

## **Remarks of Stacey Smith, APR, Fellow PRSA upon receiving IPR's Jack Felton Lifetime Achievement Award, November 30, 2023.**

So, a Lifetime Award, really? When did a lifetime pass?

The last thing I remember, I was graduating with a degree in Public Relations and still had not a clue what I was going to do with it.

I really didn't like the idea of dealing with media but I really liked trying to understand human behavior. See, I had originally been a theater major and learned there about human motivation.

Think Stanislavski. Why does a character do what they do? Behave the way they behave.

However, I realized, I'd just might end up starving. So, I looked for a profession where human behavior played an incredibly important role.

I was then so lucky to stumble across the first of my many mentors and rolemodel, one who threw open a giant window and showed me that the talents we have as professionals can make a true difference in this world.

He said that our role is to give people a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

But to do that, we must first listen— we must be the best listeners possible.

We must listen before we start any planning, listen during our time of relationship building, listen long after we've begun engaging – as that is the only way to truly build relationships based on trust.

Because where there is trust, there is the possibility that everyone will get what they need.

And what is good listening but research and measurement? It is likely why I advocate so strongly for it to anyone who will listen.

Want to truly move behavior? Listen with good research.

Want to execute a plan that hits the mark? Track it, tweak it, change it with good ongoing research.

Want respect from your leadership team? Prove your effectiveness with good research.

You'd think I'm asking for the moon sometimes when I say this to clients and colleagues. And budgets are always a barrier.

But an even bigger barrier had been the knowledge of HOW to do this. And that is where the work of The Institute has made such a huge difference.

That is what Jack Felton, in his wisdom, saw was needed.

The Institute – you and people like you and the very lovely Mark Weiner who nominated me for this honor (thank you Mark) -- have helped bring this knowledge to a place where, if motivated, a professional can have all the tools they need to do this important work.

But they must be “motivated” by mentors and role models as I was – and I am thankful for every one of mine. I would name them all – they deserve it -- but Tina only gave me three minutes. So instead, I urge you to be that mentor, that role model for others.

The joy that comes from seeing others succeed is truly the best reward going.

But this one is pretty cool too. So thank you!