

# PRWeek

## Grace Leong, Women of Distinction 2022

CEO, Hunter

Added 2 hours ago



### Who was your mentor and what are you now doing to send the elevator back down?

My mother and grandmother, who jointly raised me and my three siblings, were my first mentors. As well-educated, full-time working professionals, these strong women taught me how to cultivate independence, engage in life-long learning, endure adversity and nurture a strong family life. Barbara Hunter taught me the art of client service, ethical practice and how to cultivate resilience during the dark days. Following Barbara's example, I work side by side with women of all levels in my firm every day and make a point to actively support trade associations (PRSA, PRSSA, Museum of PR, IPRA) and my undergraduate alma mater, the University of Delaware, where other women are looking for support.

### What is your golden rule at work?

I am often teased about my adherence to policies and procedures, but I believe rules are the basic building blocks that create respect and consideration for others. One my favorite advertising tag lines is used by the New York Lottery — "You Got to Be In It To Win It" — because it sums up my golden rule for work. If you want to learn, grow and succeed, you have to put your whole self in the job every single day no matter what is in front of you. Sure, it's very hard some days, but I believe that the more you give the more you get. I try to give my all every day and I think that has made all the difference in my career and the passion I have for the work I do.



Leong with Barbara Hunter, the founder of Hunter PR.

**What are some new challenges you are seeing in the workplace and how do you think they can be overcome? What are some improvements?**

Burnout is real, especially in any business in which you service others. Today's demand for communication counsel and results has never been stronger, which I see as a real opportunity for our profession to grow and gain greater respect. However, the relentless demand for what we offer is now in conflict with how people want to work post pandemic. As leaders of a new service-focused workforce we have to resist falling back on the tropes that were not working before (i.e., long hours, in-office requirements) and reinvent what work should look like and feel like for these new counselors. The pandemic "canceled" many of the old rules, and now we have the chance to reinvent — but it's going to take a lot of work and focus for us to do it right as there is no precedent.

**Has the pandemic changed your approach to work?**

I grew up in a home where heads-down hard work and cooperative struggle led to happy days and a great deal of personal pride. My siblings and I were always in school and holding down service jobs in gas stations, restaurants or in childcare for working parents. Learning this pace early in life, I was well prepped to deal with the pandemic. It just felt like old times when we hunkered down, did the work and showed up for each other. The last two years reminded me of the good that can come from cooperative struggle.

**What was something that kept you sane during remote work?**

I have never been a work-from-home person, so living and working within my small apartment with two of my four college-age kids and husband was tough. Just before COVID hit, I bought a new Wolf range and I rediscovered my joy and talents for cooking. I fired up my oven almost every night and cracked open old and new cookbooks attempting recipes that previously scared me. I also dove into dozens of WW2 documentaries, podcasts and books to remind myself how lucky we were compared to those who survived through those horrific years of terror.

**What is your favorite hobby, TV show, song, drink?**

My perfect day off involves having time to clean my home (so relaxing!), sitting outside in the hot sun (80+ degree preferred) watching my kids play soccer and then finishing off the night with our family feast at our favorite Korean BBQ spot. Screen time favorites include *Veep*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (the dialogue!), *The Sopranos* (the Jersey connection!), and *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (the kooky family dynamics!).