustainability of the chapter from its inception, i.e., increase membership. Collectively, PRSA has an opportunity and a responsibility to foster a media environment that serves the needs and best interests of our communities.

Current threats to the organization's progress and success include the COVID-19 pandemic, increased workload of communication professionals, burnout, Zoom meetings, and the spread of misinformation.

The chapter's most important partner is PRSA National. It provides administrative support, programming support, and membership support. A focus needs to be made on more local partnerships with local chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, toastmaster groups, etc.

The biggest competitor of PRSA WNC includes the American Marketing Association: Charlotte and other professional development conferences or membership-based groups specific to individual areas of interest, such as hospitality and tourism organizations.

Organizational Goals and Challenges

The most effective communication strategy used to date has to do with the communication strategies the chapter practiced last year. At that time, before any communication program began, all organizational board members and other members would hold a 15-minute Zoom meeting to determine the details and division of labor for the chapter.

The least effective communication strategies used so far include sharing and posting without communication between leadership and members. Additionally, they have been more reactive than proactive in their communication.

The goals are to post more on social media, showcase PRSA's relevance and importance to potential and existing members, and create a monthly newsletter. Their strengths include: promoting events and sharing a monthly newsletter efficiently. Their weaknesses include a lack of time, resources, and volunteers. An area for improvement is that they could increase meaningful posts for the audience and encourage member engagement on social media.

Research Summary

The WNC chapter of PRSA needs brand awareness and to increase membership. The current obstacle in spreading the word about their chapter during a pandemic. There is an opportunity to improve their website. Also working in their favor is the fact that they have little if any, bad publicity. Additionally, by the chapter being so small, there is an opportunity to do in-person events during the pandemic in a way larger organizations cannot.

Ultimately, PRSA needs to recruit new members to sustain their chapter, and this has been challenging due to COVID-19. Building their website, posting and increasing social media engagement, and hosting events may increase their brand awareness and memberships.

Objectives

For this campaign, we created three main outcome objectives as well as related strategies and tactics. The first outcome objective was to increase membership within the PRSA WNC chapter by at least 12 members following the April 21, 2022 event.

Our second outcome objective was to increase attendance at the April 21 event from the chapter launch event (40 attendees in 2019) to 50 attendees.

Our third outcome objective was to motivate 12 members to commit to bringing a potential new member prospect as their plus one by April 7.

Key Publics & Messages

Our key publics are PRSA WNC existing members, potential PRSA WNC members, and PRSSA members. The existing members because they are the ones that are already involved with the organization and can be people that recruit. The existing members can vary in age from young adults to retired adults. The potential members are coming into the organization to learn more. These upcoming members can vary in age from young adults to retired adults. Lastly, the students because they are the young audience that can use this organization as a resource when beginning a career, usually as a recent college graduate.

The existing relationship between the client and the target public is not where it should be. COVID-19 has created numerous obstacles including limiting face-to-face meetings. Zoom meetings make it hard to communicate with these target publics, especially considering one of the main appeals of the organization is networking events.

Those that are aware of the chapter, are likely not aware of the opportunities that PRSA WNC offers and how it could benefit them. A large part of the problem is attributed to COVID-19, but we can't stop there. Recruitment for PRSA WNC needs to increase to be able to have more successful engagement at meetings and events.

PRSA uses numerous channels of communication. On a personal level, they offer one-on-one mentorship, free webinars, and live events for active members. Communicating from an organizational standpoint, PRSA uses its national/regional website and its newsletter. Social media (LinkedIn) and news outlets are other ways the organization uses shared and earned media channels to expand to grow.

Learning about this organization helps professionals by providing them with invaluable resources and connections within their field that will allow them to advance their careers. These connections can last a lifetime and create a sense of community and act as a career lifeline.

All of these benefits are vital to PRSA WNC and their community, but the benefit that distinguishes them from their competitors would have to be their use of MyPRSA. This is such a helpful and exclusive tool (no other organization has MyPRSA) that allows those personal connections between these professions/members to occur on a more exclusive basis.

Strategies & Tactics

The biggest advantage of our plan included utilizing shared media to promote the event. This was advantageous because PRSA WNC needed more activity on their social media accounts and the event provided content for the pages. The use of a plan that is heavily centered around social media could potentially be a disadvantage because the existing social media were not very frequently used. This meant posts might not get as much visibility as we had hoped for. Besides, our target audience was existing members, prospective members, and PRSSA students. Our message was that PRSA WNC was an organization that could benefit their career. The overall goal was to ensure that our target audiences were aware of our message and joined PRSA WNC. If the strategy and tactics were successful, we would persuade the target public to not only have a positive attitude toward the organization but to take action and join.

PESO

We did not use paid media for this campaign. If we would have, we would have used traditional advertisements in the WNC Times, Hendersonville Times-News, Mountain Xpress, Smoky Mountain News, and Asheville Citizen-Times. The design message could be fully conveyed to the local audience through the above channels, and the content would be transmitted

according to the time expected by the organization. Additionally, since our campaign is very social media-oriented, we would have used sponsored tweets on Twitter targeting people in the PR industry to become a member of PRSA WNC. This was not very realistic because we didn't have sufficient funds or enough activity on the PRSA WNC Twitter page, but it could be a tactic to consider in the future.

In terms of the earned media, we did not see this as a realistic option, but we did attempt to use it. Our tactic for earned media was to send out news releases to the corresponding Asheville press to inform the public about the upcoming event. This was mainly because we were trying to target a niche audience of prospective members in the Asheville region. Additionally, we couldn't guarantee that we would reach 12 members through earned media channels, it was better to use shared and owned media to reach members with this information and motivate them.

Our tactic to increase attendance at the April 21 event through shared media was to create five social media posts and share them on the Facebook and LinkedIn PRSA WNC pages. This spreads awareness regarding the event. If members could share the event on their page, it would increase visibility and help attract prospective members. To increase membership following the event, our shared media tactic was posting videos and pictures of the event to PRSA WNC social media pages including LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, along with join links to encourage people to become members.

For the shared media tactic, we initially envisioned microblogging to encourage existing members to share information (time & brief details) about the upcoming event in short posts to their followers and friends on Facebook and Twitter.

For the owned media tactic, we designed a flyer and emailed it to the PRSSA leaders at Appalachian State University.

Additionally, we sent out emails to at least 12 active members to have them commit to bringing a potential new member to the April 21 event. This email contained information that they could share with potential members to motivate them to come to the event. We would then send follow-up emails after the networking event to all event guests who are not active members of the PRSA WNC chapter.

We also prepared a testimonial video to inform the public of the benefits of PRSA WNC. The video and other information about the event were placed on the chapter's website. We were also trying to email the 12 people to bring a prospective member.

We brainstormed ideas on how to recruit new members to PRSA WNC while also reminding existing members why they joined the organization. We thought the best way to do both of these was with an event.

Our group did not want to do another networking event at a brewery because the past few events have been held at breweries due to COVID-19 restrictions. We wanted to devote time to learning as well as connecting and sharing. This is how the idea for “Connect, Share & Learn” was born.

For the event itself, we decided to design and print out the brochure that contains the details of the PRSA and PRSA WNC chapters. We believed that these printed brochures could greatly help potential audiences to clearly understand the PRSA and related benefits, thus better promoting the objective. Along with the brochure, we designed and created a program for the event to enhance the guest experience and give them more information about the organization and future events.

Lastly, we came up with the idea to conduct testimonial interviews that could be shown at the event. Unfortunately, we were not able to get the video done in time, but the interviews were completed and edited and will hopefully be uploaded to the PRSA WNC site soon.

Evaluation

Our first objective of increasing membership by 12 people, following the April 21 event was not completed. We had a great turnout for the event involving members and potential members. Although we were unsuccessful in reaching our goal, we still had a lot of engagement from potential members and believe we have generated some momentum that could lead to 12 additional members soon.

Our second objective of increasing the turnout to this event to 50 attendees, from the chapter's launch in 2019 at 40 attendees, was not achieved. Although we had 30 attendees for the Connect, Share & Learn event, we still did not reach our goal of 50 attendees. This could have been due to several reasons: scheduling issues, personal matters, sickness, unchecked emails, etc.

Our third objective of motivating 12 members to commit to bringing a prospective member as a plus one was not completed. We had over 30 members commit to the event, though most didn't show. We achieved this objective because we shared the information by sending out an Eventbrite invitation and had a lot of engagement from that.

This was not enough and we think the event would have had more turnout if we made better contact to members of the chapter, encouraging them to bring a prospective member. If we had made calls or encouraged board members to invite people, we might have had more prospective members show up.

PRSA WNC Board Member Feedback

Sarah Broberg

“On behalf of PRSA WNC, I am grateful to each of you for your dedication, hard work and professionalism in support of a very successful networking event yesterday. The energy in the room was wonderful, conversations were engaging, and meaningful connections were made - all while spreading the word about PRSA WNC and the membership benefits.

From prospect research and outreach to event planning and management, to communication and marketing, to the pieces yet to come - it has been a pleasure to work with you on this project and see you put your skills into action!

Thank you so much for your support of PRSA WNC. Congratulations to us all!”

Janet Oppenheimer

“I echo Sarah's sentiments as well! We SO appreciate what you have done for the chapter. I've enjoyed meeting you all. Please stay in touch!”

Mike Crisp

“Same message from me. Last night's event was up to a high professional standard – from the invites/literature/promotions to the hospitality on site.

Everyone involved should take pride in a job well done.”

Recommendations

The timeline that we created was the ultimate way to keep us on track. We made sure to do weekly check-ins with each other on GroupMe to make sure that everyone was looking at the timeline and getting everything in before the deadline. For example, Dawson and Nick went to

Asheville to film testimonial interviews and they had to go by a timeline to keep things on track. They had to know what day to go, what day to have it edited by, and what to accommodate for if something didn't work out. Of course, we could recommend some changes to the timeline because it was not perfect but we made it work and that's what is most important.

Our team functioned efficiently and effectively given the circumstances that we were faced with. There were times when we did not get a response from our client for a while and we just had to adapt to something productive at the time until we got an answer to our questions. It is important to be a flexible person when it comes to working with a client or the public. A few strengths of our team were that we communicated well, everyone had a specific job to get done, and generous attitudes to help with other things. A couple of things that our team could have done better are preparing a little more in advance, updating our timeline as we went, and communicating more. Communication was both a strength and a thing we could work on because we communicated well but there is always room for improvement.

If we could go back and redo this campaign, we would make sure to send more reminder emails to our clients. This was a big problem that we faced earlier in the semester. We struggled with technical difficulties that led to communication issues.

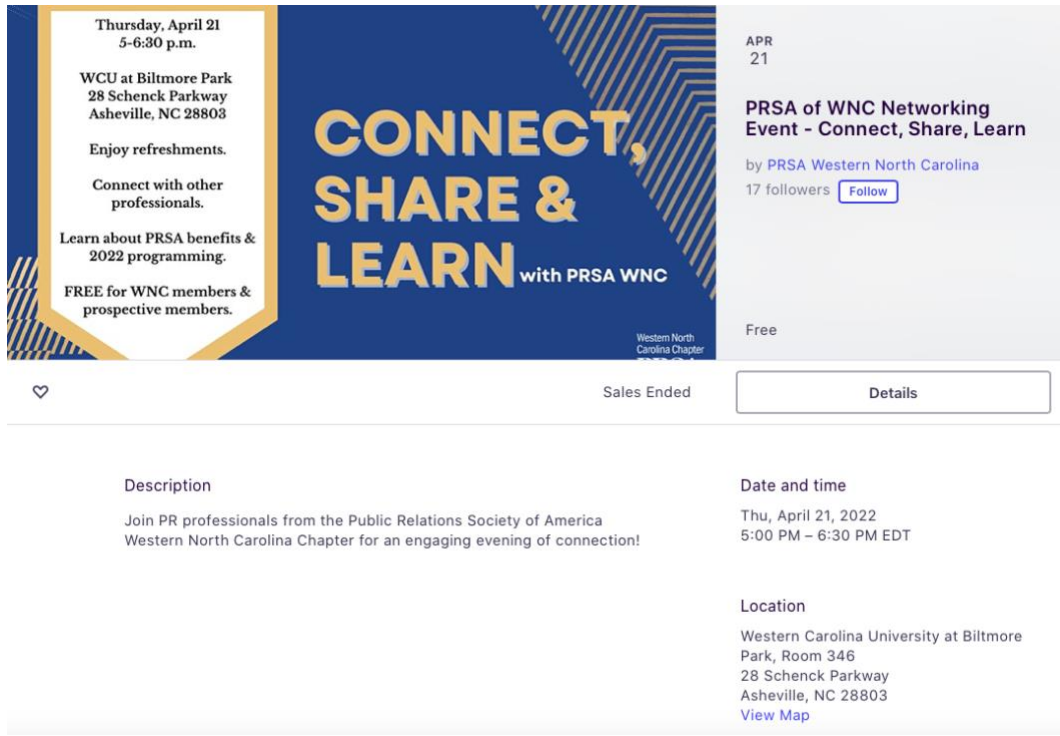
We learned to be a flexible group and excel anyways. We expected hurdles to come our way and if we could have done better, we would have come up with a "when things go wrong" sheet (taking a page out of our crisis communication class). All in all, the event turned out to be a great night and we can always improve on everything we do related to our profession.

In the future, we recommend connecting with relevant client representatives early and scheduling regular virtual meetings to determine the details of each step and ask for advice. This allows the team members to confirm the details in a timely manner and give them confidence.

Lastly, a recommendation that we have for the future would be to use Instagram as well as Facebook. Instagram reaches a younger audience of professionals that are not being reached through Facebook. This is also easy to do since Instagram and Facebook are both under the parent company of Meta. This means that once an Instagram account is set up, you only have to hit a button and every Facebook post will also be automatically updated to Instagram too with no extra work.

Event Materials

Eventbrite evite



Thursday, April 21
5-6:30 p.m.

WCU at Biltmore Park
28 Schenck Parkway
Asheville, NC 28803

Enjoy refreshments.

Connect with other professionals.

Learn about PRSA benefits & 2022 programming.

FREE for WNC members & prospective members.

CONNECT, SHARE & LEARN with PRSA WNC

Western North Carolina Chapter

APR 21

PRSA of WNC Networking Event - Connect, Share, Learn

by [PRSA Western North Carolina](#)
17 followers [Follow](#)

Free

♡ Sales Ended [Details](#)

Description

Join PR professionals from the Public Relations Society of America Western North Carolina Chapter for an engaging evening of connection!

Date and time

Thu, April 21, 2022
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM EDT

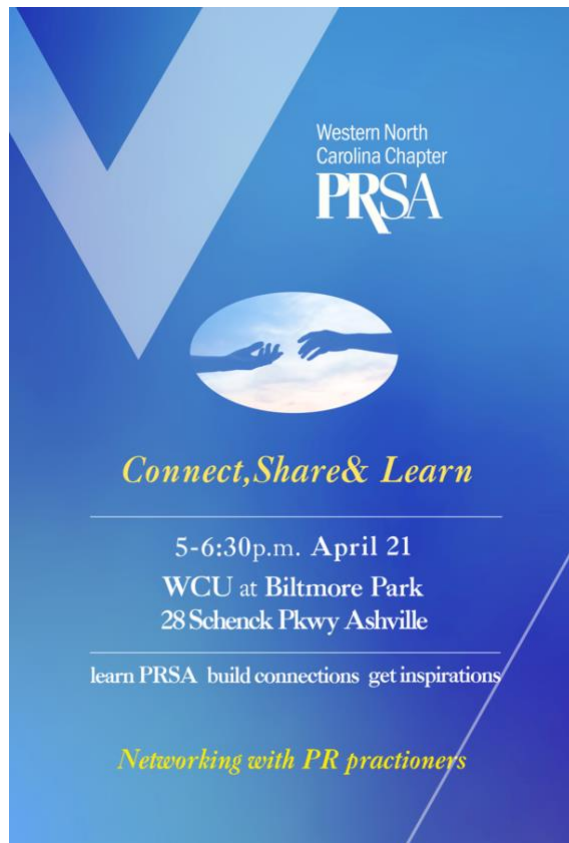
Location

Western Carolina University at Biltmore Park, Room 346
28 Schenck Parkway
Asheville, NC 28803
[View Map](#)

Welcome sign/guest book:



Invitation Flyer to Appalachian State:



Event Program:

CONNECT, SHARE & LEARN

Western North
Carolina Chapter
PRSA

Thursday, April 21
5-6:30 p.m.

5-5:30 p.m. – CONNECT

- Networking & Refreshments

5:30-5:50 p.m. – LEARN

- Leadership Announcements
 - Sarah Broberg, APR: Opening remarks
 - Emily McCollin: Membership
 - Mike Crisp: Programming
 - Janet Oppenheimer, APR, Fellow PRSA: Benefits of APR

5:50-6:25 p.m. – SHARE

- Respond to question prompts and share insights and experiences

6:25-6:30 p.m. – CLOSING

- Recognition of Students & Sponsors
 - Betty Farmer

Share with your table...

- What is the biggest challenge or obstacle you have faced in your career? How did you overcome it?
- What is your key takeaway from working in communication during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What is the best advice you have received in your career?
- What is your most memorable work experience?
- What is your dream job? If you are working in it, how did you get there?
- What do you think the future of PR looks like?

2022 Programming in the Works:

- Self-Branding Seminar – Communicating the Value of What We Do to Employers and Clients
- Data-Driven Marketing Communication
- Voices4Everyone – Encouraging Civil Conversation in Media Outreach
 - *Details about dates, times, and speakers to be announced*

Special Thanks to our Event Sponsors:

Mike Crisp
Principal of
Crisp PR

Kevan Frazier
Executive Director of
WCU at Biltmore Park



The Connect, Share & Learn event was organized and promoted by WCU students in Dr. Betty Farmer's PR Campaigns class.

For more information regarding
membership, please scan this QR code:



Contact Emily McCollin at: Emily.McCollin@gmail.com

Brochure:

PRSA/PRSSA Partnerships

PRSA WNC is proud to sponsor the Public Relations Student Society of America chapters at Appalachian State and Western Carolina Universities, as well as connect with students at UNC Asheville. Our future professionals benefit from attending programs and conferences, networking, shadowing and internships.



PRSA Public
Relations
Society of
America
Western North Carolina Chapter



PRSA



WNC Chapter



Who We Are

As the nation's leading organization serving the communications community, PRSA provides members lifelong learning opportunities and leading-edge resources to support them at every stage of their career. There are nearly 30,000 PRSA members across 110 chapters, and more than 7,000 PRSSA students in 300+ chapters.

Contact Us:

<http://prsa-wnc.org/>

PRSAofWNC@gmail.com

<https://www.facebook.com/PRSAWNC/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/prsa-of-western-north-carolina/>



Serving Public Relations
and Communication
Professionals across 22
counties in WNC



BENEFITS OF PRSA MEMBERSHIP

About PRSA WNC

As a member of the national PRSA family, our top priority is to help all members achieve their professional goals by providing them with the latest resources, professional development activities, and high-quality mentoring. The chapter advances the PRSA Code of Ethics and works to create a positive media environment and communication atmosphere for local businesses and communities. We serve 22 Western North Carolina counties with four hub regions including: Asheville area (central counties), Boone (northwest counties), Hendersonville/Brevard (southern counties) and Sylva/Cullowhee (western counties).

Our Mission

"We have an ethical obligation to examine and evolve industry best practices for the benefit of the national communication environment and future Public Relations practitioners." Sarah Broberg, president of the chapter.



Connection

Members interact with public relations and communication professionals in chapters across the country to build expertise in areas such as leadership and crisis management.



APR

The Accreditation in Public Relations credential certifies PR professionals for their knowledge, professionalism and principles. If you would like to distinguish yourself from your peers and position yourself as a leader and mentor in the PR field, APR is for you.



Resources

The chapter provides PR mentoring, unique job resources, quality events, and programming to meet members' specific needs.



How to Join

To become a member, first join PRSA national. Then, when prompted to affiliate with a specific chapter, choose Western North Carolina. Please scan the QR codes on the back of the brochure to visit the PRSA and PRSA WNC websites.

"PRSA is like an angel sitting on my shoulder, illuminating the path for my career journey." Janet Oppenheimer, APR, founder of PRSA WNC

Western North
Carolina Chapter
PRSA

Table Host Guide and bookmark

Table Host Guide


DIRECTIONS:

1. Start out by choosing one ice breaker for your table.
2. After every person in your group responds to the icebreaker (including yourself), then have each group member choose one question from the program.
3. After every person answers their question, let each member choose one more question from the program.


ICE BREAKERS:

- What three adjectives best describe you?
- If you could choose any superpower what would it be?
- What is your favorite moment in history?
- Do you have any pets?
- What is one place you'd love to travel to?

Western North
Carolina Chapter
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PRSA.org




WNC PRSA

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LinkedIn



Facebook

Bookmark:

Group Time Log-

this is time spent working as a group on the event, not accounting for individual time spent.

