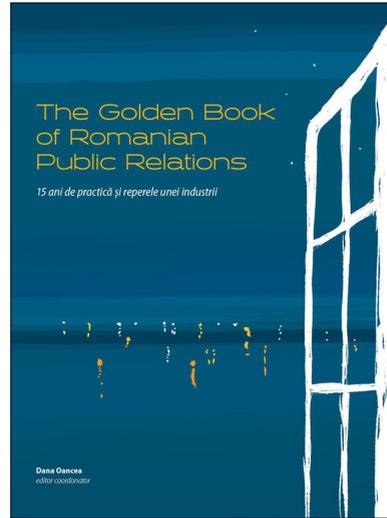


## Book Review

Dana Oancea, James E. Grunig, Aneta Bogdan  
*The Golden Book of Romanian Public Relations*  
București: Fundația Forum for International Communication, 2017, ISBN: 9789730255836

Public relations have been perceived for a long time as a rather sensitive subject in Romania. This was mainly due to the reticence of many clients to crown *communication* as a vital element for their business. And this attitude had a strong impact on the work of communication specialists all over the country. As a blooming domain in Romania, public relations has been the subject to debate for many years. Several Romanian specialists tried to form a unifying set of norms which could regulate the domain. And this is the starting point of *The Golden Book of Romanian Public Relations*.



With an eye on the most sensitive issues public relations face in Romania, the present work presents itself as a handbook for all practitioners, comprising no less than 95 projects, distinguished with the Golden Award for Excellence in the 2003-2016 period. *Dana Oancea*- coordinator of the volume- talks about the multidisciplinary facets of public relations, and the profound need of a “reflection over the domain’s concepts and values”. Also, this is the first collaborative process of its kind, activating the local community. At a first glimpse, it is worth mentioning the book comprises 18 years of experiences, with 54 experts in communication and editorialists who contributed to the book’s content.

The book opens with a foreword from Dana Oancea, presenting the general tableau of the work. Their combined efforts are set to make the difference in time between the so-called “improvisation practitioner” and the professional. Also, one of the core ideas the book revolves around is the unbreakable binder between PR and the leadership component. This belief was perfectly encompassed in the following quote: “The Public Relations cannot be practiced as a profession, as a function of

accepted management by organizations and society, without the practitioners who have a solid array of knowledge, based on study, dialog and reflection." The eye-opening idea that welcomes the reader from the first pages is public relations is more than simply connecting the consumers with the organization. The holistic approach generates trust and strong roots within the company, which will naturally create powerful connections with the external medium. And this also represents the challenge for the Romanian public relations practitioners, as they battle with the management, in order to prove their role is part of the leading levers.

Before the unfolding of chapters, there are two reference names that set the red thread of the book. The first one is *James E. Grunig*, Professor Emeritus at the University of Maryland. Having started his activity in the 60's, Professor Grunig has a vast experience in the field of public relations of several decades, seeing the domain evolve from his infancy to the present day and facing many challenges in all the decades to come. Also, living USA, a country with a strongly developed PR industry, he can identify the stage the Romanian PR finds itself and offer valuable advice for its future evolution.

Professor Grunig does not hide behind pompous words and offers a straight and slightly pungent analysis in certain points. Although he applauds all the efforts Romanian professionals made in the past decade and the rapid growth of opportunities and projects, he draws attention over the past tendency of Romanian companies of using PR simply as a beautification instrument. In the past years, he analyzed Romanian CSR (corporate social responsibility) cases which were mainly focused on creating the illusion of responsibility, thus not containing the necessary coherence between the organization and its program. However, the present sounds more promising according to him, as companies slowly start understanding the utter importance of meaningful communication and allowing public relations to build a bridge between their work and the image they create.

The second reference name guiding the book and discussing about its importance is *Aneta Bogdan*, FCIM Chartered Marketer and Managing partner at Brandient. She talks from the point of view of the specialist who developed her professional skills in the local culture and has seen two decades of "transformative society", as she well describes the Romanian society. Miss Bogdan points out one of the most difficult challenges the Romanian society has to face: an exacerbated growth. From the fall of the past regime, Romania faced the ever-developing nature of capitalism and was confronted with prerequisites which come from the fast-paced, developed Western world. The local PR specialists always had to "burn" stages, in order to keep up with the callings of the "civilized" world. More than this, she also underlines the fact the Romanian market was always oriented towards numbers, rather than quality. The attempt of presenting everything in a better light, in order to justify some budgets of the parties involved.

Moreover, even at the dawn of a new era in the Romanian PR, many brands of the industry have serious brand relevance issues. The problem of differentiation is

still extremely strong in this industry and this proves to be a big problem in helping clients to face the current times and current opportunities. Nevertheless, there are areas in which the local companies deserve the “pat on the back”. Many did pioneering work in their times. The market was virgin in terms of knowledge and material and they had to do their best without professional directions.

The chapters of the book are extremely generous in the areas covered. As the subtitle of the book suggests, they reflect “15 years of practice and benchmarks of an industry”. They vary from: corporate and brand communication, to crisis communication, digital and tech PR, public affairs, lobbying and advocacy, NGOs, cultural PR and the list goes on. They all encompass case studies which marked and shaped the Romanian market in the last two decades.

All the cases are structured in a similar way, in search of unity. Starting with opportunity for that campaign, the authors carry you through all the stages of the development, presenting the main pillars of the strategic and creative processes. Although extremely different in their specifics and with different approaches, varying from category to category, there is a certain common pattern one can identify. Most of them try to nuance the “pioneering nature” of their work, as miss Bogdan mentions at the beginning of the book. Understandable, as several known Romania practitioners caught the dawn of the domain. However, distancing a little from the style of the foreword writers, they try to cast the best light on the projects they worked on. If the reader can indulge with this association, the book is a display of cases much like the tableaus in a museum. The viewer is able to analyze each case separately, review the technique used in conceiving it and its “textures”.

Of course, the most cavalier of the readers could say the illustrations of many cases is too idyllic, as it predominantly shows the glamour of the ideas and the results. The burdensome processes which mostly take place behind the curtain are not detailed as much. Nevertheless, all the efforts put in by the specialists who contributed should be a source of inspiration for the future generation of professionals. The lucidity, doubled by passion with which the practitioners present their cases is most certainly set to prove that the Romanian PR industry has solid chances of developing to its full potential in the many years to come. The local culture is slowly opening its eyes to wider contexts and our professionals, although slowed down by a rough start, seem to have learned the fast-paced steps of global communication and proved they have the necessary resources and abilities to compete with a global market.

**Reviewed by**

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