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Monday, February 27, 2012

Book: DC Is Where PR, PA Action Is

College communications/PR majors as well others in PR can find out why so many career paths lead to Washington, D.C., these days by reading **"In the Trenches"** by John Adams, who has had a D.C. firm since 1973.

John Adams Associates has been up to its ears in many of the major PR/PA stories involving D.C. in one way or another for 39 years.

Adams started as a journalist and never let his writing skills atrophy. He combined this talent with knowledge of D.C. to build a firm that has worked for American Express, General Electric, DuPont, 3M, Dow, France's Aerospatiale, Canada's Bombardier, Sony, and other clients, and industry groups such as the American Petroleum Institute and American Chemistry Council and coalitions including the Clean Air Working Group, Environmental Industry Council, and Manufacturers of Emission Controls.



Adams

His firm became known for its expertise in scientific issues. Chief scientist John Heinze, formerly at the National Institutes of Health, quickly analyzes new studies and determines how seriously they should be taken by clients, legislators or the press.

Adams continued to do plenty of writing including speeches, congressional testimony, developing background papers and writing articles and letters to the editor for publications. Evidence of his skills is that he wrote a speech for President Ford on inflation and one for President Reagan on the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

Adams was founding chairman of the Worldcom Group of independent agencies, working closely with New York financial PR counselor Andrew Edson who was honorary secretary.

Was Reporter in U.K.

The first reporting jobs of Adams were at the *Gazette* and *The Daily Telegraph* in England. From there he went to editorial posts in Munich and Bonn working for Radio Free Europe in the 1950's. After that he went to the U.S. where he became an editor at the Catholic News and later a correspondent with ABC News and CBS News.

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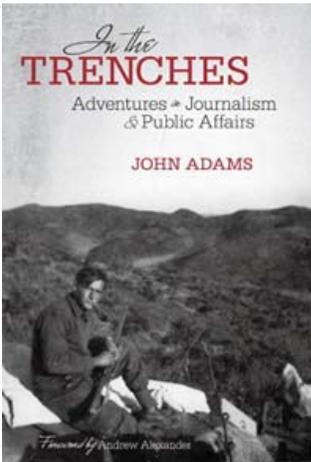
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Before launching his writing career, Adams served a required two years with the British army. He found himself at the age of 20 in 1951 fighting against the Chinese in the Korean War. He received head and back injuries from an exploding shell in one of the battles and was captured. He and about 20 prisoners, only "loosely guarded," managed to escape in the dark by working their way through a minefield that they had laid down only a few days previously.

From Telegraph to RFE to U.S.

Adams jumped from the Telegraph to Radio Free Europe by answering an ad in a trade paper looking for an editor. That led to the job at the Catholic News in New York because his immediate boss at RFE was Bill Fanning who had become editor of that paper. Adams had spent seven years in Germany and felt that was "enough."

A key career move by Adams was offering to be a correspondent in Africa after several priests and nuns were killed in the Belgian Congo. He became the only reporter there for the Catholic press. His stories drew the attention of ABC which resulted in a full-time job from ABC at twice the salary when he returned to New York.

"I found myself flying to the 1964 Republican convention in San Francisco," he wrote. "For me, a new era had begun."

However, the ABC job ended abruptly in November of that year once the election was over. Adams was quickly recruited by CBS but that job didn't last too long, either. Next job was at the Congressional Quarterly which was planning a broadcast service. CQ decided after six months it didn't want such a service and Adams took his first PR post—with the Investment Company Institute.

This did not hold his interest too long because ICI was dominated by government lawyers. Adams found his biggest challenge was to "stay awake during the long silent afternoons."

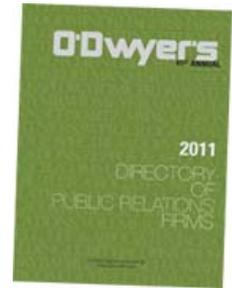
A neighbor tipped him off to a post with the U.S. Price Commission which was battling inflation in the 1970s. He became director of the Office of PA in the Executive Office of President Nixon, working on the Nixon's controversial price control program. That job ended when the Administration deemed the program a success since inflation dipped to 3%.

Staff Had Government, Political Backgrounds

Adams opened his own firm in 1973 with people from government and political jobs. None had ever worked in PR. Three co-workers from the Price Commission soon joined him.

Here's how Adams views D.C. "It's a place where people come with their problems, where they want policies or regulations changed. It's not the exciting mecca of advertising, PR and marketing of consumer goods that one finds in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, London or Paris...our activities are best described as government relations, PA or issues management, or simply, consulting."

Adams cites the many successful people who had tours at his firm including intern Debbie DiMaio. She landed a job as an associate producer with a morning show in Baltimore hosted by Oprah Winfrey. Adams says that when DiMaio later got a job at ABC-TV's Channel 7 in Chicago she convinced the station to hire Winfrey for the station's morning show, "AM Chicago." In less than a year the show went from



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February, *Environmental PR & Public Affairs*

March, *Food & Beverage PR*

April, *Broadcast Media Services & Social Media PR*

May, *PR Firm Rankings*

June, *Multicultural/Diversity PR*

July, *Travel & Tourism PR*

August, *Prof. Svcs. PR & Financial/Investor Rels.*

September, *Beauty & Fashion PR*

October, *Healthcare & Medical PR*

November: *Technology PR*

December: *Sports & Entertainment PR*

low-ratings to No. 1.

Adams says media are changing so fast that “no one knows what journalism will look like in a few years, or even next year. It may well be all electronic with no newspapers at all.”

But he still urges young people to consider journalism as a career because the internet “badly needs” those who can “ferret out the truth and make it comprehensible to an ever widening audience.”

Consumers are being overwhelmed with information and need journalists who can serve as “explainers-in-chief,” he writes.

Posted by **Jack O'Dwyer** in **books** at **12:03** | **Comments (0)** | **Trackbacks (0)**

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2. APCO Worldwide, D.C. - \$113,400,000
3. Waggener Edstrom, Wash. - \$111,910,000
4. Ruder Finn, NY - \$97,059,000
5. Text 100, San Fran. - \$46,700,000
6. WCG, San Fran. - \$37,008,000
7. MWW Group, NJ - \$34,798,000
8. Qorvis Communications, DC - \$29,713,320
9. ICR, CT - \$26,514,0009.
10. Schwartz Comms., Mass. - \$25,210,803

Ranking of 151 Top PR Firms and Agencies



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[Ranking Instructions PDF](#)

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- Professional Svcs.
- Sports/Leisure
- Technology/Industrial
- Travel

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- Atlanta
- Chicago
- Connecticut
- Florida
- Los Angeles
- Massachusetts
- Midwest Cities
- Minneapolis/St. Paul
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