

Carla Jean Whitley, APR

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Senior communications leader with expertise in executive counsel, crisis response and media strategy. Advises C-suite leaders on messaging strategy, media positioning and crisis response. Recognized for cross-functional leadership, inclusive workplace culture, ethical AI workflows and values-driven storytelling.

Professional experience

Brasfield & Gorrie | Birmingham, AL

Senior communications manager | 2026–Present

- Partner with C-suite executives and subject matter experts to shape high-level messaging, prepare for media engagements and steer crisis response.
- Collaborate with the VP of Communications to establish department strategy, annual priorities and operating workflows for a 13-person team.
- Lead a 3-person team, overseeing workload allocation and professional development.
- Built and deployed a library of AI-assisted communications tools and repeatable workflows, reducing production time on recurring deliverables, enabling more consistent brand voice at scale and expanding team output without adding headcount.

Communications manager | 2022–2026

- Led proactive reputation-building campaigns in priority markets, securing strategic coverage in top-tier outlets including The New York Times and ENR Southeast.
- Pioneered early adoption of AI tools for content development, establishing foundational workflows later scaled across the communications function.

Senior communications coordinator | 2020–2022

- Provided strategic communications counsel to internal business units to support regional visibility and organizational growth.
- Partnered with corporate responsibility team to lead companywide values-driven book studies and community initiatives.

Communications coordinator | 2018–2020

- Executed strategic communication plans for internal and external audiences to support organizational goals.
- Coordinated press release distribution and media monitoring to support PR outreach efforts.

Yoga instructor | Yoga[Lab] | Birmingham, AL | 2024–Present

Adjunct journalism instructor | University of Alabama and Samford University | 2012–2021

- Developed curriculum and instructed undergraduate and graduate courses in journalism, media writing and reporting.

Freelance writer, editor and author | Various Publications | 2004–Present

- Author of “Muscle Shoals Sound Studio” (6,000+ copies sold), “Birmingham Beer” (1,000+ copies sold), and “Balancing Act: Yoga Essays.”
- Writer and book reviewer for BookPage, Lonely Planet, Southern Living, Paste, others.

Earlier editorial experience

Features editor | Glenwood Springs Post Independent | Glenwood Springs, CO | 2017–2018

- Served as newsroom second-in-command; directed daily editorial meetings, coached reporters and managed newsroom staff.
- Awarded Solutions Journalism Network grant to fund an investigative reporting series on creative-sector affordable housing.

Features reporter | AL.com | Birmingham, AL | 2015–2016

- Covered diverse cultural topics, in addition to producing and co-hosting cultural podcasts and driving 500,000+ page views for the Go Set a Watchman series.

Managing editor | Birmingham magazine | Birmingham, AL | 2006–2015

- Directed editorial production, managed a \$30,000 budget, led editorial redesigns and developed the publication's intern program (promoted from Associate Editor in 2009).

Civic and community leadership

- **Yard sign director (volunteer)** | Doug Jones Gubernatorial Campaign | 2026
 - Built and directed regional distribution logistics across Jefferson County, managing inventory and 90 volunteers.
- **Board member and secretary** | Friends of Avondale Park | 2025–Present
- **Treasurer, strategic planning chair and former accreditation chair** | Public Relations Society of America (Alabama Chapter) | 2022–Present
- **Board member, board development, marketing and communications and strategic planning committees** | Better Basics | 2024–Present
- **Screenplay judge (volunteer)** | Sidewalk Film Festival/Sidewrite | 2025–Present
- **Past leadership roles:** HOA board president (2022–2024); Society of Professional Journalists Alabama Chapter president (2016); founding board member, Desert Island Supply Co. (2011–2013)

Education and credentials

- **Master of Arts, Journalism** | University of Alabama
- **Bachelor of Science, Communication Studies** | Florida State University
- **Accredited in Public Relations (APR)** | Universal Accreditation Board (2021)
- **Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT)** | Sacred Glow Yoga (2014)

Skills and expertise

- **Core competencies:** executive counsel, crisis communications, reputation management, media relations, content strategy, team leadership, ethical AI workflow integration, AI workflow design, AP Style, Chicago Manual of Style
- **Tools and platforms:** Meltwater, Salesforce, WordPress, Adobe Creative Suite, Monday.com, Trello, Claude, Gemini, ChatGPT