

Public Relations Industry Paper:
Belinda Arnold the Founder of BAM Communications

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PRL 206: Public Relations Principles and Practices

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9 December 2025

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On November 20th, 2025 I had the privilege of interviewing Belinda Arnold, the founder of BAM Communications, a boutique communications agency specializing in beauty and health and wellness. However, Belinda's career is made up of much more than founding BAM Communications; she held many different positions during her career, from large corporate positions to using connection and storytelling to help small up-and-coming brands take off. Belinda's story inspired me; her most rewarding experiences have been the ones that really transform a client's prospects from the ground up. Interviewing Belinda opened my eyes to the idea that being successful in the Public Relations industry isn't just about graduating and getting a job and staying there. I learned that the PR industry is special because it is built on relationships and connections. Belinda paved a professional path for herself and wasn't limited to working for someone else. She utilized networking and relationship-building throughout her career to find passions and pursue them, not just climb a corporate ladder. Interviewing Belinda solidified that I want to use PR to help emerging companies get their start; we need PR to help us find what isn't on the market, not just to hit us in the head with what we already know.

Long before founding BAM Communications, Belinda graduated from Florida State University, with a bachelors of science in marketing. Belinda moved to New York City to pursue her dreams of working in the fashion and beauty industry. She got her foot in the door of the fashion industry when she was hired as a receptionist at Calvin Klein. During her time at Calvin Klein she met two women who decided to leave Calvin Klein to start their own small PR firm focused on fashion clients. She followed them, joined their firm and began her career in PR. Belinda used her connections from her time at Calvin Klein to reach small up-and-coming

fashion designers at the point of their business where they were just about to take off. She has the chance to work on large scale fashion production projects and fashion shows.

Then, J. Walter Thompson, a large advertising firm, recruited her. She worked on the Diamond Information Center (DeBeers) account as a Public Relations Account Supervisor where she coordinated press for diamond retailers like Tiffany and Van Cleef, helped plan events, dressed celebrities and got press on diamond jewelry. This position was unique because Belinda was able to have creative control. At the time, DeBeers was not yet a fully developed brand; they simply supplied all of the diamonds to brands. She found particular reward in this work helping clients who didn't have a lot of prior experience with PR spearhead their communication efforts.

Belinda's connections drove her career forward when one of her old clients, Malia Mills, a fashion designer that she worked with at the small PR firm founded by her coworkers at Calvin Klein, invited her to join as Vice President of Marketing. She worked in-house with her for about a year; however, she couldn't quite afford the salary that Belinda needed. So, Belinda decided to start up her own consultancy on the side, which is how BAM Communications was born. When founding BAM, Belinda learned how to do a sole proprietorship and how to do the billing, accounting and bookkeeping. She continued working with her fashion clients at Malia Mills, but began switching over to the beauty industry where she began working for larger beauty companies such as L'Oreal and Ralph Lauren Fragrances. She enjoyed this work because working with the larger companies provides access to many more resources; however, she continued picking up freelance work on the side. During this period of Belinda's career, she had a foot in both worlds—working for a larger, high-end agency and building BAM from the ground up, doing the minutia of a solo consultant.

Belinda then got the job that she claims was the best job so far in her career, Vice president of Global Communications at Coty Prestige, where she ended up working for five years. She worked in this role for a comparatively long time, and during this time, she built a lot of relationships and connections that she would tap into later in her career. This corporate experience would prove really essential later on as she built her network in the fashion and beauty industry and grew BAM. A memorable experience from her time at Coty Prestige was working with Sarah Jessica Parker, "I would sit in on the strategy meetings, watch Sarah Jessica Parker smell different notes and explain what kind of fragrance she wanted, so that I could document it and craft a story." (B. Arnold, personal communication, November 20, 2025) She explained that her favorite part about working in the Public Relations industry is that her work "was really built on relationships and storytelling" and "the events were so much fun to plan based on the concept of the fragrance. It was very creative, I would work with the in-house creative team and come up with how the venue was styled, the flowers and what the aha moment was going to be." (B. Arnold, personal communication, November 20, 2025)

After an economic decline, Belinda's position at Coty Prestige was eliminated and she then was hired as Head of US PR for Mugler and Azzaro Fragrances at Groupe Clarins where she spent five years working in-house. Belinda's career demonstrates that the beauty of the public relations industry is that many professional paths are possible—public relations is not just about climbing a corporate ladder, but making your own opportunities through relationship-building. Belinda used this turning point in her career as an opportunity to lean into her freelance work at BAM Communications. She spent five years working in-house at Groupe Clarins while simultaneously managing her own clients at BAM.

Currently, Belinda operates BAM Communications as a boutique agency headquartered in New York City, working with clean beauty clients such as Uma Oils and Surface Deep. When BAM was founded, clean beauty wasn't even a term people used, so Belinda was able to work in the clean beauty industry as it was just beginning to take off. Because Belinda had been working in the PR industry long before BAM's founding, she was well connected in the industry and was able to gain a lot of her clients such as UMA Oils through her previous connections.

Even as Belinda held different corporate roles, she continued building BAM on the side and was so successful because of how she positioned herself in the PR industry and the connections she had made throughout her career. PR is really about building relationships, and a lot of what Belinda values most is building relationships with clients who are emerging into their industries. Success in the PR industry isn't defined by the job title and clients you have right now, but the connections you build across a career, which was the foundation of her success working with smaller brands and startups to help them grow and succeed.

BAM Communications's major service is to work with clients through their 360° customer-centric approach to navigate a plan unique to each client. The staff of BAM is made up of 4 people including Belinda. Belinda highlighted important members of her team such as her Account Executive who's worked with her at all of her jobs over the years. She also had an intern that worked on client reports, research, spreadsheets and worked with social media influencers.

BAM operates as a Public Relations Counseling Firms industry or "agency" in the fashion and beauty industry. PR agencies "promote companies or individuals via editorial coverage known as 'earned' or 'free' media—stories appearing on websites, newspapers, magazines and TV programs—as compared to 'paid media' or advertisements." (Wynne, n.d., para. 1) Much of Belinda's work consists of pitching stories to clean beauty outlets to promote

her clients. Belinda shares that the important skills needed when working for a small PR agency such as BAM are to be adaptable and really be able to think outside the box because the PR industry is constantly evolving. Belinda shares that now, it is harder than ever to get press. Earlier in her career, she had strong relationships with around 60 editors. Now, when she is pitching a story, she has around 2,000 people in her database, much more than just the editorial team; there's the commerce team and all of the freelance writers. This makes it much more difficult for Belinda to gain coverage making it crucial to be able to think outside the box in order to get coverage.

Belinda shared that being polished, client facing and not having an ego are all crucial skills when working at a boutique agency. "Particularly in service companies such as public relations agencies, it is imperative that all business partnerships are effective...It is important to not only maintain, but also improve current customer relationships in an effort to increase an organization's bottom line both in good and more difficult financial times." (Everling, 2009)

Belinda shared that what makes BAM Communications unique is the fact that they go above and beyond the PR work for their clients and help up-and-coming clean beauty brands get their start. BAM offers comprehensive support, such as interface with the client, doing proposals, pitching, executing the "nitty-gritty stuff" like expense reports and quite literally packing products and sending them out via UPS.

Because BAM is a small boutique agency it operates differently than the other larger organizations that Belinda has worked for such as Coty or L'Oreal because there isn't the same structure as a large company. Belinda describes her role as "literally doing everything." Belinda interfaces with the client, especially if it's a new client that she is trying to win over. She does her own expense reports and pitching. Belinda says her main role is to make sure the clients are

happy and make sure that she exceeds expectations. When working with a new client, Belinda always writes up a proposal and a contract outlining what she offers and expects to deliver and she hopes to exceed those expectations so that they renew another contract.

BAM's 360° customer-centric approach builds relationships with clients past simply managing their PR, BAM aims to help clients improve every aspect of their business. Belinda stated "I think it's so important for brands to know that you can have the best product of something, but if people don't know that it's there, what good is it? There's someone right behind you that's going to do the same thing and is going to have great communications. Even though your product might be better, it doesn't matter." (B. Arnold, personal communication, November 20, 2025) This outlook drives BAM's speciality of working to understand every aspect of their client's business and ensuring that it all works together to build the brand and get sales. Because Belinda is so well networked in the PR industry, Belinda can find investors and decide which outlets to pitch new up-and-coming brands to.

BAM Communications works with multiple clients simultaneously, so Belinda must allocate her time and ensure she manages diverse accounts effectively. She explained that the challenge of having an agency like BAM is you never know if you're going to have work after the next three or six months so, you tend to take on too much just in case. Because BAM focuses on small up-and-coming beauty brands most of her clients don't have big budgets, so they need to take breaks sometimes. They'll pause for around three months then return back to continue working with BAM. She says that "it's all about time management and figuring out what the priority of the day is, which depends on if there's deadlines or if she feels like she has been focusing more on one client than another." She said "some days you could work 20 hours and get the same result as if you had worked for two hours." (B. Arnold, personal communication,

November 20, 2025) Essentially, quality over quantity is the key to managing your time when working at an agency like BAM, which is why being strategic, knowing what works and doesn't work, and letting go of some of the busy work is crucial. She added "sometimes it is best to narrow your focus. If you have multiple ideas but you think that maybe three outlets would generate more attention towards your client, focus on those three." (B. Arnold, personal communication, November 20, 2025)

In class we are learning that the definition of PR is "A strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics." (Page & Parnell, 2024) Belinda's job aligns to that definition because essentially, that is everything she does at BAM. She shared an example of when she was working with one of her clients Surface Deep, which is a clean beauty company that specializes in dermatologist developed anti-odorant products and skincare using glycolic acid and botanicals to prevent body odor and improve skin health. In the initial stages of working with Surface Deep, they had an underdeveloped website showcasing images of their product being used by a tweenaged girl. Belinda noticed that it didn't convey who their customers were. She told them "Your customer has to be wealthy. They're not going to spend \$29 on a deodorant. They have to be a certain age. They have to have experience and they have to care about clean beauty and packaging." (B. Arnold, personal communication, November 20, 2025) The model on their original website would be a target audience for different companies such as ELF beauty. She said "I think even though the brand thinks that they're doing the right things to reach their customer, sometimes they don't understand who their customer is." (B. Arnold, personal communication, November 20, 2025) Belinda helped Surface Deep rebrand their website catered to a more accurate target audience.

The definition of PR is about knowing your audience and managing the relationship between them and an organization based on that. Belinda is very thoughtful in understanding the outlets that she pitches to and who is reading those outlets. If a potential customer discovers her client Surface Deep through an article that she pitched for and decides they want to buy it, then goes to the homepage and they see this not great image that's kind of grainy of a 13-year-old, that can drive them away from the purchase. Therefore, by helping Surface Deep rebrand their website, Belinda managed the relationship between them and their public by understanding their brand, target audience and tailoring content to them.

I asked Belinda what advice she had for me, a sophomore in college looking to start up my career in public relations. She emphasized the importance of knowing the ins and outs and being an expert in digital marketing, SEO and Artificial Intelligence. She said to keep an open mind and try to get as much experience around the overall business of a brand as possible. The PR industry is constantly evolving especially with technological advances in artificial intelligence, so it is important to evolve with it. My main takeaway from Belinda is that networking and relationship building are the foundation of the PR industry. In order to be successful, it is crucial to find passions and pursue them, not just climb a corporate ladder. Going into this interview with Belinda, I was surprised that her founding BAM communications began as a side project alongside her previous positions. I was inspired to see how Belinda started at large corporations and still founded BAM because of her passion for the industry. It taught me that being successful in the PR industry is not about landing your next job, it's about making connections and positioning yourself to seek opportunities wherever you can find them.

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