



# The Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management: Origins, influences, issues and prospects



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## ABSTRACT

This paper chronicles the formation and development of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (GA) up to 2002. It sets the GA's genesis within the context of other internationalisation initiatives undertaken by the wider public relations practitioner community and draws links between the formation of the GA and the emerging phenomenon of globalisation. The paper's intent is to describe the formation of the GA from a historical perspective, to understand the forces that led to its creation and to appreciate the different drivers and motivation of founding members. These factors provide a springboard to consider some of the issues that currently challenge GA, some of which were inherent in the governance model it chose at its inception.

Through the analysis of original documentation, supplemented by associated contemporary materials and in-depth interviews with key players, the paper seeks to address the following questions: why was GA created? What visions and operational models were presented? What challenges emerged and how were they overcome? How do reflections on the early years of GA inform current issues? The paper concludes with a series of topics for future research.

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## 1. Introduction

The Global Alliance of Public Relations and Communication Management (GA), headquartered in Switzerland, represents more than 66 public relations associations and institutions worldwide and reaches over 170,000 association members. This paper presents an analysis of the driving forces and key issues, particularly the competing positions of the participant organisations which were prevalent during the formation of the GA. This is set within the context of other internationalisation initiatives undertaken by the wider public relations practitioner community, in a common drive to develop, promote and professionalise the practice. The paper also links the formation of the GA and the emerging phenomenon of globalisation at the time and proposes that both are connected.

The paper covers five main areas:

- Attempts to form global initiatives by a number of individual associations, namely

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- The International Public Relations Association (IPRA), the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and the then Institute of Public Relations (formerly the IPR, becoming the Chartered Institute of Public Relations [CIPR] in 2005). This places the GA negotiations and ultimate agreement into wider industry context.
- The emerging globalisation agenda which included pressures to establish global standards and connections.
- Early meetings between members of several national and
- International associations in the late 1990s leading to a commitment in principle by more than 20 associations in 2000 and finally to an agreement on a vision, mission, objectives and structure for an international alliance in 2002.
- An analysis and discussion of the formation years of the GA.
- Reflections on current opportunities and challenges.

## 2. Method

A historical, descriptive research approach was taken which embraces a timeline narrative (given in Fig. 1). However, the intent was not just to describe the events that led to the formation of the GA, but by viewing them through a critical lens, to use them as pointers to contemporary issues and challenges and as a cause for reflection and analysis. In this way, history has been used to both foreshadow and frame the current issues faced by GA. The approach involved both primary and secondary research.

Year	Location	Highlights
1996	Ottawa	CPRS National president Jean Valin begins planning for Year 2000 reciprocity initiative with Executive Director Arbo Matilla.
1997	Ottawa December	Letter from CPRS Immediate Past National President Jean Valin sent to over 60 PR associations proposing reciprocity initiative as per PRSA/CPRS model for a year 2000 unveiling.
	New York October	PRSA International section submits recommendations on global outreach to PRSA board
1998	London	Email from Peter Walker President IPR UK in response to reciprocity initiative inviting Jean Valin to present the CPRS reciprocity initiative at meeting in London at a PR summit as part of their 50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary initiatives. Several leaders from several PR associations will be present. Jean Valin unable to attend but Peter Walker presents reciprocity initiative on his behalf.
	New York January-May	PRSA forms task Force on Global Understanding. Issues RFP and develops business plan. Nancy Bricker & Associates is chosen to study global initiatives.
	London April 22	Ray Gaulke (PRSA executive director) meets with John Lavallee (exec dir IPR) to discuss collaboration prior to meeting. Meeting chaired by Peter Walker (President IPR) with representatives of PRSA (Ray Gaulke), IPR (Philip Dewhurst), PRISA (Margi Moscardi

Fig. 1. Timeline history of the Global Alliance formation years 1996–2002.

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