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Strategic Public Relations
A Constantly Evolving Discipline

Learning Objectives

1.1 Understand the perception and realities of PR
1.2 Define PR
1.3 Define corporate social responsibility
1.4 Explore the growth of the PR industry in the United States and abroad
1.5 Review roles and functions in the field of PR
1.6 Review career options in the field of PR
Scenario

IBM Employees Celebrate 100 Years of Service

On June 16, 2011, IBM marked its 100-year anniversary as a corporation. While this is a rare milestone for any company, it is almost unheard of in the fast-paced, boom-and-bust technology industry. In setting out to mark the occasion, the company challenged itself to answer the key question: What would be the most meaningful way to celebrate the milestone? The answer was not commissioning a coffee-table book or commemorative video or presenting a large check to a charity. Instead it was a giant, hands-on global Celebration of Service—a year-long employee initiative designed to support local community organizations worldwide. The event was to be a combination of strategic communications planning, global and local social responsibility initiatives, employee engagement, and a worldwide exhibition of IBM’s corporate character—all in one package.

Listening to 15,000 voices. In October 2010, IBM held a massive online brainstorm in which 15,000 executives, innovators, philanthropists, volunteers, and students from 119 countries shared ideas on volunteerism and service to create positive change in their local communities. The ideas and suggestions for the “Service Jam” were catalogued, researched, and where possible, matched with a local organization in or near an area of the world where IBM people (called “IBMers”) lived and worked.

Serving communities. The insights from the brainstorm and the follow-up research led to the overarching plan: Design the Celebration of Service to enable IBM and its clients and business partners to engage with local communities on volunteer projects locally while expressing IBM’s brand and corporate values to the world. That meant encouraging IBM’s broad base of employees to donate approximately 1 million hours of service to improving conditions in their communities—in most of the 170 countries in which IBM operates.

Spreading the word. The plan also created awareness of the IBM brand in the broadcast and print media, and online, by garnering coverage and visibility both inside and outside the United States. Media coverage featured the volunteer events along with key messages about IBM’s commitment to service. The Celebration of Service involved nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and non-profit organizations, clients and potential clients, former employees, and the 400,000+ IBM current employees worldwide—more than half of whom had been with the company less than five years and were unfamiliar with the company’s history.
This celebration leveraged the 100-year anniversary as an opportunity to communicate IBM’s brand and values to the world and celebrate its employees’ long-standing commitment to community service. Instead of a one-off project, the Celebration of Service included thousands of local volunteer projects throughout the year to engage current and former employees, business partners, clients, NGOs and nonprofit organizations. Each volunteer activity was designed to leverage the experience and brainpower of the IBM volunteers (such as legal, computer, and marketing skills).

After reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. How did IBM take a major milestone celebration—a common public relations (PR) tactic—and expand it into a comprehensive company-wide event?
2. How did IBM make sure that they included all facets of communications—marketing, corporate, and employee communications?
3. How did they measure success of the communications activities?
4. How did they work in a social responsibility initiative? Was it successful in your view, and if so why?

The goal of this introductory chapter is to provide you with a foundation and understanding of the field of PR, its development into a strategic management function, and how you can pursue a career in this dynamic global industry.

The chapter will also connect PR to the growing field of corporate social responsibility (CSR)—referred to as sustainability or corporate philanthropy—and illustrate how one discipline informs and enriches the other. Later in the chapter you will read the first of a series of “Personality Profiles.” In this section, you will be introduced to a successful, young PR professional who will share her advice for starting out and building a career in PR.

In subsequent chapters, the profiles will feature other professionals and experts with experience and advice to share on the material covered in the chapter, such as media relations, crisis management, or CSR.

THE IMAGE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN POPULAR CULTURE

LO 1.1 Understand the perception and realities of PR

In this chapter, you will read about the public perception—accurate and not so accurate—of PR and how it contributes to an organization or cause. This issue has been discussed and debated since the early days of the profession. Historically, PR was focused primarily on generating publicity or “hype” versus today, when the goal has shifted to impacting public opinion, influencing behavior and driving business results (see Chapter 2 on the history of PR). The historical image of the publicist or “flack” is a common one of PR people driven, in part, by how the profession has been depicted in movies and on television.
According to Joe Saltzman, director of The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture project at the Norman Lear Center at the University of Southern California (USC), “Many public relations practitioners believe that the image of the publicist and the public relations professional (in the media) is one of the most negative in history.” In Saltzman’s USC research, he studied more than 300 films and TV programs from 1901 to 2011. The negative images of PR range from press agents (men and women) who will do anything, including “charm” clients or lie, cheat, and steal—even commit murder—to save their reputations and protect clients. For example, the character Don Draper is immortalized as a powerful and unethical executive on the popular A&E Network show Mad Men.

Olivia Pope, on the hit ABC TV show Scandal, is involved in high-stakes crisis communications work each week. The show is based on the life and career of Judy Smith, a Washington, DC-based crisis manager. Smith serves as a consultant to the show providing suggestions and guidance on how PR and crisis management in Washington, DC works. However, she insists her work, while demanding, is nowhere near as dramatic as the life and career of Olivia Pope.

In her pioneering study, “Public Relations in Film and Fiction, 1930 to 1995,” Karen Miller wrote that today’s “fictitious characters . . . display very little understanding of PR or what practitioners do” (1999, p. 24). Miller explained, “Sometimes (in the movies) PR is magic,” and other times, “it is almost embarrassingly easy.” Nowhere in these shows or movies do you see PR people like the ones working at IBM on making the 100th anniversary something more than just a celebration. Perhaps that is because while the work ultimately benefitted thousands of people around the world, it is not as entertaining as watching high stakes intrigue or satire and parody.

These stereotypes should not be taken lightly and must be countered, as with any profession or group of people. The best way to do that is by engaging with people and clients and showing them the value that PR brings to the management table and market. At the end of this chapter is an exercise for you to engage in and explore this challenge.

DEFINING PUBLIC RELATIONS: WHAT’S IN A NAME?

LO 1.2 Define PR

Moving beyond the perception of public relations, let’s examine the various definitions of PR and see if there is a consensus. Defining PR has been a goal for much of the profession’s history. Often people have relied on saying what PR was not—for example, advertising, which traditionally relies on paid media “ads” or sales, which is an in-person transactional exercise. At its best, PR involves an information exchange between two or more people or “publics” with a goal of sharing information and influencing the behavior of the recipient.

Other key elements of PR that distinguish it from advertising include the need to master skills...
such as issues and crisis management, internal communications, and providing strategic communications advice. These and other related elements are unique to PR and are not found in advertising, sales, or marketing activity.

While the strategies, tactics, and vehicles may differ over time, PR professionals are engaged in delivering messages and attempting to influence behavior or public opinion. Whether it is buying a certain brand or product, voting for a candidate, donating to a cause or charity, or investing in a public company, in PR you are in the business of building reputation and creating trust. This must be done in an ethical and transparent manner to best serve your client or company’s interests.

A CROWD-SOURCED DEFINITION FROM THE PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF AMERICA

In response to the lack of an agreed-upon definition, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the leading professional organization for public relations professionals, launched an effort in 2011 to develop a more “current and accurate definition of public relations.” The project took the form of a “crowd-sourced” effort involving PRSA members, top academics, and industry leaders to solicit their input for an “official” definition of PR to be used going forward. That months-long process produced the following definition which was published in 2012:

Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.

(Public Relations Society of America, n.d.)

Chartered in 1947, the PRSA is the world’s largest and foremost organization of PR professionals with more than 22,000 PR and communications professionals in addition to more than 10,000 university and college students through the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA).

PRSA provides professional development, sets standards of excellence, and upholds principles of ethics for its members. It also advocates for greater understanding and adoption of public relations services and acts as one of the industry’s leading voices on pivotal business and professional issues (Public Relations Society of America, n.d.).

PUBLIC RELATIONS SCHOLARS WEIGH IN

Academics and authors have developed their own definitions over the years that share many elements with the PRSA’s. Scott Cutlip, Allen Center, and Glen Broom, in the seminal text Effective Public Relations (first published in 2000) defined PR as the “management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organizations and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000). This definition has echoes both in the PRSA version as well as the one put forth by leading PR scholars James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt (1984), which suggested that “public relations is the management of communication between an organization and its publics.”
Regardless of which definition you find most relevant, each of them has elements and concepts in common. Note the use of the terms “mutually beneficial,” “management function,” “strategic,” and “publics.” At its heart, PR is, in fact, a business process that keeps the interests of all parties in mind. It is strategic, not tactical. It is a relationship—not a one-way street where pronouncements of policies are taken verbatim. It is a process that occurs over time, not a transaction or isolated event or activity.

These distinctions convey a give-and-take relationship in which the interests of all parties are addressed and communications goals are achieved within the context of that relationship.

PUBLIC RELATIONS VERSUS ADVERTISING: UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE

While the lines between PR and advertising/marketing are increasingly blurred, there are some distinct differences, even though both disciplines work through the
media to convey a message. To begin with, as noted earlier, PR involves persuasion, not purchasing. The result the PR pro is seeking (obtaining news coverage, influencing public opinion, enhancing a reputation or rebuilding one, etc.) comes through interaction between the PR professional and a gatekeeper (e.g., a journalist, blogger, or influencer). This process of outreach to and persuasion of a reporter to write or film a story is referred to as “earned” media.

On the contrary, advertising is a transaction, thus the term “paid” media. A company that wishes to get public attention for a product or a cause pays for the ad

### Public Relations or Advertisement?

Comparing the cost and benefit of an advertisement versus a PR program can be a useful exercise in communications planning. Advertising might seem to be the easiest way to go, and for some purposes it probably is. But advertising can be very expensive—it requires research, creative input, shooting, and editing the commercial or producing copy and artwork for a print ad. These costs can range in the millions of dollars to produce an ad campaign. Plus, once it is developed, there is the additional cost of purchasing the space or airtime. For example, a full-page ad in a major daily newspaper, like The New York Times, could cost more than $100,000, and a 30-second network TV spot costs hundreds of thousands of dollars (millions if you advertise during the Super Bowl). For example, commercials aired during the 2017 Super Bowl game averaged $5 million for a 30-second ad (Dorfman, 2017).

By any measure, PR is less expensive. The costs for PR typically consist of the time or salary of the PR professional and his/her out-of-pocket costs for travel, entertainment, and events (e.g., a news conference or product launch). In their recent book, *The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of Public Relations*, Al Ries and coauthor Laura Ries (2002), commented:

> We are beginning to see research that supports the superiority of PR over advertising to launch a brand.

The authors suggest that with PR, audiences believe what they read or see on the news because they assume the journalist has done the work to make sure the story is accurate and balanced. Further, while an ad covers most of the key variables, the critical one—audience attention—is not guaranteed. Current technology provides the viewer the option to skip ads or switch the channel, and the ad’s impact becomes limited.

As a result, the tide is turning in PR’s favor due to these relative costs and benefits. Time will tell how the advertising community reacts, but for now the analysis seems to increasingly favor PR as the less expensive and more impactful option (Table 1.1).

### Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Exposure: Advertisements Versus Public Relations</th>
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<td><strong>ADVERTISEMENTS</strong></td>
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<td>Expensive</td>
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<td>Production Time &amp; Costs</td>
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<td>Space or airtime Costs</td>
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<td>Seen as a paid ad and likely to be skipped</td>
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space or air time, then develops their print ad or radio/TV commercial, and it is run as is with no interpretation. This distinction—between earned and paid media—has been captured in a short but accurate quote (Wynne, 2014):

PR is what you pray for. Advertising is what you pay for.

DEFINING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATIONS: DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD, OR IS IT MORE COMPLEX?

LO 1.3 Define corporate social responsibility

Many PR campaigns incorporate CSR, and it’s important now to examine the various definitions and lay the groundwork for a more robust discussion in a later chapter. CSR has been defined as the “economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations” (Carroll & Buchholtz 2014, p. 36) to give back or contribute to society. In 2007 a peer-reviewed study of the top 50 global business schools, defined CSR as “the sum of the voluntary actions taken by a company to address the economic, social and environmental impacts of its business operations and the concerns of its principal stakeholders” (Christensen Peirce, Hartman, Hoffman, & Carrier, 2007, pp. 347–368). The use of the word voluntary is key here—no one is making these companies do this activity.

Ideally CSR should function as a built-in, self-regulating mechanism whereby a business monitors and ensures its support of the law, ethical standards, and international norms. Consequently, businesses would embrace responsibility for the impact of its activities on the environment, consumers, employees, communities, stakeholders, and all other members of the public sphere. Essentially, CSR is the deliberate inclusion of public interest into corporate decision-making, and honors a triple bottom line: people, planet, and profit.

EVOLUTION OF CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY INTO CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Carol Cone, generally regarded as the pioneer of CSR as a business and communications strategy, described the evolution of CSR in a 2010 study published by Edelman (2010):

Nearly two-thirds of consumers feel that it is not adequate for corporations to simply give money away to charity or good causes, they need to integrate them into their day-to-day business,” she notes. “It is no longer enough to slap a ‘green’ ribbon on a product and call it CSR. Americans seek deeper involvement in social issues and expect brands and companies to provide various means of engagement . . . we call this the rise of the “citizen consumer.”
Arguments in Favor of Corporate Social Responsibility

An Economic Argument for CSR

There are two economic arguments in favor of CSR.

Economic Self-Interest

CSR is an argument of economic self-interest for business. CSR adds value because it allows companies to reflect the needs and concerns of their various stakeholder groups. By doing so, a company is more likely to retain its societal legitimacy and maximize its financial viability over the medium to long term. Simply put, CSR is a way of matching corporate operations with societal values and expectations that are constantly evolving. For example, think in terms of a manufacturer or utility that improves its energy and water management process. Not only does it respond to public concerns, but it also can reduce operating expenses and increase profits.

Responsibility Beyond What Is Required

Regardless of your specific definition, the concept of CSR generally focuses on the idea that organizations have moral, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities in addition to the responsibility to earn a fair return for investors and comply with the law. This is an evolution of the early thinking that the only purpose of business was to be profitable and reward investors. For example, this trend is exemplified by offering generous family leave programs. The result is often a happy and motivated workforce (therefore more productive) as well as enhanced standing as a good place to work for future hires.

When CSR is done well, for example, at CSR leaders like Timberland, IBM, Intel, Cisco, GE, and Starbucks, the organization adopts a broader view of its responsibility to society. That view includes many other constituencies beyond just the company—including employees, suppliers, and customers; the local community; local, state, and federal governments; environmental groups; and other special interest groups.●

In 2004, CVS pharmacies across the United States stopped selling cigarettes after the company decided that doing so was incompatible with its goal of promoting health.

Andrew Burton/Getty Images

Business professors David Chandler and William B. Werther, Jr. (2014), identify the arguments for CSR:

A Moral Argument for CSR

CSR broadly represents the relationship between a company and the principles expected by the wider society within which it operates. It assumes businesses recognize that for-profit entities do not exist in a vacuum and that a large part of their success comes as much from actions that are congruent with societal values as from factors internal to the company. For example, while not all its stakeholders may care or think about CSR in the short term, Walmart has aggressively promoted sustainability with its ambitious Sustainability Index—winning the support of firms, activists, and government agencies.

A Rational Argument for CSR

CSR is an opportunity for businesses seeking to maximize their performance by minimizing restrictions on operations. In today’s globalizing world, where individuals and activist organizations feel empowered to enact change, CSR represents a means of anticipating and reflecting societal concerns to minimize operational and financial constraints on business. For example, the alcoholic beverage industry has responded to concerns about alcoholism and underage drinking with its well-known “Drink Responsibly” campaign.
What Cone is talking about is the difference between allocating a share of the proceeds from product sales to a charity, for example, Lord & Taylor donating to St. Jude’s Hospital during a “special sale” versus integrating sustainable business practices into the company’s operations as companies like Starbucks, Nike, CVS, and other CSR leaders do. In short, one company is making a charitable donation—no doubt welcomed by the charity—while the other is fundamentally changing the way it does business and how it treats its suppliers and employees. Where would you rather work or do business?

VALUE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO CORPORATE REPUTATION

There is abundant research that demonstrates the value of successful CSR activity in building corporate reputation. It should be no surprise then that most of the companies on the Fortune’s Most Admired list—a coveted form of recognition for corporate leaders—are also CSR leaders and pioneers. This is because, according to Fortune and the Korn Ferry Hay Group, social responsibility is one of the key factors considered in selecting a company for this list and helping determine its place on it (Fortune, 2017). The Most Admired process begins with a universe of 1,500 companies—made up of the 1,000 largest U.S. companies ranked by revenue and the members of the Fortune Global 500 database (non-U.S. companies that have revenues of $10 billion or more).

Once the list has been reduced to the best regarded companies in each of the industry categories, Fortune and the Korn Ferry Hay Group polls a select group of “executives, directors, and analysts to rate companies in their own industry on nine criteria—from investment value and quality of management and products to social responsibility and ability to attract talent” (Fortune, 2017). Beside the recognition of leading publications like Fortune, companies are learning that well-planned and implemented sustainability initiatives can make a difference in recruitment and retention, customer acceptance, and reputation enhancement.

In 2006, Andrew Winston and Daniel Esty wrote that building corporate reputation and trusted brands is one of the ways smart companies can profit from sustainability: “The better a company does at protecting its reputation and building brand trust, the more successful it will be at gaining and maintaining competitive differentiation” (Esty & Winston, 2006).

Looking ahead, Chapter 9 will profile companies and organizations doing a good job of communicating their CSR progress and activities and examine the elements of effective CSR communications strategy.

GROWTH OF PUBLIC RELATIONS INTO A GLOBAL INDUSTRY

Looking ahead to Chapter 2, the PR industry has its roots in U.S. history, business, and politics. But there can be no doubt that it has now become a global
After her senior year of high school, Nicole Mortimer decided to take a gap year before beginning her freshman year at George Washington University. She traveled to Russia, China, Cambodia, Israel, Jordan, South Africa, and Tanzania. In each country, she spent time volunteering at schools, hospitals, and orphanages. During her travels, she came across many small NGOs and charities doing amazing work in their local communities. In a small coastal town in Tanzania, she worked with a school that taught street children vocational skills so they could escape poverty. In Cambodia she assisted an organization that repaired broken water pumps in rural villages so people could have access to clean drinking water.

**Scarce Resources and Funds Limit Impact**—After gaining hands-on experience with several organizations, she realized that the impact of these organizations on their community was limited because they lacked resources and funds. Because these NGOs were small and located in remote areas, many of them did not have the know-how or the technology to use the Internet to promote their missions or to reach out to potential donors. After beginning college and becoming a Compass Fellow (see www.compassfellows.org), she kept these foreign NGOs in mind. I wanted to find a way to help these organizations, and others like them, achieve their missions and be as effective as possible.

**Donated Video Equipment Used to Extend Impact and Awareness**—Give Impact Films provides an outlet for small NGOs to express their mission statements and accept donations on a global stage, so they can maximize their influence. Give Impact Films mails NGOs video cameras. The NGO then records what they do and explains the social issue they are trying to address.

**Short Amateur Videos Improve Fund-Raising**—Give Impact Films edits the footage into a mini-documentary and posts it on their website, along with a biography of the NGO. Through this process people can learn more about the issues discussed and donate to the NGOs featured.


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**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN ACTION**

Business and that several countries in Europe—such as Great Britain—have long traditions of PR as well. Within the United States, PR remains an attractive career choice with steady growth in employment opportunities and salaries driven by increasing spending by clients and companies on PR-related activity. The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates job growth in the PR field at 6% per year from 2014 to 2024 with a median income of $58,000 per year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014b). The BLS’s most recent report indicates that as of the end of 2014, there were 240,700 people nationwide employed in the PR industry as public relations specialists. The BLS projected about 14,000 new jobs in PR will be added each year until 2024 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014b).

**DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA KEY TO GROWTH**

A lot of this growth is attributable to the impact of digital communications on the industry and the growing demand for skilled communicators who can leverage social media for their employers. For those of you with these skills, the career upside
is almost unlimited. The BLS concurs, noting in its most recent report that the
growth of the PR industry “will be driven by the need for organizations to maintain
their public image, especially with the growth of social media” (Bureau of Labor

While much of the increase in PR spending in the United States is attributable
to an improving economy, the growing recognition of PR as an effective platform for
supporting both business and sustainability communications activity is a factor as
well.

There is no doubt that social media has accelerated this trend, moving rapidly
from a platform for leisure time use to a powerful marketing and communications
platform for organizations all over the globe.

GLOBAL PUBLIC RELATIONS
SPENDING TRENDS

On a worldwide basis, the Global Alliance estimates that in 2015, the top 10 global
PR firms generated a fee income of close to $4.9 billion (Global Alliance PR, 2016).
Overall global spending on PR is hard to track as there are often different terms or
activities included in the category (e.g., advertising, marketing, and special events)
in different countries, and the documentation is not as reliable as it is in the United
States. Estimates range from $13.5 billion in income for small, medium, and large
global firms as reported by The Holmes Report (2015a) and $14 billion according
to the Council of PR Firms (see http://prcouncil.net), a New York City-based PR
agency trade group¹ (Sudhaman, 2016). Particularly strong markets worldwide,
besides the United States, include China (now the second largest in the world) and
the Middle East.

EMERGING AND DEVELOPING NATIONS

In developing countries where there is not as much traditional media or a traditional
free press, PR’s growth is driven by social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter,
Instagram, and others. In these economies, private citizens and advocacy groups
use social media to spread their message(s), build followers, and conduct business
without ever dealing with a newspaper or broadcast media outlet for a news story or
a paid ad.

Pew Research noted in its 2016 Online Media Report (Poushter, 2016):

Once online, people in emerging and developing nations are hungry for
social interaction. The majority of adult Internet users in developing nations
surveyed say that they use social networking sites, such as Facebook and
Twitter for news and information, as well as to keep in touch.

The report adds: “Unlike overall internet access, online adults in emerging and
developing nations are more likely to use these forms of social media compared
with their rich-country counterparts” (Poushter, 2016).

¹ http://prcouncil.net
ROLES AND FUNCTIONS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PROS

LO 1.5 Review roles and functions in the field of PR

As noted earlier, some organizations rely on PR professionals solely to “play defense” in media relations and offset the impact of bad stories or help manage a crisis or major issue facing the organization. However, many enlightened organizations see the benefit of using the PR staff and professionals to “play offense” as well and build or enhance the reputation of the company, cause, or candidate.

What are the key roles PR professionals play in an organization? What are the key strategies and tactics they use? How do you get started and build a career in PR? Let’s examine these questions now and set the stage for a more in-depth discussion of strategies and tactics in subsequent chapters.

ROLES

WRITER

First and foremost, to be effective as a PR professional, you must be an accomplished writer. Your role will be to take complex or controversial subject matter and prepare press releases, statements, opinion pieces, and occasionally, speeches, and write papers for your clients or senior management team. In addition, your writing must not only be succinct and complete, but it will also need to be persuasive. After all, your goal is to influence the reader’s or listener’s thinking and stimulate behavior—e.g., making a purchase, supporting a cause or...
political candidate, or raising funds for a charity—so being persuasive as well as accurate and honest is key.

**STRATEGIC ADVISOR**

Good PR advisers are a strategic resource to their company or client. They keep them abreast of current issues, trends in public opinion, and on marketplace developments. No communications plan occurs in a vacuum. Knowing what competitors are doing, how the public is feeling, and what government officials might do or say that impacts your organization is critical to developing strategic plans and selecting tactics that will work. To do this well, you will need to be current on your company and industry and on overall business trends. You will also need to be comfortable with PR strategies and tactics to advise your company on the best path to follow given the situation.

**MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS EXPERT**

Occasionally the role of PR is to support product introductions or ongoing sales and marketing programs. While this is most often the case with consumer product companies—sometimes referred to as business-to-consumer (B-to-C) communications—increasingly PR is being leveraged to boost sales and launch new products across many types of industries, including business-to-business (B-to-B) and business-to-government (B-to-G) situations. *(Note: see the case study at the end of the chapter on the Nature Conservancy’s efforts to reach utility companies and local governments with a message about water management. This is an example of B-to-G communications.)*

This can take the form of news conferences or events to introduce new products, testimonials, and case studies and posting content on social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat) to create interest and conversation about the product or service. This has evolved to a practice referred to as integrated marketing communications (IMC).

**CRISIS MANAGER**

This is one of the most well-known and glamorized roles for PR (e.g., *Scandal*) and is one that most PR pros see as the ultimate test of their abilities. In a crisis something big has gone wrong: The industry has changed dramatically; a natural disaster has occurred; negligence or discrimination has been discovered; a product is being recalled; or internal financial wrongdoing is uncovered. Your company is in the spotlight. The so-called court of public opinion is in session, and its judgments can be harsh and swift—especially in a 24/7 digital media world. However, be aware that this kind of work is very stressful and the stakes are high—so it is not for the inexperienced or timid.

Also, keep in mind that what is usually remembered the most about a crisis is not the details but how well the company (and the PR team) handled the situation and responded to the issues it created. One need only look at the Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill in April 2010 to see what happens when a crisis is poorly managed. More people recall the dramatic underwater footage of oil pouring into the Gulf of Mexico, the damaged coastline, and stricken wildlife than remember what happened to cause the damage. But they have not forgotten the company responsible.
As a PR professional, you will learn to deploy various tools and tactics to accomplish your communications goals. While there are many skills you will utilize in your career, there are some basic ones you must master to be successful. Later in this text, in the practice areas chapters, there will be a more in-depth discussion of each of these items. For now, let’s summarize them as follows: media relations, employee communications, research and strategic planning, and social media (see Figure 1.1).

Let’s take each one separately.

### MEDIA RELATIONS

Media relations and PR are terms that are often used interchangeably, especially by non-practitioners. However, while they are related, they are not the same thing. Generally media relations strategies are designed to accomplish one specific goal, for example, publicity, while PR is a category with various goals and specific elements.

Media relations can be described as a company’s interactions (directly or through intermediaries) with editors, reporters, and journalists at national, local, specialty, and trade publications and broadcast outlets. The goal is to communicate a client’s message, story, or information by convincing the journalist(s) that it is newsworthy and deserves mention or focus in their publication, online, or broadcast outlet.

On occasion media relations can mean working with the media to avoid a “bad” story or “balance” it to minimize the damage. For example, a reporter may approach you with a story idea or tip that is based on a rumor or misleading information.
Your role is to provide sufficient data and details to convince them that the story idea is flawed or incomplete and provide them with the information to support that conclusion.

Another component to media relations that can be critical to your long-term success as PR professional is to be an intermediary or liaison between the company and the media. Dana Perino, who served as press secretary to President George W. Bush (from September 2007 to January 2009) and is now a commentator on Fox News, explains it by saying; “Your job is to represent the president to the media, as most people expect, but it also to represent the media to the president—both roles are crucial to your success in the job” (D. Perino, personal communication, 2017).

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

Those of you whose career path leads you to work for a company or inside a large organization may find yourselves asked to manage communications to your fellow employees. This can concern routine matters such as employee benefits and updates to company policy or involve more complex matters like communicating before, during, and after a merger or similar major corporate event. Generally employee communications can involve creating newsletters, websites, videos, intranets, or frequently asked questions (FAQs) and preparing remarks for senior management to convey their vision for the company to employees.

However, communications can be a crucial factor in whether the benefits of a major organizational change (e.g., a merger) are achieved or not, research shows. Depending on which research source you use, it is estimated that anywhere between 50% and 85% of mergers fail to deliver on the promises made the day the deal was announced. Often one of the reasons cited for the failure is poor communication to the employees impacted by the transaction and lack of clarity on the vision and goals going forward.
RESEARCH AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

In a time when documenting results matters more and more, PR professionals need to develop and utilize their strategic planning and research capabilities. As such, a full chapter will be spent reviewing this topic in detail later in the book (see Chapter 4). Whether you conduct the research yourself or delegate it to a colleague or an outside firm, your plans will be much more likely to succeed if they are based on solid research. This can take the form of secondary research (reviewing already available materials) or primary research (e.g., conducting new surveys and/or focus groups). In an ideal situation, your communications plan will benefit from both these forms of research.

You research plan should include testing your message(s), identifying your target audience, and measuring progress toward the goals you have set. The upfront investment of time and resources on research will provide a strong foundation and greatly enhance the outcome of your plan (Stacks & Michaelson, 2010). The importance of the research and planning element was also outlined well in the IBM Centennial of Service case presented at the beginning of the chapter. Their efforts included preliminary research on what the employees felt were key issue or opportunities to address and post campaign research to document the hours of volunteer time, projects undertaken, and the news coverage obtained for the campaign’s activities around the world. As noted there will be a more in-depth discussion of research and strategic planning in Chapter 4.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The explosive growth in digital media as an alternative media and information source—particularly in the developing world—has dramatically increased the need for social media skills as a prerequisite for a career in public relations in addition to the more traditional ones (Elliott, 2011; Perrin, 2015). Deirdre Breakenridge, a noted author and social media expert, suggests that “people in the PR industry need to
become hybrid professionals” (Cision Bloggers, 2012), combining traditional PR and cutting-edge social media skills.

Breakenridge recommended the following skills development goals:

- Integrate traditional PR practices with digital and social communications while moving the best of both practices forward.
- Work outside of the PR “silo” and cross-functionally with marketing, including learning and applying marketing tactics.
- Collaborate with other departments, such as web/IT, sales, customer service, human resources, and so on.
- Be flexible and adaptable in an ever-changing global communications environment.

Given this trend, employers will be looking for professionals who are comfortable in this space and competent in leveraging this evolving resource to accomplish their business and communications goals. It is no longer sufficient to know how to use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or Snapchat for personal outreach. Employers are looking for staff that know how to work with social media to reach new customers, engage with them, and drive sales and marketing programs.

In the corporate arena, this can include managing a company’s social media profile, monitoring online conversations, and developing content that enhances the company’s reputation and supports its business objectives.

In the nonprofit arena, an effective social media strategy is a cost-efficient way to build followers, raise money for operations and charitable activities, as well as activate and engage people to support a cause or issue.

Finally in government and in politics—social media represents a direct route to reach citizens and voters to inform and educate them about government services, policy, candidates, and in the case of an election, can be a highly effective get-out-the-vote weapon.

CAREER PATHS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONALS: WHICH WAY IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

>> LO 1.6 Review career options in the field of PR

While there are many variables and options, there are generally four paths or concentrations your PR career might take. These are agency (such as a PR or consulting firm); corporate, in a communications staff role; government (e.g., local, state, or federal), or working for a nonprofit organization (like the United Way) or an association (such as National Restaurant Association; see Figure 1.2).

Let’s review each one individually and put them into perspective.

AGENCY

The path of working in an agency setting is one many PR professionals take—especially early in their careers when they are learning their craft. As a young PR
How I Started and Built My Career in Public Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility

Erin Munley DeWaters, MetLife

Research shows Millennials will change jobs four times before the age of 32. I beat the average. I’ve held six roles with titles from assistant to strategist to vice president but not in that order. I’ve done many types of communications—from digital to crisis—and even helped launch an award-winning CSR program. I have had an interesting, challenging, and rewarding career so far. I joke that I have good career karma, but I also fueled my success by leveraging two things: education and opportunities.

Careers start with decisions about education. When you select a college, you begin to create your network. Professors, counselors, and peers will be avenues to career opportunities. People you know from childhood, like friends of your parents, are also your initial network. That’s how my career started.

My mom had a friend whose daughter worked on Capitol Hill. Through that connection, I got an internship in a congressional office. When I graduated, I wanted to go back to D.C., so I scoured the job boards and applied to entry-level roles. I was open to all opportunities, and I encourage you to be too.

My first job was in a nonprofit membership organization. It wasn’t a PR agency or well-known company; yet, today, I do PR for a global corporation. When you’re evaluating roles, know there is no “typical” career path.

Another major influence on my career was graduate school. Two years after college, I got my master’s in PR. I learned a lot, broadened my network, and built confidence. Through that confidence, I’ve raised my hand many times to take on new responsibilities at work so I could learn and gain experience.

It was by raising my hand that I was asked to help launch a new CSR program for regional grocer Food Lion. There was a vacant position, and I stepped into a lead role on the project. Food Lion was looking to integrate PR and CSR, and that’s exactly what we did through Food Lion Feeds. It was the most rewarding experience of my career. After that, I joined MetLife, where I now do PR for two of its U.S. divisions. MetLife’s reputation as a good corporate citizen is one of the things that drew me to the company.

CSR isn’t a nice-to-do; it’s a must-do, and smart companies get that. An integrated PR/CSR strategy creates opportunities to tell stories, reach consumers, and much more. If you’re entering PR today, you’ll be at an advantage by understanding the intersection.

As you think about the road ahead, lean into your education, and value the relationships it helps you create. Be open to opportunities. Raise your hand and learn. You’ll build competency and credibility, and that will be the foundation for your career path—whatever that may be.

Erin DeWaters is an “Older Millennial,” working wife, mom, and graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and The George Washington University. She serves as lead communications strategist for global insurance company MetLife.


Professional, joining an agency has many advantages. First and foremost is that the focus and business is on public relations—that is what they do for clients every day. As such you would be in an environment where nearly everyone you work with is a PR professional. The opportunity to learn new tactics and strategies, benefit from a colleague’s industry experience, or bounce an idea off someone with more experience is actively encouraged. Some people make an entire career of working for an agency, rising to become practice leaders, office managing partners, or even senior management of a firm.

Barri Rafferty, worldwide president of Ketchum Public Relations, got her start in the industry working at Cone Communications while in graduate school in...
Barri Rafferty is now worldwide president of Ketchum Public Relations.

Barra Rafferty

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Boston. She then moved to New York and experimented with a big agency (Burson-Marsteller), on the corporate side (SlimFast), and at a small beauty boutique (Lippe Taylor). Rafferty decided that a big agency would provide a supportive environment as she started her family, so she joined Ketchum as a vice president and account supervisor in New York.

Working her way up to her present position at Ketchum, Rafferty has held several key roles, including group manager for the New York Brand Practice, associate director of the New York office, and director of the Global Brand Marketing Practice. She relocated to Atlanta to be director of the office and later became director of the Ketchum’s South region. She came back to New York to serve as office director. In 2012, Rafferty became CEO of North America, and in 2016 she was named worldwide president.

After working in an agency for a few years, you might decide to move to an internal (or client-side) position in a government, corporate, or nonprofit setting. Others decide to start their own firms or set up shop as independent counselors to leverage the skills and contacts gained while working for a larger firm.

CORPORATE

For those PR professionals who pursue a career working in a corporate environment, there are challenges and opportunities to develop skills not found in other work settings. As a corporate PR professional, you would generally work in the communications department, although it may have many different names depending on the nomenclature and culture of the company. Some companies refer to the department as public relations; others will use variations of corporate communications, external affairs, corporate affairs, public affairs, and/or just communications or marketing.

This is also dependent on the corporate structure and reporting relationship of the function. According to a recent study by USC Annenberg Center (Holmes, 2017a), in most...
companies, PR reports to marketing or the CEO, but in some cases, it reports to others including legal or human resources (HR). Reporting to the CEO is viewed as desirable because it positions the function as a key corporate department with direct access and interaction with top management (see Figure 1.3).

For these individuals, there is often the added responsibility of writing the company’s annual report to stockholders, news releases on quarterly financial results, announcement on mergers and acquisitions, and senior management changes. These are known as **material events**, and publicly traded companies are required to produce them in a timely manner.

A career in corporate PR can be challenging and rewarding, and the compensation and benefits are often quite good. As well, corporate PR positions can be somewhat more stable and less susceptible to economic downturns or client-mandated changes that can directly impact agency work and staffing.

Recent research suggests that succeeding in a corporate role requires communications executives “to be knowledgeable about the business—from strategy to operations—so they are able to provide strategic input on issues that span business functions” (Arthur W. Page Society, 2017). The Page report quotes one CEO as suggesting, “I don’t think a healthy organization can do much without (communications) being involved in every part of the strategy and every part of the operation.”

One cautionary note about this path—unlike the agency world, it is likely you will be one of only a handful of people who work on PR for your company. This can limit your internal network and be challenging because your fellow employees may not understand what you do and how it adds value to the company’s business objectives. As a result, many PR pros wait to pursue corporate opportunities until later in their careers when they have more general PR experience.
GOVERNMENT

Many PR professionals have long careers in a government communication role working at the federal or state level. In the federal government, the function is more commonly referred to as public affairs. Most every cabinet department—from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—has a public affairs office. In larger departments with a national or international focus (like the U.S. State Department), there are often regional offices where communications professionals interact with the regional media around the world and serve constituents (e.g., US citizens and companies) locally instead of referring them to headquarters in Washington, D.C. Generally, the focus of this work is more reactive and service oriented as opposed to proactive or lobbying/advocating for the reasons already noted.

Similarly, at the state, county, or city level, public information and public service is the driving force and primary focus. Most elected officials, for example, a governor, county commissioner, or mayor, often have a dedicated press secretary, who is a political appointee, serving at the pleasure of the elected official. In each major city or state department, there is usually also a public information office, and its focus is on responding to the media and the public, providing information about essential services and responding in crisis or disaster situations. As with the other career paths noted here, the PR professional (or public affairs officer) is usually part of a small group. As such, there are few others in the office who understand your role and can offer suggestions or advice.

NONPROFIT AND/OR ASSOCIATION PUBLIC RELATIONS

Nonprofit and association work is an increasingly popular path for young PR professionals, especially in the Washington, D.C., area and in metro New York, where many of these organizations are headquartered. However, the measure of success in this setting is more often measured in awareness, membership growth, and fund-raising success. Non-profits, like the United Way, the Red Cross, and the World Wildlife Federation are focused on a key cause or issue, such as community service, disaster relief, or protecting endangered species. The PR professionals in this environment will have responsibility for traditional PR activities like media relations and executive counsel as well as supporting the ongoing fund-raising efforts and membership communications.

The membership looks to their association to monitor events and activity of the local, state, and federal government as well as advance the profession through research, training, and overall visibility. Often these organizations take on the additional role of managing industry-wide issues and crises on behalf of their members or assist member companies as they work their way through the situation.

Jeff Joseph is senior vice president of communications and strategic relationships at the Consumer Technology Association (CTA), based in Northern Virginia. According to its website, The CTA “advocates for the entrepreneurs, technologists and innovators who mold the future of the consumer technology industry” (J. Joseph, personal communication, 2017). The CET (formerly the CEA) is perhaps best known as the host of the huge Consumer Electronics Show (CES) each year in Las Vegas, which draws thousands of tech suppliers and customers to see what’s new and cool.
in high technology and popular entertainment from the biggest names in technology. “Association PR allows me to engage in a variety of PR disciplines. One moment I’m focused on public affairs. The next, media relations, or crisis communications. All while supporting our singular mission—to help grow our industry,” he concludes.

SCENARIO OUTCOME

At the beginning of this chapter, you read about IBM’s strategy to turn its 100th anniversary into a celebration of service for its thousands of employees worldwide. The goal was to celebrate the event in a way that emphasized the company’s commitment and tradition of community service and social responsibility and highlighted the many contributions of its employees and business partners.

You were asked to consider how IBM turned this milestone celebration into a comprehensive, year-long, company-wide event; how employee, corporate, and marketing communications were addressed; how success was measured; and how social responsibility was included.

Here is what the company did: IBM created a comprehensive, company-wide event with its Celebration of Service by driving engagement in multiple ways. It established a highly visible Service Pledge on the IBM Centennial website that constantly updated total hours pledged. Activity kits in seven languages offered grab-and-go volunteer ideas. It also provided detailed service leader training modules and grants to support IBMers’ volunteer activities.

A Global Communications Guidebook was created to support the local IBM communications teams, and an NGO Communications Guidebook was provided as well to enable NGOs to amplify their partnerships with IBM through numerous global communications channels and on social media.
To communicate with employees, as well as corporate and marketing management, IBM visually represented the sheer volume of the volunteer work through a Volunteerism by the Numbers infographic. It featured key stats on the global progress of the thousands of volunteer projects underway all year long. This infographic was kept current and made available to media and bloggers, and a photo slideshow of global volunteer efforts was kept current and made available as well on the Celebration of Service site.

The IBM Celebration of Service was a huge success, with many socially responsible activities. Some of the volunteer projects included IBM’s CEO teaching math and science to a middle school class in Baltimore; volunteers in California installing solar panels on low-income houses; IBM employees in Uruguay helping young people in impoverished neighborhoods get their first jobs; and IBM technicians in New Zealand teaching senior citizens how to text and use their smartphones.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Three million hours of service were donated by IBM employees worldwide.
- Ten thousand clients, business partners, and others participated.
- Projects were completed in 120 countries.
- More than a 1,000 news articles were generated, most in major target media outlets—many of which were outside the United States.
- IBM brand awareness was enhanced globally, and the Centennial Celebration of Service was cited as a proof point in independent research.

Source: Eckels (2012).

This initial chapter discussed the definitions of PR throughout history and the "official" one by the PRSA, developed in 2012. The chapter also examined the differences between PR and advertising, noting the credibility gap between what people read and see on the news and in paid advertisements. The impact of social media was addressed, with a focus on "sponsored" and "owned" content used to bridge the gap between "paid" and "earned" media.

In addition the skills that PR professionals utilize in their work—including media relations, employee communications, research, and strategic planning—were reviewed. Finally the chapter looked at the career paths a PR professional might follow.

As you move through the remainder of the text, there will be detailed chapters on these concepts as well as the areas of specialization for a career in this dynamic and exciting industry.

**KEY TERMS**

*Blogger:* An individual who writes and posts his or her thoughts about news, issues, or trends on a blog that is then shared, liked, or re-posted by others on social media, 6

*Business-to-Business (B-to-B):* Communications efforts focused on a business audience or customer, 13

*Business-to-Consumer (B-to-C):* Traditional PR focused on promoting a product or service to consumers, 13

*Business-to-Government (B-to-G):* Outreach designed to support the purchase of goods and services by government agencies, 13

*Corporate Reputation:* How a company (or organization) is perceived by its key stakeholders, 9

*Influencer:* An individual who develops a following and becomes a trendsetter or opinion leader and can influence the success or failure of a communications campaign, 6
Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC): A strategic communications activity combining the activities of advertising, promotion, and PR to plan, develop, and implement brand-focused communications programs to generate sales or attract customers to a product or service.  

Material Events: News or developments that the Securities and Exchange Commission views as potentially having an impact on the stock price of a public company, including a new product or a product recall, a change in senior management, the announcement of a merger or major transaction, a major news or economic event, or annual and quarterly earnings announcements.  

Public Affairs: (1) Communications activity engaged in by companies directed at impacting government policy or legislation; (2) Communications outreach and public information activities by government employees to the public in place of the term PR.  

Public Company (Publicly Traded Company): A company that sells stock (shares) to the public to raise money (capital) to fund its growth and expansion.  

Publicist: Most common in the entertainment, fashion, and celebrity arenas, this professional focuses on keeping the client visible and in the news to boost popularity and promote projects (e.g., movies and television shows).  

Primary Research: New research activity undertaken to prepare a communications plan or activity (e.g., a survey, focus group, or other form of research).  

Secondary Research: Reviewing existing research for new insights or trends, including reviewing a recent public opinion survey; scanning news coverage on a topic, issue, or individual; or reading scholarly research for insights on communications theory and its application to a current issue or opportunity.  

Stakeholders: People or organizations who have a “stake” in a company/organization, including employees, voters, government agencies and elected officials, customers, prospective employees, as well as customers and other similar individuals.  

Sustainable Business Practices (Sustainability Communications): Activities that improve an organization’s reputation that can also have positive economic and social aspects.  

**THINK ABOUT IT**

Early in the chapter, you read about the perception of PR and PR people based on the research from USC and others on how popular culture (movies, television, etc.) have portrayed PR over the years. As part of that research, they produced a YouTube video with a compilation of scenes from movies and television over the past 50+ years. For this activity, it is suggested that you form small work groups. The link to the video follows: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqGCgg68Wt4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqGCgg68Wt4).

Your task:

- View the YouTube video from USC.
- Discuss your thoughts and reactions to how it portrays PR.
- Capture your notes on the discussion, and share them with the class.
- Brainstorm ideas to change the perception (if necessary).
- Determine if you can (or feel you need to) improve the public’s understanding of PR.

**WRITE LIKE A PRO**

After reading about the IBM Centennial Celebration of Service, assume you are on the PR team for a regional bank nearing its 150th anniversary. The bank serves both its economically challenged headquarters city and an affluent state in the Northeast United States. As such the bank’s customers have a variety of challenges, including home affordability, paying for college and healthcare, reducing unemployment, and caring for senior citizens. Remember, as a bank, your company’s expertise lends itself more to some challenges than others. How do you decide which ones to take on and which to leave for others? How do you leverage and engage your employees and customers?

1. Develop an outline of a plan (250 words) to celebrate the bank’s anniversary, based on these suggestions.
2. Make sure to include tactics from PR (media relations and community events) and social responsibility initiatives (employee volunteers, contributions, or fund-raising) into one comprehensive outline.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CASE STUDY

Allstate Purple Purse: Raising Awareness and Funds for Victims

The issue of domestic violence has become a national phenomenon in recent years. Research indicates that one in four women will be a victim of domestic violence in her lifetime and that financial abuse occurs in 98% of those cases. Financial abuse (withholding funds, destroying credit, and jeopardizing jobs) provides abusers with another way to control and punish their victims.

The Allstate Foundation created Purple Purse in 2010 to ignite a national conversation about domestic violence and financial abuse. The Allstate Foundation committed to an expanded Purple Purse program in 2014, including a fashion statement around the Purple Purse imagery, a social statement on a serious issue, and increased financial support for the local organizations that victims depend on to rebuild their lives.

Research and Strategy

The Allstate Foundation commissioned a national survey "Silent Weapon: Domestic Violence and Financial Abuse," which showed that two-thirds of Americans believe domestic violence is a serious problem, while revealing that just over one in three has ever talked about it. Further, nearly eight in ten said they were not familiar with financial abuse and considered it the least likely form of abuse to be recognized by others. In fact 65% believed their own family or friends would not know if they were in a financially abusive relationship, and 70 percent said family or friends would not know how to help them. Strategies included media relations, social media, celebrity involvement, and fund-raising challenges.

Execution

The centerpiece of the program was a launch event held in New York City, timed to coincide with Fashion Week, and featuring a purple purse designed by celebrity campaign ambassador Kerry Washington, star of the hit TV show Scandal. An Associated Press exclusive interview was placed to break the story the morning of the event, creating a cascade of media coverage. Washington also appeared in a public service announcement (PSA) on the program, conducted interviews with national media, engaged fans through her social media feeds, and introduced new audiences to the cause by showcasing her personally designed purple purse at numerous high-profile events during Fashion Week.

At the local level, the Allstate Foundation issued the Purple Purse Challenge to 140 nonprofits across the country. The goal was to raise money for domestic violence survivors and the organizations that serve them. The challenge was launched through the PurplePurse.com program site, with $650,000 in incentives from the Allstate Foundation. Each program partner company received a package of purple purses, purple purse charms, and other collateral to generate awareness and promote fund-raising.

The Allstate Foundation delivered program kits internally to help company employees and allied Allstate agents involve their local communities in the campaign, thereby expanding the program’s impact.

To engage the Hispanic audience fully, the Allstate Foundation placed an exclusive on the Hispanic survey statistics with the international news agency Agencia EFE. A Spanish-language satellite media tour, audio news release, and a new Spanish-language site—BolsoMorado.com (PurplePurse.com)—completed this outreach initiative and provided key information to an essential program audience.

Evaluation

In only one month, the Purple Purse Challenge raised nearly $2.5 million to benefit financial empowerment services for survivors, a 614% increase from the revenues raised in 2013. More
than half of all donations were at $25 and under, demonstrating that this was truly a successful grassroots fund-raising campaign. The program resulted in more than 23,000 media placements through earned media and social platforms as well as paid amplification, a 447% increase in program media results from 2013.


Online, Allstate Foundation Purple Purse became a continuing topic of conversation, with more than 13,500 #PurplePurse social posts across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. On September 17, a few days after the program launch, Kerry Washington was trending on Facebook due to her involvement in the Purple Purse campaign.

Source: Adapted from PRSA Silver Anvil Case Study—Winners, 2015.

ENGAGE

1. Explore the National Network to End Domestic Violence website to see how it communicates with its various stakeholders.
2. Search for “controversial celebrity endorsements,” and learn what can go wrong and what can be done.

DISCUSS

1. The Purple Purse campaign deals with a very sensitive and controversial topic. Do you think it is wise for the Allstate Company to connect itself so visibly? What are the downsides of this approach for customers, employees, and the public?
2. How do the issues of domestic violence and financial abuse connect or relate to the business of the Allstate Company?
3. Is there a risk of tying your CSR campaign to a celebrity so closely? What if he/she gets into difficulty or has his/her own crisis? How does Allstate protect itself from any backlash?
4. The case mentions special outreach to the Hispanic community. Why do you think this is a key part of the program?

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CASE STUDY

The Nature Conservancy: Connecting City Water Supplies With Nature

We all know that cities need clean water to thrive, but public drinking water supplies in the United States and globally are threatened by overuse, pollution, and climate change. The Nature Conservancy released the “Urban Water Blueprint” report in 2014 to educate city leaders and utility managers worldwide on nature’s ability to improve water quality.

To support that launch, the Nature Conservancy implemented an international communications campaign to promote the blueprint’s findings to government decision makers and build support for investing in nature instead of infrastructure (treatment plants, pipes, and storage reservoirs). A secondary goal was to position the Nature Conservancy as a credible partner and authority in watershed management.

Research and Strategy

The blueprint concluded that for many cities, protecting water at its source can be cheaper and more efficient than treating it after it is already polluted and also provides recreational value and job growth for area residents. Based on the research, there were three primary objectives for the campaign: a business objective (increase municipal and utility investment in natural infrastructure and watersheds) and two communications objectives (increase awareness and understanding among city and utility leaders of non-infrastructure options to improve urban drinking water
CHAPTER 1 STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS: A CONSTANTLY EVOLVING DISCIPLINE

quality and position the Nature Conservancy as a resource for information and advisor on watershed protection. It was important to make the report data more easily understood by using existing media channels to reach the target audience(s) for blueprint information distribution. The campaign aimed to connect the report with topics trending in the news cycle and launched the report by leveraging the Global Water Summit to engage a captive audience.

Execution

Several key steps were taken:

1. Messaging—Messages were developed to connect findings to concerns of audience(s).
2. Urban Water Blueprint Microsite—A dedicated microsite was created and promoted.
3. Infographics—Two sharable infographics were created to present data from the report.
4. Stakeholder Engagement—The organization reached out to key groups to participate on launch day.
5. Trade Publication Outreach—The PR team submitted feature stories to utility and water industry trade publications.
6. International Media Outreach—The PR team pitched top-tier global media outlets on the findings.
7. Launch Event—The organization launched its report at the Global Water Summit to reach decision makers and key media already there.

Evaluation

To increase awareness among key audiences of nature-based solutions to water treatment, 11 stakeholder groups published the Nature Conservancy’s prepackaged media materials. Media pitching efforts resulted in earned coverage in more than 20 outlets, including Reuters and Bloomberg Businessweek. Feature stories appeared in three key trade publications—American City and County, Journal of the American Water Works Association, and Water World. In addition to the 400 people at the Global Water Summit, nearly 300 people attended the session virtually. Viewership was recorded in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Italy, Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela.

To position the Nature Conservancy as a resource on watershed protection and management, three op-eds and two blog posts were published in top-tier publications, including the Chicago Sun-Times, The Guardian, GreenBiz, Project Syndicate, and TreeHugger. The Nature Conservancy’s promotion of the report and microsite resulted in 18,000 people from 143 countries visiting the website.

Source: Adapted from PRSA Silver Anvil Cases—Winners, 2015.

ENGAGE

1. Visit the Nature Conservancy at www.nature.org to discover how it’s communicating about natural solutions for water management.
2. Visit the website’s newsroom and explore the various press releases, newsfeeds, expert testimonials, and blogs.

DISCUSS

1. What is the connection between the Nature Conservancy and the issue of water resource management, and how does that involve local government?
2. Advocating for natural solutions for water management and purification is admirable, but is it realistic that cities and towns are going to shift their plans and policies to emphasize that approach versus traditional means—sewage treatment plants, filtration, and other forms of infrastructure?
3. While generating news coverage and awareness of the report, which the Nature Conservancy clearly achieved in this case, how will they know if the government audiences adapt and change their approaches?
4. After a successful launch event and rollout of the report, what should the Nature Conservancy do next to advance their agenda for natural solutions to water management?
Starbucks: Corporate Social Responsibility

Since the company’s founding, Starbucks’ coffee operations have been accompanied by various efforts at social responsibility, from fair trade coffee to covering tuition for its employees at Arizona State University. CEO Howard Schultz has been the face of Starbucks for more than 30 years.

In the following clip, Schultz speaks on the occasion of Starbucks’ entry into the Italian market and discusses his view of the company’s philanthropic efforts.

VIDEO

1. How did “responsibility beyond what is required” help Starbucks build its business?
2. How did Howard Schultz use the opening of Starbucks stores in Italy as a PR opportunity?
3. Make an argument for corporate social responsibility at Starbucks from a moral, a rational, and an economic viewpoint.