Bradford Fitch   Jack Holt, Editor

Media Relations Handbook
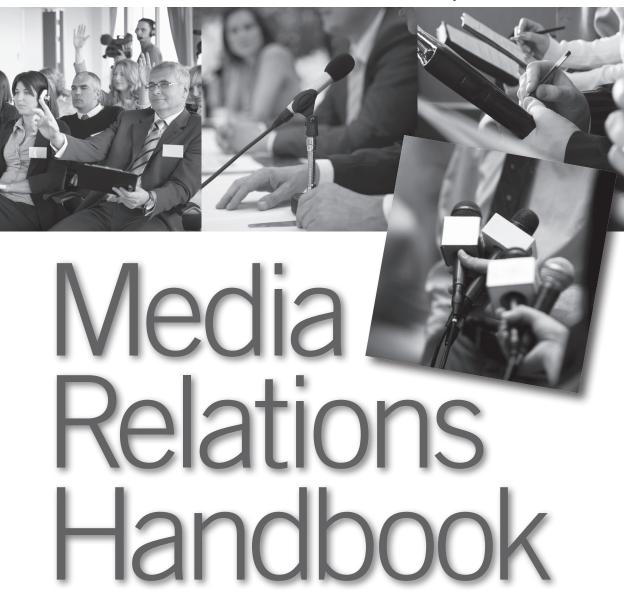
for Government, Associations, Nonprofits, and Elected Officials

Second Edition

TheCapitol.Net

Bradford Fitch   Jack Holt, Editor

Media Relations Handbook

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Second Edition

For more than 30 years, TheCapitol.Net and its predecessor, Congressional Quarterly Executive Conferences, have been training professionals from government, military, business, and NGOs on the dynamics and operations of the legislative and executive branches of the U.S. government and how to work with them.

Our training and publications include congressional operations, legislative and budget process, communication and advocacy, media and public relations, testifying before Congress, research skills, legislative drafting, critical thinking and writing, and more.

Our publications and courses, written and taught by current Washington insiders who are all independent subject matter experts, show how Washington works.™ Our products and services can be found on our web site at *<www.TheCapitol.Net>*.

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Additional copies of the *Media Relations Handbook for Government, Associations, Nonprofits, and Elected Officials* can be ordered directly from the publisher. Secure online ordering is available on the web site, *<www.TCNMRH.com>*.

The Training Edition of *Media Relations Handbook for for Government, Associations, Nonprofits, and Elected Officials* is used as course materials in several of the media training programs offered by TheCapitol.Net. See our web site for more information, *<www.WorkWithTheMedia.com>*.

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Web addresses that have the standard web addressing form at the beginning of the URL of "http://www." we show only the initial "www." For example, the URL "http://www.domainname.com" will appear in text and tables as "*<www.domainname.com>*".

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Editor's Note

Communication vs. Communications

Human communication is a constant, continuous, and dynamic phenomenon. You cannot not-communicate nor can you un-communicate. For an individual entity, there is only ONE communication. Not multiple, not varieties, only one. That one communication is the culmination of all that has been communicated by the entity until the "now" in time. You cannot go back and un-communicate something. You can only begin from the "now" to create the intended outcome. That outcome is always a negotiation with the receiver/audience/community to cultivate an agreed understanding.

For a communication professional, understanding this fact is essential. No matter where you work, someone has been communicating something before you began. You cannot un-communicate it. You cannot create a new beginning; but you can begin now to create a new outcome.

Communication Professional Careers

There are many facets to the communication professional's career environment. Here is a primer on some of the different career positions.

Press Secretary: works for an individual in a public office to help manage that individual's public profile. Duties typically include:
- Primary advisor for public affairs policy
- Speechwriter
- Editorial writer
- Spokesperson
- Media representative
- Public affairs staff supervisor

Public Affairs Officer (PAO): works in the public sector for a government agency to help manage the agency's public profile. Duties typically include:
- Primary advisor to leadership on public affairs operations
- Primary point of contact for news media
- Media representative for the agency
- Agency journalist
- Spokesperson
- Public Affairs Event/Media Planner
- Public Affairs staff supervisor

Public Information Officer (PIO): works in the public sector for a government (usually state and local) agency to help manage the agency's public information activities. This position is sometimes a secondary duty for a professional from another field within the organization to assist the leadership with public information activities in the event of an emergency or crisis. In some agencies the duties typically include the same duties as the public affairs officer but with activities scaled back:

- Emergency/Crisis communication principal
- Spokesperson on-scene
- Media representative
- News release writing

Public Relations professional: works in the private sector for a company, industry, or nonprofit organization. Duties typically include:

- Primary advisor to leadership for developing public relationships
- Primary point of contact for news media
- Organization spokesperson
- Organization journalist
- Media representative
- Press/news release writing
- Public events planner/supervisor

This is by no means an exclusive list. Communication professionals may find themselves in any, sometimes all, of these roles at any point during their careers. As you see, many of these roles are common among each type of career position. So what is the difference? Focus.

The Press Secretary focuses on the reputation of the individual for whom he works. The Public Affairs Officer focuses on the public understanding of what the agency is doing and how tax dollars are being spent. The Public Information Officer usually focuses on specific events or types of events to ensure that the public stays informed as a public safety measure. The Public Relations professional focuses on the organization's reputation and relationship with the public as typically reflected in the bottom line of the financial statements.

Difference between the Internet and the World Wide Web

It is helpful to understand the difference between the Internet and the "world wide web." The Internet is the core structure on which the web is built. The web is an application that runs on the Internet. To get to the web you must

first be connected to the Internet. Not everything that runs on the Internet is available on the web, but everything on the web is available on the Internet. A bit of history may help here. The Internet was first established in the late 1960s between a computer at UCLA and another at SRI International. More connections were added over time; in 1982 the Internetworking Protocol Suite (TCP/IP) was standardized and commercial Internet service providers began to emerge in the late 1980s. In the early 1990s Tim Berners-Lee used the inter-linking of hypertext documents to create the World Wide Web (www, web). So, while the Internet is the backbone, it is the web that powers our online communication.

The Media Environment

What would you consider to be the first, high-speed Internet? This question usually conjures up a variety of responses. I submit to you the first, high-speed Internet was hard-surface Roman roads. This technology, built by the government for a military purpose, and laid out in public, changed the way Roman citizens lived their lives. No longer relegated to subsistence farming, the roads gave rise to farmers trading in agricultural goods. It opened new industry, changed commerce, and empowered the individual citizens with the ability to diversify their holdings, increase their wealth, and build their own personal economies of scale. This new technology gave rise to other new technologies that also increased the speed and reach of communication at the level of the individual. Cultural change happens at the speed and reach of individual communication.

We are in a time of great change. Today's Internet has given rise to the web, which has given rise to the social web, commonly known as Web 2.0. The social web is giving rise to the "semantic web," becoming known as Web 3.0. What next? The "sentient web"? Know one really knows.

What we do know is that this new media has changed people's behavior. It allows us to do things we could not do before. We can broadcast ourselves on YouTube, find long-lost friends and relatives on Facebook, post about our daily life, thoughts, and concerns on Twitter, Blogger, WordPress, Tumblr, and any number of online platforms. We can find jobs and become thought leaders on LinkedIn. We can do all these things without leaving our living room. These interconnected online technologies have increased the speed and reach of communication at the level of the individual, creating cultural change.

With this in mind we present this Second Edition of *Media Relations Handbook*. While some examples may seem dated, the examples are still

valid. Research continues into the changes wrought by the Internet and public expectations that are experiencing mercurial change. As best practices are now being developed, it is our hope that we are able to give you guidance and ideas that will spark your innovation and that we may find you setting the examples to be published in the Third Edition.

Jack Holt

Acknowledgments

While this text aims to collect the accumulated wisdom of hundreds of public relations professionals, there were a few friends and colleagues who provided invaluable guidance, reviewed drafts, answered countless questions, and gave the author both support and friendship during the writing process. I am grateful to these people, who understand and appreciate the communication profession as a crucial part of the democratic process: Jim Berard, Paul Bock, David Carle, Mike Casey, Deb DeYoung, Kathy Goldschmidt, Ed Henry, Marci Hilt, Dennis Johnson, Jim Kennedy, Kathy McShea, Mike McCurry, Margo Mikkelson, Congressman Tom Sawyer, Kristy Schantz, James Vaughn, and Pat Wood. My wife, Susanne Fitch, has been a sounding board, editor, and advisor through the first and second editions. And, this book would have been considerably weaker if it were not for the enormous and important contributions of fellow public relations professional Beth Gaston, who also is a contributing author to Chapter Eleven, Communication in a Federal Agency.

Aiding me in researching, updating, and editing the second edition was Zach Goldberg, a veteran of the congressional, association, and agency media relations worlds. Zach's discipline and research skills were invaluable to the finished product (and it helped that we both share a kind of snarky humor).

Finally, I owe my highest praise and gratitude to my editor and publisher, Chug Roberts of TheCapitol.Net. For years I've read authors praising editors in the front of books—thinking it merely a polite necessity. I now know different. This book would not have been written without Chug's initiative, encouragement, guidance, and support.

Bradford Fitch

About the Author

Bradford Fitch is president and CEO of the Congressional Management Foundation. He has spent twenty-five years in Washington as a journalist, congressional aide, consultant, college instructor, Internet entrepreneur, and writer/researcher.

Fitch began his career as a radio and television reporter in the 1980s. He began working on Capitol Hill in 1988, where he served for thirteen years. He worked in the House and Senate for four members of Congress, serving as press secretary, legislative director, and chief of staff.

He left the Hill in 2001 to work for the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that advises congressional offices on how to improve operations and enhance the relationship between citizens and Congress. As deputy director of CMF, he served as a management consultant for members of Congress, offering confidential guidance, conducting staff training programs, and writing publications on enhancing the performance of individual congressional offices and the institution. He left CMF in 2006 to form a new company, Knowlegis, in affiliation with Capitol Advantage. Knowlegis is now a part of CQ-Roll Call, where Fitch served as a vice president until 2010, when he returned to CMF.

Fitch is the author of *Citizen's Handbook to Influencing Elected Officials* (TheCapitol.Net, 2010); *Pocket Guide to Advocacy on Capitol Hill* (TheCapitol. Net, 2010); "Best Practices in Online Advocacy for Associations, Nonprofits, and Corporations," a chapter in *Routledge Handbook of Political Management* (Routledge, 2008); and articles on communication and advocacy. He also served as editor of *Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide* for the 108th Congress and 109th Congress editions. He taught journalism and public communications at American University in Washington, DC, for thirteen years, where he served an adjunct associate professor of Communications. He received his B.A. in Political Science from The Johns Hopkins University and his M.A. in Journalism and Public Affairs from American University.

About the Editor

Charles J. "Jack" Holt, APR. Jack Holt is a recognized leader in successfully formulating, implementing, and managing communication programs for very large organizations, including both the Department of Defense and other U.S. federal government agencies. He created, developed, and produced the DoD Bloggers Roundtable and DoDLive web communication concept, co-authored the OSD policy memorandum DTM 09-026 for the Responsible and Effective Use of Internet-based Capabilities, and is co-founder of the DoD All Services Social Media Council.

Jack has more than twenty years of communication policy development and application experience, teaches at the graduate level, consults, and collaborates on how to effectively use the new and emerging media in meeting business needs, including improving customer relationships, implementing change management, and developing innovative organizational environments. He also has more than twenty years of direct experience as a leader, coach, teacher, and mentor in policy analysis and development, communication, and business strategy development, organizational design, knowledge management, and workforce training and development.

Jack has his own communication consulting firm, is the director for Policy Analysis for Blue Ridge Information Systems, adjunct lecturer at Georgetown University, and a member of the faculty for TheCapitol.Net. He also teaches at the NATO School and has taught sessions on Communication, Journalism, and New Media strategies and tactics at the Defense Information School and the Naval Postgraduate School. He is a member of the PRSA Counselors Academy, The PRSA Counselors to Higher Education Committee, and served as the 2009 Chair for the PRSA National Capital Chapter Public Affairs and Government Committee.

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Introduction

America was founded by a public relations campaign. Certainly General George Washington's army played an important role as well in freeing the colonies from British tyranny. But it was Thomas Paine's pen, through his pamphlet *Common Sense*, which motivated thousands of colonists to join the rebel army to fight for the cause of liberty against their British cousins.

It's strange to think that public relations existed two hundred years ago, yet *Common Sense* was the first mass-media campaign on American soil. In a nation of three million, more than 500,000 copies of the forty-page pamphlet were printed. That would be the modern-day equivalent of about half of all voters watching the same thirty-minute documentary calling on them to overthrow their government—and most of them supporting the idea.

From cave drawings to the printing press to the Internet, leaders and their acolytes throughout human history have combined persuasive ideas and available technology to communicate those ideas to those they wish to influence. In a democratic context, the process takes on larger meaning, as the goals of the persuader are often intended to better the human condition, right a social wrong, or protect an unsuspecting public from some menace.

We think of *public relations* as a craft invented in the twentieth century by people like Edward Bernays, sometimes called the "Father of Public Relations." The writings and tactics of this first great thinker and practitioner in the industry redefined both government and corporate communication in America. Bernays (who was also the nephew of Sigmund Freud) defined the topography of our profession through his concept of "engineering consent," and the fundamental tools of press releases and photo opportunities that he perfected are still staples today.

Yet whether we use pen, pamphlet and horseback, or web site and satellite to carry the message, the basic principles remain the same. The great journalist Walter Lippmann said the question his communication profession faced was "what to say and how to say it." Communicators using public relations face the same question, but must add a twist: "to what end?" In public affairs, our objective must have some purpose, because the results of our work can have significant consequences. Through the communication of certain facts and how they are presented, people will vote for a candidate, contribute to a nonprofit, join an organization, or take up arms against their government.

This book is for those who are seeking the most effective means to communicate on behalf of a government agency, a national association or non-

profit, or an elected official. It will help you channel your hot passion with the cool guidance that has been gleaned through others' experience.

The author professes no unique insight into media relations in public affairs. Rather, this book is an amalgamation of the collective wisdom of hundreds of public relations professionals in the worlds of government and politics. It is an overview of the ideas that have become the accepted rules of communication in Washington, presented in one volume.

Soon before his death in 1995 at the age of 102, Edward Bernays was asked for his definition of a "public relations person." He scoffed at the notion that anyone who could write something down in a press release and hawk it to a newspaper could qualify for what he considered a meaningful calling. "A public relations person . . . is an applied social scientist who advises a client or employer on the social attitudes and actions to take to win the support of the publics upon whom his or her or its viability depends." (Stuart Ewen, *PR! A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).)

In the world of public affairs, the "viability" of the cause often has greater meaning to us and to others than those causes in related public relations fields. We are not selling soap—we're selling ideas to improve the world. We promote a member of Congress who wants to cut taxes; a nonprofit executive who wants to stop a timber company from clearing a thousand-year-old forest; an association executive trying to build a coalition to lobby against federal regulations; or a federal agency trying to convince an industry that those same regulations might save lives and property.

The public relations profession in Washington is often derided as populated by nefarious characters, willing to say anything to promote their agenda. Like most caricatures of Washington politics, this is exaggerated and largely inaccurate. We may not be the direct descendants of Thomas Paine, but our lineage is closely connected. We mostly advance our employer's objectives because we *believe* in their causes; we share their faith that our goals are just and their achievement will make things better . . . if only a little bit. We like the idea that we can make a difference.

To do that, you have to know how. This book is a tool in that undertaking.

Media Relations Handbook
for Agencies, Associations, Nonprofits and Congress

Chapter One:
First Steps

> *"Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. He who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or decisions possible or impossible to execute."*
>
> Abraham Lincoln

First Steps

§1.1 Introduction

On my first day as a press secretary, I walked into the office filled with enthusiasm, the intention to do the right thing, and a small amount of knowledge about the public relations profession. To me, the decision to work for a member of Congress was an easy progression. I was interested in government, I had a background in journalism with solid writing skills, and it seemed like a natural transition to translate these abilities into another form of communication work.

The office was a typical congressional environment in 1988. I had a desk, phone, computer, and maybe eight square feet of office real estate I could call my own. All my teenage and adult life I had watched and studied government. And five years as an intermittent radio and television reporter, a political science degree from a university, and two whole years in Washington made me feel that I was prepared for the job of press secretary.

As a new public relations professional, I did not fully understand the impact press secretaries could have on the content of the news. This is not to diminish the dominant role of the news media in communicating information to the public. Network television, major daily papers, web sites, blogs, and a host of other avenues are the primary filters for information the public receives. However, public relations agents for corporate, political, and governmental figures also play a significant role in the positioning and content of much of the news the American public hears about its government.

The communication professionals who serve in government, a nonprofit organization, or any group that operates in the world of public affairs have the rare position of supporting a mission, a cause or individual, and advocating

those ideas using their communication skills. Public relations specialists are a crucial link in the chain of communication between leaders and citizens, and our ability to translate those high ideals into language and images that impact people and cultivate understanding often makes the difference between the success and failure of those ideals.

§1.2 Matching Convictions with a Job

Trying to match up your personal beliefs to a cause or individual is usually the first major hurdle in any public relations career. As they enter the profession, most communication professionals dream of fighting the great fight for a cause or person they believe in, with all the best resources, and all the best people. The real world is a little more complicated, and public relations people often find themselves with either a shortage of resources or nobility in their cause. Nonetheless, it's best to find some healthy balance where you are given the tools to grow professionally, do an effective job for the organization or individual you represent, and feel that your work has some meaning.

There is a vast array of people and organizations that are in desperate need of good communication work, so there's likely to be something that you can connect with. Working in politics is one way to feel meaningful in a public relations job, but not the only way. Some of the happiest public relations professionals I know are doing sports information and entertainment press work. The important point is that you share some common beliefs with those whom you represent.

As a general rule, not just applicable to public relations professionals, you want to find a functional office—one that has good internal communication among staff and is solidly managed. It's often hard to get a clear picture of the internal politics of any organization until you're fully accepted as a member of the team. Still, there are warning signs to watch out for. If you get a really bad vibe from the supervisor you interviewed with, you should probably go with your gut and pass on the position.

Most important, communication specialists succeed most often when they are working with leaders who understand the importance of communication. Some public figures are obsessed with the media. They love the camera, will never turn down interviews, and berate the press secretary if the headline is below the fold instead of above it. Others really don't care about the press and consider it an afterthought, not central to their mission. It's hard to say which one is more difficult, but I would rather try to slow down a moving train than get it going from a dead stop. Leaders who are shy of the media, or who

just don't understand the impact, are not good candidates for sophisticated communication work. Employers don't all have to be perfect spokesmen, but they do have to think that it is important to communicate professionally and effectively.

Finally, when you attach yourself to an individual or organization, you're attaching your reputation as well. If the individual or organization succeeds, you succeed. If scandal or failure should envelop your employer, you will be painted with the same brush, at least temporarily. Finding yourself spokesperson for a corrupt or scandal-ridden politician doesn't necessarily have to destroy your career. Mike McCurry worked for a U.S. senator who resigned over a bribery scandal and a president who was impeached. Yet, McCurry's reputation as one of the best public relations practitioners ever remains intact. As you consider whom you will advocate for, the principal's character is probably one of the most important qualities to consider.

§1.3 Getting to Know the Principal

In many public affairs-related operations, there often is one person who will be the leader, and therefore the chief spokesperson for the organization. They may be called member of Congress, president of the association, executive director of the agency, Undersecretary of Something Important, Grand Poobah of the Ascension of Moose Antlers, or some other title that makes them worthy of quoting in the news media. This means that much of the communication that you're responsible for creating will have to flow through one person: the principal. The communication that you create is the voice of the organization through the principal.

It's important that you get to know your boss on many levels. You must develop a trust between one another, so that your principal has confidence in your ability to deliver the message, and you have confidence that your hard work to create the message will be advanced by a solid leader. You must identify the strengths and weaknesses of the principal, assessing which forums and public relations vehicles work best, and develop a strategy for improving her skills. And, you must appreciate that you're dealing with a human being, whose emotions will occasionally interfere with sound judgment when dealing with the media. Nothing creates more joy or despair among principals and organizations than media stories. Public relations professionals must be prepared to handle these roller coasters of emotions, recognizing the real problems and smoothing over the false ones. For more detail, see Chapter Seven, Dealing with the Principal.

out every technical innovation. It's more important for communication professionals to be functional than current. At the same time, don't let valuable technology developments pass you by.

It's also a good idea to be on good terms with the computer expert in your office, as you will likely need her help in a variety of ways: coordinating databases, building mass mailings, updating the web site, etc. With the assistance of someone who understands the office computer system and knows how to make it sing, you can geometrically increase your reach.

As you become familiar with your word processing, spreadsheet, database management, and email programs, make sure you are able to seamlessly integrate these tools. A good press database should have the flexibility to manipulate the data and be merged with your

§1.8 Asset Inventory

- Desktop computer
- Laptop computer or pad
- Smartphone
- Printer
- Fax machine
- Television
- DVR
- DVD
- Word processing program
- Database program
- Email program
- Presentation software (PowerPoint, Keynote, FlipShare, etc.)
- Web site editing program
- Media directory (online or offline)
- Digital audio recorder
- Digital video recorder
- Digital camera
- Easel

email program. Categories should be created for type of media, geographic region, issue interest, or any other logical issue that could separate reporters. Ideally, the database should merge well with your email and word processing programs. Some organizations maintain association member or constituent databases that are set up to manage correspondence and contacts—and it's possible to adapt these for communication professionals' needs. However, most communication professionals are more comfortable maintaining their own press databases because of the flexibility they require, and the ability to conduct media outreach—mass or targeted—using the database. A list of items to include in a media database is provided in § 1.10.

As your office's communication professional, you are likely responsible for maintaining the web site and keeping it up-to-date. Even if you have a staff member or systems administrator who is tasked with updating the web site, you should be familiar with the web site management program. Web sites and electronic communication are addressed in Chapter Six, Online Communication. For the purposes of your asset inventory, you should know how to post

press releases, update the issue pages, provide new information about constituent services, etc.

You also may have the responsibility of creating and sending the organization's e-newsletter. If so, learn the software that manages the content, how to create "stories," and include links and photos. Many of these programs are intuitive, but that has a downside: it makes it easy to hit "send." Make sure you learn how to save content and delay sending so others can check your work.

The reality of your job is that it doesn't end when you leave the office. At any given hour on any day (weekends and holidays included), you may be required to respond to a reporter's inquiry, draft and distribute a press statement, or update the web site. That's where your smartphone, laptop, or tablet comes in. These tools allow you to do your job essentially anywhere in the world. You may need to work with your systems administrator to sync your smartphone with the tools at your office (such as your media lists), but there is no reason you need to come in the office to send a press release on a Sunday.

Your office also may have access to research tools, such as Lexis-Nexis, Factiva, WESTLAW, CQ.com, or Bloomberg Government. As a communication professional, you have to be one of the best general researchers in your office. You must know how to use the research services available, how best to use common search engines, and how to quickly download and transmit the data to colleagues. You also may determine that these services aren't worth the cost. The House of Representatives canceled its Factiva contract in 2011 because House offices were using Google News searches instead of Factiva.

Fortunate communication operations also will have use of television facilities. They could consist of a contractual relationship with a company that produces video news releases (VNRs), or be full studios at your disposal, such as in the U.S. House, the Senate, and some federal agencies. If television production is part of the communication strategy of the office, methods and practices will exist for using this asset. For new public relations professionals, working as a "television producer" can be one of the most rewarding aspects of the job. Identify the television assets the organization works with and consider how they may be expanded to enhance the organization's goals. For more on this topic, see § 2.21, Video News Release (VNR).

§ 1.9 List Building

For most communication professionals, their most tangible asset is their press list. The White House press secretary probably isn't fretting over whether his list of the local Iowa weekly editors is updated, but someone in the

§1.10 Sample Database Checklist

Databases should be designed to capture all relevant information for a news organization. Ideally, they should be laid out using software that allows the user to:

- Have data easily input by individuals not versed in computer software (such as interns);
- Merge with other office software to build letters, fax cover sheets, or customized emails;
- Create flexible forms so that fields can be added to the database when appropriate; and
- Possess clear search and list-building capabilities.

All Media

- Organization
- Phone Number (main)
- Fax Number (main)
- Address
- Subject Area (for news organizations that specialize in certain issues)
- Geographic Region (if appropriate)
- Media Type (daily newspaper, television station, etc.)
- Primary Contact
- Phone Number (direct)
- Fax Number (direct)
- Email Address
- Deadlines
- Notes/Special Instructions
- Preferred Delivery Method of Releases (email, fax, postal mail)

Talk Shows Only

- Host(s)
- Show Time(s)
- Booker(s)
- Format

Television Stations Only

- News Director
- Executive Producer
- Assignment Editor
- Newscast Producers (Create fields for each producer of a particular newscast, such as "5 PM Producer, 6 PM Producer.")
- Newscast Times
- Newscast Lineup Meeting Times (when news staff make choices for story lineups in upcoming newscasts)
- Reporters (Include specialties or beats, if appropriate.)
- Special Programs (Include information on public affairs programs the station may produce; you may wish to create a separate record for this program.)
- General Manager

Print/Wire Services Only

- Publication Frequency (daily, weekly, monthly)
- Time/Date of Publication
- Editor
- City Desk Editor
- Other Editors (Create fields for each editor of a particular section of the publication.)
- Other Reporters

Radio Stations Only

- News Director
- Newscast Times
- Special Programs (Include information on public affairs programs the station may produce; you may wish to create a separate record for this program.)
- Program Director
- General Manager

New Media Only

- Editor
- Blogger(s)
- Frequency of blog posts
- Type of post (opinion/reporting)
- Political leaning (if appropriate)
- Accept guest posts?
- Social media accounts

§1.11 Media Directories and Software

- BurrellesLuce
  <www.burrellesluce.com>
- Gebbie Press
  <www.gebbieinc.com>
- The News Media Yellow Book
  <www.leadershipdirectories.com>
- Hudson's Washington News
  Media Contacts Directory
  <www.greyhouse.com/hudsons.htm>
- Vocus *<www.vocus.com>*
- Cision *<http://us.cision.com>*

White House probably is. The press list is the pure definition of your target audience. It should be up-to-date, complete, comprehensive, and in an electronic format that can be used to create letters, send out emails and faxes, and rapidly make phone calls. As the new press secretary, you inherit the list of your predecessor, making you completely vulnerable to the professionalism, or lack thereof, of the immediate past occupant of your chair.

You must first determine what is in your computer and in the files. Does the press list encompass the full universe of media that you wish to target? Are all the specialty reporters who might have occasional interest in your issues included? Are news organizations, reporters, and bloggers coded, based on a logical breakdown of issues and interests? Are all the characteristics of the news organizations accurately recorded? (editors' names, deadline times, circulation, satellite feed preferences. See § 1.10, Sample Database Checklist, for a detailed list of all possible characteristics.) While your predecessor's press list may be in rough shape, it's still better than starting from scratch.

After you've assessed what you have, start looking for more information. Press lists can always benefit from an infusion of new data. There are probably other individuals or groups that are collecting the same press lists and might be willing to share data. For example, House and Senate offices from the same state all have overlapping territory. If you work for a Republican congressman in a state with two Republican senators, your Senate press secretary colleagues might lend you their portion of the state press list that covers your congressional district. Similar nonprofit organizations would probably benefit from sharing reporters' names and interests; or, federal agencies or departments may have overlapping missions. However you acquire it, make sure your press list is as up-to-date as possible.

For public relations professionals new to their posts, the tasks of updating a press list and making the rounds of introductions to key news media can be combined. If you can't beg, borrow, or steal your way to a shiny new list, you'll have to go through the labor-intensive process of calling each organization on

your list to determine if it's current. As you review your list, make sure you have all relevant numbers of each news organization. Most important, make sure you have direct dial numbers and email addresses for television assignment desks, radio station news departments, and newspaper news editors (sometimes called the "city desk"). For reporters who cover you on a weekly basis, try to get cell and home phone numbers and email addresses. They'll likely want to exchange for yours, so be ready to give up some evenings for reporters' phone calls.

As you review your data, it's important to ensure that the software format that contains the data is compatible with the regular communication tasks you'll perform. Technology used to maintain press data and distribute press materials has evolved in the Internet Age, but it's up to you to determine the most effective and user-friendly method (sometimes those two concepts don't align). Some offices rely on an email program like Microsoft Outlook to keep media contacts and to create press lists, such as one for TV news assignment editors or Washington-based reporters for local newspapers. Others prefer to keep a press list on a spreadsheet and use mail merging to disseminate information. Another option is to use the same online program used to distribute the email newsletter. Rarely, but occasionally, offices use faxes to distribute materials. You should ask media outlets how they prefer to get information.

You should use the format that allows you to regularly carry out communication tasks, including keeping an up-to-date list and sending out press releases on short notice. You don't have to be a "tech expert," but you must know your way around your system and be able to perform basic functions. If your current technology doesn't afford you these basic functions, you may need to have the list converted to another format. To do this, it's best to have your systems administrator or computer vendor help. Databases and spreadsheets are generally malleable and can be converted in a variety of ways. It usually means that you or your assistant will have some clean-up and you will have to eyeball each record. But that's another way of getting to know your media outlets.

§1.12 Getting to Know Your Reporters

Next to your new boss, the most important people in your life are the reporters who cover your office. These are the keepers of your reputation, and building a good relationship with them will be one of the key criteria you'll be judged by. As you start a new job, the list of key reporters will become self-

evident. For a congressional office in Washington, there are usually a hand-ful of reporters who cover the state delegation, though fewer of these report-ers remain in Washington each year—as newspapers downsize, Washington bureaus are often among the first to be cut. For agencies, there are report-ers for major papers or wire services who cover a beat that encompasses the agency mission. The list will probably be in descending order, based on news-paper circulation, television ratings, or blogger's importance—and that's an appropriate way to get to know your new friends. Every press office either mentally or in a written plan prioritizes the reporters who cover them. This doesn't mean you have to play favorites all the time; but it does mean that you understand who has the greatest reach and who has the greatest impact on your target audiences.

Getting to know the reporters who cover you is a little like learning about the new teacher you have for a tough course. You want to check them out sur-reptitiously, try to get on their good side without doing much work, but you're always kind of wondering when they're going to slam you with a pop quiz. The friendlier and more comfortable you are with your reporters, the better job you can do for your boss.

One way to get to know reporters is to do a "media tour" by setting up appointments and visiting them on their turf. Since a press secretary's primary link to the media is through reporters, this is a rare opportunity for you to get to know the editors and news directors who pull their strings. It may also be your only chance to meet face-to-face with the radio voices who will regularly call you at 6:00 a.m. for a sound bite. Visiting news organizations is a great way to demonstrate that you appreciate and respect the work that reporters do. If you're a former reporter, you can establish a rapport as common prac-titioners of a trade. It's important that you convey your credibility in these meetings and try to build both a professional and personal connection.

§1.13 Internal Politics

Early in your tenure as a new communication professional, the internal poli-tics of your organization will become visible. Whether you're a press assistant in a nonprofit association with a hundred people, a press secretary in a con-gressional office with fifteen, a federal agency department with a half-dozen staff, or a two-person public relations firm, internal politics exist in any orga-nized association of humans. People with apparently equal titles will appear to have different status with the boss, some policy people may have sign-off authority on communication matters, or the executive assistant will review

every document that flows in and out of the office. However the power flows, it's a good idea to get a handle on it as soon as possible.

Internal political games can be some of the most self-defeating and depressing aspects of a career in public affairs. People who gravitate to the work are often very intelligent, highly motivated, and have a strong sense of public service. This can often translate into people enthusiastically expressing their beliefs and sticking by them. We'll address how to handle some of the more common internal office issues related to communication in Chapter Nine, Internal Issues: Experts, Policy, Numbers, Leaks, Lawyers, and Language. In your first week, size up the situation and don't make a bad impression. Sophisticated personnel interaction should wait until you get settled in.

Any review of internal political issues should include a check on outside groups or individuals who carry weight on communication issues. Nonprofit organizations have boards of directors, members of Congress have political consultants, and federal agencies have lawyers, *lots* of lawyers. You'll want to identify early on those who feel they have a piece of the communication operation and set up a procedure for working with them. As you do, consider two questions: 1) who *should* have input, and 2) who *thinks* they should have input. How you manage the answers to those questions probably will have a significant impact on your interpersonal relationships in the operation.

§1.14 Creating a Communication Plan

Often, one of the most important early tasks for new communication professionals is the development of a communication plan. We will address this task in much greater detail in Chapter Three, Developing a Message and Communication Plan. Nonetheless, it's important to recognize that much of your initial research, reviews, and interviews with staff will lead to the development of this important written product. Without a plan, your proactive press work will be rudderless. Sometimes you will enter a press shop that has a communication plan, and your primary responsibility is to help implement it. Many times, if you are the senior (or only) press liaison, you'll be expected to chart the message course and will have to draft a plan.

When drafting a communication plan, first consider the message you want to convey, the strategic goals of the principal or organization, the history of communication on the issue, and the tools you have to communicate with. You may have communication goals tied to a timeline—either a legislative calendar, election campaign, or other major series of events.

Communication plans cannot be created in a vacuum. Staff who are

genuinely terrified of dealing with the media will suddenly want to get very involved in crafting the particulars of a communication plan. Recognize who the players are when considering the internal politics, and think about who needs to review the plan in order to make it a reality.

§1.15 Finding Teachers and Allies

Someone once said that wisdom begins with the statement, "I don't know." Even the most seasoned professional starting her fifth senior communication position needs help, especially at first. If you work in a public relations firm, large federal agency, or trade association, friends in the profession can often be found in the cubicle next to yours. However, many public relations professionals are islands in a sea of policy wonks.

You'll need to find someone to bounce ideas off, learn from, even just gripe about the challenges you face. Your logical allies will likely work regularly with your office. Congressional delegations, common policy coalitions, other similar agencies, all have communication professionals who will want to help you succeed. Building personal relationships, professional ties, and networking are all necessary for a successful career.

When I was a new press secretary, I was intimidated by the breadth of my responsibility. It seemed awesome, the potential for good or mischief, huge successes or humiliating failures, all at the end of the phone or the computer keyboard. With luck, you'll find yourself in an office that also employs a person who has more communication experience than you.

I was fortunate in my first job working for freshman Congressman Tom McMillen of Maryland. His administrative assistant was Jerry Grant. Jerry was one of these political operatives out of central casting. His resume was filled with work for presidential candidate Senator "Scoop" Jackson in 1976, administrative assistant to Senator Jim Sasser of Tennessee, and he attended every Democratic political convention from Kennedy to Clinton. He had been lured back into politics from semi-retirement by a brash young candidate. McMillen, a former NBA player, University of Maryland graduate, and Rhodes Scholar, was beginning his political career, and won a House seat in 1986 with Jerry's help.

Jerry Grant split his day between the Capitol Hill office and making the rounds in suburban Maryland, handling district political and congressional business. His usual attire consisted of casual shirts and docksiders, with a good cigar nearby. Jerry's brutal and often wonderfully profane honesty about political communication was the real-world hardball course I needed. Jerry

knew all the messy communication problems a young press secretary could get into, and he helped me avoid most of them. When I wanted to fire back at an editor who (I thought) had unfairly criticized the congressman in an editorial, Jerry gave me my first political rule: "Never get in a pissing contest with someone who buys ink by the barrel." His humor and wisdom guided me through many crises. He wasn't always right, but having someone to talk things through with is invaluable in any communication situation.

Jerry Grant developed bone cancer some years ago and passed away after a five-year struggle with the disease. I attended the funeral in Annapolis. The political pros from four decades were in the pews—congressmen, senators, governors, sitting and retired. Seems like I wasn't the only one Jerry taught political communication to.

§1.99 Chapter Summary

- Find an organization or boss who shares your values. You'll be a much stronger advocate for the mission if you believe in it. (§ 1.2)
- Research the organization's strategic position, historical record, and key issues. Use your predecessor as a resource. (§ 1.4)
- Learn the principal's or organization's strategic mission. Are they following a written strategic plan, or some unwritten yet well-known goals? (§ 1.5)
- Assess the internal and external environment from a communicator's perspective. Identify strengths and weaknesses of the principal and staff; scan for potential opportunities and threats. (§ 1.6)
- Conduct a resource assessment. List the hardware and software you have to work with. (§ 1.7)
- Review the press list, update and build on it. It is the most important asset to a public relations professional. (§ 1.9)
- Make an effort to get to know the reporters who regularly cover your organization. If possible, visit them in their offices. (§ 1.12)
- Try to get a handle on the internal politics of the organization. Who is involved in communication strategy? Are there outside advisors who need to be consulted? (§ 1.13)
- Consider how you'll form a communication plan. Identify broad themes as you conduct other reviews of your external and internal environments. (§ 1.14)
- Find teachers and allies. Everyone needs someone to talk to and bounce ideas off. (§ 1.15)

Chapter Two:
Tools of the Craft

Tools of the Craft

§2.1 Introduction

Communication is the act of conveying a message from one person to another. In public relations, that message is conveyed through a variety of vehicles that make up the public relations practitioner's tools. The White House press secretary has many staff, television studios, vast computer assets, web site managers, and a host of other resources. The communication assistant for a small nonprofit organization may only have a phone, computer, fax, and his charm to convince a reporter to write a story for *The New York Times*. The vehicles for conveying the message vary from organization to organization, but there are some basic tools that are common to most public relations shops.

Like any craftsman, becoming skilled at using the tools of the craft makes you a more valuable worker. In public relations, there are certain skills that everyone must master, such as writing a press release. Others, such as designing a web site, lend themselves to specialty experts. This chapter will give an overview of the essential tools of public relations and how to use them.

§2.2 The First Tool: The Written Word

At the core of all communication vehicles is a written product. Whether it's a ten-page speech delivered with hundreds of reporters frantically scribbling notes, a set of talking points for a television interview, or a press advisory that will be read by two or three weekly newspaper editors, something written is usually the starting point. Every new college graduate hears stories from business leaders about how they can't find enough people who write well— and there's certainly some truth to that complaint. That makes it all the more important for a public relations practitioner's writing to be clear, crisp, and

publication. Newspapers sometimes will print a rebuttal to the charge accompanying the letter—giving the exchange a juvenile "did too, did not" tone.

- **Try to make the letter self-contained.** Readers may not be familiar with the piece that generated the letter. Include at least one line that explains the previous article the letter is referring to.
- **Send letters quickly—the same day, if possible.** Publications like to keep things current, even criticism of their own coverage.
- **Use letters to correct inaccuracies.** If an incorrect fact has been placed into the public record, letters to the editor are important clarification tools that may be useful in the future. Especially in politics, a charge unanswered, even if inaccurate, eventually becomes fact in the public's mind.

§2.12 Speeches

Entire courses are given on speechwriting, and if you find yourself as a full-time speechwriter, you should take one. If you're not a full-time speechwriter, but still want a quick run-down on the basics, here are three extremely helpful speechwriting books: *Speak Like Churchill, Stand Like Lincoln: 21 Power Secrets of History's Great Speakers*, by James C. Humes, ISBN 0761563512 (Prima Publishing 2002); *The Lost Art of the Great Speech: How to Write One—How to Deliver It*, by Richard Dowis, ISBN 0814470548 (AMACOM 1999); and *The 7 Principles of Public Speaking: Proven Methods from a PR Professional*, by Richard Zeoli, ISBN 1602392838 (Skyhorse 2008). Speechwriters often recommend that those new to the craft not read speechwriting books, but read great speeches. William Safire's *Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History* (W.W. Norton 2004) is a great read, whether you're a speechwriter or just an aficionado of wonderful rhetoric.

For most public relations professionals, writing speeches is an intermittent responsibility, usually requiring one to do workmanlike projects of limited rhetorical flourish. Press secretaries are usually called upon to draft the garden-variety speeches, such as the ribbon-cutting ceremony of a new bridge, the remarks to company employees at the annual meeting, or the brief after-dinner speech at a fund-raising event.

Like op-ed pieces, each principal will have her own system for writing speeches. Some will do most of the outlining and writing themselves, others will have staff write the entire speech. As you get to know your principal, learn about her speaking requirements, how best to fulfill them, and what

other people on your staff you can draw on to help you. People are usually more particular about what they say than what they write. This is because they are often *looking* at the audience, and have to endure their reaction if things don't go well.

One of the greatest challenges is to learn how to craft a speech in the "speaker's voice." Do they like lots of statistics in a speech? Do they like to start every speech with a joke? Are they scholarly, or do they prefer to speak in a common person's cadence? Only through trial and error can you learn the unique aspects of a principal's speaking style, and public relations professionals who only spend 10 percent to 20 percent of their time on the task often don't find a groove until months into the job. Yet, it's important to try to find that groove, and add this communication merit badge to your list of skills.

The first task in crafting a speech is to determine audience needs and desires. Who are they? What do they want to hear from us? What are they expecting? How long should the speech be? When working for a major official, public relations practitioners can often negotiate the speech topics based on resources available in the office and previously written speeches. More than once I've convinced an environmental group that a speech on the Clean Water Act would be terrific—only because I knew I already had a speech on that topic in the can that only needed slight modifications to sound fresh. For the more infrequent speaker, or for the really important speeches, it's very important to understand your audience and tailor the remarks to fulfill their needs.

Like other public relations tools, your principal or organization should have goals for the speech. The most basic goal often is to impress an audience and gain their support. However, you might also want to obtain additional media coverage, or to win over a group of reluctant supporters with a surprising offer of assistance, or move the audience with "red meat" to motivate them to action.

Whatever your goals, know them before you begin writing and keep them in your mind throughout the process. As you work with the person giving the speech, clarify in advance the goals and general outline of the remarks. Make sure you're aware of key points the speaker wants to make, and exactly the phrases she'd like to use in making them. In essence, act like a reporter, taking careful notes during the planning session. This will reduce the number of drafts you have to create.

§2.13 Press Conferences/Events

Planning a press conference or a press event is a little like staging a play, and you're the director. In the lead, hopefully, is your principal. In supporting roles are characters who enhance the story and make it more likely to earn media coverage. The production can be as simple as a one-man act in front of a podium, or include a cast of hundreds.

Like all good plays, your event must start with a compelling story. The content must attract a reporter to the event. Politicians standing behind podiums and talking are boring. Events involving kids or animals are fun and engaging. The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) came up with a novel way to encourage lawmakers to avoid eating meat: in July 2009 PETA stationed two Playboy Playmates outside a congressional office building to pass out vegetarian hot dogs to members of Congress and staff. The ladies were clad in fashionable bikinis made of lettuce, virtually guaranteeing a photograph placement in Capitol Hill newspapers. The event or press conference must stem from your message, but it also must add a new twist or dimension in order to get coverage.

A key component of any event or press conference is visuals. All media want to tell a story with pictures—even if it's a radio reporter describing an exciting scene. One U.S. senator plans all of his events in the state backwards. Before they even consider the content, his staff asks themselves, "What do we want the newspaper picture to be," and backward-plan the event based on that image. Consider any props that could help tell your story.

During his presentation to the United Nations about the potential dangers of Saddam Hussein, Secretary of State Colin Powell held a vial purporting to contain anthrax to emphasize his point that the Iraqi dictator could attack the United States with a small amount of the biotoxin. (It was later reported that the vial did not contain anthrax.) Needless to say, those present paid very close attention to Secretary Powell's presentation and his handling of the glass vial.

Carefully consider the venue. Will there be enough room for video camera crews? Are the lighting and acoustics suitable for radio and television? Think of what the reporters will need, and any way you can make it easier for them do so. It will ensure their likely attendance at future events when you think like a journalist and anticipate their needs.

Where you can, work to control the environment in which the press conference will take place. Depending on the situation, you may want to be able to control access to avoid unnecessary disturbances. If you can, provide light-

§2.14 Press Conference Checklist

Below is a checklist for preparing for a press conference or press event. This list covers the logistics of a press conference after the topic and message have been determined. These tasks should not be performed by just one person, and do not all need to be done by public relations staff. However, a public relations specialist should at least oversee all aspects of the planning, preparation, execution, and follow-up of the event.

Planning

- Determine target media list
- Draft advisory
- Vet advisory with policy staff
- List possible locations
- Scout possible locations
- Select location (include alternative rain location if outdoors)
- List possible guest speakers
- Vet possible guest speakers
- Select guest speakers and determine speaking lineup

Preparation

- Issue press advisory
- Conduct follow-up phone calls to media and pitch event
- Prepare and review principal's talking points or remarks
- Draft press release and other media kit materials
- Vet materials with policy staff
- Review media kit materials
- Print and collate media kits
- Coordinate preparation of any additional props or tools (charts, PowerPoint, etc.)
- Confirm attendance and talking points of guest speakers

- Review event/room set-up
- Arrange/review media monitoring procedures
- Coordinate in-office photography

Execution

- Collect list of all press attendees
- Identify special needs of reporters (post-event interviews, post-event information requests)
- Distribute press release to target media list (done simultaneously as event occurs)

Immediate Follow-Up (Same Day)

- Post photos and press release on web site
- Post video on YouTube and create link on web site
- Respond to reporters' requests for additional information
- Conduct follow-up interviews
- Draft initial summary of coverage, including names and organizations of attending reporters

Long-Term Follow-Up

- Collect clips and video of event
- Prepare report summarizing coverage

Chapter Three:
Developing a Message
and Communication Plan

> *"Without publicity, a terrible thing happens . . . nothing."*
>
> P.T. Barnum

Developing a Message and Communication Plan

§3.1 Introduction

As public relations has become more sophisticated, the strategies and terms that previously were only discussed in boardrooms and in campaign headquarters have now worked their way into mainstream media. The word "spin" was considered an insider term fifteen years ago—now it's part of our common language.

Similarly, "message"—a term and concept formerly only used by professional public relations and marketing practitioners—is now a regular staple on CNN. We now accept the notion that all public figures and organizations must have a message, whether they sell soap, candidates, or ideas.

Developing a message is one of the most difficult aspects of a public relations professional's job because it's not just journeyman work—it requires savvy political skills, coordination among the diverse interests within an organization, and, above all else, creativity. This chapter addresses the components of a message and how to integrate it into a practical communication plan. In the public affairs arena, that often means marrying policy ideas with public relations tactics. Developing a message and communication plan is the tangible beginning of that partnership.

Chapter Five:
Overview of the Media:
Print, Radio, TV,
and the Internet

> *"Television news is to journalism as bumper stickers are to philosophy."*
>
> Richard Nixon

Overview of the Media: Print, Radio, TV, and the Internet

§5.1 Introduction

Interacting with the various forms of media and reporters is a little like the herpetologist who grabs rattlesnakes, wrestles alligators, and picks up big spiders. You need to know how to deal with each species, or you'll get stung, bit, or badly chewed up.

Each form of media—print, radio, TV, and the Internet—has unique characteristics and must be dealt with differently. Knowing the differences helps public relations professionals correctly develop strategies, pitch stories, and handle potentially negative news.

This chapter will provide for each medium:
- an overview of the value and impact;
- an overview of the structure and decision-making;
- distinctive pitching and response techniques;
- relevant deadlines; and
- unique aspects.

§5.2 Print Medium

Overview of Value and Impact

Despite the dominance of television in shaping public opinion through the impact of video, the print medium is still considered the reigning king of the

the boss and comments on the posts is becoming a standard for both public and private organizations.

It is important to understand that for the communication professional this means working differently than we have traditionally. The enormous amount of data and information now available to an organization from their interested communities is staggering, making it both a blessing and a curse. However, those communities more and more are expecting the ability to interact. This means finding new ways to manage the workflows and respond to the community or be relegated to irrelevance.

Social media is also more of a community relations effort. You have control of your efforts on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc., but only at the consent of the community. Social media is NOT a place to pitch stories. It is, however, a place to TELL stories and have discussions about them—honesty, authenticity, and relevance are what matter. Depending on your community and your organization, social media may be a place to tell that story, to be picked up by bloggers and journalists.

§5.99 Chapter Summary

Print Medium (§ 5.2)

- Newspapers often set the public affairs agenda. Television reporters often follow the lead from daily newspapers, but newspapers rarely follow television stories.
- Reporters are the primary contacts; decision-making also rests with section editors.
- Most newspaper deadlines are at 6:00 p.m.
- Wire services can reach millions of readers and operate the primary daybooks that list upcoming events.

Television Medium (§ 5.6)

- Television is the dominant method to influence public opinion and convey a message.
- Television covers much less news than newspapers. The key decision-makers often are not reporters, but assignment editors and producers at the station. Local stations usually hold two decisionmaking meetings a day to determine newscast lineups: between 8:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., and 2:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.
- Pitches to television stations must be fast (fifteen to thirty seconds) and include recommendations for visual components to the story.

- Television interview locations should be selected by public relations professionals to make the principal look good or to illustrate an aspect of the story. Work with the cameraman to set up the best possible shot.

Radio Medium (§ 5.11)

- Radio can be very effective at reinforcing a message. The best time for radio coverage is morning drive time, 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.
- Radio news staffs are small, unless it is the top news station in a major market. Individual radio reporters work independently, deciding whether to cover a story, conducting interviews, and writing and editing the stories.
- Pitching to radio stations is fast. Reporters usually aren't interested in advancing the story or new angles—they just want sound bites to add to stories already written.
- Avoid calling radio stations during busy times (6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., and 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.) while reporters are primarily delivering the news at thirty-minute intervals.

The Internet Medium: Web Sites, Blogs, and Social Media (§ 5.13)

- Blogs are generally divided into these categories: news creators and aggregators; opinion supplementers and professional columnists; and niche and issue-specific blogs.
- Blogs are a different medium than mainstream media. There are fewer checks on the content, either ethically or editorially, and require different pitching techniques.
- Organizational web sites can be designed to help in the connection to constituent communities and to develop the organization's presence in the blogosphere.
- Social media is a community relations effort. Consider it for telling a story rather than pitching one.

Chapter Six:
Online Communication

Online Communication

§6.1 Introduction

By the time you read this, much of what is written in this chapter will likely have changed. Authors, industry experts, and researchers frequently try to nail down global conclusions about the Internet, only to find that, before the ink is dry, someone has rewritten the rulebook, forcing us to rethink our assumptions about communication. Ubiquitous connectivity and the proliferation of connected devices including desktops, laptops, netbooks, pads, and phones have empowered individuals like never before. We are now in the Networked Age.

Since publishing the first edition of *Media Relations Handbook*, hundreds of millions of people have created Facebook accounts, Tweeted revolutionary activity in the Middle East, and provided grassroots fund-raising support for elected officals. The Internet is no longer an ancillary tool in communication strategy. The World Wide Web (web) is essential to all public relationships, communication campaigns, and community development.

This chapter offers guidance on how to integrate new media tools, practices, and strategies into media relations work. And yet, as stated above, the very nature of the developing medium makes it difficult to set any hard-and-fast rules. This new media environment offers professional communicators the opportunity to seize the Holy Grail of organizational communication: cost-effective mass communication with your constituents. E-newsletters, blogs, Twitter accounts, and Facebook pages, among other Internet tools, provide

unprecedented access to our target markets, sometimes called Direct to Constituent Communication (DCC).

This chapter is not an exhaustive examination of this new media world. Such an exploration would require another book (or a web site that is updated daily). Rather, this chapter will seek to articulate those known best practices for online communication that relate to interacting with traditional media sources. The focus is on major components of online community action and how they play into other components of a media relations strategy.

§6.10 The Differences between Old Media and New Media

Despite the omnipresent nature of new media in our society, some principals view the Internet as a fad and some public relations practitioners still look at the web as merely a new technology to implement the same strategies and messages they delivered with traditional media (television, radio, and print). But in order to fully utilize the Internet and web capabilities one must first appreciate that they have some basic differences from other media.

For example, both television and the web can be viewed as revolutionary changes in communication—but in different ways. Radio changed the delivery system for information. Instead of paper-based, printed word communication, people got information through a broadcast audio medium. Television brought impact to the broadcast medium, making it an audio-visual medium. The web is more than a change in the delivery system—it changes the entire dynamic between an organization and its public. Online communication is an ongoing dialogue where the public relations expert must quickly respond to an audience's interests and needs, communicating core principles and messages.

Dr. Alan Rosenblatt's "3-D Model of Campaign Communication" best describes this effect. The model was created to describe the evolution of public affairs advocacy, yet it serves all communicators in understanding the web. Rosenblatt posits that the first iteration of the communication architecture of the Internet's web was "1 Dimensional." The communicator created a one-way communication pathway, merely substituting a new electronic vehicle to transmit the same communication effort sent via existing vehicles.

By 1998, a "2 Dimensional" world was evolving with the introduction of interactivity between audience and content creator. Online polls, responsive e-newsletters, and online chats dominated this brief era. The end of the first decade of the twenty-first century ushered in a "3 Dimensional" world, best epitomized by the development of social media. With social media, the com-

§6.11 Rosenblatt's 3-D Model of Internet Communication

1-D	2-D	3-D
Information	Action	Community
One-way Communication	Two-way Communication	All-way Communication
Campaign Talks to Activist	Campaign Mobilizes Activist to Action	Activists Mobilize and Talk to Each Other
Email Lists and Brochure Web Sites	Transactional Web Sites	Social Networks

Source: Dr. Alan Rosenblatt

municator relinquishes nearly all control of the communication platform and environment, allowing her audience to create their own content and conduct a dialogue with the audience the communicator helped to recruit. This audience is no longer merely an audience but now is a community and the focus is no longer "controlling the message" but "cultivating understanding."

Many communicators (especially those in a public affairs environment) view a web site or Facebook page as an online brochure—like a billboard that they post messages on for people to read. However, the interactive nature of the web is a much more intimate and powerful communication tool once a bond has been established with an audience. In order to develop the most effective and creative strategies for using the web, public relations professionals must go through a paradigm shift in thinking. They must appreciate that the web is more than an online bulletin board—it is a dynamic communication environment that converges with the characteristics and uses of television, radio, and print, creating greater communication potential than has ever been available before. The web changes the concept of mass communication from a broadcast paradigm to an interactive, interpersonal paradigm.

The mechanics for the internal creation of online content is discussed in § 6.13, Six Management Principles of Online Communication, but the central, guiding canon calls for an open process, allowing all segments of an organization or audience to contribute to the development and release of information—sometimes without the filter of a public relations expert. Indeed, the

target audience itself becomes a co-creator of the message, building the community aspect of the relationship. This is contrary to traditional PR procedures, yet is essential to maximizing the potential of social media.

Also, traditional communication is less complex—the best strategies usually call for organizations to put forth a core message over and over again. Online communication in a public affairs environment can have a range of messages all targeted to various audiences. While certain core audiences should be catered to throughout a web site, a communicator should avoid message-like, repetitive themes or slogans and instead try to convey diverse information that meets the community needs while maintaining the core philosophy of the leadership of the organization. This is an exercise in leadership for your community.

Rather than hammer home the same message over and over again, online communication requires more subtlety. You can get your message across, but it must be contained within information the community wants.

In addition, unlike traditional communication that is filtered through a communication professional and then the media, social media reaches your audience unfiltered. This presents both a greater opportunity and a greater responsibility for security, accuracy, policy, and propriety on behalf of the organization. In this environment, strengthening an organization's internal communication strengthens its external communication reach and credibility.

A public relations specialist who creates a static web site with no interactivity for the visitor, or no social media strategy that invites dialogue, is today's equivalent of the politician who wouldn't do television in the 1960s, or who refused to install a telephone in his office in the 1930s. Trying to compete in today's communication environment using yesterday's strategies and tools is a formula for becoming irrelevant.

Another important concept is how new media strategies have become an organic part of the communication operations and processes. This is best demonstrated by the comparison of how presidential campaigns organized their online efforts between 2004 and 2008. In 2004 the Howard Dean campaign had an "Internet Division." This group organized their Meet-up efforts, contributed to the fund-raising operations, and delivered messages (crafted by other departments) to supporters via email. In 2008 the Obama campaign created no such distinction. Every division of the campaign had a web component—it was intertwined in every aspect of the organization.

As part of any strategic-planning process, an online strategy must be cen-

tral to achieving goals. The benefits of using the web should be weighed *before* other media, as the tools are less costly, more efficient, and are more likely to reach a target audience than older media tools: building your community first. One cannot ignore print, radio, television, and the reporters who support those media, as they provide a validating and credible platform for authenticating a message. Yet the web requires public relations professionals to build a communication structure and strategy integrating old and new media so they complement each other.

§6.12 Al Gore Didn't Invent the Internet . . .

As a presidential candidate, Vice President Al Gore took a lot of grief for making the statement that he "invented" the Internet. In fact, his quote was, "During my service in the United States Congress, I took the initiative in creating the Internet." He was correct in claiming credit as one of a few members of Congress who saw the potential for this vast knowledge network back in the 1980s.

In 1962, J. C. R. Licklider wrote a memo discussing his concept of an "Intergalactic Computer Network." After he was appointed to a position at the Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), he persuaded colleagues that the networked computer was important. One of these colleagues, Bob Taylor, was involved in the early development in the mid-1960s of what came to be known as ARPANET, the technical precursor to today's Internet.

On November 7, 1967, at the bill-signing ceremony establishing the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, President Lyndon Johnson spoke on the topic of information distribution.

"I think we must consider new ways to build a great network for knowledge—not just a broadcast system—but one that employs every means of sending and of storing information that the individual can use. The country doctor getting help from a distant laboratory or a teaching hospital; a scholar in Atlanta might draw instantly on a library in New York; a famous teacher could reach with ideas and inspiration into some far-off classroom, so that no child need be neglected. Eventually, I think this electronic knowledge bank could be as valuable as the Federal Reserve Bank, and such a system could involve other nations. It could involve them in a partnership to share knowledge and to thus enrich all mankind. A wild and visionary idea? Not at all. Yesterday's strangest dreams are today's headlines, and change is getting swifter every moment."

In late 1969, a few computer engineers, including Robert Taylor, Leonard Kleinrock, and Larry Roberts, connected four computers with a Department of Defense grant. The grant resulted in "ARPANET."

§6.13 Six Management Principles of Online Communication

Some people in public affairs think the biggest challenge of online communication is understanding the *technology*—and they are wrong. The biggest challenge is understanding the *management* of creating and maintaining online communication strategies. Despite many non-geeks' initial fears, getting a computer to do what you want is relatively simple and straightforward. Getting a social media strategy adopted in a risk-averse organization is much more difficult, because people are more complicated than machines.

Successful online strategies can only be built and maintained effectively through a management and execution scheme that touches an entire organization in some way. There are six key management principles for a successful online communication strategy.

1. Leadership—The communication professional works to support the leadership. Online communication strategies, just like off-line strategies, must have the support of that leadership. Managers must commit resources, ensure that all staff understands the importance of the strategy, and be involved in key strategic decisions. Leaders don't have to be involved in the day-to-day decisions, or create their own Twitter accounts; but if they're not behind the effort, it's likely to fail. One of the reasons that the federal government's portal, First.gov, is rated as one of the best web sites in the world is because two presidents, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, devoted resources and support to using the Internet to make the federal government more accessible to citizens.

President Obama continued that support, issuing his Open and Transparent Government memorandum soon after entering office, and in 2010 the Department of Defense issued its Directive-type Memorandum 09-026 on the Responsible and Effective use of Internet-based Capabilities.

2. Internal Leadership—Behind most successful online strategies are one or two people inside the organization who drive the effort. They provide the creativity, knowledge, and basic hard work that result in great web sites, rich e-newsletters, and thoughtful social media efforts. It is their responsibility to push the thinking of leaders and colleagues about the value of the web to their organization, and translate those ideas into practical benefits.

- Email should be used to provide valuable data or services to a receiver. Email can use viral marketing to spread a message if it includes one of the following elements: humor; connected to a recipient's values; or would reflect well on the recipient who forwards it. (§ 6.40)
- To get e-newsletters read, a communicator should (§ 6.41)
  - Keep the content subject-oriented, not self-congratulatory
  - Build a relationship with the receiver with an email address and a unique or helpful subject line
  - Keep emails short, no more than three screens
  - Link to the web site
  - Provide details not available in off-line media
  - Send emails frequently, no more than one month apart
  - Strive to provide HTML versions
- Journalists are one of the most important audiences to any public affairs web site. Content should be targeted for their particular needs. (§ 6.50)

Chapter Seven:
Dealing with the Principal

"Half of my job is explaining my boss to the media, and the other half of my job is explaining the media to my boss."

Mike McCurry, Press Secretary for President Clinton

Dealing with the Principal

§7.1 Introduction

Almost every public relations professional has a principal: the primary person who the spokesperson defends, speaks for, advocates on behalf of, articulates achievements of, coordinates interviews for, and sometimes, in rare cases, regrettably—lies for. In nonprofit groups, federal agencies, or companies, the principal is the person who is the face on the organization. If this is an elected official—this is the person who people expect to see on television and the ballot. The visionary, the expert, the passionate advocate, the hero, or the villain (depending upon the circumstances).

Public relations professionals working in large organizations or federal agencies may not have one clear-cut, "go-to" person every time the media calls. They may have a lineup of experts to choose from, and how they match up the right specialist with the right reporter often makes a big difference in the success of a media strategy. These issues are discussed in Chapter Eleven, Communication in a Federal Agency.

Nonetheless, even if you have multiple choices, your responsibility is still going to be the same. You must be the guide who conducts another person through the process of interacting with the media. When you are dealing with a single principal, it is the communication specialist's job to work with him, cater to his needs, train him in the ways of the media, and get him coverage. The goals of the office often flow through the principal. And, your success sometimes depends on your ability to interact with this individual.

Chapter Nine:
Internal Issues:
Experts, Policy, Numbers,
Leaks, Lawyers, and Language

> *"On Capitol Hill, office politics is played by pros."*
>
> Bob Willard

Internal Issues: Experts, Policy, Numbers, Leaks, Lawyers, and Language

§9.1 Introduction

One of the harsh realities of being a press secretary is that you can't create the policy product *and* sell it. Public relations specialists, campaign consultants, and political advisors often lament that they don't control all phases of the public policy process. On the eve of a key vote that a Senate press secretary *knows* will earn someone's wrath on the front page, she might be heard saying, "It would be so much easier if we just didn't have to vote that way."

But members of Congress have a nasty habit of following their conscience, federal agencies sometimes do noble things that are hard to explain to the media, and meager, do-gooder nonprofit organizations usually stick to their guns in the face of awesome, well-financed opposition. It is often the responsibility of communication specialists to take whatever public position the policy specialists have created, put the best face on it, and sell it to the media and the public.

At the same time, public relations specialists are beholden to policy experts within their organization to do their job—responding to reporter inquiries and translating the organization's initiatives into press coverage. Questions posed by reporters often require diverse resources of an organization

Chapter Eleven:
Communication
in a Federal Agency

> *"It has reached the point where the CIA has to reveal its sources and The New York Times doesn't."*
>
> I. Mee

Communication in a Federal Agency

§11.1 Introduction

"We're from the government; we're here to help." Those words, presented seriously in the 1950s, are now a common joke both inside and outside of Washington. Many things associated with the gargantuan federal government are considered suspect by the public. And any public relations campaign with a U.S. government stamp is often criticized as being unsophisticated, politically motivated, and sometimes untruthful.

Yet consider the extraordinary importance of federal agency public affairs information specialists in our society. How would disaster victims get access to immediate and sometimes life-saving information without clear and professional instructions from a Federal Emergency Management Agency spokesperson? How much better prepared are we for terrorist attacks because of warning and emergency preparedness campaigns? And how many lives have been saved by the federal government campaign against drunk driving with the slogan created and run by some bureaucrat: "Friends don't let friends drive drunk."

Those who choose careers to communicate the programs and goals of a federal agency, and to respond to the myriad of requests for information from reporters and the public, play a vital, yet often unheralded, role. As our government has grown in size and complexity, explaining how it works, promoting the programs available to the public, and executing public service campaigns to improve our society are profoundly important to our democracy.

This chapter addresses some of the unique tasks of government public affairs information specialists. Much of the advice offered throughout this book applies to this group. However, working for federal agencies offers some clear advantages, disadvantages, and quirks that one is wise to learn prior to signing on for a tour with Uncle Sam.

§ 11.2 What's Different about Federal Agencies

For those making the transition from the private sector to the public sector of public communication, after a few weeks on the job a person might be seen mumbling to himself, "I don't think we're in Kansas anymore, Toto." A key difference between working in the federal government and working in a non-profit, association, or Congress is the *bureaucracy*. Unless you've worked in a large corporation, you've never seen anything like the internecine intricacies of a federal agency. This is discussed in more detail in § 11.4, The Bureaucracy.

Federal agency communication work also differs from other forms of public affairs public relations work in that it is often nonpolitical. The outside observer might think that all federal government work is political. But the mission of thousands of public information specialists who work for the federal government is often straight, nonpartisan, garden-variety communication. As a longtime veteran of federal government put it: "Our job is to tell the U.S. taxpayer how their tax dollars are being spent."

Because the communication product has the authority of the United States government behind it, the federal agency public relations specialist has an added responsibility to double-check facts, authenticate statistics, and engage in reviews that other communication professionals can treat more casually. Any statement, press release, or web site entry is an official record of a federal agency. While you may consider a government report such as "Mating Disruption of Grape Moths with Pheromone as a Pest Control Strategy in Vineyards" a dry subject for a press release, it is extremely important to vineyard owners (as well as to grape moths).

Another key difference between federal agency and other public relations work is the use of web sites. While the web plays an important role in any public relations effort, government web sites are much more prominent information dissemination tools for federal public information specialists. First, the government has *much* more information to distribute than most organizations. This wealth of data has a perfect home on a well-designed web site. Second, people like dealing with the government online. A web site is the first choice

Chapter Twelve:
Crisis Communication in Public Affairs

> *"There cannot be a crisis next week.*
> *My schedule is already full."*
>
> Henry Kissinger

Crisis Communication in Public Affairs

§12.1 Introduction

Some consider the ultimate measurement of any public relations professional to be how he handles a crisis. For some in public affairs, that test can be given five days a week—and on weekends during a particularly bad week. Crises are regular occurrences in many public relations jobs. Whether they are caused by natural disasters, harrying critics, enterprising reporters, or by the actions of an organization or principal—responding to crises is a central part of the job description.

This chapter outlines the types of crises you might encounter and how to handle them. In any crisis often the greatest challenge is not dealing with those things outside the organization beyond your control, but managing those elements within your organization that are supposedly within your control. Identifying the crucial issues, marshaling your resources, and coordinating your message are usually the greatest tasks in handling unforeseen events.

This chapter provides guidance on how to deal with the multiday story—the one that can spiral out of control without effective public relations management. While public relations must often take a backseat to other priorities within an organization, effectively handling a crisis is of paramount importance in the world of public affairs, because mishandling a crisis can lead to

can be self-correcting, but don't assume that bad information and false charges will be addressed on their own.

§12.15 Eight Mistakes to Avoid in a Crisis

If truth is the first casualty in a war, common sense is the first casualty in a communication crisis. People who normally plan out their bathroom breaks suddenly become panicked when a reporter calls. Or, worse, they try to avoid the crisis altogether. Here are eight common mistakes you want to avoid.

1. Ignoring the Problem—Not Changing Priorities: It's hard to implement a good crisis communication plan (§ 12.2) if the boss decides to keep his golf tee-time. Many organizations fail to recognize they have a communication crisis and don't shift priorities and resources accordingly.

2. Not Changing Decisionmaking Apparatus and Team: The most common way organizations mistakenly deal with crises, communication or otherwise, is to simply work harder. A communication crisis adds considerable burden and work on a probably already-overworked team. New decisionmaking protocols must be established to deal with the crisis—maybe even establishing a separate communication team to address the crisis. In the Clinton White House, all impeachment inquiries were directed to a newly installed spokesman in the office of White House Counsel, freeing up the White House press office to continue to push the president's agenda.

3. Letting Lawyers Direct the Public Relations Policy: If I'm headed to a courtroom, I want the best lawyer defending me. But, if I'm headed to a press conference, I want an expert advising me how to win in the court of public opinion. Firestone and Exxon let the lawyers craft the public relations strategy when their companies faced communication crises, while Johnson & Johnson, during an incident involving Tylenol-tampering, pursued a public relations course. Pick the right advocate for the right battleground.

4. Allowing Systemic Crises to Become Image Crises: Exxon Valdez, Firestone and tire treads, United Way, even the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, all started as systemic accidents that may or may not have reflected on the judgment and decisionmaking abilities of these organizations' leaders. However, *how* those leaders handled the crises led to questions being raised about their ethics, judgment, and concern for public welfare. If it's an accident or mistake, treat it like an accident or mistake.

5. Withholding Information: People underestimate the power of Washington investigations to ferret out *every* detail in a crisis. Information that is not disclosed will eventually come out, adding stories to the crisis and

Chapter Thirteen:
Honest Spin:
The Ethics of Public Relations

Honest Spin: The Ethics of Public Relations

§13.1 Introduction

For years I taught a course at the American University in Washington, DC, titled, "Ethical Persuasion: The Ethics of Public Relations." The title of the course has been a constant source of humor over the years, and one of the best straight lines in Washington: "Must be a short course." Other comments: "That's an oxymoron, isn't it?" and "There is no such thing." These are the common retorts to the assertion that, yes, there is such a thing as the ethics of public relations.

In fact, it is far easier to be an ethical practitioner of public relations than many other professions. Doctors and hospitals have to balance weighty bio-ethical issues, lawyers contend with complicated problems involving justice and civil liberties, even journalists wrestle with a myriad of ethical challenges every time they edit a sound bite from a newscast or choose a word to put on a page. Most reporters must consider more ethical issues in one month than congressional press secretaries must consider in one year. This is due, in part, to the fact that the ethics of public relations is a simpler code to follow.

At the heart of public relations ethics is one overriding principle: don't lie. Beyond the moral value in doing the right thing, being ethical is also the most effective way to do your job. "Credibility is the coin of the realm," said Mike

McCurry, former President Bill Clinton's spokesman. Once a spokesperson is no longer believed by the media, his value to his principal or organization is significantly diminished.

This chapter addresses the larger questions beyond the simple truth-telling lesson you got in the first grade. The who, what, when, where, why, and how of conducting a public relations job carries ethical implications. Sometimes daily conversations with reporters are laden with ethical questions that a public relations professional must resolve in a split second. This chapter will help you focus on those questions in advance, consider how you deal with ethical issues associated with your daily work, and offer guidance on potential solutions to the thorny problems you may face.

§ 13.2 The Current Ethical Environment in Public Affairs

Throughout American history, those seeking to influence public opinion have had to understand and contend with the prevailing ethical environment of their times—what amounts to the population's perceptions of the credibility of public figures and public institutions. This environment can be shaped by outside circumstances (such as wars or natural disasters), the policies and behavior of our leaders, and how those leaders characterize those policies and behavior in the mass media.

For example, while there were no polls to measure public opinion, one could surmise that the population was generally supportive of government leaders immediately following the War of Independence in 1776. This was the environment in which the advocates of a new Constitution launched a public relations campaign (through the *Federalist Papers*) to support its adoption. In contrast, the corruption in government and business in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and criticism of that behavior by popular commentators like Will Rogers, created an environment of public distrust in America's institutions.

Prior to the introduction of mass media, this ethical environment was more a product of leaders' policies and the simple articulation of those policies. But as communication has become omnipresent and more complicated, how leaders characterize their policies and behavior, and the public relations strategies they choose, are increasingly the dominant influences in shaping our ethical environment.

In much of the post-World War II era, Americans held government and other major institutional leaders in high regard. Since the 1950s, the Gallup

Poll has asked a question to gauge Americans' trust in government. The question is:

*How much of the time do you think you can trust
the government in Washington to do what is right?
Always, most of the time, or only some of the time?*

For thirty years, the numbers held steady. About two-thirds of all Americans answered "yes," they trusted the government to do the right thing most of the time or always. But two historic and tragic series of events changed everything. Watergate and the Vietnam War altered Americans' attitudes about government.

Beginning in the late 1960s and early '70s, answers to the "trust" polling question shifted: instead of two-thirds of all Americans saying they trusted government most of the time, two-thirds said they trusted the government only some of the time or not at all. The polling numbers on this question remain unchanged from the early 1970s, ranging to a low of 23 percent trusting government in 1992 to 42 percent in 2000.

After Watergate, the default setting for most Americans had become one of cynicism and suspicion toward public institutions and leaders. Frank Mankiewicz, former president of National Public Radio and press secretary to Senator Robert Kennedy, noted: "Nixon aides kept saying, 'We may have committed illegal, unconstitutional acts, and then lied and covered them up—but we were only doing what all leaders do.' And the American public somehow believed this." Mankiewicz argued that Americans had a "changed, less indignant attitude toward antisocial behavior in their leaders—from school boards to the president." (*Communications Ethics*, by James Jaksa and Michael Pritchard (Wadsworth, 1994).)

Subsequent revelations in the post-Watergate era confirmed what Nixon had argued were standard operating practices in politics. John F. Kennedy's infidelities became common knowledge; Lyndon Johnson's own Oval Office taping system was made public; and Jimmy Carter's early scandal involving allegations of financial improprieties by his budget director, Burt Lance, seemed to further cement this cynical belief in the minds of Americans.

As new presidents and congresses took office, new scandals added weight to citizens' distrust of their leaders in all positions of public trust. The Iran-Contra Affair, the House Banking-Checks Scandal, the Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky Scandal, allegations of child abuse in the Catholic Church, allegations of sexual abuse and coverup by prominent college athletic coaches,

insider trading and below-market rate mortgages by members of Congress, and the Enron collapse, Hurricane Katrina, Deepwater Horizon, Fast and Furious, and the Solyndra bankruptcy. After each of these incidents, commentators said that public confidence in America's leadership was at a new low. But, in fact, public trust hasn't changed much since Richard Nixon resigned from office—most Americans don't trust the government.

Moreover, Watergate and Vietnam did more than initiate a change in government and the public's perception of leaders—it changed the practices, attitudes, and standards of the profession largely responsible for that perception: the media. James Jaksa and Michael Pritchard, in their book *Communications Ethics*, said: "Prior to Watergate, government officials had been successful in controlling the press in wartime, citing security concerns. The abuse of power during Watergate, the unwillingness of the White House to provide the press and the nation with information, and the rampant deceit all prompted the press to more aggressively assert its responsibility to the public."

Thousands of young people graduated from college with journalism degrees, dreaming of becoming the next Woodwards and Bernsteins. Television stations hired investigative units to root out local corruption. The entire tenor of the relationship between the governing class and the watchers had changed—the watchers had taken down a president, and no public figure could escape their scrutiny or wrath. A British observer commented on the differences between their parliamentary system and our constitutional system, and the effect it has on the media. "We have a permanent opposition party in Great Britain—you have *The Washington Post*."

While the media may have seen itself as a public crusader charged with cleaning up government in the post-Watergate years, their actions and excesses in this pursuit have led to a drop in their own public esteem. Sixty-four percent of Americans rate the honesty and ethical standards of members of Congress as "low" or "very low," tying the record "low"/"very low" rating Gallup has measured for any profession historically. Gallup has asked Americans to rate the honesty and ethics of numerous professions since 1976, including annually since 1990. In the same Gallup Poll, from November 28–December 1, 2011, journalists were rated "low" or "very low" by 27 percent of Americans, compared to 9 percent for clergy, 15 percent for building contractors, and 1 percent for nurses.

Beginning with Watergate and Vietnam, and extending to the Fast and Furious, Solyndra, and Penn State scandals of the early twenty-first century, the ethical environment in which public relations practitioners work has been

dominated by mistrust of the major American institutions in every corner of leadership. This lack of trust defines every interaction that public figures and their spokespeople have with reporters. It helps shape every story that is written about public affairs. And the pervading negative view has the earned status of "conventional wisdom" in the minds and attitude of nearly every citizen.

Our distrust of government and the media was interrupted by one short blip of confidence in the last three decades. In the weeks following the tragic attacks of September 11, 2001, the American people for a short time turned to their government for support. The Gallup Poll in October 2001 showed that 60 percent of Americans trusted the government to do the right thing most of the time, which was the first time since Richard Nixon resigned that a majority of the nation had faith in its leaders to do the right thing. The media enjoyed a similar bump in popularity—some speculated because they went back to their roots and did more straight reporting and less commenting of the news. Whatever the effect, it was short-lived. A CBS/*New York Times* survey a year later in 2002 indicated that only 37 percent trusted the government always or most of the time.

Public relations practitioners seeking to engage in completely ethical practices must be prepared to be met by skepticism from reporter and citizen alike. This sets the bar enormously high for anyone in public affairs, and requires us to work harder to regain the public trust that has been battered for decades.

§13.3 Ethical Duties of a Public Relations Professional

Philip Seib and Kathy Fitzpatrick's book, *Public Relations Ethics*, enumerates five categories of ethical duties: duty to self, duty to client organization, duty to employer, duty to profession, and duty to society. For the public relations practitioner in public affairs, three of these figure most prominently: duty to self, duty to employer, and duty to society.

Duty to Self. It may sound trite, but Washington might be a better place if we all followed Jiminy Cricket's advice to Pinocchio, "Let your conscience be your guide." As experienced public relations professionals know, it isn't always that easy. Yet, we all have an ethical duty to reconcile our behavior with our own personal value systems and beliefs. For those lucky enough to spend a long and fruitful career in public service communication, one of the yardsticks we will use to measure our achievements will be based on our own notions of right and wrong.

Duty to Employer. Matching your convictions with a job (§ 1.2) is one of the most important decisions in your communication career when dealing with your duty to your employer. The bulk of ethical issues are handled upfront when you agree to be an advocate for a person or organization, and hopefully your views are in sync with theirs. Ethical questions can arise when your employer engages in activity that crosses a legal or ethical line, such as violating the law, an institutional rule, or knowingly misleading the public. How a public relations specialist responds to this kind of employer behavior often depends upon the employer's intentions on how to deal with the ethical violation. If an employer has made a mistake, he may choose to admit to the wrongdoing and make amends. In this case, your loyalty may be called upon to assist him through the crisis. However, if the employer is not repentant, and intends to continue with his unethical actions, then, depending upon the seriousness of the mistake, resignation may be the only ethical course of action.

Disagreements between public relations specialist and employer are usually not confined to ethical lapses. You may disagree with your boss on policy decisions or individual actions. If you agree with the overall mission of the organization, and do not find yourself in conflict too often, you can usually live with the occasional divergence of opinion without it requiring a serious ethical analysis. However, when working for an elected official, it is that official's responsibility to promulgate policy.

Duty to Society. The opening sentence of the Public Relations Society of America Member Code of Ethics Pledge states, "I pledge to conduct myself professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness, and responsibility to the public." Most public relations practitioners in Washington aren't in it for the money—they are passionate believers in a cause or ideology and have chosen the communication profession as the best avenue to advance the issues and institutions that they believe are beneficial to society. Private public relations experts, while often engaged in worthwhile work, often don't carry the same degree of ethical burden. It's a lot easier to get worked up over a public relations campaign related to restricting a woman's right to an abortion than it is to get excited about the unveiling of a new laundry detergent.

How you interpret your duty to society is based on your own moral and ethical code. While there are some standard public relations codes, they must be viewed through your own personal prism of right and wrong. One person's blatant fabrication is another person's white lie.

How one analyzes these situations, and the resulting decisions, have a collective impact on society and how the public relations profession is viewed by

the public. In public affairs, misleading or lying to the public has significant implications. Not only can individuals be harmed, caretakers of the public trust diminish citizens' faith in democracy with every deceitful action or statement. While there can be no absolute ethical yardstick to measure one's duty to society, it is important that it be included in any ethical analysis, and your interpretation of your societal responsibilities can often be the best guidance in a situation involving ethical questions.

Ethical challenges arise when these duties come into conflict with one another. Your employer wants you to say or do something that you think is wrong. Or, your organization has taken a public position on an issue that you think is harmful to society. There are no easy answers to these challenges, and often your choices result in some sacrifice. Some options for addressing these challenges are covered in § 13.5, Ethical Choices.

Tips for PAOs and PIOs

Public trust trumps all.

§13.4 Common Ethical Challenges

Use of Language. Sometimes the simple selection of words can have ethical implications. Exaggerating the impact of legislation or minimizing its effect can be viewed as misleading the public. Members of Congress and advocacy groups are in a constant struggle over defining their own and their opponents' agenda, and are sometimes accused of crossing the ethical language line in their zealousness to win media attention and favorable public opinion.

In Chapter Ten, we reviewed how Newt Gingrich and the GOP image-makers in 1995 sought to portray their reduction in planned Medicare spending as "strengthening" seniors' health-care system. Similarly, Republicans accused Democrats of foul play when seniors in a close congressional race received official-looking direct-mail pieces emblazoned on the cover, "Please Open Immediately. Notification Regarding Denial of Your Health Care Coverage." Inside was a letter outlining the Democratic candidate's support for a patients' bill of rights and the Republican candidate's opposition to the bill.

Surprisingly, keeping language honest and undistorted by hyperbole is not only more ethical, it's often more effective. Reporters have become so accustomed to exaggerated claims that doses of clean, straight communication can be a refreshing and convincing tool.

Language issues are the most common ethical challenge faced in media relations. Communication specialists have to weigh internal issues, impact on

the public, potential damage to the credibility of the principal, and effect on your own reputation. Often the best ethical measurement in these instances is also tied to effectiveness. Will the language pass the media's "smell test"? Will they question the veracity of the statement we're issuing? Can our data be refuted, and what is the credibility of the sources challenging it? These are the questions reporters will ask, and the ones public relations specialists should ask as well. When assessing whether you are using the correct language in a publicly released document, make sure it will withstand the withering examination that accompanies any public figure's statements.

Misappropriation (Stealing) of Credit. They say failure is an orphan and success has a thousand fathers. Often when an accomplishment is about to be unveiled in Washington, the delivery room suddenly becomes crowded with parents not present at the conception or at any stage of development. This is a particularly delicate matter for members of Congress, whose survival depends on demonstrating achievement to voters.

Consequently, ethical problems arise when public relations professionals are pushed to enhance the role or work of an organization or principal in public affairs beyond what they legitimately did. Congressional press secretaries often struggle with the verb in the lead of the press release after legislation is passed. Did the member "sponsor," "vigorously support," "push through," "champion," or merely "vote for" the bill in question?

However one settles on how to portray a public figure's role in a success, it is important that the public relations specialist back up all claims of credit with proof and documentation. You may be called upon to justify your boss' heroics in the court of public opinion.

Interactions with Political Campaigns. Our governmental system has established an important, but sometimes vague, dividing line between official activity and campaign activity. Government communication specialists are often in the toughest spot, since much of their work can be easily translated into political value. Congressional press secretaries and communication directors are pulled in to craft campaign press releases that refer back to official activity. Federal agency public affairs deputies coordinate campaign visits of cabinet secretaries and other officials during presidential election years.

While the interpretation of the rules and laws governing public relations professionals' actions vary, there can be no debating the consequences for violating them. Crossing these lines not only damages your credibility, it will reflect poorly on your entire organization. If you are interacting with a campaign organization, it's best to be briefed on all provisions that cover your

actions from an expert on the interpretation of the requirements. After starting in a new position, or prior to initiating a regular working relationship with a campaign, ask your supervisor or office counsel to provide you with a comprehensive review of all the laws, regulations, and advisory opinions covering your activities.

Leaking, or Use of Anonymity. The efficacy of leaking was discussed in Chapter Nine. But the ethical use of leaking is—forgive the pun—another story. Journalistic ethical standards on the use of unnamed sources have changed over the last quarter-century. Prior to the 1970s, news organizations felt it was unethical to quote unnamed sources except when it was necessary to protect them from reprisal for speaking to the media. Today, using unnamed sources is a common practice in journalism, and it allows individuals with a variety of motives to use the media to further their goals. And Wikileaks provides anonymously sourced documents that have included classified information.

Because the journalistic ethical standard has changed on the propriety of using unnamed sources, it's ridiculous to think that those who deal with reporters will not use leaks to further their aims. However, when leaking information or speaking to the media anonymously, there are some good rules to follow.

First, just as misleading the media on the record is unethical and ineffective, lying in an off-the-record setting carries a similar ethical weight, and a loss of credibility with the reporter if the lie is discovered. In addition, you should not use the cloak of anonymity to unfairly hurt another's reputation or image. It's one thing to secretly attack a policy position because your identification would cause unacceptable reprisals; it's another thing to unjustly attack another person's character behind a veil of secrecy.

Finally, there are serious ethical questions surrounding the use of leaked or anonymous sourcing when critiquing a policy position of your own organization. Large entities, such as the federal government, always have policy debates as to the appropriateness of a particular official action. Internal processes are established to consider a variety of viewpoints and filter reasonable debate through an organized decisionmaking process.

If that process is extremely flawed, or results in an illegal policy, using the media to correct a societal wrong can be considered the most ethical choice. In 2002, *Time* magazine chose the three whistle-blowers at Enron, the FBI, and Worldcom as their Persons of the Year for challenging organizational doctrine and using both internal communication systems and the media to reveal wrongdoing. Regrettably, this type of character is the exception, and more

Back of the Book

Appendix Two:
Glossary

Actuality—Audio package or sound bite provided to radio stations. (§ 2.19)

Assignment Editor—Air traffic controller of television news, responsible for managing and directing all the assets in the newsroom, assigning reporters, camera crews, and satellite trucks. Often, this person, or the individual show's producer, is the primary target audience for pitches. (Increasingly, this term is used in newspapers for a person with similar responsibilities.) (§ 5.6)

Background, or "on background"—Term used when information may be used, but the source may not be specifically identified. The source may be identified generally, using a description mutually agreed upon.

B-roll—Television footage that is not the interview. Usually includes some kind of action or activity.

Backgrounder—An in-depth memo, more detailed than a press release, providing detailed background information on a particular topic. Backgrounders often provide statistical information, chronologies of events, or contact information and sources. (§ 2.9)

Blog (or Web Log)—Individual commentary, like a running column, posted on a web site.

Booker—Individual responsible on television or radio show for booking guests.

Copy—Written material submitted for publication or broadcast.

Cutaway—Shot in television news segment that is not focused on the principal action, often used to segue between two other important shots.

Daybook—A listing of the major events in a state or city, produced by the Associated Press, Reuters, and United Press International. (§ 5.5)

Deep background, or "on deep background"—Term used when information may be used, but the source may not be identified in any manner. (§ 4.12 and § 4.13)

Earned Media (or free media)—All publicity not paid for.

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)—Used on web sites as resources and presented in a question-and-answer format. (Ch. Six)

Appendix Three:
Related Resources

Training from TheCapitol.Net

Media Training in Washington, DC
<TCNMR.com>

Capitol Learning Audio Courses™
<http://TheCapitol.Net/CapitolLearning/MediaTraining.htm>

Internet Resources

- Abscam Bribery Scandal (1970s-1980s)—Wikipedia | FBI Documents
- Bhopal/Union Carbide gas disaster (1984)—Wikipedia | Bhopal Information Center | Wired | The Big Picture (photos) | DoD
- CAN-SPAM Act: A Compliance Guide for Business—FTC
- Charles B. Rangel Censure (2008-2010)—Wikipedia
- Chicago Tylenol murders (1982)—Wikipedia | Reyna Susi | DoD
- Codes of Ethics—Public Relations Society of America | National Association of Government Communicators
- Deepwater Horizon oil spill (2010)—Wikipedia
- Exxon Valdez oil spill (1989)—Wikipedia | EPA | Rich Klein | Ron Smith |
- Factcheck.org
- Fast and Furious, Operation (2009-2010)—Wikipedia
- Federal Records Managers—National Archives
- FOIA.gov—from the Dept. of Justice
- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)—from the Paul V. Galvin Library at the Illinois Institute of Technology
- Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster (2011)—Wikipedia
- Gallup—Politics | Congress | Economy | Honesty and Ethics of Professions
- Honest Leadership and Open Government Act—Wikipedia
- "In Recent Scandals, a Rethinking Of Capital's Conventional Wisdom," by John F. Harris, *The Washington Post*, April 12, 2005
- Iran-Contra Affair—Wikipedia | infoplease
- Jack Abramoff (2006)—Wikipedia
- NASA Space Shuttle Challenger STS 51L (1986)—Wikipedia | DoD | NASA

Links for all of these items are online at <TCNMRA.com>

- Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) (reviews agency compliance with FOIA)
- Oklahoma City bombing (1995)—Wikipedia | Chronology (*The Washington Post*)
- OpenSecrets.org
- Political Scandals in Congress—Wikipedia
- Press Area Usability—Jakob Nielsen (The Nielsen Norman Group Report, "Designing Websites to Maximize Press Relations," is available here)
- Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Member Code of Ethics
- Ruby Ridge (1992)—Wikipedia
- Section508.gov
- Sex Scandals in Congress—Wikipedia | LA Times | *The Washington Post*
- Solyndra loan controversy (2011)—Wikipedia
- The Fact Checker—*The Washington Post*
- useit.com—Jakob Nielsen
- Usability.gov
- Waco siege (1993)—Wikipedia | Chronology (PBS)
- Watergate scandal (1970s)—Wikipedia | *The Washington Post* | PBS
- Web Pages That Suck—Vincent Flanders
- Web analytics—Wikipedia
- Your Right to Federal Records—from GSA (Also available as a 36-page PDF)
- Your Right to Know: Guide to FOIA—ACLU

Books

Ambush at Ruby Ridge: How Government Agents Set Randy Weaver Up and Took His Family Down, by Alan W. Bock, ISBN 1880741482 (1995)

A Place Called Waco: A Survivor's Story, by David Thibodeau, Leon Whiteson, ISBN 1891620428 (1999)

Crisis Communication: Practical PR Strategies for Reputation Management and Company Survival, by Peter Anthonissen, ISBN 0749454008 (2008)

Crisis Communications: A Casebook Approach, by Kathleen Fearn-Banks, ISBN 0415880599 (2010)

Crisis Management: Planning for the Inevitable, by Steven Fink, ISBN 0595090796 (2010)

Links for all of these items are online at <TCNMRA.com>

Dead Last: The Public Memory of Warren G. Harding's Scandalous Legacy,
by Phillip G. Payne, ISBN 082141819X (2009)

Designing Brand Identity: An Essential Guide for the Whole Branding Team,
by Alina Wheeler, ISBN 0470401427 (2009)

Digital Strategies for Powerful Corporate Communications, by Paul Argenti
and Courtney Barnes, ISBN 0071606025 (2009)

Disaster Response and Recovery, by David A. McEntire, ISBN 0471789747
(2006)

Effective Crisis Communication: Moving From Crisis to Opportunity,
by Robert R. (Ray) Ulmer, Timothy L. Sellnow, and Matthew Seeger,
ISBN 1412980348 (2010)

Emergency Management, by Michael K. Lindell, Carla Prater, and Ronald Perry,
ISBN 0471772607 (2006)

Emergency Management: Principles and Practice for Local Goverment,
by William Waugh and Kathleen Tierney, ISBN 0873267192 (2007)

Emergency Management: The American Experience 1900–2005,
by Claire B. Rubin, ISBN 0979372208 (2007)

*Engage, Revised and Updated: The Complete Guide for Brands and
Businesses to Build, Cultivate, and Measure Success in the New Web*,
by Brian Solis, Ashton Kutcher, ISBN 1118003764 (2011)

Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice, by Patricia J Parsons,
ISBN 074945332X (2008)

Ethics in Public Relations: Responsible Advocacy, by Kathy R. Fitzpatrick
and Carolyn Bronstein, ISBN 1412917980 (2006)

Exxon Valdez: The Great Crisis Management Paradox,
by James A. Lukaszewski and Joy Gmeiner, ASIN B000PC6WXC (1993)

Firewall: The Iran-Contra Conspiracy and Cover-up, by Lawrence E. Walsh,
ISBN 0393318605 (1998)

*Glass Houses: Shocking Profiles of Congressional Sex Scandals and
Other Unofficial Misconduct*, by Stanley G. Hilton and Anne-Renee Testa,
ISBN 0312971028 (1998)

Hardball: How Politics Is Played, Told by One Who Knows the Game,
by Chris Matthews, ISBN 0684845598 (1999)

*How Come No One Knows About Us? The Ultimate Public Relations Guide:
Tactics Anyone Can Use to Win High Visibility*, by Robert Deigh,
ISBN 0832950173 (2008)

Links for all of these items are online at <TCNMRA.com>

Feeding the Media Beast: An Easy Recipe for Great Publicity,
by Mark E. Mathis, ISBN 1557533970 (2005)

For Immediate Release: Shape Minds, Build Brands, and Deliver Results with Game-Changing Public Relations, by Ronn Torossian, ISBN 1936661160 (2011)

Introduction to Emergency Management, by George Haddow, Jane Bullock, and Damon Coppola, ISBN 1856179591 (2010)

Likeable Social Media: How to Delight Your Customers, Create an Irresistible Brand, and Be Generally Amazing on Facebook (And Other Social Networks), by Dave Kerpen, ISBN 0071762345 (2011)

Making News: A Straight-Shooting Guide to Media Relations,
by David Henderson, ISBN 158348468X (2006)

Measure What Matters: Online Tools For Understanding Customers, Social Media, Engagement, and Key Relationships, by Katie Delahaye Paine, ISBN 0470920106 (2011)

Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning, by Clifford G. Christians, ISBN 0205029043 (2011)

Media Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible Practice,
by Patrick Lee Plaisance, ISBN 1412956854 (2008)

Media Law and Ethics, by Roy L. Moore and Michael Murray,
ISBN 0805850678 (2007)

Media Training 101: A Guide to Meeting the Press, by Sally Stewart,
ISBN 0471271551 (2003)

Media Training A–Z, by BJ Walker, ISBN 1932642366 (2008)

No More Wacos: What's Wrong with Federal Law Enforcement and How to Fix It, by David Kopel and Paul Blackman, ISBN 1573921254 (1997)

Obama's Wars, by Bob Woodward, ISBN 1439172498 (2010)

Political Scandals in the United States, by Robert Williams,
ISBN 1579580394 (1998)

Public Relations Ethics, by Phillip Seib, Jerry Hendrix, ISBN 0155019430 (1994)

Ruby Ridge: The Truth and Tragedy of the Randy Weaver Family,
by Jess Walter, ISBN 006000794X (2002)

Send In The Waco Killers: Essays on the Freedom Movement, 1993–1998,
by Jeanne Suprynowicz, ISBN 0967025907 (1999)

Shadow: Five Presidents and the Legacy of Watergate, by Bob Woodward,
ISBN 0684852624 (1999)

Links for all of these items are online at <TCNMRA.com>

Strategic Public Relations: 10 Principles to Harness the Power of PR, by Jennifer Gehrt and Colleen Moffitt, ISBN 1436387256 (2009)

The Corporate Blogging Book, by Debbie Weil, ASIN B003B654MO (2010)

The Economics of a Disaster: The Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, by Bruce M. Owen, David Argue, et al., ISBN 0899309879 (1995)

The Federal Siege at Ruby Ridge: In Our Own Words, by Randy Weaver and Sara Weaver, ISBN 0966433408 (1998)

The Four Stages of Highly Effective Crisis Management: How to Manage the Media in the Digital Age, by Jane Jordan-Meier, ISBN 1439853738 (2011)

The Future of War: Organizations as Weapons, by Mark D. Mandeles, ISBN 1574886304 (2005)

The McGraw-Hill 36-Hour Course: Online Marketing, by Lorrie Thomas, ISBN 0071743863 (2010)

The New Rules of Marketing and PR: How to Use Social Media, Blogs, News Releases, Online Video, and Viral Marketing to Reach Buyers Directly, by David Scott, ISBN 1118026985 (2011)

The Old Rules of Marketing Are Dead: 6 New Rules to Reinvent Your Brand and Reignite Your Business, by Timothy R. Pearson, ISBN 0071762558 (2011)

The Politics of Disgrace: The Role of Political Scandal in American Politics, by Nancy E. Marion, ISBN 1594605084 (2010)

The Siege at Ruby Ridge, Starring Laura Dern and Randy Quaid, ASIN B000AM6OO4 (2005)

The Zen of Social Media Marketing: An Easier Way to Build Credibility, Generate Buzz, and Increase Revenue, by Shama Kabani, Chris Brogan, ISBN 1935251732 (2010)

Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror, by Mark Danner, ISBN 1590171527 (2004)

Toxic Sludge Is Good For You: Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry, by John Stauber, Sheldon Rampton, ISBN 1567510604 (2002)

Waco—The Rules of Engagement, Starring Clive Doyle, Dan Giffird, ASIN B0000DIJOO (2003)

Why Our Drug Laws Have Failed: A Judicial Indictment of the War On Drugs, by James Gray, ISBN 1566398606 (2001)

Winning PR in the Wired World: Powerful Communications Strategies for the Noisy Digital Space, by Don Middleburg, ISBN 0071363424 (2000)

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Human communication is a constant, continuous, and dynamic phenomenon. You cannot not-communicate nor can you un-communicate. For an individual entity, there is only ONE communication. Not multiple, not varieties, only one. That one communication is the culmination of all that has been communicated by the entity until the "now" in time. You cannot go back and un-communicate something. You can only begin from the "now" to create the intended outcome. That outcome is always a negotiation with the receiver/audience/community to cultivate an agreed understanding.

For a communication professional, understanding this fact is essential. No matter where you work, someone has been communicating something before you began. You cannot un-communicate it. You cannot create a new beginning; but you can begin now to create a new outcome. Research continues into the changes in communication wrought by the Internet and public expectations that are experiencing mercurial change.

As best practices are now being developed, the *Media Relations Handbook*, Second Edition, can give you guidance and ideas that will spark your innovation.

MediaRelationsHandbook.com