

Sex and the Public Relations...and the City

“Sex and the City” has always been one of my favorite shows. I remember watching it with my mom when I was younger and for nearly every scene involving Samantha Jones, she would hastily kick me out of the room, and I never understood why until I was older. Saying Samantha is raunchy is an understatement. Now, here I am, vehemently pursuing the profession of the character who I have always failed to find anything in common with until recently. Samantha’s career in “Sex and the City” has been deemed a poor portrayal of the PR profession, and majority of the time I can agree with this. However, I found a few episodes when Samantha Jones rocked her “mojo” and worked the field in her own way.

By the time Season 6 rolled around in the HBO series, I think the writers were tired of making Samantha look bad and decided to use her career to benefit other characters. One example is how Samantha helped, “Smith,” her new boyfriend. Before he was an actor named Smith (I’ll get to that in a few sentences), Jerry Jerrod was a part-time waiter who was also acting in theatrical productions on the side. Samantha promised to see his play if he would have sexual relations with her afterwards, and she attended his show only to realize the single promising aspect of the performance is Jerry’s nude scene. After commenting on the “sad little fliers,” Samantha discovered that no one has been hired to promote the play. Partly out of fear that she will have to see low-quality plays for the rest of her relationship and partly out of compassion for Jerry, Samantha changed his name to “Smith Jerrod” knowing it would give him the “mojo” that he had been lacking. She then bought tickets for Carrie, Charlotte and Miranda and encouraged them to dress up and invite “everyone fabulous.” The show

ended up being a successful sell-out and Smith's body not only impressed the audience, but it landed him gigs in future episodes.

One of the first notes I took in this class defines PR as a management function that "establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships." At the end of the day Samantha was happy, Smith was happy and so was the audience. The win can be awarded to Samantha Jones. She did, however, spin the promotion away from the actual play and focused on something that little to do with the performance. Is this ethical? I've struggled with this because I've done the same thing. In the end everyone ends up happy, but sometimes to make people show up to events, I've had to focus on the only key, positive aspect and play it up. I'm not sure whether or not this actually is spin, because it's not technically lying; you're just focusing on a certain element. In this case Samantha was hiding the fact that the play was terrible behind Smith's body. Some people would view this as selfish and distasteful, but I think her whole strategy was clever. She completely rebranded Smith as an actor in the matter of a week and it paid off in the end. Samantha identified the crisis (Smith's flopping career), evaluated the situation, acted quickly and efficiently and saved the day.

My favorite portrayal of Samantha Jones and her PR profession occurred in season 6, episode 15 when she was chosen to give a speech at a black-tie breast cancer awareness event. Her client, the woman who was hosting the event, complained to Samantha that all breast cancer events are the same. She commented on how each event had "the same damn cookie" and decided that she wanted something more "outrageous and inspiring than a cookie;" she wanted Samantha to give a speech because she herself was battling breast cancer. The next scene in the episode showed Samantha practicing

her speech in front of Smith. It was very dry and cliché. Smith commented on the lackluster performance too which she replied with, “Look, you may know AA but I know PR.” In this case, she didn’t know PR and was being defensive. She was not trying to appeal to her audience and she was not being honest with herself. Samantha was fully aware that there would be women in the audience who were also fighting breast cancer, yet her speech was simple and impersonal. Finally Samantha delivered her speech and the scene cut to her standing in the front of a large crowd struggling through her prepared words. She was sweating and fanning herself when finally she threw down her cue card, took off her wig and said, “To hell with it.” One by one women in the crowd stood and removed their wigs while everyone applauded.

This is the kind of PR that is the most effective. It’s honest and real. People who attended this benefit wouldn’t look back and even suggest that Samantha planned the entire speech. It’s the moments like these in “Sex and the City” that make PR look like an honest profession, not the ones where Samantha is involved in sex and scandal. Overall Samantha is an existentialist in the profession; she makes immediate decisions based on the situation. Sometimes her decisions end up enhancing the profession, but sadly, a majority of the time they give PR a bad name. She handles crisis’s well, however she handles them in her own manner. She doesn’t adhere to the code of ethics, she adheres to the code of Samantha, which sometimes matches up with professional version. For instance, she is loyal to herself and her clients, she acts in their best interest, she is honest and she shows expertise in the field. It was almost impossible to relate the R.O.P.E.S. process to her examples of PR because she really doesn’t use it. She is a great

steward and is effective when it comes to implementing her plans, but she marches to the beat of her own drum.