Study Guide

for the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations

A Preparation Tool for Candidates

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Acknowledgments

The Universal Accreditation Board (UAB) has developed this study guide to help candidates prepare for the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations. The Examination tests broad business and communication knowledge, strategic perspective and sound professional judgment. Successful completion of the Examination, therefore, demonstrates significant knowledge of ethical public relations as a management function.

The Examination items reflect results of industrywide analyses of public relations practice in 2000, 2010 and 2015. This research identified more than 70 areas of competence (knowledge, skills and abilities) that mid-career public relations practitioners should demonstrate. Each Examination question has gone through rigorous development, sourcing and pre-testing. A subject-matter expert, trained by a test-development specialist to write test questions, authored each item and tied it to references in the public relations body of knowledge. Each question was then edited for readability and clarity by a professional test editor, evaluated by a professional psychometrician and reviewed by a national panel of experts. The Examination continuously evolves as public relations practices change and new questions are added.

Information in this fourth study-guide edition has been compiled, adapted and updated by the Universal Accreditation Examination Preparation Work Group. Organizations participating in the Accreditation process have provided a wealth of resources. Courtesy credits appear in materials that follow. Unless otherwise noted, all approvals for various materials were originally granted to the Public Relations Society of America by authors for the first or second edition of this study guide.

Feedback on this study guide is always welcome. Please send comments to accred@prsa.org.

About the Universal Accreditation Board

The Universal Accreditation Board, established in 1998, is a credentialing agency for members of 10 public relations professional organizations and public affairs practitioners in the Department of Defense. Each organization contributes resources to the Accreditation process. Senior-level volunteers — practitioners, educators and military personnel — represent participating organizations on the board and oversee the Accreditation program. That program includes three credentials: **Accredited in Public Relations** (APR), **Accredited in Public Relations and Military Communication** (APR+M) and the **Certificate in Principles of Public Relations**. Participating organizations are the Agricultural Relations Council, Asociación de Relacionistas Profesionales de Puerto Rico, California Association of Public Information Officials, Florida Public Relations Association, Maine Public Relations Council, National Association of Government Communicators, National School Public Relations Association, Public Relations Society of America, Religion Communicators Council, Southern Public Relations Federation, and U.S. Department of Defense.

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Introduction

Welcome to the process of becoming Accredited in Public Relations. Preparing for Accreditation is an excellent way to grow professionally. The knowledge, skills and abilities tested on the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations are building blocks for your career. Your commitment to becoming Accredited is an important decision.

Earning APR involves two steps: (1) completing a Panel Presentation and (2) passing a computer-based Examination. The Panel Presentation evaluates your knowledge, skills and abilities in 12 specific areas that cannot be effectively judged in the computer-based Examination. A panel of three Accredited practitioners assesses your competence in creative conceptualization/creativity, initiative, interpersonal skills, management skills, multitasking, flexibility, time management, uses of multiple delivery mechanisms, communication skills/speaking, communication skills/writing and editing, communication skills/listening, and presentation skills.

The computer-based Examination tests six groupings of knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). The list below indicates the percentage of the Examination devoted to each category. Detailed descriptions of each KSA grouping are given in the following chapters.

- Researching, Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Programs   33%
- Leading the Public Relations Function   18%
- Managing Relationships   15%
- Applying Ethics and Law   13%
- Managing Issues and Crisis Communications   13%
- Understanding Communication Models, Theories and History of the Profession   8%

You'll find exercises and case studies throughout this study guide. Look for this exercise icon (➡). These exercises should be used with other preparation resources that you choose from the Readings on pp. 6, 7, and 8. **This study guide should not be your only preparation resource**. We recommend that you choose from resources on pp. 6, 7, and 8. In addition, we recommend that you take advantage of coaching sessions offered by participating organizations, mentoring, study groups, APR Learning Opportunity webinars or workshops, and The Online Study Course. Some resources may fit your individual needs and preparation style better than others. Choose those that work for you.

If you need more information, you'll find answers to frequently asked questions on the Universal Accreditation Board website at www.praccreditation.org. If you need help, contact your local Accreditation chair, a mentor, a colleague, a friend who recently became Accredited, or Kathy Mulvihill, senior manager, Accreditation Programs, c/o PRSA, 120 Wall Street, 21th Floor, New York, NY 10005, Telephone: (212) 460-1436, kathy.mulvihill@prsa.org.

Information and Resources

Links You Can Use

Tip: All links in this study guide are current as of January 2017. Remember that some websites may change navigation and render links inactive. If you have trouble connecting to a specific page, search from the organization's home page.

Candidate's Process for Accreditation in Public Relations

www.praccreditation.org/resources/documents/apr-candidate-process-chart.docx

What's on the Examination?

www.praccreditation.org/resources/examination-questions-faq/index.html

Demo of Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations

www.praccreditation.org/resources/aprdemo/index.htm

Panel Presentation Instructions for Candidates and Panel Presentation Questionnaire

http://www.praccreditation.org/resources/documents/apr-RR-Candidates-Insructions.pdf

http://www.praccreditation.org/resources/documents/apr-RR-questionnaire.doc

APR Online Study Course

www.online2learn.net/APR

Readings

The Universal Accreditation Board suggests that candidates for Accreditation review contents of at least one general text and one or more of the specialized texts from the Short Bookshelf of Texts below. In some sections of this study guide, you will find references to resources not on the recommended bookshelf. These references are intended to encourage you to explore the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) further.

Short Bookshelf of Recommended Texts

- **AP Stylebook current edition**

  *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law (*current edition). New York: The Associated Press.

- **EPR 11th edition or current**

  Broom, G. M., & Sha, B-L (2013). *Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations* (11th or current edition). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education.

- **Primer of PR Research 3rd or current**

  Stacks, D. W. (2017). *Primer of Public Relations Research* (3rd or current edition). New York: Guilford Press.

- **Strategies and Tactics 11th edition or current**

  Wilcox, D. L., Cameron, G. T., & Reber, B. H. (2015). *Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics* (11th or current edition). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education.

- **Strategic Planning for PR 4th or current**

  Smith, R. D. (2013). *Strategic Planning for Public Relations* (4th or current edition). New York: Routledge.

<u>**References by KSA Grouping**</u>

The following references from the Short Bookshelf of Recommended Texts correspond to sections of this study guide and to the knowledge, skills and abilities the computer-based Examination will test. Please note that some chapters address several areas of KSAs.

Defining Public Relations (Practice, Function, Roles)

- EPR 11th, chapters 1 and 2

- Primer of PR Research, chapter 2

- Strategies and Tactics, chapters 1 and 4

Researching, Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Programs

- EPR 11th, chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14

- Primer of PR Research, Part II: Informal Research Methodology; Part III: Formal Research Methodology, chapter 10 (Design Considerations, Survey Type: Internet)

- Strategies and Tactics, chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8

- Strategic Planning for PR, all content, a step-by-step planning process for public relations professionals

Leading the Public Relations Function

- AP Stylebook, Business Guidelines section

- EPR 11th, chapters 2 (Requirements for Success), 3, 4 (Business Practices), 9 (Cultural Contexts, Regulatory and Business Contexts), 11, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19

- Strategies and Tactics, chapters 1 (Essential Career Skills), 2 (Public Relations in the Next Five Years), 4, 12 (Regulations by Government Agencies, Liability for Sponsored Events, Attorney/Public Relations relationship) and 17 (Investor Relations), 18, 19, 20 and 21

Managing Relationships

- AP Stylebook, Social Media Guidelines, Business Guidelines and Broadcast Guidelines sections

- EPR 11th, chapters 4 (Digital Age and Globalization), 6 (Reputation in the Digital Age), 7 (A Systems Perspective, Open and Closed Systems), 9, 10, 12 (Get Buy-In for the Plan), and 16 (Facilitating Media Relations, Building Community and Nation)

- Strategies and Tactics, chapters 1 (Networking), 2 (Public Relations Enters the Digital Age), 3 (Ethical Dealings with News Media), 7, 10 (Reputation Management), 11, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17

- Strategic Planning for PR, Step 6: Using Effective Communication; Step 7: Choosing Communication Tactics

Applying Ethics and Law

- AP Stylebook, Briefing on Media Law section

- EPR 11th, chapters 5 and 6

- Primer of PR Research, chapter 3

- Strategies and Tactics, chapters 3, 9 (The Ethics of Persuasion) and 12

Managing Issues and Crisis Communication

- EPR 11th, chapters 1 (Issue Management, Crisis Management), 11, 12 (Planning for Program Implementation) and 13 (Crisis Communication)

- Strategies and Tactics, chapter 10

Understanding Communication Models, Theories and History of the Profession

- EPR 11th, chapters 1, 4, 7, 8 and 12 (Role of Working Theory)

- Strategies and Tactics, chapters 1, 2, 7, 9 and 11

Tips and What to Expect

Tips for Preparation

1. Familiarize yourself with the competencies or **KSAs** explained throughout this study guide. These KSAs outline what the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations tests.

2. Compare your public relations experience with KSAs evaluated in the Panel Presentation and those tested on the computer-based Examination. Identify areas where you need additional preparation.

3. Pay attention to the percentage listed for each KSA. Use these percentages to guide your preparation. For example, one-third of Examination items ask about researching, planning, implementing and evaluating programs. Only 8 percent of questions ask about communication models, theories or history.

4. Note that more than half the questions on the computer-based Examination are posed as brief situations or scenarios. All responses are multiple-choice.

5. Think about each answer option to determine the most appropriate choices. The Examination does not test what you can memorize. The Examination assesses how well you can apply your knowledge to everyday situations that public relations professionals encounter.

6. Refer to the Short Bookshelf of Recommended Texts (pp. 6, 7, and 8), and use information provided in this study guide.

7. Review the code of ethics for your professional organization. Use exercises and case studies in this study guide and on PRSA's code of ethics page to practice ethical decision-making.

8. Use available resources such as this study guide, local coaching sessions, APR learning opportunity workshops, webinars and the Online Study Course to prepare for the Examination. Form a study group, or identify a study buddy from among friends or colleagues preparing for the Examination.

9. If you have questions, ask your Accreditation chair, coach, presenter, mentor or a recently Accredited friend. You may contact Kathy Mulvihill (kathy.mulvihill@prsa.org), Accreditation program senior manager at PRSA, for help finding others who can assist you.

Tips for the Panel Presentation

1. Read and follow the Panel Presentation Instructions for Candidates carefully. Print the Panel Presentation Questionnaire.

2. Approach Panel Presentation as an opportunity to demonstrate your professionalism. Treat it as if you were selling your credentials to a prospective client. Dress professionally. Be on time. Be courteous. Remember that first impressions count. Expect your Panel Presentation to last at least one hour but no more than two hours. Your panel members may ask you to present your portfolio as soon as the session starts and ask questions during, afterward or both. Make your points, and move on. Do not drag your presentation out unnecessarily.

3. Talk to your Accreditation chair, new APRs, friends and colleagues who may be a few steps ahead of you in the process. Ask them what to expect and for suggestions.

4. Remember that communication skills, including writing, editing, speaking and listening, are among 12 KSAs evaluated during the Panel Presentation. Avoid showmanship and flashy or elaborate props and handouts. If you use PowerPoint or similar presentation software, you are responsible for bringing and setting up the necessary projection equipment. Have an alternate plan for equipment emergencies or similar situations.

5. Take time to think about answers for the Panel Presentation questionnaire. Candidates often write and re-write each response. Some candidates start three to four weeks before the due date. Questionnaire responses are the primary examples of your writing that panel members will review.

6. Proofread your Panel Presentation questionnaire. Have another public relations colleague or friend read it for typos, logic and language errors.

7. Include the public relations plan you describe on your Panel Presentation questionnaire in the portfolio you prepare for your presentation. Show materials that illustrate your role in the execution of your example plan. If you do not have an actual work-related plan, create one to use for Accreditation purposes.

8. Be prepared to discuss your portfolio and the application of KSAs such as research, planning, implementation and evaluation, ethics, and communication theories in your public relations practice. For example:

    *   Do you know the difference between output and outcome objectives? Strategies and tactics?

    *   Can you show how your campaign follows the four-step process (research, planning, implementation and evaluation)?

    *   Can you identify a communication model/theory and apply it to your work experience or to a situation?

    *   What's the difference between primary and secondary research? How about formal and informal? What's an adequate sample size for a national survey?

    *   What provision in your organization's code of ethics applies to a situation you have experienced or observed?

9. Tell your panelists what you would do differently if the plan you are using does not include all prescribed research, planning, implementation and evaluation elements.

10. Don't get bogged down in details of your organizational structure, your boss's concerns or internal controversies about your case.

11. Don't be afraid to ask panelists for feedback, suggestions and guidance. The Panel Presentation is intended to be a dialogue during which you demonstrate your knowledge, skills and abilities to Accredited panelists. The encounter is not to be adversarial.

Be Prepared for Questions Panelists May Ask

- Which elements of the plan did you oversee or implement?

- What other departments needed to be involved in this campaign for it to be successful, and how did you ensure their involvement?

- How did you present this plan to decision makers?

- What other elements, which may not have been approved, did you want to include in the plan?

- What other research methodologies might you have used if you had more budget or time?

- How did you determine which publics were most important?

- If you included news media as a public, why are they not just a channel or tool?

- Can you identify a point in the plan when you needed to demonstrate initiative or creativity?

- What strategies or timetables needed to be modified during the campaign because of unexpected developments?

- What potential communication barriers did you need to overcome to reach your key publics? Which specific strategies or tactics minimized those barriers?

- What crisis could have made success impossible? What contingency plans did you have in place for that scenario?

- Which strategies or tactics were most important in the end? Which had little or no impact?

- What specific strategies or tactics were evaluated? How do you know what made an impact?

Think about other questions that panelists may ask about your specific plan. Be prepared to answer the most challenging questions that the panel could ask you.

Questions courtesy of the Minnesota PRSA Accreditation Committee.

What to Expect at the Prometric Testing Center

Examination Length

You will have three hours and 45 minutes (including 15 minutes of recommended practice/tutorial time before you start the Examination) to complete the Examination. Time for an optional 15-minute break is included. You can choose to take the break or not. If you do take the break, be aware that the time clock will continue to run down; it does not stop for your break.

Examination Questions

The Examination includes 132 scored questions and may include other items that are not scored. The ungraded items are beta questions being evaluated for possible future use. The Universal Accreditation Board refreshes the Examination with validated beta questions as needed to ensure the Examination remains current.

You will not see a distinction between beta and scored questions. The question order changes randomly from candidate to candidate. Many questions present brief scenarios. The number of items about each subject reflects percentages listed for KSAs. In other words, more questions focus on Researching, Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Programs (33 percent) than on Applying Ethics and Law (13 percent).

Admission to the Examination Area

Arrive at the Prometric Testing Center you have selected at least 30 minutes before your scheduled examination time. If you arrive 30 minutes or more after your scheduled examination time, you will be considered a non-refundable no-show. Be prepared to show two current forms of identification with your signature. One should be a valid government-issued photo identification document, such as a driver's license or passport. The other should show your signature. Your name on both identification documents must match the name on the Authorization to Test (ATT) letter you received from UAB. You cannot take the Examination without the required identification. Some Prometric sites now give you the option of providing biometric identification in the form of an electronic fingerprint that will be deleted as soon as you complete the Examination. The purpose is to speed your exit and re-entry if you take a break.

Canceling, Rescheduling and Missing Appointments

If you need to cancel or reschedule the Examination appointment, you must do so by noon Eastern Time at least two (2) business days before your appointment. For example, an appointment for Thursday must be rescheduled/canceled by noon ET Tuesday. An appointment for Tuesday must be rescheduled/canceled by noon ET Saturday. You can cancel or reschedule by calling 1 (800) 853-6775 or by visiting www.prometric.com. You will need to provide your Prometric confirmation number when you cancel or reschedule an appointment.

If you cancel or reschedule, you will pay a fee to Prometric as follows: $15 if the change is done five to 29 days before the Examination date or $60 if the change is done less than five days but more than two days before the Examination date.

If you miss your appointment, you will not be rescheduled, and you will forfeit the testing fees. If you are late for your appointment, you may not be admitted. Late admission is at the discretion of the Prometric Testing Center. If you are unable to test because the Prometric testing site has a technical or personal problem, contact UAB immediately at (212) 460-1436.

Dress

Wear comfortable, layered clothing. Test center temperatures may vary. Because Prometric has many locations across the country, you may find other physical differences.

Taking the Examination

Upon check-in, you will be required to leave all personal items in a locker. You can't take anything in or out of the actual testing area. You will be given scratch paper and pencil or an erasable board and marker for use during the Examination. Prometric will collect these items from you when you finish. While you're taking the Examination, you can make notes, write down things you don't want to forget, and list questions you've answered but want to double-check later if you have time. These questions may be in addition to those you flag electronically to return to later.

Prometric meets testing needs for numerous organizations nationwide. Others in the room when you take the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations are probably not taking the APR computer-based Examination. Expect to be in a room filled with computer stations and other people at work. If the Prometric manager hands you a calculator when you check in, hand it back because you won't need it.

All Prometric sites employ continuous video surveillance for security. Footage can be reviewed in cases where a security breach or candidate misconduct is a concern.

Tips for Taking a Computer-Based Examination

1. The only computer skill you need for the Examination is the ability to move a computer mouse to click a box. You can take the Examination by using keyboard commands if you prefer.

2. You will take a step-by-step tutorial before starting the Examination. The tutorial will show you how to use the computer to answer questions. Relax and take your time becoming comfortable with the computer. The tutorial generally takes about 15 minutes. That time is included in the period you have to complete the Examination.

3. The tutorial will teach you how to navigate through the Examination and how to flag questions to return to later.

4. All responses on the computer-based Examination are multiple-choice.

5. You do not have to select a final answer for every question as you come to it. The computer will let you electronically flag those that you want to return to.

6. Some questions require two or three answers. Items with multiple answers will clearly state how many responses you need to select. Read carefully, and remember that the Examination includes no trick questions.

7. The computer will not let you move to the next question until you have selected the appropriate number of responses.

8. Throughout the Examination, the computer screen will display how much time you have left so that you can pace yourself. When your time is up, the screen will display a message that says the Examination is over. If you finish earlier, you can leave.

9. The computer will print a feedback page.* It tells you how you performed on scored questions in each KSA area. You can take this feedback page* with you. The computer will score your Examination too.

10. You will receive unofficial pass/fail feedback when you complete the Examination. UAB will officially notify you of your results within two weeks.

*This feedback page is intended to help you identify KSA areas that you may want to strengthen through experience and professional development. The page will help you identify areas for additional preparation if you need to retake the Examination.

Tips courtesy of Certification Management Services Inc.

Benefits of Accreditation

Acquiring my APR made me think differently. It's as simple as that. I ask more of the "why" than the "how," and as a result, my work is far less rooted in tactical implementation and far more on strategy and critical thinking.

— **Kelly Bray, APR**

Professionally, APR has infused me with the confidence, knowledge, skills and abilities to be at the table with CEOs and other decision makers. Further, it has allowed me to educate business leaders that public relations is front-end planning and integral to creating mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders. It is not spin, and it is most definitely not "buzz." As an APR, I know public relations is a thorough science of research, planning, implementation and evaluation.

— **Vanessa S. Stiles, APR**

For me, earning my APR was an acknowledgment of my broad experience, proficiency and commitment to behave ethically in the public relations industry. The APR credential informs the world that I am a professional PR practitioner, not someone who is just "in public relations." The designation has become increasingly important as I moved into senior-level positions where I assumed more of a counselor role to the C-suite.

— **Kena Lewis, APR**

The APR mindset pervades much of what I do — advising as a business mentor rather than "just" a PR person, tightened discipline in my communications planning and much stronger focus on results rather than activities. The guidance, approach and techniques reinforced throughout the APR process have guided my work to a higher plane, given me added influence and confidence, and helped me advance our profession's abilities. These APR benefits have been very important to my career.

— **Ken Hunter, APR**

Accreditation has differentiated me among many organizations and corporations because it showcases further education and professional development. To many, by working with an APR, you are getting the best you can in the public relations field.

— **Jeffrey D. Ory, APR**

On average, experienced Accredited independent professionals made **$83,250.24** more a year in 2010 than un-Accredited practitioners. *(Note: This compensation figure comes from the fourth replication of a study that covers 2000 to 2010. Earlier studies showed similar compensation differences between Accredited and non-Accredited practitioners.)*

— **Vincent Hazleton, Ph.D., APR, Fellow PRSA, Radford University**
— **Jay D. Rayburn, Ph.D., APR, CPRC, Fellow PRSA, Florida State University**

Public Relations: A Management Function

This chapter presents definitions and general information about public relations. This material provides background information but does not address specific knowledge, skills and abilities on the Examination.

What Is Public Relations?

"Public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends." (EPR 11th, p. 5).

How Does Public Relations Earn Public Understanding and Acceptance?

Public relations fosters and maintains relationships between your organization and publics by finding common interests. Failures usually stem from communication breakdowns.

What Is the Social Significance of the Practice of Public Relations?

American business gave birth to public relations as it is practiced today. Growth and trends in business created the conditions for the public relations profession to develop.

Typical 12 Functions of Public Relations

Competencies

1. Trusted counsel — Advise and anticipate.
2. Internal communication — Engage employees and build trust.
3. Media relations — Develop public trust and support by working through journalists and bloggers.
4. Community relations — Establish public trust and support by working with community groups.
5. External communication to customers/stakeholders/investors — Build public trust and support.

Public Relations Four-Step Process

6. Research
7. Plan
8. Implement, execute and communicate
9. Evaluate

Other

10. Publicity and special events
11. Issues management
12. Crisis communication

Definitions

Advertising: Paid communication; information placed in a communication delivery vehicle by an identified sponsor that pays for time or space. Advertising is a controlled method of delivering messages and gaining media placement.

Brand: A product, service or concept that is publicly distinguished from other products, services or concepts so that it can be easily communicated and usually marketed. A brand name is the name of the distinctive product, service or concept.

Branding: The process of creating and/or disseminating the brand name. Branding can be applied to the entire corporate identity as well as to individual product and service names.

Community relations: An area of public relations with responsibilities for building relationships with constituent publics such as schools, charities, clubs and activist interests of the neighborhoods or metropolitan area(s) where an organization operates. Community relations involves dealing and communicating with citizens and groups within an organization's operating area.

Controlled communication channels: Communication channels, media and tools that are under direct control of the sender. Examples include paid advertising, newsletters, brochures, some types of emails, organizational websites and blogs, leaflets, organizational broadcasts and podcasts, intranets, teleconferences and videoconferences, meetings, speeches, and position papers.

Counseling: Advising management about policies, relations and communications.

Crisis communication: Protecting and defending an individual, company or organization facing a public challenge to its reputation. These challenges can involve legal, ethical or financial standing. **See Managing Issues and Crisis Communication in this study guide**.

Employee relations: Activities designed to build sound relationships between an organization and its employees. Employee relations is a critical element in fostering positive opinions and behaviors of employees as ambassadors for the organization.

Financial relations: An aspect of public relations responsible for fostering relationships with investor publics. Those include shareholders/stockholders, potential investors, financial analysts, the financial markets (such as the stock exchanges and commodities exchanges), and the Securities and Exchange Commission. Also known as investor relations or shareholder relations.

Goodwill: An accounting term for the value of a business' intangible assets. The goodwill amount equals the difference between the value of a company's net tangible assets (total assets minus total liabilities) and the company's market value. Goodwill is closely related to reputation. International Financial Reporting Standards require businesses to calculate goodwill value annually to determine how it has changed. The public relations management function may be responsible for protecting and enhancing goodwill.

Government relations: An aspect of relationship building between an organization and government at local, state, and/or national levels, especially involving flow of information to and from legislative and regulatory bodies. The goal often is to influence public policy decisions compatible with the organization's interests. Government relations involves dealing and communicating with legislatures and government agencies on behalf of an organization. **Also see Public affairs and Lobbying**.

Grassroots organizing: An activist practice for creating social change among average people. Grassroots organizing is based on the power of people to take collective action on their behalf. This public relations technique is often used to sway public opinion and move legislators to action. "Grasstops" organizing uses the same strategy but involves community influencers.

Issues management: The proactive process of anticipating, identifying, evaluating and responding to public policy issues that affect organizations and their publics now and in the future.

Lobbying: The specialized area of public relations that fosters and maintains relations with a government or its officials for the primary purpose of influencing legislation and regulation. **Also see Government relations and Public affairs**.

Marketing: The management function that identifies human needs and wants, offers products and services to satisfy those demands, and causes transactions that deliver products and services in exchange for something of value to the provider. Targets customers.

Marketing communications: A combination of activities designed to sell a product, service or idea. These activities are designed to maintain consistent brand messaging across traditional and nontraditional communication channels. These channels include advertising, collateral materials, interactive communications, publicity, promotion, direct mail, trade shows and special events. Also called "integrated marketing communication" and "product publicity."

Media relations: Mutually beneficial associations between publicists or public relations professionals and journalists as a condition for reaching publics with messages of news or features of interest (publicity). The function includes both seeking publicity for an organization and responding to queries from journalists about the organization. Maintaining up-to-date lists of media contacts and a knowledge of media audience interests are critical to media relations. **Also see Press agentry and Publicity**.

Press agentry: Creating newsworthy stories and events to attract media attention and gain public notice (although not all this attention may be positive). **Also see Media relations, Promotion and Publicity**.

Proactive public relations: Taking the initiative to develop and apply public relations plans to achieve measurable results toward set goals and objectives. **Also see Reactive public relations**.

Promotion: Activities designed to win publicity or attention, especially the staging of special events to generate media coverage. Promotional activities are designed to create and stimulate interest in a person, product, organization or cause. **Also see Media relations, Press agentry and Publicity**.

Propaganda: Messages specifically designed to shape perceptions or motivate actions that an organization wants. The word was coined in the 17th century by the Roman Catholic Church and originally meant "writing to propagate the faith." The word took on negative connotations in the 20th century and is usually associated with lies, deceit and misinformation.

Propaganda devices:

- Glittering generalities (broad statements)
- Name calling (Vilify opponents.)
- Transfer (guilt or credit by association)
- Bandwagon (Everybody's doing it.)
- Plain folks (anti-elitism)
- Testimonials (Cite a celebrity, an authority figure or "plain folks" to endorse a cause.)
- Card stacking (one-sided arguments)

Public: Any group of people tied together by some common factor or interest. Public relations practitioners identify and foster relationships with publics essential to the success or failure of organizations or clients. Some publics, such as residents of a specific neighborhood, advocates of certain issues or fans of a sports team, are self-defined. Members are aware of their connection to others in the group. Other publics are identified by public relations practitioners. They often use demographics, psychographics, motivating self-interests, status of current relationships with an organization, location or other characteristics to define these publics. (For example: retired residents 60 to 75 who live within five miles of our store and want to maintain an active lifestyle.) Members may not be aware that they are part of such a public. They may, however, acknowledge certain opinion leaders who influence their thinking on some topics. Publics differ from "audiences." An audience is a group of listeners (or spectators) who may receive a message but otherwise have no common connection with one another.

Public affairs: A specialized area of public relations that builds and maintains mutually beneficial governmental and local community relations. Also applies to public relations practices by the military and governmental agencies because of the 1913 Gillett Amendment. **Also see Lobbying and Government relations**.

Public information: Information open to or belonging to the public. In government agencies, nonprofit organizations, or colleges and universities, the task of disseminating information from the organization to the public. The process is usually done through mass or social media. **Also see Media relations**.

Publicity: Information from an outside source that is used by news organizations because it has news value. Publicity is an uncontrolled method of placing messages because the source does not pay the media for placement and cannot guarantee if or how the material will be used. **Also see Media relations, Press agentry and Promotion**.

Reactive public relations: Response to crises and putting out fires defensively rather than initiating programs. Reactive public relations is practiced in various degrees. Some situations require implementation of an organization's crisis plan. **Also see Proactive public relations**.

Relationship: A connection or association between entities. Relationship is the central organizing principle of public relations scholarship. Human relationships are often described in terms of interactions, transactions, exchanges of influence, or shared communication between individuals or groups.

Reputation management: Systematic actions and messages designed to influence what people in key publics think about an organization. Reputation management has long been a function of public relations and is often a priority in crisis management. The increased use of the Internet and related social networks has given added urgency to the practice. The immediate and anonymous nature of the Web increases the risk of communications that can damage an organization's reputation. Online reputation management is a growing specialized segment of public relations.

Special events: Stimulating an interest in a person, product or organization by means of a focused "happening." Activities designed to interact with publics and listen to them.

Uncontrolled communications channels: Uncontrolled communications channels refer to the message-delivery methods that are not under direct control of the company, organization or sender of messages. These channels include newspapers and magazines, radio and television, external websites, externally produced blogs and social media commentaries, and externally developed news stories.

Researching, Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Programs (RPIE)

RPIE questions account for 33 percent of the computer-based Examination. Specific KSAs for these topics are:

- **Research (Concepts):** Understands and can apply primary and secondary, formal and informal, quantitative and qualitative methods. Decides on the population and sampling techniques. Understands instrument design. Develops a premise and research plan.

- **Research (Applications):** Uses a variety of research tools to gather information about the employer or client, industry, and relevant issues. Investigates stakeholders' understanding of the product, organization and issues. Applies research findings.

- **Analytical skills:** Continuously analyzes the business environment that includes the client, stakeholders and employer. Objectively interprets data.

- **Strategic thinking:** Synthesizes relevant information to determine what is needed to position the client, organization or issue appropriately in its market/environment, especially with regard to changing business, political or cultural climates.

- **Planning:** Sets goals and objectives based on research findings. Distinguishes among goals, objectives, strategies and tactics. Distinguishes organizational/operational goals and strategies from communication goals and strategies. Aligns project goals with organizational mission and goals.

- **Audience identification:** Differentiates among publics, markets, audiences and stakeholders. Identifies appropriate audiences and the opinions, beliefs, attitudes, cultures and values of each. Assesses interests of influential institutions, groups and individuals. Identifies appropriate communication channels/vehicles for reaching target audiences. Identifies communities formed through technologies. Understands varying needs and priorities of individual constituent groups (e.g., investors, governmental agencies, unions, consumers).

- **Diversity:** Identifies and respects a range of differences among target audiences. Researches and addresses the cultural preferences and/or needs and barriers to communication of target audiences. Develops culturally and linguistically appropriate strategies and tactics.

- **Implementation:** Understands sequence of events. Develops timelines and budget. Assigns responsibilities. Executes planned strategies and tactics.

- **Evaluation of programs:** Determines if goals and objectives of public relations program were met and the extent to which the results or outcomes of public relations programs have been accomplished. Uses evaluation results for future planning.

Successful public relations programs require proactive, strategic planning. This planning includes measurable objectives, is grounded in research and is evaluated for return on investment. Because strategic planning is such a critical requirement for the public relations profession, questions on the RPIE process make up the largest portion of the Examination. By knowing this RPIE process and having the skills and abilities to apply it to the work you do every day, you can greatly increase your chances of success on the Examination and in your professional life.

Both the Panel Presentation and computer-based Examination will assess your knowledge, skills and ability to apply the RPIE process. If you are not already doing so, begin developing public relations plans using this four-step process in your professional work. The process will help you prepare for the Examination and distinguish top-of-mind activities from research-based strategic plans that provide a return on investment and positively affect your organization's goals.

The Accreditation process focuses on strategic thinking and planning to achieve measurable public relations outcomes. This approach is consistent with the Barcelona Principles developed by the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication in 2010 and updated in 2015. The seven Barcelona Principles are:

- Goal setting and measurement are fundamental to communication and public relations.
- Measuring communication outcomes is recommended versus measuring only outputs. Outcomes include changes in awareness, comprehension, opinions or behavior.
- The effect on organizational performance can and should be measured where possible.
- Measurement and evaluation require both qualitative and quantitative methods.
- Advertising value equivalencies (AVEs) are not the value of communication. AVEs reflect only costs.
- Social media can and should be measured consistently with other media channels.
- Measurement and evaluation should be transparent, consistent and valid.

Quick Self-Assessment

- Review the stages and levels for evaluating public relations programs in the references you have selected from the Short Bookshelf of Recommended Texts (See Readings on pp. 6, 7, and 8.). Do you have experience writing plans that have both measurable objectives and measurable outcomes on opinions, knowledge or behavior?

- **If you are confident** about your ability to perform work according to the RPIE process, review the glossary, and test your judgment against the case studies provided in this study guide.

- **If you're not confident** about your understanding of how to perform work according to the RPIE process, use this preparation process as an investment in your career. Candidates have reported that preparing for the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations changed the way they practiced public relations, made them more valuable to their organizations and helped them be more successful in their careers.

The Four-Step Process

Different organizations and different authors use different acronyms: **RACE** (Research and planning, Action, Communication, Evaluation), **ROPE** (Research, Objectives, Programming, Evaluation), or **RPIE** (Research, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation). The APR process uses RPIE. Whatever you call it, public relations planning addresses these four topics:

- Research/analysis of the situation

- Planning, goal/objective setting

- Implementation/execution/communication

- Evaluation

Tip: Start at the beginning. Don't rush to solutions or jump into tactics before you have done adequate research to analyze the situation, define the business problem, determine key publics and set measurable objectives. By beginning with research, you reduce uncertainty in later decision-making.

Step 1: Research

Research is the systematic gathering of information to describe and understand a situation, check assumptions about publics and perceptions, and determine the public relations consequences. Research is the foundation for effective strategic public relations planning. Research helps define the problem and publics.

- WHO do we want to reach?

- WHAT do we want people in each public to DO?

- WHAT messages do we want to communicate to each public that will:

    o Increase knowledge?

    o Change opinions?

    o Encourage desired behavior?

Research Terms

- Primary or secondary

- Formal or informal

- Qualitative or quantitative

- Scientific method

Research Considerations (Know advantages, disadvantages and appropriate application for each.)

- What decision will be made from research results, and what information is required to support the decision?

- What resources are available for information gathering?

- What other parts of your organization — or other organizations — have already done research you could use?

- Does sample selection for a survey give you an accurate assessment of your target population?

- How big is your sample and universe/survey population?

- How will you collect data — survey, telephone, mail-in, online?

- How much time do you have?

- How scientific do you need to be; what level of confidence do you need to have in the data?

- What questions will you ask?

- Will the results be used internally only, or will results be made public?

- How will you tabulate answers?

Information gathering usually begins with an analysis of relevant secondary sources. Sometimes secondary research is all you have the time or money to do. The key considerations in determining the scope of research you need are (1) what you need to find out and (2) how you plan to use research results. While secondary research may be enough in some situations, you will usually need primary research to establish benchmarks for assessing specific later outcomes.

In Steps 1 and 2 of the Four-Step process, you do "formative" research. It provides background on the current situation, guides planning and signals needs for adjustments in program implementation. In Step 4 you do "summative" research. It assesses outcomes at the end of a program and may become "formative" research that establishes benchmarks for the next program.

Step 2: Planning (goals, publics, objectives, strategies and tactics)

Tip: These five planning elements will give you a framework for any PR situation. Even if you lack direct experience in public relations practice, these five elements can help you look past what you don't know and effectively apply the knowledge, skills and abilities you have learned.

Goals: Goals are longer-term, broad, global and future statements of "being." Goals may include how an organization is uniquely distinguished in the minds of its key publics.

> *Example*: To become the recognized leader in our industry and foster continuing public support.

Publics: Publics are groups of people tied together by some common element. Before starting to plan, public relations practitioners need to clearly define groups with which an organization needs to foster mutually beneficial relationships. Objectives need to say which public a public relations strategy is designed to reach.

Objectives: Objectives focus on a shorter term than goals. Objectives are written after research on all publics is done. Objectives (1) define WHAT opinion, attitude or behavior you want to achieve from specific publics, (2) specify how much change you want to achieve from each public, and (3) tell by when you want to achieve that change. Objectives should be SMART:

- Specific (both action to be taken and public involved)
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic (or relevant or results (outcome) oriented)
- Time-specific

Objectives establish standards for assessing the success of your public relations efforts. Objectives come in three general types:

- **Output objectives** measure activities, e.g., issue 10 news releases during the month or post three tweets per day. Outputs can help monitor your work but have no direct value in measuring the effectiveness of a campaign. The Barcelona Principles discourage the use of output objectives.

- **Process objectives** call for you to "inform" or "educate" publics.

- **Outcome objectives** specify changes in awareness, opinions, behavior or support. (For example, "Increase downloads of our product coupon by 25 percent from October levels by Dec. 31.") Outcome objectives require high-level strategic thinking. You must determine, for instance, which changes would be consistent with organizational goals and demonstrate public relations effectiveness to management. (For example, a fundraising objective may be more

appropriate for a nonprofit organization's annual gala than an attendance or awareness objective. The group's board is likely most concerned about raising money.) "Differentiate between measuring public relations 'outputs,' generally short-term and surface (e.g., amount of news coverage, number of blog posts) and measuring public relations 'outcomes,' usually more far-reaching and carrying greater impact (changing awareness, attitudes and even behavior)" (Seitel, 2001, 145).

Strategies: Strategies provide the roadmap to your objectives. (Communication strategies target publics for change. Action strategies focus on organizations' internal changes.)

- Strategies describe HOW to reach your objectives.

- Strategies include "enlist community influentials to …," "accelerate involvement with …," "position the company as …" or "establish strategic partnerships with … ."

Tactics/tools: Tactics are specific elements of a strategy or tools for accomplishing a strategy.

- Examples include meetings, publications, product tie-ins, community events, news releases, online information dissemination and social networks.

- Activities are details of tactics: six meetings, four publications, three blog posts and one tweet per day. Activities have dates, indicate who is in charge and tell what attendance or outcome is expected.

Step 3: Implementation: Executing the plan and communicating

- Actions the organization is taking as part of the plan.

- Messages sent through each communication channel.

- Timetables, budget allocations, accountabilities (who's responsible for making sure each step is accomplished.)

- Number of people reached in each key public.

- Monitor results of actions and messages while keeping track of campaign milestones.

Step 4: Evaluation

- Measure effectiveness of the program against objectives. Outcome objectives generally call for changes in awareness, opinions, behavior or support. Behavior change is usually considered the ultimate sign of public relations effectiveness. But some assessments consider long-term outgrowths of public relations actions as well. The highest level of public relations impact could be social or cultural changes.

- Determine how members of each key public interpreted messages. (Meaning comes from individual interpretations.)

- Identify ways to improve, and develop recommendations for the future.

- Adjust the plan, materials, messages and activities before going forward.

- Collect data and record information for use in research phase of next program.

Public relations campaigns could fail for at least four reasons:

- People most interested in the issue may seek information elsewhere and may not see your messages.

- People interpreted campaign messages differently from what you intended.

- Objective information or counterarguments cannot always change opinions.

- People often seek information that supports their beliefs. As a result, some people may avoid or reject your campaign messages.

How the Four-Step Process Is Assessed for Accreditation

Panel Presentation

- Panel Presentation questionnaire

- Panel Presentation (includes a public relations plan and work samples that relate to this plan). Panelists can ask questions about what you presented and information in your Panel Presentation questionnaire.

Note: See Candidate's Panel Presentation Instructions via the [Links You Can Use](#) on p. 6. Not only does the Panel Presentation Questionnaire require you to discuss a public relations plan, but the instructions also ask you to include this plan in your portfolio. Panelists are likely to ask you to discuss your involvement with this plan.

Computer-Based Examination

The Examination's scenario questions require you to apply your understanding of the four-step process to arrive at the most appropriate answer. Here are questions to consider as you prepare for the Examination:

Research

- Can you identify and select the research approach, methodologies and information-gathering needs that support planning decisions?

- Can you differentiate research methodologies: primary, secondary; formal, informal; qualitative, quantitative?

- Do you know how to apply definitions, examples and characteristics of different types of research?

- Do you understand time and budget constraints for various methodologies?

- Are you familiar with sample size? Costs, characteristics and delivery methods can help you identify the most appropriate research methodology for a particular situation. *Example*: If an issue requires information from legislators or CEOs, a survey is not the best tool. By knowing the characteristics or disadvantages of surveys, you know that personal interviews may be your most valid research method.

Planning

- **Publics:** Are you able to identify and prioritize publics and segments of those publics? For instance, employees are a public; management is an important segment of the employee public. Some publics are more important than others. Can you select the most important public from a brief scenario? Do you know why this public is important?
    - Public relations practitioners have no such thing as "the general public." Our total audience is composed of groups of publics with whom we can interact.
    - As you determine the most important publics, ask whether the public can help your organization achieve its goals and objectives, hinder your organization in achieving its goals and objectives, or hurt your organization in some way.

- **Goals, objectives, strategies, tactics:** Can you differentiate among these four terms?

    Example: Given a well-written objective, two very strong strategies or tactics, and a weaker or poorly written objective, would you be able to select the most appropriate objective?

Example objectives:

    a.   *Weak*: Enhance our public image.

    b.   *Stronger*: Improve recall of 10 important facts about our organization — from three to five — among key media representatives by June 1 of next year.

    c.   *Weak*: Improve media relations.

    d.   *Stronger*: Increase positive coverage on 10 key issues from 60 percent to 70 percent by the end of the year.

Example strategies: Strategies include use of social media, media relations, public engagement, employee engagement, third-party endorsement and interactions with opinion leaders. Strategies may call for celebrating success among early adopters, positioning the organization or its products, correcting or clarifying positions, fostering viral online communication, or delivering specific information to certain decision makers. *Examples of what is not a strategy*: Scheduling a news conference, sending a newsletter, hosting a meeting (or series of meetings), writing a news release or planning a special event. These are tactics.

Messages and spokespersons: After reading a very brief scenario, could you identify the most appropriate message and spokesperson? This level of knowledge can be developed in two ways: 1) professional experience, and 2) studying others, e.g., case studies in textbooks or the trade press. The following principles guide our professional judgment in message development and identification of a spokesperson:

- Public relations' responsibility to act in the public interest.

- Ethical values of honesty, accuracy, fairness and full disclosure.

- Ethical responsibility to our client or employer.

- Organizational mission, values, goals and objectives.

- Plans or program objectives to influence awareness, opinions or actions.

- Desire to build mutually beneficial relationships.

- Spokesperson's credibility, prestige and likeability among key publics.

- The needs, interests, values and concerns of key publics.

- Key publics' perceptions of risks and threats.

Tactics and tools: After considering a range of options, could you determine the most appropriate use of tactics? Could you identify those that should be included in a plan? Criteria to consider in evaluating tactics include:

- Available time and resources.

- Ability to reach and influence key publics to achieve desired objectives.

- Compliance with ethical and legal guidelines.

- Return on investment.

- Multiple methods and multiple touch points to reinforce consistent messages.

Budget: Do you understand budgeting? Do you know what to include in a budget, e.g., staff time, materials and out-of-pocket expenses such as printing, postage, Web design and website hosting?

Evaluation

Are you able to judge appropriate uses of evaluation? Can you link evaluation to specific publics and objectives?

- o Evaluation of success is only as good as the quality of the objectives.

- o Every objective should include a statement of how its accomplishment will be measured — both criteria and tools.

- o Outputs, outtakes and outcomes are different. Outputs and outtakes are measures of execution and strategy. Outcomes are measures of achieving objectives.

- o Evaluation helps practitioners in at least three ways: (1) verifies that public relations efforts were effective (because they met objectives), (2) demonstrates return on public relations investment, and (3) provides information for refining future public relations strategies.

- o Measurement should be included in the plan and budget. (Otherwise, assessments won't be done.)

Adapted from Texas Public Relations Association Jumpstart, 2006.

Additional Resources

Broom, G. M., & Sha, B-L. (2013). *Cutlip and Center's effective public relations* (11ᵗʰ ed.*).* Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education. (See chapters 11, 12, 13, 14.)

Lukaszewski, J. E. (2007, September). Gaining and maintaining public consent: Building community relationships and overcoming opposition. *Public Relations Tactics.* Retrieved from http://e911.com/monos/articles/Tactics-Gaining-&-Maintaining-Public-Consent-09-07.pdf.

Lukaszewski, J. E. (2007). *Gaining Public Consent: How to build community relationships and overcome opposition* (January/February 2008). All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission of the author. Retrieved from http://e911.com/monos/articles/California-Builde-Gaining-Public-Consent-January-2008.pdf.

Lukaszewski, J. E. (1991). *Managing Fear: Taking the risk out of risk communications.* Presented before the Edison Electric Institute, Washington, D.C., Oct. 25, 1991. Retrieved from http://e911.com/speeches/08%20-%20Speech,%20Vital%20Speeches%20of%20the%20Day,%20Managing%20Fear,%2002-01-92.pdf.

Newsom, D., & Haynes, J. (2011). *Public relations writing: Form & style* (9ᵗʰ ed.) Boston, Mass.: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning. (See chapter 5, The Public Relations Planning Process.)

Smith, R. D. (2009). *Strategic planning for public relations* (3ʳᵈ ed.). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum. (See Phase 2 on Strategy.)

Research Methodologies

➔ **Exercise: Advantages, Disadvantages and Applications**

Put notes from your readings on this chart. Completing it in your own words will help you develop a stronger understanding of research concepts. Once you have completed it, check your chart against the answer key that begins on p. 30.

Method	Formal	Informal	Primary	Secondary	Advantages	Disadvantages
Focus groups						
Intercept interviews						
Telephone surveys (based on random sampling)						
Mail survey						
Online/email survey						
Content analysis						
Communications audit						
In-depth interviews						
Phone interviews						
Complaint reviews						
Tracking calls, purchases, hits, actions, placements						
Observations, visits, field reports						

Method	Formal	Informal	Primary	Secondary	Advantages	Disadvantages
Advisory panels						
Community forums						
Media analysis						
Research databases (such as Lexis/Nexis), literature review						
Fact finding						
Historical research						
Internet/social media research						

⬆Answer Key: Advantages, Disadvantages, Applications

Method	Formal	Informal	Primary	Secondary	Advantages	Disadvantages
Focus groups		X	X		Speed. Efficient for qualitative data gathering. Ability to explore associations, relationships, reactions. Can use supporting materials. Allows respondents to react to one another. Provides the possibility of learning completely new information.	High cost. Low external validity. Requires multiple sessions for reliability (at least two). Difficult to interpret. Can't generalize from results. Limited content domain. Information obtained is subjective. Results cannot be charted and graphed. Management may not accept results as well as executives might accept survey data. Good results depend heavily upon experience and objectivity of person conducting the focus groups.
Intercept interviews		X	X		Ability to target a geographic location or demographic group. Ability to clarify or probe responses. Can use supporting materials.	Limited in length and scope.
Telephone surveys (based on random sampling)	X		X		Speed of administration. Ability to clarify, probe. No geographic limitations. No sampling limitations. Accepted as industry standard.	Requires professional phone bank. Cost. Limited in length and scope. Caller ID allows respondents to screen calls and reduce response rate. Not good for rankings, paired comparisons, evaluation of messages. Possible skew in favor of older respondents because many younger people don't have landlines. Random-digit dialing can't reach cell numbers.
Mail survey	X		X		Can be internally administered. No cost differences based on geography. Can use rankings, comparisons. Can do message evaluations. Can be included in existing communication tools. Convenient for respondent.	Slow to completion. Considerable time/labor commitment for data entry. Limited control over who completes. Little ability to clarify question wording, meanings. Limited ability to use filter questions. Sample limitations. Cost can be high if response rates are low. Often yields very low response.

Method	Formal	Informal	Primary	Secondary	Advantages	Disadvantages
Online/ email survey	X	X	X		Speed of data collection, lower cost of administration. Excellent tool for known populations with access to technology. Can combine data collection methods and gain advantages over telephone and mail methods. Can disaggregate results easily for analysis.	Best with known populations. Requires access to technologies. May be difficult to generalize to larger groups or populations. Requires disciplined administration and ability to randomly sample from within universe to qualify as formal research; most often is informal.
Content analysis	X	X	X		Can apply same scientific sampling methods used in social surveys to establish reliability and validity. Relatively low cost. Easy to replicate, extend over time, sources. Measure latent content characteristics and manifest content characteristics. Can be combined with other research methods.	Requires careful definition of units of measurement, units of observation and attributes coded. Labor intensive, or use of specialized software. Value often limited to comparative descriptions or profiles.
Communi–cations audit		X	X		Assesses PR activities' alignment with organization goals. Can provide comprehensive evaluation of communication tools used to support many plans and programs. Identifies bottlenecks in information flow within the organization. Provides independent evaluation of PR plans.	Can be costly. Requires thorough definition and planning to do well. Labor intensive. Combines all disadvantages of focus groups, personal interviews and content analysis.
In-depth interviews		X	X		All the advantages of telephone and mail survey methods. Ability to collect unobtrusive information. Extensive use of supporting materials. Complex probes. Validation of respondent identity (best method for highly paid professionals and busy people).	Very expensive. Potential safety risk for interviewer. Difficult to monitor for quality. Requires highly trained interviewers. Slow to complete. Geographic limitations. Access limitations. Interviewer effects may become significant.
Phone interviews		X	X		All the advantages of telephone and mail survey methods. Ability to collect unobtrusive information. Extensive use of supporting materials. Complex probes. Validation of respondent identity. No geographic limitations. Can be completed more quickly than in-person interviews.	Expensive. Difficult to monitor for quality. Requires highly trained interviewers. Access limitations. Interviewer effects may become significant.

Method	Formal	Informal	Primary	Secondary	Advantages	Disadvantages
Complaint reviews		X	X		May provide direct measure of impact objectives. Provides early warning of emerging issues. May provide baseline data of attitudes and perceptions. Provides foundation for formal research.	Limited ability to project onto greater population. Validity reliant on accuracy/completeness of collection process.
Tracking calls, purchases, hits, actions, placements		X	X		May provide direct measure of impact objectives. Provides early warning of emerging issues. Collects information on performance of campaign. May measure effects on attitudes, behaviors and perceptions.	Limited ability to project onto greater population. Should be combined with other research methods.
Observations, visits, field reports		X	X		Ability to probe for insight. Easily/quickly accessible. Provides foundation for formal research.	Limited ability to project onto greater population. Geographic limitations. Low inter-rater reliability.
Advisory panels		X	X		Ability to probe for insight. Easily/quickly accessible. Provides foundation for formal research.	Limited ability to project onto greater population.
Community forums		X	X		Ability to probe for insight. Provides foundation for formal research.	Difficult to assemble representative sample. Limited ability to project onto greater population. Requires highly skilled facilitator.
Media analysis		X	X		Identifies appropriate budget and media strategies. Identifies what media opportunities exist. Comparison of how competitors are spending media resources.	Check for completeness, accuracy. Assessment limited to output objectives not impact objectives.
Research databases (such as Lexis/ Nexis), literature review	X			X	More efficient (time and money) than primary research methods. Advantages of credibility, standardization and longitudinal stability.	Requires access to databases. Can yield large quantities of data to review.
Fact finding	X			X	Directly answers questions. Contributes to insights. Provides foundations for primary research.	Needs to be evaluated for completeness, accuracy, quality.
Historical research		X		X	Directly answers questions. Contributes to insights. Provides foundations for primary research.	Needs to be evaluated for completeness, accuracy, quality. May be time consuming (especially for pre-2000 public records).
Internet/ social media research	X	X		X	Directly answers questions. Contributes to insights. Provides foundations for primary research.	Needs to be evaluated for completeness, accuracy, quality.

Adapted from Minnesota PRSA, APR Study Session on Research presented by Professor Albert Tims, University of Minnesota.

Content Analysis

What Is Content Analysis?

Content analysis is the objective, systematic and quantitative description of manifest content in print, online or broadcast messages. In content analysis, we attempt to objectively code message content to identify issues reported by news media, determine topics important to journalists or bloggers, define information that publics may have received or help scan the environment for trends that public relations efforts should address. Content analysis involves selecting a unit of analysis, defining content categories, sampling and coding.

Ways to Use Content Analysis

- To describe and evaluate the contents of a message

- To compare messages delivered by different media, such as social networks versus television

- To study trends or changes in content of a medium over time

- To analyze regional or international differences in communication content

- To scan the environment to track trends in news coverage of topics important to your organization

Content Analysis Process

1. Select the unit for analysis (what you will code or count). The most commonly used units of analysis are newspaper stories, magazine articles, radio newscasts, television programs, individual tweets or Facebook posts. The entire item is counted. But portions of a message, such as segments in a television program, may be used as units of analysis.

2. Decide whether to study samples of content or all reports. When you study content of messages about specific topics over short periods and when outside events may affect what is said, look at every report. *Example*: A study of 2015 *New York Times* coverage of events in Afghanistan would require analysis of all 2015 newspaper issues. As the purpose of the study becomes more general and as the time period and number of messages increase, you can use sampling. *Example*: To categorize news items reported in *The New York Times* over the last five years, you might use "constructed week" sampling for each year. This sampling approach assumes that the amount of news reported each day of the week follows a cycle. (Sunday newspapers, for example, are usually larger than Monday editions.) The constructed week tries to account for this cyclic variation. You could randomly select one Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc. from each year to represent each day of the week in that year. You would analyze the content for the five constructed weeks rather than all editions over five years. Exact sample size will depend on margin of error, confidence level and variability of contents you are studying.

3. Define categories that will be used to describe contents. Commonly used categories are topic/subject matter (for example, crime, economics, weather), direction/tone (positive, negative or neutral), values (such as achievement motivation, fatalism, materialism), and theme (such as prejudice, violence or stereotypes). Categories should be clearly described, fit the study needs, be exhaustive (describe all the material considered) and be mutually exclusive (a coded item fits only one category). Pretest categories to determine whether they fulfill all these requirements.

4. After categories have been defined, begin the analysis. At least two coders should work independently. Work by only one coder may not be objective. His or her values, experiences or needs could affect coding decisions. Checking inter-coder reliability (degree to which coders agree on assigning items to categories) is one way to assess coding validity. Coders should agree on at least 80 percent of category decisions. If the percentage is lower, you will need to (1) make category definitions more precise or (2) retrain coders in how to understand and apply category definitions.

5. Conduct data reduction and analysis of results. Present results by using descriptive statistics such as means, percentages and cross tabulations. Relate results to the study's original problem statement or objectives. The main criteria for evaluating content analyses are the adequacy of categories and the degree of agreement among coders. Be concerned with internal and external validity and whether the objectives were met.

Courtesy of Ferne G. Bonomi, APR, Fellow PRSA, and Henry Bonomi, Ph.D., APR.

Survey Research

What Is Survey Research?

Survey research is a quantitative method that uses a series of written, oral or online questions to sample a desired "universe" — a population or group of people. Surveys are excellent ways to determine the knowledge or opinions of identified groups such as employees, voters or members of your organization. The important part of this method is developing questions that clearly address your research objective without threatening the people you are surveying. Surveys can be mailed, emailed, telephoned, asked in person or completed online. The techniques used for these different survey formats vary widely.

Survey Advantages

- Planned correctly, a survey makes participation easy.

- People participating can remain anonymous.

- The same questions can be asked in several ways to double-check responses for accuracy.

- You can place questions in a sequence that will help get answers for even disturbing subject matter.

- Survey answers can be quantified and analyzed by a computer and tabulated rapidly in multiple ways.

- You can pre-distribute a product and follow up with a survey.

- Surveys can be used in a variety of forms: in-person interviews, written documents, telephone questionnaires or online forms.

Survey Disadvantages

- People may not answer all questions.

- People who respond may not be part of the universe you intended to question.

- If you ask open-ended questions, tabulating will be labor- and time-intensive. Statistical analysis may be difficult.

- People can easily give habitual responses or randomly pick responses without considering the question.

- People don't necessarily respond to questionnaires.

- Costs to mail a survey, provide return postage and offer incentives for completing the questionnaire can be expensive.

- People won't write a lot.

- People can and do lie.

- If open-ended questions are not specific enough, answers will be too broad.

- You can't test knowledge with mailed or online surveys.

Determine the Best Survey Method

- Use **personal interviewing** for complex situations that require extensive explanation or context. Use personal interviewing for subjects that are difficult to access or sensitive. Personal interviewing ensures the greatest control over data collection. But personal interviewing is the most expensive approach and is used less frequently than many other methods.

- Use a **telephone survey** as a primary research method for basic, well-defined opinions.

    o Keep survey calls shorter than 10 minutes.

    o Use professional phone callers when you can.

- **Mail surveys** are the most effective for well-defined concepts and specific, limited answers. Mail surveys rarely produce high response rates, and response sources are often hard to determine.

    o Make sure your mailing list is accurate and includes people from the population you want to reach.

    o Use a cover letter to explain the survey and encourage responses.

    o Send a postcard announcement before the questionnaire to increase response rates.

    o Send a follow-up mailing to further improve response rates.

- **Web or online surveys** are easy to distribute, convenient for respondents, provide immediate electronic tabulation of responses and cost little to produce. Disadvantages include challenges securing email addresses, low delivery rates because of spam filters, low response rates because of email overload, a generally impersonal process, and the ease of deleting the survey invitation or leaving a partially completed questionnaire with a mouse click.

How Should You Ask Your Questions?

- **Open-ended questions** allow respondents to answer in their own words but present problems of interpretation and analysis.

- **Multiple-choice questions** give a respondent several options. Be sure to include an "other" category.

- **Yes-and-no questions** serve as good qualifying items to make sure the respondent has the characteristics of the group you want to test.

- **Ranking answers** that put items into a top-to-bottom order is useful.

- **Opinion measurement** ("agree" or "disagree" questions) can be used. Often these questions are offered on a multipoint continuum known as a Likert Scale.

- **Verbal/numbered scale questions** in a Likert Scale are best for determining intensity of feeling about a subject. **Examples:** Strongly agree, somewhat agree, neutral, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree; or circle a number on a five-point or seven-point scale where one end is "strongly agree" or "strongly approve" and the other end is "strongly disagree" or "strongly disapprove." Other terms can be used with the scale, of course.

Method for Conducting Surveys

1. Write a research question (establish what you need to learn).

2. Review the literature and develop a hypothesis (what you think you might find). *Example*: People who like us on Facebook will have the most positive opinions of our cause.

3. Select the public or sample "universe."

4. Decide on the format — online, phone, mail, in-person, etc.

5. Plan the arrangement of question topics — non-threatening questions, threatening questions (items about possibly embarrassing behaviors) and demographic data (age and income questions are sometimes threatening).

6. Write questions.

7. When you write questions about **non-threatening** topics, remember:

   o Use closed-ended responses (such as Yes/No or 1, 2 or 3) for responses that tabulate quickly.

   o Use open-ended responses to get a range of data and bring up ideas you had overlooked.

   o Make questions and responses specific. Avoid double-barreled answers.

   o Use terms everyone can understand; avoid jargon.

8. When you write questions about **threatening** topics (things, such as drinking, drug use or gambling, that might embarrass respondents if they talked about them openly), remember:

   o Create an environment that lets people comfortably respond.

   o Prefer open-ended items that let people decide how to respond.

   o Include necessary qualifiers and context in questions.

   o Avoid technical terms.

   o Phrase your question in terms of "most people you know." People are usually more willing to talk about others than themselves.

   o Ask about past behavior before you ask about present behavior.

   o Keep questions about deviant behavior in clusters with related items about deviant behavior.

   o Put threatening questions toward the end of the questionnaire.

   o Answers to threatening questions may be lies.

9. When you write questions to test **knowledge**, remember:

   o Ease into items (e.g., do you happen to know?). Don't make the questionnaire seem like a test.

   o Simplify questions and answers.

   o Leave questions with numerical answers open-ended.

   o If you ask yes/no questions, use related questions later to double-check responses.

   o Do not use mail or online questionnaires to test for knowledge.

10. When you write **opinion** questions, remember:

    o Be very specific.

    o Use close-ended responses.

    o Keep the affective (feeling), cognitive (thinking) and action aspects in separate questions.

    o Gauge the strength of responses by providing a response scale (e.g., how important is this issue to you? Very important, somewhat important, etc.).

    o Start with general questions and then move to specific questions.

    o Group questions with the same underlying values.

    o Start with the least popular proposal.

    o Use neutral terms (e.g., the president, not President Smith).

11. Write questions so answers will be easy to tabulate.

12. Consider question order and possible order bias.

    o   Keep like questions together.

    o   Start with non-threatening items.

    o   Ask demographic questions last. They can be considered threatening.

    o   Diagram questions in a flow chart to see the logic.

    o   Don't make your questionnaire too long. (Some topics may require many questions, but dropout rates increase with questionnaire length. Therefore, you may need to ask priority questions near the beginning of a long questionnaire to increase the likelihood of getting responses to those items.)

    o   Start with general questions and then go to specifics.

    o   Go forward or backward in time, but don't jump around.

    o   Reverse scale order in some items to eliminate habitual responses.

13. Format the questionnaire.

14. Pretest the survey with people who know about the study. Adjust questionnaire elements that don't perform the way you expected.

15. Conduct a pilot test by surveying a small number of people from the public you want to check. Adjust survey elements that don't perform the way you expected.

16. Initiate the full-scale survey.

Sample Size

How Many to Survey?

Formulas for determining sample size are complex, but the calculations have all been done for you. Results are shown in the charts below.

Types of Samples

- **Census:** A 100 percent sample. Identify all people in your universe and give each one an opportunity to respond. Censuses are especially useful with small and well-defined populations. If your universe numbers less than 300, consider a census.

- **Probability samples:** A systematic sample drawn in such a way that the probability of being chosen is equal or is known. A random sample is a good example. In a random sample, all members of the survey population have an equal chance of being chosen.

- **Nonprobability samples:** An informal selection of people to be interviewed.
    - **Convenience or accidental:** Drop by the company cafeteria to ask questions of whomever you find there.
    - **Quota:** In a school, find 10 elementary teachers, 10 middle school teachers and 10 high school teachers; any 10 of each kind.
    - **Dimensional:** Identify a specific number of male or female employees, employees in clerical or technical jobs, employees who are married or single, or some combination of characteristics such as married female technical workers. Any employee is acceptable if he or she matches the dimensions.
    - **Snowball:** You may know only a few users of a certain type of computer, but they probably know other users. You contact the first few and ask them for names of others. You then proceed in successive waves of questioning to find the universe you desire.
    - **Purposive:** Identify a sample that suits your purpose. For a quick check among music lovers, do intercept surveys in the lobby before a symphony concert. For opinions of golfers, hang out at the 19th hole and buttonhole people. For business executives, choose a specific industry. Contact corporate officers identified in annual reports of selected companies.

Nonprobability sampling is easier and faster than probability methods. While nonprobability samples can give you quick clues to a group's opinions or behaviors, results cannot be projected onto the universe. Probability sample results can be considered representative of the total population that interests you.

Based on information from Henry Milam, Ph.D., APR.

Sample Size and Accuracy

The table below shows the effect of sample size on survey accuracy from a random sample. The list is for populations of 100,000 or more. A random sample of 384 from such a population will yield a confidence level of 95 percent with a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percent. The confidence level means that 19 chances in 20 the true result will be within five percentage points (plus or minus) of the survey result. If you wish to reduce the margin of error, you must enlarge the sample substantially. To achieve a plus or minus 4 percent margin, the sample must be nearly doubled to 600. To lower the margin of error by another point to plus or minus 3 percent, the sample must be more than 1,000. These figures become significant if you are planning telephone interviews at a fixed cost per interview of $25 or more. Plus or minus 5 percent is often regarded as sufficiently accurate.

Sometimes researchers oversample for greater reliability or to ensure subgroup samples are of sufficient size to provide reliable analysis. Reducing the size of the sample below 384 raises the margin of error and makes the results less dependable.

Limits of error + or -	Sample size
.25%	153,658
.50 %	38,415
.75 %	17,073
1 %	9,604
2 %	2,401
3 %	1,067
4 %	600
5 %	384
6 %	267
7 %	196
8 %	150
9 %	119
10 %	96
15 %	43
20 %	24
25 %	15
30 %	10
35 %	8
40 %	6

Focus Group Research

What Are Focus Groups?

Focus group interviews are focused discussions led by a moderator. Eight-to-12 people usually take part. Focus groups are examples of *qualitative* and *exploratory* research.

Why Do We Use Focus Groups?

- Focus group interviews help us explore feelings people have for a given product, service or idea. Group discussions help us understand the language people use to express these feelings.

- Focus groups help us gain insight into why people feel as they do. Group comments may reveal misperceptions or misunderstandings about a given product, service or idea.

- Focus groups are valuable and often sufficient by themselves to test market assumptions about the emotional responses people are likely to make to a given concept.

- Focus groups are useful to pre-test creative ideas or to seek creative ideas for expressing benefits of a product, service or concept.

- Focus groups are helpful in identifying what benefits some publics may associate with a product, service or idea.

- Group interviews tend to have a synergistic effect on how individuals respond. The group interaction typically stimulates a broader range, and sometimes a greater depth, of responses than one would get from individual interviews.

- Clients tend to like focus group interviews. Clients like the direct contact. They may trust relatively unstructured, verbatim responses more than numerical data from surveys.

Uses with Surveys

- **Before a survey** — Because of their power to reveal how people express feelings and ideas, focus groups are useful before surveys. Group results help expand understanding of what needs to be researched and help identify language for survey questions. Focus groups give researchers and clients an overview of trends, themes, issues and points for survey questionnaire design.

- **After a survey** — Focus group interviews are useful after a survey to explore in more depth findings or trends that may be observed in the analysis of quantitative results.

Limitations of Focus Group Interviews

- Because they are qualitative research, not quantitative, focus groups cannot be used to measure human behavior statistically.

- Findings can't be generalized to the research universe as a whole. Participants are often recruited intentionally from specific segments of the research population. Participants aren't expected to represent the whole group. Even if individuals were drawn at random from the population to be studied, their numbers would be too small to offer any statistical assurances of the validity and reliability of their comments.

- One focus group reveals feelings of only the people in that one group. As a result, you should conduct at least **two focus groups** for a given market or public. Subsequent groups allow you to see if comments and behaviors observed in the first group are repeated. Such replication gives evidence that the feelings may be common in the population being studied. The second focus group often provides additional insights and helps avoid a group bias that might result from a line of reasoning that some comment in the first group may have set into motion.

Based on information from Henry Milam, Ph.D., APR, and Ferne G. Bonomi, APR, Fellow PRSA.

Parameters for Focus Group Research

Setting

The setting and mood of a focus group session should be relaxed and as natural as possible. The moderator needs to create a coffee-klatch feeling so people will open up in comfortable ways.

Focus groups seek spontaneous and emotional — not considered and cognitive — responses. Once a group participant thinks, censors or intellectualizes, the response is no longer affective. A big danger of qualitative research like focus groups is ending up with only considered, rationalized comments. Only participants who have not pre-thought their answers make fresh, spontaneous and honest contributions. The group moderator must constantly work to make sure that responses are fresh and spontaneous.

If you are using a one-way mirror so clients can observe the session, you don't need to disclose that fact to clients. They will see the mirror. Do tell participants that they are being recorded. Videotaping may occasionally be desirable to record body language. That recording is best done through the one-way mirror. Visible recording equipment may disrupt the coffee-klatch environment.

Group Characteristics

The optimum size for a group is eight-to-12 people. Generally, groups are often relatively homogeneous, not representative (all men, all women, people from one age group). Mixed demographics may be desirable when you want to stimulate discussion on some topics.

Physical Location

Ideally, you can use a focus group laboratory with a one-way glass viewing port and built-in sound recording. If you don't have such a facility available, select a pleasant, quiet room in a relaxed setting. Conference rooms, kitchens, motel meeting rooms and hotel guest rooms are all good options.

Length and Time of Interview

Most sessions run one to two hours. Groups with adults are usually conducted in the evening. Start no earlier than 6 p.m. to allow participants to arrive after work. End by 9 p.m. so participants won't get home too late. You might conduct back-to-back sessions in the same evening. Special-interest groups such as those involving homemakers or children may require different hours. For businessmen and businesswomen, midday sessions with a box lunch may be most appropriate; allow 90 minutes. Tell participants to schedule two hours so you can excuse them early. They will appreciate your respect for their time.

Group Recruitment

Decide what characteristics you want in participants (age, sex, residence, occupation, marital status, parental status, etc.) You might identify potential group members from client membership or customer lists. You could recruit participants randomly by using online directories, telephone books, mailing lists or passersby. You will need to screen all participants to make sure they meet the participant characteristics you identified. As an alternative, you could pay a professional recruiting service to provide group members.

Preparing for the Focus Group Interview

1. Define the reasons for the research and the specific information you need to collect.

2. Gain a thorough understanding of the research question and task. Be prepared to help your client, the head of your company, etc., understand what the research is designed to do.

3. Make a list of questions to be explored. Start with the general and move toward the specific. Organize areas or topics. Have a beginning, middle and end.

4. Use a discussion guide or moderator's script.

5. Make sure the setting will be comfortable. Sit around a large table if you want. The table creates an environment of "We're here to do something."

Conducting the Session

Effective focus groups can be run many ways. No way is "best." The moderator needs to keep people called "rushers" from dominating the discussion or avoiding participation. The moderator must stay on top of the discussion while balancing friendliness with directness to keep discussion moving. Groups respond well to lively leadership that keeps discussion vigorous but intervenes when needed. The moderator's interest in the topic and alert listening are keys to success. He or she should make participants think that their feelings are important.

If clients or company executives attend, keep them unseen and unheard. Don't let them take over until after the main discussion is finished.

Courtesy of Henry Milam, Ph.D., APR, and Ferne G. Bonomi, APR, Fellow PRSA.

Scientific Method Research

The scientific method follows a series of steps to test the validity of a concept.

- The scientific method is self-correcting in that changes in thought or theory are appropriate when errors in previous research are discovered.

    Example: Scientists changed their ideas about Saturn after information gathered by Voyager spacecraft revealed errors in earlier observations. In communication, researchers discovered that an early perception of media's power to influence behavior directly was incorrect. After numerous research studies, communication scholars concluded that a combination of social, psychological and communication variables affected behavior and ideas and that people could react to the same message in different ways.

- Science tries to provide more reliable answers to questions than those offered by other generally used ways of knowing, such as intuition. By using the scientific method for decision making in public relations management, you can elevate the public relations function from an intuitive, artistic enterprise to a strategic part of an organization's management. In the strategic approach, research is at the core of how the function is managed. Research is implemented to accomplish the following:

    - Define the problem or situation for the purpose of informing decision making and developing a public relations program.

    - Monitor program implementation for performance accountability and for strategic adjustments.

    - Measure program impact or effectiveness with respect to goals and objectives.

Scientific Method Research Procedures

The scientific method of research can provide an objective, unbiased evaluation of data. To investigate research questions and hypotheses systematically, both academic and practitioner researchers should use these steps.

1. Select a problem.

2. Review existing research and relevant theories.

3. Develop hypotheses or research questions.

4. Determine an appropriate methodology/research design.

5. Collect data to test the hypothesis or answer the research question.

6. Analyze and interpret results.

7. Present results in appropriate form.

8. Replicate the study (when necessary).

Courtesy of Henry Milam, Ph.D., APR.

Additional Resources

Lindenmann, W. K. (2001). *Research doesn't have to put you in the poorhouse*. Institute for Public Relations. Retrieved from www.instituteforpr.org/ipr_info/research_in_poorhouse.

Newsom, D., & Haynes, J. (2011). *Public relations writing: Form & style* (9th ed.) Boston, Mass.: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

➔Exercise: Build Confidence in Your Knowledge, Skills and Abilities in Research

Find something in the news that involves an organization outside your field — a small business, large corporation, government entity or nonprofit. The situation can be a challenge, a problem, a solution, an event — whatever is making news.

1. **Put yourself** in the shoes of the public relations professional for that organization.

2. **List** half a dozen publics you should consider from the perspective of this role.

3. **Select** two publics that seem to be the most significant.

4. **Think** about what you in your public relations capacity for the organization might want from the two publics. Think in terms of awareness, opinion or action. Consider verbs such as be aware of, favor, oppose, endorse, buy, discard or others that fit the situation.

5. **Consider** what information you need before you start to plan toward your desired results. Apply what you know about research.

6. **Think of three** research activities that will provide useful information for planning. Classify each of the methods you think of as formal or informal. Remember, formal uses scientific method; informal is everything else. For each activity, write down the following:

   o **Method:** Develop a statement for the method such as informal interviews, focus groups (informal), formal telephone survey or informal content analysis. (*Tip*: If you have trouble putting labels on your methods, go back to one of your textbooks. Can you identify research activities by name?)

   o **Source:** Where is your information coming from? Employees? Customers? Local newspapers? Websites? Social networks?

   o **Rationale:** Write a one-sentence statement of why you are going to do what you are doing and what you want to determine. (*Tip*: A rationale is generally a good way to present research activities in a plan or report.)

   Note: Other parts of the organization may have existing data that were gathered for other reasons. You may be able to use that information in your planning. Seek out that information.

If you can, have a public relations colleague or mentor review your research plan. See if he or she agrees with you on terminology and whether your proposed activities will be fruitful.

Courtesy of Ferne G. Bonomi, APR, Fellow PRSA.

➔Exercise: Build Confidence in Your Knowledge, Skills and Abilities in Research

Case Study: Planned Parenthood

Situation: You are a loaned executive to Planned Parenthood of your state. You are working in the capital city where the organization has its offices and operates a clinic. The time is an anniversary of the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* U.S. Supreme Court decision that established a woman's right to legal abortion.

An ultra-conservative afternoon talk show host on a high-powered (50,000-watt) AM radio station in the state capital broadcasts an interview purportedly with Margaret Sanger, who founded the organization that became Planned Parenthood. The station's signal could be heard all across the state and in parts of several neighboring states. The program streamed live online as well. The talk show host said his "guest" favored eugenics and made her out to be a racist.

Eugenics is a philosophy of improving humanity through "selective breeding." This philosophy was popular in the early 1900s. (Adolf Hitler's programs to eliminate Jews during World War II wiped out support for eugenics in this country.)

Margaret Sanger has been dead since 1966, but this point was not mentioned during the radio talk show. In the early 1900s, Sanger was a birth control pioneer who fought to remove the legal barriers to information about contraception. She spent most of her career working for legal and public acceptance of contraception and family planning. The quotes from Sanger on the radio broadcast were authentic and were her views during her lifetime.

(*Note*: This story is true. A broadcast personality in a Midwestern city actually did such a broadcast.)

Exercise: What research will you recommend to assess the damage and any need for action?

Courtesy of Ferne G. Bonomi, APR, Fellow PRSA.

Writing a Public Relations Plan

Tip: These 10 steps for writing a plan follow the research phase. Begin here after you decide, based on your research, what you want to accomplish, and identify what you want to correct, prevent or preserve.

1. Overall Goals for Public Relations

- Limit goals. Identify no more than three to five. One may be enough.

- Make public relations goals consistent with management goals and mission.

- Think in terms of end results, not process alone.

2. Key Publics

- Identify groups or subgroups with which you need to communicate (talk *and* listen).

- Consider the following:

    o Who needs to know or understand?

    o Who needs to be involved?

    o Whose advice or support do you need?

    o Who will be affected? Who has something to gain or lose?

3. Objectives for Key Publics

- Think in terms of the awareness, opinion or action you desire — not the process (tactics you will use) — but the end result.

- Articulate objectives with verbs that reflect changes in awareness, opinion or behavior: recognize, acknowledge, know (awareness); favor, accept, oppose, think (opinion); and purchase, participate, endorse, discard, write, visit (behavior).

- Phrase objectives in terms of specific results you desire and what you think is possible.

- Each objective should cite a public, outcome, attainment level (%) and time frame. (*Example*: To have 65 percent of current employees in a car pool or ride-share program at the end of six months.)

- The same objective may fit a number of publics, but strategies may need to be different.

- Consider what position you want to occupy in the mind of your key publics. How should the organization, product, issue or cause be known or perceived by each public, and how will that position be distinct?

4. Strategies

- The military definition of strategy is the science and art of employing political, economic, psychological and military forces to support policies or achieve goals; to meet the enemy under advantageous conditions.

- In public relations planning, strategy explains ***how*** you will approach the challenge of working toward your objectives. On what can you build or take advantage in your situation? What devices will you employ?

- Your strategy may describe the diplomacy, psychology, philosophy, themes and appeals you will use or the message you will convey.

- Strategies may describe how you will work with community groups.

- You probably will have several strategies for an objective.

- Some strategies may serve several objectives.

- Vehicles or channels you will use to communicate can appear here or in tactics or activities.

- Examples of strategies include media relations campaigns, gaining third-party endorsements and public engagement efforts.

5. Tactics

- Tactics are specific ways you will use your resources to carry out your strategy and work toward objectives.

- You can have several tactics per strategy.

- Some plans stop with tactics and omit detail of activities.

6. Activities

- Include specific activities required under your tactics to carry out strategies.

- Informal plans often jump from objectives to activities.

- Vehicles or channels you will use to communicate can appear here.

7. Evaluation

- How will you determine if you are reaching objectives?

- What's the baseline (initial measure to which later outcomes are compared)?

- How will you monitor feedback?

- What will you measure or observe, and how will you do that?

8. Materials

- What do you need to implement/execute tactics?

9. Budget

- Include staff time, volunteer energy and out-of-pocket costs (expenses for transportation, images, materials and fabrication).

10. Timetable and Task List

- Who does what when? Who is responsible for making sure each task is accomplished? Work backward from deadline or forward from start date.

Courtesy of Ferne G. Bonomi, APR, Fellow PRSA.

Plan Formats and Styles

Public relations plans come in many formats. Two are commonly seen: **a grid format** or a **paragraph format**. These formats are presented as suggestions only. If your planning style is different, use it. Just be sure you address all four parts of the process.

You may want to use these formats to work through case studies presented in this study guide. Practice in writing plans will develop your knowledge, skills and abilities in public relations. This experience will help you more easily process information and situations.

Paragraph Style Plan

1. Problem — (one to three sentences)

2. Situation analysis — Summary of research findings, opportunities and concerns

3. Goals — (overarching)

For the remainder of the plan, repeat these items for each public:

4. Public

5. Objectives (both long-term and short-term)

6. Communication strategy

7. Messages

8. Tactics/tools

9. Budget (A budget summary is common at the end of a plan.)

10. Staffing/responsibility

11. Timeline

12. Evaluation

13. Summary documents

  - Budget

  - Materials list

  - Task list and timetable

Courtesy of Minnesota PRSA, APR Study Session Handout, 1999.

Grid Style Plan

(*Note*: Tables should be expanded as needed for additional details.)

Problem
Situation/Analysis
Goals

Repeat below for each public.

Public:

Objectives:

1. State specific objective for this audience.

Communication strategy	Messages	Tactics/tools	Budget	Staff/ responsibility	Timetable	Evaluation
1. **2.** **3.**						

Courtesy of Minnesota PRSA, APR Study Session Handout, 1999.

Audience Identification

Identifying publics is one of the first steps in planning a public relations program. Typically, you identify the publics you want to reach after you've completed research, conducted a situation analysis and developed a problem statement. Sometimes you do a "stakeholder analysis" to determine which publics are already involved in or affected by a situation. Equipped with this research, you then formulate goals, identify key publics for the public relations program and write measurable objectives for each public.

"Publics" Defined for Public Relations

Public relations professionals refer to people or groups of "people who are somehow mutually involved or interdependent with particular organizations" as "publics" (EPR 11th, p. 2). A public may be further defined as "a particular group of people with a common interest, aim" (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/publics). Some publics, such as residents of a specific neighborhood, advocates of certain issues or fans of a sports team, are self-defined. Members are aware of their connection to others in the group. Other publics are identified by public relations practitioners. They often use demographics, psychographics, motivating self-interests, status of current relationships with an organization, location or other characteristics to define these publics. Members may not be aware that they are part of such a public. They may, however, acknowledge certain opinion leaders who influence their thinking on some topics. Publics differ from "audiences." An audience is a group of listeners (or spectators) who may receive a message but otherwise have no common connection with one another.

The so-called "general public" includes many specific or specialized publics. These publics often overlap and can be segmented in multiple ways. Segments respond in different ways and have different needs. As a result, relying on one characteristic, such as race or income, to identify a public is usually not adequate. People in the millennial generation (born between 1981 and 1997), for example, share some common characteristics but are very diverse. They like to comparison shop before buying products online, for example, and trust information shared online by people they know. But, depending on their age, millennials may use different channels to get information and show different interests in topics such as current events, politics or religion. Messages and communication tactics, therefore, must be shaped to respond to the needs of each key public.

Following is a list (excerpted from *Public Relations, An Overview*, Vol. 1, Number 3, PRSA Foundation Monograph Series) of publics for an organization. It could be a private or publicly held business, a not-for-profit group, government agency, educational or religious institution, or other organization or group. Notice how publics are identified from all sectors of a community: from government, education and businesses external to groups internal to an organization.

Employee
Management
Hourly vs. salaried
Prospective employees
Families
Union members
Retirees

Community
Business locations
Neighborhood coalitions
Chambers of Commerce
Community organizations
Local government
Religious organizations

Media
General
Ethnic
Foreign
Trade, specialized
Social networks

Government
Legislators
Regulatory agencies
Local, state, federal officials

Academia
Trustees, regents, directors
Administration officials
Financial supporters
Faculty and staff members
Students, prospects, alumni

Investment/Financial
Analysts
Stockbrokers
Institutional investors
Portfolio managers
Shareholders
Potential investors
Bankers (commercial and investment)

Industry/Business
Suppliers
Teaming partners
Competitors
Professional societies
Subcontractors
Joint ventures
Trade associations
Employees

Customer
Geographical
  Local
  Regional
  National
  International
Functional
  Distributors
  Jobbers
  Wholesalers
  Retailers
  Consumers

How Can You Identify Publics?

Think about the company or client you serve. Jot down various publics you reach daily. Then write down specific publics served by your last public relations program, e.g., public awareness campaign, direct-mail campaign, media relations activity, etc. Were publics the same in each instance? Probably not. Your specific program most likely targeted a segmented population within the larger group of publics you reach regularly. By thinking through the publics with which you work, you can prepare to identify publics in given scenarios and activities outside your public relations practice today.

The Public Opinion Process

Scholar James Grunig, in his work on communication behaviors and attitudes of environmental publics, defined publics by type. He found that publics could be grouped by the way they behave toward messages and issues. He identified four types:

- **All-issue publics** who are active on all issues.

- **Apathetic publics** who are inattentive and inactive on all issues.

- **Single-issue publics** who are active on a limited number of issues.

- **Hot-issue publics** who respond and become active after being exposed to an issue.

Grunig identified another method of labeling publics: **nonpublics, latent, aware** and **active**. Nonpublics have virtually no connection, involvement or interest in the issue at hand. Latent publics are not aware of their connections to a situation. Aware publics understand the importance of an issue to them, but they have not acted. Active publics are doing something about an issue. Key publics categorized in this way will vary greatly in each situation. Grunig implies that practitioners must often influence individuals in a progression from latent to aware to active on pertinent topics (EPR 11th, p. 268).

These types of publics are important to public opinion formation because influencing each of them will require different tactics. If you understand the groups of publics you must reach and the types of publics within the groups, you will be closer to reaching your objective. Now think about how these public types work with the elements that make up public opinion: **opinion**, **attitude**, **belief** and **value**.

- **Opinions** are observable (verbal) responses or statements concerning issues or topics. Opinions are specific to a topic and time (situational and focused), rational (cognitive and objective), and changeable. Opinions can be measured directly by asking a person a question and recording the response. The response is the person's opinion.

- **Attitudes** are covert predispositions governing likes and dislikes. Attitudes are affective, rather than cognitive; subjective, rather than objective; global or general, rather than specific; and enduring, rather than changeable. Attitudes cannot be measured by asking direct questions. People often can't explain their attitudes. Therefore, attitudes must be inferred through indirect questioning about how people feel (not what they think) or through physiological responses.

- **Beliefs** are assumptions people live by. Beliefs are understandings about the way things in the world work or should be. People often have trouble explaining their beliefs in detail. Nevertheless, beliefs are building blocks of attitudes and opinions. Researchers often group beliefs into systems such as capitalism, feminism or Christian theology.

- **Values** are explicit standards for evaluating right or wrong, desirable or undesirable. Values determine what people think are important in life and, like attitudes, are usually covert. People can usually say what they think is right or wrong or what is important to them, but they usually can't explain why they make those judgments.

Reading through the definitions, you can see that each one is more systemic to the individual and becomes progressively harder to change. People often change opinions without changing attitudes, personal beliefs or, especially, values.

What happens when individual opinions merge into public opinion? A classic early model comes from the work of sociologists Lang and Lang, in "Collective Dynamics":

Public Opinion Process
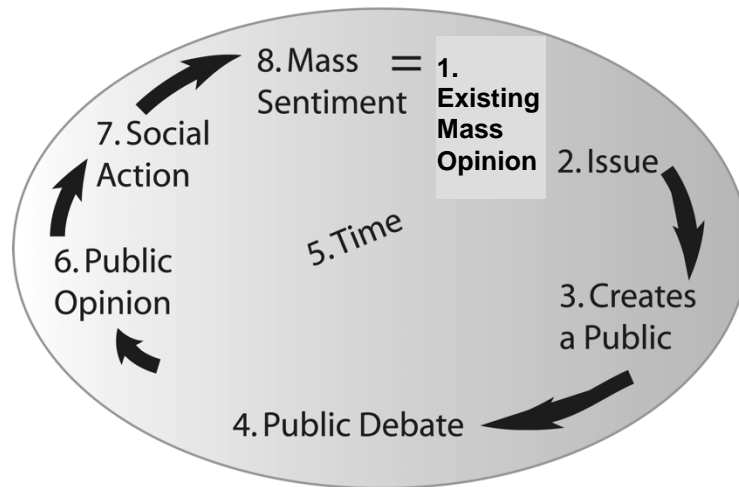
Based on material from Lang and Lang, "Collective Dynamics"

Lang and Lang observed that in any given situation, a mass sentiment or a general social consensus exists. At different times, people have different views about issues and, as Grunig points out, they become a type of public that will respond to an issue in a specific way. Those who fall into the all-issue, single-issue (if the particular issue affects them), or hot-issue publics will take pro and con positions on an issue and foster public and private debate. The public debate may include publicity, staged events, opinion polls or public appeals. This debate may lead people to make up their minds about the issue. A new **public opinion** may develop, and that opinion may lead to **social action.** That action might occur as an election vote, a consent decree by a court or a product recall by a company. A new **social value** may emerge and become part of mass sentiment. The time needed for this new social value to take hold is varied.

Example: Consider the lengthy debate about secondhand smoke in public places and today's laws against smoking in restaurants. Changed public opinion led to laws and regulations, such as nonsmoking areas or outright bans on smoking in public places.

The diffusion of innovation theory (see p. 112) addresses the adoption or rejection of new ideas and the impact of elapsed time on the process. In a digital media environment, "rogue opinions" sometimes emerge. These damaging statements spread quickly, are usually inaccurate and often are not attributed to a specific source. Nevertheless, they can influence an organization's reputation.

Think about how the Lang and Lang model applies to public relations situations you have faced. Once you understand how the process works, you will be able to more effectively write public relations plans and strategies to achieve the outcomes you want.

Additional Resource

Lang, G. E., & Lang, K. (1961). *Collective dynamics*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

➡ Exercise: Build Confidence in Your Knowledge, Skills and Abilities in Defining the Problem, Doing Research and Identifying Audiences

Case Study: HIV/AIDS Activism and Nurses' Residence

Situation: You are the public relations director of a nonprofit hospital in a competitive market in a midsize city in a metro area of 350,000 people. The time is sweeps week for broadcast media. One of the market's television stations is running a series on HIV/AIDS in the community. Recent segments have covered:

- The need for a confidential clinic.

- Homelessness related to HIV/AIDS.

- How people living with HIV/AIDS suffer from being outcasts.

- How understanding has increased in some circles but prejudice remains in many.

The case of a hemophiliac who acquired HIV/AIDS through transfusion at the university hospital has been reported in the series. The university and its teaching hospital are located elsewhere in the state.

At a staff meeting this morning, you learn that petitions are circulating in the community and online to request that your hospital convert its former nurses' residence into a clinic and residential shelter for HIV/AIDS patients. Your hospital no longer maintains a school of nursing. The three-story brick building has been used for miscellaneous administrative purposes since nurses' training was phased out. The residence is connected to the hospital by a skywalk. The former residence does not have facilities for food service or laundry. Nurses always ate at the hospital, and the hospital handled their laundry. The residence and hospital are served by common systems for hot water, steam heat, ventilating and sewer. The building predates central air-conditioning.

The human resources director reports that the business agent for kitchen and laundry workers, who are represented by a union, has already contacted the human resources department about this proposal and suggested that grievances will result, at the very least, and a strike could ensue.

Your director of volunteers expresses concerns about reaction to the proposal by volunteers who now handle many peripheral hospital duties.

Your physical plant supervisor, who lives in the neighborhood, says neighbors are already apprehensive about the possibility of HIV/AIDS patients in their vicinity.

Your hospital's five-year strategic plan, which was recently updated, has no mention of developing an HIV/AIDS specialty.

Exercise:

Define the problem.

1. What research will you perform to assess this situation?

2. Identify five important publics to consider in your plan.
   (**Note:** Not all important publics are mentioned in this case study.)

Courtesy of Ferne G. Bonomi, APR, Fellow PRSA.

➜ Exercise: Build Confidence in Your Knowledge, Skills and Abilities in Developing Objectives and Strategies

Situation: Go back to the exercise involving a situation in the news exercise earlier in this chapter (p. 42), and pick up where you stopped.

1. **List** a half-dozen publics you should consider from the perspective of the public relations director for the organization involved.

2. **Select** two publics that seem to be the most significant. Choose at least one where money comes into play — customers, investors, contributors, vendors, dues-paying members.

3. **Think** about what you in your public relations capacity for the organization might want from these two publics.

4. **Think** in terms of awareness, opinion or action — the end result you want.

5. **Consider** verbs such as be aware of, favor, oppose, endorse, buy, discard or others that fit the situation. Use such verbs to write objectives for each public.

6. Now, consider your **strategy** or strategies for working toward your end result for each public. You may have one or more strategies for each public; you may have strategies that fit both of them.

   Tip: Your objective or end result is the "what" in your thinking. The objective is **what** you hope to accomplish with the selected public. Your strategy is the **how**. How can you reach the objective effectively and efficiently on someone else's nickel by using someone else's credibility and bypassing barriers to communication? Military parallels may help here. Your objective might be to defeat the enemy at a site you're approaching. Your strategy might be to attack under cover of darkness, circle around behind the enemy to cut off reinforcements, create a diversion to distract attention or any number of other clever maneuvers. Try to come up with clever ideas you can use to gain an advantage.

   Caution: Do not think in terms of specifics and details — things you would do to carry out your plan. These elements are tactics, which are subdivisions of a strategy and must link to the strategy. Don't rush into planning tactics. Back up one step and identify the broader strategy — the approach you are envisioning that will help you move faster, conserve your resources, avoid waste and stay on target. For most of us, tactics come quickly to mind. We jump right to them. In the planning stage, we may have tactics in search of a strategy. Take the time to identify your strategy. It may be hidden in your list of tactics. Strategy is important for many reasons. When you need to justify your plan to supervisors or clients, laying out your strategy or strategies is a basic step.

Share your notes with a public relations colleague or mentor. Ask him or her if the difference between what and how is apparent. *Note*: Theoretic implementation is difficult. Develop your knowledge, skills and abilities in this area so that you can choose the best or most appropriate strategies from a brief scenario. Also be prepared to evaluate your outcomes. You may want to work through the order of implementation for strategies and tactics for these last two exercises. Then continue through the evaluation to determine if your planning had the results you and your leadership team expected.

For implementation strategies, tactics and tools, think about what you will do as a public relations professional. Apply your knowledge, skills and abilities to these scenarios and to the planning process. Refer to one of the textbooks on the Short Bookshelf of Recommended Texts (pp. 6, 7, and 8), and review the case studies and plans provided at the end of this study guide.

Courtesy of Ferne G. Bonomi, APR, Fellow PRSA.

Diversity

Diversity: Differences among people within a group, stemming from variations in factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual preference, education, etc.

Managing diversity: Achieved when a business recognizes the strengths and specific needs/preferences of its diverse publics and employees and chooses strategies based on these strengths and perspectives.

Multicultural relations/workplace diversity: Relating to people in various cultural groups. Understanding multicultural and workplace diversity continues to increase in importance. Diversity in the workplace continues to provide challenges and opportunities to public relations practitioners and other managers by affecting messaging, perceptions of ideas, and services. Multicultural considerations may include issues of household composition, ages, sex, ethnic and religious backgrounds, language, technology fluency, and health status or disabilities.

Culture and diversity should play a role in public relations programming. Practitioners need to understand the values, attitudes and beliefs important to all publics an organization serves. For example, in the health arena, culture can affect the effectiveness of health promotion, disease prevention and management, early detection, access to health care, trust, and compliance (Satcher & Pamies, 2005). Remember as well that people within minority communities may show significant cultural differences. Race or ethnicity alone does not define a public.

Public relations practitioners equipped with culturally proficient communication models, messages and tools can influence an organization's publics by addressing the unique needs of each. Public relations experts agree, "understanding the internal communication of any organization requires analysis of the culture of that organization" (EPR 11th, p. 190).

In the business world, diversity goes beyond communication strategies. Encouraging understanding and acceptance of people from diverse backgrounds is at the core of many companies' cultures. Affirmative action, valuing diversity and managing diversity are part of the business case for diversity. Managing diversity moves beyond affirmative action and valuing differences. Diversity is achieved when a business recognizes the strengths of its various publics and employees and chooses strategies based on these strengths and perspectives. (Fiske, 2004; Satcher, D., & Pamies, R., (2006). *Multicultural medicine and health disparities* (6th ed.), New York: McGraw-Hill.)

➔ Exercise: Practicing Diversity

Many global companies today have developed statements attesting to their firm commitment to diversity. Think about the following statements, and for each, provide three practical programs you would advise senior management to implement to turn policy into practice.

Excerpts from UPS Diversity Statements

"UPS understands that diversity encompasses more than ethnicity, gender and age. It's how employees think, the ideas they contribute and their general attitude toward work and life.

"Diversity is encouraged by recognizing the value of people's different experiences, backgrounds and perspectives. Diversity is a valuable, core component of UPS because it brings a wider range of resources, skills and ideas to the business.

"UPS understands that customer diversity requires understanding the differences in cultural backgrounds and the unique needs of each customer."

List practical steps that could turn policy into practice.

1.

2.

3.

Excerpts from The Home Depot

"Diversity is the catalyst for innovative thinking, entrepreneurial spirit and new ways of building our communities. The greater the diversity of our people, the greater our ability to serve our customers. At The Home Depot, we firmly believe that talent comes in many forms, and we celebrate each and every one of them. It is talent above all else that is cultivated, nourished and is considered to be the foundation of our culture."

List practical steps that could turn policy into practice.

1.

2.

3.

➔Exercise: Who's Keeping Time: Communicating with Cultural Competency

Consider the following example to determine the best approaches to maintain respect, sensitivity and cultural understanding.

Your client is developing a public education campaign to help Latina adolescents adopt safe driving methods. After polling to find out the most convenient time for a group of volunteers, you scheduled focus group meetings for 15 teenage girls for the next three Wednesdays at 7 p.m. On the first Wednesday, you and the facilitator arrive at 6 p.m. to set up for the meeting. The first teen arrives at 7:05 p.m. By 7:25, all but one of the 15 girls have arrived, so you begin the session. You feel frustrated and have been pacing the floor as you wait for group members. Indeed, your time is precious, and you are aware that the young girls have to return home no later than 8:30 p.m. You're not sure how you will be able to achieve results in the now-limited time.

Describe how you would initiate a dialogue with the group to ask for punctuality.

⬆Sample answers to exercises in this section

Practicing Diversity

Answers for both exercises could include the information below.

1. A Diversity Steering Council or Task Force chaired by the CEO to ensure that workforce, customer and supplier diversity remain a visible core value.

2. Employee ownership that recognizes the varied contributions of a diverse workforce.

3. Strategic partnerships with like-minded community organizations that are striving to embrace diversity in the area.

4. Ongoing cultural celebration events for internal and external publics.

5. Employee councils to shape policy, determine key initiatives, and examine current company practices and processes to ensure an approach aligned with diversity goals.

6. CEO and community exchange initiative to establish a better connection between the CEO and key publics

Communicating with Cultural Competency

Keep in mind the cultural values of your population. For example, the values of *familismo* and *personalismo* are important to the Latino population. If a Latino meets a cousin on the street on the way to your meeting, culture dictates that stopping to talk with the cousin is a priority. The individual values a personal relationship over the scheduled task and will engage in a conversation without consideration of time for something regarded to be of lesser value.

In the given scenario, your answers should include the following details:

1. Ask questions to help understand why group participants were tardy.

2. If reasons point to positive values unique to cultural background, understand that these positive values drive student behavior.

3. Ask the group to develop ways to keep positive values while group members meet other commitments. Solutions could include rolling times for entry into the group, social time until all have gathered, etc.

Additional Resources

Institute for Public Relations. PR Coalition: 2005 Summit. (2005, January). *Focus on diversity: Lowering the barriers, raising the bar*. Retrieved from www.instituteforpr.org/research_single/focus_on_diversity.

Definitions

Attitude: A cognitive predisposition, often unconscious, relating to likes and dislikes. Attitudes are affective, rather than rational; subjective, rather than objective; global or general, rather than specific; and enduring, rather than easily changeable. Attitudes help people evaluate an object, situation or issue and may relate to behavior. Once attitudes are influenced, new behaviors may follow.

Audience segmentation: The breakdown of an audience into demographic, psychographic or other dimensions. These divisions allow planners to adapt and focus strategies, tactics and messages on needs or interests of subgroups within the audience.

Baseline data: Data collected before or at the beginning of a project or program. These data will be compared to information collected during and after program implementation to assess program effectiveness.

Benchmarking: Comparing products and services from one organization to those of competitors or those recognized as the "best in the industry." The goal is to identify standards for improvement or superior performance. Sometimes the term is used to signify milestones or progress achieved during the life of a project.

Communications audit: A complete analysis of an organization's communications processes, both internal and external. The audit is designed to reveal how an organization wants to be perceived by designated publics, what it is doing to foster that perception and how it is actually perceived.

Content analysis: A study of publications, print, online and broadcast reports, speeches, and letters to measure, codify, analyze and/or evaluate the coverage of an organization, its people and its activities. In a strict sense, content analysis uses a rigorous, statistical methodology. But in many cases, it is less formally structured.

Descriptive research: Collecting information that describes existing conditions, the status quo of individuals, or group opinions and behaviors. Usually designed to test a theory or hypothesis.

Environmental scanning: Careful monitoring of an organization's internal and external environments for detecting early signs of opportunities and threats that may influence its current and future plans. In comparison, "surveillance" is confined to a specific objective or a narrow sector.

Evaluation research: Process of evaluating concepts, design, plan, implementation and effectiveness of a program. Used to learn what happened and why it happened.

Formal research: Uses principles of scientific investigation, such as the rules of empirical observation, random sampling in surveys or comparison of results against statistical standards, to replicate results. If done correctly, formal research allows accurate statements about publics based on evidence drawn from scientifically representative samples. Clear objectives and purpose are a must.

Formative research: Gathering information for use in making decisions before a program or making adjustments in a program/plan during implementation.

Gantt Chart: A bar chart that shows the visual and linear direction of project tasks. The chart is useful for tracking deadlines and monitoring a project's progress as well as for planning and scheduling tasks. A Gantt Chart visually lays out the order in which tasks will be carried out. It can identify resources (staff expenses and out-of-pocket costs) needed for each task. The chart always shows a start and finish date and may identify team members responsible for each tactic.

Goal: Statement that spells out the overall outcomes of a program. Goals are usually a more specific expression of a mission or purpose and are directly related to the problem or opportunity at hand. Goals are often related to one aspect of the mission or purpose.

> *Examples:* To increase public use of mass transit. To introduce people in developing countries to multiyield agricultural practices.

Historical research: Collecting information that exists on the record. Sources include historic documents, personal papers, journals, official records and online databases.

Informal (nonscientific) research: Methods of gathering information that don't necessarily follow the scientific method and are usually subjective and exploratory. Informal research can look at values or qualities and is good for pre-testing formal strategies. Findings cannot be projected to represent an entire population. Informal research may provide an early warning signal about emerging issues and is often used to inform formal scientific research.

> *Examples*: Personal interviews, community forums, call-in phone lines, field reports.

Mission or mission statement: The overarching reason an organization exists; a visionary statement that can guide an organization's purpose and planning for many years.

> *Examples*: To bring affordable transportation to the common person. To end world hunger.

Objective: The measurable result that must be achieved with each public to reach the program goal. Objectives should be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-specific) and may establish milestones toward a goal. Objectives should do the following:

1. Address desired result in terms of knowledge change, opinion change and/or behavioral outcome, not in terms of communication output.

2. Designate the public or publics that should show the knowledge, opinion or behavior changes.

3. Specify the expected level of accomplishment (knowledge, opinion or behavior change).

4. Identify the time frame for these accomplishments to occur.

> *Examples*:
>
> - To increase ridership of public transportation in the Los Angeles metropolitan area [*behavioral outcome*] by 8 percent [*level*] among workers earning less than $25,000 per year [*public*] within the first six months [*time frame*] of the communication program.
>
> - To have at least 10 percent [*level*] of a randomly selected sample of public transportation riders in the Los Angeles metropolitan area [*public*] identify one public relations campaign communication tactic as their reason for using public transportation [*behavioral outcome*] by the end of the second year of that campaign [*time frame*].
>
> - To have confirmed reports that 50 percent [*level*] of the natives of one Asian, one African and one South American developing country [*publics*] are applying multiyield agricultural practices [*behavioral outcome*] by 2020 [*time frame*].

Omnibus survey or study: A quantitative research method that combines questions from several organizations into a research company's national or regional poll; also called subscription studies. Omnibus research is often less expensive than developing a stand-alone survey for an organization.

Opinions: Observable (verbal) responses or statements concerning issues or topics. Opinions are specific to a topic and time (situational and focused), rational (cognitive and objective) and changeable. Public opinion is often described as the composite opinion of all people who make up a public.

Outcome: Measurable result of change in action, attitude, awareness, behavior, opinion, support.

Output: Measure of tools, tactics or activities supporting a plan or project.

> *Examples*: Number of news releases issued, media reports earned, tweets posted, trade shows attended.

Population: Individuals whose opinions are sought in a survey. The population can be as broad as every adult in the United States or as focused as liberal Democrats who live in the Fifth Ward of Chicago and voted in the last election. A sample may be drawn to reflect the population, which is sometimes called the sample universe.

Positioning: The process of managing how an organization distinguishes itself with a unique meaning in the mind of its publics — that is, how it wants to be seen and known among its publics, especially as distinguished from its competitors.

Primary research: Investigation or data collected you do yourself or you hire someone to do for you.

Problem statement: A brief summary of the situation as it is now. The statement should be written in the present tense and not imply blame or a solution. The statement typically answers these specific questions (EPR 11th, pp. 244–245):

1. What is the source of concern?

2. Where is it a problem?

3. When is it a problem?

4. Who does the problem involve or affect?

5. How have those people been involved or affected?

6. Why is this situation a concern to the organization and its publics?

Proportional sampling: A method used to ensure that a survey sample includes representatives of each subset in the survey population in proportion to that group's size in the universe.

> *Example:* If 53 percent of a certain population were women, a proportional sample would contain 53 percent women.

Qualitative research: Research that gathers impressions and feelings about topics or probes understandings of issues without relying on statistical methods. Researchers often use open-ended questions and free-response formats to investigate the value of programs, delve deeply into questions and explore the how and why of beliefs. Results are usually descriptive (not measurable), and analysis, while systematic, is usually subjective. The goal is often an in-depth understanding of an issue. Qualitative research may be exploratory.

> *Examples:* Focus groups, community forums, advisory boards, informal discussions.

Quantitative research: Research that can be numerically stated or compared and may use statistical standards. Researchers often ask close-ended or forced-choice questions. Responses are usually multiple-choice, true-false or agree-disagree. Analysis is highly objective. Results, if drawn from random samples of a population, may be projected to the total population.

Random sample: Each person in a population has an equal chance of being chosen.

Reliability: The extent to which a survey, test or measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials.

Research: Systematic information gathering to describe and understand situations, check assumptions about publics and make programming decisions. Research helps define the problem.

Respondent: In polling, a person who participates in a survey or poll by answering questions.

Risk assessment: The determination and ranking of how likely certain emergencies or crises are to happen. Risk assessment is related to the larger function of risk management. It uses outcomes of risk assessments to plan and execute strategies to deal with such risks.

Risk management: The process of assessing risk and developing strategies to manage such risks.

Sample: A portion of a larger whole. In polling, a sample is a relatively small group of individuals selected to represent a population. If the sample is drawn randomly, responses from the sample may be generalized to the entire population.

Scientific method: Principles and procedures for the systematic pursuit of data through replicable observation and experimentation. Scientists formulate and test hypotheses; use methods that can be replicated; collect objective, empirical data; and compare results against established theoretical standards.

Secondary research: Using research findings of others or collecting information secondhand.

> *Examples*: National or regional studies, studies by trade associations used by members in the industry.

Situational analysis: Information pulled together to define a situation (e.g., history, factors affecting a situation, people involved). Contains all information needed to write a problem statement.

Stakeholder: A person or group with an interest in an organization or cause, someone affected by an organization or someone who can affect an organization. The term sometimes refers to investors but includes others who are committed to — or otherwise involved with — an organization in a sense other than financial.

Strategy: The overall concept, approach or general plan for a program designed to achieve objectives. Strategies indicate *how* someone will accomplish an objective. Each objective can have multiple strategies. General, well-thought-out tactics flow from strategy. *Strategies do not indicate specific actions to achieve objectives.*

> *Examples*: Use communication vehicles that can be understood by a public with limited education to demonstrate that riding public transportation to work is an attractive alternative to driving.

Strategic thinking: Formulating plans for achieving goals.

Summative research: Gathering information as a way of monitoring a program and documenting the effectiveness of the whole program or its parts.

Tactics/tools: The exact activities and methods used at the operational level to implement a strategy and reach an objective. By helping achieve objectives, tactics, in turn, support goals that have been set to carry out the mission or purpose of the organization. Tactics/tools involve use of selected personnel, time, cost and other organizational resources.

> *Examples*: Design, produce and distribute radio, television, print and online public service announcements. Conduct a "Why I'd rather be riding" essay contest.

Trend analysis: Tracking and analyzing trends in news coverage, online activity, marketplace events and the overall environment to prepare and respond as changes occur. Part of environmental scanning.

Validity: Refers to the degree to which a research study accurately assesses what the researcher set out to evaluate. Researchers assess external and internal validity. External validity refers to the extent to which results of the study can be transferred to other settings or groups. Internal validity assesses the study's methodology and alternative explanations for study results.

> *Example of external validity*: A study found that three messages were effective in educating members of the Pima Indian tribe about diabetes self-care steps. External validity checks would assess if the same messages were appropriate for members of another tribe or ethnic population.

> *Example of internal validity*: Researchers surveyed a group of high school students to determine where and how they receive messages on college education. Each question on the survey was determined to be reliable; however, in reviewing responses, researchers found that many questionnaires from three classrooms had incomplete responses for the last questions. To ensure that the answers were validly computed and consistent with other classrooms, researchers determined the percentage affected by this "item missingness" and applied the same percentage to responses from the remaining classrooms.

Leading the Public Relations Function

Eighteen percent of questions on the computer-based Examination ask about Leading the Public Relations Function. Specific KSAs for this topic are:

- **Business literacy:** Understands and explains how employers/clients generate revenue and how their operations are conducted. Identifies relevant business drivers and how they impact the business. Understands how the public relations function contributes to the financial success of the organization.

- **Resource management:** Takes into account human, financial and organizational resources. Prepares, justifies and controls budgets for departments, programs, clients or agencies. Understands what information needs to be collected, evaluated, disseminated and retained. Is able to obtain information using innovative methods and appropriately store it, so that it can be retrieved easily for future use.

- **Organizational structure and resources:** Recognizes chain of command, including boards of directors, senior leadership, middle management, direct line supervision, line positions and each level's distinctions. Knows how organizations are horizontally and vertically structured. Identifies which divisions within an organization that need to be involved in any communication program. Understands impact of organizational governance. Recognizes the relationships among PR, legal, finance and IT as essential management functions.

- **Problem solving and decision making:** Approaches problems with sound reasoning and logic. Distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information. Evaluates opportunities for resolution. Devises appropriate courses of action based on context and facts. Makes sound, well-informed and objective decisions in a timely manner. Assesses the impact and implications of these decisions.

- **Leadership skills:** Influences others to achieve desired goals. Motivates and inspires others, builds coalitions and communicates vision. Influences overall organizational changes in policy, procedures, staffing and structure, as appropriate.

- **Organizational skills**: Integrates multiple dimensions of a public relations campaign. Integrates internal and external components so that there is a synergy among the messages.

Business Literacy

Business literacy is the ability to use financial and business information as the basis for decisions that help an organization achieve success. Business literacy permeates everything public relations practitioners do. Nevertheless, public relations industry leaders consistently complain that candidates for entry-level public relations positions lack business literacy.

Being business literate means understanding exactly how various organizations make money and what differentiates one organization from its competition. Business literacy includes knowing the legal, political and regulatory environment in which the organization operates and trends in employee, customer, shareholder and community relations.

Business literacy starts with an understanding of how businesses are organized and make decisions. Businesses fall into three basic categories:

- **For profit:** Publicly traded corporations such as General Motors or privately owned companies such as Dell that do business to make money for shareholders or owners.

- **Nonprofit:** Organizations such as certain hospitals, public radio stations, most colleges and universities, and charities that don't do business to make a profit for owners. Any surplus income derived from the business operation is used to expand the organization or support its mission. Nonprofit organizations often provide a public service.

- **Not-for-profit:** Organizations such as credit unions, mutual insurance companies and farm cooperatives that may generate revenue surpluses but are not designed to earn money for owners or members. Surplus revenue is generally used to carry out operations. If fiscal reserves become large enough, however, some money may be returned to member-owners.

Businesses are integrated horizontally or vertically. In horizontal businesses, production units create similar outputs. An example would be a brewer that produces beer under many different labels. Vertical businesses control all parts of their supply chains. For example, a newspaper publishing company could own forests, run logging operations to supply wood for making paper, operate wood-pulp plants to manufacture newsprint, maintain truck fleets for transporting newsprint to newspaper printing plants and run other trucks for delivering newspapers to distribution points.

The specific organizational setup of each business determines corporate culture, operational efficiency and effectiveness, market responsiveness, employee engagement and morale, and approaches to decision making. In some companies, decision making is centralized. In others, decision making is decentralized.

In centralized decision making, a top-level leadership group sets organizational policy and direction. This approach facilitates coordination across the enterprise, helps ensure decisions are consistent with organizational objectives and across all units, makes organizational change easier and avoids duplication of activities. But this top-down management method can create distance from market and customer needs as well as hamper customization required in regional markets.

In decentralized organizations, decisions are made in operating units across the organizations. This "horizontal" or "flat" approach promotes flexibility and market responsiveness, increases control over specific markets or products, creates a greater sense of autonomy within operating units and broadens a sense of accountability and ownership. But decentralized decision making can create organizational silos that hinder interaction and cooperation between units, hamper efforts to maintain product uniformity and permit duplicate functions to emerge.

Many public relations positions do not offer frequent opportunities to cultivate knowledge of business strategy, operation and management. That's why taking the initiative to broaden your knowledge in this area is important. Even for those who practice in a specialized field such as education or government public information, a higher level of business literacy will be valuable in dealing with constituencies and decision makers in the community. You should understand basic economic trends and how they affect different organizations. The direction of interest rates, for example, has a huge influence on many businesses.

Business Literacy Scavenger Hunt

This scavenger hunt is a tool to help you gather key data and begin to analyze an organization's competitive position. Think of it in terms of identifying information that will help you become a more valuable resource to your organization and more effectively use your public relations knowledge, skills and abilities to add value. Business knowledge can help public relations practitioners move up quickly within an organization.

Start with your own organization or a client company and a couple of key competitors. Then re-run the Scavenger Hunt for different organizations. For example, if you work for a public relations agency, use the Scavenger Hunt to assess your agency's competitive position in its market, and then begin to analyze a couple of your clients' positions. This exercise will give you the broadest grasp of different markets and completely different competitive landscapes.

You will need to do basic background research as well as talk with employees of your target organization to put together a complete picture. Please remember to exercise discretion. Some information may be confidential, and employees of other organizations may not be comfortable discussing some topics.

Although not every question that follows applies to every organization or situation, most information is relevant, whether you're a solo public relations practitioner or counsel for a nonprofit group, government agency, private company or publicly traded corporation. Try to answer each question thoroughly, and think through the implications of what you learn during this exercise. Some helpful resources, including a brief overview of SEC Filings and Forms, can be found at the end of the Scavenger Hunt.

➔ Exercise: Basic Scavenger Hunt

Here are some basics to help you start thinking about the nature of your organization or client and the competitive landscape.

1. How does your organization make money — the money on which it operates?

2. Who decides how the public relations office or unit will spend its organization's money?

3. What drives growth for your organization?

4. What and/or who could put you out of business?

5. Who are your key publics for products or services?

6. Who is your competition?

7. What motivates your organization to improve?

8. Who gets promoted in your organization? What characteristics, what skills, what backgrounds get rewarded?

9. What values are important in your organization?

10. Which two or three regulatory agencies affect your organization? How do they do that?

11. What is the biggest threat to your organization right now?

12. What is your organization's key competitive advantage?

13. Briefly, how are you organized in terms of who reports to whom, who supervises whom, who is responsible for transmitting information from level to level, up or down or sideways? Where does public relations fit into the organization?

14. What are the key ethical issues for your organization/industry at the current time?

➜Exercise: Advanced Scavenger Hunt

The following questions go into even more detail about your organization's competitive strategy and financials. Some questions are more relevant to a publicly traded corporation, but again, professionals working in not-for-profit operations, education or government will discover some key insights if they try to think through how these questions apply to their organizations and to others whose approval, cooperation or collaboration is desirable or necessary.

1. Which major economic factors most affect your industry? Some important economic factors to consider include short-term and long-term interest rates, inflation, trade policies, unemployment levels, consumer spending, business investment, tax rates and currency exchange rates.

2. What are some key metrics in your industry? Examples might include the number of student applications for educational institutions, number of members for member-based organizations, number of clients for professional services agencies, assets under management for financial institutions, same-store sales or inventory turn-over for retailers, or number of drugs patented or in the pipeline for pharmaceutical companies.

3. What is the peer group against which the success of your organization is judged?

4. What were your organization's revenues for the last fiscal year? What were they in the two previous fiscal years? What does the trend line show (revenues growing, declining or staying the same)?

5. What was your organization's net profit for the last fiscal year? What was the net profit in the two previous fiscal years? What does the trend line show?

6. If your company is publicly traded, what is its current stock price? What was the growth rate over the past 12 months? What was the annualized growth rate over the past three years?

7. How do your organization's revenues, net profit and stock price compare to those of your peers and competitors?

8. If your organization is publicly traded, who are the sell-side analysts who cover your organization? What is their outlook for your organization in terms of stock price appreciation, ability to execute, etc.?

9. If your organization is publicly traded, who are the primary stockholders: company insiders, founding family members, employees, retail investors or institutional investors (such as mutual funds)? How has the order of these publics changed over the past three years?

10. Who are your customers? Are your customers primarily local, regional, national or international?

11. How many employees does your organization have? Who are the key employee groups? Is part or all of your labor force unionized? What is the employee turnover rate?

12. How many locations does your organization operate? What processes are in place for communication between corporate headquarters and its other facilities and/or operations?

13. How visible is your organization in the local community (or any local community where your organization conducts business)?

14. Is your organization actively involved in community issues and events? Which ones and why?

15. Are your senior managers/employees actively involved in the community? Do they contribute money, sit on boards, volunteer their time to nonprofits? Do they build relationships across the community?

16. Is your organization involved in any disagreement with the community or your stakeholders (such as legal disputes, building leases or construction, labor strikes or contract negotiations, environmental impact issues, plant closings, etc.)?

Putting It All Together

Once you have answered these questions, analyze how successful the organization you studied has been at meeting key strategic goals. Does the information you collected support or contradict the choices the organization has made (as you know them — either from personal experience, from your informational interviews or from news reports)? This assessment involves thinking through the relationships between disparate bits of information. Such synthesis is at the heart of putting business literacy to use to support your public relations planning.

Additional Broad Resources

Your daily reading probably already contains a great deal of information on the state of business in your industry, region or the world at large. The single best source of business information is *The Wall Street Journal.* Ask colleagues or mentors which publications they read regularly and why.

As you already know, a lot of information is available on the Web — although sometimes the information you find should be taken with a grain of salt. A few general sites are listed below. Search online for companies that interest you, and read through financial statements they post on their websites.

Business and Economic Information

> www.finance.yahoo.com
>
> www.dismal.com
>
> www.marketwatch.com
>
> www.hoovers.com

Compilation of Business Links

> www.ceoexpress.com

Education Information

> www.chronicle.com
>
> www.case.org

Legal, Government and Regulatory Information

> www.findlaw.com
>
> www.firstgov.gov
>
> www.statelocalgov.net

Not-for-Profit Information

> www.philanthropy.com
>
> www.asaenet.org

SEC Filings

The best way to find basic information on a publicly traded company, as well as a wealth of detail, is to search the company's Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) filings. Many companies have links to their recent filings on their own websites, usually under "shareholder information" or a similar heading Another way to find this information is to search the SEC's Electronic Data Gathering, Analysis and Retrieval System (EDGAR) at www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml.

You can search for filings from your own company or client and for filings from competitors, peers, major customers or suppliers, domestic and foreign, as long as they are publicly traded in the United States. Listed below are **key filings** that should be reviewed.

10-K (annual report): This report provides a comprehensive overview of a company. The 10-K must be filed within 60 days after the close of the company's fiscal year and contains crucial information such as company history, organizational structure, equity, holdings, earnings per share, subsidiaries, etc. Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition (MD&A) is a must-read. It lists strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) facing the organization and its industry. The financial footnotes often contain detailed information such as sales by geographic region. Also, the Corporate Exhibits include information such as labor contracts, non-compete agreements, golden parachutes for executives and some contracts for key employees.

10-Q (quarterly report): The 10-Q is a quarterly financial report containing unaudited financial data. The 10-Q is due 35 days after the close of each of the first three fiscal quarters. No 10-Q is filed after the fourth quarter because that is when the 10-K is filed.

8-K (current report): The 8-K filings are for unscheduled material or corporate events of importance to the shareholders and SEC. This report is great for determining any significant problems, such as litigation or executive malfeasance, the company may be facing. In addition to the 8-K filing for your own company, review filings for publicly traded competitors, suppliers and industry peers. These filings may include indicators of problems facing the entire industry or product category. This information may provide an early warning for potential litigation against your company.

Proxy statement: The Proxy Statement (sometimes referred to as Form Def 14A) is produced for the benefit of shareholders before the Annual Meeting of Shareholders so that they can make informed decisions about matters to be discussed at the meeting. Issues covered in a proxy statement can include proposals for new additions to the board of directors, information on directors' and executives' salaries, information on bonus and options plans for directors and key managers, and any declarations made by company management.

Many other forms will be of special interest at different times. Some of these may include an initial public offering (IPO), insider ownership and trading reports, institutional ownership reports, etc. Procedures described in the first paragraph of this page will lead you to those forms on the SEC website as well.

Business Laws and Regulations

Anti-trust: Sherman/Clayton Act and Robinson Putnam Act make engaging in activity that ruins competition illegal. Overselling wording in news releases announcing acquisitions and divestitures can be cited as violations.

Lobbying: Federal Lobbying Act (1913) requires lobbyists to register with the clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives or the secretary of the Senate between the first and tenth day of each quarter. A lobbyist must report the amount of money he or she received during the previous quarter for lobbying activities. The lobbyist must name publications in which he or she has had an article or editorial published on behalf of the person or organization for which he or she is lobbying. This requirement does not apply to newspapers in the regular course of business. Cases indicate that this act applies only if a person is aiding in the passage or defeat of legislation. Public relations practitioners often do such work. Legal statutes for lobbying state lawmakers vary by state.

Political contributions: Federal Corrupt Practices Act of 1925, Hatch Act of 1939, and the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 govern labor relations management. These laws prevent organizations, including unions, from contributing to any political campaign or candidate and prohibit any candidate from accepting such contributions. Organizations and unions have formed political action committees (PACs) to get around these prohibitions. PACs are legal because employees or union members, not the organization itself, fund them. However, the 2010 Citizens United U.S. Supreme Court decision has changed the rules by which corporations, unions and other organizations can contribute to political causes.

Registering as a foreign agent: Registration of Foreign Agents Act of 1938 requires public relations professionals who represent a foreign government to register with the U.S. State Department. Anyone who acts in the United States as an agent of a foreign government without proper registration can suffer stiff penalties (fines of up to $5,000 and prison sentences of up to 10 years). Registered agents must report under oath every six months names of all foreign interests agents have represented, activities agents have carried out, and all funds agents have received and spent. This law grew out of practices by Carl Byoir and Associates in the 1930s on behalf of Nazi Germany and changed how public relations was practiced in the United States. Economic globalization has greatly increased the potential for involvements with foreign governments.

Regulation Fair Disclosure, Regulation FD or Reg FD: Adopted in August 2000, Regulation Fair Disclosure requires all publicly traded companies to disclose material information to all investors at the same time. Material information is any news that could influence a reasonable investor's decision to buy or sell stock. Consequently, a company can't share material news with just a limited audience (such as selected reporters, stock analysts or large institutional investors); rather, the company must disclose that information in ways that ensure everyone has equal access at the same time. Regulation FD opened quarterly analyst conference calls to all investors. For more information about Regulation Fair Disclosure, go to www.sec.gov/answers/regfd.htm.

Sarbanes-Oxley Act: The **Sarbanes-Oxley Act**, passed in 2002, covers corporate auditing accountability, responsibility and transparency. Public companies are required to evaluate and disclose the effectiveness of internal financial reporting controls, accelerated insider trading reports and blackout periods. The law, often called SOX, was enacted after revelation of accounting scandals at Enron and other major corporations between 2000 and 2002. Enron's CEO and CFO claimed they were not aware of the fraud the corporation had committed. SOX requires the CEO and CFO to sign certificates that say they have read and understood everything in company reports and that reports are complete and accurate. Other SOX provisions affect how information is disclosed, and therefore, how public relations is practiced. Knowledge of what and when one's company must disclose is critical to executing public relations responsibilities.

Sections of the Securities and Exchange Commission Laws Important to Public Relations Practice

The **Securities Act of 1933** and the **Security Exchange Act of 1934** were enacted following the 1929 stock market crash. These acts contain checks and balances for securities-related actions and remain in place today. The need for such legislation grew out of abuses in the securities industry. Investors' and brokers' devious practices were destroying small investors. While these laws are complex, certain sections, discussed below, directly relate to public relations practice.

Rule 5c of the Security Act of 1933 deals with the registration of securities and led to the embargo of publicity materials during a specific time frame — frequently called "**gag period**" — because these materials could be construed as an effort to sell a new security. No comments or written statements on future sales or earnings projections, predictions, estimates or similar information can be given during this gag period. It is in effect from the date a corporation officially registers its intent to offer a security to 90 days after the registration statement becomes effective. SEC rules require that direct stock sales take place through a registration statement and prospectus that are reviewed and approved by the SEC in advance. Corporations that use news releases, ads, etc., to sell stock during the gag period risk lawsuits.

The gag period should not be confused with a **blackout**. Several types of blackouts exist in contracts, policies and business activities. Two common blackouts relate to employee benefits and political campaigns. A human resources blackout is a temporary period during which access, often to retirement or investment funds, is limited or denied. For example, employees may not be able to modify their retirement or investment plans for 60 days because benefits are being modified or the fund manager is changing. Employees must receive notice of the blackout in advance. In addition, a blackout can refer to a political party's restriction on advertising for a set period before an election.

The Security Exchange Act of 1934 mandates **disclosure**. While the actual legislation says little specifically about publicity, the regulations apply to how we practice public relations. The real aim is to level the playing field for all investors. The law requires filing specific information with the SEC to make that material available to the public. SEC regulations don't specifically enforce or prompt timely disclosure, but rules of the stock exchanges do. Investor and media relations professionals deal most directly with these laws.

Rule 10 b-5 of SEC 1934 concerns fraud in disclosure. An organization has the legal responsibility to ensure the information it releases is both accurate and complete. This standard applies to all publications, including speeches, news releases and all published materials.

A **1963 SEC** study of the securities market defined **insider trading**, **material information** and violations of each. Rules against **insider trading** encourage timely disclosure of **material information** in an attempt to level the playing field between small and large investors. **Material information** is any news that could influence a reasonable investor's decision to buy or sell stock. The study showed concrete examples of how public relations practitioners used news media to disseminate false and misleading information or deliberately withheld information from news media.

Section 14 of the Act of 1934 covers solicitation of proxies from shareholders between when a corporation sends an official statement about a vote and the annual meeting where the proxy voting occurs. Because a specific number of proxies or attendees is required for a vote to happen, companies can use ads, news releases, speeches and other promotional tools to secure the required proxies or attendees. However, the solicitations must be filed with the SEC no later than the date of use. The purpose of proxy rules is to prevent false and misleading statements from affecting shareholders' judgment. Any public utterance made during the proxy period could be construed as an additional solicitation of proxies. Public relations practitioners need to monitor executive speeches, correspondence and online communication for potential solicitations and then ensure that information is filed with the SEC.

SEC Form 8-K: Form 8-K provides current information about a corporation so investors can make informed buying decisions. Companies must file Form 8-Ks within four business days of corporate actions that would materially affect stock prices. Information is "material" whenever a reasonable investor would consider the news important in making an investment decision. Issuing a news release and then filing that news release on a Form 8-K is an appropriate way to make a fair disclosure.

SEC Form 10K: Commonly called the "annual report," Form 10-K offers a detailed picture of a company's operations, the risks the organization faces and financial results for the fiscal year. The report includes analysis by company management of the business results and what is driving them.

Quiet Period: The interval between when a company registers a public offering of securities (stocks or bonds) with the SEC and the time the SEC declares the registration effective. At that point the company can offer the securities for sale. During Quiet Period, a company generally can't issue any information that might affect the stock price or be perceived as "front-running" the stock offering.

Types of Employee Benefits

Public relations practitioners working with human resources managers should understand benefit plans commonly used in organizations:

401(k) and 403(b) retirement plans: Voluntary retirement plans for employees of for-profit businesses are known as 401(k). Similar plans for employees of public/not-for-profit organizations are known as 403(b). These employer-sponsored defined-contribution retirement plans allow workers to save for retirement by investing in various options. Income taxes on the saved money and earnings are deferred until the employee begins withdrawing from the investment fund upon retirement.

Cafeteria benefit plan: A cafeteria plan allows employees to choose from different types of benefits. Cafeteria plans may include health insurance, group-term life insurance and flexible spending accounts. Typically, these cafeteria plans allow employees to pay for benefits they choose through a salary-reduction agreement, which is similar to a payroll deduction. Deductions under such agreements are often called pre-tax salary reductions; they are not subject to income tax, or in most cases, Social Security withholding.

Defined benefit plan: This retirement plan promises employees a specific monthly benefit. The employee usually is not required to contribute to this plan in the private sector. In the public sector, however, employee contributions are required. Employees are not required to make investment decisions. Defined-benefit plans are sometimes referred to as fully funded pension plans

Defined-contribution plan: This retirement plan creates an individual account for each employee. The benefit the employee receives is determined by the amount the employee contributes to the account and income, expenses, gains and losses in the overall plan. Two common types of defined-contribution plans are the 401(k) and 403(b) plans.

Pension plan: Pension plans provide income after retirement or disability. Companies, not-for-profit organizations, labor unions and the government can create pensions for workers. Organizations may fund pension plans with income from corporate profits, tax revenue, membership dues, investments and/or participant contributions.

Roth retirement plan: Roth plans allow workers who meet certain criteria to save for retirement. These workers can invest retirement contributions after paying income taxes on the money. Earnings are then tax-free when workers withdraw funds upon retirement.

Note: Federal and state regulations require employers to post certain information about working conditions and employee benefits on physical bulletin boards in the workplace. Those notices include Occupational Safety and Health Administration information and Homeland Security posters. (EPR 11th, p. 204).

Resource Management

Budgeting

Budgeting must be considered in all aspects of public relations planning, whether the practitioner works for a corporation, agency, nonprofit, government entity or other organization. During planning stages, managers must determine what specific actions will be undertaken by which employees or outside consultants and how much each activity will cost. Budgets reinforce implementation of such plans by (1) listing staff costs and workloads, (2) specifying financial metrics for tracking contractor performance, and (3) establishing accountabilities for each expense. Program evaluations compare actual expenses to initial budget estimates.

Budget allocations should be consistent with campaign and organizational goals. Without proper budget planning, even the best plans will fail. Budgets should consider costs for media, materials and personnel. Of course, adjustments often are made during a campaign, but funding should be estimated as closely as possible in light of all relevant factors.

EPR, 11th (p. 275) says budgeting in public relations is an art and a science. Many practitioners are not familiar enough with general budgeting procedures, and relatively few have a related background in business. As a result, some public relations managers leave budgeting to other offices. However, to truly reach optimal success, public relations leaders should strive to estimate and manage accurate budgets. EPR 11th lists three important budgeting guidelines: Know prices of items (whether products or services), communicate the overall budget related to costs leading to results and use a spreadsheet or similar software to plan and manage the program (p. 277).

Organizations use four basic methods to determine public relations budgets:

1. Overall money available for operations. The public relations unit is allocated a percentage of the organization's total budget.

2. The competitive necessity of the public relations function. What competitors are spending is evaluated. Attempts are made to match or exceed their public relations spending.

3. The specific tasks or goals set for the public relations function. Amounts are set aside for certain important public relations activities.

4. Excess money after expenses. Funding for public relations comes from profit. This method implies that the public relations function is considered after everything else has been budgeted!

Financial Statements

Public relations practitioners should understand **commonly used financial statements**. Managers regularly use three financial statements to track the status of business operations:

Balance sheet: Like a financial still photograph, the balance sheet shows assets, liabilities and capital (equity) of a business on a specific date. Assets and liabilities are listed in their order of liquidity. The balance sheet always balances because assets must equal liabilities plus owner's equity.

Income statement: Like a financial video, the income statement shows the profitability of a business over a specified time. The business can choose the length of the reporting period (e.g., month, quarter or year). The income statement shows gross income, revenues, expenses and net income. The statement includes both cash items, such as cash sales, and non-cash items, such as credit card sales, as income. The statement shows depreciation as an expense. An income statement is also known as a profit/loss or P&L statement.

Statement of cash flow: All publicly traded corporations must file statements of cash flow. Again, like a financial video, this report shows how changes in balance sheet accounts and income over a specified reporting period affect cash and cash equivalents (cash in and out). The report breaks the analysis down by operating, investing and financing activities. Cash flow may be positive or negative. For example, selling stock generates cash and is a positive cash flow.

Organizing and Structuring

Line management function: In an organizational structure, line management functions are often limited to product- and profit-producing functions that increase the bottom line. These functions include engineering, production and marketing. (See p. 82 for further discussion of this function.)

Staff management function: Staff management functions provide advice and counsel to those in line management positions. Public relations and corporate legal counsel are common examples of staff management functions. (See p. 82 for further discussion of this function.)

Additional Resources

Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (2010). Retrieved from www.globalalliancepr.org. (Includes information profiling the PR industry, business and political landscapes in countries around the world.)

Grunig, J. E. (2001, May 12). *The role of public relations in management and its contribution to organizational and societal effectiveness (from speech).* Institute for Public Relations. Retrieved from http://www.instituteforpr.org/research_single/public_relations_in_management.

Problem Solving and Decision Making

Management teams rely on several mechanisms to work through problems, assess opportunities and arrive at effective decisions. Common tools include:

SWOT analysis: Helps a company understand its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Organizations use SWOT analysis for business planning, strategic planning, competitor evaluation, marketing, business and product development, and research reports.

Cause-and-effect diagrams: Help managers analyze a particular problem by thinking through the reasons a problem exists. Also known as Fishbone Diagrams.

Drill-down technique: Gives planners a visual image of a problem by breaking the problem into progressively smaller parts. By examining elements that contribute to the problem, information relating to the problem and questions raised by the problem, communication experts can identify best solutions to respond to the many parts of a problem.

Porter's five forces: Assess where power and weaknesses lie and assume that five important forces affect competition: supplier power, buyer power, competitive rivalry, threat of substitution and threat of new entry.

Albert Humphrey, who led a Stanford University research project that used 1960s and 1970s data from *Fortune* 500 companies, developed the SWOT approach. For most planning, SWOT is used with a clear objective in mind, i.e., "to build product brand recognition among the millennial generation within 12 months." Strategists look at both external and internal environments to understand what could lead to or prevent the organization from reaching the goal:

- **Strengths:** Organizational attributes helpful to achieving the goal.

- **Weaknesses:** Organizational attributes harmful to achieving the goal.

- **Opportunities:** External conditions helpful to achieving the goal.

- **Threats:** External conditions harmful to achieving the goal.

Example SWOT Analysis

A nonprofit membership organization for medical practitioners published a quarterly monograph to report research results of interest to its members. The organization wanted to expand circulation by 50 percent within the next volume year. A SWOT Analysis revealed the following results:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Indexed for easy reference Index published online Peer-review Unique content Strong flow of contributors Topic-specific supplements	Financial resources Limited staffing Less-than-automated systems Limited online use Subscription base Difficulty managing strong flow of manuscripts Inability to drive content for focus areas
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
Unique content Untapped marketplace Marketplace interest in publication topics and focus areas Reach to international community Organization recognized as leader in subject area	Emergence of competitive publications with more sophisticated production systems Other online and print scientific publications

➔ Exercise: Applying SWOT

To take the SWOT analysis to the next step, strategists plan programs to build upon the strength, prevent or stop the weakness, take advantage of the opportunity, or eliminate the threat. In this example, provide one solution for one element in each category.

1. Choose one strength. Explain how the organization can use that strength.

2. Choose one weakness. Explain how the organization can stop that weakness.

3. Choose one opportunity. Explain how the organization can take advantage of this opportunity to reach the objective.

4. Choose one threat. Explain how the organization can eliminate or prevent this threat from harming the objective.

Drill-Down Problem Solving

To employ drill-down problem solving, write a problem statement on the left side of a page. In the next "column," list items that relate to the problem. Break down each item by using knowledge you have. In some cases, you may need to research to learn more about the item. Next, break down each element of the new item with additional detail and information. When you finish, your matrix should have the following structure.

For your reference, a completed illustration of drill-down problem solving follows this section.
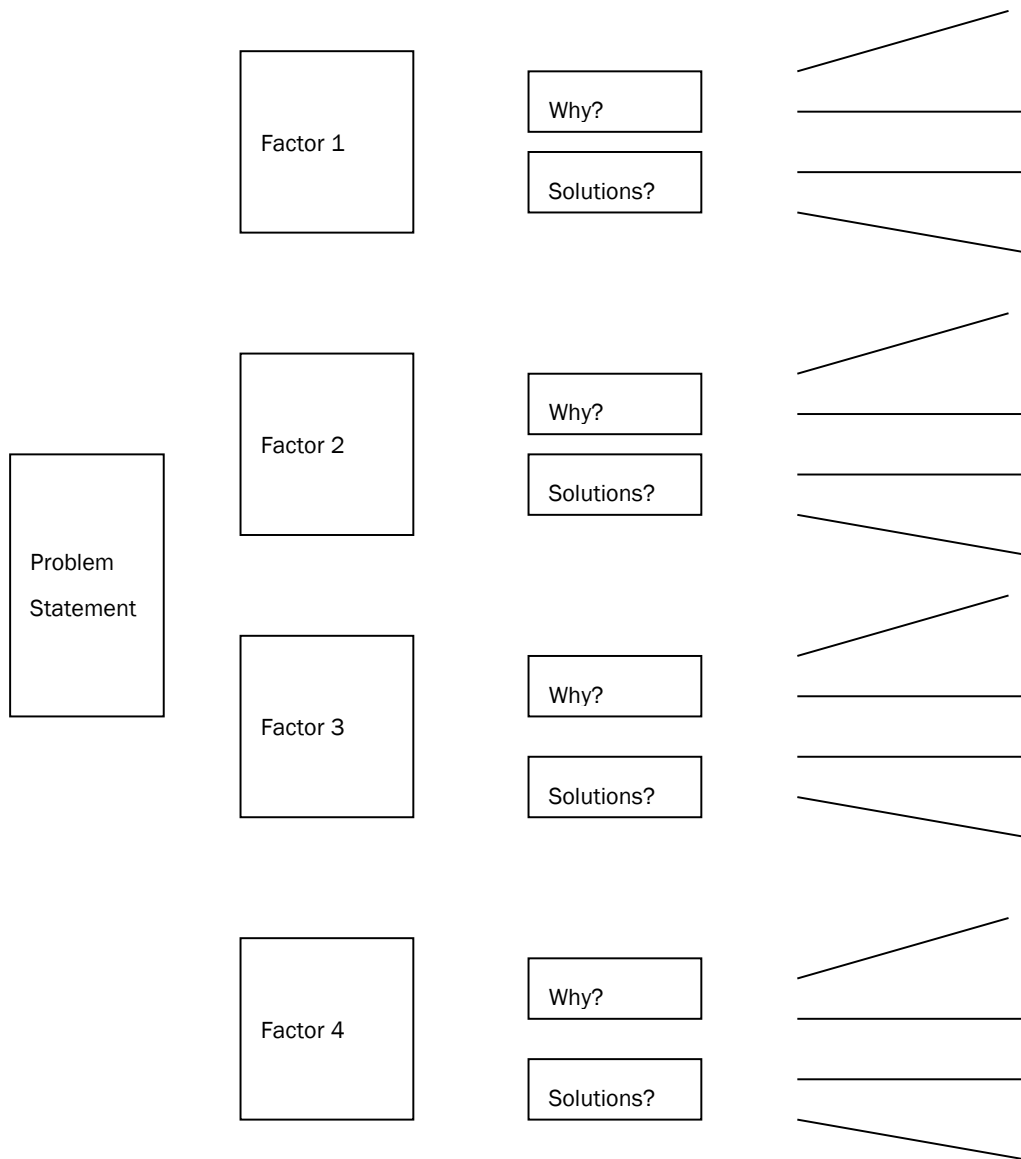
➔ Exercise: Drill-Down Problem Solving Scenario

You are the communications director for Market Farmer's Coop, a multi-million-dollar distribution company of farm-fresh produce such as spinach, lettuce, mustard greens and cabbage. Recent *E. coli* infections related to spinach have been linked to your suppliers. Your crisis communication plan identifies spokespeople, media outlets and general approaches. The plan does not provide specific solutions for this problem. Before you can implement the steps in the plan, you must identify elements that will answer the question, "How will our industry rise above this incident and continue to provide fresh, high-quality produce to our consumers?"

Using a drill-down matrix, dissect the varying levels of this problem statement. Arrive at appropriate solutions to apply to the crisis communication plan.

⬆ Sample Answers to Exercises in This Section

SWOT Analysis

1. Choose one strength. Explain how the organization can use that strength.

   - Strength: Indexed online.

   - Understanding and using this strength: Being part of the national databases for scientific research has a high value to those in research as well as to practicing physicians.

   - Promote this feature to academics and physicians to drive more queries for the research published in the monograph. Increased citations from the publication mean an increased Impact Factor, and thus, increased appeal for future advertisers and subscribers.

2. Choose one weakness. How can the organization work around that weakness?

   - Weakness: Less-than-automated systems.

   - Stopping this weakness: Conduct a cost analysis for a current online system such as automated peer-review, editorial review software, etc. As feasible, take the time to introduce new systems to keep the publication aligned with technology.

3. Choose one opportunity. How can the organization take advantage of this opportunity to reach the objective?

   - Opportunity: Untapped marketplace.

   - Taking advantage of opportunity: Consider a multi-phased campaign that would include low-cost programming such as subscriber-get-a-subscriber; members refer colleagues; outreach to medical institutions, etc.

4. Choose one threat. How can the organization eliminate or prevent this threat from harming the objective?

   - Threat: Emergence of competitive publications with more sophisticated systems.

   - Prevention: Review options to improve technology for the publication, and employ systems of equal sophistication. Train staff in new software or processes to keep aligned with technology.

Drill-Down Problem Solving Example

Several approaches could be used in the exercise scenario. Your answer should include some of the following:

How will our business overcome this incident and continue to provide fresh, high-quality produce to our consumers?

Farming practices
- Irrigation or cattle?
- Natural solutions

→ Infected manure
Grain-fed cattle
Groundwater from neighboring farms
Return cattle to natural diet of grass, hay
Lobby beef and dairy farmers to contain runoff from manure

Consumer information
- Fact or fiction
- Address fear-driven purchasing behaviors

→ Overstated disease warnings?

Regulations

Farm subsidies to control waste products

More research needed

Retailers' reactions
- Consumer needs being met?
- How can industry assist retailers?

→ Refunds for returned bags of spinach?

More research needed

Op-Ed and other media outreach with accurate information

Federal government response
- Is it enough?
- Policy needed?

→ Public education on *E coli*

Programs to reduce public hysteria

Leadership and Organizational Skills

Successful public relations practitioners understand the influence strategic relationship management can have on propelling a business into industry leadership. Public relations employs a planning process that is deliberate, performance-based, focused on public interest, keyed to two-way communications and vigilantly ethical. Achieving excellence in management skills and issues, including decision making, leadership, organizational problem solving and team building, leads to such success.

A public relations manager today is often part of an organization's dominant coalition or core management group. That group determines the corporate vision and identity (how an organization wants to be viewed). The dominant coalition determines a company's culture and is responsible for overseeing and conveying the corporate vision and identity to key stakeholders—especially employees. Corporate executives articulate that vision to employees and through ongoing training and reinforcement, encourage them to share the vision and project the corporate identity to other publics.

The importance of teamwork should not be minimized. Involving multiple levels of employees in planning increases opportunities for success. Conrad and Poole point out:

> Participatory systems offer a number of positive effects. … Informal programs, where supervisors ask their most productive employees for advice, are more widespread. Subordinates respond with useful advice, which increases their supervisors' trust in their judgment and encourages them to seek further advice, and their job satisfaction increases, which reduces absenteeism and voluntary turnover. Somewhat surprisingly, these positive effects do not result from subordinates feeling that participation gives them greater power. Instead it results from their being better informed about what is going on in the organization. (Conrad, C., & Poole, M. S. (2005). *Strategic organizational communication: In a global economy* (6th ed.). Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, pp. 71-72).

To keep pace in today's international environment, leaders must focus on creating a mission worth achieving, a sense of urgency, goals that stretch people's abilities, a spirit of teamwork and realistic expectations that the team can succeed. Leaders set clear direction and produce results by inspiring and motivating others, addressing issues important to the organization, and being a catalyst for change and improvement. True leaders put the needs of the organization before their own desires.

Executive leadership today is about building and maintaining trusting relationships by using compassion as well as open and candid communication among employees, customers, suppliers, investors, analysts, board members and all major stakeholder groups. Executives often influence people's behavior through persuasive communication. This communication not only conveys information from one party in a relationship to another but also shapes perceptions of issues important to each public. Public relations planning can enhance that process. Public relations managers may employ case studies to show senior executives how public relations recommendations contribute to transmitting information, shaping perceptions and enhancing the organizational bottom line.

Understanding how publics perceive an issue (their orientation to the issue) is important for building consensus. Leaders, especially those in an organization's dominant coalition, must assess how their orientation to an issue compares to the orientation in key stakeholder groups. Sometimes these judgments are wrong. Leaders think stakeholders agree with them when those stakeholders do not, or leaders think stakeholders oppose them when stakeholders support a position. In these instances, public relations managers should help organizational leaders identify and understand these misperceptions. By using the co-orientation model of communication (EPR 11th, pp. 179-184), public relations managers can identify (1) when an organization and public define issues differently, (2) when the organization's perception of a public's view on an issue doesn't match the public's actual view and (3) when stakeholder have inaccurate perceptions of the organization's position. By judging co-orientation, public relations managers can help leaders counter misperceptions between organizations and stakeholders. The co-orientational approach moves a step beyond simply trying to persuade stakeholders to agree with the organizational position. Co-orientation promotes

mutual understanding between organization and publics by recognizing and addressing misperceptions that hinder understanding.

Many styles of leadership exist — sometimes within the same person. A successful leader is able to adapt his or her leadership style to each situation while maintaining basic core principles. Style may depend on the organization's culture and the specific task as well as the leader's personality and the group he or she is leading. Whatever his or her style, the skilled leader provides vision, direction and focus to the organization. Several texts on the Short Bookshelf of Recommended Texts have information about leadership skills needed within the public relations field. Various textbooks provide case studies of exemplary leadership, ethics and decision-making practices.

Knowing and Assessing the Management Functions of Public Relations

Are you a manager or a technician? Managerial skills and strategic planning expertise usually separate managers and leaders from technicians. They carry out decisions made by managers. You should understand what role you play within your organization and whether public relations is part of a line or staff management function.

The line-staff distinction comes from the military. Those who directly help a commander coordinate combat operations are line officers. Those officers are traditionally responsible for personnel, intelligence, operations or training, and logistics. Officers who advise the commander on specialized topics or manage specific non-maneuver functions are on his/her special staff. Those officers include the legal counsel, the chaplain, the surgeon, the military police chief/security officer, the finance officer and the public affairs officer.

In many civilian organizations, line management functions include only product-producing and profit-producing functions that increase the bottom line. These functions include sales, engineering, production and marketing. Staff management functions provide advice and counsel to those in line management positions. Staff people recommend actions to line managers but usually have no direct authority to carry out those actions.

The distinction between staff and line roles is sometimes blurred. Nevertheless, public relations experts define the field as a **staff function**, parallel with finance, human resources, legal and other management areas that advise the CEO and the Board of Directors. That staff classification is especially clear when the public relations manager reports directly to the CEO. When the public relations manager reports to another executive, however, public relations may be seen as part of a line function.

In a staff role, public relations practitioners work closely with various levels of management (EPR 11th, pp. 49–51). Through participation in day-to-day operations and with the authorization of the CEO, the public relation staff manager may assume some line-like duties that have direct input on organizational policies and operations. As a result, public relations managers may perform some or all of the following line-management tasks:

- Anticipate, analyze and interpret public opinion, attitudes and issues that might affect, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organization.

- Counsel management at all organizational levels on public ramifications of policy decisions, courses of action and communications as well as the organization's social or citizenship responsibilities.

- Research, conduct and evaluate programs of action and communications to achieve the informed public understanding necessary for success of the organization's aims. These programs may include marketing, financial and fundraising as well as employee relations, community relations or government relations.

- Plan and implement the organization's efforts to influence or change public policy.

- Set objectives, plans, budgets, recruits and train staff members — in short, manage resources needed — to perform all of the above.

A CEO might, for example, ask a public relations manager to help determine which communication positions to eliminate as part of overall staff reductions. The public relations manager would need to determine how each position affected the success and profitability of the business and assess how the loss of specific positions might affect the bottom line.

Examples of the knowledge, skills and abilities required in professional public relations practice include communication arts, psychology, social psychology, sociology, political science, economics, management principles and ethical decision making. Technical knowledge, skills and abilities are required for opinion research, public issues analysis, media relations, direct mail promotion, institutional advertising, online communication, publications, multiplatform productions, special events, speeches and presentations.

EPR, 11th (pp. 31–34) divides public relations functions into four roles: *communication technician*, *expert prescriber*, *communication facilitator* and *problem-solving process facilitator*. The chart that follows in this section of the study guide will help you identify your current role and potential for growth.

Public relations practitioners typically fill many roles for an organization and must strive to communicate effectively with all internal and external publics. Just as planning and organizing public relations goals and related strategies should be a main priority for practitioners, engaging cooperatively with all levels of staff and line managers is essential to success. These colleagues must be aware of public relations objectives and policies so they can reflect them throughout the organization. The organization must be consistent in words and actions at every level. The public relations management function should coordinate this consistency.

Collaboration and cooperation with other organizational divisions are essential. Legal considerations and risk management when a lawsuit is pending can inhibit open communications, especially when issues relate to employee privacy and confidential personnel matters. The goal must always be to adhere to the ethical considerations of public relations while managers work to protect individual privacy rights and the reputation, credibility and market position of the organization. In these situations, the selection of a spokesperson can send a powerful message. Consider the difference between hearing important news from legal counsel or the CEO. In relation to the guidelines for crisis responses, which spokesperson would probably be perceived as more credible?

Human nature and our societal tendency toward cynicism lead some to question motivations of spokespersons representing an organization on a sensitive matter. Choosing the right spokesperson with the ability to instill the most credibility and to remain consistent with the mission of the organization is a serious decision. Adequate preparation and coaching are essential when a spokesperson is unaccustomed to the glare of the public spotlight.

Working with Other Departments

In addition to working effectively as a distinct function, public relations practitioners must cooperate with other departments or units in an organization. That cooperation should help other executives understand how public relations strategies could contribute to the organizational bottom line and enhance the work of other departments. Because marketing focuses on sales of the company's products or services, that function needs to collaborate with public relations. Legal counsel is often linked with public relations. Cooperation between the two areas is important because battles must be won in the courts of public opinion and law. The corporate counsel usually guides what a company releases about a lawsuit. What a company communicates to internal and external publics might affect the litigation. For example, if a reporter asks about an accident, such as factory chemical spill that led to an employee injury, the PR executive should coordinate the response with the corporate counsel. The attorney might advise that the response emphasize that the spill was an accident and was being cleaned up when an employee fell. Those points might be key in an expected liability lawsuit. If an employee is charged with wrongdoing, the PR executive would need to work with both the legal counsel and human resources director. Human resources typically works closely with public relations on employee communication, recruiting and other workplace issues (EPR 11th, pp. 57–61). Public relations managers work closely with human resources when PR hires new employees. Human resources helps make sure managers follow all hiring regulations and treat all candidates fairly. If, for example, a public relations manager had questions about claims on an applicant's resume, human resources could advise the manager on appropriate

ways to seek clarification. When the public relations executive develops the annual report for a publicly traded company, he/she regularly works with the corporate attorney, chief of accounting and marketing director.

➔ Exercise: Are You a Technician or a Manager?
Line Management Function or Staff Management Function?

Role	Main responsibilities	Hrs / Wk	% 40-Hr
Role 1: Communication Technician	Writes and edits employee or other newsletters.		
	Writes news releases and feature stories.		
	Develops content for websites and social networks.		
	Conducts media outreach.		
	Arranges and manages special events.		
	Conducts research by gathering information about public opinion, trends, emerging issues, political climate and legislation, etc.		
	Total: Communication Technician		
Role 2: Communication Facilitator	Serves as liaison/spokesperson between an organization and its publics.		
	Maintains two-way communication and removes barriers to keeping communication channels open.		
	Provides information needed to make decisions of mutual interest to both management and publics.		
	Establishes discussion/meeting agendas, summarizes and restates views, calls for reactions, and helps diagnose and correct conditions interfering with communication relationships.		
	Total: Communication Facilitator		
Role 3: Problem-Solving Facilitator	Collaborates with other managers to define and solve problems.		
	Assists other managers in applying step-by-step public relations solutions.		
	Uses knowledge of an organization's policies, products, procedures and actions to create solutions.		
	Total: Problem-Solving Facilitator		
Role 4: Expert Prescriber	Anticipates, analyzes, interprets public opinion, attitudes and issues that might affect, for better or worse, the operations and plans of the organization.		
	Provides counsel to management at all organizational levels on public ramifications of policy decisions, courses of action and communication as well as the organization's social or citizenship responsibilities.		
	Sets objectives, plans, budgets, recruits & trains staff members.		
	Plans and implements the organization's efforts to influence or change policy.		
	Conducts research, implements and evaluates programs of action and communication.		
	Total: Expert Prescriber		
	TOTAL		

(Adapted from EPR 11th)

How to Use Your Results

If more than 75 percent of your time is spent in roles 2–4, you are most likely part of your company's staff management team. You should have a clear understanding of management roles and responsibilities. You are likely seen as doing research on issues that influence the organization's success and strategically connecting public relations outcomes to business objectives. If you scored more than 75 percent of your time in role 1, you may not have a complete picture of the public relations management functions. People in your organization may view you purely as a technician who focuses on tactics, not strategy. That perception might

limit your contributions to the organization and be an obstacle to introducing strategic public relations thinking.

➔ Exercise: Public Relations Provides Value to Management

Like every staff management function, public relations works within the organization to achieve its business goals. To put the management function into day-to-day action, complete the following exercise.

What Do You Think?

You have been invited to be a guest presenter for a university class of MBA students. Your assigned topic is "How Public Relations Helps Management." List four points you want to cover.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Adapted from: *Public Relations, An Overview. Vol. 1(3):* PRSA Foundation Monograph Series. Exercise courtesy of Ferne G. Bonomi, APR, Fellow PRSA.

⬆ Sample answers
Public Relations Provides Value to Management

Answers should include items such as the following:

1. Public relations helps management achieve the organization's business goals by managing the organization's reputation and image with internal and external publics.

2. Public relations gives an organization new opportunities as leaders identify new markets, new products, new methods, etc., most suitable to the organization's publics.

3. Public relations monitors the environment to provide early warnings of issues that the organization may need to address or to identify opportunities and vulnerabilities that may enhance or disrupt pathways for products and services.

4. Public relations can help an organization clearly state its position when a crisis occurs.

5. Public relations can add value to an organization by managing change that is often necessary to stay competitive and efficient.

6. Public relations fosters productive, interactive dialogue for mutual benefit between an organization and its publics.

7. Public relations programs help both internal and external publics understand and support the organization's mission, vision, values, products or services.

8. Public relations can help ensure that decisions and actions align with an organization's values and ethics.

Managing Relationships

Questions about Managing Relationships account for 15 percent of the Examination. Specific KSAs for this topic are:

- **Relationship building:** Understands consensus-building strategies and techniques to persuade key stakeholders to support a decision. Ensures discussions allow key stakeholders the opportunity to express opinions. Recognizes need for affected parties and stakeholders to find mutually acceptable solutions. Uses persuasion, negotiation and coalition building.

- **Reputation management:** Understands need for maintaining individual and organizational credibility with and among key constituents. Recognizes value of reputation, image, public trust and corporate social responsibility.

- **Internal stakeholders:** Understands importance of internal relationships to the public relations function. Understands the importance of organizational culture and communicating key messages through frontline supervisors. Uses mediated and non-mediated channels of communication for effective engagement. Prioritizes internal audiences.

- **Media relations:** Understands definitions, strengths, weaknesses and needs of different media. Understands the relationships among public relations professionals, journalists and media organizations. Builds effective relationships with media based on mutual respect and trust. Analyzes current events and trends for opportunities and threats. Identifies appropriate controlled and uncontrolled media channels and key influencers.

- **Networks:** Understands how different tactics can be used to establish and enhance relationships (e.g., electronic communications, special events, face-to-face communication, networking, social networking, word-of-mouth and third-party communication). Recognizes interconnectedness among various stakeholders. Considers broad/global relationships.

Relationship Building

Relationship: A connection or association between entities. Relationship is the central organizing principle of public relations scholarship. Human relationships are often described in terms of interactions, transactions, influence exchanges (persuasion) or shared communication between individuals or groups.

Individuals exist in networks of relationships from birth. Individuals (and organizations of individuals) decide to enhance some of these relationships to satisfy certain mutual needs. Being in such a relationship implies mutual awareness of the connection, some sort of influence exchange (persuasion) and agreement about benefits the association produces.

Researchers often study (1) why people enter relationships (e.g., to meet cultural and social norms, to join forces for a shared purpose, to gain resources, to satisfy legal requirements or to gratify a convenience), (2) maintenance strategies (e.g., persuasion technique, interaction strategies, membership expectations), and (3) consequences or outcomes of associations (e.g., goal attainment, dependency or loss of autonomy, routine or institutional behavior, changes in power balance, trust, relational satisfaction and commitment to parties in the group).

Clark and Mills (1993) divided relationships into two basic categories: **exchange** and **communal**. "Exchange" relationships are strategic and utilitarian. They rely on persuasion, but they often break down when disagreements arise between the parties involved. "Communal" relationships are based on emotional ties, proximity or geography. They rely on two-way dialogue and are likely to survive disputes. Communal relationships, therefore, are considered stronger and more enduring than exchange relationships.

Social scientists have identified multiple relationship attributes. Ki and Shin (2005) said the most common attributes are level of satisfaction with the connection, commitment, trust, mutual understanding, control mutuality (power relationship of those in the relationship) and benefits. Public relations practitioners often measure these attributes to determine the quality of a relationship.

Public relations practice involves the management of connections between organizations and those publics important to the organization's success. Bruning and Ledingham (1999) identified three types of organizational-public relationships: **professional**, **personal** and **community**. These connections were built on trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment. These three relationship types help illustrate that organizations have more interactions with publics than simply financial transactions. Public relations practitioners use techniques to encourage dialogue with professional, personal or community publics, encourage consensus about issues, establish partnerships, or generate support for causes.

Each organizational-public relationship type includes sets of stakeholder networks. Each set has a different strategic priority for the organization. Each network is connected in multiple ways and, depending on the message, may require different levels of interaction: formal vs. informal, face-to-face vs. mediated (including online), synchronous vs. asynchronous. Public relations practitioners should consider the information needs of stakeholders in various situations and then use networks strategically and appropriately to meet those needs. For example, if your company is buying out a local competitor, some publics, such as financial analysts or community leaders, may need to be told by phone. Direct two-way communication allows people in those key publics to get questions answered immediately. Other stakeholders may be satisfied by receiving an email message, seeing a social network post or reading a news story prompted by a company news release. Public relations practitioners must constantly determine the most appropriate ways to manage communication with various stakeholder networks to maintain and enhance connections to the organization.

Consensus Building

As a public relations practitioner, you may find yourself called to help disputing parties come to a mutually acceptable solution. As a consensus-building facilitator, you typically take the following actions:

- Identify and recruit appropriate representatives to participate in consensus-building sessions.
- Guide participants to establish the agenda and process.
- Identify and analyze the problem with participants.
- Evaluate possible solutions.
- Direct the group through the decision-making process.
- Obtain finalization and unanimous approval of the solution.

Consensus building, unlike the majority rule approach, requires that all parties around the table agree to support the final decision. A few examples of consensus-building processes and techniques can be found from the following resources:

- Southern Tobacco Communities Project: Describes an effort to find common ground between community, health and industry leaders from six Southern U.S. states. www.virginia.edu/ien/tobacco/

- Coming to Consensus: Tips on cooperative decision making. www.markshep.com/nonviolence/Consensus.html

Consulting Skills

Whether you work as a staff member within a corporate environment, in an agency or as a solo practitioner, you will likely provide public relations counsel to your board of directors, senior staff or clients. Before you head into a consulting project, use the following list to ask yourself if you have the skills needed to be a good consultant. Experts agree that these skills are imperative for consulting on public relations programming:

- Creativity to offer new solutions, new messages and new options
- Good communication skills: written, verbal, electronic, online
- In-depth knowledge of the issues to be addressed
- Respect for the individual/group requesting consultation
- An understanding of the importance of confidentiality

- Cultural competence and proficiency
- Vision to look beyond the obvious to suggest new possibilities
- A team or partnership approach to work with the individual or group
- Leadership in setting an example for others to follow
- Flexibility in facilitating change or adapting to changing needs

Negotiating Skills

Our lives are filled with negotiation. Throughout each day, we will invariably come into conflict with someone: family members, coworkers, clients, sales personnel, government officials, etc. Some activist publics may advocate goals at odds with what our organizations want. How we handle each conflict demonstrates our ability to negotiate in a way that fulfills our needs and allows for a win-win situation for the parties involved.

Negotiation, as defined by Cohen (1980), is the "use of information and power to affect behavior." Cohen identifies three critical elements that are always present in negotiation:

1. **Information:** You may perceive that the other side knows more about you and your needs than you know about them and their needs.

2. **Time:** You may perceive that the other side is not under the same kind of time pressure or deadlines as you are.

3. **Power:** You may perceive that the other side has more power and authority than you think you have.

The key point about these elements is that they are your perceptions and may not be reality. Your ability to negotiate improves as you believe you have the power to influence your environment, your clients and your world. Use this positive approach next time you are asked to negotiate a situation. With an understanding of the need for information, the time constraints and the many sources of power at your disposal, you will affect a positive outcome.

Additional Resources

Acuff, F. L. (1997). *How to negotiate anything with anyone anywhere around the world.* New York: American Management Association.

American Management Association (for books, articles and briefs on negotiating skills) www.amanet.org/resources/negotiation.htm?CMP=KAC-G3086&pcode=XAR7&gclid=CLr0nYvPtYsCFRE8gQodV3-Yxg

Bruning, S. D., & Ledingham, J. A. (1999). Relationships between organizations and publics: Development of a multi-dimensional organization-public relationship scale. *Public Relations Review, 25*, 157–170.

Clark, M. S., & Mills, J. (1993). The difference between communal and exchange relationships: What it is and is not. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 19,* 684–691.

Cohen, H. (1980). *You can negotiate anything.* Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stuart, Inc.

Ki, E. J., & Shin, J. H. (2005, May). The Status of Organization-Public Relationship Research in Public Relations: Analysis of Published Articles Between 1985 and 2004. Paper presented at the 2005 Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, New York.

Mills, H. (2000). *Artful persuasion: How to command attention, change minds, and influence people.* New York: American Management Association.

Reputation Management

Reputation management: Systematic actions and messages designed to influence what people in key publics think about an organization. Reputation management has long been a function of public relations and is often a priority in crisis management. The increased use of the Internet and related social networks has given added urgency to the practice. The immediate and anonymous nature of the Web increases the risk of communications that can damage an organization's reputation.

Reputation management is a growing field within public relations. Reputation management implies that public relations practitioners should be experts in issues management, crisis communications and environmental scanning to foster credibility and trust among internal and external publics as well as enhance the organization's image for social responsibility (Strategies and Tactics 11, p. 58). Practitioners use electronic monitoring tools to scan the Internet for references that could affect the organization's reputation. These references may be in blogs, on websites or on social networks.

One of an organization's most valuable assets is its reputation. Corporations assign a value to this intangible asset and call it "goodwill." That amount represents the difference between the value of the organization's tangible assets and what the company could be sold for. The way publics think about a company determines reputation and goodwill. The public relations management function usually coordinates the organization's strategies that most influence reputation and goodwill.

But with a few keyboard strokes or taps on a mobile device, negative online posts can instantly threaten reputation, credibility and market position. "Perception is reality" to many publics, and a potentially damaging Internet or social media rumor can reach millions of people in seconds. Prompt and appropriate responses are essential. The guidelines for managing issues and crisis communications are as applicable to cyber crises as other types, with the added priority of urgency.

Reputation is the sum of what others say or think about you or your organization. Reputation is based on how you or your organization interacts with others (what you do or say) and how they evaluate those actions. Reputation exists in the eye of the beholder. It is ***conferred*** by publics, ***not projected*** by the organization. Reputation may change quickly as others constantly evaluate what you do and say.

A business' reputation is often built on three pillars: (1) economic performance, (2) social responsiveness and (3) the ability to deliver outcomes to stakeholders. The public relations management function plays a role in all three areas but especially social responsiveness. It involves careful issue tracking, organizational positioning, risk communication and credibility enhancement. (Strategies and Tactics 11, pp. 269–270)

The Research Institute, a private organization with offices in New York and Denmark, defines **corporate reputation** as "aggregate perceptions and interpretations of a company's past actions and future prospects." The institute explains: "Corporate reputations take shape from the perceptions that stakeholders have about a company's results on seven key dimensions: Products, Innovation, Performance, Citizenship, Workplace, Leadership and Governance. Reputations are measured by aggregating the feelings of Trust, Admiration and Esteem that stakeholders have for a company."

PRSA's 2009 Business Case for Public Relations said public relations strategies could affect an organization's reputation in at least nine ways. They included increasing the likelihood that people would consider or purchase products from a particular brand, establishing initial credibility for new products or services, enhancing recommendations or word-of-mouth response to products or services, increasing customer loyalty, and attracting top talent.

Reputation differs from two concepts sometimes used as synonyms: **image** and **brand**. Image refers to characteristics **you or your organization present** (features you show, things you do and messages you transmit) so that others may remember you. The goal of your actions is to influence how others think of you. Brand, according to the American Marketing Association, is "a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers." The legal term for brand is trademark. A brand may identify one item, a family of items or all items of one seller. If the word is used for a company as a whole, the preferred term is **trade name**.

Internal Stakeholders

Internal publics (i.e., employees for businesses and members for various organizations) are essential to an organization's success. Employees produce products and services. Members provide associations and other nonprofit organizations revenue and a reason for being. Furthermore, these internal groups are ambassadors for their organizations to family members, friends, neighbors and others they meet in the community. Therefore, internal stakeholders are important publics. They need broad understanding of their organization, its values and goals as well as its initiatives in business or the community. When something affects the organization (e.g., ownership change, layoffs, plant closing, new product launch), the internal publics should be among the first to know. For example, when a company plans an organizationwide effort, such as an initiative to improve customer satisfaction, employees would be a key public. They would need to understand why the organization was launching the initiative, what the key messages were and which workers might need special training to take part.

In studying businesses, associations and other institutions, social scientists have identified open and closed organizational systems as well as asymmetrical and symmetrical worldviews. Open systems allow interaction between units within an organization as well as input to the organization from external forces. Closed systems isolate internal units from the external environment. Asymmetrical worldviews reflect a top-down management approach. The organization sets goals and makes decisions without much input from workers or external forces. The organization gets what it wants without having to change the way it does business. Symmetrical worldviews reflect more bottom-up influences. Managers develop a shared vision with workers. Operating practices include negotiations between labor and management, frequent compromises and intentional approaches to conflict resolution.

In the Excellence Theory of Public Relations, scholar James Grunig encouraged open organizational systems. The theory lists five characteristics for an "excellent" organization: participatory rather than authoritative cultures, symmetrical system of internal communication, organic rather than mechanical structures, intentional efforts to equalize opportunities for men and women, and high job satisfaction among employees (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006, p. 53).

For success within an organizational system, the public relations department needs to identify and prioritize publics who affect the department's success and have a stake in seeing public relations efforts succeed. Those stakeholders often include the board of directors or other governing body, top management executives, and key employee leaders.

Organizations communicate to internal stakeholders through paid, earned, owned and shared media. Paid messages are delivered through ads in external delivery channels that internal publics use. Earned messages are news stories (prompted by news releases) carried in external delivery channels that internal stakeholders follow. Owned messages appear in communication channels the organization controls completely (newsletters, websites, bulletin boards, employee meetings). When an organization operates in multiple locations, for example, it can deliver key messages to all employees through owned channels. Shared messages appear on social networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram). Research shows, however, that the most credible source of information about a business for many employees is their immediate supervisor. Frontline supervisors are a key channel for building employee support or consensus.

Additional Resources

Grunig, J. E., Grunig, L. A., & Dozier, D. M. (2006). The excellence theory. In C. Botan & V. Hazleton (Eds.), *Public relations theory II* (pp. 19–54). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Media Relations

Media relations is an integral part of most public relations programs. Public relations professionals interact with journalists and bloggers both proactively and reactively. The overall goal of good media relations is to establish relationships with reporters and editors. These relationships should be professional and cooperative, not adversarial. The goal of media relations should be to help foster accurate, balanced and timely coverage of your organization's information.

Whether dealing with a broadcast network reporting global issues or a specialized news outlet such as a trade journal concerned with a specific industry segment, you can enhance relationships with journalists when you first conduct research. Become familiar with specific news they cover. Receiving news that is unrelated to their audience profile serves not only to diminish journalists' trust but also the respect that is so important to earning coverage.

Media relations campaigns should be planned to deliver messages related to public relations goals to key publics through appropriate media channels. The effectiveness of a media relations campaign should be evaluated regularly. Comprehensive metrics have been developed. Though the amount of media coverage is only an output measure, it remains among the top indicators that clients value.

News organizations have no obligation to use any story you pitch. Therefore, public relations practitioners must resist pressuring reporters for coverage and understand that submitting a news release does not guarantee its publication. Understanding and respecting the First Amendment rights of news organizations will go a long way toward building professional, ethical standards in your media relations.

Providing value to reporters is a way to foster good media relations. Journalists value sources that are accessible, responsive and credible. Know what constitutes news for each journalist, and offer newsworthy, timely stories of direct interest to their readers, listeners or viewers. Keep track of current events. Relate pitches about your organization's products or programs to events in the news. Connect journalists with authoritative sources. If, for example, your publicly traded company is acquiring another, arrange interviews with your CEO. Know the best ways to pitch stories or deliver information to journalists and bloggers. For example, don't call a news conference unless (1) you have real news that you need to deliver simultaneously to many news organizations, (2) you need to have an expert present to answer questions or (3) you need to demonstrate the subject of the news story. If the story isn't breaking, consider communication alternatives, and look for ways to tailor pitches to the interests of reporters and their audiences. Media databases, such as Cision, Vocus and Factiva, show what topics, areas and publics news outlets cover. This information can help you identify appropriate outlets and beats for your stories.

When reporters and bloggers come to you for information, provide timely responses and encourage senior executives to do the same. Remember that journalists have deadlines. Not answering a question in time can keep your organization out of the immediate story and hurt chances of being included in future reports. Encourage reporters and bloggers to submit all questions about your organization through the public relations office. Prove by the way you handle these inquiries that you are an information-gathering resource for journalists, not a roadblock.

Even in the age of social media, the news release is still a media-relations mainstay for delivering key corporate messages to reporters and, in turn, media consumers. For example, when a corporate board approves employee benefit changes, a public stock offering or a generous retirement package for an outgoing CEO, the organization can frame key messages about those actions in a news release. For the CEO's retirement package, for instances, those messages might be that the retiring executive had presided over a significant growth in stock value, enhanced the company's reputation, become the well-respected face of the organization and earned the unanimous gratitude of the board for his or her strong leadership.

Public relations practitioners write news releases and direct the approval process. This process varies by organization but may include input from the corporate legal counsel and the CEO. Public relations practitioners should focus upon the objectives of each communication piece and how it relates to the overall corporate strategy. Distribution is now most often electronic through email, online wire services, websites or

social media. How releases are delivered may change with technology, but the overarching purpose of the release does not.

Video news releases (VNRs) supply information, pictures and sound that electronic journalists can use to illustrate your story. VNRs should look like news and not advertising. VNR content must be completely accurate because it might air as submitted to the program producer. VNRs should clearly declare the sponsoring company, organization or individual. Observing a code of good practice for VNRs will help establish your reputation as a trustworthy, reliable news source (EPR 11th, p. 220).

Seitel (2011, p. 189) notes that wire services continue to carry the most important news. He cites the Associated Press (AP), founded in 1848, as still one of the most important news organizations in the world. Also available are services such as PR Newswire, Business Wire and Market Wire. They charge a fee for distributing news releases.

Here are some questions to guide your concept of sound media relations:

- Do you understand the relationships between public relations practitioners and journalists?

- Can you relate current events and trends to what your organization/clients are doing? In other words, have you developed news sensibilities and solid news judgment?

- Do you recognize the strengths and weaknesses of different media channels and select the ones that will be most effective for different communications goals?

- Do you understand how to use the Internet, Worldwide Web, social media and other new media technologies as part of an overall media strategy?

- Do you understand how the many information distribution systems work?

- Have you learned to recognize unique media relations laws, requirements and responsibilities associated with financial public relations for publicly owned companies?

Vital Media for External Publics

- Newspapers
- Wire services/News syndicates
- Magazines
- Radio
- Television
- Company Web page
- Email
- Blogs
- Chat rooms
- Interactive networks
- VNRs
- Direct mailings
- Podcasts/videocasts
- Online social networks

Important Relationships for Effective Media Relations

- Relations with newspeople (Help them do their job well.)

- Relations with production staff members (Get them on your side.)

- Relations with other public relations practitioners (shared responsibilities)

- Relations with freelance writers

- Understand differences between paid (advertising — controlled), earned (publicity — uncontrolled), shared (social media — uncontrolled) and owned (internal — controlled) media.

Best Practices

- Protect relationships: Keep up-to-date contacts and meet media deadlines.

- Keep background sheet handy.

- Maintain newsroom (news release archive, company backgrounder, downloadable images) on website or social media sites.

- Prepare for interviews by following these steps:

    o Know the facts.

    o Prepare for questions. Develop Q&A.

    o Plan for articulation of key messages.

    o Provide media training so that executives and other organizational representatives can anticipate and prepare to answer questions that reporters are most likely to ask.

    o Select and train the right spokespersons.

    o Stick to the facts; never guess; never speculate; never lie.

    o Avoid "no comment," even if you can't comment.

    o Be confident, credible, personable.

    o Be on time.

Summary

- Learn as much as you can about the reporters and news organizations that cover the different aspects of your organization. For example, if you work for a school system, you should know local education and political writers. If you work for a health care operation, you should know health and business writers.

- Be informative and honest in every contact with journalists and bloggers. Treat them professionally, not as adversaries. Provide timely responses.

- Always focus on the media channels that can meet your communication objectives.

- Work closely with other parts of your organization, including others in the public relations and/or communication department, to prepare for media contacts and ensure that you have the most accurate and up-to-date information.

Tip: Think about how you might work with reporters. Refer to texts on the Short Bookshelf of Recommended Texts (pp. 6, 7, and 8), and take advantage of other resources for developing your knowledge, skills and abilities in this area. Examples of other media relations resources include workshops and teleconferences, articles in public relations trade magazines or journals, and textbooks such as those listed throughout this study guide.

Adapted from information provided by the Minnesota PRSA Accreditation Committee.

Additional Resources

Newsom, D., & Haynes, J. (2011). *Public relations writing: Form & style* (9th ed.) Boston, Mass.: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning. (See chapters 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 and 15.)

Seitel, F. (2011). *The practice of public relations* (11th ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall. (See chapter 9 on Media Relations/Print and Broadcast.)

Networks

Technology Expands Channels But Doesn't Change Public Relations Principles

Technological advances since the 1990s have greatly expanded the ways public relations practitioners can relate to publics. The Internet has interconnected humans more closely than ever before and provided the backbone for the Worldwide Web and all online social networks. These online channels allow public relations practitioners to tell stories through multiple channels directly to key publics. These direct messages can potentially personalize connections between people and organizations, foster two-way relationships and build grassroots support for products, services or causes. Thus, even in this digital age, the basic public relations management function within an organization and the principles of reputation management have not changed. Public relations practitioners work through online channels to foster mutually beneficial two-way relationships between organizations and those publics upon whom the organization's success depends. Furthermore, new technologies haven't eliminated other longstanding communication tools. Television, newspapers and other traditional media outlets still play major roles in delivering information to many publics. People still interact through one-to-one contacts, meetings and special events. Social networks, however, enable two-way communication between organizations and publics more easily than older media. As Internet, social media and mobile information technologies continue to evolve, more and more people seek and receive their news online. New online delivery tools come and go almost daily. Therefore, public relations practitioners must stay current with trends and adapt strategies to the digital age. The goal is to know which channels can most effectively reach each key public.

Information Technology Considerations

The development and enhancement of online communication opportunities and mobile technologies have created "on-demand media." Many 21st century news consumers expect content to be individualized, tailored to their needs and delivered to them regularly and instantaneously. This trend requires public relations practitioners to consider how to employ online communication tactics that are not only informative but also concise and useful — not sales pitches, fluff or trivia. People often search online for information they can use. They don't always pay attention to the online source. A tweet from an individual may be just as credible in some instances as a report from a traditional news organization like *The Wall Street Journal.* As a public relations practitioner, therefore, you need to understand your publics in more detailed ways than in the past and to be well versed on emerging and ever-changing digital media trends. That understanding requires ongoing research and monitoring of online behaviors.

Gone are the days when updating your organization's website was all you needed to do to command market presence on the Internet. Your website is merely one stream feeding into the vast ocean of today's online information. The breadth and depth of search engines, combined with online social networking, create a plethora of real-time news delivery sources as well as additional content channels to monitor. Following all these sites — as both ongoing research and a search for input opportunity through blogs, chats and social media — adds a vast new challenge to public relations work.

The "news cycle," which used to have specific deadlines in the morning, afternoon and evening, now runs 24 hours a day seven days a week for most news outlets and other direct media (curating websites, social media sites, blogs and other media without a gatekeeper). News organizations are no longer limited to filling a specific "news hole" (a limited number of newspaper pages or broadcast minutes to fill each news cycle). The demand for information in the 24-hour news cycle is massive, and the capacity for delivering stories is almost limitless. Public relations practitioners have always needed to be available to various publics, but with electronic media systems constantly being updated, you now must be on call around the clock. While media contacts still are important, the gatekeeping dynamic has changed. You can now reach publics directly and interact with people without media intervention. If the 6 p.m. local news doesn't cover a story, organizations can now get the word out through social media instead.

In addition, convergence is affecting traditional news operations. For example, most newspapers deliver audio and video reports as well as text through their websites and social media platforms. Radio stations post pictures and video as part of their online news coverage. Television stations include still photos and text stories on their websites along with video reports. The bottom line is that public relations managers must provide content in various modes through a variety of channels to both media outlets and key publics.

With the onset of high-quality digital still and video cameras and the advance of affordable mobile technologies, "the media" can now include almost everybody. Anyone with a smartphone can potentially share information with a massive global audience. "Citizen journalists" provide new opportunities for engaging key publics. These citizen reporters can deliver content from your organization. But citizen journalism can have a downside. People with mobile phones can capture and immediately post both positive and negative audio, video or still images online. Public relations practitioners must constantly be ready to respond to negative messaging. Furthermore, public relations executives need to remind organizational leaders about the reputational dangers of the unguarded remark made in public or private. Many politicians, sports figures and celebrities have been embarrassed in recent years when a "non-media" attendee at a party or other supposedly informal function posted video of an off-color or controversial comment online.

Although "virtually" all practitioners now use email, the Internet, social media, smartphones and other technological tools, these public relations people still must employ the fundamental skills of writing, critical thinking and strategic analysis in daily practice. The content of each message, not the delivery channel, still affects the credibility of the practitioner and the organization (EPR 11th, pp. 221–225).

Online channels provide a wide range of feedback data about users. These analytics help practitioners measure and evaluate message reach. But practitioners must be able to look beyond "hits," "likes" and "follows" to interpret what these numbers mean for organizations or clients in strategic business terms. What, for example, might such numbers say about message awareness, audience engagement, lead generation, share of voice, online reputation or return on investment?

Online digital communication can challenge public relations practitioners in many ways. Social media, for example, empower publics. Once organizations post information online, they can't control their messages. Publics expect organizations in online communities to be transparent and ethical. Organization credibility is constantly being scrutinized. Online followers can be anywhere. Therefore, geographic proximity gives way to cultural proximity. Practitioners must be alert to ways people in different nations or cultures might misperceive messages or organizational actions.

Public relations practitioners must be lifelong learners — about both people and technology. Though recent college graduates may know more than their clients or bosses about how the latest media technologies work, that knowledge may not be enough for success on the job. New practitioners must understand how to use those tools strategically as part of an overall public relations plan.

Technology Definitions

Tip: For terms and definitions in addition to those that follow, please consult technology-focused textbooks and publications, or go online to www.whatis.techtarget.com. That website is the source for a majority of these terms and definitions and one of many online technology resources.

Address: The unique location of (1) an Internet server, (2) a specific file (for example, a Web page), or (3) an email user. Address is also used to specify the location of data within computer storage.

Audiocast: Audio content broadcast over the Internet. The term serves as a broad descriptor for any audio content, including streaming audio, podcasts or other distribution methods.

Blog: Short for weblog, a personal online journal that is frequently updated and intended for general public consumption. Blogs are defined by their format: a series of entries posted to a single page in reverse-chronological order. Blogs generally represent the personality of the author or reflect the purpose of the website that hosts the blog.

Bookmark: A saved link to a Web page.

Breadcrumb trail: On a website, a navigation tool that allows a user to see where the current page is in relation to the website's hierarchy.

Cascading style sheet: Or CSS; determines how a given element is presented on a Web page. CSS gives more control over the appearance of a Web page to the page creator than to the browser designer or the viewer.

Channel: A group of items, each of which represents one post (e.g., a blog post or MP3 audio file). You subscribe to the channel when subscribing to podcasts. Channel is used interchangeably with feed on many websites.

Chat room: A Web-based venue for communities of users with a common interest to communicate in real time. Forums and discussion groups, in comparison, allow users to post messages but don't have the capacity for interactive messaging. Users can enter chat rooms and read messages without sending any — a practice known as lurking.

Content management system: Or CMS; a system used to manage website content in lieu of commercially available code-based Web-design software. CMS features vary, but most include Web-based publishing, format management, revision control, indexing, search and retrieval.

Cookie: Information a website puts on your hard disk so that it can remember something about you at a later time. Typically, a cookie records your preferences when you use a particular site.

Counter: On a website, a program that counts and typically displays how many people have visited an HTML page (usually the home page). Many sites include a counter, either as a matter of interest or to show that the site is popular.

Cybersquatting: According to the U.S. Anti-Cybersquatting Consumer Protection Act, cybersquatting is registering, trafficking in or using a domain name with bad-faith intent to profit from the goodwill of a trademark or celebrity belonging to someone else.

Digitization: The process of converting information into a digital format. In this format, information is organized into discrete units of data (called bits) that can be separately addressed (usually in multiple-bit groups called bytes). Computers and many devices with computing capacity (such as digital cameras and digital hearing aids) can process these data.

FAQ: A list of "frequently asked questions" (with answers) that has become a common feature of Internet sites.

File transfer protocol: Or FTP. A standard Internet protocol and the simplest way to exchange files between computers on the Internet. FTP is commonly used to transfer Web page files from creator to server. FTP is commonly used to download programs and other files to your computer from other servers.

Item: A single entry in a news feed or podcast channel. Each item contains an enclosure that links to the audio file for the podcast, including ID3 tags.

Internet: A worldwide system of computer networks conceived by the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) of the U.S. government in 1969 and first known as the ARPANET. The original aim was to allow users of a research computer at one university to "talk to" research computers at other universities. A side benefit of ARPANET's design was enabling messages to be routed or rerouted in more than one direction so that the network could continue to function even if parts of it were destroyed in a military attack or other disaster.

Narrowcast: Audio or video programs targeting a specific audience demographic; the opposite of broadcast. Many podcasts may be described as narrowcasts, although as the technology expands, "mainstream" programming for wider audiences is being podcast as well.

News feed: A Web feed that specifically supplies new headlines or posts to an RSS aggregator. (See RSS feed.) A news feed may be called a news channel.

Permission marketing: A marketing strategy using email and other mobile technology to send consumers information that they have agreed in advance to receive. Permission is a key provision of the 2003 Can Spam Act, www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/buspubs/canspam/shtm.

Phishing: An email fraud method. A perpetrator sends a legitimate-looking email message in an attempt to gather personal and/or financial information from recipients. Typically, the messages appear to come from well-known and trustworthy (but "spoofed") websites.

Ping: A basic Internet program that lets you verify that a particular IP address exists and can accept requests. The verb ping means the act of using the ping utility or command. Ping is used diagnostically to ensure that a host computer is actually operating

Podcast: An audio file published on the Internet with an RSS feed that allows users to subscribe to automatic downloads of a series of such programs. Podcasts are a collection of files, audio MP3 files, for example, that are then included in an RSS 2.0 news feed as enclosures. Instead of headlines in a news feed, each item in a podcast RSS feed represents a single MP3 file.

Podcasting: The preparation and distribution of audio (and possibly other media) files for download to digital music or multimedia players and smartphones.

Proxy server: An enterprise that uses the Internet to act as an intermediary between a workstation user and the Internet so that the enterprise can ensure security, administrative control and caching service. A proxy server is associated with or part of a gateway server that separates the enterprise network from the outside network and a firewall server that protects the enterprise network from outside intrusion.

Push technology: A set of technologies whereby information is delivered from a central server to a client computer, often by means of an Internet-based content delivery network.

Redirection: On a website, a technique for moving visitors to a different page or site when its address has been changed and visitors are familiar with the old address.

RSSL: RDF Site Summary, formerly called Rich Site Summary or Really Simple Syndication; a method of describing news or other Web content that is available for "feeding" (distribution or syndication) from an online publisher to Web users.

RSS aggregator: A program used to collect and read RSS feeds. An RSS aggregator may be known as a newsreader, news aggregator or RSS aggregator. Some readers exist as stand-alone programs and others operate as extensions of Web browsers or email programs. Still others are available online so feeds can be read independently of the computer used to collect them.

RSS feed: An XML file that provides content or summaries of content, including links to the full versions of the content and other metadata, that a user can subscribe to using an RSS aggregator. Some sites may call this RSS feed a channel.

Spam: Unsolicited email. From the sender's point-of-view, spam is a form of bulk mail, often sent to a list obtained from a spambot or to a list obtained by companies that specialize in creating email distribution lists. To the receiver, it usually seems like junk email.

Spool: To copy an RSS link into a podcast organizer or loader application to download later.

Spyware: Any technology that aids in gathering information about people or organizations without their knowledge. On the Internet (where it is sometimes called a spybot or tracking software), spyware is programming that is put into someone's computer to gather information about the user secretly and relay it to advertisers or other interested parties. Spyware can get into a computer as a software virus or as the result of installing a new program.

Streaming media: Sound (audio) and pictures (video) transmitted on the Internet in a streaming or continuous fashion by using data packets. The most effective reception of streaming media requires some form of high-speed broadband technology.

Syndication: The supply of material for reuse and integration with other material, often through a paid service subscription. Newspapers provide a common example of syndication. Newspapers receive content from content providers (news services, for example), reformat it as required, integrate it with other copy, print it and publish it. For many years syndication was mainly a feature of print media. Today content syndication is used widely across the Web.

Timeshifting: The process of recording and storing data for later viewing, listening or reading.

URL: Uniform Resource Locator, previously Universal Resource Locator; the unique address for a file that is accessible on the Internet. A URL is a type of URI (Uniform Resource Identifier, formerly called Universal Resource Identifier).

USM: Universal Subscription Mechanism, which allows certain podcasters to add a subscription automatically from an RSS file.

Uploading: The transmission of a file from one computer system to another. From a network user's point of view, to upload a file is to send it to another computer that is set up to receive it.

Video podcasting: Similar to podcasting, except that video files instead of MP3s are published into RSS feeds.

Vlog: Video blog; a blog that contains video content.

Web 2.0: A term for advanced Internet technology and applications. These include blogs, wikis, RSS and bookmark sharing.

Web accessibility: Standards ensuring that people with disabilities can use the Web. Web accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the Web and that they can contribute to the Web. Web accessibility encompasses all disabilities that affect access to the Web. These include visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive and neurological disabilities.

Webinar: A type of Web conference or Web seminar that can be presented as an interactive dialogue between presenter and audience completely via the Internet or a telephone-based presentation with complementing computer-based content.

Wiki: A server program that allows collaboration in forming the content of a website or other document via a website. With a wiki, any user can edit the site content, including other users' contributions, by using a regular Web browser. The term comes from the word "wikiwiki," which means "fast" in Hawaiian.

World Wide Web: All resources and users on the Internet that are employing Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP). The World Wide Web is the universe of network-accessible information.

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Applying Ethics and Law

Questions about Applying Ethics and Law account for 13 percent of the Examination. Specific KSAs for these topics are:

- **Integrity**: Conducts professional activities in a lawful and principled manner. Functions as the conscience of the organization.

- **Ethical behavior**: Understands and adheres to commonly accepted standards for professional behavior. Recognizes ethical dilemmas. Acts to remedy unethical acts.

- **First Amendment issues**: Understands First Amendment as a foundational principle for public relations. Distinguishes between political and corporate speech. Articulates conditions for libel and defenses thereof. Understands impact of digital record on status as public and private figure.

- **Privacy issues**: Understands federal law regarding privacy (e.g., HIPAA, FERPA, DPPA), identity protection, ethical implications and digital record. Effectively advises organization on strategic adoption and effective use of technology for listening to, communicating with and engaging priority publics.

- **Other legal issues**: Upholds applicable federal laws regarding disclosure, copyright, trademarks, fair use.

Ethics

Ethics connotes the process you follow to decide what is right or wrong. The application of ethics to public relations practice is critical to our profession. Unfortunately, most ethical questions do not have black or white answers. Various values, such as our commitment to truth, honesty and transparency vs. our commitment to safeguarding client confidences, often compete. The correct moral path may not be clear.

Each UAB Participating Organization has its own code of ethics. All these codes share some common principles. For purposes of this Examination, familiarity with the following common general principles, along with knowledge of the code of ethics for your participating organization, is recommended.

This section presents common ethical principles of public relations and a decision-making model. The information is designed to help you evaluate ethical dilemmas and determine rationales to address them. Several scenarios are provided for you to practice ethical decision making.

General Principles Underlying Public Relations Practice

- Act in the public interest: Find the greatest good for the majority of the people (a utilitarianism or teleological perspective in which what benefits the most people in the end is moral).

- Use honesty and integrity as your guide.

- Avoid actual or apparent conflicts of interest. Disclose all potential conflicts of interest as soon as you identify them.

- Ensure accuracy and truth.

  - Promote the free exchange of ideas.
  - Do not disseminate false and misleading information.
  - Correct errors immediately with all publics.

- Deal fairly with all publics.

  - Respect yourself, and respect others.
  - Ensure high standards of conduct in daily practice.
  - Leave proprietary materials related to your old job behind when you move to a new position.

More Specific Principles Defining How Public Relations Is Practiced

- Accurately define what public relations strategies and tactics can accomplish. Do not guarantee results for areas beyond your control.

- Maintain the integrity of communication channels.

  - Ensure transparency with all publics, from employees to external publics.
  - Maintain ethical relationships with government, regulatory agencies, news media, colleagues and all other publics.

- Safeguard confidences.

  - Build trust through protection of confidential information.
  - Secure the privacy of organization and individuals.

- Do not damage the reputation of others.

  - Be careful during agency pitches.
  - Don't impugn the reputation of other practitioners.
  - Stick to the facts, and avoid the gossip.

- Avoid conflicts of interest.

  - Disclose interests of yourself and others.
  - Get consent to represent conflicting views or competitors; maintain the related knowledge in two different areas.
  - Be ready to publicly identify your clients, sources of information and funding sources.

Decision-Making Process

Here are six steps, suggested by the PRSA Board of Ethics and Professional Standards, for making an ethical decision:

- Define the specific ethical issue or conflict.

- Identify internal and external factors (legal, political, social, economic) that may influence the decision.

- Identify key values that should guide your thinking.

- Identify individuals and publics who will be affected by the decision, and define your obligation to each.

- Select ethical principles to guide your decision-making process.

- Make your decision, and justify it.

An Ethical Dilemma and Application of the Decision-Making Process

<u>Situation</u> (From the PRSA Board of Ethics and Professional Standards):

Assume you are the director of public relations for Megabucks Energy Company, a Houston-based *Fortune* 500 oil and gas exploration and production company. Megabucks' profits are declining because of drops in oil and gas prices. Recent drilling on one of the company's properties in the Java Sea has produced promising indications of a significant new oil and gas reservoir. Although geological testing is incomplete, rumors are flying in the marketplace about the potential of this new well to increase Megabucks' profits. Senior management asks you to prepare a news release that responds to these rumors and downplays the significance of the find. As part of your research, you discover internal reports that show this new well is, indeed, a major discovery and that further testing is planned simply to determine the size of the reservoir.

<u>One Way to Arrive at Your Decision</u>

- **Define the specific ethical issue or conflict.**
  Can you ethically disseminate deceptive information about the financial condition of your company on which a number of key publics may rely?

- **Identify internal and external factors (legal, political, social, economic) that may influence the decision.**

  - What does the federal Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) require in such instances?
  - Do federal and/or state laws require a particular decision or disclosure?
  - What do company values, policies and/or procedures require?

- **Identify key values that should guide your thinking.** (*Note*: These values come from the PRSA Code of Ethics.)

  - *Loyalty* — As a professional, commitment to your employer often comes before other obligations.
  - *Advocacy* — As a responsible advocate, you should consider both the company's interests and the interests of publics that may be affected by the decision.
  - *Honesty* — Consider obligations to tell the truth in advancing the company's interest and in communicating to the public.
  - *Independence* — Retain objectivity in counseling employers on a course of action that is in the company's best interest both today and into the future.

- **Identify the individuals and publics who will be affected by the decision and your obligation to each.**

  Consider the company/employer, board of directors, shareholders/potential shareholders, SEC, other government agencies, financial analysts, financial media, employees, other publics, the public relations profession and society in general.

- **Select ethical principles to guide your decision-making process.** (*Note*: These principles come from the PRSA Code of Ethics.)

  Protecting and advancing the free flow of accurate and truthful information is essential to serving the public interest and contributing to informed decision making. Maintaining the integrity of relationships with media and government regulatory agencies is central to public relations practice and in the best interest of the greater public. Truth and accuracy are underpinnings of our profession.

- **Make your decision, and justify it.**

  The public relations practitioner's greatest **loyalty** is typically to the client/employer; you are obligated to provide counsel and communications support that serves the best interest of the organization. At the same time, responsible **advocacy** requires that the interests of those affected by the decision be considered as well. In this case, numerous publics could both rely on this information and be adversely affected.

Although the potential for **conflict between loyalty to employer and honesty exists**, the value of **independence** helps resolve this conflict. Sound, objective counsel requires you to refuse to write the release and advise the company on more appropriate actions that don't deceive the various stakeholders or conflict with laws governing financial disclosure. Ultimately, this course of action is in the company's best interest. Release of deceptive information could contribute to declining public trust and potential legal liabilities related to proper disclosure under SEC regulations. Your recommended action preserves the **integrity of the communications process**, helps maintain important company relationships, and **advances the free flow of accurate, truthful information**.

Now ask yourself, in a real-life situation, might external pressures cause you to reach a different conclusion? If so, what would you do then?

➔ Exercise: What Would You Do If ... ?

If you practice applying this ethical decision-making process, it will become second nature. With some of your public relations colleagues, talk through some real-life dilemmas you are facing or have faced. You can use these scenarios to get started.

Scenario 1 (From the National School Public Relations Association)

A school board member who has been an outstanding advocate for the district is up for re-election. He calls to ask you if you would help with his re-election campaign. He says he values your communication expertise and needs help to defeat his opponent, who is very vocal about reducing administrative positions in the district. He considers them "fluff." In fact, your job as communication director is at the top of his list and will likely be the first to go. You know you can't work on the campaign during working hours, but you agree to work from home on the incumbent's campaign. You don't plan to tell anyone else you are helping him because what you do on your own time is your business.

Scenario 2 (From the PRSA Boston Chapter)

You are working for a pharmaceutical company that wants to sell more of its non-drowsy allergy drug. One of your interns offers to go into online chat rooms that focus on the topic of allergies to tout the success she has had using this drug. She does not intend to disclose her employer or that she doesn't personally suffer from allergies. She intends to do a content analysis on the responses for a term paper at her university.

Scenario 3 (From the PRSA Board of Ethics and Professional Standards)

A group of prominent citizens approaches you, a solo public relations practitioner. The group wants to advocate closing a nuclear power plant. Members argue that it is upwind from a major metropolis and that either an accident or a terrorist attack at the plant could result in widespread radiation fallout, loss of human life and environmental damage. The group wants you to prepare informational materials without mentioning that closing the plant could result in rolling brownouts in the metro area.

Scenario 4 (From the PRSA Board of Ethics and Professional Standards)

A partner in a public relations counseling firm tells a reporter from a local newspaper that a competing public relations agency is recommending to a client some underhanded tactics to gain government approval of a plan to begin a new mining operation. Specific tactics included payments to elected officials. That "tip" results in a front-page story accusing the company of trying to "buy" mine approval by paying off local government officials. The practitioner providing the tip had been courting the same client but had lost the account to the competitor.

Scenario 5 (From the National School Public Relations Association)

You are the director of public relations for a small, private university. In the days after the September 11 attacks, you receive information from an acquaintance through your university email account. The message says that a local businessman, who is foreign, is allegedly supporting terrorist activity by displaying a poster of Osama bin Laden in his store. You are asked by the sender not only to boycott that business but also to pass along this information to other friends and colleagues. This message is not a news release of any kind. The information is not meant for public consumption. The information is intended for sharing among friends. What do you do and why?

Additional Resources

Professional standard advisories and case studies are available for your further preparation from the PRSA Board of Ethics and Professional Standards. Visit www.prsa.org/aboutUs/ethics/index.html. PRSA membership is not required for access to ethics information.

Laws for Public Relations Professionals

The Examination requires you to demonstrate broad understanding of First Amendment issues, privacy standards and other legal concepts (e.g., copyright, trademark, fair use). Some public relations activities are considered **corporate speech**. Other public relations messages are classified **commercial speech**. The difference is important.

Corporate speech addresses political or social issues and has First Amendment protection. In *First Bank of Boston vs. Bellotti* (1978), the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Massachusetts law preventing companies from expressing views on election issues. *Consolidated Edison Co. vs. NY Public Utility Commission* (1980) said prohibiting a corporation from expressing opinions on public issues was unconstitutional.

Commercial speech deals with a transaction or desire for profit. A news release announcing the introduction of a new product or service would be an example. Commercial speech isn't considered as valuable to society as corporate speech and has less protection. Under the Lanham Act, the Federal Trade Commission has regulated commercial speech — including some public relations activities — since 1914. The FTC can fine public relations practitioners for misleading or incorrect information included in news releases or other promotional messages.

In some public relations specialties such as investor relations, legal and regulatory considerations are part of everyday practice. The Securities and Exchange Commission regulates what practitioners in these specialties do related to stock trading. The 1965 Texas Sulphur case classified public relations practitioners as "insiders" in stock dealings because these individuals have access to information that affects stock prices. The SEC can fine public relations practitioners for violating stock trading regulations.

Other federal laws affect public relations practice. The Freedom of Information Act, for example, gives citizens access to much of the information that the federal government collects. As a result, the law may allow disclosure of corporate information filed with federal agencies. The Privacy Act governs information the federal government may keep on individuals. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) limits disclosure of an individual's medical information by health care and insurance providers.

The following terms relate to concepts covered on the Examination. For a more extensive review of laws affecting public relations practice, see the media law section of the *Associated Press Stylebook*. Also see sections of this study guide on **Business Literacy**, **SEC Filings**, and **Business Laws and Regulations**.

Copyright law: Two major goals of copyright laws are (1) to protect the original creator of the work and (2) to provide economic incentive for new knowledge. The statutory definition says that copyright exists in "original works of authorship in any tangible medium of expression ... from which they can be perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated" (17 U.S. Constitution, Sec. 102, as noted in EPR 11th, p. 139). Any written sources that are not original should be cited in following works. In addition, Internet and social network references should adhere to traditional copyright procedures for securing appropriate permissions and/or indicate proper citations.

Common law copyright: An author who creates a tangible expression of his or her ideas immediately acquires common law copyright for the work. This right continues until the author dedicates work to the public by a general publication or surrenders common law right and obtains specific statutory copyright protection. The purpose of copyright law is to protect an author's intellectual production. The dividing line between common law copyright and statutory copyright is publication. Statutory copyright is a legal word or act — the act by which the author makes the work available to the world while retaining control of the creative expression. Two types of publication exist. **General publication** is any overt act that indicates the intention to surrender one's right to control one's creative expression and allow the public to copy the material. If there is a general publication and the author has not obtained statutory copyright and does not use the copyright symbol (©), he or she has no further right to prevent the use by the public. **Limited publication,** such as delivery of a manuscript to a possible purchaser, does not cause the author to lose any common law rights.

Statutory copyright: To obtain statutory copyright, an author must submit copies of what he/she has written to the Library of Congress and display the copyright symbol (©) on the material. Creative expression of ideas is subject to copyright. Securing a statutory copyright is simple. Notice/use of the copyright symbol must be on the very first copy sold or publicly distributed.

Ownership of copyright for work by contractors, employees: The contract between your organization and a non-employee who takes photos, creates artwork or writes text determines who owns the copyright. The copyright owner determines use and the license fee for use of the creative work. Be clear with your legal counsel in the contract you develop about the ownership of both the film negatives, digital files and hard copies of photos or artwork. The organization owns an employee's work done on behalf of the organization.

Defamation: Defamation is untruth that damages a reputation. Written or pictorial defamation is known as **libel**; spoken or verbal defamation is known as **slander** and need not be spoken in a public setting. To qualify as defamation, the statement must be untrue. To be defamed or damaged, an exposed person or organization must prove three conditions were present: **hatred**, **contempt**, **ridicule**. Damage must be proved as well. Reports of official proceedings are privileged and cannot be cause for libel (see fair comment below). To be actionable for libel, five elements must be present: **defamation**, **identification**, **communication** (publication/broadcast), **fault** (malice or negligence), and **damage** (in absence of fault, provable damages or injury). Because a public figure puts himself or herself before the public, he or she must prove actual malice. **Libel** has **four defenses**: **truth**, **privilege**, **fair comment** (see next entry), and **retraction**. **Retraction** is a full and prompt apology that helps mitigate damages.

Fair comment: This privilege insulates a reporter or publication against defamation (libel or slander). Fair comment is not a license to circulate derogatory information. The information must be related to community interest about the subject. Fair comment is a recognized defense against a libel action and is based on the argument that the statement was either true or **privileged** (taken from a public document). Be aware that although **truth** is the traditional defense against libel, truth is hard to prove. **Fair comment**, which involves privacy, should not be confused with **fair use**, which involves copyright.

Digital Millennium Copyright Act: A U.S. digital rights management law, enacted Oct. 28, 1998, created an updated version of copyright laws to deal with special challenges of regulating digital material. Broadly, the aim of DMCA is to protect the rights of both copyright owners and consumers.

Fair use: This principle allows use of parts of copyrighted materials without violating copyright laws and without paying a fee. Fair use is for criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship or research. Drawing the line for what is fair use is one of the most difficult problems of copyright law. Fair use originally applied to printed works. With the advent of digital technology, the Internet and online social networks, fair use now applies to the redistribution of music, photographs, videos and software. Fair use is usually determined on the special facts of each case. If you begin to question how you're using something or how much you're using, be cautious. Public relations professionals should note that fair use does not apply to commercial use. **Fair use**, which involves copyright, should not be confused with **fair comment**, which involves privacy.

Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938: Public relations practitioners working for any "foreign principals," whether the practitioners are directly lobbying U.S. government officials or not, must register under this act. **The Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995** relates to the 1938 act in a broad context by requiring anyone in a public relations or related position who represents a foreign government to register and label lobbying materials as "political propaganda" (EPR 11th, p. 135).

Intellectual property: This legal term describes rights or entitlements that apply to the ownership and use of certain types of information, ideas or other creative concepts in an expressed (fixed) form.

New York Times vs. Sullivan: This 1964 U.S. Supreme Court decision said public figures must prove actual malice to win a libel case.

Right of privacy: This legal principle, important for public relations professionals to know, ensures an individual's right to be left alone. This right may be violated if names, likenesses and/or information are used for commercial purposes. Privacy differs from defamation and is a practical effort to protect the individual who does not relish the unexpected appearance of his or her picture, story or testimonial in public media. The publication need only injure the feelings of the person, even though it may not have any effect on his or her reputation. Many violations evolve from advertising, which is deemed worse than news reporting because of the potential for direct profit. Securing permission from the individual protects the public relations practitioner. While use of employee photos in employee publications isn't specifically covered, protecting your employees' right of privacy by obtaining signed waivers is a good idea. Four kinds of wrongful acts can violate privacy:

- **Appropriation:** Taking some element of a person's name or likeness for advertising or trade purposes without consent. An example would be using a celebrity's photo without permission and signed releases.

- **Intrusion:** Invading a person's solitude, such as audio or video recording him or her without permission.

- **Public disclosure of embarrassing private facts:** Medical information, sex-crime victim identity, name of juvenile offender, embarrassing poses. Truth is not necessarily a defense here. Reputation need not be harmed.

- **False light:** Putting a person in a false position before the public or misleading the public to make a person appear other than he or she is (misrepresentation). Reputation need not be harmed.

Slavish copying: This term is used for extensive word-for-word copying. One can use an idea but not the creative expression of the idea. For a violation, copying must be exact, word-for-word. Paraphrasing is not a violation, but without attribution, it does raise ethical concerns. Speeches quoting the ideas of another can lead to copyright violation.

Managing Issues and Crisis Communications

Questions on Managing Issues and Crisis Communications account for 13 percent of the Examination. Specific KSAs for these topics are:

- **Issues and risk management:** Identifies potential or emerging issues that may impact the organization. Identifies potential risks to the organization or client. Analyzes probability and potential impact of risk. Ensures organization develops appropriate response plans. Designs and deploys a strategic public relations response.
- **Crisis management:** Understands the roles and responsibilities of public relations at the pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis phases. Communicates the implications of each of these phases and understands the messaging needs of each. Looks beyond current organizational mindset.
- **Counsel to management:** Understands the importance of providing counsel to the management team or client regarding issues, risks and crises. Looks beyond the current organizational mindset. Considers and accommodates all views on an issue or crisis. Factors views into communication strategy.

Issue and Risk Management

Issue management is inherent in the public relations management function. Goals are to predict problems, anticipate threats, minimize risk, seize opportunities, resolve problems and prevent crises. Practitioners should always carefully monitor an organization's internal and external environments for signs of opportunities or threats that may influence current or future operations. This process is often called "environmental scanning." It allows practitioners to determine counter actions and messages. Chase (1976) said issue management involved identifying issues, analyzing issues, setting priorities, selecting program strategies, implementing programs of action and communication, and evaluating results. Chase and Crane (1996) said issue management closed the "gap between corporate action and stakeholder expectation" (pp. 130–131). The focus of issue management is proactive planning. That approach differs from crisis management, which is often reactive. For example, if a public relations manager hears a passing comment about a potential problem, such as customers starting to complain about shipping delays, he or she should immediately investigate. The manager should look into the cause, nature and scope of the problem, use that information to help recommend steps to address the problem, and then develop a communication plan to counter reputational damage from the evolving issue.

Risk communication involves messages designed to protect publics from harm. Examples include warnings on product labels, safety signs around facilities and explanations of dangers associated with plant operations, chemical spills or incorrect product use. When risk management fails, the organization may face a crisis. (Strategies and Tactics 11, pp. 263–264)

Crisis Management

Anticipating a crisis is part of every public relations practitioner's job. Organizations often face three types of crises:

- **Immediate** — A sudden incident, such as an industrial accident or natural disaster, that requires an immediate reaction and allows little time for research or planning. Crisis plans outline general responses. Those plans allow management to react quickly and without confusion.
- **Emerging or "shouldering"** — An issue that is brewing and that an organization knows could disrupt operations or affect its reputation. Examples include factory safety violations, ethically questionable actions or employee dissatisfaction with wages and benefits. Because emerging crises are not only possible but probable, organizations have time to research and plan how to eliminate the problem or how to respond if the crisis erupts.
- **Sustained** — Continued negative news coverage or rumors about an organization. These often evolve from immediate crises. Examples include ongoing coverage of the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico or stories about repeated recalls by an automaker. Sustained crises can cause lasting reputational damage.

Management often wants to minimize or downplay that a crisis exists. That approach is usually a mistake and detrimental to the organization's reputation in the long run. Instead, every organization should have an up-to-date crisis communication plan in the hands of a clearly identified and prepared crisis communication team: internal public relations staff members, management representatives and outside public relations counsel. This plan should align with your organization's operations crisis plan.

The Team

- Assign specific roles to team members. These roles may include designating one person to speak to external publics and another to keep internal publics fully informed.

- Rehearse the crisis management team regularly.

- Train and retrain spokespersons. Emphasize the need for them to work with others involved (including officials and agencies) and to communicate so the organization will be seen as speaking with one consistent voice.

The Plan

- Monitor your environment regularly and identify your organization's vulnerabilities. Assess these vulnerabilities. Continuously seek ways to mitigate these vulnerabilities before they become crises.

- Develop a series of scenarios that reflect the crises your organization may face (what's possible). Prioritize your organization's vulnerabilities by identifying those that would be most urgent or most probable.

- Pay particular attention to the worst cases.

- Evaluate realistically the probability that the worst case will happen.

- Review current policies and strategies that might be affected.

- Review key messages you will want to impart in response to possible scenarios. Draft Q&A documents for responses to these possible crisis scenarios.

Seitel (2011) says that being prepared is the key to effective crisis management. Seitel cites four paramount issues to consider in crisis planning:

- Define the risk for each potentially affected public.

- Describe the actions that will mitigate each risk defined.

- Identify the cause of the risk.

- Demonstrate responsible management action.

Seitel says most effective crisis communicators provide prompt, frank and full information to journalists as the crisis unfolds. Keeping silent on crisis issues only angers reporters and makes problems worse.

Crisis management expert Jim Lukaszewski, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA, suggests the following planning steps (EPR 11th, p. 282):

1. Identify what can go wrong and become highly visible.

2. Assign priorities based on which vulnerabilities are most urgent.

3. Draft questions, answers and resolutions for potential scenarios.

4. Focus on what to do and say during the first critical hours of a crisis.

5. Develop a strategy to contain and counteract, not react and respond.

Keep Plans Current

- Review the entire plan at least annually; a quarterly review is better. Practice implementing the plan through role-playing and mock events.

- Be sure that members of the crisis management team have copies of the current plan and can access them immediately.

- Put the crisis plan on your intranet with password protection.

Crisis Event

- Activate the crisis plan immediately. Assemble the crisis team to implement emergency protocols. An organization's reputation often stands or falls as a result of how it handles a crisis during those critical first 24 hours — and especially the first hour — after a crisis.

Define the crisis in terms of a **triggering event** — the cause. Craft a timely statement that is accurate yet flexible enough to be refined as details about the crisis emerge. The initial statement often should confirm that an incident has happened, that the company is responding and that you will update information as more details become known.

If your team is well prepared, day-to-day business can continue while the crisis gets needed attention from the designated crisis team. Only designated spokespersons should officially speak for the company as incident details become available.

Identify **priority publics**. These may change with the type of crisis while others will remain constant, such as employees, customers, shareholders, suppliers, neighbors, the larger community, news organizations, regulatory agencies and government officials.

- Inform employees and your internal audience first.

- Demonstrate concern for those affected by the crisis, and communicate what the organization is doing or planning to do to solve the problem.

- Keep employees informed so they don't resort to speculation that generates rumors. Rumors can sometimes create more damage than the initial crisis.

- Have someone on call around the clock during the most intense hours or days of the crisis.

The crisis message needs to be posted on the organization's website and social network platforms. This message should include a basic statement about the incident, how the organization is responding and supporting facts as they become known. Organizations often set up "dark" websites for crisis communication and activate them when an incident occurs.

As the Crisis Unfolds

Strive for a timely, consistent and candid flow of accurate information to both internal and external publics. This information flow should help allay fears and stifle rumors. The organization should continue to function as normally as possible and let the crisis management team contend with the emergency.

Major mistakes made by public relations practitioners and other leaders during crises include waiting too long to respond, hiding from various publics, attacking involved publics and entering into unfavorable litigation. Major goals for most crisis situations are to minimize the problems as soon as possible and remove the event from the minds of affected publics (EPR 11th, p. 308).

Evaluation

Learn from the crisis experience. After it's over, reconvene the crisis management team to evaluate. Review the crisis' causes, the organization's responses to it and the outcomes. If necessary, make changes to the structure of the organization. If the organization has a history of an open-management style, such changes are likely to be slight. Update the crisis management/communication plan in light of this most recent experience.

Adapted from a presentation by Doug Newsom, Ph.D., APR, Fellow PRSA, and Jim Haynes, APR, Fellow PRSA.

Additional Resources

Chase, H. W. (1976). Public issue management: The new science. *Public Relations Journal, 33*:10 (October), 25–26.

Chase, H. W., & Crane, T. Y. (1996). Issue management: Dissolving the archaic division between line and staff. In L. B. Dennis, ed., *Practical Public Affairs in an Era of Change* (pp. 130–131). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

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Newsom, D., & Haynes, J. (2011). *Public relations writing: Form & style* (9th ed.) Boston, Mass.: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning. (See chapter 20 on The Public Relations Planning Process.)

Seitel, F. (2011). *The practice of public relations* (11th ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Understanding Communication Theories, Models and the History of the Profession

Specific questions about communication theories, communication models and public relations history account for 8 percent of the Examination. Other questions throughout the test, however, assume an understanding of these subjects. Specific KSAs for these topics are:

- **Communication/public relations models and theories:** Demonstrates familiarity with social science theories and research that guide planning, prioritizing audiences, developing messages, selecting spokespersons, establishing credibility and trust.

- **Barriers to communication:** Understands how messages and messengers are interpreted by different audiences. Understands barriers that prevent changes to knowledge, attitude and behavior. Understands how semantics, cultural norms, timing, context and related factors impact the practice.

- **Knowledge of the field:** Defines public relations and differentiates among related concepts (e.g., publicity, advertising, marketing, press agentry, public affairs, lobbying, investor relations, social networking and branding). Identifies key figures who influenced the field and major trends in the development of public relations as it is practiced today.

Theories

Nothing is more practical than a good theory, social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1952, p. 169) once wrote. Theories are statements that explain or predict how things happen (Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa, 2004). Theories are based on observation, experience and experimentation. Everyone has lots of theories about how the world works. We use those theories every day to decide what actions to take or to determine what results to expect from an action. For example, if you drop a container of milk, you can be certain the container will fall to the floor (law of gravity). If you consider what the container and floor are made of, you can predict from previous experience what might happen when the container hits the floor: A glass container might break. A plastic container might bounce. If the container breaks or the milk otherwise spills, you can further predict that you might have sour milk smell in the room if you don't clean up the mess thoroughly. All these thoughts apply theories about how things work to the situation at hand.

EPR 11th (p. 148) says a theoretical framework for public relations practice is necessary "for understanding, organizing and integrating the many activities and purposes of public relations." Good theory drives good practice. Many theories from communication and the social sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology) can be the basis for a public relations program, and many of these theories are described in detail in public relations textbooks on the Short Bookshelf of Recommended Texts (pp. 6, 7, and 8 of this study guide). You should be familiar with major theories guiding public relations work.

The tables below show some — but definitely not all — theories used by public relations practitioners. Each entry names the theory, briefly summarizes what the theory explains or predicts, and gives an example of the theory in action.

Transmission/media-effects theories

Theory	Description/purpose	Example
Magic bullet/ hypodermic needle	Developed after WWI (Harold Lasswell, 1927), this theory says media messages directly affect human behavior. The theory reflects stimulus-response thinking (behaviorism). The "atomized," passive audience can't resist the message effect. Lasswell's 1948 statement reflects bullet thinking: Who said what to whom through what channel with what effect?	I saw an ad for an iPhone, and I just had to have one!
Two-step flow	Media messages indirectly affect human behavior. "Opinion leaders" mediate message effects. Everyone in the audience can receive the message, but opinion leaders influence how individuals understand and respond to messages. Paul Lazarsfeld first hypothesized two-step flow in 1944 after studying the 1940 presidential election. Elihu Katz and Lazarsfeld refined the theory in 1955 (*Personal Influence*).	I've seen lots of information online about hybrid cars. I'm interested in buying one, but I won't until I talk to my father. He knows lots about cars.
Agenda setting	Media messages can have a direct cognitive effect but not necessarily a behavioral effect. Repeated news reports about an issue can make it important to readers (transfer of issue salience from media agenda to public agenda). Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw first demonstrated agenda setting during the 1968 presidential election (1972 publication).	I know reducing unemployment is important. I've been seeing things in the news about it for weeks.
Framing/second-level agenda setting	As a media-effects theory, framing involves transfer of attributes (or frames) describing a person, issue or topic from media to audience. News stories, for example, describe a political candidate in a certain way. News consumers begin to use those attributes to describe the candidate.	I trust the governor. Everything I've read about him makes me think he's an honest, straight-talking politician (attributes). He has middle-class values and is concerned about people like me (more attributes). **OR** I won't vote for that candidate. From what I've seen, I don't think he's qualified for office.
Organizational theory of public relations	Organizations are more likely to give information than to seek information. Information flow is generally one way (James Grunig, 1976).	The Colombian agricultural agency had trouble informing farmers. The agency was more likely to give information than to seek information. The agency was unlikely to listen to or engage in dialogue with its publics (Grunig, 1976, 2006).

Cultivation	Mass media (particularly television) shapes (cultivates) people's view of social reality. Secondhand experience through media content can distort what people think of the world. George Gerbner, who began this line of thinking, found that people who watched lots of TV tended to be fearful of the world, suspicious of others and susceptible to social paranoia or conspiracy theories ("mean or scary world effect").	I won't go downtown after 6 p.m. I don't want to get mugged. I know from watching the TV news each evening that crime is rampant downtown at night.

Audience theories

Theory	Description/purpose	Example
Diffusion of innovation	Everett Rogers' theory describes how people adopt new products or ideas. Personality traits influence how people approach new things. The theory proposes five personality categories: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. Five factors influence how soon people adopt a new idea: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trainability, observability.	In June 1995 only 14 percent of Americans used the Internet. By August 2011 that number had climbed to nearly 80 percent.
Uses and gratifications	People seek out communication media to satisfy specific needs. Audience members are actively involved in the communication process and make goal-oriented media choices.	College students prefer to get news through social networks rather than through traditional mass news media (newspapers, radio, TV).
Third-person effect	When a person lacks information about other people's opinions, he/she thinks others will think and behave as he/she would. W. Phillips Davison (1982) said people expect mass media messages to affect others (them: third person) more than themselves (us: first person). That belief may lead the first persons to act in mistaken anticipation of the media effect.	Comments on Twitter about our product are ridiculous. Any thinking person can see these statements are baseless. Nevertheless, we better reduce the price to prevent a drop in sales.
Spiral of silence	Elisabeth Nolle-Neumann (1974) said people constantly monitor the opinion climate around them. They perceive the majority viewpoint. Those who disagree keep silent. They are afraid of social isolation if they buck the majority view. This theory helps explain "bandwagon effect."	I know people don't agree with me. Therefore, I'm keeping my opinions to myself.

Situational theory of publics	Context influences relationships. Publics are active or passive. People are more likely to seek information related to a decision they are making than to reinforce their attitudes (James Grunig, 1966). Those publics are active. Three elements are involved in this process: (1) Problem recognition (awareness, interest), (2) Constraint recognition (what's required or what motivates a person to act), (3) Level of involvement (importance). Some publics are active on several issues; others are active on only one. Passive publics usually aren't interested in the issue, or it isn't important to them.	Elected church decision makers are more likely to seek information about church issues from church newspapers than are rank and file church members (Cannon, 2007).
Social learning	Albert Bandura says people can learn by watching others. People adopt opinions and behaviors they see modeled and rewarded.	Children watched adults treat dolls violently. Later, those children replicated the violent behavior.
Social exchange	Perceived costs and rewards (effort) of an action predict group behavior.	My church and most of my friends favor green burials. We won't join the effort to make the practice legal in my state, however. The effort would take too much work and probably wouldn't succeed. The funeral lobby is too strong.
Social judgment	People accept or reject messages to the extent that message content corresponds to each individual's attitudes and beliefs and influences his or her self-concept. Carl Hovland helped develop this theory (Sherif & Hovland, 1961).	I won't support same-sex marriage. A same-sex couple doesn't fit my idea of what "marriage" means. If same-sex couples can "marry," then my marriage isn't the special union I always thought it was.
Cognitive consistency theories (Balance, symmetry theory of interpersonal action, congruity, cognitive dissonance)	Inconsistencies between attitudes and actions drive (motivate) people to change what they think/believe. The goal is to achieve consistency between expressed opinions and actions. Major theorists: Heider, Newcomb, Osgood, Festinger.	I've never liked people from that group. After working with some of them, however, I now don't think they are so bad.

Attribution theory	To understand or explain circumstances, events or phenomenon, communicators assign (attribute) cause(s) to events. Internal attribution (personal factors), external attribution (situational factors) and attribution error (wrongly assigning cause) are important considerations with attribution theory.	When Walmart was found to be contracting with an employer who hired illegal workers, many customers and media organizations blamed Walmart for employing illegal workers. But the contracted service employed the illegal workers. While Walmart should have explored practices of its contractors, the retail giant was improperly blamed by many in the public for employment of illegal workers.
Identification	Identification theory examines how communication helps people seek to identify with individuals, groups or causes. The goal of identification is to overcome separateness. Identification occurs when individuals are made aware of the common ground they share with others.	To encourage more Hispanic voters to identify with Republicans, the party created ads in Spanish with Latino characters.
Reasoned action	A person's attitude toward a behavior consists of (1) a belief that that particular behavior leads to a certain outcome, and (2) an evaluation of the outcome of that behavior. If the outcome seems beneficial to the individual, he or she may participate in a particular behavior. Included in a person's attitude toward a behavior is his/her concept of the subjective norm. Central concepts include attitude, intent and behavior. Knowing people's attitudes and intents helps predict people's behaviors.	John knew his friends usually followed his example. Habitat for Humanity needed volunteers to build a house. John thought Habitat did good work. If he volunteered, his friends would likely join him, and Habitat would have several volunteers. If he didn't volunteer, his friends probably wouldn't volunteer, either. Because John wanted to advance Habitat's mission, he volunteered and expected his friends to volunteer as well.
Inoculation	William McGuire found that people are more likely to resist persuasive messages if those people have been exposed to counterarguments in advance. People are less likely to change opinions they have already formed and tested.	Our first ad shows that our candidate is an upstanding family man who has been active in the local community. We don't want our opponent to paint him as a "Washington insider."
Cognitive dual processing	People use different strategies for processing messages or making decisions. These strategies are based on how important the topic is (motivation), or the individual's cognitive capacity (time to think about the topic, knowledge of the topic or general intelligence). People generally try to use as little cognitive energy as possible to make decisions. Three models illustrate cognitive dual processing: The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion (1979), The Heuristic-Systematic Model of Cognitive Processing (1980), and Motivation Determines Processing (MODE Model, 1990). Each model presents two paths or roots to decision making.	"The president said it, and I believe it because I trust him" is an example of peripheral (ELM), heuristic (HSM) or spontaneous (MODE) processing. The speaker uses minimal cognitive energy. He/she makes a decision based on the information source (a cue or rule of thumb) and not on message content. "I really need to consider all the options" is an example of central (ELM), systematic (HSM) or deliberate (MODE) processing. The speaker intends to use cognitive energy to weigh the merits of the information.

Message theories

Theory	Description/purpose	Example
Framing	As a message-focused theory, framing describes how content elements (frames) prompt audience members to recall certain already established, shared and persistent stereotypes, metaphors or social qualities. These predispositions shape how audience members interpret messages and respond to narratives and events.	News reports quickly classified destruction of the World Trade Center as a "terrorist attack," rather than a "tragic accident" or "criminal act." President Bush described our response as a "war on terror." People thought about the events as military matters, not police matters. **OR** The committee report said that researchers "had made great strides" and that the project was "moving forward." Progress is associated with walking forward.
Rhetoric	Rhetoric represents a category of communication concepts that trace their roots to Aristotle. Rhetorical elements are ethos, logos and pathos. The rhetorical approach uses information about the communicator, the logic of the message and the emotional appeal of the message to describe and predict how effective a message will be. Organizations use language/messages to build consensus (organizations and publics co-create meaning). The process may involve advocacy and counter-advocacy. People are adjusted to ideas, and ideas are adjusted to people.	For many years Tiger Woods was a credible spokesman for Buick. He represented the young, hip image that GM wanted to associate with Buick. Woods was an effective speaker who could connect with target audiences who might buy Buick models. He delivered a credible message about Buick quality and appeal.
Sleeper Effect	In propaganda research Carl Hovland found a decreased tendency over time to reject the material presented by an untrustworthy source (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). People may initially reject a message because the source isn't credible. But after about six weeks, people may forget the source but remember — and begin to believe — the message.	I won't go to that coffee shop anymore. I read someplace that the pumpkin spice latte contains dangerous toxins.

Public-relations-specific theories

Theory	Description/purpose	Example
Agenda building	Often described as a subset of agenda-setting theory, agenda building describes how organizations can use "information subsidies" to news outlets to influence the media agenda. (Information subsidies include news releases, blog posts and interview opportunities with policymakers or advocates.) The thinking behind agenda-building theory is that news coverage doesn't just reflect reality. News	A business might coordinate the use of news releases, blog posts, tweets, special events and interviews to build — and then sustain — media interest in a new product. News releases and story pitches could be timed in weeks before the product launch to draw attention to the story and highlight intriguing features of the planned item. The launch event and

	coverage is a manufactured product that can be influenced. By working to boost media attention to a topic, organizations get more public attention for their issues. Increased news coverage can make those topics important to people in key publics (transfer of issue salience from media agenda to public agenda).	follow-up interviews with company representatives could bring more attention to the product. Continuing attention to reactions by customers and analysts could keep the story on the media agenda.
Competence	A PR practitioner's knowledge and skills determine his/her role in an organization. Perception of competence depends on work context and the measurement method management uses. Competent practitioners balance concerns for what's effective with what's appropriate. They base judgments on social impressions of how actions and messages work to reach strategic goals.	As a technician, I'm concerned most with output, message content and framing. As a manager, I'm concerned with outcomes and relational results (goodwill).
Excellence	James Grunig, Larissa Grunig and David Dozier first published this general theory of public relations in 1992. The theory "specifies how public relations makes organizations more effective, how it is organized and managed when it contributes most to organizational effectiveness, the conditions in organizations and their environments that make organizations more effective, and how the monetary value of public relations can be determined." Excellence theory shaped lots of thinking about public relations in the late 20th century. The theory includes the four classic models of public relations: press agentry/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical.	If an organization makes public relations a distinct senior-management function, lets the PR executive fill both management and administrative roles, considers public relations outcomes in policymaking, fosters an open corporate culture, generally practices two-way symmetrical communication and engages activist publics, the organization meets standards of "excellence."
Relationship management	Mary Ann Ferguson (1984) asserted that relationships between organizations and their key publics should be the focus of PR research. John Ledingham and Stephen Bruning's (1998) relational perspective positions PR as a "management function that uses communication strategically" (p .56). The theory advocates long-standing engagement between organizations and publics with indicators of control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship and communal relationship measures used to evaluate relational dynamics.	Major banking institutions aim to score favorably on the six theoretical dimensions to ensure customers continue to bank with the institution and are satisfied with the relationship.

From Douglas F. Cannon, Ph.D., APR+M, Fellow PRSA.

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➔ Exercise: Use Diffusion Theory

Effective public relations professionals design campaigns to target the five categories of people and motivate them at each stage of the diffusion process by using channels appropriate to that stage. Think about a new product or service launch involving your organization. How are strategies and tactics likely to change from one stage to the next or as communication technology evolves?

Communication Models

Models are not the same as theories. Theories explain and predict how things happen. Models describe, illustrate or imagine how things work (Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa, 2004). A couple of commonly referenced models illustrate the communication process. The simplest one reflects the work of two mathematicians named Shannon and Weaver. They developed this model in 1948 to show how communication by telephone works.

Early View of Communications Process

Noise

Sender → Encoder → Channel(s) → Decoder → Receiver
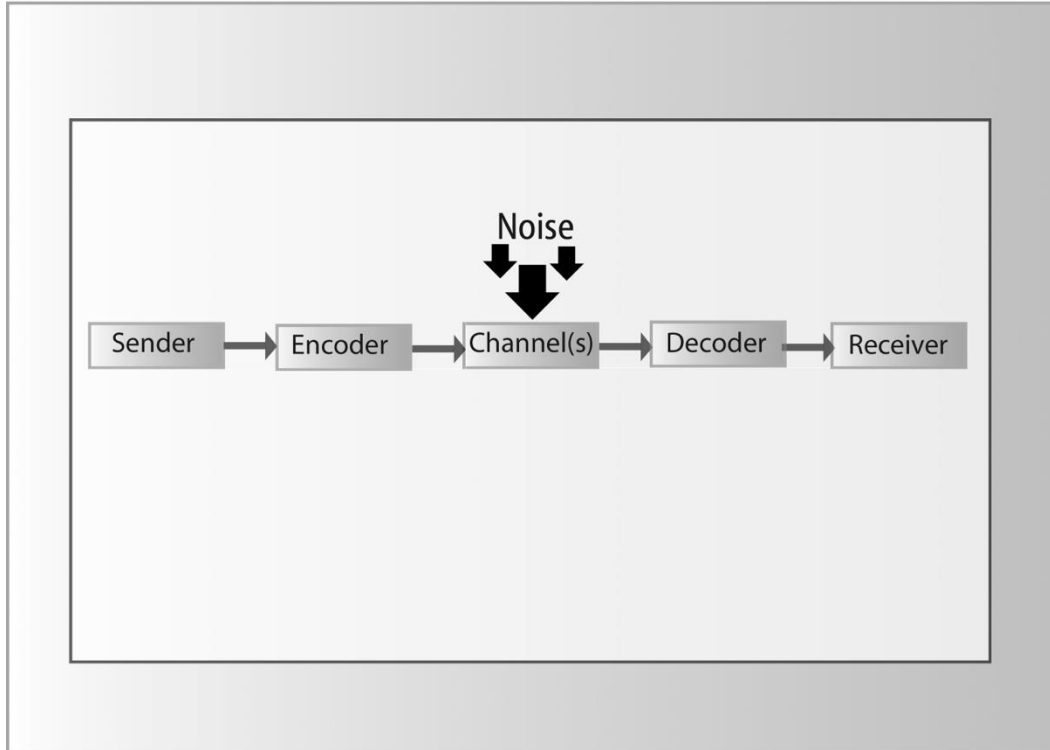
The Shannon-Weaver Model

CP 3/16/03

The model consists of a sender, a message, a channel through which the message travels, noise or interference that impedes or distorts the message, and a receiver. For example, a telephone converts (encodes) sound or spoken words into electrical impulses that are transmitted over a telephone line (the channel). On the receiving end, the process is reversed. The electrical signals are converted (decoded) back into sound and speech. But noise can interfere with the signal and create problems in understanding the message.

As you develop specific messages, you should consider each part of this model. All elements must work effectively for receivers to get the intended message. Often communicators blame the audience for not accepting a message when the sender, encoding process or channels chosen were not appropriate. Although originally designed to describe telephone communication, the Shannon-Weaver model can apply to other forms of communication as well.

Speech: Thoughts are encoded into words, transmitted by sound waves and decoded according to the receiver's understanding of the words — if that person is within earshot. Physical noise can affect how well the receiver hears the words. Internal noise (such as lack of attention, lack of interest or distraction) can affect decoding and understanding as well.

Pantomime: Gestures encode thoughts. Light transmits the scene. Receivers decode the body movements based on their interpretation of the mime's actions. Anything that prevents receivers from seeing or understanding the gestures would constitute noise.

Printing: Thoughts are encoded into words of a specific language. Those words are further encoded into typographic characters and transmitted via a printed page. If receivers can read and know the encoded language, they can decode the words. If receivers understand the vocabulary, they can understand the message. Noise can enter the process at each step. Poor word selection or a misspelling can affect encoding. Poor-quality printing can make words hard to read. Lack of reading ability or lack of familiarity with the language or vocabulary used to encode the message can affect decoding and eventual understanding.

We can apply the Shannon-Weaver model to art, music, drama, signs, symbols, graffiti and countless other ways we attempt to transmit thoughts and meaning. But the Shannon-Weaver model is missing an essential step in the communications process: feedback. Without feedback, you don't know if people have received or understood your message.

Communications Process Illustrating Feedback within Common Experience
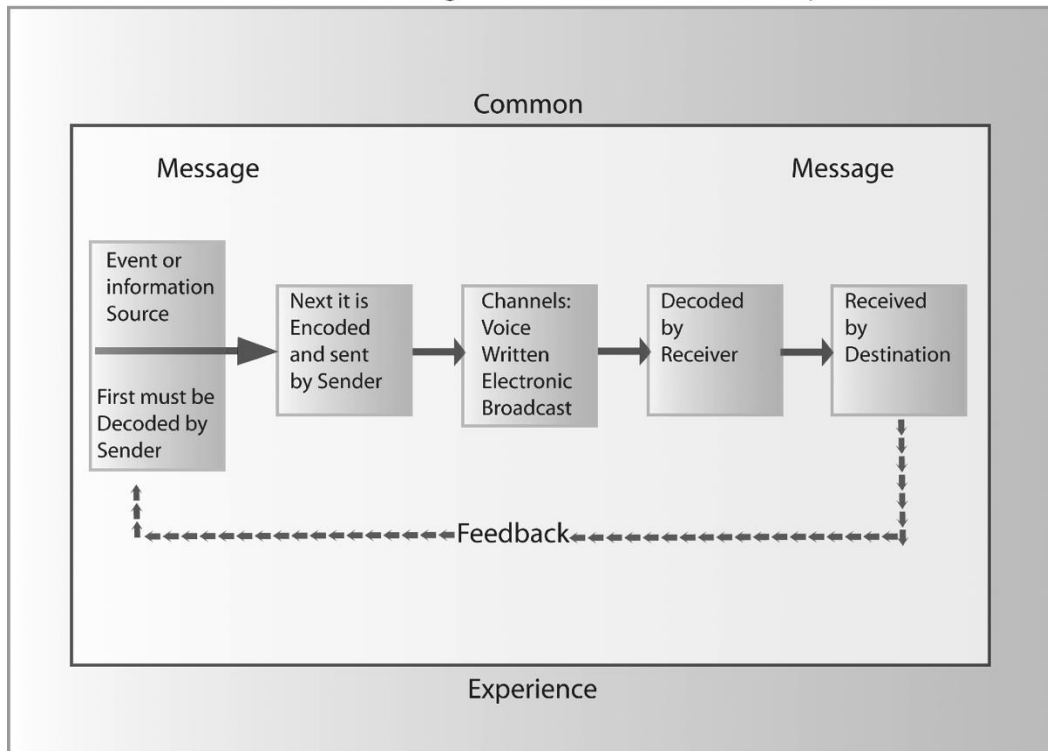
The Shannon-Weaver Model

Feedback follows the same communication process as sending a message, but in reverse. Can you apply these models to your practice of public relations?

As the Shannon-Weaver model shows, noise can introduce barriers to effective communication throughout the process. Below are some common barriers to communication, and strategies for overcoming them.

Communication Barriers

- Fuzzy language
- Misalignment of messages with culture and values
- History of distrust
- Distractions
- Negative influencers
- Sources or spokespersons with no credibility

- Unreliable media
- Media with which people are not comfortable, e.g., blogs, social networks and, for some where illiteracy is high, printed material
- Captive audiences
- Gatekeepers

Ways to Overcome Communication Barriers

- Design and deliver the message so that it gets the attention of the intended public.
- Employ signs, images and symbols that relate to experiences common to senders and receivers.
- Arouse personality needs in the receiver; appeal to the self-interests of receivers.
- Offer ways to meet those personality needs that are appropriate to the group situation the receiver is in at the time you want that receiver to respond.

Describing factors that influence effective communication, communication scholar Wilbur Schramm wrote:

> Communication (human communication, at least) is *something people* do. It has no life of its own. There is no magic about it except what people in the communication relationship put into it. There is no meaning in a message except what the people put into it. When one studies communication, therefore, one studies people — relating to each other and to their groups, organizations and societies, influencing each other, being influenced, informing and being informed, teaching and being taught, entertaining and being entertained — by means of certain signs that exist separately from either of them. To understand the human communication process, one must understand how people relate to each other. (EPR 11th, p. 169)

Communication Process Model
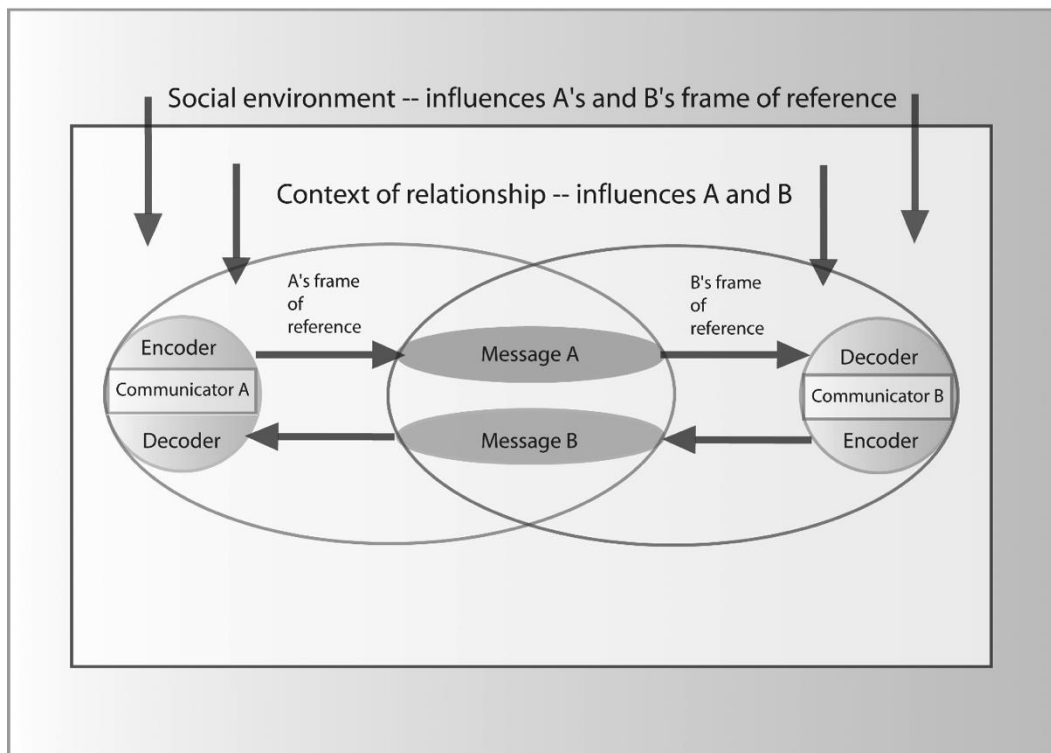
From work of the late Wilbur Schramm

CP 3/16/03

Identify people in your organization in the A and B roles of this diagram. What are differences in their frames of reference? Where is the common ground? How are their social environments different or the same? Consider their cultures, customs, languages, occupations and demographics that make a difference.

As noted in EPR 11th (p. 306), Walter Lippmann, author of *Public Opinion*, published in 1922, described several communication barriers:

- Artificial censorship
- Limitation of social contact
- Meager time available for paying attention
- Distortion from compressing events into short messages (sound bites in today's terms)
- Difficulty expressing a big, complicated world in short messages
- Fear of facing facts perceived to threaten established routines

The **7 Cs of Communication** (EPR 11th, pp. 308–309) can help to overcome the barriers Lippmann has listed.

1. Clarity
2. Credibility
3. Content
4. Context
5. Continuity
6. Capability
7. Channels

Tools You Can Use

Creative ways you devise to work around barriers to communication become creative strategies in your public relations planning. Communication theories and models are tools public relations professionals can apply to everyday situations.

- Define your publics, including subsets or segments.
- Identify your social relationship with each public.
- Understand the context and frames of reference of your relationships.
- Encode your messages effectively.
- Choose the proper medium to convey your messages.

Four Classic Models of Public Relations

James Grunig and Todd Hunt introduced four models of public relations in 1984 in *Managing Public Relations*. Each model illustrates a common way that public relations practitioners approach their work. The table below summarizes points of each model. These models have become part of Excellence Theory. Research since 1984 has shown that these models do describe the way many organizations approach public relations. Few organizations follow one model exclusively. Depending on the situation, many organizations use all of them.

Characteristics	Press agentry/ publicity	Public information	Two-way asymmetrical	Two-way symmetrical
Purpose	Promotion	Report information	Scientific persuasion: The goal is to get people to do what the organization wants.	Mutual understanding, two-way influence
Nature of communication	One-way to undefined audience. Truth and accuracy of information are not essential.	One-way dissemination of factual, newsworthy information to undefined audience. Truth and accuracy are essential. Journalistic reporting standards apply.	Two-way: Audience research helps determine actions and craft messages designed to achieve specific behavioral goals.	Two-way with balanced influence (win-win situations). Audience research determines actions that will promote understanding and reduce conflicts with key publics. Publics are as likely to influence the organization as the organization is likely to influence publics.
Intent of communication	Influence thoughts, behaviors	Education	Influence thoughts, behaviors	Mutual benefit
Nature of research	None. Information about public isn't essential.	Little. May monitor public opinion polls or readability of messages. Readability measures assess message construction.	Formative research on audience opinions and motivation. Information collected on audiences is not used to modify the organization's goals, policies or actions. Research simply guides message crafting.	Ongoing research to adjust messages throughout interactions with publics. Information collected from audiences may influence what an organization does and says.

From Douglas F. Cannon, Ph.D., APR+M, Fellow PRSA.

Additional Resource

Broom, G. M., & Sha, B-L. (2013). *Cutlip and Center's effective public relations* (11th ed*.).* Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education. (See chapters 7, 8, 13.)

Eras of Public Relations History

These key time periods are listed as described in EPR 11th (pp. 83–101). Also included are notable trends and figures during stages.

Seedbed Era (1900 to 1916)

- Organizational Attitudes: Let the public be informed. Muckraking, social reform, unions.

- PR Trends: Defensive publicity. Journalists hired as "interpreters" to get the news out.

- Key PR figures:

  - Ivy Ledbetter Lee — Full disclosure and tell the truth

  - President Theodore Roosevelt — Bully pulpit

World War I Period (1917 to 1918)

- Organizational Attitudes: Let the public be informed. The war to end all wars.

- PR Trends: Organized promotion. Promote patriotism. Use interest groups.

- Key PR figure: George Creel (Committee on Public Information) — The Four Minutemen

Booming Twenties Era (1919 to 1929)

- Organizational Attitude: Mutual understanding.

- PR Trends: Promoting products. WWI publicity techniques used for social science.

- Key PR figures:

  - Edward L. Bernays — *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923), *Propaganda* (1928)

  - Arthur W. Page — Performance = Reputation

Roosevelt Era and World War II (1930 to 1945)

- Organizational Attitudes: Mutual understanding. Depression. World War II.

- PR Trends: Mass media use. Social responsibility.

- Radio delivers immediate news.

- Key PR figures:

  - Louis McHenry Howe — Responsible performance, persuasive publicity

  - Elmer Davis — Office of War Information

  - President Franklin D. Roosevelt — "Fireside Chats"

Postwar Era (1946 to 1964)

- Organizational Attitudes: Mutual adjustment. Professionalism. Postwar service economy, consumerism.

- PR Trends: Credibility. Associations form, including PRSA. Many PR Codes of Ethics written. Colleges establish curricula.

- TV emerges as key communication medium.

Period of Protest and Empowerment (1965 to 1985)

- Organizational Attitude: Mutual adjustment.

- PR Trends: Accommodation. Systems theory. Management by Objectives (MBO). Functional vs. functionary approach.

- Technology increasing.

- Key PR figure:

    o Marshall McLuhan — Understanding Media, "global village," "the medium is the message."

Digital Age and Globalism (1986 to present)

- Organizational Attitude: Mutual adjustment.

- PR Trends: Constant technological connections. International relationships. Organizational transparency.

- Internet, World Wide Web, social networks, mobile technology.

Comparison of Descriptive and Historical Aspects of Public Relations			
Public Relations Models	Historical Periods	Organizational Attitudes	Example Practitioners
Press Agentry	Pre-Seedbed Era (pre-1900s)	Public-Be-Damned	P.T. Barnum
Public Information	Seedbed Era (1900–1916)	Public-Be-Informed	Ivy Lee
Two-Way Asymmetric	World War I (1917–1918)		
	Booming Twenties (1919–1929)	Mutual Understanding	Edward Bernays and Arthur Page
	Roosevelt & WWII (1930–1945)		
Two-way Symmetric	Postwar Boom (1946–1964)	Mutual Adjustment	Edward Bernays, Arthur Page, Scott Cutlip and Allen Center
	Period of Protest and Empowerment (1965–1985)		
	Digital Age and Globalization (1986–Present)		
Notes: Public relations models as explained in Grunig & Hunt (1984). Historical periods as articulated in EPR 11th. Organizational attitudes as articulated by Edward Bernays and Arthur Page (cited in EPR 11th). Example practitioners as identified in EPR 11th and Grunig & Hunt (1984).			

Acknowledgment: This chart is adapted from one that appears in Sha, B.-L. (2007). Dimensions of public relations: Moving beyond traditional public relations models. In S. Duhe (Ed.), *New media and public relations* (pp. 3–25). New York: Peter Lang.

Additional Resource

Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. New York: CBS College Publishing.

Figures and Events in Public Relations History

Samuel Adams: Organization — Sons of Liberty, Committees of Correspondence; Symbols — Liberty Tree; Slogans — Taxation Without Representation; Staged events — Boston Tea Party.

Edward L. Bernays: Staff member of the Committee on Public Information during World War I. Wrote *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, first book on public relations (published in 1923), and with his wife, Doris Fleischman, coined the term public relations counsel. Taught first college course on public relations (at New York University) and was the first to call himself a public relations professional. Said good public relations counsel recognizes changes in an organization's social setting and advises clients or employers how the organization should change to establish a "common meeting ground." Among the first to advocate licensure for public relations counsels. (1920s)

Carl Byoir: Staff member of the Committee on Public Information during World War I. Directed campaign to publicize the military draft among non-English-speaking men and helped distribute information to Americans about U.S. war goals. Founded Carl Byoir and Associates, one of the world's largest public relations agencies during the mid-20th century, in 1930. Represented the Tourist Information Office for the Nazi German government during the 1930s. This connection led Congress to pass the Registration of Foreign Agents Act of 1938. That law requires public relations practitioners who represent a foreign government to register with the U.S. State Department.

George Creel: Chairman of the Committee on Public Information during World War I. Understood the power of publicity to mobilize the public. Started the "Four Minutemen" and created "spokespersons" from key interest groups such as lawyers, actors, journalists, teachers. Used persuasive tactics to dehumanize the enemy.

Elmer Davis: Director of the Office of War Information during World War II. Pioneered widespread use of radio, Hollywood and other mass media to publicize the war effort.

Rex Harlow: Founded the American Council on Public Relations, which ultimately became the Public Relations Society of America through mergers with other public relations organizations. (1947)

Louis McHenry Howe: Long-time public relations adviser to Franklin D. Roosevelt. Recognized that mutually beneficial public relationships could be built only by coupling responsible performance with persuasive publicity. (1936)

Ivy Ledbetter Lee: Created a "Declaration of Principles" in 1906. Among the principles: to supply news and ensure the company's work is done in the open, provide accurate information and not advertising, and work with media to respond promptly to requests for additional information. Issued first news release in 1906. Among the first to recognize that publicity needs to be supported by good works. Performance determines the publicity a client gets. Used testimonials. Advised clients to make full disclosure, tell the truth and persuade management to do the same. (1900s)

Arthur W. Page: An AT&T vice president who helped set the standard for corporate PR ("Page Principles"). Said a company's performance would be determined by its public reputation, therefore, policymaking should involve corporate public relations executives. (1927)

Publicity Bureau: Nation's first publicity agency (1900), forerunner to today's PR agencies. Used tools of fact-finding, publicity and personal contact to saturate media with railroad propaganda.

Theodore Roosevelt: First president to exploit news media as a new and powerful tool of presidential leadership.

George Westinghouse: Created the first corporate public relations department. (1889)

Additional Resource

Cutlip, S. M. (1994). *The unseen power: Public relations — a history.* Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Case Study and Public Relations Plan Examples

NOTE: *The following case studies are provided for study. The Examination doesn't include long examples like the ones in this section.*

➔ Case Study: Blue Ridge Water Company

Blue Ridge Opening New Plant, Needs Rate Increase

Situation: You are the public relations director for a midsize water and wastewater utility in Northern Virginia called the Blue Ridge Water Company (Blue, for short). The company has been supplying 200,000 residents water and wastewater service for more than 45 years without issue. Before you joined the organization five years ago, Blue had no formal public relations strategy — or strategist like you — in place. In terms of communication, the company was reactive and issued information only when a particular situation necessitated it.

Your company, while a public utility, tries to operate more like a business. Blue has a strategic plan, a pay-for-performance appraisal system and an "AA" financial rating. The utility is well managed and has a strong record of fiscal and environmental stewardship. However, like many water utilities, it has operated under the radar for 45 years. You have done very little communicating about the company's internal business structure and plan, however positive. You have focused your very limited communications on customers — and only for issues related to water and sewer services.

Your customers are a highly educated, affluent group. Median household income is one of the highest in the country. Most customers have lived in your service area for less than five years. Because of growth in the Blue Ridge Region, your total number of customers doubles every 10 years.

In one year, Blue will start operating an advanced wastewater [sewage] treatment plant in the heart of your service area. The plant will be virtually odor-free and employ the best technology available to treat wastewater before returning it to the environment. In fact, the cleaned water will be available for sale for irrigation. While Blue has financed the construction of the plant over the next 20 years, day-to-day operations will be costly and will require a 6 percent user rate increase each year for at least the next three years — and possibly beyond. Blue has not had a rate increase for 12 years. You have featured the new plant prominently on the company website, posted updates on social media platforms and run frequent stories in the e-newsletter that is distributed to all customers. Local weekly newspapers near the plant site have covered plant construction over the last year. Still, you do not believe that very many customers are aware of the plant's arrival next year or the impending rate increase it will require.

Residents in your area are reeling from several years of increasing property tax assessments. Housing affordability and rising public service costs are extremely hot topics. In addition, local elected officials have recently come under investigation for unethical dealings. Two local elected officials serve on your board of directors, as does a prominent local developer.

Use the following research findings to answer the questions that follow:

- A survey you conducted indicated that 90 percent of your customers think your services are tax supported. (They are not. Blue is funded solely by water and sewer fees collected from customers.) Fifty-one percent of your customers cannot recall your company name unaided, let alone anything about your company. Twenty-five percent of your customers think trash service is among the services Blue provides. (It isn't.)

- Your board of directors does not understand public relations in its truest form. Directors see it merely as a way to promote good things or cover up or spin bad things.

- After 10 years of unprecedented growth, residential construction has slowed down, and the number of water connections (hookups) is lower than projected, so cost control measures are in place for all internal departments until further notice.

- Blue is building a new headquarters next to the new plant. The headquarters will cost $11 million, and you will be moving into the building the same time next year that the plant starts operating. The building will employ many environmental and good-neighbor features, such as geothermal energy, energy efficient lighting, motion sensors and low-water landscape. The facility will feature an outdoor park and trail where the public can come for fitness activities, walks and picnic lunches. The building will have an indoor education center for community and school groups to book to learn about water science, treatment and conservation.

Questions

- **Step 1:** Describe what, if any, research is needed. Identify the source of information and a rationale for each research activity that you recommend.

- **Step 2:** In one general sentence, state the problem(s) to be addressed.

- **Step 3:** Identify three key publics to be included in your plan and a rationale for including them.

- **Step 4:** Provide one short-term and one long-term objective for each public.

- **Step 5:** Provide one strategy for each objective, and cite a theory or model as rationale for its use.

Courtesy of Samantha Villegas, APR, Accreditation Committee, National Capital Chapter, PRSA.

⬆Plan: Blue Ridge Water Company (First Steps)

Step 1: Describe what, if any, research is needed. Identify the source of information and a rationale for each research activity that you recommend.

Topic of Research	Type or Source	Rationale
Rate Increase	Content analysis and/or interviews with other utilities	See how rate increases by utilities have been reported by media to understand and anticipate what angles are typically used and/or what information proves to be confusing. Ask other utilities about lessons learned.
	Focus group, intercept interviews or complaint reviews	Find out early reaction from customers/attitudes about rate increases to know how to shape message.
Wastewater Treatment Plant Site	Focus group or intercept Interviews	Find out early reaction from customers/attitudes about water and wastewater treatment plants to know how to shape message and find out what most worries them.

Step 2: In one general sentence, state the problem(s) to be addressed.

Blue suffers from poor or weak name identification that will soon be magnified by the rate increase, typical negative perceptions and fears associated with operation of a wastewater treatment plant near residential areas, the need to explain a beautiful new headquarters and reaction to the combination of the rate increase with the two new facilities.

Step 3: Identify three key publics to be included in your plan and a rationale for including them.

Publics	Rationale
Rate-paying customers	They will be affected by the rate increase.
Public school system (teachers and students)	Children are one of the most effective ways for reaching parents with messages. Targeting them through the schools and teachers, with the indoor education center and the outdoor interpretive area, will get messages out into the community about the wastewater treatment plant technology and good-neighbor provisions of the plant.
Blue Ridge neighbors (people who live near the new wastewater treatment plant)	Blue's immediate neighbors must get to know the company. If they understand and believe the reputation that Blue has built, then Blue will have a better shot at building understanding and support for the wastewater treatment plant and its operation as well as for the new headquarters building and rate increase.

Step 4: Provide one short-term and one long-term objective for each public.

Public	Short-term objective (less than one year)	Long-term objective (more than one year)
Rate-paying customers	Within one year, the percentage of rate-paying customers who think Blue is tax supported will be reduced from 90 percent to 65 percent.	In two years, more than half of those surveyed will characterize the rate increase as necessary, warranted or adequately justified.
Teachers/students	At least 50 percent of the teachers and/or students in the local public school system will visit the new education center during the first month it's open.	In two years, more than half the students or parents of students surveyed will be able to name two of the good-

		neighbor policies employed at the wastewater treatment plant.
Neighbors	Within one year, 60 percent of the neighbors will support the wastewater treatment plant (up from 51 percent) and be able to identify benefits of its operation.	In two years, the number of neighbors who will support the wastewater treatment plant will be 85 percent (up from 60 percent), and those able to identify benefits of its operation will be 75 percent (up from 50 percent).

Step 5: Provide one strategy for each objective, and cite a theory or model as rationale for its use.

Objective	Strategy	Rationale/theory
Rate-paying customers/ short-term objective	Statement stuffer, advertising, social media presence	You can cost-effectively reach customers with statement stuffers and social media posts. You can access reserve funds for targeted local advertising on cable TV and in homeowner association newsletters. Agenda-setting theory.
Rate-paying customers/ long-term objective	Customers/face-to-face interaction via town hall meetings, participation in community events	A deeper, more complex understanding of the organization will require a more intimate relationship based on getting to know the company and recognizing it as an important part of the community. Identification theory.
Teachers/students/ short-term objective	Field trips and special events at new education center	We can reach thousands of students and their teachers by making full use of this facility. And we can send teachers away with a colorful packet of information about water and wastewater treatment plants. Two-step flow theory.
Teachers/students/long-term objective	Return field trips and repeat special events at new education center. Provide opportunities for staff to establish one-on-one relationships with teachers and possibly some students.	Again, we can reach thousands of students and their teachers during visits to this facility. Return visits will show that they like it and give staff the opportunity to build on relationships established during the first visits. Social judgment theory.
Neighbors/short-term objective	Community meetings, advertising, media relations, social media outreach	This approach requires a layered effort to create opportunities for community meetings, participate in neighborhood events, work with local journalists and spend money on cable TV or local newsprint ads. Diffusion of innovation.

Courtesy of Samantha Villegas, APR, Accreditation Committee, National Capital Chapter, PRSA.

➜ Case Study: Healthtech Labs

Healthtech Labs Targeted by Animal Rights Activists

Create a communication plan for this case study by using either a grid- or paragraph-style plan. Look at the situation. Then develop your plan. Start with the research element before you move to the remaining three steps or look at the sample provided.

Situation: You are the director of public relations for Healthtech Labs, a large chemical research company in Gaithersburg, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C. Your privately held company has been in business for 21 years and has specialized in providing research and chemical analysis in a variety of areas. Virtually all your work is based on contracts from federal and state agencies and on grants from foundations. The majority of your work involves developing sewage treatment and water purification programs for applications in the United States and developing countries. Your researchers have been recognized frequently for their work in this area, and the lab has a reputation for producing environmentally sound, socially aware solutions to problems. As PR director, you have conducted an aggressive and successful campaign to generate publicity for the lab's research program. But the company has kept one research program under wraps.

For the last 10 years, the lab has had a small contract to test Ragus-A, a new medicine that appears to reverse a genetically based deficiency of the hormone insulin, which is the cause of diabetes mellitus or Type 1 diabetes. To test Ragus-A, the lab has modified the genes of chimpanzees to cause them to lack the insulin hormone and to pass that trait on to their offspring. The offspring are then treated with Ragus-A. The experiment involves regular injections of Ragus-A. The control group is not treated and exhibits symptoms of diabetes, including episodes of insulin shock under certain circumstances. As part of the test, mature monkeys are killed so the long-term effect of Ragus-A on the brain and other body parts can be determined. In 10 years, 30 monkeys have been used in the experiment, and 10 have been killed for examination. The tests are scheduled to last another six months.

The Ragus-A experiments have not been publicized nor has the contract ever been announced. In fact, most Healthtech employees don't know about the program, and the public knows virtually nothing about the Ragus-A contract.

You learn that ROAR (pROtectors of Animal Rights) has found out about the Ragus-A program and is planning to demonstrate outside the lab in just over a month. ROAR has been successful in generating media coverage of demonstrations at the National Institutes of Health and other private laboratories in the Washington area.

You are concerned about the negative publicity that could come from the protest — especially the impact of publicity on Healthtech employees and on decision makers at federal and state agencies and foundations that support the vast majority of the lab's work.

You inform Dr. Alan Parker, president of Healthtech Labs and a distinguished researcher, of the planned demonstration. He asks you to develop a communication plan for what the lab should do.

Step 1: How will you go about research in the limited time available? Outline in some detail the steps you would take, and explain why you would take each step. Include in your answer responses for each question below.

- Whom do you want information from or about?
- What information do you want?
- What formal and informal research is needed?

Step 2: When Dr. Ralph Johnson, director of the Ragus-A program, is informed of the planned protest, he suggests that the entire project — including all the monkeys and the four-person research team — be moved quickly to a small Healthtech facility in another state. The lab could then deny the existence of the program and stonewall reporters and demonstrators for six months until the project could be concluded quietly. Dr. Parker asks you to consider Dr. Johnson's suggestions as you continue to develop your action plan.

Develop a complete public relations plan for the four weeks before the demonstration and for the day of the demonstration itself. Be specific. Include these eight elements as well as any other planning elements you think appropriate.

1. A response to Dr. Johnson's suggestion, including a rationale for your position

2. Key publics

3. Long- and short-term objectives for the plan

4. Messages, strategies and tactics

5. Specifically, how to reach each public

6. Materials you will need and use

7. Spokespersons to be used (including identification, selection and preparation)

8. Timetable

Step 3: Describe the media relations program you will use to implement the plan outlined above in detail and include the following:

- Targeted news organizations and social media platforms

- Activities before the day of the demonstration

- Activities on the day of the demonstration

- Activities in the week following the demonstration

Step 4: Explain how you will evaluate your program.

⬆Plan: Healthtech Labs

(This plan was written during a four-hour exam by a candidate who is now an APR. *Notes* describe what she would do differently today.)

Step 1: Formal Research Needed

Research	Sources of information	Rationale
Survey	Randomly selected sample of members of the medical community, including doctors and researchers *Note*: This approach assumes that an accurate list (i.e., sampling frame) of members of the medical community is available. Without the sampling frame, selecting a statistically valid random sample would be difficult.	This method is useful for gaining information that can be generalized to the whole population of "members of the medical community." I need this information to gauge potential support among "experts" for the Ragus-A program. The findings may be cited in communications with target publics who find members of the medical community to be credible sources in the context of the situation.
Survey	Randomly selected sample of employees of Healthtech Labs	This information is required to provide a benchmark of whether and to what extent employees know about the program. Although management thinks employees don't know because they haven't been told, that does not mean that employees didn't hear whispers about the program through informal channels of communication. We need this baseline formation to evaluate the communication efforts later.

Informal Research Needed

Research	Sources of information	Rationale
Interviews with influentials	Dr. Johnson (director of Ragus-A program); each of the four people on the research team; the company president and other executive-level leaders	This method is useful for gaining better understanding of project details (purpose, execution, preliminary findings). Interviewing allows sources of information to express their opinions in their own words. I would use these findings to craft messages explaining the program.
Interviews with influentials	Key decision makers for government regulatory agencies about animal testing in general	This method would help me gauge whether these individuals understand animal testing issues and benefits as well as help me identify potential allies for the program.
Secondary analysis *Note*: The proposed research may actually be "secondary research" in which one looks at information both collected and analyzed by others. In contrast, "secondary analysis" occurs when you take information	Study by the American Medical Association regarding prevalence of diabetes-related illnesses in the last three years	Although I would have to be careful about using research data collected by others (looking at who collected the data and how the questions were asked), this information would help me determine the potential contributions of the Ragus-A project. That knowledge, in turn, would help me construct messages for target publics by using argumentation strategies such as logical explanations.

Research	Sources of information	Rationale
collected by others and analyze that raw data yourself. The original answer did not really address whether I would re-analyze raw data collected by others.	Opinion polls conducted by other organizations on whether and what types of people support animal testing	See caveats above. This information would provide a baseline of what kinds of publics I might be dealing with as well as the values and concerns of those publics. This information would help me prioritize my publics as well as help me craft communication appeals to them. These appeals might be based on altruism strategies (appealing to their sense of helping people who need this type of research).
Trend analysis	Major print and broadcast media stories from the past year	This method helps me determine whether journalists have been covering this type of story. If they haven't, I should be prepared for a possible onslaught and the need to educate reporters about animal testing in general. If they have, I can assess the angle of these stories and how they have portrayed companies. (If I had more time, I would conduct a content analysis of these print and broadcast stories. It would be formal research. However, because I'm short on time, I can do only an informal analysis of apparent trends in media coverage of animal testing issues.)

Step 2: Identify Publics

The problem is that Healthtech Labs has been conducting animal testing "under wraps" without sharing this information with important organizational publics who should have been informed. As a result, the company will not be able to draw on key supporters in the event of a public protest of the program. We are looking at lack of awareness and, consequently, lack of support.

Note: Although not requested to do so in the instructions, I should have at this point articulated a goal statement for my campaign. Goal statements should be positive reiterations of the problem statement. One appropriate goal statement would be "to raise awareness and support of the Ragus-A program among members of the target public within the next two years."

Five key publics include the following:

- Rank-and-file employees
- Federal and state agencies that can exert regulatory control over Healthtech Labs activities
- Physicians and medical researchers who support animal testing in general
- Members of the local community who support animal testing
- Members of the local community who aren't sure whether they support animal testing

Original Note: I am not targeting the protesters as a key public because they are unlikely to be willing to communicate with us in a two-way symmetrical manner. As a result, they are highly unlikely to listen to our point of view and prefer instead to insist on their own views. Thus, communicating with them is a waste of time because we are unlikely to prevent the protest anyway — just totally unrealistic, especially given the emotional nature of the animal-testing issue. Instead, we can try to get "our side" of the issue to those who are still in the middle or undecided as well as to reinforce the sense of rightness among those who already support our position.

Objectives

Note: Short-term objectives center on knowledge outcomes, which necessarily precede the changes in attitude and behavior that are longer-term objective outcomes.

Publics	Short-term objectives (within this calendar year)	Long-term objectives (within the next two years)
Rank-and-file employees	Increase to 100 percent employee awareness of the Ragus-A program. Increase to 100 percent employee knowledge of the purpose of the Ragus-A program.	Gain and maintain support of the program from 75 percent of employees. Maintain employee satisfaction levels with the company at 75 percent or above.
Federal and state regulators that have jurisdiction over types of activities in which Healthtech Labs is engaged	Increase to 100 percent regulators' awareness of the Ragus-A program. Increase to 100 percent regulators' knowledge of the purpose of the Ragus-A program.	Gain and maintain support of the program from 75 percent of regulators.
Physicians and medical researchers who support animal testing in general	Increase to 90 percent the proportion of pro-animal-testing doctors and researchers who are aware of the Ragus-A program. Increase to 90 percent the proportion of pro-animal-testing doctors and researchers who know the purpose of the Ragus-A program.	Gain and maintain support of the program from 90 percent of pro-animal-testing doctors and researchers. Increase to and maintain at least 15 people as the number of pro-animal-testing doctors and researchers who are willing to speak publicly in support of the program.
Members of the local community who support animal testing	Increase to 90 percent the proportion of pro-animal-testing community members who are aware of the Ragus-A program. Increase to 90 percent the proportion of pro-animal-testing community members who know the purpose the Ragus-A program.	Gain and maintain support of the program from 90 percent of pro-animal-testing community members.
Members of the local community who aren't sure whether they support animal testing	Increase to 90 percent the proportion of "undecided" community members who are aware of the Ragus-A program. Increase to 90 percent the proportion of "undecided" community members who know the purpose of the Ragus-A program.	Gain and maintain support of the program from 60 percent of currently "undecided" community members.

Strategies

Note: My original answers here did not adequately distinguish among the three types of strategies: (1) action strategies, which are internal changes the organization would have to make to achieve its objectives; (2) communication/message-delivery strategies, which are ways by which the messages would be delivered; and (3) communication/message-content strategies, which deal with the content of organizational messages.

Publics	Objectives (for specifics, see above)	Strategies
Rank-and-file employees	Increase employee awareness of the program and knowledge about its purpose.	Educate employees about the purpose, goals, execution and preliminary findings of the project.
	Gain and maintain support of the program among employees.	Explain and justify the previous decision to keep employees from knowing about the program; highlight the benefits of the program.
	Maintain levels of employee satisfaction with the company.	Earn employee trust by apologizing for not informing them earlier, promising to keep them apprised of program developments and findings, and keeping that promise.
Federal and state regulators that have jurisdiction over types of activities in which Healthtech Labs is engaged	Increase regulators' awareness of the program and knowledge about its purpose.	Educate regulators as to the purpose, goals, execution and preliminary findings of the project.
	Gain and maintain support of the program among regulators.	Highlight the benefits of the program; explain and justify the previous decision to keep regulators from knowing about the program.
Physicians and medical researchers who support animal testing in general	Increase awareness among these doctors and medical researchers of the program and knowledge about its purpose.	Educate these doctors and medical researchers about the purpose, goals, execution and preliminary findings of the project.
	Gain and maintain support of the program among these doctors and medical researchers.	Highlight the benefits of the program; explain and justify the previous decision to keep regulators from knowing about the program.
	Increase to and maintain at least 15 doctors and researchers who are willing to speak publicly in support of the program.	Convince them of the importance of "expert witnesses" in the "court of public opinion"; convince them that supporting Healthtech Labs is in essence supporting the pro-animal-testing cause in which they believe.
Members of the local community who support animal testing	Increase awareness among these community members of the program and knowledge about its purpose.	Educate these community members about the purpose, goals, execution and preliminary findings of the project.
	Gain and maintain support of the program among these community members.	Highlight the benefits of the program; explain and justify the previous decision to keep regulators from knowing about the program.
Members of the local community who aren't sure whether they support animal testing	Increase awareness among these community members of the program and knowledge about its purpose.	Educate these community members about the purpose, goals, execution and preliminary findings of the project.

Publics	Objectives (for specifics, see above)	Strategies
	Gain and maintain support of the program among these community members.	Highlight the benefits of the program; explain and justify the previous decision to keep regulators from knowing about the program.

Step 3: Implementation

Note: The words in ALL CAPS below refer to the "seven Cs of communication" explained in EPR 11th.

Publics	Strategy	Message	Tactics/tools	Spokesperson
Rank-and-file employees	Educate employees about the purpose, goals, execution and preliminary findings of the project.	Diabetes is a tough disease, and we must make tough choices to fight it.	Town meeting with all employees Write-up of the program in the next employee newsletter	Company president (because he is the most CREDIBLE and appropriate to this CONTEXT)
	Explain and justify the previous decision to keep employees from knowing about the program; highlight the benefits of the program.	Human diseases are tough enemies, and we must make tough choices in the war against them.	Town meeting with all employees	Company president
Federal and state regulators that have jurisdiction over types of activities in which Healthtech Labs is engaged	Increase regulators' awareness of the program and knowledge about its purpose.	Diabetes is a tough disease, and we must make tough choices to fight it.	In-person meetings with regulators Simple brochure about the program and its benefits	Company president (because he is the most CREDIBLE and appropriate to this CONTEXT)
	Gain and maintain support of the program among regulators.	Human diseases are tough enemies, and we must make tough choices in the war against them.	Simple brochure about the program and its benefits	Company president
Physicians and medical researchers who support animal testing in general	Increase awareness among these doctors and medical researchers of the program and knowledge about its purpose.	While cases of diabetes are increasing, Healthtech Labs is developing a cutting-edge treatment.	Feature article about the program in professional association newsletters	Director of the program (because he is the most CREDIBLE and appropriate to this CONTEXT; also, he can articulate CLEARLY details of the program in ways that fit the technical CAPABILITY of this public)
			Public relations advertisement in trade publication that promotes cutting-edge research of Healthtech Labs without mentioning specific programs	Company president (because he is the most CREDIBLE voice of the organization as a whole)

Publics	Strategy	Message	Tactics/tools	Spokesperson
	Gain and maintain support of the program among these doctors and medical researchers.	Human diseases are tough enemies, and we must make tough choices in the war against them.	Exhibit booth at professional association meetings where program researchers can talk face-to-face with members of this public	Director of the program
	Increase to and maintain at least 15 doctors and researchers who are willing to speak publicly in support of the program.	Stand up to diabetes; stand up with Healthtech Labs.	Personal contact with potential spokespersons, possibly by phone initially	Director of the program
Members of the local community who support animal testing	Increase awareness of the program and knowledge about its purpose.	Diabetes is a tough disease, and we must make tough choices to fight it.	Video news releases for local broadcast media	Company president Doctors and researchers who support animal testing
			Advertising to put issue on public agenda	Member of the community who talks about how animal testing made possible the treatment that saved her loved one
(Doctors and researchers would be CREDIBLE spokespersons because of their expertise; they are opinion leaders for this public whose views are likely to be heeded, according to the two-step flow model of communication and Roper's concentric circles theory, both of which basically argue that opinion leaders are necessary filters of messages between senders and their desired receiver.)				
	Gain and maintain support of the program among these community members.	Human diseases are tough enemies, and we must make tough choices in the war against them.	Op-ed pieces for community paper and other local print media	Company president Doctors and researchers who support animal testing
Members of the local community who aren't sure whether they support animal testing	Increase awareness among these community members of the program and knowledge about its purpose.	Diabetes is a tough disease, and we must make tough choices to fight it.	Video news releases for local broadcast media	Doctors and researchers who support animal testing
			Advertising to put issue on public agenda	Member of the community who talks about how animal testing made possible the treatment that saved her loved one

Publics	Strategy	Message	Tactics/tools	Spokesperson
	Gain and maintain support of the program among these community members.	Human diseases are tough enemies, and we must make tough choices in the war against them.	Op-ed pieces for community paper and other local print media	Written by an employee to give the "Average Joe" viewpoint (This approach makes the message CLEAR without jargon and accessible to a public with limited CAPABILITY to understand the complex nature of an unfamiliar issue.)

Budget

Tactics/tools	Details	Cost details	Cost
Town meeting with all employees	Refreshments	$1 per attendee, 1,000 employees	$1,000
Write-up of the program in next employee newsletter	Staff time spent writing article	$20/hr equivalent staff salary; five hours to write and edit	$100
Flier that summarizes the program and its benefits to go to all employees with their next pay stubs	Write summary and other information; design flier	$20/hr equivalent staff salary; 15 hours to write, edit and design	$300
	Insert with paychecks	$1 per manual insertion for 1,000 employee pay stubs	$1,000
Personal meetings with regulators	Gas and mileage; and parking downtown	$10 per meeting, for 10 meetings	$100
	CEO time spent in meetings	$500/hr equivalent salary for 10 1-hr meetings	$5,000
	Staff time spent arranging meetings	$20/hr equivalent staff salary; two hours	$40
Simple brochure about the program and its benefits	Write summary and other information; design brochure	$20/hr equivalent staff salary; 10 hours	$200
	Printing of brochure	$0.25 per piece for single fold, 4,000 pieces	$1,000
Feature article about the program in professional association newsletters	Senior staff time spent writing and pitching article	$30/hr equivalent staff salary; 20 hours	$600
Op-ed pieces for community paper and other local print media	Senior staff time spent writing and pitching article	$30/hr equivalent staff salary; 20 hours	$600
Video news releases for local broadcast media	Senior staff time spent writing script and training spokespersons; then filming	$30/hr equivalent staff salary; 40 hours	$1,200
Advertising to put issue on public agenda		Contracted to local ad agency; includes talent fees, shooting, film and agency costs	$20,000
		TOTAL COSTS (in-house):	$11,140
		TOTAL COSTS (for budget):	$31,140

Timetable (P=Planning; I=Implementation)

Tactics/Tools	ASAP	In 1 Mo.	In 3 Mos.	In 6 Mos.	In 9 Mos.	In/At 12 Mos.	At 18 Mos.	At 24 Mos.
Town meeting with all employees	PI							
Write-up of the program in next employee newsletter (and keeping employees apprised of program developments)		P	I		I	I	I	I
Flier that summarizes the program and its benefits to go to all employees with their next pay stubs	P	I						
Personal meetings with regulators	P	I	I					
Simple brochure about the program and its benefits	P	I	I					
Feature article about the program in professional association newsletters		P	P	I		I		
Op-ed pieces for community paper and other local print media	P	I						
Video news releases for local broadcast media	P	I						
Advertising to put issue on public agenda	P	I						

Step 4: Evaluation

Objectives	Data collection method	Evaluation criteria	Evaluation intervals
Increase to 100 percent employee awareness of Ragus-A program. Increase to 100 percent employee knowledge of the purpose of the Ragus-A program.	Survey	One hundred percent of employees indicate awareness of the program in general and accurate knowledge as to the purpose of the program.	At one year
Gain and maintain support of the program from 75 percent of employees. Maintain employee satisfaction levels with the company at 75 percent or above.	Survey	Seventy-five percent of employees indicate that they support the program, and 75 percent of employees indicate they are satisfied with the company.	At one year and 1.5 years (to measure progress) At two years (to measure achievement or failure)

Objectives	Data collection method	Evaluation criteria	Evaluation intervals
Increase to 100 percent regulators' awareness of Ragus-A program. Increase to 100 percent regulators' knowledge of the purpose of the Ragus-A program.	Telephone interview	One hundred percent of regulators indicate awareness of the program in general and accurate knowledge as to the purpose of the program.	At one year
Gain and maintain support of the program from 75 percent of regulators.	Telephone interview	Seventy-five percent of regulators indicate support for the program.	At one year and 1.5 years (to measure progress) At two years (to measure achievement or failure)
Increase to 90 percent the proportion of pro-animal-testing doctors and researchers who are aware of the Ragus-A program. Increase to 90 percent the proportion of pro-animal-testing doctors and researchers who know the purpose of the Ragus-A program.	Survey	Ninety percent of doctors and researchers indicating pro-animal-testing views also indicate awareness of the program and knowledge about its purpose.	At one year
Gain and maintain support of the program from 90 percent of pro-animal-testing doctors and researchers.	Survey	Ninety percent of doctors and researchers indicating pro-animal-testing views AND knowledge about the program also indicates support of the program.	At two years
Increase to and maintain at least 15 people as the number of pro-animal-testing doctors and researchers who are willing to speak publicly in support of the program.	Trend analysis of print and broadcast news stories about the program	News articles include quotes from 15 pro-animal-testing doctors and researchers supporting the program.	At two years
Increase to 90 percent the proportion of pro-animal-testing community members who are aware of the Ragus-A program. Increase to 90 percent the proportion of pro-animal-testing community members who know the purpose of the Ragus-A program.	Focus group of pro-animal-testing community members *Note:* This use of the focus group is not really appropriate because qualitative methods should not be used to obtain quantitative results that can be applied generally from the sample to the population.	In nine out of 10 focus groups, the participants indicate awareness of the program and knowledge as to its purpose.	At one year

Objectives	Data collection method	Evaluation criteria	Evaluation intervals
Gain and maintain support of the program from 90 percent of pro-animal testing community members.	Focus group of pro-animal testing community members *Note:* See above.	In nine out of 10 focus groups, the participants indicate support for the program.	At two years
Increase to 90 percent the proportion of "undecided" community members who are aware of the Ragus-A program. Increase to 90 percent the proportion of "undecided" community members who know the purpose of the Ragus-A program.	Focus group of (previously) undecided community members *Note:* See above.	In nine out of 10 focus groups, the participants indicate awareness of the program and knowledge as to its purpose.	At one year
Gain and maintain support of the program from 60 percent of currently "undecided" community members.	Focus group of (previously) undecided community members *Note:* See above.	In six out of 10 focus groups, the participants indicate support for the program.	At two years

Note: For intervals of evaluations, see column on the right of table above.

Note: Cost estimates in the budget of this plan would be higher today.

Courtesy of Bey-Ling Sha, Ph.D., APR, who wrote the original plan in 2001. Notes were provided in 2007 by Dr. Sha, now a professor at San Diego State University.

➔ Case Study: Ramsey Steel

Ramsey Steel Faces Pollution Allegations

Create a comprehensive public relations plan for this case study by using either a grid-style or paragraph-style plan. Look at the situation and then develop the research element of your plan before you move to the remainder; or look at the sample provided.

Situation: You are the public relations manager for Ramsey Steel. It has a massive steel mill with 14 open-hearth and four electric furnaces. The open-hearth furnaces present major technical difficulties in collecting and controlling air emissions. These emissions result in air pollution that is becoming a problem for the community and company. Ramsey long has been aware of the potential pollution problem. The company's first pollution control director was named 36 years ago and retired last month.

Steel industry economics establish certain parameters for the cost of furnace installation. Installing all new electric furnaces at once would be prohibitive because the work would require $40 to $50 million upfront.

Ramsey has, despite the cost, made a policy decision to replace all the open-hearth furnaces with electric furnaces of equal or greater capacity. Two open-hearth furnaces have just been removed from production, and two new electric furnaces have been installed. At a cost of $2.5 million, new smoke control devices known as high-energy scrubbers have been added and are doing an excellent job. Scrubbers will be installed in the two older electric furnaces at an additional expenditure of $2 million. The company has set a 20-year timetable for replacing the remaining 12 open-hearth furnaces and has committed to reducing emissions for its furnaces if a new technology becomes available during that period.

Meanwhile, the company continues to test new technologies and is committed to investing in systems to control the pollution created by open-hearth furnaces. As a result of this testing, new overhead systems, including a $500,000 high-velocity centrifugal separator, were installed recently. But the separator was found to be insufficient. Subsequently, additional equipment, including a bag house and spray chamber costing $1 million, was tried and found to help but not solve the pollution problem.

Local publicity about air pollution in daily print and electronic media has been increasing. Most is slanted and inaccurate. Until recently, reports had not specifically mentioned Ramsey. But last month, the County Pollution Control Office named Ramsey Steel "Polluter of the Month." Much negative publicity followed. The situation was handled according to Ramsey's crisis communication plan.

Ramsey's mill manager is concerned about the adverse effects of publicity on the company's future. In light of the overall situation and recent events, the mill manager has requested that you develop a comprehensive corporate communication plan for Ramsey Steel.

Step 1: Describe the formal and informal research needed. Identify a source of information and rationale for each recommended activity.

For steps 2–12, use the following as findings from your research:

- Ramsey's customers are sympathetic to the company.
- Most complaints come from a few people who moved into the area near the mill after it was built and operational.
- In the greater metropolitan area, the public-at-large is not aware of the exceptional effort and millions of dollars spent by the company to counter air pollution.
- A small majority (55 percent of those queried) believes the "Polluter of the Month" award is deserved and thinks that the company is concerned only with profits and not with the public welfare.
- Others realize that public incineration and automobile exhaust are responsible for much pollution.
- The mill is located adjacent to two smaller municipalities.
- County commissioners seem basically sympathetic to the company's difficult problem but are also afraid of voter sentiment.

- Some City Council members in the city where Ramsey Steel is located are wondering what they can do to bring Ramsey and other industrial plants into line with anti-pollution regulations.
- Some other industries in the area apparently put profits before public health and have made no moves to control air pollution.

Step 2: In light of what you have learned, draft a broad goal for your communications effort — the end result you will hope to achieve for the company.

Step 3: Identify five key publics or constituent groups.

Step 4: Select one of these groups. Write one short-term and one long-term objective for your communication plan to address your key public, and work toward your goal.

Step 5: Write two strategies for this key public and tell how you will work toward your objective.

Step 6: Write your main message for this key group.

Step 7: Identify three tactics or tools you will use to carry out your strategies. Identify which strategy each tactic is intended to carry out. (Your tactics may be the same for both strategies, or they may be different.)

Step 8: Identify a spokesperson for tactics, as appropriate.

Step 9: Estimate costs associated with each tactic. Include out-of-pocket expenses, staff or volunteer time, and in-kind donations.

Step 10: Draft a timetable for your public relations plan. Set up a chart, grid or other device to show how your plan will proceed and the progression of tasks. Include start and finish dates.

Step 11: Consider how and when you will evaluate progress toward your short-term and long-term objective, and add those points to your timetable. When will you provide an opportunity for correcting your course, if that appears to be strategic?

Step 12: Determine how and when to evaluate progress toward your overall goal, and add that date to your timetable.

⬆Plan: Ramsey Steel

Listed below is an example of an **outline-planning format (research, planning, implementation, evaluation, budget, timeline)** with various steps included.

Research (Informal)

Method: **Interviews**

Sources

- City Council members in our town and two neighboring municipalities
- County commissioners
- Chamber of Commerce
- Civic leaders
- Ramsey's retired pollution control director

Rationale: To see how leaders in the community feel about Ramsey. To determine effect of "Polluter of the Month" award. To assess opinions/beliefs of key decision makers and publics.

Method: **Focus groups**

Sources

- Employees of the mill
- Employees of the mill who are residents in the immediate area of the mill
- Residents closest to the mill
- Residents in other areas of the town where the mill is located and in neighboring municipalities

Rationale: Because formal research questions will need to be constructed, information on issues raised in focus groups will help identify topics that should be included in the formal research phase. Focus groups are a good way to reach targeted publics and take their pulse.

Method: **Mail and telephone logs segmented into contact categories**

Sources

- Employees of the mill who are residents in the immediate area of the mill
- Customers
- Community contacts
- Corporate
- Community influencers and elected officials

Rationale: To identify topics with strong enough levels of concern to prompt people to initiate communication with the company. To probe for underlying values and attitudes. Data such as these can be used to identify which publics need information on specific topics.

Method: **Trends and analysis**

Sources
- Online searches by related topics
- Industry data banks and bibliographies from trade and professional associations
- Lexis®/Nexis®

Rationale: To determine if this problem is industrywide or a local issue; to identify companies that have addressed pollution issues successfully; to determine how much of the "public mind" is focused on pollution issues; and to identify resources and experts who may be able to help.

Method: **Benchmarking**

Sources

- Competitors
- Members of trade associations for outside of region

Rationale: To provide baseline data for future measurement.

Method: **Historical Research — Review of complaints made against the company**

Sources

- Public files of the County Pollution Control Office
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- State Department of Natural Resources
- National, state and local associations focusing on air and water issues

Rationale: To determine the nature and source(s) of complaints and if most complaints are coming from the same people. What specifically the complainers are upset about. And what, if any, solutions/remedies would be acceptable.

Research (Formal)

Method: **Formal media content analysis** (print and broadcast) (using positive, negative and neutral sort categories and a predetermined sample of media coverage)

Sources

- All references to Ramsey and/or pollution in all local news media (print and electronic) for the past 12 months

Rationale: To determine what, if anything, in the news has contributed to public perceptions of the company. To determine if past messages had been received. May help identify news outlets sympathetic and unsympathetic to the company on the pollution issue.

Method: **Telephone survey**

Sources

- Random sample of employees who are residents in the mill area and nearby communities
- Random sample of residents of the town where the mill is located and in two nearby municipalities

Rationale: To determine the extent to which residents are aware of efforts Ramsey Steel has made to control pollution and the degree to which they believe Ramsey Steel is unconcerned with public welfare. Most importantly, to find out what changes and remedies would improve their perception of Ramsey Steel.

Method: **Formal online survey**

Sources

- Statistically valid random sample of customers

Rationale: To find out if customers are sympathetic to the company's plight, aware of all the efforts the company has made to curb pollution and willing to share costs of change.

Planning

Problem

Though Ramsey Steel has made many efforts to address pollution issues at its mill, the community and the County Pollution Control office think of the company only as a pollution creator.

Publics

- Employees
- *Community influencers and elected officials
- *Residents of local community and two nearby municipalities
- *County Pollution Control Office
- *City Council members and community leaders in three municipalities
- Local media
- *Customers
- Stockholders
- Environmental groups
- Regulators such as EPA, DNR, etc.

*Indicates key publics that must be identified and incorporated into the plan.

Objectives

Short-Term

- Within three months, 75 percent of employees who reside in three targeted municipalities will articulate support — including the ability to state at least three of the organization's key messages — for Ramsey Steel's position as an industry leader in pollution control.

- Within three months, the county pollution control officer will have stopped making negative public comments about Ramsey Steel.

- Within three months, local news (print and electronic) coverage of Ramsey Steel's pollution control efforts will be 20 percent less negative than in the original content analysis.

- Within six months, 30 percent of local and nearby residents given a list of actions that could be taken to curb pollution will be able to identify at least two that Ramsey Steel has taken (contacted in intercept interviews).

- Within six months, 60 percent of stockholders surveyed will confirm support for Ramsey Steel's pollution control efforts.

- Within nine months, 15 percent more customers than in the original online survey will identify Ramsey Steel as a company that acts to control pollution in another online survey.

Long-Term

- Employee opinion survey question related to mission will retain or improve score over previous year.

- Within one year, 60 percent of local residents surveyed will report that they believe Ramsey Steel is trying to control its pollution.

- Within 18 months, five customers will volunteer to write testimonials about Ramsey Steel's pollution control efforts.

- Within two years, local news organizations (print and electronic) will have run 50 percent more positive stories about Ramsey Steel than evidenced in the original content analysis.

- Within three years, the County Pollution Control Office's annual reports and public statements will identify Ramsey Steel as a leader in pollution abatement.

- Within 36 months, Ramsey will receive significant, relevant industry award.

Strategies

All publics: two-way communications that respond in genuine, sincere way to real concerns.

Employees

- Use existing internal communication channel to highlight pollution control efforts; if none exists, set up a two-way feedback channel on corporate intranet to keep employees up-to-date with news and activities. Employee communications should be posted before communications with other publics unless such order is in violation of a law.

- Leverage external educational/information campaign for internal educational/information campaign.

- Engage select sample of employees who live in targeted municipalities as opinion leaders on pollution control initiatives.

- Reach residents, including community influencers, environmental groups and elected officials, of local community and two nearby municipalities.

- Use an information/education campaign that relies on social networks.

- Use a media relations strategy that includes stories with third-party credibility.

- Use a community engagement strategy focused on opinion leaders in the local municipalities.

County Pollution Control Office

- Build relationship through frequent contacts and regular dissemination of related information. Couple personal interaction with factual data presented verbally and graphically.

Local news organizations

- Increase contact with all news outlets in the area.

- Provide opportunities for local reporters to become knowledgeable about the company through open-house media tours, editorial boards, media breakfasts, invitations to community education events, social-network interactions, technical reports and availability of knowledgeable experts.

Customers

- Make customers a part of the solution by giving them written and verbal opportunities through social media to learn more about the company, and give the company feedback about their satisfaction or concerns regarding its performance.

Stockholders

- Inform them through existing communication vehicles, as well as special graphic and visual presentations that quickly convey the messages.

Key Messages

1. Ramsey Steel is a good corporate citizen: contributes to the local economy and a clean environment.

2. Ramsey Steel will continue to work collaboratively with employees, community members and regulators to enhance our efforts and improve our communities.

3. Ramsey Steel needs your help and your input to continue to improve our communities.

Implementing/Executing/Communicating

(Implementing the plan: tactics, tools and spokespersons)

Employees

Message

- See above.

Tactics/tools

- Employee Advisory Committee — select group of front-line employees who live in targeted municipalities; two-way, face-to-face efforts to monitor and anticipate community opinions, concerns, questions and opportunities; engage friends and neighbors within community, sample for community sentiment; provide educational/informational material; enlist in ownership of the plan and company's reputation in the community.

- Employee newsletter/intranet/social networks — dedicated-space stories focused on Ramsey's pollution control efforts, care for the environment, etc.

- Supervisor meetings/management briefings — series of key messages over time to align with public campaign.

- Create specific channel(s) of communication with audience segment that resides in the mill area and surrounding communities.

Residents of Local Community and Two Nearby Municipalities

Message

- See above.

Tactics/Tools

- Community newsletter — (quarterly) describing efforts to control pollution and improve environment.

- Electronic newsletter — (monthly) focused on Ramsey as corporate citizen to opinion leaders in three municipalities; environmental efforts/plan; testimonials/quotes from employees engaged as opinion leaders.

- Website — microsite — dedicated to environmental efforts; include long-range plan; pollution control officer's blog, FAQs; interactive "how citizens can take action to improve environment."

- Facebook page — with daily posts linked to website and electronic versions of posters (see below).

- Speakers' bureau and YouTube video — available to civic groups, schools, city councils and other organizations interested in environmental topics. Video shows how citizens can take action to improve environment and how Ramsey is doing "its part."

- Posters — (a series of six) displayed in buses and on public bulletin boards in the local area. Content will be a different slogan on each with actions being taken within the county to control pollution. Prepared jointly with the Pollution Control Office.

- "Clean Up with Ramsey" auto trash bags — (use these for the duration of the campaign) printed and distributed in county recreation centers, car washes and service stations.

- Image advertising/infomercials — (three per month for first six months, two per month for the next six months, one per month for balance of campaign) in all local news outlets. Ads will tell Ramsey's story — the new equipment and costs of equipment are not intended to improve product but to save the environment.

- Environmental and community improvement events — Partner with the communities and work with environmental groups, community influencers and elected officials to hold environmental, communitywide events focused on improving the communities.

Spokespersons

- Ramsey's pollution control officer and staff, as well as public relations staff (speakers' bureau)

- President of Ramsey and pollution control officer (video)

- President, environmental leaders, engineers (image ads)

County Pollution Control Office

Message

- See above.

Tactics/tools

- Monthly meetings — with pollution control officer and staff to discuss complaints that have been received, activities underway at Ramsey to further pollution control at the mill, and Ramsey's public service efforts to increase public awareness and participation in environmental improvements

- Quarterly letters outlining activities the company has taken internally to control pollution, and areas of cooperation with the community to improve the environment — to the County Pollution Control Office

- Tours of the mill — each time new equipment is installed and old (polluting equipment) is removed

- Hold regular open forums with mill management team and pollution control agency management team.

Spokespersons

- Pollution control officer and public relations director (for monthly meetings)

- President (as signatory of letters)

- Public relations staff, pollution control officer and mill operations manager (tours)

Local News Organizations

Message

- See above.

Tactics/Tools

- Establish one-on-one media relationships — with reporters covering the mill.

- Set editorial board meeting(s) — with newspaper(s) serving each of the three communities. Ramsey president, pollution control officer and public relations staff will attend.

- Tours — of the mill, including a Q&A session with corporate executives after the tour; special tours for reporters when new equipment is operational; lots of descriptions of how new equipment curbs pollution, how much it cost the company, etc.

- Insider interviews — with pollution control officer and employees "on the line"

- Testimonials — from customers who praise the efforts of the company

- Feature stories — on the steel industry and the industry's efforts to create a good product and work for a clean, safe environment

- Backgrounder/fact sheets — including benchmarking data, industry trends, Ramsey's leadership efforts, equipment installations, long-term environmental plan contact information of third-party industry experts

- Online newsroom — with fact sheets, quotes, links to third-party research and experts

Spokespersons

- Media relations director for meetings

- Internal experts on pollution, equipment, operations for mill tours

- Mill president and pollution control officer for question-and-answer session

Customers

Message

- See above.

Tactics/Tools

- Customer newsletter — four times a year with information about people in the Ramsey organization, what's up at the mill, new products and other things Ramsey is doing to be a good corporate citizen

- Feedback email address — in every newsletter. Ask for suggestions on pollution control, environmental safety and improvement programs customers have seen or think might work and for general feedback on products and people of Ramsey.

- Sales team training/speaking points — on Ramsey as an industry leader in environmental issues; feedback line for sales team to PR department to monitor customer feedback, identify possible testimonials

- Set up interactive feedback mechanism on the Ramsey Steel Internet site and through Facebook page.

Spokespersons

- Director of public relations and director of sales

- Sales force in using key messages

Stockholders

Message

- You can be proud of the products Ramsey produces. Successful pollution control is good for business and profits.

Tactics/Tools

- Annual Stockholders' Report — Will have a shaded box on page one for the duration of the campaign to provide information on what Ramsey is doing to control pollution.

- Special direct mail — to all stockholders in six months. Message will include photo essay showing Ramsey controlling pollution in the mill and helping community members control pollution. Charts, graphs and pictures predominate; little text.

Spokesperson

- Chairman of the board and president

Budget

(See attachment.)

Timetable

(See attachment.)

Evaluation

Short-Term Objectives

- Within three months, 75 percent of employees who live in three targeted municipalities will articulate support for Ramsey Steel's position as an industry leader in pollution control and show ability to state at least three of the organization's key messages. Use internal communication channels to survey select sample of employees who live in targeted municipalities on their interactions in their local communities. Include an open-ended question inviting feedback identifying three key messages that they believe to have been most important. Responses from 75 percent of these selected employees will include at least three of the organization's key messages.

- Within three months, the county pollution control officer will have stopped making negative public comments about Ramsey Steel.

- Attend all public meetings where pollution is an issue and/or the officer might attend or speak. Assess comments on a scale of 0–10 with zero representing no comments made. Piggyback on content analysis described below.

- Within three months, local news (print and electronic) coverage of Ramsey Steel's pollution control efforts will be 20 percent less negative than in the original content analysis.

- Conduct a content analysis using the same methodology and audience as the first one described in research section (all local print and electronic media). Negative coverage will be 20 percent less.

- Within six months, 30 percent of local and nearby residents given a list of actions that could be taken to curb pollution will be able to identify at least two that Ramsey Steel has taken.

- Do intercept interviews at the post office, bank and supermarket. Ask every 10th person to review a list of pollution control actions and to identify two that they believe Ramsey Steel uses to control pollution at its local steel mill. See how many of those interviewed can correctly identify two actions that are being taken by Ramsey Steel.

- Within six months, 60 percent of stockholders surveyed will confirm support for Ramsey Steel's pollution control efforts.

- Survey all stockholders. Sixty percent of respondents will say they support the company's pollution control efforts

- Within nine months, 15 percent more customers than in the original online survey will identify Ramsey Steel as a company that acts to control pollution.

- Re-survey all customers via an online questionnaire. Be sure to re-ask all questions, especially those that deal with whether Ramsey Steel acts to control pollution. Compare original pre-communication plan results with current results. Fifteen percent of customers will identify pollution control as something the company does well.

Long-Term Objectives

- Annual employee opinion survey question related to mission will show improved score over previous year.

- Within one year, 60 percent of local residents surveyed will report that they believe Ramsey Steel is trying to control its pollution.

- Repeat research section's formal telephone survey of this population by using the same sampling method. Compare results of pre-communications program survey with the one-year survey to see if 60 percent of residents view Ramsey Steel's pollution control efforts positively.

- Within 18 months, five customers will volunteer to write testimonials about Ramsey Steel's pollution control efforts.

- Review letters, faxes and emails sent to the office. See if five customers have commented positively on the company's products and efforts to control pollution. Ask them if they will allow their words to be used as testimonials. If five say yes, the objective has been met.

- Within two years, local news organizations (print and electronic) will have run 50 percent more positive stories about Ramsey Steel than evidenced in the original content analysis.

- Conduct a third content analysis by using the same methodology as the first and second ones. Draw on the same media (all local print and electronic media). Compare positive coverage figures from the first to the second set of data. Fifty percent more of the coverage will be positive.

- Within three years, the County Pollution Control Office's annual reports and public statements will identify Ramsey Steel as a leader in pollution abatement.

- Attend all public meetings of the Pollution Control Office and review minutes, news, annual reports and related records every six months. Focus will be on determining that Ramsey Steel is not viewed negatively and, more importantly, that Ramsey Steel is being cited as a good example of pollution abatement and corporate citizenship.

When Evaluation Should Be Done

All evaluation will be conducted in the month following the time frame set in the objective:

County Pollution Office	4th and 37th month
Media content analysis	4th and 25th month
Employee opinion survey	4th month and regularly thereafter
Intercept interviews with residents	7th month
Stockholder survey	7th month
Online survey of customers	10th month
Phone survey of residents	13th month
Testimonials provided by customers	19th month
Positive stories	25th month
Absence of citation as polluter/recognition	37th month

Note: In addition, the total plan will be informally assessed quarterly so that midcourse corrections can be made as needed. Further assessments will be made annually, including reports to the CEO and board of directors.

Ramsey Steel Public Relations Plan Budget

(*Note*: Some activities require only staff time and no additional budget.)

Salaries: assumes full time dedicated to this project			
Director		$80,000.00	
Assistant		$35,000.00	
Office manager		$18,000.00	
Support staff		$15,000.00	
Benefits at 35 percent		$50,000.00	
			$198,000.00
Preplan research			
Informal			
Leader interviews	Staff time/existing materials		
Resident focus groups	($500 per group)		$8,500.00
	Professional facilitator	$5,000.00	

	Room rental	$500.00	
	Report writing/production	$3,000.00	
Mail/telephone analysis	Staff		$1,000.00
Trend analysis	Staff time		
	Purchase of publications, data	$1,000.00	
Complaint reviews	Staff time		
Formal			
Content analysis	PR agency		$40,000.00
	Monitor	$15,000.00	
	Analysis and report	$25,000.00	
Phone survey	PR agency conduct and report		$15,000.00
	Sample selection	$500.00	
	500 interviews @ $25 ea.	$12,500.00	
	Analysis and report	$2,000.00	
Online survey			$1000.00
	Survey design and publication	$1000.00	
Tools			
Community newsletter			$83,000.00
	Design	$5,000.00	
	Print 50k @ .30 x 4 quarters	$60,00.00	
	Postage 50k @ .09 x 4 quarters	$18,000.00	
Web microsite			$10,000.00
	Staff time (write/design)		
	Web developer (Interactive design)	$10,000.00	
Video/DVD			$8,500.00
	Script	$500.00	
	Talent	$2,500.00	
	Production	$5,000.00	

	Duplication/distribution	500.00	
Speakers' bureau			$11,000.00
	Script, staff time		
	Scheduling speakers — staff time		
	Speaker/media training at $5,000 for each four people		$10,000
	Handouts and collaterals	$1,000.00	
Auto trash bags			$31,250.00
	Design	$1,000.00	
	Production 250K @ $100 per 1,000	$25,000.00	
	Intro letter/collateral	$250.00	
	Distribution	$5,000.00	
Image ads			$31,000.00
	Design	$1,000.00	
	Writing by staff		
	Placements 15 per year @ 2,000 ea. in community newspapers	$30,000.00	
Employee Advisory Committee	Attendee staff time (overtime for production line employees) 30 @ 24 hrs @$40/hr	$28,000.00	$29,000.00
	Meeting materials	$1,000.00	
	Staff time to facilitate meetings		
Pollution Control Office meetings	By staff		
Pollution Control Office letters	By staff		
Pollution-control tours			$500.00
	By staff with collaterals	$500.00	
Media meetings	By staff and subject matter experts with collaterals	$500.00	$500.00
Media tours	By staff with collaterals	$500.00	$500.00
Insider interviews	By staff	$500.00	$500.00
Testimonials	By staff		$500.00
	Reproduction/distribution	$500.00	

Feature stories	By staff			
Customer newsletter				$14,900.00
	Design 2-color		$2,000.00	
	Print 2,000 @ $1.00 ea. x 4 quarters		$8,000.00	
	Mail house and postage		$4,900.00	
Stockholder annual report				$23,200.00
	Staff time to research/write			
	Photography		$5,000	
	Design 4-color		$1,000.00	
	Production 10k @ $1.50		$15,000.00	
	Envelopes and postage		$2,200.00	
Evaluation				
Intercept interviews	PR agency			$35,000.00
	Design instrument	$2,500.00		
	Conduct survey	$25,000.00		
	Write report	$7,500.00		
Ongoing content analysis	PR agency			$40,000.00
	Monitor	$15,000.00		
	Analysis and report	$25,000.00		
Customer phone survey	PR agency			$23,500.00
	Design and tailor survey	$3,500.00		
	Conduct survey	$12,500.00		
	Write report	$7,500.00		
Stockholder survey	PR agency			$35,000.00
	Create survey	$7,500.00		
	Conduct survey, 15 min. x 800 calls x $100 per hour	$20,000.00		
	Write report	$7,500.00		
Online survey	Analysis and report			$500.00

Local resident survey	PR agency		$48,000.00
	Design and tailor survey	$3,500.00	
	Conduct survey	$37,500.00	
	Write report	$7,500.00	
Total:	$689,850.00		

Timeline for Ramsey Steel Public Relations Plan

p = planning

d = development

e = execution

Note: Additional years should be added as needed for further planning.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Y2Q1	Y2Q2	Y2Q3	Y2Q4
Pre-plan research																
Informal																
Leader interviews	e															
Resident focus group		e														
Mail/telephone analysis	e															
Trend analysis		e														
Complaint review	e															
Formal																
Media analysis	d	e														
Phone survey	p	d	e													
Online survey	p	d	e						e							
Tools																
Community newsletter		p	d	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	
Web microsite	p	d	e													
Speakers' bureau				d	d	e		Available as requested								
Video for speakers/Web	p	d	d	d	e											
Auto trash bags	p	d	e													
Image ads		p	d	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	
Employee advisory	p	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	
Internal comm feature	p	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	
Poll control meetings			e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	
Poll control letters		e				e			e							
Poll control equipment			As new equipment comes on-													
Media meetings	p	d	e			e			e			e	e			e
Media tours	p	d		e		As new equipment comes on-line										
Insider interviews		p	d	e		e				e					e	
Testimonials	d	d	d		e	Available as needed										
Feature stories	p	d	e	d	e	d	e	d	e	d	e	d	d/e	d/e	d/e	d/e

Customer newsletter			p	d	d	e	p	d	d	e	p/d	e	p/d	e
Stockholder newsletter					p	d	e				p/d		e	
Annual report					p	d	d	d	d	e	p	p/d	d	e
Evaluation															
Tools	p	d	e		e		e		e		e	e	e	e
Budget	p		e		e		e		e		e	e	e	e
Timetable		e		e		e		e		e		e	e	e
Total plan				e						e		e		e