

## Made in the Mid-Willamette Valley: VanNatta Public Relations

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Company Name: VanNatta Public Relations

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**Business Description:** A public relations, marketing/advertising, association management, and public policy consulting firm located in Salem, Oregon. Founded in 1967, the firm has had a long and successful history as an association management company (AMC) and government relations firm, working with both trade and non-profit associations. More recently, VPR has also distinguished itself as one of Oregon's most established public relations firms serving individual businesses, non-profits, professional organizations and corporate clients. They have been recognized by Oregon Business Magazine four times as one of the top public relations firms in the state.

**Employees:** 6 fulltime, 1 part-time

**Business Specialties:** Public relations, advertising/marketing, event planning, government affairs, association management.

**Business History:**

The company was founded on June 14, 1967, under the name Public Affairs, Inc., the day after the adjournment of the 1967 legislature. Company founder, Fred VanNatta, had just completed his second legislative session as Assistant to the Speaker of the House and the Majority Caucus. The company was founded as a campaign management and public relations consulting firm. In its second year, the company managed the highest profile conference in its history. The Republican Governor's Conference in Palm Springs was chaired by future president Ronald Reagan, and attended by 32 governors and President-Elect Nixon. Bob Hope provided the entertainment for the major conference banquet.

In 1986, Mary VanNatta joined the firm as an Associate and the firm changed its name to VanNatta Public Relations, Inc. The firm enjoyed interesting work during this period, especially



**Special to the Statesman Journal**  
The staff of VanNatta Public Relations.

SEDCOR, the lead economic development agency for Marion and Polk counties, is pleased to offer you a glimpse of the multitude of products and services being manufactured and provided by local area companies. SEDCOR's membership is composed of more than 500 business and community leaders who support our mission to enhance and diversify the economy of the Mid-Willamette Valley.

with the National Basketball Association and the National Football League.

Harvey Gail joined the firm in 1994, coming to VPR with an MBA in Management and Marketing. He quickly began creating a niche in the marketing and public relations field for VPR as specialists in association public relations. The firm began working with a number of regional trade associations, corporate PR accounts.

VPR commitment to Salem was finalized in a purchase of its first office building in 2004. Located on Commercial Street in South Salem, VPR resides in the entire upper floor of the building and rents the ground floor, currently occupied by Express Employment Professionals. "The new building provides an excellent combination of privacy and common space," says Harvey Gail.

Today VPR has six employees and an active work experience program for college students. More recently, Mary VanNatta and Harvey Gail founded Spire Management, LLC, a sister company specializing in event planning, association management and consulting for NGO's and nonprofit.

What is biggest advantage of doing business in the Mid-Willamette Valley: Being located in the state capitol provides us with a proximity to the center of government and headquarters of many non-profit and trade associations.

Essential Business Philosophy: Telling your organization's story well is essential to its success whether that's to your customers, your stakeholders or elected officials.

Best Way to Stay Competitive: Stay engaged in the community at all levels. Volunteer time and give back to the community; Stay up-to-date on technology and industry trends. Be flexible.

What is most Challenging in Work: Affording and keeping up with technology and facing rising costs of healthcare.

Best Business Decision: Having Harvey Gail join the company. Buying our building on Commercial Street in Salem.

Toughest Business Decision: Give up a lucrative client that didn't fit into our portfolio.

What trends do you see happening in your Industry: Social media driving advertising, down economy making meeting management more challenging.

Company Affiliations: American Society of Association Executives, Oregon Society of Association Management, Public Relations Society of America, Oregon Capital Chapter Public Relations Society, Oregon Capitol Club, Oregon Capitol Foundation, Rotary International, Salem Area Chamber of Commerce, Keizer Chamber of Commerce, SEDCOR.

Major Clients:

-Professional Land Surveyors of Oregon

-Oregon Association of Health Underwriters (and chapters in Portland, Willamette Valley and Bend)

-Keizer Station / Donahue Schriber

-Liberty House

- Marion Polk Medical Society
- Oregon Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association
- Salem Area Chamber of Commerce
- Rural/Metro Ambulance
- Various local businesses and small associations and non-profits

For additional information contact SEDCOR at 503-584-7303 or email [sappleby@sedcor.com](mailto:sappleby@sedcor.com).