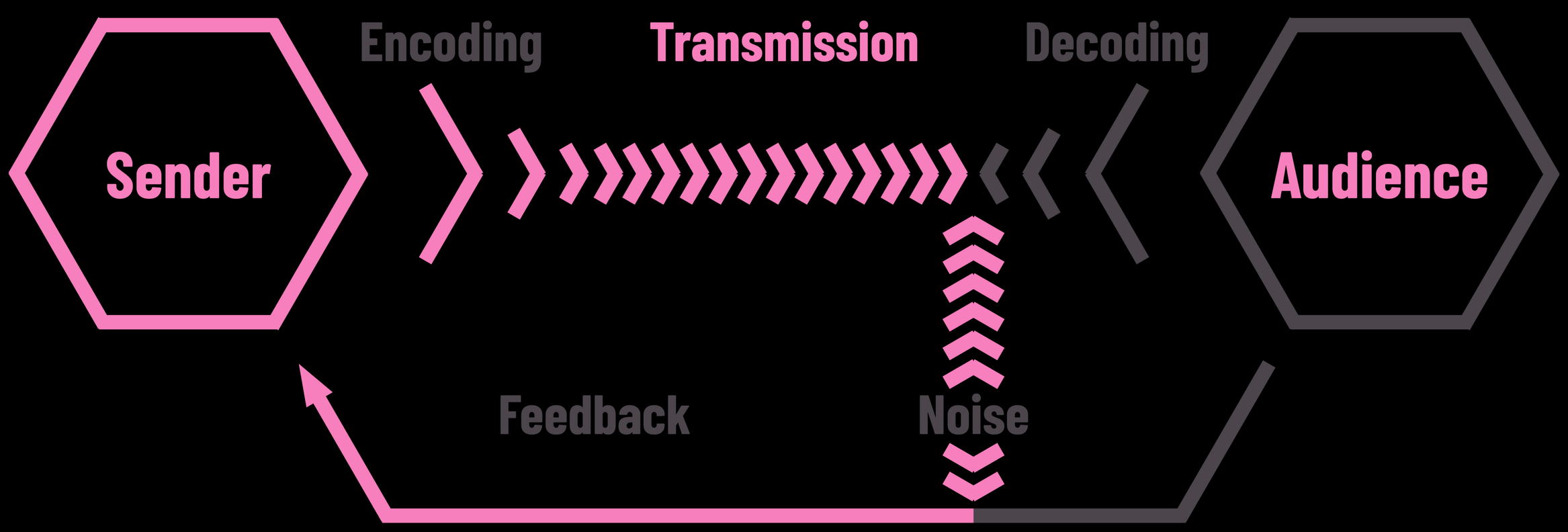
Public Relations

From Strategy to Action



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Introduction

Welcome to *Public Relations: From Strategy to Action*! This book was written for CMNS 3700: Strategic Public Relations at Douglas College, but could also be a valuable textbook for many other post-secondary courses.

Acknowledgements to contributing authors are included on a chapter-by-chapter basis.

Chapter 1: A Brief Introduction to Public Relations

As surely as “HR” means “human resources” and “FB” means “Facebook,” the letters “PR” refer to “public relations” and that is how the professional world and this textbook refer to it: PR. The craft of public relations has some stigma and negative connotations attached to it, owing in large part to the pervasive sentiment that there is something dishonest, manipulative, self-serving, or unethical to the practice. While there are always examples to reinforce that unfortunate image, the best practitioners of PR prize honesty, ethical behaviour, and building of mutually beneficial relationships.

Most PR practitioners work on behalf of their employers or clients; fewer act as their own agents. If we’re willing to categorize top executives, politicians, and other leadership positions into the category of PR practitioners, those would be examples of practitioners acting as their own agents; however, those people usually have skilled PR practitioners supporting them behind the scenes. The overarching goal of PR practitioners is to build and maintain honest, ethical, and mutually beneficial relationships between their client/employer and the stakeholders upon whom they rely, whether those are customers, investors, governments, employees, journalists, or even competitors (among many other types of stakeholders).

The origins of PR are historic, with study of the craft dating as far back as ancient Greece and Rome. The professionalization of PR emerged in the early 20th century and, by the late 20th

century, it was an established function of most major organizations. Now in the 21st century, the craft is evolving for a digital world; PR practitioners are increasing in number and their role is increasing in scope, especially as the profitability of traditional media (namely newspapers, but also radio and television) is challenged.

So, how would one define "PR"? Here are a few definitions.

Perhaps the most famous definition among PR scholars, James Grunig and Todd Hunt (1984) defined public relations as "the management of communication between an organization and its publics" (p. 4.). (The word "publics" is akin to "audiences" or "stakeholders" in the world of PR.)

Here's another noteworthy definition of PR: "The management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the public on whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip & Center, 1982).

The Public Relations Society of America defines the term as follows: "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" (n.d.).

Regardless of which definition one prefers, there is one constant: PR is about the relationship between a communicator and its audience(s), so the craft is aptly named. And what does one want from their relationships? Mutual benefit, trust, longevity: these are the desired outcomes of quality PR practice.

Today, the practice of PR ranges from small organizations spending little or no money to connect with the local community to multinational campaigns spending millions of dollars to push for global change. A PR campaign can be fully digital or fully real-world or any blend of the two. The craft

is highly sensitive to changes in society, culture, politics, and technology, adapting constantly, and far too often forgetting important lessons from the past.

This OER textbook introduces students to the past and present of PR, looking at theories and models on the way to studying the comprehensive communication process. The book discusses the PR environment, audience analysis, how to develop a PR strategy, and what tactics to deploy to send carefully crafted messages to targeted audiences. Finally, the book emphasizes specific—but critically important—niches in media relations and crisis communications, along with other specializations such as government relations, investor relations, entertainment and sports PR, and grassroots campaigns.

In all, this OER textbook is designed to give students the primer they need to speak and understand the language of PR, as well as understand the fundamental methods used by PR practitioners to establish and maintain "mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the public on whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip & Center, 1982).

Public Relations Versus Marketing Versus Advertising

Many people confuse public relations with marketing and advertising. Although there are similarities, there also are key differences.

Probably the most important difference between marketing, public relations, and advertising is the primary focus. Public relations emphasizes cultivating relationships between an organization or individual and key publics for the purpose of managing the client's image. This can be confusing because an organization depends on its relationship with its customers

and communicating with customers is the work of marketing. Marketing is the process of getting a product to a customer for a profit. The so-called "marketing mix" traditionally includes the "4 Ps": products (what is being sold), prices (how much a customer must pay), promotion (motivating the customer to make a purchase), and placement (creating availability for the customer to complete the purchase). The most common tool used to promote a product is advertising. Advertising is a communication tool used by marketers to create awareness of products and to motivate customers to buy them, but it can also be used by public relations professionals to communicate non-sales messages.

In short, if a communicator is trying to get a product to a consumer for a profit, it's probably marketing. If a communicator is managing a relationship with a target audience or other stakeholder group, but not in the immediate process of selling a product, it's probably public relations.

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Chapter 2: Origins and Evolution of PR

Before there were televisions, radios, newspapers, printing presses, or even woodblock printing, there was public relations. The craft dates back in a documentable way to at least ancient Greece, as Athenian scholars and aristocrats (notably Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates) contemplated the effective use of rhetoric in the public sphere and the realm of governance.

In some way, shape, or form, leaders in government, religion, and society have employed PR practices for thousands of years, whether that was by giving out free bread at the Coliseum to poorer Roman citizens or the creation of state-sponsored entertainment and propaganda inside the Coliseum itself. Julius Caesar wrote an autobiographical account of his military success in an effort to persuade influential Romans that he would be best suited to preside over the growing empire.

The introduction of the printing press spurred new opportunities for more affordable mass communication, which is a common theme in public relations: as new technologies are introduced, they are used for PR purposes. Major innovations in communications and transportation technology inevitably resulted in their increased use by opinion leaders to engage their audiences.

Major political movements of the 18th and 19th century were the subject of and beneficiary of new technologies and public relations techniques. Noteworthy examples include the dissemination of communist ideals, as penned by Karl Marx, and the justification for the American Revolution, which was

heavily advanced through pamphlets, newspapers, and speeches.

Important precursors to the modern era of PR can be found in 19th century world of publicists who specialized in promoting circuses, theatrical performances, and other public spectacles. Of circus fame, the oft-quoted P.T. Barnum is known for his use of publicity tactics—or press agentry—to generate attention for his shows and attractions. He was famous for coining the phrase, "There's no such thing as bad publicity" (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 28). He was even known to pen letters to the editor under a fake name, outing some of his attractions as hoaxes just to generate publicity and keep news coverage going. Unfortunately, Barnum's ethics left much to be desired.

20th Century Evolution of PR

In the United States, where professionalized public relations has its origins, many early PR practices were developed in support of the expansive power of the railroads. In fact, the first documented use of the term "public relations" appeared in the *1897 Year Book of Railway Literature* and the first press release written was sent by Ivy Lee on behalf of the Pennsylvania Railroad following a terrible train derailment.

Later, public relations practitioners were—and are still often—recruited from the ranks of journalists. Some journalists, concerned with ethics, have criticized former colleagues for using their inside understanding of news media to help clients receive favorable news coverage (Caywood, 1997).

The First World War also helped stimulate the development of public relations as a profession. Many of the first public relations professionals—including Edward L. Bernays and Carl Byoir—worked with the Committee on Public Information (also

known as the "Creel Commission"), which organized publicity on behalf of American objectives during World War I. Some historians regard Ivy Lee as the first real practitioner of public relations, but Bernays is generally regarded today as the profession's founder. In describing the origin of the term "public relations," Bernays commented:

> When I came back to the United States, I decided that if you could use propaganda for war, you could certainly use it for peace. And propaganda got to be a bad word because of the Germans using it. So what I did was to try to find some other words, so we found the words Council on Public Relations. (Curtis, 2022)

Lee, who has been credited with developing the modern "news release" (previously known as a "press release" and sometimes now called a "media release"), espoused a philosophy consistent with what has sometimes been called the "two-way street" approach to public relations, in which public relations consists of helping clients listen, as well as communicate messages to their publics.

Bernays was the profession's first theorist. A nephew of Sigmund Freud, Bernays drew many of his ideas from Freud's theories about the irrational, unconscious motives that shape human behaviour. One of Bernays' early clients was the tobacco industry. In 1929, he orchestrated a legendary publicity stunt aimed at persuading women to take up cigarette smoking, which was then considered unfeminine and inappropriate for women with any social standing. Bernays arranged for New York City débutantes to march in that year's Easter Day Parade, defiantly smoking cigarettes as a statement of rebellion against the norms of a male-dominated society.

Following the stock market crash of 1929, the National Association of Manufacturers became the first lobby group to have its own in-house public relations department, with the

goal of improving American attitudes towards businesses during the Great Depression (The Public Relations Museum, n.d.).

Rosie the Riveter

Wartime propaganda, always popular among governments, both democratic and authoritarian, made major advancements in the 1930s, especially in Germany, where political manifestos, patriotic imagery, and aspirational films (notably *Triumph of the Will*) motivated impassioned loyalty to the Nazi regime of the day. Once World War II began, Allied propaganda also increased, such as with the use of "Rosie the Riveter" posters to motivate women to join the industrial workforce. Equally, the image of US Marines raising the flag on Mt. Suribachi was used to inspire Americans to continue supporting the war effort.

American Marines raising the US flag on Mount Suribachi

Following the war, there was an explosion in the number of public relations firms, especially in New York City. The practice

was quickly linked to parallel growth in marketing and advertising firms. These firms often worked with political entities, as well, contributing to the increasing sophistication of election campaigns.

In 1950, PRSA enacted the "Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations," a forerunner to the current Code of Ethics, revised in 2000, to include six core values and six Code provisions. These six core values are "Advocacy, Honesty, Expertise, Independence, Loyalty, and Fairness" (Public Relations Society of America, n.d.). The six Code provisions are "Free Flow of Information, Competition, Disclosure of Information, Safeguarding Confidences, Conflicts of Interest, and Enhancing the Profession" (n.d.).

As the century progressed, an increasing majority of people in western countries had televisions in their home and, much later, internet access (though this did not become a majority of the population until the early 21st century). The population was increasingly enrolling in post-secondary education and awareness of the public sphere reached an all-time high.

In 1982, the rise of crisis communications as a quintessential part of public relations emerged, as Tylenol navigated a crisis precipitated by a murderer lacing their product with cyanide, killing seven people (Public Relations Museum, n.d.). The response to this crisis changed how medicine is packaged and saw the advent of the "1-800" number hotline.

The practice—and the number of practitioners—has been steadily growing globally, especially as public investment in journalism fades and as closed societies, such as those in the former Soviet Union, become more open and commercial. Modern public relations uses a variety of techniques, including opinion polling and focus groups, to evaluate public opinion. This is combined with a variety of high-tech techniques for distributing information on behalf of their clients, including

satellite feeds, the internet, email blasts, and database-driven phone banks to advance a client's cause.

As the internet became a more entrenched part of daily life in Western society, and as mobile phones and social media also became normative, political rock star Barack Obama, coupled with experts and insiders from Silicon Valley, put a budget of over $700 million behind his 2008 election campaign, creating a unique synthesis of public relations, technology, and real-world action that saw him sweep into office as the 44th President of the United States.

Also in 2008, China hosted the Olympic Games in Beijing, with a state-sponsored and highly orchestrated publicity event designed to implicitly announce to the world that the People's Republic of China would challenge America as the dominant global state power.

The significance of 2008 as a turning point in world politics and public relations cannot be overstated and, for the purposes of studying public relations, 2008 represents the conclusion to this prologue of contemporary PR practice.

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Chapter 3: Theories and Models of PR

Public relations is much more a craft of best practices than of application of theory. However, PR professionals need to be able to think in broad, theoretical, and systemic ways about audiences, the PR environment, and communicating in general. Learning about communication theories helps practitioners in three key ways:

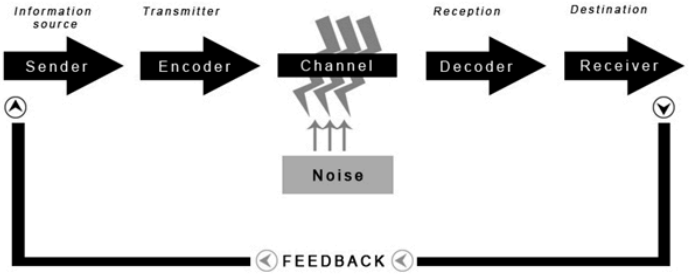
- to organize large amounts of complex information
- to explain patterns, and
- to build predictability.

Communication scholars draw theory and research from a wide diversity of fields, notably including sociology, political science, economics, organizational behaviour, gender studies, marketing, and psychology. Truthfully, there are too many theoretical concepts to absorb in the space of one semester and knowing most of these theories and models is not necessary to succeed as a PR practitioner. Nonetheless, this chapter introduces students to some of the most commonly used and conceptually valuable theories and models that support thinking about PR problems and thinking through to PR solutions.

The Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication

Communication textbooks often adopt the Shannon-Weaver model (1948)—also known as the transmission model—to

represent the linear process of communication, as shown in the image below.



SHANNON-WEAVER'S MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

In this linear model, a sender encodes information and, through a transmitter, sends it to a receiver, who subsequently decodes the message. According to this model, information seems to move in a simplified, linear manner, even though the process can be complicated by noise, which is pollution added to a message during transmission, and feedback, which is information that the receiver transmits back to the sender (which can also be complicated by noise).

This is a simple and elegant model of communication that can help you visualize the process anytime you're going to be communicating.

The first rule of communication is to know your audience and put them first. You can use this model to think about how to best encode your messages for them and and how to send it to them. You can also think about what types of interference (noise) could prevent your message from being received, understood, or accepted. Finally, you can think about what

feedback you'll look for when determining if your message was successful.

3.1. Media Influence

Direct Effects

Early media studies focused on the use of mass media in propaganda and persuasion. However, journalists and researchers soon looked to behavioural sciences to help figure out the effect of mass media and communication on society.

Widespread fear that mass-media messages could outweigh other stabilizing cultural influences, such as family and community, led to what is known as the direct effects model. Also known as the "hypodermic needle" model, the direct effects model posits that audiences passively accept media messages and exhibit predictable reactions in response to those messages. Take note that this theoretical model has largely been debunked. The most famous example stems from the famous 1938 *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast by Orsen Wells. That broadcast was a fictional news report of an alien invasion of earth; some people believed the story to be true and panicked, but most people understood this was an entertaining and compelling work of fiction.

Limited Effects

In 1948, Paul Lazarsfeld—along with his fellow researchers—published *The People's Choice*, which challenged the direct effects model by gauging the effects of political

campaigns on voter choice. Lazarsfeld et al. found that voters who consumed the most media had generally already decided for which candidate to vote, while undecided voters generally turned to family and community members to help them decide (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948). The study thus discredited the direct effects model and influenced a host of other media theories (Hanson, 2008). In particular, Lazarsfeld (and later Elihu Katz, with Lazarsfeld) argued for a limited effects model of media influence and a two-step flow of influence. This more nuanced theory suggested that the influence of the mass media is mediated through personal relationships and the audience's existing knowledge (not so "hypodermic" as previous scholars had feared).

Agenda-Setting Theory

In contrast to the extreme views of the direct effects model, the agenda-setting theory of media stated that mass media determine the issues that concern the public rather than the public's views. Under this theory, the issues that receive the most attention from media become the issues that the public discusses, debates, and demands action on. This means that the media is determining what issues and stories the public thinks about. Therefore, when the media fails to address a particular issue, it becomes marginalized in the minds of the public (Hanson, 2008). In this theory, the mass media are not very skilled at telling the public what to think, but they are very successful in telling the public what to think *about*. A number of criticisms have dogged agenda-setting theory, notably that agenda-setting studies are unable to prove cause and effect. Essentially, no one has truly shown that the media agenda sets the public agenda and not the other way around.

Framing Effects

In many ways, news framing is to interpretation of an issue as agenda setting theory is to whether an issue is considered at all. How news media cover an issue and "frame" it affects the audience's perceptions. Though there is a broad consensus that news framing is real, there is little consensus about its significance or even how to define it. However, Lecheler and de Vreese (2019) offer a broadly useful description:

> ...a news frame can affect an individual by stressing certain aspects of reality and pushing others into the background: The news frame has a selective function. In this way, certain issue attributes, judgments, and decisions are suggested. (p. 3)

An illustration of how framing effects work might be an instance where a homeless man accidentally burns down a building while trying to stay warm during a cold winter night. If the reporter covering the story quotes a police officer first, this is a crime story. If the reporter quotes a social worker first, this is a poverty story. If a public health official is quoted first, it's a public health story. If the owner of the building is interviewed first, this is a story about the loss of the building. The events, of course, do not change based on the reporter's decisions or writing, but how the readers understand the issue changes based on how the events are framed.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Practitioners of the uses and gratifications theory study the ways the public consumes media. This theory states that consumers use the media to satisfy specific needs or desires. Many people use the internet to seek out entertainment, to

find information, to communicate with like-minded individuals, or to pursue self-expression. Each of these uses gratifies a particular need and the needs determine the way in which media is used. By examining factors of different groups' media choices, researchers can determine the motivations behind media use (Papacharissi, 2009).

Uses and gratifications theories of media are often applied to contemporary media issues. The analysis of the relationship between media and violence exemplifies this. Researchers employed the uses and gratifications theory in this case to reveal a nuanced set of circumstances surrounding violent media consumption, as individuals with aggressive tendencies were drawn to violent media (Papacharissi, 2009).

The general assumptions of the uses and gratifications theory have drawn criticism. By assuming that media fulfill a functional purpose in an individual's life, the uses and gratifications theory implicitly justifies and reaffirms the place of media in the public sphere. Furthermore, because it focuses on personal, psychological aspects of media, the theory cannot question whether media is artificially imposed on an individual.

Cultivation Analysis

The cultivation analysis theory states that heavy exposure to media causes individuals to develop an illusory perception of reality based on the most repetitive and consistent messages

of a particular medium. Under this theory, someone who watches a great deal of television, for example, may form a picture of reality that does not correspond to actual life. Televised acts of violence, whether those reported on news programs or portrayed on television dramas greatly outnumber violent acts that most people encounter in their daily lives. Thus, an individual who watches a great number of violent acts may come to view the world as more violent and dangerous than it actually is.

3.2. Systems and Structures

Theories in this section focus on different aspects of human society, such as class, race, gender, or employment. There is much overlap and the prominence of particular theoretical perspectives follows definite trends, experiencing rises and lulls in popularity (both in academia and society at large).

Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism is a body of theories that understand the world as a large system of interrelated parts that all work together.

Émile Durkheim explored these ideas when individualism was replacing the authority of the Catholic church in France (in the late 19th and early 20th centuries). Societies no longer had singular dominant religions that bonded them together, or even dominant ethnicities. How was society being held together? Durkheim's answer was that social life was possible because of the trust that existed among members of society. For society to function, there must exist an unwritten moral code that people follow.

Talcott Parsons, like Durkheim before him, argued that schools existed to socialize students. He argued that schools assess children in standardized ways, with the goal being that they are judged based only on how they perform, regardless of social background. In this way, adults' later placement in the workforce is a reflection of how much they achieved and how successful they were in their schooling. The school is functionally related to the workforce because it assigns people to their roles.

Note that structural functionalists do not believe that inequality is non-existent. On the contrary, they believe it is inherent to the broader social system. In other words, inequality exists because society needs some people to be working class and some people to be managerial class and some people to be in the governing class and so forth.

As you may imagine, structural functionalism has received many well-founded criticisms. In particular, the approach fails to account for how many ascribed traits, like socioeconomic background, gender, and race, appear to be so important in determining life outcomes. A plethora of research has provided compelling evidence that the education system does not operate on a purely meritocratic basis. However, despite its shortcomings, structural functionalism has been a useful framework for understanding how morality and norms are spread across society.

However, the enduring benefit of a functionalist view is that it asks people to view organizations and social structures in terms of their function, which further suggests that news media have a specific regulating function in society.

Marxism

Writing during the industrial revolution in Europe (a time of unprecedented economic transition), Karl Marx argued that all social relations were rooted in economic relations, particularly the *mode of production*: the way of producing goods and services. In capitalism, workers and owners are in direct opposition. Both groups have competing interests: the workers, for example, want to command the highest wage, while the owners, in order to drive the greatest profit, want to pay the lowest possible wage.

Marx viewed society as divided into distinct classes. At the most basic level, there were owners (the bourgeoisie) and workers (the proletariat). He argued that the only way to achieve a just society was for the proletariat to achieve class consciousness—to collectively become self-aware of their class group and take control of the economy for the benefit of the working class.

An enormous amount of scholarly thinking stems from Marx, but the core idea of Marxism that endures is the notion that society is defined by what Marx called "class struggle," an ongoing effort of the working class to elevate its standard of living and control of the economy and society and the aristocracy's ongoing effort to hoard as much wealth and wield as much power as possible.

Hegemony: Antonio Gramsci's contribution to Marxist theory

Marxist theory has contributed to the scholarly thinking in most social sciences and is foundational to many other theoretical models. Antonio Gramsci added clarification to

Marxist theory to explain why full-scale workers' revolutions were not common. His theory was hegemony: a fine balance between the aristocracy and the working class. In Gramsci's thinking, so long as the risks of pursuing a revolution were greater than the relative comforts and benefits of the existing balance, workers would shy away from militant overthrow of the aristocracy. In other words, if the aristocracy paid wages that were just high enough and provided other benefits that were just good enough (such as elected parliaments and free or affordable healthcare and education), they would be safe to continue hoarding a disproportionate amount of wealth and wielding a disproportionate amount of power.

Rational-Legal Model

Max Weber (1868–1920) was a German sociologist who, along with Marx and Durkheim, is widely regarded as being a "founding father" of sociology. Weber's analysis of rationalization was linked to his interest in religion and its place in society. Rationalization occurred when society became more secular; scientific knowledge began to develop and an increasing reliance on scientific and technological explanations began to emerge. Instead of being based on customs or religious belief, more and more social actions were the outcome of beliefs related to scientific thought. Rationalization paved the way for what Weber referred to as "rational-legal authority," which is a type of political leadership that is regarded as legitimate due to being rooted in established laws (which themselves are the outcome of rationalization).

Closely related to the concepts of rationalization and rational-legal authority is bureaucracy, which is an administrative structure that follows a clear hierarchical structure and involves

very specific rules and chains of command. Bureaucracies organize work in specific ways and can be frustrating because they are, by design, inflexible. (In defense of bureaucracies, they also provide important efficiencies, such as putting specialists in charge of specific functions. Few businesses of any significance could endure long if each employee was jointly responsible for accounting, human resources, legal counsel, building cleaning and maintenance, information technology, marketing, sales, manufacturing, distribution, and, not to be forgotten, public relations.)

Weber also provided a unique interpretation of the nature of social stratification. As discussed earlier, Marx indicated that there were two social classes: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. These classes were entirely determined by the relationship that individuals had to the means of production. Max Weber, in contrast, had a more complex understanding of stratification, identifying class and status groups as the two major distributors of power within a society.

However, both Marx and Weber argued that social classes had the tendency to reproduce themselves. This tendency for reproduction is, in fact, the ultimate feature of classes. The concept of status is central to understanding how Weber understood society's division into groups with competing interests. Weber defined status as being associated with honour and privilege, independent of class membership. According to Weber, status groups are moral communities, concerned with upholding the privilege of their members in society. Weber also argued that status groups could cut across classes and thus acted to work against class unification. As well, status groups also secure power through "social closure," whereby they restrict rewards to those who possess certain characteristics (social or physical) (Parkin, 1982). Weber indicated that these groups would use the most convenient criteria available to exclude outsiders from their ranks. The

result of this social closure would be to secure resources and advantages at the expense of other groups.

Feminism

Feminist theory is concerned with how gender produces differences in society, whether it concerns access to education, treatment in the workplace, or representation in legislatures. Feminist theory and feminism in general has undergone tremendous shifts since its beginning in the late nineteenth century, compared to how it is popularly understood in academic research today. There are three general "waves" that are associated with feminism (Gaskell, 2009).

First wave feminism is associated with the women's rights and suffrage movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The concern of feminists of this generation was to achieve equal rights to men. Second wave feminism, which occurred in the 1960s and extended into the early 1990s, focused on women's equality, financial independence, access to work, and sexual harassment.

Having emerged in the early 1990s, third wave feminism is what is most commonly (but not exclusively) associated with feminism today. Also known as critical feminism, third wave feminism is largely a response to the White middle-class focus of second wave feminism. Not only concerned with gender, third wave feminist scholarship also focuses on the intersection of race and class in producing inequality.

Often dubbed postmodern feminism, the critical feminist scholarship of third wave feminism frequently scrutinizes the meaning surrounding gender and how power relations play themselves out in subtle ways. Many self-identified postmodern feminists draw on the work of Michel Foucault,

a theorist associated with discourse analysis (and poststructuralism). Discourse refers to the way that a certain topic is talked about—the words, images, and emotions that are used when talking about something. Postmodern feminists who use a Foucauldian approach would be interested in examining how language is used to maintain gendered power relationships.

3.3. Society and Culture

Pluralism sees democratic society as having a diverse range of interest groups, such as industry, small business, unions.... Journalists tend to project the world through a pluralistic lens. One result of this is that we tend to understand news stories with a tribal or guild-like structure.

As an example, when there's a tragedy in a particular ethnocultural community, news media may interview a connected spiritual leader, as if that person spoke for their entire community—or *tribe*, one could say. In the same story, a mayor could be quoted, presenting this quote as "the view of government" in the story.

Discourse Theory

Discussed briefly above, Michel Foucault was a 20th century historian and philosopher. He promoted the idea that people all have lasting understandings of social issues that persist across society; media is hugely influential in defining those discourses that we share over time. Public discourse is the ongoing and evolving consensus and acceptable deviation from that consensus that can be associated with our shared understanding of various issues.

Marshall McLuhan's Influence on Media Studies

During the early 1960s, University of Toronto professor Marshall McLuhan wrote two books that had an enormous effect on the history of media studies. Published in 1962 and 1964, respectively, the *Gutenberg Galaxy* and *Understanding Media* both traced the history of media technology and illustrated the ways these innovations had changed both individual behaviour and the wider culture. *Understanding Media* introduced a phrase that McLuhan has become known for: "The medium is the message." This notion represented a novel take on attitudes toward media—that the media themselves are instrumental in shaping human and cultural experience.

His bold statements about media gained McLuhan a great deal of attention as both his supporters and critics responded to his utopian views about the ways media could transform 20th-century life. McLuhan

spoke of a media-inspired “global village” at a time when Cold War paranoia was at its peak and the Vietnam War was a hotly debated subject. McLuhan became a pop culture icon, mentioned frequently in the television sketch-comedy program *Laugh-In,* sitting as a guest for late-night talk show host Johnny Carson, and appearing as himself in Woody Allen’s film *Annie Hall*.

Analysis of McLuhan’s work has, interestingly, not changed very much since his works were published. His supporters point to the hopes and achievements of digital technology. The current critique of McLuhan, however, is a bit more revealing of the state of modern media scholars who criticize McLuhan’s lack of methodological rigor and theoretical framework.

Despite his lack of scholarly diligence, McLuhan had a great deal of influence on media studies. Professors at Fordham University have formed an association of McLuhan-influenced scholars. McLuhan’s other great achievement is the popularization of the concept of media studies. His work brought the idea of media effects into the public arena and created a new way for the public to consider the influence of media on culture (Stille, 2000).

3.4. Evolutionary Models

Grunig and Hunt (1984) developed four models of public relations that describe the field’s various management and

organizational practices. These models serve as guidelines to create programs, strategies, and tactics.

Press Agentry

In the press agentry model (a.k.a. publicity model), communications professionals broadcast overtly persuasive messages to motivate audiences, often with imprecise or macro-level-only targeting. In this model, accuracy is not important and organizations do not seek audience feedback or conduct audience analysis research. It is a one-way asymmetrical form of communication, evolving from 19th century showmanship (see P.T. Barnum). The principal goal is to generate publicity (and not even necessarily positive publicity) to change audience behaviour, with no intention of being responsive.

Public Information

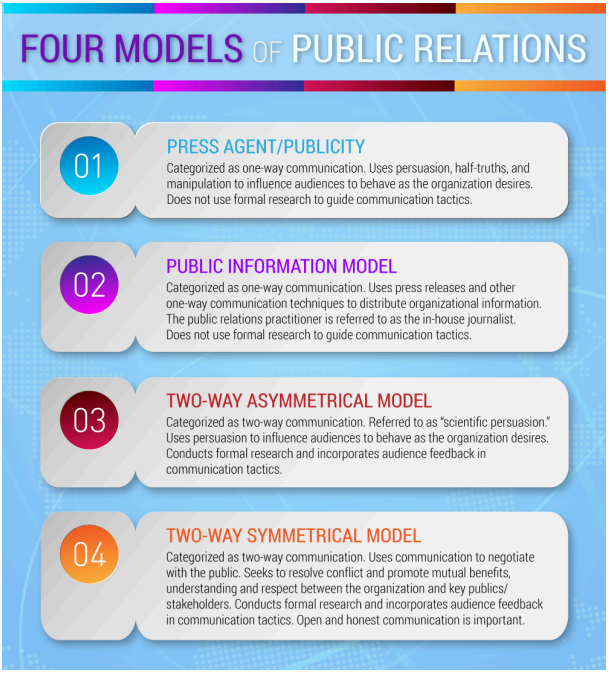
The public information model moves away from the manipulative tactics used in the press agentry model and presents more accurate information. However, the communication pattern is still one-way. Practitioners do not conduct audience analysis research to guide their strategies or tactics. Some press releases and newsletters are created based on this model, when audiences are not necessarily targeted or researched beforehand. This model is fashioned after early 20th century journalism; the primary vehicle for this model is distribution through the mainstream media.

Two-Way Asymmetrical

The two-way asymmetrical model presents a more research-driven method of communicating with key audiences. Here, communicators conduct research to better understand the audience's attitudes and behaviours, which informs careful planning of the communicator's strategy, message, and tactics. While the communicator draws information from the audience, that is only to the benefit of their employer/client; the model is asymmetrical and not designed to mutually benefit the audience. The two-way asymmetrical model is particularly popular in advertising and consumer marketing: fields that are specifically interested in increasing an organization's profits.

Two-Way Symmetrical

Finally, the two-way symmetrical model positions the communicator almost as a skilled mediator or facilitator between their employer/client and the audience(s), with a heavy emphasis on dialogue and problem solving. Reputation management and relationship building are core goals of the process. The term "symmetrical" is used because the model attempts to create a mutually beneficial situation. Unlike the other models, two-way symmetrical PR will result in organizations changing to meet stakeholder needs or wants. As with all communication, there is still a persuasive element to the model.



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Closing Note

While there are countless other theories and models in the study of communication and public relations, the above serve as a valuable primer for PR practitioners who, as is indicated in the word, are practitioners, not theorists. This knowledge is valuable, but it does not define the craft of public relations.

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Chapter 4: Audience Analysis

According to this author, rule number one of communication is “know your audience and put them first.” Communication begins and ends with the audience; if the audience did not receive or understand the message, then the communication failed. The best way to ensure that a message has been received and understood is through audience analysis.

A fundamental technique used in public relations is to identify the target audience and to tailor every message to appeal to that audience. The audience can be local, nationwide, or worldwide, but it is more often a segment of a population. Marketers often refer to economy-driven “demographics,” such as “white males, 18-49,” but in public relations, an audience is more fluid, being whomever someone wants to reach. For example, political audiences may include “soccer moms” and “NASCAR dads,” which are admittedly stereotypes, but they’re also very visual and accessible simplifications of a large amount of complex audience analysis summarized in two words. Sometimes, that’s what PR practitioners need in conversation with their clients, rather than a complicated spreadsheet or chart.

In addition to audiences, there are usually stakeholders, literally people who have a “stake” in a given issue. All audiences are stakeholders (or presumptive stakeholders), but not all stakeholders are audiences. For example, a charitable organization may commission a public relations agency to create an advertising campaign to raise money to find a cure for a disease. The charity and the people with the disease are

stakeholders, but the audience is anyone who is likely to donate money.

Sometimes the interests of differing audiences and stakeholders common to a public relations effort necessitate the creation of several distinct—but still complementary—messages. This is not always easy to do, and sometimes—especially in politics—a spokesperson or client says something to one audience that angers another audience or group of stakeholders.

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

Public relations practitioners first analyze an audience by its demographic characteristics and then by their internal psychological traits. In beginning this discussion, however, be careful about stereotyping, which is generalizing about a group of people and assuming that, because a few people in that group have a characteristic, all of them do.

At the same time, one should not totalize about a person or group of persons. Totalizing is taking one characteristic of a group or person and making that the "totality" or sum total of what that person or group is. Totalizing often happens to persons with disabilities, for example; the disability is seen as the totality of that person or all that person is about. This can be both harmful to the relationship and ineffective as a means of communicating.

Avoiding stereotyping and totalizing is important because PR practitioners cannot assume everything about an audience based on just one demographic characteristic. Only two or

three might be important, but in other cases, several demographic characteristics matter.

What follows is a listing of the more common demographic characteristics that a communicator might use in understanding their audience and shaping their message and the delivery of that message to adapt to the target audience. Understand, however, that there are others, as well.

Age

In North American culture, certain roles, behaviours, motivations, interests, and concerns have traditionally been assigned to people of certain ages. Young people are concerned about career choices; people over 60 are concerned about retirement. Most people go to college from the age of 18 to about 25. People 50 years old have raised their children and are "empty nesters." These neat categories still exist for many, but are largely outdated. Most post-secondary classrooms have a student who is in their 40s or older; many people aged 50+ still have children living at home or never had children at all. These stereotypes are problematic, even if they more often true than not.

Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity

The second demographic characteristic commonly listed is gender. This area is open to misunderstanding as much as any other. In most cases, PR practitioners will be communicating with a mixed audience, which may include people of more than one or two genders, so one needs to keep all groups

in mind. Yes, there are more than two genders; this topic is complex and, while not the focus of a public relations course, demands attention and sensitivity.

While a broader consensus is emerging in North America about the politics of sexual orientation—which isn't to say there is unanimity and acknowledges extreme regional and/or religion-based variances in attitudes—the politics of sexual identity are at the forefront of political attention. Divisive debates and policies about gender identity need to be clearly understood and navigated with the greatest care.

Age and gender are the two main ways PR practitioners categorize people: "teenaged boys," "elderly women," or "middle-aged men" would be examples of potential starting points for how PR practitioners would begin defining their target audience.

Race, Ethnicity, Nationality and Culture

Race, ethnicity, nationality, and culture are often lumped together; at the same time, these categorizations can be controversial. Race, ethnicity, nationality, and culture are discussed here in one section because of their interrelationship, though they are distinct categories. Most social scientists today reject the idea of race as a biological reality altogether and see it as a social construct. This means it is a view of humanity that has arisen over time and affects our thinking about others.

Unfortunately, dividing these categories and groups is not that easy and these categories are almost always clouded by complicated political and personal concerns, which this author does not have time or space to address here. However, as an example, far too many people confuse language categories

with cultures and are oblivious to differences, ranging from subtle to what should be painfully obvious.

Having said this, PR practitioners must be able to consider issues of race, ethnicity, nationality, and culture without being racist. PR practitioners need to be able to consider how these factors may affect tactical communications choices not as inspired by stereotypes, but to meet the needs and sensitivities of the target audiences.

Be mindful of the sensitivities associated with these topics and take time to meaningfully understand and appreciate the differences involved, being especially sensitive to those populations that have been colonized, marginalized, oppressed, or otherwise discriminated against.

Religion

Religion, casually defined as beliefs and practices about the transcendent, deities, and the meaning of life, can be thought of as an *affiliation* and as a *life commitment*. On the other hand, a person may have an affiliation with a religious group, but have no real commitment to it. The teachings and practices of the group may not affect the personal daily life of the member, but they nonetheless identify as a member.

Religion, like ethnicity and culture, is an area where PR practitioners should be conscious of the diversity of their audience. Not everyone worships in a "church" and not everyone attends a house of worship on Sunday. Not everyone celebrates Christmas the same and some do not celebrate it at all. PR practitioners need to carefully choose their words, aiming for inclusive language.

Group Affiliation

Without getting into a sociological discussion, one can note that one demographic characteristics and sources of identity for some is a group affiliation. To what groups do the audience members predominantly belong? Sometimes, a PR practitioner will want to know if the group is mostly members in a particular political party, union, recreational club, professional organization, and so on. In many cases, the reason they are the target audience is connected to a group identity. Again, be mindful of what the group values and what binds the audience together.

Region

Region, another demographic characteristic, relates to where the audience members live. PR practitioners can think of this in two ways. Large countries have regions: Atlantic Canada, the Pacific Northwest, the Prairies, and so on. These regions can be broken down even more, such as the Gulf Islands or the Niagara Peninsula. Many are very conscious of their province or community and identify with it a great deal.

The second way to think about region is as "residence" or whether the audience lives in an urban area, the suburbs, or a rural area. If a person lives in a city, they probably do not think about being without cell phone or internet service, but many people in rural areas do not take those for granted. The clubs that students in rural schools belong to might be very different from the clubs a student in a large city would join.

Occupation

Occupation may be a demographic characteristic that is central to a PR task. For the most part, people choose their occupations based on their values, interests, and abilities. As people associate with colleagues in their occupation, those values, interests, and abilities are strengthened. Readers of this OER textbook are probably in college to enter a specific career that they believe will be economically beneficial and personally fulfilling. Many people spend more time at work than any other activity, except sleeping (or even more than sleeping in extremely demanding jobs). Messages that acknowledge the importance, diversity, and reasons for occupations may be more effective in some situations, such as if the target audience is police officers, teachers, or farmers; such occupations are often central to the audience's identity.

Education

Education is closely tied to occupation and is often, though not always, a matter of choice. Education usually reflects what kind of information and training a person has been *exposed to,* but it does not reflect intelligence. Nonetheless, people of varying education levels often react quite differently to messages and PR practitioners will often target people based on education level.

Socio-Economic Level

Socio-economic level (sometimes socio-economic status) is also tied to occupation and education in many cases. Generally, people of certain levels of education or certain occupations to

make more money. These norms can be significantly thrown off, however, by inheritance (or lack thereof) or marital status.

Marital and Family Status

Family status, such as whether the audience members are married, single, divorced, or have children or grandchildren may be very important to the concerns and values of the audience and even the reason the audience is targeted. For example, young parents could be gathered to town hall meeting because they are concerned about health and safety of children in the community. Getting married and/or having a child often creates a major shift in how people view the world and manage their priorities.

All that Diversity!

This section on demographics could leave one wondering, "With all this diversity, how can we even think about an audience?" That's a reasonable reaction. As diversity increases, audience understanding and adaptation becomes more difficult. To address this concern, PR practitioners should keep in mind the primary reason the audience is being targeted and the demographic characteristics they have in common—*their common bonds*. For example, a group of classmates may be diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, or religion, but they have a common occupation (all students) and region (living near or on the campus), group identity (sharing a class together) as well as, possibly, other characteristics.

4.2. Psychographic Characteristics

Whereas demographic characteristics describe the "facts" about the people in a target audience and are focused on the external, psychographic characteristics explain the inner qualities. Although there are many ways to think about this topic, beliefs, attitudes, needs, and values are the best starting point.

Beliefs

Daryl Bem (1970) defined beliefs as "statements we hold to be true." Notice this definition does not say the beliefs *are* true, only that people hold them to be true and, as such, they determine how people respond to the world as they encounter it. Stereotypes are a believe that all the people in a certain group are "like that" or share a trait. Beliefs are not confined to the religious or political realms, but touch all aspects of human experience.

Beliefs are hard to change, but perhaps more so based on each level of these characteristics:

- Stability—the longer a belief is held, the more stable or entrenched they are
- Centrality—they are in the middle of a person's identity, self-concept, or "who we are"
- Saliency—the audience thinks about them a great deal
- Strength—the audience has a great deal of intellectual or experiential support for the belief or engage in activities that strengthen the beliefs

Beliefs can have varying levels of stability, centrality, salience, and strength. An educator's beliefs about the educational

process and importance of education would be strong (support from everyday experience and reading sources of information), central (how they make their living and define their work), salient (they spend every day thinking about it), and stable (especially if they have been an educator for a long time). Beliefs can be changed, but it is not a quick or easy process.

Attitudes

The next psychographic characteristic, attitude, is closely related to beliefs. Attitude is defined as a stable positive or negative response to a person, idea, object, or policy (Bem, 1970) and comes from experiences, peer groups, beliefs, rewards, and punishments.

Do not confuse attitude with "mood." Attitudes are stable; that does not mean they are unchangeable, only that they change slowly and in response to certain experiences. Changing attitudes is a primary task of public relations professionals because attitudes are the most determining factor in what people actually do. In other words, attitudes lead to actions and, interestingly, actions lead to and strengthen attitudes.

Values

Values are goals people strive for and what they consider important and desirable. However, values are not just basic wants. A person may want a vintage sports car from the 1960s and may value it because of the amount of money it costs, but the vintage sports car is not a value; it represents another type of value:

- Nostalgia (positive memories)
- Display (vanity, showing off)
- Materialism (greed, desire to own more or what others do not)
- Aesthetics (beauty, appearance, style, design)
- Prestige (status symbol)
- Pleasure (physical enjoyment)

Therefore, people can engage in the same behaviour, but for different values. One person may participate in a river cleanup because she values the future of the planet; another may value the appearance of the community in which she lives; another may help because friends are involved and she values those relationships.

Needs

The fourth psychographic characteristic is needs, which are important deficiencies that people are motivated to fulfill. Students may already be familiar with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). It is commonly discussed in the fields of management, psychology, and health professions. The hierarchy is one way to think about needs. In trying to understand human motivation, Maslow theorized that, as people's needs represented at the base of the pyramid are fulfilled, they move up the hierarchy to fulfill other types of need (McLeod, 2014).

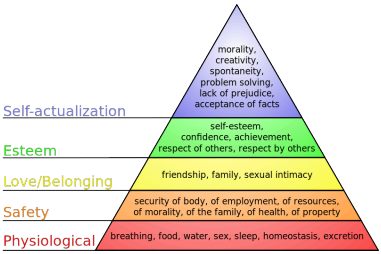

Image created by J. Finkelstein, 2006. Published in WikiMedia Commons.

According to Maslow's theory, the most basic physiological or survival needs must be met before people move to the second level, which is safety and security. When needs for safety and security are met, people move up to relationships or connection needs, often called "love and belongingness." The fourth level up is esteem needs, which could be thought of as achievement, accomplishment, or self-confidence. The highest level, self-actualization, is achieved by those who are satisfied and secure enough in the lower four levels that they can make sacrifices for others. (As an aside, this model is sometimes shown with different levels or labels, such as "social" instead of "love/belonging." Many scholars reject this model as inaccurate. However problematic it may be, it is still a useful tool for contemplating audience motivations. Other useful models also exist.)

So, how do these psychographic characteristics affect the work of PR practitioners? They are most applicable to understanding how audiences are likely to be persuaded to take action. This is a crucial part of a PR practitioner's job: motivating a target audience to act (or stop acting) in a particular way or at a particular time.

4.3. Contextual Factors of Audience Analysis

The "facts about" and "inner qualities" (demographic and psychographic characteristics) of the audience influence how

a PR practitioner approaches communication. The context (place and time) does also. What follows are some questions to consider when planning to communicate with a target audience.

1. How much time does the audience have to receive and process a message. The less time available, the fewer details and the more simplified the message needs to be. With more time, messages can become more detailed and complex.
2. What has recently happened to this audience? If a PR message is being sent to residents of a small town about water quality safety, that message is received differently if a train with hazardous materials has recently derailed nearby or if there was a fire at a chemical plant.
3. Why is the target audience being targeted? If an organization needs to change a group's behaviour, that means there's some reason that audience isn't already doing what the organization wants. In many PR messages, the target audience is, in some way, vulnerable, so understanding the motivations of both parties is key.
4. How many people are being targeted? If a million people are being engaged, this changes the tactics considerably from engaging 400 people. If a neighbourhood is being targeted, a PR practitioner may choose to knock on everybody's front door and talk to them. If every wheat farmer in the country is being targeted, other methods will be needed.
5. What does the audience expect? This depends a lot on the communicator and/or their client. For example, audiences are usually skeptical of governments and large businesses; this influences how they view the messages delivered. On the other hand, members of a religious organization will usually accept messages from the leadership of that group—pardon the pun—on good faith.

Knowing these details about the audience can greatly impact how successful a PR message will be; not knowing them can potentially have adverse effects.

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Chapter 5: Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder analysis is an automatic and necessary extension of audience analysis. The two go hand-in-hand and some would doubtlessly argue that it should all be grouped together.

Public relations practitioners must accurately identifying the audiences (sometimes called “publics”) with whom they need productive relationships. A popular axiom for public relations is that there is no such thing as a “general public.” In other words, an organization has a variety of key groups who bring different expectations for their relationship with the organization. These differences help an organization segment its audiences into groups with similar values and expectations and to focus communication strategies.

5.1. Stakeholder Management and Prioritizing Audiences

Categorizing and ranking stakeholders is essential to the work of a public relations practitioner, notably in terms of how much attention, energy, and resources they commit to engaging with a particular stakeholder.

Difficult questions must be posed:

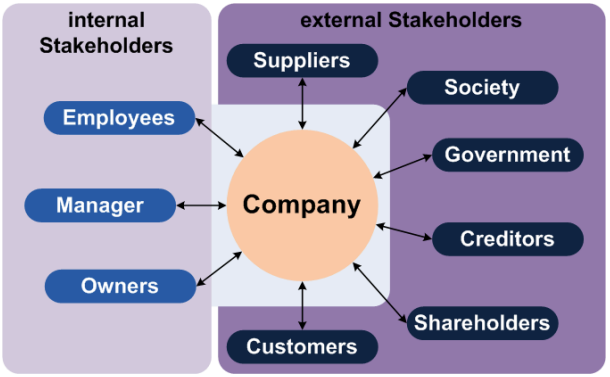
- To whom must the organization acquiesce?
- Who needs the organization more than the organization needs them?
- What relationships must be protected above all else?

- What relationships can be sacrificed?

Sacrificing the needs of one stakeholder for the needs of the other is a dilemma with which many organizations struggle. When these conflicts arise, organizations must have a clear understanding of these stakeholders, their relationships, and their short-term, mid-term, and long-term needs for each.

5.2. Common Stakeholders

In a corporation, there are a predictable set of stakeholders that almost any company would need to interact with: employees, customers, suppliers, regulators, and others. Some stakeholders, such as employees, are internal to the organization, while others are external.



Grochim. (2008). Stakeholder. http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4c/Stakeholder_%28en%29.png (Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 license)

Take note that, while owners of companies are

internal, *shareholders* are treated as external. While they may own a small fraction of the company, the only time they have any voice is at a shareholder's meeting and, even then, no one shareholder has much sway. If they did own a significant portion of the company, they would be classified as owners.

Other organizations have different sets of stakeholders. For example, a non-profit organization has members and donors rather than shareholders and customers. Governments are responsible to voters or citizens and revenue is generated from taxpayers, not customers (except in the case of government-owned businesses, known as "Crown corporations" in Canada).

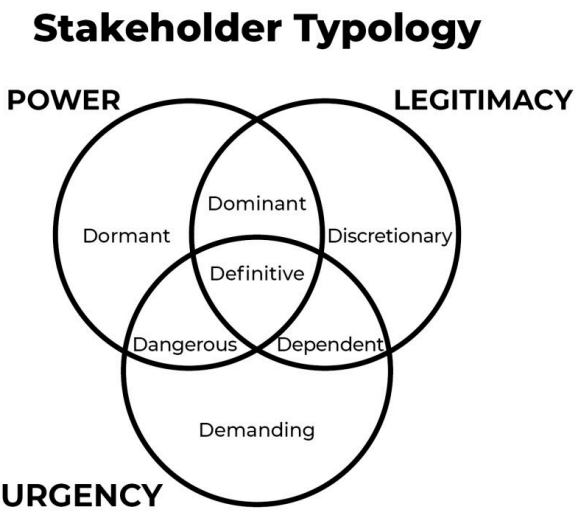
5.3. Defining Stakeholders and Publics

In 1997, Mitchell, Agle, and Wood crafted an extremely useful method of defining stakeholders organized by three defining aspects of an organization's relationship(s) with its stakeholder(s): urgency, legitimacy, and power.

If a stakeholder is legitimate, they have some reason for interacting with the organization. That could be a contract, as with a customer or supplier, a regulatory duty, as with government, or an ownership interest, as with a shareholder.

If a stakeholder has a sense of urgency, the need to deal with them is more immediate. For example, if employees are threatening to go on strike, suspending operations for a company, the company must address this stakeholder with a greater sense of urgency. Once an agreement has been reached and signed by both parties, discontented employees wishing for better pay must wait until the contract expires before they can renegotiate, meaning that there would be less urgency to deal with that stakeholder on that particular issue.

In any relationship, there is a balance of power, which is often dictated by the flow of money or the scarcity of resources, but not always. One interesting example is the relationship between a company and its supplier(s). If there is only one supplier for a vitally important resource that the company must have to produce its product(s), the supplier has an enormous amount of power. On the other hand, if there are many competitors offering the same resource and not enough companies wanting or needing that resource as part of their supply chain, the suppliers have very little power, as the company could always switch suppliers. In the model below, the question is whether the stakeholder has power over the organization.



Mitchell, R.K., Agle, B.R., & Wood, D.J. (1997). Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. *The Academy of Management Review, 22*(4), 853-886. http://www.jstor.org/stable/259247

Based on the intersection of these traits, stakeholders fall into one of seven categories:

- Dormant

- Discretionary
- Demanding
- Dangerous
- Dominant
- Dependent
- Definitive

(Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997)

Dormant stakeholders have power over the organization, but no reason to exercise it and no urgency to do so. One example would be the power of a famous environmental activist who could turn their attention to the activities of the organization, but hasn't and has no reason to do so, but could if the organization's activities are environmentally sensitive and the company causes an environmental problem.

Discretionary stakeholders are legitimate, but do not have the power in the relationship and currently have no urgency to act. A common example would be those charities and goodwill causes that a company tends to support financially. Yes, there's a relationship, but the company is under no obligation to continue it (so the charity has no power) and there's unlikely to be any rush to action that would be necessary.

Demanding stakeholders are the "mosquitoes buzzing in the ears" of managers (p. 875); they think their concerns are important, but they have no power and no legitimacy. One example might be an employee whose colleague was promoted over themselves; the employee has no legitimate grievance and no power to reverse the promotion decision, but may nonetheless assert that they deserve some urgent consideration.

Dangerous stakeholders are a major problem for an organization because they have power that they can apply immediately, but there is no legitimate relationship, such as a

contract, a regulatory interest, a stake in the company, or any other matter. The most notable dangerous stakeholder is the media. Journalists and reporters reach wide audiences and are influential; they work on tight timelines and in a confined news cycle. However, they are not legitimate stakeholders because they do not actually have any stake in the organization, nor does the organization have a stake in them. There is no formal relationship, which is part of what makes them dangerous; they have little or nothing to lose from damaging the organization's reputation.

Dominant stakeholders, on the other hand, carry legitimacy and power, but have no urgent need to act. Shareholders are a good example. Once per year, they gather to elect a company's board of directors, appoint auditors, and consider resolutions and policies of the company. Unless a shareholders' meeting is pending or there is some pressing issue, such as another company offering to buy all of the shares, shareholders are usually a very passive group. Their money is invested; they collect dividends; they sell their shares when they please. However, they exert no influence on the organization's day-to-day operations.

Dependent stakeholders rely on their relationship with the organization to achieve their needs because they have no power to do so themselves. Although their needs are urgent and legitimate, they are beholden to the will of the organization to act, such as would be the case of a small seaside village impacted by an oil spill; they would have no ability to deal with such a calamity by themselves (p. 877).

Definitive stakeholders meet all three tests: they have a legitimate need; they need it addressed urgently; they have power over the organization. Drawing on an earlier example, a union taking a strike vote would be a definitive stakeholder of a company. If a strike vote is pending, a decision about striking

will be made within a few days (urgency), and the union could shut down or drastically reduce the company's operations (power). The union is legitimate because they represent the workers in contractual negotiations with the company. As another example, after a company has had a serious problem, a regulator may become a definitive stakeholder, as they have the legitimate authority to investigate, the urgency to investigate now, and the power to take action that would affect the company.

Squeaky Wheels

Developing positive relationships with stakeholders is a necessity for organizations. The first step is to identify stakeholders and then prioritize them according to organizational goals and situations. A common tendency is to respond to the squeaky-wheel stakeholder. If the organization has not properly prioritized its stakeholders and their relationships, this group may get more attention than is deserved. This model demonstrates that the squeaky wheel may not be the stakeholder with the greatest priority. By using the ideas outlined in this chapter, organizations can take a more systematic and comprehensive approach to prioritizing and engaging with stakeholders.

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Chapter 6: Contemporary PR Practice

Public relations is a large discipline that can be subdivided into five functional areas:

1. Corporate public relations
2. Agency public relations
3. Government/public affairs
4. Nonprofit/NGO/activist public relations
5. Independent consulting (freelance)

These primary functional areas differ, but also draw on the same strategies, tactics, and PR models (though which models and tactics they prefer and the budgets to deploy them can vary wildly). Within each of these functional areas, there are a variety of professional specializations, some of which are common across all four areas, such as media relations, and some of which are specific to one or two, such as investor relations. Other interesting specializations include litigation PR, campaign management, crisis communications, community relations, employee relations, publicists, social media management, customer relations, and political work.

6.1. Corporate Public Relations

Corporate public relations departments exist by many names and in many configurations, often grouped together with marketing departments and/or reporting to the same vice president. Names such as “Communications and Public

Relations" or "Marketing and Communications" are common places to find corporate public relations departments. Equally, the name of the person running the department may vary, from "chief communications officer" to "director of communications" or "vice president-marketing and public relations."

The functions of these departments are varied and can include media relations, investor relations, internal communications (i.e., employee relations), digital communications, issue management, crisis management, and other functions. Added specific functions may include organizing conferences and trade shows, leading media tours, liaising with politicians and VIPs, hosting large employee gatherings, and managing the public profile of key organizational leaders (namely the president and/or CEO). These departments are frequently responsible for an organization's overall brand and may liaise extensively with the marketing department (if they aren't already a part of it).

Media Relations

Although not every organization is newsworthy or wishes to be, most larger organizations seek ongoing relationships with local, national, and/or international media. These relationships facilitate the flow of information to and from the organization to audiences.

The size of the media relations staff is relative to the amount of news coverage the company receives or expects. For example, a major firm with its headquarters in a major city will probably have a more active relationship with the press than a smaller organization located in a small town.

Due to their level of controversy or public interest, some

industries generate more media attention than others. Organizations with highly visible chief executive officers (CEOs) also tend to attract more media interest, and many CEOs have a presence on social media forums, such as Facebook or Twitter, to facilitate public interest. Such CEOs may have a dedicated press secretary who is part of or liaises with the communications/PR team. The chief communications officer or director of communications normally has some hand in managing these communications, as well as preparing executives for major media appearances, key industry speeches, employee meetings, testifying before government entities, and participating in community events. This facet includes speechwriting, ghost writing op-eds, and rehearsing key messages and delivery for media interviews.

Investor Relations

Some companies integrate investor relations into PR/communications. Investor relations involves communicating with the company's shareholders and the financial analysts who follow and report on the company. In a publicly traded company, the investor relations function must comply with a number of securities regulations regarding the company's disclosure of its financial information. These activities involve the release of quarterly and annual financial results and providing timely information to shareholders regarding any event that meets the definition of materiality, an event that could have a positive or negative impact on the company's share price. In fulfilling these requirements, the investor relations function works closely with the finance and legal departments, as well as the company's outside auditing firm.

Employee/Internal Relations

Though sometimes undervalued, a company's communication efforts with its own employees can yield the highest returns. Employees often feel they are the last to hear of major developments within their organizations, but the most successful organizations are now placing greater emphasis on keeping employees well informed, conducting an ongoing dialogue with internal audiences, and incorporating their views into management policy in a symmetrical manner. Much of the focus in internal communication is now centered on the role of frontline supervisors. When that individual does a good job of communicating about issues, employees are more willing to pay attention to organization-wide initiatives.

Digital Communications and Reputation Management

Increasingly, companies are prioritizing social media as a vehicle for customer relations, media relations, and even employee relations. In all cases, these can be problematic interactions.

Communications/PR departments often have a dedicated social media team to push content out and to manage the inbound traffic. The professional communicators in these roles must be well trained on how to communicate in the "corporate voice" (on brand) and must be able to exercise tact, diplomacy, sensitivity, and often humour (tastefully and cautiously).

Unlike traditional media relations staff who typically work regular business hours, social media teams are often broken into irregular shifts, with some people starting earlier than normal business hours and some finishing much later. Major

global brands will sometimes have social media staff handling their accounts 24 hours per day.

Social media is now where corporate brands are often most quickly tarnished and also most aggressively defended, so this function is intimately involved in reputation management. A single ill-advised tweet from a corporate social media account can have disastrous consequences (especially for the sender's short-term job security). This aspect of corporate communications is also linked to issue management and crisis communications.

Issue Management and Crisis Communications

Industries that are prone to hazards, risks, or product failure (such as the airline industry, the petroleum industry, pharmaceuticals, and so on) usually have dedicated crisis communications plans and personnel in place. When not managing a crisis, they're training everybody else to be ready and updating their crisis communications plans.

The key to issues management is providing wise counsel to the organization's senior leadership team whenever major decisions are debated. Organizations face many choices in the course of business and virtually all the major ones have a communication dimension. An effective corporate communication function counsels the organization of potential risks, predicts and interprets stakeholder reactions and behaviours, and helps the organization translate strategy into action.

Liaising with Marketing Departments

Many corporate chief communications officers spend a great deal of time interacting with the chief marketing officers (CMOs), or marketing heads, of their organizations. Although the marketing function usually has primary responsibility for selling products and services, the corporate communication function normally manages the corporate or organizational brand, as well as the overall reputation of the organization for quality, customer service, and so on. This activity may include corporate advertising that speaks to the attributes and values of the entire organization rather than of a specific product or service. It also includes participation in industry coalitions, leadership forums, and academic panels. Research by Stacks and Michaelson (2009) found parity between public relations messages and advertising messages, meaning that public relations should be equally incorporated into the marketing mix alongside, rather than as subservient to, advertising.

6.2. Agency Public Relations

In addition to in-house departments, many organizations—from small firms to huge global entities—work in partnership with public relations agencies to develop and implement communication programs. These agencies

generate billions of dollars in revenue, employ thousands of communications specialists, and serve as the source of training and development for hundreds of young entrants to the field each year.

Agency Definitions

There are various types of public relations agencies. They range from full service agencies to specialists who fill a particular organizational or client need. Further, they range from being units of larger, umbrella organizations to individually-owned agencies. Some organizations specialize in areas such as corporate social responsibility, offering strategic counsel during critical corporate events (such as during mergers, hostile takeovers, or other major public transitions), or crafting organizational branding.

Full Service Agencies

Some of the largest agencies offer a full spectrum of services,

from traditional media relations and event planning to highly specialized research, training, and social media expertise. Some of these large agencies, such as Ketchum, Burson Marsteller, Weber Shandwick, Porter Novelli, and Fleishman-Hillard are part of large media conglomerates like Omnicom, WPP, and Interpublic. A number of large agencies, most notably Edelman, have remained independent.

Public Affairs Agencies

Agencies such as APCO Worldwide are recognized primarily for their expertise in public affairs. These agencies focus on developing advocacy positions for or against legislative initiatives, organizing grassroots campaigns, lobbying members of Congress and other government leaders or coaching their clients to do so, and participating in and often leading coalitions that link like-minded members.

Agency Life Versus Corporate Life

The resumes of many practitioners often include experience in both agency and corporate positions, and many of the management responsibilities of the corporate CCO are also conducted by agency professionals. Agency professionals oftentimes build an area of expertise with long-term service for a client or within an industry, and offer niche expertise in resolving problems and crises.

The agency world offers the opportunity for varied assignments with multiple clients. A career path through the agency can provide opportunities in a wide range of areas, including media relations, issues management, crises management, brand building, event planning, and corporate reputation work. To some, one of the negative aspects of entry-level jobs in agencies is that they are highly focused on conducting events, publicity, and media pitching.

On the corporate side, most employees, especially at the entry level, are focused on a single industry or line of business. Since corporate departments are often smaller, the career path may be more limited, whereas agencies may have a diverse client list and numerous opportunities for travel. On the other hand, corporate communication positions can provide a more strategic focus, depending on the company.

Having said that, the line between corporate and agency roles is becoming less distinct. With the use of virtual teams increasing, clients are more focused on results than on the demarcation between the agency and the corporation.

6.3. Government Relations, Public Affairs, and Issues Management

Government relations and public affairs are the types of public relations that deal with how an organization interacts with the government, with governmental regulators, and the legislative and regulatory arms of government. Government relations and public affairs are discussed together in this section; the two functions are often referred to as synonyms, but there are minor differences.

Government relations is the branch of public relations that helps an organization communicate with governmental agencies.

Public affairs is the type of public relations that helps an organization interact with the government, legislators, interest groups, and the media. Public affairs are often issues of public concern that involve grassroots initiatives, meaning that everyday citizens organize and create a movement in favour of a certain issue or perspective. In that case, public affairs specialists would work to resolve conflict or negotiate on behalf of an organization, working with these groups to create solutions.

These two functions often overlap, but government relations is often a more organization-to-government type of communication in which regulatory issues are discussed. In

public affairs, communication is directed to governmental representatives, including lobbying efforts.

In some organizations, the governmental relations arm or public affairs unit is coupled with issues management or it can even be the same public relations executive responsible for both roles. Issues management and public affairs are extremely close in their responsibilities, goals, and activities. Both issues management and public affairs seek to facilitate interaction between organization and the government or governments with whom it must deal. However, issues management is the larger function because it deals not only with governmental and regulatory publics, but also many other audiences. The governmental relations or public affairs function is more narrowly focused on legislative, regulatory, and lobbying issues.

In most organizations, especially in corporations, issues management and public affairs are inextricably linked. Organizations must manage public policy issues that they create as a consequence of their doing business. Organizational policy must continually be revised and updated to reflect the current regulatory environment, as well as the demands placed on it by stakeholders.

Issues management is the process through which an organization manages its policy and identifies potential problems, issues, or trends that could impact it in the future. The issues management process is a long-term, problem-solving function placed at the highest level of the organization. Issues management allows the top professional communicator to interact with government and stakeholders, advising the CEO about the organization's reputation with those groups.

When public affairs and issues management fail, an organization can lose much of its autonomy, meaning that key decisions are legislated and regulated, rather than made by top

management, often costing the organization a great deal of money or resources. Ideally, the organization would know how to best allocate its own resources and would manage issues in a more efficient and effective way than having those legislated and standardized across an industry, so maintaining its autonomy is generally the goal of issues management.

In issues management, PR practitioners not only look for emerging issues that can affect an organization, but also seek to build long-term, trusting relationships with stakeholders, both governmental and not. Issues management should be collaborative and based on the available research. However, not all problems can be resolved through communication and not all decisions will be mutually beneficial.

Issues management is normally conducted on a continual, ongoing basis in which the manager is monitoring, researching, advising, and communicating about a number of concurrent issues at any given time. How many issues are managed will depend on the size of the organization and the turbulence of the industry in which it operates. Successful issues managers are those who hold in-depth knowledge of their industry, problem-solving ability, negotiating skill, and the analytical ability to examine the issue from numerous perspectives. Below, a six-step process for ongoing issues management is provided.

1. Identify public issues and trends in public expectations
2. Evaluate their impact and set priorities
3. Conduct research and analysis, categorizing and prioritizing issues, risks, and needs
4. Develop strategy
5. Implement strategy

6. Evaluate strategy

(Buchholz, Evans, & Wagley, 1994, p. 41)

Arguably, the most important phase of issues management is the **issues scanning**, **monitoring**, **and analysis phase**. If an issues manager fails to identify an emerging issue, the hope of creating a proactive plan to manage the issue diminishes.

Once an issue emerges into the public policy arena, the organization loses control of defining the issue and time is of the essence in its management. Monitoring for emerging issues and predicting the future importance of issues is called issues forecasting, which is a bit like fortune telling. We can never accurately predict the future emergence of an issue with all of its nuances and the dynamic interactions of the issue with stakeholders.

Another argument could be made that the research and analysis of an issue is the most important phase for determining priorities and how to best handle the new issue. The more research an organization can gather, the more informed its decisions should be.

A large part of government relations and public affairs is the lobbying process in which the research, knowledge, and policies formulated through issues management are communicated to legislative stakeholders. This communication often takes place while educating elected officials on an organization's point of view, contribution to society, regulatory environment, and business practices. The legislative process is one in which organizations can collaboratively participate, helping to inform legislation. Oftentimes, lobbyists are hired to advocate for or against legislation that would potentially impact the organization.

6.4. Nonprofit, NGO, and Activist Public Relations

Nonprofit or not-for-profit groups are mission-driven organization that seek to advance some societal, religious, ideological, educational, environmental, or other ethos. They often have programs to further those aims at a grassroots level, such as by providing free or low-cost services, funding projects, or otherwise "acting locally while thinking globally." For example, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) often has local animal shelters and takes government contracts to help with local animal control bylaws, all while advancing the cause of animal rights through public education and political engagement. Public relations efforts on behalf of nonprofits generally involve disseminating public information, persuading stakeholders to adopt the ideas of the organization through the use of press agentry and asymmetrical public relations, and the use of symmetrical public relations to increase donor funding and governmental funding of the initiative.

Nonprofit public relations often relies heavily on member relations, meaning that it seeks to maintain and develop relationships with supportive publics who can distribute the organization's message and often pay a membership fee or give donations to assist in providing an operational budget for the nonprofit. Member relations is often conducted through the use of internet websites, magazines, newsletters, and special events. Fundraising (or "development) is the final, vital

part of nonprofit public relations. Development is tasked with raising funds from both large-fund donors, writing grants for governmental support, and conducting fundraising with smaller, private donors.

Activist groups are special interest groups that arise around an organization in order to establish some type of change around their particular issue of concern. Activist groups normally arise from a "grassroots movement," meaning that it comes from everyday citizens, rather than those who work in government. That fact makes it slightly different from an NGO and oftentimes activist groups are less official in the formal structure of their organization and its nonprofit status, compared to nonprofits or NGOs. Activist groups can be small and informal, such as a local group of parents banding together to protest a school board decision or they can be large and more organized, such as Greenpeace.

Activist groups can differ in their purposes and reasons for existing, and in the amount of action-taking behaviour that they undertake. Activist groups exert power on organizations in many forms of pressure, such as appearances at "town hall" type meetings, rallies and demonstrations, boycotts, anti–web sites, e-mail campaigns, letter-writing campaigns, phone calls to legislators, lobbying, and events designed specifically to garner media attention. Activist groups are usually filled with young, educated, and motivated ideologues with a strong devotion to acting on behalf of their cause. These groups are normally quite effective in their efforts to have organizations integrate their values into organizational policy.

One concept of note is the growing phenomenon of *astroturfing*. This is a corporate effort to simulate a grassroots organization that advances political positions favourable to the corporation funding the campaign. These campaigns are not truly grassroots in any respect, but

companies go to great lengths to simulate the notion that there is broad, popular, activist appeal to whatever political position they are advancing, as opposed merely to their own self-interest. Such odious practices are perhaps most commonly seen coming from the fossil fuel industry.

How to Respond to Activism

Organizations might attempt to "ignore" activist pressure, but that approach simply does not work because it often prolongs or exacerbates the activist group's campaign. When the organization stonewalls, activist groups normally approach elected officials and ask for the organization to be investigated, fined, and/or regulated. Activists also employ various forms of media that can both influence legislators and change public opinion, building support for their perspective that can be used in creating turbulence for the organization.

The most effective way that public relations can deal with activist groups is to engage them in a give-and-take or symmetrical dialogue to discover their issues of concern, values, wants, and priorities. Collaborative efforts to resolve conflict normally lessen the damage resulting from conflict for organizations; refusing to deal with activist groups protracts the dispute. The efficacy of activist groups cannot be underestimated.

6.5. Independent Consulting (Freelance)

Sometimes freelance PR consultants incorporate themselves and operate as a corporation of one; some stay small enough that formal incorporation is unnecessary. However, this is usually a one-person show that either works in a very particular niche or with a very select group of clients (or both). Clients frequently include local/regional businesses, start-ups, mid-sized non-profit organizations, and other specialized groups, such as labour unions or trade associations.

In terms of job security, this is about as low as it gets, but this type of work is often "feast or famine" in its revenue stream. A skilled PR practitioner can command billings competitive with other professional experts, such as lawyers, and securing a retainer or contract with a client can be very lucrative. However, long stretches without steady income can occur. During such times, an independent consultant needs to market their services to new clients and pay their living expenses out of pocket (meaning that those previously secured lucrative contracts need to be directed towards savings more than spending). Before embarking on this as a career path, one would be wise to have at least six months of living expenses in pocket to allow time to secure paying clients. Anything less could pose a serious risk to personal financial security.

From the above, being a freelance consultant most closely resembles agency PR, except that the freelance consultant is an agency of one, with no support, no backup, and nobody else's specialization to draw on when needed. The primary challenge for independent PR consultants—other than securing clients—is understanding the needs of each unique client and catering the service provided to meet those needs, ensuring that the service delivered achieves the needed results. This can be easier said than done, as client needs,

wants, and expectations are not always in alignment and may need to be managed with tact, skill, and diplomacy.

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Attributions

Chapter 7: Ethics, Law, Politics, and CSR

Despite many negative stereotypes, the public relations industry maintains high standards for conducting professional work ethically and legally that must be understood and heeded. Missteps in these areas will undermine credibility and can have wide-ranging repercussions for the organization and profession.

Being a socially responsible PR practitioner requires attention to both ethical standards and legal requirements, so readers must understand the distinction between ethics and law.

7.1. Distinction Between Ethics and Law

Ethics stem from the field of philosophy, where much attention is given to the "rightness" and "wrongness" of human actions, as they are linked to particular high-level values and codes of conduct. Ethics are self-legislated and self-enforced and can be difficult to parse because an ethical dilemma can have multiple competing interpretations, possibly with multiple equally valid choices (or no compelling ethical choice at all).

On the other hand, while laws are ostensibly drawn from ethics, they are formally and institutionally determined and enforced through policing and courts. Laws are more easily interpreted because they are spelled out as a matter of statute; jurisprudence in court speaks to how these laws have been interpreted in various cases over decades or even centuries.

In each of the communication professions, there are key legal considerations that must be understood that will either help or hinder the seeking of information to meet those goals.

In news, for example, if some of the information needed requires the use of public records, then an understanding of public records and privacy laws will indicate what records are available and how to access them.

In advertising, companies want to promote the attributes of their products, but they need to abide truth-in-advertising laws.

For public relations professionals, when responding to a crisis, everybody involved needs to understand the requirements and restrictions for disclosing information and to which stakeholders.

Socially responsible PR practitioners are not content with just staying on the right side of the law. While the law embodies a significant portion of a society's values, individuals and organizations want to be considered socially responsible and must go beyond the minimum requirements of the law and adopt higher and more thoughtful standards.

In some cases, these standards may have a legal basis as well as an ethical one. Following these standards requires the PR practitioner to consider both "positive obligations" (what one should strive to do) or "negative obligations" (what one should not do).

The Public Relations Society of America Member Code of Ethics provides useful guidance for PR practitioners that connect to both ethical and legal responsibilities.

7.2. Positive Obligations

1) Serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for those the PR firm or professional represents.

2) Adhere to the highest standards of truth and accuracy while advancing the interests of those the PR firm or professional represents.

3) Acquire and responsibly use specialized knowledge and experience in preparing public relations messages to build mutual understanding, credibility, and relationships among a wide array of institutions and audiences.

4) Provide objective counsel to those the PR firm or professional represents. For example, the best advice for a client may be to admit wrongdoing and apologize. The PR practitioner must objectively weigh this advice and offer it if it is the best option.

5) Deal fairly with clients, employers, competitors, peers, vendors, the media and the general public.

6) Act promptly to correct erroneous communication for which the PR firm or professional is responsible. Again, failure to do this could invoke both ethical and legal sanctions.

7.3. Negative Obligations

1) Do not plagiarize. Never, ever, ever represent someone else's work as your own.

2) Do not give or receive gifts of any type from clients or sources that might influence the information in a message

beyond the legal limits and/or in violation of government reporting requirements.

3) Do not violate intellectual property rights in the marketplace. Sharing competitive information, leaking proprietary information, taking confidential information from one employer to another, and other such practices are both illegal and ethically unacceptable.

4) Do not employ deceptive practices. Paying someone to pose as a "volunteer" to speak at public hearings or participate in a "grassroots" campaign is deceptive, for instance.

5) Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived. PR professionals and firms must encourage clients and customers, as well as colleagues in the profession, to notify all affected parties when a conflict of interest arises.

You can see from the sampling of positive and negative obligations that communications professionals must weigh a wide variety of considerations when gathering and using the information to create a message. The intended audience, the purpose of the message, the intent of the communicator, the ethical considerations, the legal constraints, and many other variables help determine how to act (or not).

7.4. Ethical Responsibility

Communications professionals must also conduct their work in the context of a commitment to social responsibility. Because mass communication messages are pervasive and influential, media organizations and professionals are held to high standards for their actions.

There are three levels of responsibility that affect PR practitioners:

- **Societal:** the relationships between media systems and other major institutions in society
- **Professional/Organizational:** a profession's own self-regulation and standards for conduct
- **Individual:** the responsibility an individual has to society, their profession, their audience, and themselves

Communications professionals must understand the societal implications of their work and the rules (which are sometimes unwritten) under which they operate.

Professional education and licensing have been traditional means by which society has sought to ensure legal and ethical behaviour from those who bear important social responsibilities. For law, medicine, accounting, teaching, architecture, engineering, and other fields of expertise, specific training is followed by examinations, licensing, and administration of oaths that include promises to live up to the standards established for the profession.

However, there is no law that requires PR practitioners to be licensed. Without the power to control entry into the field and withdraw the license to operate as in these other professions, PR practitioners have an even higher need to police themselves. Especially in light of the huge explosion of "fake news" being generated by individuals with political, cultural, or financial motives, legitimate communicators must defend their crucial role in society.

Strategic communications professionals face questions about their interactions with other major social institutions. There is more and more agitation for government regulation of

advertising because people perceive that advertisers do not police themselves enough.

As strategic communicators have adopted social media platforms to distribute their messages, scrutiny by other societal institutions has increased. In the United States, the Federal Trade Commission was so concerned about claims being made by advertisers and PR practitioners via social media that they updated their social media guidelines.

The new FTC guidelines require social media marketers to do as follows:

- Fully disclose their sponsorship of the information. If an advertiser has hired a blogger to endorse a product or service, the blogger MUST disclose that they are working for that advertiser; if a PR firm posts positive comments about its clients on social media, the firm MUST disclose that they are working on behalf of the client. Further, the disclosure must be clear and conspicuous; it cannot be buried in the fine print.
- Monitor the social media conversation and correct misstatements or problematic claims by commenters.
- Create social media policies to instruct employees about the expectations and practices that will be enforced.

The mention of company-specific social media policies leads to the next category of responsibility: the professional or organizational perspective.

In addition to the societal level of interactions, communication organizations and professionals engage in self-criticism and set standards for their own conduct and performance as information gatherers. One of the most conspicuous examples of this lies in the proliferation of codes of conduct for mass communication activities at all levels.

Public relations practitioners work closely with clients. Through these associations, legal and ethical decisions often arise as clients and publicists discuss information-gathering strategies. For example, the American Securities and Exchange Commission monitors the way corporations report their financial affairs, scrutinizing information about stock offerings and financial balance sheets for accuracy and omission of important facts. Their objective is to ensure that investors and stock analysts can get accurate information about the companies that are offering securities.

Increasingly, legal and ethical standards are holding public relations practitioners, along with stockbrokers, lawyers, and accountants responsible for the accuracy of the information they communicate to the public. When public relations professionals find themselves on the losing side of an important ethical question with a client, they may wish to resign their positions as a matter of principle.

The Canadian Public Relations Society emphasizes honesty and accountability, in addition to expertise, advocacy, fairness, independence, and loyalty. Their code of professional standards reflects the concerns of society, as well as the practitioners who adopt the code. Provisions of all ethical codes are designed, at least in part, to provide the public with reasons to have confidence in the integrity and reliability of the people who follow them. Of course, the codes are also there to help keep PR practitioners out of court.

For example, a large multinational PR firm resigned its account with a major tire manufacturer just months after landing the account. The reason was that the tire manufacturer failed to disclose to the PR firm that it knew about defects in its tires that had caused a number of fatal accidents. The PR professionals decided they could not ethically represent the tire manufacturer to the public under such circumstances and

ended their relationship with the company. The PR firm's adherence to professional and organizational standards was more important than the income that would have been generated from the account with the tire manufacturer (Miller, 2000).

There is an individual level of responsibility for behaviour. Communications professionals may find themselves confronting conflicting obligations in their work. PR work can sometimes have a decidedly ambivalent atmosphere. Public relations, as a field, is criticized for creating and manipulating images on behalf of those with narrow interests, failing to give public interest information a priority.

In confronting social responsibility, practitioners must always abide their own moral standards, but also those of their employer and clients. When any two of those are incompatible, a reassignment may be necessary or the time working together may have come to an end.

7.5. Key Laws in the Canadian Context

There are a wide variety of laws the PR practitioners must familiarize themselves with to work productively, effectively, ethically, and legally in Canada:

- Employment and labour relations legislation
- Freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation
- Human rights laws
- Tort laws

Some of these are primarily defined at the federal level and some are defined at the provincial level. Some are defined at both levels and the legislation that takes effect depends

on the industry in question. For example, in employment law, approximately 90% of all Canadians are governed by provincial legislation; however, federally regulated industries, such as aviation and telecommunication, are governed at the federal level.

Depending on the sector in question, other legislation may be especially relevant, such as environmental regulations or industry-specific rules, such as for mining, food production, or transportation.

While one does not need to be a lawyer to be a PR practitioner, every PR firm should have a lawyer in house or on retainer. PR practitioners are wise to study these laws and read about cases that are relevant to their practice so that they know what is expected, what is prohibited, and when to seek legal advice (preferably before taking action, rather than after there's a problem).

Employment Laws

Without getting into details, virtually every organization of any significance has employees. A basic understanding the legal requirements of being an employer (and by extension, the rights of employees) is necessary to advise clients. For example, if a client is irritated that some of their employees are organizing a union, the client cannot simply fire them, nor can they harass or intimidate the employees in question. That would contravene labour laws.

Basic provisions of employment law specify minimum workplace safety and training requirements, minimum wage provisions (including overtime, vacation pay, and now health leave), requirements to allow parental leaves of absence, and basic rights of employees in the workplace. Unionized

environments have collective agreements between the employer and the employees; these collective agreements and their unionized workplaces are governed under separate legislation.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Laws

Often known as "FOI," "FOIPPA," or other similar acronyms, these relatively recent laws limit what information can be collected, stored, shared, and destroyed, by whom, when, and how.

When an organization collects personal information, such as an email address, they must declare how that information will be used. For example, if a religious organization collects the names, home addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses of congregants in order to circulate information about prayer services, holidays, or other religious events, that would all seem appropriate, so long as the information was safeguarded. However, if somebody working for the organization took that list to a publisher and started working to sell religious books and movies to those congregants, a FOIPPA violation would have taken place. This would be both unethical and illegal use of the congregants' personal information.

Human Rights Laws

A wide variety of human rights laws exist and many organizations have policies about how to apply them internally. In general, human rights laws prohibit discrimination based on a person's ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, age, gender,

sex, sexual identity, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, parental status, or other demographic information, except where it is a bona fide requirement.

As an example of a bona fide requirement, a synagogue looking to hire a new rabbi can legitimately discriminate against people on the basis of religion when hiring a rabbi. As wonderful as a spiritual leader from another faith may be, immersion in the Jewish faith and being ordained as a rabbi (rather than a Christian minister, for example) would be required. Another example would include discrimination based on physical fitness; to be a firefighter, an applicant must be able to lift a certain amount of weight. Without that physical ability, they may not be able to escape a fire or rescue an incapacitated person. However, a company looking to hire telemarketers or an office assistant could not discriminate based on either religion or physical fitness; there is no need to lift substantial weight or teach the scripture of a particular religion involved in that work.

Tort Law

The category of tort law is enormous and encompasses a huge amount of civil law (as opposed to criminal law). Tort law is usually settled between citizens and/or organizations where a wrongdoing has occurred where one party owed a duty to another, either through contract or civil expectation. In some cases, torts are also subject to criminal law, as well (with separate legal proceedings). The list of torts is quite long, but is broken into three groups: intentional torts, negligence torts, and strict liability torts.

Intentional torts occur when a person deliberately causes harm

to another, such as through harassment, assault, property damage, or trespassing.

Negligence torts occur when a person accidentally causes harm to another through their actions or even through *inaction* where they had a duty to act. For example, if a tenant reports a water leak to a landlord, which the landlord ignores, only to have the leak cause a fire that damages the tenant's belongings, the landlord could be liable for the damage done because they owed a duty of care to the tenant. The landlord should have fixed the leak because that's their responsibility. Car accidents are perhaps the most common form of such torts.

Strict liability torts usually arise from a business-to-customer relationship, such as when a business sells a faulty product to a customer. If a restaurant serves rotten food to a customer, prompting a health impact to the customer, they could be found liable for the customer's pain and suffering.

Most tort cases are settled out of court, but if they do go to court, the matter falls to a civil court and is usually resolved through an award of money to the plaintiff (where the plaintiff wins their case).

Public relations practitioners should have a basic working knowledge of the concepts attached to these laws, especially concerning the rights of employees, human rights, confidentiality and privacy laws, and the duties of care and communication that come into play in tort law. Further, public relations practitioners should be able to read a contract and understand the obligations imparted between the various parties of the contract.

7.6. Politics and Society

The political expectations of a society in a given moment in time is known as its *zeitgeist*. The passage of time, advancements in technology, influential opinion leaders, and major events shift a society's zeitgeist.

For example, consider the dominant societal views of social issues over time, such as marriage. Over time, attitudes in North America have shifted dramatically. At one point, a common viewpoint was that divorce was unethical and should be illegal. Over time, attitudes and laws shifted. Equally, interracial marriage was seen as unethical and such marriages were illegal. Again, attitudes and laws have shifted. More recently, social attitudes and laws about same-sex marriage have shifted. The current zeitgeist takes an inclusive, liberal view about how marriage should be defined, who should be able to participate, and how and when a marriage can or should come to an end.

The focal point of electoral politics tends to be those issues where a social or legal consensus has not been reached. Recently emerging issues include sensitivity about a person's pronouns and acknowledging the rightful claims of Indigenous peoples to their land through territorial acknowledgments. These were done to account for shifting expectations in society and to help account for historical wrongdoings.

Organizations operate within the context of their political environment and must have a clear understanding of the current zeitgeist so that they know what is generally expected of them. This is necessary to reduce the likelihood of offending stakeholders, especially customers.

While no organization can please everybody all of the time, few organizations would receive criticism in this day and age for,

as an example, giving equal health and dental benefits to the spouses of their employees, regardless of the sexes of spouses. On the other hand, a company that refused to award equal health and dental benefits to spouses of employees if they were of the same sex would likely quickly find themselves the subject of negative publicity and a law suit.

Public relations practitioners must help organizations navigate such societal issues and understand the broad expectations in their political environment. The changing social, political, religious, sexual, artistic, and economic conditions of our world, country, region, and even organization need to be accounted for.

Political Correctness

The term "political correctness" is much maligned and even weaponized, but it really amounts to describing people in the terms by which they reasonably request they be described and being respectful in communication about other people. However one may feel about the term or any of these issues, there are professional expectations that organizations be sensitive and respectful in their communications.

Many professionals find themselves in trouble because, when they communicate, they either do not know about certain sensitivities (especially when there's an expectation that they should know) or they stubbornly refuse to apologize for errors and to adapt to the shifting realities in which they live.

Professional communicators need to use respectful, appropriate, and non-judgmental language to ensure clear, respectful, and ethical communication. Pay close attention to the issues that arise in politics and society around communication; learning opportunities abound and learning

the easy way is much better than learning the hard way, which can involve a lot of unpleasantness for all.

7.7. Corporate Social Responsibility

One strategy for building an ethical organizational brand is through corporate social responsibility, which is a business model or practice that ostensibly seeks to benefit the greater society. More and more consumers support businesses that create initiatives to help communities. Corporate social responsibility can take a variety of forms, from making charitable donations to local causes to underwriting beneficial projects in developing countries.

There are several benefits to demonstrating and promoting corporate social responsibility. Organizations that do so tend to have a better public image. Consumers are willing to spend more on a product if they believe that their purchase benefits a charitable cause or addresses a social or environmental need. Strategic communication professionals play a key role in branding businesses as socially conscious through message design and brand management. Their efforts help to spread awareness of these initiatives and make them a part of the organization's brand identity and core values.

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No part of this book was written by a lawyer and nothing herein should not be construed as legal advice.

Chapter 8: Media Relations

> "News is what somebody does not want you to print.
> All the rest is advertising."
> –authorship uncertain

Public relations professionals act on behalf of their organization, so their role is to be an advocate for their brand. This role often includes providing information to the media in the hope that it will be published. It also can mean bypassing media gatekeepers and publishing newsworthy information directly to intended audiences in ways that may attract media attention as a byproduct. Finding and creating newsworthy information requires a firm understanding of three key points:

1. News value: timeliness, prominence, proximity, significance, unusualness, human interest, conflict, newness
2. News angles: what is going to be most interesting to a journalist and their audience
3. Successful pitches: how to break through a sea of clutter and competing messages

A large part of the public relations profession involves working with the media. PR practitioners garner publicity that benefits a client and, in most cases, mass media is the preferred channel for reaching the public, as most audiences assign more credibility to mainstream media coverage than other

sources of information. Therefore, learning how to develop and manage relationships with reporters and editors is critical to effective communication.

The primary benefit for journalists is the easy access to story ideas and sources. Reporters spend a large amount of time and effort gathering information in order to write a story. Working with public relations professionals cuts down on the time needed to find information, validate it, and publish the story. Public relations practitioners benefit from media relations because it secures free publicity and promotion for a client. By using media as a promotional tool, they are able to reach a large audience without high costs.

8.1. Understanding News Values

Newsroom experience cements a PR practitioner's understanding of the news values media use to choose what stories to publish. In the public relations role, look for stories that have strong news value or draw connections that create newsworthy content.

Timeliness:

- Pitch new information or events
- Relate company information to breaking or current news, anniversaries of important events, or holidays
- Find something new that hasn't been covered before or find new uses for old products

Prominence

- Embrace a thought leader as a spokesperson
- Tie information to someone with star power

Proximity

- Seek local connections and angles
- Tailor messages and angles for the readership of different news outlets

Significance/Impact

- Honestly assess what company news affects a substantial number of people and what those effects are

Unusualness

- Look for "nuggets" you haven't heard before or aspects of your client or their operations that are somehow extraordinary

Human interest

- Humanize your story—people like to hear about other people

Conflict

- Different views are engaging; controversy fuels discussion and stimulates the mind

The priority of these news values shifts based on the media outlet. Familiarize yourself with any media outlets you plan to pitch, as well as the nature of their readers or viewers so that

you only reach out with potential news stories that fit their format and audience.

Media interest also can be attracted by other content:

- Special events
- Contests and giveaways
- Polls, surveys, or other data
- Top ten lists or "report cards"
- Publicity stunts
- Rallies and protests
- Awards
- Anniversaries or milestones
- Babies and exotic or cute animals (yes, really)

But keep in mind that reporters and their editors don't like to feel used or tricked. They might not cover events that seem arranged only to generate news. They key is to be creative and fresh enough that they will define what you are doing as legitimate news according to their definitions.

Students interested in careers in public relations and related fields greatly benefit from media and newsroom experience. Familiarity with media needs speeds a PR practitioner's ability to provide useful content (hint: not just a talking head on camera, lot of visuals and B-roll). Public relations professionals without experience in a newsroom may not appreciate the tight and constant deadlines journalists face or the information and resources needed to create an objective news story. Corporate environments often move at a slower pace where decisions and messages require several layers of approval and corporate policies and politics can come into play.

As with any professional relationship, there are "do's and don'ts" to be aware of when developing relationships with journalists. Take the time to research reporters or bloggers to

identify those who will help you achieve your organization's publicity goals. Once you've found an appropriate journalist or blogger, think carefully about how you plan to pitch your story to the individual. Avoid gimmicky or hyped-up press releases; they may catch the reporter's attention, but for the wrong reason. Also avoid jarring language such as "urgent," "must read," or "extremely important," even if you need to secure media coverage quickly.

In general, developing a rapport with journalists takes time, strategy, skill, and practice.

Lessons learned writing for daily newspapers and magazines that help in the PR world:

- Deadlines are life and death in the news business. Once you get a request for information, it's vital to find out when it's needed. Ask about it.
- A deadline is final. Don't expect extensions or give excuses. Find a way to get it done on time or submit the best you've got before deadline.
- It stinks when PR people don't respect deadlines or return calls. This made me eternally committed to responding quickly to media inquiries, even if just to tell them I was still working on an answer or source for their story from within my organization.
- Be persistent and resourceful. If one source doesn't return a call, try again or try a different source.
- Get it right. Triple check spellings, question all

facts, ask if you're not sure, step away for coffee and come back for a final proofread. Do whatever is in your power to be completely accurate.

- Work fast. The more you work under the pressure of deadline, the better you get at producing accurate and well-written content quickly. Good time management and the ability to do good work quickly has never been more important.

8.2. Pitching a Media Story

Simply contacting the media will not guarantee coverage for your client. You have to persuade the journalist that your story idea is newsworthy. Public relations professionals typically pitch to reporters, editors, bloggers, and social media influencers. Pitches can take place via email, phone calls, and increasingly through Twitter. The channel you choose for your pitch depends upon the intended individual's preference.

Pitching is a skill that requires creative thinking, persuasive communication skills, and knowing how your story idea benefits the reporter and the audience. Your pitching skills can improve with time and practice. You will feel more confident reaching out to reporters if you make pitches regularly.

Before Pitching

Before you send an email pitch or call a reporter, have a solid understanding of your key audience. Carefully examine the interests, preferences, media consumption behaviours, and key demographic information associated with that group. Then you can more accurately select which media outlet will help reach the target audience.

Go where your audience is located. For example, as you conduct research about your target audience, you might learn that members read blog posts more than news articles. Therefore, reaching out to bloggers could be more beneficial than targeting news reporters. Place your message or story in media outlets that your intended audience frequently visits or reads.

One of the most common complaints from journalists about public relations pitches involves the use of mass emails. Generic pitches sent out to anyone and everyone come across to reporters and bloggers as careless and can compromise your credibility among media professionals. Remember, reporters are going to look at how your story will appeal to their specific readers; therefore, your pitch needs to be strategic. Failure to keep this in mind may result in a rejected pitch or no response at all.

Before you pitch to a particular media outlet, be sure to research which specific writer within the organization can help you target your audience. Each reporter covers a different topic or "beat." Reading some of a reporter's previous stories will give you an indication of whether they are the right person to cover your story. Let's say your client is a restaurant that wants to publicize the opening of a new location. A reporter who covers food topics and brands, lifestyle topics, or the restaurant or

entertainment industries would be the most logical choice to write your story.

Writing the Pitch

Now that you've done your homework on the audience, media outlet, and specific writer, pay close attention to how you craft your pitch message.

The subject line is especially important if you're using email. It needs to be creative enough to catch the attention of the writer; however, avoid exaggerated phrases or visual gimmicks such as all capital letters. Do not use generic headlines such as "Story Idea" or "Cool Upcoming Event." Try to create a headline similar to one the journalist might use in writing the story.

Next, address the reporter or blogger by name and begin the body of the pitch. State why you're writing and provide some information about yourself and the company or client you represent. Next, summarize the lead of the story. Writing in this manner resonates with some reporters, as it is the style they are accustomed to. You also can start the email with a catchy line that will hook the journalist, but be careful not to overdo this. Reporters and editors do not like flowery or gimmicky language because it sounds more like a hard sales pitch than a public relations pitch.

Continue with the pitch by providing important details about the story and talking about why it would be interesting to the media outlet's audience. Doing this indicates that the story has news value, which is very important in pitching. Toward the end of the email pitch, state when you would like a response, indicate when you plan to follow up if necessary, and offer specific help. Be sure to thank the reporter or blogger for their time.

Don't feel discouraged if the person does not respond immediately. Journalists are extremely busy, and sometimes they simply overlook emails. If necessary, send a reminder email by the follow-up date you mentioned in the first communication.

Also, as convenient as an email may be for you, there is no substitute for a phone conversation with a journalist. A good phone pitch elevates your chance of success, meaningfully builds the relationship, allows the journalist to ask questions right away and to probe for interesting angles, and also guarantees that you have received the journalist's attention. Take the time to pick up the phone. It's a wildly underappreciated communications device.

In both written and verbal pitches, grammar, and tone matter a lot; for written pitches, punctuation and spelling are important, too. Some journalists have admitted to not responding to a pitch that contains grammatical and spelling errors. Reread your message several times to check for errors. Here are more articles that discuss media relations, proper etiquette, and tips on gaining media exposure:

- Surprising tips to get the media's attention
- 9 pitch tips from PR News Online
- How not to pitch

8.3. Responsive Media Relations and Terms of an Interview

There is more to media relations than understanding a journalist's needs and making a good pitch.

Good PR practitioners are also skilled at receiving media calls and inquiries.

When a journalist already has a story and is looking to add to it, give balance, or extract points that could add reader interest (potentially at your client's peril—no pressure), they will contact you, often by phone, but sometimes via email or social media.

When the phone rings, a skilled PR practitioner is ready to respond.

All media calls should be treated as urgent and potentially dangerous. Listening carefully, taking notes, and asking questions of the journalist are key to fielding media calls. As noted above, ask about their deadlines, find out what they're after, whether it's information, an interview, quotes, confirmation, or background.

A prepared PR practitioner has already self-scouted their own organization to identify who might be a necessary or valuable spokesperson. If somebody is particularly good at public speaking and/or speaking on camera, they may be a preferred option to act as a spokesperson. In some situations, the spokesperson must be the organization's chief executive, as any other spokesperson would seem out of place and the chief executive would seem conspicuously absent.

Before putting a spokesperson in front of a journalist or camera, train them for necessary interview skills and rehearse the key messages needed for the given interview. If necessary, script the spokesperson, as in distributing information during a crisis.

Negotiate the terms of an interview. Gather information before providing information and establish whether the interview is "on the record," "not for attribution," "on background," or "off the record." Also agree on when the interview will happen, how long it will be, and who the spokesperson will be.

On the record: the words spoken or written may be printed as stated with attribution provided (that is, the name and position of the speaker/writer). This is sometimes called a "direct quote."

Not for attribution: the words spoken or written may be printed as stated, but only with indirect attribution provided, such as a vague description of the rank and origin of the person giving the quote (as in, "a European diplomat" or "an auto-industry executive").

On background: the information provided can be used, but not quoted word-for-word and not directly attributed (but a vague description of the source may be used, as above).

Off the record: the information cannot be published, but can be used to help the journalist find other sources.

There are several important points to note here:

- Unless otherwise agreed in advance, everything stated to a journalist is on the record
- None of these terms are legally binding; you take on the journalist's honour that they will keep these agreements
- Confirm what these terms mean to the journalist when you use them; not everybody uses these terms the same way and, if you don't have an agreement about what they mean, information may not be used as the PR practitioner had anticipated

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Chapter 9: Writing for PR

Public relations professionals at all levels need to have solid writing skills. PR practitioners are responsible for developing communication materials intended to influence the attitudes and/or behaviours of target audiences (and without receiving push back from non-target audiences). Many employers require candidates for public relations positions to complete a writing test and provide a writing sample or entire portfolio to demonstrate proficiency in this skill. Understanding how to craft effective messages through written communication is critical to success in PR.

Here are some of the many materials and messages that public relations professionals have to write:

- Press/news releases
- Fact sheets
- Feature articles
- Social media messages
- Blog posts
- Speeches
- PowerPoint presentations
- Brochures
- Media pitches
- Statements
- website messages

9.1. News Writing Versus Public Relations Writing

Effective public relations writing draws from news writing principles because the news media is one of the preferred channels for communicating messages to target audiences. However, news writing and public relations writing differ in terms of audience, tone, and media channels. News writing should be objective in tone, with the purpose of presenting information to educate an audience about newsworthy events. On the other hand, public relations writing advocates for the client. It is informative, but it should also influence key publics' perception of the organization. Some would also argue that public relations writing is even more concise than news writing.

Reporters usually write for one audience: readers or listeners of the respective media outlet. Public relations professionals may have to write for a variety of audiences, including internal audiences (such as employees) and external audiences (such as the media, customers, and regulators). News writing uses one primary communication channel: news outlets (which can be a newspaper or a television or radio broadcast). Although journalists are increasingly using Twitter to post their articles, this usually entails posting a link that directs the audience to the news outlet's primary website. Public relations professionals use a variety of channels to distribute their messages, including news media, social media, advertisements, blogs, press kits, and more.

This blog post further explains some of the differences between news writing and public relations writing.

9.2. The News Release

Formerly known as a "press release" and frequently called a "media release," the news release is one of the most common types of communication collateral written by public relations professionals. News releases are sent to outlets such as newspapers, television and/or radio stations, and magazines to deliver a strategic message that the media ideally will publish or broadcast. The primary audience for the news release is reporters and editors, although some organizations publish news releases on their own websites for primary audiences to view, as well. This may be done due to shrinking newsroom staffs and insufficient resources to develop original content. (NB: the term "press release" is out of date because so much of the mainstream media is video, audio, or digital, and not produced by a "press" at all.)

Journalists use news releases as a reporting tool, relying on them to provide essential information from opinion leaders, especially quotes and key facts. Although the emergence of digital media has challenged public relations professionals to think of nontraditional ways to garner publicity, the use of news releases is still widespread in the profession. Therefore, public relations practitioners should know how to write an effective news release.

Writing the News Release

Traditionally, news releases use the inverted pyramid style, which is easy for journalists and editors to process. This means the news hook should be revealed in the headline and lead of the release. Journalists will not take your news release seriously if the content is not newsworthy and it is not written in an accepted style, such as AP (Associated Press) style in the United

States or CP (Canadian Press) style in Canada. Make sure that the news release contains attributed information with proper sources and is error free.

Before writing the release, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the announcement or event newsworthy? Does it appeal to the media outlet's audience? Some announcements do not warrant a press release and can simply be posted on the company website.
- What is the key message? What should the reader take away?
- Who is the target audience for the release? Although you're writing the release for the media, you need to keep in mind the type of readers or listeners you hope to attract.

News Release Structure and Format

The release should be written on the letterhead, with the words "News Release" or "Media Release" at the top left corner of the page. Below this, indicate when the information is available for publication. The term "immediate release" means the information is ready to publish and can be used by journalists as soon as they receive it. Occasionally, you might want more time to gather other information, or would prefer that the journalist publish the announcement at a later date, often immediately after a live announcement or news conference. In this case, use the words "under embargo until" followed by the embargo date, which is when you will allow the journalist to publish the information. Put the news release date below the "immediate release" or "under embargo until" statement. Always include contact information for the journalist's reference, usually at the bottom of the page.

Write the body of the news release using news writing techniques and style. Be sure to include a headline; you also may include a subheadline. Provide a dateline, followed by the summary lead.

When writing the body, the first paragraph explains the issue and, as concisely as possible, its significance. After that, information is provided in descending order, with the most significant information first. Facts, figures, statistics, and other such information is provided in regular paragraphs. Explanations of human interest, emotion, or interpretation should be provided through quotes. These quotes should help audiences connect the factual information with its greater significance and emotional relevance.

This website provides a valuable point-by-point breakdown of how news release should be constructed.

The formatting varies slightly from this from template to template. For example, in Canada, the text "-30-" usually shows the end of text in a news release and lands above the contact information, whereas this example has "###" at the end and after the contact information. Also, in some places, the date and location are listed at the beginning of the first paragraph, rather than above it.

Be sure to use the inverted pyramid to organize the information throughout the news release. Include at least two quotes, one from the sending organization and another from a third party (example: customer, volunteer, or other stakeholder). After the body is finished, many organizations add a boilerplate, which is identical across all news releases and is included in all of them; the boilerplate provides information about the company or organization, similar to the "About Us" section that one might find on a company website.

Examples of news releases (which are admittedly changing in

style with an increasingly digital-first delivery) can be found on the websites of most major or even minor organizations, including your local college or university.

9.3. Media Kits

Media kits (or press kits) are packages or website pages that contain promotional materials and resources for editors and reporters. The purpose is to provide detailed information about a company in one location. Although a media kit delivers more information than a news release, the overall goal is similar: to secure publicity for a organization or client.

Major events or stories that require more information than is typically included in a news release warrant a media kit. Examples include a company merger, the launch of a new product, a rebranding campaign, or a major change in organizational leadership. Media kits can be hard copy or digital, though digital is now widely preferred. Hard-copy press kits use folders with the company logo, whereas digital media kits use a website page or are sent in a zip file via email.

The following materials are found in a media kit:

- Backgrounder
- News release
- Fact sheet
- Publicity photos or list of photo opportunities
- Video clips
- Media advisories

Click here for information on how to assemble a media kit.

Backgrounder

A backgrounder contains the history of a company or issue and/or biographies of key executives. The purpose is to supplement the news release and explain the company's story, issue, event, products, services, and/or milestones. It is in paragraph format and relatively brief (one to two pages). Click here for a sample corporate backgrounder from GainSpan, a semiconductor company.

Fact Sheet

A fact sheet provides a summary of an event, product, service, or person by focusing only on essential information or key characteristics. It is more concise than a backgrounder and serves as a quick reference for reporters. However, the fact sheet is not meant for publication. The headings of a fact sheet vary; the creator of the document chooses how to categorize major information. The most common type of fact sheet is the organizational profile, which gives basic information about an organization. This includes descriptions of products or services, annual revenues, markets served, and number of employees, for example.

The standard fact sheet contains company letterhead and contact information. The body is single-spaced, with an extra space between paragraphs and subheadings. Although the fact sheet is typically one page, put the word "-more-" at the bottom of the first page to indicate additional pages (if needed). Similar to the news release format, include "-30-" at the bottom of the document to indicate the end. Group similar information together and include bulleted items if appropriate.

Click here for one example of a fact sheet and here for another.

Keep in mind that the subheadings/categories used in this example may not be used in another one. Writers have some flexibility in the categories they choose in a fact sheet.

Media Advisory

There are times when announcements do not require the distribution of a news release, but rather a concise notice to the media. This is called a media advisory or media alert. Media advisories are essentially short memos to reporters about an interview opportunity, news conference, or upcoming event. They very briefly explain who, what, where, when, why (and sometimes how), inviting the media to attend, often to take photographs, ask questions, or capture video interviews.

Here is an example of a media advisory.

Attributions

Chapter 10: PR Campaigns

Public relations campaigns do not begin with an announcement. They do not begin with a product, a candidate, a controversy, a calamity, or an event.

Public relations campaigns begin with research.

PR practitioners must understand their audiences, the PR environment, contextual issues, and the tools and resources available to them. There are a number of models for how to construct a PR campaign, but all of them begin either with research or goal-setting, immediately followed by research. Many of these models come with a fun little acronym, but which acronym a PR practitioner works with is far less important than understanding the need to be systemic and strategic in the research, planning, and implementation processes.

A good PR practitioner is organized, detailed, strategic, scheduled, and methodical. The precise systemic approach is, again, less important than embodying those traits.

These are perhaps the six most popular models:

ACE Assessment, Communication, Evaluation	**RACE** Research, Action, Communication, Evaluation	**ROSIE** Research, Objectives, Strategy, Implementation, Evaluation
GRACE Goals, Research, Assessment, Communication, Evaluation	**PACE** Planning, Action, Communication, Evaluation	**STARE** Scan, Track, Analyze, Respond, Evaluate

Looking at those, this practitioner always found that something is missing from all of them: ongoing monitoring and adjustment.

All of them end with evaluation, which many would argue is also the beginning of the next campaign's research/assessment/planning/scanning (whichever word you want to pick to start with).

A strong argument can be made for beginning with goal-setting, even before research. If one is going to embark on a PR campaign, there must be a motivation; there must be something the client/employer wants to be true at the end of the campaign that is not true now. That truth is the goal of the campaign. Goals may be adapted based on research, but they are also the reason for completing the research in the first place.

At this point, the text should also acknowledge that, by teaching that PR campaigns begin with research, the text is asserting that PR campaigns need a two-way model. In truth, most major PR campaigns follow the two-way asymmetrical model (See Chapter 3), which prizes research, much as evidenced by the models above. The text continues below with this understanding.

10.1. Research

Public relations research allows PR practitioners to develop strategy in three significant ways:

- Conducting campaigns with specific purpose and targeted goals
- Operating as a part of the overall strategic management function in an organization

- Measuring the effectiveness of public relations efforts

By conducting research before communicating, PR practitioners revise their own thinking to include the views of audiences. PR campaigns can segment those audiences, tailor communications for unique audiences, send different messages to specifically targeted audiences, and build relationships by communicating with audiences who have an interest in the message.

This type of planning is formative; it helps practitioners understand what publics know, believe, or value and what they need or desire to know before communicating.

Research also allows public relations professionals to show the impact made through their communication efforts after a public relations campaign. This type of research is called evaluation research. Using both forms of research in public relations allows campaigns to communicate strategically and to demonstrate effectiveness.

Research makes public relations activities strategic by ensuring that communication is specifically targeted to audiences who want, need, or care about the information. Without conducting research, public relations is based on experience or instinct, which has value, but is unreliable and has a much higher rate of failure. Quality research ensures that time and money committed to communicating is well spent, as the messages reach the target audiences and achieve the desired results. Even with research, campaigns cannot be perfect, but research shows results, measures impact, and helps to refocus efforts based on those numbers, so that campaigns can be improved.

Without research, public relations would not be a true management function. It would not be strategic, but would instead regress to the days of simple press agentry, following hunches and instinct to create publicity. As a true

management function, public relations uses research to fulfill several key communications tasks:

- Identify issues and engage in problem solving
- Prevent and manage crises
- Make organizations responsive and responsible to their audiences
- Create better organizational policy
- Build and maintain long-term relationships with publics

A thorough knowledge of research methods and extensive analyzes of data also allow public relations practitioners a way to illustrate the value and worth of their activities. In this manner, research is the strategic foundation of modern public relations management.

10.2. Methods and Types of Research

Formal Research

Formal research normally takes place in order to generate numbers and statistics that target communications and measure results. Formal research also gains a deeper, qualitative understanding of the issue(s) of concern, to ascertain the range of audience responses, and to elicit in-depth opinion data. Formal research is planned research of a quantitative or qualitative nature, normally asking specific questions about topics of concern for the organization. Formal research is both *formative*, at the outset of a public relations initiative, and *evaluative*, to determine the degree of change attributable to public relations activities.

Informal Research

Informal research is collected on an ongoing basis by most public relations managers, from sources both inside and outside of their organizations. Informal research usually gathers information and opinions through conversations. It consists of asking questions, talking to trusted stakeholders or employees in the organization to find out their concerns, reading e-mails from customers or comment cards, and other informal methods, such as scanning the news and trade publications. A public relations professional spends a great deal of time communicating informally with these contacts in an open exchange of ideas and concerns. This is one way that public relations can keep abreast of changes in an industry, trends affecting the competitive marketplace, issues of discontent among audiences, the values and activities of activist groups, the innovations of competitors, and so on. Informal research methods are usually non-numerical and are not generalizable to a larger population, but they yield a great deal of useful information. The data yielded from informal research can be used to examine or revise organizational policy, to craft and finetune messages, to respond to trends in an industry, to include the values or priorities of audiences in new initiatives, and numerous other derivations. Informal research often helps to create questions and themes to be explored through formal research.

10.3. Primary and Secondary Research

Research in public relations management requires the use of specialized terminology. The term primary research is used when collecting unique data firsthand. Primary research, because it is unique to an organization and its research questions, is often the most expensive type of data to collect.

Secondary research refers to research that is normally a part of public domain, but is applicable to the client, organization, or industry, and can be used to round out and support the conclusions drawn from our primary research. Secondary research is normally accessed through the internet or available at libraries or from industry and trade associations. Reference books, encyclopedias, and trade press publications provide a wealth of free or inexpensive secondary research. Managers often use secondary research as an exploratory base from which to decide what type of primary research needs to be conducted.

10.4. Quantitative Research

When we speak of research in public relations, we are normally referring to primary research, such as public opinion studies based on surveys and polling. Quantitative research is based on statistical generalization. It allows organizations to make numerical observations such as "85% of frontline healthcare workers can name three or more benefits of vaccinations." Statistical observations allow PR practitioners to know exactly where they need to improve relationships with certain audiences and measure how much those relationships have ultimately improved (or degraded) at the end of a public relations campaign.

For example, a strategic report in public relations management for a province's public health agency might include a statement such as this:

> "Three months ago, 85% of frontline healthcare workers could name three or more benefits of vaccinations. After an 80-day campaign, 94% could name three or more benefits. The campaign achieved a 9% increase in awareness of vaccination benefits."

Other data gathered might report on the most common questions about vaccinations received by frontline healthcare workers, their ability to accurately respond to patient questions, or knowledge of where the general public could obtain different types of vaccinations. Quantitative research gives a "before and after" snapshot to compare the numbers in each group, creating evidence of a campaign's efficacy.

Methods of Quantitative Data Collection

There are several reliable methods to collect quantitative data:

- Surveys conducted online, by phone, or in person
- Content analysis (usually of media coverage)
- Comment cards and feedback forms
- Warranty cards (usually demographic information on buyers)
- Frequent shopper program tracking (purchasing data)
- web and social media traffic (sometimes called "metrics")
- Foot traffic (how many people go to a place, often counted using a turnstile, door counter, or information from appointments made or transactions conducted)

In quantitative research, the entire public you wish to understand or make statements about is called the population. The population might be women over 40, union members, purchasers of a competitor's product, college students, or any other group that a PR practitioner would like to study.

From that population, a sample is selected to actually contact with questions. Probability samples can be randomly drawn from a list of the population, which gives the strongest statistical measures of generalizability. A random sample means that participants are drawn randomly and have an equal chance of being selected. Some variants will always exist in a population, but a random sample should account for the range of opinions in that population. The larger the sample size

(number of respondents), the smaller the margin of error and the more confident the researcher can be that the sample is an accurate reflection of the entire population.

There are also other sampling methods, known as non-probability samples, that do not allow for generalization, but meet the requirement of the problem or project. A convenience sample, for instance, is drawn from those who are convenient to study, such as having visitors to a shopping mall fill out a survey. Another approach is a snowball sample in which the researcher asks someone completing a survey to recommend the next potential respondent to complete the survey. These methods allow less generalizability to the larger population, but they are often less expensive than random sample methods and still may generate the type of data that usefully answers a research question.

Quantitative research has the major strength of explaining who the audience is, where they get their information, how many believe certain viewpoints, and which communications create the strongest resonance with their beliefs. Demographic variables are used to very specifically segment audiences. Demographics generally include gender, education, ethnicity, profession, geographic location, annual household income, political affiliation, religious affiliation, and size of family or household.

Once these data are collected, cross-tabulating the data with opinion and attitude variables allows trends to be quickly detected. Such cross-tabulations result in very specific audiences who can be targeted with future messages in the channels and the language that they prefer.

Segmenting publics in this manner is an everyday occurrence in public relations management. Through their segmentation, public relations managers have an idea of who will support their organization, who will oppose the organization, and what

communications—messages and values—resonate with each audience. After using research to identify these groups, public relations professionals can then build relationships with them in order to conduct informal research, better understand their positions, and help to represent the values and desires of those publics in organizational decision making and policy formation.

10.5. Qualitative Research

The second major group of research methods used in the public relations industry is qualitative research. Qualitative research generates in-depth, "quality" information that allows practitioners to truly understand public opinion, but it is not statistically generalizable. Qualitative research is enormously valuable because it allows PR practitioners to truly learn the experience, values, and viewpoints of audiences. It also provides ample quotes to use as evidence or illustration in strategy documents, and sometimes even results in slogans or fodder for use in public relations' messages.

Qualitative research is particularly adept at answering questions from public relations practitioners that began "How?" or "Why?" This form of research allows the researcher to ask the participants to explain their rationale for decision making, belief systems, values, thought processes, and so on. It

allows researchers to explore complicated topics to understand the meaning behind them and the meanings that participants ascribe to certain concepts. For example, a researcher might ask a participant, "What does the concept of liberty mean to you?" and get a detailed explanation. However, that explanation to vary among participants and different concepts might be associated with liberty when asking an American versus a citizen of Iran or China (and responses could vary wildly by region within China). Such complex understandings are extremely helpful in integrating the values and ideas of audiences into organizational strategy, as well as in crafting messages that resonate with those specific audiences of different nationalities. Such rich analysis is also very difficult to glean from quantitative research methods.

Methods of Qualitative Data Collection

These are some of the most common qualitative research methods:

- In-depth interviews
- Focus groups
- Case studies
- Participant observation
- Monitoring toll-free (1-800 #) call transcripts

- Monitoring incoming correspondence

Public relations managers often use qualitative research to support quantitative findings. Qualitative research can be designed to understand the views of specific audiences and to have them elaborate on beliefs or values that stood out in quantitative analyzes. For example, if quantitative research showed a strong agreement with the particular statement, that statement could be read to focus group participants to ask them to agree or disagree with this statement and explain their rationale and thought process behind that choice. In this manner, qualitative researchers can understand complex reasoning and dilemmas in much greater detail than only through results yielded by a survey.

Another reason to use qualitative research is that it can provide data that researchers did not know they needed. For instance, a focus group may take an unexpected turn and the discussion may yield statements that the researcher had not thought to include on a survey questionnaire. Sometimes unknown information or unfamiliar perspectives arise through qualitative studies that are ultimately extremely valuable to public relations' understanding of the issues impacting audiences.

Qualitative research also allows for participants to speak for themselves rather than to use the terminology provided by researchers. This benefit can often yield a greater understanding that results in far more effective messages than when public relations practitioners attempt to construct views of audiences based on quantitative research alone. Using the representative language of members of a certain audience often allows public relations to build a more respectful relationship with that public. For instance, animal rights activists often use the term "companion animal" instead of the term "pet"; that information could be extremely important to

organizations such as Purina or the American Veterinary Medical Association.

10.6. Mixed Methods/ Triangulation

Clearly, both quantitative and qualitative research have complementary and unique strengths. These two groups of research methods should be used in conjunction whenever possible in public relations so that both audiences and issues can be better understood. Using both of these research methods together is called mixed method research[1] Combining multiple focus groups from various cities with interviews of important leaders and a quantitative survey of audiences is an example of mixed method research because it includes both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Using two or more methods of study is sometimes called triangulation, meaning using multiple research methods to triangulate upon the underlying truth of how audiences view an issue.

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10.7. Goals and Objectives

Although goals may be set before, during, or after the research process, objectives are definitely set later in the process.

The two words are often conflated, but the difference is important.

A goal is something that is not true before a PR campaign, but must be true after to judge the campaign a success. If the goal is achieved, the campaign is a success.

On the other hand, objectives can be missed, while still having a successful campaign and a campaign can achieve all of its objectives without succeeding in their goal.

Election campaigns are a good way of explaining the difference. (An election campaign is a very specialized type of PR campaign and a good one to be involved in to witness some highly skilled PR and communications practitioners at work.)

During an election, there will be politicians campaigning to win in each district, municipality, riding, constituency, ward, or other geographic area (these words are sometimes informally interchangeable). The goal for most campaigns is simple: to win.

In crafting their campaign plan, several key objectives will be met. For example, the campaign may attempt to raise a certain amount of money, to place a certain number of lawn signs, to identify a certain number of people who have pledged their support, and then to motivate a high percentage of those voters to remember to vote on election day.

So, let's say the campaign for a local electoral district sets a goal of raising $100,000, placing 2,000 lawn signs, identifying 10,000 supporters, and motivating 90% of them to vote on election

day. And, let's say that the campaign achieves every one of those objectives. However, if they lose the election, the campaign is not a success, even though they reach all of their objectives.

On the other hand, if they fail to reach all of those objectives, no matter how badly, the campaign is a success if the election is won.

This is the key difference between goals and objectives. Goals are often measured by a simple yes/no question, while objectives should be "SMART" (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-specific).

Objectives are often linked to specific campaign tactics (see Chapter 11), as well. Using the above example, for an election campaign to identify 10,000 supporters, they probably plan to identify those voters through a few different tactics: phone calls, knocking on doors, social media engagement, fundraising, and possibly a few other means, such as signing petitions that would be compatible with the campaign's positions on issues. Equally, the campaign would probably target fundraising a certain amount from a variety of different stakeholder groups or through different media, such as mail, phone calls, and campaign events.

Goals, on the other hand, are very simple and define the campaign.

10.8. Analysis

Background/Overview

The background/overview section of a public relations

campaign plan briefly tells the story of how the campaign came into existence. What happened that instigated the campaign planning process to be initiated? What would be helpful for somebody being hired to implement the campaign to know before reading the rest of the plan? This is not usually a long section, unless the environmental scan, problem statement, and/or situational analysis (see below) are blended into the background/overview section, which is sometimes done.

Environmental Scan

Previously, this textbook looked at audience analysis and stakeholder analysis. This is a similar type of analysis that is designed to explain the current communications environment for the campaign. The environmental scan answers a variety of key questions, in more or less detail, depending on what is being observed:

- What is currently going on in the industry?
- What recent events may shape audience perception of campaign messages?
- What have news media been reporting recently that could be swaying opinion and interpretation?
- Perhaps most importantly, what are competitors contributing to the communications environment?

Problem Statement

This section is as simple as it sounds; explain the problem that needs to be solved through a public relations campaign. The problem should be sated clearly and concisely in a single

sentence, probably in the middle of two or three short paragraphs that introduce the problem and point towards the rest of the analysis.

Situational Analysis

There are several formats for a situational analysis, all of which have their time and place.

SWOT: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

The SWOT analysis is more introspective, looking first at the organization itself and then at the environment.

PESTEL: Political, economic, social, technological, environmental, legal

The PESTEL model arranges analysis by key areas of organizational and environmental interest (with "environmental" meaning the natural environment here, not the communications environment).

These are probably the two most popular, though PEST (political, economic, social, technological), PERSIA (political, economic, religious, social, intellectual, artistic), and other similar analytical models are also out there.

Whichever model is selected, the goal is to provide an honest and thorough inventory of all considerations that may feed into decision making about the campaign plan. The analysis needs to be both inward and outward looking.

10.9. Strategy and Tactics

These will be explained in far greater depth in Chapter 11; however, a brief description here may be helpful.

Once the campaign's goals have been set and the research has been gathered, the campaign should have some ideas about what might motivate the audience.

Every campaign needs to change or sustain some type of audience behaviour, which includes changing audience opinions. In broad strokes, the idea behind how to achieve this is the campaign's strategy. An outsider cannot see the strategy; it can only be interpreted.

Tactics are the hands-on tools the campaign uses to communicate with audiences, such as placing billboards, airing radio commercials, organizing a protest, or encouraging people to write letters to politicians. Outsiders can see the tactics being used.

Tactics are always consistent with the strategy and are measurable, so objectives are often attached to tactics to measure their efficacy in the campaign.

10.10. Evaluation

What does success look like in a campaign?

For overarching goals, such as mentioned with an election campaign, the answer is obvious. However, with objectives, the answer is not always so clear. What target should a campaign set for the number of views on the launch of the first video on its new Youtube channel? How much money does a good blog

post raise for a charity? When recalling a tainted food product, what percent of returns is a win?

These are tricky to answer, but research can give helpful clues.

Using the election campaign example above, publicly accessible records of how much previous campaigns have spent can be accessed from election authorities. Knowing how much previous winning campaigns spent in a given district or in similar districts can provide insight about what targets should be attached to which fundraising methods.

Equally, a review of the social media accounts of other politicians can be helpful in setting targets. In the larger picture, winning the election will be the most obvious evaluation point, but leading up to the election, campaigns need to analyze where they should target their limited resources. If a candidate is meeting or exceeding their social media targets, maybe money should be spent on hiring canvassers to go knocking on doors in areas with a large number of senior citizens, who are less likely to be social media users. (Information about who lives in which neighbourhoods can be found in publicly available census data; people who know an area may also have strong anecdotal knowledge of the demographics of a given neighbourhood.)

What about a different type of PR campaign, such as a public health vaccination campaign? The most obvious evaluation point will be counting the number of people who get vaccinated during and immediately after the campaign, comparing that to the numbers before the campaign. The campaign will need to work with public health authorities to collect such data, but that's the obvious evaluation point. What else could be measured? The number of phone calls to public health agencies or clinics to inquire about vaccination would be revealing, but may be hard to use if there was no tracking being done before the campaign begins. In such cases, the

unofficial launch of the campaign may be to arrange data collection prior to communicating with the target audience(s).

In discussing evaluation here, two points are clear:

1. Measuring whether a campaign reached its overarching goal is often easy to measure
2. Measuring the efficacy of the campaign's tactics is more difficult and requires research, planning, and thoughtful analysis

So, what are the step-by-step points in evaluating a campaign, then?

1. The campaign needs to know what the benchmark for success will be
2. The campaign needs a way to measure whether it has met that benchmark and by what margin of success or failure
3. The campaign needs to be able to analyze the data collected to understand its results
4. The campaign needs to take that data and turn it into actionable suggestions to improve the remainder of the campaign or future campaigns

Evaluation is about learning and improving. Technically, a campaign could be a success without evaluation, but how would the campaign know they were successful and by what margin? How would this failure to learn affect future campaigns? Evaluation is a critical component of any campaign.

10.11. Sample Campaign Plans

Examples of completed public relations campaign plans are

notoriously hard to come by, as they aren't intended to be public documents. Blank templates are widely available, but rarely with authentic content filled in to show somebody's campaign plan from goals through the research process, strategy and tactics, all the way through to evaluation.

Craig Miyamoto, who is connected to the Public Relations Society of America, produced this template for public relations practitioners to use as a starting point: http://aboutpublicrelations.net/PRPlan.pdf.

This sample template is from Harley House, a group of consultants who have prepared a communications plan template specifically for agencies working with Canada's federal government. The template is clearly tailored as such, but still shows a useful framework for building a public relations campaign plan.

The University of Georgia's Hugh Hodgson School of Music produced a comprehensive public relations campaign—complete with examples of campaign collateral (such as letters and budgets)—that is publicly available here: https://musi.franklin.uga.edu/sites/default/files/PR%20Campaign%20Book-Goals.pdf. Campaign plans do not usually include sample collateral documents, such as news releases, so the University may have gone overboard here, but it's very helpful for PR students to look at as an example of how one organization built a campaign plan to be ready-made for deployment.

Not a campaign plan, per se, Health PEI, the principal public health agency for Prince Edward Island, has published its communications plan here. It follows many of the same basic structures as a PR campaign plan.

Attributions

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Chapter 11: Strategy

The question of audience behaviour is at the heart of strategy: how will the campaign motivate an audience to change or sustain its behaviour such that the campaign will achieve its overarching goal(s)?

With the campaign's goal(s) in place and the collected research analyzed, a PR practitioner should more or less understand where they need their audience to be at the end of the campaign and have at least some ideas about what would motivate the audience to change or sustain their behaviour.

Strategy explains the conceptual approach that will achieve the desired audience behaviour.

11.1. Setting Strategy

The process of creating a strategy requires high levels of planning and research. Strategies are created with a specific audience(s) in mind and help to ensure that the messages created and deployed motivate the audience to change or sustain their behaviour, as may be desirable to the client/employer. The strategy tells the campaign how to effectively deliver their message(s) to the target audience(s).

There are three key components to setting a clear strategy:

- Audience selection and analysis
- Desired behavioural change or continuity
- Calculated timing

Let's consider the example of major student union looking to

push the cost of post-secondary education lower. The goal of the campaign is clear from that sentence: achieve reduced tuition fees. So what should the strategy be? There are many potential approaches to that goal; a likely option is to pressure the institutions and governments responsible for assigning funding for post-secondary institutions. How can they apply pressure? Simply asking nicely won't do the trick. What about this as a strategy?

To pressure the government to increase funding for post-secondary institutions and reduce tuition fees, the campaign will publicize a voter registration drive for people aged 18-24 and a subsequent effort to urge voters aged 18-24 to vote and to vote only for candidates supporting this policy.

Implicit to this strategy statement is an understanding that the target audience is actually the decision makers in government, not the people aged 18-24. While the tactics of the campaign may be largely directed to that group, the communication to the real target audience—the government decision makers—is that their position as a government could be threatened by this new block of voters who could sway the outcome of an election. That's evidence of audience selection and analysis. The audience is the person or group of people whose behaviour must change. While motivating young people to vote would be a general societal benefit, the campaign is only a success if the government decision makers reduce tuition fees. The timing is implicit here, too; it will mirror the timing of the election calendar, whenever the next election may be.

11.2. Strategic Analysis

Strategy involves a great deal of thought, planning, and

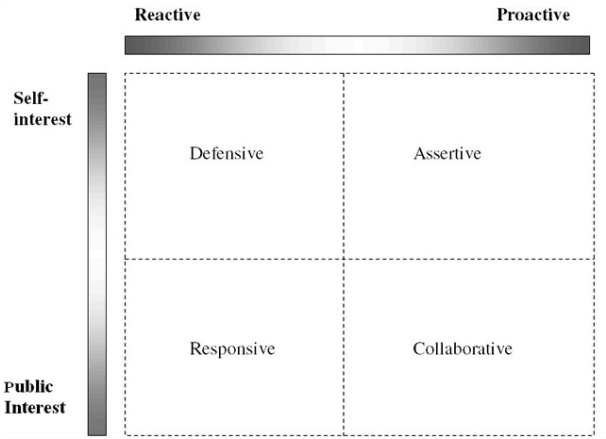
analysis. It does not mean simply designing a clever advertisement or sending a tweet without thinking about its implications. Whatever the campaign's goal may be, PR practitioners must begin with a well-defined strategy and continue to keep it at the forefront throughout the process of the campaign's development and implementation.

Strategic communicators use analysis to examine trends, audiences, and campaign design. They also use these skills to manage organizational needs, solve complex problems, conduct research, come up with creative ideas and communication tactics, and conceptualize realistic and effective messaging goals. They also may use metric-driven programs such as Google Analytics or Kissmetrics. Strong analysis is not simply brilliance; it is a systematic approach to gathering information, considering options, and creating a viable approach that leads to a campaign's success.

11.3. Four Strategic Approaches

While every strategy should be tailored to each specific campaign, audience, and context, there are four broad categories of strategic approaches:

- Defensive
- Responsive
- Assertive
- Collaborative



Examining the four strategic approaches in the context of being reactive or proactive and in the interest of the communicator or the public interest.

Defensive Approach

The primary form of communication for the defensive approach is planned one-way communication. The defensive approach uses the tools of publicity and public information to disseminate "facts" and "educate" audiences about an organization's actions or policies in response to criticisms or crises.

Sometimes a defensive approach is the only one that can be used because the organization is falsely accused of certain behaviours or actions; defending itself from such erroneous information is a legitimate and logical recourse.

The defensive approach becomes a necessary response to certain situations and problems, but it is not an ideal approach if used exclusively for all situations. If public relations is relegated to practicing primarily the defensive approach in an organization, then its function is limited to damage control that results in the loss of credibility and trust with valuable audiences. Public relations professionals who are confined to

practicing this approach are often representative of communication technicians and have very little power or participation in the decision-making process of an organization.

Responsive Approach

The responsive approach is also used to react to situations, but in this approach an organization acts in a fashion that demonstrates its concerns for society. This approach has become more prominent as organizations have lost the trust and confidence of their stakeholders. Social responsibility has become a rallying cry for consumer and environmental advocates. Some organizations learned that certain crises were better resolved when communication and actions showed remorse and concern toward audiences (and society at large). These organizations would also try to shift into a more proactive mode by identifying actions they were taking to prevent such crises in the future.

The much-documented Tylenol case set the standard for this approach. The introduction of tamper-proof seals revolutionized product packaging. The responsive approach in such cases was—at least, one would argue—more effective than a defensive approach would have been.

Assertive Approach

Bernays's "Torches of Freedom" publicity stunt in the 1920s is a good example of the assertive approach. Bernays helped George Washington Hill and the American Tobacco Company break down the social taboo that discouraged women from smoking in public by having young debutantes, or paid representations of such figures, walk in the New York Easter parade smoking Lucky Strike cigarettes. Using publicity and Freudian psychology of attitude change, Bernays was able to condition the marketplace to accept female smokers and, thereby, increase the market for Lucky Strike. Bernays played an important role in the development of this asymmetrical approach as he promoted public relations as the "engineering of consent." Organizations that use this approach see public relations as an asymmetric strategic function that helps control the external environment.

Many corporations have used the assertive approach to shape marketing, social, and regulatory conditions that would favor them. Sometimes the assertive approach is used to the detriment of society's best interests. An example of an assertive measure that had a negative social impact is the criminal conspiracy by General Motors (GM), with Firestone Tires and Standard Oil of California, to eliminate the electric streetcar system in Los Angeles. Los Angeles had one of the best electric streetcar systems in the country before GM bought it out and converted it to GM buses that used Firestone tires and Standard Oil gasoline. In 1947 the Federal government found GM and its coconspirators guilty of criminal actions and fined

them $5,000 ([1] Since then, the city of Los Angeles, with support of federal grants, has spent billions of dollars on building an electric subway system to reduce pollution and public transportation problems. At the same time, there is an abundance of prosocial examples of the assertive approach, such as the civil rights movement and health awareness campaigns to reduce the risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and lung diseases.

Collaborative Approach

The collaborative approach is, or should be, used by organizations when building consensus and support. Collaboration relies on an organization's ability to show how its actions will benefit—or at least not harm—its stakeholders. A collaborative approach requires interaction with the audiences that invites participation and involvement along the conditions of honest and genuine dialogue that respects the rights of each side and is non-manipulative in intent or action. Collaboration emphasizes that the audiences who are affected by or who can affect the action of an organization's decision should participate in the decision-making process. It involves cooperation to develop equilibrium between the interests of the two parties. The collaborative approach uses the

1. *United States v. National City Lines, Inc., et al.*).

coordination motive to negotiate outcomes that will help strengthen relationships with key stakeholders, helping both an organization's self-interest and relationship maintenance.

11.4. Strategy Versus Tactics

This distinction was noted in Chapter 10, but as a refresher, strategy is the conceptual explanation of how a campaign will motivate their audience to change or sustain their behaviour. An outsider cannot see the strategy; it can only be interpreted.

Tactics are the physical, observable tools the campaign uses to engage audiences. Examples could include television commercials, townhall meetings, op-ed articles in newspapers, or handing out leaflets in a busy public area. Outsiders can see the tactics being used.

The next chapter will deal with public relations tactics.

Attributions

Chapter 12: Tactics

Tactics comply with strategy

If a campaign uses tactics that are inconsistent with the strategy, the campaign can no longer be seen as strategic.

As an example, consider a campaign that sets a goal of achieving a specific legislative change. In looking at the audience, the research indicates that policymakers may be willing to make that legislative change, but they don't want to be seen as beholden to any industry or the company that the PR practitioners is working for.

Therefore, the strategy involves quickly and quietly engaging policymakers behind the scenes (a.k.a. lobbying) and making sure such legislative changes are not attributed to the industry or the client/employer. If that's the strategy, publicity-oriented tactics cannot be used, such as public events, news releases, or public speeches. The campaign will use less obvious tactics, such as arranging meetings with policymakers, producing research that supports their desired policy change, and possibly funding allied organizations that are willing to promote compatible messages to the voters in electoral districts that key politicians represent.

12.1. Tactics are Measurable

Tactics can be clearly linked to campaign objectives and the use of those tactics can be evaluated in relation to their success in achieving those objectives.

For example, with the above-noted campaign, the PR

practitioner(s) will use the tactic of holding private meetings with politicians. Believing that more meetings with more politicians will increase the likelihood of success, the campaign may set an objective of meeting with 75% of the politicians elected to the legislature. After conducting those meetings, they can count whether they hit their objective and they can observe whether the politicians they met with voted in favour of the legislative changes they wanted.

Can the campaign know for sure that a meeting with a politician resulted in a favourable vote in the legislature or not meeting with a politician resulted in an unfavourable vote? No, they cannot. However, they can make such measurements and interpret them to the best of their ability.

This is true of many objectives and returns to a point made previously. A campaign can achieve its overarching goal without hitting any of its objectives or a campaign can hit all of its objectives and not achieve its overarching goal.

In another example, if a campaign wanted to motivate young adults to vote, they use the tactic of targeted social media engagement and set an objective for a certain number of likes, followers, shares, and so on.

When campaigns design their tactical plans, those plans are linked to objectives that follow a "SMART" model; they are **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**chievable, **r**elevant, and **t**ime-sensitive. The tactics and objectives are often displayed in a table that shows the tactic to be used, how it will be used, a timeline of when it will be used, and an objective that shows how the successful (or unsuccessful) use of the tactic will be evaluated.

12.2. Categories of PR Tactics

Tactics can be divided into four simple categories, based on the level of control and cost associated with each:

- Earned media
- Unearned media (advertising)
- Controlled media
- Shared media (mostly social media)

Earned Media

For most PR practitioners, earned media is the biggest "bang" for the least "buck." Earned media refers to news coverage in newspapers, magazines, television programs, radio broadcasts, and other (usually) mainstream media for which no money was paid. The client/employer does something newsworthy and the mainstream media provides coverage for the interest of its readers/listeners/viewers; thus, the media coverage has been *earned*.

Despite the explosion and popularity of social media, strong coverage in mainstream media is still extremely important. Indeed, strong mainstream media coverage will result in those video clips and articles being shared through social media, amplifying the message.

Earned media is based on journalistic interest in whatever the client/employer has said, done, not done, had done to it, or had said about it. There are a few traits to one of these actions or statements that makes it newsworthy:

- Controversy
- Impact

- Timeliness
- Novelty
- Prominence
- Furriness

Controversy

Not surprisingly, news media love something controversial. Conflict helps to tell a story and helps to crystalize the issues for media consumers (i.e., readers, listeners, and viewers). Conflict also generates emotional investment, not only for media consumers, but for the opinion leaders and stakeholders involved, which amplifies the level of interest for all.

Impact

The more people who are impacted by a story, the more coverage it will (or should) receive. People care about what's happening to them, their neighbourhood, their city/town, their region, their province, and their country (often in that order). Students of PR may note that whenever a plane crashes abroad, the news media always note how many passengers were from the local country or area. This is a way of showing local impact on the story (though one may ponder the ethical implications of why media consumers have such tribal interpretations of the value of the lives lost in the same plane crash).

Timeliness

It's in the name: **new**s. Old news isn't news unless there's something significant to update. News that has not yet been

reported by any mainstream media outlet is much more exciting, as news media crave the opportunity to "break" a story by being the first to publish it. News media often credit the agency that broke a story, so media want to be the agency being credited, not the agency giving credit to a competitor.

Novelty

Again, this is associated with being new, but it is also something rare. For example, new technologies, previously unperformed feats of human athleticism or creativity, and never-before-seen discoveries of science are of heightened interest to news media.

Prominence

In some situations, none of the above may apply and, yet, the news media will cover it (such as every sneeze or utterance of major celebrities). People love to indulge in "palace intrigue" stories, especially of the British royal family, but not only them and not only literal royals. The shuffling of personnel in the Whitehouse draws media attention, even when those changes have no impact on the general public, have no novelty, are not really controversial (hard as media may try to make it so), and not really timely. However, there is no building more politically prominent than the Whitehouse and no family more prominent than the British royal family.

Furriness

Yes, fluffy animals—and colourful animals and cetaceans and any animal that is rare or at least not found locally. News media

love a story about a pregnant whale in an aquarium or a pregnant elephant at a zoo. (The news story in *Anchorman* about a pregnant koala at the zoo being a top story is only oh-so-slightly an exaggeration.)

If sheep are being transported around a region as part of a new biodynamic farming method, the news media will show up to capture video and tell the story. They don't want every story on the evening news to be about politicians and crime; they need something uplifting or adorable once in a while.

Unearned Media

In short, unearned media is advertising. News media will not provide this content because of news interest; campaigns must pay to have the content displayed, which increases the amount of control over the content, but decreases the level of interest the audience takes in it.

Audiences are typically wary of advertisements and often tune them out (and often deliberately at that). However, audiences tune in for earned media.

The craft of advertising merits an entire post-secondary course and its own textbook, so this chapter will not attempt to explain the world of advertising here. However, advertising can be bought in a wide variety of media, such as mainstream media (television, radio, newspapers, magazines), billboards, bus stops, sports arenas, the internet, and social media channels. This option is expensive, but effective (as hard as audiences may try to tune it out).

Controlled Media

Also known as "owned media," this refers to media that an organization directly controls, such as its own website, the audio in its businesses (such as the advertisements companies play for themselves between songs in their retail locations), or the walls of its facilities. The content may come from within, such as testimonials from employees about how much the like working for the organization or may even come from external sources, such as product reviews provided by customers.

Shared Media

This category is mostly social media, but also includes partnerships, such as sponsoring an event hosted by a local charity, where the organization has some control over how their brand and message are communicated, but not total control. They entrust, in this case, the local charity with pushing the message forward to the target audience (much as what happens in social media).

Again, how to use social media to communicate with target audiences could be an entire course—in fact, a course this author teaches—so there isn't space to do the topic justice here. However, an enormous amount of information is available to PR practitioners about which audiences are using which social media platforms and how. The decision to pick between TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, or Snapchat should come down to which audience is using which medium and how, as well as the nature of the PR campaign. PR practitioners should have a strong understanding of social media engagement, both earned and unearned, but also need to acknowledge that this is a specialization area where dedicated social media

communicators may need to be hired in order to ensure success in these media.

12.3. Tactical Laundry List

There are *so many* tactics. This chapter does not attempt to be exhaustive, as truly no book could ever achieve that, but this is a long list of PR tactics, along with a short explanation of each.

Media Relations Tactics

News release: tell the news media what they should write about your client/employer.

Media advisory: tell the news media to come film/photograph/interview your client/employer and/or their event.

Media kit: tell the news what they should know about your client/employer before they write about them.

Op-ed article: write an interesting article for the news media to publish, giving credit to you or your client/employer.

News conference: invite the news media to record your client/employer making an announcement or statement, giving them a chance to ask questions. (This is preceded by a media advisory.)

Interview: invite the news media to ask a spokesperson questions to help inform an article they will write or a clip they will produce.

Exclusive: invite one news media to have exclusive coverage of

your story, forgoing the rest, at least until the story has been published.

Media tour: invite the news media to see something your client/employer does really well or has started doing recently. Examples include touring a new facility or letting them participate in the production process in an existing facility.

Sample: send your client/employer's product to the news media so they can write about it; this is popular with edible products, books, and new novelty products.

Publicity stunt: be careful! These can go sideways quickly and have disastrous effects. Plan meticulously, consider Murphy's Law, and practice every step of the stunt privately before trying it publicly. Good luck!

Editorial board visit: if the client/employer is noteworthy enough, a newspaper's editorial board may agree to meet with them to have a conversation that leads to media coverage, often an opinion piece, but not necessarily.

Direct-to-Audience Tactics

Knock on doors: nothing stimulates a better conversation with the audience than a one-on-one conversation, right at their home.

Be present: when major events are happening, set up a booth with information, treats, novel giveaways, and fun activities. Typical major events include national and regional holidays, social and political events, such as Pride parades, or themed events, such as Labour Day or a Santa Claus parade.

Go where they go: if your client/employer's audience loves monster trucks, look to connect at monster truck shows. If

they like art, connect with them outside the art gallery. This could involve setting up a booth, buying exposure, handing out information or fun giveaways, or other similar actions.

Make allies: work with local charities, service clubs, or other groups to help connect with mutually sympathetic audiences. A lot of good public relations work happens at charity fundraisers, chambers of commerce, union halls, and service clubs (such as the Rotary Club).

Host an open house: invite you client/employer's audience to their business or place of operations. Give them a chance to begin the conversations they want to have and engage responsively.

Phone them: people hate phone calls—at first. Once they understand that there's a real person on the other end of the phone who isn't trying to scam them, they sometimes become interested in meaningful conversations. Sometimes not.

Deploy a friend tree: once you have somebody who feels strongly positive about your message—sometimes known as a "brand evangelist"—have them engage people they know directly or invite those people to an event your client/employer is hosting.

Write to them: if you know where the audience lives, send them a letter. This often works well with neighbourhood-based engagement, but can work with any audience, so long as you can make sure the right letter gets to the right reader.

Give something away: publicize that you'll give something away for free, perhaps in exchange for showing up at a particular time and place or providing a mailing address, email address, and/or phone number (to allow the conversation to be continued later).

Alternative Media Tactics

Billboards: for the right audience (motorists), these can be very effective, if expensive.

Human billboards: yes, you can pay a person to attach a billboard or costume to their body and move it about. This is an expensive gimmick that looks cheap.

Burma Shave: a misnomer to most, this tactic refers to standing by the side of a major road waving signs at traffic, sometimes in a staggered fashion with multiple messages for motorists as they move past the line of sign wavers.

Rallies: gather an enthusiastic group to a very public place (often a court house or city hall) to hear a few speeches and cheer in favour of something.

Protests: gather an angry group to a very public place (often a court house or city hall) to hear a few speeches and cheer against something.

Vandalism: okay, this tactic is illegal and you definitely shouldn't do it. However, if one were to consider such a tactic, they should know that it typically works best for political and social causes, not corporate clients, and it needs to be either very clever, very poignant, or very shocking. But, yeah, this author definitely does not recommend vandalism.

Newsjacking: this is when somebody tries to insert themselves into a news story that has little or nothing to do with them in an effort to promote their own separate (or minimally related) issue. This one can backfire, so be careful.

Guerilla publicity: there are all sorts of creative options here. One example this author especially admired was a non-profit organization that drew chalk outlines of people who had died

in the streets from exposure and added the names, ages, and information about their cause of death to highlight the human impact of inadequate social services and to shame the audience into realizing their own indifference to these tragic deaths.

Confrontation: publicly challenge or attack a competitor. Some politicians will even crash a rival's event to challenge the narrative being given, drum up attention for themselves, and create conflict (which is newsworthy, as noted earlier).

Social Media Tactics

Ride hashtags: when a hashtag is trending, if appropriate, latch on to it and insert the client/employer's brand into the conversation.

Latch onto influencers: connect with influencers (often by sending them something for free or paying them) and push into their channel to connect with a mutual target audience.

Push content: though this seems obvious, PR practitioners should push their client/employer's content into social media channels in a way that captures the attention of the target audience and is easily shareable.

Be conversational: social media campaigns that are strictly one way and stop as soon as the campaign hits "send" are less engaging. When somebody takes the time to engage with a campaign, have that conversation.

Recruit brand ambassadors: work with somebody prominent to become a spokesperson or de facto spokesperson for the campaign's cause.

Blog: tell the world interesting stories about your client/

employer, their products/services, their operations, the people who rely on them, the people who help out, or anything else that might create some human interest and "feel good" vibes. Make the blog easy to share.

Vlog: give people useful advice for free. Go online and tell people how to do what your client/employer does; share a few "tricks of the trade" and make your client/employer a respected authority on the matter.

Show up when it counts (and record it): if something problematic is happening in your client/employer's sector, make sure the client/employer is part of the solution and showing up to help. Capture that effort on film and push it into social media, connecting it with relevant hashtags and influencer accounts.

Create unique content: if there's a content gap out there, fill it with interesting, useful, and unique content. (For a stunning example, study the Kony 2012 campaign.)

In wrapping up this section, remember that creating a social media account is free, but using it effectively can be very expensive. Also remember that this list is helpful, but far from exhaustive. There are myriad tactics; some work well and some are risky. Each campaign must choose the best tactics—tactics that are congruent with their strategy—to achieve their objectives and overall campaign goal.

Attributions

Chapter 13: Crisis Communications

> A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes.
> -Mark Twain

How fitting that the 13th chapter of this book is for crisis communications: indeed, there is much bad luck associated with needing the knowledge and skills taught herein.

Despite the best laid plans of the best public relations practitioners, clients and employers sometimes find themselves embroiled in a public relations crisis—even through no fault of their own—and need to navigate the very difficult path from crisis to stability.

This is an important point: in the short-term the goal of crisis communications isn't success or profitability or victory or anything so grandiose; it's stability; it's survival.

When embroiled in a communications crisis, survival is a good mantra to have and the role of doctor is a good one to envision: what medicine does the employer/client need to survive this crisis? And, as many doctors may tell you, the best option is *prevention*. What can be done before a crisis to limit its spread and impact?

13.1. Crisis Communications Planning and

Preparation

When joining an organization, a PR practitioner should be very interested in seeing the crisis communications plans in place and should be interested in learning what preparations have been implemented, what training has been done to keep personnel ready for a crisis, and what resources are available in the event calamity strikes. If no plans are in place, creating such a plan should be a top priority. Equally, if no training is being done or if inadequate resources are available, this should be remedied quickly.

These are the crisis communications preparations that should be in place in any organization:

- Completed crisis communications plan (with associated policy documents)
- Designated crisis management team (with role definitions and 24/7 contact information)
- Pre-established communications channels and protocols
- Trained spokespeople (with 24/7 contact information)
- Confirmed media contact list (updated regularly)
- Verified contact information for key personnel (especially cell phone numbers)
- Pre-authorized information sheets, especially about sensitive areas of operation
- Pre-prepared templates and boilerplates
- Designated meeting places and primary and secondary crisis management centers

Crisis preparation can be a dismal experience. Organizations should brainstorm worst case scenarios and discuss probable responses, even exploring morbid and gruesome possibilities. (This author once produced a crisis communications plan for an organization with multiple childcare facilities, which

basically amounted to a greatest hits album of every parent's worst nightmares.) These tasks are unpleasant, but are essential to help prepare personnel to respond effectively in a crisis. Such preparations may also help to limit liability stemming from a crisis, as a failure to prepare could be a civil suit waiting to happen.

13.2. Symptoms of a Crisis

What makes a crisis? That's subjective, but everybody seems to be very clear and sure when they're in one.

There are several symptoms that make up a crisis:

- Surprise
- Lack of information
- Escalating severity
- Loss of control
- Increasing audience hostility
- Existential threat

Each of these symptoms is problematic, but skilled PR practitioners can limit the impact of each.

For example, surprise can be partially neutralized through anticipation; did the team prepare a crisis communications plan that anticipated this possibility?

Equally, an information deficit can be partially neutralized through preparation. Even if you don't have all the information in a crisis, you've prepared how to respond and you can issue holding statements until more information is available.

As the crisis gets worse (which it will if it's truly a crisis), strong planning and training will help to maintain clear

communication, organizational effectiveness, and calm leadership.

When the organization has truly lost control of the situation (which, again, will happen if it's truly a crisis), engaged monitoring of the situation and active engagement will help navigate until a modicum of control can be established.

As audiences learn about the crisis, they will quickly lay blame, even if unfairly. Taking a values-based approach can help. One important lesson in a crisis is to always put victims first. If the organization shows that value, audiences will appreciate the concern for human wellbeing. Protecting wildlife, the environment, and personal property is also valued by audiences. Companies that do so stand to recover well. Companies that try not to spend too much on remediation during a crisis stand to lose the loyalty of stakeholders and invoke the wrath of others (especially regulators).

Finally, as an organization faces the distinct possibility that it will not survive the crisis, this symptom can be partially negated by suspending emotional reactions, respecting and supporting the emotions of others, and focusing on rational action.

13.3. Types of Crisis

Natural: a natural crisis is typically a volcanic eruption, earthquake, tsunami, deluge, flood, drought, heat wave, wildfire, sandstorm, landslide, avalanche, blizzard, hailstorm, ice storm, tornado, hurricane, typhoon, cyclone, asteroid, or problematic type of vermin.

While one can always discuss the role of human-made climate

change in some of these, in the short-term, they need to be treated as natural.

From a PR perspective, these are generally the easiest to deal with because they are completely beyond the control of anybody to stop (again, excluding the fact that some of these are caused by human-made climate change). However, if an organization has failed to prepare for these predictable occurrences (such as flooding on the Red River or blizzards in north-eastern North America, which are both common occurrences), then they will need to explain that failure sooner or later.

Active accident: there are too many possibilities to list here, but this happens when there is a deliberate action, such as building a bridge, with unintended consequences, such as its collapse during construction.

The original decision may have been perfectly fine, but something went wrong that will have PR consequences. Understanding what the problem is, taking responsibility for the problem and the solution, and doing everything possible to protect people, the environment, wildlife, and personal property is the path forward.

Passive accident: examples include system failures, neglect, or technical problems.

These are more problematic because they are usually entirely preventable. A failure of due diligence is often the root cause and audiences are not sympathetic to neglectful management.

In addition to solving the problem, stakeholders will often look for a higher level of accountability here. In other words, the people responsible may likely be fired (or even prosecuted).

Confrontational: typical examples include boycotts, protests,

strikes, lockouts, censures, sanctions, or some pressure or threat to do the same.

Some of these PR crises are less of a crisis and more of a slow burn, such as with labour disputes. In some cases, the disputes cause significant hardship to people, but they are unlikely to result in a loss of life or damage to the natural environment (when there is a risk to life or the environment, governments will often order an end to the dispute, assigning a mediator to help resolve it).

The key to these crises is to keen the long-term outcome in mind. These confrontational crises can turn violent, but no one violent action will define the outcome weeks or months later (though it may unfortunately taint the outcome and cause lingering hurt feelings).

In some situations, such as with a lockout, the crisis is one of the client/employer's own deliberate making, so audiences may have little sympathy for the situation.

External malevolent: examples include vandalism, arson, sabotage, violence, theft, espionage, and corruption.

How to handle these situations is extremely variable and dependent on the precise circumstances of the crisis. There's a huge difference between a company being a victim of theft from a ransomware attack that could compromise customer accounts, as compared to somebody sabotaging their remote facilities that customers will never directly notice.

As always, PR practitioners need to think about who the victims are (hint: not the company, even when the company has been robbed) and how to protect them (i.e., the company's stakeholders who may be vulnerable as a result of the situation).

Internal malevolent: similar to the above examples, this is

when somebody within the organization commits an act of vandalism, arson, sabotage, violence, harassment, theft, espionage, corruption, sexual misconduct, or even unrelated criminality.

As a note, scandals such as these do not need to actually be criminal actions. For example, if a CEO is having numerous consensual sexual relationships concurrently with multiple employees, this might be gross managerial misconduct, but it's not actually a crime. That doesn't matter much; the crisis will need to be handled (and your CEO is probably choosing between resigning and getting fired).

False/manufactured: these include untrue rumours, speculation, misinformation, disinformation, slander, libel, and unfair associations (such as when former company leaders or employees are charged with disturbing crimes).

With every one of these types of crisis, litigation is a potential or even likely event. During the crisis, litigation is a volatile aggravator and it can limit how PR practitioners respond. PR practitioners are wise to get the lawyers involved too early, rather than too late.

13.4. Benefits of a Crisis

Amazingly, there can actually be benefits to a PR crisis. Consider the recent global pandemic; health ministers became trusted friends and public health officials became heroes, nearly even patron saints. The crisis exposed weaknesses in a variety of sectors and forced a greater global understanding of the importance of public health, supply chain management, and the stress that a general crisis can cause the population at large.

Heroes are born: people will quickly learn who they can rely on in a crisis. Those people are going to gain a favourable spotlight and will be called upon more often and in more important roles.

Change is accelerated: sometimes, change is aching to happen, but organizational resistance or other factors limit that change. A crisis will blow the lid off such containment, forcing rapid adaptations and deployment of resources.

Latent problems are faced: a problem that has been simmering for a long-time explodes; the organization's delay in dealing with the problem comes to a sudden end and the problem is finally fixed.

People are changed: this has a double meaning. First, people change their attitudes, behaviours, and approaches. Second, if they don't, they are pushed out of the organization, sometimes known as "cleaning house." While not pretty, sometimes cleaning house is essential for organizational growth and renewal. (Voters happily confirm this necessity at least every few elections!)

New strategies evolve: old ways of doing business may have worked, but they can be replaced in a hurry because of the immediate necessity to do so. The new strategies and approaches may be for the best and stand the test of time.

Better preparation for the next crisis: battle-tested veterans of one crisis are better equipped to handle the next. Going through a crisis helps to cultivate a long-term view and to keep an emotional calm in short-term decision-making.

New competitive edge and organizational resilience: what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. (Another cliché is probably available for each of the above, as well, if desired.)

13.5. Words for the Wise

Dealing with a public relations crisis is an emotional experience.

Knowledge of past crises and best practices is invaluable, but confronting and containing one's own emotions at the same time as trying to read the emotional needs of others, especially target audiences, is the quintessential skill of crisis management.

Planning, preparation, training, simulating, testing, and other methods of minimizing the impacts and stress of a crisis are critically important. However, in the moment-to-moment experience of a crisis, self-discipline, calm listening, genuine empathy, and clear thinking are going to be the tools that make or break a PR practitioner and their client/employer.

Attributions

Parts of this chapter were informed by or are conceptually drawn from the work of Gerald Meyers, author of *Managing Crisis : A Positive Approach* (1986).

About the Author

Sam Schechter adapted *Public Relations: From Strategy to Action* from a variety of sources, but most of the content is his original writing. Sam is a faculty member in the Communications Department at Douglas College. This is his third OER textbook in the field of applied communications. His first OER textbook, *Professional Writing Today: A Functional Approach*, provides guidance for undergraduate students and entry-level employees looking to improve their professional writing skills. His second OER textbook, *Public Speaking for Today's Audiences*, provides guidance for undergraduate students looking to improve their public speaking skills.

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