

So What's Wrong With Strategic?

By Robert A. Kelly

So What's Wrong With Strategic?

Robert A. Kelly
bobbkelly@TNI.net

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

Some folks see the word “strategic” as a needlessly tiresome and complicated notion. But anything that shows you how to get from here to there IS strategic, and something we all need.

Even the dictionary calls a strategy “of great importance to a planned effort.”

For example, look at public relations where just about everything is based on getting from here to there. That is, from a dangerous lack of concern with external audiences to a sensible plan for doing something about what those key audiences think about you.

To make the point, here’s a quick two-sentence thumbnail that promises just such an outcome.

“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 those people whose behaviors affect the organization, the public relations mission is accomplished.”

While it’s obvious that survival is the pot of gold at the end of this rainbow, you don’t get those external audiences on your side without a little work

Better prioritize those outside interest groups of yours into some kind of importance ranking. Then, let’s take the external audience you rank clearly as #1 and do a little work on it right now.

How much do you know about this group of people? Are you aware of what the prevailing view of you and your enterprise is among group members? Do you know of any negative perceptions?

No? That's why you must get busy and interact with members of that key target audience of yours. Ask questions: "What do you think about our business, products or services? Why?" And stay alert to any signs of negativity, any inaccurate perceptions, misconceptions or rumors.

The reactions to such probing questions help you to set down a public relations goal designed to correct misperceptions and inaccuracies.

So, while this gives you your public relations goal, HOW will you reach it? That's right, you need a strategy to help you get from here to there. You're in luck because there are just three strategic options for dealing with opinion available to you. Create opinion (perceptions) where none may exist; change existing opinion, or reinforce it.

Select the one that logically flows from the goal you established.

Now, you're ready to write the persuasive and compelling message you'll be counting on to change perceptions and move your target audience behaviors in your direction.

It's not an easy writing job. The message must be not only persuasive and compelling but very clear, direct and brief in its presentation. The facts and figures supporting WHY target audience members should alter their perception of your organization must be accurate and believable. It's best to try out the message on a few audience members first, then adjust if needed and commence public distribution.

Now, to mix metaphors, who will be your "beasts of burden," or "foot soldiers?" In other words, which communications tactics will you use to carry that carefully constructed message to the eyes and ears of key target audience members?

There are a lot of tactics available to you. Everything from letters and emails, personal contacts, face-to-face meetings and special events to brochures, press releases, speeches, broadcast interviews and a ton of others.

At this point, you will still not know if you're making progress towards your public relations goal.

Which is why you must return to the field and once again talk to those members of your key target audience. Ask questions very similar to those you used during your earlier information gathering.

The big difference the second time around will be that you are watching closely for signs of changed perceptions, hopefully in your direction. Have misconceptions cleared up?

Does it appear that inaccuracies have been corrected? Do you see signs that the dangerous rumor has been defeated?

Not enough progress? Review the mix and frequency of your communications tactics. And take a hard look at that all-important message. Measure it as to how well your facts and figures equip it to change minds and perceptions. Make adjustments and recommence firing!

What you've just completed is a first-class, "strategic" plan for managing the perceptions and behaviors of your key external audiences. A plan that will have a large say in your personal success and, possibly, the survival of your organization.

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.](#)