

JEFFREY DEGRAFF

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Professional Summary

An experienced bilingual (Spanish & English) communications professional capable of conveying key messages in circumstances ranging from national crisis coverage to local human-interest stories. Possesses extensive knowledge in messaging, crisis communications, media production, and traditional and digital dissemination techniques. Career spans a variety of industries, a testament to adaptability and quick learning.

Skills

Strategic & Crisis Communications | Governmental Affairs & Public Policy | Executive Communication | Community Outreach | Media Relations | Social Media Management | Event Planning & Coordination | Bilingual Communications

Select Accomplishments

- Media spokesperson for multiple Fortune 200 companies (local to international level coverage)
 - Direct proactive and reactive media activities
 - 24-hour response readiness, both on the ground and remotely
- Extensive experience and training in crisis communications
 - Specialized crisis communications training from Harvard Kennedy School of Government
 - Led communications for natural disasters, industrial accidents, and law enforcement activities
- Developed and directed short- and long-term strategic communications campaigns
 - Covered brand transition, leadership restructure and issue related topics
 - Consulted closely with executive teams and provided specific counsel
- Website content creator specializing in communications and management messages
 - Designed, maintained, and promoted personal website
 - Research, write, and edit posts detailing professional and personal experiences

Experience

Norfolk Southern Corp, (Atlanta, GA)

Class I railroad operating in 22 states across the eastern half of the country. This position manages and coordinates all external communications and media interactions.

Sr. Communications Manager: Operations & Safety

July 2021 - Present

- Counsel Operations Division leadership on effective internal and external communications strategies
- Develop communication programs in partnership with Operations Division leadership that strengthen employee engagement and promote a strong safety culture
- Lead communications initiatives in the areas of precision-scheduled railroading, labor relations, and the safe transportation of various materials
- Collaborate with external stakeholders to increase awareness of safety initiatives.
- Serve as media spokesperson as required.

Media Relations Manager

Feb 2020 - July 2021

- Respond to all media inquiries from local, regional, and national outlets
- Proactively pitch media placements and opportunities
- Prepare and train company leaders for media interactions and interviews
- Assist Corporate Communications department with internal communications and policies
- Develop crisis communications plans, policies, and strategies for deployment across company
- Formulate and coordinate messaging across departments for external use

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Experience *(continued)*

HDR, Inc, (Houston, TX)

International engineering firm serving clients in the public and private sectors. This position leads strategic communications efforts for projects across the Texas Gulf Coast, specializing in public engagement.

Strategic Communications Lead

Sept 2019 - Feb 2020

- Act as freight rail specialist for communications projects across entire practice
- Coordinate public meetings and outreach efforts for projects, including along and across Mexican border
- Assist in developing department protocols and procedures for growing Strategic Communications practice

Union Pacific Railroad (Houston, TX)

A Fortune 150 company that operates across twenty-three states. This position served as the primary media and communications lead for eleven states.

Senior Director of Media Relations

July 2014 - Oct 2018

- Monitored communication needs, identified opportunities for outreach, and secured executive participation to support strategic corporate communication goals
- Coordinated responses to all inbound media requests and inquiries, and prepared, pitched and placed proactive stories and content in local outlets and trade publications
- Led on-the-ground crisis communications responses, and directed efforts to mitigate potential crises
- Provided strategy, input and content to internal projects, social media efforts and overall communications positioning, including advising CEO and other senior executives
- Worked with the Government Affairs team, provided messaging and analyzed legislation and policy response

Louisiana Housing Corporation (Baton Rouge, LA)

A state agency tasked with providing housing opportunities for low to moderate income individuals and families. The Public Information Director leads all public relations, media responses and marketing activities

Public Information Director,

Sep 2007 - July 2014

- Directed media relations (local/state/regional) through the issuance of news releases, crafted statements and as spokesman in interviews
- Managed all external events, meetings, trainings, expos, workshops, and statewide meetings
- Led the creation of the Community Outreach Department

Education

Louisiana State University (Baton Rouge, LA)

Mass Communications - Public Relations

May 2001

Minor in Spanish; completed internship with University Relations Department

Harvard University (Cambridge, MA)

Leadership in Crisis - Crisis Communications

April 2011

Part of Executive Leadership Program hosted by Kennedy School of Government