

# How to Take Advantage of Public Relations

By Robert A. Kelly

How to Take Advantage of Public Relations

Robert A. Kelly  
bobbkelly@TNI.net

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

Decide once and for all to do something about those outside audiences whose behaviors affect your organization the most.

When members of those “publics” of yours perceive and understand who and what you are, and like what they see, the behaviors that flow from those perceptions will put a smile on your face.

Good things happen like converting sales prospects into customers, convincing existing customers to stay with you, or even toning down activist rhetoric. Even internally, productivity often increases when employees conclude that you really do care about them.

It's all possible when you commit your organization to confront head-on those key target audience perceptions and behaviors.

Easy to do? Well, it's not so hard when you have a roadmap to guide you.

Right at the top, try listing, say, your top three outside audiences whose behaviors can really affect the success of your organization. Let's pick the audience at the top of the list and go to work on it.

Can't take any chances on being wrong about what they think of you, so now's the time to start interacting with audience members. Ask a lot of questions. What do they think of your services or products? Is there a hint of negativity in their answers? Do you detect the evil effects of a rumor? Are their facts inaccurate and in need of correction?

What information gathering like this does for you is let you form a public relations goal. It could be as simple as

correcting an inaccurate perception, clearing up a misconception or spiking that nasty rumor. Your goal might even have to take aim at a widespread belief that's just plain wrong.

With your goal set, how will you actually affect those perceptions? Of course, that takes a successful strategy. But when it comes down to really doing something about opinion, we have only three ways to go: create opinion if there is none, change existing opinion, or reinforce it. Just make sure the strategy you choose flows logically from the public relations goal you set.

What exactly will you say to the members of your key target audience? Well, that depends largely on what changes in perception and, thus, behaviors you want. Your message must be clear as a mountain stream and, above all, factually believable and persuasive. It should be direct and as compelling as possible. Might help to try it out on one or two audience members and get their reactions.

Dare I call this part fun? Communications tactics, I mean? There are dozens available and they all will reach members of your key target audience with varying degrees of efficiency. You could use personal meetings, emails, letters-to-the-editor and brochures, or you could try open houses, speeches, radio interviews and even a news conference. There are many, many more.

But now, you can't avoid this. You must once again interact with members of your key target audience or you will never know if your goal, strategy, message and communications tactics ever worked.

When you again meet with these individuals, you'll be asking questions similar to your first opinion monitoring session.

Difference this time is that you're hot on the trail of altered perceptions because you know they will almost always lead to the change in behavior you really want.

Does it look like you were successful in cleaning up that misconception? Or in rooting out that wrong but deep-seated belief? Or shooting big round holes in that mischievous rumor?

If you're not happy with your progress, consider altering the mix and frequency of your communications tactics. And don't forget to take a hard look at your message. Was it REALLY clear? Did your facts and figures support your contention that the rumor is not only unfair, but hurtfully

wrong?

Finally, as noted at the top of this piece, when members of your key audiences really understand you and your organization, good things usually happen. Things that really will put that smile on your face.

end

Bob Kelly counsels, writes and speaks about the fundamental premise of public relations. 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 : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.](#)

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)