

Don't Use PR...

By Robert A. Kelly

Don't Use PR...

Robert A. Kelly
bobbkelly@TNI.net

PRCommentary.com <http://www.prcommentary.com>

...lose the confidence of your key target audiences... discourage them from taking actions that lead to your success...fail to achieve your department, division or subsidiary objectives.

A sad scenario that should not occur. In fact, as a manager in a business, non-profit or association, the exact opposite can occur based on a simple premise you can adopt and make happen starting today.

And here it is: People act on their own perception of the facts before them, which leads to predictable behaviors about which something can be done. When we create, change or reinforce that opinion by reaching, persuading and moving-to-desired-action the very people whose behaviors affect the organization the most, the public relations mission is accomplished.

Then, follow through!

Meet with the PR people assigned to your unit, sit down and list those outside audiences with the greatest impact on your operation. Then prioritize them and we'll use #1 on the list as our example for this article.

What do you know about the perceptions of that key external audience whose behaviors can affect the success or failure of your unit's operation? Probably not as much as you should despite the reality that existing perceptions almost always lead to predictable behaviors.

Make some time for you and your PR colleagues to monitor those key audience perceptions by interacting with audience members and asking a lot of questions: Do you know anything about us? Might you have need for our services or products? If you've ever had contact with our organization,

was it satisfactory? Do you have an opinion about us?

Keep your antenna up for hints of negativity, and your eyes peeled for misconceptions, inaccuracies, untruths, rumors or exaggeration.

What you will have gathered is the data you need to identify the most severe perception problem alive and kicking in that #1 external audience of yours. This becomes your corrective public relations goal. For example, clear up that unfortunate misconception; correct that inaccuracy; or tone down that exaggeration.

Now, the question persists, how do you get to that goal? You need a strategy. But, when it comes to altering perceptions or opinions you have just three strategic choices: create perception where none exists, change existing opinion/perception, or reinforce it.

Be careful here that your new strategy is a natural fit with your new goal. Obviously, if you discovered negative perceptions, you wouldn't select the "reinforce" strategy.

Next step is a writing challenge. Prepare a message bearing a real burden – alter the offending perception. That means the message will have to change what a lot of people have come to believe. However, it can not be done unless your message is very clear about what is wrong with the current perception. In addition, it must be truthful if it is to be persuasive, and compelling if it is to be believable. Spend some time on this step in the problem-solving sequence and try it out for its effectiveness on folks whose opinions you value.

If you goof the message, the entire effort may fail.

In most cases, you won't want to call too much attention to this perception-altering message by using a high-profile news announcement. Rather, include it as part of another announcement, a speech or related presentation.

Now, it's message delivery time. Here, you select the right communications tactics to carry your message to the attention of members of your target audience. You're in luck because there are so many tactics waiting to help you reach those audience members. They range from speeches, brochures, op-eds and radio/newspaper interviews to newsmaker events, newsletters, press releases and many more.

And double-check the tactics you select to make certain they actually reach people similar to those you want to reach.

In short order, all concerned, including you, will want to see signs of progress. Only way to nail this down is to once again

monitor audience member perceptions with many of the same questions you used during your benchmark opinion monitoring exercise.

If you decide the effort must move faster, you can always fine-tune the message, add new communications tactics to the battle and increase their frequencies.

So, the message of the article NOW becomes, "Use PR," gain the confidence of your key target audiences, persuade them to take actions that lead to your success, and achieve your department, division or subsidiary objectives.

end

Bob Kelly counsels, writes and speaks to business, non-profit and association managers about using the fundamental premise of public relations to achieve their operating objectives. He has been DPR, Pepsi-Cola Co.; AGM-PR, Texaco Inc.; VP-PR, Olin Corp.; VP-PR, Newport News Shipbuilding & Drydock Co.; director of communications, U.S. Department of the Interior, and deputy assistant press secretary, The White House.
mailto:bobkelly@TNI.net Visit:<http://www.prcommentary.com>

[Get-Articles.com](http://www.get-articles.com) : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)