

Public Relations: Why it Works

By Robert A. Kelly

Public Relations: Why it Works

Robert A. Kelly
bobbkelly@TNI.net

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

The short answer is, it works best when its fundamental premise is the guide, which insures that the primary focus of your public relations program is the behaviors of your most important outside audiences. Not less urgent matters like personalities, communications tactics or administrative concerns.

PR strives to effectively manage the perceptions and behaviors of your outside audiences with the goal of helping you achieve your organizational objectives.

Pretty important stuff.

But not difficult or complex.

Particularly when you get started on the right foot.

Namely, do an inventory and identify those groups of people whose behaviors have a clear impact on your organization.

Because how those folks think about you and your organization usually leads to those helpful/hurtful behaviors, job #1 is, find out how they perceive you right now.

You and your colleagues must monitor those perceptions, interact with those target audience individuals and pose lots of questions. What do you think of us? Have you ever had a problem with our service? But remain alert to signs of negativity like hesitant or evasive responses, misconceptions, rumors or inaccuracies.

With those responses in hand, you establish your public relations goal. For example, correct a specific inaccuracy, clear up that misconception, or neutralize a damaging rumor.

Next question: how do I get from here to there? You need a strategy. But in dealing with opinion change, you have just three possibilities. Create opinion/perception where there may be none, change

existing opinion, or reinforce it.

What you say to members of your target audience is really important.

After all, you're trying to change perceptions, and that requires a message that is not only crystal-clear, but persuasive and believable.

So, when you say the misconception, inaccuracy or rumor should be corrected, be sure your facts are rock-solid, credible and, hopefully, compelling.

Run the message by your colleagues to test its chances of altering perception, then fine tune it.

Your delivery system for moving your message to members of your target audience is the communications tactic. And there are scores of them available to you. From newspaper interviews, radio talk shows, emails, speeches and brochures to op-eds, community briefings, newsletters, personal contacts and many others.

How will you know if you are making progress?

Once your communications tactics have had six or seven weeks to make an impact on your target audience, go back out among audience members and ask the same questions all over again. The big difference the second time around is, you are now looking for signs that opinion has been altered with regard to the problem perception. And watch especially for altered perceptions that include the corrective elements of your message.

As you continue monitoring key audience opinion/perceptions, positive changes should begin appearing and, inevitably, lead to the behavior changes you want.

In public relations, it doesn't get much better than that.

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](mailto:bobkelly@TNI.net)

Visit: [">http://www.prcommentary.com](http://www.prcommentary.com)

-

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)