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## 10 years in PR: A Hayslett Group Anniversary *Chatting with CEO Charlie Hayslett*

*So, you're celebrating 10 years in business. What's your reaction to making it this far?*

CH: A combination, I think, of at least three things, and I guess the first is amazement that it's already been a decade since we hung out the shingle. The second is a very, very deep sense of gratitude both to our clients and to the terrific people who have been part of this company. And the third is enthusiasm about our future. I think we're well positioned to take advantage of the economic turnaround that seems to be coming.

*What made you decide to start your own business?*

CH: I had wanted to for as far back as I can remember. Back when I was a reporter with *The Atlanta Journal*, I thought that someday I'd want to own and operate a small paper somewhere, maybe back in my hometown. But then I had three daughters and I had to get a real job, and over time the focus shifted to trying to establish a communications shop. Plus, people have been telling me my whole life that I had an entrepreneurial streak and that sooner or later I would try something stupid. I guess this is it.

*What made you think it could work?*

CH: Well, I had worked for two larger agencies, both good shops, and I had worked at a couple of major corporations. The old C&S bank - now part of Bank of America - briefly in the early '80s, and then BellSouth for 10 years. I had agency experience and had been on the client side, and I had a strong sense that there was an opening for a communications firm built first and foremost around talented, seasoned, senior-level practitioners, and with a very strong service ethic. I've always believed that if you could assemble a talented team, you could sell it, and that if you delivered valuable service at reasonable prices, clients would continue coming back to you. I believed that on day one and nothing's happened since to change my mind.

*And after 10 years, what do you think?*

CH: Believe it or not, I still enjoy it. The thing is that, the tough times, and the challenges, never stop coming.

*Believe it or not,  
I still enjoy it.*



You have to just step back and say, okay, I can get through this, and you just bear down, and persevere through it. The economic downturn with 9-11 and staff and partnership changes, all represent dips, but we are still here, and in many respects we are stronger.

*What's been the hardest thing to handle or adjust to over the years?*

CH: That, inevitably, people leave, that things change. We've been very fortunate over the years in that we have attracted very talented and capable people, and from time to time a client or a larger agency will come along and snatch somebody up. Or peoples' priorities change and they decide to do something different. I remember when the very first person we hired was recruited after a couple of years by one of our clients. It really got to me. I hated to see her go, even though I knew it was a good career move for her. Then one day several years after that, she called me out of the blue to tell me how much she appreciated the opportunity we had given her. That was personally very rewarding.

*How would you describe the culture at Hayslett Group?*

CH: First and foremost, it's one in which client service comes first. Several years ago we held a firm planning meeting and got to

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# News around the Firm

## Hayslett Group Scores in Competitions

For the sixth year in a row, Hayslett Group has won numerous awards from the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Thanks to all of the clients who made it possible!

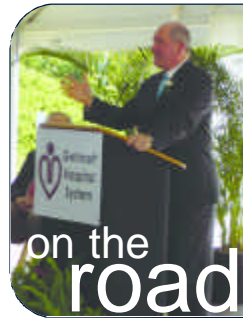
### IABC 2004 Golden Flame Awards

Golden Flame: Writing - Feature Writing  
Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals

Silver Flame: Writing - Speechwriting  
Atlanta Public Schools

Bronze Flame: Special Event Piece  
DeKalb Medical Center

Bronze Flame: Graphic Design - Logo  
Hayslett Group



This past October, Gwinnett Hospital System broke ground for a new hospital in Duluth, Ga. The event, planned by Hayslett Group and Gwinnett Hospital System featured Gov. Sonny Perdue as a speaker and garnered television and front-page newspaper coverage.

### A Peek at HG Events

### PRSA 2004 Phoenix Awards

PRSA Phoenix - Writing - Editorials/OP-ED  
Atlanta Public Schools

PRSA Phoenix - Speechwriting  
Atlanta Public Schools

PRSA Certificate of Excellence  
Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals

## Anniversary - Continued from Cover

brainstorming about our position in the marketplace and how we wanted to be perceived. I can't remember who came up with the line, but the motto we left with that day was "Client Service: First, last and always." It's obviously stuck, and it's something we're serious about and that I hope permeates and shapes the culture. So that's number one. Number two is that we try to maintain a flexible, collegial workplace, and I hope this is a place where people enjoy coming to work, at least on most days.

### Any favorite client or success stories?

CH: I guess there are three that immediately come to mind. They were big successes and made a real difference for the clients. In the late '90s we were brought in to quietly organize communications support for a new high-technology initiative being planned by the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism. Our rollout program generated a massive amount of local, national and international publicity, helped attract the first new corporate sponsors and set the stage for a successful effort to convince the General Assembly to put about \$12 or \$13 million in funding into the program. Second I would mention the Clean Water Initiative for the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. We had a very finite budget, but managed to

generate about a million dollars' worth of publicity and were able to show through polling data a significant increase in public awareness of the water quality problem and public willingness to address the problem, including support for a tax increase. As with the high-tech initiative, this campaign set the stage for a successful legislative effort, this time to create a new body to deal with the metro area's clean water problems across political jurisdictions. And finally, our Georgia DOT Work Zone Safety campaign. Georgia at the time was experiencing a very high number of highway work zone accidents and deaths. We convinced DOT to redirect their messaging and pushed through a really innovative campaign that included earned media, paid media and community outreach. The result was that during the campaign period work zone deaths fell by more than 55 percent compared to the same period the year before. Communications actually helped save lives. That was very powerful.

### Looking forward, where do you think the business is headed?

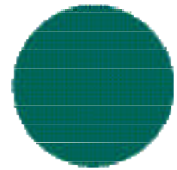
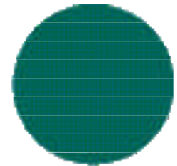
C: The model has shifted from telling people what to say - traditional "PR" - to counseling them on what to do. That's what we've been about for a long time. At first, clients didn't quite know what to make of it: "What do you mean I may not need a brochure?" But more and more, we're now being brought in on the front end, to help develop the communications strategy for a company or organization in tandem with the overall strategy. Because if you haven't got the strategy nailed, honestly, the brochure's not going to help much! ●

*Communiqué is written by Hayslett Group staff and published as a service to our clients. We appreciate your comments, suggestions and ideas for the newsletter. Please email your input to [mclark@hayslettgroup.com](mailto:mclark@hayslettgroup.com).*



Join Us to "Lunch & Learn"...details on back!  
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**Easy to navigate?** Is your Web design so clever and quirky that navigating it is difficult? The best sites are informative without resembling a maze. Use a search engine or site map in addition to clear navigation.

**Equipped with accurate contact info?** There should be a phone number, e-mail address and a mailing address listed for your company — *yes, all three!* A visitor should be able to find the numbers easily.

**Up to Date?** Make sure your content, press releases and news are up to date. Has your company changed addresses or phone numbers? Have you discontinued a service or product? Nothing is more irritating to a visitor than finding outdated information on a Web site.

These are only a few guidelines to make your Web site as successful as possible. If you'd like to learn more about improving your company's site, contact us at (770) 522-8855. Hayslett Group can enhance your online presence to work seamlessly with your other PR and marketing tools!



# Lunch & Learn

*Feed your mind & body...free!*

Hayslett Group would like to invite you to join us for a casual *Lunch & Learn*. Nibble on lunch, chat with other professionals and take in an IABC sponsored teleseminar.

**Integrating Print and Online Communication Vehicles**  
Thursday, February 24, 2005 10:30am - 12:00pm

Please RSVP to [mclark@hayslettgroup.com](mailto:mclark@hayslettgroup.com) to reserve your spot. For more information on the event visit this issue of *Communique* online at [www.hayslettgroup.com](http://www.hayslettgroup.com).

*A past Lunch & Learn guest comments on her experience:*

*"Great idea! It was so interesting to see so many bright professional women in one room! Thanks Hayslett!"*

*- Lori Urbaniak, Wood Partners*