

What Is "Best Practice" Public Relations?

By Robert A. Kelly

What Is "Best Practice" Public Relations?

Robert A. Kelly
bobbkelly@TNI.net

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

Why, public relations that stays true to its fundamental premise, of course.

In a nutshell, "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."

Adhere to that, and you can't go wrong!

Even those who believe public relations is just a bunch of communications tactics, can improve their performance because the premise and its strategy will keep those tactics on the straight and narrow.

How? The premise requires that tactics be selected on the basis of (1) knowing how a target audience perceives the organization, (2) precisely who the tactics should be aimed at, and (3) and most important, what changes in perception, and thus behaviors, are desired so that you can set a goal, then tell if you achieved it or not.

That way, the tactics have a fair chance of doing some good by visibly helping you achieve your business objectives.

Happily, even when "practiced best," this isn't rocket science. All it takes is a brief but logical plan.

Decide which external audience of yours has the most serious impact on your organization. That becomes your key target audience, and off we go!

Can't do much if we don't know how they perceive you and your organization. So, you've got to get out there among

members of that key target audience and ask some questions.

What do they think of you and your operation? Notice any negatives? Are misconceptions, inaccuracies or rumors becoming evident? Any undercurrents surfacing? Is there a problem coming down the pike?

When this monitoring phase is complete, you can set a public relations goal that corrects the problem you turned up. For example, your goal might try for a positive impact on individual perception by explaining your pricing policies, or replacing a damaging rumor with the truth.

Now you need to know how you're going to reach that goal. And that's where strategy comes in. You have three choices. You can create opinion (perception) where none exists, or you can change existing opinion, or simply reinforce it. Your choice will respond to what you turned up during your monitoring phase.

If there is a tough part in our brief and logical plan, this is it. You need a really good, corrective message for delivery to your key target audience. It must be clear as spring water, VERY persuasive and, of course, the unvarnished truth. Prepare a draft, then try it out on two or three members of your external audience, then adjust as needed.

Now we come to those "beasts of burden" we discussed up front, the communications tactics themselves. These foot soldiers, to mix a metaphor, will carry your corrective message to the eyes and ears of members of the target audience. A pretty important step, so choose well.

Luckily, you have a ton at your disposal. Emails, personal meetings, news releases, radio interviews and special events. Or, letters-to-the-editor, face-to-face meetings, speeches and open houses. A long list.

Your work is not quite over. How do you know whether your brief and logical plan is working?

The answer is, you will not know for certain until you and your colleagues get back into the field and talk to members of that all-important key audience population all over again.

I know, I know, that's time consuming and a powerful lot of work. But it's worth it! What you want to question those folks about, of course, is the same topics you raised the first time around. Only now, you're looking for altered perceptions.

For example, does the second set of responses indicate that you were successful in clarifying the misconception? Or that the inaccurate belief is morphing into your version? Or, that

the irritating (and potentially dangerous) rumor has been laid to rest?

If, however, feedback shows more work is needed, it's back to the drawing board for a better mix and frequency of higher-impact communications tactics. Plus, another look at your message – was it clear enough? Were the best “hot buttons” pressed? Did you include the right facts and figures to support your case?

Fact is, the Pot 'o Gold at the end of this rainbow is consistency. When you gather responses showing a consistently positive pattern, that brief and logical plan of yours is beginning to produce the success promised by the fundamental premise of public relations.

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.](#)