Advanced Public Relations

KOM 5321
(READING MATERIAL 1 & 2)

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Reading Material 1

KOM5321
(Advanced Public Relations)
Public Relations
(The Profession & The Practice)
Public Relations
The Profession and the Practice

Fourth Edition

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Public relations is an emerging profession. In a complex global society, business, government, nonprofit, and other organizations must have people who can communicate the needs of the organization to its various constituents and, at the same time, communicate the concerns of those publics back to the organization. In this environment of rapid social change, every organization must evolve or die. Public relations practitioners must possess the communications expertise and social sensitivity necessary to help organizations adapt to their changing environments.

Because public relations is now a critical dimension of management, practitioners are no longer mere technicians who shape and transmit messages from organizations to their publics. All managers now recognize that they themselves practice public relations, and they also see that public relations practitioners should be part of the management mainstream.

To this broadened role, the public relations practitioner must bring all of the traditional skills of the craft. The ability to understand public opinion, to plan public relations programs, to create effective messages in all media for all organizational publics, and to evaluate public relations effectiveness remain crucial areas of talent, skill, and knowledge. Public relations as it is practiced today, however, demands much more. A full understanding of all communication processes and a close acquaintance with the methods of management are critical to the successful practice of public relations. Thorough knowledge of the environment of the organization in which the practitioner works is a prerequisite to public relations effectiveness.

The spirit of innovation that characterized the first editions of our text continues in this fourth edition. The book deals with public relations in the overall context of organizational communications. It stresses the practitioner's role in organizational and societal communication systems. It comes to grips with challenges to the profession from within organizations and from organizations' surrounding environments. It views public relations from the perspective of overall organizational decision making, examining how public relations affects and is
affected by decisions that are made. It does these things within the context of a constantly changing environment, facing issues of rapid technological change in communication, increasing societal diversity, and expanding global markets.

The fourth edition benefits from the tremendous feedback we received on our earlier efforts. It also benefits from insight gained through the addition of a new coauthor, Dan Lattimore, APR. Professor Lattimore brings years of professional experience and public relations teaching to the book. He has been involved actively with the Public Relations Society of America, including serving as the 1996 chair of the Educator Section. He is also vice-president of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

The fourth edition has kept the organization of the earlier versions but contains completely rewritten chapters on theory and ethics. Although technological changes, diversity issues, and global concerns are addressed throughout the book, new sections on each of these issues have been added to chapter 18, on corporate public relations.

We have tried to maintain the easy-to-read, personal style throughout the text. In doing this we have added new examples and mini-cases, while keeping some of the classic cases. Public relations spotlights are included to give you special insight into particular issues or concerns. We have kept the integrating case study in chapters 6 through 9. Still present in a chapter on public relations careers is a strong emphasis on preparing to get a job in public relations.

Our goals in writing this edition remained quite ambitious. We feel we have probed the deepest issues of public relations for a profession whose time has come. Part I describes the current situation, historical roots, and future issues of the profession. Part II examines the core issues of the process that underlies public relations, and Part III focuses on the publics that are the objects of these efforts. Finally, Part IV summarizes the practice of public relations in its various environments.

We believe that our work here truly reflects the progression of public relations as a discipline and an emerging profession. This book, like the profession it describes, is fundamentally eclectic, drawing its major theories, research, and principles from journalism, psychology, speech communication, and management. This eclecticism is, of course, due to the graduate training, research, and teaching experience of the authors in each of these disciplines, but it also reflects the needs of students who will be practicing public relations in diverse environments.

We have attempted to give public relations students and practitioners the tools and knowledge they need in ways that reflect the reality of the public relations world. Moreover, we have consistently attempted to provide that information in a direct, interesting, and highly readable form. We have resisted the temptation to include extraneous information that might be helpful but that also would overwhelm the undergraduate student. In short, we have tried to make Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice the public relations textbook most able to move ahead with the profession into the 21st century.
Our thanks are due to many people, colleagues with whom we have worked in public relations, leading practitioners with whom we have spent hours in rewarding conversation, students and fellow teachers on whom we have tested concepts contained in this book. They are too numerous to name, but all have our gratitude.

We owe a particular debt of gratitude to our public relations mentors, including Alan Scott and Scott Cuthg. Gene Donner, Darrel Alexander, Nick Del Calzo, and Guy Brown are public relations practitioners who have influenced our careers and our insight into the profession. Thanks to Professor Rick Fischer, APR, of the University of Memphis, who authored the material that constitutes the new chapter on public relations theories.

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Part I

Public Relations

The Profession

This book deals with public relations—its process, its publics, the kinds of organizations in which it is practiced, and the critical issues that confront it. Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice takes a practical approach, drawing on the experiences of many practitioners and executives. It also incorporates the theoretical perspectives of researchers and scholars from various disciplines, including communications, business, and psychology. It is intended to provide students with a thorough understanding of public relations and a basis for successful practice today and in the future.

Part I covers fundamentals of public relations practice. Chapter 1 gives a working definition of public relations, reviewing and refining the definitions of previous studies. Chapter 2 describes the history of public relations, providing a useful perspective on the field. Chapter 3 deals with communications and systems theory, and chapter 4 discusses the most important application of public relations—its contribution to organizational decision making. Finally, chapter 5 looks at the ethical and professional responsibilities of public relations practitioners in our society.
CHAPTER 1

The Nature of Public Relations

Preview

Public relations is a management function that helps define organizational objectives and philosophy. Public relations practitioners communicate with all relevant internal and external publics in the effort to create consistency between organizational goals and societal expectations.

Public relations practitioners develop, execute, and evaluate organizational programs. Their goal is to promote the exchange of influence and understanding among an organization's constituent parts and publics.

Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail. Without it, nothing can succeed.

—Abraham Lincoln
It began in Seattle when a TV station informed the local Pepsi franchise bottler that an 82-year-old Tacoma man had found a hypodermic needle in a can of Diet Pepsi. The report was broadcast that evening on the local news. It would be the nation’s top story for the next 96 hours. Within hours, another syringe turned up in another locality. Soon news reports from different parts of the country also had people finding needles in Pepsi cans. More than 50 allegations were made in 23 states.

Pepsi-Cola set up a crisis management team at its corporate headquarters in Somers, New York. The team was led by Craig Weatherup, Pepsi-Cola president and CEO. Rebecca Madeira, Pepsi’s vice-president for public affairs, directed the team’s actions and coordinated the communications so the company could speak with one voice.

First, the Pepsi crisis team had to determine the source of the problem. The crisis response plan had these key points:

- **Put public safety first.** Assess the problem through the public’s eyes. Be clear that their needs and concerns come first.
- **Find it. Fix it.** Work around the clock with regulatory officials to investigate every aspect of the plant operation to identify and, if possible, correct the problem.
- **Communicate quickly and frequently.** Using tools and timetables reporters use.
- **Take responsibility for solving the crisis.** Don’t point fingers, assign blame, or pass the buck. Make your team accountable for a swift and sound resolution to the problem.
Once Pepsi had gathered its facts and felt secure that this was not a manufacturing problem, Pepsi took the offensive. President Weatherup said repeatedly through the media that “a can is the most tamper-proof packaging in food supply. We are 99.99 percent certain that this didn’t happen in Pepsi plants.”

The crisis team decided to use Video News Releases (VNR) to show consumers that it was extremely difficult to tamper with Pepsi’s canning process. High-tech, high-speed equipment was shown filling cans. Each can is turned upside down, cleaned with a powerful jet of air or water, inverted, filled, and closed—all in less than one second! Video footage of the canning process was beamed by satellite to TV stations across the country. Within 48 hours, the first VNR was seen around the world by 296 million viewers, three times the number that watched the Super Bowl that year.

The company used the video to combat the visual images of the syringe that had been shown repeatedly on network television since the first instance in Seattle. Pepsi created three more VNRs within three days. By the end of the week, the president had appeared on a dozen network TV news shows and talk shows and his spokespersons had conducted more than 2,000 interviews with newspapers, magazine, TV, and radio reporters. The strategy was to reassure the public that what was happening was really a hoax. The real turning point came with the third video. It showed an in-store surveillance camera filming a shopper slipping a syringe into an open Diet Pepsi can while the cashier’s back was turned. Pepsi could not release the tape, though, until the next day when an arrest was made. From the time that VNR ran—the same day that FAA Commissioner David Kessler officially denounced the crisis at a national press conference—viewers were overwhelmingly supportive of Pepsi. According to the company’s own follow-up evaluation, Pepsi’s response worked. Sales for the July 4 period were not affected adversely, which was quite important.

This case illustrates many of the public relations principles you will examine throughout this book. For instance, the case shows the public relations process—research or fact-finding, action planning, communication, and evaluation. You can see in the Pepsi hoax many of the tasks a public relations person has to do, from counseling management to relating to the media to doing research.

Attempts to define the public relations discipline are frequently conflicting and generally diverse. Some definitions list the kinds of organizations that use public relations (all kinds), some dwell on the media used for public relations communications (all media); and still others focus on the publics, or target audiences, with which public relations communicates (all publics). Many authors give exhaustive lists of what public relations is not, while a few even claim that “public relations” as such no longer exists, preferring another name for the process. Indeed, in major corporations, the term corporate communications has replaced public relations as the most common name for departments having that responsibility. 1

Public relations is difficult to sum up in a brief statement. The very nature of the profession and its constant adaptation to the needs of society make it at best a moving target for definition.
Public relations is practiced in organizations that range in type from giant, multinational oil companies to small, human service agencies. A public relations manager for a private university may devote most of his or her efforts to fundraising and student recruitment. The public relations staff of a large corporation may be responsible for the firm's relationships with customers, suppliers, investors, employees, and even foreign governments.

Public relations practitioners are individuals who help others establish and maintain effective relationships with third parties. Their work is usually performed in organizational environments like those already mentioned, even if they are not employees of that organization. Some public relations practitioners are independent counselors, some work for public relations firms, and still others are directly employed by individual organizations.

For the purposes of this book—and to establish a broad, realistic, and accurate description of the public relations function—we offer the following working definition:

Public relations is a management function that helps achieve organizational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organizational change. Public relations practitioners communicate with all relevant internal and external publics to develop positive relationships and to create consistency between organizational goals and societal expectations. Public relations practitioners develop, execute, and evaluate organizational programs that promote the exchange of influence and understanding among an organization's constituent parts and publics.

Not all people who say they practice public relations do everything implied by this definition. Some interpret their jobs even more broadly, but for now and for the foreseeable future, this description captures the essential aspects of public relations practice. Chapter 2 demonstrates that this definition is valid for much of the past as well.

We have divided the chapters in this book into four parts: the profession, the process, the publics, and the practice. Figure 1.1 illustrates the progression of the book and the relationship between the various sections.

The profession sets the historical foundations of the field in a context that will help explain the origins and reasons for much current practice. Likewise, the theoretical foundations are presented in the context of relevant application. The pivotal role of public relations in organizational decision making further defines its management function along with its ethical and social responsibilities. These elements fit together to describe a professional climate that feeds every aspect of the process.

The process begins and ends with research. Although public relations began as a reactive force, it has become proactive through its ability to predict trends and respond to needs before they become emergencies. As a management function, public relations gathers information, makes plans, implements action, and evaluates results.

The publics are the targets of public relations action and the source of feedback for evaluation. Any identifiable group can be considered a public, however, most are encompassed by the following: media, employees, consumers, the
Public Relations as a Management Function

To begin with, it is necessary to recognize that public relations is a management function. Although it may support or facilitate production or sales, public relations is not merely an adjunct of personnel, marketing, or advertising. Ideally, public relations helps an organization establish its philosophy, achieve its objectives, adapt to a changing environment, and successfully compete in today's markets.

The managerial responsibilities associated with the public relations function are both general and specific. Some public relations duties are shared by all managers. For example,
example, all managers spend much of their time communicating with various external or internal publics. All managers, indeed virtually all employees, represent their organizations to some public. Public relations also contributes to general management. Recent research into the job responsibilities of senior production managers found that public relations is one of "the most demanding aspects of their jobs. It is the part of their jobs for which they feel least prepared and qualified." \(^{8}\)

Other public relations functions are the particular responsibility of public relations specialists. Editors of internal publications and managers of government, consumer, media, and financial relations, for example, tend to be public relations professionals trained specifically for their areas of expertise.

Public relations can make important contributions to forming an organization's ideas about itself—what it should do and what society wants and expects from it. Charles Steinberg describes this aspect of public relations as the "structuring of company philosophy and carrying out of that philosophy in practice so that what the institution says is not at variance with what it does." \(^7\)

Many public relations authorities make the point that as a profession, public relations is obligated to advise management in the development of sound policies that are in the best interests of the public as well as the company. \(^8\) Of course, public relations practitioners rarely have final authority in setting objectives, policies, or philosophy within their organizations, but in most modern organizational structures, they are important members of policy-making groups. The participation of Rebecca Madeura, vice-president of public affairs, in Pepsi's crisis management team during the Pepsi hoax is just one example.

The role of public relations is critically important, especially in crisis situations, for two reasons. First, because public relations monitors public opinion, practitioners can represent the public interest and predict public reaction to institutional decisions. Second, public relations communicates organizational decisions to the public. Thus, the commitment and understanding gained from helping to make these decisions are tremendous assets.

All managers are concerned with adapting their organizations to changing environments, but public relations managers play a particularly important role in this area. Indeed, facilitating organizational change has become a frequently mentioned part of public relations definitions.

Robert Dilenschneider, former Hill & Knowlton CEO and now president of the Dilenschneider Group, cites six key factors that suggest why business needs more and better public relations than ever before:

- Technology—forcing companies to communicate instantly around the globe
- Increasing oversight by government
- Trade—forcing business to deal with foreign governments and cultures
- Mergers and acquisitions
- Third-world countries trying to attract investment
- Tourism—the world's second largest industry

\(^{8}\)
Again, public relations managers do not make all the decisions that lead to change within organizations, but because they constantly monitor and interact with the organizational environment, they often possess information that suggests a need for change or indicates the direction change should take. Public relations practitioners can discover a problem when it is still manageable, thus avoiding unnecessary crises. Indeed, Scott Cutlip, the leading public relations historian, feels that "the public relations practitioner’s most important responsibility is to interpret the public opinion climate to management." 

Rex Harlow’s historical review of public relations definitions indicates that emphasis on change has grown steadily since the 1940s, when PR News suggested this definition: "Public relations is the activities of a corporation . . . building and maintaining sound and productive relations . . . as to adapt itself to the environment." 

By the 1970s, leaders in public relations were describing their profession in terms that reflected the turbulence of society. David Finn, chairman of Ruder Finn, Inc., one of the world’s leading public relations firms, suggested that public relations practitioners try "to prevent the crisis from getting out of hand . . . to help clients conduct their business in a way that is responsive to the new demands made by concerned scientists, environmentalists, consumers, minority leaders, underprivileged segments of the community, the young generation." 

These definitions make an important point about the fundamental nature of public relations—it reflects the needs of the society in which it is practiced. While the 1980s in some ways were calmer than the 1960s and 1970s, the rise of mergers and acquisitions in the United States and worldwide have brought to the forefront a whole new level of societal concern. In the 1990s, we are dealing with the issues of an appropriately educated workforce, continuing transformation of the workplace by new technology, and the increasing demand for information. 

Through it all, public relations continues to help harmonize organizations with these environments and promote positive organizational change. The process of defining goals and facilitating change is discussed further in chapter 4.

Some definitions emphasize the communication function of public relations. All managers are involved in and responsible for communication, but public relations managers have additional, more specific responsibilities in this area. Communication applies to the definition of the public relations role in at least four specific ways. It refers to skills possessed by public relations practitioners, tasks performed, systems established, and operations of established systems.

Many authors point out that public relations practitioners need to be excellent writers and speakers. Some call for expertise in graphics or audiovisual communication as well. Public relations authority Allen Center, calling public relations practitioners "technicians in communication," adds to the list a "knack for persuasion." As we approach the 21st century, the practitioner now must also be able to communicate effectively in cyberspace. Practitioners are certainly more than technicians. The ability to write and speak effectively is still a basic...
prerequisite, however, they also must be able to conduct research, formulate plans, and evaluate results.

Many commentators on public relations point out the tasks and goals of communication. In his book *The Nature of Public Relations*, John Marston defines the process as "planned, persuasive communication designed to influence significant publics." The early work of public relations scholars Gene Harlan and Alan Scott also stressed a task orientation: "skilled communication of ideas to various publics with the object of producing desired results." Production of a media release, an annual report, an employee magazine, or an electronic newspaper might be among the tasks of public relations practitioners. Other tasks include the creation and management of campaigns to achieve awareness of an issue or change opinions about a subject.

Rather than stressing individual skills or tasks, some public relations writers have advocated the establishment of systems for ongoing communications. For example, Frank Jenks describes "a system of communications to create goodwill," and Rex Harlow emphasizes "establishment and maintenance of mutual lines of communication." The systematic methods of gathering information, the relationships established with editors and publishers, and the creation of community or consumer groups to provide insights and perspectives are examples of ongoing communication systems.

Several observers concentrate on how such systems should be used once established. Most who carry the definitions to this extent hold that public relations is responsible for maintaining systematic two-way communication. The nature of communication is treated more extensively in chapter 3, and specific problems in communicating to external and internal audiences are covered in chapters 10 and 11.

As we have already mentioned, exerting influence on public opinion is often considered a part of the public relations mission. How public relations should deal with public opinion, however, is a matter of considerable debate. The opinions of scholars in the field range from simple plans to complex prescriptions for pumping up corporate prestige and establishing mutual understanding between management and its publics.

Public relations practitioners often keep three major persuasion objectives in mind when they are developing their strategies:

1. maintain favorable opinion,
2. create opinion where none exists, or where it is latent,
3. neutralize hostile opinion

First, an organization should not neglect to take positive steps to keep its favorable publics "on its side." That's one reason so much effort in public relations is spent on improving employee and community relations. Employees must maintain
a good opinion of the organization if external public relations efforts are to succeed. Similarly, the community must have a favorable opinion of the organization to continue to do business successfully.

Second, public relations practitioners often have the opportunity to create awareness of a new theatrical season at the local community playhouse. The objective may be to sell season tickets to the community theater. Communicating the shows, moderate ticket prices, and that the shows are appropriate for the family may increase season ticket sales. Creating positive opinion could come, in this case, because the audience, unaware of the upcoming season, had no opinion of it. Latent opinion might also be present. Perhaps it has been several years since some of the audience had been to the theater. Making them aware of the season may create the positive latent opinion about going to the community theater.

Third, psychologists often suggest that when a segment of the audience holds a hostile opinion about an organization, the best a practitioner may be able to do is to neutralize that hostile opinion. If, for example, a company wants to build a gas refinery on a rural site near a historical and recreational area, the residents may have strong hostile opinions about those plans. This happened to Phillips Petroleum when it decided to put a gas plant near Independence, Texas. It took considerable effort (positive action, not just rhetoric) on Phillips's part to neutralize the hostile opinion. Although Phillips didn't convince its opponents to favor the plant site, it did lessen the opposition by taking enough positive action and communicating that action to opponents. Phillips could then convince those who were favorable or had no opinion that the well would be mutually beneficial to Phillips and the community.

Perhaps the most basic way that public relations influences public opinion is by enhancing an organization's prestige. Harlow and Jenkins touch on this aspect of public relations in another simple and widely quoted conception of public relations: good performance publicly appreciated. Indeed, effective public relations depends on the effective performance of the organization being represented. Another theme holds that it is the task of public relations to supply accurate information concerning subjects of value to the public. Most news releases seek to achieve this goal. When Dayton-Hudson, the big retailing concern, opens stores in a new city, it makes major contributions to local charities—then issues news releases to let local customers know of the role Dayton-Hudson plays when it comes to town. Beyond dispassionately dispensing information, public relations should be an active process of interpreting the organization to its publics. This interpretation leads directly to a definition of public relations as pursuit of public understanding and acceptance of the organization. Thus far, our attempts to define how public relations influences public opinion have dealt with informing, promoting, understanding, and interpreting, but affecting public opinion also implies conscious efforts to exert influence. Effective influence or persuasion inevitably rests on an understanding of those to whom the effort is directed. The price of influence is being influenced. Not surprisingly,
certain writers suggest that communication must not flow in only one direction. Edward Stan called it a "planned effort to influence opinion through acceptable performance and two-way communication." Once the recognition of two-way communication has been established, public relations can be defined in literal terms, that is, in terms of relations with publics.

A public is a group of people who share a common problem or goal and recognize their common interest. A term often used by practitioners to refine the concept of public to mean those with a vested interest or "stake" in an organization is stakeholder. The cumulative experience of public relations practitioners suggests that public opinion is an ornery beast, nearly impossible to push or prod. It will move, however, if you understand its needs and cater to them. Some practitioners believe that rather than seeking to engineer, control, or convince the public, public relations is a means of seeking common ground. It is the linking pin in a relationship that looks past short-term goals and interests toward the kind of long-term success that requires positive public opinion. Author and practitioner Charles S. Steinberg's 1958 definition of public relations exemplifies this viewpoint:

Public relations is that specific operating philosophy by which management sets up policies designed to serve both the company's and the public's interest. [the] long-range, carefully nurtured effort to develop and maintain a strong, resilient and positive consensus from all of the publics upon whom the activities of the institution impinge.

While certain aggressive organizations still seek to create their own public opinion climates, most perceive public opinion as a significant environment that needs constant attention and active response. A primary aim of public relations, rather than attempting to manipulate various publics, is to sensitize the organization to public images and expectations. Public relations staffs effectively link institutions and help organizations harmonize their behavior with the expectations of various external and internal publics.

Many thoughtful observers of the contemporary world maintain that adaptability is an organization's greatest asset. For example, in 1985, when sales of the "New Coke" went flat, the Coca-Cola Company proved itself an effective organization by reacting rapidly to the negative response and bringing back the old formula, newly labeled "Coca-Cola Classic." With regard to public relations, this view suggests that emphasis should be placed on gathering and interpreting information from the organization's relevant publics and disseminating it to management. Thus, the traditional direction of public relations information flow is reversed. This idea is closely related to the general function of facilitating organizational change.

Such an approach to public relations suggests that some of the most important messages communicated by public relations practitioners are aimed neither at the media, nor at customers and the general public, nor even at employees. The most important messages, rather, are developed with management in mind and deal with fundamental aspects of organizational direction, decision making, and
Exercising Social Responsibility

The Nature of Public Relations Work

The Duties of the Profession

Public Relations: The Profession

coordination. With this perspective, public relations is established as an integral part of organizational management. Although public relations definitions stressing interpretation of public opinion vary, opinion research and management consultation are the most commonly mentioned activities. Alan Scott sums it up best by emphasizing, "the sensitive interpretation of the human scene to management . . . evaluating and interpreting public opinion, public issues and the public demands." Further discussion of the nature of public opinion and the public relations issues involved in it can be found in chapter 6.

Whenever the potential for influencing public opinion exists, the issue of social responsibility becomes significant. During the past 30 years, social responsibility has become a major concern in American society. Many thoughtful observers feel that institutions should assume responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Within the context of public relations, according to Donald Wright, this implies that "public relations people . . . should act at all times with the best interests of society in mind." Rex Harlow makes much of the social responsibility theme, maintaining that the public relations practitioner "defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest." In addition, he says, the practitioner suggests ways the organization can adjust its behavior to meet social, political, and economic responsibilities and the needs created by shifting human standards and attitudes. Moreover, the practitioner tries to help the organization demonstrate a keen sense of social responsibility with profit responsibility. The logical extreme of this position, which suggests that public relations be defined as representing the public and attempting to influence management, has been argued. Some even claim that public relations gives the public "a voice at policy-making tables." Although the exercise of social responsibility should not be mistaken for the sum total of the practice, it remains vitally important as a public relations ideal. Social responsibility is increasingly perceived as an integral aspect of the public relations function, as we discuss more extensively in chapter 5.

One of the best ways to define public relations is to describe what its practitioners do. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) formally adopted one such description (see public relations spotlight 1.1). Practitioners of public relations apply their skills and knowledge in many different ways. The Occupational Outlook Handbook suggests that public relations specialists are responsible for maintaining positive relationships with the press, employees, community, consumers, investors, regulatory agencies, contributors, and a number of other publics. They can be involved in activities as diverse as sales promotion, political campaigning, interest group representation, fund-raising, and employee recruitment.

Public relations practitioners are basically responsible for assimilating and communicating information between an organization and its environment. Public relations employees span the boundaries of an organization. They attempt to relate
Public Relations Spotlight 4.1

Public relations helps our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring the public and public policies into harmony. Public relations serves a wide variety of institutions in society such as businesses, trade unions, government agencies, voluntary associations, foundations, hospitals and educational and religious institutions. To achieve their goals, these institutions must develop effective relationships with many different audiences or publics such as employees, members, customers, local communities, shareholders and other institutions, and with society at large.

The managers of institutions need to understand the attitudes and values of their publics in order to achieve institutional goals. The goals themselves are shaped by the external environment. The public relations practitioner acts as a counselor to management, and as a mediator, helping to translate private aims into reasonable, publicly acceptable policy and action. As a management function, public relations encompasses the following:

- Anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues which might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organization.
- Counseling management at all levels in the organization with regard to policy decisions, courses of action and communication, taking into account their public ramifications and the organization's social or citizenship responsibilities.
to the needs and interests of its publics, informing them about the organization's impact on their lives and thus building positive relationships.

As they perform these services, public relations practitioners must maintain effective relationships with the media representatives who publish or broadcast information about the organization and its publics. Public relations departments are frequently the source of information for special reports and news and feature articles for television, radio, newspapers, and magazines.

Public relations messages do not always advertise the organization or its services and products directly. Instead, releases may be designed to aid consumers or some other public, and only indirectly contribute to a positive image for the organization. Information about health, nutrition, energy, and the environment may be researched and communicated because the organization recognizes an obligation to respond to its publics in a socially responsible way.

Public relations duties may also include arranging for company representatives to have direct contact with various publics. Speakers' bureaus, which arrange for members of the organization to speak to civic and social groups on topics of current interest, frequently come under the umbrella of public relations. In addition to arranging such events, public relations specialists may write speeches for members of the organization or even serve as representatives themselves. Other common public relations activities include editing in-house publications, producing and distributing films, slides, and other audiovisual programs, and managing fund-raising campaigns and community activities. Spotlight 1.2 suggests the duties or elements of public relations. Public relations practitioners may work either in
Public Relations Spotlight 1.2

- Counseling. Providing advice to the management of an organization concerning policies, relationships and communications, in effect, "what to do."
- Research. Determining attitudes and behaviors of publics and their causes in order to plan, implement and measure activities to influence or change the attitudes and behavior.
- Media Relations. Relating with communications media in seeking publicity or responding to their interest in an organization.
- Publicity. Disseminating planned messages through selected media without payment to further an organization's interest.
- Employee/Member Relations. Responding to concerns and informing and motivating an organization's employees or members, its retirees and their families.
- Community Relations. Continuing, planned and active participation with and within a community to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit of both an organization and the community.
- Public Affairs. Developing effective involvement in public policy, and helping an organization adapt to public expectations, also, term used by military services and some government agencies to describe their public relations activities.
- Government Affairs. Relating directly with legislators and regulatory agencies on behalf of an organization, usually as a central element of a public affairs program, often called "lobbying."
- Issues Management. Identifying and addressing issues of public concern in which an organization is, or should be, concerned.
- Financial Relations. Creating and maintaining investor confidence and building positive relationships with the financial community, also, sometimes known as Investor Relations or Shareholder Relations.
- Industry Relations. Relating with other firms in the industry of an organization and with trade associations.
- Development/Fund Raising. Demonstrating the need for and encouraging an organization's members, friends, supporters and others to voluntarily contribute to support it.
- Minority Relations/Multicultural Affairs. Relating with individuals and groups in minorities.
- Special Events and Public Participation. Stimulating an interest in a person, product or organization by means of a focused "happening;" also, activities designed to enable an organization to listen to and interact with publics.
- Marketing Communications. Combination of activities designed to sell a product, service or idea, including advertising, collateral materials, publicity, promotion, packaging, point-of-sale display, trade shows and special events.

Source: "Public Relations: An Overview," 3-4
department found in business organizations, nonprofit organizations, government, or in public relations counseling firms or agencies. The department work is examined in part IV, the practice section, including chapters 16, 17, and 18. Many of these departments are small, with more than half of practitioners working in departments with four or fewer public relations professionals.28

Many organizations find it useful to contract for the services of a counseling firm. Chester Burger names six reasons for hiring outside consultants:

1. Management has not previously conducted a formal public relations program and lacks experience in organizing one.
2. Headquarters may be located away from New York City, the communications and financial center of the nation.
3. A wide range of up-to-date contacts is maintained by an agency.
4. An outside agency can provide services of experienced executives who would be unwilling to move to other cities or whose salaries could not be afforded by a single firm.
5. An organization with its own PR department may be in need of highly specialized services that it cannot afford on a permanent basis.
6. Crucial matters of overall outside policy dictate a need for the independent judgment of an outsider.29

Basically, an organization may decide to retain the services of a counseling firm because of special needs that it cannot meet internally. In addition to supplementing their own talent, organizations frequently employ outside public relations consultants to provide a third-party opinion. “We tell our clients not only how to say things but what to say,” notes Michael Rowan, vice-president for survey research at Hill & Knowlton.30

The principal advantages of an in-house public relations staff—familiarity with issues, loyalty, team membership—may also be important drawbacks in some decision-making situations. Like all managers, public relations executives may be too close to a situation to maintain an objective point of view. Public relations consultants can often bring a startlingly fresh approach to the problems and programs of an organization. They are called on to assess the effectiveness of various programs and to help plan public relations strategies. PR firms are now of, providing public relations audits as well—rehearsals for hostile news conferences, advice on lobbying, strategic counsel on new product marketing and takeover defenses, and arrangement of corporate sales meetings.

With the mergers and acquisitions of the 1980s and early 1990s, public relations counseling firms have changed drastically. Many smaller firms were bought by larger firms who were themselves acquired by other major organizations, advertising agencies, and others. In addition to changes in the structure of counseling firms, the practice of public relations also changed. The most important changes affecting the function of public relations counseling firms, according to Robert Dilenschneider, are “globalization and specialization.”31 Most major
public relations organizations now have branches and affiliates worldwide, and an increasing number of practitioners now specialize in communicating with one of the numerous publics whose opinion a client might want to influence. Most major public relations firms have responded to these changes by dividing their businesses by discipline. In this way, they have experts in the specific public relations needs of any client who might call asking for help. Table 1.1 lists the top 10 public relations firms in 1994 billings.

In a survey of business executives that asked them what were the most valuable skills they wanted from a public relations firm the following were included in order of preference:

1. Communication strategies that support business objectives.
2. Maximum input/results for investment
3. Responsiveness
4. Understanding of our industry and of the particular problems we face

The implication for public relations agencies of the future is that agencies must be more knowledgeable about a client's business and the problems of that particular business or industry. In other words, there will be more specialization among public relations firms in terms of industries served as well as services and skills offered. The agency must also be in harmony with the concerns of top management, embrace and create better ways to measure results and the value of public relations, and enlarge its scope to become global.

While smaller agencies may become more specialized—for instance, an agency may serve only high-tech companies—larger agencies can simply reorganize their firms around rather specialties or practice areas. The globalization of public relations, made possible by rapid advances in communication technology, has made organization of firms by geographic region much less necessary. Top officers of public relations firms say that agency management now emphasizes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>1994 Net Fees</th>
<th>No. of Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Burson-Marsteller Ltd. (A)</td>
<td>$192,999,000</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Shandwick P.L.C.</td>
<td>160,100,000</td>
<td>1,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hill &amp; Knowlton (A)</td>
<td>134,300,000</td>
<td>1,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communications Int'l Group (A)</td>
<td>111,720,434</td>
<td>1,183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Daniel J. Edelman Inc.</td>
<td>74,900,804</td>
<td>819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Fleishman-Hillard</td>
<td>73,886,000</td>
<td>775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ketchum Public Relations (A)</td>
<td>55,405,000</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ogilvy Adams &amp; Reinhardt (A)</td>
<td>51,300,000</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Robinson/Lake/Sawyer/Miller (A)</td>
<td>37,800,000</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Rowland Worldwide Inc. (A)</td>
<td>35,000,000</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(A) means an agency-related
Source: "Dyer's PR Services Report" vol. 10, no. 1 (January 1996) 27
practice areas and interdisciplinary cooperation. "Office and staff managers are a
vanishing breed," according to these top agency officials in a recent Public Rela-
tions Journal survey.24

The interviews with the heads of major public relations firms also suggested
a different structure or organization for the future. Work groups are emphasized
with practitioners working in teams on projects and problem-solving tasks. There
is more attention now paid to teamwork, continuing professional education, and
quality control. For example, Burson-Marsteller has restructured itself based on
"practice rather than geography." CEO Thomas D. Bell said, "In the future, we
will be increasingly organized around the disciplines and industry sectors which
are the most important to our clients."25

The consensus of the firms surveyed is that the "hottest" practice areas in
the next five years will be dealing with corporate change, finance, and issues
management. Health care, public affairs, and technology will also be emphasized
in the immediate future.26

Despite the trend toward less reliance upon geographical distribution of
public relations firms, jobs in counseling firms still tend to be concentrated in the
larger cities because of access to government, media, corporate, union, and trade
association headquarters. This has changed to some degree and is likely to change
more as technology makes global communications even easier. Still, more than
half of the approximately 2,000 public relations counseling firms are located in
New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Washington, D.C.

Public relations departments range in size from more than 400 members in large
corporations to one or two individuals in small organizations. Large corporations
frequently have an officer at the vice-presidential level who is in charge of the
public relations function and helps develop overall policy as a member of top
management. Large organizations also typically include various other public rela-
tions managers at both corporate and division levels, and they may employ a num-
ber of public relations specialists such as writers, researchers, and representatives
to the media. In a small organization, however, one individual may handle all
these responsibilities. Public relations counseling firms may contain specialists in
a particular area, such as merger or takeover campaigns, or generalists who advise
management on a wide range of matters.

This great diversity in the duties of public relations practitioners is illus-
trated by the list of public relations functions published by PRSA in a booklet en-
titled, Careers in Public Relations.

I. Programming. This involves analyzing problems and opportunities,
defining goals and the publics (or groups of people whose support or
understanding is needed), and recommending and planning activities. It
may include budgeting and assignment of responsibilities to the
appropriate people, including non-public relations personnel. For
example, an organization's president or executive director is often a key
figure in public relations activities.
2. Relationships. Successful public relations people develop skill in gathering information from management, from colleagues in their organizations, and from external sources. Continually evaluating what they learn, they formulate recommendations and gain approval for them from their management. Many public relations activities require working with, and sometimes through, other organizational units such as personnel, legal, and marketing staffs.

The practitioner who learns to be persuasive with others will be most effective. But in all their relationships—including people in industry groups, regulatory agencies, governmental and educational institutions, and the public in general—public relations personnel are at work on behalf of their organizations.

3. Writing and Editing. Since the public relations worker is often trying to reach large groups of people, an important tool is the printed word. Examples of its use are found in reports, news releases, booklets, speeches, film scripts, trade magazine articles, product information, and technical material, employee publications, newsletters, shareholder reports, and other management communications directed to both organization personnel and external groups. A sound, clear style of writing that communicates effectively is a must for public relations work.

4. Information. Establishing systems for the dissemination of material to appropriate newspapers, broadcast, general and trade publication editors, and communicating with them to enlist their interest in publishing an organization's news and features are normal public relations activities. This requires knowledge of how newspapers and other media operate, the areas of specialization of publications, and the interests of individual editors. (Competition is keen for the attention of editors and broadcasters who have a limited amount of space and time at their disposal.)

As one public relations practitioner puts it, "You have to get to the right editor of the right publication with the right story at the right time." Although ideas are accepted on the basis of newsworthiness and other readership values, an ability to develop relationships of mutual respect and cooperation with the news media can be useful to both the practitioner and the news people.

5. Production. Various publications, special reports, films, and multimedia programs are important ways of communicating. The public relations practitioner need not be an expert in art, layout, typography, and photography, but background knowledge of the techniques of preparation is needed for intelligent planning and supervision of their use.

6. Special Events. News conferences, convention exhibits, and special showings, new facility and anniversary celebrations, contests and award programs, tours and special meetings are only a few of the special events used to gain attention and acceptance of groups of people. They involve
Events like Coretta King's
leading the march to
commemorate the 50th
anniversary of the civil rights
march from Selma to
Montgomery, Alabama, create
photo and story opportunities
for media. The sponsor's
name (SCLC in this case)
should be visible in the photos
of the event.

careful planning and coordination, attention to detail, preparation of
special booklets, publicity, and reports.

7. Speaking. Public relations work often requires skill in face-to-face
communication—finding appropriate platforms, the preparation of
speeches for others, and the delivery of speeches. The person who can
effectively address individuals and groups will enjoy an advantage over
those whose facility of expression is limited to writing.

8. Research and Evaluation. An important activity undertaken by a public
relations practitioner is fact-gathering. As previously indicated, this can
be highly personal, through interviews, review of library materials, and
informal conversations. It can also involve the use of survey techniques
and forms specializing in designing and conducting opinion research.

After a program is completed, the public relations practitioner
studies its results and evaluates the program's planning, implementation,
and effectiveness. More and more managers expect research and
evaluation from their public relations advisers or staffs.

The changing nature of public relations work is illustrated in Table 1, which lists
the rank order of PR employers' emphasis on knowledge/skill areas. It should be
noted that customer and client relations and decision making and problem solving
are both managerial functions. They do not depend only on hands-on skills that
enable individuals to complete a piece of work from start to finish but instead em-
phasize the ability of the practitioner to accomplish his or her job through the co-
operation of other people.
### TABLE 1.2 Rank Order of PR Employers’ Emphasis on Knowledge/Skill Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Customer/client relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Important to Very Important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Decision making/problem solving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Copywriting/proofreading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Writing print advertising copy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Writing news releases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Project management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Account sales/service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Coordination of creative efforts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Graphic design of print advertising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Writing collateral pieces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Design and layout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Writing direct mail pieces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Media relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Writing corporate publications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Unimportant to Moderately Important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Management counsel regarding organizational decisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Community relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Writing promotional and training films/videos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Traffic management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Graphic design of promotional films/videos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Photographic shooting skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Graphic design of broadcast advertising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Trade shows and exhibits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Convention and meeting planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Governmental relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Stockholder relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. School relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Graphic design of news releases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Fundraising and development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gay Rockey and Laura Mancuso Cottone, "Knowledge and Skills Required by Public Relations Employers," *Public Relations Review* (Fall 1987)

We began this discussion by defining public relations as a management function. Since then, we have discussed various other definitions, each dealing with a particular aspect of the practice of public relations and helping us to better understand this rapidly expanding, multifaceted field. In preparing to read the remainder of this book, think back to where this discussion began—management. The managerial context is required to understand public relations most completely.

One of the most widely accepted views of management can be found within the concept of systems theory. This view describes organizations in our society as systems with permeable boundaries. Two-way communication flows between organizations and their environments. Systems of this type are called open systems. You will read about them further in chapter 9. Open systems are composed of various subsystems that give them their identity and purpose, such as the production of goods or a service. The management subsystem is at the center of each organizational system.
Open systems, with their permeable boundaries, must constantly respond to and interact with their environment. This interaction makes public relations a part of every manager's job, as Figure 1.2 shows. The earlier example of Pepsi-Cola's crisis group formed during the hoax also illustrates this point. Public relations becomes the central subsystem through which management responds to and attempts to influence an organization's environment.

Systems theory also provides an excellent vehicle to describe public relations. Figure 1.3 presents public relations as a system within society, bounded by the environment to which it must respond. At the center of this system is a four-step process that is its core: research, planning, action, and evaluation. Surrounding this core are successive rings of permeable boundaries. Inputs from the environment penetrate through these boundaries and become throughputs when the process of public relations occurs. After the public relations process has responded, outputs are redirected back through the boundaries to the environment.

For example, when the Houston Independent School District was faced with an outside group's discovery that lead-based paint had been used to refinish student desks (input), officials checked the facts and formulated a response strategy (throughput). Once the strategy of repainting the desks over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays was set, it was announced to the news media and parents (output).

This system illustrates that public relations responds to certain elements of the general environment we have previously defined as publics. While these are most frequently the media, consumers, employees, the financial community, and governmental bodies, any definable group can be classified as a public. These
Although many useful definitions of public relations are available from a variety of sources, the concept of public relations as a management function encompasses most aspects. The duties of public relations practitioners go far beyond the skills of communicating, because effective communication requires planning and implementing organizational objectives. The public relations practitioner, like his or her counterparts in other functional areas of the organization, must be adept at influencing policy decisions and developing strategies to implement them. The perspective of this book is broad enough to consider all aspects of public relations practice—from the fundamental skills necessary to obtain a first job to the decision-making ability needed to direct the public relations actions of a large corporation.
"Doing" Public Relations

By Nancy M. Somerick
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Case Study

You have applied for a public relations position with a $10.2 million savings and loan association, a conservative financial institution that has been in existence for over 50 years. The organization has never employed a public relations person before. Now that its assets have risen above $10 million, however, the president of the institution feels it is time to hire someone to "do the PR."

During an interview, the president admits he is not sure what public relations is, but he is fairly sure he wants the person he hires to plan promotions and stage events that will attract new customers, write stories that will get free space and time in the local media, and start an employee publication. The president also states that he is open to suggestions about the position and asks you to explain how you would establish a professional, effective public relations program if you were hired.

Questions

1. Do the responsibilities outlined by the president indicate that he understands how the public relations function can be utilized most effectively? Use the overview given in this chapter to list and discuss some areas of public relations the president has not mentioned that could benefit his company.

2. What would you tell the president about your plans for establishing an effective public relations program for the financial institution? Briefly discuss how the eight functions from Careers in Public Relations listed in this chapter could be a part of your response to the president. Relate your plans to the definition of public relations at the beginning of the chapter.

Notes

2. Ray Stilte, Delta Beverage, in a speech for the Memphis Chapter of PRSA, 13 September 1995
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. "Corporate Communication Most Popular Name Used," Communication World (September 1983), 2
9. Craig Mellow, "Reinventing PR's Image," Across the Board (July/August 1989) 33-39
10. Scott M. Culp quoted in Susan Fry Bovet, Interpret Public Opinion for
The Nature of Public Relations


12. Ibid., 61.


26. Ibid., 35.


29. Chester Burger, Primer of Public Relations Counseling (Counselors Section of the Public Relations Society of America, 1972), 81.


31. Ibid., 34.


33. Ibid.


35. Ibid., 23-29.

36. Ibid., 28.
CHAPTER 2

The History of Public Relations

Preview

Public relations is an outgrowth of three factors: the recognition of the power of public opinion, continuous competition among institutions for public support, and the development of media through which the public can readily be reached.

Historically, public relations has gone through three overlapping stages: manipulation, information, and mutual influence and understanding. Their development was sequential, but all three still exist.

Public relations has generally moved from using any available means to achieve desired public opinion toward informing the public and providing information and counsel to management.

The future of public relations can be better predicted and prepared for if trends in its history are identified and understood.

Vox populi, vox Dei. (The voice of the people is the voice of God.)

― Ancient Roman proverb
Public opinion has always been a force in human events. Leaders have counted the sentiments of the people to sustain their power and gain support for their actions. Only those rulers believed to be gods, or chosen by gods, could afford to ignore public attitudes—and even they usually took pains to assure their subjects that their faith was well placed. Many despots, believing they held absolute power and were thus immune to public opinion, later lost their heads.

Public opinion is a force that has been reckoned with in all civilizations. Artifacts of what can be construed as public relations materials survive from ancient India, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome. The Crusades, the exploits of Lady Godiva, the actions of Martin Luther, and the adventures of the Conquistadores seeking El Dorado have all been explained as examples of ancient public relations activities. The creation in the 17th century of the Congregatio de Propaganda (the congregation for propagating the faith) by the Roman Catholic Church is often pointed to as a keystone in the development of public relations. The action brought us the term *propaganda* but was not a significant development in a church that exists to propagate the faith.

Because public opinion has been a powerful and important factor throughout human history, it is easy to claim that public relations has similarly ancient antecedents. Such a pedigree might be attractive to the public relations historian, but it would be erroneous. Sporadic examples of what might be considered public relations can be traced to earliest recorded history. Nonetheless, the widespread practice of public relations as a necessary and respected organizational function is a fairly recent development.

Modern-day public relations is a product of the recognition that public opinion is powerful, the establishment of strong constituent relationships, and competition among institutions for public support. The United States was and is the perfect crucible in which to mold public relations. With its republican government, its democratic sensibilities, its free markets, its various systems of checks and balances, and its independent population forever voting with ballots and dollars while increasing their levels of affluence and education, public relations was in truth "made in America."

Occasional examples of public relations-like activities were identifiable in the early days of the American colonies. For example, Harvard College initiated the first systematic U. S. fund-raising campaign in 1641. The campaign was supported by the first fund-raising brochure entitled *New England's First Fruits*. In 1758, King's College (now Columbia University) issued the first press release—to announce graduation exercises.

Public relations prospers under adverse circumstances—when power is threatened or when public support is needed. Public relations has prospered most in times of extreme pressure or crisis. Such were the circumstances preceding the American Revolution, when Samuel Adams initiated what can be called a public relations campaign. Adams was to the communication dimension of the Revolution what George Washington was to the military dimension. He recognized the value of using symbols that were easily identifiable and aroused emotions.
Adams used slogans that are still remembered, like “Taxation without representation is tyranny.” Because he got his side of the story to a receptive public first, ships fired into a group of rowdies became known as “the Boston Massacre.” Adams directed a sustained-saturation public relations campaign using all available media. He staged the Boston Tea Party to influence public opinion. In the Sons of Liberty and Committees of Correspondence, he maintained mechanisms to implement the actions made possible by his public relations campaign.

In the infancy of the United States, public relations was practiced primarily in the political sphere. The publication and dissemination of the Federalist Papers, leading to the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, has been called “history’s finest public relations job.”

During the 1820s and 1830s, the vote was granted to a larger portion of the population. Expanding public education increased literacy. The mass medium of the penny press was developing. The campaign that brought Andrew Jackson to the White House was the first to appeal directly to the public rather than to the land-owning elite. Amos Kendall, a member of the famous “kitchen cabinet,” served as the candidate’s political counselor, ghostwriter, and publicist. Although he did not hold the title, Kendall effectively served as the first presidential press secretary and congressional liaison. Jackson, who did not express himself terribly well, used Kendall as a specialist to convey his ideas to Congress and the American people.
Jackson’s foes were forced to adopt similar tactics in the effort to gain public favor. In March 1831, the Bank of the United States, locked in a life-or-death struggle with President Jackson, decided “to cause to be prepared and circulated such documents and papers as may communicate to the people information in regard to the nature and operations of the bank.” Jackson and Kendall, however, prevailed.

With the majority of Americans living on farms or in small communities, communication was primarily person-to-person and face-to-face during the 19th century. There was limited need for public relations intermediaries. Still, the various potentials and applications of public relations began to be explored.

“Manifest Destiny” and America’s settlement of her western frontier were driven by publicity. Even Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, and Buffalo Bill, skilled and sometimes exaggerated promotion was the way to move easterners to the West. Even Jesse James got in on the act when he issued a news release about one of his particularly daring train robberies.

Business became aware of publicity’s virtues. When Burlington Railroad initiated its 1858 publicity campaign, Charles Russell Lowell stated, “We must blow as loud a trumpet as the merits of our position warrants.” Political agents gained increasing sophistication as Tammany Hall, New York City’s famous political machine, used interviewing to obtain information in the late 1850s.

More dramatic were campaigns related to the issues of the day—movements for the abolition of slavery, women’s rights, and prohibition. Demonstrations and endorsements by public figures and the press were used to promote these and other causes.

Still, through the better part of the 19th century, public relations remained a rudimentary adjunct to political activities. The vigorous expansion of American business was tremendously popular and faced few challenges. In its early days, big business played its cards close to the vest—the less the public knew, the better. By the latter part of the century, however, business had overplayed its hand.

The 1880s saw government’s first major steps into the marketplace. Markets and the size of business organizations grew rapidly. Simultaneously, dramatic shifts occurred in public attitudes toward business and in the roles played by several institutions. Workers began to organize themselves into unions, and they perceived their interests in many cases as directly opposed to those of business owners. Business was at once highly successful and increasingly besieged.

By this era, big institutions removed from people’s day-to-day interactions were emerging. In an increasingly diverse society, consensus was breaking down, with a rise in the incidence of conflict and confrontation.

Not surprisingly, the term “public relations” came into use at this time, its earliest appearance was probably in Doremus B. Eaton’s 1882 address to the graduating class of the Yale Law School. The concept, as noted, was not new, but the coming of the term suggested a new level of importance and consciousness. As historian Marc Bloch has commented, “The advent of a name is a great event even when the object named is not new, for the act of naming signifies conscious awareness.”
The Industrial Revolution hit America with full force during the last quarter of the 19th century. The nation’s population doubled as immigrants rushed to the land of opportunity. New products and new patterns of life rapidly emerged. The enforced rhythm of the factory, the stress of urban life, and the vast distinction between the bosses and the workers were new and not always pleasant realities of American life.

According to historian Merle Curti:

Corporations gradually began to realize the importance of combating hostility and courting public favor. The expert in the field of public relations was an inevitable phenomenon in view of the need for the services he could provide.

By 1883, American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) leader Theodore Vail expressed concern about the company’s relationship with the public and the public’s conflicts with the company. In 1888, the Mutual Life Insurance Company employed Charles J. Smith to manage a “species of literary bureau” in response to similar concerns.

In 1889, George Westinghouse, founder of the industrial giant that still bears his name, saw the light. He established the first corporate public relations department and hired E. H. Heinrichs, a Pittsburgh newspaperman, to run it. Heinrichs’s immediate task was to direct a fierce struggle with Thomas Alva Edison over whether the nation would be wired for alternating or direct electric current. Edison was a formidable adversary. Forest McDonald describes the battle this way:

Edison, General Electric attempted to prevent the development of alternating current by unscrupulous political action and by even less savory promotional tactics. The promotional activity was a series of spectacular stunts aimed at dramatizing the deadliness of high voltage alternating current, the most notorious being the development and promotion of the electric chair.

Ultimately, Westinghouse won. Consequently, we use alternating current today. Seeing his success, other businesses followed Westinghouse’s example. Just as the era brought changes to business, politics was forced to adapt to new realities. The hard-fought 1896 Bryan-McKinley presidential race was the first to use modern methods of political campaigning.

The massive social and economic changes of the late 19th century and the resulting pressures on business forced the most dramatic change in the attitudes of businessmen. A philosophy of pure competition gave way to different concerns. Social and economic benefits had to be considered when weighing alternative reasons. As the 20th century began, public relations practitioners concentrated increasingly on this aspect of corporate legitimacy.

The development of public relations in the United States can be divided into three stages. To some degree, their progression was sequential, but all have existed simultaneously, and still do so today. Moreover, while the intellectual and theoretical bases of all three stages evolved rapidly during the first quarter of this century, in practice, the most advanced stage has only recently gone beyond the point of novelty. The three stages are as follows:
1. **Manipulation.** Public relations is assumed to use whatever means are available to achieve desired public opinion and action. Traditionally, practitioners of this type of public relations have been called press agents.

2. **Information.** Public relations is regarded as a conduit for information flowing from organizations to the public so that the public will understand, sympathize with, and patronize the organization. Practitioners of this form of public relations are called publicity agents.

3. **Mutual influence and understanding.** In this most recent stage, public relations accepts the responsibilities of Stage 2, but also provides information and counsel to management on the nature and realities of public opinion and awareness by which the organization can establish policy, make decisions, and take action in light of public opinion. Practitioners who follow this approach are called public relations counselors. Not everyone who assumes this title, however, deserves it.

Manipulation was the technique of 19th-century press agents who served political campaigns and carnivals shows more than mainstream business. The frequently quoted remark “There’s a sucker born every minute” exemplifies the manipulative approach.

In their efforts to promote land sales in the American West or attract attention for politicians, early publicists did not hesitate to embellish the truth. Press agents made exaggeration into an art. The myth of Davy Crockett was a creation of the political enemies of Andrew Jackson. Matthew St. Clair Clarke, Crockett’s press agent, was attempting to lure the frontier vote away from Jackson. 

Old-time press agents played upon the credulity of the public. Exaggeration, distortion, and deception were their stock-in-trade. They became masters of the publicity stunt or what later came to be known as the “pseudo event,” a planned happening that occurs for the purpose of being reported.

P. T. Barnum — Phineas T. Barnum has always been considered the master of press agents—a promoter with endless imagination in a calling in which imagination is the main ingredient. Barnum promoted the midget General Tom Thumb, Jenny Lind, the “Swedish Nightingale,” Jumbo the elephant, and Joice Heath, a 161-year-old woman (an autopsy report after her death put her age at 70 to 80) Barnum used publicity to make money, pure and simple.

Nearly a century after his death, the Ringling Brothers. Barnum and Bailey Circus still uses Barnum’s technique with virtually no alteration. In the 1985–86 season, the circus claimed to exhibit a living example of the mythical unicorn. Informed opinion said that the horn had been grafted to the head of a young goat. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals protested and picketed, but people bought tickets to see the creature—circus revenues rose 22 percent that year. Barnum’s spirit must have smiled from that three-rung circus in the sky.

When P. T. Barnum died, the London Times fondly called him a “harmless deceiver.” As long as press agency is used to promote circuses, entertainment.
and professional sports, its negative potential is limited. Its use in business and politics, however, is more threatening.

In the quest to gain media and public attention, press agents become increasingly outrageous, exploitive, and manipulative. Moreover, the manipulative attempts to gain the attention of the public through the media has an even darker side.

The Downside of Press Agency

In 1878, French socialist Paul Brousse described what he called "the propaganda of the deed." The term refers to a provocative act committed to draw attention toward an idea or grievance in order to get publicity.

For European anarchists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, propaganda of the deed meant bombing, murder, and assassination. During those days, fear gripped the people of Paris because they knew they might be victims of a bomb explosion in the effort to gain attention. Although these techniques were used less often after the start of World War I, they have been revived since the 1960s and used quite broadly throughout the world during recent decades. Violent forms of propaganda of the deed today are known as terrorism.

Violent efforts to attract attention must be differentiated from illegal but nonviolent efforts. Exemplified by the philosophies and activities of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., these acts also are akin to the tactics of press agents.

The tools of press agents, and any of the means and methods of public relations, are available to all—true or false, right or wrong, good or evil. The success of press agents in attracting attention and public response, coupled with their blatantly manipulative arms, inevitably arouse hostility from the press and the public. Press agents give public relations an odor that persists to this day.

By the early 1900s, business was forced to submit to more and more governmental regulations and encountered increasingly hostile criticism from the press. Because of the social forces that gathered against business at the turn of the 20th century, public relations became a specialized function broadly accepted in major corporations. Corporations rapidly recognized that deception, manipulation, and self-serving half-truths were inappropriate responses to challenges raised by media and government. Edward L. Bernays, public relations pioneer, first teacher of public relations at the college level, and author of the first book on the subject, explained the emergence of the public relations function in this way:

"The first recognition of distinct functions of the public relations counsel arose, perhaps, in the early years of this century from the insurance scandals coincident with the muckraking of corporate finance in the popular magazines. The interests attacked suddenly realized that they were completely out of touch with the public; they were professing to serve, and required expert advice to show them how they could understand the public and interpret themselves to it."

Publicity Bureaus

Former journalists began to find it possible to make a living in the public relations business. In 1900, George V. S. Michaelis established the Publicity Bureau in Boston. His job, as he saw it, was to gather factual information about his clients for distribution to newspapers. By 1906, his major clients were the nation's railroads. The railroads engaged the Publicity Bureau to head off
The History of Public Relations

Edward L. Bernays, a pioneer in public relations education

adverse regulations being promoted by Theodore Roosevelt. The agency used
fact-finding publicity and personal contact to push its clients' positions, but kept
secret its connection with the railroad. Publicity Bureau staff increased dramati-
cally, with offices set up in New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Topeka, and Washing-
ton, D.C. and with agents in California, South Dakota, and elsewhere.

President Roosevelt, who saw the presidency as "a bully pulpit," proved to
be more than a match for the Publicity Bureau. The first president to make exten-
sive use of press conferences and interviews, Roosevelt was said to rule the coun-
try from the newspapers' front pages. The passage of the Hepburn Act extended
government control over the railroad industry and represented a clear victory for
the Roosevelt Administration.

Other early publicity offices were established by William Wolf Smith in
Washington, D.C., in 1902; Hamilton Wright, San Francisco, 1908; Pendleton
Dudley, New York's Wall Street district, 1909; Rex Harlow, Oklahoma City,
1912; and Fred Lewis and William Seabrook, Atlanta, 1912.

Ivy Lee The father of public relations, however, and the man who nurtured the
fledgling profession, was Ivy Lee. Better Lee, son of a Georgia preacher. Lee was a
reporter who saw better prospects in the publicity arena. After working in New
York's 1903 mayoral campaign and for the Democratic National Committee, Lee
joined George Parker, another newspaper veteran, to form the nation's third pub-
licity agency in 1904.
Two years later, coal operators George F. Baer and Associates hired the partnership to represent their interests during a strike in the anthracite mines. John Mitchell, leader of the labor forces, was quite open and conversant with the press, which treated him and his cause with considerable sympathy. The tight-lipped Baer would not even talk to the president of the United States.

Lee took the assignment and persuaded Baer to open up. Then he promptly issued a "Declaration of Principles" to all newspaper city editors. The sentiments expressed in this document clearly indicated that public relations had entered its second stage.

As Eric Goldman observes, "The public was no longer to be ignored, in the traditional manner of business, nor fooled, in the continuing manner of the press agent." Lee declared that the public was to be informed. The declaration read:

This is not a secret press bureau. All our work is done in the open. We aim to supply news. This is not an advertising agency, if you think any of our matter ought properly to go to your business office, do not use it. Our matter is accurate. Further details on any subject treated will be supplied promptly, and any editor will be assisted most cheerfully in verifying directly any statement of fact.

In brief, our plan is, frankly and openly, on behalf of business concerns and public institutions, to supply to the press and public of the United States prompt and accurate information concerning subjects which it is of value and interest to the public to know about.

From his actions and effectiveness in dealing with the coal strike, Lee clearly was not just a press agent catering publicity. Indeed, he had a sophisticated grasp of the fundamental nature, problems, and opportunities of conflict.

Lee realized that a corporation could not hope to influence the public unless its publicity was supported by good works. Performance determines publicity. To achieve necessary and positive consistency between words and actions, Lee urged his clients in business and industry to align their senses and their policies with the public interest.

Railroads
As previously indicated, railroads were among the early users of public relations consultants. In 1906, the Pennsylvania Railroad retained Lee as publicity counselor. Beginning in 1897, the term public relations was frequently used in railroad trade publications. Indeed, publications of the day maintained that as early as 1893, railroads had begun "to research and study the social condition of its public." Lee's activities for the Pennsylvania included publicizing employee benefits and railroad safety. He also emphasized the large numbers of people who owned the railroad's stock (not mentioning that a very few people held the vast majority of stock). He urged executives to accept public exposure and to cooperate fully with community projects. Most controversially, Lee released complete, factual information about accidents. Traditionally, such news had been suppressed.

The railroad industry was convinced of the value of public relations. By 1909, an industry leader called on all major companies to create a Vice President in charge of public relations, a man of mature years and judgment, skilled in railway affairs and human affairs as well, and carrying enough weight in the councils of his company so that his suggestions would be apt to be carried out.
Such an adviser, it was held, could reveal and eliminate the unpopularity of the railroad industry by evaluating and improving customer service.

In a similar vein, a 1912 article stressed that “real publicity” goes beyond appointment of a special agent to court journalists. “It should be ingrown in the entire staff from top to bottom...” An early textbook entitled *Railroad Administration* included a chapter devoted to “Public Relations of a Railroad.” J. Hampton Baumgartner was hired in 1910 to handle publicity for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. In 1913, he told the Virginia Press Association that railroads had endeavored to establish closer relations with the public, chiefly through the press and with its cooperation.

Despite their early adoption of public relations techniques, the railroads were notably unsuccessful in lobbying their cause before government bodies. Over 2,000 laws affecting railroads were passed by Congress and the various state legislatures in the period between 1908 and 1913.

**Not-for-Profit Organizations** Not-for-profit organizations—including colleges, churches, charitable causes, and health and welfare agencies—began to use publicity extensively during this era. In 1899, Anson Phelps Stokes converted Yale University’s office of secretary into an effective alumni and public relations office. Harvard President Charles W. Eliot, who spoke as early as 1869 on the need to influence public opinion toward advancement of learning, was among the Publicity Bureau’s first clients in 1900. The University of Pennsylvania and the University of Wisconsin set up publicity bureaus in 1904. By 1917, the Association of American College News Bureaus was formed.

In 1905, the Washington, D.C., YMCA sought $350,000 for a new building. For the first time, a full-time publicist was engaged in a fund-raising drive. By 1908, the Red Cross and the National Tuberculosis Association were making extensive use of publicity agents. The New York Orphan Asylum was paying a publicist man $75 per month.

Churches and church groups were quick to recognize the value of an organized publicity effort. New York City’s Trinity Episcopal Church was one of Pendleton Dudley’s first clients in 1909. The Seventh Day Adventist Church established its publicity office in 1912. George Parker, Ivy Lee’s old partner, was appointed to handle publicity for the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1913.

**Business** Publicity and public relations were making their greatest strides in business. In 1907, AT&T’s Theodore N. Vail hired James Drummond Ellsworth for that corporation’s public relations. Ellsworth promoted efficient operation and consideration of customers’ needs, a systematic method for answering complaints, and acceptance of governmental regulation as the price for operating a privately owned natural monopoly.

Samuel Insull, an associate of George Westinghouse, rose to head the Chicago Edison Company, an electric utility. In 1903, he began to publish *The Electric City*, a magazine aimed at gaining the understanding and goodwill of the community. He pioneered films for public relations purposes in 1909. In 1912, he introduced bill stuffers, messages to customers in their monthly statements.
Among the greatest of industrial publicity users was Henry Ford. One commentator suggests "He may have been an even greater publicist than mechanic." The Ford Company pioneered use of several public relations tools. The employee periodical Ford Times was begun in 1908 and continues today. In 1914, a corporate film department was established. Ford surveyed 1,000 customers to gain insights into their attitudes and concerns.

The company set up demonstrations for the media, including car races and speed records. Ford sought publicity at every opportunity. Presenting himself as the price-reducing champion of the common man, he was totally accessible to the press and quotable on any subject. Ford became a household word.

Business leaders were convinced of the legitimacy and importance of publicity and public relations. In the 1911 AT&T annual report, corporation president Theodore Vail advocated a policy of absolute truthfulness, even in treating unfavorable information.

In all times, in all lands, public opinion has had control at last word — public opinion is but the concert of individual opinions, and is as much subject to change or to education.

Another business leader who spoke out on public relations was U.S. Steel Board Chairman Elbert H. Gary. In 1909, he maintained, "I believe thoroughly in publicity. The surest and wisest of all regulations is public opinion." B. C. Forbes wrote of Gary.

"Perhaps his greatest achievement was his leading of (U.S. Steel) out of the old ways of secrecy into the path of 'pointless publicity.' All America owes him a profound debt for this. When Judge Gary began his great work, everybody considered business a private matter, and the public had a right to look in upon it only when some crime was alleged. Today, business in general is in the open, and the more everybody knows about it the more everybody concerned is pleased. Hats off to Judge Gary for this — it is the greatest public relations effort in history, up to its time, was the one mounted in support of the United States effort in World War I. The military had utilized publicity for several years, the Marine Corps established a publicity bureau in Chicago in 1907. Never before had there been such a massive, multifaceted, coordinated program been mounted. Moreover, though often used by big business in a defensive fashion, public relations took the offensive when it came to war."

Woodrow Wilson set up a Committee on Public Information in 1917. Newspaperman George Creel was asked to run it. With a staff of journalists, scholars, artists, and others skilled at manipulating words and symbols, Creel mobilized the home front. Before the war, the Red Cross had 486,194 members in 372 chapters and $200,000 in funds. At the war's end, the organization's numbers were 20 million members in 3,864 chapters and $400 million raised. On May 1, 1917, there were 350,000 holders of U.S. bonds. Six months later 10 million held bonds.

Creel did not just work out of a central office; he decentralized the organization and the effort. Every industry had a special group of publicity workers tending to their particular contributions to the war effort. Political scientist Harold D. Lasswell was involved in the Creel organization. Looking back to assess the
situations. Lasswell concluded, "Propaganda is one of the most powerful instrumentalities in the modern world."

Indeed, this committee was a crucial point in pushing public relations to its next level. Many publicists trained in the war effort set out to make careers for themselves when the war ended. Impressed with their results, organizations were eager to use their services. In 1919, the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic organization, set up a publicity bureau. Two years later, the American Association of Engineers held its first national conference on public information and published its proceedings as a book called Publicity Methods for Engineers. Also in 1921, Sears, Roebuck and Company retained Hayes, Loeb, and Company to counter a movement by thousands of local merchants fighting mail-order competition. In 1922, the National Publicity Council for Welfare Services was set up. Public relations was becoming more sophisticated. Edward Bernays used market research, social surveys, and public opinion polls in efforts to, as he called it, "engineer public consent."

Still, the ends to be served by public relations and its practitioners were not always noble by any means. Between 1920 and 1923, for example, Edward Y. Clark and Bessie Tyler increased the membership of the Ku Klux Klan, a group that thrives on notions of bigotry and white supremacy, from a few thousand to some 3 million members.

To dedicated and thoughtful public relations professionals in the decade following 1910, it became increasingly obvious that organizations communicate with the public not only by words released through the press, but also by their policies and actions. Consequently, public relations professionals sought to advise business executives in such matters, attempting to gain a place in the heart of business organization—the decision-making and operational aspects. Ivy Lee was again in the vanguard, recognizing that good words had to be supported by good deeds. Lee sought to elevate his own status to that of "brain trust" for his clients.

N. W. Ayer & Son published a booklet in 1912 recommending that business executives discuss with their advertising agents "if conditions in the business are in harmony with an advertising program." Luke Lee, Ayer wanted business executives to understand that a successful publicity campaign involved their companies' basic policies as much as their procedures for telling the public about goods or services. These basic policies included both external and internal concerns. Following this theme, it was perhaps not surprising that George Michaelis, who had founded the Publicity Bureau in Boston, advised Westinghouse in 1914 to pay more attention to internal "human relations."

A protracted and violent strike against Colorado Fuel and Iron Company gave Ivy Lee the opportunity to become a consultant on the internal workings of a business. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the company's principal stockholder, employed Lee in 1914 after savage criticism for his handling of the strike. Lee publicized management's position in the strike (without revealing himself as the source of the information). He also persuaded Rockefeller to visit the strike area. The man who was perceived as a reclusive tycoon talked with the miners, ate in their dining halls, and danced with their wives. Beyond these traditional
actions, however, Lee strongly recommended to management that they improve their communication with workers and establish mechanisms to redress workers' grievances. Thus, Lee became an adviser to Rockefeller not only in relation to dealings with the press and the public but also in relation to the actual operation of the business. His emphasis on counseling management to take positive action marked a major shift in public relations theory and practice. Lee served Rockefeller until his own death in 1934.

Inward Focus In addition to its outward focus, public relations was gaining an inward focus. This had several results. Employees became recognized as a significant public and an appropriately important audience for public relations efforts. In this regard, Lee persuaded client American Tobacco Company to introduce profit sharing for its employees.

By 1925, more than half of all major manufacturing companies were publishing employee magazines. Textbooks stressed the integration of public relations with general business activities. Samuel Kennedy maintained that from the viewpoint of companies, it was of little importance which person had immediate responsibility for directing publicity and giving out news. What mattered was that the policies of the organization be guided by executives aware of political considerations.

By the 1920s, the vanguard of public relations practitioners considered themselves responsible not only for informing the press and the public, but also for educating management about public opinion. They saw themselves as advising managerial decisions and actions in terms of public response. Only rarely, however, were public relations persons actually allowed to play such roles.

A new understanding of publicity was developing, based on recognition of its tremendous potentials and its very real limitations. Bernard J. Mullaney, who served Samuel Insull's efforts to establish utilities as privately owned natural monopolies, concluded in 1924:

Honest and intelligent publicity efforts are a most important part of a public relations program but not the whole program, and not even a part of it, as publicity is commonly understood. Publicity that seeks to put over something in a sound, in the long run it defeats itself.

Arthur W. Page The third stage in the development of public relations was established at American Telephone & Telegraph during the career of Arthur W. Page. A successful businessman, public servant, writer, and editor, Page was approached with an offer to become vice president of AT&T, succeeding the pioneer public relations specialist James D. Ellsworth. Page agreed to accept the position only on the condition that he would not be restricted to publicity in the traditional sense. He demanded and received a voice in company policy and insisted that the company's performance be the determinant of its public reputation. Page practiced the Stage 2 informative approach to public relations. He maintained that all business in a democratic country begins with public permission and exists by public approval. If that be true, it follows that business should be cheerfully willing to tell the public what its policies are, what it is doing, and what it hopes to do. Thus, it seems practically a duty.
Under Page's leadership, however, the company recognized that winning public confidence required not merely ad hoc attempts to answer criticism. Rather, a continuous and planned program of positive public relations was needed. Using institutional advertising, the usual stream of information flowing through press releases and other methods, bypassing the conventional print media, the company went directly to the public, establishing, for instance, a film program to be shown at schools and civic groups.

AT&T sought to maintain direct contact with as many of its clients as possible. The company made a total commitment to customer service. Moreover, deposits were broadly distributed among banks, legal business was given to attorneys throughout the country, and contracts for supplies and insurance were made with many local agencies. AT&T paid fees for employees to join outside organizations, knowing that through their presence the company would be constantly represented in many forums. Finally, the company sought to have as many people as possible own its stock. Today, AT&T and the successor companies that were created by divestiture in 1984 are the most widely held of all securities.

What truly set Page apart and established him as a pioneer was his insistence that the publicity department act as an interpreter of the public to the company, drawing on a systematic and accurate diagnosis of public opinion. Page wanted data, not hunches. Under his direction, the AT&T publicity department (as it was still called) kept close check on company policies, assessing their impact on the public. Thus, Page caused the company "to act all the time from the public point of view, even when that seems in conflict with the operating point of view."

In 1931, General Motors followed AT&T's lead. The automobile giant set up an internal department under Paul Garrett to ascertain public attitudes and
execute a program to bring the company fully into public approval. Garrett was told to put the interests of the public first. (See spotlight 2.1 for a brief biographical sketch of leading public relations pioneers.)

**Public Relations Spotlight 2.1**

**Samuel Adams.** Most active prior to and during the American Revolution, Adams organized the Sons of Liberty, used the liberty tree symbol, minted slogans like "Taxation Without Representation Is Tyranny," staged the Boston Tea Party, named the Boston Massacre, and mounted a sustained propaganda campaign.

**Amos Kendall.** During the 1820s and 1830s, Kendall served candidate and President Andrew Jackson as public relations counselor, poet, and speechwriter. He spearheaded the successful campaign against the Bank of the United States.

**Matthew St. Clair Clarke.** As publicist for the Bank of the United States in the 1830s, Clarke saturated the press with releases, reports, and pamphlets in the most extensive, albeit unsuccessful, public relations campaign to that date. In an effort to develop a politician to oppose Andrew Jackson, he created the myth surrounding the historical figure Davy Crockett.

**P. T. Barnum.** A consummate showman during the middle and late 1800s, Barnum originated many methods for attracting public attention. He didn't let truth interfere with his publicity and press agency techniques. While he contributed positively to our understanding of the power of publicity, his lack of honesty led to a legacy of mistrust of publicity efforts that exists sometimes even today.

**George Michaelis.** Organizer of the nation's first publicity firm, the Publicity Bureau of Boston in 1900. Michaelis used fact-finding publicity and personal contact to saturate the nation's press.

**Ivy Lee.** Often called the father of modern public relations, Lee believed the public should be informed. He recognized that good words had to be supported by positive actions on the part of individuals and organizations. His emphasis on public relations as a management function put public relations on the right track with corporate America. His career spanned 31 years from its beginning in 1902 until his death in 1934.

**George Creel.** As head of the Committee on Public Information during World War I, Creel used public relations techniques to sell Liberty Bonds, build the Red Cross, and promote food conservation and other war-related activities. In so doing, he proved the power of public relations and trained a host of the 20th century's most influential practitioners.

**Edward Bernays.** An intellectual leader in the field, Bernays coined the phrase "public relations counsel," wrote Crystallizing Public Opinion (the first book on public relations), and taught the first college-level public relations course at New York University in 1923. Bernays emphasized the social science contribution to public relations and was a leading advocate for public relations professionalism through practitioner licensing or credentialing. He remained an active counselor, writer, and speaker until his death in 1995 at age 103.

**Arthur Page.** When offered a vice-presidency at AT&T, Page insisted he have a voice in shaping corporate policy. He maintained that business in a democratic country depends on public approval and approval.

**John Hill.** Along with Don Knowlton, John Hill opened a public relations agency in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1927. When John Hill moved to New York a few years later to

Carl Byor and FDR

Franklin Roosevelt became ill with polio in 1921 while vacationing, a few months after his defeat as vice-president on the James Cox Democratic ticket in the 1920 elections. Roosevelt narrowly escaped death from the polio and would light the crippling effects of the disease for the rest of his life.

In 1926, Roosevelt bought a run-down spa in Warm Springs, Georgia, from his friend and philanthropist, George Peabody. The spa—with 1,200 acres, hotel, and cottages—was in poor shape, but the curative powers of the hot mineral springs held promise for many polio victims.

When Roosevelt was elected governor of New York in 1928, he realized he wouldn’t have time to oversee the rehabilitation effort at Warm Springs. Roosevelt asked his law partner, Basil O’Connor, to lead the effort. O’Connor formed the Warm Springs Foundation to raise money for the refurbishing of the health resort. However, the stock market crash in 1929 made fund-raising difficult.

When Roosevelt became president in 1932, the foundation was nearly bankrupt. However, one of the foundation fund-raisers, Keith Morgan, hired a public relations counselor, Carl Byor, to do the job. Byor had founded his own public relations agency in 1930 to promote tourism in Cuba. Byor’s fundraising idea for the Warm Springs Foundation was to create a special event to raise the money. That event turned out to be birthday balls around the country to celebrate President Roosevelt’s birthday on January 30, 1934.

Byor sent letters to newspaper editors around the country asking them to nominate a birthday ball director for their area. If an editor didn’t respond, he went to the Democratic Party chairman in the area or to the Roosevelt-appointed postmaster to ask them to do the ball. Media were besieged with information about the balls. Nationally syndicated columnist and broadcaster Walter Winchell presented an appeal that was so good it would be used for years for both birthday balls and for March of Dimes. Radio personalities tried to outdo each other in promoting the balls. In the end, 6,000 balls were held in 3,600 communities and more than $1 million was raised for the foundation.

The next two years the event was changed to split the proceeds 70 percent to the local communities and 30 percent to a newly created national polio research commission.

Carl Byor led the first three birthday balls. He left after the third because he became disillusioned with President Roosevelt when FDR “packed” the Supreme Court in 1937.

But, out of Byor’s effort not only came the birthday balls, but also the March of Dimes, the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, and finally victory over polio. Carl Byor had elevated fund-raising to a new level through his public relations efforts, and had given new insight into techniques that public relations practitioners continue to use today.

The deteriorating military and political situation in Europe caused the military to move massively into public relations in the 1930s. In 1935, Chief of Staff General Douglas MacArthur appointed Major Alexander Surles to head a public relations branch. His orders: "The dual job of getting before the public the War Department's anxiety over things to come in Europe and helping newspeople pry stories out of the War Department."[27]

Each branch of the service built its own public relations apparatus. The Army Air Corps, under former information officer General H. H. "Hap" Arnold, promoted air power. The Army's efforts employed 3,000 military and civilian personnel.

The greatest application of public relations techniques in the 1930s occurred not in the United States, however, but in Germany. In the hands of the Nazis, propaganda demonstrated its effectiveness, but became a dirty word.

In June 1942, with America fully engaged in worldwide struggle, the Office of War Information (OWI) was established. Similar to Creel's effort in World War I, a massive public relations effort was mounted to rally the home front. Elmer Davis directed the program. The goals of the Office of War Information included selling war bonds, rationing food, clothing, and gasoline, planting victory gardens, and recruiting military personnel. Other issues promoted were factory productivity and efficiency.

Several important communication agencies still active today trace their beginnings to OWI. These include the United States Information Agency (USIA), the Voice of America, and the Advertising Council.

Following the war, public relations gained increased respectability, acceptance, and professionalism. In 1947, Boston University established the first school of public relations. Two years later, one hundred colleges and universities offered classes in the subject.

Earl Newson was perhaps the model public relations professional of the immediate post–World War II era. Hired by Standard Oil in 1945, Newson was best known for helping young Henry Ford II become a public figure known for responsible business management. Newson was a public relations counselor in the purest sense. He held no press conferences. He simply advised business leaders at the highest levels. His laws of public opinion are still appropriate today.

In 1954, the Public Relations Society of America developed the first code of ethics for the profession. The society set up a grievance board for code enforcement in 1962 and a program of voluntary accreditation in 1964.

In the late 1960s and the 1970s, public relations seemed to be enjoying a renaissance of sorts. Corporations again felt themselves beset by adverse circumstances. Some have compared the 1970s with the muckraking era and maintain that public relations was more concerned with helping corporations avoid destructive attacks than with attempting to gain positive attention. "The public relations man now is far less of an ingenious producer of marvelous editorial gifts for his clients," said David Finn in 1977, "and far more of an experienced counselor in relating to potential or actual media attacks."[28]
During this period, new emphasis was placed on public relations functions other than marketing. Business/government relations became increasingly important as the federal government entered a new era of regulation. Environmentalism, consumerism, equal opportunity, urban problems, and nuclear power became issues confronting many organizations and demanding managed responses. The Vietnam War created special problems at home and abroad. Dow Chemical was picketed on college campuses, while overseas, branches of the Bank of America were frequently bombed. Sit-ins and marches were nonviolent events staged to influence public discussion and discourse. But radical young people in the United States and elsewhere also used riots and bombings as propaganda of the deed.

Public relations had to increase its sophistication in a hurry. New tools and processes were developed. These included issues management, audience analysis, environmental scanning, and strategic planning. Indeed, with the importance of business’s traditional technological and economic criteria increasing challenged on social and political grounds, corporations expanded public relations staffs, budgets, and programs and elevated the function to a higher status in the organization’s hierarchy.

All managers and virtually all employees developed a strong public relations dimension in their work. Chief executives assumed more and more public relations responsibility. At companies like McGraw-Edison (where public relations convinced top management to abandon the use of the chemical PCB in electrical capacitors) public relations has reached the third stage of development. In return, the results-oriented approach of top management demands from public relations demonstrable achievements similar to those expected of all other corporate functions.

Since the 1930s, the theory and practice of public relations has centered around variations on the three themes or stages previously discussed. More and more, public relations is continuous rather than episodic, positive rather than defensive. It is now accepted as a legitimate function within virtually all institutions and organizations.

Other trends are less clear. The argument over the professionalism of public relations practitioners continues. While the practice of public relations often calls for sophisticated technical skills and capabilities, public relations within organizations is frequently practiced, if not directed, by managers with training in other fields. Public relations practitioners as a group are more professionally ethical today than in the early years when the residue of press agentry still tainted the practice, but instances of laundering press releases through subsidized agencies, manipulating statistics, doing selective reporting, and staging events still occur. Perhaps for this reason, the term public relations is still mistrusted to indicate a coverup or distortion of truth.

William A. Durbin, former chairman of Hill & Knowlton Public Relations, said.

The PR function is about to cross the threshold from a primarily communications function to a management function participating systematically in the formation of policy and the decision-making process itself.
Durbin sees the profession at the same threshold seen by Michaelis, Lee, and Bernays—the threshold that was crossed more than half a century ago by Arthur W. Page. His perception illustrates how things change and remain the same.

By the 1980s, over 60 percent of the workforce were information workers. The precise role public relations will play in post-industrial America is impossible to predict. Societal complexity and interdependence are greater than ever before. International competition and concerns about productivity and the quality of life have reemphasized traditional economic concerns as well. More information and voices compete for resources, attention, acceptance, approval, and support.

Society, however, exists through consensus, which seems ever harder to find. Public relations must not only assist those seeking attention, but also help nurture consensus and promote adaptation to changing environments. That public relations in all its stages will prosper for some years to come is a safe bet.

The future is always difficult to gauge, but by identifying and describing historical trends, one can make good guesses. We will summarize public relations history and try to fathom its future by identifying and describing 10 trends that appear to influence the direction of the practice today.

Public relations is moving from Manipulation, External counselor, Marketing, Program, Craftsperson, Items, Output, Firefighter, Illegitimacy, U.S. profession to Adaptation, Internal team member, Management, Process, Manager, Issues, Input, Fire preventer, Legitimacy, Global profession.

Let's look at each of these trends:

We begin with the consideration of this trend because it encompasses the entire past century of public relations evolution and because changes in this area are prerequisites for the development of other trends we will discuss. Public relations was born as a manipulative art. Its intent was to achieve specific results in terms of customer response, election outcomes, media coverage, or public attitudes.

Public relations' purpose was to communicate in such ways as to assure the compliance of relevant publics' behavior and attitudes with an individual or organization's plans. The means, methods, and media of communication were determined by what it took to get the job done and little else. Stunts, sensationalism, and embellishment and highly selective truth were hallmarks of the trade.

The blatantly manipulative aims of public relations in the past aroused the hostility of press and public. Residual effects of that early hostility still linger.
Moreover, in a more subtle and serious way, mistrust of manipulative techniques caused those who employed public relations practitioners to consciously limit their influence. Until public relations practitioners moved beyond manipulation, their practice was restricted to specific tasks. They were the errand boys (and sometimes prostitutes) their journalistic colleagues accused them of being.

As practitioners began to establish trust and credibility, the manipulative phase became history. Only then could public relations begin to make claims in stature and responsibility within organizations.

As the 20th century progressed, it became apparent that organizations—achieved success not just by seeking compliance to their plans from outside entities, but by responding and adapting effectively to environmental demands, constraints, and opportunities. Public relations practitioners found they could greatly facilitate this adaptive process if they could become trusted, two-way communicators seeking to establish rapport and mutual understanding between groups.

The field of public relations was established as a legitimate occupation and worthwhile field of study by a handful of ex-newspapermen and press agents in the early decades of the 20th century. These pioneers, for the most part, set up their own firms and frequently succeeded in building larger-than-life reputations for themselves as well as their clients. This external, independent counselor model of public relations practice quickly became the ideal taught in our textbooks and university classrooms ever since.

The actual practice of public relations has evolved far beyond this original model. Although counseling firms have flourished, a new breed of practitioner has emerged, primarily within the structures of large complex organizations. Public relations staffs now work for amorphous organizational entities with vast managerial hierarchies that can seldom produce a personality like J. D. Rockefeller. They must be concerned with internal communication as well as external publicity and must provide managerial leadership as well as communication expertise. They are essential members of the management team. Moreover, these new organizational practitioners are achieving, through their anonymous managerial accomplishments, the kind of influence the pioneers only dreamed about.

Public relations specialists in organizations must understand the concerns and attitudes of customers, employees, investors, managers, special interest groups, and a vast array of other publics. The job cannot stop with an understanding of these complex issues; public relations practitioners must be able to integrate this information into the organization's managerial decision-making process. Public relations practitioners of today and tomorrow must continue to exhibit high-quality communication skills to do the jobs for which they are hired. They must also understand both their role as managers in affecting the actions of an organization and the importance of public relations input into that process.

Public relations is increasingly the responsibility of managers themselves. Rather than having a public relations specialist to deal with the media or the community, managers often have that duty. In some cases public relations departments have shrunk because the managerial aspects of the public relations efforts are
accomplished by managers and the marketing dimensions are farmed out to outside public relations agencies.

Not very long ago, the primary justification for public relations was its effort to sell products. Public relations was seen as an adjunct to the sales effort, concerned primarily with product publicity, special events coordination, and getting free advertising.

The trend that has seen public relations move from a marketing adjunct to the management mainstream is a by-product of the changes in both areas. The development of the marketing concept that stresses organizational responsiveness to markets rather than sales efforts has changed the direction of information flow related to the development and sale of products. Management’s task has also changed dramatically. Once, the job of management was to keep an established production organization smoothly functioning. Now, management seeks constantly to adapt a flexible organism to dynamic and complex environments.

Naturally, public relations has changed in conjunction with these changes in marketing and management. While still contributing to the marketing effort, the prime responsibility of public relations today is providing the information and environment in which management can function most effectively.

Traditionally, public relations has placed tremendous emphasis on programs and products, specific tangible outputs of public relations efforts. The job of the public relations practitioner has consisted of a progression of discrete tasks—media releases, publications, public service announcements, publicity campaigns, and the like. Such products and programs are still a time-consuming responsibility of public relations departments. They are the bulk of the expanding work of public relations agencies. One of the clearest observable trends in public relations, however, is the growing view that organizational communication is a continuous process, not just a succession of programs.

Although public relations practitioners will still develop and deliver specific products and programs, they will be increasingly involved in broader, less discrete responsibilities. They will spend more time and effort developing communication objectives that are consistent with an organization’s overall objectives. They will act as counselors to management and serve on teams with managers and other organizational specialists, working closely and cogently on a broad array of organizational programs. They will adopt a long-term, general perspective instead of a short-term, specific perspective.

In conjunction with the traditional emphasis on producing specific products and programs, public relations practitioners have been viewed as possessing a specific set of skills. Writing ability has always led the list, followed by speaking, interpersonal skills, and a potpourri of other abilities, including photography, graphic design, and the like. These skills are important, but stressing them exclusively leaves the fledgling public relations person in danger of becoming a narrowly specialized craftsman or technician when trends demand a broadly experienced communication manager.
A young public relations practitioner with less than 10 years of experience put it this way:

We’re yearning to learn all we can about financial statements and effective management techniques. While many of us still write, edit, layout and design, we have also moved up to greater responsibilities demanding a broad knowledge of business, international affairs, and the issues affecting the industries in which we work.

She learned about writing, editing, layout, and design in school, but not the rest.

**From Items to Issues**

In times past, public relations practitioners sought to place “items” in the media and measured their effectiveness by their success. The current trend carries public relations away from that stage, through defending against negative publicity, and toward issues management.

**Issues management** is the identification of key issues confronting organizations and the management of organizational responses to them. This process involves early identification of potential controversies, development of organizational policy related to these issues, creation of programs to carry out policies, implementation of these programs, communication with appropriate publics about these policies and programs, and evaluation of the results.

The issues management process is an area in which public relations has its greatest potential in terms of contributions to managerial decision making (see chapter 4). Organizations can avoid negative publicity and gain positive public notice by adapting in advance to environmental demands. In this way, they are able to reap benefits by being perceived as responsible leaders. Public relations practitioners must be prepared to identify and deal with the issues that confront their organizations.

**From Output to Input**

The traditional emphasis of public relations has been on output—the creation of messages for external publics. Increasingly, however, public relations practitioners are realizing that their most important messages constitute input—messages to internal publics from external and internal publics. The trend line indicates the rising importance of employee and managerial audiences for public relations messages.

Ultimately, public relations enters into the very core of organizations, bearing the information and perspectives that influence fundamental decisions of policy and strategy. Public relations practitioners increasingly provide input and participate in such decisions. Thus, it is necessary too for them to understand the managerial perspective, while maintaining an independent viewpoint that considers social as well as economic variables.

**From Firefighters to Fire Preventers**

Among the most fully established trends affecting public relations practitioners is the evolution of their role from being “firefighters” to “fire preventers.” Effective public relations does not exist merely to clean up messes once they are made, but seeks to avoid such dilemmas. Preventive public relations is a widely held ideal among practitioners.
The confluence of many of the trends just described makes preventive public relations possible. Public relations practitioners are moving into positions that allow them to more fully recognize areas of potential danger, to be equipped to deal with those dangers, and to possess sufficient power and influence to effect needed changes before potentials become realities. Once again, managerial skills take precedence over media skills.

Continuing debates about professionalism notwithstanding, and despite the efforts of PRSA and others, public relations has always had an air of illegitimacy about it. Public relations has been a bastard child, a waif that was not really wanted even by those who temporarily took it in. Journalists often treat public relations professionals like cousins who have fallen from grace. Thus, as long as public relations practitioners seek their legitimacy from the working press, they will remain unfulfilled.

Public relations has, however, rapidly gained legitimacy in the eyes of organizational managers and executives. Executives recognize and accept the responsibilities of being their organizations’ chief public relations practitioners. The trend of legitimacy developed because of all the other trends discussed. Members of the profession who help organizations adapt and respond to the demands and opportunities present in society, who provide working linkages between organizations, and who play a critical role in the effective management of our crucial problem-solving organizational systems are not only legitimate, but are deserving of honor and esteem.

The last decade has seen worldwide expansion of public relations as U.S. business activity has increasingly become global. Cultural, language, and legal differences make global public relations more difficult, but rapidly evolving communication technology has made these barriers less of a factor. Marshall McLuhan’s “Global Village,” which he predicted more than 30 years ago, has finally arrived. The future of public relations must take into account the global community in all its efforts.

As public relations educator and historian Scott M. Cutlip wrote in his book, *The Unseen Power*: “The essentiality of public relations as a management function that Ivy Lee envisaged in the early 1900s becomes clearer each passing day as our global society becomes more and more dependent on effective communication and on an interdependent, competitive world.”

Persuasion and public opinion are forces that have always played a role in human events, but widespread practice of public relations as a necessary and respected organizational function is largely an American product of this century. Ever evolving and in transition, public relations practice has experienced three distinct stages: manipulation, information, and mutual influence and understanding.

The future of public relations can be understood through 10 trends that emphasize the practice’s ongoing management role in helping to shape organizations’ responses to their environments.
Wreck on the Pennsylvania Railroad, 1906

By Craig E. Anstoff
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Case Study

Severe railroad regulations passed in 1903 and 1906 caused Alexander J. Cassatt, president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, to seek the counsel of Ivy Lee, better known as the "Dean of Public Relations.

Lee went right to work. He believed in absolute frankness with the press; veteran railroad men were distressed at Lee's behavior. They were convinced that revealing facts about accidents would frighten customers.

A golden opportunity for Lee to put his ideas into practice soon arose. A train wrecked on the Pennsylvania Railroad main line near the town of Gap, Pennsylvania. As was its time-honored practice, the company sought to suppress all news of the accident.

When Ivy Lee learned of the situation, he took control. He contacted reporters, inviting them to come to the accident scene at company expense. He provided facilities to help them in their work. He gave out information for which journalists had not considered asking.

The railroad's executives were appalled at Lee's actions. His policies were seen as unnecessary and destructive. How could the propagation of such bad news do anything but harm the railroad's freight and passenger business?

At about the time of the wreck on the Pennsylvania, another train accident struck the rival New York Central. Sticking with traditional policy, the Central sought to avoid the press and restrict information flow concerning the situation. Confronted with the Central's behavior, and having tasted Lee's approach to public relations, the press was furious with the New York line. Columns and editorials pour forth chiding the Central and praising the Pennsylvania. Lee's efforts resulted in positive publicity, increased credibility, comparative advantages over the Central, and good, constructive press coverage and relations. Lee critics were silenced.

Earl Newson, himself a public relations giant, looked back at this accident nearly 60 years later and said:

"The whole activity of which you and I are a part can probably be said to have its beginning when Ivy Lee persuaded the directors of the Pennsylvania Railroad that the press should be given all the facts on all railway accidents—even though the facts might place the blame on the railroad itself."

When Ivy Lee died in 1934, among the many dignitaries at his funeral were the presidents of both the Pennsylvania and the New York Central railroads.

Questions

1. Were Lee's actions in response to the railroad accident consistent with Stage 1, Stage 2, or Stage 3 of public relations development? Explain your answer.

2. Had the New York Central accident not occurred, what do you think would have happened to Ivy Lee and his relationship with the Pennsylvania Railroad?
Railroad? Do you think the course of public relations development would have been affected?

3. In certain totalitarian states, news of accidents and disasters is often largely suppressed. What do you consider their reasons to be for retaining a posture grown up by American public relations practice more than 80 years ago?


Source: Material for this case was gathered from Ray Herbert’s Outpost to the Crowd (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1966), 53-61, and Eric Goldman’s Two-Way Street (Boston: Ballman Publishing Co., 1948), 6.


12. Quoted in Sherman Morse, "An Awakening on Wall Street.”

American Magazine 62 (September 1906): 460.


26 Raucher, Public Relations and Business, 90–111.


28 David Finn, "The Media as Monitor of Corporate Behavior," in Business

and the Media, Craig E. Arens, ed. (Santa Monica, Calif.: Goodyear Publishing Company, 1979), 117–121.


30 ibid., 60.

CHAPTER 3

A Theoretical Basis for Public Relations
By Rick Fischer, Ph.D., APR
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Preview

Theories present an understanding of the relationship between or among various actions or events. Theories are used to explain or predict the way things work or happen. As a public relations practitioner you will need to build a set of theories to use and refine as you apply professional skill to the task of doing public relations.

Unfortunately, there is no single theory to guide you. This chapter looks specifically at 10 theories, which are categorized by function in three areas: relationships, cognition and behavior, and mass communication.

Another way to build an understanding of public relations is by using typologies. This chapter divides practitioners’ roles into managers and technicians and suggests more specific roles for each broad category. As individuals have roles, so do organizations. Noted public relations researcher Jim Crumley describes four models that public relations has used: press agent, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and the two-way symmetrical models.
What would happen if...? Why did those people...? Questions like these should sound familiar. We ask them all the time—about the routine and not so routine.

When someone knows answers to routine questions we say that person has “common sense.” When someone can correctly answer the nonroutine, we say that person is smart or educated. To answer either type (routine or nonroutine) assumes that the person answering the question understands relationships among actions and events. If you were a scientist, you might call these actions and events variables.

For example, if you put a pot of water on the stove and turn the burner under the pot to high, what will happen? After a time the water will heat up, start bubbling, eventually come to a boil—and, if the pot is full, will likely spill water on the stove. If you don’t intervene, the water level will begin to go down from spillage and evaporation and, eventually, you will burn your pot. Maybe you learned this from experience. Maybe someone told you, or you read about what happens when a pot of water sits on the stove unattended with the heat on high. However you learned it, you have some notion about the way heat interacts with pots full of water. We call that understanding a theory. A theory is a statement about the relationship among variables.

We have theories about many things, and individual theories can have any number of variables. Some theories may serve us well because we get to test them regularly and observe the same relationship each time. Other theories are used only occasionally and with mixed results. Some of our theories have good predictive value; others may be no better than flipping a coin.

This chapter is about explaining and predicting the things public relations people work with regularly. As a public relations manager you are expected to know what works and what doesn’t. You can learn it the hard way—by trial and error—or you can learn from others. In any case, your value to your employer or client will be directly related to the quality of your advice.

No single theory covers all you need to know in public relations or any other discipline. The only question is: How are you going to organize the theories you need to know? We will look at theories by function, that is, we are going to group theories according to how they are used. We will start with theories of relationships, then move to how people come to know things and what moves them to act. Next, we will consider two theories of mass communication. Finally, we will look at ways to describe what public relations people do and how organizations approach public relations.

Theories of Relationships
Systems Theory

Systems theory is especially useful to public relations because it gives us a way to think about relationships. It captures the notion of parts and wholes, allows us to look at structure, and provides insight into how the parts are related. When we formulate statements about how the parts of this model interact, we can use the model itself to clarify our thinking and predict outcomes.

Let’s start with a hypothetical organization—United Fratworkco. This organization is depicted as an oval at the center of Figure 3.1. Moving out from the organization, you can see that it has an environment—the area between the large
circle and the organization. In that environment are most of the publics considered in chapter 1: customers, suppliers, the community (neighbors), the media, financial institutions, and government. This is sometimes called the task environment. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we have a relationship with each of these publics. The question is 'Will we manage these relationships or just let them happen?'

We can also use systems theory to look at the parts of an organization—salaried employees and managers, departments and shops, staff and line. It's up to us to decide the most appropriate way to subdivide the whole.

The environment imposes constraints on our organization. Customers can boycott our products. The courts can make us pay damages to people who are injured by our products. Banks can choose not to lend us money. Public relations practitioners must know what is going on in the environment and maintain a balance between the organization and the environment.

That monitoring task is a major one for the public relations staff. We might think of the public relations function as straddling the edge of an organization—looking both within and outside the organization. Public relations practitioners explain the organization to its publics and interpret the environment to the organization. Public relations people warn of problems in the environment and help the organization develop responses to those problems.

Fortunately, organizations are adaptive. When they allow for the two-way flow of resources and information between themselves and their environment, they can use that information for self-change. Many organizations also use such information as the basis for plans to change the environment. That is a much more difficult task.

Using the concepts of organizations and environments, we can begin to create theoretical statements about the relationship. For example, we might say: The
more turbulent the environment, the more flexible the PR department needs to be. This gives us a way to explain and predict organizational behavior at a macro level.  

It would be short-sighted to identify key publics and then ignore the rest of the environment. We also need to be alert to the possibility of a new public popping up in the environment—one that might help or challenge us. Grung and Hunt propose what they call a situational theory of publics to explain now and when we might expect to see such a group.

Grung and Hunt say that an active public is one that seeks and processes information about an organization or an issue of interest to an organization. They describe three variables that predict when individuals will seek and process information about an issue.

The first is problem recognition. People who face an issue must first be aware of it and recognize its potential to affect them. Constraint recognition describes how individuals perceive obstacles that may stand in the way of a solution. If they believe they have a real shot at influencing the issue, they will tend to seek and process information on that issue. The third variable is level of involvement, which refers to how much an individual cares about an issue. Those who care a lot would likely be active communicators on an issue. Those who care little would likely be more passive in seeking information and processing it.

From these three variables Grung and Hunt describe four responses that follow from being high or low in these dimensions. The responses range from fatalism (doing nothing) to problem-finding (taking direct action). Situational theory also helps explain why some groups are active on a single issue, others are active on many issues, and others are uniformly apathetic. The specific relationship is determined by the type of group and how an organization is linked with the issue.

If we start with the notion that conflict is just one of many states a relationship can take, we will be making a good start in understanding conflict and how to deal with it. All of us have a common-sense understanding of conflict. It involves an individual or group actively opposing another owing to differences in values or goals.

Some people take the view that conflict is a phenomenon to be avoided. If you operate from this point of view, you must be alert to potential conflicts and attempt to handle them before they become unpleasant. Others see conflict as a natural stage that some relationships pass through and, therefore, something to be managed.

What we know about resolving conflict exists largely as a set of techniques and skills that negotiators have found useful. Fisher and Ury suggest four things to keep in mind when trying to resolve conflict:

1. Separate the people from the problem. Try to start from a position of respect for those with whom you disagree. Remember, it is the goals and values that you disagree with, not the person holding the position. The next three steps suggest ways to do this.
2. **Focus on interests, not positions**  It is normal for both sides to stake out positions and try to convince the other side of the wisdom in adopting their point of view. It is natural but not productive. Instead, try to move beyond positions to find out what the other side really wants. A position is just one expression of what someone wants, but they may be able to satisfy their goals in other ways. Until you explore the possibilities, you won't know.

3. **Invent options for mutual gain**  You may know this as creative problem solving. The idea is to explore ways you can both meet your goals. Plan on generating lots of solutions before you reach an agreement. It sounds like an impossible task, but for many issues it just requires the will to move beyond the conflict in a way that respects the interests of both sides.

4. **Insist on objective criteria**  Seek early agreement on what a fair solution would look like. Is there a standard or index on which you could base a solution? Finding one makes evaluating solutions easier.

These guidelines are not expressed as formal theory, but those who use them regularly would likely agree that using this framework increases the chances of resolving a conflict early, results in higher-quality solutions, and preserves the integrity of the relationship between those involved in the conflict. That is theory any practitioner can understand.
Public relations practitioners find it useful to think about effects—how products, services, and policies affect others. What we say and what we do are given meaning by others, and sometimes that meaning is not what we intended.

Typically, we talk about getting people to know something, or to do something. Cognitive theories deal with the knowing, and behavioral theories cover the doing. There are many more approaches to thinking, behavior, and communication than are discussed here. It is a good idea for public relations students to take courses in general psychology, cognitive psychology, communication theory, and persuasion.

Action Assembly Theory

All behavior is logical to the person behaving. If that is true, then before we can understand behavior, we have to understand how people think. That sounds like an incredibly hard task, and at one level it is, but communication scholar John O. Greene believes thinking can be explained at an abstract level by three constructs: structures, content, and processes.

Cognitive structure defines the form of our thought. Some call this form a script, some call it a schema, others call it a frame. It’s like a storyboard that defines how we expect a story to unfold. Over time we build up a set of expectations. These expectations affect what information we process and store.

Content refers to the specific characters, details, and plot twists within the basic structure.

Cognitive processes are the operations we use to take in, transform, and store information (the content).

That’s all very abstract. How does that help us understand how people think? Let’s look a little closer.

People are great observers. We see that certain actions result in predictable outcomes in similar situations. Over time we develop expectations about these relationships. In fact, the expectations become so strong that we may fail to notice when the details or outcomes vary from what we expect to see.

For example, if we are used to seeing clutter and useless information on bulletin boards, then our script says “don’t bother to read bulletin boards because it is a waste of time.” That script guides our behavior, and we ignore information on bulletin boards—even if the information on it would be useful. Consequently, when we communicate with the publics we must put our messages in places where people look for important information. Maybe, too, we ought to think about putting out only important information—as perceived by the people who read our messages. Newspaper reporters who receive several dull press releases a week from a source will likely miss the good one that finally comes along. They already associate that source with dull content and will likely throw away all messages from that source without ever reading them.

Another part of understanding cognitive structure is understanding how content is stored in the mind. We don’t record all that passes our senses as if they were hooked to a flight data recorder. We abstract data, filtering information based on what we think is important or useful. We determine this by checking to see if the new information is similar to information we labeled “important” in the past.
A Theoretical Bases for Public Relations

Have you noticed that when your teacher says, "there are seven..." everybody begins writing? Students know from experience that lists are typically important at test time. The key is to decide whether you want to tap into your public's existing memory structures or try to establish and reinforce entirely new cognitive structures.

When 7-Up decided to position itself as the "uncola," it was taking advantage of our pre-existing beliefs about and responses to cola beverages. The uncola could be enjoyed in all the same settings as a cola; it would just look and taste different.

Oldsmobile recently tried to tell youthful car buyers that "It's not your dad's Oldsmobile." Here they tried to break the script that the Olds is a sensible family car—and boring!

Social exchange theory uses the economic metaphor of costs and benefits to predict behavior. It assumes that individuals and groups choose strategies based on perceived rewards and costs. This theory, developed by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley, has been used at many levels, including interpersonal, small-group, and organizational levels.

Social exchange theory asserts that people factor in the consequences of their behavior before acting. In general, people want to keep their costs low and their rewards high. Get-rich-quick schemes have been using this principle for a long time.

But what does this have to do with public relations? Let's say we want people to respond to a survey. Remember, we want to keep costs to potential respondents low and perceived rewards high. What can we do to keep costs low?

Keep the instructions simple.

Keep the survey short.

If mailing is required, provide a post-paid return envelope.

If returning by fax, use an 800 number.

Avoid open-ended, complex, and personal questions.

Now, how can I increase the rewards for the respondent?

Make the survey interesting.

Emphasize that the person is being "consulted" for his or her thoughts and that his or her ideas are important.

Tell them how the results will be used—presumably to contribute to something worthwhile.

Offer an opportunity for a tangible reward, for example, a copy of the results or a chance to win something of value.

This same logic can be applied to more complex behavior by using a pay-off matrix. Let's say our company, United Fratchworks, becomes aware of a defect in a batch of screws that has already shipped to its aerospace customers. The defect puts them outside acceptable contract specifications for hardness.
Figure 3.2 Payoff matrix showing costs and rewards involved in a recall decision

We can look at this situation as a set of possible decisions, with each decision having costs and rewards. In figure 3.2 the upper part of each cell contains perceived rewards and the lower part, possible costs. Some of the consequences, like recall costs, are certain. Others, like the possibility of lawsuits and negative publicity, have some probability associated with them.

Now, if the head of United Fratchworks could see the decision in this way, the company would recall the screws and accept the short-term loss. The trouble is, human nature can blind us to the information in the cells associated with customers finding out. Some people would bet they could get away with ignoring the problem. Have you ever done something at home or at school and immediately looked for ways to keep your parents from finding out? The PR practitioner’s job is to let the decision maker see a whole range of options along with the associated costs and rewards.

Diffusion theory is another way to look at how people process and accept information. Diffusion theory says that people adopt an idea only after going through the following five discrete steps (or stages):

1. **Awareness.** The individual has to have been exposed to the idea.
2. **Interest.** The idea has to arouse the individual.
3. **Evaluation.** The individual must have considered the idea as potentially useful.
4. **Trial.** The individual tries out the idea on others.
5. **Adoption.** This represents final acceptance of the idea after having successfully passed through the four earlier stages.
This theory is useful for explaining how we reach important decisions—not acts of impulse. We know from testing this model that mass media are important in the first two stages: personal contacts are important for the next two.

Let's take an example. United Fratwork's annual family picnic is two weeks away. You are selling tickets at $1 per family as a way to plan how much food to order. Ticket sales have been slow. You tell the boss at the morning staff meeting. “If your boss is typical, he or she will say “Make sure every employee gets a flyer.”

Sending out more flyers virtually guarantees awareness, but you are still three steps away from getting people to decide to go (adoption). By knowing how people accept and process information, you can plan systematically to move the employees through the remaining stages. To do this you will need lots of people at the shop level to talk to their fellow workers. Think about what precinct organizers mean in a political campaign.

We will return to the diffusion theory again in chapter 8.

So far, we have discussed theories that consider the receiver to be actively involved in information processing. Social learning theory attempts to explain and predict behavior by looking at another way individuals process information. This theory helps us understand that personal example and mass media can be important in acquiring new behaviors.

Social psychologist Albert Bandura says that we can learn new behaviors merely by observing others. When we see behavior that interests us, we note whether that behavior seems to be rewarding to the actor. These rewards can be external, as in praise, or internal, as in “it looks cool.” Bandura says that we vicariously try out the behavior in our minds. If we agree that the behavior is potentially useful to us, it can lie dormant for long periods until we need it. The likelihood that a specific behavior will occur is determined by the expected consequences from performing that behavior. The more positive and rewarding the consequences, the more likely the behavior will occur.

Knowing this, public relations people shouldn't be surprised when employees model the inappropriate behavior of more experienced employees, particularly if that behavior is rewarded. If chronic complaining keeps someone from having to work a double shift or a weekend, you can bet others will copy this tactic. If a company promotes people who are cold and rigid, you can predict that those wanting to get ahead will model those same behaviors. If company publications run pictures that show people violating safety procedures or breaking company rules, readers of those publications are not likely to take those policies seriously.

Remember: You get the behavior you reward. Social learning theory explains one of the routes to this behavior.

The notion of "routes" is central to a theory that describes two ways that people are influenced. Richard Petty and John Cacioppo describe the first route as the "central route"—the situation in which people actively think about an idea. Relying on this route presumes people are interested in your message, have the time
to attend to your arguments, and can evaluate your evidence with an open mind. This is how public relations people usually attempt to influence attitudes and behavior.

But, what if the target group is not interested, is too busy, or just can’t understand the issues? How do you proceed? The elaborated likelihood model proposes a “peripheral route,” in which people are influenced by such things as repetition, a highly credible spokesperson, or even tangible rewards. Advertising people frequently use this route when designing their messages.

Candidates for local office can’t engage all the voters in a discussion of the issues, so they take the peripheral route and blanket the town with yard signs. Message repetition provides familiarity with the candidate’s name, and sign location suggests that many of your neighbors actively support that candidate. People who are not politically active don’t have to think about the issues; they just vote for the obvious popular choice.

When long-distance phone companies claim they can save you money on plans that are not easily compared, it becomes difficult to make an informed decision. That’s when the credibility of the spokesperson may be the deciding factor on which plan you select.

Today, rewards can involve valuable premiums, such as those offered for opening a bank account or donating money to your favorite charity when you use a certain credit card.

It’s important to recognize that people do not uniformly read the daily paper, watch the 6 o’clock news, or listen to talk radio as a mass audience. While papers, TV, and radio are called mass media, it is the individual person that determines how and when media are used.

Similarly, you shouldn’t presume that employees uniformly read internal publications or view company videos. Even a note in every pay envelope could go straight from the pay envelope to the wastebasket.

What explains this behavior? Uses and gratifications theory asserts that people are active users of media and selective in the media they use. Researchers have found that people use media in the following ways:

- as entertainment,
- to scan the environment for items important to them personally,
- as a diversion (as when the TV is on and no one is in the room),
- as a substitute for personal relationships, and
- as a check on our personal identity and values.

For public relations people this means that not everyone will see or hear the bad news about a company or product. It also means you can’t count on people seeing or hearing the good news. Just because a message is available in some medium does not mean that people attend to it and remember it.
We know from the O.J. Simpson trial that the media can focus attention on an event. The question is: Can it also convince us of such things as guilt or innocence? In spite of a constant barrage from news analysts, Jay Leno, and Saturday Night Live, polls showed that throughout the O.J. Simpson trial those who initially believed him guilty maintained that belief, and those who believed him innocent were equally steadfast. How can we explain this?

Bernard Cohen noted that although the media can't tell people what to think, they are stunningly successful in telling them what to think about. It was an interesting idea but not widely accepted in 1963. About a decade later, journalism scholars Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw demonstrated Cohen was onto something. During the 1968 presidential campaign, they followed public opinion and media reports of the key issues in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. They found that there was a strong positive relationship between what voters said was important and what media were reporting as important. Since the issues were evident in the media several weeks before they appeared in public opinion, McCombs and Shaw were reasonably sure media set the agenda and not the reverse. What was more amazing was that voters were more likely to agree with the composite media agenda than with the position of the candidate they claimed they favored.

McCombs and Shaw do not say that simple agreement with the media changed voting behavior. What they demonstrated was that the media can set the agenda for what we talk and think about.

Following Jim Grunig's and Todd Hunt's suggestion, this talking and thinking could lead to information seeking and processing, but only if other conditions are met. That's an important point for public relations people to remember when their organization is taking a beating in the press. People may be talking about you, but it doesn't necessarily mean that strong opinions about your organization will be changed. You will need to do some research before you can draw a conclusion.

More typically, public relations people attempt to influence the media agenda by providing news items for public consumption. To accomplish this, they identify subject editors and news directors consider news, localize their messages, and help media representatives cover the story.

If you were to visit the public relations department of a large organization you would see a lot of activity. Some individuals would be on the phone. Others would be writing. A few would be working at computers. You would miss seeing some because they would be working away from the office. What you see are activities—things people do.

At another level we can describe their roles. Roles define a collection of activities people regularly do. Glen Broom and David Dozier use public relations roles to describe and predict such things as the relative power of the public relations unit, public relations participation in strategic decision making, salaries, and job satisfaction.

They see two broad roles in public relations: technician and manager. The technician is the writer, the layout person, the photographer. This is the journalist.
Theories Used in Public Relations

Public Relations Spotlight 3.1

The 10 theories highlighted in the chapter are summarized as follows:

I. Theories of Relationships
   1. Systems theory—evaluates relationships and structure as they relate to the whole.
   2. Situational theory—situations define relationships.
   3. Approaches to conflict resolution—include separating people from the problem, focusing on interests, not positions; inventing options for mutual gain, and insisting on objective criteria.

II. Theories of Cognition and Behavior
   4. Action assembly theory—understanding behavior by understanding how people think.
   5. Social exchange theory—predicting behavior of groups and individuals based on perceived rewards and costs.
   6. Diffusion theory—people adopt an important idea or innovation after going through five discrete steps: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption.
   7. Social learning theory—people use information processing to explain and predict behavior.
   8. Elaborated likelihood model—suggests decision making is influenced through repetition, rewards, and credible spokespersons.

III. Theories of Mass Communication
   9. Uses and gratification—people are active users of media and select media based on its gratification for them.
   10. Agenda setting theory—suggests that media content that people read, see, and listen to set the agenda for society’s discussion and interaction.

In-residence, the person who has a nose for news and works with media outlets to get the story out. Technicians carry out the broad plans of managers.

Public relations managers are problem solvers and advisors to senior management. They are responsible for broad program results. Broom and Duxier identify three manager roles:

- **expert prescriber** operates as a consultant to define the problem, suggest options, and oversee implementation.
- **problem-solver process facilitator** partners with senior management to identify problems and solve problems.
- **communication facilitator** the person on the periphery between the organization and its environment who keeps two-way communication flowing.

Public relations managers tend to adopt all three roles when functioning in their organizations. Much depends on the style of the practitioner, the expectations of senior management, and the type of issues faced.
Just as individuals have roles, so can whole departments. Jim Grunig has given us four roles or models that public relations departments can assume while carrying out their collective duties.\(^{15}\)

Press agency describes the model where information moves one-way from the organization to its publics. It is, perhaps, the oldest form of public relations and is synonymous with promotions and publicity. Public relations people operating under this model are constantly looking for opportunities to get their organization’s name favorably mentioned in the media.

Public information differs from press agency because the intent is to inform rather than to press for sales, but communication is still essentially one-way. Today this model is practiced in government and educational organizations, non-profit organizations, trade and member associations, and even in some corporations. Practitioners operating under this model respond to queries from various publics and become proactive when they believe their publics need to know something important.

The third model, the two-way asymmetric model, is best described as scientific persuasion. The two-way asymmetric model employs social-science methods to increase the persuasiveness of its messages. Public relations practitioners use polls, interviews, and focus groups to measure public attitudes so the organization can design public relations programs that gain the support of key publics. Although feedback is built into the process, the organization is much more interested in having the publics adjust to the organization rather than the reverse. This model of public relations applies to most goods-producing businesses where public relations programs are geared to short-term attitude change.

Finally, the two-way symmetric model represents a public relations orientation in which organizations and their publics adjust to each other. It focuses on mutual understanding and two-way communication rather than one-way persuasion. The two-way model is used often in regulated businesses like public utilities that strive to build long-term relationships with their publics. Practitioners operating under this model are as likely to suggest internal changes as to recommend repairing something in the environment.

In 1990 a group of public relations scholars completed a five-year study, underwritten by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), of excellent public relations departments. Not surprisingly, the two-way symmetric model emerged as the distinguishing feature of excellent programs. Thus, Grunig and Grunig considered the two-way model both a normative one expressing how public relations work should be conducted and a positive one explaining things as they are.\(^{16}\)

Obviously, there is a lot to learn about human nature, organizations, and the practice of public relations. The approaches noted here are presented to get you thinking about theory and the implied relationship among variables.

As you can see, theory operates on many levels: between individuals, groups, and organizations. You will need to be able to conceptualize issues at each of these levels to be successful. The theories you use in public relations are your tools. Keep them handy and learn to use them well.
Case Study

The following case study serves as a conceptual illustration of how we might go about systematically influencing individuals and groups on an issue. More importantly, the case outlined in figure 3.3 spells out the types of public relations decision making and programming taking place when public relations campaigns are broken down into communication stages.  

Recall from the earlier discussion of systems theory that organizations try to maintain balanced relationships with their various publics, but that not all publics are treated equally because some create greater obstacles for organizations and vice versa. Thus, publics or audiences form at different stages as issues develop and the public relations practitioner must learn how to respond appropriately to each group at each stage. The key notion to grasp from this case is that the changing nature of the publics attending to a developing public issue shapes the way public relations practitioners operate and respond on behalf of their organizations. Four types of publics are likely to emerge over the course of an issue's development. (See chapter 6 for further discussions of publics and public opinion.) At one extreme are active publics who get involved early because they make a practice of understanding issue dimensions and the issue's relevance to them, and because they perceive no barriers precluding active engagement. Next are the aware-but-not-yet-active publics to whom public relations practitioners are quick to peg publicity and information campaigns. Latent publics become associated with an issue somewhat later as they see a connection between the issue and their established interests, social relationships, and values. Inactive publics (i.e., most people) are not likely to become aware of an issue until it's almost impossible to ignore.  

The media coverage or center column of the figure shows how media adapt their coverage to the dominant publics at each communication stage of the process. Public relations practitioners use the mass media, but they also communicate directly with publics through speeches, newsletters, position papers, and so on. Thus, practitioners direct their efforts to different publics according to their changing assessments of the publics' relative importance. Stated theoretically, public relations practitioners match the intensity of the programming to the capabilities of different publics for achieving different levels of communication and behavioral effect. Let's consider the five stages in the context of trying to pass the local school bond issue.

1. Awareness Stage. Plans for the school bond issue typically are confined for some time within the school board and perhaps a citizens' group before the issue moves onto the public stage when the school district's public relations practitioner announces the drive in the form of news tips to reporters, news releases, press conferences, a special rally in front of the
Figure 3.3 The emergence of public opinion roles of organizations, media, and publics.
counting high school building, or perhaps from a newsletter distributed to teachers. As the initial announcements reach the public, the district’s goal is to get the issue on the media agenda, and in so doing, to assess how the issue is perceived. At the same time, the public relations practitioners assess how the media interpret their message. From the public relations standpoint, the most important publics are the active ones who already see the connection of the issue to their collective interests.

2. Elaboration (or knowledge gain) Stage. The issue and its implications are developed more fully during the elaboration stage as the bond issue’s impacts on children and taxes are learned. The school district’s public relations programming—whether done by the district or through a citizen committee—gears up with position papers, a speaker’s bureau, and meetings by targeted groups. Stories are planned with various community media along with story placement in newsletters and other in-house publications of key interest groups.

   For the most part, the elaboration stage of the communication process relies on newspaper and specialized publication coverage along with direct mailings, and these are directed to members of active publics (school booster groups, PTA) as well as to aware publics (teachers, chamber of commerce members) who gather more information about the issue and its implications for group action.

3. Understanding Stage. The issue’s political, social, and economic ramifications get synthesized, condensed, and integrated at the understanding stage. Then, as issues are cast as two-sided contests, members of groups begin to take collective stands, and, in turn, align themselves with other groups to form more organized publics. A group of residents in a neighborhood whose school will be closed decide to pool their time and resources with an anti-tax group to defeat the measure.

   At this time, the focus of media attention advances beyond reporting opposing views toward defining the consequences of the emergent issue. School public relations specialists, loaned PR executives, or agency public relations teams head for the campaign organize editorial conferences with local media. Moreover, public relations efforts begin to target the more latent publics with television talk show appearances and drive-time radio interviews. Practitioners organize their publics at the local level.

   Latent publics become a primary audience at this stage along with active and aware ones. The latent publics, such as adults without school-age children, may start to recognize the issue due to increased media prominence, mention in the church bulletin, or discussion during volleyball practice. As a result, members of latent publics may adjust their individual stances in line with those of organizations and groups to which they belong.

4. Attitude Crystallization Stage. The complexity of the process changes considerably now that the primary participants have emerged, and their interests, implications, and consequences have been clarified. Attention from the public relations practitioners shifts to a much broader set of relatively passive, uncommitted voters and audience members. The emerging community involvement around the issue makes it easier for television to cover. Public relations practitioners and the citizens’ group buy
full-page endorsement ads in the local paper, orchestrate rallies, letter
writing campaigns, media events, and other activities. Issue polarization
prompts the print media to declare their stands and hence more time and
space goes to editorials, op-ed pieces, letters to the editor, and guest
columns.

5. Action Stage. Because there’s so little time before the election to correct
misunderstandings, public relations practitioners employ all of their talents
to maintain constant liaison with key publics. Sometimes they motivate
desired behavior by arranging rides to the polls or providing sample ballots.

In summary, this model breaks down a campaign into more or less discrete
communication phases in order to show how public relations practices change as
issues emerge and new publics come into play.

Questions
1. Briefly describe how the two-way symmetric model might be working at each
stage of this campaign.
2. How is agenda-setting theory used in this campaign?
3. What parallels do you see between diffusion theory and the model presented
in figure 3.37?

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CHAPTER 4

Public Relations in Organizational Decision Making

Preview

To play a serious role in organizational decision making, public relations practitioners must:

1. Gain management support and understanding by broadening their knowledge, interests, and perspectives; learn to think like managers while retaining an independent perspective, and become issue-oriented.

2. Issues management is a process by which organizations can have a voice in influencing public policy. It is also a way by which public relations staffs can play a more effective role in their organizations’ decisions.

The opinion of the public is a judgment which the honest man should never entirely accept and which he should never reject.

—Nicholas Chamfort
Throughout this book, we stress that the contribution of public relations to organizational decision making is among its most important functions. We do not claim that public relations practitioners actually make the decisions that determine organizational purpose, direction, coordination, and control. We do maintain, however, that all managers can and should take public relations considerations into account when making decisions, and that public relations practitioners can and should make direct contributions to fundamental organizational decisions. Lawrence Foster, former vice-president of public relations for Johnson and Johnson, believes, “The public relations factor can help influence important business decisions.” Foster also suggests that “to gain management’s confidence, public relations professionals must lead instead of follow. Be ready with an analysis of the public relations problems being faced, and offer solutions.... don’t wait for the roof to cave in.” Executives who are sensitive to public relations considerations are “public relations-minded,” a valuable perspective in today’s complex environment.

In future chapters, we will discuss how the contributions of public relations to organizational decision making affect employee relations, local community opinion, financial activities, and dealings with the government. By active participation in managerial decision making, public relations people can gain the commitment and understanding necessary for effective communication.

In a sense, this chapter is a pivotal one in the book. It deals with decision making, which is the essence of the managerial process, and with the position of public relations in that process. The chapter explains the role and function of public relations in organizational decision making. It discusses the nature of public relations inputs and the constraints on those inputs. It tells how public relations can be most influential in organizational decision making.

The most common type of organizational structure is called line organization. In its most basic form, line organization can be thought of as a sequence of ascending levels of responsibility connected by direct vertical links. All functions and activities are directly involved in producing goods or services. Line structures can be found in churches, charities, museums, not-for-profit clinics, and business organizations.

As line organizations grow in size, however, various specialists are added, creating a line and staff organization. These staff functions provide advice and support to line management and are designed to contribute to the efficiency and maintenance of the organization. Staff functions might include research and development, personnel management and training, accounting, legal services, and public relations.

As a staff function, public relations must support management. The entire reason for the existence of public relations is to help create an environment of public opinion in which management can function. It provides counsel that management may ignore or consider, follow or reject. Part of being an effective adviser, however, is taking actions to assure that your advice is heard, heeded, and frequently acted on. In this way, public relations makes its contribution to organizational objectives and
Corporations are seeking to increase efficiency by cutting staff. This trend affects planners, economists, marketers, human-resources specialists, and others who provide executives with advice and counsel. Recent government figures show that more than nine million workers lost their jobs between 1991 and 1993. The Fortune 500 companies reduced their workforce by about four million workers in the 10-year period ending in 1992. A report on the third quarter of 1995 by the Daily Labor Report found layoffs up 53 percent. Lockheed Martin Corporation recently laid off 15,000; General Motors laid off 5,000; and MCI 3,000. Downsizing is increasingly becoming a way of life in corporate America. As it does, public relations advice becomes even more necessary.

Edward Gubman of Hewitt Associates notes this trend is "unlikely to change."

Employers are not shedding jobs today because of a recession or slow economic growth. They are doing so because technology and global cost pressures are changing the way people work—requiring fewer people to do far more work than ever before. Pacific Bell, for example, served twice as many customers with half the employees in 1994 as it did in 1984 when the AT&T Bell system was broken up.

The current need for public relations to become more thoroughly integrated into the organizational decision-making process cannot be questioned. Indeed, public relations is increasingly the responsibility of executives rather than the province of public relations staffs. Government agencies at all levels retreat in the face of new fiscal limitations. Hospitals struggle with regulations, rising costs, new technologies, and changing customer demands. Arts organizations seek new sources of funds as Congress plans to reduce or withdraw government support. Businesses deal with global competition, economic conditions, and a skeptical public. Successful managers in today's environments are those who maintain "a high batting average in accurately assessing the forces that determine the most appropriate behavior at any given time." The contributions of a public relations specialist often enable managers to assess such forces accurately.

Even the initiation of organizational decision-making can depend on public relations input. "The organizational decision-making process is activated when information is received indicating changes in an organization's internal or external environment calling for an organizational response." Information gathered by the public relations staff can promote the organization's ability to adapt to changing political, social, economic, and cultural conditions. "Public relations should occupy one of the most strategic positions in the organizational structure," James N. Sites explains. "If for no other reason than that it sits squarely astride the communication channels that are absolutely vital to the effective operation of an organization."
Chief executive officers of major corporations are well aware that public relations contributes to decision making. Sir Gordon White, who as chairman of Hanson Industries made a career of buying companies and eliminating their corporate staffs, had a staff of only 12—but it included a public relations officer. To blend public relations goals with organizational goals, public relations information must be part-and-parcel of the organizational decision-making process and must include intelligence regarding likely reaction and response by relevant publics. Moreover, the commitment and understanding that come through participating in organizational decision making are invaluable assets when communicating decisions to the organization’s publics. Perhaps the most important task of public relations is to ensure the public relations-mindedness of management officials so that public relations considerations are in the mainstream of managerial decision making.

Acknowledging the importance of public relations in organizational decision making is one thing. Ensuring that public relations is part of the management mainstream is quite another. To make public relations an effective part of an organization’s decision-making process and to be taken seriously in a decision-making role, the public relations practitioner must observe the following five interrelated steps:

1. Gain management support and understanding.
2. Be more than a technician.
4. Learn to think like a manager while retaining an independent perspective.

“Early in his career every public relations practitioner finds to his surprise—and often distress—that he must . . . communicate . . . with those key centers of influence and power within his own organization.” 

Management is one of the key publics for public relations. Like that of any other public, the support of management must be earned. Like those of any other audience, management’s needs, wants, attitudes, values, and perceptions must be considered. “Public relations counselors should be involved in all top management decisions, including mergers, acquisitions and downsizing,” according to J. Handley Wright, retired vice-president for the American Association of Railroads.

The public relations function cannot be taken as a given by those who practice it, for management generally does not view the communications function in that light. Traditionally, public relations has been first on the budgetary chopping block, precisely because management has not perceived it as essential to long-term organizational health. Only in the recession in the early 1980s did this tendency begin to fade. Tom Ruddell, former president of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), explained, “In past recessions public
relations and communication departments were too often the first to suffer from staff and budget cuts. This time management seems to be getting the message that communication is a necessity, not a luxury."15

Unfortunately, as organizations worked hard to reduce costs and get "lean and mean" in the late 1980s and 1990s, public relations staffing was affected. With many major businesses merging to produce more efficient operations, some found that one larger business required fewer public relations personnel than two smaller ones. Some public relations activities, like production of annual reports, were "outsourced." In other words, public relations staffs were reduced by turning certain tasks over to outside specialists.

Like all other staff specialists within organizations, public relations practitioners must be prepared to explain and justify their existence to managers and to convince them that public relations is an investment in the privilege to operate perhaps more an investment in the future than an operating expenditure for the present.16 Most important, public relations can influence organizational action by demonstrating the ability to produce results in accordance with the organization's goals. An example of this ability is shown in mini-case 4.1.

Many communicators regard themselves as communicators first, last, and always. They think of their relationship to management in terms of "Tell me what you want to say and I'll tell you how to say it." Communication skills are essential to effective public relations. An attitude like that just described, though, simply encourages management to think of public relations as a tool with which to implement policy rather than as a crucial part of the policy-making process.

Whether holding the title "staff writer," "editor," "speechwriter," or "audiovisual specialist," a public relations practitioner must learn to think of the role as
Mini-Case 4.1

Communication Improves Silicon Wafer Quality at Monsanto

Monsanto Company's electronics division held a comfortable leadership role in the production of silicon wafers for many years. Suddenly, the company was being challenged by aggressive Japanese and German manufacturers who said their products offered superior quality.

Silicon wafers are used by producers of electronic chips for computers, video games, and digital watches. The manufacturing process is very labor-intensive, and quality control is critical. The product can be rejected for as little as a stray fingerprint or a speck of dust.

The problem was defined: How can Monsanto maintain its position and maintain the highest possible quality level? The answer: Develop in the employees, who are scattered in widely separated geographic areas, a single-minded dedication to a consistently high level of quality.

The challenge of achieving that goal was turned over to John Mason, Monsanto's corporate communications director. Mason explains:

Our department at Monsanto tries to avoid concentrating on the traditional aspects of communications—such as the production of magazines, newsletters and videotapes. We use them but don't stress them. Instead, we offer ourselves to various divisions and departments as internal corporate communications consultants. The traditional approach is to say communications can increase employee involvement, thus leading to productivity gains. We say communications can help produce a product superior to that of the competition.

In response to the need for quality improvement in silicon wafer production, Monsanto's corporate communications department developed a communications program to be used with groups and one-on-one. Video, print, feedback, and recognition methods were employed. Mason insisted on two provisions: that the communications department be held accountable for measurable results and that once started, the program be turned over to the electronics division, freeing communications for new projects.

After its first year, the silicon wafer communications project reduced late shipments from 3 percent to 2 1/2 percent. Moreover, the company saved $200,000 in rework and penalties.

Mason concludes: "I am convinced that we can use communications to produce business results. However, you must look for opportunities to inject yourself into a business decision—don't wait around to be asked."

Source: Based on "Communicating for Bottom-Line Results," a talk delivered by John Mason, Monsanto's corporate communications director, at the International Association of Business Communicators, International Conference, Atlanta, Georgia.

more than that of a technician and the job as more than that of a communication medium. A writer writes, but a public relations practitioner helps solve problems. An editor reacts to management requests, but a public relations practitioner helps diagnose problems and opportunities while planning solutions and strategies. Writers and editors are typically concerned with the content and techniques of communication; public relations practitioners are concerned with the results. As one public relations professional put it, "Be an architect, not a bricklayer."

The two differing perspectives will lead individuals working in public relations jobs to ask different questions in the performance of their duties, to seek
different insights, and ultimately, to offer different kinds of programs and solutions. One reacts, the other anticipates. One responds to decisions after they are made; the other is an essential part of decision making.

Communication consultant Ron Weiser tells of an incident that illustrates this distinction. Early in his career, when he was an edtor at a factory in Pennsylvania, Weiser was told to communicate a change in safety policy to plant employees. Everyone in the plant would have to wear safety glasses at all times and in all locations. Instead of simply writing a memo to announce the change, Weiser started asking questions. Why everyone? Why everywhere? How was the policy decided? What prompted the change? What was management’s objective? The answers he received demonstrated clearly that management had not really thought the policy through—that the main consideration was ease in administering the rule.

Management then decided to rethink the policy and invited Weiser to help out. The newly formulated policy required safety glasses in areas of the plant where specific hazards justified the requirement. Instead of a memo, a six-week multimedia program introduced the change. The policy was implemented smoothly, and Weiser gained the respect of management and was allowed to take part in future decisions.

Being more than a technician earns the public relations practitioner management’s respect. According to management consultant R. Edward Freeman, the communicator who sticks with traditional tools is in potential jeopardy. “Armed with the traditional weapons of the vitriolic press release, the annual report, a slick videotape, corporate philanthropy, etc., today’s PR manager is a sacrificial lamb.”

To be valuable to management in a decision-making role, the public relations practitioner must have the appropriate knowledge, background, interests, and perspectives. Public relations practitioners, no matter what their training or background, must learn everything they can about business and government in general; the specific industry (or areas) in which their corporation (or agency) operates; and the organization itself. To be successful, public relations practitioners should know the functions, viewpoints, and problems of all parts of the organization. They should know its products, markets, internal structures, and external social, economic, and political pressures. New York public relations counselor Chester Burger says it this way:

A deep and broad knowledge of the business in which we are employed remains an essential requirement for any public relations professional. We simply can’t get by with public relations expertise alone. We need to inform ourselves about every aspect of our companies and organization: their history, their economics, their technology, their markets.

More than any other executive except the chief executive officer, public relations people must understand what is going on inside the organization and how all activities and functions interrelate. They must do their homework and know the why, who, what, where, when, and how of whatever comes up for managerial consideration. They should also be prepared to present and evaluate a variety of alternatives and contingencies related to organizational problems and opportunities.
Increasingly, practitioners must learn about disciplines that would have seemed unrelated to public relations a few years ago. Required reading may include anything from archaeology to zoology. Drawing on such knowledge, the public relations practitioner is in a position to contribute creative ideas and sound judgment in clarifying and accomplishing organizational objectives.

To influence management, public relations practitioners must learn to understand the managerial point of view, realizing at the same time that the greatest asset for public relations in decision making is its access to viewpoints not traditionally included in managerial deliberations. In other words, the public relations practitioner must think in terms of results, accountability, and accomplishments necessary to achieve organizational objectives while retaining a broader perspective that considers social as well as economic variables.

A results-oriented perspective is particularly important in competitive organizations that have moved away from the classic pyramid management style. Those who "advise, counsel or coordinate" are seen as less and less crucial. Those who demonstrably contribute to organizational success retain their positions and gain power and rewards. Many corporations now let operating managers decide what corporate services to pay for out of their own budgets. If the corporate public relations staff fails to convince line managers that its services are valuable, it will fail to attract the resources to keep it operating.

Former Fortune editor Max Ways points to what he calls the "danger inherent in any kind of concentrated framework of decision." He explains:

"The public" cannot decide where to put a paper mill. For that decision special competence in pursuit of narrowly defined goals is necessary. Yet if this power is not somehow related to interests outside the framework of competent action, the results will reflect a larger incompetence.

To use Ways’s example, the public relations practitioner involved in deciding where to locate a paper mill must understand the economic and geographic considerations of such a decision. But he or she must also understand social considerations, such as displacement of existing houses and pollution of waterways. Moreover, the practitioner must effectively communicate those concerns to other decision makers. If such issues are not resolved early in the process, a mill could be built on a site judged appropriate by economic criteria, only to be prevented from operating by community protest.

Similarly, when planning communication strategy, managers are often faced with the question of how truthful and open they wish to be about a given matter. In such circumstances, the public relations practitioner who does not think like a manager typically will counsel openness, honesty, and the people’s right to know. In short order, such individuals are labeled “Johnny-one-notes” who really do not understand the big picture. Their advice and counsel are rejected as impractical or preachy.

The public relations practitioner who thinks like a manager seeks the same goals of openness and honesty, but takes a different approach. Instead of preaching, he or she helps management weigh the pragmatic risks of communicating or...
not communicating. By pointing out the costs and benefits that could result, this practitioner is much more likely to provide constructive and acceptable advice, to retain credibility in a decision-making role, and to steer the organization toward the course of openness and honesty.

William W. Weston, public relations director of Sun Company, has observed, "How well the public relations practitioner succeeds in retaining some distance and objectivity, resisting the almost irresistible pull toward total absorption into the view of the world held by the leadership of his institution, will critically affect his ability to be truly useful." Jim Osborne, a public relations consultant agrees, suggesting that senior managers are too often isolated from the outside world. "Consequently," he says, "CEOs require highly skilled communications and issue support. They also need candid advice and feedback that tells them what they need to know, not what they want to hear."

All of this suggests that effective public relations practitioners who take part in organizational decision making must frequently tell their executives what they do not want to hear. They must ask hard, probing questions and raise points that may not have been considered. To do so takes a certain amount of assertiveness and guts. It is a role that, while essential, may certainly lead to alienation and ineffectiveness if it is not tempered by understanding of managerial thinking and commitment to organizational goals.

Developing a broadened base of knowledge and perspective helps elevate public relations to a central role in identifying and managing the key issues that confront an organization. Issues management is an important means of integrating public relations into organizational planning and operations. The management of issues involves identifying, controversy-creating, ranking issues in terms of importance to the organization, developing policy related to issues, developing programs to carry out policies, implementing programs, communicating with appropriate publics about organizational policies and programs, and evaluating the results of such efforts. Issues may range from ethical standards for organizational behavior to energy conservation, from solid waste disposal to immigration policy.

Spring Mills board chairman H. W. Close explains:

Meeting issues head-on is perhaps the biggest challenge facing management today. If misunderstandings about the motives for business damage our freedom to run our businesses in the best interests of everyone concerned, then we won't be in business long and everyone loses. That's why this area of issue identification and response is so important. And it's why top management is looking to public relations pros for assistance.

Public relations practitioners must develop the formal and informal research skills necessary to survey their organizations' internal and external environments. Such surveys help determine what issues their organizations must confront and how those issues can be successfully dealt with. Each organization must determine for itself which issues are most crucial at any given time. The issues management process, however, is an area in which public relations can make one
of its greatest contributions to managerial decision making. Public relations counselor Ralph Frede agrees, "Interpreting our publics and anticipating future issues in order to recommend positions, actions, policy changes is equally, if not more, important than how well we select and use the channels of communication."34

W. Howard Chase is given credit for coining the term issues management. One of the nation's leading public relations practitioners, he sees issues management as "the highway by which public relations professionals can move even more significantly into full participation in management decision making."35

Issues management grew out of the same reality and recognition that led organizations to practice public relations originally. Organizations have been blindsided for too long by protest groups who gain public support by striking public chords through protests or other tactics. To avoid unpleasant surprises, organizations should scan, monitor, and track external forces. Some public relations practitioners say issues management is "analogous to establishing a radar system to help management anticipate and prepare for issues — any condition or pressure that if continued will significantly impact the mission of an organization."36 These forces must be analyzed in terms of their effects on the organization's image, profit, and ability to act. Based on that analysis, an organization's policy must be developed, strategy planned, and action implemented.

The issues-management process initially serves as an early warning system. Much like the rangers who staff spotter stations in our nation's forests, the idea is to locate the smoke and take action before a major fire develops. In this way, the organization has a better opportunity to shape, rather than react to, public
discourse and decision making. There are two major goals of the issues-management function. (1) Identify issues early that may have an effect on the organization; and (2) influence the issues to prevent them from causing a major consequence to the organization.

The term issues management can be slightly misleading. No one can manage issues in a free society. Organizations, however, can manage their own actions and statements in relation to public issues. They can determine which issues to become involved in, and when and how to make statements or take action. Like marketing, issues management is an effort to manage an organization so that it can effectively interact with its changing external environment. In short, it is the systematic coordination of an institution’s efforts to participate in the public policy process.

Although this area of public relations grew quickly in the 1970s and early 1980s, it has remained fairly constant in recent years. Reasons for the slower growth in this area of public relations are largely a result of tight corporate budgets, issues requiring organizational change as well as communication, professionals needed with a broad, interdisciplinary background, and little professional development assistance in this arena. Still, it is a function that many argue must be developed. “We’ve failed to advance the concept because we insist on viewing ourselves as professional communicators instead of management professionals experienced with communication and management principles,” according to Ray Ewing, retired public relations director for All State. “We invented it [issues management]; we developed the techniques, and no one is better equipped to staff issues management than we are. Issues management runs parallel in value to strategic planning among top management, and we should never give it up,” he said. (See public relations spotlight 41.)

What are issues? An issue is a problem, question, or choice being faced. A public issue is a problem, question, or choice being faced by society or some segment of society that involves actual or potential governmental action. When public issues impact an organization’s investments, operations, or ability to act, that organization needs to become actively involved with those issues.

Public issues may involve a particular company, as when Minute Maid was accused of taking advantage of migrant labor. More often, issues affect specific industrial categories, such as the chemical industry. Manville Corporation was forced into bankruptcy in the 1970s because of the asbestos problem. It has emerged from bankruptcy and is one of the leading proponents of issues management today.

An issues analyst identified a potential issue that it called “holds on deposits,” a practice where banks will not give depositors credit for their deposit until the check or checks have cleared. This issue eventually was the focus of NBC’s Meet the Press and an article in the San Francisco Examiner. Following the media pressure, U.S. House and Senate committees held hearings on the issue. Bank of America was ready at the hearings and able to provide Congress with facts showing only 0.3 percent of their deposits were held this way. Senator Christopher Dodd from Connecticut praised Bank of America for its plan and foresight to deal with the issue long before it became public.
Public Relations Spotlight 4.1

How Can Issues Management Be Re-Energized?

- Reposition issues management as a bridge between public relations and strategic planning with an eventual evolution to the planning function
- Create a career path for issues management
- Create an issues-management master’s degree program
- Create a new professional society or re-energize existing groups
- Create a professional certification program
- Create a new curriculum to meet the mandate of the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business to include more social sciences
- Develop continuing education programs for business organizations
- Integrate the issues-management body of knowledge.


Perhaps most common, however, are issues of general concern affecting organizations across the spectrum. Such issues include environmentalism, consumerism, unionism, feminism, energy, health and safety, human resources, productivity, and the list goes on. (See figure 4.1 to see how Bridgestone dealt with an issue concerning their product.)

The issues-management process consists of five steps: identification, analysis, strategy, action, and evaluation.

1. Identification When identifying issues, organizations use various methods to scan the external environment for potential areas of threat or opportunity. An issue should be identified in the earliest stages of its life cycle—while still unnoticed or of only awakening interest to others. If an issue is not dealt with until it has reached the crisis stage, efforts to influence society's resolution of the problem often prove futile.

   The initial identification effort usually points out in excess of 100 issues that might have an impact on a given organization. Issues can be generated in a number of ways, including media scanning, polling of the public or special publics, or use of consultants. Alcoa, for example, explores issues considered important by governmental, academic, and activist organizations. John Nashett, author of MegaTrends, gained his fortune by helping organizations identify and track important trends.

2. Analysis Issue analysis is the second step of the issues-management process. In this phase, priorities are set by determining an issue's potential and publics. Obviously, organizations cannot effectively manage hundreds of issues at one time. The list must be narrowed to the most important. The importance of an issue is determined by its timing and impact. To establish priorities, six questions must be asked:

   a. How quickly will this issue unfold?
   b. How will it impact our products and operations?
TIME TIPS...TO KEEP YOU ROLLING
A SUCCESS WITH WOMEN

...from July 15, 1980...[paragraph cut off]

To every Bridgestone U.S. independent tire dealer network at...[paragraph cut off]

To every Bridgestone...[paragraph cut off]

...to which female consumers and males are understanding the...[paragraph cut off]

...in female-race-car-driver...[paragraph cut off]

The first Bridgestone...[paragraph cut off]

...by computer-set typeface format...[paragraph cut off]

...to help women feel more comfortable...[paragraph cut off]

...more tire dealers better assist women...[paragraph cut off]

...that many women...[paragraph cut off]

...that they have not been given the information necessary...[paragraph cut off]

...and maintenance decisions...[paragraph cut off]

...have been terrific...[paragraph cut off]

...and car maintenance as a result of our program...[paragraph cut off]

...of the brochure is a list of things consumers can...[paragraph cut off]

...to guarantee they get the most mileage from their tires...[paragraph cut off]

...for selecting a tire's air...[paragraph cut off]

...are thousands of tires on the market today...[paragraph cut off]

...might be considered a chore...[paragraph cut off]

...to the tire buyers...[paragraph cut off]

...tire dealers...[paragraph cut off]
How likely is it that this issue will come to fruition?

How would our stakeholders expect us to act in relation to this issue?

What is our ability to have an impact on this issue?

What are the costs of not dealing with the issue?

Ultimately, the organization seeks to determine whether a given issue potentially impacts its success or survival. Those issues with the greatest bottom-line impact should receive the most attention.

Different organizations view and prioritize different issues in different ways. Environmental issues may threaten Midwestern coal-burning electric utility plants, but present opportunities to companies in scientific waste disposal. The debate over the effects of cigarette smoke on nonsmokers may affect work practices in a bank, but impact the ability of a tobacco company to sell its product.

Strategy: The third step in the issues-management process, developing strategy, is usually accomplished by a committee that includes top management and others in areas affected by the issue. Based on input by those affected and those who would be involved in implementing the
organizational response, position papers and plans are developed by staff subject to the approval of senior executives.

4. Action An organization’s action program is an orchestrated, integrated response to the issue of concern. A campaign is developed and implemented that coordinates the efforts of lobbyists, media relations, general management, advertising, employee communications, and whatever other organizational units need to be included. While some efforts are of relatively short duration, many represent substantial commitments of energy and resources over time.

5. Evaluation Evaluation, the final step in the issues-management process, seeks to determine the effectiveness and impact of the program. Evaluation may help establish how long the program should continue or whether changes need to be made.
Summary

In this chapter, we have looked at how public relations considerations fit into the organizational decision-making process. We have pointed out that these considerations are playing an increasingly important role in all areas of organizational decision making, particularly through the issues-management process. Indeed, being public relations-minded is a critical perspective for line managers to possess. However, general trends toward reducing corporate staffs have jeopardized some public relations specialist positions.

As we continue through this book, we will consider the public relations practitioner as someone who does much more than write media releases or plan publicity stunts. The expanded role now includes harmonizing an organization with its environments by analyzing those environments; advising management and participating in decisions affecting all areas of organizational activity, and communicating with various corporate publics concerning policy, programs, activities, ideas, and images. Emphasis is placed, however, on achieving clear results relating to organizational goals. In the fullest sense, public relations practitioners are more than communication technicians. They are an integral part of the management team possessed with special skills, training, and sensitivities in the area of communication.

Neighbors

By Dulcie Strachan
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

You are public information director for a city mental health department. Your department plans to open a group home for eight adults who are cognitively disabled. Group homes, in which a small number of clients live together with counselors, are designed to serve as an alternative to institutional living for some people who have cognitive disabilities. A house located in a middle-class subdivision was privately donated to the city for use as a group home. This is to be the first group home in your state, other states have been using the group-home system for years, while still others have not begun community care programs.

The clients (four men and four women) will live in the group home with a married couple who are trained counselors. All eight residents have full-time jobs in the city at places such as McDonald’s. The money they earn working will go towards food bills, their clothing, and pocket money.

A few months ago, some general stories about the concept of group-home care for people who have cognitive disabilities appeared in the local newspaper. One story contained a statement by the city director (your boss) that said a group home was planned in the city “at a future date.” After this article appeared in the paper, the director received a few letters from citizens objecting to the idea of “mentally retarded” persons living in group homes. One concern was that property values would be lowered in neighborhoods where group homes were located.

The director, fearing negative reactions from residents in the neighborhood where the group home is to be located, tells you he wants to keep a low
profile about the opening of the group home. In a memo, he tells you not to generate any publicity about the group home’s opening. When the counselors and residents arrive at the group home a few days later to move in, they find hand-lettered signs posted on the trees in the yard, saying that they are not welcome in the neighborhood.

The counselors call the director, who calls you to say that something has to be done before the situation gets out of hand. He asks for your advice.

**Questions**

1. Do you think the city director made the right decision in deciding not to generate any publicity about the group home? What would you, as public information director, suggest doing now?

2. How would the situation have been different had the public information director been involved in the original decision rather than being brought in after the fact?

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**Notes**

10. The authors are indebted to Ron Weiser of the consulting firm Medinger, Inc. for the phrase “management mainstream” and for some of the ideas contained in this section.
Public Relations: The Profession

21 Jim Osborne, "Getting Full Value from Public Relations," Public Relations Review (Fall 1975) 13

22 R. P. Ewing, "Issues," Public Relations Journal (June 1980) 14–16

23 Close, "Public Relations as a Management Function," 13

24 "Pursuing Professional Excellence," 29


28 Quoted in "Managing Issues Acts As Bridge to Strategic Planning," Public Relations Journal (November 1983) 38

29 Meng, "Early Identification," 22
CHAPTER 5

Ethics and Professionalism

Preview

Legal and ethical issues are closely related in public relations practice, however, they are not identical. Even when no violation of law can be proven, a practitioner can be sanctioned for unethical conduct under the code of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). The law is the base; ethical conduct should rise well above that minimum standard. Ethics means more than being honest and obeying the law, it means being morally good.

The history of public relations is filled with allegations and confirmations of unethical behavior. While this may be no different in any other profession, public relations practitioners are especially sensitive to any suggestion of misconduct. This sensitivity may exist because public relations is frequently called on to generate ethical statements and policies for an organization, as well as often to promote socially responsible action within the organization. To help provide guidance in ethical decisions, both PRSA and the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) have established codes for ethical behavior. While both encourage professionals to demonstrate a commitment to ethical behavior, only PRSA has an enforcement procedure.

Ethical questions often arise in professional relationships with clients, news media representatives, financial analysts, and others. Increased professionalization is one possible answer to questions regarding ethical practice. Even with the legislative force of licensure, though, ethical practice is still a function of individual behavior.

Unless you are willing to resign an account or a job over a matter of principle, it is useless to call yourself a member of the world's newest profession—for you are already a member of the world's oldest.

—Tommy Ross
The Challenge of Ethical Practice

Everyone faces ethical dilemmas throughout life. What is ethics? What are common standards or criteria? What are ways to avoid and handle ethical dilemmas?

Mark McElreath, in Managing Systematic and Ethical Public Relations, defines ethics as "the set of criteria by which decisions are made about what is right and what is wrong." He continues to suggest that the function of the public relations manager is "to establish criteria by which decisions are made in the organization." Thus, managers establish guidelines that help employees decide what is right and what is wrong.

Ethics is an area of particular concern for public relations for four reasons: (1) Practitioners are aware that, to some, public relations has a reputation for unethical behavior; (2) public relations is often the source of ethical statements from an organization and the repository of ethical and social policies for that organization; (3) practitioners have struggled to create suitable codes of ethics for themselves, and (4) practitioners should act on behalf of their organizations as the ethical ombudsmen for the publics they serve.

The practitioner, then, should be the most ethical person in the organization. As we shall discuss in this chapter, public relations practice is based on trust. Members of the profession who violate that trust harm their colleagues as much as themselves.

Public relations practitioners are very sensitive, even defensive, about allegations of unethical behavior. The term public relations is sometimes used as a synonym for lying, distortion, selective disclosure, or cover-up. A Wall Street Journal article points to the ethical shortcomings of public relations, quoting the former public relations vice-president for United Brands: "The more I thought about it, and the more I looked at events around me, the more certain I became that PR was helping to screw up the world." He said, "I could see the hand of the PR man pulling the strings, making things happen, covering things up. Everywhere I looked it seemed as if image and style had taken the place of substance."

While several limited studies have ranked the profession low in honesty and ethics, a recent study by Lynne Sallot asked the general public what they thought about public relations practitioners. The survey elicited both good news and bad news. "Overall, the good news—which, given public relations' bad press, is a pleasant surprise—is that among the general public, the reputation of public relations practitioners is better than many think. Public relations practitioners have a reputation that is 'better than average' for occupations, the study found.

Like any other group or profession, public relations has ethical as well as unethical practitioners. However, because public relations as an emerging profession attempts to represent the public as well as the organization in business decision making, its practitioners are frequently held to a higher standard. The media and various publics will quickly point out deception in behavior that might be considered normal for members of other competitive businesses.

Ethics is what is morally right or wrong in social conduct, usually as determined by standards of professions, organizations, and individuals. Ethical behavior is a major consideration that distinguishes the civilized from the uncivilized in
society. Allen Center and Patrick Jackson argue that five factors regulate social conduct:

1. Tradition: Ways in which the situation has been viewed or handled in the past.
2. Public Opinion: Currently acceptable behavior according to the majority of one's peers.
3. Law: Behaviors that are permissible and those that are prohibited by legislation.
4. Morality: Generally, a spiritual or religious prohibition. Immorality is a charge usually leveled in issues on which religious teachings have been concentrated.
5. Ethics: Standards set by the profession, an organization, or oneself, based on conscience—what is right or fair to others as well as to self?

Because morality is actually the basis for ethics, it is difficult to separate them. Many issues of right or wrong are not ethical issues. For instance, whether or not to pay a hike is a question of right or wrong, but it is not an ethical question. If the question is not one of moral right or wrong, then it is not an ethical issue.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American philosopher, once said, “What you are stands over you the while, and thunders so that I cannot hear what you say.” This same philosophy was evident in the work of Ivy Lee, who became recognized as the “father of public relations” because he considered the public relations actions, not the words, more important. Lee’s 1906 Declaration of Principles was the first code of ethics for public relations. More important than ethical codes of public relations conduct, though, is the nature of the individual, private ethics of the practitioner. When it comes right down to it, the public relations practitioner must have a high personal standard of ethics that carries over into his or her work. James Grung, a proponent of public relations professionalism, argues that the practitioners must have two basic guiding ethical principles:

1. They must have the will to be ethical, intending not to injure others but rather to be honest and trustworthy.
2. They must make every effort to avoid actions that would have adverse consequences for others.

At the heart of any discussion of ethics in public relations are some questions that are deeply troubling for the individual practitioner. For example, will he or she:

1. Lie for a client or employer?
2. Engage in deception to collect information about another practitioner’s clients?
3. Help conceal a hazardous condition or illegal act?
4. Provide information that presents only part of the truth.

5. Offer something (gift, travel, or information) to reporters or legislators that may compromise their reporting.

6. Present true but misleading information in an interview or news conference that will mask some unpleasant fact.

Many public relations practitioners find themselves forced to respond to questions like these. Even though most report that they are seldom pressed to compromise their values, the questions are still asked. By conscientiously considering their ethical standards, practitioners can avoid difficult and embarrassing situations. Maintaining ethical standards is the key to establishing relationships of trust with employees, employers, clients, media contacts, and others. Because of the importance of ethical behavior to the general practice of public relations, attempts have been made to impose sanctions against individuals who violate professional standards.

While many practitioners consider it generally unethical to criticize each other's actions publicly, it is often necessary to raise the issue to meet the ethical obligations of the profession. When some public relations professionals spoke out against the Firestone Tire Company's stonewalling of accurate information about defective radial tires and when others denounced conflicting statements released to the press during the Three Mile Island nuclear accident, they themselves were criticized. For example, both PR News and Public Relations Journal labeled Firestone's critics unprofessional.

Thomas Bivins suggests that the individual practitioner has five moral obligations:

1. To ourselves—to preserve our own integrity.
2. To our clients—to honor our contracts and to use our professional expertise on our clients' behalf.
3. To our organization or employer—to adhere to organizational goals and policies.
4. To our profession and our professional colleagues—to uphold the standards of the profession and, by extension, the reputation of our fellow practitioners.
5. To society—to consider social needs and claims.

Unfortunately, most ethical situations are not black and white. When obligations to some of Bivins's five major stakeholders collide over an ethical issue, the practitioner must decide whose claim is most important or entails the least harm to the fewest people. Thus, when the employer's policies are different from those of the profession or the dictates of individual conscience, which should take precedence?

Some practical tips for ethical decision making are given in public relations spotlight 5.1.

More controversial than the question of personal ethics is the general issue of business ethics. It is relatively easy to agree in abstract terms that individual
public relations spotlight 5.1

1. Never accept a client or a job with an organization or person whose character or conduct doesn't measure up to your personal ethical standards.
2. Always be honest with everyone, especially the media.
3. Don't handle competing clients.
4. Don't make unfair comments about competitors.
5. Keep the public interest in mind at all times, including your responsibility to represent the various stakeholder groups to management.
6. Respect confidences.
7. Make sure all your financial activities are "above board." 
8. Use organizational codes—such as the PRSA Code given in this chapter—as a starting place, but build your own standards on top of these.

Professionals have a duty to behave ethically. Unfortunately, translating these abstract concepts into rules governing business practice in a competitive environment has not been so easy. The Public Relations Society of America has established a Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations (see public relations spotlight 5.2). In general, this voluntary code calls for truth, accuracy, good taste, fairness, and responsibility to the public.

The code, like the U.S. Constitution, is open to many interpretations. To deal with this problem, PRSA has supplied official interpretations of several of the provisions. For example, article 6 says, "A member shall not engage in any practice which has the purpose of corrupting the integrity of channels of communication or the processes of government." Does this mean that you cannot give a small gift, such as a $10 pen with the company logo and your phone number, to reporters at an open house? No, it does not. The interpretation says that gifts of "nominal value" are acceptable. Does article 6 mean that "junkets" are prohibited? No, as long as the special media event has legitimate news value and there is no pressure to do a story or—especially—to give a story a particular slant. This article likewise does not prohibit giving legitimate sample products or services to media representatives who have a bona fide interest in the product. It is also permissible under the code to offer complimentary or discount rates to the media if the rate is for business use and available to all writers.

On the other hand, the public relations practitioner must be aware that many media representatives have their own codes of ethics that prohibit accepting anything free from public relations people. For example, Scripps Howard Inc.'s ethical policy prohibits "freebies." If the company has a legitimate news interest in the event or product, reporters and editors must pay their own way or risk being fired.

More and more, companies will be held to the same standards of behavior that people are, and more and more this will mean people answering for companies. The CEO will be expected to articulate his or her position on all these issues, and to the senior PR person will fall the duty of analyzing public opinion and advising on such positions.

Business Ethics
PRSA Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations

Public Relations Spotlight 5.2

Declaration of Principles
Members of the Public Relations Society of America base their professional principles on the fundamental value and dignity of the individual, holding that the free exercise of human rights, especially freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press, is essential to the practice of public relations.

In serving the interests of clients and employers, we dedicate ourselves to the goals of better communication, understanding, and cooperation among the diverse individuals, groups, and institutions of society, and of equal opportunity of employment in the public relations profession.

We pledge:
To conduct ourselves professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness, and responsibility to the public,
To improve our individual competence and advance the knowledge and proficiency of the profession through continuing research and education,
And to adhere to the articles of the Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations as adopted by the governing Assembly of the Society.

Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations
These articles have been adopted by the Public Relations Society of America to promote and maintain high standards of public service and ethical conduct among its members.

1. A member shall conduct his or her professional life in accord with the public interest.
2. A member shall exemplify high standards of honesty and integrity while carrying out dual obligations to a client or employer and to the democratic process.
3. A member shall deal fairly with the public, with past or present clients or employers, and with fellow practitioners, giving due respect to the ideal of free inquiry and to the opinions of others.
4. A member shall adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth, avoiding extravagant claims or unfair comparisons and giving credit for ideas and words borrowed from others.
5. A member shall not knowingly disseminate false or misleading information and shall act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which he or she is responsible.
6. A member shall not engage in any practice which has the purpose of corrupting the integrity of channels of communications or the processes of government.
7. A member shall be prepared to identify publicly the name of the client or employer whose behalf any public communication is made.
8. A member shall not use any individual or organization professing to serve or represent an announced cause, or professing to be independent or unbiased, but actually serving another or undisclosed interest.
9. A member shall not guarantee the achievement of specified results beyond the member’s direct control.
10. A member shall not represent conflicting or competing interests without the express consent of those concerned, given after a full disclosure of the facts.
A member shall not accept fees, commissions, gifts, or any other consideration from anyone except clients or employers for whom services are performed without their express consent, given after full disclosure of the facts.

A member shall scrupulously safeguard the confidences and privacy rights of present, former, and prospective clients or employers.

A member shall not intentionally damage the professional reputation or practice of another practitioner.

A member shall, as soon as possible, sever relations with any organization or individual if such relationship requires conduct contrary to the articles of this code.

Again, it is the public relations professional who will be responsible for monitoring controversial issues and ensuring that the company responds to the expectations of its consumers, acting almost as the corporate conscience.

Some practitioners have been fired arbitrarily for refusing to write news releases they felt would be false and misleading. One practitioner worked for a company that wanted him to prepare and distribute a release listing company clients before the clients had signed contracts for services. The practitioner refused, believing that to comply would violate the PRSA code, and was fired. He subsequently sued the company for unlawful dismissal, receiving almost $100,000 in an out-of-court settlement.

The question of whistle-blowing has become prominent in recent years. What is an ethical practitioner’s correct response when an employer or client refuses to exercise public responsibility? The PRSA Code of Ethics says that he or she should quit. Some practitioners, however, believe they can accomplish more good by staying on to argue for more responsible action. Realistically, few practitioners can afford to quit and therefore choose to stay in the face of questionable activities. Out of frustration, they become whistle-blowers. That is, they secretly inform the media about irresponsible actions in order to bring public pressure on their organizations. Although whistle-blowing can halt the unethical practice, it usually costs the whistle-blower his or her job in the long run. Thus, the decision to quit is a more direct means to the same end.

Another public relations professional resigned after initially participating in several ethically questionable practices with a multinational fruit conglomerate.
He charged the company with manipulation of press coverage as well as with political and military action involving a Latin American country in which it was operating. The increased attention of many corporations to the ethical dimensions of business can be traced back to Watergate and Korea. These major national scandals were followed by a 1975 investigation revealing that dozens of U.S. companies had made payments to government officials in foreign countries in order to gain lucrative contracts. The Lockheed Aircraft Corporation was the most publicized among more than 400 firms eventually admitting such practices. Opinion polls conducted soon after the scandal revealed that Americans felt only about 20 percent of business executives had high ethical standards. Most observers believe that these revelations were significantly related to the erosion of public confidence in American business and its leaders.

A study conducted by one of the authors solicited a copy of the ethics policy of each of the Fortune 500 companies. Of the organizations, 421 responded with ethics procedures ranging in length from a single page to 47 pages. Most not only affirmed the corporation's intent to do business in an ethical manner but also provided for dismissal of employees who violated the policy. However, closer examination of these documents revealed a tendency to rely on legal rather than ethical standards. Some Fortune 500 companies and other firms are providing ethics training for their managers and other employees. Companies increasingly are using outside consultants or panels to examine systematically the social and ethical implications of impending decisions. Some also use internal experts or ethics committees to review major decisions.

One recent study indicates that public relations professionals who are willing to take ethical positions are more likely to participate in top-level management decisions. Table 5.1 shows that 52 percent of the practitioners in the study who made frequent recommendations for socially responsible actions were also frequent participants in policy decisions within their organizations. In an Arthur W. Page Hall of Fame Lecture in 1989, W. Howard Chase predicted that "the next important stage in public relations service—its edge of the new unused—will be the management of values, the disciplines inherent in ethical corporate conduct."

When public relations practitioners participate in organizational decisions, they bear a heavy ethical responsibility—not only to themselves and their organizations but also to their profession and the public. They must weigh all these

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<thead>
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<th>TABLE 5.1 Frequency of Recommending Social Responsibility and Frequency of Participation in Policy Decisions</th>
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<td>Participate in decisions more than 50% of the time</td>
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<td>Very often or often recommend social responsibility</td>
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<td>Not very often or never recommend social responsibility</td>
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considerations when helping to make organizational decisions and communicate decisions once they are made.

The examples cited here show that ethical behavior is ultimately an individual decision. Professional codes, corporate policy, and even law cannot ensure the ethical practice of any profession; only the application of sound personal values can guarantee ethical behavior. Nevertheless, professional codes, sound business policies, and appropriate legislation can serve as valuable guidelines for public relations practitioners who desire to maintain high ethical standards.

Perhaps the most critical relationships managed by public relations practitioners are those concerning the news media. Here, anything less than total honesty will destroy credibility and with it, the practitioner's usefulness to an employer or client. All news media depend on public relations sources for much of the information they convey to viewers, readers, and listeners (see chapter 10). Although public relations releases are sometimes used simply as leads from which to develop stories, at other times reporters and editors rely on the accuracy and thoroughness of public relations copy and use it with little change.

Trust, the foundation of all public relations practice, is achieved only through ethical performance. Therefore, providing junkets for the press that have doubtful news value, throwing extravagant parties, giving expensive gifts, and doing personal favors will ultimately destroy a practitioner's effectiveness. Even if journalists ask for favors, the ethical public relations professional must find a way to decline tactfully. In the long run, establishing a reputation for honesty and integrity will yield dividends in media relations.

Although several studies have consistently shown that public relations practitioners and journalists hold similar professional values and make similar news
judgments, the same studies show that journalists strongly believe public relations practitioners lack professional values. The unwillingness of a few practitioners to uphold ethical standards could be the reason for this misconception.

Ethical and legal issues frequently evolve from similar circumstances, but the public relations professional must understand the difference. Keeping to the letter of the law does not guarantee ethical action because the law is written to cover only the worst—or at least the most general—offenses. Many unethical claims and promotions have been structured to stay within legal limits, even though their intent was to trick or deceive. Although an understanding of the law is important, a professional must rely on a higher standard for decision making.

Public relations practitioners working for publicly held companies have both an ethical and a legal obligation to release promptly news about dividends, earnings, new products, mergers, and other developments that might affect the value of securities. A delay in releasing such news could allow insiders to derive unfair financial benefits. The Securities and Exchange Commission and the individual stock exchanges strictly enforce these regulations.

Corporations are also prohibited from using public relations techniques in connection with the sale of new issues of securities (see Chapter 14). Public relations personnel must be thoroughly aware of Federal Trade Commission and Food and Drug Administration regulations regarding the promotion of products and services. Such practices as unsubstantiated claims, fraudulent testimonials, deceptive pricing, so-called independent surveys, and rigged contests are regulated through these agencies.

For any occupation to become a profession, it must meet four criteria

1. Expertise
2. Autonomy
3. Commitment
4. Responsibility

Expertise comprises the specialized knowledge and skill that are vital requirements for the profession to perform its function in society. Autonomy allows the practitioner to practice without outside interference. Commitment, the outcome of expertise, implies devotion to the pursuit of excellence without emphasis on the rewards of the profession. Finally, responsibility means that the power conferred by expertise entails a trust relationship with the practitioner’s stakeholder groups.

Though all four criteria are important, the last one, responsibility, is operationalized through codes of ethics, professional organizations, and licensure. Thus, to be considered fully professionalized, an occupation needs a well-developed and well-enforced code of ethics, active professional organizations, and some means of controlling who is allowed to practice. It is the licensure issue that continues to prevent public relations from being a fully professional occupation.
James Grunig and Todd Hunt list five characteristics of a professional group. As a relatively young profession, public relations has made remarkable progress in each area, but its practitioners still need to do more and to encourage others to accept these norms.

1. **A set of professional values**  In particular, professionals believe that service to others is more important than their own economic gain. Professionals also strongly value autonomy.

2. **Membership in strong professional organizations**  Professional organizations provide professionals the contact with other professionals they need to maintain an allegiance to the profession.

3. **Adherence to professional norms**  A true profession has a code of ethics and a procedure for enforcing it.

4. **An intellectual tradition and an established body of knowledge**  A profession must have a unique and well-established body of knowledge.

5. **Technical skills acquired through professional training**  Professionals should have the technical skills needed to provide a unique and essential service.

As Grunig and Hunt indicate, true professions have strong professional organizations with codes of ethics and the ability to prohibit violators of these codes from practicing. Public relations has several professional organizations, and most have codes of ethics, however, no single central organization can control access to the practice. Therefore, enforcement of these codes is difficult, and the effects of sanctions that can be imposed are questionable. Many argue that for public relations to mature from an emerging profession to a fully professionalized occupation, some licensure or certification process is necessary.

The code of the Public Relations Society of America is the most detailed and comprehensive in the field (see public relations spotlight 5.2). When PRSA was founded in 1948, one of its first actions was to develop a code of ethics so members would have some common behavioral guidelines and managers would have a clear understanding of their standards. This code became the tool used to distinguish professionals in public relations from shady promoters and publicists who had been quick to appropriate the term public relations to describe their activities.

The PRSA Code was adopted in 1954 and revised in 1959, 1963, 1977, 1983, and 1988. Because the code seeks to establish specific standards for public relations practice, it must be changed periodically to address new problems. In 1963, revisions were designed to toughen the standards for financial public relations after an investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission resulted in a public revelation of the corrupt actions of some practitioners. In 1977, under threat of antitrust litigation by the Federal Trade Commission, certain provisions of the code barring contingency fees and barring one member’s encroaching upon another member’s clients were changed. This revision of the code also removed sexist concepts and language from the document.
In 1983, articles 1 and 5 of the code were revised to cover potential as well as past and present clients. This change was the result of a grievance board hearing about a practitioner's disclosure of a potential client's plans to a competitor. In the wake of a scandal involving the newly elected president of the society, who had been charged with insider trading and violations of a client's confidentiality, the code was revised again in 1988. This revision gives the ethics board more freedom to communicate its actions and those of members who resign before their cases can be considered. The need for this change was made apparent when a front-page story in the September 26, 1986, Wall Street Journal revealed to many PRSA members for the first time the resignation under fire of their president.

Because professional organizations' codes of practice do not have the force of law, enforcement is problematic. Investigation of charges independent of those who make them is an expensive process that most organizations cannot afford. Moreover, the legal and ethical responsibility to avoid unwarranted damage to someone's reputation and livelihood requires that any group proceed cautiously in enforcing a code of practice. The American Society of Newspaper Editors encountered many legal problems and other difficulties in its attempts to censure members that it suspended further enforcement attempts soon after its code of ethics was adopted in 1923. However, Allen Center, author and former vice president for public relations at Motorola and Parker Pen, believes that "we need to stake our claim to the moral high ground, and not tolerate anyone among us who breaches our code of ethics." 14

As noted earlier in this chapter, codes, policies, and even laws are not the answer to achieving ethical practice in public relations. Only the individual professional can ensure his or her ethical behavior. In an article titled "Hope Springs Eternal for Good Use of PR," W. M. Shaffer put it quite simply: "Customers and prospects, long ago recognized ethics as an aspect of individual character, not collective industry. PR professionals would do well to emulate customer and prospect wisdom, good ethics is just good business." 15 Lee Jaffe, retired public relations director for the New York Port Authority, states that "integrity is the key to the proper practice of public relations." 16 Those who exemplify the best of any profession develop personal philosophies that allow them to deal with individual cases as they occur.

"What is needed is an approach to ethics that combines 'moral conviction and tolerance,'" according to the Excellence study in public relations. 17 While practitioners won't always agree on what's right or wrong or on a practical interpretation of a moral principle, they should strive to be tolerant of other viewpoints. 21 Chester Burger, president of a New York-based management consulting firm, revealed his own philosophy in a Public Relations Journal article concerning ethics in public relations. The following statements encapsulate what he learned during a newspaper reporting and public relations career spanning more than four decades:

**Lesson 1** Communicators must trust the common sense of their audience.

More often than not, the public will justify our trust by seeing accurately the issues, the contenders, and the motivations. Communicators should
not resort to clever headlines, gimmicks, distortions, or lies, they should not underestimate the public's perceptiveness.

Lesson 2  People generally will know or care very little about the issues that concern you. You need to inform, to clarify, and to simplify issues truthfully and in ways that will relate to your audience's self-interest.

Lesson 3  Don't compromise your own ethical standards for anyone. Don't take the easy way out. Don't say what you don't really believe, and don't do for the sake of expediency what you think is wrong. It isn't worth it. Ask yourself how your action would look if it were reported tomorrow on the front page of your local newspaper. Who would absolve you from responsibility if you said you had written or said an untruth because your boss told you to?

Lesson 4  Choices for communicators between right and wrong are rarely black or white, yes or no. Questions of ethics involve degrees, nuances, differing viewpoints. Too many times in my life I have been wrong to feel sure that I know the right answer. A bit of uncertainty and humility sometimes is appropriate in considering ethical questions.24

Some believe that codes of behavior will lack wholly effective means of enforcement until practitioners are required to be legally certified. Controlled access is the hallmark of a recognized profession. Therefore, controlled access, through licensure, to the title of "certified public relations counselor" is viewed as the only way to separate the frauds and hacks from legitimate practitioners. Proponents such as the late Edward L. Bernays, who was instrumental in formulating the modern concept of public relations (see chapter 2), believe that licensing can protect the profession and the public from incompetent practitioners.

Those who argue for licensure see it as the only effective method of enforcing professional standards. But efforts to impose such standards are highly controversial. The Public Relations Society of America has commissioned several studies on licensure but has never endorsed it. Even if licensure were implemented, many practitioners would probably not be affected because they work in corporate departments. In the legal and accounting professions, many trained practitioners never sit for bar or CPA examinations because they are not required to represent their firms in official capacities.

Both PRSA and IABC offer accreditation programs for experienced practitioners who pass a comprehensive examination. These programs are the closest existing approximation to licensing procedures. Less than half the memberships of both associations are accredited. Despite efforts by PRSA, few people outside the profession have any notion of the accreditation process and what it means.

The issue of ethical practice in public relations is closely tied to efforts toward accreditation and licensure. While no amount of testing or education can guarantee ethical behavior on the part of individuals, the potential removal of accreditation or license can give professional codes of practice more leverage. By promoting professional responsibility and recognition, public relations organizations can encourage ethical behavior and awareness among their members.
Summary

Public relations professionals frequently face ethical questions during the course of their daily business with clients, the media, and others. Practitioners are often called on to issue ethical statements on behalf of the organizations they represent. Thus, public relations professionals are especially sensitive to any suggestion of misconduct.

To encourage commitment to ethical standards, both PRSA and IABC have established codes for ethical behavior, and PRSA has set up an enforcement procedure as well. Some believe that practitioners would be further influenced to abide by ethical standards if they were required to become legally certified, but licensure is still a controversial issue and has not been implemented. Codes, policies, and laws alone cannot achieve ethical standards, the ultimate responsibility lies with each individual practitioner.

Critical Incidents: The Practical Side of Ethics

By Donald B. McCammond, APR
Former Chairman
Board of Ethics, PRSA

Case Study

Sometimes, in everyday practice, situations arise where the proper thng, the ethical thng, even the legal thing to do is not always immediately clear. Following are several such situations.

1. A well-known athlete is charged with selling drugs and planning and carrying out, with others, the death of a young married couple. His attorney calls you, a close friend, to advise and assist him in handling the intense media interest in the case. During the period before trial, you learn that the athlete was, in fact, a drug dealer and did participate in the murder. The lawyer tells you that the information is privileged. You decide to await the outcome of the trial. The lawyer is able to get his client acquitted. What should you do?

2. Your firm is one of six under consideration by a manufacturer planning to introduce a new service into your area. You are given confidential information as to the service and the plans of the company. You are aware that the company will face severe opposition from certain groups and politicians and that the job would entail overcoming this resistance. Your firm is turned down by the company, and the assignment is given to a competitor. Can you disclose the information you have learned to the manufacturer’s opposition in your area?

3. Your public relations firm publishes a newsletter directed to brokerage houses. A corporate executive asks your help in making his company better known among the brokerage community. A subsequent issue of the newsletter carries a highly optimistic forecast of the company but omits some information. Nothing in the story indicates any relationship between you and the company. Were you under any obligation to disclose this relationship, and should you print a retraction?

4. You are a corporate public relations director. Your employer tells you to set up a supposedly independent organization to introduce and promote the use of
a new product made by your company. This new organization is to be financed secretely by your company and some of its suppliers. Is there anything wrong with establishing this organization?

5. A distributor of medicinal products arranges with your firm to put on a press conference for an independent British scientist who has tested the product and written favorably about them. You also arrange speaking engagements for the visiting scientist. After the press conference, you learn that the scientist was actually an employee of the research arm of the manufacturer of the products. What actions should you take?

6. A client asks you for help in a financial merger situation. You decline because the matter is outside your expertise and refer the company to a fellow practitioner who is knowledgeable in financial affairs. The fellow practitioner is so appreciative he sends you a check for $500. Can you accept the money without telling the client?

7. One of your clients calls you to assist in a takeover situation. You tell a friend who had originally helped you get the client. Several days later, your friend buys 5,000 shares in one of the companies involved in the takeover. You do not buy any yourself. The day after the merger announcement, your friend sells the shares, at a profit of $15 a share and a total profit of $75,000. Are you guilty of insider trading, even if you made no profit?

8. Your employer asks you to give a series of talks in communities served by your company regarding its new plant and the service it will provide. On a visit to the plant to acquaint yourself with its operation, you get clear evidence that it cannot fulfill the expectations outlined in the talk prepared by your company. Can you give the talks as originally prepared?

Questions

1. Which articles of the PRSA code (spotlight 5.2) apply to each incident?
2. List the ethical questions involved in each
3. Describe any legal questions raised by those incidents

Notes

3. Ibid., 320
5. Lynne Salz, "Doing Good Is a Hustle, Too," paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in Atlanta, Ga 11 August 1994, 21-22
6. Ibid., 22


11 Angus McEachran, editor of The Commercial Appeal, speech to SPU Memphis Chapter, April 1994, Memphis, Tenn.


16 McKee, Nayman and Lathem, 17-60.


20 ibid., 38.


22 ibid., 59.

23 Chester Burger, Public Relations Journal (December 1982).
PART II

Public Relations
The Process

It isn't enough to know what public relations is and what purposes it serves. To practice public relations, one must understand the process by which public relations operates. As we have already discussed, public relations goes far beyond the task of producing messages. An effective public relations effort is the result of mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. The development of this understanding can be regarded as a four-step process:

1. Research  An initial fact-finding stage defines the problem areas and differentiates among publics.

2. Planning  Once the facts have been gathered from the various publics, decisions must be made regarding their importance and their potential impact on the organization. After these decisions are made, strategies must be developed to enable the organization to achieve its goals.

3. Action and Communication  Strategies are implemented as new organizational policies and/or projects. Messages are then constructed to reach target publics.

4. Evaluation  Once a public relations campaign is developed and implemented, it should be followed by an evaluation of its effectiveness in meeting the criteria that were set. The results of the evaluation are used both to assess the effectiveness of the effort and to plan future action. For open-system responses, evaluation information becomes a self-correction mechanism; feedback of this type allows plans to be fine-tuned as they are carried out. The results of closed-system evaluations should be stored for use in similar projects in the future.

These four steps are essential to any effective public relations campaign. They are not, however, four independent functions. Each step overlaps the others; if any one is neglected, the entire process will be affected. The next four chapters will discuss each of these steps in detail. To help you keep in mind the interdependence of the steps, an integrating case study will open each chapter. The case of Cedar Springs Community Hospital will illustrate a complete public relations project as it progresses through each stage, from research through evaluation. You may find it useful to turn back and review the previous case segments as you read through the next four chapters.
CHAPTER 6

Research: Understanding Public Opinion

Preview

Research is a crucial part of the public relations process. Information gained through careful research can be used to guide planning, pretest messages, evaluate results, and direct follow-up efforts.

Effective research techniques for public relations practice include both formal and informal methods. The use of research data to evaluate current practice and forecast future events is well accepted in most organizations today. Public relations practitioners must be able to evaluate their efforts and demonstrate effectiveness.

Good public opinion research must be sensitive enough to identify publics as definable groups rather than as unrelated masses.

Public relations audits, social audits, communication audits, and environmental monitoring are effective research methods for public relations planning and evaluation.
The process of issues management, which has become a major part of public relations practice, must be informed at every stage by research data. The early identification of issues that may impact a client or organization is most thoroughly accomplished through research methods designed to scan the environment for potential issues. Analysis to determine which issues have the greatest possible impact requires various research methods designed to determine both the strength of opinion about an issue and its perceived centrality to the client or organization. Likewise, the selection of potential actions and the evaluation of their implementation can be determined through well-planned research activities.

Research is a vital function in the process of public relations. It provides the initial information necessary to plan public relations action and to evaluate its effectiveness. Management demands hard facts, not intuition or guesswork. Public relations practitioners, like their colleagues in every area of management, must be able to demonstrate convincingly their ability to "add value" in producing a product or service. The economic realities of modern organizations make it necessary for public relations to incorporate data-gathering techniques into every phase of the process. The Cedar Springs Hospital case study that follows shows how a public relations effort can utilize research in identifying and dealing with an organizational problem.

Integrating Case Study

**Problem Identification**

The Cedar Springs Community Hospital, Inc., was formed by the merger of two formerly competing hospitals. Two years later, a new management team was brought in to help resolve concerns about the ability of the newly formed hospital to serve its patients' needs. Soon after the new administrator and his seven assistants assumed their duties, they began to hear reports of low employee morale and declining quality in patient care. Much of this input came from physicians who felt that the changes since the merger had produced an environment that was more routine and less personal. Many doctors felt that their relationships with other hospital employees had been undermined by the new organization's attempts to eliminate duplication and build a more efficient structure. In general, the growing consensus among the physicians was that the quality of patient care had declined significantly since the merger.

**Informal and Secondary Research**

Because physicians are a significant public for any hospital, their concerns received immediate attention from management. The physicians had suggested
mounting a campaign to make employees more aware of their responsibility for
good patient care. However, the public relations director felt that more infor-
mation was needed in the form of secondary research before an effective com-
munication campaign could be planned. He began to look into the background of the
merger and the relationships between hospital employees and the medical staff.
A careful review of hospital records and local newspaper files, plus con-
versations with several long-time employees, revealed the complexity of the sit-
tuation. Not only had the hospitals formerly been competitors, they had also been
founded by two very different religious groups and thus had developed two dis-
tinct constiuencies. Although the religious affiliations of both hospitals had been
discontinued long before the merger, an atmosphere of rivalry remained. This ri-
vality had been most obvious when the hospitals had attempted to outdo each
other in terms of benefits for physicians.

Primary Research
One important public, the physicians, clearly believed that the quality of patient
care was not acceptable. However, employees’ and patients’ views were not as
easily defined. The public relations department devised a primary research plan
to measure the opinions of each group. A random sample of hospital employees
was asked to fill out a questionnaire about various aspects of patient care. Simul-
taneously, a telephone survey was conducted among recently released patients to
gauge their opinions on the same issues.
The results were surprising. On a scale ranging from 1 (poor) to 10 (excell-
ent), employees rated the hospital’s performance a disappointing 6.6 overall.
However, the survey of former patients produced an overall rating of 8.5. Other
questions concerning the quality of patient care also elicited significantly lower
marks from the employees than from the patients.

Qualitative Research
To understand the reasons for the low ratings given by employees, a focus group
was assembled to respond to the survey findings. This five-member panel was
composed of three representatives from nursing services and one each from an-
cillary support and business services. The members were interviewed as a group
concerning their responses to the questionnaire. The interview revealed that
while employees believed that the hospital in general delivered mediocre patient
care, they felt that the care was significantly better in their specific areas than in
the rest of the hospital and that they, personally, were slightly above average
within their departments. These employees also indicated that their co-workers
sensed that something was wrong in the organization but were not sure what. This
led to feelings of individual helplessness and produced high levels of stress and
frustration.
In the Cedar Springs case, what originally seemed like a rather straightforward employee communication problem was a complex situation involving three important publics. Research showed the physicians' concerns to be overblown. Had Cedar Springs management acted on the physicians' original recommendation without doing further research, the situation would have just gotten worse, increasing employee frustration and stress.

As you read about the different types of research methods public relations practitioners employ, refer to this segment and notice how several of the techniques were applied. A quick comparison of the Cedar Springs case with the first step in figure 6.1 will confirm that each of the basic elements of research is present.
In this example, the surprising nature of the findings in this case illustrates the need for research in public relations.

**Proving the Worth of Public Relations**

Because public relations professionals have traditionally been doers rather than researchers, they often assume that others see the value of their function. That assumption places public relations necks squarely on budgetary chopping blocks. Even when economic conditions are not critical, public relations may be perceived as window dressing. Media, regulatory agencies, consumer groups, and many managers doubt that public relations has a useful purpose in American business.

Typically, public relations professionals respond by claiming that they contribute to better understanding between publics and organizations, but they do not present tangible evidence of this contribution. When the Cobb County, Georgia, Chamber of Commerce went to the city council with a request for $100,000 to promote tourism, they took the council members out to dinner and made an appeal based on generalities. The council agreed to provide $10,000. While the chamber was disappointed, communication chairman Dave Kaplan was circumspect. “We’ll have to spend that $10,000 on something that gives us measurable results,” he said. “Then we’ll come back next year and show them what we can accomplish.”

Public relations practitioners must speak with authority when asked to prove their value to business and society. This authority can come only through an ability to conduct research and apply the results to public relations campaigns. Public relations professionals must maintain good media relations, produce employee publications, release financial information, and conduct community relations programs. In addition, those who succeed must also be able to measure the effects of their programs, provide sound forecasts of future needs, and account for the resources they consume.

An independent public relations counselor was seeking a new client. “What can you do for me?” asked the prospective client.

“I can get you exposure,” explained the public relations person. “I can get you speaking dates and get you in the newspaper.”

“I can do that,” said the prospect (who was rapidly becoming a less likely client). “What I need is someone to help me make money.”

“That’s marketing,” said the public relations counselor. “I do public relations.”

“You do nothing if you don’t contribute to my bottom line,” was the response. “All my expenditures make me money or they don’t get made. No sale.”

**Informal Research Techniques**

Research means information gathering. Research can range from looking up the names of editors of weekly newspapers in Nebraska to polling those people to discover their opinions about farm export policy. Research is not always elaborate or highly structured. We want to begin this section by considering a few informal research methods and sources that practitioners use.
One of the most important skills necessary for the successful practice of public relations is the ability to keep comprehensive and accurate records. Practitioners are frequently asked to produce critical information at a moment’s notice for use inside and outside their organizations. Thus, when an editor or manager calls for information, the public relations practitioner must produce the needed data within a relatively short time or suffer loss of credibility. By earning a reputation as a source of valuable information, the practitioner can develop a network of internal and external information contacts.

Frequently, individuals who are opinion leaders in the community, industry, or organization act as key contacts for the public relations practitioner. Others who possess special knowledge or who communicate frequently with significant publics are also good sources. For a community college, for example, key contacts would be significant business, political, student, and community leaders. However, while these people can provide valuable information, they may not represent the majority opinion. Because they are leaders or individuals with special knowledge, they must be regarded as nontypical of their groups. Their special insight may give them greater sensitivity to an issue than most people would have. Therefore, the practitioner must be careful not to overreact to feedback from these sources or plan major responses based solely on such information. Key contacts are best used to provide early warning about issues that may become significant.

To help obtain necessary information, many public relations practitioners organize special committees. Internal and external committees of key communicators, decision makers, and opinion leaders can point out issues before they become problems and suggest alternative courses of action. Such an advisory group can be formed for a specified length of time, such as the duration of a campaign, or it can be a permanent board that replaces members periodically.

Qualitative research offers an informal way to gain in-depth understanding of an audience without the rigor of more formal research methods. The most widely used technique for qualitative research is the focus group. As we saw in the Cedar Springs case, a focus group is a small number of people who share some demographic characteristic. Group members are interviewed, often with open-ended questions used to encourage interaction and probe the nature of their beliefs. Focus groups are generally assembled only once, and their responses are videotaped or observed from behind a one-way mirror. This procedure enables researchers to take into account not only what is said but also gestures, facial expressions, and other forms of nonverbal communication that may reveal depth of meaning.

Although ethical and legal considerations require researchers to inform focus groups that they are being recorded or observed, experience shows that participants are seldom reluctant to discuss their feelings. Frequently, people selected for focus groups are glad someone is willing to listen to them. Sometimes the process of asking can be just as valuable as the information gained because the organization is perceived as being responsive to its publics.
Recently, Syracuse University used several focus groups composed of alumni to help plan a major fund-raising drive. The centerpiece of the campaign was to be a promotional film stressing the scientific and research emphasis at the university. However, feedback from focus group participants revealed that such presentations turned them off. This realization prevented Syracuse from making a costly error in communication. Larissa A. Grung reported on the use of focus groups to help plan a program for a county mental health department designed to reduce the stigma existing in the community regarding chronic mental illness. In addition to focus groups, a larger sample-size telephone survey of county residents was conducted. According to the departmental administrator, however, results of the phone survey provided fewer and shallower responses for designing the subsequent communication campaign. Focus groups allowed researchers to discuss why residents felt the way they did; the survey did not provide that opportunity.

Many practitioners find it helpful to screen systematically material that regularly comes through their offices. Monitoring of news reports in both print and broadcast media should be done to allow consideration of the quality and quantity of coverage. Carefully tracking incoming mail, telephone calls, and sales reports can also provide valuable information. Like all information collected through informal research methods, however, these techniques have built-in biases because the data are not collected from representative samples of the target publics.

The growing importance of formal research in public relations has in recent years prompted several studies that attempt to assess research techniques preferred among professionals. In one such study, Walter K. Lindenmann sampled 253 practitioners among them public relations executives from Fortune 500 companies, public relations
TABLE 6.1 Research Techniques Respondents Claimed They Used Most Frequently

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature searches/information retrieval</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity tracking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone/mail surveys with simple cross-tabs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR/communications audits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary analysis studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer inquiry analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth interviews with opinion leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readership/readability studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre- and posttests (before and after polls)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophisticated techniques (conjoint/factor analysis)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychographic analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail intercept/shopping center studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content analysis studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental designs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unobtrusive measures (role-playing, observation participation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

agencies, nonprofit organizations, and academic institutions. A summary of his findings is listed in Table 6.1. Formal research procedures topped the list. Public and private libraries are sources of data that would be impossible for the practitioner to collect personally. Reference librarians are helpful in finding information, and many libraries now subscribe to computerized data retrieval networks that can obtain information from anywhere in the world. Census data and other types of public information are available at libraries that are designated as government depositories. In addition, a number of independent research organizations, such as the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan, publish information that may be valuable to the public relations practitioner. Media guides, trade and professional journals, and other reference books may be useful items in a public relations practitioner’s personal library. Following are further sources that should be noted and can be valuable in researching a future employer or a competing organization.

- Don and Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory
- Don and Bradstreet Middle Market Directory
- Standard and Poor’s Register of Corporations, Directors, and Executives
- Thomas’ Register of American Manufacturers
- Fortune Magazine’s “Directory of Largest Corporations”
- Fortune Magazine’s “Annual Directory Issues”
- Black Enterprise Magazine’s “The Top 100”

As you read the next section, keep in mind that secondary sources like those mentioned should be exhausted before a primary research effort is planned. Researchers should review the information available to make certain the questions to be asked have not already been answered by others.
Content Analysis is a research method that allows the researcher to code systematically and thereby quantify the verbal content of written or transcribed messages. This technique provides a method of systematic observation for informal research efforts, such as the analysis of transcripts from focus groups. News clippings can be analyzed for quantity and quality of coverage. Many organizations analyze the contents of newspaper and magazines, the contents of the annual reports and other publications of their competitors to discover strategic plans.

The practice of public relations employs all types of research processes, but the survey method is the most common. Cedar Springs Hospital used survey research to answer some critical questions. Laboratory and field experiments, as well as various types of simulations, can have a place in public relations research effort. However, surveys are the most effective way to assess the characteristics of publics in a form that allows the data to be used in planning and evaluating public relations efforts. Surveys should provide a means of separating publics rather than lumping them together into one amorphous mass.

The term survey as applied in public relations research, refers to careful, detailed examination of the perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of members of various publics. The general purpose of a survey is to obtain a better understanding of the reactions and preferences of a specific public. For public relations efforts, we divide survey data into two types, demographic and opinion. Demographic data are those characteristics (age, sex, occupational, etc.) of the people responding to the survey that help a practitioner classify them into one or more publics. Opinion data are responses to the questions a practitioner raises concerning the attitudes and perceptions of certain publics about critical issues.

Experimental research is generally divided into two categories, laboratory experiments and field experiments. Laboratory experiments take place in carefully controlled environments designed to minimize outside effects. Field experiments take place in real-world settings. The trade-off between field and laboratory experiments is essentially one of authenticity versus purity.

In a field experiment, the researcher has a great deal of control over the setting to obtain reactions in a real environment. In a laboratory setting, however, the researcher can control many outside stimuli that might contaminate the results of the study. For example, a public relations practitioner might decide to pretest a particular message by inviting people into a room to view the message in several forms and then measuring their reactions. A church foundation attempting to raise funds for a chaplain in a local cancer hospital used this method to test the graphics and photographs in its brochure to avoid negative effects before publication. The laboratory setting ensured that the subject’s responses were based on the message being studied and not on other stimuli that might exist in a normal environment. To test the effects of a message in a more authentic setting, a field experiment such as a test-market study could be arranged, using a specific group of people in their normal environment.
We have described several methods of research. Now we will look at ways to actually collect information.

Formal research information can be obtained in a variety of ways that may be classified as either descriptive or inferential. Descriptive data are used to characterize something, like a particular group of people (a public). If the public relations practitioner in an organization asks the personnel department to prepare a demographic profile of its employees (average age, gender breakdown, years of education, experience level, etc.), he or she is requesting descriptive data. Such studies use averages, percentages, actual numbers, or other descriptive statistics to summarize the characteristics of a group or public.

Inferential data do more than describe a particular public. Inferential data identify indirectly (infer) the characteristics of people not included in the specific group from which the information was obtained. Through sampling, which we will discuss later in this section, it is possible to select a relatively small number who represent a larger population. Using inferential statistics, a public relations practitioner can infer the characteristics of a very large public, such as a consumer group, from a relatively small but representative sample of that population.

Whether research is classified as descriptive or inferential, survey or experimental, and regardless of the sampling technique employed, the three basic means for collecting research data are observations, interviews, and questionnaires.

Observational techniques are easily misused in public relations research because of the informal nature of many observations about publics. A practitioner’s personal observations are severely limited by his or her own perceptions, experiences, and sensitivity. These limitations can lead to decisions based more on gut feeling than on reliable information. Structural techniques make personal observations more reliable because observers are trained within established rules to observe and record data systematically, but this is normally an expensive and complex process.

Interviews can be a successful way to get information from a public. Skilled interviewers can elicit information that subjects might not otherwise volunteer. Interviews may be conducted face-to-face as well as over the telephone. They are generally classified as structured or unstructured. A structured interview uses a schedule of questions with specific response choices ranging from yes/no to multiple choice. Unstructured interviews allow subjects to respond to open-ended questions however they wish. Although interviews are frequently employed, they have disadvantages. For example, the interviewer’s personality, dress, and nonverbal cues may bias the response. To minimize such problems, it is necessary to use experts trained interviewers, the cost of which can be prohibitive.

Questionnaires are the most common form of data collection because they are stable in presentation and inexpensive to use. Once a questionnaire is printed, each subject is asked the same set of questions in exactly the same way. Questionnaires are generally designed to measure one or more of the following attitudes, opinions, and demographic characteristics of the sample. Figure 6.2 is an example of
a questionnaire used to measure the effects of certain messages on the public images of political candidates. Note that it seeks information in all three categories.

The decision about whether to use questionnaires or interviews to gather data for public relations research must take into account the study’s budget, purpose, subjects, and a variety of other considerations. Questionnaires can be distributed by mail and may be administered to either individuals or groups. They provide anonymity and present a uniform stimulus to all subjects. On the other hand, interviews are more flexible, elicit a higher percentage of responses in some situations, and can be used with relatively uneducated publics.

A sample is a subset of a population or public. Public relations researchers use samples because in most instances it is impractical to collect information from every person in the target public. Sampling techniques are numerous, but the best methods rely on the theory of probability to portray a miniature version of the target public. Although the theory of probability is too complex to discuss here, it is the basis of all inferential statistics. The following sampling methods rely on the theory of probability to ensure a sample that is representative of the public from which it is drawn.

Simple random sampling is a technique that allows each member of a public an equal chance of being selected. If the sample is large enough (some experts say at least 30 to 60 people) and is selected totally at random, it will accurately reflect the characteristics of its public. Probably the most common example of simple random sampling is drawing names from a hat. If the slips of paper are mixed thoroughly enough, each one has an equal chance of being drawn.

Systematic sampling uses a list, like a telephone directory or mailing list, to produce a sample at random. Generally, a table of random numbers is used to find a starting point on the list and a selection interval. For example, a researcher...
**Instructions—Please Read Carefully**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure the impact of political advertisements on public opinion. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements about the candidates. Please note that the candidates are anonymous to ensure confidentiality. The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The order of the questions is random to reduce bias. You may skip any question if you choose. Please answer all questions truthfully and thoughtfully. Your responses will be treated confidentially and will not affect your participation in this research.

**Figure 6.2** Sample questionnaire used to measure effects of political advertisements on candidate images

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>John Olsen—Republican</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Unattractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Reminiscent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Incompetent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Beneficial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Special</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Concrete Image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Wrong Political Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Our Kind of Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Competent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Represents no interests of the tax payer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do we need a new Congress?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you feel about the current political situation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6.2** Sample questionnaire used to measure effects of political advertisements on candidate images
The diversity of individuals in our society presents a unique challenge for the selection of target audience groups.

One might randomly pick the number 29306 from a table of random numbers. Using the first three digits, the researcher could start on page 293 of the telephone directory, then, using the last three digits, he or she could select every sixth name for the sample. This method is more practical than simple random sampling in most public relations research.

Stratified random sampling is a two-stage process that first divides the public into two or more mutually exclusive categories (such as males and females) and then randomly selects samples from each stratum. This method is used to guarantee that each subgroup of a particular public is adequately represented in the sample. For example, if a practitioner wanted information about all ethnic groups in a particular geographical area, it would be necessary first to divide the population into ethnic categories to ensure that the sample included representatives from each group.

Cluster sampling involves the random selection of groups rather than individuals for a sample. For example, if we wanted to measure the attitudes of United Auto Workers members, we could randomly include local unions in our study rather than individual UAW members.

Quota sampling randomly selects a fixed number of people from each of several distinguishable subsets of a public. For example, a researcher may decide to select 50 subjects from each of the following groups by sex and age, regardless of what proportion of the actual public they account for: males 18 to 25, males 26
to 40, males over 40, females 18 to 25, females 26 to 40, and females over 40. This technique would allow accurate assessment of the opinions of each subgroup.

Most organizational goals and objectives dealing with public relations depend to some extent on the concept of public opinion. Therefore, the first step in public relations research is to sample public opinion. It is important to recognize at the outset that an organization does not have a single indistinguishable public. The practitioner who relies on so-called public opinion polls to provide insight into the characteristics of a potential audience may be operating with erroneous data. Most polls of this type are not very useful from a public relations point of view because they actually measure mass opinion rather than public opinion. Before using a survey, the practitioner should understand the difference between measuring mass opinion and measuring public opinion.

Mass opinion represents an average taken from a group with many different opinions. Averages by nature tend to blur the strength of some attitudes. When substantially different opinions are averaged together, the result may be very different from the original opinions stated. For example, if we conduct a poll asking about the image of a particular organization, we might find that 60 percent of our sample give it very high marks while 40 percent feel very negatively. Looking at the average of these responses, we might deduce that the organization in question has a moderately positive image, however, this average would hide the substantial negative feelings that exist.

Our hypothetical survey has actually uncovered two publics—one that has a very positive image of the organization and another that has a very negative image. In fact, no one in our sample holds the moderately positive view the average implies. To respond properly, we should construct communication strategies for two groups of people with very strong but opposite opinions. Public relations must be concerned with the strength as well as the direction of public attitudes.

Many public opinion polls are useful for little more than predicting political election results. They do not shed much light on the complexities of public opinion that an effective public relations program must address.

Public opinion polls involve carefully targeted populations. The public relations professional must break the audience into meaningful subgroups and design a specific communication campaign for each segment. Public opinion sampling is not useful unless it reflects accurately the feelings of each significant audience subgroup and provides some insight into the reasons behind these feelings.

John Dewey, in his 1927 book The Public and Its Problems, defines a public as a group of people who:

1. Face a similar indeterminate situation
2. Recognize what is indeterminate in that situation.
3. Organize to do something about the problem.
A public, then, is a group of people who share a common problem or goal and recognize their common interest. In the remainder of this chapter, we will discuss specific methods for measuring public opinion and applying the results effectively in public relations work.

Traditional public opinion polling methods typically sort their results into demographic categories that seldom identify groups of people with common interests. Because of this inadequacy, James Grunig proposed and tested three categories for the identification of publics based on Dewey’s definition:

- **Latent public** A group faces an indeterminate situation but does not recognize it as a problem.
- **Aware public** The group recognizes a problem—what is missing in the situation—and becomes aware.
- **Active public** The group organizes to discuss and do something about the problem.

Such categories group together people who are likely to behave in similar ways. This grouping enables public relations practitioners to communicate with each public regarding their needs and concerns rather than attempting to communicate with a mythical “average” public. Researching public opinion in appropriate categories can help direct the public relations process. For example, it may be possible to situate the primary audience for a public relations campaign in one of Grunig’s three categories and to develop specific messages for that audience. In the Cedar Springs case, physicians were an active public. However, if management had not taken care to determine the view of a latent public, the patients’ costly errors could have resulted.

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**Uses of Research in Public Relations**

A recent study funded by the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education considered 28 public and private organizations and concluded that “the use of public relations research by corporations is on the rise and its function and contribution are becoming better defined and recognized.” The study points out that the term public relations research no longer describes specific types of research methodology such as content analysis, public opinion polls, or readership surveys. Instead, the term is now employed to refer to any type of research that yields data for use in planning and evaluating communication efforts.

The same survey revealed that most public relations research activities fall into four basic categories: environmental monitoring, public relations audits, communication audits, and social audits. These activities may incorporate any or all of the techniques already mentioned, furnishing public relations practitioners with information that is useful in every phase of their task. Table 6.2 illustrates how these categories of research provide useful information in the various areas of public relations practice.
TABLE 6.2 Categories of Public Relations Research Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Environment</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Publics</th>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Environments monitoring</td>
<td>II. Public relations audit</td>
<td>A. Audience identification</td>
<td>B. Corporate images</td>
<td>III. Communications audit</td>
<td>1. Readership survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Social audits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The study by the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education revealed that environmental monitoring is the most rapidly growing category of public relations research. Organizations today recognize themselves as dynamic, open systems that must react to changes in the environment, keeping track of those changes is important.

Public relations practitioners can use formal systems for observing trends and changes in public opinion and other areas of the environment to guide many phases of organizational planning, including public relations. Issues management, discussed in chapter 4, is one application of environmental monitoring. Another technique is scanning.

Scanning Liam Fahey and W. R. King described three basic scanning models—irregular, regular, and continuous—that various organizations employ to track environmental changes. Table 6.3 lists some characteristics of each model.

Irregular model The irregular model of environmental study is an ad hoc approach. Generally its use is precipitated by a crisis situation like an oil embargo or the introduction of a significant new product by a competitor. Once the unanticipated event occurs, the scanning process begins, focusing on past events that may help explain what has happened. The model is useful for identifying immediate reactions to problem situations, and it can provide input for short-range planning. The model does not help detect incipient crises or form long-range plans for future occurrences.

Regular model More comprehensive and systematic than the ad hoc model, the regular model generally entails an annual appraisal of environmental situations. Typically, the focus is on specific issues or decisions facing the organization.
### Table 6.3 Scanning Model Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irregular</th>
<th>Scanning Models</th>
<th>Continuous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media for scanning activity</td>
<td>Ad hoc studies</td>
<td>Periodically updated studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of scanning</td>
<td>Specific events</td>
<td>Selected events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation for activity</td>
<td>Crisis initiated</td>
<td>Decision and issue oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal nature of activity</td>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time frame for data</td>
<td>Retrospective</td>
<td>Primarily current and retrospective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time frame for decision impact</td>
<td>Current and near-term future</td>
<td>Near-term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational makeup</td>
<td>Various staff agencies</td>
<td>Various staff agencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: drawn from Business Horizons (1977) by the Foundation for the School of Business at Indiana University. Used with permission.

Automobile companies use this model in conducting annual research on consumer attitudes to help them develop advertising appeals for the automobiles they have already designed. Obviously, the regular model is still directed toward the recent past and the current situation and can develop only limited plans for the future. However, the regular model is an improvement over the irregular model. Current issues and decisions are examined in reference to the environment, and predictions are made about future impacts on those issues and decisions. Basically, the difference between the regular and the irregular model is a matter of degree and regularity.

**Continuous model** The continuous model emphasizes the ongoing monitoring of various environmental elements rather than specific issues and decisions. Any number of environmental segments—including political, regulatory, and competitive systems—may have input into this model. Auto companies that conduct consumer research to analyze preference trends are using continuous environmental scanning when the data collected become input for future automotive designs. Continuous scanning requires that the system be designed into the organization. Irregular (and to some extent regular) scanning methods can be managed by the concerned division or department, but an agency like the public relations department or another subset must function as a clearinghouse for environmental data that are appropriate for several areas of the organization. In addition, computerized management information systems (MIS) are generally needed to store, evaluate, and integrate the vast amounts of information generated.
The continuous scanning model supports organizations' strategic planning efforts. Other models support specific issues or decisions, but the continuous model yields data to support the various issues and decisions an organization may face. For example, the American Council of Life Insurance developed a Trend Analysis Program (TAP), which "seeks to identify the direction of major social and economic trends so that companies may plan for the years ahead with greater confidence." The program operates as a cooperative effort, with over 100 life insurance executives monitoring the specialty press and other publications where emerging social and economic trends might first become evident. Reports are issued whenever the data in a particular area are sufficient. For example, one report issued by TAP provided an in-depth survey of possible changes in American culture in the coming years.

The most frequently used type of public relations research is the audit. The public relations audit is essentially a broad-scale study that examines an organization's internal and external public relations. Many of the research techniques we have already discussed are used in public relations audits. The purpose of the audit is to provide information for planning future public relations efforts. Carl Byor and Associates, one of the pioneers of public relations auditing, describes it as follows: "The Public Relations Audit, as the name implies, involves a comprehensive study of the public relations position of an organization: how it stands in the opinion of its various publics." We can identify four general categories of audits in relation to organizations and their publics:

**Relevant Publics** The organization's relevant publics are listed, and each is described according to its function—stockholders, employees, customers, suppliers, and the like. Also included are publics that have no direct functional relationship but are nevertheless in a position to affect the organization—for example, consumer, environmental, community, and other social action groups. The procedure is basically one of audience identification and is in the planning of public relations messages. Some audits stop with this step.

**The Organization's Standing with Publics** Each public's view of the organization is determined through various research methods, most commonly image studies and content analysis of newspapers, magazines, and other print media. Both of these research methods were discussed earlier in this chapter.

**Issues of Concern to Publics** Environmental monitoring techniques such as those already mentioned are used to construct an issues agenda for each of the organization's relevant publics. These data identify publics according to issues of interest and their stands on those issues. The findings are then compared to the organization's own policies. This is a vital step in the planning of public relations campaigns for various audiences.

**Power of Publics** Publics are rated according to the amount of economic and political (and therefore regulatory) influence they have. Interest groups and other activist organizations are evaluated according to size of membership, size of constituency, budget size and income source, staff size, and number of qualified specialists (lobbyists, attorneys, public relations professionals, etc.)
Public relations audits are becoming regular components of many public relations programs. They provide input data for planning future public relations programs and help evaluate the effectiveness of previous efforts. Several public relations counseling firms offer audit services to their clients. Joyce F. Jones of the Ruder Finn Roman Agency describes the audit process in four steps:  

1. **Finding out what "we" think**. Interviews with key management at the organization's top and middle strata are conducted to determine company strengths and weaknesses, relevant publics, and issues and topics to be explored.  

2. **Finding out what "they" think**. Research is conducted with key publics to determine how closely their views match those of company management.  

3. **Evaluating the disparity**. A public relations balance sheet of assets, liabilities, strengths, weaknesses, and the like is prepared on the basis of an analysis of the differences found between steps 1 and 2.  

4. **Recommendation**. A comprehensive public relations program is planned to fill in the gap between steps 1 and 2 and to correct defects revealed in the balance sheet of step 3.  

**Organizational Image Surveys**  
Attitude surveys that determine a public's perceptions of an organization help the public relations manager obtain an overall view of the organization's image. Generally, such research seeks to measure (1) familiarity of the public with the organization and with its officers, products, policies, and other aspects, (2) degrees of positive and negative perception, and (3) characteristics various publics attribute to the organization. Frequently, organizations use such surveys as planning tools to compare existing images with desired images. Once the differences are assessed, image goals can be set and strategic plans made to overcome the identified problems. Cities seeking to attract convention and tourist business periodically check their images as perceived by key groups, then use these data to evaluate their attraction techniques.  

Although several organizations conduct their own image studies, many employ outside consultants or research organizations to supply them with data. Some major organizations that provide such data are Opinion Research Center, Inc., Louis Harris and Associates, and Yankelovich, Skelly and White.  

The communication audit, like the public relations audit, is applied in many different ways. Generally, it attempts to monitor and evaluate the channels, messages, and communication climate of an organization. Sometimes audits are applied only to internal organizational communication systems; however, the same technique can be used to evaluate external systems as well. Frequently, a communication audit reveals problems of distortion or lack of information. Communication audits package various research methods for specific applications. The following research methods are used in appropriate combinations to audit organizational communication and investigate specific problem areas.
1. Communication climate surveys These attitudinal measurements are designed to reveal how open and adequate the publics perceive communication channels to be.

2. Network analysis This analysis reveals the frequency and importance of interactions in a network, on the basis of the most frequent linkages. These patterns can be compared to official organizational charts and communication policies to determine disparities between theory and practice.

3. Readership surveys These surveys identify which articles or sections of publications are read most frequently. While this method is strictly quantitative, it is an excellent way to determine the reading patterns of various publics.

4. Content analysis This quantitative tool, discussed earlier, can analyze the content of all types of messages. It is frequently used to describe the amount of favorable and unfavorable news coverage an organization receives.

5. Readability studies Several methods may be employed to assess how readily written messages are understood. Most of these methods are based on numbers of syllables in words and on length of sentences. These formulas—to be discussed in more detail in chapter 9, where evaluation techniques are examined—help determine the clarity of a written message and its appropriateness to an audience’s educational level.

The concept of social auditing emerged in the early 1960s when businesses and other organizations were challenged to recognize their obligations to society. Social audits are generally attitude and opinion surveys that measure various publics’ perceptions concerning an organization’s social responsiveness. This technique attempts to quantify the organization’s impact on its public in much the same way that a public relations audit does. However, social audits are generally confined to issues of social responsibility.

Social auditing was common in the mid- to late 1970s. In recent years, social issues have been addressed in other types of research, such as environmental scanning and public relations and communication audits. One of the best and most complete examples of a social audit was conducted for a city government and published in 1975 by Professor Robert D. Hay.

Research is a vital part of any public relations effort. It supplies the initial inputs to guide strategy and message development, and it provides a method for predicting effectiveness and assessing results. In most organizations today, public relations professionals must be able to measure the effects of their work and make reasonable predictions about future success if they wish to influence managerial decisions.
Many public opinion surveys are not useful in public relations planning and evaluation because they tend to average responses in a way that disguises the relative strengths of attitudes. Good public opinion research must be sensitive enough to segment publics according to the strength of their opinions. Four basic categories of research in public relations are sufficiently sensitive: environmental monitoring, public relations audits, communication audits, and social audits.

### Case Study

Before hiring an architect to design a new student union building, University of Idaho student leaders commissioned an attitude study of student leisure interests. The leaders wanted to know which kinds of students used which kinds of facilities. Study the following data and then answer the questions.

**Sampling Methodology**

The researchers selected 384 students from a student body of 7,000 by taking every 17th name in the student directory. Each respondent was asked to complete a four-page mail questionnaire that utilized several question formats. Some 225 students, or roughly 60 percent, completed the procedure. The following table presents the results of the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year in School</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Actual Student Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate/PhD</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Actual Student Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fraternity</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's hall</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorority</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's hall</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried housing</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-campus</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Actual Student Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in Activities</td>
<td>Involved 4/more hrs/Wk</td>
<td>Slightly Involved Up to 4 hrs/Wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASUll committees</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASUll senate</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASUll communications (Arg, KUDI, etc.)</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ASUll activity</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living group officer</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living group social activity</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living group recreation activity</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting with members of living group</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live off campus, still take part in living group</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus religious organization</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious study group</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus/community craft groups</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music performance group</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International student organization</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other cultural group</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting and fishing</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping and backpacking</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus intramural sports</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming and water sports</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf and tennis</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handball and gym sports</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sking</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other sports</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television viewing</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moves and films</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling and billiards</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting over coffee or soft drinks</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service clubs and organizations</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorary clubs in student’s major</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political organizations</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other organizations</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participation key:**
- 1 = freshman
- 2 = sophomore
- 3 = junior
- 4 = senior
- m = man's hall
- f = woman's hall
- w = off-campus
- s = sociology
- t = psychology
- u = Ulman's hall
- l = graduate/low
- h = housing
- n = no

**Questions:**
1. In which eight activities are nearly half or more than half of the respondents involved?
2. How representative of the total campus population are the respondents?
3. If this were your survey, would you feel comfortable suggesting to management that they act on these findings?
4. In general, what is the relationship between a student's year in school, living arrangements, and participation in student activities?
Notes


6. Ibid. 12.


9. Ibid. 16.


Planning for Public Relations Effectiveness

Preview

Public relations effectiveness depends on planning. Good planning is the best way to practice preventive rather than remedial public relations. Tactical and strategic plans help public relations coordinate its efforts with those of other areas of the organization. Public relations units in organizations are generally considered expense centers when budgets are prepared because only the inputs or expenditures can be measured adequately. Therefore, to secure an appropriate share of the organization's resources, the public relations unit must do a good job of "selling" its activities to managerial decision makers.

Public relations practitioners can apply the basic four-step planning model discussed in this chapter to increase their effectiveness in organizational settings.

From now on, we will demand the same strategic plans from you that we expect from production, marketing, and research—plans based on where the company wants to be, what it needs to get there, and what the communications function can do to help.

--James Bost, Chairman and CEO
Boag-Warren Corporation
Public Relations: The Process

Public relations practitioners, like most other managers, tend to be action-oriented. The constant changes both within and outside any organization produce an endless procession of public relations problems. Too often, because of the number of pressing problems, managers find themselves responding only to exceptional situations. Such situations are usually negative. They require the practitioner to intervene after a problem has already gotten out of control. Former media relations manager for the New York Yankees, Ira Kase summed up his job as follows: “I have to come up with certain statements after the fact (and fend off nastiness in the press).” Thus, public relations managers frequently find themselves so busy putting out fires that they do not have time to prevent them from starting.

While putting out fires is certainly part of the public relations function, it cannot be allowed to dominate all actions. If it does, the practitioner becomes a victim of circumstances, able only to react to the situation at hand. Perhaps the most frequent complaint of public relations practitioners is that other managers request their services only after problems have become unmanageable. When damage to the organization’s image has already been done, the public relations manager is often directed to “fix it.” This may prove to be a no-win situation both for the organization and for the practitioner, who must engage in usually fruitless remedial public relations.

For a long time, practitioners have advocated preventive public relations to avoid such problems. Part of this approach involves the type of fact-finding research already discussed in chapter 6. If practitioners detect potential problems before they erupt into damaging situations, they can give management early warning and advice. At times, even early detection can forestall some negative impact. However, when advance warning is coupled with adequate planning, negative effects can be minimized, and public relations management can offer well-designed, positive actions rather than hastily conceived reactions. As we continue our integrating case study begun in chapter 6, notice how the pitfalls of hasty reactions were avoided.

The Importance of Planning

In the Cedar Springs case, research and careful planning prevented the loss of time and employee confidence that would have resulted from too quick a reaction to the first symptoms of the problem. Only through continuous advance planning can public relations practitioners avoid having to react after damage has been done. Even though many public relations managers feel they have no time to plan, the opposite is more accurate. The more time managers devote to planning based on adequate research, the less time they will need to spend putting out fires.

Planning actually creates the time needed to plan. It permits the development of integrated public relations efforts that support an organization’s goals in a positive rather than a defensive manner. Planning provides the opportunity to involve management from other areas of the organization and to ensure their cooperation and support. One important cause of ineffective public relations efforts is the lack of planning. Through careful, detailed planning, public relations departments can make more efficient use of the funds and personnel allocated to them.
Integrating Case Study

You may remember that the physicians at Cedar Springs Hospital (chapter 6) were calling for immediate action to correct what they saw as a potentially life-threatening situation in patient care. Reaction to the problem as it appeared at the time would have generated a campaign to heighten employees’ awareness of the need for quality patient care and emphasize their responsibility for providing the best care possible. However, before taking action, the public relations director conducted some research to help him better understand the problem. The results were surprising and showed that the first action contemplated would have only made things worse. Employees already believed that the quality of patient care in the hospital was subpar, and they were frustrated because they felt that they personally were doing good work. In addition, research revealed that recently released patients rated the quality of care significantly better than the employees did.

The sizable difference between the employee and patient ratings pointed to a different problem than was originally suspected. The planning process based upon this research redefined the issue from one of actual care to one of perceptions about care.

Objective: The objective that emerged from the research findings was to improve employee and physician views of overall hospital performance. Obviously, because both doctors and individual employees felt they were personally providing the best care they could and because patients rated their performance high, the actual quality of care was good. However, their perception of poor performance was creating a morale problem for both doctors and employees.

Planning: Two basic strategies were devised to be implemented in a year-long campaign. The first strategy was continually to reinforce employees’ feelings of worth as members of the hospital’s medical team through positive feedback from management. The second strategy was to help both physicians and employees more accurately judge the overall quality of care through increased feedback from patients.

A budget of $6,000 was developed to conduct additional surveys of recent patients and communicate the message of quality care through a variety of media. Communication channels would be selected to let both internal and external audiences receive the message that hospital employees were a quality team. Policies were changed to allow letters with positive comments from patients to be routed first to the concerned departments before being filed.
Communicating with Management

Public relations efforts often fail because of communication breakdowns between practitioners and other managers within the organization. These breakdowns are frequently due to imperfect alignment between the public relations planning process and planning done elsewhere in the organization. Misunderstandings can usually be prevented if public relations practitioners analyze the organizational management as carefully as they analyze any other audience.

Public relations departments must prepare messages that communicate their needs and their potential contributions to other segments of the organization. Therefore, when planning, they must learn the terms and methods common to organizational management.

The Fundamentals of Managerial Planning

Managerial planning is generally classified into two broad categories: strategic and tactical. Strategic plans are long-range plans, usually made by higher levels of management. This type of planning involves decisions concerning the major goals of an organization and policies for their implementation. Tactical plans are specific decisions about what will be done at every level of the organization to accomplish the strategic plans. Strategic planners typically deal with future events and must therefore rely on relatively uncertain data. The use of forecasting techniques to predict the effects of economic and technical changes on an organization in the coming five years is an example of strategic planning. Tactical planners, on the other hand, are more concerned with the day-to-day operation of an organization and its immediate future.

Public relations plans are both strategic and tactical. Decisions concerning an organization's long-range future often take public relations into consideration. Of course, public relations develops tactical plans in support of strategic plans.

Strategic plans and tactical plans combined produce either single-use plans or standing plans. This hierarchy of plans is illustrated in Figure 7.1. Goals refer
to the basic direction an organization is heading in. The purpose, mission, objectives, and strategies of an organization are all component parts of its goals. These terms are frequently used interchangeably; however, they may also be used in various combinations to indicate sublevels of planning. Because there are no universally accepted definitions for these terms, most organizations adopt their own very specific applications. 1

In this section, we will discuss a four-step process that is characteristic of managerial planning. Understanding this process, along with the specifics of planning, should help public relations practitioners adapt their planning messages to other managers. The elements of the process are (1) establishing goals, (2) determining the present situation, (3) determining aids and barriers to goals, and (4) forecasting.

In the Cedar Springs case, patient care became the goal that unified physicians, administrators, and employees. Agreeing on a goal or a set of goals must be the first step in deciding what a public relations effort will need. Frequently, in a list of possible goals, two or more are mutually exclusive. When possible goals conflict, each must be evaluated to determine the long- and short-range effects of acceptance or rejection.

Resources often dictate the selection of goals. An organization may not be able (or willing) to devote the time, personnel, and capital necessary to accomplish some goals. Goals that are selected for the public relations function, however, must always relate to organizational purpose. When seeking approval for public relations goals, a manager will be more successful if he or she can relate them to the goals and objectives of the entire organization.

In reality, it is impossible to separate planning from research because they occur almost simultaneously. As a goal is considered, current data about the organization's environment must be collected and used to evaluate the likelihood that the goal can be reached. Information provided by the kind of fact-finding research discussed in Chapter 6 is crucial at this point.

Again, the Cedar Springs example demonstrates the importance of taking appropriate steps to get accurate information before a plan is begun. It is useless to set goals that are unrealistic or that have already been accomplished. Even after the goal has been firmly set, data about the current situation must be monitored. If the situation changes, it may be necessary to alter the goal or goals. Goals must be set with a good understanding of the current situation, the available resources, and the limitations that must be placed on those goals.

After reasonable goals are determined, a more careful investigation of the environment must take place to identify aids and barriers to their attainment. An organization's resources in terms of people, money, and equipment are important aids for achieving any goal. Likewise, a shortage of any of these elements represents a barrier that must be overcome. Although money is frequently the first barrier to be considered, it is seldom severe enough to prevent the accomplishment of objectives. Many plans, like the one at Cedar Springs Hospital, can be carried out on relatively small budgets. The following are key questions that help identify aids
and barriers. Do we have the right individuals? (rather than enough people) and
Do we have enough money? (rather than how much money).

An organization’s structure and policies can also form either aids or bar-
riers. For example, the goal of creating a sense of unity between labor and manage-
ment could be severely hindered by policies that prohibit informal communica-
tion between the company and its union. Other barriers and aids reside outside the
organization—for example, with government, competitors, consumer groups, and
other special interest groups.

Planning always involves the future. Predicting aids and barriers that will exist in
the future is much more difficult than evaluating the existing situation, yet such
predictions are necessary to determine the effects of anticipated conditions on the
programs being planned. Such variables as unemployment, economic develop-
ments, and inflation can reasonably be predicted a year or more in advance by
using quantitative techniques.

Econometric models and other statistical tools are used in most large organi-
zations to predict future events. Public opinion surveys forecast reactions to initia-
tives or actions contemplated by politicians, government officials, and managers. In
the early part of President Reagan’s administration, various versions of his tax re-
form plan were aired publicly so that reaction could be measured prior to final congress-
ional action. Public relations management must become familiar with these
methods and use them to evaluate future effects on publics (see chapter 6).

Predictions should also be made concerning the effects of planned public
relations activities on various publics and the corresponding effects of public re-
action on the programs being planned. Often these judgments must be made by
qualitative rather than quantitative means. Juries of executive opinion, sales force composites, and customer expectations are frequently employed. The following other forecasting methods may also be used.

The Delphi Model is a method developed by the Rand Corporation as a systematic procedure for arriving at a consensus among a group of experts. The panel of experts is usually separated by great geographical distances and never meets to interact about the topic. A series of detailed questionnaires is mailed to every panelist. The responses are used to construct subsequent sets of questionnaires that are sent to the same panelists. The process continues until a consensus is apparent.

Brainstorming is a group discussion technique used to generate large numbers of creative alternatives or new ideas. It has been used for some time by advertising agencies, public relations firms, and others who need to generate creative ideas. An example of brainstorming occurred recently when the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce held a breakfast for several top practitioners in the city and solicited their ideas on ways to revive the failing Peach Bowl game. Ideas were generated while the game's planning committee listened and took notes for later consideration.

The basic rule of brainstorming is that no one is permitted to interject negative feedback or criticism into the discussion. As the group proceeds to generate ideas, all are carefully recorded to be critiqued later. No comment is considered too absurd or too simple because it could produce the spark necessary for a truly creative idea. Brainstorming can be effective with a group that is comfortable functioning in a free-wheeling atmosphere.

Scenario construction has been used by "think tanks" like the Rand Corporation to create very long-range forecasts. A logical, hypothetical description of future events (a scenario) is constructed to explore the dynamics of various alternatives. For example, if a large auto company wanted to choose one of several manufacturing plants to close, a scenario could be constructed for each case to detail possible effects on the environment, the economic future of the community, the availability of replacement jobs, and other positive and negative results.

If the current situation has been described, aids and barriers considered, and forecasts completed, listing alternative courses of action should be relatively automatic. After as many alternatives as possible have been listed, the process of evaluating them should begin. Alternatives should be compared in terms of costs and benefits. In the following discussion, we will describe some management techniques that can be applied in public relations planning.

The term management-by-objectives (MBO), an approach to planning detailed in public relations spotlight 7, has lost popularity in management jargon. However, its basic elements are still widely used to describe management plans. Remember that the public relations plan is a message that must be communicated to an organization's executives. Whether or not that message is accepted depends not only on the effective execution of the planning process but also on the way the plan is communicated to the decision makers who must understand and approve it.
MBO is an administrative planning process that entails setting both long- and short-range objectives and then developing plans to accomplish those goals. Frequently, the process spreads to every level of an organization. Managers and their subordinates may begin the process by developing separate objectives and plans, then review each other's work and prepare a joint document as a final plan. This process can occur at every level up the organizational chart. Sometimes this flexible planning technique is called by other names. As we shall discuss in chapter 9, setting objectives before initiating action is critical to the ability to demonstrate effectiveness in public relations efforts.

Program evaluation and review technique (PERT) depicts a plan in network form by showing the sequence, timing, and costs of tasks needed to complete a project. PERT can be used in public relations for planning and controlling

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Public Relations Spotlight 7.1

Public relations often fails because managers do not understand what public relations people are saying and doing. This can be prevented if we talk in management's terms rather than trying to educate them in ours.

The Advantages of MBO

1. Communicates the way business people think in terms of business problems and objectives.
2. Raises the importance of public relations in the corporate structure.
3. Presents a structure for implementing effective communications programs.
4. Helps keep the public relations practitioner on target in solving public relations problems.
5. Contributes to the public relations body of knowledge.

The Process

1. Get a fix on the business problem. Analyze the business problem using all available research techniques, then develop a clear, concise statement of what the problem is.
2. Translate the business problem into public relations objectives. This is the most difficult part of the process. The objectives should be stated in measurable terms.
3. Determine the audience(s) Identify to whom your message will be directed. There may be several audiences. Examples: print and broadcast media, company employees, customers, government officials.
4. Determine program elements. Exactly what vehicles will be used to effect the program. Examples: TV, news clips, news releases, institutional ads, speeches, and publicity events.
5. Determine budget. The ideal situation is to fit the budget to the need, using an objective and task approach.
6. Evaluate the program. Utilize appropriate measuring instruments and techniques.

Source: Walt Selent, APR, Professor Emeritus, School of Journalism, Ohio State University
anything from single projects to entire campaigns. This technique is most appropriate when the effort being planned has definite beginning and completion points. After the planning phase is completed and action has begun, PERT can provide information about the status of the task and the alternatives available if the schedule or budget is not being met.²

PERT consists of four basic steps:

1. List all major tasks in a project.
2. Determine the required order of the tasks.
3. Estimate expected completion time for the tasks.
4. Draw a PERT network.

The application of PERT to public relations planning can be illustrated through the hypothetical case of Beverly James, a staff member in the public relations department of Alpha Corporation, who was asked to produce a new brochure for an employee community volunteer program.

Bev’s first step was to develop a list of the major tasks required to produce a brochure. These tasks are usually called activities in PERT analysis. Public relations spotlight 7.2 includes the list of activities Bev developed for her assignment.

---

### Public Relations Spotlight 7.2

**Activities Required to Develop a Brochure on the Employee Volunteer Program at Alpha Corporation**

1. Begin the project
2. Interview several employees who participate in the program to get details and personal interests
3. Write copy for the brochure
4. Obtain photos of employees serving the community through the program
5. Integrate photos into copy
6. Review similar publications from other organizations for ideas
7. Prepare layout and finalize copy
8. Prepare budget for project, including printing
9. Get final approval of copy, photos, layout, and budget
10. Make any necessary changes and prepare brochure for submission to print shop

**PERT Network Analysis for Brochure Project**

\[ N = \frac{a + 4m + b}{6} \]

where:
- \( N \) = expected time to complete an activity
- \( a \) = optimistic time to complete an activity
- \( m \) = most likely time to complete an activity (\( m \) is multiplied by 4 in the formula to give the highest weight to the most likely time)
- \( b \) = pessimistic time to complete an activity

---
By simply listing the tasks in the order in which they must be accomplished, Bev had performed step 2, sequencing the activities.

Bev noted that some of the activities could be performed simultaneously. For example, she could meet with employees who were participating in the program (activity 2) while the staff photographer took pictures of employees at work in the community (activity 4). The PERT network in figure 7.2 shows some activities being performed at the same time.

PERT is especially useful in determining the time required to complete each activity. Note on the PERT diagram that each activity is preceded by a time line indicating the amount of time it is expected to take. When the task is fairly simple, experienced guesses can suffice. For complex projects, however, PERT offers a formula for computing expected times on the basis of three estimates: an optimistic time (a), a pessimistic time (b), and the most likely time of completion (m).

For example, Bev estimated that activity 2 (interviewing employees) could be completed optimistically in 3 days, pessimistically in 10 days, and most likely in 5 days. Using the formula illustrated in Public Relations Spotlight 7.2, Bev arrived at an expected time of 5.5 days to complete her interviews. She was able to calculate the time for the other activities in the same way.

PERT allows the planner to identify the critical path for completion of the project by discovering the longest sequence of events. The critical path for Bev’s project is [1]—[4]—[5]—[7]—[8]—[9]—[10], showing that it should take a total of 34 days to complete the brochure. This tells Bev that if unexpected delays occur along the critical path, she must revise her estimated completion date; however, delays along the other paths probably will not affect the overall schedule. This information could be very important to the printing department that is scheduling Bev’s job; an unexpected delay might necessitate starting another job ahead of hers.

Another tool for planning projects and campaigns is the Gantt chart. This method is widely used to plan any activity in which time is the critical variable. Unlike the PERT network, the Gantt chart does not use formulas for more sophisticated control and does not identify a critical path. It simply lists the separate activities or steps in the plan in the order in which they are to be performed and
Planning for Public Relations Effectiveness

Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>14</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Begin project</td>
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<td>2. Interview employees</td>
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<td>3. Write copy—brochure</td>
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<td>4. Photos of employees</td>
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<td>5. Integrate photos</td>
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<td>6. Review publications</td>
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<td>7. Prepare layout</td>
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<td>8. Prepare budget</td>
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<td>9. Final approval</td>
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<td>10. Changes—Print brochure</td>
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NOTE: A calendar can be easily integrated into a Gantt chart with non-work days like weekends collapsed into a single cell per week.

Figure 7.3: Gantt chart plan to develop a brochure on the employee volunteer program

The three major types of plans used by public relations practitioners are budgets, campaigns, and standing plans.

Budgets are perhaps the most common type of plan in any organization. Generally, they are short-range plans designed to project costs through the duration of a campaign or other period.

Campaign or project budgets are components of plans to accomplish specific public relations activities. They provide structure and discipline in terms of time and money costs. Budgeting for specific activities is a rather straightforward process. Public relations managers budget using a simple three-step model. First, required resources such as people, time, material, and equipment must be listed. Next, the extent to which these resources will be used is estimated. Finally, the costs of the resources are determined.

When Bev, of Alpha Corporation, set about producing a brochure on the employee volunteer program, she first had to develop a project budget. Table 7.1 shows the result. The left-hand column lists resources (step 1), the center column shows estimated quantities (step 2), and the right-hand column shows costs and how they are derived (step 3).

Project and campaign budgets are the building blocks for annual public relations departmental budgets and the basis for bids submitted by independent public relations counselors. In either case, budgets become instruments in the competition for organizational resources.

Types of Plans

Budgets
### TABLE 7.1 Budget for Alpha Corporation Brochure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Quantities</th>
<th>Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bev’s time (interview, write, integrate photos into copy, administer project)</td>
<td>7 days</td>
<td>$700.00 $(based on $26,000 yearly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Photographer’s time (freelance)</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
<td>$500.00 $(at $50 per hr.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Layout (graphics dept.)</td>
<td>8 pages</td>
<td>$200.00 $(estimate, graphics dept.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Printing (outside contractor)</td>
<td>1,000 copies, 2 colors, with halftone</td>
<td>$575.00 $(estimate, printer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Distribution costs (mailing and handling)</td>
<td>Postage for 1,000 copies, Making lists of 500 names</td>
<td>$270.00 $(bulk mail at $1.2 and cost of list)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,245.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% contingency</td>
<td></td>
<td>$225.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total budgeted for brochures</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,470.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Competition for Resources**  
Because the annual budget represents the lifeblood of each subunit of an organization, there is inevitably competition for limited resources. One of the public relations manager’s most important jobs, therefore, is to make certain the public relations function gets its fair share. This means that the public relations professional must be able to understand balance sheets as well as galley proofs.

In most organizations, the budgeting process is decentralized. Budgets are initially planned by those who must implement them. Supervisors submit their budget proposals to department heads, who in turn prepare department budgets to submit to their supervisors for approval. This process continues in an upward flow until the controller or budget director for the organization assembles all the budgets into one integrated package and submits it to the president or the budget committee. Finally, the master budget goes to the board of directors for approval. Negotiation and alteration occur at each step of this process.

The best writers, designers, and media relations experts cannot do their jobs without the necessary funding. As indicated in chapter 4, public relations staffs must fight continually to maintain influence within the organizational structure. Their skill in preparing budgetary proposals and getting them funded is often an important measure of their influence throughout the organization.

There is no substitute for a basic knowledge of financial planning and accounting procedures in understanding the budgeting process, but other factors enter into this process as well. Competition among subunits for funds involves certain vital aspects of organizational politics. It is most important to remember that public relations must constantly “sell” the value of its services to the organization. Unfortunately, too many public relations departments fail to understand the needs of their own internal publics and do not communicate with them as they should. The public relations practitioner in an organizational environment must maintain a professional image as a member of the management team.
Practitioners should identify the people in their organization who have both formal and informal power to influence budget allocations. They should then communicate with these individuals regularly, emphasizing the effectiveness and professionalism with which the public relations function is being carried out. Some ways to demonstrate and communicate effectiveness are discussed in chapter 9. If these people are ignored until just before the budget request is submitted, they cannot be expected to understand fully the needs of the public relations unit.

Preparing Budget Requests Budget requests should consider and reflect continuing programs, new programs, and contingencies. Continuing programs are programs carried over from the previous budget period for completion. Such carryover must be justified. Was the duration of the program anticipated from the start? Was it included in the original plan? If so, this fact must be made explicit to avoid criticism for not finishing the job within the previous budget. If the carryover was an unforeseen circumstance, however, an explanation of the extension is in order. Though many activities are by nature continuous, an understanding of this fact should not be assumed. Those who make budgetary decisions must be reminded regularly, and especially at budget time, of the value of these continuous activities.

Requests for new programs must be well documented, particularly in slow economic periods. The need for each new program should be specified in terms that relate to the organization’s most basic functions. Projections concerning the potential effects of a program should be secured from other departments as well as from the public relations staff.

Unexpected occurrences (contingencies) must also be accounted for in the budget request. Some organizations have a standard percentage that is acceptable for contingency funds; others do not permit such items in a budget. If an organization does not permit the direct budgeting of contingency funds, they are generally included as part of other budget items from which funds can be diverted if necessary. Many organizations also build an inflation factor into their budgets. Economic forecasts are used to establish a percentage figure that will minimize budget erosion due to inflation.

Budget padding is a common practice in many organizations. It usually occurs when the people who make budget requests know that top management will routinely cut every budget by a certain percentage. Budget requests are then increased enough to allow for cuts and still yield enough money to accomplish department objectives. Such political maneuvering is generally dysfunctional and should be discouraged by top management. Managers who do not understand how the “game” is played, however, may be left without sufficient resources to accomplish their assigned functions.

Types of Budgets Organizations usually divide the budget planning process into two parts: operating budgets and financial budgets. Operating budgets forecast the goods and services the organization expects to consume, in terms of both costs and physical quantities (e.g., reams of paper). Financial budgets give detailed estimates of the amounts an organization expects to spend during the budget period.
and where the funds will come from (i.e., cash or financing). Figure 7.4 illustrates the components of these two types of budgets. Although public relations managers are typically responsible only for preparing their own operating budgets, an understanding of the entire process will make them more effective in defending their requests.

Organizations are typically divided into four responsibility centers for purposes of budgetary control:

1. **Revenue centers** These are organizational subunits, such as sales, in which outputs are measured in monetary terms but are not compared to costs of inputs because they have little influence over factors such as product cost and design.

2. **Expense centers** Budgets reflect only expenses for these subunits because only inputs (expenses) can be measured in monetary terms. These subunits (such as public relations departments) do not directly generate any revenues for the organization.

3. **Profit centers** Any organizational subunit that is charged with earning a profit will have its performance measured as the numerical difference between outputs (revenues) and inputs (expenditures).

4. **Investment centers** In addition to measuring monetary inputs and outputs of these subunits, depreciation and costs of capital investments are subtracted before profit is determined.
Public Relations Budgets  Public relations units are generally considered expense centers because their budgets reflect only expenditures. The two types of expense centers are engineered and discretionary. Engineered cost budgets are most often used for manufacturing operations, while discretionary cost budgets are used for public relations and many other administrative functions.

Because their output cannot be measured with accuracy, expense center budgets are concerned only with inputs. At intervals during the budget period, comparisons are made between actual and budgeted expenses. Discretionary cost budgets cannot assess efficiency, however, because of the difficulty in setting performance standards for these functions. This fact often makes it difficult for the public relations manager to justify a budget request because normal control procedures cannot be used to evaluate performance. In chapter 9 we will discuss some alternative comparisons to help justify public relations expenses to top management.

Public relations budgets are typically concerned with two basic expenses: administrative costs (salaries, benefits, and overhead) and program costs (research, publications, special events, films, and other program-related activities). Budgets are usually justified by one or more of the following factors:

1. **Total funds available** Public relations is allocated a percentage of available revenue.
2. **Competitive necessity** Sometimes public relations receives a budget allocation designed to match or equal the public relations budget of a competing organization.
3. **Task to be accomplished** Public relations shares in an overall budget allotted for accomplishing a particular objective. Advertising and marketing promotion, for example, might also share in these funds.
4. **Profit or surplus over expense** The budget can fluctuate up or down depending on the amount of profit or surplus generated.

Campaigns are a frequent output of public relations planning. Because campaigns are usually designed to accomplish unique objectives, they must be planned using nonroutine procedures and unprogrammable decisions. Preparing a plan for a public relations campaign is a matter of following the process outline in figure 7.1. Some generally accepted guidelines for writing the campaign planning document include the following:

**Problem statement** This statement should reflect the research done to narrow the task to a manageable size. It should define the scope of the effort and recognize any special requirements of the organization, target audiences, and media.

**Purpose statement** This statement should present a realistic view of what the campaign is designed to accomplish. Clear objectives should be developed that can be measured against results to determine the effectiveness of the effort.

**Audience analysis** On the basis of preliminary research, the planning document should describe the primary target audience, identify appeals
and points of interest that will attract attention, define audience lifestyles, and determine the relative strength of each possible appeal.

**Recommended actions** The planning document should tell how the purpose will be accomplished for the audience that has been identified. It should discuss specific tactics and alternatives; define expected outcomes; and specify communication media, activities, and channels to be used.

**Time frame** A schedule of activities should be developed. Any of the tools discussed earlier in this chapter (PERT, Gantt chart) can be applied to define the schedule of events.

**Projected costs** Plans cannot be evaluated unless they include a realistic budget. Enough documentation should be supplied to demonstrate that the projected expenses and fees are realistic.

**Evaluation design** A method should be set up in advance to determine the extent to which the objectives of the campaign have been attained. All objectives should lend themselves to an evaluation process that will have credibility with decision makers.

**Standing Plans**

Within all organizations, certain **programmable decisions** call for standardized, consistent responses. Standing plans provide routine responses to recurring situations. Once set, standing plans allow the manager to make more efficient use of planning time because he or she need not formulate a new plan for every similar situation. One note of caution is in order: Overuse of standing plans may limit an organization’s responsiveness to its environment, a critical issue for public relations. Nevertheless, standing plans do have a place in the public relations function.

We shall discuss three types of standing plans: policies, procedures, and rules.

**Policies** Policies are generally established by an organization’s top management as guidelines for decision making. The policy makers usually seek to guide decision-making activities in ways consistent with organizational objectives. Other purposes include improving effectiveness or imposing the values of top management.

Sometimes policies originate informally at lower organizational levels as a pattern of decision making occurs over a long period. In such cases, top management merely formalizes what is already happening. In other situations, policy may be established either as a result of recommendations from lower-level managers or directly as a result of top management’s observation that a problem exists.

External organizations, such as governmental agencies, also set policies or at least influence them. Health and safety policies in most large organizations have changed considerably in recent years as a direct result of actions by government agencies.

Public relations departments, like all other subunits of organizations, must plan their daily operations to avoid conflict with policy. More important, the strata of policy makers in any organization should include public relations practitioners to ensure sensitivity to the interests of its publics. For example, policies that direct all contact with the press through the public relations department for approval and advice should be reviewed by the public relations staff.
Procedures. Detailed guidelines for implementing policy decisions are called standard procedures. Standard procedures, or standard operating procedures, provide detailed instructions for performing sequences of actions that occur regularly. Most public relations departments have standard procedures for news releases, internal publications, site tours, media interviews, and many other activities that are carried on from year to year. In addition, every organization needs a standard procedure for emergencies.

Emergencies, although infrequent, should be handled through set procedures because of the need to respond quickly and effectively. When a disaster happens, it is too late to begin a deliberate planning process that will consider every alternative before responding. Nevertheless, coordinated, deliberate, and effective response is vitally important. When an emergency situation exists, time becomes the key element in communication; plans must be made in advance so that reaction can be immediate. Public relations spotlight 7.3 shows the set of disaster response procedures that was established by a major metropolitan hospital.

---

Public Relations Spotlight 7.3

ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL HOSPITAL-Houston, Texas

GENERAL POLICY/PROCEDURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject/Title:</th>
<th>Staged Preparations for Anticipated Natural Disasters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective Date:</td>
<td>April 1, 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Date:</td>
<td>April 1, 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed by:</td>
<td>Executive Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewed by:</td>
<td>Policy Committee/Management Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved by:</td>
<td>Management Central Approval</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This policy/procedure rescinds all other policies/procedures and memoranda issued prior to April 1, 1989.

PURPOSE

To outline stages of preparation for anticipated natural disasters to assure adequate levels of preparation by all departments.

STATEMENT OF POLICY

It is the policy of St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital to establish written policies and procedures for response to disaster situations to assure adequate preparations and communications before, during and after such situations.

PROCEDURES

1.00 Phase 1—General Preparations

1.01 The Emergency Preparedness Coordinator shall:

- Monitor weather broadcasts
- Establish a Communications Post from which department managers may obtain current weather information
• Assess current inpatient population to determine those that could be discharged in advance of severe weather
• Assess preparation of physical plant, including but not limited to:
  • Placement of storm shutters
  • Availability of flood stop logs
  • Securing of loose items on exterior of building
• Notify all department managers to begin making general preparations

1.02 Department Managers shall:
• Assess the current status of all essential supplies and make arrangements to restock as necessary.
• Determine, in consultation with the responsible administrator, which employees are essential to the operation of the department and which employees could be directed to leave early or not report to work, based on weather conditions. A written list of essential employees by shift shall be submitted to the department’s administrator.
• Make any special preparations needed to meet their department’s responsibility for disaster response.
• Ensure that the department call list is accurate and up-to-date, to facilitate the calling of staff for coverage, should it be necessary.
• Discuss compensation, staffing, and other severe weather policies with employees. Obtain administrative clarification, as needed.

2.00 Phase II—Implementation of Disaster Response Plan

2.01 The Chief Operating Officer or his designee shall:
• Direct Nursing to begin census reduction by discharging patients whom the medical staff agrees may go home and consolidate remaining patients to free beds
• Notify Admitting to accept only emergency admissions
• Establish a central Command Post
• Notify Communications to begin paging “CARLA ALERT” or “CARLA,” as applicable
• Notify department managers to implement their disaster response plans, including arrangements for essential staff
• Evacuate underground parking areas, order placement of flood stop logs, and notify the Emergency Department and Admitting of need to move emergency receiving site to Bates Street Lobby

2.02 Department Managers shall:
• Implement their department response plans, including calling in or holding over essential staff
• Direct non-essential staff members to leave for home even though their shifts may not be over
• Contact outpatients scheduled for visits or tests and cancel/reschedule appointments
• Report the above information to the Command Post

3.00 Phase III—Operation During Disaster

3.01 The Chief Operating Officer or his designee shall:
• Continue Command Post operations
• Evaluate need to move patients and staff from threatened areas (such as upper tower floors)
Figure 7.5 shows how the same hospital implemented its disaster response plan in a simulated emergency.

Four areas of emergency planning should be specifically designed in advance.  

1. Notification  Plan exactly who should be notified and in what order. Generally, this is handled on a "need to know" basis. For example, an accident within a particular department will generally be reported, as soon as it occurs, directly to the department head and then to specified individuals in management, including the appropriate public relations manager.

2. Spokesperson  The best strategy to avoid conflicting reports and any appearance of attempting to conceal facts is to direct all inquiries, particularly those from the press, to one person or task force. Generally, this function is handled within the public relations department, which may also need to arrange for statements from others within the organization.

3. News media  First, notify all media representatives listed in the emergency procedure file, and immediately issue all available facts to press representatives who request them. Never attempt to manipulate, delay, or conceal information. Anything less than full disclosure at such times runs the risk of being interpreted as a coverup. Mmm-case 7.1 helps illustrate this point. Remember that reporters want to know all the information as soon as possible. If the public relations staff can facilitate this process, the organization will benefit by receiving objective coverage. If the organization’s representatives appear to be holding back information, however, the press will react with suspicion. Help reporters get the kind of information they want within the limits of legal liability. Provide them with human interest material about the people involved and as much information as possible about the rest of the circumstances. While it is
important to work closely with the organization’s legal counsel in such situations, remember that legal staff personnel may not be sensitive to the issues of public and media relations. They may react too conservatively and cause unnecessary problems if allowed to control the situation. Always be sure that public relations has a direct line to top management in emergency situations.

4. Notification of families. If the emergency has resulted in injury or death, inform the families involved before releasing any names to the news media. Handle such notifications with tact and concern, but because of legal questions regarding liability, take care when speaking to the families. Any acceptance of responsibility or indication of fault should first be cleared through the legal department.
Mini-Case 7.1

There were no reporters or correspondents from any media on hand at Cape Kennedy when the fire broke out. The question of informing the public was thus left entirely to the institutional machinations of NASA. The agency reacted predictably. It not only shut down all lines of communication, but, by either accident or design, issued statements that proved to be erroneous.

Although NASA knew within five minutes after the accident that all three astronauts were dead, the information was not released until two hours later. It was nearly midnight before UP and AP received a NASA picture of two of the astronauts entering the capsule for the last time.

NASA claimed that the withholding of facts and its issuance of misleading and wrong statements resulted from the lack of a plan for handling information in emergencies. As hard to believe as this may be, coming as it does from an agency with a public information staff of 300, there is undoubtedly some validity to the claim.

NASA's information office has since maintained that an emergency plan was in effect and followed at the time of the Apollo 11 fire. NASA states that it has contingency plans for each mission.

Early in 1986, tragedy struck the nation's space program again when millions of Americans and people all over the world witnessed live on television the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger. Many professional observers and news reporters in their critiques of NASA's handling of the disaster commented that little seemed to have been learned from the experience of Apollo 11. Although flight controllers knew the fate of the Challenger crew almost instantly, speculation about their ability to survive the accident was allowed to continue for about an hour while technicians "gathered data."


Rules: While policies and standard procedures serve as guidelines for decision making, rules substitute for decisions. Rules are statements that specify the action to be taken in a particular situation. No latitude for application is provided other than the decision either to follow or not to follow the rule. Rules may be necessary when certain procedures are crucial. For example, it is often wise to have a rule requiring that signed releases be obtained before photographs or other personal information are used in publicity releases.

Good public relations practice demands good planning. As exciting as they may sound, public relations actions that arise from spur-of-the-moment decisions usually produce short-term gains and long-term losses. Even emergency situations that cannot be predicted must have planned response systems. The process of planning is slow, complex, and frequently boring. However, in public relations, as in other managerial functions, careful planning increases the effectiveness and decreases the frequency of future actions. Adequate planning also establishes a system of goals that can be used to measure public relations success. This aspect of planning will be expanded in Chapter 9.
David M. Dozier summarized the significance of planning:

The process of setting public relations goals and objectives in measurable form serves two purposes. First, the prudent and strategic selection of public relations goals and objectives linked to organizational survival and growth serves to justify the public relations program as a viable management activity. Second, the specification of public relations goals and objectives in measurable form makes public relations accountable and makes program success or failure concrete and objective.

Lions Club Book Sale

By Artemio R. Guillermo
Assistant Professor of Speech
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa

Each spring the Waterloo, Iowa Lions Club holds a used book sale. The books, which are sold for as little as 10 cents, are donations from the public. Proceeds go to various sight-saving projects, including the cornea bank in Iowa City. Since the Lions started the book sales, there has been only limited participation by its members. The most ever raised in one year has been $3,000. Still, the 1981 goal was set at $4,000. While the goal was raised, no changes were planned for promotion of the event. The Lions would use the same public service announcements, posters, and press releases that had not done the job before.

Fortunately, however, a group of senior public relations students decided to help the Lions. After analyzing the promotional efforts from the past year and determining target audiences, the team created a public relations plan using the communication tools used before and adding advertising and staged events. The target area was expanded to include Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and the surrounding communities within a 50-mile radius. The club provided $150 to the team for publicity expenses.

All promotional efforts centered on the slogan "Buy a Book and Help Someone See!" Simple announcements using two-color posters were placed in strategic places in shopping malls, dining centers at the university, and restaurants and other local businesses. Two students donned lion costumes and paraded in the shopping mall during the book sale week.

Local media supported the promotional effort by donating space and time. Expenses, including classified ads in the student newspaper, display ads in the local papers, rental of the lion costumes, and printing of posters, were carefully budgeted.

The five-day book sale was held in Waterloo's biggest shopping mall after target audiences had been saturated for four weeks. The receipts were counted, and the Lions grossed $5,137—28 percent above their ambitious goal.

Questions

1. What made the difference between the 1981 book sale and the preceding sale?
2. How was public relations planning used to promote the sale?
3. Plan a similar campaign for a not-for-profit group.
4. What was missing from the public relations campaign described in this case?
Planning for Public Relations Effectiveness

NOTES

3. Ibid., 594–596
4. Raymond Simon, Public Relations Concepts and Practice (Columbus, Ohio: Ginn, Inc., 1978), 95
CHAPTER 8

Action and Communication

Preview

The public relations actions required in modern organizations have expanded to include managerial decision making in virtually every aspect of operation. Nevertheless, most public relations actions can be described as attempts to spread information within a target audience.

Public relations practitioners can benefit by following several basic steps in diffusing information. It is also possible to identify certain critical paths that facilitate the adoption of new ideas by target publics. These critical paths lead an idea through five basic steps: awareness, interest, evaluation, trials, and adoption.

Both primary and secondary critical paths are more sensitive to certain channels of influence or to certain media at each step in the adoption process. When a public relations plan is developed, it must take into account all five stages of implementation in order to have maximum impact.

The process of diffusion must be planned and executed separately for each target public. Therefore, a method such as stakeholder analysis should be used to plan actions appropriate to the needs and interests of each public. Publics can generally be categorized as primary, intervening, or moderating. After channels of influence are identified for each public, appropriate messages can be prepared within the basic functional areas of public relations.

Most public relations actions involve communication. Writing is the primary tool for constructing messages and is therefore a critical skill for practitioners. By applying the principles of effective writing, they can develop public relations messages for all audiences and media.
Public relations actions can be organized around three basic areas of planning: target audiences, channels of influence, and messages. These areas interact to provide a unique plan of action for every audience in every situation. Segment 3 of the integrating case study illustrates action implementation in the Cedar Springs Hospital case.

**Integrating Case Study**

**Cedar Springs Community Hospital**

Segment 3

**Action Implementation**

In the previous segment, described in chapter 7, goals, objectives, and basic strategies were developed for solving the hospital’s problem. Next, the public relations staff turned its attention to the execution of those plans. It was clear from the patient surveys that the hospital’s primary goal of quality patient care was already being achieved. Therefore, strategies were developed for improving employee and physician perceptions of the hospital’s performance.

The two basic strategies for which action steps needed to be developed were:

1. Reinforcement of employee feelings of worth as members of the medical team
2. Increase in feedback from patients

Several tactics were implemented to address these needs:

**Employee Team**

A theme was developed to heighten all employees’ awareness of their value as members of the medical team at Cedar Springs Hospital. The theme “Quality People, Quality Care” was communicated to employees, physicians, and other publics through five media:

1. Signs were displayed over the entrances to all three main buildings
2. Mailing panels were printed for all publications
3. Birthday cards for employees were redesigned
4. Special employee name badges were designed for employees who had passed the 90-day probationary period, designating them as “Quality Providers”
5. T-shirts were printed with the theme and used as gifts for participation in the personnel department’s annual Benefits Fair

Hospital management also wanted to make a very public statement about the quality of the employees and their work. Thus, an existing “Employee-of-the-Month” program was revitalized. To give the recognition more visibility among patients, physicians, and the general public, a 24-inch display ad appeared in the local newspaper every month, featuring the honored employee and the “Quality People, Quality Care” theme.
Examples of communication with various target audiences
Public Relations: The Process

Patient Feedback

Three primary methods were used to increase feedback from patients to the hospital staff. First, the survey of recently released patients was repeated quarterly. Survey results were disseminated through various vehicles, such as the hospital newsletter and table tents in the staff cafeteria. In addition, a contest was established in which employees tried to guess the survey results before they were published. Second, positive letters from former patients were disseminated among hospital employees. Third, a regular feature called “Worth Sharing” was incorporated into the monthly newsletter to highlight patient success stories.

Public Relations in Action

Traditionally, public relations action has meant communication in some form, often a publicity release for print media. However, as the world has changed, so has public relations practice. Technology has altered the media practitioners must work with, and it is causing organizations to require an increasingly wide range of possible action alternatives from their public relations staffs. When Johnson & Johnson was ready to announce the return of Tylenol capsules to the market after the first wave of poisonings in 1982, satellite technology helped deliver the message.

Large organizations with access to space-age technology are not the only ones that require a variety of response mechanisms. Cedar Springs Community Hospital took several action steps: none of them press releases. While much of that action involved written communication, several important steps centered on managerial decision making.

When it was first proposed that the “Quality People, Quality Care” theme be displayed over the entrances to the main buildings, many employees reacted negatively, feeling that “advertising” was too commercial for a medical facility. An ad hoc committee of department managers investigated the complaints and made recommendations regarding use of the theme. The committee eventually advised placing it above the entrances and sold the employees on the integrity of the idea. This group also suggested using the theme only on the name tags of employees who had passed the 90-day review period.

Management decision making was again the principal action leading to the wider dissemination of letters of appreciation from patients. This relatively simple action required a change in organizational policy that could have been politically explosive. Such letters normally had been routed to the personnel department and then to the manager of the department involved. This procedure meant that for a department to get any recognition, it would have to appear to “blow its own horn.” Therefore, most letters of appreciation had been handled internally, without the knowledge of the rest of the organization. The private nature of this process was counter to the new objective of improving employee perceptions by sharing patient feedback. Thus, the policy was changed so that the original letter was routed first to public relations, where copies were made for the appropriate department manager and for personnel.
A policy change of this type, if not handled carefully, could have alienated both the personnel manager and the department managers. The public relations manager needed a good understanding of both communication and organizational dynamics to accomplish this objective.

Although managerial decision making was one of the public relations actions in the Cedar Springs case, the primary action process can be described as the diffusion of information. More often than not, the action implemented to accomplish a public relations plan can be explained as an attempt to spread information within a target audience.

**Selecting a Target Audience** The action process begins and ends with the target audiences. Once each public is identified, its characteristics can be studied, and a critical path of influence can be planned for the issue in question.

When considering the individual characteristics of each target audience, it is helpful to categorize the audience as (1) primary, intervening, or moderating and (2) latent, aware, or active (see figure 8.1). A primary public is the group to which the action is ultimately directed. As we have shown, however, the critical path to this group frequently requires that other audiences be addressed. Individuals in intervening publics have direct contact with the primary audience and can pass messages along to them. All the channels of influence listed in figure 8.2, except personal experience, may constitute intervening publics. Moderating publics are groups that share a common goal or guiding philosophy and can make an impact on the primary public. These groups usually have high credibility with the primary public in specific subject areas.

In figure 8.2, only mass media and personal experience do not have the potential to be moderating publics.

As you will recall from our discussion in chapter 6, a latent public is not aware of a need to change or act. An aware public recognizes a need but is not prone to any action, such as accepting a new idea. An active public is aware and ready to do something.

The classification system just described helps determine the extent to which a given public is ready and able to respond to any planned action. The relationship between these classifications is diagrammed in figure 8.1.

**The Diffusion Process** Diffusion is a term used to describe the way in which new ideas are adopted in a society. Sociologists and communication researchers...
have long been fascinated by the paths that innovations follow as they make their way through a social system. Publics or target audiences are social systems that public relations practitioners seek to influence. Therefore, it is important that knowledge about the diffusion of information be applied to the public relations process.

**Critical Paths**  
Figure 8.2 illustrates some of the critical paths for the adoption of innovations. Those who study the processes through which new products, ideas, and technologies spread have identified five steps that describe how people are influenced to change:

1. **Awareness** People are aware of the idea or practice, although their knowledge is limited.
2. **Interest** People begin to develop an interest in the idea and seek more information about it.
3. **Evaluation** People begin to apply the idea mentally to their individual situations. Simultaneously, they obtain more information and decide to try the new idea.
4. **Trial** At this point, actual application begins, usually on a small scale. Potential adopters are primarily interested in the practice, techniques, and conditions necessary for application.
5. **Adoption** Once the idea is proven worthwhile, it is adopted.

**Channels of Influence** Researchers have tracked innovations through the adoption process and concluded that they use five basic channels of influence:

1. **Mass media** Electronic and print media such as radio, television, newspapers, and magazines.
2. **Based intermediaries** Individuals or groups (such as salespersons) that stand to benefit from another’s adoption.

3. **Unbiased third parties** Consumer groups, government agencies, and other groups or individuals that have credibility.

4. **Significant others** Friends, relatives, and others who are admired by potential adopters.

5. **Personal experience** Actual use of the innovation.

Figure 8-2 traces primary and secondary paths of influence, following the most important and second most important channels at each stage of adoption. In the early stages of awareness and interest, mass media are most effective. In the critical stages of evaluation and trial, however, emphasis shifts to significant others. Finally, at the point of adoption, personal experience becomes the primary channel. The secondary or support path begins with significant others, moving to unbiased third parties at the evaluation and trial stages and then back to significant others at adoption.

The public relations practitioner can implement the critical path approach by attempting to create awareness and interest through press releases and other media coverage. From the start of the campaign, the practitioner should plan to communicate with other publics that are significant to the target audience. When the initial goals of awareness and interest are reached, public relations actions should move away from the obvious to more subtle forms of communication through significant others and unbiased third parties. After the evaluation and trial stages are passed, success can be measured by the extent to which the target public accepts the new idea.

When Mountain Bell (now U.S. West) decided to introduce Local Measured Service in the Phoenix area, the media devoted a great deal of coverage to describing the advantages of the new system. Because of the favorable publicity, the telephone company felt confident when the issue came up for approval before the Arizona Corporation Commission. When Mountain Bell representatives arrived at the hearing, however, they found senior citizens jamming the chambers and others picketing outside to protest the innovation. Obviously, one important public in the Phoenix area, senior citizens, had not adopted the idea. After its first request was turned down, the phone company began to work with senior citizen groups to win support from significant others and unbiased third parties. The proposal was approved without protest the next time it came before the commission.

To secure the cooperation of various publics, Mountain Bell used an action strategy known as stakeholder analysis.

**Pressure and Special Interest Groups** Traditionally, much public relations practice has been based on a generally accepted two-step flow of information theory. This theory is built on the premise that certain people in our society are opinion leaders and that, if those leaders can be convinced to support a certain matter, they will influence others to support it also.

While the two-step flow theory contains a great deal of truth, both research and practice have shown that it is too simplistic. The theory allows for only two
levels (leaders and followers) in any influence attempt. Further, it presumes a linear flow of information through a social system. From our discussion of systems theory in chapter 3 and the diffusion process in chapter 3 and this chapter, it should be apparent that society is much more complex. The proliferation of pressure groups demonstrates the flaws in the two-step flow theory. As more special interest groups appear on the scene, it is obvious that large masses are not always influenced by a few opinion leaders. Instead, issues may be fragmented by relatively small special interest groups, each with its own agenda. These groups have demonstrated an ability to pressure decision makers far more than the size of their constituencies would justify. Thus, a well-organized minority can (and frequently does) influence decisions that affect the majority.

**Stakeholder Analysis.** The concept of stakeholder management provides a more realistic framework for an organization to visualize its environment. Stakeholder analysis is a method for differentiating among publics. Stakeholders are individuals who perceive themselves to have an interest in the actions of an organization. They may be customers, shareholders, employees, or just members of society. They generally express themselves through groups that share a common purpose, such as environmental or consumer causes.

Applying the stakeholder management approach to public relations practice allows actions to be organized around an entire system of stakeholder groups. The goal is maximum overall cooperation between the stakeholders and the organization's objectives. To accomplish this goal, strategies are designed to deal simultaneously with issues affecting multiple groups.

The stakeholder approach does not fundamentally change public relations communication or other action processes. Instead, it organizes them for more

**Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) rally in St. Paul, Minn.** A small but well-organized special interest group can sometimes influence decisions that affect the majority.
efficient use. Stakeholder management can determine who should be the object of an action step, what that action should be, what results should be sought, and how each element will fit into the overall plan.

Traditionally, many public relations activities were managed through delivery systems like news bureaus, speakers' bureaus, and complaint departments. Because these systems focus on single actions, they have difficulty recognizing the differences between publics. In a stakeholder management system, however, action for each public is planned separately. The needs and interests of a given stakeholder group determine what actions are appropriate and how they should be implemented.

When Mountain Bell managers first attempted to begin Local Measured Service, they were trying to reach all consumers through the same action strategies. Their initial view of the problem is illustrated in Figure 8.3. Further analysis led them to realize that the task required a more complex view of these publics (Figure 8.4). The following stakeholders needed to be considered in the Local Measured Service issue:

1. **Internal stakeholders** Employees and shareholders
2. **Resident stakeholders** Consumer advocates, the handicapped, minorities, low-income people, senior citizens, volunteer and service groups, educational organizations
3. **Business stakeholders** Those dependent on telemarketing, small businesses, large businesses.
4. **Other stakeholders** Media, government, the Arizona Corporation Commission

Each stakeholder group was assigned to a project manager, who became familiar with the group's needs and interests and worked with functional departments such as media relations, the speakers bureau, internal publications, and others to target messages to that audience.

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**Figure 8.3** Mountain Bell's initial action plan
Senior citizens are important stakeholders to many organizations.

After the appropriate channels of influence are determined and target audiences selected, messages are prepared within basic action categories. In a large organization, these functional areas or subspecialties within public relations are sometimes handled by different departments. Even if they are the responsibility of one person, each action category must produce a distinct message. Frequently, different media are used as well. The result is a series of crossover or matrix relationships between target audiences and messages.
TABLE 8.1 Public Relations Matrix for Mountain Bell Target Audiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Categories</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Residential Consumers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Business Consumers</th>
<th>Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Press releases</td>
<td>Intervening</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Moderating</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Moderating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speakers' bureaus</td>
<td>Intervening</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Moderating</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Moderating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal publications</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Moderating</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External publications</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Moderating</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy advertising</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Moderating</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.1 illustrates the relationships between some of Mountain Bell’s target audiences (stakeholders) and the action categories used to respond to the situation. In the case of Mountain Bell’s response to the Local Measured Service protest, each target audience was assigned to a practitioner, while each action category was the responsibility of a functional department. For any message, at least two members of the public relations staff would be responsible for its design and implementation. For example, a news release prepared by the press relations group could have been initiated by the residential or business consumer manager and closely reviewed by other managers for potential impact on media, employee, and government stakeholders. Under this system, messages are prepared for primary audiences and checked for the desired effect on moderating and intervening audiences. This system allows functional specialists such as writers and editors to continue performing their tasks, while project managers assume the responsibility for making sure all messages received by their publics are prepared according to the public relations plan. A single manager can be responsible for supervising contacts with several publics on more than one project. These responsibilities change as projects are completed and new ones are added.

We began this chapter by illustrating the variety of action steps possible under a single public relations plan. While the actions that might be used are virtually limitless, one remains predominant: Most strategies involve communication.

Just as communication is the primary action step in a public relations plan, writing is the principal tool for constructing messages. Even messages that are primarily visual, like videotape or slide presentations, generally require well-written directions or scripts. Policies and other decisions are written as they are developed, transmitted, and preserved. Therefore, writing is a basic skill needed by all public relations professionals, regardless of the type or size of the organizations in which they work.

Some people are born with an exceptional talent that cannot be explained or taught. The Ernest Hemingways of this world may not need to learn the principles of effective writing, but few of us are exceptionally gifted artists. Most people
have to learn the craft of writing through study, practice, and hard work—that’s the bad news.

The good news is that effective writing can be learned. People of average talent can learn to write effectively by practicing some basic principles. The following tips can help just about everyone effectively communicate technical and nontechnical information in letters, reports, news stories, booklets, and most other media that use the written word:

1. Use short, simple words.
2. Use short, simple sentences and paragraphs.
3. Write in the active, not the passive voice.
4. Avoid slang and jargon.
5. Use adjectives and adverbs sparingly.
6. Be brief; for example, keep most news releases to one or two typewritten pages.

**Packaging Ideas**

In a written document, sentence length is widely recognized as a key to clarity. Many of the readability formulas mentioned earlier use sentence length as the basis of measurement. Distinguished educator and journalist Harold Davis often tells the story of a journalist working with the American Press Institute in the late 1940s and early 1950s who helped firmly establish the link between clarity and length.

James H. Coutey Jr. of the *Birmingham News* helped conduct seminars for working journalists at Columbia University. Before a seminar began, he would ask each participant to send him a writing sample so he could test it. The testing process was accomplished with the cooperation of several local civic organizations in the Birmingham area.

Coutey would take a journalist’s stories to a club meeting and ask the members to read them and answer some questions. The results would then be used to help the writers understand how well they communicated with the average reader.

One story submitted for testing, a description of an important breakthrough in the textile industry, was typical of material used in news releases. When Coutey received the story, he noticed that it contained 271 words, but only five sentences, for an average of just over 54 words per sentence. The article is reproduced here:

American London Shrinkers Corporation has spent a year and a half experimenting and compiling data on the shrinking and finishing of man-made fibers used in combination with woolen and worsted yarns and is now equipped to handle all types of blends. It was made known by Theodore Trilling, president.

The trend toward blends in suiting and coating woolens and worsteds brought with it the need for a variety of alterations in the shrinking and sponging operation. Mr. Trilling adds, pointing out, for example, that the Orion content in a fabric turned yellow, the rayon and acetate content tended to more and the 15 to 20 percent of nylon now often used to give added strength tended to shine.

No new machinery is involved, just alterations in the processing, such as a change in the action or the weight of the apron or the leader, but it took a lot of trial
Action and Communication

and error observations, testing to make sure that further shrinkage would not take
place, and tabulation of the data before the "we are now in a position" statement could
be made; it was added.

Special reports of the tests and their results have been passed along to the mills
and sealing agents of these blends, and in some cases, they have served as a guide in
the correction and improvement of these fabrics, Mr. Trilling states.

He adds that his firm has been offering its 100 percent woolen and worsted
finishing and shrinking service to the industry for the past 55 years and that with the
alterations to handle blends now completed, an important step has been made.

Results of the preseminar test showed that readers gained little information
from the story. Couey's questions and the reader's responses follow:

Who is making the statements? (26 percent knew)
What firm is doing the work? (18 percent knew)
How long have the experiments been going on? (30 percent knew)
What kinds of materials are involved? (11 percent knew)
What briefly is the story about? (9 percent knew)

To test his theory that the trouble with such stories was the average length
of their sentences, Couey edited this one and then retested it. He used a mecha-
nical editing technique that retained the original writer's style, grammar, and in-
formation. His corrected version (which follows), considered as literature, does not
read any better than the original, but it now contains 265 words and 21 sentences,
for an average of 12 words per sentence:

American London Shrinkers Corp. has come to the end of an 18-month search
One year and a half ago, that firm set out to find a safe way to shrink, sponge,
and handle blended materials without damage. Much experimentation was required
Many volumes of data were gathered. The trial and error method was given a
thorough test.

And now—success.

Theodore Trilling, president of American London Shrinkers, has announced that
the problem has been solved.

Exactly what was the problem?
The trend towards blends in suiting and coating woolens and worsteds created
the necessity for developing some alterations in shrinking and sponging operations

Mr. Trilling mentioned the "change color" problem. He pointed out that the
Orlon content in a fabric turned yellow. The rayon and acetate content tended to
more. The 15 to 20 percent of nylon, used to give strength, tended to shine. The
"color changes" did not occur in the new process.

No new machinery is needed, Trilling said. He made clear that only alterations in
the processing are necessary. He referred to alterations such as a change in the action,
the weight of the apron or the leader.

The firm’s president emphasized that many tests were required to make sure no
further shrinkage would occur.

Reports of the tests and results have been passed on to the mills and sealing
agents of the new blends, Mr. Trilling said. In some cases, the new information has
served as a guide in the correction and improvement of these fabrics, he said.

This is an important step in the industry, according to Trilling.
When another group was asked to read the edited version and answer the same questions, the results were very different:

- Who is making the statement? (68 percent knew)
- What firm is doing the work? (55 percent knew)
- How long have the experiments been going on? (71 percent knew)
- What kinds of materials are involved? (29 percent knew)
- What, briefly, is this story about? (64 percent knew)

If you were preparing a news release for your company or a client, a 37-percent increase in firm identification and a 55-percent gain in understanding of the story would be significant achievements. Couey repeated this experiment with dozens of articles. The results were always the same. A sentence is a package for ideas, and readers must struggle to get huge, bulky packages into their minds. By simply making the sentences shorter, he achieved large gains in understanding.

Couey continued to investigate the short sentence phenomenon and discovered some interesting facts:

1. Short sentences usually contained only one idea each.
2. A story could contain both long and short sentences for variety, as long as the average was short.
3. The optimum average for most sentences seemed to be about 17 words.

Pyramid Power

Couey achieved tremendous gains in understanding by simply shortening sentences, but he never taught that sentence length was the only element in effective writing. Organization is another important skill that must be mastered.

Journalists use the inverted pyramid form (figure 8.5), which organizes a story so that the most important points are covered first. The inverted pyramid is equally useful for other types of informative writing. A message should begin by answering five questions: who, what, when, where, and why? These questions are answered in the first one or two paragraphs, called the lead. Journalists begin with the question that is most important to the message and proceed in descending order. Each succeeding paragraph contains details that are less important than those in the previous paragraph.

The inverted pyramid offers several advantages. First, it puts the most important details near the beginning, where readers who skim the message will be more likely to see them. Second, an editor may cut the story from the bottom up if necessary without losing the more important details. Third, a strong opening gets readers' attention and directs them into the rest of the message.

Various media and their audiences will be discussed in detail in part III, but it is appropriate at this point to outline a strategy for media selection. Although it is crucial to construct each message carefully so it communicates the desired meaning to the audience, it is equally important to choose the proper medium to carry the message. For discussion purposes, media may be classified as controlled or uncontrolled.
News that could help save your life is making news.

Aspirin Called Aid Against 2d Heart Attack

Aspirin a day may prevent heart attacks by 50%

Aspirin prevent heart attacks?

Aspirin may reduce heart attack chances

An aspirin a day keeps hearts ok

The Wondery Drug That Works Wonders.

Using advertising and the news media to promote a product

Figure 8.5 Inverted pyramid form
Audiences

The preparation of a news release is different from the preparation of an advertising message because news depends on a third party to select and deliver the message. This is the basic difference between controlled and uncontrolled media. Controlled media, such as internal publications, direct mail, posters (see chapter 10), and advertising, allow the public relations practitioner to dictate what is published and how it is delivered to the primary audience. Uncontrolled media, for which someone else makes decisions about content, include newspapers, television, and radio.

The three basic considerations in media selection are the audiences, the timing, and the available budget.

Audiences must be the first consideration in any public relations effort (see chapter 6). You need to identify the publics you are trying to reach and determine what will interest them. Uncontrolled media present a special problem to the public relations practitioner because publicity releases must be planned for two audiences: the primary audience, the public for whom the message is intended, and the most important, however, the editor or reporter who selects or rejects the release for publication or broadcast is the first hurdle. Thus, although the release is designed to communicate a particular message to the primary audience, it must first attract the journalistic attention of an editor.

After identifying the target audience, you must next determine which media are likely to be interested in particular types of information. By researching available media carefully, you can become familiar with the types of stories they use and the audiences they attract. You may then select the best media for each release and package the information in a way that will attract the editor's attention. Chapter 10 discusses various strategies for media relations in greater detail.

Timing. Timing is the second important factor in media selection. Once the appropriate media are chosen, the time required to reach the primary audience is critical. Some publications have backlogs of material and may not be able to get a story out in time. Therefore, the question of when the primary audience receives the message may be just as important as whether or not it receives the message at all.

Budgets. Budgets, the third important consideration, are always limited, and frequently they, in turn, limit media selection. Usually the first decision is whether or not the message needs to be delivered by more than one medium. If a mix of media is desirable, it may be necessary to consider cost when deciding which one to use. Remember that while the costs of controlled media, such as advertising, are obvious, costs associated with uncontrolled media must also be counted.

Table 8.2 contrasts advantages and disadvantages of several different media. Considering these points with regard to audiences, time, and budget will help public relations practitioners select the media most appropriate to their messages.

Summary

The job of public relations is to create a positive universe of discourse about the organization. It is this universe of discourse that creates the mental pictures publics develop about organizations. These public images are different for each
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 8.2 Principal Media: Advantages and Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Combines sight, sound, and motion attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Permits physical demonstration of product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Believable due to immediacy of message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. High impact of message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Huge audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Good product identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Popular medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Selectivity of audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reaches more affluent consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Long closing dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No immediacy of message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sometimes high production costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Selectivity of geographical markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Good saturation of local markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ease of changing advertising copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Relatively low cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Selectivity of geographical markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ease of changing advertising copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reaches all income groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ease of scheduling advertisements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Relatively low cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Good medium for manufacturer/dealer advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Extremely selective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Message can be very personalized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Little competition with other advertisements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Easy to measure effect of advertisements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Provides easy means for consumer action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Posters (on stationary panels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Selectivity of geographical markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. High repetitive value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Large physical size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Relatively low cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 8.2 (continued)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Point-of-Purchase Displays</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Presents message at point of sale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Great flexibility for creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ability to demonstrate product in use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Good color reproduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Repetitive value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transit Posters (on moving vehicles)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Selectivity of geographical markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Captive audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Very-low cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Good color reproduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. High repetitive value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Movie Trailers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Selectivity of geographical markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Captive audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Large physical size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Good medium for manufacturer/ dealer advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advertising Specialists</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Unique presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. High repetitive value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Has a “gift” quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Relatively long life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pamphlets and Booklets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Offer detailed message at point of sale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Supplement a personal sales presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Offer to potential buyers a good referral means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Good color reproduction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individual, yet they are highly similar. They are the collective impressions various publics use to judge the value and effectiveness of organizations in society. The first action step of public relations is to assess these images accurately and then to plan and execute communication programs based on that information. The final step in the process of public relations, measuring the effects of these messages, will be discussed in the next chapter.
Case Study

For most of his life, Pete Rose has been a hero. Born in Cincinnati and raised "blue collar," he made his professional baseball debut with the hometown team, the Cincinnati Reds, on April 4, 1963. Within two years he led the National League in hits—a performance he repeated often, in 1968, 1970, 1972, 1973, and 1976. He was also the League leader three times each in At-Bats, Runs, and Doubles. Over the span of his career, he set records for hits (4,256) and games played (3,662), and he broke Ty Cobb's batting record. He made the National League's All Star Team in 1965, 1967–71, and 1973–77. He was the 1963 Rookie of the Year and, in 1973, was selected Most Valuable Player by the Baseball Writers Association of America. During his years with the Reds, he managed to be the all-time leader in most of the batting statistics.

Pete endeared himself to many fans by not quitting baseball in his youth—he played into his forties, working for both Montreal and Philadelphia before returning to Cincinnati as player/manager in August of 1984. When he became the Reds' manager, they had finished last two years in a row and were in fifth place. The following season he moved them into second place and kept them solid contenders for the National League pennant. At one point in his career, it was said Pete Rose was baseball. He was definitely destined for the Hall of Fame.

Along the way, though, things began to go wrong in the private and professional life of "Charlie Hustle": a messy divorce in 1978, a paternity suit he did not contest in 1979, and in 1988, an unprecedented 30-day suspension from baseball for betting on games. By 1989 he was facing threats to his very livelihood—he was being investigated by then Commissioner of Baseball A. Bartlett Giamatti on charges of betting on baseball games, including Reds' games. Six months and 225 pages of evidence later, Pete Rose signed a settlement that banned him from baseball for life. In April of 1990 he pleaded guilty to felony tax fraud stemming from his gambling money and was sentenced in July of that year to five months in prison, three months in a halfway house, and $50,000 in fines.

Earlier in the year Rose had hired a new press agent, Barbara Pinzka, to restore his shredded public image. He did not appear at the Kentucky Derby or the Indy 300 (unusual for Rose), and Pinzka was credited with pointing out to Pete that a man accused of having a gambling addiction could not restore his hero image by appearing with high rollers. Although he was generally keeping a low profile, Pinzka arranged for Rose to appear on a national television interview program and speak about his compulsive gambling. He even entered treatment and contortedly admitted, at his sentencing, to being at fault.

No sooner had Rose been sentenced than people began to wonder whether it would keep him out of the Hall of Fame, the final defeat. Amid speculation that Rose had learned nothing and that his remorse was simply a well-orchestrated public relations campaign, Rose himself seemed to believe he still had a chance.
Now, several years later, he would be eligible for the Hall of Fame. Sometimes fans can forgive and forget.

Questions

1. What publics would you want to influence if you were Piroka? Are there intervening and moderating publics in this case?
2. What role would written messages have in a campaign to restore “Charlie Hustle’s” image?
3. What media would you use in your campaign? Do you agree with Piroka’s decisions to keep Rose away from the Indy 500 and the Kentucky Derby? Was the television interview a good idea? Would those tactics reach the publics you want to influence?

Notes

4. Ibid.
Evaluating Public Relations Effectiveness

Preview

Evaluation is an essential step in a public relations program. It permits the practitioner to assess the effectiveness of the effort, demonstrate that effectiveness to management, and plan for future efforts. Value is more important than volume in evaluating the effectiveness of public relations efforts.

Public relations effectiveness is best measured using an open-system model that takes into account environmental factors and before-and-after comparisons.

Open-system evaluation models include effectiveness measures of factors like administrative processes, employee publications, media relations, and advertising.
We have arbitrarily separated the public relations process into four related functions: research, planning, action, and evaluation. In reality, however, the methods outlined in Chapter 6 and the material in this chapter are simply different applications of the research function. For illustration and emphasis, we have separated the two chapters, but much of the discussion about evaluating public relations programs relates directly to the research methods mentioned in Chapter 6.

Although presented last, evaluation is not the final stage of the public relations process. In practice, evaluation is frequently the beginning of a new effort. The research function overlaps the planning, action, and evaluation functions. It is an interdependent process that, once set in motion, has no beginning or end.

To help explain how evaluation can be involved in virtually every phase of a program, Figure 9.1 shows three evaluation segments: implementation checking, in-progress monitoring, and outcome evaluation.

1. Implementation checking. In this start-up assessment step, the central question is: To what degree is the target audience being reached? However complete the planning may have been, it will still be necessary to determine the difference between planned and actual implementation. Variations from the original plan must be analyzed and explained so that a decision can be made to either modify the plan or correct the discrepancies.

2. In-progress monitoring. Periodically during the program, actions undertaken should be reviewed and, if necessary, modified. Reviews at regular intervals can be planned to determine the program's effectiveness in meeting its objectives. Any unanticipated results can be assessed and factored into the evaluation. The variance between actual and anticipated progress at each point can be examined for its effect on the overall outcome. Regular monitoring helps determine why some results differ significantly from the original plan, and it prevents unwelcome surprises.

3. Outcome evaluation. The final step is to assess the program's end results. Again, objectives and results are compared to determine the variance. At this point, all prior evaluations become important for explaining the context in which the program was implemented and for interpreting the results. An evaluation report transmits this information, along with suggestions for planning future efforts, to an appropriate decision maker. Research in public relations should be ongoing, continually evaluating the process and its environment and providing new information to sustain it. Learning about the failures and successes of a public relations campaign provides information that can be used in more precise planning for the next effort. Evaluation research is also valuable in assessing an existing campaign. This point is illustrated in the Cedar Springs Community Hospital case, where research made a tremendous impact on the planning and action steps taken. In the following final segment, research helps determine the effectiveness of the total effort.
Integrating Case Study

Approximately one year after the start of the program to improve the employees’ perceptions regarding the quality of patient care, follow-up research was conducted. This evaluation process began at the same point as the original research. The methodology of the initial employee survey was used, and 300 names were again chosen at random from the 1,226 employees. Each individual selected received a mailed questionnaire similar to the one used to launch the process.

Four key factors from the original survey had been selected as objectives for improvement during the preceding year. These same factors were measured again...
in the evaluation survey to determine how much progress had been made. The following comparisons were produced:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Average Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of care</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients’ understanding of procedures and tests</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtesy and respect shown to patients</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient call lights answered in less than five minutes</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obviously, a noticeable and positive shift in employee perceptions of the hospital’s overall performance had taken place. In addition to the quantitative evidence, which showed gains in every category over the previous year, qualitative indicators also supported this conclusion. Another focus group demonstrated considerable improvement in employees’ feelings about the quality of care available. This finding was reinforced through letters from employees and comments made during monthly employee group meetings.

Although employee perceptions of quality did not rise to the same level as those of recently released patients participating in earlier surveys, the improvements were consistent and strong. Therefore, management concluded that continuation of feedback to employees from patients would be an important part of future employee communication programs.

Another important reason evaluation research is a necessity for public relations programs is that it enhances organizational support. Public relations professionals must assume the same responsibility for effectiveness as do their management colleagues. Organizational resources are always limited, and competition for them is keen. Public relations managers must be able to demonstrate effectiveness in ways that can be measured against other competing functions, as Robert Marker, manager of press services for Armstrong Cork, reveals in mini-case 9.1.

**Mini-Case 9.1**

**The Importance of Evaluation**

I remember an occasion, some years ago, that started me thinking about the need for some kind of measurement device and internal reporting system to help explain the public relations function. I was asked by a marketing executive at Armstrong to come to his office and inform him, as accurately as possible, just what it was he was getting for what he was spending on public relations. It really didn’t bother me at the time, because we had had these inquiries before, and I was pretty sure I could handle it. I came prepared with a considerable volume of newspaper clippings, magazine features, and case histories that we had produced in support of his product line that year.

I laid this out in front of him. . . . After an appropriate interval, I pointed out that all this publicity—if strung end to end—would reach from his office located in the
west wing of the building, clear across the center wing to the east wing, down the stairs, and out into the main lobby, and there'd still be enough leftover to paper one and a half walls of his office. (That was a favored "measurement" device back in those days. We used to have our secretaries total the column inches, and then convert it all into linear feet of hallway space.) And then it came, the question no one had ever asked before: "But what's all this worth to us?"

I stammered for a moment and said something to the effect that I thought the material spoke for itself. After all, this was highly coveted editorial space we were talking about . . . . I said it would be difficult to attach a specific value to it.

He smiled. "My boy," he said, "I have to attach a value to everything in this operation. Why don't you go back and write me a memo outlining clearly what this function does for us, and then we'll talk about your budget for next year."


Too many public relations programs have been eliminated or severely cut back because no "value" could be attached to them. The harsh realities of corporate existence make it necessary for public relations practitioners to demonstrate the worth of what they do. Particularly in difficult economic situations, every aspect of organizational activity is measured by its relative benefit to the firm. A public relations department that cannot demonstrate its value to the organization will not be in a position to influence the policy decisions that affect its own fate.

The concept of measurement itself is not new to the practice of public relations. The problem, as Robert Marker discovered, is that the rest of the business world has been using different standards. Marker's measurement system was quantifiable (linear feet of hallway), and it accurately reflected the effort that had been expended. In response to the devastating question of "worth," however, the measurement strategy could not provide any data. Because public relations is by nature intangible, assigning a value to its activities is difficult. Often the problem leads practitioners into the use of erroneous measures or measures incorrectly applied.

Like every aspect of public relations practice, evaluation needs careful planning. Ideally, the evaluation effort should be planned from the inception of the program. An evaluation attempt that is tacked onto after a program is finished will produce incomplete and generally inappropriate data. When evaluation is part of the overall plan, each component can be constructed with an eye toward later measurement of its success.

**Measurement-by-Objectives** The use of management-by-objectives (MBO), or any similar planning process, will alleviate the measurement problem facing public relations. Although MBO is most frequently used for evaluating individual employees, its basic elements can also be applied to programs, projects, and work groups. The object is to prepare advance statements, usually during the planning phase, concerning legitimate expectations from a given effort. These statements must be mutually agreed on by all those involved before the action occurs. When the set time for evaluation arrives, objectives can be compared to
accomplishments to assess the degree of success. The process used varies among organizations, but the basic MBO steps include the following:

1. **Work group involvement**  If more than one person will be working on the project, the entire group should be involved in setting the objectives. This ensures that no portion of the task is overlooked and each contributor feels committed to the effort.

2. **Manager-subordinate involvement**  Once the group’s objectives are established, each subordinate should work with the project manager to define a set of individual objectives. These keep the project moving by making certain that everyone understands his or her role.

3. **Determination of intermediate objectives**  This step defines a series of objectives along the way toward the overall target. Setting intermediate objectives permits more precise in-progress evaluation and makes it possible to consider mid-course corrections before the project gets out of hand.

4. **Determination of measures of achievement**  The point at which the effort will be considered complete should be specified in terms of either a time element or the achievement of a stated objective.

5. **Review, evaluation, and recycling**  Because no objective can be defined with absolute precision nor achieved perfectly, it is important to use information gained from each evaluation process to improve the planning for the next public relations effort.

**Impact Analysis**  Measuring the impact or results of a public relations effort is always difficult and never totally objective. As we have emphasized in this chapter, however, the more public relations practitioners can quantitatively measure the effects of their work, the better they will be able to plan future efforts and demonstrate their value to organizational decision makers. In this section, we offer four dimensions of measurement that can be applied to assess the impact of any public relations campaign, regardless of its size. These are **audience coverage**, **audience response**, **campaign impact**, and **environmental mediation**.

**Audience Coverage**  Perhaps the first point that must be addressed in any evaluation is whether or not the intended audiences were reached. Other questions that should be answered in the initial phase are: To what extent was each target audience exposed to the various messages? Which unintended audiences also received the messages?

Two basic measures are used to help answer these questions. First, accurate record keeping must detail what messages were prepared and where they were sent. Second, a system must be employed for tracking which releases were used and by whom. While the first measure is the easiest to obtain, it is worthless without the second for comparison. Massive amounts of publicity have no value unless some of it actually reaches the intended audience. Therefore, some method must be devised to measure accurately the use of publicity and the coverage of events.
Essentially, such measurement can be accomplished if the practitioner and/or other staff members keep a careful check on target media and maintain clipping files. This process, of course, is easier for print than for broadcast media, but some radio and television stations give periodic reports to public relations practitioners if requested. In addition, clipping services that monitor both print and broadcast media provide regular reports for a fee. Such a service must be selected carefully, on the basis of other users' recommendations concerning its accuracy.

The measurement of audience coverage involves more than just the ratio of releases sent to releases used. The practitioner must also be able to specify what audiences (both intended and unintended) were reached through which media. Data of this type are available from readership surveys and audience rating information obtainable through media advertising sales departments. Audience profiles for each publication or broadcast station can be calculated with the amount of space or time used to yield a complete measure of audience coverage. Such data can be reported in terms of total column inches (for print media) or amount of air time per audience (for broadcast media) for each release or event (see table 9.1). John Pavlik et al. used a readership survey at a medical center to determine that employees who were more integrated into the organization were more likely to read a company newsletter—the newsletter could then be designed to meet the needs of this public. For more of a bottom line effect, however, many practitioners translate media time and space into dollar values based on prevailing advertising rates.

**Audience Response** Once it is determined that a message has reached its intended audience, the practitioner must evaluate that audience's response. Frequently, this type of information can be obtained through various message testing methods like those discussed in this chapter and in chapter 7. Samples of each target audience are exposed to various messages before they are released. The resulting data help predict whether the message will elicit a favorable or unfavorable reaction. It can also determine if the message attracts attention, arouses interest, or gains audience understanding. With good sampling techniques and questionnaire design (chapter 6), accurate predictions are possible, and problems can be corrected before messages are released. Some messages, however, such as spot news or stories written from releases, cannot be measured in advance because they are not controlled by the practitioner. Thus, it is necessary to measure audience response using the survey techniques discussed in chapter 6. Frequently, the practitioner can predict audience response by tracking media treatment of stories in terms of favorable, neutral, and unfavorable tendencies, as we shall see later in this chapter.

Messages can also be pretested using **readability studies**. The basic premise of these tests is that written copy will be ineffective if it is too difficult to read. Most methods for measuring readability generate an index score that translates to an approximate educational level required for understanding the material. For example, *Time* and *Reader's Digest* are written at what is termed an 11th- or 12th-grade level. This indicates that their readers are primarily persons with education at least through high school. Though a great deal of controversy surrounds
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience Type</th>
<th>All Time</th>
<th>Event 1</th>
<th>Event 2</th>
<th>Event 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience Type I</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Type II</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Type III</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Type IV</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Type V</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine A</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper B</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Station C</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television Station D</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wireless Service</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.1: Some Available Measures of Audience Coverage

This formula is one of the most accurate and widely used for calculating the size of the target audience. It calculates the audience size by multiplying the number of people exposed to the medium by the number of times they are exposed. The formula is:

\[ \text{Audience Size} = \text{Exposures} \times \text{Frequency} \]

where:
- \( \text{Audience Size} \) is the size of the audience.
- \( \text{Exposures} \) is the number of people exposed to the medium.
- \( \text{Frequency} \) is the number of times they are exposed.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event 1</th>
<th>Event 2</th>
<th>Event 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>900</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The table values are illustrative and do not represent real data.
TABLE 9.2 Computing the Gunning Fog Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To check the reading ease of any passage of writing, compute:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The number of words in the copy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The number of complete thoughts in the copy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The average sentence length. [number of words ÷ number of complete thoughts]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The percentage of difficult words (words having three or more syllables except proper names, combinations of short easy words, and verbs formed by adding -ed or -es). [number of difficult words ÷ total number of words]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Average sentence length + percentage of difficult words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The figure derived in Step 5 is multiplied by .4 to get the Fog Index Score, the grade level at which the copy is easily read.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...to the publication and audience for which it is intended. This textbook, for example, is written for college students who are studying public relations, not for casual readers. Frequently, editors of internal publications for highly technical organizations must avoid talking down to their readers as much as they avoid "jargon."

Campaign Impact In addition to considering audience response to individual messages, the practitioner must be concerned with the impact of the campaign as a whole. In this case, the whole is not equal to the sum of the parts. If a campaign is correctly researched and planned, its elements will interact to produce an effect that is much greater than the sum of the response to the individual messages. If the mix is not right, however, the combined elements of the campaign, no matter how individually excellent, may fall far short of the goal.

For this reason, it is important to measure the cumulative impact of a public relations campaign, keeping in mind the goals developed in the planning phase. This measurement can be made only after the campaign has been in progress long enough to achieve some results. Effects are generally attitudinal, although they can be behavioral as well. If one campaign goal is to maintain or increase favorable attitudes toward an organization among members of certain publics, research methods such as organizational image surveys described in chapter 6 can be used to gauge success. Usually this calls for both pretests and posttests or for a series of surveys to track attitude trends. In addition, the practitioner can measure certain actions by members of a public like complaints, inquiries about services, and requests for reprints.

Environmental Mediation Practitioners must realize that public relations campaigns do not exert the only influence on the attitudes and behaviors of their publics. Any campaign exists in an environment of social processes that can have as much or more effect on the attainment of its goals as the prepared messages do. Therefore, the measured results must be interpreted in light of various other forces. Failure to reach a goal may not be failure at all when unforeseen negative conditions have arisen. Likewise, a striking success may not be entirely attributable to the public relations campaign when positive environmental forces were also present at the time. Techniques such as environmental monitoring and others discussed in chapter 6 should be used to evaluate the results of a campaign.
One method the practitioner can use to monitor environmental influences, even with a modest budget and a small staff, is focus group interviewing. Focus groups are composed of individuals randomly selected from a public who meet to discuss the campaign. The group should be presented with the elements of the campaign and then directed through a discussion of its effects and the causes of those effects. A skillful interviewer will keep the discussion on the subject without compromising candor or disrupting the free flow of ideas. Focus groups should be asked to discuss their reactions to the elements of the campaign and assess the campaign’s overall effect. They can also help interpret data obtained in the campaign impact stage in relation to historical, social, and political events that may have had influence.

These four stages of measurement can help a public relations practitioner more completely assess the results of a campaign and plan effective future efforts. These stages of measurement also yield the kind of real-world data that managers in other areas of an organization use to support their activities.

Following are some common mistakes in the measurement of public relations effectiveness:

1. **Volume is not equal to results.** Too often, the working assumption is that if one press release is effective, three will be three times as effective. As Harker learned, a large stack or even a long chain of press clippings may be proof of effort. But results in terms of the effect of those clippings on the publics for which they were intended cannot be measured by volume. Even audience measurement devices designed to count the number of people exposed to a message do not show whether or not those exposed actually paid any attention or, if they did, what effect the message had on them.

2. **Estimate is not measurement.** Relying on experience and intuition to gauge the effectiveness of public relations efforts is no longer acceptable as objective measurement. Experts know that appearances, even to the trained eye, can be deceiving. Guesswork has no place in a measurement system. It can be appealing and comfortable because it is easy to accomplish and flattering to the expert. However, when it comes to budget requests, managers like the one Harker encountered demand hard facts.

3. **Samples must be representative.** Many wrong decisions about the future of a public relations campaign have been based on a few favorable comments that were either volunteered or collected unsystematically. Several pitfalls exist. Only those with positive (or negative) comments may volunteer them; some people, when asked, tend to give the response they think the interviewer wants to hear; or the selection of interviewers may be unintentionally biased. Samples must be selected scientifically and systematically to avoid such errors.

4. **Effort is not knowledge.** One of the most common public relations objectives is to increase the public’s knowledge about a particular
subject. Sometimes practitioners assume a direct relationship between the amount of effort they expend in communicating a message and the amount of knowledge a public acquires. This erroneous assumption leads to a problem similar to the volume error discussed earlier. The study of human learning suggests that after a certain level of knowledge is reached, the rate of learning slows in most people. Therefore, in spite of any communicator's best efforts, all publics will eventually reach a knowledge plateau at which very little additional learning occurs.

5. Knowledge is not favorable attitude. Communication is often deemed successful if the public has gained knowledge of the message content. However, even when pretest and posttest results indicate an increase in knowledge, it cannot be assumed that more favorable attitudes have also resulted. A high degree of name recall or awareness is not necessarily an indication that the public relations effort has been effective. Familiarity does not necessarily lead to positive opinion.

6. Attitude is not behavior. While positive public opinion may be a legitimate goal of public relations, it is incorrect to assume that favorable attitudes will result in desired behaviors. When members of a particular public hold favorable attitudes toward a client or organization, they will probably not consciously oppose that person or group. On the other hand, they may not actively support the goals of the public relations campaign. Our discussion of latent, aware, and active publics in chapter 6 emphasized this point. Practitioners must be aware of the need to predict behavior, or at least potential behavior, when measuring public opinion.

Mark P. McElreath describes two models of public relations research into which most measurement efforts can be categorized: open and closed evaluation systems. A closed-system evaluation limits its scope to the messages and events planned for the campaign and their effects on the intended publics. This is the model of public relations evaluation most frequently employed. Its purpose is to test the messages and media of a public relations campaign before they are presented to the intended publics. This pretest strategy is designed to uncover miscalculations that may have gone unnoticed in the planning stage. The posttest evaluation is conducted after the campaign has been underway long enough to produce results. Posttest data can be compared to pretest results and campaign objectives to evaluate the effectiveness of the effort. These results also provide input for planning the next campaign.

Factors normally considered in the standard pretest and posttest evaluation design are as follows:

1. Production: The evaluation includes an accounting of every public relations tool used in the campaign (press releases, press kits, booklets, films, letters, etc.). The amount of material actually produced and the
total cost of production yield important cost-effectiveness information.
The amount of time and money devoted to each segment of a public
relations effort can be reassessed with this type of data.

2. **Distribution**  The evaluation examines the channels through which the
messages of the campaign are distributed. Clippings collected by
professional services are often used to measure how many stories were
actually printed. The number of radio and television stations that picked
up the story can be important information. These kinds of data are
perhaps most frequently used to evaluate public relations campaigns.
Note that although distribution data provide a reasonable measure of the
campaign's efficiency, they do not really address the issue of
effectiveness.

3. **Interest**  Reader interest surveys determine what people read in various
types of publications. A representative sample of the total potential
reading audience is surveyed for a quantitative measure of which items
attract more interest. These surveys are relatively good measures of what
readers actually consume, but they do not measure comprehension or the
effect of the message on the reader. Television and radio use similar
survey methods to determine what programs and times people prefer.

4. **Reach**  Reader interest surveys not only reveal whether or not a story
was read but also describe the people who read it. This information can
be valuable because messages frequently reach publics other than those
for whom they are intended. The efficiency of a message is the extent to
which it actually reaches the intended audience. A reasonably accurate
measure of which audiences are being reached by which messages is
imperative to any evaluation effort. Television and radio rating services
provide information concerning the characteristics of audiences at
various times of day.

5. **Understanding**  While it is important to determine whether the target
audience is being reached, it is equally important to know whether or not
the audience understands the message. A public relations campaign
cannot be considered successful if the public does not get the point.
Frequently, readability tests are applied to printed messages to measure
their accessibility. As we have already discussed, readability measures
are based on sentence length and number of syllables in the words used.
While much criticism has been directed at such tests, they remain
standard instruments for pretest evaluation.

6. **Attitudes**  Creating and maintaining positive attitudes or changing
negative ones is a central purpose of all public relations activity.
Therefore, measurement of attitudes, or preferably of attitude change, is
a highly prized form of evaluation. Frequently a pretest/posttest
measurement is conducted to determine the degree of change in the
attitudes of target publics that can be attributed to the public relations
campaign.
Attitude measurement is a sophisticated behavioral science technique that presents many opportunities for error. Few practitioners attempt major attitudinal studies without the help of professionals who specialize in this type of measurement. Several of the research techniques discussed in chapter 6 (for example, the public relations audit) use some form of attitudinal measurement. Professional research organizations frequently provide attitudinal data for public relations evaluation. Many factors, ranging from the need for a scientifically selected sample to the construction of a questionnaire that will not bias results, make attitude measurement a difficult task for most practitioners.

While closed-system evaluation is the model most widely used by public relations staffs, it has two major drawbacks. First, as we have already discussed, the fact that a message was transmitted to the intended audience in an understandable form and that it produced favorable attitudes does not mean the campaign goals were reached. Second, the likelihood that desired results will occur, especially in terms of actual behavior changes, is influenced by a number of factors external to the campaign. Failure of a public relations effort to achieve its goals may not mean that the elements or the plan of the effort were faulty. A number of environmental factors such as economic, political, and social change can nullify what might otherwise have been positive results.

During the early 1970s, oil companies caught in the grip of an embargo that caused escalating prices, shortages, and long lines at the gas pumps experienced losses in favorable public opinion in spite of massive public relations efforts. The effectiveness of their messages was undermined by events outside the control of any public relations campaign. Therefore, these events had to be factored in when the public relations efforts were evaluated. While the companies experienced losses rather than gains in positive public opinion, the campaigns may still have been effective. In the absence of workable public relations plans already in place, the losses in favorable public opinion could have been even more devastating.

Although a pretest/posttest design may be appropriate for evaluating short-range projects, many public relations programs are too complex for simple before-and-after measures. Continuing or long-range programs, such as changes in organizational policy, require an evaluation method that can provide feedback throughout the process, before the end results are available. Open-system evaluation models attempt to account for factors outside the control of the public relations campaign when assessing its effectiveness.

The open-system model emphasizes the extent to which the public relations function is encompassed by numerous other aspects of an organization and its environment. Factors like unintended audiences and organizational administration and effectiveness are also included.

In chapter 6, we discussed the growing use of environmental monitoring and social audits as data-gathering methods. These same techniques yield valuable information for evaluating effectiveness in public relations campaigns. The impact of public relations efforts on various environmental factors can be one useful
measure of results. In turn, environmental data can help explain the effects of a campaign. Because most of these factors are outside the organization's control, they may operate as confounding variables in a closed-system evaluation. Economic conditions, for example, can have a significant effect on consumers' attitudes toward an organization. Thus, results from a public relations effort that do not seem positive when viewed alone might really be significant when the negative effects of certain economic conditions are considered.

Internal climate data are also useful for evaluating public relations campaigns. Public relations messages should be expected to have as much effect on the managers and employees of an organization as they do on other publics. In chapter 6, we suggested that organizations research their internal climate for public relations planning information, and the same holds true for evaluation. Public relations practitioners should look inside and outside their organizations to measure the effects of their efforts. Like environmental factors, the internal climate of an organization can help explain the effect of a public relations effort. Union activities, management perceptions, and changes in company policy can all affect the results of a campaign.

Many of the factors included in the open-system evaluation model are difficult to measure accurately. Nevertheless, recognizing these factors is itself an important step toward evaluating public relations efforts. The value of open-system evaluation is that it considers public relations within the broader context of overall organizational effectiveness.

An Open-System Plan in Actual Practice

James F. Turone, public relations director of AT&T before the company's breakup, maintains that public relations is a managerial as well as a creative effort. Turone believes that public relations should meet the same tests of performance as other management functions. This belief is reflected in the classic measurement techniques developed by the Bell System to be applied uniformly on a wide variety of public relations situations. Although they are dated in content, the following examples from the Bell System program still represent an excellent attempt to implement an open-system evaluation model in three areas: administrative processes, employee publications, and media relations.

Evaluating Administrative Processes. To measure the effectiveness of public relations administrative processes, Turone used information already available from standard organization sources to make some unique comparisons. Figure 9.2 shows the correlation between the size of the public relations budget of each of the companies included in the study and the company's revenues. The graph shows a clear positive correlation (0.91) between the public relations budget size and sales income. Figure 9.3 demonstrates an even greater correlation (0.913) between the number of telephones in service and the size of the public relations budget. By relating public relations budgets to these standard measurements in the industry, Turone was able to show a "return" on public relations expenditures.

Figures 9.4 and 9.5 extend this analysis by comparing increases in public relations budgets with increases in revenues over a five-year period. Figure 9.4 shows that the percentage growth in public relations expenditures did not exceed
the percentage growth in revenues. Taking this comparison still further, Tirone demonstrated that when compared to the increase in the consumer price index (one way to measure inflation), the general public relations budgets fell significantly behind, while the advertising budget stayed even (see figure 9.5).

**Evaluating Employee Publications** The success of employee publications in the Bell System was measured against corporate objectives for those publications: to "reach all employees, create awareness, establish a reputation for reliability, be
written so the material can be understood, and be readable at an educational level appropriate to the audience. These objectives were translated into the following: measurement criteria. How effectively the publication was distributed within forty-eight hours, an average estimate of reader awareness of stories, a reliability index, understanding, and readability (as measured on the Gunning scale). Table 9.3 reports the ability of a sample of employees to recall (without any help) certain stories that appeared in the company's weekly newspaper. Table 9.4 reports measures of all the components of publication efficiency as operationally defined.

- **Distribution**: Percentage of issues delivered in a 48-hour period
- **Awareness**: Average of recall data
- **Reliability**: Average response to three questions about the newspaper. Is it very understandable, excellent at presenting both sides, and an excellent source of information?
- **Understanding**: Percentage of those recalling and comprehending the corporate planning seminar story.

![Figure 9.4](image)

**Figure 9.4** Increases in revenue and public relations budgets

![Figure 9.5](image)

**Figure 9.5** Percent increases in operating telephone company public relations accounts and Consumer Price Index, 1971–1975
### TABLE 9.3 Top Recall by Employees of Company Newspaper Articles (Three Issues of the Publication)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Matter</th>
<th>Unaided Recall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment office hiring (1)</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defending the company (3)</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneer circus (1)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing/competition (3)</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate planning seminar (3-week average)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averaged recall</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### TABLE 9.4 Employee Publication Scoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability (average)</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very understandable</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both sides/Excellent</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source/Excellent</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding (CPS only)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readability (CPS only)</td>
<td>16.5 (Years)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Readability:** The Gunning score for the corporate planning seminar story, which is roughly equal to the number of years of education required for comprehension.

**Evaluating Media Relations:** Measuring the effectiveness of an organization’s relationships with media representatives is a difficult task. Trione reports three aspects of these relationships that can be measured to some degree: "the media’s views of those relationships, the consequences which follow from news release output, and the activity of our (Bell System) media representative." As a first step toward accomplishing these measurement objectives, Trione proposed a nationwide survey of news media representatives to estimate their ratings of the quality and quantity of Bell System releases. He also initiated an analysis of the media to determine what was actually being said about Bell. To launch the second phase of the process, Bell hired PR Data Systems, Inc., to code and computerize information collected from clippings and electronic media reports. Figure 9.6 summarizes the percentages of favorable, unfavorable, and neutral news articles about Bell companies in the media surveyed. Figure 9.7 sorts the news items into 10 categories relevant to Bell operations and provides favorable, unfavorable, and neutral data for each category. Figure 9.8 reports the...
TABLE 9.5  Newspaper Stories by Region (Total: 3,848)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Favorable</th>
<th>Unfavorable</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


TABLE 9.6  Treatment by Media Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Favorable</th>
<th>Unfavorable</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPR</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syndicates</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


number of rebuttals by Bell representatives that were incorporated into the 503 unfavorable stories included in the sample. Toner explains that Bell news people are expected to maintain the kind of relationships with news media that will encourage a reporter or editor to call for a company reaction before printing an unfavorable story. Figure 9.8 shows that 45 percent of the unfavorable stories included rebuttal statements from Bell representatives. Over a long period, this type of data could help measure both access to Bell spokespersons and the quality of their relationships with media representatives. Tables 9.5 and 9.6 report the percentages of favorable, unfavorable, and neutral stories according to region of the country and media service, respectively. From these data, certain discrepancies can be discovered that are useful in pinpointing problem areas and in planning future efforts.

Frequently, evaluation is assumed to be the final step in the public relations process, however, it is really best described as a new beginning. Measuring the effectiveness of a public relations effort frequently provides new direction and emphasis for an ongoing program. Even when the project being evaluated does not continue, the lessons learned concerning its effectiveness will be useful in numerous future activities. Knowledge gained through careful evaluation is an important payoff to any public relations effort. Evaluation of projects that are obvious failures can help prevent future mistakes. Careful measurement of successful efforts will help reproduce positive elements in future programs.

Public relations can no longer afford to ignore the question, “But what’s it all worth to us?” Practitioners must be ready to respond with appropriate methods, solid data, and accurate predictions.
American Red Cross
Centennial Celebration

By Artemio R. Guillermo
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University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa

Case Study

Anniversary celebrations can be major public relations events in the life of an organization. Celebrations are especially significant when they mark centennial observances that not only generate mass media coverage but also produce activities highlighting the image of the institution.

Although the planning of most celebrations follows the four-step process of public relations, evaluation is often neglected during the enthusiasm of planning. After activities and programs have been executed, how can planners know whether the celebration was a success? How can they know to what extent their celebration affected their target audience’s attitudes toward the organization? What information can the planners get that could be used to evaluate the results of the celebration?

These questions were posed to a public relations student team that undertook to help the Hawkeye Chapter of the American Red Cross celebrate its centennial. When the team volunteered its assistance, the program and activities had already been planned. The overall objective was to project the humanitarian service of the American Red Cross and encourage volunteer participation.

The plan called for a week-long celebration. There were 20 events and activities, including a hot air balloon, a mock disaster, a historical display, a speakers’ bureau, an open house, an annual meeting and banquet, a centennial blood donor day, a birthday party, and the like.

Printed communications, including a 16-page historical booklet and a 6-page newsletter, were sent to local institutions and community leaders. The local papers gave the celebration full-page pictorial coverage with the headline “Happy Birthday.” Billboards, media releases, and public service announcements on radio and television were also used to publicize the event.

Although the Red Cross centennial committee planned an evaluation, they did not quite know how to proceed. When the students became involved, they decided that their first task was to develop an evaluation instrument.

After consulting with several professors, they devised a form on which to note the following terms:

- Project name
- Description:
- Time—
- Place—
- Has project been done before? If so, describe:
- Intended publics:
  - Primary—
  - Secondary—
- Goals and objectives:
  - Strategies—
Cost:
Possible public relations problems
Method of evaluation.

Results:
Conclusion:
When the centennial celebration started, the public relations team monitored the activities. Out of 10 projects/activities, 12 were evaluated.
When all the evaluations were compiled, the students had some interesting findings. One of the hottest items in the celebration as a crowd-drawer was the hot air balloon. An evaluator stated, "Such an event draws attention (biggest advantage); location was good." On the other hand, a leaflet enclosed with monthly bank statements, describing the centennial activities, received a low evaluation. An evaluator’s comment on the possible public relations effect was: "Confusion by general public as to purpose of stuffler." And the conclusion was that it had low visible response from customers.
All of these evaluations were placed on file with the Hawkeye Chapter of the American Red Cross for future reference as a record of its 100th anniversary celebration.

Questions
1. What is the value of an evaluation of this kind of program?
2. How would you improve the evaluation instrument used in this project?
3. What other forms of evaluation described in this chapter might be appropriate in this situation?

2. Rudolph Fleisch, How to Test Readability (New York: Harper and Row, 1951)
8. ibid., 31
9. ibid., 31
Public Relations
The Practice

Public relations serves all types of organizations. Not-for-profit organizations, government agencies, and corporations have embraced public relations and set it to work, recognizing it as a means of increasing organizational effectiveness in a complex and changing environment.

To operate effectively within these organizations, the public relations practitioner must be thoroughly aware of all we have discussed to this point: the process of communication, the role of public relations in organizational decision making, the four-step public relations process, and the primary publics of public relations. Practitioners must also recognize the problems and publics that are specific to public relations in each organizational type.

In this section, we look first at the practice of public relations in three distinct types of organizations: chapter 16, not-for-profit organizations; chapter 17, government; and chapter 18, corporations. Next, in chapter 19, we examine the legal environment that governs public relations practice. We conclude in chapter 20 with a realistic look at careers in public relations and some helpful hints for finding your first job.
CHAPTER 16

Public Relations in Not-for-Profit Organizations

Preview

Communication with members, government, and other publics is the bottom line for many not-for-profit organizations. Maintaining a positive public image, fund-raising, and cost containment are crucial public relations issues facing not-for-profit organizations in general.

Membership recruitment and retention is the chief public relations objective of many associations and religious organizations. Labor unions and trade and professional organizations sometimes prefer to work behind the scenes to influence government regulation rather than to address issues in more public forums.

Health care organizations are changing drastically. The advent of for-profit management companies and recent changes in Medicare payment procedures have resulted in an emphasis on marketing and competition that has made a profound impact on public relations. Dealing with volunteers requires more attention to motivational factors than does dealing with typical employee groups.

In elementary and secondary schools, parents, alumni, and school board members represent both internal and external publics. The value of higher education may be the single most important public relations issue facing colleges and universities in the 1990s. Fund-raising is a primary public relations function in most not-for-profit organizations.

There is a tremendous opportunity for practitioners who think broadly and who welcome accountability. This is not an era for technicians.

—Frank J. Weaver, APR
Director of Public Affairs
Cleveland Clinic Foundation
ongovernmental organizations that do not seek to make a profit are becoming more prevalent in our society. "More people work for nonprofit associations than the federal government and all 50 states combined: namely 8.6 million versus 6.8 million." Numerous associations, societies, and labor unions promote the interests of their members and impose ethical, professional, or contractual obligations on the individuals or organizations they represent.

Hospitals, religious bodies, and volunteer organizations serve various constituent groups while relying on broad-based support to survive. Educational institutions, both public and private, must maintain effective relationships with a variety of professional and nonprofessional publics while serving society as a whole.

Accomplishment of these missions depends largely on the quality of the relationships a for-profit organization maintains with its publics. Fund-raising is a common concern shared by all these organizations and often becomes a priority of public relations practice.

Communication is the primary mission of most associations, societies, unions, and religious organizations. Communication with members, government, and other groups becomes the basic product of many for-profit organizations. Even those with missions other than disseminating information find communication a necessary prerequisite to attainment of their announced objectives. Hospitals, charities, and educational institutions devote a great amount of time and energy to communicating ideas and soliciting volunteers and funds. We discussed in chapter 9 the need to relate public relations effectiveness to an organization’s bottom-line objectives. In a for-profit organization, the bottom line is frequently measured in terms of new and retained members, dues collected, or funds raised. Effective communication programs are generally seen as the key to success in these areas.

Not-for-profit organizations rely much more heavily on publications in their public relations efforts than do corporations. Although the trend is toward expanded use of new communication technologies such as Video News Releases (VNRS), satellite interviews, fax machines, and World Wide Web pages, not-for-profit organizations have not branched into these areas as rapidly as their business counterparts have.

Formal communication programs with written goals and objectives are less prevalent in not-for-profit organizations. A survey of such organizations also found a distinct difference between for-profit and not-for-profit organizations with regard to the issues they believe should be addressed through their communication programs. 2 High on the corporate list of key issues were inflation and compensation, government regulation, and equal opportunity. Not-for-profit organizations pointed to maintaining a positive public image, fund-raising, and cost containment.
In the same survey, not-for-profit organizations indicated that their departments charged with public relations functions were called either public relations (20 percent) or public affairs (16 percent). Of the 81 organizations surveyed, 46 percent of the public relations staffs reported directly to the CEO, 19 percent to a vice-president, and 20 percent to a director. The sizes of public relations staffs vary as widely as the sizes of the organizations themselves; however, 35 percent of the organizations surveyed reported staffs exceeding 10 persons.

In the 1995 Profile of business communications issued by IABC, 13 percent of the communicators worked for nonprofit organizations (excluding government); this figure reflects an increase since the 1989 Profile, which showed 11.8 percent working in nonprofits. The nonprofit sector was second only to corporate communicators, with 43 percent.

Despite differences in application, public relations is alive and well in not-for-profit organizations. In fact, we could argue that public relations is the business of many not-for-profit organizations. While the salaries for practitioners in these organizations have traditionally been lower than for those in corporations, they have improved. The median salary for all nonprofit public relations work is $43,388. We will discuss the differences and opportunities specific to certain types of not-for-profit organizations in the remainder of this chapter.

Labor unions and the various trade or professional associations have one important focus in common—membership. Representing the interests of members to a number of different publics is the business of these not-for-profit organizations. Recruitment and retention of members is also a major function. Therefore, publics for unions and associations can be divided into two groups: members and nonmembers.

Member publics must constantly be kept informed about new developments in their field or area of interest. Nonmember publics must be told about the group's importance to society and the benefits of heeding its recommendations. Many associations and all labor unions mount strong efforts to influence local, state, and federal legislation. Membership may be the single most important factor all these organizations have in common, and it also accounts for their diversity.

Associations can be divided into two categories: professional and trade. A professional association, like the Public Relations Society of America and those listed in public relations spotlight 16.1, works to enhance the public image of the profession and disseminate knowledge among the membership and to society at large. In addition, many professional associations establish legal and ethical requirements for practice and certify the proficiencies of practitioners.

The public relations function of an association is complicated considerably when it plays the dual roles of advocate and regulator for a professional group. Besides professional associations, many learned societies, such as the International Communication Association or the Academy of Management, promote knowledge in certain fields without exercising any regulatory powers. Members of these organizations are individuals or organizations involved in research.
practice, or teaching in the fields. Learned societies, for the most part, do not employ public relations professionals.

A trade association primarily represents organizations that produce a common product or service. Sometimes trade associations enforce ethical and legal standards, like the television and radio codes established by the National Association of Broadcasters. More frequently, they promote products or services and attempt to influence legislation and government regulations for the benefit of their members.

Sometimes trade association efforts are perceived as working against the broader interests of society. For example, the American Dairy Association conducted a massive television, radio, and print media campaign advertising milk as "the perfect food." After the campaign was in full swing, it was widely reported that drinking milk could in fact pose a threat to some individuals, primarily members of several minority groups who lack an enzyme necessary to digest milk products. The Dairy Association and its member cooperatives were suddenly in the position of promoting a product that could be harmful to minority children.
Association Diversity  Many associations and societies are divided into local, state, national, and sometimes international levels. Frequently, each level has a separate staff. The diversity that exists among the members of broad-based groups is not apparent. For example, the National Rifle Association is well known for its opposition to gun control laws, but not all its members support these efforts, thus reality has caused criticism and even loss of membership within the organization. Member organizations within a trade association may range from small family businesses to giant conglomerates. Obviously, these organizations will not hold the same views on all issues. Public relations skills are therefore important within associations to retain members, ensure that all points of view are represented, and build consensus.

Public Relations Practices  Some associations take very aggressive action to promote the interests of their members (figure 16.1). Many, like the American Dairy Association, spend millions of dollars a year on advertising. The Grocery Manufacturers of America bought time and space to inform consumers about the percentage added to rising food costs by growers, shippers, wholesalers, and retailers. The Toy Manufacturers of America also spend considerable sums to increase consumer confidence in the safety of their members’ products.

Other organizations prefer to work behind the scenes to promote their members’ welfare. Frequently, they attempt to influence legislation and regulation. Lobbying is a major activity of associations ranging from the American Medical
Association to the National Association of Homebuilders. Many organizations maintain offices in Washington, D.C., and in some state capitals to support their continuous efforts to influence lawmakers and government officials.

Sustained lobbying efforts exceed legal limits. During the Nixon administration, three of the country's largest dairy cooperatives were convicted of making illegal campaign contributions in exchange for higher milk price supports. Public relations professionals must be able to advise policy makers concerning the possible damage such activities may do to an association's image, whether the action is technically legal or not. Chapter 15 discusses more thoroughly the role of public relations in influencing government.

Communicating with members occupies the time of professionals in many associations. The need to attract new members and retain current ones is a constant issue facing most such organizations. The bulk of their budgets and professional talent may therefore be spent on association meetings and publications. Of course, large associations can afford to engage in membership recruitment, lobbying, advertising, and other activities simultaneously.

According to the Public Relations Society of America, practitioners in professional and trade associations can expect to participate in the following activities:

- Preparing and distributing news and informational material to the press, radio, and television
- Preparing and disseminating technical and educational materials (publications, motion pictures, and audiovisual aids) to other publics
- Sponsoring conventions, meetings, educational seminars, and exhibitions
- Maintaining government relations, including interpreting the legislative and administrative actions of government agencies in terms of members' interests
- Compiling and publishing business and industry statistics
- Sponsoring public service activities (such as those related to health or safety)
- Preparing and enforcing codes of ethics or professional standards
- Conducting cooperative research (scientific, social, and economic)
- Issuing institutional and/or product advertising to better acquaint various publics with the products or services represented

Media relations is, of course, an important aspect of nonprofit public relations. Often, though, nonprofit associations cannot afford media relations efforts. See public relations spotlight 16.2 for five tips for saving media relations dollars.

Most of these recommended activities underscore two basic values and functions of the association in the American economy and society. First, they provide a means of 
*experience sharing* for individuals and entities with common activities or interest. The benefits of shared experience accrue to all members and might be unobtainable otherwise. Second, through voluntary, cooperative support, they make possible *beneficial programs* that in most instances could not be
Public Relations Spotlight 16.2

Tips to Save Media Relations Dollars

1. Call the local university journalism or communication department to see if students need hands-on experience through internships, practica, or class credit. A small sum of money will go a long way here. If you can pay $500 or $600 a semester as an honorarium or perhaps as a scholarship, you will see the level of work and responsibility rise considerably.

2. Submit articles to local company newsletters asking for volunteers when you need help.

3. Join the local chapter of PRSA, IABC, or Women in Communication. Contacts and ideas you get from the meetings will be invaluable.

4. Attend seminars and workshops where media personnel talk about what they want from public relations people. Universities, local chapters of professional organizations, and others often hold such seminars. If they don’t, work with them to develop one.

5. Work with the public relations staffs of companies that have donated money to your nonprofit group. These professionals will often find time and resources to assist you with your major programs.

Labor Unions

undertaken by individual companies or persons. Many medical, engineering, scientific, technological, and social advances affecting the lives of all Americans exist only because of such programs. 7

In many ways, the role of public relations in a labor union is much like its role in professional or trade associations. Communicating with current members, recruiting new members, and influencing legislation and regulation are all objectives of labor unions. Thus, the public relations professional will be involved with union publications, news releases, and lobbying efforts. Some unions, such as the International Ladies’ Garment Workers, have mounted campaigns to encourage consumers to buy products with the union label.

For the most part, however, unions have avoided public discourse in favor of lobbying efforts and member communication. These tactics have made the labor movement, which represents less than 20 percent of the country’s workforce, the major voice of working people in the United States.

While the voice of labor is powerful in political circles, its popularity with many publics has suffered in recent times. Economic problems like inflation and trade deficits have been blamed on organized labor. Public opinion surveys consistently place labor unions last among institutions holding the public’s confidence. 8

In recent years, the continued decline in the proportion of the workforce unionized, the loss of union political power, and the failure of union pay raises to keep pace with those for the nonunion workforce suggest that labor unions may be facing a crisis. Sensitive to public opinion, though, does not appear to be spreading rapidly in the labor movement. In 1992, striking newspaper employees refused to settle a contract dispute with Scripps Howard Corporation even though it meant the death of the Pittsburgh Press.
Unions traditionally look to their own ranks for professional services. Frequently, individuals responsible for public relations policy in organized labor are promoted from the rank and file with little or no formal training in the field. This practice appears to be changing, however, and unions are employing more professionals. As a result, the aversion of labor unions to broader public discourse may also change.

Hospital public relations, like all other aspects of hospital administration, is a relatively new field. Not many years ago, professional managers in hospitals were very rare. A hospital typically was managed by a board of physicians, with one named as director. These physicians gave more attention to patient care than to details of administration. As hospitals became larger and more complex, managerial duties were turned over to professionally trained administrative personnel. As hospital management became increasingly professional, the need for public relations practitioners was perceived and met.

Until recently, the vast majority of health care delivery systems in the United States were nonprofit organizations operated by government, charity, and religious organizations. Today, however, for-profit management companies like Humana, AML, and Hospital Corporation of America are major players in the health care field.

Nonprofit hospitals have been faced with several major changes in the health care system that have special implications for the practice of public relations. First, the federal government has changed its method of payment to health care providers; second, competition has increased dramatically; and third, marketing has become the watchword of the industry.

Federal and state reimbursement to hospitals for Medicare and Medicaid has changed. In 1983, the federal government decided to reimburse health care service providers under Medicare in a totally new way. Admissions were placed in categories called Diagnostic Related Groups (DRGs), with set fees for treatment. Thus, if a DRG #2 appendectomy has a set price of $1,000, the hospital receives that amount regardless of the procedure’s actual cost. Because the federal government is the single largest purchaser of medical services, this change revolutionized the health care industry. Some states have considered changes in Medicaid reimbursement. Tennessee, for example, has established its own program called TennCare. Suddenly, there were incentives for cost savings that had never been present before. This situation increased the demand for professional managers in health care organizations and injected a new word into the vocabulary of health care: competition.

New delivery systems have increased competition. Hospitals not only compete among themselves for patients but must also contend with a growing number of alternative delivery systems. Hospital occupancy levels have been dropping as health maintenance organizations (HMOs), urgent care centers, and other minor care facilities have taken shares of the market once controlled by a few nonprofit hospitals. These alternative delivery systems have been successful in cutting...
costs and marketing their services to prospective patients directly rather than through physicians.

Marketing has become a dominant force. As a result of the increased competition in health care, marketing is now viewed as the key to survival. Markets are being segmented, and new products and services are being introduced as never before.

The marketing push in health care focuses on communication and promotion. This situation significantly raises the value of public relations and presents many new challenges to those in the field. Many public relations practitioners are now being called on to administer health care organizations' marketing programs. Staffs are growing as an increasing array of new skills are demanded.

This boom also has its downside. In many health care organizations, marketing and public relations managers are locked in heated combat over who will control the communication function. Marketing has often been put in charge of public relations, rather than the two working as partners. Some public relations professionals are called on to manage a complete range of communication programs, including advertising and other consumer-oriented media. In hospitals, the lines between public relations and marketing will continue to blur.

Hospitals, nursing homes, convalescent care centers, HMOs, emergency care clinics, and all other health care organizations are caught in the bind of rising patient expectations for services. No one disputes the fact that health care has improved phenomenally over the past 25 years. Health care practices that were considered advanced only a few years ago are now obsolete. Yet, scientific, technological, and clinical advances have in fact contributed to the problems of health care organizations. Because the state of the art changes so rapidly, hospitals and other facilities are under constant pressure to update their services. The same publics who call for continuous updating, however, are shocked by the rapid rise in costs.

People also know more than ever before about their own health and the treatments available to them. When this factor is added to the cost/service dilemma, the credibility problems of health care organizations can be better understood. In spite of tremendous advances in medical practice, physicians are no longer relied on as completely as they once were. Today, it is not unusual for a patient to ask for a second opinion on a diagnosis or treatment—something almost unheard of a few years ago. In this rapidly changing environment, hospitals and other health care organizations need help communicating with a variety of publics (figure 16:2).

In simpler times, hospitals were the only source of most major medical services. Both physicians and patients had relatively little choice because hospitals were often large, centralized organizations that serviced entire geographical areas without any competition. For the hospital, public relations merely meant basic internal communication, a little pampering for physicians, and a strong volunteer organization. Today, however, the audiences for public relations are changing and expanding. Key internal publics include employees—doctors, nurses, medical technicians of all kinds, clerical staff, and maintenance and housekeeping employees.
The hospital environment, frightening to many patients, places special demands on public relations practitioners in the health care industry.
Public Relations: The Practice

Target external publics include patients and potential patients (the clients), government, business, and volunteers.

Even though public relations plays a clearly important role in health care organizations, the number of full-time practitioners is still rather low. As the professionalization of health care administration increases, however, the opportunities for public relations professionals in those organizations likely will increase also. Public relations practitioners are needed to advise administrators and professional employees in a variety of matters involving internal, community, and media relations.

Public Relations in Religious and Volunteer Organizations

Churches and other religious and charitable organizations depend on positive public images for their very lives. Most have relatively few employees and must rely on volunteer labor. The vast majority are funded solely by member contributions, public fund-raising drives, and/or philanthropic gifts. Public relations is an important part of the day-to-day operation of such organizations, but only the largest employ full-time practitioners.

The goals of most religious organizations require a great many activities that can be considered public relations. Churches and synagogues must communicate with their memberships and with local and even national publics regarding doctrinal and social issues. In the early 1970s, declines in church membership and rising costs forced many of the larger protestant organizations to cut back their mission operations and staffs. These circumstances led some denominations to realize their need for professional help in public relations.

Recently, a number of religious organizations have begun to expand their communication activities, especially those involving mass media. Some of these organizations have been able to exert considerable influence. The Moral Majority, a conservative group of fundamentalist churches, became active in electoral politics and is widely believed to have been instrumental in the election of Ronald Reagan. Other organizations, such as the churches described in mini-case 16.1, have found that public relations skills and techniques can help them better accomplish their traditional missions.

The number of public relations practitioners employed in churches, synagogues, and other religious organizations is still very small. However, because the church is no longer the center of local communities and cannot automatically count on large weekly attendance, things may have to change. Indeed, the following examples indicate a new era of religious communication.

Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention’s news service for secular media, packages and distributes the work of five bureaus and material supplied by paid stringers, the staffs of 34 Baptist state papers, and some 350 public relations employees. The press service uses Compuserve to transmit the material to its subscribers electronically. Recently, because of controversy within the convention, a rival press service, Associated Baptist Press, has been formed to compete with the more traditional, fundamentalist-controlled Baptist Press.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) has a well-defined and well-organized communication function. The managing director of
The Episcopal Ad Project sold about 200 sets of ads nationwide to other churches of several denominations. "They just stuck their own name in place of ours," said the Rev. George Martin, pastor of St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

St. Luke's was a shrinking church in a shrinking town when it decided to advertise itself—to "break out of the church advertising mold of just the sermon topic and time of services," Martin said. The project came up with ads that brought in both new church members and national awards.

"Now, we're a congregation with a good mix of 300 families and growing in a city that lost 100,000 people over the past few years," Martin said. The first ads were aimed at "what people are doing on Sunday morning. They had striking visuals like a line drawing of Dante's Inferno with short messages." The church placed the ads in neighborhood newspapers.

The new set of four ads is aimed at people who "seem to fear any religious involvement, worrying they might turn into some kind of religious fanatic" or will lose themselves in church trappings, he said.

One of the ads shows a picture of Jesus with the caption, "He died to take away your sins. Not your mind."

Perhaps the most striking of the new ads again concerns television religion, raising the question, "Have you ever seen a Sony that goes Holy Communion?"

Martin said that while researching the new set of ads, "We were also concerned with what was happening to young people involved with some of the cults."

The resulting ad notes, "There's only one problem with religions that have all the answers: They don't allow questions."

Tom McElroyt Jr., of the Minneapolis office of the national advertising firm Bozell and Jacobs, worked on the ads, saying it was part of the free public service work "we feel we should do."

Source: Adapted with permission of Knight-Ridder Newspapers

It is estimated that some 500,000 gft-supported organizations other than hospitals, churches, and colleges exist in the United States. Most of these organizations depend for their survival on donations of time and expertise as much as money (see mini-case 16.2). Corporate financial support has remained static (see table 16.1). However, volunteers have declined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount Given</th>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>$ 6.00 billion</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>$ 5.90 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>$ 6.05 billion</td>
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U.S. Army Supports National Scout Jamboree

A Bridge to the Future was the 1993 National Scout Jamboree’s theme for 33,000 Boy Scouts and their adult leaders at Fort A. P. Hill, Virginia. Approximately 1,650 active, reserve, and National Guard Army soldiers in addition to 100 sailors, aviators, Marines, and Coast Guard members supported the Scout Jamboree with the U.S. Army theme “America’s Army: Defending Values – Adding Value.”

The Department of Defense has provided the support that the nonprofit Boy Scout group has needed for more than 50 years and that was authorized by Congress in 1972. Col. Conrad Busch, Jr., director of public affairs for FORCES Command, Fort McPherson, Georgia, summarized the Army’s support for the Boy Scouts this way:

What we have is one great institution, the United States Army, supporting another great institution, the Boy Scouts of America. These two organizations instill similar values—leadership, responsibility, and service to our country.

The 314th Press Camp Headquarters’ missions were to:
1. Provide command and control for the deployment of the public affairs detachments.
2. Tell the U.S. Army’s support story to the nation through print news releases, VNRs, radio spot beepers, photos, hometown news releases, fact sheets, and other media channels.
3. Assure the U.S. Army’s future recruiting efforts by instilling in today’s Boy Scouts an understanding, appreciation, and support for the U.S. Army.

The 314th Press Camp Headquarters organized Army Media Center and Joint Information Bureau by integrating all public affairs detachments into the following sections: headquarters, media relations, media briefing, video section, print section, marketing, and logistics.

The press camp prepared for every possible crisis communication situation by developing a thorough crisis communication plan. This was extremely important because President Bill Clinton had just announced the U.S. Department of Defense’s policy on homosexuality—namely, “Don’t ask, don’t tell, and don’t pursue.” The Boy Scouts of America had just reinforced its anti-homosexuality stance in early 1993. The nation’s media wondered how these two organizations, with different policies regarding homosexuality, could work together in August of 1993.

During the 12 hot, dusty August days of the Jamboree, the press corps accomplished the following: registered and Briefed over 500 media representatives, took and distributed thousands of photos, wrote and distributed more than 2,000 hometown news releases, produced and transmitted to Soldiers Radio Satellite Network more than 100 radio “live breaks,” wrote and mailed out 300 news releases, produced an army adventure souvenir issue newspaper, answered more than 200 media inquiries, and made 33,000 impressions on future American voters.

Major General Richard Griffitts, deputy commander of First Army and the senior Jamboree officer, remarked: “This has been one of the most rewarding experiences I’ve ever had in the Army. To see the 314th Scouts get talking with soldiers, who really are role models for them, and to see the bond that developed between Scouts and soldiers was really impressive. The Jamboree has given us an opportunity to support America’s future leaders, conduct mission training, and show America another facet of the military’s domestic support role.”

Source: Joseph V. Truhan II, PhD, APR, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Unfortunately, volunteers, like church members, can no longer be taken for granted. As families move too frequently to become a permanent part of any community, and as more and more women enter the workforce, volunteerism is declining in the United States. Although volunteers are still important to the life and economy of many organizations, their future is uncertain. To continue attracting volunteers in the numbers necessary to carry out their programs, organizations will need to take innovative approaches in communicating with their publics.

Although their full-time staffs are relatively small, volunteer organizations offer public relations students an excellent opportunity to gain experience. Volunteers with communication and other public relations skills are always needed, and the problems they confront are good preparation for full-time careers. The following are just a few of the many large volunteer organizations:

- American Heart Association
- American Cancer Society
- American Lung Association
- American Red Cross
- American Humane Association
- Advertising Council
- March of Dimes
- Sierra Club
- Salvation Army
- Girl Scouts of America
- Boy Scouts of America
- YMCA
- YWCA

Anyone who doubts the need for public relations practice in the administration of elementary and secondary schools today need only glance at the headlines. School bond issues are being voted down, teachers are striking, AIDS patients are attending schools, gang activity is increasing, parents are demanding that curricula return to the “basics,” students and teachers are being attacked in classrooms.

The list of problems in our schools could go on. Most large school districts now realize that part of their responsibility as publicly funded agencies is to keep taxpayers and other publics informed about their operations.

In some communities, few issues are as volatile as those relating to the public schools. The recent history of busing and other issues surrounding public school desegregation has proven in every region of the country that changes in the schools can result in catastrophic social upheaval. Any issue that affects public schools is likely to affect large segments of the community; even people without school-age children have an interest in the school system because their taxes support it, and it is a focus of civic pride and concern. Most people in our society feel it is their
right to know and have a voice in what happens in the public schools. As the overall educational level rises, more and more people feel they have not only the right but also the qualifications to express their opinions concerning every phase of public education.

Following are some of the many publics that must be addressed by public relations efforts in the educational environment:

**Internal**
- Teachers
- Students
- Local school administrators
- Other employees
- Parents
- Alumni
- School board members
- Taxpayer advocate groups
- Service and civic clubs
- Local business and industry leaders
- School district residents
- School neighbors
- Churches and religious organizations
- Athletic boosters
- Legislators
- Local, state, and federal government agencies
- Teachers' organizations and unions

**External**

Each of these publics affects schools in a variety of ways, but four groups—teachers, students, parents, and district residents—are of particular importance and must receive special attention here.

*Teachers* are now a well-organized and influential force in many parts of the country. Teachers' unions and professional organizations are concerned with every phase of public school operation. These groups also exert influence with other publics like legislators, government agencies, and parents. The political nature of public school administration and the enormous size of many school districts have strained the naturally cooperative relationship that should exist between teachers and administrators. With every segment of the population demanding a stronger voice in what takes place in the classroom, many teachers feel deprived of authority. Like other employee groups, teachers increasingly turn to unions to gain influence on what happens where they work. Any effective public relations effort in a school district must recognize the importance of the professional input teachers can offer and take appropriate steps to bring them into the communication system.

*Students* are now more active and vocal, even at the elementary and secondary levels. Various student groups demand more say in the decisions that affect the educational environment. Individual students have brought suit against school districts over policies they considered discriminatory or unreasonable. Public relations efforts must be designed to inform students about the reasoning...
behind decisions that affect them. To be responsive to student needs, however, school public relations programs must be able to assess student opinion and predict reactions to decisions before they are made.

Parents function as both an internal and an external public. Because of their intense interest in everything that affects their children, parents are frequently as knowledgeable as students about school events. Many parents volunteer in their local schools through parent-teacher organizations or other programs. Parents often feel as involved in the school as the staff does, but their participation is indirect because it is not full time. Teacher organizations are quick to point out that parental cooperation is essential to good education. Public relations programs must be designed to win parental approval and cooperation in a team effort to educate children.

School district residents are concerned about public school operations even if they do not have children attending school. The quality and reputation of local schools have considerable influence on the property values of a community. In addition, the preparation of young people to become productive citizens is an issue that affects everyone. School public relations programs must be sensitive to the impact of their efforts outside the classroom. Those who pay taxes and vote on school board issues must be kept informed about the needs, concerns, and contributions of local schools.

The practice of public relations is well established in higher education. Colleges and universities, both public and private, have long understood the necessity to cultivate favorable public opinion. The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), a national organization concerned with public relations, alumni relations, and fund raising, dates back to 1917.

In spite of its long history, however, public relations in higher education may be facing its most difficult era. The student activism of the 1960s brought numerous changes to college and university operations. Curricula were changed to meet the interests of politically and socially active students. Rules and entrance requirements were relaxed in response to student pressure. Students in the mid-1990s are much more pragmatic. They are often more interested in specific career preparation and maximum earning potential. The question now is whether a college education is really worth the time, effort, and expense involved.

The mid-1990s has also seen the bottom of the low-birthrate trend that has affected the public school system for more than a decade. High school graduation rates are at their lowest point. The trend has reversed itself in the last half of the decade, however.

Financial difficulties due to declining enrollments have been exacerbated by the pressure on state governments to increase funding for prisons, Medicaid payments, social services, mass transportation, and other important needs. Funding of public colleges and universities has in many instances been reduced, and this development in turn has put demands on private institutions. Colleges and universities have faced funding reductions, cutbacks in curricula, and even layoffs of tenured faculty.
Higher education has responded to these pressures by offering new career-oriented degree programs. In addition, colleges look for students other than the traditional 18-year-old high school graduate. Both degree offerings and non-degree continuing education programs have been expanded to meet the needs of students in all age ranges. Extended or distance learning has become a popular means to reach nontraditional students or those who cannot attend traditional classes. Interactive video, fly-in weekend or week-long classes, and on-line computer instruction have become important. Syracuse University, for example, offers its master's in public relations program in a special format. In lieu of traditional class meetings, the program includes a week-long session at the beginning of the term and assignments throughout the term often discussed via e-mail. The University of Memphis has begun the first master's program in public relations and journalism to be offered entirely online (see mini-case 16.3).

Higher education has become a lifelong process instead of a brief training period. Continuing to meet the needs of a changing society without sacrificing quality will be the toughest challenge for colleges and universities in the late 1990s. Public relations practitioners must help institutions of higher learning.

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**Mini-Case 16.3**

**On-Line Master's Program**

The University of Memphis Department of Journalism launched the first on-line master's program in journalism and public relations in January 1996. Classes meet "on-line" through an arrangement with Compuserve twice a week, three hours at a time, for six weeks. The $1,000-per-course fee includes all tuition, books, and materials. Usually, a professor uploads lecture material at the beginning of the week. Students can download the lecture and then be prepared to meet on-line for discussion. A student can earn a master's degree in two years. Requirements for the on-line program are the same as those for the department's on-campus program, but computer technology has made possible extended or distance learning.

From the professor's office or home—or anywhere there is a phone connection—the class can be taught. Students can also connect with the class from wherever they may be. One student took his laptop to work with him, but he had to excuse himself twice to deliver babies. The student, a physician, was on call during class.

One problem has been time zones. While requests have come from Europe, Asia, and Canada, the program is not large enough at this point to schedule class meetings at times to accommodate distant time zones. In the United States, classes usually meet at 9 PM eastern time to accommodate students on the west coast who, at 6 PM, their time, would likely be off work and free to go on line.

Begun by Dr. E. W. Brody, APR, PRSA Fellow, the program graduated its first two students in 18 months. In the first year the program enrolled about 24 students. Dr. Brody says the program is especially helpful for the midcareer student who is not near a university with a master's program in public relations, who travels a great deal, or who may have any kind of mobility problem. Students with disabilities may find this program attractive, he believes.
The University of Memphis president addressed a convocation of faculty, staff, students, and friends shortly after a major public relations campaign to change the university's name.

Communicate their changing programs and needs to a changing audience. Following are some of these varied publics.

**Internal**
- Students
- Faculty
- Administrators
- Alumni
- Parents
- Trustees

**External**
- Federal government agencies
- State government agencies
- State legislators
- Professional associations and learned societies
- Accrediting agencies
- Textbook publishers
- Business and industries that employ graduates
- Local community

In the late 1990s, college and university public relations professionals will have to demonstrate (1) the value of postsecondary education, (2) justification for increased faculty workloads, and (3) the importance of their institutions' contributions to economic development through teaching and research.

All not-for-profit organizations face a common problem: the recurring need to raise money to support their operations. Even public institutions like universities and hospitals have discovered that they cannot continue to develop in their inflationary times without sources of private funds. Institutional advancement (or...
development) programs are big business in the United States. Much of the effort of most nonprofit organizations goes toward raising the funds necessary to carry out their missions.

Frequently, the job of coordinating fund-raising efforts falls to the public relations function of an organization because of the communication expertise required. John Price Jones, a pioneer professional fund-raiser, noted that:

Fundraising is public relations, for without sound public relations no philanthropy can live long. It takes better public relations to get a man to give a dollar than it does to convince him to spend a dollar. Favorable public opinion is the basis upon which American philanthropy has been built. 11

Successful development campaigns require close attention to many details. Because they are massive projects, organizations frequently engage professional fund-raising firms to provide counsel or even to manage entire campaigns. John W. Leslie, an international authority on fund-raising, enumerates nine steps for a successful institutional advancement program. 11

Step 1. Identify broad objectives and policies for the institutional advancement program. In this first step, the broad objectives and governing policies should be outlined for all activities designed to increase understanding of and support for the institution. Objectives, broad and specific, are designed to assist in achieving already established institutional goals. (We are assuming, of course, that the institution has a current concrete, understood, and accepted statement of purpose and goals.) Resulting from this step is a plan with both long- and short-range objectives.

Step 2. Define relevant trends that might affect the institutional advancement program. Careful consideration of such trends will ensure that the implementation of the plan is as appropriate as possible to the prevailing conditions. Examples of trends and external influences that would affect elements of the program are relations with various components of the institution’s constituency, the condition of the national economy and of various industries important to the institution, congressional and legislative attitudes, current and anticipated campus problems, and so on.

Step 3. Identify specific communication and financial support activities, and group them into program elements. All institutional advancement programs are composed of a number of activities through which program objectives are pursued. All activities (regardless of departmental direction) should be itemized as to which are designed to communicate and ensure the financial support of the institution’s educational goals. Activities may be unique and nonrecurring, like special events. Or they may be ongoing, like gathering and distribution of institutional news.

Discrete activities should be grouped into program elements. A program element is a logical grouping of related activities for purposes of management and budget control. It is administered by a director who supervises the activities and personnel within the program element.

Step 4. Determine the basic approach and designate administrators for discrete activities within the program elements. Broadly plan and outline the
purpose, basic approach, and audience emphasis of each activity within each program element. The primary concern should be determining the type (personnel, funds, etc.) and amount of resources required for each program element.

When converting to a programmatic analysis of planning and budgeting (using information acquired from conventional accounting methods), a manager needs to keep several points in mind. Arbitrary allocations of staff time and expenditures will often have to be made for various activities. Travel, telephone service, and print materials are examples of expensive items that often serve multiple activities but are usually accounted for in lump sums.

Further, the manager should expect that in the beginning, allocation estimates will be crude. The key to effective program planning and budgeting in the future is establishing procedures to validate as well as possible the initial allocation estimates. Relevant literature and experience are substantial and can yield suggestions for keeping staff time records. For those who divide their time among several activities, the easiest method is to use the various activities as broad time category headings. Although procedures are crucial, assessing the time devoted to specific activities is not difficult; in fact, it is routine in consulting firms, advertising agencies, and similar groups that provide services to a number of clients.

Each major activity should be the responsibility of one administrator. It is not always possible or desirable to limit activity administration to professional staff personnel. More than likely, one person will administer several activities; this has for some time been common practice in the management of institutional advancement programs.

Step 5. Designate a person to direct and coordinate the various activities within each program element. This step is crucial to overall program success. The choice of director will depend on the following considerations:

- Nature, purpose, and audience of the key activities
- Principal source of funding for the key activities
- Knowledge and experience deemed desirable
- Management skills

Program element directors will report to the program manager concerning coordination and direction of the various activities—regardless of whom they report to in the departmental chain of command. Procedures must be established to facilitate good working relationships and smooth transfer of funds (when necessary) among budget authorities.

Step 6. Establish objectives of various program elements. Program element directors, in cooperation with the program manager, should determine long- and short-range objectives for each element. Objectives should be as specific and quantitative as possible and must reflect analogous objectives of other program elements.

Step 7. Review and revise various activities to conform to the objectives of their respective program elements. The entire rationale for programmatic planning and budgeting is summed up in this step. Undoubtedly, step 6 will point up a number of duplications—and probably some oversights—in programing.
To increase effectiveness as well as efficiency, the activities composing a program element must be streamlined. The cost of each activity in staff time and institutional funds must be assessed in relation to the exact results achieved or the estimated results desired. Likewise, the relative merit of each activity within a program element must be analyzed. Undoubtedly, opportunities for revision (and probable elimination) of some activities will be obvious to analytical judgment. Objective scrutiny and the courage to streamline decisions are crucial management tools for successful program planning and budgeting.

Step 8. Develop revised plans for each activity within each program element. Program element directors will need to work with each activity administrator to review and formulate new plans for the activities composing each element. The director must ensure that objectives established for his or her particular element will be met by the sum of the results of the activities. Directors and the manager may discover that a realignment of activities would be advantageous.

Revised program element plans must include resources required, sources of those resources, job descriptions, space requirements, time schedules, expected results, evaluation procedures, and revisions and future modifications expected in light of long-range objectives.

Step 9. Establish a control system. The control system should provide a periodic, systematic review of performance in relation to objectives. The control system is the manager’s chief method of assessing progress toward objectives. Quality awards, such as the Malcolm Baldrige Award, are often used to focus on Total Quality Management. Figure 16.3 is a sample page from an entry for a quality award that is available to nonprofit agencies. Managers must allow sufficient calendar time—not continuous time—for implementing a program planning and budgeting system. Procedures must be thoroughly tested, and personnel must understand and adjust to the new methods.

Programmatic planning and budgeting is a management tool but not a philosophy of management. Its strength is its flexibility, but programmatic planning does not replace imagination, intelligence, and initiative.

No one questions the need for not-for-profit organizations to raise funds, but the methods they employ can lead to public relations problems. Burnout is always a risk in huge fund drives that employ mass media, direct mail, or telephone communication channels. Another issue that can trigger adverse public reaction is the proportion of funds raised that is spent on the campaign itself. Some national campaigns cost as much as 25 percent of the total funds raised. Unfavorable publicity about campaign costs can hurt future efforts for all organizations that depend on public generosity. Most professional fund-raising organizations advise that costs not exceed 12 to 15 percent of the amount raised. Fort Worth, Texas, prohibits nonprofit organizations from collecting funds in the city if their administrative costs exceed 20 percent of budget.

Marc Epstein suggests three major factors that affect the decline of corporate giving to nonprofit organizations. First, shareholders rank corporate giving low on their priority lists when looking for stocks to purchase. Second, economic decline
Opening a new facility to treat juvenile offenders near the Tennessee River, required a special public relations plan.
has sharply affected the margin from which corporate donations are drawn. Third, damage was inflicted by news about former United Way president William Aman's salary, lavish spending by top officials, and general abuse of charity funds.14 (See the case study featuring United Way at the end of the chapter.)

Not-for-profit organizations by nature rely on public relations for their survival. In spite of this fact, many of these organizations are slow to develop the public relations function within their professional staffs. Increasingly, however, the realization of the necessity for more consistency in their relationships with various publics is causing many not-for-profit organizations to expand their public relations efforts.

Membership recruitment/retention and fund-raising are the two major public relations objectives of most nonprofit associations. Labor unions spend much of their effort lobbying, as do trade associations. Health care organizations, religious groups, and public schools also have volunteer assistance as a key objective.

Case Study

The nation's nonprofits received a wake-up call in early 1992 when the president and two top officers of United Way of America (UWA) were charged with mismanagement and lavish spending. Hardest hit were the 2,100 local, independent United Ways that raise more than $3 billion annually for human service programs in their communities.

Donors responded quickly to the allegations and intense negative publicity. Many believed their contributions had been mishandled and questioned United Way practices and accountability. Local United Ways and the agencies they support feared donations would decrease dramatically, with cuts in programs and services resulting. In Atlanta, where United Way raised $54 million in 1991, the organization moved quickly to rebuild confidence and trust within the community. Research revealed that 67 percent of Atlantans were aware of the controversy and that 38 percent said it would adversely affect their donations. Only half knew their money stayed in the metro area.

Ongoing, open disclosure with the local media was important in reaching a mass audience. However, United Way of Metro Atlanta also used direct communication strategies to reach its donor base with key messages: (1) Steps were being taken to make sure this could never happen again, (2) dollars raised locally stay at home to help people in need, and (3) the issue was never about the local charity (United Way of America is a trade group that provides advertising, training, and legislative advocacy for local United Ways). In Atlanta, the organization trained

Restoring Confidence in the Nation's Largest Charity

By Mark Dvorak
Director of Marketing
Services
United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta
staff, volunteers, and agency representatives to present the facts to hundreds of employees and neighborhood and civic groups. An information line was established to answer questions and allow donors to air their concerns.

While many local United Ways saw large losses in contributions following the 1992 scandal, Atlanta’s donations remained flat. Each year since, however, the campaign has grown—reflecting restored donor confidence in the organization and the charities it supports. Moreover, a 1995 survey showed that Atlantans rate United Way’s trustworthiness the same as they did before the national problems surfaced.

An adage says that every problem is an opportunity. In Atlanta and other communities, the heightened sense of accountability encouraged a number of nonprofits to review their practices. Over the long run, increased attention focused on United Way has reduced donor apathy—enabling the organization to share important messages about community needs and how funds are used. In many cases, years of goodwill gave United Way the benefit of the doubt with donors. But effective public relations helped to maintain credibility and, more important, to make United Way better prepared to meet the needs of the community in years to come.

Questions
1. What can the national United Way do to restore credibility with its local, independent United Way organizations?
2. If the national United Way does advertising, training, and lobbying, what would you suggest it do in each of these areas now?
3. If you were the public relations director for a major nonprofit youth services agency that had net revenues of $5 million over expenses for the year, what would you suggest it do with the surplus (not profit)?
4. What would you suggest in regard to pay increases for the youth agency, given the United Way experience?

Notes
3. Ibid., 17.
7. Reprinted from Association Public Relations, with permission from Association Section, Public Relations Society of America, 1981.
12. Leaper, "Communicate or Perish." 12.
CHAPTER 17

Public Relations in Government

Preview

Governmental public relations plays a crucial role in keeping the public informed about issues, problems, and actions at all levels of government.

Government public information officers seek citizen approval of government programs, help explain what citizens want from the government, strive to make government responsive to citizens' wishes, and attempt to understand and affect public opinion.

Public relations operatives are pervasive in political campaigns, promoting both public understanding of candidates and candidates' understanding of publics.

A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to a farce, or a tragedy, or perhaps both.

—James Madison, President
The framers of the U.S. Constitution believed that the American people were capable of governing themselves. To do so, however, citizens needed to be fully informed about issues and problems confronting them and actions taken by their government. Despite their belief, the founding fathers provided no specific means to disseminate information nor any assurance that citizens would be kept informed. It was assumed that government would maintain open communication channels with the public and provide sufficient information to enable citizens to make intelligent decisions about its policies and activities.

To a certain extent, these ideals have been realized through a system that evolved in response to public needs. The mass media struggle to serve our right to know. In providing information to the public about government affairs, they draw on the public relations arm of government—local, state, and federal—that offers the media a constant flow of information.

Government public relations practitioners are often called public information officers (PIOs), a designation suggesting that they simply transmit information in an objective and neutral fashion. In fact, they are no more neutral or objective than public relations professionals working in the private sector.

Because the success and stability of democratic governments are ultimately determined by continuous citizen approval, public information officers seek to ensure such approval. The democratic system implies that government will respond to the wishes of the governed, so public information officers work to determine those wishes, then strive to make government responsive to them. Because public opinion provides the climate in which public officials, agencies, and institutions succeed or fail, public information officers try to understand and influence public opinion. Given that a multitude of institutional interests coexist in any society, public relations practitioners both inside and outside government represent a comparable variety of perspectives. As a consequence, much of the significant dialogue needed to ensure democracy’s proper functioning is generated, molded, and sanctified by public relations practitioners.

In short, in government—as in any other organization—public relations is a management function that helps define objectives and philosophies while also helping the organization adapt to the demands of its constituencies and environments. Public relations practitioners—whether called PIOs, public affairs officers (PAOs), press secretaries, or just plain administrative aides—still communicate with all relevant internal and external publics to make organizational goals and societal expectations consistent. Public information officers, like their counterparts in business and industry, develop, execute, and evaluate programs that promote the exchange of influence and understanding among an organization’s constituent parts and publics.

Of course, because they work in a different context with different constraints and problems, government public relations specialists operate somewhat differently from their private sector counterparts. PIOs face unique problems. Their mission and legitimacy are questioned more extensively. Their constituents are forced to provide financial support through taxation. Red tape, internal bureaucratic situations, and political pressures hinder their efforts. Career development opportunities are limited.
In this chapter, we will explore the practice of government public relations and its background, importance, functions, and responsibilities.

As we stated in chapter 2, leaders have always courted the sentiments of their people. In this sense, governments have practiced public relations since the reign of the pharaohs. In the United States, however, its formal integration into local, state, and federal government programs has occurred largely since World War II. Before this time, public relations practice was confined mainly to the upper levels of the federal government.

As previously discussed, Amos Kendall served Andrew Jackson in the capacities of politician, counsel, ghostwriter, and publicist. Use of such counsel, though, did not become established until the administration of Theodore Roosevelt. From that time forward, "Strong U.S. presidents have utilized the expertise of public relations to exploit the mounting power of the news media to mobilize public support for their policies."  

Public relations pioneer Edward Bernays recognized that his own expertise could be applied to government and politics as well as to business and philanthropic endeavors. Having served as adviser to Presidents Coolidge and Hoover, he recommended in the 1930s the creation of a cabinet-level Secretary of Public Relations. His suggestion was not acted on; nevertheless, press secretaries of some recent presidents, although formally ranked merely as presidential staff, have been more influential than cabinet officers. When Gerald Ford took office, his first appointments were a personal photographer, a new press secretary, and a chief speechwriter.

Frequently, presidents are conscious of the public relations aspects of their highly visible jobs. Teddy Roosevelt talked of the presidency as a "bully pulpit." Harry Truman was characteristically more blunt; in a letter to his sister Mary, dated November 14, 1947, he wrote, "All the President is, is a glorified public relations man."

Outside of the presidency, public relations had tougher sledding. In 1913, the U.S. Civil Service Commission announced an examination for a "Publicity Expert." On October 22 of that year, Congress passed the Gillett Amendment (38 U.S.C. 3107), which stated:

No money appropriated by any act shall be used for the compensation of any publicity expert unless specifically appropriated for that purpose.

Despite the law, the public relations function persisted. Most notable among government's early public relations endeavors was George Creel's World War I Committee on Public Information.

Public relations in the federal government came of age during the New Deal, when the creation of the so-called alphabet agencies "precipitated a flood tide of publicists into the channels of government." The Office of War Information, created during World War II, gave further federal support to the profession. When the war was over, the office became the United States Information Agency (USIA). During the late 1940s, public relations activity was increasingly evident.
in state and local government. By 1949, nearly every state had established a state-supported public relations program to attract both tourism and industry.

Since 1970, at least 20 new federal regulatory agencies have been created. All of them have extensive public information programs.

Despite the limits placed on public relations activity by Congress, government publicity has always been necessary, if for no other reason than to tell citizens what services are available and how to use them. With the developing complexity of government has come a corresponding increase in publicity. 1

Ron Levy, counselor to government communicators, argues that government needs to do a better job of giving the public more information about what government literature is available, what services are available, and where to write for specific government information materials. He says government communicators also should provide wider dissemination for speeches by government leaders. 3

They may be given different titles, but virtually every federal government agency maintains a public relations body. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has an External Affairs Division. The Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) maintains an Office of Communications and Consumer Affairs. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has an Office of Public Awareness. Even the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) employs a 20-person Public Affairs Group.

It is impossible to estimate the number of people involved or the money spent in government public relations. As William Gilbert states, "If you are in government, you are in public relations. . . . [There is a] public relations element in all the things . . . government . . . does." 2

Government public relations ranges from simple publicity to global propaganda. The government spends more money on audiovisual services than does any film studio or television network. It prints over 100,000 different publications each year. K. H. Rabin quotes U.S. News and World Report in putting the size of the federal government's public relations expenditures in perspective:

The federal government spends more money each year trying to influence the way people think than it spends altogether for disaster relief, foreign military assistance, energy conservation and cancer research. 6

It is similarly difficult to know the numbers of people involved in federal public relations.

The major government information agency for worldwide communication is the United States Information Agency (USIA). Its activities are summarized in mini-case 17.1.

As impressive as federal government public relations employees and budgets may be, they do not include the personnel or expenses involved in city, county, state, or regional governmental agencies, programs, or authorities. Nor do they reflect the fact that the inputs provided by these tens of thousands of public relations officials grow more influential every year. In fact, it is at the state and local levels that public information has witnessed its greatest expansion in recent years. School districts, counties, and local governments have seen the need to tell
Mini-Case 17.1

The USIA

Sometimes the target of terrorists’ bombs abroad and of political uproar at home, the
United States Information Agency is the public relations arm of the United States in
more than 125 countries. USIA’s 1996 budget is an estimated $496 million. It has
about 9,000 employees, including 1,100 foreign service officers; 4,000 foreign citi-
zens employed to assist the agency, mostly in its posts abroad; and 4,000 civil ser-
vice employees, mostly in the United States. This is the agency’s mission:

To support the national interest by conveying an understanding abroad of what the United
States stands for as a nation and as a people; to explain the nation’s policies and to
present a true picture of the society, institutions and culture in which those policies evolve.

The Voice of America, the USIA radio operation, maintains 166 transmitters
worldwide, broadcasting in 40 languages and reaching 75 million people a year. USIA
also annually produces and distributes about 200 films, publishes 15 magazines in
31 languages, and mounts 50 major exhibits.

The agency maintains over 200 libraries and information centers in 90 coun-
tries and provides educational programs for 350,000 students per year.

Media relations is also an important USIA job. Like the Associated Press or
United Press International, the agency functions as a wire service, providing film news
caps for overseas television and moving information from 205 posts in 127 countries
everyday.

Sources: USIA, Its Work and Structure, October 1987, also, the United States Budget for fiscal year 1996.

their stories to taxpayers to get budget increases, bond approvals, or tax increases.
They have seen that a public relations (or public affairs/public information) spe-
cialist is essential in this process.

The Function of Governmental Public Relations

Government public information officers, like any other public relations practi-
cioners, seek to achieve mutual understanding between their agencies and publics
by following the four-step process explained in part II of this book. They must
gauge public opinion, plan and organize for public relations effectiveness, con-
struct messages for internal and external audiences, and measure the effectiveness
of the entire process.

Serving Both the Public and Government

Like all organizational boundary spanners, public information officers jointly
serve two masters—their publics and their employers. On the one hand, they pro-
vide the public with complete, candid, continuous reporting of government infor-
mation and accessible channels for citizen inputs. On the other hand, Scott M.
Cutlip maintains:

The vast government information machine has as its primary purpose advancement of
government’s policies and personnel. . . . the major objective is to gain support for the
incumbent administration’s policies and maintain its leaders in power.
In a recent Brookings Institution study, former aide to Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon, Stephen Hess, observed the contradictory pressures on government press officers in the Departments of Defense, Transportation, and State; the Food and Drug Administration; and the White House. What he found was "a semibureaucrat/semi-reporter, in the bureaucracy but not truly of it, tainted by association with the press yet not of the press." Hess found that press officers were trusted neither by the media nor by their own superiors. Because they are suspect in the eyes of their own political executives, according to Hess, "The career press officer is often the odd person out in the permanent bureaucracy."

Moreover, the media perhaps underrate the press information officer's role. Says Hess, "If they were to be invited to view press operations from the inside, many reporters would be surprised to see the extent to which the press officer is their advocate within the permanent government." Consequently, public information officers serve neither masters very well, as evidenced by millions of Americans viewing their "government as distant and unresponsive, if not hostile." Both the public and the politicians might be better served if public information officers could provide more active input for governmental decision makers. In his seminal 1947 report, Government and Mass Communication, Zachariah Chafee Jr. held that:

Government information can play a vital role in the cause of good administration by exploring the impact of new social forces, discovering strains and tensions before they become acute, and encouraging a positive sense of unity and national direction.

The most basic functions of government public relations are to help define and achieve government program goals, to enhance government responsiveness and service, and to provide the public with sufficient information to permit self-government. The goal of public information officers is to promote cooperation and confidence between citizens and their government. This in turn requires government accessibility, accountability, consistency, and integrity.

Planned, continuous governmental public relations programs may have any one or several of the following objectives:

1. To gain support for new laws or initiatives. Jockeying for political support for particular laws and initiatives is evident in news reports every day. Whether the issue is a local ordinance related to land-use planning, a state effort to improve elementary and secondary education, or a federal tax reform, public information officers play an active role.

2. To stimulate citizen interest and relieve public confusion about governmental agencies, processes, and programs. When drought hit the Southeast, governmental agencies implemented various water conservation measures. Government public relations officials encouraged interest in water conservation and straightened out confusion about new water use rules.

3. To facilitate voter decision making by providing factual information. Particularly important in local government referenda, government public
relations practitioners provide accurate information about potential outcomes of various initiatives.

4. To enable citizens to use government services fully by providing continuous information. An example is promotion of state parks or dissemination of energy-saving tips during crisis power shortages.

5. To open channels of communication with government officials. PIOs serve as ombudsmen, establish hot lines, and set up public forums to promote information input and output.

6. To serve officials by helping interpret citizen attitudes and public opinion. At the highest levels of government, press secretaries and other communication operatives are members of the teams that seek to fathom public desires regarding legislation and governmental programs.

7. To gain voluntary obedience with laws, regulations, and rules. Public relations efforts support laws and rules related to everything from the automobile speed limit to drug abuse and from littering to compliance with tax laws.

8. To build generalized support for agencies or programs so that conflicts or negative events can be overcome. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration is mandated by law to provide the American public with full information about its programs. Throughout its history, it has done so with an eye toward building public support. The reservoir of public approval for NASA was evident in the aftermath of the Challenger space shuttle disaster. Although investigations were launched, no one seriously suggested dissolving the agency or its programs.

The practice of public relations in government is much like that in other institutions, but government information officers do face some difficulties unique to their area. Because they are paid with public funds, their mission and legitimacy are questioned more than would be the case in private organizations. Gilbert points out that "the citizen . . . regards government public information activities as wasteful of the taxpayers' money and essentially propagandistic." This is why the Gillett Amendment has never been repealed and why government public relations practitioners ply their trade under euphemisms like "information officer," "public affairs officer," or "education officer."

Unlike the customers of corporations, the constituents of governmental entities are forced to support those entities financially through taxes. Thus, while government may be responsive to political forces, it is not directly responsive to market forces. "Government red tape" has become a sadly accurate cliché and a serious public relations problem.

David Brown points out other problems of public information officers: internal bureaucratic situations that hinder professional efforts; weak job standards; political pressure; and little career development or recognition. Moreover, he states, government public relations specialists are considered "after-the-fact operators;"
To deal with these problems, public information officers may adopt several strategies. First, they should strive to be generalists in both public relations and management skills while becoming expert in the language and discipline of particular fields within government (health, education, transportation, welfare, defense, etc.).

Second, public information officers should practice preventive maintenance, providing policy guidance before programs are approved. Doing so requires them to enter government's management mainstream, as we discussed in chapter 4.

Third, government public relations must develop a service orientation—responding to a public made up of consumers of government services. Moreover, public relations should foster this perspective in all government employees, using established channels of internal communication.

Fourth, government public information officers should concentrate on inputs as much as outputs. As Rabin suggests, "The proverbial general audience will be identified more and more as a consumer public." This calls for getting direct feedback through citizen participation, surveys and questionnaires, and community meetings—feedback that will be used to adjust programs, messages, and media.

Finally, as the downfall of the Nixon administration so aptly demonstrated, great hazards confront governmental attempts to hide failures, ineptitude, or mistakes. Openness is essential to effective government public relations.

Fairfax County, Virginia, has worked to involve citizens in the open communication process that is needed for government to work well (see mini-case 17.2.).

Although employee and media relations are processes important to all institutions, certain aspects are specific to government public relations practice.

The impression citizens have of their government, particularly of local government, is often formed through routine day-to-day contacts between government employees and members of the public. Gilbert points out, "One dissatisfied employee can, by his or her deeds and words, do irreparable harm... if such actions are multiplied by several... the result can be devastating."

Practitioners must foster attitudes of goodwill and respect for the public among governmental employees and officials. Particular attention should be given to face-to-face contacts, correspondence, and telephone conversations.
Interactive Government: Involving Citizens on Many Fronts

Hundreds of citizens testify during budget deliberations. Homeowners join in associations in almost every neighborhood. Other citizens spend their evenings at local government board and commission meetings. Still others volunteer to help the police, the libraries, the animal shelter, or the county's elderly. This is participatory democracy at its best. And Fairfax County, Virginia, has the good fortune—and the challenge—to have all these citizens actively engaged.

The consensus is an important result of citizen involvement. In an era of government bashing and citizen distrust of institutions, citizens most often become either advocates of the process or positive catalysts for change.

When Fairfax County has needed major funding for schools or parks or other capital projects, it has placed a bond issue before the county's voters. The last county government referendum helped finance transportation facilities, including highways and subway/bus facilities. Informing citizens about the bond issue is a major challenge in logistics, usually met under time constraints and with limited resources.

In each recent bond referendum, a citizen task force has played a major and vital role in explaining the electorate the projects to be funded. Task force members meet with editorial boards, citizen groups, reporters, and businesses, and provide a proactive conduit of information to the community. The task force remains neutral on the issues, advocating neither for nor against the bond issue.

The citizen task force reinforces the county’s other information efforts: a cable TV program, a coordinated series of media blitzes, a bond pamphlet sent to all citizens, and major districtwide and countywide information meetings. As a result of this multipronged voter education effort, the vast majority of county bond proposals in recent years have won voter approval because the voters understood the issues.

Literally thousands of other opportunities exist for individuals to make a difference. In fiscal 1994, more than 17,000 volunteers assisted county government, contributing an estimated 850,000 volunteer hours.

Volunteers staff gyms for nighttime sessions, deliver hot meals to the homeless, help at the county animal shelter. One volunteer helped set up the police department's electronic bulletin board, making crime reports available to anyone with access to a computer and a modem.

Electronic communications are beginning to grow in importance as a tool in the county's multifaceted communication efforts. The new Countywide Information Network Bulletin Board offers citizens details on county job openings, Board of Supervisors' agendas and meeting actions, budget and taxes, and requests for proposals on county contracts. The bulletin board becomes interactive when users ask questions via e-mail, and citizens can even download tax forms.

Electronic communications join other ongoing programs such as the county's 24-hour telephone taped information system. In addition, the county's cable television channel offers a variety of information programming and a new bulletin board, and its Weekly Agenda newsletter highlights agendas of the Board of Supervisors and planning and zoning bodies as well as other county government news.

The county also targets specific groups in its communications efforts. Homeowners get special recycling news, and civic homeowner associations receive quarterly mailings of an anthology of county news they can pass along to their memberships. The association mailings are 20- to 25-page documents prepared—camera ready—for the more than 1,400 civic associations to use in their newsletters or on flyers. The material is also available on disk. In this way, the associations receive information that is important to them but may not have been picked up by the media.
As more and more sophisticated electronic means become available and affordable, the citizen-government interaction not only will become easier, it will become faster. The path ahead begins to look like one of the "alternative futures" the County Goals Citizens Commission envisioned eight years ago.

The groundwork, in fact, was laid for interactive government in a statement made by the Goals Commission in its report to the board and the citizenry:

The Commission cannot stress enough its view that citizen participation is essential to good county government and to the public's support of that government. In its ability to touch our daily lives, county government is unique. To serve us well, the county must nurture the ability of its citizens from many diverse backgrounds to express their needs and then must respond to them.


Reception areas should be pleasant and well maintained, and public vehicles should be driven in a safe and courteous fashion.

Rabin puts it this way:

If the image of the government is to be enhanced, the process must take place at the level of the individual employee—his or her productivity, and how he or she conducts encounters with individual citizens. ... Focus will be more and more on internal communications ... employees will be sent more and more as media for communicating with external publics.17

Chapter 11 provides further discussion of the rationale and means for employee communication.

Some commentators seem to believe that media relations has lost importance as a priority of public information officers now that the public increasingly receives government information in more direct forms. J. M. Perry, writing in The Wall Street Journal, observes: "The press release is more or less a decaying institution in Washington... government communicators have turned more and more to sophisticated tools—orchestrated advertising campaigns, television commercials, videotape cassettes. Full-color brochures and glossy magazines." 18 Although government information encompasses an ever-broadening range of media and techniques, plain old media relations still get tremendous attention. Indeed, without government information officers, the news media could not report on governments as effectively and economically as they do.

Government public information officers outgun reporters in numbers and resources. Moreover, reporters often feel lost in local, state, or federal bureaucracies. Under these circumstances, says Cutlip, "An ever-increasing share of news content... is coming often unchanged from the government officer's typewriter. More and more of the governmental news reporting task is abandoned to the practitioner who supplies the information in professional ready-to-use packages." 19 The public information officer thus has an enormous opportunity for media access, but with that access comes the responsibility not to abuse it. Typically, government press officers accept that responsibility. According to Hess, "Releases are
readable and competent, sometimes the press releases were more precise than
the hurried accounts written by general-assignment reporters. 50
Press officers work hard to serve the media and to do so with a high sense
of ethical behavior. Hess describes the qualities of a good press officer: "Stamina,
curiosity, a helpful nature, a good memory, civility, coolness under pressure, and
an understanding of human psychology." 51 Commenting on PIOs' ethical stan-
dards, he says:

For all press secretaries the crux of unethical conduct is lying. Spokesmen are
expected to tell the truth—it is U.S. government policy. They also prefer to tell the
truth. 52

Summing up his observations of governmental media relations, Hess ex-
plains:
The view from inside a press office is that most energy seems to be devoted to trying to
find out what the rest of the agency is doing (often unsuccessfully), gathering material
that has been requested by reporters rather than promoting carefully prepared positions,
and distributing information that is neither controversial nor especially self-serving. 53

Using the Internet

Using technology to communicate with the public is not new in government pub-
lc relations, but the possibilities of the new computer-based technologies make
inexpensive two-way communication a reality for the low operating budgets
prevalent in government public relations.

One use of computer technology is the Internet, and especially World Wide
Web pages. The World Wide Web is composed of home pages that make up web
sites. These home pages often incorporate full-color photos or graphics and text
that can be designed like a brochure or newsletter. To "navigate" or move between
web sites once on the Internet, the user merely points and clicks the computer
mouse. New software, sometimes called "browser software," is used to get people
onto and through the Internet. This software makes using the Internet easy and fun
for even the computer newcomer. With an estimated eight million users in the
United States in 1995, the Internet is quickly becoming a mass medium.

Government web sites range from the White House to local city and county
sites such as one in Hennepin County, Minnesota. (See figure 17.1 for a sample of
government web sites.) Memphis is developing a network of city sites. See mini-
case 17.3 for a look at a network of city web sites.

Web sites can accomplish several objectives:

1. **Communicating with the public.** With the web you can bypass the
media. The web site can supplement your media relations efforts and
may eventually replace much of the media effort.

2. **Communicating with researchers, activists, specialists, and
journalists.** People will use your site for information they need.

3. **Distributing large volumes of information.** Web users can pick and
choose what they want from the information provided. A good web site,
though, routes users to information that interests them.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The National Wildlife Refuge System
Refuges: A Wild Place For Wildlife!

The Blue Goose Server provides information about the National Wildlife Refuge System and topics of interest related to wildlife management and natural resources management.

Other U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Resources
Information Relating To Natural Resources Management
Legislation Information - Federal Government
Tools to search the Internet
Blue Goose Server Signaturess

This page was revised on December 5, 1993.

Your questions and comments will assist us to decide what features and information to add to this server. Send questions about the National Wildlife Refuge System and information being provided to Sean Farness - Sean.Farness@fws.gov, Mail address: Division of Refugees, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS 670, ARLSQ, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203, USA.
Welcome
What is the Department of Education? Read this brief introduction to learn about the Department, its mission and goals, and how it helps Americans achieve higher levels of educational attainment.
What's who at the Department of Education? Check the Department's organizational chart, which leads to information about program offices, organizational units, key staff, and a listing of programs managed by each office. You'll also find where we're located — both in Washington and around the nation. In addition, there's a searchable phone directory so that you can find the person who has answers you need.

- Programs and Services
  What programs does the Department sponsor? What services are available in your state? Check out the new dynamic map of the United States to identify resources and services in your area. Read about the Department's major program themes and then use the Guide to ED Programs to lead you to as much detail as you want on individual programs.

- Publications and Products
  Have we got a document for you! You'll find the full text of many of our publications, all marked-up and ready to be read or searched. Other documents are available via our Gopher system, too.

- Other Sites
  In addition to this site, there are many educational resources available online around the world. This section provides links to some public sites of interest to teachers, students, and researchers. We've also put together lists of Department-funded or affiliated sites and services.

- Search!
  Use great information retrieval tools to find documents at this site or elsewhere on the Internet.

- Picks of the Month
  We pick three great resources every month and highlight them here for you. Our picks are taken from three broad categories: ED-affiliated Internet sites elsewhere, newly available documents of merit, and new selections at this site focusing on individual ED programs and offices.

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The mission of the U.S. Air Force is to defend the United States through control and exploitation of the air and space. The vision: Air Force people building the world's most respected air and space force - global power and reach for America.

The Department of the Air Force is headquartered in the Pentagon, Washington D.C. The service is organized in eight major commands throughout the world which provide combat aircraft, airlift, rotary wing, reconnaissance and other support to the United States Commands.

The Air Force also has more than three dozen Field Operating Agencies and Direct Reporting Units who directly support the mission by providing unique services.

Together with Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard forces, the United States Air Force is the best in the world.


As you browse these pages, in the Air Force Song (243KB) plays in the background. It is performed by the Air Force Combined Heritage of America Band.

AirForce.com is provided through the cooperative efforts of the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force (Public Affairs) and the Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC). This is a government computer system. We welcome comments and suggestions.
Mini-Case 17.3

American Community Network

Imagine turning on your computer to find an art show in Dallas, job openings in Denver, or the best fish to use while fishing in Montana in late July.

Under the American Community Network, a planned network of possibly 1,200 communities beginning in Memphis, Tennessee, you will be linked to a community information clearinghouse through a home page at a World Wide Web site on the Internet (see Figure 17.2).

Information on topics such as educational data, economic statistics, tourism, amenities, sporting events, or entertainment opportunities will be available for these 1,200 communities.

Figure 17.2 Memphs was one of the first cities to link its home page to various businesses, community organizations, and tourist attractions.

Information About Memphis

- Memphis Camerata, Concert Work
- Memphis Chamber Chorale, Concert Work
- Memphis Symphony Orchestra, Concert Work
- Memphis Youth Symphony Orchestra, Concert Work
- Memphis Opera, Concert Work
- Memphis Symphony Orchestra, Community, Community, Music
- Memphis Information
- Stax Museum of American Soul
- Sun Studios of Memphis
-查询 musical performance in Memphis
- The City of Memphis
- Memphis Music, the Jailhouse Guide to Memphis Music, and the Outskirts
- Memphis Staff
- Exploring Memphis
- Memphis Mansions
- Memphis Museums
- Memphis Art Galleries
- Memphis Attractions
- Memphis Aldermen

Memphis Links

Businesses
- Federal Express
- Dyson Corporation
- Turner Broadcasting

Community Organizations
- Memorial Hospital

Memphis, Attractions, Bands
- Sun Studio A, Sun Studio B
- The Living Room
The network is being developed by New Media Publishing for The Chamber of Commerce Executives and Towne Publishing of Memphis. The basic web sites will be sponsored by local chambers of commerce.

Larger cities will be linked together for super sites that will provide a wider variety of information. Organizers plan to have 20 super sites and 200 others created by 1997. For local citizens, the hometown page will be a means of getting local information and keeping informed of city events and services. For the out-of-towner it will provide tourist-type information such as weather reports, sporting event schedules (and possibly tickets), and restaurant guides.

Initial access can be found at http://www.memphis.acn.net.

Source: Jody Calahan, "Memphis Will Be 1st City on Internet Data Finder," The Commercial Appeal (Memphis, 6 November 1996), C-2.

4. **Publicizing anything from a new policy to an upcoming event.** A web site is accessible all over the world, and it can be updated easily. You can also use other media to invite the public to your web site.

5. **Soliciting public comment.** The web provides a two-way communication medium. You can build in an e-mail option with a click of the mouse.34

The single most conspicuous and important government public relations practitioner is the presidential press secretary. As the chief public relations spokesperson for the administration, he or she communicates policies and practices to the public while providing input into governmental decision making. The unfortunate wounding of press secretary Jim Brady during an assassination attempt on President Reagan shows that the job even carries an element of danger. The following

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**The Presidential Press Secretary**

The presidential press secretary is the most conspicuous and important government public relations practitioner. George Stephanopoulos was President Bill Clinton’s first press secretary.
description of the press secretary’s job can be applied to all government public relations duties in general. Several times a day, the presidential press secretary stands before largely hostile media representatives and fields questions for the president. The smallest misstatement can lead the world to think there has been a change in White House policy.

According to William Safire, a speechwriter for President Nixon who became a political columnist for The New York Times,

A good press secretary speaks up for the press to the President and speaks out for the President to the press. He makes his home in the pitted no-man’s-land of an adversary relationship and is primarily an advocate, interpreter and amplifier. He must be more the President’s man than the press’s. But he can be his own man as well.

Gerald Ford’s two press secretaries give differing perspectives on the relationship that should exist between the practitioner and the president. Gerald terHorst quit after Ford pardoned Nixon, commenting, “A spokesman should feel in his heart and mind that the Chief’s decision is the right one so that he can speak with a persuasiveness that stems from conviction.”

Ron Nessan, who replaced terHorst, took a different view: “A press secretary does not always have to agree with the President. His first loyalty is to the public, and he should not knowingly lie or mislead the press.” Larry Speakes, spokesman for the Reagan White House agrees, “If I lose my reputation for being truthful,” he says, “I’ve lost everything.”

Whether or not a practitioner must agree with his or her boss is a matter of personal conscience. Loyalty to the public and an ability to foster communications in both directions, however, are essential aspects of the job just as they are for all public relations professionals.

Public Relations and Political Campaigns

Government really cannot be discussed without regard to political context. While government provides many and diverse services to its constituents, its policies are guided by politics. The political campaign is the most overt expression of politics. Public relations activity on behalf of political candidates is practically synonymous with the campaign itself.

Political campaigning is a nonstop industry, raising hundreds of millions of dollars from political action committees (see chapter 15) and others and spending that money to attract votes. Public relations plays a critical role in both raising and spending those funds.

The public relations practitioner in the political campaign is not just a spokesperson to the media but usually also a trusted adviser who helps formulate campaign strategy and positions on issues. Gaining votes first requires gaining funds, media exposure, and volunteers. Public relations works hard to attract all three. These resources must then be converted into political support.

Some campaign tactics in which public relations may be involved include the following:

- Developing computerized mail campaigns.
- Coordinating broadcast, print, and other advertising.
Scouting sites for speeches and other campaign events.
Staging events to increase candidate visibility.
Raising campaign funds.
Preparing news releases concerning candidates' activities, positions, and schedules.
Writing speeches and position papers.
Coordinating research on issues and voters.
Providing briefings and background sessions for the media and others.
Attracting and coordinating volunteers.

All of this activity is designed to get the candidate elected so that he or she can become a part of the governing process. Campaign press aides to successful candidates often join government as well.

Contemporary political campaigning is frequently criticized for the extent to which the process has become one of "包装" and "selling" candidates. Public relations has received much of the blame for this perceived phenomenon. Indeed, public relations practitioners have changed the nature of political campaigns in both negative and positive ways.

Candidates are criticized for paying too much attention to polls and for trying to be what people want them to be rather than being themselves. When operating ethically, positively, and professionally, public relations practitioners facilitate two-way communication between candidates and constituencies. They help candidates gain public attention for themselves and their positions. Moreover, public relations people help candidates understand what voters want and expect. Such understanding is essential in a representative form of government.

The success of many government programs depends on the dispensation of adequate information about them to relevant publics. The president and the police officer, the legislator and the librarian all rely on public information officers to do their jobs effectively and efficiently. Government programs ranging from soil conservation to crime prevention, from anti-litter campaigns to army recruitment depend on public relations.

R. L. Rings demonstrated the dramatic impact of governmental public relations in a study of 70 Ohio school districts. Rings analyzed 35 school districts that employed public information officers and 35 that did not. The districts with public information officers received significantly more news coverage. Moreover, where public information officers were on staff, the news focused on student and public affairs; without public information officers, coverage consisted mainly of sports and administrative news. The most telling findings, however, concerned the finances of the school districts.

Financial records indicated that the director systems' current average operating millage was two mills above the state mean, whereas the non-director systems average operating millage was four mills below the state mean. In local support per pupil, the director sample averaged $374 to the nondirector sample average of $275.79.
It could be argued that only more affluent school districts can afford public relations directors, but it is probable that such directors in Ohio had an impact on public support of education that directly translated into financial support.

**Summary**

Public relations is just as critical to governmental organizations as it is to other institutions. Since government activities depend so much on public opinion, public relations is the stuff of government. Rather than seeking to ban public relations from government, citizens should recognize its legitimacy, and public relations specialists should work toward making its practice ever more professional, responsible, and efficient.

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**Case Study**

In early summer, officials from Kern County, California, contracted to have a "chip seal" of small rocks applied to the only road leading in and out of the mountain community of Frazier Park, about 75 miles north of Los Angeles. The chip seal would provide better road traction during icy and snowy conditions in the high mountain country. Several thousand people live in small isolated communities along the 13-mile stretch of road. The contractor began applying the rocks to the road, but something went wrong, and things did not stick to the tar sealant. It was also reported that the contractor's heavyweight rolling machine had broken down, and thus he could not pack down the rocks and gravel.

The road became extremely dangerous, with cars encountering flying gravel and stones. Reportedly, the contractor's own trucks caused a great deal of damage as they roared up and down the road at high speeds, showering passing cars with rocks. During the next two days, approximately 600 cars suffered severe damage, including broken windshields and headlights and ruined paint. Irate local residents bombarded the county supervisor with calls, and he assured them that all damage would be repaired by the contractor's insurance company. He advised each caller to get two damage estimates, submit them to the insurance company, and wait until everything was paid.

The hundreds of local residents did that, then waited and waited and waited. After three months, with no action from the insurance company (a very large national firm, United States Fidelity and Guaranty—USF&G), residents contacted the firm's regional office in Fresno. Many were treated in a curt and rude manner, and a number of residents reported that the firm's officials had hung up on them.

Finally, in September, all residents who had filed claims received a form letter from the insurance company denying any settlement. The insurance firm said it had closely investigated the insured's behavior and had concluded that he had
done nothing wrong. The denial letter also stated that all those sustaining damage had driven in a reckless and careless manner and thus had caused their own damage. Local residents were extremely angry and insisted that the big insurance company, thought it was sloshing off a bunch of dumb mountain hillbillies! The fact that dozens of California Highway Patrol cars, county sheriff’s cars, and U.S. Forest Service vehicles had also sustained severe damage made the insurance firm’s claims of reckless driving a bit ludicrous! The total damage to local residents’ vehicles was estimated at approaching $1 million.

One of the local residents called a public meeting in the town hall to discuss ways to fight the insurance company. Hundreds of irate citizens showed up, filling the hall to overflowing.

Questions

1. Did the county supervisor have additional responsibility beyond “passing the buck” to the insurance company? What was his responsibility after the insurance company refused to pay?

2. Obviously, the insurance company officials in this case mishandled the situation. What should they have done? If they were going to deny all claims, could they have used public relations techniques to ease the tensions? What would you have done differently?

3. Considering the heated situation the insurance firm now finds itself in, what would you, as its public relations director, do next? Can you save the day for the firm?

4. Would “stonewalling” (attempting to prevent information from getting out) be a viable alternative for the insurance firm? What are the potential risks of such an action?

5. Do the local residents really have any power in fighting the big national company and its apparently arbitrary decision? Could the citizens use public relations techniques in their battle against the insurance firm?

6. If the local residents launched a negative publicity campaign against the insurance company in an attempt to equalize and neutralize its power and size, would this be fair or ethical?

Notes


3. Ibid., 8.


5. Ibid., 5.


9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
21. Ibid. 42.
22. Ibid. 45.
23. Ibid. 44.
27. J. W. Hill, "Nissan Lots Ways He Has Improved Public Relations," Editor and Publisher (10 April 1975): 40.
Corporate Public Relations

Preview

Public relations efforts designed to improve public attitudes toward private enterprise must address the credibility of corporations, corporate concern for individuals on a human scale, public understanding of economic realities, and corporate willingness to lead society toward change.

Renewed business credibility must be built on honest performance, open communication, consistency between performance and communication, commitment to problem solving, and establishment of feasible expectations.

To ensure public confidence in business, public relations should act as business’s eyes and ears, as a receiver of the subtle information that signals societal demands, and as a purveyor of information that moves management toward effective response.

Small business owners and managers typically serve as their own public relations experts. They can and should be involved with media, community, employee, customer, supplier, financial, and political relations. Such efforts promote and protect the small business and also improve its profitability.

Public relations is practiced more extensively and with more impact in large business organizations than anywhere else. Public relations is a means by which businesses seek to improve their ability to do business.

Other major issues of special significance for corporate public relations in the last half of the 1990s and into the early 21st century include globalization of business operations thus of public relations, increased emphasis on diversity issues, intensified crises and disasters, and unprecedented technological change.

Organizations that cannot understand the new era and navigate a path through the transition are vulnerable and will be bypassed.

—Don Tapscott and Art Cameron
Paradigm Shift
Businesses deal with and adapt to increasingly complex and dynamic environments. They manage relations with a variety of publics and balance behavior in response to many, often conflicting, demands. They confront numerous complicated and pressing issues, including business ethics, equal opportunity, the quality of work life, consumerism, environmentalism, global commerce, and others.

Large corporations have substantial resources available to invest in public relations efforts. They do not invest, however, unless they believe the amounts spent will yield even greater returns. Thus, while public relations is allotted great scope and resources in business organizations, it is also held closely accountable for producing desired results.

As indicated in earlier chapters, public relations is practiced by all managers in business, not just by those whose titles or job descriptions contain the term. Top-level executives are expected to spend substantial portions of their energies and efforts on public relations-related matters. Consequently, while the status of public relations has recently been elevated in business organizations, public relations specialists who possess only traditional skills risk being restricted to technical roles.

Obviously, all of the chapters in this book dealing with the practice, the process, and the publics of public relations apply directly to business public relations. Businesses use media relations to gain support and sympathy from print and broadcast outlets, to generate positive publicity, to tell business's side of the story, and to reduce negative publicity or at least keep it in perspective.

Employee relations is important to business as it contributes to harmonious labor relations and helps attract and retain good employees. Effective employee communication can also stimulate worker creativity and input, boost attitudes and morale, improve product quality and customer service, and enhance productivity.

Community relations is a business concern because it supports sales, attracts employees, improves the quality of public services, provides support for business initiatives, and improves the quality of life for employees and executives.

Business is greatly concerned with consumer relations. Corporations want to build positive relations with customers, respond effectively to consumer complaints and problems, and support sales and marketing efforts.

As our chapter on financial relations indicates, sound financial communication allows business to attract capital at the lowest possible cost. Other financial relations goals include ensuring that public firms' stock is appropriately valued, building knowledge and confidence in fund sources, and responding to investor questions or needs.

Finally, public affairs deals with business's interaction with government on various levels. Government relations have direct impact on a business's flexibility and manageability. Regulation, taxation, labor law, and international trade policies are only a few ways in which governmental actions constrain business decision making and success.

In short, public relations is a means by which businesses seek to improve their ability to do business. Effective public relations smooths and enhances a company's operations and eases and increases its sales. It enables a business to
better anticipate and adapt to societal demands and trends. It is the means by which businesses improve their operating environments.

The demands placed on large corporations are great and diverse. Business organizations must fulfill a long list of domestic responsibilities and still compete effectively in domestic and international markets.

International competitiveness has been among the greatest challenges facing business in the last decade. Cooperative arrangements between business and government in Japan, West Germany, and other countries represent a competitive advantage over the often adversarial relations found in the United States. Public relations in business must help corporations and society accept and conform to two "Iron Laws." 

1. The Iron Law of Responsibility: In the long run, those who do not use power in a manner which society considers responsible will tend to lose it.

2. The Iron Law of Cooperation: Those societies who do not establish cooperative relationships will tend to decline economically.

To compete successfully in the global market, corporations must use and retain their power responsibly in relation to the demands of various domestic publics. Moreover, if our societal institutions cannot develop cooperative relationships, we will face economic decline. The job of public relations in large corporations is ultimately to ensure that corporate power is maintained through responsible use and to help develop cooperative relationships between corporations and other societal institutions. To successfully promote attainment of these goals, public relations practitioners must understand and deal with public opinion concerning business. In this chapter, we will consider what attitudes the public holds toward private enterprise; how corporate management responds to those attitudes; what corporations, trade associations, and others are doing about the situation; and what else might be done. We hope to produce an accurate picture of these problems and to suggest a role public relations can play in their solution. We will also examine several key issues facing public relations practitioners today and in the immediate future.

The 1970s marked an era of decline in positive attitudes toward U.S. business; however, evidence of an attitude change came in 1980. The election of Ronald Reagan as president marked an upswing in those attitudes. Indeed, public attitudes—particularly among students—became much more favorable toward private enterprise. Once again, entrepreneurs were American heroes.

By the 1990s, however, the public opinion pendulum seemed to be swinging again. Massive trade deficits pointed to the weakness of American corporate competitiveness. Big business in particular received criticism from all sides. Government officials hurled charges of "corporacy," while so-called "corporate raiders" vilified entrenched executives for selfishness and mismanagement. Insider trading scandals rocked Wall Street as record numbers of postdepression bank closings rocked Main Street in many U.S. cities and towns. Massive layoffs...
Consumer confidence is often related to financial news reports.

**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**

Due to corporate restructuring suggested that the little guy would be stepped on without feeling when the corporate titans began their dance.

**Reasons for Negative Attitudes**

Various reasons have been advanced for the unpopularity of American business: the unresponsiveness of business to customers; the mass media's treatment of business; a general distrust of institutions and power; the failure of business to tell its own story; unrealistic expectations of business; crime, misdemeanors, and corporate misconduct; so-called economic illiteracy (a lack of public understanding of profits, productivity, and the laws of supply and demand); and many others. Most explanations contain some truth, but no single reason is sufficient to explain the phenomenon.

**Effects of Negative Attitudes**

The potential consequences of adverse public opinion are many and diverse. Business executives recognize that private enterprise enjoys no constitutional guarantee—private and corporate business are carried out at the public's pleasure. The ballot box, the media, and the marketplace are mechanisms through which U.S. citizens express their approval or disapproval of the ways, means, and institutions through which the nation's business is conducted.

Trends such as the environmental and consumer movements, increases in governmental regulations, and calls for social responsibility are direct consequences of negative public attitudes toward private enterprise.

**Dealing with Negative Attitudes**

The public's attitude toward business is an issue confronting all businesses and the professionals who represent them. Dealing with opinions concerning the whole private enterprise system, however, requires a substantial shift in orientation for the public relations practitioner. Instead of working on behalf of a particular and
specific institution, organization, individual, product, or idea, the practitioner is asked to promote what could best be described as a way of life.

It is safe to conclude that public relations efforts designed to improve public attitudes toward private enterprise as a whole will not work. The real issue is not private enterprise; rather it is business attitudes and behavior. To be effective, corporate public relations efforts must focus on the following factors:

1. The credibility of corporations and corporate management
2. Demonstration of corporate concern for individuals on a human scale
3. A more thorough public understanding of the economic realities of corporate life including profits, productivity, pricing, and the distribution of the sales dollar.
4. A willingness on the part of business to help solve the problems of U.S. society and lead the country toward change.

In the next section of this chapter, we will discuss each of these factors in turn.

If business and private enterprise are to exert positive influence on public attitudes toward business, they must be perceived by the public as trustworthy. In a sense, businesses have and always will have one strike against them in this respect. Research into techniques of persuasion clearly demonstrates that disinterested parties are perceived as more credible than interested ones. As long as the profit motive drives business (that is, as long as businesses are businesses), spokespersons will be perceived as self-interested. Today, *caveat emptor* is directed as much toward business’s words and deeds as toward its products. Hill & Knowlton executive William A. Durban says simply, “The single most critical problem facing today is lost credibility.”

Other reasons for the lack of corporate credibility include records of evading taxes, disclaiming responsibility, exaggerating facts, or overpromising results. Perhaps the most devastating cause is the systematic violation of expected business behavior that has largely been built on an image projected by business itself. Business, in effect, has not lived up to the standards set for it by the American public. According to George A. Steiner, “Society expects business to help society improve the quality of life, and expectations are running ahead of reality.”

Areas where business has failed to meet public expectations run the gamut from economic performance (as it relates to improving living standards, combating poverty, controlling business cycles, fostering employment, etc.) to social performance (rebuidling cities, eliminating discrimination, promoting world peace, etc.) to scientific and technological performance (finding cures for disease, controlling pollution, reducing accidents, etc.). Richard Darrow explains that the public’s inflated expectations are the result of what he calls business’s “five big mistakes.”
How to Destroy Corporate Credibility

"Did you ever have one of those days when you felt like you were driving down the highway of life in a Ford Pinto on Firestone 500 radials?" What turns a good company into a bad joke?

In today's world, a corporation's success is a function not only of how it manufactures and markets its products but also of how it is viewed by its publics.

Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, second-largest in the industry, lost its credibility—and damaged the credibility of business as a whole—in what has come to be known as the "500 Fiasco." Shortly after Firestone introduced its "500" line of steel-belted radial tires, questions were raised regarding their safety.

Federal authorities charged that the tires were prone to blowouts, tread separations, and other dangerous deformities. Thousands of customer complaints, hundreds of accidents, and at least 34 deaths formed the basis of their allegations. In the process, profits became losses as customers deserted the company, millions of tires were recalled, stock prices plummeted, and takeover attempts, once unthinkable, were sought.

Meanwhile, the company had been hit with over 250 lawsuits. In some cases, settlements exceeded $1 million. Through it all, Firestone steadfastly maintained that the company had been unjustly accused, that nothing was fundamentally wrong with the tire, and that its failure could be blamed on consumer neglect (overinflating tires) and abuse (hitting curbs).

Firestone made every effort to avoid negative consequences. In fact, the company made too many efforts and became its own worst enemy. Firestone provoked hostility and doubt by failing to cooperate with government agencies, attempting to thwart investigations by regulatory agencies and Congress, trying to publicly impugn investigator motives, and engaging in legalistic maneuvering and hair-splitting. All of these activities were widely reported in the mass media (to which Firestone officials told lies).

Despite all the company's efforts, the government eventually forced recall of all "500" radials on the market.

Even before the massive recall, Firestone had lost not only the battle but the war. It now stands as an example of why government regulation is desirable and necessary. It is also an example of how not to deal with government and the public.

He argues that business formerly took credit—or permitted the American public to give it credit—for material prosperity

1. Furnished by mass production and mass marketing of products, some of which had defects that were only gradually detected;
2. Energized by a speculative stock market;
3. Based on underpriced fuel and raw materials from less developed countries, many of which have ceased to cooperate;
4. Provided at the cost of mismanaged solid, liquid, and gaseous wastes; and
5. Measured largely against the illusory statistics of spiraling wage and price inflation.
In short, American business made promises it could not keep, accepted credit for accomplishments that were not really its own, pushed costs and problems into a future that has now arrived, oversold and underdelivered, and kept score with a crooked measuring stick. Whether such mistakes and misdemeanors are intentional or not, and whether business is the perpetrator or the victim of these circumstances, is not the point. What matters is that public and consumer expectations have been pumped up in thousands of small ways—through corporate statements, advertising, marketing techniques, and public relations—and that those expectations have not been fulfilled.

In the early 1930s, President Hoover and American business promised that “prosperity is right around the corner.” When the promises proved false, the American public invited Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal to change the face of American business, government, and society. Such is the power of promises perceived to be broken.

Credibility once lost is difficult to regain. Nevertheless, a number of policies, if implemented and practiced by businesses individually and collectively, can contribute substantially to the reestablishment of public trust.

**Openness and Honesty** As a first step, business must tear down the walls. The notion that public relations can be used as a shield is passé. The idea that the corporate domain is impervious to the prying eyes and ears of consumers, competitors, the media, and the regulators is an illusion. Honesty is no longer just the best policy; it is the only policy when even painful truths cannot be securely and permanently hidden. Procter & Gamble’s handling of Dely tampons, Johnson & Johnson’s Tylenol response, and the Pepsi-Cola hoax all show how businesses have become more open and forthcoming.

Complete candor and forthrightness is the only way to achieve credibility. This candor, though, must be active rather than passive. It is not enough to say, “I will answer any question,” when you know that your audience does not necessarily know what questions to ask. Instead, businesses must listen to their constituents (including employees, customers, regulators, and other stakeholders) and respond to their incompletely articulated questions and concerns.

U.S. corporations, represented by their upper-level executives, must reach out to their communities directly and through the media on a regular and continuing basis, responding to public concerns and explaining the impacts of and rationales for corporate actions and decisions. Chief executive officers recognize in most cases that they should play the leading role in public outreach. It is no longer uncommon for top executives to spend one-fourth to more than one-half of their time on externalities.

In responding to the public’s desire and need to know, businesses must go further than ever before in releasing what was previously considered confidential information. Marshall C. Lewis, former head of Union Carbide’s communication department, states, “I think we have no choice but to accept less confidentiality as the quid pro quo for greater credibility. Openness has become the name of the credibility game.”

**Restoring Credibility**
Openness, in this case, refers again to many publics. Employees need more information on the finances, economics, and policies of their employers. Members of communities in which businesses operate should be informed in advance of decisions and actions that may affect them. Corporations have already learned painfully that voluntary disclosure of corporate problems, mistakes, or wrongdoing hurts far less than the later discovery of coverups by regulators or the media.

**Consistent Actions** The second step in restoring the credibility of business is to resolve the glaring contradictions of business behavior. Too often, what business says and what it does fail to correspond. There are gaps between mouth and movement, code and conduct, espoused theory and actual practice. These inconsistencies undermine business credibility. For example, the promise is that private enterprise rewards individuals on the basis of ability rather than birth. Yet, being born on the wrong side of the tracks, belonging to a poor family rather than a rich one, being black or white, male or female, or having an accent still affects individual opportunities. In many cases, what you get—good or bad—does not correspond with what you do.

Some business people preach free and open markets while they seek to restrict freedom and act in secrecy. Even those who claim to fear for the future of private enterprise may only fear the loss of privileges they currently enjoy through abuse of that system.

Some business people who crusade publicly against government intervention and regulation are also quick to rush off to Washington or to the state capital to seek favorable legislation, treaties, tariffs, regulations, and policies. A steel company that resists the Environmental Protection Agency on ideological grounds one day but insists on protective tariffs on pragmatic grounds the next appears self-serving at best and hypocritical at worst.

**Social Responsibility** Third, if business is to be treated and trusted as a central force in American society, it must address issues perceived as crucial to society. Although we will discuss this matter at greater length later in the chapter, we should note here that for the sake of credibility, businesses must be visibly involved in the public realm, making substantial commitments in tune, energy, resources, and discipline toward solving problems of public importance.

In a sense, the focus of corporate concerns needs to be refined. As one former major corporate CEO put it:

Companies like ours are public institutions with several publics to account to—not just shareholders. This requires a different type of informational approach. Part of my job is to be a public figure and to take positions on public issues, not just company activities.

Mini-case 18.2 demonstrates how a relatively small action aimed at providing sound incentives to employees can build credibility, employee morale, and sales.

**Public Education** Finally, business must strive to offer the public a better understanding of what it can do, what it cannot do, how it operates, and what are the constraints on its operations. Public expectations must be brought into line with reality.
Mini-Case 18.2

Chick-fil-A: Employee Scholarships Demonstrate Good Corporate Citizenship

Fast-food chains sometimes suffer from the public perception that they take advantage of undereducated, often underprivileged teenagers, working teens long hours for low wages. Chick-fil-A, Inc., the nation’s third-largest quick-service chicken company operating 650 restaurants in 34 states and Canada, and with plans to open in 10 South African nations, counters the image by offering very attractive scholarship opportunities to its employees.

Since the program was initiated in 1973, the Atlanta-based Chick-fil-A has given $1.0 million “Team Member” scholarships exceeding a total of $10 million to more than 10,000 outstanding restaurant employees who “have demonstrated a strong work ethic, determination, and commitment to the chain,” according to S. Truett Cathy, founder and CEO. Cathy believes business is more than a matter of profits; it is a matter of social responsibility. “We’re also in the people business. Young people are investments in the future,” he says. A 23-foot sculpture along Peachtree Street near the Georgia State University campus in downtown Atlanta commemorates the scholarships with the inscription, “No goal is too high if we climb with care and confidence.”

To qualify for a scholarship, a restaurant employee must have completed high school, must have worked for Chick-fil-A for two consecutive years and 2,000 working hours, and must use the scholarship to attend any accredited school. To date, employees have received scholarships to more than 1,200 institutions, and they represent almost every profession—from engineers to veterinarians attending schools from Abilene Christian University to Yale. In 1984, Truett Cathy also founded the WinShape Center Foundation, which annually awards 20 to 30 $16,000 joint scholarships, funded equally by Berry College, to students wishing to attend that institution in Rome, Georgia.

According to the Council for Aid to Education, no other company “does as much in the scholarship area in terms of the company’s size.” It’s remarkable. And the “Team Member” scholarship program is growing. Chick-fil-A is on track to award $20 million in scholarships by the year 2000.

Source: Lynne M. Saltal, Ph.D., APR, Assistant Professor of Public Relations, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

Renewed credibility must be built on a firm foundation of honest performance, open communication, and resolution of inconsistencies between performance and communication. Business should reemphasize its commitments to problem solving in areas usually considered beyond its purview, and business should avoid raising or encouraging expectations that cannot be met. Restoring business credibility is, however, only a first step in the overall rehabilitation of public attitudes toward business.

Frequently, the public develops attitudes toward business neither by reading stories about business in the newspaper nor by listening to the pronouncements of executives in public forums. Most people develop their opinions as a result of their experiences as consumers, employees, or investors. Every interaction between buyer and seller or employee and employer has not only economic but educational and political implications.
Polls have revealed the widespread belief that business lacks concern for the consumer. Harris found that 71 percent of the population feels business will do nothing to help the consumer that might reduce its own profits—unless forced to do so. It is really not necessary, though, to go to the pollsters to discover consumer dissatisfaction. Everyone has not one but several horror stories about experiences as a customer, including battles with computers, insensitive salespeople, false and misleading advertising, abusive repair services, warranty problems, and so on. At the heart of all such difficulties is the consumer’s perception that business is unconcerned and unresponsive. Business on too many occasions reinforces feelings of depersonalization and alienation—of being just a number. It is in this fertile ground of hostility and alienation that the roots of the consumer movement have grown.

At some point, the people say (as they did in the popular film *Network*), “I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take it any more!” Consumer relations was discussed at length in chapter 13, but we will touch here on ways it can improve public attitudes toward private enterprise.

Researchers Z. V. Lambert and F. W. Kniffin analyzed the concept of alienation and concluded that it “provides important insights into the propelling forces behind consumerism.” When looking at the feeling of powerlessness that is an important component of alienation, they found that:

From a consumer standpoint, powerlessness is a feeling or belief held by a person that as an individual he cannot influence business behavior to be more in accord with his needs and interests.

Since many dissatisfied consumers feel they cannot obtain redress through the offending companies, they either live with their anger or make their complaints and seek resolution at the institutional level. They turn to the courts, the regulatory agencies, or the mass media for action. Consequently, when businesses are continually unresponsive and insensitive to the problems of individual consumers, they invite public attitudes and actions that will eventually restrict the freedom of private enterprise.

Standard public relations techniques cannot address these problems. Educational efforts designed to inform consumers about their real clout in the marketplace cannot address these problems either. Lambert and Kniffin offer a five-point program that could be called “point-of-sale public relations.” It addresses problems of consumer alienation by enabling even very large corporations to respond to individuals as individuals. Following are elements of the program:

1. A corporate mechanism and a willingness to implement consumer proposals;
2. An information system that monitors consumer concerns and irritating;
3. Corporate conditioning and mechanisms for rapidly alleviating consumer dissatisfaction;
4. A control system to prevent practices that inadvertently produce consumer dissatisfaction; and
5. Employee training, evaluation, and compensation methods that provide incentives for satisfying consumers. If attitudes toward business are to become more positive, the quality of the average individual's daily experiences with it must be improved. The role of public relations in this effort is to advise top management of appropriate responses to alienated consumers and to assist in implementing point-of-sale public relations

Many polls have shown that Americans severely overestimate average business profits on sales. In one survey, 10 percent was considered a just and reasonable profit on sales, although in reality, average profit is less than 5 percent. When a poll stated, "Excessive profits are one of the most important causes of inflation today," 74 percent of the respondents agreed. Opinion was split equally regarding the statement, "The country would be a lot better off if the government put a tight lid on the percentage of profit any business can make." As many as 45 percent agreed that "most companies could afford to raise wages 10 percent without raising prices," while 29 percent disagreed. When these opinions are analyzed, it is obvious that they are based on erroneous information about the magnitude of profits. Widespread misinformation, together with Americans' inflated expectations, suggests that mass economic education might remedy negative public attitudes toward private enterprise (see figure 18.1).

Several surveys have shown that many people lack the knowledge and skills to make intelligent individual decisions in the marketplace, let alone to comprehend or appreciate the private enterprise system as a whole. The term economic illiteracy is now widely used to describe this condition. Sylvia Porter has labeled this illiteracy "a fundamental threat to the survival of our capitalist systems." Still other studies underscore the need for economic education by showing a strong correlation between people's attitudes toward private enterprise and the amount of economic information they have (see figure 18.2).

The battle against economic illiteracy is being waged on several fronts. With the support of thousands of businesses, centers for economic education and charts of private enterprise have been established at colleges and universities throughout the United States and abroad to develop objective economic understanding among teachers, students, and others. Many states have mandated economics for high school curricula. The Advertising Council, the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, and the National Association of Manufacturers have developed programs that respond to this need, as have hundreds of major corporations, using their advertising and employee communication systems. In effect, economic education itself has become a minor industry. Although it is difficult to assess the effect of all the activity aimed at reducing economic illiteracy, two conclusions can be drawn:

1. Those who claim that economic education is sufficient to correct the problem of negative public attitudes are mistaken. Economic education
as a remedy can be effective only in the context of the people's overall economic experience. Business credibility and individual responsiveness must be restored if economic education is to achieve its desired ends.

2. Those who claim that economic education is inherently inappropriate for achieving the goal of improved public opinion toward business are also mistaken. Real gaps of knowledge and understanding do exist and have helped create public attitudes. Thus, depending on the means and methods by which it is pursued, economic education can be an effective antidote to negative public opinion.

Public relations, always charged with providing information and building public sympathy for organizations and their activities, is in the thick of corporate efforts to improve public understanding of private enterprise. Its functions include
ABOUT GM

General Motors has operations in 53 countries and worldwide employment nearing 171,000 people. Best known as a full-line vehicle manufacturer, GM is recognized for its leading vehicles and performance cars. For many years, the company has set the pace in the development of such advancements as残疾人-friendly vehicles, CVT transmission and the world's first mass-produced hybrid vehicle.

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

The dominant, powerful industry in a region's economy and the U.S. economy in terms of all values of its output, the jobs it creates, the revenue it generates and the taxes it pays.

Material Consumptions in the Automotive Industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Percent of U.S. Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steel</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copper</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stainless</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aluminum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plastic</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>2%</td>
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</table>

The rate and source of crude vehicle production, includes revenue from the sale of all vehicles produced.

TOTAL U.S. AUTOMOTIVE-RELATED MATERIALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
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<td>19,000,000</td>
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<td>Glass</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>

Figure 18.2: GM addresses economic contributions in its annual public issues report.
advancing corporate management, developing programs, and disseminating information. Unfortunately, many economic education efforts to date have been ineffective.

**Preaching to the Choir** Economic education efforts have too often been directed toward audiences that already understand and agree with the points being made. Although such activities reinforce communicators, making them feel good, they serve little useful purpose in improving public understanding. "A lot of business people want to preach to the choir," says TRW, Inc.'s Richard A. Condon. "That does no good whatsoever."

Perhaps even worse is the tendency to communicate as though you were preaching to the choir when in fact you are not. Critics of economic education have labeled such efforts propagandistic indoctrination. Preaching "the gospel of private enterprise" to nonbelievers will result in rejection of messages at best and in reinforcement of negative attitudes at worst.

Who are the nonbelievers? Many business people think that students constitute the major market for economic education; thus, they are content to support academics and teachers in traditional roles. The far bigger market, however, consists of people who have already left school. In fact, the primary audience for economic education may be business and its employees.

Economic understanding programs for employees should be built on the specifics of corporate finances, activities, and economics as they affect the individual. Bethlehem Steel, Dow Chemical, Firestone, GTE, Kemper, Owens Corning Fiberglas, Priney-Bowes, TRW, and other companies have used that approach.

To be effective for any audience, economic education must be communicated objectively and the facts allowed to speak for themselves. Moreover, information should be presented in ways that are meaningful to the audience and related to their needs and values. Finally, while facts are important, they are insufficient. Most attitudes are at least in part emotionally derived. Consequently, affective as well as cognitive dimensions of learning must be addressed. In a strike situation, for instance, all the facts a company can muster will pale before the sight of one striker's suffering family. Economic education must be exciting and alive, appealing to the emotions and the intellect while walking the thin line between propagandistic manipulation and objective presentation of reality.

**Cowboys and Indians** Often, economic education efforts are scare tactics in which the so-called enemies of private enterprise are reviled while its heroes are stoutly defended. The "enemies" may be socialistic conspiracies, creeping socialism, consumer activists, government regulators, or simply critics of business behavior. It is important to remember, however, that little sentiment exists in the United States in favor of socialism, that consumer activism and government regulation are arguably necessary checks on business behavior, and that critics sometimes express legitimate grievances on behalf of the public. In any case, defensive postures lack both credibility and persuasiveness.

Moreover, if economic education is to be believable, it must resist the temptation to equate private enterprise with big business as it is practiced in the United States. As we noted earlier, opinion polls indicate that private enterprise has broad
support. But private enterprise is in danger at least in part because it is too often identified with huge corporations—that is, collective organizations that are not private, involve little entrepreneurship, promote dependence and conformity, and have on many occasions sought to avoid risk and responsibility. If economic education is to present private enterprise in ideal terms, it must also point out areas where the ideal is not being achieved.

It is not the function of economic education to paint business as the good guy in the white hat. In fact, effective economic education can actually reveal to the public abuses of the private enterprise system by government, business, or other institutions. Individuals educated in economics and business will be able to recognize monopolistic and other unfair business practices. They will demand information and openness from business, not only about products but also about the ways business is conducted.

In short, when undertaking the economic education of the American public, business risks increasing scrutiny, demands to honor its promises, and most of all, change.

First Do No Harm. We have repeatedly mentioned polls showing that the public has an exaggerated notion of business profits. Where do people get their ideas about sales profits? Some have suggested that surveys respondents have not understood the distinction between profit and markup. A more obvious reason, however, is a recent trend in business reporting. In the rush to impress investors with reports of quarterly earnings, public relations staffs can undo years of carefully nurtured economic understanding.

One example was a newspaper headline which reported a major company's "Profits Up 273 Percent." During the next few days, other corporations' second-quarter earnings were reported in similar terms. An auto maker's profits were up 313 percent; three chemical companies' profits were up 109 percent, 430 percent, and 947 percent, respectively. Various sources reported that all industries enjoyed average profit increases ranging from 31 to 36 percent. People who have business experience understand those figures and can immediately put them in perspective. Indeed, such statistics are designed to impress knowledgeable stockholders and investors. But these astronomically high figures also reach the general public, who interpret them as big, even "obscene" profits.

Admittedly, those who know what they are looking for and are willing to search for information or apply a calculator to a newspaper article can dig out the real story. One can learn, for instance, that one company's return on sales rose from 3.6 to 7.3 percent, figures that are impressive to the trained eye but not inflammatory to the untrained one. Of course, even these numbers can be manipulated. A company can still express the increase by claiming a 103-percent increase in profit as a percent of sales or simply stating it as an increase of 3.7 percent in profits as a percent of revenues. As D'Autremont said, there are lies, damn lies, and statistics.

An insurance company offered another example of inflammatory rhetoric, reporting "operating earnings...almost four times greater than...a year earlier." Consumers who do not understand the statistics that follow this claim
consider their higher insurance premiums and conclude that they are being ripped off. With the help of a calculator, however, one can see that the company’s margins rose from .92 percent to 2.57 percent. An informed emotional response changes from hostility to sympathy. But the company cannot assume that the ordinary consumer will understand such figures.

If we want the public to understand profits or private enterprise, we must see to it that communicators present information in terms the public can understand. Statistics must illuminate, not exaggerate. Here again, public relations practitioners should heed the basic tenets of their creed: Consider the audience, word the communication carefully, and be consistent. We cannot achieve public economic understanding by bloating it with statistics, generalities, technical language, or the like. Frequently, such communication does more harm than good.

As we mentioned in our discussion of credibility, the public expects business to play a leading role in pursuing solutions to societal problems and has been disappointed when business has not lived up to expectations.

At one time in the United States, business was broadly perceived as benevolent. From 1830 to 1887, there was probably less government regulation of business in this country than at any other time in any other nation. Business will never again be viewed in that way—as a means of solving society’s ills while also pursuing profit. Society now expects business to improve the quality of life in ways that go beyond serving narrowly defined, if enlightened, self-interest. The popularity of business or government in the public mind is ultimately less important than society’s choice of institutions to solve its problems. Since the New Deal, the United States has chosen government. The long-term efficacy of business and the well-being of private enterprise depend on society’s view of business not as a problem but as a problem solver.

Business must adjust to a changing world, realizing that capitalism can no longer be based on an economy of unpaid costs. Profit must be measured by more than a bottom line; human and environmental costs must also be accounted for. Business has to find profitable solutions to such social problems as pollution, health care, housing, illiteracy, and urban decay. This will call for unparalleled creativity on the part of business and the private enterprise system.

If business begins to solve such problems, the old relationship of government aiding business rather than business serving government may be reestablished. The trend toward increasing government encroachment in the marketplace will be reversed if business demonstrates that it can fulfill the goals and aspirations of the American public.

The last decade has revealed a much-expanded social role for business. In particular, firms have assumed broader responsibility. They are more interested in ethical conduct and more involved with public policy and government. Moreover, large businesses are more sophisticated in planning, implementing, and controlling their social performance.

Ultimately, the case for private enterprise must be made in the marketplace. The present and the future of private enterprise depend on its ability to meet societal
demands, which in turn rests on the receptiveness, responsiveness, flexibility, and skill of business people. If business as a whole fails to meet market demands, it will go the way of any single business that fails. It will go bankrupt.

In the effort to restore public confidence in American business, the public relations practitioner must reestablish business credibility, reintroduce the human dimension to business corporations, and facilitate public understanding of business and economics. Most important, public relations must be business's eyes and ears—the receiver of society's subtle signals and the prod that moves management toward effective response.

Small business owners and managers lack the luxury of in-house public relations staffs, and they rarely employ public relations agencies. Nonetheless, public relations efforts can make tremendous contributions to a small business's bottom line. As is typical in a small business, if you want something done, you do it yourself. Thus, small business owners or managers usually serve as their own public relations practitioners.

The potential value of public relations for a small business is substantial. Leone Ackerly started a business called Mini-Maid—at the time a unique service where a crew cleaned a house in a few hours. With women working outside the home in greater numbers and fewer people able to afford full-time domestic help, it was an idea whose time had come. Local publicity helped build sales by generating customer inquiries and exposure. Tying the business to the “working woman” theme and persistently telling her story, Ackerly received national coverage on the Today show, in Newsweek, and in other publications. People throughout the country wanted to know how she handled her enterprise. Soon her main
business changed from cleaning to franchising her successful formula. Ackerly became wealthy and received national recognition for her hard work, vision, and tenacity and (implicitly) for her skill at public relations.

Public relations in small businesses covers a broad range as it does in large businesses. It is less systematic, however, because no one in a small business can concentrate solely on public relations. In effect, public relations becomes a way of life for many small business owners, who are concerned not only with media relations but also with community, customer, employee, financial, supplier, and political relations.

Although the subject is not treated elsewhere in this book, supplier relations is particularly important to small businesses. Smaller businesses may be highly dependent on their suppliers for materials or goods. Moreover, they often depend on suppliers’ credit terms to finance their inventories, and it is not unusual for a small business to fall behind on its bills. Following are some ideas for maintaining good relations with suppliers:

- Get to know your suppliers—not only salespeople but decision makers in the supplier organization.
- Communicate with your suppliers, letting them know the advantages of doing business with you.
- Give honest feedback to your suppliers on their products and services. If you can see ways suppliers can improve, let them know.
- If you are having problems paying bills, tell your suppliers. It is often advisable to explain what the problem is, what you are doing about it, and when it will be straightened out.

By attending to relationships with media, community, employees, customers, sources of financing, politicians, and suppliers, a small business can be promoted and protected. New business opportunities may be identified and brought to fruition while risks and liabilities may be reduced—and that translates into profits.

Other major issues with special implications for corporate public relations in the latter half of the 1990s and into the early 21st century include (1) globalization of business operations with resulting globalization of public relations, (2) unprecedented technological change, (3) increased emphasis on diversity issues, and (4) intensified crises and disasters.

American business has expanded rapidly into global markets in the last decade and especially in the 1990s. The passage of the NAFTA and GATT treaties with the resulting lowering of trade barriers, the development of worldwide, almost instantaneous financial markets, and the acquisition of many U.S. businesses by foreign companies have led to the globalization of American business and the consequent globalization of public relations. Speeding the process have been major technological changes including the advent of the Internet, fax machines,
and microwave telephone relays. The innovations have linked even remote parts of the world with businesses everywhere.

Much of the business expansion followed the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the creation in 1992 of the European Community of Western Europe, which seeks a single European business community.

Historically, American business has been disinterested in international trade. However, out of economic necessity in the last decade, U.S. companies have expanded rapidly into global markets. International trade is much more complicated than trade within the United States because differences in laws and cultural norms often cause considerable confusion. Conditions of competition are often quite different as well. Many barriers not found in American markets are present in international business.

The challenge of global public relations is to eliminate as many as possible of the barriers to effective communication. That communication must be able to transcend cultural as well as geographic barriers. Three major barriers that often confront business and public relations are differences in language, law, and culture. Other barriers in many countries include extremely bureaucratic governments, multiplicity of languages, and underdeveloped mass media.

Public relations for multinational corporations is a complex area of practice requiring all the skills discussed elsewhere in this book plus extraordinary cross-cultural sensitivity (see public relations spotlight 18.1).

Cultural adjustment is a key aspect of preparing employees to work in a foreign environment. Controlling the integration process eases new employees' adjustment to the environment while encouraging them to make unique contributions to the enrichment of the organization. In the cross-cultural adjustment process, the employee in a new culture is confronted with three situations (see table 18.1): the employee's culture of origin; the culture he or she must adjust to; and the third culture, which results from the integration of the two.
Cultural Adaptations: Avoiding Cultural Shock

Culture is complex. There are so many things we take for granted that we tend to be unaware of the tremendous differences that exist across the world.

We’re familiar with our own surroundings—buildings, streets, people, clothing, food, and everything around and part of us. The way we do things or put things together makes up our culture. Why do we eat with knives and forks? What’s okay to eat with the fingers? Why? Who should you sit with? Who not? When do you smile? When do you remain silent?

What does it mean when someone belches? When someone laughs at you? When someone doesn’t ask you to sit down? When someone shakes a stick at you? When the agreed-upon meeting time arrives and there’s no one there but you? These questions have cultural meaning and, when you don’t know the “code,” you feel left out. Likely after a while it will get to you, and you will withdraw into a stupor. That’s cultural shock!

Cultural shock is real. It may be one of several things, or a combination of:

- Emotional anxiety from being in strange surroundings.
- Disorientation from not being able to predict what other people are going to do.
- Discomfort from not knowing what one should do to handle the situation.
- An overwhelming feeling of incompetence that comes from experiencing so many sensory stimuli that don’t have clear meanings.

Reducing Cultural Shock

To reduce cultural shock or to make it more unlikely, there are three principal things that you may do:

1. **Empathy**—How you relate to others is the basic foundation for cross-cultural effectiveness. Can you trust others? Do you accept help from others? Americans often pride themselves on being independent. There are few places outside the United States and Europe where that will work very well. In most of the world, people are expected to need one another, especially within the extended family. This mutually dependent relationship is built on sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others. You must be prepared to depend on other people.

2. **Observation Skills**—You need to be more alert to what is going on around you. Practice in observing even the small things around you will help you see things and become more aware of your environment. You must observe your environment.

3. **Transactional Exploration**—You can relate to the unknown by experiencing it. As a child, this is the way you learn. You try something and see if it works. This is called discovery learning or inquiry learning. It is building inductively toward the generalized principles of the culture. It is better to act than to freeze up and do nothing. When you freeze up, you stop learning. You must experience the unknown.

Source: Information from United States Agency for International Development training seminar at the East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii.
### TABLE 18.1 Cross-Cultural Adjustment

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<th>Culture I Come from</th>
<th>Culture I Have to Adjust To</th>
<th>Third Culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What shall I keep</td>
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<td>2. What shall I modify</td>
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<td>3. What shall I give up</td>
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<td><img src="image.png" alt="Image" /></td>
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Source: Pierre Caille, Organization Development and Cross-Cultural Training, World Bank

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The public relations function in multinational corporations has three distinct aspects. In one role, public relations practitioners represent multinational corporations at home, dealing with public opinion and governmental activities that relate both to specific corporations and to multinational enterprise as a whole. The second role of multinational public relations is to help bridge the communication gap that inevitably exists between foreign operations and top management in the world headquarters. Finally, public relations must be conducted in the corporation’s various host countries. (Another aspect of global public relations is the propaganda efforts by various countries, which were examined in chapter 17.)
John M. Reed concluded that public relations in the host country "has to have three legs upon which it is built: cultural savvy; language savvy; a savvy use of the tools of the craft. Forget one leg and the edifice topples. Use them in balance and success is assured." 12

Corporations often engage public relations agencies to handle their international interests. The increased demand for experts in international public relations accounts for a major portion of agency public relations income. "The 15 largest public relations organizations now generate more than 40 percent of their fees outside the United States." 13

Agencies have found they need global presence to compete for U.S. clients. On the other hand, U.S. public relations firms are competing well for clients outside the United States. American-style public relations is highly regarded. One French practitioner is quoted as saying, "U.S. public relations is 10 years ahead of the brand practiced in this country." 14

To increase effectiveness in dealing with host country public relations, the practitioner can do the following:

2. Use local public relations practitioners as an interface with the local culture. This can help avoid the kinds of major public relations catastrophes that have occurred much too frequently in recent years.
3. Work through local public relations agencies in dealing with local media to maximize your media relations efforts.
4. Develop community relations programs in the host country (including corporate contributions when appropriate).
5. Develop good relationships with government, business, and financial leaders in the host country.
6. Interface with U.S. trade, embassy, and other officials in the host country.
7. Work with higher education in the country to assist in research and evaluation.

Technological Change

Advancing technology is already revolutionizing the way public relations people do business. Don Tapscott and Art Caston in their best seller, Paradigm Shift, suggest that we all must be transformed or be left out. They claim:

We are entering a second era of information technology in which the applications of computers, the nature of technology itself, and the leadership for the use of technology are all going through profound change. 15

Public relations practitioners must understand this new era to succeed in the years ahead. See public relations spotlight 18.2 for a discussion of ways the new technology can help public relations practitioners do their jobs more effectively.

While a variety of new technologies affect the public relations practitioner, those related to the computer are the most revolutionary. We are in the fourth decade of computers, and perhaps the fourth era. The 1960s saw the development
New technologies are having profound impact on public relations, but in ways that relatively few in the discipline or in the business community recognize. The political community was first to perceive and act on the practical implications of facsimile systems, computer bulletin boards, information utilities, and the Internet. Would-be shareholders exploited them with singular success during the presidential campaign of 1992 and beyond. Before the end of 1995, every announced 1996 candidate had opened a home page on the World Wide Web and was developing media with automated facsimile transmissions.

The rest of the world lags behind, in part because of the volume of "tech-hype" dispensed by hardware and software vendors and trade magazines. In pursuit of sales, they entice both "techies" and managers to "stay on the cutting edge" or, at minimum, to avoid being left behind. The resulting avalanche of messages obscures the fundamental change that new technologies are creating in public communication.

The postindustrial nations of the world have or soon will have moved beyond the age of one-way mass communication. Print and broadcast audiences continue to fragment, while new technologies feed explosive growth in one-to-one communication.

What are the new technologies? All are creatures of the microprocessor—the "computer on a chip". It gave birth to the facsimile or fax machine and to the microcomputer. With the advent of the fax modem, the two merged, spawning broadcast fax and fax-on-demand systems. Sophisticated software enables computer owners to maintain fax telephone lists and distribute new releases, newsletters, and other information at will and in personalized form. The electronic "documents" involved, together with any other information an organization wants to make available to any group, then can be stored on the computer's hard drive and can be made accessible to prospective users via fax machine and modem.

The boom in desktop computers and high-speed modems produced a corresponding growth in consumer use of information utilities and the Internet. The utilities—CompuServe, America Online, Prodigy, and the Microsoft Network—serve as information sources and communication channels. All provide electronic mail services. Their forums, essentially electronically ponded special interest groups, offer real-time conferencing as well as bulletin boards and data libraries.

The Internet is similar but less formally organized. The Net, as it's called, links the computers of governmental agencies, educational institutions, businesses. Most businesses are concentrated on the World Wide Web, essentially a group of electronic "store fronts" through which merchandise one day will be sold in volume. For the moment, security problems discourage credit transactions, but this obstacle soon will be overcome.

Colleges, universities, and others also may be on the Web, but their greatest value to "net surfers," as users are called, is in their links to gopher and ftp (file transfer protocol) sites, from which information of all kinds can be retrieved. The Internet also affords access to newsgroups and listervs. The former are akin to the information utilities forums. The latter are electronic information transmitters that Internet users can join and leave at will.

Collectively, these and other technology-based information exchange systems threaten the very existence of traditional mass media. They have broken the monopoly the media once held in mass communication. They enable individuals to transmit messages directly to large audiences across the nation and around the globe. Media have been responding to this challenge by adopting the technologies to their own use. Many newspapers sell the information they have gathered through computer data bases such as Lexis/Nexis. Some, such as The
Businesses find home pages are a good informational tool.

The Pickup Truck Homepage
Established February 1996

"Great Pickup and Truck Pages"

Site maintained by Mike Larsen
last updated October 6, 1997
195,122 page accesses between 9-1-97 to 10-6-97

Pickup Truck Homepage Contents

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WARNING
This page enhanced for

"Wall Street Journal" have developed and are offering subscriptions to electronic newspapers.

The public relations community, unfortunately, has been slow to react to these changes. Most practitioners continue to focus the bulk of their efforts on mass media publicity. They package the product electronically and deliver it through facsimile systems or Video News Releases, but the substance and underlying one-to-many communication principles remain the same. The practitioner needs to be skilled enough to:

- Design a World Wide Web home page in a way that will encourage "visits" by members of specific audiences
- Create a library of documents that will encourage use of a fax-on-demand system
- Publish a newsletter electronically, avoiding the expenses associated with printing and postage as well as the untender mercy of the postal service
- Function in behalf of the clients or the employers in the new electronic environment popularly known as "cyberspace"
Operating in cyberspace arguably will be the most challenging of these functions. The Internet, privately operated bulletin boards, and computer utilities have been markedly irresistible to commercial interests. Internet users are quick to condemn use of the net for commercial purposes. Computer utilities and many bulletin boards bar commercial messages of all kinds.

Public relations practitioners who would overcome these barriers must establish individual credibility with their electronic peers. On the western frontier of the United States, the gun was commonly known as an "equalizer." The computer fulfills that role in cyberspace. It is a world of equals in which social, political, and economic standing are useless. Knowledge alone creates status.

Public relations practitioners who would succeed in this environment must be wholly knowledgeable in the affairs of their employers or clients. They have no choice but to become involved on a personal level with computer utility forums, Internet newsgroups, and other components of the electronic community that may influence client or employer welfare. With demonstrated expertise comes the peer recognition necessary to function successfully in the electronic world.

Source: E.W. Brany, APR, Fellow, president, Resource Group, and professor, University of Memphis.

of the mainframe computers used by government, education, and large industry. In the 1970s the minicomputer was developed. Smaller and much less expensive, it was still a centralized system. The 1980s saw the invention of the personal computer—a relatively inexpensive tool that individuals can use on their desktops. Not only is the personal computer widespread in government, education, and business, but also the consumer has been able to afford it for home use. The 1990s, has evolved into the decade of the network. While the Internet was actually in use in the earliest days of the computer, recent familiarity with it and its widespread use have changed the world dramatically.

Experts expect that the Internet, or some similar communication system, will become the focus of information technology in the next several years. This network orientation will eliminate platform dependence. Thus, it will no longer matter whether you use a Macintosh or a PC. By the end of the decade it won’t matter what computer sits on your desk because it will be using software on a network and everything will be compatible. “The Internet wipes away differences in platforms, thanks to a standard communication language. All computers are equal on the Net,” writes Kevin Maney in USA Today.

The Internet’s usage increased 60 percent in 1995, to a total of about eight million users. The figure is expected to rise to 25 million by the end of the decade.18 Usage has also grown worldwide, with increases of more than 40 percent in 1995 in Japan and Germany and 30 percent in Canada. Forrester Research predicts there will be 52 million users worldwide by the year 2000.19 World Wide Web sites have also proliferated at an unbelievable rate. From 1,000 sites in April 1994, there was an increase to 110,000 by October 1995.20 Learning to use the Internet, then, is a must for the public relations practitioner.

J. Donald Turk, public relations adviser at Mobil Oil Co., believes that in the future, “there will be greater diversity of employees, customers, and constituencies.”
Turk, who was the 1995 chair of the Corporate Section of PRSA, continues by saying that the global economy will be a place where "diversity will be characteristic of the work force and customer mix, as well as one in which diversity will be valued and even required to be a successful business."21

Diversity is a relatively new concept in American business. Rather than just denoting minority issues, diversity encompasses the mix of race, age, gender, religious beliefs, national origin, and disability. Most business workforces have had difficulty attaining optimum diversity. Public relations departments may have had even more trouble because of their relatively small size and the problem of finding people with the appropriate professional and educational qualifications.

Business, however, can perhaps borrow from the late Commerce Secretary Ron Brown's seven tenets for planning to achieve diversity. The census bureau uses the following guidelines for achieving a diverse workforce:

1. Inclusion Valuing all employees regardless of race, gender, color, religious belief, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation.
2. Opportunity Recruiting aggressively and developing career programs to ensure a diverse pool of qualified candidates for the job.
3. Comprehensiveness Considering diversity in business affairs such as training, seminar procurement, grant processes, trade missions, regulatory matters, business liaison, and "every other program of the department."
4. Accessibility Strengthening EEO complaint procedures to ensure fair and timely processing of complaints.
5. Training Encouraging participation of senior managers in training on diversity policies and conflict resolution techniques.
6. Management Adding diversity efforts as a factor to job performance evaluations of management personnel.
7. Evaluation and communication Establishing a diversity council to monitor, evaluate, and facilitate programs to implement diversity.22

Crisis Communication

Crisis management has emerged recently as a major corporate concern. Corporate America has been faced with a rising number of both crises and disasters in recent years.

While the terms crisis and disaster are often used interchangeably, there is a distinction. A crisis develops in predictable fashion. E. W. Brody says that a crisis is "a decisive turning point in a condition or state of affairs."23 Thus, an organization can anticipate possible consequences and put into effect a crisis plan to deal with the problem or issue. A disaster, of course, is either a natural disaster, such as a flood, or a human error disaster, such as an oil spill or gas explosion (see mini-case 18.3).

Two keys to crisis or disaster public relations are (1) having an up-to-date, workable crisis plan and (2) taking positive action that will move your corporation off the defensive and onto the offensive. Action can be what Standard Oil did
In the Eye of the Storm: Hurricane Andrew

On August 24, 1992, Hurricane Andrew, packing winds of 165 miles per hour and greater, smashed into the Florida towns of Homestead, Florida City, and Kendall. The destruction was total, and chaos was everywhere. Within 24 hours, hundreds of media representatives descended on south Florida with cameras, tape recorders, and computers screaming into operation. Our U.S. Army Reserve unit, the 314th Public Affairs Detachment (Press Camp Headquarters) out of Birmingham, Alabama, was voluntarily activated to handle the hundreds of media inquiries that were rushing into the Joint Task Force Andrew Headquarters in Miami.

The 314th PAD (PCH) is one of only three military press camp headquarters in the Department of Defense's arsenal that briefs, gives media credentials to, and escorts media in a theater of operations.

Our six specific missions were as follows:

1. To handle successfully hundreds of media inquiries for Joint Task Force (JTF) Andrew
2. To coordinate the media responses of all federal agencies involved in JTF Andrew's relief efforts. The following federal agencies were involved: U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Marines, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, FEMA, USDA, SBA, Department of Health and Human Services, IRS, and U.S. Forest Service, plus the American Red Cross.
3. To escort media into the hurricane-ravaged areas
4. To prepare Transportation Secretary Andrew Card's daily media briefings
5. To provide command and control for the U.S. Army Reserve Public Affairs Detachments (PAD), that were voluntarily activated to produce internal and electronic products
6. To assist in the establishment and operation of Radio Recovery, which broadcast 24 hours a day in English, Spanish, and Creole. This radio station went to 50,000 watts with the coordination and assistance of the FCC and Miami's WINK.

Four simple communication objectives were established:

1. To ensure that the Hurricane Andrew victims were kept informed of where and how to get assistance.
2. To tell the American people what Joint Task Force Andrew members were doing to help the victims.
3. To keep Joint Task Force Andrew members informed of what was happening in and around the hurricane-ravaged areas.
4. To help keep morale high within Joint Task Force Andrew.

The following organizational lessons were learned:

1. Your organization must have an easy-to-understand and annually practiced crisis communication plan.
2. Your organization must have a mobilization readiness container with state-of-the-art communication and computer equipment.
3. Your communication channels must be successfully analyzed and properly utilized in order to get your message out and understood.
following a tanker collision in San Francisco Bay in the late 1960s. Standard oil immediately spent whatever resources were necessary to clean up the mess. At the end newspapers editorialized were saying things like, "Beaches never cleaner before." Also, it is possible to plan for crises and disasters, despite what Exxon president Booth Simon claimed when he said the Exxon Valdez disaster was "unconceivable." It could have been anticipated with knowledge of what had befallen Standard Oil in San Francisco and the Amoco Cadiz in 1978, when it spilled six times as much oil off the coast of France as the Valdez spilled off the Alaskan coast.

Crisis Planning In a random survey of 200 of the Fortune 500 corporations, Debbie Walton found that 69 percent had crisis plans in place. Of those that didn't, however, 42 percent were currently developing plans, with the remainder either postponing their development or not even considering it. Walton found that almost all of the plans addressed media relations and emergency personnel contact. However, fewer than half of the businesses' crisis plans addressed shareholder communication or vendor communication. See Table 18.2 for a look at the plans' elements.

Planning must take place before any sign of a crisis appears or a disaster occurs. Philip Lelseth suggests four actions that should be operationalized in the plan:

1. Establishing beyond doubt among everyone in the organization that it will put first the interest of all people concerned—employees, their families, neighbors, communities, personnel of sales outlets, investors, and so on.
2. Making it clear to all that the organization will be as open about what happened as the facts and conditions permit.
3. Giving priority to resolving the emergency and protecting the people affected until it is completely resolved.
4. Emphasizing that despite stress and danger to the company, it will be fair to all, including, to the extent possible, critics or opponents who may have instigated the problem."
TABLE 18.2 Crisis Plan Elements (n=71)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Element</th>
<th>Percent Addressing Element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Media Relations</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Emergency Personnel Contact</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Communication with Legal Department</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communication with Governmental Agencies</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Communication with Customers/Consumers</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Follow-up Communication</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Shareholder Communication</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Vendor Communication</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Other more specific items and guidelines that should be in a crisis or disaster plan include these:

1. Have a designated spokesperson.
2. Gather all relevant facts and verify them.
3. Set up a media center, appropriately equipped if possible.
4. Don't release names of dead or injured until relatives have been notified.
5. Respond to all media inquiries, but if you don't know the answer, say so. Then promise to get back as soon as possible with the answer.
6. Do not speculate

Public relations spotlight 18.3 is an example of an initial response statement. It illustrates what can be included in the plan to let the media know an emergency has occurred if your company spokesperson is not yet present at the crisis location.

Once the spokesperson is available, he or she should handle all media inquiries. A look at what can go wrong in these media interviews may help you avoid them (see public relations spotlight 18.4).

Communication Efforts Technology changes have transformed the way we communicate in a crisis or disaster. While traditional communication tools may need to be used, Raymond Kotcher suggests that the following new techniques are useful in a crisis?

Satellite communication: Local United Way agencies used teleconferencing to discuss leadership and other questions surrounding the national office during the Aramony case examined in chapter 16.

Video News Releases. Pepsi used this tool extensively to tell its story in the Pepsi hoax, as we discussed in chapter 1.

Fax technology: Ketchum Public Relations used a fax to help a high-tech company announce its filing for bankruptcy by faxing customized letters from the CEO to shareholders, customers, vendors, and elected officials within an hour of filing.
Public Relations Spotlight 18.3

Initial Media Response Statement

Instructions: Should a major emergency situation (fire, explosion, accident, etc.) occur when the designated crisis spokesperson, and other managers are absent, the following may be used to respond to inquiries from news reporters who phone or come to the facility for information.

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate information, and select the most accurate statement as you know the facts to be.

Do not provide any other information to reporters. As soon as the designated crisis spokesperson is available, discontinue the use of this statement, and refer all media inquiries immediately to that individual.

At _______ (a/an) _______ (time) occurred _______ (fire, explosion, accident)

At _______ (time) in the _______ (company name and facility) _______ (area affected)

Emergency services are responding

(Select most accurate statement—DO NOT SPECULATE)

____ We do not know whether injuries occurred
____ No injuries have been reported
____ There have been some injuries

This facility _______ (describe plant operation/products)

We have no further details at this time. Additional information will be provided by _______ (public information officer) _______ as soon as possible

Keep a record of the names, organizations, and phone numbers of all reporters inquiring about the incident, and provide that list to the public information officer or his/her alternate as soon as he/she arrives at the facility.

The initial statement must NOT include

A. Any discussion or speculation about the CAUSE of the incident
B. Any discussion or estimate of the AMOUNT OF DAMAGE
C. Any speculation about the IMPACT of the incident on the FACILITY, EMPLOYEES, CUSTOMERS, or SUPPLIERS; on the COMMUNITY; on the COMPANY generally; or on the ENVIRONMENT.

Public Relations Spotlight 18.4

1. Failure to take charge. The spokesperson must be a leader. His/her role is not just to answer questions but also to disseminate information.

2. Failure to anticipate questions. Don’t just concentrate on assembling the factual details. Prepare for obvious questions. Remember, the public wants to know, “Is it safe?”

3. Failure to develop key message. This is your opportunity to communicate with the public. Make sure you can take advantage of it by having your organization’s message prepared and ready for use.

4. Failure to stick to the facts. Speculating or answering hypothetical questions can get you in trouble. Avoid “What if” questions by confirming your answers to what is known.

5. Failure to keep calm. By not letting questions get under your skin, you will show a willingness to cooperate with courteous journalists and convey an impression of candor. Keep cool!


Other tools. Improved video and print distribution services, and the use of the Internet to provide information on the World Wide Web or to send information by electronic mail, can speed communication.

Summary

Though all aspects of public relations practice apply to corporations, public relations practitioners must also deal with career issues related to the role of business in society. Corporate credibility and public confidence in business form the backdrop for all businesses’ public relations efforts, but public relations is not the exclusive domain of large businesses. Although small business owners serve as their own public relations experts, the smaller enterprise can profitably employ a variety of public relations techniques.

Globalization of public relations, diversity, technological change, and crisis management are major issues facing the corporate public relations practitioner. How he or she prepares to deal with these issues may well be the margin of success or failure by the year 2000.
Snap-on Tools’ Image Campaign Pays Tribute to Auto Repair Industry

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Case Study

In 1994, Snap-on Tools of Kenosha, Wisconsin, realized that its customers—automotive repair dealers—needed help with a new public image. The Fortune 500 manufacturer and distributor of quality power tools and diagnostic equipment had a big idea, and it decided to lend a hand to the auto repair trade while taking a fresh public relations/public relations approach for itself. The idea was to elevate the image of auto repair mechanics from grease monkeys to “automotive technicians” in the public’s mind by paying tribute to these highly skilled but unsung heroes.

Focus group research revealed a gap between consumer’s perceptions and reality about mechanics. While consumers understood new car features, they did not comprehend advances in automotive technology, nor did they recognize the impact of complex new technology on the mechanics who keep their cars running. Instead, consumers persisted in seeing automotive service in terms of a simple tuneup, despite the fact that automobiles manufactured in the past 10 years are increasingly complicated technological works. Consumers did not recognize that, because of the advent of antilock brakes, fuel-injected engines, and other systems managed by on-board computers in today’s cars, contemporary mechanics are highly skilled technicians who require countless hours of training and information and who spend thousands of dollars on high-tech tools and intricate diagnostic equipment.

“A lot of exceptionally bright people get dirt under their fingernails, and we all depend on them every time we put the key in the ignition to head for work, the mall, or the kids’ soccer game,” said Robert Cornog, chairman, president, and chief executive of Snap-on in USA Today. “Snap-on knows the importance of automotive technicians in our daily lives. We want the rest of the world to know it, too. Just about everyone has had an experience where he or she realized the value of a good mechanic. We’re going to help people remember that experience.”

Snap-on’s comprehensive, integrated communications effort was directed at consumers by Ogilvy Adams & Reuncheon of Chicago, with Sawyer Riley Compton of Atlanta. It was built around a tribute campaign theme of “When did you first learn the value of a good mechanic?” A tribute to the automotive technicians that keep us moving from Snap-on Tools.

Snap-on’s first-ever consumer advertising with that tag line appeared in popular media such as Time, People, Sports Illustrated, Motor Trend, Hot Rod, and USA Today. Clever photography in the institutional ads underscored the theme. For example, one ad showed a frustrated father frantically trying to assemble toys in front of a Christmas tree. The ads also appeared on the tailgates of vans used by Snap-on dealers to call on the nation’s one million mechanics weekly. Posters of the ads were made available to automotive service centers and dealerships nationwide. Major news stories about the tribute campaign appeared in USA Today and other media.
In addition, Snap-on hosted a series of educational “service update” conferences for consumer automotive writers and editors. Experts from a variety of associations covered what consumers should know about today’s automotive service to save time and money and get better results. To complement and extend the value of the educational conferences, Snap-on began publishing a quarterly newsletter for consumer automotive writers.

Coincidentally, in the fifth month of its tribute campaign, Snap-on made the separate decision to discontinue distributing 1.2 million classic “pinup” calendars to its 5,000 worldwide dealers, who in turn passed them on to auto repair shops. With attractive female models displaying—among other things—a variety of Snap-on products, the calendars had become legendary among auto mechanics, who had hung them in their offices and repair docks for the previous 12 years.

News of the demise of the girls calendars made the front page of The Wall Street Journal. Acting immediately, Snap-on’s public relations firm was able to place information about the tribute campaign, including a print of one of the tribute ads, with the Associated Press wire coverage about the discontinued calendars. Subsequent coverage about the tribute campaign was carried by CNN, Entertainment Tonight, and TV and radio segments in 80 local markets.

Follow-up evaluation research, when compared with precampaign research, measured a marked increase in consumer awareness of Snap-on during the first year of the tribute campaign. The campaign generated a total of 400 million impressions through public relations and advertising efforts. Focus groups were conducted to measure the impact of the campaign on individual consumers. Results showed a positive impact, with consumers saying the ads made them stop and think that there are hard-working technicians who want to make a difference. Snap-on dealers reported consumers stopping them in parking lots to comment favorably about the tribute ads. Repair shop owners have reported positive reactions to the posters from customers. And Snap-on has received endorsements from several top automotive associations for its efforts.

By doing the auto repair industry a good turn with its consumer tribute, Snap-on Tools has strengthened its own relationships with its customers. To further strengthen those relationships, Snap-on Tools has expanded its tribute campaign to focus on profiles of individual skilled auto technicians.

“As cars continue to become more sophisticated, and as stringent new emissions testing takes on a national scope, consumers’ reliance on qualified auto technicians will become increasingly important,” said David Hesse, manager of public relations for Snap-on, Inc. “We’re hoping the campaign will have a positive effect on the future workforce. As the technology of cars become more complicated, the need for automotive technicians continues to grow. Through advertising and consumer education, Snap-on will increase awareness of automotive technology as a highly skilled, well-paying career option,” he added.

Questions

1. What is the value of research in this kind of program? At what stage(s) is it valuable?
2. John Pavlik, in Public Relations: What Research Tells Us, defines public relations as "the business of relationship management." How does Pavlik's definition of public relations apply in this case?

3. As the Snap-on campaign moves into its second phase, focusing on profiles of individual automotive technicians, what additional communication strategies would you recommend to Snap-on?

4. What additional theme lines might complement and extend the campaign as it expands in its subsequent phases?

Notes

16. Don Tapscott and Art Cascio, Paradigm Shift.
18. In a speech at the Memphis PRSA meeting, Oct. 11.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
24. Debbie Walton, A Study of Components and Variables Comprising Corporate Crisis Communication Plans, master's
25 Ibid., 20


27 Raymond L. Kelches, “The Technological Revolution Has Transformed Crisis Communications,” Public Relations Quarterly (Fall 1992) 20–21
The Legal Environment of Public Relations Practice

Preview

The public relations profession is constrained by a dynamic environment of laws and regulations designed to safeguard freedoms and provide guidelines for the secure pursuit of First Amendment rights.

Attorneys and public relations practitioners need to recognize and accept each other's expertise in their respective areas of practice. Legal counsel represents organizations before the court of law, and public relations counsel performs similar services before the court of public opinion.

Free speech is balanced against privacy, property, and other rights. Communication is limited to the extent that it may slander or libel an individual, invade an individual's privacy, infringe on trademarks or copyrights, breach contracts, or violate regulatory requirements.

Regulations of the Federal Trade Commission, the Food and Drug Administration, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the National Labor Relations Board, the United States Postal Service, the Federal Communications Commission, and other agencies impact the practice of public relations.

The Internet, while a great boost for the gathering and disseminating of information, is particularly vulnerable to libel and copyright violations.

The life of the law has not been logic; it has been experience.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes
any public relations professionals may be placing themselves and client organizations at risk of legal liability because they have little or no familiarity with important legal issues that affect public relations activities," according to a recent survey of public relations practitioners by Kathy Fitzpatrick. Public relations personnel are increasingly vulnerable to legal liability. It is thus more important than ever that a public relations practitioner be acquainted with key legal issues such as libel, privacy, copyright, conspiracy, contracts, and numerous agency regulations. However, in her survey, Fitzpatrick found that more than half of public relations practitioners had no familiarity with SEC regulations, more than 40 percent had no knowledge of commercial speech or financial public relations legal issues, and just over 21 percent reported no familiarity with laws governing access to information.7

In 1986, the chairman of Puritan Fashions, a clothing manufacturer, was sued by the Securities and Exchange Commission for making "false, overly optimistic" statements about the firm's performance during a recessionary period. Furthermore, the corporation's chief financial officer, an official of the financial public relations firm that represented Puritan, and two stockbrokers were accused of insider trading of the manufacturing company's stock.

The charges against Puritan's chief executive resulted from his failure to correct inflated projections of the company's 1983 performance although (the SEC alleged) he was aware of the inaccuracies. According to an article in The New York Times, the public relations official "learned of the alleged inaccuracy of the public projection and passed that information to . . . a stockbroker."5

In another case, the Food and Drug Administration ordered ICN Pharmaceuticals, Inc. to correct a news release concerning the safety and effectiveness of ViraZole, a recently developed drug used to treat respiratory viral infections. ICN claimed the errors were unintentional, but it was forced to amend what the FDA considered exaggerated product claims in its press kit and suffered some unfavorable publicity because of the incident.

In October 1985, The Wall Street Journal reported that a $50 million, five-year public relations campaign initiated by Dow Chemical Company got off to a rocky start when it released the inaccurate information that an arrested member of a protest group had venereal disease. According to the news article, a local law official was "investigating how Dow Chemical obtained the information." The error not only tarnished an expensive public relations campaign but also left the company open to possible costly and embarrassing charges of libel and invasion of privacy.

Members of each business or profession are constrained by laws and regulations affecting their practice. Public relations practitioners are no different. Their advice and guidance to management should be consistent with relevant laws and regulations. Moreover, they must understand the legal and regulatory areas that can affect their own communication activities.

Discussing the legal environment of public relations can be both overwhelming and frightening to those not formally educated in law. Much of the fear originates from an inability to interpret legal jargon. Many people misunderstand the purpose of law in the United States, believing that law exists to restrict rights.
On the contrary: The purpose of law in this country is to safeguard freedoms. Laws offer guidelines under which rights may be securely pursued.

The legal environment of public relations is quite dynamic. Laws and government regulations are frequently changed or clarified. Court decisions may narrow, broaden, or reinterpret laws or regulations affecting public relations practice. Nonetheless, basic legal guidelines—most of which rest on the freedom of expression guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution—remain fairly consistent. These guidelines should be understood by all who aspire to practice public relations.

Because public relations professionals’ efforts are often concentrated in such sensitive areas as financial relations, product publicity, and labor relations, their work is scrutinized by government regulatory agencies. Lack of knowledge may lead to violations of Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Federal Trade Commission (FTC), National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), or other state or federal agency regulations.

Lawyers can be very helpful to public relations practitioners. Professional communicators should strive to develop close working relationships with attorneys, but they need to recognize that public relations and legal counselors may clash head-on when offering advice to organizational executives.

The public relations practitioner may have a basic understanding of laws and regulations, but certain sensitive or questionable areas require expert legal advice. Whether that advice comes from a corporate legal department or from outside counsel is not important. What matters is that the attorney and the public relations practitioner recognize and accept each other’s expertise in their respective areas. When major difficulties confront organizations and place them in the public eye, decisions need to reflect a careful balance of public relations and legal tactics.

Kathy Fitzpatrick came to the following conclusion in her survey of public relations practitioners:

Although practitioners reported that in situations involving conflicts with legal counsel over the public release of information, decisions are generally made as a result of collaboration between the two advisors or by a company official, the reality is that the public relations professionals are not playing lead roles in these instances.

Unfortunately, close working relationships between public relations practitioners and lawyers are rare. More often, the two find themselves in competition for the ear of top management, and their advice is often contradictory.

Public relations practitioners are sometimes envious of the status enjoyed by lawyers in the corporate world. Indeed, the term “public relations counsel” emulates the term “legal counsel.” Early public relations specialists specifically compared their role to that of lawyers—one specializing in representing organizations before the court of law, the other performing similar services before the court of public opinion.

These courts, however, are not as distinct in practice as they are in theory. What an organization does in the name of public relations may well affect its legal
position. Likewise, an organization’s behavior in court may affect public opinion. The reason is that lawyers and public relations practitioners view public relations from different perspectives. The lawyer tends to look at the short-term, immediate action that must be taken. On the other hand, the public relations person should look at the potential long-term effect of the situation on relations with stakeholder groups, media relations, and the long-term image of the organization. Consequently, legal and public relations counsels often find themselves at loggerheads. As Ivy Lee put it, “I have seen more situations which the public ought to understand spoiled by the intervention of a lawyer than in any other way.”

In discussing problems that occur between business and the media, David Finn, chairman of one of the country’s largest public relations firms, suggests that disclosure of information is frequently impeded by legal counsel. According to Finn, this is “the least-known aspect of corporate communications, yet it is in all probability the most troublesome in achieving an open, constructive communication between business and the media.”

Lawyers generally advise their clients to avoid making any public statements that could prove troublesome in future legal actions. Frequently, they recommend saying nothing. When an executive tersely says, “No comment,” it is usually on the advice of the lawyer rather than the public relations counsel.

Finn comments:

For the most part, I find that business executives would like to be open and candid about their affairs. They repeatedly make the point that they want the truth to be known, and that they would like to cooperate with the press as much as possible. When public relations advisors tell their clients that the only way to avoid distortions is to answer all questions as fully as possible, the instinct of most businesspersons is to do so. But when there are conical issues involved, legal counsel usually has a greater influence on business executives by making it clear that speaking too freely about matters that may have to be integrated can cause a great deal of trouble for the corporation and even for the executives personally.

The damage that lawyers anticipate are very real. So are the damages that occur when a corporation appears unresponsive, unfeeling, defensive, or irresponsible and consequently loses the respect and trust of its publics. In either case, millions of dollars can be lost and careers can be ruined.

There are no simple solutions to the problems arising from the differences between lawyers and public relations practitioners. That public relations should speak of the potential practical consequences of various communication strategies rather than merely preaching truth and openness certainly applies in these sensitive areas. Procter & Gamble’s Relly tampon case, Firestone’s 500 radial tire case, and Johnson & Johnson’s handling of Tylenol illustrate this point.

Lawyers’ advice to clients not to speak is based on legal tactics, not on the law per se. We all recognize that individuals in the United States are guaranteed freedom of speech under the First Amendment to the Constitution. We also know that the media are protected by freedom-of-the-press provisions of the same amendment.
Recent court cases have clarified that nonmedia corporations enjoy much the same freedom and protection. When the First National Bank of Boston wanted publicly to oppose and advertise against a Massachusetts personal income tax referendum, State Attorney General Francis Bellotti said a state law barred corporations from financial participation in referenda that did not affect them directly. First National sued the state for violating its First Amendment right to speak. In 1978, First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti (435 U.S. 530) was resolved when the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the bank. A similar case in 1980, Consolidated Edison Company of New York v. Public Service Commission of New York (447 U.S. 530), reaffirmed the utility’s right to issue advertising promoting electricity. Thus, the Supreme Court has diminished distinctions between the levels of First Amendment protection for political and social expression and for what has been called commercial speech.

The importance of commercial speech was made clear in yet another Supreme Court decision, Virginia State Board of Pharmacy v. Virginia Citizens’ Consumer Council, Inc. (425 U.S. 748 [1976]). In his opinion on the case, Justice Harry Blackman wrote:

So long as we preserve a predominantly free enterprise economy, the allocation of our resources in large measure will be made through numerous private economic decisions. It is a matter of public interest that those decisions in the aggregate be intelligent and well informed. To this end, the free flow of commercial information is indispensable.

The Supreme Court decisions in these and other cases opened the door to issues-oriented advertising by corporations, as discussed in chapter 15. The broadened interpretation of free speech protection has resulted in increased corporate political activity through lobbying and political action committees (PACs). Free speech is not without limits. Most jurists today interpret the First Amendment to mean that free speech should be balanced against other human values or rights. Those other rights—for example, the right to privacy, the right to a good reputation, or property rights—can restrict the right to free speech (see mum-case 19 1).

The free flow of commercial information is indispensable, but the content of all public communications—news releases, company newspapers, speeches, and advertisements—must meet legal and regulatory guidelines. For instance, section 8c of the Taft-Hartley Act says:

The expressing of any view, argument, or opinion or the dissemination thereof, whether in written, printed, graphic, or visual form, shall not constitute or be evidence of an unfair labor practice under any of the provisions of this Act, if such expression contains no threat of reprisal or force or promise of benefits.

The last clause is the key—“no threat . . . or promise of benefits.” This would mean, for example, that in an employee newsletter, you as editor could not promise workers a bonus if they would come back to work early from a strike or threaten that workers who didn’t would likely be fired.

Public communication is limited to the extent that it may slander or libel an individual, invade an individual’s privacy, infringe on existing copyrights or trademarks, breach contracts, or violate regulatory requirements.
Commercial Speech in U.S. Healthcare Case

Blue Cross of Greater Philadelphia launched a major advertising campaign to reduce the attractiveness of HMOs to consumers. One HMO, U.S. Healthcare, objected. U.S. Healthcare sued Blue Cross of Philadelphia for libel, claiming that it had defamed the HMO through its derogatory advertising.

Departing from the concept of corporations being public figures, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the libel charge by U.S. Healthcare. In its departure, the court imposed the commercial speech doctrine into the determination of malice. The court looked first at the nature of the speech rather than the status of the parties.

Most corporate cases in the last two decades have assumed that the public figure status of a corporation makes actual malice unnecessary to prove under the 1964 New York Times v. Sullivan doctrine. The Third Circuit noted that the New York Times case opinion said that the advertisement was political and not commercial when it handed down its landmark ruling. The Third Circuit Court ruled in the U.S. Healthcare Case that the commercial speech doctrine applied. This approach gives less First Amendment protection to the corporation. The ruling should give corporate public relations practitioners reason to consider more carefully any possibilities of defamation in publicity and advertising.

Source: Based on material in Matthew D. Burkett, "The Corporate Plaintiff as Public Figure," Journalism Quarterly, vol. 72, no. 3 (Autumn 1995), 587-599.

The definitions of defamation are as diverse as have been its various legal interpretations through the years. Perhaps the simplest, most straightforward definition is that offered by Don R. Pember of the University of Washington. Pember says defamation "is any communication which holds a person up to contempt, hatred, ridicule, or scorn." While "truth" is the best legal defense against defamation suits, Pember does not define defamation as a "false" statement. As he carefully points out, a true statement can still be held legally defamatory if its truth cannot be established in court. Proving truth can sometimes be more difficult than it seems. In at least one state, Colorado, truth is not a complete defense in criminal libel in two instances. Blackening the memory of the dead and holding a handicapped person up to ridicule.

Libel is published defamation, and slander is oral defamation. Libel has two categories, criminal and civil. Although the Supreme Court has frequently overturned the convictions, individuals have been found guilty of criminal libel in cases involving "breach of the peace" or "inciting to riot." In some states, one can criminally libel a dead person, and in 1952, the conviction of a white racist for criminally libeling an entire race of people was upheld by the Supreme Court. Criminal libel suits are very rare today, but some states still carry criminal libel statutes on their books.

More important to public relations practitioners is civil libel. The attention generated by Carol Burnett's suit against the National Enquirer; General William Westmoreland's libel suit against CBS, and Israeli General Ariel Sharon's...
defamation suit against Time may lead many people to think such charges apply only to the media. That assumption is erroneous. The vast majority of libel suits are filed against the media, but any corporation, organization, public relations practitioner, or private individual can be guilty of defamation through written material or through remarks made before any group of people. Advertising Age reported in its February 10, 1986, issue that an ex-employee of JWT Group had filed a libel suit against her former employers on the basis of the wording of a press release issued regarding her dismissal (see mini-case 19.2).

Mini-Case 19.2

A "Responsible" Play on Words

JWT Group is one of the nation's largest and most successful advertising agencies. However, in 1982, the company took a $30 million pretax write-off. An internal investigation revealed that the losses were due to irregularities in the corporation's barter syndication unit. The special investigation found several improprieties within the department, including fictitious accounting entries in the syndication unit's computer system. Mario Luiz, one of the overseers of the syndication unit, was fired.

In March, JWT Group issued a press release announcing the large write-off. The communication claimed that Ms. Luiz "was responsible for the improper activities." in the syndication unit and noted that she had been fired. The release quoted Don Johnston, JWT chairman and CEO, as saying, "As long as business depends on human beings, we will all be vulnerable to human frailty. We're not the first ones to discover that—we won't be the last. In today's world you are more than ever dependent on the personal integrity of the people involved."

Ms. Luiz took offense at the wording of the press release. She consulted an attorney and filed suit for libel against JWT Group and various JWT executives, includ-
Elements of Civil Libel  For a statement to be libelous, it must contain certain elements. It must be published, it must be damaging, and it must identify the injured party. Negligence must be involved, and the statement must be defamatory. If the statement involves a public figure, another element becomes of paramount importance: It must involve _malice._

_Publication_ is considered to have occurred when the alleged defamation has been communicated to a third party. For example, it is “published” when the writer, the injured party, and one other person have seen or heard the remark.

_Defamation_ deals with the words themselves or the implication behind the words. A person’s reputation (not character) has been damaged. Libel can either be _per se_ or _per quod._ _Libel per se_ is libel “on the face of it,” which means that the words themselves are defamatory. To call someone a thief, murderer, or labor agitator is libel _per se._ Libel _per quod_ means that it is libel by the circumstances or by innuendo.

_Damage_ has occurred if the remarks reflect poorly on one’s reputation, impair one’s ability to earn a living, or restrict one’s social contacts.

_Identification_ has occurred when readers or listeners are able to identify the person referred to, whether or not that person is specifically named.

_Fault_ must be shown in order for the plaintiff to win a libel suit. If the wrong photograph is run with an article, if there is a typographical or mechanical error in the publication process, or if information is not carefully checked, then the defendant may be found negligent. First established by a 1974 Supreme Court ruling (Gertz v. Welch, 94 S Ct, 2997), definitions of negligent conduct are still evolving.

_Malice_ has occurred when the plaintiff can prove that the defendant knew the published material was false or showed a reckless disregard for the truth. Only public figures must prove malice. Politicians, elected government officials, and entertainers are obvious public figures, but the legal interpretation of who is or is not a public figure continues to evolve.
Defenses Against Libel Charges There are three primary defenses against libel charges—truth, qualified privilege, and fair comment. The primary legal defense against libel is truth. That sounds simple enough, but truth and provable truth are often quite different. To know that John Smith is an incompetent manager is one thing; to prove it with evidence that would be admissible in court is another.

A second legal defense against libel is privilege. Privilege protects materials and remarks coming from official proceedings and actions of members in executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, from the local to the federal level. However, this privilege is qualified. The qualifications are that the report must be a fair, accurate, and complete account of the proceedings. There is no guarantee of privilege related to proceedings from public, (but non-governmental) meetings such as those of unions, political parties, and chambers of commerce.

The extent of privilege was examined by an Arkansas court in a defamation case involving an employee dismissed for theft. The court held that remarks made in the presence of the employee, his immediate supervisor, and another supervisor were privileged, as were accurate statements made to the employee's wife and to unemployment compensation officials. The company, the wife, and the unemployment compensation officials all had legitimate interest in the information, and the information given was necessary and factual. The court found, however, that the employer had been defamed by a supervisor who had made excessive, incorrect statements to co-workers. Although a company's right to inform its other employees of a co-worker's dismissal for theft could be privileged, the information released had to be both totally accurate and limited to only that necessary to protect company interests.

A third legal defense is fair comment. If communications involve matters of genuine public interest, expressing critical opinions is permissible. However, the opinions expressed must be limited to the public interest aspects of the matter and buttressed by the publication of factual material on which the opinion is based. This is the position assumed by book, restaurant, and film critics, but fair comment can apply equally well to consumer products and services or even to the work of charitable organizations—all of which are of public interest. Fair comment makes possible competitive advertising, in which one brand is weighed unfavorably against another. Using this technique, corporate advertising campaigns have pitted Pepsi against Coke, Burger King against McDonald's, and Hanes underwear against Fruit of the Loom.

For the public relations practitioner, the best defenses against libel are knowledge of the law, exercise of good judgment, and reasonable care in constructing all public communications. Practitioners should take time to research and verify controversial material and, if still in doubt, seek legal advice.

Defamation may be defined broadly as the issuance of untrue, derogatory information, but even the publication of complimentary information may break the law if it invades another's right to privacy.
Privacy is a word that probably has as many definitions as there are people. Individual notions of its meaning can differ markedly, and relevant laws may vary widely from state to state. Advance Machine Company was found guilty of breaking a New Jersey privacy law when it rummaged through the garbage of a competitor and retrieved valuable customer lists. The competitor was awarded damages of $500,000.11

As government bureaucracies grow, so does their penchant for collecting personal data about the citizenry. As society becomes more reliant on credit, more and more personal information is stored in the computer systems of retail credit agencies. Centralized health agencies disseminate data concerning the diseases, hospitalization, and treatment undergone by patients throughout the nation. Personnel files and school records contain information that many people consider confidential. Individuals feel that their privacy is being assaulted by a number of sources, and perhaps because they feel a long-cherished right slowly eroding, lawsuits charging invasion of privacy have increased over the last few years.12

Public relations practitioners should be aware that the right of privacy extends not only to an organization’s customers but also to its employees. A business does not have carte blanche to use an employee’s picture or to divulge information about an employee’s personal life in either external or internal communications.

Though privacy itself may be difficult to define, and though what constitutes an invasion may vary from state to state, most legal scholars agree that invasions of privacy fall into four categories: appropriation, publication of private information, intrusion, and publication of that material which casts a person in a false light.

Appropriation is the commercial use without permission of an entity’s picture, likeness, or name. This area of the privacy laws is especially significant to public relations professionals involved in preparing organizational communications. Although John Doe is a mechanic for the Skiddo Brake Company, his name, picture, or likeness should not be used to advertise the company’s products without his permission. Although customer Jane Smith wrote an unsolicited letter claiming Skiddo brakes saved her life, Skiddo should not use her name without permission either.

Equally important to public relations practitioners is the category known as publication of private information. While not recognized in all states, this area of privacy law requires the public relations person to be diligent. Private or personal information might be defined as true information not known by a great number of people. Banks and health care organizations possess a great deal of personal information about their clients, as do some charitable groups. The release of information without prior consent can be cause for an invasion of privacy suit, as happened to Midatlantic Banks, Inc. A Midatlantic banker made known a customer’s lavish lifestyle to the customer’s employer. When the customer was subsequently fired, he sued the bank, charging invasion of privacy. The judge ruled in favor of the plaintiff, declaring that bankers have an implied contract not to release customers’ confidential financial information.13 Release of information that a particular employee has AIDS would fall into this category as well.
Novels and films often feature detectives who invade privacy by intrusion—surreptitiously filming, bugging, or otherwise snooping into other people's private affairs. However, secretly recording the voice or actions of another or surreptitiously examining private documents is generally illegal.

False light is the fourth and final category of invasion of privacy. It would seem to fall under defamation laws; however, there are some differences. For example, much of the published information may indeed be factual, and it need not actually have damaged a person's reputation. Suits based on publication of false information claim that certain true facts have been embellished with falsehoods (fictionalization) or that certain true facts have been exaggerated or used out of context (false light). In fact, this is often called "false light" publication and can include distortions of the truth. A case occurred in Aspen, Colorado, where a news videographer shot random tape of house of some celebrities and then talked about drug use in Aspen. One of the celebrities took issue that his house was featured. The case was settled out of court, with considerable money going to the celebrity.

Defenses Against Invasion-of-Privacy Charges Written consent is the best defense against charges of invasion of privacy. In all instances in which a photograph, likeness, or name is to be published, a practitioner should get the individual's consent to the usage in writing. One can accomplish this most simply by keeping standard release forms on hand. (Figure 19.1 is an example.) Releases occasionally need renewal. Just as it makes sense for public relations professionals to update their photographic files continually, so too should they update the releases that go with the photographs.

While employees do not often sue companies for publishing private information in internal newsletters, the wisest course is either to limit the content to off-the-job subjects or to obtain written releases when private information is to be disclosed.

The Freedom of Information Act Officials and organizations in the public sector enjoy much less privacy than do individuals and organizations in the private sector. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) opens the federal government to great public scrutiny. Communicators employed by federal agencies need to be familiar with the public's general rights under the Freedom of Information Act. Adopted in 1966 and revised several times since then, the act allows for disclosure of certain information gathered by the government. In 1976, Congress passed the Sunshine Act, which opened to the public some previously closed meetings of federal boards, commissions, and agencies, including the SEC and the FTC. Many states and municipalities have similar statutes affecting their boards and commissions.

Generally, the materials mandated for disclosure under the federal act fall into the following categories: (1) opinions in settled cases, (2) statements of policy or interpretations not published in the Federal Register, and (3) staff manuals that affect the public.

Though public relations practitioners employed by the government need to know what materials must be made available, business practitioners should also
Adult Release

In consideration of my engagement as a model, and for other good and valuable consideration herein acknowledged as paid, upon the terms hereinafter stated, I hereby grant

his legal representatives and assigns, those for whom

is acting, and those acting with his authority and

permission, the absolute right and permission to copyright and use, re-use and publish, and

reproduce photographic portraits or pictures of me or any in which I may be included, in whole or in

part, or composite distortion in character or form, without restriction as to changes or alterations,

from time to time, in conjunction with my own or a fictitious name, or reproductions thereof in

color or otherwise made through any media at his studios or elsewhere for art, advertising, trade, or

any other purpose whatsoever.

I also consent to the use of any printed matter in conjunction therewith.

I hereby waive any right that I may have to inspect or approve the finished product or products or

the advertising copy or printed matter that may be used in connection therewith or the use to which

it may be applied.

I hereby release, discharge and agree to save harmless

his legal representatives or assigns, and all persons acting under his permission or authority or those

for whom he is acting, from any liability by reason of any printing, distribution, insertion, optical

illusion, or use in composite form, whether intentional or otherwise, that may occur or be produced

in the taking of said picture or in any subsequent processing thereof, as well as any publications

thereof even though it may subject me to ridicule, scandal, reproach, scorn and indignity.

I hereby warrant that I am of full age and have every right to contract in my own name in the above

regard. I state further that I have read the above authorization, release and agreement, prior to its

execution, and that I am fully familiar with the contents thereof.

Dated

(Address)

(Witness)

be familiar with government information. Businesses use the FOIA far more than
do private individuals. Government statistics are important research and verifica-
tion tools in the preparation of product news releases, brochures, and other forms
of public communication.

Public disclosure of private information without proper consent is illegal, and
so is the use of another’s intellectual property. Tangible intellectual properties
are protected under copyright or trademark laws.
Copyright Law

Why would a public relations practitioner need to be familiar with copyright law? Because most formalized methods of communication can be, and often are, copyrighted. Books, movies, plays, dances, songs, sculptures, pictures, and other original artistic works fixed in any tangible medium of expression are eligible for protection from unauthorized use by copyrighting. Ideas, news events, and utilitarian objects cannot be copyrighted. An original design of an annual report cover can be copyrighted once the idea has been transferred to paper, as can original brochures prepared by an organization. Music you can use in videos, PSAs, or slide shows is often copyrighted. You need to obtain permission to use it, to provide your own original music, or to use licensed music you have obtained by paying a fee. Material that is available on the Internet is also copyright protected.

Wendy’s popular slogan “Where’s the beef?” is protected by copyright law, a remedy the corporation had to seek in order to prevent the slogan’s unauthorized use on T-shirts. The Fast Food Commission was sued for copyright infringement when it produced a toy replica of the comic strip character Conan the Barbarian.

Self-employed public relations consultants can copyright materials they produce unless they contractually sign away that right to their clients. Public relations staff members within organizations cannot copyright their work; it belongs to the organization, which can copyright it. The “fair use” provision of the Copyright Act allows use of material, with broad provisions addressing the following:

1. The purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes.
2. The nature of the copyrighted work.
3. The amount and substantiality of the portion used.
4. The effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

This means that in the preparation of communications, a portion of copyrighted material may be used without the author’s permission

1. If it is not taken out of context.
2. If credit to the source is given.
3. If such usage does not materially affect the market for the copyrighted material
4. If the work in which it is used is for scholastic, news, or research purposes
5. If the material used does not exceed a certain percentage of the total work
   (No percentage is given in the law, but it depends on the work. One rule of thumb is: Don’t use any music; use only a fraction of poetry, but you can use 100 to 200 words of a book or major article.)

Trademark Laws

Copyright laws do not apply to the names of businesses and business products. Just as the products themselves are often covered by patent laws, their names can be covered under trademark laws. For someone other than the holder to market a
product with a name strongly resembling or suggestive of an existing trademark or trade name would constitute infringement.

Companies zealously protect their product brand name trademarks. Failure to do so allows the brand name to become generic for all products in its category, thus sacrificing its uniqueness and causing serious advertising and public relations problems. Trade name and trademark protection can be an uphill battle, its necessity an ironic confirmation of the success of marketing and advertising techniques. How many people think that Kleenex (brand) is the generic name for all facial tissue (see Figure 19.2), Band-Aid (brand) is a word denoting all small bandages, and Xerox (brand) is a verb that can be substituted for the word "copy"?

In a consumer survey conducted in connection with a lawsuit involving another trademark, 76 percent of those surveyed identified "Kleenex" as a brand name. Only 23 percent thought the name was generic for facial tissue.10 Those results told Kimberly-Clark Corporation, the owner of Kleenex, that its trademark protection efforts were successful.19

The Minolta Corporation redesigned the logo for its new Maxxum camera. According to The Wall Street Journal, that measure settled a lawsuit in which

The Kimberly-Clark Corporation has successfully protected its "Kleenex" trademark through efforts like this.

To all the proofreaders and typesetters and editors and publishers who help us protect our trademark Kleenex by always starting it with a capital K followed by l-e-e-n-x and following it with a proper generic: be it tissue, towels, or diapers. Kimberly-Clark says "Bless you!"
Exxon Corporation had claimed the Maxxum logo was too similar to its own use of the “interlocking double X in the Exxon name.” Exxon contended that the Minolta logo constituted trademark infringement.

Copyrighted and trademarked materials may be used if permission has been given by the copyright or trademark holder. Permission for use can constitute a contract, a legal instrument that protects the rights of two or more parties.

Public relations practitioners often use contracts. Independent public relations professionals need contracts between themselves and the firms or individuals they represent. Special event plans may require contracts with hotels, musical groups, caterers, and others. Most practitioners work outside publishing or printing firms, and those relationships should involve contracts. And, while perhaps not generally viewed as such, correctly prepared information and photographic release forms are also contracts.

For a contract to be binding, it must meet certain legal criteria. If they are not met, the contract is not valid. The essential elements of contracts include these:

A genuine, legal offer;
A legally effective acceptance;
An agreement that includes an exchange of acts or promises, which is called “consideration.”

Some but not all contracts must be in writing. Courts often consider oral contracts binding if all legal tests have been met in the process. Implied contracts may also be valid. If, for example, an employee is told that his picture will be used in a company newspaper to illustrate safety techniques and he then poses in hard hat and safety goggles, his behavior implies agreement, and a valid contract is in force.

If some of the obligations set out in a contract are not fulfilled, a possible breach of contract has occurred. Such disputes may be settled in court. To avoid unpleasant misunderstandings or possible breach of contract, all parties involved should make certain they understand the terms and conditions of the contracts they sign.

Another area of criminal law with which public relations practitioners need to be familiar is conspiracy. If a public relations person (or anyone else) knows about a felony and fails to report it, he or she could be found guilty of conspiracy in the crime. Even the president can be affected. Richard Nixon resigned from the presidency because of the Watergate cover-up and resulting conspiracy. If you were the public relations director for a bank and knew about a land fraud scheme financed by your bank, you would be obligated to report it to police or face conspiracy charges.

Laws related to contracts, copyright and trademark, invasion of privacy, defamation, and conspiracy constitute part of the legal environment of public relations. That environment is further complicated by a number of federal regulations that govern business conduct. While a public relations practitioner cannot
always ensure that federal regulatory guidelines are met, an awareness of the principal agencies involved in the area of communication can help avoid problems.

Several years ago the Warner-Lambert Company’s commercials for Listerine were required to include a disclaimer that its product would not prevent or cure common colds.

Later, most television viewers noticed that Carter’s Little Liver Pills suddenly became Carter’s Pills, but they may not have known why.

In both cases, the manufacturers had run afoul of Federal Trade Commission (FTC) regulations. The FTC is just one of the government agencies having regulatory powers over the conduct of business. Others include the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and even the United States Postal Service. Public relations professionals need to be aware of the regulatory environment in which their employers operate.

Regulatory complaints may originate within an agency itself, or they may be brought to the agency’s attention by consumers or competitors. An alert public relations practitioner who stays informed about the corporation’s publics can sometimes avert problems with regulatory agencies by making management aware of product problems as perceived by either consumer or competitor publics. Product or service deficiencies can be corrected, irate customers can be soothed, regulations can be complied with, and unfavorable media attention can be avoided.

The NLRB and the SEC are covered in chapters 11 and 14. Two other powerful agencies with which many businesses must deal are the Federal Trade Commission and the Food and Drug Administration; another, the FCC, regulates the telecommunication business.

The FTC not only governs advertising, it also regulates product or service news releases. Advertising and news releases are illegal if they deceive or mislead the public in any way. Likewise, promotional practices are illegal unless they are literally true.

Business must be able to substantiate all specific product claims. In 1984, the U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the FTC’s ruling that Bayer Aspirin’s advertising made deceptive and misleading claims; Bayer’s assertion that it was better than other brands of aspirin had not been substantiated. The court also affirmed the FTC finding that the pain reliever Midol’s claim to contain no aspirin was false. Similarly, advertising claims for Bufferin and Excedrin were found to be unsubstantiated. The claims could no longer be used in the marketing of the products.

The FTC requires that unsubstantiated or false claims for products be omitted from future advertising, and some advertisers may also be required to run corrective ads. Both alternatives can be expensive.

Non-specific, subjective product claims may sometimes be permitted by the FTC. Regarded as product “puffery,” claims that a brand of whole wheat bread is
the “best” or that a vacation on a tropical isle is a trip to “heaven” are regularly permitted.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates labeling, packaging, and sale of food, drugs, and cosmetics. The regulations govern both product safety and product advertising. Many product recalls and the prohibition of some drug products in the United States result from failure to meet FDA safety regulations or guidelines. The FDA is responsible for the nutritional labeling on many food products.

The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) regulates broadcasting. However, beginning with the Reagan presidency, the FCC has engaged much less in regulating media content. This means, among other things, that public service announcements are not as closely scrutinized as they once were in determining if a broadcast station met the requirement that it be operating in the public interest. Most stations have continued to use PSAs anyway because of the community relations benefits the stations receive.

In 1987 the FCC decided to cease enforcing the Fairness Doctrine, which had especially affected political public relations. However, Section 315 of the Communications Act is still enforced. It specifically concerns fairness in political broadcasting and spells out precise regulations addressing that content. A public relations practitioner for a political candidate should be well acquainted with Section 315—especially Section 4, which says:

If any licensee shall permit any person who is a legally qualified candidate for any public office to use a broadcasting station, he shall afford equal opportunities to all other such candidates for that office in the use of such broadcasting station, provided that such licensee shall have no power of censorship over the material broadcast under the provisions of this section. No obligation is hereby imposed upon any licensee to allow the use of its station by any such candidate.

While Section 315 doesn’t require stations to provide broadcast time, Section 312(c)(7) does. It requires stations to sell “reasonable amounts of time” to legally qualified candidates for federal office. What is important to remember in these sections of the FCC regulation is that the stations aren’t held accountable for content but that the candidates, their organizations, and their public relations people are accountable.

The Internet has quickly entered the legal realm of our information society. Cyberspace is charting new territory in libel, copyright, and obscenity. Especially of interest to the public relations practitioner are the first two issues—libel and copyright infringement.

Copyright and the Net

Public relations practitioners are using the Internet and on-line services to deliver breaking news, feature stories, photos, information about their agencies or organizations, and many other materials. Accessibility of research resources and multiple dissemination opportunities increase the likelihood of piracy on the Net.
But all information in cyberspace is copyright protected, even without the optional copyright notice, and public relations persons should not use material without permission.26

*Business Week* calls copyright violation on the Internet "highway robbery," claiming that infringement goes far beyond the copy machine violations. A digital copyright code was being designed in 1995 to put a "cuffler," or a code, identifying the owner in each copyrighted work on the Internet.27

Though a debate is raging in the courts and elsewhere about who is responsible for libel on the Internet, public relations practitioners would be held accountable for libel should they use the Net because the practitioner controls the messages sent to the public. Common carriers such as telephone companies, however, are not responsible because they don't control the statements. A New York court decided in 1995 that an Internet provider could be held responsible if it edited electronic messages posted by subscribers. The Long Island securities investment firm Stratton Oakmont Inc. sued Prodigy for $200 million because an anonymous user of Prodigy's "Money Talk" bulletin board falsely portrayed the company as criminals involved in fraud.28 The court said that since Prodigy marketed itself as a family-oriented on-line service that screened new messages on its bulletin board, it was more like a publisher than like a common carrier.

Another 1995 case has added a new dimension to the debate. A Caribbean resort owner is trying to get America Online to divulge the name of a subscriber, identified only as Jenny TRR, so it can sue the subscriber. In June of 1995, the user put on the bulletin board a message suggesting that the "only white instructor" at a particular resort in the Caribbean was stoned when he gave her scuba diving lessons.29 How the Cook County Court (and possible appeals courts) will
Summary

This chapter does not constitute a complete discussion of the laws affecting public relations practice. It merely touches on some of the important legal areas with which professionals should be familiar. It outlines most of the legal protections for and the limitations on public communications. If public relations practitioners have a general knowledge of law as it affects their profession, take reasonable care to fulfill obligations and avoid legal transgressions, follow organizational procedures in handling sensitive information, and consult appropriate legal counsel when any question or doubt emerges, they can avoid most legal troubles.

The Internet has emerged as a legal problem area for users. Of particular concern to public relations personnel are issues of copyright and libel on the Internet. The legislative bodies and courts are trying to keep up with technology in developing legal models to regulate the Internet.

Case Study

An Employee’s Rights

By Mary B. Cawley
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Officers of Pine Tree Lumber Company, a large corporation supplying the construction industry with wood products, noticed that its overall production figures were steadily slipping. After analyzing internal personnel figures, the officers determined that the majority of the slippage seemed to be occurring at its isolated raw materials production plant near Mt. Perkins. Among the plant’s 50 workers, absenteeism and turnover were high, and supervisors reported an increased number of disciplinary problems. Several workers had been discharged for drinking on the job, and supervisors noted a large number of workers whose productivity was affected by their consumption of alcohol when off the job. Worker morale was extremely low.

Pine Tree sent personnel director Jim Haskins and employee communications specialist Bob Burruss to the Mt. Perkins site to survey the problems and report back to corporate management. Haskins and Burruss spent two weeks observing the workers on site and conducting extensive interviews with both employees and management. The two skilled communicators successfully encouraged the interviewed workers to speak openly and honestly by assuring them of confidentiality. Their interviews yielded a great deal of personal information about many of the employees.

Haskins and Burruss's report to corporate management concluded that several factors were contributing to low productivity: boredom, alcohol, and the workers’ sense of isolation. Haskins and Burruss felt that a large part of the prob-
The problem lay in the living conditions at the plant. Workers were housed in large barracks, which were noisy and provided little or no privacy. The nearest town was 30 miles away, over often impassable, unpaved mountain roads. The closest outside contact was a small hunting supply store that also sold liquor and beer. There, the workers could sit and drink and visit with a few hunters who frequented the area.

The company quickly acted to improve worker facilities. While the remoteness of the site precluded the presence of families, PineTree built more private, comfortable living quarters and some recreational facilities for the workers. An on-site clubhouse was equipped with cable TV, a small library, and a supply of fishing and hunting gear that the workers could use free of charge. At Buruss's suggestion, PineTree's employee newspaper focused more attention on the workers at the Mt. Perkins site, praising both collective and individual accomplishments and introducing them to other PineTree employees through articles on individual workers' interests and activities. Furthermore, the company initiated a monthly 21-day work schedule, with 10 days paid leave, allowing workers extended visits with their families.

The effect was immediate and dramatic. Productivity increased sharply, and absenteeism and turnover figures dropped. A residual problem remained, however. While the majority of the workers had decreased their alcohol intake, an unacceptable percentage continued to drink excessively. PineTree was concerned for these workers and determined to institute an alcohol rehabilitation program for the problem drinkers.

Although Buruss and Haskins communicated the available program to a variety of channels, there were no takers at Mt. Perkins. Buruss decided that a true story on the ravages of alcohol might provide the needed incentive. After consulting with Haskins and reviewing their interview notes, Buruss chose to tell the story of one Mt. Perkins worker, Mack Frame, the youngest of three tree-toppers at the facility, who had revealed during his interview with Haskins that he had been a heavy drinker during his teenage years; in fact, he had been convicted of DUI and manslaughter and kicked out of his parents' home at age 18. He was married at 19, had a son, and was divorced by age 20. He couldn't keep a job; he said, because of his constant drinking, and his wife grew fearful of his drunkenness around their small child. He confided to Haskins that he had never discussed his past with his co-workers because he was ashamed of his youthful behavior. Now nearly 30 years old, he had not had a drink since attending an alcohol treatment program after his divorce. He looked at his job at Mt. Perkins as a part of a new, sober life. His ex-wife had finally become convinced that he was no longer drinking and for the last several years had allowed him to spend his vacation time with his son. The prevalence of alcohol use among his co-workers provided a continuing test of the strength of his convictions, the young man told Haskins. In checking Frame's personnel file, Haskins found that the manslaughter conviction was noted there and that he had been an exemplary employee during his tenure with PineTree.

Buruss contacted Frame's supervisor, who sought written permission to do a profile on the employee for the company paper. Frame, having seen the interesting employee profiles already published, readily granted permission. The
finished news article was a straightforward retelling of Frame’s story. While the article told of his bout with alcohol and the manslaughter conviction, it placed particular emphasis on his subsequent recovery and exemplary life. The publication of Frame’s story had the desired effect: Nearly 50 percent of the problem drinkers at Mt. Perkins entered the alcohol rehabilitation program. Within one month of the story’s appearance in the company newspaper, Mack Frame sued Pinetree Lumber Company, Jim Haskins, and Bob Bumuss.

Questions
1. Under what law did Mack Frame most probably bring suit against Pinetree? What do you think were the elements of his suit? On the basis of information in the chapter, do you think he had cause for suit?
2. What actions could Bob Bumuss and Jim Haskins have taken to avoid legal problems with Frame? How might Pinetree defend itself?
3. Do you think Bumuss and Haskins could (or should) be liable as individuals?

*This is a fictional case. Neither the company nor any individual mentioned is real.

Notes
2 Ibid., 3-4
3 The New York Times (15 January 1986), E3
4 The Wall Street Journal (14 April 1986), 39
5 The Wall Street Journal (4 October 1985), 23
6 Fitzpatrick, “Public Relations and the Law,” 1
8 David Ferris, “Media as Monitor of Corporate Behavior,” in Business and the Media, Craig E. Armour, ed. (Santa Monica, Goodyear Publishing Co., 1979), 120-121
9 Ibid., 122
10 425 U.S. 748, 771-72, N. 24 (1976)
11 Taft-Hartley Act, Section 8(d)
13 The Wall Street Journal (9 November 1984), 33
14 Pember, 171
15 The Wall Street Journal (21 February 1986), 9
16 The Wall Street Journal (13 March 1984), 33
17 The Wall Street Journal (15 August 1984), 14
19 Ibid
20 The Wall Street Journal (4 March 1983), 20
22 The Wall Street Journal (29 August 1984), 37
23 The Wall Street Journal (22 January 1985), 4
24 Section 315a, Federal Communications Act
29 Tuscaloosa News, June 1995
30 Lauree Lattimore, in "Legal Considerations"
CHAPTER 20

Public Relations as a Career

Preview

The demand for public relations practitioners is growing, primarily because of the need for all types of organizations to maintain effective relationships with their constituents. Public relations practitioners are gaining more influence in policy-level decisions made by their organizations and are more likely to be part of management teams.

Women represent a significant portion of the total number of public relations professionals in practice today. More practitioners are employed in corporate public relations than in any other type.

Today, of course, I would take courses in journalism and public relations, but I'd emphasize the liberal arts, particularly economics, philosophy and cultural history.

—David Ferguson, former PRSA President
The term public relations covers a variety of occupations, as we discussed in chapter 1. Because of the variety of titles, government agencies have difficulty determining how many people are in the occupation. Moreover, budget cuts in most government agencies, with the resulting reduction in numbers of reports, compound the difficulty of obtaining accurate data on occupational employment. The Handbook of Labor Statistics' latest figures place the number of public relations practitioners in the United States at 151,000. The Office of Employment within the Labor Department projects public relations as one of the most rapidly growing industries through 2005, predicting a 69-percent total increase in jobs during the next decade. It estimates that public relations employees currently number 655,000, including staff and clerical as well as professional positions. This number is expected to rise to 1.1 million by 2005.1

Competition for entry-level positions will remain keen, but the rewards for those prepared to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing environment will be great. As USA Today points out, the practice of public relations has changed greatly to keep in step with business and society. If PR was once the haven for burned-out news reporters looking to make a better buck for coloring the truth, it is no longer. The field has evolved, says Joseph Awad, former president of the Public Relations Society of America, into “a whole management discipline, if you will, that is concerned with all the relationships of an organization and society.”2

As management becomes increasingly aware of the importance of effective public relations, public relations staffs grow both in number and in influence. All but 5% of the Fortune 500 companies have public relations departments.3 The 1995 International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) member profile noted that respondents were most likely to hold the title “manager” or “director.”4

As practitioners gain middle- and upper-management status, they are being called on to solve a greater range of consumer and corporate environmental problems. A quick publicity fix will not suffice. Some CEOs spend half their time trying to manage or avert crises, so they are demanding more help from their public relations practitioners in responding to shareholder, staff, public, and media pressure for information.5 Practitioners were on the crisis management teams in the case of Coca-Cola’s switch and reversal on its sugared soft drinks and in Pepsi-Cola’s classic plan to save Pepsi’s market share after tampering incidents.

The involvement of public relations staffs was critical in the name and image change of International Harvester (now Navistar), in the successful introduction of Apple’s Macintosh computer, and in Union Carbide’s recovery from the Bhopal, India, disaster. Practitioners must keep pace with governmental regulations and political trends as Congress and the courts are calling on companies to be more accountable to the public.

New directions for public relations careers have also been opening up outside corporate settings. The IABC’s Profile95 member survey showed a slight decrease in the percentage of members on corporate payrolls—from 46 percent in 1989 to slightly more than 44 percent in 1995. Although public relations has long been part of the operations of not-for-profit entities like hospitals and universities,
public relations practitioners now work for consumer groups, labor unions, government agencies, television stations, and numerous other types of organizations, all of which recognize the need to approach their dealings with the public in an organized and coherent fashion.

Several recent surveys have detailed who practices public relations and how, although the averages included in their results may mask the profession's variety and complexity. Among the 4,679 respondents to the 1993 IABC Profile, 66 percent of the public relations specialists were college graduates, 26 percent held master's degrees, and 1 percent held doctorates.

The traditional profile of the public relations practitioner as a white, middle-aged male has been relegated to the outdated stereotype heap as women now appear to hold the majority of public relations jobs. The 1993 IABC survey reported that nearly 71 percent of the association's members were women. The typical public relations communicator was female, age 37, and a college graduate earning $49,300 as a manager or assistant manager in a corporate communication department. PRSA has more men than does IABC, but the majority of its members likewise are female (58%).

That same 1993 IABC survey showed the average income for respondents to be $49,300, compared with $40,300 in 1989. The Public Relations Journal's 1993 salary survey reported a median salary of $46,204, with an average of $58,477 for men and $39,542 for women. That survey found entry-level salaries to be $21,310. Top median salaries, at $66,707, in the Public Relations Journal survey went to those working in investor relations. See tables 20.1 and 20.2 for the salary distributions by area of public relations.
### TABLE 20.1 Public Relations Journal Salary Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Median Salary</th>
<th>Percent Men</th>
<th>Percent Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industrial/manufacturing</td>
<td>$62,300</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR counseling firms</td>
<td>53,728</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>52,672</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial/insurance</td>
<td>49,602</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media/communications</td>
<td>49,473</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous services</td>
<td>47,915</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific/technical</td>
<td>44,351</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>44,019</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association/foundation</td>
<td>43,388</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo practitioner</td>
<td>43,101</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation/entertainment/</td>
<td>41,943</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hotels/resorts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>41,550</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>41,006</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>41,008</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous professional</td>
<td>40,235</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>39,780</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious/charitable</td>
<td>35,545</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous nonprofits</td>
<td>32,910</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous marketing</td>
<td>32,677</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>41,616</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All respondents</td>
<td>$46,204</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### TABLE 20.2 IABC Salary Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents</th>
<th>Median Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate relations</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>49,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing/advertising</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public relations</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal communication</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public affairs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community relations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public information</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video/Audio</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused to respond</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Profile: A Survey of IABC Communicators' Salaries and Responsibilities (San Francisco: IABC and IABC Research Foundation, 1995)
In 1994 there were 2,887 graduates with bachelor's degrees, with a total of 10,236 public relations majors enrolled in 431 journalism and mass communications programs in U.S. universities. These figures represent a slight decrease in both majors and degrees from 1992 and 1993, however, graduate enrollments have increased.

The scope of public relations education may need to be broadened. As the profession's responsibilities increase, so will the requirements for job entry. Some organizations want their practitioners to have courses in business, finance, and specific technologies in addition to public relations. Some now prefer the master's degree.

Bill Cantor, president of Cantor Concern, an executive search firm, says public relations practitioners will have to understand business, finance, economic principles, and the marketplace. "Above all, they will be required to understand more thoroughly their employer's or client's business and industry if they are to demonstrate to top management the effectiveness of their roles." Pat Jackson, head of a New Hampshire public relations counseling firm, says, "It is clear to me after 46 years of practice that the only result that matters—indeed, the only outcome that can rightly be called a result—is to have motivated, reinforced or modified behavior. Nothing else counts." Thus, he says, future practitioners need to add courses in behavioral science to their public relations studies.

Technological expertise will also be important, Cantor notes: Professionals will need an understanding of the newer media like cable television, teleconferencing, videotape, and satellite conferencing as well as a good working familiarity with computers.

In public relations spotlight 20.1, four professionals tell what they look for when they hire college graduates.

**Public Relations Spotlight 20.1**

Jane Banks asked 10 prominent public relations professionals what they looked for when hiring graduates. The following are excerpts from four of the interviews:

1. James E. Alderman Jr., Vice-President, Public Affairs, Energex, Birmingham, Alabama
   - I prefer someone with a journalism degree because of the writing skills they develop. Too many public relations majors don't develop writing skills well enough, and that's a serious shortcoming. Too many people come out of school saying I just love working with people. I tell them we don't work much with people. We do a lot of writing. So while I will not hire someone without a degree, neither would I hire someone out of college who hasn't worked for a college newspaper or public relations department. If you managed a baseball team, would you hire someone who hasn't studied sports but never played?

2. Michael J. Rouke, Vice-President, Communication and Corporate Affairs, Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co., Montvale, New Jersey
   - The only preference I would give is if the applicant had a public relations or journalism major. It would be a really strong indication of a desire to work in the field. That would help in the initial interview. But I'd mainly look for writing skills.
Public Relations as a Career

skills, communication skills and, if they were going to work with the public, personality.

3. Helen Frank-Benson, APR, Director, Public Relations, American Society for Training and Development, Alexandria, Virginia

"I would look for a liberal arts degree with strong evidence of writing ability. One of the things that’s important in public relations is to be a well-educated person who knows how to think, how to inquire and how to analyze a complex subject. The technical things you can learn on the job or in night school once you have the entry-level job, but knowing how to learn is something you either get or you don’t."

4. John L. Gregory, Executive Director, Corporate Communications, Bellcore, Livingston, New Jersey

"I would hope for someone with a degree in journalism or public relations, but what I’d really look for is a demonstrated writing ability such as working for the school paper or an internship. I think writing is terribly important in any public relations job. If they don’t have the writing ability, it really limits their ability to move around in the company. Also, quite often there’s a PRSSA chapter on campus where people can get some hands-on experience while they’re in school."


Written and oral communication skills, judgment, and an understanding of media functions still top the list of what public relations firm CEOs look for in new hires.11 As Jackson observes, however, public relations seems to be moving beyond a total emphasis on journalism toward more preparation in management, sociology, and psychology, particularly as more public relations specialists join management ranks. Recent graduates are more confident of their general business skills than were their earlier counterparts, but budgeting and computers confound them, according to a survey of former members of the Public Relations Student Society of America.12 Despite the need for a broader range of skills, any expansion of public relations curricula must not shortchange the writing and media skills that have long been the hallmark of professionals.

The most important qualifications for a public relations career can be summed up as good judgment, creativity, good writing skills, articulateness, good organization, sensitivity to people, self-confidence, an understanding of human psychology, the enthusiasm necessary to motivate people, a highly developed sense of competitiveness, and the ability to function as part of a team.13

Important to any profession are the organizations that promote professional standards for its practitioners. Public relations professional organizations include the following:

Agricultural Relations Council
American Society for Hospital Public Relations Directors
Bank Marketing Association
Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)
Chemical Public Relations Association
International Association of Business Communicators (IABC)
Library Public Relations Council
National Association of Government Communicators (NAGC)
National School Public Relations Association
Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)
Railroad Public Relations Association
Religious Public Relations Council

The largest of these are the Public Relations Society of America, with more than 17,000 members, and the International Association of Business Communicators, with slightly more than 12,000 members. PRSA was founded in 1947 through the merger of the National Association of Public Relations Council and the American Council on Public Relations. In 1961, the American Public Relations Association also joined PRSA to make it one of the dominant professional organizations in the field. Most professional organizations offer their members career development, training and job placement services.

Finding a Job in Public Relations

As we have already discussed, public relations practitioners are employed in a variety of organizations. Despite corporate downsizing, corporations still appear to offer the most entry-level opportunities. Cantor and another executive search consultant, Larry Marshall, note the continuing trend toward involvement of public relations specialists in upper management, and Fortune 500 public relations executives say their CEOs are giving them more support. An internship with an organization is becoming almost a necessity for the professional experience needed to get an entry-level job. In fact, it may be the best way of getting into a public relations agency right out of college. "Indeed, in the current buyer's market for public relations personnel, an internship may be the best stepping-stone to a permanent slot in a counseling firm," according to an article on counseling firms using internships to test entry-level job seekers. Competition is still keen for entry-level public relations jobs, and finding the one that is right for you will take some doing. While the best job sources appear to be undergraduate internships, several additional strategies can help you get not only your first job in public relations but subsequent ones as well.

Job-Hunting Strategy

Job hunting should be organized and carefully executed. If you are in a panic to apply for any available opening, you may get some kind of job. But to land the right job, you should begin by doing careful research. These are the areas you need to consider:

1. Your skills and knowledge.
2. Your selected geographical area.
3. Your prospective employers.
Know Yourself: Getting a job is essentially a process of selling yourself, so get to know the product. Make a list of your qualifications. Remember that all prospective employers will be asking themselves the same question: What does this person have that my organization needs?

Gather together your documents: transcripts, awards, current and former job descriptions, old résumés, and anything else that may apply. With this information in hand, you are ready to start your self-analysis.

A helpful exercise is to write down brief descriptions of all your strengths and weaknesses. No item is too old, small, or insignificant to be included. Write everything down, and then begin to eliminate trivial items.

Next, reflect on your experiences at school, at work, or in other organizations. Look at each experience singly, recalling your accomplishments, achievements, or contributions, your specific responsibilities; and the skills or knowledge you gained that will apply to other situations. Be sure also to ask yourself what you disliked. Your list of negative factors can help identify the types of jobs you would not enjoy regardless of salary.

After you have made your two lists, examine your strengths in more detail. Look for common themes or threads. Frequently, skills and knowledge can be classified into four categories: people, ideas, data, and things. Sort out all your experiences that relate to these four and any other categories you feel are important. Once your strengths are distributed under various headings, go through each list and weigh each strength according to its importance. Some skills are more highly developed than others; some knowledge is more complete. This method will give you two bases for comparison among your categories: quantity (number of items per list) and quality (significance of items).

A final step in deciding which strengths may be attractive to a potential employer is to review your list of weaknesses. Compare your unrewarding or negative experiences to your categories of strengths. Don’t be surprised if you find some similarities. We often develop skills and knowledge in areas that we do not particularly enjoy. Experience teaches whether you will enjoy a particular activity.

Select the Proper Target: Again, the key to choosing the right employer is to research the region in which you would like to work, the kinds of organizations that need your skills and knowledge, and the prospective organizations themselves. This is one of the most important and frequently skipped phases of the job search process. If you have contacts who may know of job openings, don’t hesitate to ask them for help or for information about employers or areas they are familiar with. Research using library sources, computer data bases, and personal contacts (including professors involved with your communications association) is the best way to screen for and choose your new public relations career, geographical area, and employer.

Researching distant geographical areas can present an extra challenge. Chambers of commerce may have lists of area organizations that employ people in the job categories you have identified, as well as other information about climate and economic conditions. Your local library will have several sources, including the Editor and Publisher International Year Book on newspapers and
other publications. In addition to other information, this yearbook provides profiles of major U.S. communities. If the town you are considering has a library, you can also write directly to them for information.

Next, try to learn about specific organizations in the communities that interest you. You should answer the following questions: Which organizations are most likely to need my skills and knowledge? What problems do they face that my particular abilities could help solve? Who has the power to hire in my job classification at each of these organizations? Again, your local library and computer data bases are good starting points. These are some helpful sources.

Dun & Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory
Dun & Bradstreet Middle Market Directory
Standard and Poor’s Register of Corporations, Directors, and Executives
Thomas’ Register of American Manufacturers
Fortune’s “Directory of Largest Corporations”
Fortune’s “Annual Directory Issue”
Black Enterprise’s “The Top 100”
College Placement Annual
Membership directories of professional and trade organizations
Annual reports and other publications of organizations
NEXIS business publications
Internet resources (see figure 20.1; resources added every day, but a sample):
Online Job Services: http://rescomp.stanford.edu
The Monster Board: http://www.monster.com
Career Mosaic: http://www.careermosaic.com
Online Career Center: http://www.iquest.net/occ

Naturally, you can write or call the organizations and request information. Thorough research beforehand will ensure that you ask the right questions.

You should now be able to compile a list of jobs that use your skills and knowledge, geographical areas in which those jobs can be found, and in which you would like to live, prospective employers who meet your criteria, and individuals within those organizations who have the authority to hire you.

Keep Records You may want to establish a file for each prospective employer to keep track of the jobs you are applying for and the progress you are making toward each. Every piece of correspondence should be filed with basic information about the company and about those who make employment decisions.
Make Contacts: It is important to get acquainted with people who know where the jobs are. It helps considerably if you belong to a student professional organization like PRSSA or an IAPC student chapter. Contacts you make with professionals in the local chapter and nationally are important. You should find out if there is a job placement officer in the professional chapter. PRSA has a list of chapter placement coordinators, which you can obtain from the association's national headquarters. Find out who professionals think has the best grasp on job possibilities in the city where you want to work. Ask to speak to that person simply to talk generally about jobs in the area. The national PRSA office contracts with a firm to publicize job opportunities nationally through a newsletter entitled Career Opportunities. Other professional associations often have similar placement possibilities.

The placement coordinator in your college, university, or department should be able to help you at least in preparing material, if not in locating potential employers and setting up interviews. Often student public relations groups or classes in public relations call on groups of local professionals to speak about career possibilities and job-hunting approaches. PRSSA, for instance, will sometimes schedule workshops with professionals to give practice in interviewing. Sometimes practice interviews are videotaped so candidates can analyze their strengths and weaknesses. If your local public relations student groups are not offering these activities, initiate them yourself.
Prepare a Résumé and a Letter of Application  Once the target organizations and provisions are identified, write a résumé and a letter of application to accompany each. This step is an initial screening to identify organizations that may have an interest in you. Early elimination of organizations that are not interested will save time, money, and frustration. We will discuss techniques for writing letters and résumés later. For now, keep in mind that they must be personalized and directed toward specific jobs. Record the dates when you send each application letter and résumé, and keep copies of them. You may wish to send follow-up letters.

Tips for the Initial Interview  In response to your letter and résumé, you may receive an invitation to be interviewed by someone in the target organization. Reply immediately by telephone to the person who issued the invitation. When setting the date for this initial interview, leave yourself time to prepare, and try not to appear too eager. Follow your telephone conversation with a letter of confirmation. This two-step approach allows you to (1) make personal contact with the interviewer before the interview and (2) remind the interviewer of your interest just before the interview. After the interview, jot down your impressions and other information you obtained for future reference. Always follow this initial interview with a letter thanking the interviewer for his or her time and consideration. The thank-you letter is a good opportunity to reinforce your expressed interest in the job.

Of course, you may receive a rejection letter instead of an invitation for an interview. If you do, it is usually best to take the organization out of your file and forget it. It is not likely that they will contact you again, even if they have promised to keep your résumé. If you receive no reply, a follow-up letter and another résumé will be in order after sufficient time has passed. Use this opportunity to restate your interest in the organization. A follow-up phone call can be substituted if you have a specific person to contact.

How to Handle Job Offers  Handling job offers is not a problem when you know you have been offered the best position of all those for which you applied. It is frequently impossible, however, to know whether a better offer may result from one of your other inquiries until everyone has had an opportunity to review your qualifications. Therefore, if you receive an early job offer that you feel may not be the best possible opportunity, it is appropriate to request a reasonable delay before accepting. You may do this by letter or telephone or both. If you do ask for more time to take care of unfinished business and consider the offer thoroughly, be certain your request is reasonable. An employer may be able to wait a few days or even a week, but a longer delay would disregard his or her need to fill the position. On the other hand, you must be careful not to accept a job you really do not want just because it is the first one offered.

When you determine which job offer you wish to accept, send a follow-up acceptance letter even if you were notified and have already accepted by telephone. If, after accepting a position, you receive other offers, promptly respond with letters of refusal thanking those making the offers for their consideration. If you have asked for time to consider other offers, respond with similar letters as soon as you have accepted a job and received written confirmation of your employment.
Now that we have outlined the basic job-seeking strategies, we will discuss three key elements in the process: letters of application, résumés, and interviews.

A letter of application is often the first step in the process of getting a job. A good letter will not usually get you the job; rather, you hope that it will get you an interview. At the interview, you must present yourself as qualified, energetic, reliable, and enthusiastic. Few companies hire without interviewing. Even so, the application letter is crucial. Many letters of application are solicited, most of them being sent in response to advertisements. The United States Congress has passed laws regulating equal employment opportunity. As part of companies' efforts to comply, they use advertisements much more frequently than they formerly did. Although some of these ads run in community newspapers and in magazines of general circulation, most appear in specialized newspapers, magazines, and publications. The latter are good sources to check when you are looking for a job.

Feel free also to send unsolicited letters of application. Analyze your qualifications carefully, identify companies or institutions you wish to work for, and send the strongest letter you can. It is not uncommon for a graduating college student to send 20 or 25 unsolicited letters. Usually some are answered, and a chance for an interview may develop. Mass mailing of unsolicited letters, however, is expensive and takes a lot of time. It is often better to narrow your sights and write only to companies or institutions in which you have genuine interest. Follow the suggestions given earlier for selecting the right prospective employer.

In preparing a letter of application, follow these general rules:

1. Emphasize your strong points. In one sense, you are writing a sales letter. Do not exaggerate.
2. Remember that each time a company hires somebody, it takes a risk. Think about what the company wants, and take that into account in preparing your letter. If you have done your research properly, this will be easy.
3. Never say critical things about other places you have worked or other people you have worked for. Most potential employers believe that if you were unhappy elsewhere, you will be unhappy with them.
4. Do not talk about what you want in terms of salary and benefits. Normally these subjects come up in the interview.
5. See that your letter is perfectly prepared. A smudgy letter could ruin you. A typographical error or an incorrect spelling will be spotted at once. Use good-quality bond paper. Never send a carbon or photocopy of a letter.
6. Where possible, address your letter to a person, not to "Personnel Manager" or "President."
7. Remember that there is no single correct format for your letter. The letter should reflect your personality and strengths, and it should also address the particular job you are seeking.
8. Don't forget to request an interview at the end of your letter.
Most job applications are in two parts—the letter itself and an attachment or enclosure. The attachment or enclosure is variously called the résumé, vita, data sheet, qualification sheet, or personal profile. Although all five titles are correct, we shall hereafter use the term résumé. Both letter and résumé are important; neither should be slighted.

The letter usually should be typed. You often see printed letters of application, but they suggest a mass mailing, which means they will be taken less seriously than individually typed letters.

A résumé is a kind of tabulation of a candidate's qualifications. It is an impersonal document with no room for wasted words. The contents are balanced on the page to look appealing. When a second page is necessary, a carryover heading goes at the top. Most employers prefer one-page résumés, especially for beginning workers.

Most résumés have several parts, although the order in which they come is not fixed (except for the heading), and the form in which the information is placed on the page is flexible. Résumés do not all look alike. The heading, however, always comes first. It gives your name, address, and telephone number (if appropriate). It may give the name of the company you are applying to, but that may be omitted if copies of your résumé are going to many companies. After the heading, put the strongest part of your résumé first: education, experience, personal details, activities and achievements, and (sometimes) references. As a general rule, the personal data section should be brief and not near the top of the résumé. Employers do, however, expect to read something about you as a person that will help them visualize you and give them information to draw on during the interview. Include whatever data you feel will help you the most. Activities and achievements could include participation in youth organizations and religious organizations, for example. Applicants generally name at least three references, or they simply state that references will be furnished on request.

A résumé needs constant updating, even when you are not in the job market, so that it will be ready whenever needed. Résumés are frequently used for more than just job hunting. If you are asked to speak at a meeting, the chairperson may ask for a résumé to use in preparing introductory remarks. Frequently, organizations ask that personal data in one form or another be submitted when a person is being considered for promotion. Perhaps most important, keeping an up-to-date résumé helps you maintain a healthy view of the way your career is progressing.

A portfolio should include a résumé at the beginning and then provide an organized sampling of your work (clippings, news releases, scripts, plans, etc.). Your portfolio helps show a potential employer that you have the skill and experience to do the job for which you are interviewing. That's why it is important to begin building your portfolio from the start of your college years, or at least from the time you begin to take public relations courses and do any work that would produce communication materials. Never throw away anything that you produce. You may need it for your portfolio years later. See public relations spotlight 20.2 for tips on portfolio preparation.
There is no one "right" way to put your portfolio together. Every portfolio is different; yours should reflect your personality.

Your portfolio is your chance to show and tell potential employers what you are all about. When you present your portfolio, remember that you are in control, and explain how these various public relations materials relate to your overall skills and the position you are applying for.

The most important aspect of your portfolio is the quality of the material you are displaying. Don't ever include items of your work that you wouldn't want potential employers to read or see just for the sake of having a "full" portfolio.

Your portfolio should include samples of your best work while also showing your range of capabilities.

Future public relations practitioners should have news clips, but the portfolio should also include items to reflect diversity in other areas such as design and layout, publicity, planning, and so on.

Portfolio cases come in many different sizes and styles. The zipped case with handles works well. The portfolio size depends on the type of work you will include in it.

Always put your résume on the front page. It is a good introduction, and if you ever have to leave your portfolio behind for review, it serves as a reminder of your credentials.

Put your best work in the front part of the portfolio case.

Group related items together, creating an appealing layout to increase their impact.

Tailor your portfolio for a specific job by removing items or inserting more as needed. For example, if interviewing for a sports information director position, move all sports-related items to the front, and take out some of the unrelated items.

You may want to affix labels near each item or group of items explaining your role in the project or the results the project produced. This is especially helpful when you know you will be leaving your portfolio behind and won't have a chance to explain personally.

Always carry at least four or five extra résumés and references in the side pocket of the portfolio. Often there are other executives at your interview who need copies.

Make photocopies of your best writing samples, and keep them handy in the side pocket. You'll need them to leave behind with potential employers who may not have time to read them during the interview or who may want to keep them on file with your résume for future reference.

As we indicated earlier, the job interview is a key part of the hiring process in American industry. Even organizations that do a poor job of interviewing seem to place a great deal of emphasis on the process. When you are invited for an interview, remember that you are an active participant, just as you would be in any other person-to-person encounter. You must be prepared and willing to do your part to make the interview a success.
Planning for the Interview  Once you have been invited to an interview, refer to your files and develop a data sheet that will help you prepare. Your research should have yielded certain information about the organization, such as major products or services, names of and facts about top executives, other locations, gross sales, assets, number of employees, market share, financial position, history, closest competitors, and problems—especially those that need your public relations skills and knowledge. This data sheet should also help you identify the gaps in your knowledge about the organization. Use these gaps to prepare questions to ask during the interview. In addition, be sure you know the interviewer’s name and can pronounce it. If you have any doubts, check with the secretary or receptionist before you go into the interviewer’s office. (Also, get the secretary’s name; it may be useful later.)

While you are preparing for the interview, refer to your original self-analysis inventory, and identify the particular strengths you think would be appropriate for this job. You will want to reflect on your educational and job experiences and single out examples of the skills and knowledge you have to offer. Organize these examples in your mind so that you can describe each and make your points quickly and effectively. Your personal success stories are ammunition to use during the interview to sell yourself.

Try to predict what questions an interviewer may ask you. Gary T. Hunt and William F. Eadie suggest several broad categories of questions that appear fairly consistently in many employment interviews (see public relations spotlight 20.3). Your answers to questions like these can appear more direct and sincere if you think them through before the interview.

Taking an Active Role in the Interview  Take an active role in directing and shaping the interview. Although the interviewer expects to control the interaction and you should not violate this expectation, you do have considerable latitude in responding to his or her questions. Make the most of opportunities to showcase your experience, education, skills, and knowledge. Most skilled interviewers will ask broad, open-ended questions that require more than brief replies. They want to find out what you think is important. Then they will follow up with more specific questions about areas that concern them. Use these questions to mention as many of your unique selling points as possible.

Good interviewers want you to talk more than they do; be sure you have something to say. You must be aware, however, that not all interviewers are good at their jobs. If an interviewer does not encourage you to talk and seems to prefer to do the talking, do not get in the way. You must be prepared to take the role of active listener. Sometimes people are hired as interviewers because they enjoy talking to others and have outgoing personalities, but if they do not understand the function of the employment interview, they may end up giving far more information than they receive.

The best way to handle such interviewers is to let them talk, even encourage them. It is not your place to teach the talkative interviewer his or her job. Even though you have prepared all your selling points in advance, do not try to force them in when they are not wanted. Instead, be attentive, and respond with positive
Categories of Questions in the Job Interview

Topic: Future Orientation
1. What is your five-year plan? Ten-year plan?
2. Where do you want to be in five years? Ten years? Twenty years?
3. What is your ultimate goal in life? Why?
4. What are your future educational goals? Training goals?

Topic: Technical Competence
1. What makes you think that you can do the job?
2. In your work experience, what have you done well? Not so well?
3. How would you hire someone? Fire someone? Discipline someone?
4. What is your greatest professional (or personal) strength? Weakness?

Topic: Personal Qualities
1. What personal assets would you bring to our organization?
2. When are you at your best? Worst?
3. What are your hobbies? Leisure-time activities? Nonjob interests?
4. Why are you a good employee for us?

Topic: Potential
1. How would you assess your own managerial potential?
2. In addition to a steady income, what does a position in this organization mean to you?
3. By your own assessment, how far can you go in this field? In life?


feedback such as, "I see your point" or "Please tell me more." Remember that this person enjoys the sound of his or her own voice and will like you if you seem to enjoy it as well.

During the interview, prepare questions that are based on what you have heard. Questions indicate your interest and perceptiveness. You may want to make brief notes about some details unless it bothers your interviewer. As soon as possible after the interview, write down the facts and impressions you have gained for future reference.

Nonverbal Communication in the Interview

Nonverbal cues take on great importance in an interview. Interviewers are usually very sensitive to these signals, so give them some thought. Eye contact is very important for establishing a climate of trust between you and the interviewer. Be sure to look him or her in the eye when you talk. Do not stare, but indicate that you feel comfortable looking directly at the interviewer. Do not let your facial expressions reveal thoughts you
may not want known. If you are disappointed (or even if you are thrilled), it may not be to your advantage to show your feeling.

Hands and legs can betray nervousness and anxiety. Control your motions at all times to give an impression of confidence. Avoid habitual or nervous gestures such as foot swinging, toe tapping, and other possibly irritating movements.

Dress is important in job interviews. No matter how strongly you feel that you should be hired for your talents rather than your clothes, you must consider the interviewer's initial impression. If you are in doubt, visit the interviewer's office unannounced ahead of time and observe the way people there dress. Personal features should not get in the way of the interviewer's perception of your ability.

Getting your first public relations job is a matter of careful planning and preparation. There are no magical tricks or easy formulas, but if you are willing to follow the suggestions presented here, you will be well on your way to finding the job that is right for you.

**Summary**

While communication skills and media knowledge are still the backbone of professional public relations practice, the need for new training in business, technology, and the social and behavioral sciences is evident. Perhaps the most important message of this book is that public relations is a complex and changing field. Therefore, those who earn their living through public relations must be able to apply a variety of skills to many new and unique situations. Public relations practitioners cannot be stamped out of a common mold or simply trained to perform routine functions. The field is changing so rapidly that tried-and-true methods may no longer be successful. Instead, each practitioner must approach his or her career equipped with a knowledge of the past and the skill to find new solutions for the present and the future.

**Case Study**

Your spouse has decided to attend medical school at the University of Tennessee, Memphis. You will finish this semester in the public relations program at your university. You have had an internship with a nonprofit organization and worked for the college newspaper as well. As a member of PRSSA, you have made contacts with a number of professionals in your community. You talk with your faculty advisor. She and two of the professionals in the local PRSA chapter suggest that you contact several places in Memphis. They also suggest you contact the job placement person in the Memphis chapter of PRSA. With their help, you learn of openings at three places in Memphis where you might be quite interested in working: The Federal Express media relations department needs a news writer, Baptist Hospital needs someone to work on its internal publications, and ALSAC
Public Relations as a Career

(the fund-raising arm of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital) needs someone to work with community relations

Questions

1. Research the three organizations. How many people are employed in each organization? What is each organization's purpose? Who is the person that you should contact about the job?
2. Write a letter of application to one of the three organizations.
3. Prepare your résumé for one of the three jobs.
4. Prepare your portfolio

Notes

2 Robert Garfield, "What Are the 3 Toughest PR Jobs?" USA Today (10 November 1982) 38
3 J.R. O'Dwyer, Annual Survey of the Fortune 500, (New York 1985)
4 Profile'95: Special Report (San Francisco International Association of Business Communication, 1995)
5 Bill Cantor, "Forecast '85: The Year in Public Relations," Public Relations Journal (February 1985) 24
6 Profile: A Survey of IABC Communicators' Salaries and Responsibilities (San Francisco, CA: IABC and IABC Foundation, 1995), 9
7 "Eighth Annual Salary Survey," Public Relations Journal (July 1993) 12
8 Lee Becker and Gerald Kosco, "Graduate Degrees Increase 23%, but Bachelor Numbers Decline," Journalism Educator (Fall 1995) 61-76
9 Cantor, "Forecast '85," 22-25
13 U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook (1990), 478
15 Susan L. Bovet, "Firms Use Internships to Test Entry-Level Job Seekers," Public Relations Journal (September 1992) 26
16 Material in this section adapted from Aernoff et al., Getting Your Message Across (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1981) Reprinted by permission
A
action implementation
Any attempt to spread information within a target audience as part of a public relations plan
active public
People who are aware of a problem and will organize to do something about it
annual meeting
A yearly meeting at which a corporation's stockholders have the opportunity to meet and vote on various issues related to company management
annual report
A yearly report to stockholders prepared by public relations departments, containing financial performance information and other material designed to promote the organization
appropriation
Commercial use of an entity's picture, likeness, or name without permission
ASCII
The American Standard Code for Information Exchange. It is used to transfer data to be used in any word processing program
audience coverage
Whether and how well intended publics were reached, which messages reached them, and who else heard the messages
audit
An evaluation and inventory of an organizational system
aware public
People who know about a problem but don't act on it
B
boundary spanners
Individuals within organizations assigned responsibility for communicating with other organizations
B-roll
Extra video footage often sent along with a Video News Release (VNR) for use by TV stations to prepare their own video stories about the topic on the video
brainstorming
A technique of group discussion used to generate large numbers of creative alternatives or new ideas
branding
Corporate sponsorship of special events as a way of providing publicity and gaining goodwill
burnout
The idea that a message loses its punch if consumers hear it too often or too far in advance of an event
C
censorship
An official expression of disapproval broadcast to fellow members of a group and possibly to the public
civil libel
Damaging, negligent published communication that injures an identified individual
closed-system evaluation
A pre-/postevent assessment that considers only the controlled message elements
code of ethics
A formal set of rules governing proper behavior for a particular profession or group
collective bargaining
A continuing institutional relationship between an employer and a labor organization concerned with the negotiation, administration, interpretation, and enforcement of contracts covering wages, working conditions, and other issues related to employment
commercial speech
Public communication by business organizations through advertising or public relations to achieve sales or other organizational goals
communication climate
The degree of trust and openness that exists in the communication processes of an organization
communication flow
The direction (upward, downward, or horizontal) messages travel through the networks in an organization
communication load
The total amount of communication received and initiated in a given channel
communication networks
The patterns of communication flow between individuals in organizations
communication policies
Final statements of organizational postures related to communication
activities and behaviors and information streams
communication rules
Mutually accepted standards of communication behavior that provide the basis for coordinated interpersonal interaction
community relations
A public relations function consisting of an institution's planned, active, and continuing participation with and within a community to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit of both the institution and the community
content analysis
Systematic coding of questionnaire responses or other written messages into categories that can be totaled
contract
An agreement containing a legal offer, a legally effective acceptance, and an exchange of acts or promises called consideration
controlled media
Those media that the public relations practitioner has actual control over, such as a company newsletter
copyright
Legal protection from unauthorized use of intellectual property fixed in any tangible medium of expression
corporate philanthropy
Recognition of corporate obligations and responsibilities to communities, represented by monetary and other contributions to charitable organizations
counseling firm
A public relations or marketing company hired by another organization to help with campaigns or run an online public relations function
criminal libel
Public defamatory communication causing breach of the peace or incitement to riot
cybernetics
The study of how systems use communication for direction and control
cyberspace
A term used to refer to the place where online conversations and information exchange take place
defamation
Any communication that holds a person up to contempt, hatred, ridicule, or scorn
Delphi Model
A technique for reaching consensus through mailed questionnaires
diffusion of information
The way in which information spreads through a public

econometric
Involving statistical measurement of the economy
economic education
Widespread efforts to overcome economic illiteracy
economic literacy
A lack of understanding on the part of individuals of the general public concerning economic concepts, relationships, and issues
ecosystem
A system serving as an environment for several smaller systems
employee benefits
Aspects of employee compensation, often including health and life insurance, vacation and sick leave, pension programs, and other valuable considerations
environmental monitoring
Formal systems for observing trends and changes in public opinion that are used either once, periodically, or continuously
ethics
Standards of conduct and morality
evaluation
An examination of the effectiveness of a public relations effort
far comment
A defense against libel, the expression of opinion on matters of public interest
Federal Trade Commission (FTC)
That federal government regulatory body charged with assuring fair dealing in relation to goods and services in terms of such things as truth in advertising
feedback
Information received in response to actions or messages about those actions or messages
financial analysts
Investment counselors, fund managers, and others whose function is to gather information about various companies, develop expectations of the companies' performances, and make judgments about how security markets will evaluate these factors
financial budget
A detailed estimate of how much an organization expects to spend in a given period and where the money will come from
financial press
Media outlets devoted to coverage of business and financial information
financial public relations
The process of creating and maintaining investor confidence and building positive relationships with the financial community through the dissemination of corporate information
First Amendment
The initial section of the United States Bill of Rights that guarantees the freedoms of press, speech, assembly, and religion
black (or dark)
A derogatory term sometimes applied to public relations practitioners, primarily by reporters and editors
focus group
A group of people representative of an organization's various publics who are called together, usually only once, to give advance reaction to a plan
Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
A federal government regulatory agency dealing with the efficacy, labeling, packaging, and sale of food, drugs, and cosmetics
Form 10-K, Form 10-Q, and Form 8-K Reports required by the Securities and Exchange Commission from publicly traded companies
forum
A gathering place on an online service such as CompuServe, Prodigy, or America Online where people "meet" about a topic or theme. Messages are left, other people add to the discussion, and at times people "chat" on line
Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
A law passed in 1974 requiring disclosure of certain categories of government information
ftp
File transfer protocol, the main means by which one retrieves files from the Internet
Glossary

Gantt chart
A graphic illustration of the time required to accomplish various jobs in a project

gatekeeper
An individual who is positioned within a communication network so as to control the messages flowing through communication channels

gopher
A means of finding information on the internet

groan lobbying
Organizing local constituencies to influence government decision makers

H

hierarchy
A proposition underlying systems theory that maintains that systems are organized in a successively more inclusive and complex manner, and that to understand systems, behavior, several appropriate levels should be examined

home page
A site on the Internet or World Wide Web where one can place data, including words, sound, and graphics, to be retrieved by Internet users

I

inferential data
Information that not only characterizes a particular group or situation but also allows researchers to draw conclusions about other groups or situations

interdependence
A proposition underlying systems theory that maintains that elements of systems cannot act unilaterally and that all elements of a system influence one another. Behavior is the product of systems, not individual system elements

Internet
A vast, interconnected computer network that allows computers anywhere in the world to communicate instantly with computers in another part of the country or the world

interorganizational communication
Structured communication among organizations linking them with their environments

interpersonal communication
The exchange of messages between individuals through which needs, perceptions, and values are shared and by which mutual meanings and expectations are developed

intervening public
People who may make it more difficult for an organization to reach those it is aiming to influence or gain approval from

invasion of privacy
Symptomatic recording or observing of other people's private documents, possessions, activities, or communications

issue
Four areas in which one entity may wield the privacy of another

appropriation, publication of private information, invasion, or publication of false information

issue advertising
Advertising designed to communicate an organization's stand on a particular issue and seeking to generate support for that position

issue management
The process of identifying issues that potentially impact organizations and managing organizational activities related to those issues

K

key contacts
People who either can influence the public or an organization is trying to reach or have direct power to help the organization

latent public
People who are not aware of an existing problem

level of analysis
In this systems approach, the magnitude of the system chosen for examination

lenses
Individuals who serve as linking pins connecting two or more groups within an organizational communication network. Sometimes referred to as internal boundary spanners

N

National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)
The federal government regulatory body charged with overseeing union activities and union-management relations

network
Two or more computers linked together

news conferences
Structured opportunities to release news simultaneously to all media

news release
A story prepared for the media to share information and generate publicity

liability
Published defamation

licensure
A formal certification process that indicates a person measures up to a set of professional standards and qualifications

line organization
A method of structuring organizations as a sequence of ascending levels of responsibility for the production of goods or services

lobbying
The practice of trying to influence governmental decisions, usually done by agents who serve interest groups

malice
A requirement of libel in cases involving public figures, knowledge of the falsity of published material, or a reckless disregard for the truth

management-by-objectives (MBO)
A process that specifies that supervisors and employees will jointly set goals for employees. Usually followed by a joint evaluation of the employee's progress after a set period of time

mass opinion
The consensus of the public at large

model
A way of looking at something

moderating public
Those people who could make it easier for an organization to get its message through to the public if they really want to reach mutual expectations. Should similar responses to messages and events

NLRB
National Labor Relations Board

RAF
Research Associates of America

RDA
Research Development Association

RHA
Research Health Association
Glossary

newspaper
An area set aside to provide information services, and amenities to journalists covering a story.

not-for-profit organization
A group or company whose primary purpose is not to make a profit, regardless of whether it actually does so in a given year.

off the record
An agreement with an interviewer not to print information provided on line.

open-system evaluation
An ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of a publisher's actions concerning the impact of uncontrollable elements.

operating budget
An estimate of the amount of goods and services an organization expects to consume.

opinion leaders
People who are instrumental in influencing other people's attitudes or actions.

organizational climate
The collective subjective perceptions held by an organization's employees concerning organizational policies, structure, leadership, standards, values, and rules.

organizational communication
The exchange and interaction of informal and formal messages within networks of independent relationships.

perception
The process of making sense of incoming stimuli.

perceptual screens
Filters composed of needs, values, attitudes, expectations, and experiences, through which individuals process messages to derive meaning.

planned publicity
Publicity that is planned as a result of a conscious effort to attract attention to an issue, event, or organization.

policy
A type of standing plan that serves as a guide for decision making and usually is set by top management.

political action committee (PAC)
A group of people who raise or spend at least $1,000 in connection with a federal election.

press agent
One who uses information as a manipulative tool, employing whatever means are available to achieve desired public opinion and action.

press kit
A collection of publicity releases packaged to gain media attention.

primary public
The group of people an organization ultimately hopes to influence or gain approval from.

primary research
The gathering of information that is not already available.

process
A defense against libel, the allowance of what might otherwise be libelous because of the circumstances under which a statement was produced.

procedure
A type of standing plan that consists of standard instructions for performing common tasks. Procedures carry out an organization's policies.

product liability
The principle that companies are responsible for any damage or disease that might be caused by the use of their products. Companies are being held to increasingly stricter standards, sometimes losing lawsuits even though the harm the product caused, or was linked to, resulted from improper use.

program evaluation and review technique (PERT)
A network representing a plan to accomplish a project showing the sequence, timing, and costs of the various tasks.

propaganda of the deed
Proactive actions designed solely to gain attention for ideas or grievances.

public
A group of individuals tied together by a set of common characteristics or responses.

public affairs
That aspect of public relations dealing with the political environment of organizations.

public communication
A multistep, multidirectional process in which messages are disseminated to a broad, and sometimes undifferentiated, audience through complex networks of active transmitters.

public information/public affairs officers (PIOs/PAOs)
Public relations practitioners working for the U.S. government or other institutions using those titles.

public opinion
An attitudinal measure of the image a public has concerning some person, object, or concept.

public relations
A management function that helps define an organization's philosophy and direction by maintaining communication within a firm and with outside forces and by monitoring and helping a firm adapt to significant public opinion.

public relations counselor
One who informs both publics and organizations in the effort to create relationships of mutual benefit and support.

publicity
Publication of news about an organization or person for which time or space was not purchased.

publicity agent
One who serves as a conduit of information from organizations to publics, using the information to promote understanding, sympathy, or patronage for the organization.

qualitative research
A method of delving into audience opinion without relying on formal, rigorous, number-based research methods.

readability study
An assessment of the difficulty an audience should have reading and comprehending a passage.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>stakeholders</td>
<td>The primary group an organization is trying to influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stakeholder analysis</td>
<td>A method for characterizing publics according to their interest in an issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sanctions</td>
<td>Restrictions imposed on a member of a profession by an official body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scenario construction</td>
<td>A forecasting tool that explores likely outcomes of alternative courses of action in a hypothetical, logical future situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary research</td>
<td>The gathering of available information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)</td>
<td>That federal government regulatory body charged with overseeing the trade of stocks and bonds and the operations of financial markets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single-use plans</td>
<td>Plans developed for use in one specific situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slander</td>
<td>Oral defamation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spontaneous publicity</td>
<td>Publicity accompanying unplanned events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>staff</td>
<td>Organizational personnel employed to provide support and advice to line management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>standing plans</td>
<td>Plans for dealing with certain types of situations, particularly common situations and emergencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategic plans</td>
<td>Long-range plans concerning a group's major goals and ways of carrying them out. These plans are usually made by top management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subsystem</td>
<td>A component of a system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>synergy</td>
<td>A proposition underlying systems theory that maintains that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>system</td>
<td>A set of objects or events grouped together by sets of relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine Act</td>
<td>A law requiring meetings of governmental boards, commissions, and agencies to be open to the public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tactical plans</td>
<td>Short-range plans for accomplishing the steps that lead up to achievement of an organization's goals. These plans are carried out at every level of an organization and on an everyday basis.</td>
</tr>
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KOM5321
(Advanced Public Relations)
Multicultural Public Relations
(A Social-Interpretive Approach)
MULTICULTURAL PUBLIC RELATIONS
A SOCIAL-INTERPRETIVE APPROACH
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MULTICULTURAL PUBLIC RELATIONS
A SOCIAL-INTERPRETIVE APPROACH

STEPHEN P. BANKS

SAGE Publications
International Educational and Professional Publisher
Thousand Oaks  London  New Delhi
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About the Author
values with the ways we categorize groups of people we see as being different. I believe that taking this broader view of diversity can improve both the theory and the practice of public relations communication.

Although my name alone appears as author of this volume, many people helped me with materials and ideas and provided conversational challenges and encouragement. I am especially indebted to Rocky Barker, Carl Botan, Steve Corman, Jim Fisher, Kerry Flodin, Bill Gudykunst, Ruth Guezley, Dana Horton, Ken Laverty, Esther Louise, Linda Larkey, Kristin Maestas, Terry Maurer, Michelle Posey, and Stella Ting-Toomey. For encouragement, expert editing and hassle-free administration, Sophy Craze, Astrid Virding and Janet Brown at Sage Publications deserve my gratitude and admiration. I also thank my students and colleagues at the University of Idaho—may we continue to learn from one another. Last, which also comes first, is gratitude to Anna Banks for her support before, during, and after this project.
Preface

In my introductory public relations course, I ask students to bring to class "mentions" of public relations they find in the mass media. Over the six years I have been assigning this task, the overwhelming majority of media references to public relations my students encounter are negative, likening public relations to communication to deception, whitewashing, manipulation, and insincerity.

I use this exercise to make the point that public relations, as a communication occupation and social institution, has a long way to go to achieve legitimacy. In my view, the main reason public relations is so tainted and "preparadigmatic" is its controversial function in society. Public relations literally is born and immersed in controversy—no need for change, no need for public relations. Thus differences of perspectives are at the very heart of public relations practice.

We need stronger theory to support a more virtuous practice of institutional communication, theory that both recognizes the inevitability of conflict and diversity and contributes to a more just society. The central argument of this book is that only by focusing on the construction of meaning and the values, patterned activities, and relationships that shape and are shaped by subjective meanings can public relations be truly effective. The social-interpretive approach to multicultural public relations thus joins diversity of experience and
Culture, Diversity, and Public Relations

We are living in an age of diversity.

—Don C. Locke, Increasing Multicultural Understanding

A timeless adage reminds us that no two people are exactly alike. Indeed, differences—human and otherwise—are all around us. But in most cases, the ways people are dissimilar turn out to be trivial, and we appropriately ignore those differences. In other cases, we see the dissimilarities among people as significant, and we tend to assign people to categories of difference. These dissimilarities can have immense practical consequences.

This book is about recognizing, analyzing, and responding to those categories of human differences that might "make a difference" in the practice and study of public relations. This is no simple task. Theorists, educators, and managers have long struggled with the concept of differences (Anlau, Becker, & Coleman, 1986) and the difficulties of communicating across cultures (e.g., Albers, 1992; Asante & Gudykunst, 1989; Gass & Vamos, 1991; Gudykunst, 1991; Vamos & Gass, 1985). Moreover, some influential public relations commentators (e.g., O'Dwyer, 1994) openly disparage multicultural communication. It is my hope, however, that by better understanding...
the influences of diversity on public relations and identifying effective ways people in public relations can respond to social changes, the current and following generations of practitioners will be better equipped to communicate in a rapidly changing world. It also is my hope that the ideas in this book will stimulate further theorizing and research among scholars interested in public relations.

As a simple example of what can happen to a public relations practitioner who is insufficiently aware of cultural differences, consider what happened to David M. Grant. Grant had agreed to conduct a publicity program in the U.S. business and trade press for a high-priced European client. Although he achieved excellent press placements in the right markets, the client was not satisfied. The European manager expected Grant to establish close personal contacts in the targeted industries and media markets and to spend lots of time socializing with those representatives. The client even complained that the agency’s expenses were too low. Eventually, the client switched agencies, ending an $8,000 per month relationship, because of differing cultural assumptions about how public relations should be conducted. As Grant (1988) analyzed his problem: “Results notwithstanding, when you’re dealing with a foreign culture, you must make sure that your concept of good public relations practice is the same as your client’s” (p. 48).

Public relations practice is potentially filled with embarrassments, missed opportunities, and inadequate performance that can result from misunderstanding cultural differences. The extent of the field’s lack of sensitivity to cultural differences is reflected in a recent survey of public relations professionals my students and I conducted (Banks, 1994). When asked what cultural groups among clients or employees were important to their public relations practice, the majority of practitioners could name none. One respondent said: “Diversity isn’t a problem for us. We don’t have any diversity here.” Practitioners like our survey respondents need more information about the nature of diversity and a clearer theoretical
understanding of cultural variability and what it implies for public relations communication.

Research and theory on diversity in public relations, however, are just beginning to emerge. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) has commissioned a monograph about multicultural public relations (Miller, 1991) and a book-length annotated bibliography of scholarly and popular writing on communication and culture (Miller, 1993). A modest number of academic papers on multiculturalism in public relations have appeared in recent years (e.g., Ekachai, 1992; Everett, 1993; Grunig & White, 1992; Kern-Foxworth, 1990; Kern-Foxworth & Miller, 1992). Moreover, a huge literature has appeared over the past decade to convey practical guidance on training for and managing in multicultural work settings (e.g., Fernandez, 1991; Harris & Moran, 1991; Thiederman, 1991). To date, though, no comprehensive, theory-driven, and systematic treatment of multicultural communication in public relations has appeared.

This book seeks to fill that gap in three ways. It reexamines the nature of culture, diversity, public relations, and communicative effectiveness; it establishes a broad-based and culture-sensitive theory of communication for public relations; and it analyzes the influence of different cultural perspectives on public relations practice in internal communications, community relations, communication with activist audiences, and international programs.

Unfortunately, little agreement exists on how to define even the most fundamental concepts in multicultural public relations. As illustrations of this conceptual uncertainty, consider the following. Debra Miller (1991), referring to the American demographic landscape, remarks “Some say we should call it multiculturalism, or cultural pluralism. . . . Or is it a salad? A mosaic? A patchwork quilt? A spicy gumbo?” (p. 2). Similarly, Lustig and Koester (1993) describe four metaphors for U.S. cultural diversity, none of which, they say, adequately captures the phenomenon: the melting pot, the tributary, the tapestry, and the garden salad. In addition, numerous scholars
have commented on the profusion of definitions for culture (e.g., Gudykunst, 1991, p. 42; Lustig & Koester, 1993, p. 37). And Dean Krukeberg and Kenneth Starck (1988, p. 11), like many other writers on public relations, analyze the "seemingly infinite number of definitions of public relations." Accordingly, in this chapter I develop definitions of three concepts that are central to this book—culture, diversity, and public relations. In the process of exploring these concepts, I also discuss the encompassing and controversial issue of how public relations practitioners might think about and engage cultural diversity.

Before proceeding to definitions, however, it will be useful to explore a crucial phenomenon—the immense variation among the populations of our world and the unprecedented speed with which social groupings are changing. (In line with other scholars studying diversity, such as Phulemona Essed, Louise Lamphere, and Ashley Montagu, I refer to distinctive groups of persons as populations rather than as minorities, races, or ethnic groups, unless the latter terms are specifically called for by discussion.) The diversity of populations and the pace and direction of demographic and social change are prime reasons to study multicultural public relations in the first place, and they constitute the core justification for this book.

* Changing Populations

Broadly speaking, two types of situations are of concern to multicultural public relations: communicating with domestic publics and communicating with relevant publics outside the United States. These two contexts are identified because of differences in their population dynamics, differences in their public relations objectives and relationships, and differences in their relevant cultural factors. Both these categories include audiences comprising public relations employees and
**TABLE 1.1**

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<th>Publics</th>
<th>Domestic Setting</th>
<th>International Setting</th>
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<td>Internal publics</td>
<td>Local, regional, and national employee groups</td>
<td>Employee groups outside the United States</td>
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<td>External publics</td>
<td>Clients, media, opinion leaders, activists, government officials, and so on within the United States</td>
<td>Clients, media, opinion leaders, activists, government officials, and so on</td>
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other internal publics of organizations as well as a wide range of external publics. This scheme, depicted in Table 1.1, represents the structure of topics in this book. In the following discussion, I address first the domestic scene and then the dynamics of population changes internationally.

**DOMESTIC TRENDS**

Practically every observer agrees that the U.S. workforce is undergoing dramatic demographic changes. Few recognize, though, just how profound those changes are. Between 1980 and 1990, the Census Bureau reports, the U.S. workforce grew by about 18%, however, the total population increased by only about 10%, indicating higher rates of worker participation in the job market. White worker participation increased by 12% during the decade, yet African American rates of participation in the workforce were up by 23%, while rates for Hispanics increased 67%, Asian-Pacific Islanders by 106%, and American Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos by 45% (Bovee, 1993). Moreover, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the participation rates of populations other than white males will increase markedly through the year 2005, although the growth in the workforce will slow during the period (Exter,
1992). While the overall numbers of workers will increase by about 21% between 1990 and 2005, the numbers of African Americans will further increase by almost 32%, Asians by over 74%, Hispanics by over 75%, and women aged 55 and older by 54%. Marilyn Loden and Judy B. Rosener (1991) report that more than 75% of the 24 million new jobs expected to be created in the next two decades will go to women and nonwhites.

These changes in the workplace are consistent with patterns of change occurring in the entire U.S. population. Using current Census Bureau figures, Kelvin Pollard (1993) reports that "the nation is expected to become more diverse, older, and substantially more populous than previously thought" (p. 3). What Pollard calls the "racial/ethnic mix" will continue to grow more diverse, resulting in a declining share of the total population by non-Hispanic whites from 76% to about 50% by the middle of the next century.

In addition, the nonwhite populations are expected to grow increasingly diverse. African Americans will constitute 13% of the U.S. population by 2050, up from 12% today; sometime around 2010 Hispanics will pass African Americans as the largest non-Anglo group, reaching more than 20% of the population in 2050; during the same period, Asians will increase by more than fivefold, constituting more than 10% of the total population in 2050 (Edmonston & Passel, 1992; Pollard, 1993).^2

Potentially more important than these demographic trends, however, are recent social trends in the United States. The so-called culture wars refers in part to the fragmentation of the larger society into groups of persons who come together as self-proclaimed cultures, coalescing around a shared view of a social issue or institutional action. The problem for analysts, which will be discussed in more detail later, is how to reconcile the traditional view of diversity, which is based on demographic differences, and the new and insistent elements of diversity, which are based on differences of group perception of issues.
INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

Beyond the U.S. borders, other demographic changes are evident. The United Nations Population Division of the Secretariat forecasts a continuing rise in world population of 1.7% a year, resulting in an increase from 5.5 billion people today to 8.5 billion in 2025 ("World Population," 1992). More important, Debra Miller (1991) reminds us that "few nations today are not multietnic" (p. 3). The diversity among populations in other lands is intensified by at least four other factors in addition to mere population increases: Population migrations and guest worker policies (Victor, 1992), the internationalization—some would say the globalization—of business (Fitzpatrick, 1992, Wouters, 1991), the development of regional trading blocs, such as the European Community (Corbett, 1992), and changes in communication technology and public policy (Hiebert, 1992) all contribute to an international setting that daily grows more complex for public relations communicators.

In Chapters 3 through 6, I will further discuss these changing domestic and international demographic patterns and their implications for multicultural communication in public relations. Exploration of these implications, however, must begin by establishing a common understanding of the nature of culture.

Culture and Multiculturalism

In a pivotal study published more than 40 years ago, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) identified in the research literature 160 different definitions for culture. Although they were able to group those definitions into six basic categories and generate a comprehensive single definition for culture, countless new definitions have been added since then, and today there is still no agreement among scholars about how to conceptualize culture (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p. 102; Gudykunst,
1991, p. 42). What seems important, however, is to identify those elements most scholarly definitions have in common and those phenomena and processes most nonspecialists have in mind when they think about and refer to culture.

CULTURE AS MEANING SYSTEMS

Contemporary uses of the term indicate culture has something to do with the ways a group of people make sense of their experience and differentiate their sense making from other groups’ ways of understanding. This view derives from Harry Triandis’s (1972) notion of subjective culture, a term he used to refer to a group’s unique way of experiencing its social environment. As such, culture is minimally a set of (usually implicit) theories held in common about how social life works and recipes about how social life is conducted. Some writers, such as William Gudykunst (1991) and Ward Goodenough (quoted in Geertz, 1973, p. 11), interpret this characteristic of culture as a “system of knowledge.” But much of what is cultural consists of explanations and actions that are either taken for granted or assumed to be natural or unnoticeable; moreover, it’s a commonplace occurrence for people to distinguish between knowing about something or how to do it, on one hand, and understanding why something should be done or what its doing constitutes, on the other hand (see Geertz, 1973, pp. 10-13). Consequently, equating culture with knowledge is less satisfactory than thinking of culture as systems of meaning differentially available to groups of people. It is possible to know, for example, how to invite a business associate to dinner in your home in India—to know the ritual of invitation and the rules about seating, dress, gifts, salutations, conversation, and farewells; it is even possible to “know” the type of reciprocal commitments implied by inviting a business contact in India to be entertained in your home (see Wouters, 1991). What is cultural, however, is the lived experience of an event within which it is the natural thing to do and by which a logic of relationships is maintained.
ACQUISITION OF CULTURE

If culture is not something explicitly learned as knowledge, it cannot be "picked up" or taught in the sense that we teach the procedures of another group's behavior or the facts about their beliefs. Instead, culture, as Lustig and Koester (1993) point out, is learned in the sense of gaining understandings that are "handed down" in group experience; it is transmitted through interaction with socializing agents. James Paul Gee (1992) distinguishes between two ways of gaining competence, learning and acquisition:

Acquisition is a process of (understanding) something by exposure to models, a process of trial and error, and practice within social groups, without formal teaching. It happens in natural settings that are meaningful and functional in the sense that acquirers know that they need to acquire the thing they are exposed to in order to function and that they in fact want to do so function.

Learning is a process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching (though not necessarily from someone officially designated a teacher) or through certain life experiences that trigger conscious reflection. This teaching or reflection involves explanation and analyses, that is, breaking down the thing to be learned into its analytic parts. It inherently involves attaining, along with the matter being taught, some degree of metaknowledge about the matter (p. 113).

Gee observes that most of what we know and understand is derived from a mixture of acquisition and learning, and some cultures emphasize one mode over the other. But he points out that acquisition facilitates performance while learning leads to discursive knowledge—the ability to talk about, analyze, and explain things. More important, cultural practices that constitute the social groupings people live within (what Gee calls "Discourses") are mastered through acquisition, not learning. As Gee (1992) explains:

Discourses are not mastered by overt instruction (even less so than languages), and hardly anyone ever fluently acquired a
second language sitting in a classroom), but by enculturation ("apprenticeship") into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse (p 114).

Does this mean that persons outside a culture will forever remain outside? Not necessarily, for people of any age and origin can undergo enculturation; however, it does mean that one cannot learn to master performances within a culture simply through explicit teaching. The central implication of this approach to culture is that understanding culture, either as performer within a culture or as observer from outside a culture, requires the matching of meanings and contexts, where context refers to the real-world settings in which people go about the performances of their everyday lives.

THE SCOPE OF CULTURE

Two final issues on the definition of culture: First, if culture is to be defined as systems of meaning group members acquire through experiential apprenticeship, how can we come to know the boundaries and differences among cultures? Second, and related to the first, what is a cultural unit? That is, how large is a culture and what categories of groups constitute cultures?

Some theorists employ the concept of subcultures to account for the fact that, while many aspects of social life are shared among people, other important distinguishing characteristics can be identified for almost any group. The problem with the subculture idea is that it yields endless possibilities for subdividing any cultural group; therefore the conceptual boundary line must be arbitrarily drawn by the analyst or outside observer (Lustig & Koester, 1993, p. 44). On the other hand, if Geertz's notion of culture as public systems of meaning holds true, then culture is not a set of formulas that exist in people's minds or objective traits groups display. Instead, it is a set of practices that people perform with the logics that
attach to those practices that make them sensible. Insofar as these practices are born anew each time a person acts, culture is a living process—"action which signifies" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10)—whose boundaries and terms are subject only to the definitions given them by their practitioners.

Consequently, the question of what are the boundaries and differences among cultures (and subcultures, for that matter) is moot. Cultures are bounded by the ways people make sense of events in their real-world settings. The differences between cultures are not so much matters of different rituals or different gestural signals or different modes of dress, although these elements can be clues to cultural differences; they are matters of what people believe they are doing when engaging in their normal, everyday practices. Thus a culture is as large or small as the group whose ways of constructing meaning about any salient practice are cohesively and homogeneously defined. It is the saliency of a particular practice that determines the cultural boundary of concern to public relations communicators.

Thus, in the perspective on culture I am advocating here, the cultural unit is any group of people who identify themselves in some ways as distinctive or who are so identified by others in relation to a particular practice or concept. In many cases, such identification aligns with geographic origin or nationality, as when a person says she is Scandinavian or French; in some cases, it aligns with religion or ethnicity or sex or some other relevant characteristic. (Recently groups of residents in the Northwest of the United States have been claiming that timber workers are a culture, as their traditional livelihoods have become threatened by environmentalist challenges to timber harvest practices in national forests. They arguably are cultural in relation to this particular issue.) In some cases, identification as a cultural group member involves several categories, such as the blending of nationality, race, and religion when the Dalai Lama says he is Tibetan. The point is that fundamental to a practical understanding of culture is recognizing that culture and its concerns would be
immaterial if it were not for the simple fact that people see differences among groups with respect to particular concerns and array those differences as distinguishing traits for purposes of group and self-identity

THE MULTICULTURALISM DEBATES

Strong objections have been raised in recent years against the notion that perceived group differences should be a factor in public life. One writer (Costello, 1993), for example, asks that, if some groups are identified as specifically protected against discrimination, why shouldn't "Big White Guys with Dark Hair" also be singled out for protection? Barely a notch up the scale of credibility and seriousness is Irving Kristol's (1991) argument that "multiculturalism is a desperate—and surely self-defeating—strategy for coping with the educational deficiencies, and associated social pathologies, of young blacks" (p. A10). * Profoundly more challenging than these superficial arguments against multiculturalism is Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s book, The Disuniting of America (1992). Schlesinger pleads elegantly from a classical liberal position that the distinctive historical experience of all Americans should be the focus of policy and social practices. His fear is that multiculturalism in "E pluribus Unum" emphasizes the "pluribus" over the "unum."

Charles Taylor (1992) insightfully analyzes the controversy over multiculturalism as one that swirls around subtle incompatibilities within the "politics of recognition." Identity and self-worth, he says, are grounded in the positive recognition given by others. When recognition is withheld or is given but conveys a negative evaluation, individuals' self-image and identity with their group suffer and they cannot participate equally and fully in society. The politics of recognition is about achieving efficacy in society by being validated as worthwhile, both as individuals and as members of distinctive groups. This confirmation of a society's members appears to be a universal need, however, in the history of "north Atlantic" liberalism, the politics of recognition has been pulled in

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two incompatible directions. One direction follows Jean
Jacques Rousseau's philosophy toward a politics of equal
dignity, whereby persons are accorded equal rights under a
"difference-blind" criterion for membership in society. This
is the unification impulse that moves Schlesinger to advocate
pursuit of the values and traditions that have unified the
populations of the United States since the first invasion of this
continent by Europeans.

The other direction more explicitly recognizes the modern
idea of identity and leads to a politics of difference. This view
acknowledges that every person must be recognized for her
or his uniqueness, and each person's cultural heritage merits
respect as a first principle. The public policies that elaborate
the politics of difference recognize unequal socioeconomic
conditions people are born into, and this recognition justifies
social action to redress those inequalities. The more radical
view of the politics of difference says that any evaluation by
the dominant culture of the conditions, needs, or culture of
less fortunate populations is just an expression of the domi-
nant group's ethnocentrism (see Ravitch, 1990, and Asante
& Ravitch, 1991, for debates on this viewpoint). The more
radical view of the politics of equal dignity says that any effort
to 'inject' elements of others' culture into the history, educa-
tion, or public life of society is an attack on the Western
tradition and will undermine the stability and unity of society
(see recent books by Alan Bloom, Dinesh D'Souza, and Eric
Hirsch in defense of this perspective).

What does the subjective meaning approach to culture
outlined above say about the debate between these two posi-
tions on multiculturalism? Its main contribution is to confront
the assumption of objectivity: If culture is subjectively de-
defined, there is no possibility of judging cultural superiority
and inferiority. Communicators are freer therefore to recog-
nize differences among populations while confirming others'
identities in institutional communication. It also makes it pos-
sible for organizations to work toward unifying varieties of pop-
ulations they wish to communicate with while recognizing the
differences that make cultural communication necessary. These advantages fit nicely with Taylor's (1992) conclusion that we must seek a position that is "midway between the inauthentic and homogenizing demand for recognition of equal worth and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards" (p. 72). It is necessary, as Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) argue, to reposition public relations as an institutional effort to reestablish a sense of community, emphasizing commonalities while communicating across differences.

More will be said in Chapter 2 about identity, culture, and communication; here, however, it is important to note that the popular term for acknowledging differences among groups of people is diversity, and an understanding of diversity will help illuminate the issue of multiculturalism and group boundaries. The following section develops an interpretation of diversity that expands our usual thinking about what categories of people the term encompasses while it softens the often hard boundaries government regulations place on group identities. Ultimately what practitioners and regulators alike need is a sense of diversity that is capable of encompassing any relevant differences among populations.

- **Reframing Diversity**

Because diversity is the name of an abstract quality, the term can easily be a proxy for many concepts. Consider these different views. In his poem "From the Crest," Wendell Berry calls diversity "the great song, the braided song," and he portrays it as a force that equally invigorates all living things. The physicist Freeman Dyson (1988, p. 91) argues that an open, more varied culture and economy have a robustness that more closed systems do not have. To the U.S. government, race and skin color have been the core properties of diversity since earliest days (Lott, 1993), so that currently the U.S. census data have the following categories for persons:

But is diversity, in the sense currently used in discussions about human differences, simply a matter of multiplicity, as Berry celebrates it? Or is it an objective quality of system openness? Or a limited set of categories of racial or ethnic types? While each of these views has merit in its own context, often these diverse perspectives have hampered the debate about how a society or profession should conceive of and engage diversity and have allowed us to gloss over the more sinister underside of the term.

After all, what counts as diversity for purposes of formulating public policy and instituting social action is itself historically and culturally conditioned (Becker & Arnold, 1986). For example, mandates in the United States for accommodation in public buildings and workplaces for physically handicapped persons are absent in Papua New Guinea, where the cultural norm is that disabled persons make the accommodation to physical obstacles. In the United States the constitutional rights of older citizens are considered to be so threatened that legislation is needed to protect them; in much of Asia, however, elders are so honored that special legal protections would be thought ludicrous. Legislation expressly protecting persons against employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation would have been unthinkable in the United States as recently as 40 years ago. Even the meaning of the term equality in the United States has evolved historically from interaction among different populations, especially between whites and blacks (Condit & Lucaites, 1993). This historical and cultural conditioning of what we believe constitutes diversity tells us that the nature of recognizable difference will change over time. Thus a set of principles and practices that are not category specific is needed to conceptualize and treat diversity.
DIVERSITY AS STIGMA

In its most basic sense, diversity means difference, which derives from the Latin *divertere*, to turn in different directions or to move apart. But diversity, as it is used when talking about culture, refers to not just any divergence. The underlying semantic heritage of the term tells us that the differences that "make a difference" are the factors that separate people, those by which people see themselves as being differently placed and endowed in society. A recent headline in the *New York Times* reads "More Diversity than Harmony" (Steinfelds, 1993), reflecting this discordant aspect of diversity. As such, diversity carries an undertone of disharmony and inequality, indicative by group characteristics where any individual stands vis-à-vis members of other groups.

This is so because group and self-identity are based on our perceptions of similarities and differences (Gudykunst, 1991): I am who I am in large measure because of the groups I am part of, and my group is what it is in virtue of its being different from other identifiable groups. Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue, however, that in-groups are typically characterized by positive characteristics while out-groups and their members usually are assigned negative traits, as the contrast media by which we maintain our own self- and group identities (see also H.S. Becker, 1963). These differences also imply stigmatization—persons who are seen as different are in some way not normal. And here's the rub: While both theorists and practitioners avoid recognizing or discussing it, diversity frequently connotes differences between the culturally normal and the deviant while masquerading as a neutral-sounding cover term for adjustment to social change. Thus nearly all the prescriptive management literature on diversity focuses on training culturally normal persons how to appreciate the special needs and perspectives of those who are "diverse" and how to adjust the system to accommodate "them" or how to help them adapt. But rarely is the dominant system itself challenged so that fundamental changes to values, goals, or social

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arrangements are made possible (see, for example, Fernandez, 1991; Geber, 1990; Loden & Rosener, 1991; Thiederman, 1991; Thomas, 1991).

One problem with this formulation of diversity, of course, is that the definition of what constitutes normality remains in the control of the economically and politically dominant group; thus immigrants to the United States from Europe are typically defined as part of "us" and not countable as representatives of "diversity," while poor persons fleeing political persecution in Latin America or Asia are marked as "them" and counted as targets of diversity programs (Lott, 1993). Moreover, stigma is extremely intractable, and reversing stigma requires major sociocultural movements, such as the women's liberation and civil rights movements (Becker & Arnold, 1986).

When diversity is used as a mask for stigmatized difference, it presents policymakers and managers with the dilemma of how to treat target populations under diversity programs. If those other populations are truly empowered, the whole social fabric will have to be rewoven, for stigmatization is an aspect of social control, and destigmatization implicates loss of social control (Becker & Arnold, 1986, p. 40). If, on the other hand, the cultural and political power structure is to be maintained, stigmatized others cannot genuinely be assimilated into our group and become truly one of "us." In that case, diversity is shown to be a sham. There is a related cautionary lesson here for public relations practitioners. Programs developed to address today's stigmatized groups might not be relevant in the next decade and surely will do more to encourage the piecemeal emergence of different stigmatized groups than to solve the systemic problem of stigmatized difference.

**DIVERSITY AS VARIATION**

Fortunately, the term *diversity* has another meaning, that of variety or multiformality. In this sense, diversity means something more like the proliferation of subtypes of one
overarching group, maintaining commonalities while recognizing dissimilarities. Healthy communities are human ecologies comprising many varieties of the species, each of which contributes some indispensable element to the community and is interdependent with the others. This sense of “variety” is key to reframing diversity as a positive term. Based on this idea, linguists have turned to labeling languages and dialects as “varieties” in recognition that communication is a living process that depends for its health on a complex ecology of forms of expression (Hudson, 1980)

By conceiving of diversity as the normal human condition of variation, rather than as the recognition of stigmatized differences, at least three main benefits accrue to public relations practitioners as well as to communication theorists and researchers. First, the dominant population—the one usually not considered to be among the deviant groups—can more readily be seen as equally susceptible to adaptation and transformation in intergroup settings. Basically, “under a presumption of equal worth,” as Taylor (1992, p. 72) says, commonalities among groups can be emphasized in efforts to improve intergroup understanding rather than emphasizing differences. Second, any population (who have distinctive ways of experiencing and understanding with respect to a particular issue, practice, or social context) can be accorded cultural status. As will be seen in Chapter 2 and beyond, this expansive approach will turn out to be an advantage for public communicators. And, third, efforts to improve intergroup understanding can be refocused on the interactional contexts within which individuals’ and groups’ needs become relevant. Diversity creates the problematic context of intergroup communication, but variety also provides the means for finding solutions that enrich the whole social ecology.

With this approach to reframing diversity, the core concept of this book—cultural diversity—can be understood as the normal human variation in the systems of meaning by which groups understand and enact their everyday lives, which they acquire through experiential apprenticeship
The relevance of cultural diversity depends entirely on the context of interaction. The critical context where we want to examine the relevance of this variation is the practice of public relations communication. Like the concepts just discussed, however, the term public relations is not without its problems and therefore merits a brief discussion.

**Defining Public Relations**

By all accounts, public relations, both as an academic specialty and as a collection of institutional practices, is a field in search of conceptual consensus and legitimacy (L. A. Grunig, 1992a). While there is little agreement on a precise definition of the field, most textbook definitions that go beyond clichés and slogans explicitly or implicitly include as key terms communication, organization, publics, management, goals, and system (for a complete analysis, see Kruckenberg & Starck, 1988). James Grunig and Todd Hunt (1984) coined perhaps the most widely recognized and most succinct definition for the practice of public relations: “the management of communications between an organization and its publics.” This broad definition for the field conveys the idea that public relations is goal oriented and strategic, and it is systematically linked with other units in its institution. Public relations also has a mediating and translating role in the communication activities of a society, and it legitimates the expectation that some communication will be two way. As such, this definition suggests we should conceptualize public relations with a view to including the social consequences of its practice—the constitution of communities of interest.

Profoundly extending this communitarian aspect of public relations, Kruckenberg and Starck (1988) advance the view that public relations is uniquely positioned in contemporary society to restore and maintain the sense of community that was lost with the advent of mass media and high-speed transportation. Their argument is that public relations can be used
to re-create community, but only if practitioners enact the role of communication facilitators with a primary goal of altruistic community support, instead of enacting the role of institutional advocate with a primary goal of enhancing the institution's reputation and gaining assent.

While I wholeheartedly endorse Kruckeberg and Starck's communitarian impulse and their critique of the conventional ways of defining public relations's role in society, more can be done with their germinal ideas. Many authorities have argued persuasively that communication is not just action with the potential to create or maintain community, but instead it is constitutive of social life (Putnam, 1983; Trujillo, 1987). In this view, all communication (regardless of its intended personal or institutional purposes) by its social nature contributes in some way to the content of communities, whether inclusive and supportive or oppositional and divisive. The problem for public relations is that the notion of institutional advocacy is intrinsically part of its self-definition and process. Consequently, Kruckeberg and Starck's communitarian ideal for the field better describes processes that religious, social service, or civic organizations could be expected to engage in, but not business, industry, or governmental organizations.

On the other hand, if Kruckeberg and Starck's idea is modified by recognizing that all communications from all institutions in fact constitute forms of community (both desirable and undesirable), then the objection to their communitarian purpose can be overcome. By this I mean that organizations must recognize that their long-term ability to survive depends on fostering an attitude of social responsibility that nurtures socially healthy communities among their various publics. This observation, by which organizations see their well-being as intimately bound to the well-being of their publics, is not obvious in the short term, however, over long periods of time, the convergence of interests between institutions and their relevant publics is unavoidable, and communities, whether positive and supportive or debilitating, are created and main-
tained. The fundamental goal for public relations, then, is to communicate in ways that nurture the development of positive and supportive communities, communities of which their institutions see themselves as members.

◆ Summary

Multicultural public relations can be defined as the management of formal communication between organizations and their relevant publics to create and maintain communities of interest and action that favor the organization, taking full account of the normal human variation in the systems of meaning by which groups understand and enact their everyday lives. Culture is defined and bounded by the subjective experience of communities of persons who share an understanding that some important aspect of their lives differentiates them from other groups. Diversity is a way of referring to the varieties of populations that are on the scene at any given time. What constitutes “diversity” is certain to change over time and across locations.

What is important to remember about public relations in this context is that formal communication in organizations unavoidably creates communities, but those communities are not necessarily desirable for the institution. The task for public relations is to advocate positive community building through effective communication. Just how the phrase effective communication can be understood and integrated with public relations practice is the topic of the next chapter.

Notes

1 Reviews of cross-cultural and intercultural communication research literature can be found in Gudykunst (1987), Gudykunst and Nishula (1989), Lumaye and Victor (1991)

5 For social psychological approaches to theories of self- and group identity, see Tajfel (1978, 1982), a sociolinguistic perspective is provided by Gumperz (1982). The classic study on stigma is Goffman (1963), also see Katz (1981), Schur (1980), and Anlau et al. (1986).

4 See also Kruckeberg and Starck (1988, pp. 81-82). Scholars continue the search for models and formulas that adequately describe the practices and training requirements of public relations (see the PR Bibliography issue of Public Relations Journal, Vol 19, 1993, exp. pp. 139-150); see also works on the PRSA body of knowledge project, such as McElreath and Blamphian (1994).
A Theory for Multicultural Public Relations

"There is nothing so practical as a good theory." This observation by the psychologist Kurt Lewin implies that theory and action are intimately linked. Steven Corman (1990) demonstrates that almost all human activities are grounded in theories, and he argues that better theories produce improved practices. Educators, professional practitioners, and researchers strongly agree that the practice of public relations should be based on well-developed theories (Botan, 1993).

When we start out to develop a theory for multicultural public relations, three key questions will quickly come to mind. First, how does the nature of public relations as practiced influence (and possibly modify) our existing theories of intercultural communication? In other words, why do we need a special communication theory for multicultural public relations? Second, given the perspectives on culture, diversity, and public relations developed in Chapter 1, what would constitute an adequate theory of intercultural communication? And, third, by what standards should we measure the effectiveness of public relations communication in culturally diverse settings?
The purpose of this chapter is to respond to these three questions. First, through a discussion of the nature of communication in public relations, I present an argument for developing a social-interpretive theory of intercultural communication that is especially suited for the profession. Then I outline a set of propositions for such a theory, establishing the framework for all later discussion in this book of public relations functions and settings. Finally, based on the theories developed in this chapter and a discussion of communicative competence, I identify a limited number of broadly applicable standards for judging the effectiveness of communicating in multicultural public relations. This approach to effectiveness in multicultural public relations is expanded in Chapter 6 when I discuss the international context.

- The Need for Theory

A theory is an idea about how something works, which usually also means how something should be done. Practice is the doing of that something. Thus we have theories about thermostats (Corman, 1990), theories about romantic relationships (Berscheid & Walster, 1978), and theories about intercultural communication (Ting-Toomey, 1994). When we turn the thermostat up or down, when we engage in romantic behavior, or when we interact with someone from another culture, we are guided by ideas about how those processes work and what we are supposed to do.

Not to have theories is to act randomly. Until the 1980s, public relations practice was bereft of theoretical foundation (Pavlak, 1987), and much of the activity within the profession appeared to be ad hoc and randomly motivated. Since the early 1980s a simple version of systems theory has dominated the field (Toth, 1992); more recently, other theoretical perspectives have been championed, especially rhetorical theories (Boton & Hazleton, 1989; Cheney & Dionisopoulos, 1989; Toth & Heath, 1992). To date, however, virtually no work ha
been done by public relations scholars that develops theory specifically for communication in multicultural contexts.

Intercultural communication, on the other hand, has a strong (though not very diverse) tradition of theory building stretching over at least the past two and a half decades (Kim, 1988). While much of established intercultural communication theory can contribute to greater understanding of multicultural public relations, the convergence of intercultural communication theory and multicultural public relations has not been attempted.

Instead of reviewing all intercultural communication theory to identify where it might be applicable to public relations and where it is deficient, I will take a more expedient approach to joining the two fields. In what follows I discuss the unique communication conditions of multicultural public relations and argue that the nature of public relations raises special concerns for intercultural communication theory.

- The Nature of Public Relations Communication

In Chapter 1, culture was conceived as a system of meanings that group members acquire through experiential apprenticeship. The diverse systems of meanings are what make a population identifiable and relevantly different from another population. Public relations was presented as the management of communication between an institution and its publics for the purpose of nurturing positive and supportive communities. Public relations is conducted in settings of multiple systems of meaning, systems that are at least partially incompatible.

Within this contextual framework, five characteristics of public relations communication can be identified that help guide the development of a suitable intercultural theory. Public relations is institutional, representational, ideological, integrational, and cultural. Each of these five characteristics emphasizes particular communication conditions and points
out what an adequate intercultural communication theory must embrace.

INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION

Public relations speaks not for individuals but for groups of people who are mobilized around a particular perspective on an issue (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 6). George Cheney (1992) argues that "public relations is in the business of producing symbols of, by, and for organizations" (p. 170). The obvious exception, marketing publicity for individual celebrities (such as media stars, athletes, and authors), in many ways treats the celebrity as an economic institution with corporate goals, production functions, and business plans. Celebrity publicity aside, in nearly all cases the ostensive function of public relations is to communicate with identified audiences to enhance an organization's image, reputation, and relationship with those targeted publics (Cheney & Vibbert, 1987; McElreath, 1993). Arguing for a rhetorical perspective on public relations, Robert L. Heath (1993) states that theorists must account for how organizations acquire images, express personae, receive and supply information, make value judgments and advocate as well as yield to constraint. These issues have powerful implications for the identities, identifications, and evaluative perspectives used by persons who work in organizations, conduct business with them, and judge and regulate them (p. 141).

Organizational values, goals, and actions displayed and spoken about in public relations communication thus are the result of group processes. Organizations' values and goals derive from complex political histories of discussion and decision making. Highly strategic and carefully planned actions, which typify public relations activities, often are the result of long periods of consensus building. Accordingly, public relations communication originates in group processes...
and conveys the rationale for the organization's actions—it is the voice of the organization speaking publicly.

This institutional origin of public relations communication and its function as the public speaker of an organization suggest an important lesson for developing our communication theory. The dyadic, interpersonal focus that dominates current intercultural communication theory must be expanded to include group processes and outcomes at the organizational level. Our theory must be general enough for its propositions to apply equally to personal rhetoric and to "corporate rhetoric" (Cheney, 1992).

REPRESENTATIONAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION

The identity and voices of an institution are different from those of any individual within it. Corporate persons (the organization referred to as an individual) speak with an impersonal, collective authority. The corporate voice defines itself and rhetorically creates its own character as a separate and distinct organizational person. "Budweiser says know when to say when." But as George Cheney (1992) points out, the corporate person is not like any other natural person in the organization, it is more powerfully persuasive, more abstract, and more protected from personal interrogation.

The corporate person is articulated by public relations practitioners. Cheney (1992) notes, "Corporate communication specialists, such as public relations officers, necessarily play an important part in the [corporate message-making] process. They build corporate images that function rhetorically in the appropriation of identity, both individual and collective" (p. 178). Erving Goffman's (1981) idea of participation frameworks can be used to describe the role of public relations in creating the corporate person. Goffman posited three possible positions a person might take in any communicative exchange: principal, author, and animator. While Goffman (1981) was concerned specifically with face-to-face interaction, his idea can be applied equally to corporate communication.
contexts. The principal is the entity whose values and position on the issue are established in the communication, the person "whose beliefs have been told" (p. 144). Author refers to the entity who created the content of the communication—the speechwriter, copywriter, or creator of other official texts. Animator is the person who physically performs the communicative act. Deborah Schiffrin (1990, p. 242) adds to this scheme the idea of figure: The character created within the text—the subject whose image is constructed in the communication—is the figure. The corporate person is the source of the values and strategic intention in the message; thus the corporate person is the principal. The figure is the audience's perception of that corporate entity and is often referred to as the corporate persona, which I will discuss later.

In many instances, the same speaker simultaneously has all four participation frameworks. At other times, such as when a CEO delivers a speech written by public relations staff, the CEO is animator and might be principal, but often is not author. At least in part, every animator is also figure, because audiences make judgments about performers of communication based on their observations of the performances, and the identities of corporate communicators inevitably are linked to the organizations they represent.

Thus, when Defense Department spokesman Pete Williams (now NBC newscaster) presented press briefings during the Gulf War, he sometimes participated as animator and author, especially when responding to questions from the press corps; in very large part, though, he spoke for the U.S. Department of Defense, whose positions on reporting the war were worked out in detail by groups of policymakers.

In public relations communication, then, the principal—that entity whose beliefs are being told in any communication—is the institution in whose employ the public relations communicator labors. The values, policies, problem solutions, and accounts for actions are necessarily those of the corporate person, rather than the public relations practitio-
ner personally, although they might be perfectly congruent. A convincing performance by Pete Williams would have left his audiences believing that he spoke as the Defense Department, by creating through his performance a personal figure—the persona—whose identity was that of the institution.

In this sense, all public relations communication is representational. Intercultural communication theory must be able to accommodate this "speaking for" nature of interaction. The values expressed, the stories told, even the threshold decision to engage in communication in the first place—all possible motives and means of communicating must be analyzable so that they could be those of individuals other than the speaker or writer.

IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION

Ideology commonly is identified as the pervasive power of a group to condition our beliefs and assumptions about the nature of social life (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993, p. 162). Stewart R. Clegg (1989) identifies two perspectives on this power relationship: In the Marxist tradition, ideology is an effect of positional power, in which the hierarchy of class and authority positions creates a social order of power distribution. On the other hand, "poststructuralist" theorists tend to see ideology as a set of communicative practices, in which powerful messages about what is natural and right are hidden in the structure and performance of interaction.

I use ideology in this second sense. When we say that public relations communication is ideological, we acknowledge that public relations participates in a set of communicative practices that involve subtle messages about what is true, normal, and just. Pamela J. Creedon (1993) calls the basic values and norms an institution relies on when responding to environmental changes its infrasystem, and she argues that public relations communication includes institutional infrasystem as an unseen dimension of its messages.
Whenever a public relations communicator attempts to influence a relevant public—that is, whenever she or he officially communicates—the values, goals, and preferred images of the institution are being articulated, as well as cues that convey how society should be understood. It is those aspects of communication that are taken for granted (or too subtle for audiences to notice or too culturally “normal” to catch audiences’ critical attention) that constitute the ideological. The choice of vocabulary for naming things, the choice of active or passive voice or the way agency is conveyed, the choice of pronouns, the visual images employed—all these are tactics, intentional or not, for inscribing ideological messages in our communication.¹

An example of public relations communication whose ideology is not apparent is the presentation of women’s sports as a unique and independent activity, while it remains in fact a subordinated element wrapped within the metaphors and societal framework of male images of sport (Creedon, 1993). Another widely analyzed example is the press conferences during the Persian Gulf War in which U.S. military actions were characterized as just, necessary, and successful in large part because of rhetorical superiority. Substantial evidence hidden behind the rhetorical flourishes and dramatic video footage argues for a different interpretation, one in which targeting mistakes, technological failures, diplomatic provocation and bungling, and overestimates of weapons’ effectiveness occurred (Jensen, 1992; Kellner, 1992).

Of course, ideological communication does not have to be misleading or erroneous; it simply expresses and subtly advocates the values and goals of its institution. What is important about the ideological nature of public relations, however, is that some preferred interpretation of social relationships and identities of participants is woven into the very fabric of every public relations communication. Intercultural communication theory must include this ideological aspect of multicultural public relations.
INTEGRATIONAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION

All public relations communication seeks to build consensus and community among relevant publics. In developing their evolutionary model of public relations from the publicity era through modern two-way symmetrical communication, Grunig and Hunt (1984) portray the contemporary practice as one of mutual information exchange and accommodation. The fundamental aim of public relations communicators, says McElreath (1993), is to build socially responsible relationships that are at the same time favorable to the organization. Thus, while building a sense of community and mutual understanding, public relations communicators also always have strategic organizational purposes in mind. As such, public relations communication integrates narrow organizational goals with the broader social objective of building productive communities in which various publics—and the organization—conduct their everyday lives.

Accordingly, both strategic organizational goals and social responsibility motivate each communication effort in multicultural public relations. Truly effective public relations achieves the objectives of the organization while it strengthens community relations and enhances the qualities of life within the society it influences. Intercultural communication theory needs to address the multiple purposes of institutional communication and the ways those purposes are integrated.

CULTURAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION

There are two senses in which public relations is cultural—first, that it communicates across cultural borders and, second, that it is a cultural practice itself. In the first sense, public relations always speaks to audiences who have some point of view in common, a shared understanding that differentiates them from other groups and is often different than that of the public relations professional's organization. Collier and Thomas (1988) argue that contact between populations who hold
distinctive perspectives is always intercultural. The central element that makes the populations cultural is their distinctive self-identities.

The most obvious cases of distinctive group identity in public relations communication involve racial, age, or gender differences. More subtly, whenever practitioners identify relevant publics, people are aggregated into groups on the basis of their perspectives on an issue. How aware they are of an issue, how relevant they perceive it to be to them, and what control they believe they have over changing the issue—all these factors bind persons together and affect their status as an identifiable public (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Target audiences thus are groups who share systems of meaning about particular issues; in other words, they share ways of interpreting and contextualizing the issues of concern. In this inclusive sense, all relevant publics are cultural groups, and public relations communication efforts can be viewed as attempts at intercultural communication.

Second, the practice of public relations is itself a cultural activity. Donal Carbaugh (1990) theorizes communication as “the creation and affirmation of cultural identities in social situations” (p. 7). All communication therefore has a cultural purpose. What makes public relations, in particular, cultural is that it proposes identities of both the organizations it speaks for and the audiences it addresses, and it does so in distinctive ways. Robert Heath (1992) argues that public relations creates the organization’s persona, its “voice” and “personality,” usually in an identifiable speaker. Moreover, public relations communication, Heath says, proposes to audiences ways to think of themselves, ways that will make them better adapted to the organization’s persuasive messages. This second persona represents a congruence between audience and source, “one that fosters the ends of the public relations effort” (p. 42). Insofar as it depends on audience members’ sense of identity, the communion of organization and audience goes beyond just mutual understanding; ideally, public relations communication establishes a joint identity for both.
Public relations also is cultural because it is practiced within a context of beliefs about public communication. Here are some of the major cultural assumptions of public relations:

- Organizations are social units with rights to communicate publicly.
- Gaining assent through persuasive means is preferable to using coercive means.
- The mobilization of public sentiment is not only possible but can constitute a threat or benefit to organizations.
- Institutions have public images that can be modified by communication activities.
- Society is always communicated with in segments, as targeted special-interest publics.
- A corporate person can be substituted for an individual as the responsible agent for decisions.

These premises are not typical or often dominant in noncapitalist societies or in other arenas of communication. For example, the very idea of public opinion as an important force for institutions to reckon with was inconceivable in the former Soviet Union (Matveyev, 1991). The fact that public relations is made possible by the credibility of a largely independent and competitive press is irrelevant in societies where news coverage is controlled by central government authorities.

These cultural aspects of public relations communication indicate that intercultural communication theory must be sensitive to both interaction that creates and displays identities among cultural groups and communication as a culturally coded system of expressing identity. It must concern itself with the content of interaction as well as the cultural resources and assumptions of communicating in any particular instance.

In summary, the nature of public relations tells us that an adequate theory of intercultural communication must account for (a) the institutional sources of messages, (b) the speaker as representative of the institutional source, (c) the ideological aspects of communication, (d) the tension between...
organizational strategic goals and motives that are grounded in social responsibility, and (c) the nature of public relations communication as a cultural practice involving the formation of identities and assumptions about the nature of communicative practices.

- A Social-Interpretive Communication Theory

In recent years, numerous authors have noted the emergence of an alternative orientation to the scientific tradition in communication theory. This alternative view is variously called the interpretive perspective, the new paradigm, or social approaches (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1992; Penman, 1992; Putnam, 1983). I will refer to this perspective as the social-interpretive view. It embraces many ideas and systems of thought emanating from philosophy, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and critical studies of literature; however, most descriptions of the social-interpretive view have in common a few basic and important assumptions about social life, knowledge, and action, as described below.

The scientific tradition views social reality as objective, as governed by natural laws and rules capable of being discovered through appropriate scientific techniques, and as predictable and (ultimately) controllable by people. In contrast, the social-interpretive view holds that what passes for social reality is constructed by people in communicative interaction: What is important about social reality is the meanings people assign to it. Social-interpretivists are interested in how the meaning construction process is experienced by people and the relationship between those meaningful experiences and social structure.

Theory in the traditional perspective isolates units of social life and, treating units as variables, establishes statements that link those units. As Young Yun Kim (1988) describes it, in the social scientific tradition
theory is commonly viewed as a set of principles, often called axioms or laws, that are taken as "norm-theoretic" (lawlike) statements, from which a set of probabilistic statements, called propositions or theorems, are derived. In this tradition, causality is essentially one-way and linear, and prediction (and thus control of outcome) is its most desirable goal. (p. 16)

On the other hand, the goal of theory in the social-interpretive perspective is to develop general statements about the nature of reality and of knowledge and human action, and from those concepts derive descriptive propositions about specific communication phenomena of interest. In what follows I identify five assumptions—the general conceptual statements about reality, knowledge, and action—that frame a set of theoretical propositions describing (and prescribing) communication in multicultural public relations.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

First, any social action is based in part on voluntary motives and decisions. Because humans are creative beings, communicative action is not wholly mechanistic or based on predictable responses to environmental stimuli. This assumption of voluntarism means that theorists and researchers cannot expect to discover a natural law that exhaustively explains communicative behavior, and our observations as researchers always will have limited generalizability (Penman, 1992, p. 236). It means also that prediction is a weak function of theory and is secondary to the more central functions of description and explanation of observed natural events and settings.

Voluntarism also means that communication is grounded in values. Robyn Penman (1992) points out that, if theory and research (and professional practice, too) are not objective processes of discovery and management but are in part human inventions, "then all research [and other practice] is also value based" (p. 239). Her point is that communicative practices
have a moral dimension because they have a base in human choice making. What pass for knowledge and action based on our knowledge are in part "of our own making," and we are responsible for creating what is desirable or undesirable and for many of the consequences of communication. It is in this sense that all communication is value based; there is no purely objective and values-free research or other professional practice. Thus some communicative actions are better than others, given the context of interaction, and the question becomes one of deciding what standards will identify better research and communication.

The second assumption of the social-interpretive view is that reality is socially constructed. By this theorists mean that the ways humans understand phenomena—the meanings constituting relationships, actions, and objects—and what is accepted as knowledge are products of human interaction in historically embedded contexts. If meanings are created and re-created in human interaction, then meanings are relational and fluid, subject to constant change. It also implies that knowledge is always tentative, continuously under revision and conditioned by the politics of personal and institutional power.

The third assumption is that knowing and sensibly acting are made possible only by the use of symbolic codes. Codes are systematically organized sets of signals that cultural groups use for eliciting meaning and assigning meaning to phenomena. Languages are the most obvious symbolic codes, but groups also use systems of gestures, dress, dance, chants, rituals, and so forth. Because being human means to use culturally conditioned codes to understand the world and relations within it, culture is central to a social-interpretive theory of communication.

Fourth, theorists, researchers, and practitioners cannot remove themselves from the social process they are studying or managing. Theory changes the world by proposing an understanding of it; research findings are used as part of our base of knowledge upon which we conduct our everyday lives; and
managing a professional activity like public relations is not to stand outside relationships between organizations and publics but to constitute those relationships. In short, the social-interpretive perspective holds that theorists are framed by the same contexts as those persons and processes they are trying to explain.

The fifth assumption of the social-interpretive perspective is that all communicative action has implications for self and group identities. Communication always conveys both explicit information about a topic and information that proposes a definition of the participants and their relationship (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). A hotel employee relations manager, for example, tells new workers in their first employee orientation meeting important information about hotel policies and employment benefits. However, her way of conveying that information—her tone of voice, vocabulary, facial expressions, and choice of media—signal to the new workers that they are subordinate to her, are less powerful and highly dependent on her, and are still outsiders (Banks, 1988, pp. 26-27). As Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz (1992) points out, “The psychological view of the self is replaced by a more appropriate cultural, socially constructed view of the self” (p. 134). Identity thus is not a fixed attribute of a person but a multifaceted aspect of interaction that undergoes continual modification.

These five assumptions—human voluntarism, the social construction of reality and knowledge, the centrality of symbolic codes and culture, the subjective nature of research and practice, and the importance of identity—constitute a set of foundational ideas from which propositions about communicating in multicultural public relations can be derived.

THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

Propositions are general statements of what can be expected of participants in specific communication situations. Propositions thus are descriptive statements of applied principles—moving from the broad concepts articulated in assumptions.
TABLE 2.1
Propositions of the Social-Interpretive Theory for Communication in Multicultural Public Relations

| Proposition 1 | Public relations communicators are understood as strategic agents. |
| Proposition 2 | Communication is interpreted within the cultural context of recipients, not sources. |
| Proposition 3 | All public relations communication proposes identities of participants. |
| Proposition 4 | Assessment of values in public relations communication is a culturally conditioned process. |
| Proposition 5 | Public relations sources are understood as representatives of institutional interests. |
| Proposition 6 | Public relations communications are understood as candidate versions of reality. |
| Proposition 7 | Public relations communication reflexively creates social communities. |
| Proposition 8 | Public relations sources are responsible for ideological communication. |

"to more specific theories of communication activities or phenomena" (Carbaugh & Hastings, 1992, p. 160). As such, they are statements of probability characterizing what is expectable, and are linked to assumptions by the notion of the usual and the habitual. Propositions of the social-interpretive theory for multicultural public relations are shown in Table 2.1.

Proposition 1: Public relations communicators are understood by their relevant publics as strategic agents. The assumption of voluntarism says that communicators always "could have done otherwise." Thus communicators are seen by audience members as capable of choosing from among a range of communicative options. The meanings imputed to public relations communication will be based on a habitual conclusion that the sources of public relations messages have chosen their content, media, and contexts intentionally. Accordingly, the responsibility for those imputed meanings will be placed
on the public relations communicators rather than on audience members themselves.

Proposition 2: Public relations communication is interpreted within the cultural contexts of recipients, not sources. While taking the cultural perspective of the other is often cited as an important intercultural communication skill (e.g., Gudykunst, 1991, p. 121), public relations audiences cannot be expected automatically and always to take the cultural perspectives of the practitioner. This is true partly because members of relevant publics are the parties being appealed to, while the public relations practitioner is the party seeking to change the other's knowledge, attitudes, or behavior. More critically, public relations audiences are multiple and diverse, while the source of a public relations message is typically unitary and institutional. Therefore the choice of symbolic codes that are culturally meaningful to publics is the responsibility of the public relations practitioner.

Proposition 3: All communication proposes identities for participants. Identity commonly refers to the multifaceted sense of self-identification derived from one's personal experiences. Most interpretive theorists hold that people maintain a wide array of personal, social, and cultural identities, which are subject to modification in interaction. Ting-Toomey (1993) argues that, despite some stable continuity in one's generalized identity, "each communication episode produces an inevitable change in this mosaic sense of self-identification" (p. 73). For example, while you might identify yourself as a woman, you also might identify yourself as an educated and experienced lobbyist, as an African American, as a parent, or as a Catholic.

Proposition 4: Social and personal assessment of values in public relations communication is culturally conditioned. When meaning is assigned to communicative behavior, an inevitable part of the meaning is the assignment of relevance,
truth, utility, goodness, and other assessments of value. This is so for two reasons. First, all communication is achieved by the use of cultural codes. Second, culturally encoded signals are always interpreted within a culturally textured setting, the practical setting in which the recipient must make decisions of preference in order to survive and prosper.

Proposition 5: Public relations communicators are identified as representatives of institutional interests. By its functional nature, public relations is a form of intergroup communication whose messages express a collective viewpoint. Public relations spokespersons thus communicate not as individuals but as institutional representatives, and members of relevant publics in turn communicate with them as if interacting with those institutional interests.

Proposition 6: Public relations communications are understood as candidate versions of reality. Narrative theorists using an interpretive perspective view the reality experienced by individuals as story texts (W. Fisher, 1987; Mumby, 1993). Concerning any issue, numerous stories are proffered as arguments for what reality is, and the story accepted as the true story is likely to be the one individuals find resonates with their prior experience and is internally coherent (W. Fisher, 1987). Consequently, public relations communications will be accepted as reflecting reality only if they harmonize with the cultural experience of audiences.

Proposition 7: Public relations communication creates those social communities within which its institution must operate. With each interaction between public relations practitioners and relevant publics, the relationships are redefined; whether the levels of trust, support, and cooperation are confirmed or changed, the world is not the same as before the interaction. In an incremental way, public relations influences the social fabric of the network of relationships in which it exists.
Proposition 8: Public relations practitioners are responsible for the ideological content of their communication. Because ideology is inscribed “beneath the surface” of communication in its structure and the subtle details of language and images, it is not readily detectable by participants. More important, recipients of public relations communication interpret its content within their own cultural frames of reference; it is a rare cultural perspective that places a high priority on detecting ideological elements. The worldview of institutions and their perspectives on power relationships are encoded by institutional communicators—intentionally or not, consciously or not. The ideological consequences for audiences are thus the responsibility of public relations practitioners.

These eight propositions unfortunately do not give communicators standards for effective communication. To develop those guidelines, it is necessary to clearly state what effectiveness is and how it is to be fostered.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS

To say what is effective communication is to identify a principle of acceptability or preference. Traditional views of effectiveness are derived from the idea of the competent communicator, assuming that effective communication can be identified by analyzing the skills, goals, and knowledge attributed to speakers and writers (Spitzberg, 1983; Ting-Toomey, 1993, p. 72). Gudykunst (1991, 1993), for example, argues that effectiveness in intercultural communication means the degree to which interactants are able to avoid misunderstanding. As “one of the major factors involved in our perceptions of competence,” he states, effectiveness “is related closely to the notions of adequacy and sufficiency” (p. 101). Competence in this view is an attributed quality based on a communicator’s motivations, skills, and knowledge.

The traditional perspective on intercultural communication broadly sees effectiveness as qualities persons have that are applied across situations and across time. The social-interpretive
view, on the other hand, avoids any deterministic definition of effectiveness, so that the assumptions of voluntarism and the social construction of reality can be maintained. Instead, a social-interpretive notion of effectiveness focuses on the context in which communication occurs (more specifically, the context in which receivers make sense of others’ messages) and the nature of interaction itself. Borrowing from Collier and Thomas’s (1988) cultural identity approach, I view effectiveness as the successful negotiation of mutual meanings that result in positive outcomes in any communicative activity. Positive outcomes are, minimally, reinforcement of participants’ self-concepts, affirmation of cultural identities, enhancement of the relationship, and accomplishment of strategic goals.

These four criteria can be combined with Penman’s (1992) ideas of “good communication practice” to establish guidelines for effective multicultural public relations communication. Penman says good practice involves a recognition that communication constitutes social relationships and knowledge rather than just being a tool for informing or changing people. In addition, good communication recognizes that people create meanings in particular contexts of time and place, and their interpretations of communicative actions will inevitably be diverse. Finally, Penman argues that events always are open to new interpretations, that meanings are never final and fixed.

Effectiveness in multicultural public relations, then, is assessed by the degree to which communication

(a) reinforces participants’ self-concepts,
(b) affirms participants’ cultural identities,
(c) enhances the parties’ relationship,
(d) accomplishes the parties’ strategic goals,
(e) embraces the constitutive nature of communication,
(f) recognizes the contextual nature of meanings,
(g) accepts the diversity of interpretations, and
(h) remains open to reinterpretation.
This chapter has established criteria for judging effectiveness in multicultural public relations communication. The standards are based on a theory of intercultural communication derived from the functions of public relations practice and the assumptions of the social-interpretive perspective on communication. Its central constructs are meaning, identity, culture, ideology, and context.

With these standards of effectiveness in mind, and relying on the theoretical propositions that describe the social-interpretive view of public relations communication, we can now turn to analyses of specific contexts where multicultural public relations occurs.

Notes

1. For further discussion of the ideological nature of communication, see Fairclough (1989), Fowler, Hodge, Kress, and Trew (1979), Kress and Hodge (1979), Mey (1985), Mumby (1988).
Communicating With Multicultural Internal Publics

Communication technique shapes the form and the internal economy of organization
—Chester I. Barnard,
The Functions of the Executive

For nearly all organizations, one of the most important publics to communicate with is the organizational members themselves. Wilcox, Ault, and Agee (1992), for example, call an organization's employees "a crucial audience for its public relations department" (p. 361). This is so because organizing is nothing if not coordinated collective action; hence nothing productive gets done without some form of members' assent to harmonize their goals and activities. To a great extent, orchestrating members' activities must be achieved through communication.

Despite the synchronizing effects of task coordination, though, it is a mistake for organizational communicators to treat members as if they were all the same. As I argued in Chapter 1, cultural diversity within the workforce not only is inevitable, it enriches the creative material available to organizational leaders, making for a healthier organizational ecology. As an example of diversity enriching the organization's ecology, consider the case of an urban hospital I worked with.
For years the medical center had experienced chronic turn-over and high absenteeism, especially among the nursing service and housekeeping department employees. Large numbers of workers who were single parents, many with pre-school children, chronically struggled to meet conflicting demands of their jobs and their home lives. On the job they saw themselves as an interest group with qualities in common that affected their views about many work activities and decisions; however, their voices were not recognized by top administrators as a legitimate public. When the medical center management hired a consultant to survey the attitudes and needs of the workers, the consultant translated to management a strong desire in the workforce for help in resolving the problems of single workers with child-care responsibilities. A task force comprised mainly of single parent employees from various occupations and managerial positions created a program that combined on-site facilities, some paid child-care workers, and strong employee volunteer participation to provide home chore and child-care services. The nominal program costs to the medical center were more than offset by reduced turnover and improved attendance. The single parents remained as an interest group, in some cases helping other employee populations innovate social programs that had bottom line accountability while providing needed employee services.

This example shows how it can be in the best interests of top management and public relations communicators to recognize and respond to multicultural internal publics. Creating such responses within a social-interpretive view of multicultural public relations is the subject of this chapter. First the scope and nature of internal publics is explored. Then I join the debate about valuing diversity versus managing diversity, arguing that these are not mutually exclusive perspectives and can be included in a social-interpretive approach to effective communication. Finally, the communication theory for multicultural public relations is applied to the most critical functional areas of internal public relations. Those areas are
Communicating With Multicultural Internal Publics

identified by examining major public relations textbooks (i.e., Baskin & Aronoff, 1992; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Seitel, 1992) and practitioner literature on employee communication. The functional areas are socialization and team building, decision making and communicating decisions (including health and safety communication), managing conflict, and rewarding performance.

♦ The Nature of Internal Publics

Several of the more popular textbooks do not present separate units about internal publics (McElreath, 1993; Newsome, Scott, & Turk, 1993; Wilcox et al., 1992); this omission is noteworthy because the absence of a special focus on employees and other internal publics indicates that some educators might believe internal publics can be treated theoretically the same as other, external publics. The mere fact of members' economic dependence on the organization argues otherwise. In addition, the complex personal relationships, functional interdependencies, authority hierarchy, and need to establish convergent goals and activities make internal publics quite unlike other audiences.

Newsome et al. (1993) argue that internal publics include all persons who "share the institutional identity" (pp. 140-142). This definition, however, founders on the shoals of deciding what the "institutional identity" is and how, to what degree, and by what mechanisms persons share that identity. Thomas Becker and Robert Billings's (1993) research on organizational commitment demonstrates that substantial numbers of employees in many organizations do not identify with their organizations at all. Many professionals identify with and have a primary allegiance to their occupation or social unit outside the place of employment.

Moreover, from the social-interpretive perspective, an institutional identity cannot be objectively observed, counted, and differentiated from other identities. Certainly leaders try
to foster positive worker identification with the organization and develop goals and values all members share. Yet research has shown that cultural groups vary considerably in their achievement goals and work values (Holt & Keats, 1992). In addition, with diverse cultural populations in a workforce, it is impossible for an organization to create an institutional identity that is consistent with all members' personal identities. Communicators therefore must be mindful of both the more stable, personal aspects of self-identity and the aspects that reflect group memberships—both work groups and cultural groups—as well as the subjective nature of identities.

For our purposes, internal publics are all persons who provide substantive work within the organization, either for pay or as volunteers, regardless of their occupational or authority positions. Under the umbrella of internal publics will appear a wide variety of populations with diverse interests and traits in common. Some will be obvious and easy to identify, such as race- or gender-based groups; some will be subtle and will require sensitivity to their efforts to identify themselves as a group with cultural interests, such as single parents or the deaf (Dofmick, 1993). Barbara Walker (1991) makes the important observation that race and gender can be taken as metaphors that refer to all differences. "This reference is based on the discernment that, whatever the difference, the dynamics of the conflict or struggle created by discomfort with differences are the same" (p. 14).

I prefer a more general metaphor based on music. Nearly 20 years ago my colleague Penelope Trudeau and I helped develop work teams in VA hospitals by using the example of a symphony orchestra. In a training film we used, Zubin Mehta explained that bringing the instrumental sections of the orchestra together to perform as an effective whole requires blending the unique creative contributions of each instrument while orchestrating the interpretation of the music. The musical metaphor is even more apt today, as new genres of music are invented, exotic instruments are imported from around the world, and unprecedented experiments in musical forms are tried.
Valuing, Managing, and Communicating

Two basic approaches to the issue of engaging diversity have become established in recent years, and they have been contrasted within the “valuing versus managing” controversy (Geber, 1990; Stewart, 1993; Thomas, 1992). Some human resources practitioners advocate the “valuing differences” model developed by Barbara Walker when she directed the diversity project at Digital Equipment Corporation in the 1980s (Walker, 1991; Walker & Hanson, 1992). This approach recognizes that the range of differences among people that systematically can obstruct individuals’ effectiveness—the range of differences “that make a difference”—is infinite. The valuing differences model typically focuses on awareness, attitude changes, and self-empowerment. In small group settings, employees from various levels and jobs identify their own stereotypes and attempt to “strip them away.” Next, people are encouraged to build relationships with those they see as different than themselves. The third phase builds on these relationships by emphasizing self-empowerment through appreciating and even trying on others’ ideas and values. Finally, group differences are probed to achieve a better understanding; this activity “is an important step toward developing-effective strategies to help people learn how to work together interdependently” (Walker, 1991, p. 12).

At its core, valuing differences is an individual-level effort to change attitudes and values. It assumes that interpersonal work done in small groups across a workforce can significantly alter the fabric of relationships and enhance individuals’ quality of work life, which in turn indirectly will improve productivity. While it might be true that harmonious relationships will improve productivity in cases where differences between individuals have resulted in chronic, intractable conflict, research on employee satisfaction shows that, in the absence of serious obstacles, highly satisfied employees are not necessarily more productive than employees of average satisfaction (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993, p. 200, Euske &
Roberts, 1987, p. 45). Moreover, there is little evidence that changing workers’ awareness of individual differences will result in changed behaviors on the job, even if there is substantial change in attitudes toward differences (Thomas, 1991). The precise mechanism by which empowerment is generated also is not addressed in Walker’s model.

The strongest criticisms of the valuing differences view are made by advocates of “managing diversity” (e.g., Thomas, 1991, 1992). Thomas’s argument is that the valuing differences model is too concerned with individual-level change while failing to emphasize organizational goals and functions as the focus of diversity programs. The managing diversity perspective, as Lea Stewart (1993) points out, “emphasizes work output, not necessarily the means used to obtain that work” (p. 3). Organizational needs and bottom line consequences are the yardsticks by which diversity activities are measured, and managing diversity is expected to occur at individual, work group, and total organizational levels of interaction.

Loder and Rosener (1991) argue that valuing diversity is a corporate philosophy about personal values, while managing diversity is a practical skill aimed at changing organizations’ culture (see also Harris & Moran, 1991). It is an organizational development effort whose central problematic is intergroup prejudice. While it is clear that what organizational members choose to do about diversity can have an impact on an organization—even if it is simply to modify dominant attitudes and values about differences—the central issue from a social-interpretive perspective on multicultural public relations is communication effectiveness. That is, communication that affirms participants’ identities and relationships while fostering achievement of their respective goals is the action most needed in multicultural work settings. As such, the social-interpretive view subsumes projects to enhance the understanding of differences as well as efforts to improve organizations’ performance through reducing intergroup prejudices. Table 3.1 represents a comparison of the three perspectives on diversity in internal publics.
TABLE 3.1
Comparison of Valuing Differences, Managing Diversity, and Social Interpretive Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Valuing Differences</th>
<th>Managing Diversity</th>
<th>Social Interpretive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of model</td>
<td>corporate philosophy</td>
<td>managerial skills</td>
<td>communicative action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of diversity</td>
<td>individual, subjectively defined</td>
<td>individual and group, defined by management</td>
<td>group, consensually designated meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focal problem</td>
<td>stereotyping</td>
<td>prejudice</td>
<td>meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit goal</td>
<td>individual empowerment</td>
<td>organizational development</td>
<td>effective communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The steps that need to be taken to help organizational members learn to conduct effective multicultural communication involve aspects of both the valuing differences and the managing diversity models. Those steps are identified in Chapter 7; however, they can be summarized here as follows:

1. Establish awareness of cultural groups and an accurate understanding of relevant differences.
2. Recognize identity issues and communication needs.
3. Practice mindful communication behaviors.
4. Implement cultural mindfulness in public relations communication.
5. Evaluate communication effectiveness.

The concept of mindfulness (Langer, 1989) is discussed in detail in Chapter 7. These steps, however, open the way for public relations practitioners to engage in multicultural communication with any relevant public. The sections that follow highlight the conditions of specific communication functions involving internal publics.
Building Multicultural Teams

Socialization is the process of making individuals into organizational members, as such, it is the core of team building. Critical socializing functions are communicated throughout the span of each employee's work life, and they involve almost all official communication from policy directives and newcomer training to incentive awards and disciplinary discussions. The bulk of organizational communication research identifies three situations or activities involving higher levels of management where socialization as a focused communication activity takes place: at organizational entry and other career transition points, in supervisor-subordinate interaction, and in formal training activities.

Organizational Entry

What members believed about an organization before crossing the threshold for the first time is called "anticipatory socialization" (Jablin, 1985). Members' expectations of the organization are influenced by their vocational socialization, by job information received in the job search process, and by cultural learning. Much of this information is the result of organizations' public relations communication efforts that address other audiences, such as communities, media, and educational institutions. Thus organizational entry is a point in the communication relationship between organization and member where employee relations and other functions of public relations converge. This convergence tells us that it is not possible to communicate with employees in a totally controlled and unitary program: Communication with external audiences can affect the nature of the communication relationship with internal publics. Perhaps more important, Jablin (1985) states that anticipatory socialization results in inaccurate newcomer expectations of both job and organization, which "will make the organizational assimilation process more difficult for the newcomer" (p. 693).
The organization's basic objectives in newcomer socialization are threefold. First, socializing agents convey information about task achievement (e.g., how the job is done here), positional relationships (e.g., who to see about a certain kind of problem), employment conditions and benefits (e.g., how much sick leave can be accrued), and procedural rules (e.g., how to properly request and use sick leave). Second, established members instruct newcomers in the informal ways of developing and maintaining good relationships; that is, they communicate about how personal communication is done around here. And, third, agents instill appreciation for the organization as an institution and foster understanding of the core values and ideas on which the organizational leaders base policies.

Newcomers' goals typically mirror those of the organization: to obtain information about the job, working conditions, and benefits, to learn the work rules and administrative procedures, and to understand relationships and the rationale for the organization's policies. Newcomers also place their sense of self-identity under stress because of the foreignness of the organizational setting (Van Maanen, 1977). At no other time is the individual's identity more challenged than at organizational entry. Although scholars have pointed out that each new member is a challenge to the organization's status quo, it clearly is the newcomer who is under pressure to change if she or he is in some way different from the rest of the membership. Loden and Rosener (1991, p. 49) report research showing that newcomers who are seen as more different are subject to more severe testing and hazing by organizational members. Similarly, at critical points of career transition, such as promotion, retraining, or organizational exit, workers' self- and group identities are disturbed by the disruption of roles, relationships, and work routines. Consequently, communicators must take special care to address identity issues and to affirm individuals' cultural identities during socialization communication.
SUPERVISOR-SUBORDINATE INTERACTION

A member’s communicative relationship with his or her supervisor is critical to successful adjustment not only during organizational entry but also throughout the employee’s career. Jabin (1985) summarizes relevant research in this way: “Findings of studies consistently indicate a newcomer’s relationship with his or her initial supervisor can have long-term consequences on the success of the individual’s organizational and professional career” (p. 699). Moreover, the supervisor-subordinate relationship remains critical to worker satisfaction (Hattie & Huseman, 1982) and effectiveness (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993) throughout an individual’s work life.

Despite the importance of the supervisor-subordinate relationship, severe gaps exist between supervisors and subordinates in their understanding of such organizational issues as job duties, decision authorities, and the nature of communication in organizational relationships (Jabin, 1979). In addition, it is often the case that neither supervisor nor subordinate recognizes the degree to which they misunderstand one another (Smircich & Chesser, 1981). Such gaps in understanding can influence task achievement, decision making, and employee satisfaction and can be made worse by cultural differences that block or distort communication (Stewart, 1985).

Gail Fairhurst and Theresa Chandler (1989) have studied in-group and out-group communication in supervisor-subordinate relationships. In-group communication displays high trust, high levels of mutual influence and support, and the use of both formal and informal rewards; out-group communication relies more on formal authority and shows low trust; low support, and low use of rewards. In-group communication is associated with improved performance, higher satisfaction, lower employee turnover, and smaller gaps in understanding.

Both closing the gaps in understanding and fostering in-group perspectives on relationships depend centrally on effective communication. In multicultural settings, being open
and supportive are necessary but not sufficient supervisor behaviors. In addition, these goals require sensitivity to differences in language and the need for expert translation (Banks & Banks, 1992), an understanding of cultural norms regarding hierarchical relationships, use of a flexible and adaptable interactional style, and strategies that promote the positive self-image of others.

**TRAINING ACTIVITIES**

The same competencies and practices are also needed in training contexts. Employee training efforts—whether designed to improve task skills, inform about program changes, or modify attitudes or values—are attempts to dislodge individuals' ways of doing things or seeing their world and instill new ways of doing or seeing. As such, training is an attempt to alter ways of being in the workplace and thus demands that persons' self-identities change.

To meet all eight criteria for effectiveness in multicultural public relations as described at the end of the previous chapter, two additional caveats are appropriate for the training context. First, trainers must anticipate cultural resistance to traditional training techniques and formats. Some populations learn more effectively through stories, dramas, or visual images than through lectures, logical exercises, and demonstrations. Two ways of determining the most effective training procedures for specific populations are to consult relevant research literature and to ask members of the population for their views. Relatedly, Loden and Rosener (1991, pp. 212-213) emphasize the value of tutoring and coaching as alternatives to traditional training and mentoring programs.

The second caveat is that the content of training programs—and the rationale for the training—should be provisional and thus subject to revision. In his research on empowering organizations, Michael Pacanowsky (1988) has identified six rules that foster member empowerment. Among Pacanowsky's rules are the requirements to promote full, open, and decentralized
communication; to broadly distribute power and opportunities; and to practice challenges to established routines and assumptions within an atmosphere of trust. These qualities must be carried over to training encounters, because training has a profound influence on member knowledge, values, and identity, and it is an activity where organizational leaders most directly seek to influence members. When training content is left open to reinterpretation and revision, Pacanowsky says, the organization can "become wise" by learning from unexpected sources.

To sum up so far, public relations communicators have a fundamental role in member socialization and training, and effective multicultural communication means that they should do the following:

1. Guard against hazing and testing newcomers of diverse populations.
2. Pay special attention to identity issues during organizational entry and career transitions.
3. Remain aware of language differences and provide expert translation as well as alternate media and channels.
4. Prepare supervisors to be sensitive to cultural differences in all interactions.
5. Design and implement job training that is not dogmatic and is open to new interpretations and ideas.
6. Provide broad-based learning opportunities and distribution of strategic information.

**Making and Communicating Decisions**

With the rise of the human relations and human resources traditions in organizational theory, workers' roles in decision making became a focal concern of both managers and scholars. Human relations theory recognized the importance of individuals' social needs and desire for control over aspects of their own work lives; human resources scholars advocated
authentic efforts to enrich jobs and the genuine participation of members in decisions that could affect them in their jobs. Today, however, decision making by work groups is a routine matter, not just because participation is good for workers' morale but also because organizations have seen real gains in productivity, quality, and innovation as a result of group decision making.

Most researchers recognize that group decision making is a demanding interpersonal process that often shows stages of development and cyclical phases of interaction. R. Aubrey Fisher (1980), for example, held that decision groups experience four stages: orientation, conflict, emergence, and reinforcement. In the orientation stage, members of a group clarify their task and explore the nature of the group, including learning about one another’s assumptions and positions. The conflict and emergence stages involve advocating positions more forcefully, bargaining, forming coalitions, and eventually achieving consensus on solutions. Reinforcement refers to the period after a decision has been announced by a group, when members experience a sense of mutual accomplishment and solidarity. Each of these stages is made more taxing if some members are seen as stigmatized by difference.

Although some researchers have found no consistent pattern of group processes of decision making, most groups experience some periods of disorganization, periods of examining basic assumptions and individual and group motives, and periods of work on the group's interaction (B. A. Fisher, 1980; Hirokawa & Rost, 1992). Thus group decision making occurs frequently, is profoundly communication oriented, and often involves exploration and debate on the nature of members. In these circumstances, a social-interpretive view of multicultural communication sensitizes participants to the need for eliciting and valuing perspectives and experiences from all group members and for treating decisions as unfinished business—as discussions that are subject to revision.

Certainly the quality of employees' participation in group decision making can affect organizational outcomes. Public
relations communicators typically would be more concerned, however, with the influence of cultural diversity on the process of informing internal publics about decisions already made by organizational leaders. Critical to this communication context are the credibility of the source of messages, the sensitivity of sources to workers' cultural identities and assumptions, and communicators' skill at framing policies and decisions in ways that are truly informative to diverse populations.

Source credibility can be enhanced by relationships that are trusting, open, and authentic. Frank recognition and valuing of differences is a prerequisite for members of organizations to trust and communicate openly (Walker, 1991). Similarly, knowing the values, assumptions, and identity issues of diverse populations is necessary for sensitive communication of any sort. Thus genuinely open dialogue built around exploring and valuing differences is a prerequisite to effectively communicating decisions to a diverse workforce.

Managing Conflict Episodes

Conflict is normal and ubiquitous; without conflict, social relationships stagnate or decline (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991). Thus, while Americans nearly always think of conflict in negative terms, it is part of inescapable and potentially beneficial processes in organizations (Ting-Toomey, 1985). Conflict occurs when parties in an interdependent relationship with scarce resources perceive that the other is interfering with a desired goal; hence conflict is relational. More often than not, the real conflict is about the nature of the parties' relationship rather than about a content issue, although conflict often disguises itself as being about an objective problem. Conflict encounters are opportunities for people to choose between competitive, exploitative behaviors aimed at acquiring a finite resource and collaborative, creative behavior aimed at mutually solving problems. Regardless of which
choice of strategy parties make, conflict management and resolution are cultural processes (Ting-Toomey, 1994).

Because conflict is cultural, diverse populations differ in their approaches to conflict. Nadler, Nadler, and Broome's (1985) cultural model of conflict management identifies the following three ways that people differ culturally in their views on conflict. First, groups differ in their basic orientations toward the value of conflict (positive versus negative), toward the manner in which conflict is resolved (degrees of assertiveness and cooperativeness), and toward the degree of finality in resolving conflict episodes. Second, cultural populations differ in their personal beliefs about how fairness, trust, and the use of power are related to conflict. Finally, groups differ in their message strategies and range of conflict styles.

These conflict factors provide a basis for developing guidelines for the public relations communicator, whether as participant in a conflict relationship or as a third party trying to resolve others' conflicts. Recognition that parties to a conflict can hold vastly different basic assumptions about the purposes, benefits, and procedures for engaging in conflict is essential to effective conflict communication. Moreover, as Cushman and King (1985) argue, the differences in approaches to conflict between groups' cultural norms and the organization's culture can further block effective conflict communication. Once again, as in socialization and decision making, it is necessary to first address the issues of difference before getting into the substantive content of the conflict.

In addition to applying the principles listed above for socialization and supervisor-subordinate interaction, the principles of social justice can be applied to promote effective communication in multicultural conflict situations. Jerald Greenberg and his associates have conducted research for more than a decade on organizational justice (e.g., Greenberg, 1987, 1990, 1993). Greenberg has developed a taxonomy based on four dimensions of justice—procedural versus distributive and structural versus social (see Table 3.2). The structural dimension
of justice involves environmental contexts of organizational life, so that what is of concern is ensuring fairness in the application of rules. The social dimension is concerned with the interpersonal treatment of members and the equitability of reason giving and information. Procedural justice refers to the content of procedures, while distributive justice is concerned with the fairness of outcome distributions.

From this set of dimensions, four types of justice can be identified: systemic justice, or fairness in procedural rules; configurational justice, or fairness in the distribution of resources and rewards, including positions and explicit authorities; informational justice, or fairness in providing members information about procedures so they can know the reasons for procedures and accounts for how they have been used; and interpersonal justice, or fairness in accounts for specific actions taken and their consequences.

Greenberg (1993) points out that the latter two types of justice—the two based on social dimensions of justice—are often overlooked in programs to achieve a fair and just workplace, yet they contribute significantly to reductions in conflict and workers' negative attitudes toward unfavorable events. In one study, for example, Greenberg (1993) found workers' negative reactions to a smoking ban at work were lower if they were given full information and justification for the policy; additional reduction in the negative feelings were achieved if the communication showed high sensitivity to the difficulty of refraining from or quitting smoking.
The lesson from justice research for public relations communicators is that intercultural conflict in the workplace can be mitigated by going beyond structural justice strategies to focus on the communication of informational and interpersonal justice. Providing full and frank justifications for policies and procedures while communicating concern for the identity needs of diverse populations and in-group solidarity can build a community of trust and collaboration rather than distrust and conflict.

* Rewards and Diversity

A key aspect of organizational distributive justice involves the system of rewards. Fairness says that persons will be rewarded according to their contributions to the organization (equity based), according to the way others who are similarly situated are rewarded (equality), or according to individual need. Although the tradition in the U.S. workplace has been to establish distributive justice by rewarding alike people who are in like jobs and tenure (equality basis), a dramatic trend favors rewarding on the basis of equity (Boyett & Conn, 1991; James, 1993). Different values and concepts of justice are served by each of these reward systems. Equality-based rewards reflect a system that values harmony and cohesiveness; equity-based rewards are oriented toward productivity and competition. Keith James (1993) notes that "even in profit making U.S. corporations, when egalitarianism, harmony, and relationship maintenance come to be the major goals, equality allocation principles and democratic, participative, negotiative procedures are likely to be used" (p. 24).

These factors present organizational communicators with an apparent dilemma. To emphasize productivity, an organization needs to use equity rewards; yet to emphasize harmonious relationships, an equality reward system seems better. Edward Lawler (1993) argues that "new approaches to management must be based upon employee commitment and
employee involvement rather than upon top-down control" (pp. 10-11), and reward systems must be based on "the business objectives of the organization and the kind of culture, climate, and behaviors that are needed for the organization to be effective" (p. 11).

Thus organizational values and core principles need to be identified as foundations for structuring reward systems. Lawler (1993) points out that a central function for communicators is to manage beliefs and perceptions about rewards. "The perceptions and beliefs that individuals develop are partly a product of the practices and behaviors of the organization, but they are also influenced by the statements that an organization makes—or fails to make—about its values and intentions" (p. 38). Identifying core principles and values and then effectively communicating them to members are preludes to creating a "total compensation mix." The complete reward package will vary from organization to organization but can include both equity and equality rewards across the entire workforce or by subunits, effectively resolving the dilemma of choosing between the two.

In line with the concepts of informational and interpersonal justice, it also is vitally important that reward systems be explained, justified, and applied effectively. There is a key role for public relations communicators—the communication of organizational values, core principles, procedures and rationale for reward systems, and reasons for actual distributions of rewards. Ceremonies and special awards for recognition of member contributions must be designed with social justice in mind. To do so effectively with multicultural publics, members' beliefs and values about the following elements should be surveyed and procedures built around the results:

1. The nature and benefits of competition
2. The desirability of public recognition for achievement
3. The desirability of material and intangible rewards
4. The desirability of advancement and authority
5. The desirability of equity or equality rewards
6. The benefits of commitment to organization, to individuals, and to family or other outsiders
7. The desirability of performance feedback

These recommendations for effectiveness in rewards—communicating core principles and values, informing about the procedures and rationale for rewards, devising mechanisms for giving special recognition, and justifying the distribution of compensation and awards—assume that the organization’s values and structures embrace multicultural membership in the first place. Only when the values underlying effective multicultural communication are made core elements in the routine life of the organization will the recommendations here take root.

Communicating effectively with multicultural internal publics is a highly complex task of boundary management. Boundaries are the zones of separation between individuals, groups, and entire organizations, and they demarcate differences that can be perceptual, emotional, interactional, or physical, or combinations of these. Susan C. Schneider (1991) argues that boundaries in organizational relationships are where differentiation and integration get negotiated. While strong boundaries promote increased in-group autonomy and control, they also reduce integration and harmony. Schneider states the problem this way: “A crucial dilemma faced by organizations is how to maximize a sense of identity and autonomy in individuals and groups, yet maintain the necessary interdependence and integration as well as efficiency” (p. 185).

Her solutions to maximizing both autonomy and coordination contain elements of the valuing differences and managing diversity approaches as well as the social-interpretation view. Leaders should differentiate and clarify functional boundaries, while foregrouncing individual and unit interdependencies and empowering individuals by helping them learn how to negotiate boundaries. In addition, Schneider (1991) recommends focusing on organizational goals, while enabling "interdisciplinary teams to perform required tasks without unnecessary
adherence to ideology or professional/functional loyalties (p. 186).

The recommendations for public relations communicators in this chapter contribute to building organizational communities that are both diverse and cohesive, communities where diversity is both valued and managed in an ongoing exploration of ways to live together productively. In the next chapter, many of these principles are applied to interaction between organizations and external communities.

Note

Multicultural Community Relations

Any kind of community is more than a set of customs, behaviors, or attitudes about other people. A community is also a collective identity; it is a way of saying who "we" are.
—Richard Sennett, The Fall of Public Man

The continual use of strategic communication will widen the chasm between opposing people and their ideologies.
—Ronald Arnett, Communication and Community: Implications of Martin Buber's Dialogue

The terms community, diversity, identity, and dialogue already have appeared or figured prominently in this book. In this chapter, I use these concepts to develop a new approach to effective communication in multicultural community relations. This is a "new" approach because taking a social-interpretive view of the communicative relationship between institutions and their external publics calls for a more flexible and multilayered sense of community than most public relations scholars and practitioners conceive it.

Following an exploration of the nature of community relations, I develop the idea that any institution's communities are multiple, complex, and internally diverse. Perhaps the
most important idea in this chapter, however, is the final section's discussion of dialogue. Dialogue is both the defining principle and the mechanism for conducting communication relationships within communities.

**Varieties of Community Relations**

The dominant public relations view of community is the social unit of residents where the organization is located. Baskin and Aronoff (1992), for example, call the community “the folks next door” (p. 229), and they adopt William Gilbert's definition of community as a “place of interacting social institutions which produce in the residents an attitude and practice of interdependence, cooperation, collaboration and unification” (p. 230). Center and Jackson (1990) refer to this entity as the "home/community": The Public Relations Society of America defines it as "an organization's geographic operating area" (Newsome et al., 1993, p. 585). Taking a more subtle view, Grunig and Hunt (1984) distinguish between community as a locality and publics within a locale who have a community of interest. Still, their notion of community is "rural areas, small towns, urban centers, or neighborhoods or suburban areas within an urban complex" (p. 267) constituting an organization's geographic locality where relevant publics reside.

Along with this popular assumption that community is the place where an organization is situated, some scholars suggest that the concept of community in public relations might be outdated. In an era of global telecommunications, the home office, remote markets and resources, media shopping, and transportation systems that permit unprecedented mobility, the concerns of a local neighborhood seem anachronistic. Indeed, Newsome et al. (1993) take an issues and functions approach to their analysis of public relations rather than focusing on subspecialty areas by generic type of public. Wilcox et al. (1992) organize relevant portions of their text
by subspecialty publics, but community relations is not treated as a separate topic; instead, it is covered as a functional aspect of the corporate setting. Most representative of this change of view, Cutlip et al.’s (1994) seventh edition of their classic textbook eliminated entirely the chapter on community relations that had been included in previous editions.

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

It appears then, that public relations educators are not comfortable with the concept of community and find it difficult to justify focusing program resources on communication activities with publics defined by their geographic location (see Baskin & Aronoff, 1992, p. 231). Yet organizations are becoming more aware of their social responsibility and its impacts on their survivability, and the idea often is linked with locale. Baskin and Aronoff (1992) point to the trends of neighborhood pride and community activism, as well as larger scale social movements, that necessitate corporate involvement in their community activities; Cutlip et al. (1994) call the 1980s a “new era of corporate social responsibility” (p. 441), functioning as an aspect of good citizenship. With respect to the 1990s and beyond, Patrick Jackson (1995) has asked: “Can community relations be the core of PR programming?” And he answers with a firm, “Yes, because it sets the true tone of what an organization stands for... in the communities where [organizations] conduct business” (p. 1).

Nonetheless, if the community is treated as a locality where the organization operates and its relevant publics are the people who live there, four conceptual problems arise for community relations. First, it is not community as a locale that public relations people communicate with but representatives of particular publics that reside within that locale, as Grunig and Hunt point out. The particularity of the relevant publics thus will depend on issues, while geography makes the issues salient. In this view, community relations is difficult to differentiate from consumer, government, media, education, or
investor relations, except on the basis of where those functions are carried out. With this approach to definitions, organizations are forced to conduct communication activities under a false umbrella, and social responsibility is conceived primarily as philanthropy (Cutlip et al., 1994, pp. 446-450).

Second, by viewing community relations as addressing people residing in our neighborhood, "they," as targets of our communication, are separated from "us." Two-way symmetrical communication becomes incongruous, if not fictional, and one-way communication is favored. Third, a paradox exists in the fact that "we" also often live out there in the locality among "them." Thus the line between internal communication and community relations also becomes blurred: Can we treat ourselves separately as members of the organization and as members of the community?

Finally, the traditional view of community and community relations invites organizations to see social responsibility as something they give to others whose interests are distinct from their own. When connections are made, it is to link philanthropy with corporate profitability ("Conference Board Study," 1993). The dominant view of community relations discourages organizations from conceiving their enterprise as an organic element of a larger social system.

AGAINST COMMUNITY RELATIONS

A social-interpretive view can help resolve these difficulties created by structural-functionalist definitions of public relations subspecialty areas. Richard Sennett (1976) argues that the "garden variety" sense of community as "a neighborhood, a place on the map," is too narrow in today's society "because people can have all sorts of experiences of community which do not depend on living near one another" (p. 222). Instead, Sennett says, for communicators to avoid treating others as objects—an inherently immoral form of relationship—community must include the sense of revealing one's authentic self to others and establishing a common identity and shared
action. Sennett decries the loss of genuine community as public participation in our culture has diminished to a localized perspective; an antidote to the loss of community is the advancement of common identity and shared action through authentic self-disclosure—in effect, the recognition, building, and empowerment of publics.

In a similar vein, Ronald C. Arnett (1986) differentiates association and community: "If the principles of a group are significant, but the relationships are minimized or viewed as irrelevant, then only association, not community is fostered" (p. 16). Elaborating on this distinction between association and community, Arnett describes the way theologian and philosopher Martin Buber contrasted the social and the interhuman:

Buber laid out four major differences between the "interhuman" and the "social." First, the "interhuman" realm is a personal relationship in which the individual (or group) is met as a noninterchangeable, nonobjectified contributor to the activity. On the other hand, the "social" realm has the person’s function or role as the most significant concern.

Second, the "interhuman" is the realm of the "between", it is not a psychological construct. Meaning is found not in one partner, but "between" partners in interaction. In contrast, in the activity of the "social," meaning is possessed by one party or another.

Third, the "interhuman" is grounded in the assumption that what one does is more vital than how one appears. ... The "social" life switches this emphasis.

Finally, the "interhuman" realm invites dialogue by permitting ideas to "unfold" in conversation, unlike the "social" realm, in which one pushes to "impose" a particular perspective prior to hearing the other’s views. (p. 16)

Following Buber, Arnett’s view of community says all parties to communication are part of the community—community is not a label for others but a way of referring to a relationship that includes the self, the other, and a set of communication principles. In addition, Arnett points out that community is a concept that must include conflict, for without differences of
views no change would be possible and the community would lack vitality. As we learned in Chapter 1, diversity benefits a community's ecology because it challenges the status quo and promotes adaptation.

Community relations, then, is the public relations program that enhances a particular kind of relationship with external publics, a relationship that is inclusive, self-revealing, genuine, personal, and emergent. In this sense, my argument is against community relations as a subspecialty of the practice of public relations, because all external communications should be conducted within the framework of Buber's idea of community. The same community attitude should apply to investors, customers, suppliers, media representatives, and people who live in the organization's neighborhood. Community relations thus should be a description of an attitude toward communicating rather than a subspecialty or functional area. This perspective defines community relations as the motives and techniques for communicating a sense of community with any relevant external publics.

**Cultural Diversity and Community Relations**

The social-interpretive view of community relations will be upsetting to many PR practitioners and educators, some of whom would argue that an organization, especially a profit making corporation, has interests that are inimical to those of many external publics, and vice versa. The parties who typically matter more than others are organizational leaders, financial stakeholders, and customers. Traditionalists also would argue that, as an element in an organization's strategic planning, the first and highest obligation of public relations is to enhance the firm's competitive position. As Cutlip et al. (1994) put it, "Public relations must contribute to achieving the profit goal of business in a competitive environment" (p. 437). This means community relations as traditionally con-
Multicultural Community Relations

ceived advocates against those who would take a competitive stance toward the firm, criticize it, or inhibit its profitability.

On the other hand, this traditional view is an oversimplification. Corporations (or any other organizations, for that matter) do not operate in splendid isolation from the rest of society, acting only when they determine their self-interests are at stake. Consider, for instance, Voltex, a fictional name for a company that manufactures batteries and other power sources. In addition to officers, investors, members, and customers, many other individuals and groups have critical interests in the activities and decisions of Voltex. Suppliers of raw materials and transportation companies work for Voltex’s continuing success in the marketplace. The U.S. Department of Labor is interested in Voltex’s hiring and work safety practices. The Internal Revenue Service and state and local tax authorities are concerned about the accounting practices at Voltex. Neighbors of the half-dozen Voltex plants are concerned about how the firm handles and disposes of heavy metals and acids. Hispanic leaders in the city where the new Voltex plant is being built want to be assured that Voltex will make employment opportunities equally available for all local citizens. Golf cart manufacturers need to know about the quality and quantity of Voltex products and the reliability of management commitments. A citizen who does not buy Voltex batteries and lives a thousand miles from any Voltex facility pays her taxes to support a government she expects to effectively regulate the manufacture of batteries. And so on. It is possible to functionally link almost any individual and group with any organization in an interdependent system where social meanings are the common ground.

Without mutual identities and shared activities and goals with such entities, Voltex will encounter needless opposition. More important, the mere fact that Voltex extracts sustenance in terms of careers and goodwill (and typically extracts profits as well) from the social system of which it is part obligates Voltex to avoid privileging some groups over
others. It is in Voltex's own long-term interests to communicate so as to promote the inclusion of every individual and group who express a relatedness to the organization. In a genuinely inclusive relationship as described above, Voltex can openly advocate its own positions, goals, and needs while working with other members of the same social system to serve their interests.

In addition to these functional relationships between Voltex and the rest of society, the organization has a moral connection to the community. Amitai Etzioni (1993) argues that community is the "moral voice" of a social unit, the shared sense of good conduct and reason that binds people and institutions together and reinforces their values. As organizations become increasingly interested in social responsibility, it becomes clearer that they must take account of the needs, moral standards, and expectations of good conduct among populations they touch. This attitude of shared responsibility toward community relations is exemplified by the Tom's of Maine personal health products company. Tom's of Maine practices "common good capitalism," a policy of building relationships with publics that "extends beyond product usage to include full and honest dialogue, responsiveness to feedback, and the exchange of information about products and issues" ("Common Good," 1994, p. 1).

The varieties of populations an organization might touch are not only numerous, they also are likely to change in short order. As the discussion in Chapter 1 showed, diverse cultural groups arise as issues and concerns crystallize with their identity needs. Multicultural external publics can be found among the media (Does your organization recognize a connection with women's publications?), investors (Have you made contact with an association of African American entrepreneurs and financiers?), professional organizations (Is it relevant to you to know that gay and lesbian sections of many professional associations lead their groups to hold annual meetings only in states that are receptive to gay and lesbian rights?), consumers (Does it make a difference if your customers are increasingly aware of environmental issues?), and so on.
In addition to being dispersed by functional areas, multicultural external publics also are found across geographic locations. Often corporations forget they have multiple plant sites; more likely, those whose processes are mobile or widely scattered—such as shipping and transportation companies, franchisers, dealerships, partnerships, and utilities—sometimes neglect the impact they have on individuals and groups based on personal contact in specific locations. Sometimes it is hard to recognize the connection. The movement of an interstate bus company’s service through geographically widespread areas and populations expands the number and types of contact the firm experiences with others. The relevant community in the traditional sense of locale quickly becomes incalculable.

In addition, many organizations’ outputs reach groups of people the organizational leaders never contemplated as publics. A case in point is the Hanford nuclear facility in Washington State. For decades Hanford officials paid scant attention to health complaints from residents living remote distances from the nuclear reservation until it was learned that airborne discharges from the facilities moved over vast areas downwind and affected the health of those “downwinds.”

In sum, the traditional view of community relations as a program to interact with local leadership is not viable. Problems of defining the community, identifying relevant publics, and limiting the domain of issues all argue for an alternative perspective. The social-interpretive view reframes multicultural community relations as a philosophy and method of communication that applies to all external publics—diverse groups of people who will identify themselves as having a relation to the organization but who often can be sought out before grave differences arise. The key characteristics of community relations are shown in Table 4.1.

The social-interpretive view of community notwithstanding, organizations still have their dual public relations obligations to foster their own interests through advocating issues and enhancing image and to be socially responsible. If the
community is self-defining and multiplex, what communication techniques can an organization use to achieve these dual obligations? Martin Buber supplies the answer with his concept of dialogue.

**Community Relations as Genuine Dialogue**

Social interpretivists hold that communication constitutes relationships, and the nature of the communication activity—not just the content but also the intentions and interpretations of participants—conditions the nature of the participants’ relationship. In a recursive system, the relationships people believe they have with one another provide context for interaction, while reciprocally each instance of interaction sediments a particular relationship. For a community of the sort just described to develop through communication—a community based on mutual benefit, flexibility in defining social reality, shared goals, authentic disclosure, and genuine validation of identities—the form of that communication must be consistent with the desired community. This is not to say the interaction must be the same with all populations; the underlying principles, motives, and values must be consistent, but their expression must be diverse, flexible, and creatively resourceful because of the diversity among populations.

The underlying principles, motives, and values that are necessary for effective community relations are established in
dialogue. For Buber (1965), genuine dialogue is one of three forms of communication. Monologue is discourse that expresses an institutional role, disguises the source's intentions and identity, and seeks only self-confirmation. Technical dialogue is discourse that asserts facts to inform or persuade audiences. Both monologue and technical dialogue involve what Buber (1965, pp. 22-23) calls reflexion, conceiving the other solely in relation to one's own needs and experience as a type or stereotype, and a refusal to grasp the other as a unique individual "in his particularity." "In short," Arnett (1986) concludes, "self-centered conversation is monologue. Information-centered conversation that assumes neutrality is technical dialogue. Relationship-centered communication that is sensitive to what happens to both self and other approaches genuine dialogue" (p. 7).

Genuine dialogue begins with turning toward the other. It occurs in a social space between the participants Buber calls "the narrow ridge," which defines not similarity or mutuality but a zone of openness where genuine identities are displayed and positions on issues are negotiated. Communicating on the narrow ridge means offering to the other party both an authentic display of who you are and what you stand for and a receptivity to the other's authenticity. It means striving to meet on the common ground of the narrow ridge, to find commonality and to agree to strive jointly in pursuit of mutuality.

Complete mutuality, Buber (1965, pp. 178-179) argues, is beyond human practical ability. Each party must remain faithful to the structural requirements of the relationship (such as teacher-student, therapist-patient, producer-consumer, borrower-lender), or else there might be no basis for their contact in the first place. On the other hand, dialogue is not intended to capture a psychological condition of participants in communication; it is a process that by definition brings out something new between participants, invites the creation of a text that would not exist but for the genuine openness of the parties.

In multicultural public relations, the requirements for engaging in genuine dialogue are captured in the social interpretive
perspective on communication. As populations show themselves to be relevantly connected to an organization, an engagement must occur that has at least the following characteristics:

- Full and genuine disclosure of identities, positions on issues and concerns, strategic intentions, and relevant values
- Balancing attachments to prior definitions of issues and positions with a sincere openness to alternative versions of reality and positions
- Striving for mutual solutions to problems and mutual definitions of the common good
- Genuine efforts to validate the other's identity through culture-sensitive communication

Culture-sensitive communication involves, first, a recognition that the other is an interpreter of the text created in dialogue. This means that each party must fashion contributions to the dialogue with the other's worldview and interpretive resources in mind. For Buber, to be human is to use language, and to speak to another in genuine dialogue is to speak as that person would, in forms of language that create a social bond with the other.

Steven Kepnes (1992) notes the relationship between Buber's ideas on language and dialogue and those of the Russian literary theorist and linguist Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin recognized the social constitution of language and the communicative constitution of society. His theory of dialogue includes a sense of the term that refers to an opening up of creative possibilities between participants. This openness toward the other and toward the issue between them means that neither party controls future events: "Nothing conclusive has, yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 166).

Dialogue thus means also to give up control over issues and others' responses to and actions on issues. In this way, genuine dialogue as the activity component of community rela-
tions can empower multicultural publics, providing an opportunity to create definitions of issues, the nature of interaction with institutions, and the solutions to problems institutions pursue.

But what are the particulars? How are public relations communicators to “do” dialogue? The dialogic approach to community relations can be viewed as four responsibilities in creating and maintaining effective relationships among diverse publics: outreach, leadership, conflict management, and relationship maintenance.

DIALOGIC OUTREACH

Outreach means to search for and to learn to recognize individuals and populations who might have a stake in the organization. This responsibility includes looking beyond the organization’s neighborhood to areas where people might be affected by the outputs of the organization, like the “downwinders” of southeast Washington, northwest Oregon, and north Idaho. It includes seeking out in regions the organization affects the persons and groups unlike ourselves and those who might not appear to have concerns about the organization—the impoverished and homeless, recent immigrants, aboriginals, academics, or any others who are not among the usual publics. It also includes providing mechanisms for others to freely initiate contact with the organization. Such simple mechanisms as toll-free telephone and computer communication services for providing fast, personal contact with human representatives of the organization would be a start. Maximizing opportunities for face-to-face interaction should be a guiding principle. Finally, Buber warns that in creating community it is wise not to be so formal and programmatic about it—not to talk about the process so much—that others will resist building a relationship for fear of being maneuvered into a persuasive seduction. Building communities based on dialogue takes time, patience, and persistence because trust must be built incrementally.
LEADERSHIP AND DIALOGUE

Ronald Arnett (1986) offers guidelines for dialogic leadership. First, communicators who are leaders in large organizations must recognize their superior economic power and their ideological force with respect to most publics. To be already in a position of control over resources and institutional processes can tempt leaders into believing that they therefore have rights to control community decisions; moreover, it can delude leaders into believing they are right, right on the issues and in possession of the right vision for the future. Second, leaders must be willing to strive as authentic, recognizable individuals to use persuasion and judgment—rather than manipulation, intimidation, or coercion—to move audiences to accept their vision. While not all leaders can be characterized as manipulators or bullies, public relations is widely criticized on the basis of its misleading communication practices. Third, leaders must accept the limits of their own knowledge and vision, leaving open the possibility they will be persuaded to change. And, last, leaders "must embrace a long-range perspective that extends beyond immediate recognition by one's fellows and calls the community to a higher level, while simultaneously being open to having that vision tested by counter perspectives" (Arnett, 1986, p. 156).

DIALOGUE AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Among the basic findings of conflict management, three can be formulated as guidelines for dialogic community relations. Augsburger (1992) demonstrates that conflict is a cultural activity. He points out that personal concepts of conflict are culturally conditioned; as a result, while organizational members might assume that the causes, tactics, resolutions, and values involved in conflict are universal, outsiders might maintain quite different ideas about it. Thus conflict in multicultural relationships often takes place within settings that already have high potential for misunderstandings. Part of
dialogue, then, is sensitivity to different interpretations of the nature of conflict, the permissible responses to and expressions of differences, the possible resolutions of conflict, and the nature of values used to ratify conflict. Fairness, for example, among many U.S. populations means equality (the same distribution for each party); among others, it means equity (or distribution of outcomes according to parties' relative contributions); in still others, it might mean the distribution of outcomes according to each party's needs.

Second, conflict requires multiple parties; consequently, each party contributes to the occurrence of conflict and each must own up to its contribution. Third, conflict is normal and even desirable if change is to take place. We often overlook the profound contributions the minority voice, the dissenter, can make to social change. Arnett (1986) reminds us that "from the narrow ridge perspective, we cannot follow any single position in all instances; if we do, we cease to invite dialogue and begin to prescribe a technique. . . . We cannot at all times permit the majority viewpoint to control the arena of decision making" (p. 104).

And, fourth, collaborative approaches to conflict result in more creative solutions and higher satisfaction for the conflict parties than competitive approaches (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991). Alfie Kohn (1986) concludes that "with astonishing regularity [researchers] have found that making one person's success depend on another's failure—which is what competition involves by definition—simply does not make the grade" (p. 22). To collaborate, however, does not mean to cave in. Collaboration includes vigorous defense of interests and ideas in a spirit of upholding the other's identity, dignity, and legitimacy. Collaboration means jointly finding the best mutual solutions through civil argumentation.

**DIALOGIC RELATIONSHIPS**

The final responsibility of dialogic communicators involves maintaining community-based relationships. While issues and
groups will emerge and subside over time, organizational communicators must provide full and honest feedback to others in the community about the implementation of agreements, continue to inform them of possible changes of plans and conditions, and keep returning to those publics for help in creating the "moral voice" of the organization. At the same time, organizational leaders must remain open to initiatives by others to establish relationships. Those initiatives might express approval of the organization, or they might be critical of decisions and operations. In either case, organizations cannot assume others initially will interact in a spirit of genuine dialogue. As I argued in Chapters 1 and 2, the responsibility for setting the tone and moral stance in relationships lies with organizational communicators. By displaying a commitment to genuine dialogue, public relations communicators can instruct others in ways to foster effective community relations.

This chapter has argued that a locality-based concept of community is inadequate. In place of the traditional view, the social-interpretive approach treats community as an array of relationships involving the organization and emergent publics of potentially vast diversity, based on the actual and possible impacts of the organization on others and created by dialogic communication. Dialogue, as Martin Buber conceived it, fulfills the criteria of the social-interpretive view of effective multicultural communication: It validates participants' identities, builds humane relationships, and allows for mutual goal achievement while remaining open to reinterpretation and revision. When genuine dialogue occurs, "community is where community happens" (Buber, 1965, p. 31).
Communicating With Multicultural Activists

The most progressive managers will move away from a focus on structure and toward a focus on values, away from the notions of control and domination and toward participation and involvement, away from rule-bound conformity and toward a sense of community, away from a preoccupation with the internal and toward a better understanding of those outside, away from rigidity and toward adaptability, and away from a pretension of value-neutrality and toward high standards of ethics and morality.

—Robert T. Denhardt, The Pursuit of Significance

As described in Chapter 4, community relations is effective when an organization reaches out to create a genuine dialogue with diverse groups of people who might be affected by the organization. Activist communication, the subject of this chapter, is the inverse case. With activist communication, organizational decision makers establish receptivity to genuine dialogue with those self-designating groups whose actions are intended to change the organization.

In many cases, the external activist groups are homogeneous. But the very fact of their activism indicates that they will be culturally different from organizations they have concerns about: They perceive events and interpret their meanings...
differently, and they rally around a unifying need not acknowledged by the organization. Thus they have a sense of identity distinct from that of the organization. In many other cases, activist groups are internally multicultural, because they are coalitions of cultural groups with a focal interest in something the organization has done, is rumored to have done, or is planning to do. For these reasons, it is rare that public relations practitioners engage in dialogue with external activist groups who are culturally similar to organizational decision makers.

This chapter examines from a social-interpretive perspective who might be encountered as activist groups, what the typical contexts of activism are, and how best to establish genuine dialogue with activists. It is important to recognize that activism is not limited to persons and groups outside the organization's presumed boundaries; member coalitions who raise issues to policymakers also qualify as activists. Many of the principles discussed in Chapter 3 therefore will apply to the discussion of external activists as well.

Within this discussion I will challenge conventional views of crisis communication and two principles of public relations that have achieved the status of sacred rules—the wisdom of being proactive and the "one clear voice" maxim. Occasionally in this chapter I will use the term concerns to mean topics that individuals or groups believe are especially important and require resolution. I use this as a broader term than issue, which I will distinguish as one of several types of situational factors that generate activist communication.

**The Nature of Activist Publics**

Multicultural activists are special "others" because they proclaim themselves as having a community of interest in a concern not identified by the organization as something important but that the organization must attend to. Contrary to popular assumption, the organization does not "create" activi-
ists or define them as an audience by public relations strategic communication. This has been a central idea of activist communication, because nearly every public relations textbook identifies the process of doing public relations as one of defining the problem (often called issues identification), segmenting publics (which is the same as creating an intended audience), planning and executing a communication campaign, and evaluating the effort.

This formulaic approach to what public relations practitioners do when communicating with activists is expressed in John Marston’s (1963, p. 91) RACE acronym (Research, Action [i.e., planning and programming], Communication, and Evaluation) and in Center and Jackson’s (1990, p. 21) four-step “proactive” public relations process of fact finding, planning and programming, action and communication, and evaluation. Thus it is assumed that doing public relations fundamentally includes setting the scope and nature of the concern and creating audiences for strategic communication. This clearly is not the case with activist groups. They knock on management’s door, usually without invitation and often with the prior involvement of government agencies or the mass media. In this sense, they are conducting public relations campaigns with the objective of changing the organization.

Moreover, activists open interaction about concerns they, not the organization, initially formulate. For example, Cutlip et al. (1994) point out that the animal rights movement embodies a social issue not recognized by organizations but with profound consequences for them. Noting that People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has suddenly grown into a huge movement, these authors argue that “cosmetics manufacturers, medical research laboratories, meat packers, and even federal government agencies have had to factor views of this new activist force into their decision making” (Cutlip et al., 1994, p. 206). Because of activism by PETA, many cosmetics firms no longer test their products on animals, and the message “not tested on animals” has become to many consumers a sign of quality manufacturing. PETA activism
also influenced the Pentagon decision to discontinue animal-based combat wound research and has brought to light alternative research techniques for university laboratories. Similarly, a group of environmentalists who also are employees of the National Forest Service have joined together to bring new perspectives and concerns in forestry to the attention of agency decision makers (Barker, 1993).

Many public relations theorists and practitioners view activists as the enemy. Grunig and Hunt (1984), for example, call activist publics “powerful adversaries for most organizations” (p. 309). Philip Lesly (1992) calls them “opposition groups” and likens them to “multiple anarchies” (p. 326) who conduct “insurgency against leadership” (p. 327). E. W. Brody (1991, p. 188) refers to activists as “dissidents,” and he notes that the Foundation for Public Affairs tracks dissident groups in the publication Public Interest Profiles. This portrayal of activist publics conceives of organizational relationships as comprising competitors vying for limited resources in a zero-sum game. If they win, we lose, is the implied logic of the traditional view.

In contrast, a social-interpretive perspective recognizes that both the organization and what it treats as its environment are socially constructed in the communicative behavior of members and others. With balanced and well-informed interaction, organizations and activists can create a synergistic relationship that benefits both parties. Cheney and Vibbert (1987), however, describe the history of public relations as one in which the social construction of environments has been misguided and unproductive to organizations because activists were conceived as the enemy or merely as targets of persuasion campaigns.

ENACTED ENVIRONMENTS

Only recently have theorists begun to tease out the implications of treating “the environment” as enacted. According to Karl Weick (1979), organizations pay attention to some
aspects of the chaotic events in the world and ignore others. They attempt to make sense of those events they pay attention to, labeling and characterizing those elements as constituting the world they live in. They then act toward their perceived world, and the consequences of their actions—including many unintended consequences—become elements of the chaotic world that they must continue paying attention to (or not attending to) for the purpose of creating order. In this way, organizations contribute much to their own environments and have considerable influence on their fates.

This is not to say that enacted environments are purely imaginary—the death of a customer from taking cyanide-laced Sodafed, as occurred in Washington State in 1992, represents a tragic and irrefutable reality. But Weick’s argument does point out three principles that support the social-interpretive view. First, policymakers choose what is important to attend to, and in doing so they define the reality of their environment. Reciprocally, organizational reality is that which has gained official attention. This accounts for the way institutions can be “blindsided” by an issue or trend, as the U.S. auto industry was in the late 1970s and early 1980s by the issue of product quality. Second, not only is the environment enacted, but what it means—in terms of intentions, consequences, values, motives, and organizational intelligence—also is socially constructed. This implies that organizations, like individuals, act on the basis of negotiated meanings, thus “environmental scanning” (Anderson, 1992) alone is not sufficient for effectiveness. And, third, environments are both obdurate facts and socially constructed interpretations. Some elements of an organization’s relevant world impose themselves on the organization and are largely self-defining, such as the immediate impacts of a natural disaster. A consequence of this view of enacted environments is that proper actions—those with the most favorable long-term outcomes for both the organization’s stakeholders and society—require a full, open, and egalitarian exploration of all concerns raised by any party so as to reach a joint understanding of conditions.
INTERACTIVITY AND INTERDEPENDENCE

Constructing activists as the enemy is a reactive stance; it says, “When they show up, we respond to them defensively.” Cheney and Vibbert (1987) argue that fundamental changes in the relationships between large corporations and various publics in the 1970s, particularly the big oil companies, fostered proactivity through issues management: “These problems faced by the oil companies ‘represent’ in a useful way the constraints and accommodations that have come to structure contemporary public relations in the corporate setting” (p. 172). These authors call the corporate persuasion of publics “the latest transformation of public relations” (p. 173).

Yet several of the lessons James Post and Patricia Kelley (1988) derive from their interviews and extensive review of the public relations issues management literature focus on interactivity. Post and Kelley note that “the desire to be proactive has been tempered by the realization that ‘interaction’ is more appropriate to the type of interdependence that exists in many settings” (p. 347). Their second lesson states: “A responsive organization will tend, over time, toward an interactive approach toward the stakeholders in its [enacted] environment. That is, dialogue becomes the key to an interactive approach” (p. 347).

To move beyond the traditional view of activists as the enemy or as targets of persuasion means to move from reactive communication to a point beyond proactivity where true interactivity can take place. As activist groups gain size and popular support around specific concerns, the need for interdependence between activists and the organization grows. With it the need for interactivity and dialogue grows too. Grunig and Hunt (1984) presciently note that interactive communication “is where public issues management works most effectively” (p. 297).

Two recent examples of the parallel development of interdependence and interactivity—one with external activist publics and one with internal activists—illustrate the generative
value of dialogue. In several communities across the United States, police departments are doing more than just reacting to citizens' complaints about the threat of crime in their neighborhoods. Increasingly members of community activist groups are being invited to contribute substantively to solutions to problems of community security. As one result, many neighborhoods, like those in my hometown of Moscow, Idaho, and those in Loma Vista, California, are patrolled by officers on bicycles.

In a second example of interactivity, AT&T responded quickly in 1993 when employees expressed outrage at a racially insensitive advertisement in the now-defunct employee magazine Focus. Especially concerned were African American employees, who advised AT&T management that the incident was a symptom of a need for diversity awareness throughout the organization. AT&T executives joined forces with activist employees and instituted a corporatewide review of diversity concerns and a major training program that continues today.

Activists often are identified with the types of problem or issue they advocate. Thus some writers attempt to identify activist publics by associating them with key issues and drawing conclusions about the nature of activists from the way they advocate those key issues (see Anderson, 1992; Grunig & Hunt, 1984, pp. 321-329; Wilcox et al., 1992, pp. 331-338). Gay rights activists, for example, are thought to represent confrontational tactics, consumerists are identified with boycotts, environmentalists with protests and litigation, and racial minorities with demonstrations and seeking government intervention.

To identify activism with distinctive groups, however, and then to characterize those groups on the basis of how they relate to and represent their concerns, is a short-term and self-defeating approach to analyzing communication with activist publics. As social systems change, concerns identified by diverse groups also change. For example, access to employment opportunities for women and minorities has been transformed over the past two decades to a broader range of
TABLE 5.1
Public Relations Stances Toward Change

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<tr>
<td>Publicity, public information</td>
<td>public information</td>
<td>dialogue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way, asymmetric</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concerns, including day care for children, breaking the glass ceiling effect, and valuing diversity. Moreover, the composition of groups who have a common interest in particular concerns will change over the life of those concerns. The antismoking forces once were dominated by religious leaders; now they are led by health advocates and government officials.

Clearly, what’s important for understanding activist communication is the nature of the relationship, because concerns and those who advocate them will keep changing and because activism varies multiculturally. The relationship, as I have argued so far, is one in which activists commonly take initiatives to identify concerns while organizational members respond to those initiatives. Especially effective organizations will seek out potential controversies as part of their community relations activities. Effective activist communication will respond with a receptivity to activist voices—this means being oriented toward interactivity rather than toward reactivity or proactivity. The differences among the three public relations response modes are summarized in Table 5.1.

The discussion so far might seem to be saying that disaster response, crisis communication, and issues management are the same things. In many important ways they are different, and the public relations tradition of treating them as separate subfunctions has some merit. On the other hand, each of
these contexts involves activists, and the similarities across situations are more important for effective communication than the differences.

- **Situational Factors:**
  - **Disasters, Crises, and Issues**

  Activists' concerns vary not just by individuals' positioning in society but also according to the nature of the situation. Activist publicity forms in response to a variety of circumstances. The nature of those circumstances is related primarily to the type of events and the attendant concerns raised by activist groups. E. W. Brody (1991) identifies three distinctive but related circumstances that involve activism and risk—disasters, crises, and issues.

**Disasters and Activism**

Disasters are the sudden, unforeseen, and damaging events that create an urgent need for immediate action. Often disasters are natural catastrophes, like earthquakes or hurricanes. But they also occur as a result of human error in designing or controlling complex systems, such as the space shuttle Challenger explosion. Brody argues that disaster communication is fundamentally different from crisis communication because crises develop more slowly and result from organizational stakeholders' actions, while disasters are sudden and largely unpreventable. In both cases, however, persons seeking relief from the organization are likely to present themselves as activists, voicing previously unacknowledged concerns to organizational decision makers and insisting on a role in the resolution of those concerns. Thus, in the immediate aftermath of the 1993 Northridge earthquake in Southern California, spokespersons for large groups of victims whose homes had been destroyed used news media to present their concerns about slow responses from the Federal Emergency
Management Administration and California disaster relief units. Within days they were negotiating face-to-face with officials responsible for expedited resolution of their concerns.

Activists in disaster situations typically are victims or family members of victims. Their concerns typically are to obtain information, immediate material relief, or compensation for losses; they are not concerned, as a rule, with policy changes to prevent future occurrences of the disaster. Their communication methods reflect the emergency nature of the situation: demonstrations before the news media, threats of litigation, and confrontations with organizational representatives. What makes them culturally diverse is the very fact that they have been recipients of inadequate communicative attention from the organization: In some way they have found themselves marginalized among all the contending concerns of the organization. As such, they have a set of experiences and meanings relative to the disaster that fundamentally differ from those of organizational communicators.

In some cases, the disaster directly involves cultural differences, as occurred when civil unrest followed the first jury verdict in the Rodney King trial in Los Angeles. Ray Corpuz (1992) called those riots “an important awakening, because it focused attention on the issues of social injustice, cultural diversity, and racial tension and the need for greater understanding between all people” (p. 16).

CRISIS AND ACTIVISM

Brody is right in pointing out that disaster communication is not the same as crisis communication, despite the popular assumption that most crises are disasters. Crises, Brody (1991) argues, are critical turning points in an ongoing relationship: “Crises occur where issues are neglected or otherwise mishandled” (p. 176). They originate in the relationship with recognized stakeholders, and unlike disasters, they can be anticipated. Often the communication methods used by activists in the crisis situation are powerful and include traditional
public relations practices—information campaigns and media events, for example—as well as boycotts and demonstrations.

The aim of activists in crisis situations is to change an organizational practice or policy so that a current state of affairs will be changed in the future. Logging practices in national forests, anti-gay rights initiatives, product treatments and marketing practices in the tobacco industry, local school board control over curriculum content—these are all examples of issues that have become crises in many localities.

Crisis activism can be generated by disasters, too. An ongoing activist group that formed after the Northridge earthquake, Community Assisting Recovery, is made up of insurance policyholders who have experienced poor service from their insurers. Of interest, this group was assisted in its organization and development of tactics by United Policy Holders, an earlier activist group who had experienced similar problems with the insurance industry following the disastrous 1991 fire in Oakland, California.

ISSUES AND ACTIVISM

Issues are the third situational factor in activist communication. An issue is a controversy that has potential to change public policy regarding the organization. Issues become crises if they are not resolved before they force the organization into a critical turning point, often as a result of policy changes by government regulators. Many writers have recognized the developmental pattern in the life cycle of an issue (Brody, 1991, p. 183; Center & Jackson, 1990, p. 219). Brad E. Hainsworth (1990) describes the evolution process of issues in four stages—origin, mediation and amplification, organization, and resolution. Figure 5.1 diagrams these stages and identifies the relationship between issues and crises.

Issues arise. Hainsworth (1990) notes, "when an organization or public attaches significance to a perceived problem that is a consequence of a developing political, economic, or social trend" (p. 84). Therefore it is necessary that organizations
have mechanisms for including trends in their enacted environments. An issue becomes amplified as groups coalesce around similar perspectives on the topic. Specialized industry media and mass news media begin to pay attention to the matter at this point, and the media attention often further amplifies the issue into a public policy issue. In the organization stage, commitment builds within advocacy groups, the nature of the issue changes from a problem to a policy conflict, and publics become more diverse. Resolution marks the "protracted and potentially costly" (p. 86) process of creating regulation or legislation to resolve the conflict.

The crucial insight from Hainsworth’s analysis is that, once issues become amplified through mass media coverage and
the solidifying of activists' positions, they gain policy implications and enter widespread public controversy. They no longer are issues but become crises.

Issues activism is more subtle, local, and manageable than crisis activism. The appearance of an issue is signaled by complaints or demands or letters to the editor by parties not formerly recognized as stakeholders in the organization. Customers whose autos had been serviced at California Sears Auto Centers in the early 1990s, for example, lodged complaints with Sears and state regulators. Sears failed to recognize those customers as stakeholders and misinterpreted the meaning of their complaints. As a result, Sears shortly had to contend with a consumer relations crisis unprecedented in their history, which ended with the largest customer compensation program ever undertaken by a U.S. retailer.

The engine that produces issues is environmental change. Changes in technology, economic trends, social tastes, and evolving relationships among groups can lead to issues affecting any organization. Insofar as issues are socially constructed within an enacted environment, the earlier an organization joins the discussion that leads to the rhetorical-construction of an issue, the more influential it will be in the definition and resolution of the controversy.

Moreover, activist communication is not intended to capture all there is of issues management. It has an outreach component, too. Just as diverse stakeholders wish to engage in dialogue with organizational leaders, so organizations must see themselves as stakeholders in the public policy formulation process and strive to become involved in dialogue with policymakers and ultimately to become part of public decisions. Mary Ann Pires (1988) describes how Texaco sought dialogue with public interest groups by taking an interactive approach to issues management. Following are the philosophical guidelines Texaco used in this effort:

1. Strive for long-term relationships with public interest groups, not expedient encounters.
TABLE 5.2
Comparison of Situational Factors: Disasters, Crises, and Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Disasters</th>
<th>Crises</th>
<th>Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activists are</td>
<td>victims and families</td>
<td>known stakeholders</td>
<td>unacknowledged publics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activists' objectives</td>
<td>material relief, news, information</td>
<td>change of policy and practices</td>
<td>discussion/ negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activists' methods</td>
<td>confrontation, threats, news media</td>
<td>communication campaign, boycotts, litigation, legislation</td>
<td>informal complaint, trend behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of activism</td>
<td>sudden catastrophes</td>
<td>neglected issues, delayed effects of disasters</td>
<td>environmental changes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Start by listening to what the groups have to say, to their needs, issue concerns, and so forth. Don't propagandize. Listening provides the clues that can lead to future cooperation.

3. Don't overpromise. (Use) caution..., primarily to avoid creating false expectations on either side.

4. Be prepared to give as well as get. To operate any other way borders on manipulation. Reciprocity is a legitimate expectation of all parties to such activities.

5. Treat people decently, respecting confidences. (Pires, 1988, p. 187)

Treating people decently, Pires says, involves listening carefully to discern others' needs, respecting others' time and schedules, keeping confidences, and reciprocating across the board (p. 187).

This guidance on coalition building from Texaco can help organizations be more responsive in all three situations where activist communication can occur. Those situational factors are summarized in Table 5.2.

Of these three situations, the one in which organizations are least likely to create the desired mutual gain for both
stakeholder activists and the organization is the crisis situation. This is so because in crises positions are polarized; the parties use more radical modes of communication, and thus the stakes are higher for both parties. In addition, crises can be created either by ignored or unresolved issues or by the second-, third- and fourth-order effects of disasters (Brody, 1991). This means that organizations should focus on effective disaster response and effective issues management. The best opportunities to engage activist groups may be lost by the time a crisis arrives. But how is effective communication achieved in disasters, crises, and issue controversies?

♦ Establishing Dialogue
With Multicultural Activists

Several of the principles of effective communication with multicultural activists were set forth in Chapter 4’s discussion of community building. The responsibility for outreach in community relations coincides with the need to seek out activists who have not yet initiated claims on the organization. Accordingly, organizations should maximize personal interaction, exercise patience in establishing a dialogic relationship, and provide mechanisms for activists to voice their concerns.

In addition, the general guidelines for dialogic leadership—recognizing power differences, using persuasion and judgment, being open to others’ arguments, holding to a long-range vision of community—apply equally to activist communication. So do the fundamentals of conflict management: being sensitive to the cultural basis of conflict, recognizing mutual responsibility for conflict, accepting the inevitability of conflict, and pursuing collaborative conflict approaches.

MANY CLEAR VOICES

Many public relations scholars and practitioners have advocated “one clear voice” in crisis communication. By this is
usually meant controlling the messages an organization gives publics by funneling all communication through a single speaker. Newsome et al. (1993), for example, say: "After developing a plan for responding to a crisis and making people in the organization familiar with it, the next most important part of dealing with a crisis is designating the (as in single) most credible spokesperson" (p. 546).

Designating a single spokesperson, however, offers many problems, both practical and theoretical. One person has limited capacity to interact with publics. If the spokesperson is addressing one audience, she or he is not available to interact elsewhere. There are also limits to one individual's capacity to obtain and retain information; the single spokesperson concept severely impedes the flow of information to publics, violating another maxim, that of the "open communication policy," which is to provide all the relevant information that is known (Wilcox et al., 1992, p. 347).

A theoretical problem with the "one clear voice" maxim is its denial of cultural diversity among audiences. The other parties in activist communication situations—the victims of disasters, the unacknowledged stakeholders behind campaigns to change organizational practices and policies, and other publics who have concerns they wish to negotiate—all potentially differ culturally from organizational decision makers. Their understanding of events, their needs, their bases for trust and credibility constitute a separate worldview and are grounded in their cultural experience and identities.

"One clear voice" also implies that the organization has a fixed version of reality and the spokesperson's job is to tell or sell it to audiences. In the very first moments of a disaster situation, telling and selling might be the most effective mode of communication; however, the "one clear voice" maxim consistently is advocated as the way to communicate in ongoing crisis situations. Clearly, this one-way approach is not the most effective communication model to use with activist publics, because it limits the varieties of perspectives the organization can take on the problem. Consequently, the
range of action options available to the organization are constrained by the model of communication applied with activist publics.

James E. Grunig (1984) has set forth four models of public relations: The Press Agency/Publicity Model, the Public Information Model, the Two-Way Asymmetric Model, and the Two-Way Symmetric Model. The first two models represent, respectively, propaganda and information giving (both of which constitute telling); and the latter two represent consultative communication (selling) and balanced interaction, respectively. Despite widespread praise for two-way balanced communication and Grunig and Hunt's (1984) claim that up to 15% of organizations practice it today (p. 22), in fact it remains a rarity in public communication. Nonetheless, Larissa Grunig (1992a) has found that, in activist communication, the two-way balanced approach to interaction "offers the most promise for mutually beneficial, harmonious relationships in a fractious (and litigious) society" (p. 77).

TRUST AND CREDIBILITY

Genuine dialogue with multicultural activist publics must be designed to maximize those publics' expressiveness and understanding while maintaining the organization's opportunity for fair and full pursuit of its interests. Interactivity means not just finding common ground on issues and problems but also establishing common communicative ground, creating trust and credibility through the ways communication is performed. Often, finding common ground on issues and problems requires that communicative trust and credibility be established first. Two-way symmetric structures of communication are a necessary start; genuine dialogue also requires an attitude of equal concern for self and other.

A basic consideration in dialogue is communicating so that others will appreciate the legitimacy of what is being said to achieve a common understanding. From the point of view of culturally diverse audiences, this often means hearing
spokespersons who are similar to them in some relevant ways, usually in terms of language and cultural identity. I once met with a group of Hispanic leaders in a southwestern city in an effort to resolve long-standing problems between my federal agency employer and the Spanish-speaking community. My predecessors, who like me were Anglos, had been treated with stony silence and resistance. I asked two of my Hispanic colleagues to go with me to speak with the community leaders. While at first the meetings were not warm and engaging, the parties eventually opened up a trusting dialogue. Together we created novel solutions for the major problems and achieved an ongoing positive relationship. If I had continued with the one clear voice philosophy of my predecessors, I could not have opened up a dialogue with this important group of stakeholders. Instead we opted for one clear but contingent argument and many clear voices, each voice chosen according to the audience’s needs.

Trust is created when speakers design communication with recipients’ experience in mind, fashioning interaction that affirms audience members’ identities, honors their interests, reckons with their cultural orientations, and listens actively to their arguments. Arnett (1986) points out that Buber’s “narrow ridge” of openness between polarized positions in dialogue requires trust of both oneself and the other. We must trust ourselves to hold firmly to our convictions and be able to change our positions when legitimately persuaded by another’s arguments; we must trust others to have a reciprocal concern for both themselves and us and to be able to change their positions in the face of a stronger argument. The key act in establishing trust along the narrow ridge of dialogue is listening to the other’s reasons, motives, and interests behind their actions and positions.

Credibility, Brody (1991) argues, is the organization’s “greatest asset in any effort” (p. 181). He calls it “a commodity gained over time and at great expense in effort and consistency” (p. 182). The following four principles paraphrase Brody’s advice.
Communicating With Multicultural Activists

about how to establish and maintain credibility in public relations communication with activist audiences:

1. Organizational purposes must correctly match reasonable and rational expectations of stakeholders.
2. The legitimacy of others' arguments must be accepted as relevant to each party's self-interests.
3. Effective communication is required to explain the organization and its mission.
4. Organizational policies, procedures, and actions must be perceived by stakeholders as fair and consistent with their needs.

Interactivity achieves these purposes more effectively than reactivity or proactivity. It is important to recognize three final points about dialogue with activist publics. First, dialogue is not the same as instituting feedback channels. Simply creating a mechanism for dissenting views to be received and recorded does not create interactivity. Dissent must be engaged openly and impartially, with a presumption of trust and credibility.

Second, dialogue does not mean acquiescence to the other's position. Buber was careful to affirm the necessity for commitment to our own interests as a defining characteristic of genuine dialogue. The narrow ridge is a balancing of autonomy and loyalty, of "yes and no simultaneously" (Arnett, 1986, p. 43).

Finally, dialogue with activist publics is not limited to local or national groups and issues. As world economies become more globally connected and organizations expand geographically, issues, crises, and disasters often have international dimensions. Laurie J. Wilson (1990) argues that traditional views of issues management have been too narrow and localized and have been based on cultural assumptions that might not be shared in settings outside the United States. The next chapter addresses this and other topics in international multicultural public relations.
Cultural Diversity in International Public Relations

International public relations is also always intercultural public relations.

—Carl Botan (1992)

Activist communication often extends beyond the concerns of local, regional, or national publics. Union Carbide's decade-long public relations nightmare following the tragic explosion of their chemical plant in Bhopal, India, demonstrated that crises indeed can involve international publics (Szn & Egelhoff, 1991). Other examples of crises that cross national borders are easy to find, from Dow Chemical and ITT in Chile to Nestlé in Africa and the Bank of Credit and Commerce International worldwide.

Disaster and crisis communication are not the only public relations functions that spill across national borders, though. Today, public relations agencies that practice abroad and multinational corporations with public relations staffs carry out a wide range of communication relationships in a diverse array of cultural settings.

International public relations is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Until about 1970, public relations was practiced
almost exclusively within western Europe and North America (Leaf, 1991). The ensuing quarter century has seen phenomenal growth of the practice throughout the rest of the world. Much of the proliferation of public relations has been due to changes of national boundaries, alliances, and forms of government, and much of it has been due to technological changes that have facilitated travel, commerce, and communication across the globe (Sharpe, 1992). While some observers doubt there is an emerging global marketplace ("As the World Balkanizes," 1991), communication scholars widely agree that the globalization of public relations professional practice is inevitable. Larissa A. Grunig (1992b) notes that "international public relations may be a necessary part of doing business for the public relations firm of the next century" (p. 128).

This chapter does not provide detailed lists of cultural traits, itemized guidance about etiquette and social expectations, or standard business phrases in the languages of other nations. Information of that sort is relevant and important. Basic knowledge every public relations sojourner to another nation should have. However, I have not included such information in this book for two reasons. First, the quantity of cultural information a sojourner or policymaker would need is so extensive it would require an entire book for each national culture. Many useful guidebooks and chapters on international management, business communication, and public relations containing this sort of information already are available.9

Second, the global/local principle of international public relations is widely understood and followed, and it makes good sense in light of the complex differences among national cultures. By this principle, public relations professionals are encouraged to set overall policy and institutional objectives with a global perspective at headquarters; at the same time, communication campaigns are designed and implemented at the local level, by employees or contractors who are in-country nationals and members of the local culture (Epley, 1992; Gorden, 1991). While the global/local principle is popular
both as a theory and as a practical prescription, I will discuss later why it should be modified into a local/global/local model of international public relations.

Instead of lessons and anecdotes about cultural differences, the rest of this chapter presents three critical issues for international public relations, based on a social-interpretive approach to cultural diversity. First, I discuss two divergent trends in which the homogenizing effects of globalization in business and communication—the trend toward uniformity in consumer behavior and lifestyle—occur alongside the increasing diversity and fragmentation of populations. I suggest ways these two contrasting trends can be understood and bridged in international communication relationships. Second, communication competence and effectiveness in international public relations are explored from a social-interpretive perspective. Last, I present ways to move beyond the traditional advice that focuses on gaining knowledge of others' cultural practices and using the global/local management scheme: I develop three broad principles of communication policy in international public relations by focusing on cultural interpretations and community building.

Two caveats are in order. Although I argue below that certain aspects of culture coincide with national boundaries, it is clear that important cultural differences exist within any nation, such as between the Anglophone and Francophone Canadians or between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. Second, the terms international or transnational are not precisely the same as global. I have chosen international as a way of referring to communication activities that are performed in nations other than that of the headquarters of the public relations organization.

- Balancing Diversity and Uniformity

International public relations necessarily involves communicators in multicultural settings and issues. This is so because
cultural diversity and identity tend strongly to conform to national boundaries. The association of nationality and cultural differences can be understood by considering the dimensions of diversity.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY

Marilyn Loden and Judy B. Rosener (1991) identify two sets of conditions that contribute to the ways groups of people differ from one another. Primary dimensions of diversity are “those immutable human differences that are inborn and/or that exert an important impact on our early socialization and an ongoing impact throughout our lives” (p. 18). The six primary dimensions Loden and Rosener identify are age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities and qualities, race, and sexual or affectional orientation. For many individuals, national origin can be included among the primary dimensions of diversity. These dimensions, experienced as interdependent core influences, condition individuals’ self-identity and worldview and exert a lifelong impact on thought, feelings, and behavior.

Secondary dimensions of diversity are “mutable differences that we acquire, discard, and/or modify throughout our lives” (p. 19), which enrich the ways we view ourselves and others without strongly influencing our core identities. Secondary dimensions are almost infinite in number, but minimally include education, occupation, income, marital status, and military and work experience. People differ in their ability to modify or discard secondary dimensions of diversity, and those dimensions vary in the degree to which they are susceptible to modification.

National borders define legal and economic entities, but they also identify a population’s sense of origin as a people. Populations within national borders vary in the degree to which they are culturally diverse on some of the primary dimensions: A few nations, like Japan, are highly homogeneous in race and ethnicity, and many, like the United States,
are highly differentiated (Cushman & King, 1985). In all but the most recently formed nations, however, one element that contributes to a cohesive national culture is geopolitical identity. Language policy, national history and ideology, traditional celebrations, use of technology, religion policy, and even topographical features create a sense of personhood and an interpretive logic shared by a nation’s population (Victor, 1992, p. 52).

When communicating across national borders, then, public relations communicators almost always face differences involving primary dimensions of diversity, such as ethnicity, race, or geopolitical roots. These dimensions constitute core elements of identity and worldview and thus are resistant to cultural change.

DIVERSITY VERSUS UNIFORMITY

The breakup of the former Soviet empire, the fragmentation of eastern Europe into numerous new nations based on ethnic allegiances, worldwide refugee and economic migrations, and tribal wars in much of Africa all indicate that differences among populations are increasing in number and in their impact on international relationships. In addition, as I pointed out in Chapter 1, many populations within nations who are bound by common perspectives on social concerns are declaring cultural status for themselves and are demanding to be understood in their own terms. Thus diversity seems to be increasing both within nations and across borders.

At the same time, in some ways populations are becoming more alike. David A. Victor (1992) notes that the global marketplace has created a “universalization of consumer buying habits” (p. 9). Citing observations by industrialists and marketing consultants, Victor argues that cross-border similarities often are greater than those among groups within nations. Young people’s tastes in music, clothing, and food are fast becoming universal; the global spread of consumer products, availability and use of leisure time, and conformity
in lifestyle aspirations contribute to the uniformity of cultural identity. These elements of cultural convergence are based on secondary dimensions.

Victor theorizes that cultural retrenchment—the insistence on cultural differentiation—is a defense against being absorbed into a global consumer identity. In effect, people worldwide are growing more similar as consumers while struggling to retain their core cultural distinctiveness. Cultural diversity, says Victor, reflects communication preferences, while cultural uniformity reflects consumer preferences. "Thus, as the world becomes more globalized in one sense, the people become more parochial in ways most likely to affect marketing and business communication across borders" (p. 11).

These contrasting trends have complex consequences. For multicultural public relations, one implication is the likelihood that further economic and commercial ties among nations will not necessarily lead to greater convergence on primary dimensions of culture. The need for effective intercultural communication, even under the global/local principle, therefore will continue to be strong.

In addition, economic globalization does not mean that the world is becoming one market with standardized products and communication. Joyce Wouters (1991) points out that, while products and leisure activity trends are spreading worldwide, many internationally marketed products are customized for particular cultural settings. "Forces that call for customization over standardization are customer demand in different nations for different product features, consumer resources, and different environmental factors" (p. 165). Wouters concludes. Nevertheless, global consumer products companies maximize standardization because it is thought to be cost-effective. Wouters notes that in customized marketing "even though the underlying message, and the theme and the purpose are the same, the style of communication is different and is critical to the success of the promotion" (p. 172). In other words, to global marketers, international communication often is a matter of dressing up in local style a set of business ideas,
products and objectives created in the culture of the United States. In this way, communicators are adjusting for secondary dimensions of culture while ignoring differences based on primary dimensions.

Certainly it is important to recognize that people with diverse cultural backgrounds respond to consumer messages differently. However, from the viewpoint of the social-interpretive approach to communication, business objectives, marketing schemes, and product ideas created in the United States and exported under the camouflage of another culture's language, popular tastes, and social norms will not in the long run benefit either the others' culture or the global human ecology. This form of cultural colonization through consumerism, which is grounded in the secondary dimensions of diversity, can lead to more extreme expressions of group distinctiveness based on primary dimensions of diversity. In creating contradictions between secondary dimensions of diversity and primary ones, global marketing also can destabilize social units by fostering identity conflicts within individuals, families, and communities.

BRIDGING DIVERSITY AND UNIFORMITY

Extending the principles of effective communication in multicultural public relations to the international setting can moderate the impacts of the diversity/uniformity trends. First, genuine dialogue means finding common ground while engaging in reasoned debate in pursuit of one's own interests. Many elements of international public relations transcend political boundaries or ethnic group identities, such as preserving the environment, maintaining regional peace and stability, and enhancing diversity within the human ecology. These transcendent elements can be useful common grounds at the outset of dialogue.

Second, affirmation is central to genuine dialogue. When the active affirmation of cultural identities, participants' self-concepts, and the parties' relationship is made a focal communication
goal, both secondary and primary dimensions of diversity must be addressed. Hence more than just the style of communication needs to be adjusted to local cultures in international public relations—the organization’s long-range motives, strategic objectives, and cultural impacts in the others’ settings should be subject to dialogue with locals.

CONTROL, SUBJUGATION, AND HARMONY CULTURES

Ultimately, the indeterminant and open-ended nature of meanings dictates that public relations communicators must be willing to give up the quest to control interaction and commercial relationships with other cultural groups. The North American and western European culture of control reflects the belief that technology is a tool for controlling the environment and that problems are solved, the future controlled, and life improved through the application of technology and self-determination. John McPhee (1989) portrayed the control culture as a scientific hubris that seeks to subordinate nature to the human will.

In sharp contrast with control cultures are the subjugation and harmonization cultures (Victor, 1992, p. 69). Subjugation cultures, such as those found in Jordan, Tanzania, and Guatemala, believe nature is too powerful or sacred for human control, and technology, while seductive, is sacrilegious. Harmonization cultures, like those in Japan and India, see humans as natural elements within a larger environmental system. Technology in harmonization cultures is not for controlling nature but for maintaining or restoring balance between people and the rest of nature.

While this view of culture types characterizes culture as fixed and objective, it suggests that attitudes concerning control, causation, privilege, and motives often vary by nationality. In this regard, injecting products and imposing technological solutions to problems with a control rationale onto populations with a subjugation ethos amounts to cultural imperialism. Genuine dialogue requires that the control
rationale be identified as an aspect of the organization's culture, and communicators must be willing to give up the control culture's sense of superiority based on technology.

If this logic of the social-interpretive view holds, critics might say, then the very idea of what constitutes public relations and competency in its practice is subject to change within different contexts. Indeed, that is a key implication that flows from an examination of international public relations.

**Redefining Public Relations and Effectiveness**

The indeterminacy of meaning raises the possibility that effectiveness in public relations communication will vary across national settings. Many scholars of international public relations conceive of effectiveness as achieving organizational goals from the headquarters perspective. Joyce Wouters (1991) writes that organizations are successful overseas if they make a profit or enhance their image as an international player (p. 124), and she portrays public relations as broadly supporting those goals by providing an "essential maintenance, coordination, and troubleshooting role" (p. 3). Just how these functions are to be carried out is not clearly specified, although Wouters provides a wealth of advice about cultural sensitivity. She suggests throughout her book, however, that public relations has a fundamental marketing role within a selling and consultative communication model.

Ray Hiebert (1992) argues that international public relations effectiveness is contingent on the development of an efficient communication system resembling the ideal at home: "Regardless of political system, the more a nation has a variety of communication sources and a variety of target audiences, with developed media and responsive feedback systems, the more effective will be the communication system of that nation" (p. 125). Hiebert's approach moves us closer to the social-interpretive view, which defines effectiveness as the successful negotiation of meanings that result in reinforcement of the parties' self-concepts, enhancement of their relationship,
affirmation of cultural identities, and accomplishment of strategic goals. His criteria, however, are framed in terms of a predetermined sort of communication system, one with "developed media" and "feedback systems." A social-interpretive approach embraces improvisation, diversity, and emergence regarding communication media, but it has a bias toward face-to-face interaction where mutual disclosure and negotiation take place. Moreover, the notion of feedback systems suggests that interaction is a linear, mechanical process of message transmission and response in sequence, rather than an emergent, dialogic process of forming relationships.

Both Wouters and Hiebert, and a majority of all scholarly and practical guides on international public relations, represent what Carl Botan calls the polycentric model for public relations management in multinational corporations. Botan (1992) identifies two dominant models, the ethnocentric and the polycentric models, which he critiques with his notion of the public relations matrix.

The ethnocentric model places an expatriate manager in the host country to direct public relations activities there, while corporate headquarters managers at home make strategic decisions and closely supervise host country programs. This model assumes people everywhere are motivated by the same needs and desires and are persuaded by the same arguments, and it uses in all host country settings public relations practices that managers believe are effective at home.

In the polycentric model, host country practitioners are given autonomy to carry out public relations programs devised and evaluated by headquarters managers. The home organization's goals and programs, however, "are often not brought into question and the underlying assumption—that the host country is merely a site for fulfilling the [organization's] needs—remains intact and problematic" (Botan, 1992, p. 151). Botan's ongoing review of the literature on international public relations has revealed that a number of broad conditions work together in varying combinations to create a contextual matrix that is unique for each nation. To date he
has identified four factors in the public relations matrix: (a) the level of national development, including economic, literacy, and national unity development; (b) the nature of primary consumers of public relations services; (c) the legal/political context, including issues of freedom of expression, lobbying, and press freedoms; and (d) history and origins of the practice. Botan (1992) argues that the practice of public relations in any nation depends on its unique mix of these (and probably other) factors, not on home country assumptions about how public relations should be done:

To avoid the harms of narrow cultural or national assumptions about public relations first requires adopting a definition of the practice not tied to any one set of assumptions, particularly the assumption that public relations is a management function. We need a view that focuses on the process at the center of public relations—using communication to adapt relationships between organizations and their publics. (p. 153)

Effectiveness of public relations in international settings, then, recognizes that the organization’s communities extend beyond the home country’s national borders. Effectiveness is inherent in a definition that conceives of the practice as communicating to create favorable relationships and communities of interest with relevant publics. The specific frameworks and forms of relationship building that public relations workers engage in will vary from setting to setting, depending on the matrix of cultural, economic, legal, and political conditions. However, its focus on creating mutually satisfying and culturally nurturing relationships through genuine dialogue will help practitioners avoid the harms done by ethnocentric and polycentric approaches.

**Beyond Cultural Knowledge**

Most guidebooks on international business and management, including public relations, are created on the assumption that increasing individuals’ knowledge about a host nation’s culture
is the way to achieve organizational success in the host nation (Limaye & Victor, 1991; for examples, see Condon, 1985; Nydell, 1987; Wouters, 1991). Such knowledge about culture, however, consists of generalizations about a group's behavior and mental constructs, which are often stereotyped. In Japan one refuses a cup of tea three times before accepting it; Arabs are offended by written contracts; pointing one's foot toward another person is an insult in Thailand (Wouters, 1991). In addition, the cultural knowledge approach to improving international communication ignores the obvious fact that most nations do not have a single, homogeneous culture. Films like Mississippi Marsala and The Joy Luck Club illustrate this point dramatically.

Limaye and Victor (1991) argue that, at a minimum, knowledge of other cultures must be augmented by a nonevaluative sensitivity to diversity. They add that communicators must "go beyond tolerance or acceptance of non-Western modes of thinking, values, and communication practices . . . because acceptance may not be enough . . . It still may remain essentially a Western paradigm with Western standards, just a little more sensitized" (p. 292). The key question, then, is this: How does one go beyond knowledge and appreciation? Limaye and Victor recommend that communication effectiveness be based on the values of the local culture, which in turn demands multiple models and techniques for communication framed within individual cultures.

The social-interpretive approach would not develop a fixed set of communication models and techniques. On the contrary, a social-interpretive analysis often is least satisfying in providing details about how to act in standardized settings (Penman, 1992, p. 236). Three guidelines, however, can be derived from the foregoing discussion to help public relations communicators build positive communities internationally.

First, facts and values are culturally conditioned. What is desirable, beneficial, or socially necessary within a culture might have no basis of relevance to a subjugation
Cultural Diversity in International Relations

Culture population. "Development" is a Western concept with positive values in the West. But elsewhere development often looks like exploitation and cultural imperialism. Many in the non-Western world's populations reject the self-serving hierarchy established by the rhetorical convention that divides the globe into developed, developing, and underdeveloped (or "Third World") nations.

Second, knowing other cultures' rituals, languages, social norms, and values is necessary but not sufficient preparation for forming international community relationships. It is necessary also to remain open to the possibility of conducting business within others' worldviews and effectiveness criteria. Furthermore, the nature, means, and methods of communication must be emergent, allowing specific communication outcomes to flow organically from interaction based on the few basic principles of genuine dialogue.

Third, practitioners and researchers should be ready to redefine the nature of public relations situationally. We must leave open to interpretation and negotiation what constitutes the forms and goals of practice, depending on the cultural context. Srinamesh's (1992) ethnographic research on public relations in India demonstrates that the types and functions of public relations activities are conditioned by societal culture.

Taken together, these guidelines suggest that the global/local approach to managing international public relations should be modified to provide for interactivity through genuine dialogue. A first step is for practitioners and host nation officials to jointly create at the beginning of the relationship a public relations matrix for the host society, including its goals, plans, and projects. This array of local concerns then would be honored as initial conditions, or givens, for formulating the organization's own goals, plans, and programs. This pattern of relationship, a local/global/local approach, will structurally mandate space for interactivity through genuine dialogue in international public relations.
Note

1. Many informative books about specific countries' cultural practices are available, such as those by Condon (1985), De Mente (1990a, 1990b), Ladd (1990), Nydell (1987), and Richmond (1992). Other volumes focus on principles of management in international settings, including public relations (e.g., Currah, 1975; Ferraro, 1990; Kennedy, 1985; Lowe, 1986; Roth, 1982; Wouters, 1991). Useful examples of problems caused by poor communication and cultural ignorance in international business settings can be found in the entertaining books by D. A. Ricks and associates (Ricks, 1983; Ricks, Fu, & Arpan, 1974). In addition, scholarly research and practical information about intercultural communication can be gained from articles in such journals as Advances in International Comparative Management, International Journal of Business Studies, International Public Relations Review, and Management International Review.
The Future of Multicultural Public Relations

The guidelines and principles presented in previous chapters can be seen as prescriptions for effectiveness in multicultural public relations, based on a social-interpretive theory of communication. Those prescriptions, however, do not tell practitioners and educators how to get from here to there, when "here" represents a profession that demonstrates low recognition of diversity (Banks, 1994; Miller, 1991), a poor record of educating for diversity (Fitzpatrick & Whillock, 1993; Kern-Foxworth & Miller, 1992), and low employment of racial or ethnic minorities and other members of diverse populations (Kern-Foxworth, 1989). All indications point toward increases in diversity, both domestically and in the international areas of public relations practice. Consequently, practitioners and educators must become more sensitive to this immense environmental change by enacting diversity as a concern relevant to their professional lives and responding to it interactively.

Of course, the key question is this: Exactly how is this done? This chapter provides some ideas for getting from here to there, when "there" represents a practice of public relations that is culturally sensitive and characterized by communication based on genuine dialogue. This goal for the future of the
field can only be achieved if communication focuses on building strong communities within a more human and global society.

Certainly, from a social-interpretive view, it is not possible to control the future; otherwise, the principles of emergence, contextuality, and open-endedness of meanings would be invalidated. On the other hand, through enacted environments, human attention and action do have consequences, enabling individuals to influence and partially predict future conditions. The following comments on training and education, professionalism, and ethical communication are aimed at helping practitioners, students, and educators in public relations to more effectively participate in the multicultural future of the field.

• Training and Education

Several meta-analyses have concluded that cross-cultural and managerial training can improve practitioners’ effectiveness in culturally diverse settings (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Deshpande & Viswesvaran, 1992). The quantitative studies analyzed in these meta-analyses have gauged managers’ effectiveness at meeting corporate performance standards as well as their adjustment to host cultures, their development of appropriate perceptions of diverse populations, their self-development, and their ability to form relationships with culturally diverse others.

These types of improvements are necessary for both domestic and international public relations practice: Training for cultural sensitivity, international adjustment, intercultural communication, and valuing diversity are essential to creating personal changes in multicultural settings. A diverse and rapidly expanding variety of approaches to these sorts of training are available, and organizations should assess their needs and select a training modality that suits their conditions.

Barbara Walker’s approach to the structure of training for valuing differences has proven itself effective (Walker, 1991;
Walker & Hanson, 1992). Small core groups of employees from diverse jobs and levels are organized as grassroots learning cells by a volunteer leader, sometimes facilitated by full-time diversity specialists. Walker’s core groups at Digital Equipment Corporation grew organically from early efforts to get people to talk openly about diversity in an environment that was safe from organizational and emotional dangers—the setting resembled a primitive site for Buber’s narrow ridge where dialogue could take place. This approach gradually is being adopted with success by other organizations (e.g., Johnson & O’Mara, 1992).

Similarly, cultural awareness and sensitivity need to be built into university curricula in which future public relations practitioners are educated. Kern-Foxworth and Miller (1992) decry “the absence of information about multi-ethnic public relations practitioners in textbooks” (p. 21) and note the need for more courses in intercultural and cross-cultural communication. Although McDermott (1991) lists 15 universities where graduate and undergraduate courses in international public relations were taught by 1991, over 72% of respondents to a nationwide survey of public relations educators said they do not offer a single course in multicultural communication (Kern-Foxworth & Miller, 1992).

This book argues that public relations students should be exposed to the concepts, values, assumptions, and research methods of all prominent communication theories, including social-interpretivism. Other important components in a curriculum for students headed for careers in public relations are courses in the humanities, social sciences, research methods, cultural studies, and communication ethics (Stewart, 1993). It is far more important for graduates to be critical thinkers and responsible, literate citizens than to be skilled in any of the task requirements of beginning public relations professionals. Indeed, a recent survey found that public relations executive recruiters do not value highly a specialized degree in public relations: 56% of the top public relations firms “feel that a PR/communications degree is ‘not important’ for a candidate” (“Is PR,” 1993).
Changing public relations education and practice so that it is more responsive to the multicultural world in which it operates inevitably means inviting differences and dissent into the ranks of practitioners and educators. Corporate and agency executives and academic administrators must welcome diversity among their consultants, employees, faculty, and students. Instead of seeking similarity and harmony, we should recruit people and pursue ideas that challenge the status quo. We should seek out not just identifiable minorities but also persons who have demonstrated a sensitivity to cultural diversity and a commitment to helping others become more responsive to it.

**Professionalism and Diversity**

Kirk Hallahan (1993) argues that public relations is pre-paradigmatic, in that at least seven basic models for what constitutes public relations currently compete for legitimacy. The paradigm struggle across the field is evidence that public relations is still in search of its professional identity. Yet research by Culbertson and Jeffers (1992) concludes that true professionalism in public relations is distinguished by the analysis of clients' social, political, and economic contexts. Social contexts they argue, comprise cultural beliefs, community contacts, and individuals' interpretive frames of reference; two of the relevant political contexts they identify are status differentials and positional power.

These elements, while not the whole of Culbertson and Jeffers's model, are foundational to cultural diversity; therefore, in theory at least, true professionalism includes central consideration of cultural diversity. How can leaders of the profession overcome low awareness of diversity or downright resistance to it among practitioners? This question involves huge issues of the profession's political and organizational structure. However, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), whose members currently constitute only 5% to 10%
of all practitioners in the United States (Seitel, 1992), should promptly move to endorse certified professional education and accreditation of all members, and those education and examining processes should include critical elements of cultural diversity and ethical communication.

The questions of who should be the accrediting body, what sort of accreditation is desirable, and what level of education constitutes adequate professional training are open to debate, and the debate is just beginning. Brad Hainsworth (1993) suggests that the "British counterpart of PRSA could provide a model with its academic and work qualification requirements for membership. Hainsworth also argues that PRSA should both oversee accreditation of university degree programs in public relations and administer certification of professionals. Frank Winston Wylie (1994) counters that the federal agencies with responsibility for accreditation in higher education have selected the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication to accredit communication degree programs. Moreover, Wylie argues, if PRSA both accredits degree programs and certifies graduates to practice the profession, the process would be "a self-serving, self-anointing cooperation which lacks any official status" (p. 2).

Wylie's arguments have merit. If public relations is to achieve true professional status, practitioners and educators must go through the difficult and lengthy process of establishing accredited graduate programs that specialize in communication theory, research, ethics, and effective practice. Undergraduate education for public relations graduate students should be strongly oriented toward the humanities and social sciences. A state certification or licensing mechanism should be established, similar to what is now required for the medical professions, including nursing, and the legal profession. Oversight of licensing should be governed by national boards of practitioners and educators who themselves have successfully passed examinations and licensing. With a rigorous professional education and licensing procedure in place, PRSA could become
the core professional organization representing not 10% but closer to 100% of practitioners.

* Ethical Communication and Diversity

Effective communication is the key component of public relations education, credentialing, practice, and scholarship in a multicultural world. From the social-interpretive perspective, effectiveness always has a moral dimension. As Robyn Penman (1992) describes the relationship between morality and communication:

If communicative action has a voluntary base, then we are responsible for our actions. If our social knowledge is constituted in our communicative practices, the knowledge is of our making and, again, we are responsible. If our knowledge is based on values, then we have incorporated, by implication, what we believe is good and desirable. If these are the case, then our communicative practices have at their heart a moral dimension (pp. 238-239)

Niels Thomassen (1992) points out that responsibility, as an ethical principle, itself needs moral questioning:

Who is one responsible for? in what way and when? what does responsibility really mean? and where does it come from? If one continues to maintain that the individual can only get to know it by immersing himself [or herself] in concrete situations, then this point of view is difficult to distinguish from subjective opinions. (p. 19)

The problem for ethical communication is to identify a standard for responsibility in communication, so that it can be applied across countless actual situations. Inevitably, communication responsibility involves power relationships. Thomassen (1992) observes that “all communication takes place within a complex power structure” (p. 119).
Arguing that the central issue for ethical communication is the proper governance of power and conflict, Thomassen says the standard must be based on equality. It is not that all persons are biologically or socially equal, but the standard for responsible treatment is that "all humans must be considered equal in the fundamental sense that they have the right to a life of quality, that their life should succeed" (p. 119). The underlying ethical principle, then, is equality of consideration in the pursuit of fulfillment, such that no party gains at the expense of others.

From this viewpoint, individuals are responsible not just for their own welfare but also for maintaining an attitude that favors equal consideration. All persons, therefore, whether acting as individuals or as representatives of institutions, must also side with the oppressed, the disfranchised, and the humiliated. This is what Thomassen means by solidarity—the norm and fundamental moral virtue in communication "is to act in such a way that one shows solidarity for all parties involved" (p. 120). Thus the standard of solidarity through equal consideration is recognizable only as communicative behavior, not as a psychological form or state: As an enacted ethical principle, solidarity can be motivated by myriad reasons—love, empathy, rational gain, even fear or distrust—but "the crucial thing is that the meaning of an action is determined by an equal weighting of the interests of those involved, or their right to succeed in life" (p. 144).

What solidarity means in terms of multicultural public relations is that ethical communicators must learn the interests of those involved, be sensitive to their equal right to succeed, and construct communication as genuine dialogue. But genuine dialogue is possible only when parties approach one another with what Ellen J. Langer (1989) calls mindfulness. Mindfulness is more than concentration. In Buddhist meditation practice, concentration is "defined as that faculty of the mind which focuses single-mindedly on one object without interruption" (Gunaratana, 1993, p. 162). Mindfulness "is a
pure noticing factor” (p. 164), an openness to understanding whatever concentration focuses on.

Langer sees mindfulness as the opposite of mindlessness, our all-too-normal state of awareness in which we rigidly adhere to preset categories of knowledge, exhibit automatic behavior, and act from a single, narrow perspective on the world. On the contrary, mindfulness is characterized by three key qualities: creation of new categories of understanding, openness to new information, and awareness of multiple perspectives.

The quality of creating new categories is crucial. Distinctions of experience that humans learn in the socialization process—such as male/female, young/old, them/us—often become rigid categories that take on a life of their own; when we sort new experiences into existing, old categories, we become trapped in a fixed reality with little possibility for change. Langer’s research shows that most young children and highly creative adults continually categorize and recategorize experiences in new ways, as “an adaptive and inevitable part of surviving in the world” (p. 65).

Mindfulness is that state of mental openness where new cognitive categories are welcome and where readiness to accept new information and perspectives motivates communication. Two requirements seem necessary for mindfulness to be institutionalized in any organization’s public relations efforts. First, it must be learned and practiced as a way of being. Trained facilitators should help members learn to become more mindful before more specific communication training takes place. Second, the ethical principles in which mindfulness is grounded should be incorporated into organizational policies and corporate philosophy statements.

In the final analysis, though, genuine dialogue with relevant publics will occur only when organizational leaders personally demonstrate that they ground their own communication in solidarity and mindfulness. Without total commitment to these principles, both across the public relations profession and throughout an organization’s membership, true diversity
The Future of Multicultural Public Relations

will be impossible. The physicist Freeman Dyson (1988) succinctly described the risk in falling short of this goal: "Without diversity," he warned, "there can be no freedom" (p. 6).

Note

1 Publications such as HR Magazine, Training, and Training and Development have featured numerous articles on diversity training (e.g., Baytos, 1992; Geber, 1990; Gordon, 1992; Johnson & O'Mara, 1992). The International Journal of Intercultural Relations contains a "Training Section." showcasing research articles about intercultural and cross-cultural training. Also of use is the University Training Bulletin. Books by Susan E. Jackson and associates (1990), L. I. Kessler (1990), and Sondra Thiederman (1991) offer detailed guidance for designing and implementing diversity training programs. Thiederman's book also provides exercises, tips, and a bibliography on cross-cultural training.
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