

# PAYAL PATEL

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## PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

An award-winning strategic leader with more than a decade of experience in the management and oversight of high-profile global events, programs and initiatives. A compelling storyteller with disruptive ideas and strong relationships with local, national and international press. A crisis management expert with a proven track record of converting hypersensitive crises into opportunities for progress. An experienced multilingual spokesperson, who has successfully coached senior executives, professional athletes, celebrities and public figures through media interviews and appearances. A proven leader with the ability to mentor and manage team members efficiently and effectively. A passionate and tireless advocate for girls' education around the globe and a champion for the advancement of women and girls everywhere.

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## SKILLS

- Crisis and Issues Management
  - Event and Program Management
  - Languages: English, Spanish, Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu (learning Portuguese)
  - Public Speaking Experience: Media spokesperson, regular guest speaker at Marquette University and DePaul University, frequent participant in thought leadership panels/events, host of Midwest Fashion Week and BIBO Awards (recognizing and celebrating the accomplishments of women)
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## EXPERIENCE

### **NAVY PIER** | Communications Director & Chief Spokesperson

November 2015 – Present

- Spearheads all internal and external communications for one of the top-attended civic destinations in the world, including media campaigns, digital and social media content, integrated marketing campaigns and crisis and issues management
- Serves as the primary spokesperson for the organization, conducting regular interviews with the press (including in Spanish)
- Works closely with C-suite executives and government leaders to strategize and deliver tactical messaging to the public, especially during highly sensitive situations
- Has successfully managed and diffused low to high grade organizational crises, from corporate litigation to large-scale violent incidents
- Develops and executes key public programming, including speed mentoring for inner-city youth, free quinceañera celebrations for underserved Latinx families, and more
- Co-chairs the organization's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee, which formulates and shapes policies and practices impacting more than 3,000 employees
- Engineered a robust women's leadership program that included mentorship events with female industry leaders, a Lunch and Learn series with executives, and initiatives to outline a roadmap to success and leadership for young women of color

**NFL PLAYERS ASSOCIATION – CHICAGO** | Public Relations & Programming Director

October 2014 – November 2015; February 2013 – October 2013

- Advanced NFLPA's mission by helping players leverage their platforms to spotlight key issues impacting marginalized communities throughout the Chicagoland area
- Led the development and implementation of key community initiatives, such as the NFL Draft Symposium, a marquee program that connected inner-city youth with professional players who can relate to their hardships and offer guidance and support
- Managed internal and external communications, in addition to acting as spokesperson

**CHICAGO FIRE SOCCER CLUB** | Communications Specialist

October 2013 – October 2014

- Managed the Club's business and operational communications and initiatives, including news and announcements pertaining to business development, corporate partnerships, marketing, community relations and the Chicago Fire Foundation
- Worked closely with COO to establish community programs at home games to celebrate Chicago's diverse populations (i.e. Sector Latino, LGBTQ Pride, special needs program)
- Led the strategic oversight of organization's key programs and projects, such as new kit launches, FIFA World Cup events and partnership activations
- Coordinated logistics for the organization's inaugural art show, spotlighting talented local artists from diverse neighborhoods and benefiting youth programs

**CHICAGO SOUL FC** | Director of Public Relations & Operations

January 2012 – February 2013 (until dissolution)

- Instrumental in getting Chicago's newest professional soccer team off the ground, lending expertise in key business functions, such as HR (front office and player personnel recruitment), game day operations, marketing, communications and community relations
- Handled all press inquiries, managed key stakeholders, and converted a major crisis centered on racial tension into an opportunity to discuss discrimination in sports, which resulted in a 33% spike in attendance at the following home game

**DIVERSITY SCHOLARS** | Director of Communications & External Affairs

November 2009 – January 2012

- Helped develop strategies to meet the company goal of enrolling 125,000 underserved high school students into a program designed to connect them to colleges/universities that presented them with the best chances of academic success, and ultimately, decrease college dropout rates among minorities across America
- Designed and executed creative campaigns to raise awareness regarding the dropout crisis and encourage participation in the solution via donations and student sponsorship
- Led distribution of effective marketing pieces and newsletters to more than 4,000 collegiate institutions and preparatory programs throughout the U.S. and 26,000+ participating students and families

**WISN-TV** | Sports Video Journalist; Sports Department Intern

March 2008 – November 2009

- Contributed to the station's daily sports coverage, gathered on-air content and conducted interviews at local professional sporting events

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## AWARDS

**PR News Rising Stars 30 Under 30 List** (2016)

**MarCom Platinum Award** (2016 – 2017)

**Publicity Club of Chicago Golden Trumpet Award** (2016 – 2020)

**Public Relations Society of America Chicago Skyline Award of Excellence** (2017)

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## PROFESSIONAL AND PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITIES

**Publicity Club of Chicago** | Board Member; Golden Trumpet Awards Emcee

**Women in Sports and Events** | Board Member

**Public Relations Society of America** | Member; Former Board Member

**Chicago Leadership Alliance** | Charter Member

**Room to Read** | Chicago Chapter Leader; Girls' Education Ambassador

**Saris to Suits** | Ambassador; Featured in 2020 calendar as advocate for South Asian women and girls

**Apna Ghar** | Ambassador; Helped raise funds to support housing for sexual abuse and battery survivors

**Dress for Success** | Volunteer of programs that empower women to achieve economic independence

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## EDUCATION

### NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Evanston, Illinois

**Master of Science in Communication – Concentration in Crisis Management**

GPA: 4.0

(2019 – 2020)

### MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

**Bachelor of Arts in Broadcast Journalism; Public Relations; Spanish Literature**

(2005 – 2009)

Accomplishments: Attended from ages 16 – 20; Received the Linda Cohn Award for Outstanding Journalism at Marquette University Television (MUTV); Became youngest female sports director at MUTV; Served as Diederich College of Communication Student Council President for three consecutive years (2006 – 2009)

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## ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND CERTIFICATES

### NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

**Creative Branding and Design Certificate** (2020)

### PR NEWS

**Crisis Management and Media Training** (2019)

### YNPN CHICAGO LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

**Nonprofit Leadership Certificate** (2019)

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