

# The Truth About Spin: A PR Veteran on Honesty, Courage, and the Stories She Won't Tell

*Rachel Jimenez has spent a decade navigating the grey zones of corporate communications. She says the job isn't about spin. It's about knowing when to walk away.*

By Mary Pitts

Rachel Jimenez learned the most important rule of her career from a woman she describes simply as "a higher-up." The rule was blunt: never put anything in a press release you couldn't defend to a journalist. "She told me that the moment you start massaging facts, you've lowered your own credibility," Jimenez recalls. "Credibility is the strongest asset you have."

More than a decade later, Jimenez is an account director at Trevelino/Keller, an integrated public relations, marketing, and creative firm recognized as the top-ranked agency in the Southeast. She oversees campaigns across the technology, healthcare and financial services sectors, work that puts her at the center of every kind of corporate communications pressure imaginable. That early lesson, she says, never left her.

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Public relations has a reputation problem. The profession is routinely caricatured as the machinery behind corporate spin, a dark art designed to obscure, deflect and mislead.

Jimenez has heard all of it. She doesn't entirely disagree that the industry has earned some of its bad press. But she's spent her career making the case, quietly and practically, that it doesn't have to be that way.

The most instructive story Jimenez tells involves a regional client, a safety incident and a decision that wasn't hers to make. The client had experienced a workplace accident and, hoping to keep it quiet, refused to issue any public statement. The plan was to wait out the news cycle. It didn't work. "When the story continued to gain negative attention," she says, "it became twice as bad because we still hadn't made a public acknowledgement."

For Jimenez, the lesson was less about strategy than about integrity. Transparency delivered early, with genuine accountability, almost always produces better outcomes than silence — not just for the company's reputation, but for the community whose interest in safety the client had a responsibility to address. She still advises clients this way, even when they push back.

*"Honesty delivered early and with genuine accountability almost always produces better long-term results."*

Today, Jimenez regularly references the Public Relations Society of America's Code of Ethics when walking her team through campaign decisions. She describes it not as a compliance document but as a reminder of what the work is actually for. "Our industry has a higher purpose beyond just serving our individual clients," she says. "We're here to

help our clients communicate truthfully with the public. That is valuable work, if you do it responsibly."

When asked which professional virtue matters most in her field, Jimenez doesn't hesitate: courage. Not the abstract variety. The specific, daily kind. The courage to tell a client something they don't want to hear. To walk away from business that would compromise the firm's integrity. To push back when a campaign tactic crosses a line, even when backing down is the easier path.

"Some people in this business can be very good at rationalizing, finding ways to tell themselves that something shady is just common practice," she says. "The ones I respect most don't need to rationalize."

It's a standard she holds herself to, and one she seems to have held from the beginning, from the day a mentor told a younger Rachel Jimenez that her credibility was her most valuable asset. It wasn't abstract guidance then, and it isn't now. It's the work.