

How Mary Nelson is taking a bite from The Big Apple

Mary Nelson's fingers hovered over the keyboard; her eyes locked on the glowing screen in front of her. The soft hum of the office around her faded into the background as she leaned forward, adjusting her matte black, wide-rimmed glasses with a quiet precision. It was in moments like these that her mind cleared, and all that mattered was finding the right angle for her next big pitch. This is what pure, unfiltered concentration looks like.

Nelson's firm commitment to her clients is what makes her stand out amongst the other 79,000 public relations professionals in New York City.

Nelson, a 2026 graduate from The University of Texas at Austin, brings a fresh perspective and wealth of ideas to her 100-person agency. Headquartered in New York, Rachel Harrison Communications centers its focus on restaurant and hotel solutions in the Manhattan area. It's this middle-of-the-city appeal that drives Nelson's appreciation for her work and appetite for a challenge.



Source: Mary Nelson

Nelson claims all of the characteristics required of a respected and successful public relations professional – she is timely, aware and passionate about what she does. But where can this passion be first attributed to? Nelson claimed she first realized she was on the right path in a class focused on effectively building media campaigns in her freshman year of college.

“I think I've always loved writing, and I knew I didn't want my career to be only writing, but I just really liked the creative aspect that comes with PR,” Nelson stated. “I like how you can have a lot of different clients, and you're always on their side and you want what's best for them.”

After floating around in various internships, the Austin native finally had the opportunity to work as a publicity intern at a small agency. This was the first time that Nelson could apply her hard-earned skills to ensure her client's success in a real, tangible way.

As a public relations associate in the city, Nelson focuses on events, media relations and social media. When it comes to events, Nelson has done it all. She has hosted galas and parties for over 500 attendees, promoting her hotel clients as the picture-perfect venue for any occasion.

Nelson has also honed her skills in media relations, fostering relationships with journalists at the biggest publications in New York City. Her clients' success is at the center of what she does, and she hopes to be able to position them as relevant, pressing and necessary for the public.

Although she appreciates the glitz and glam of hosting new events every other weekend, Nelson's favorite aspect of her work is having the opportunity to combine her two lifelong passions – public relations and traveling. She views it as the “best of both worlds,” where she can frequently fly from coast to coast on a New Yorker's budget.

However, this incredible job does not come without sacrifice. Nelson experiences challenges as she works with the biggest names in the Big Apple, namely managing client expectations.

“When you see your client not succeed after you've put so much work into an event or an influencer partnership and it just doesn't go their way, you know, that's always hard,” Nelson recalled. “Especially when it wasn't anyone's fault. It's just kind of how it happens.”

Despite this, Nelson is proud of how far she's come and actively hopes to encourage young aspiring PR professionals to find success in the field. She stresses developing strong communication skills, ensuring that you are personable and a great team member. She recognizes that networking is key in her field and hopes to encourage others to be cognizant of how they work with others.

Additionally, Nelson attributes much of her success to her stellar writing skills. Each day, Nelson is producing some form of written document, whether it's a press release, pitch or quick email. For this reason, it's key that upcoming students are rounding out their writing skills and ensuring their grammar is in tip-top shape.

Looking forward, Nelson is excited about what's ahead. She plans to transition from agency life to in-house work to foster a closer relationship with her client. For now, she is committed to driving success for her clients and continuously growing along the way.

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