INTERNATIONAL EDITION

Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations

ELEVENTH EDITION

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Eleventh Edition

Cutlip and Center's

Effective Public Relations

In Russia, for example, more than 400 public relations majors at 67 universities met in Moscow in December 2003 to form the Russian Public Relations Student Association (RASSO), the student division of the Russian Public Relations Association (RASO).[3] In the United States, the Southern Public Relations Federation (www.sprf.org) also sponsors student chapters on college campuses.

SPECIALIZED EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION

The establishment of pre-professional organizations for students is only one aspect of an aspiring professional's education in public relations. As a leading public relations practitioner told students at Ball State University, "Public relations will never reach the status of a profession as long as people can get into the field and prosper without having completed a fairly rigorous course of study in the field."[4] Established professions require extended periods of training to learn the knowledge and skills needed to practice, plus the completion of qualifying or board exams; generally, the more rigorous the training and the more complex the knowledge, the higher the professional status.

Because preparation is standardized and demanding, those entering professions go through similar initiations to the values and expectations of practice. Their common socialization experience not only standardizes the practice, but also encourages commitment to lifelong careers and strong bonds with colleagues. Because of the commitment, time, and effort invested in acquiring the knowledge and skills base, professionals value achievement in the intellectual aspects of their fields.[5]

Degree Programs

Degree programs in public relations have seen tremendous growth over the last half century, and the numbers of students majoring in public relations continues to grow each year.[6] The first university-level public relations course was offered in 1923 and taught by Edward L. Bernays, who had just written *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, a foundational book for the field. Bernays taught the one-semester-credit course for two years in the journalism department of New York University's School of Commerce, Accounts, and Finance.

In the United States, instruction in public relations quickly grew. By 1946, 30 colleges offered 47 courses.[7] In 1956, the PRSA made the first comprehensive survey of public relations education and found that the number of colleges offering courses had tripled in a decade.[8] Another survey financed by PRSA in 1970 identified 303 institutions offering one or more courses and increasing scholarly research activity.[9] The 1981 Commission on Public Relations Education estimated that 10,000 students were taking public relations courses at some 300 institutions.[10] Now, there are respected public relations programs at most major universities in countries around the globe.

The most recent Commission on Public Relations Education recommended that undergraduate public relations programs contain the following core content areas of study:

1. **Theory, Origin, Principles, and Professional Practice of Public Relations**—nature and role of public relations, history and development of the field, theories and principles underlying the practice, and societal forces affecting the profession and its practice.
2. **Public Relations Ethics and Law**—codes of ethics and standards of practice in public relations and in other professions; ethical issues and trends toward greater organizational transparency; and legal and regulatory compliance issues such as privacy, defamation, copyright, workplace diversity, product liability, and financial disclosure.
3. **Public Relations Research, Measurement, and Performance Evaluation**—quantitative and qualitative research designs, processes, tools, and techniques such as public opinion polls, surveys, experiments; fact-finding and applied research; observation and

performance measurement; social, communication, and employee audits; issue tracking; focus groups and interviews; use of external research services and consultants; media clipping and analysis; and historical research.

4. **Public Relations Planning and Management**—techniques and models related to setting long- and short-term goals and objectives; designing strategies and tactics; segmenting publics and designing effective messages; analyzing problems and opportunities; communicating with top management; developing budgets; contingency planning for crises and disasters; managing issues, developing timetables and calendars; and assigning authority and responsibility.
5. **Public Relations Writing and Production**—communication theory; concepts and models for mass, interpersonal, employee, and internal communication; new and emerging communication technologies; organizational communication and dynamics; communication with diverse audiences and across cultures; persuasion and propaganda; controlled versus uncontrolled communication; and feedback systems.[11]

The Commission on Public Relations Education advised that these key courses be supported by a public relations internship and coursework focusing on tactical implementation, such as a writing or campaigns class. Finally, they also recommended directed electives in an area of "supporting coursework" in another discipline. The Commission also recommended business management and marketing, sociology, public administration, political science, and international business courses.[12]

As discussed in Chapter 2, increasing numbers of practitioners possess a graduate degree, either in public relations or a related field. Graduate-degree programs in public relations today include not only standard master's-level curriculum, but also executive-level programs for public relations managers.

Continuing Education

Professions require continuing education to keep practitioners current in theory and skills. Graduate school is only one of many options for continuing education. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) now require or encourage members to earn continuing education units (CEUs) through professional development seminars and workshops.

Requiring practitioners to maintain current expertise and skills, and to perform public service, moves the field even closer to the more established professions. Continuing education also demonstrates commitment to the lifetime of learning needed to provide clients with current and competent service, part of any profession's implicit contract with society.

Educational Resources

Professional associations in public relations also offer various educational resources, such as webinars or case studies of public relations campaigns. The website of the Universal Accreditation Board includes a list of textbooks recommended for candidates who are preparing for the accreditation examination in public relations (see www.praccreditation.org). One of those textbooks is this one, *Effective Public Relations*.

The textbook that you are now reading was first published in 1952. Written by Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center (see Chapter 4 for details), the first edition of *Effective Public Relations* was one of the world's first textbooks in public relations. In the last 60 years, this text has undergone many thorough revisions and additions. Now in its eleventh edition, *Effective Public Relations* remains one of the most widely used public relations textbooks worldwide. Previous editions have been translated into several languages, including Bulgarian, Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Latvian, Russian, and Spanish.

RESEARCH AND THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

Professional higher education introduces aspiring practitioners to the body of theory, research, and skills on which the profession is based. Continuing education then keeps practitioners up to date on research developments that expand the body of knowledge. Not everyone, however, accepts the concept of a body of knowledge and the value of basic research. Few practitioners subscribe to or read the field's research journals, as many believe that experience is enough to guide their activity.

A sure sign of advancement toward professional status, however, is the increasing demand for research and critical examination of the conventional wisdom guiding the practice. Public relations problems in business and industry, for example, are every bit as tough and complicated as the problems faced by engineering, finance, production, or distribution. Practitioners must approach them as methodically and as thoroughly prepared as engineers, economists, and other managers approach their own. Such a scientific approach requires understanding based on a body of knowledge developed through extensive research. Hence, the oft said, "Nothing is more practical than a good theory."

Support for Research

Because professions draw on a specialized body of knowledge developed through research, practitioners are obligated to support the advancement of professional knowledge. Several organizations support research in public relations, including the Institute for Public Relations (IPR), the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), The Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication, and the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations.

In 1956, the PRSA chartered the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education to advance professionalism in the field by funding research, disseminating scholarly writings, and promoting professional education. In 1989, this foundation separated from PRSA and changed its name to the Institute for Public Relations (IPR). Today an independent nonprofit based at the University of Florida, the IPR's mission is to support "the science beneath the art of public relations" (www.instituteforpr.org). To that end, the IPR funds public relations research projects and publishes their results online, makes academic research accessible to practitioners, recognizes outstanding scholarship, and awards undergraduate and graduate scholarships. The IPR also supports the Commission on Public Relations Measurement and Evaluation, founded in 1998, and the International Public Relations Commission, founded in 2005. In another key effort to support public relations research, the IPR sponsors, with the University of Miami and other organizations, the annual International Public Relations Research Conference, which draws top scholars from around the world to present cutting-edge research that pushes the boundaries of our body of knowledge.

In 1984, the Research Foundation of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) awarded the largest-to-date single grant for public relations research. Estimated to total more than $400,000, its "Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management" project explored the function's contributions to the bottom line and identified factors contributing to organizational success. Professor James Grunig, now retired from the University of Maryland, led a team of researchers from the United States and the United Kingdom that produced comprehensive reviews of theory and research and also collected data from more than 200 organizations in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. This decade-long research project produced several principles of excellence in public relations, which many scholars and practitioners consider to benchmark the body of knowledge in our field.[13] Another important research project funded by the IABC Research Foundation in the 1980s was the "Velvet Ghetto" study, which benchmarked how women in public relations at that time often failed to advance to managerial roles (see Chapter 2).[14]

In 1990, the Public Relations Society of America reorganized its efforts to support research, creating the PRSA Foundation as a philanthropic arm "committed to the development of programs to advance public relations research, education and scholarships, while encouraging

EXHIBIT 5.5 Arthur W. Page Principles

Arthur W. Page practiced seven principles of public relations management as a means of implementing his philosophy.

Tell the truth. Let the public know what's happening and provide an accurate picture of the company's character, ideals and practices.

Prove it with action. Public perception of an organization is determined 90 percent by what it does and 10 percent by what it says.

Listen to the customer. To serve the company well, understand what the public wants and needs. Keep top decision makers and other employees informed about public reaction to company products, policies and practices.

Manage for tomorrow. Anticipate public reaction and eliminate practices that create difficulties. Generate goodwill.

Conduct public relations as if the whole company depends on it. Corporate relations is a management function. No corporate strategy should be implemented without considering its impact on the public. The public relations professional is a policymaker capable of handling a wide range of corporate communications activities.

Realize a company's true character is expressed by its people. The strongest opinions—good or bad—about a company are shaped by the words and deeds of its employees. As a result, every employee—active or retired—is involved with public relations. It is the responsibility of corporate communications to support each employee's capability and desire to be an honest, knowledgeable ambassador to customers, friends, shareowners and public officials.

Remain calm, patient and good-humored. Lay the groundwork for public relations miracles with consistent and reasoned attention to information and contacts. This may be difficult with today's contentious 24-hour news cycles and endless number of watchdog organizations. But when a crisis arises, remember, cool heads communicate best.

Courtesy Arthur W. Page Society. From www.awpagesociety.com/about/the-page-principles (April 2012).

contributions from those who stand to benefit from its advancement." Each year, the PRSA Foundation offers the Jackson Jackson and Wagner Behavioral Science Prize, which recognizes a researcher "whose scholarly work enhances the understanding of the concepts and theories that contribute to the effectiveness of public relations practice" (www.prsafoundation.org). In addition, the foundation offers grants to support research from public relations academics, graduate students, and practitioners.

Founded in 2004, The Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication is located at Pennsylvania State University. Although The Page Center is primarily a research center, offering financial support to public relations scholars, it also presents educational programs, houses a collection of oral histories with important public relations practitioners, and archives documents related to Arthur Page and to ethics in public communication (thepagecenter.comm.psu.edu).

The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations was established in 2005 at the University of Alabama. With generous funding from public relations pioneer Betsy Plank, often called the "First Lady of Public Relations" in the United States (see Chapter 4), the Center supports various awards and scholarships, educational programs, and grants in leadership studies related to public relations (www.plankcenter.ua.edu).

The Body of Knowledge

The body of knowledge serving the field, as documented in scholarly and trade publications, often reflects a gap between the immediate information needs of practitioners and the theory-building research conducted by scholars. For example, the content of PRSA's *Public Relations Tactics* and IABC's *Communication World* primarily reflect practitioners' interest in day-to-day problems and techniques related to designing and implementing programs and what one practitioner called "news you can use." The independent *Public Relations Quarterly* features commentaries and scholarly analyses, book reviews, and regular columnists of interest to practitioners. PRSA's *Public Relations Strategist* quarterly addresses issues and trends of interest to public relations professionals and—according to the magazine's promotional literature—their peers, meaning

"the chief executive officer, marketing managers, and financial and human resources executives." *PRWeek* updates practitioners with industry news and features, primarily focusing on marketing support efforts of public relations firms and corporate departments.

On the other hand, the scholarly journals—*Public Relations Review* and *Journal of Public Relations Research*—report research on the social context of public relations, factors of effectiveness, and theory development related to the practice. The scholarly literature also mirrors classic concerns of other emerging professions: preoccupation and introspection during the search for collective identity, justification, and recognition.[15]

In 2007, in an effort to bridge the gap between public relations practitioners and scholars, PRSA relaunched *Public Relations Journal* as an online publication in which researchers must spell out the implications of their work for public relations practice (www.prsa.org/Intelligence/PRJournal). Potential articles are reviewed by scholars for their research rigor, as well as by practitioners for their practical relevance in the day-to-day work of public relations professionals. But despite all these trade and scholarly publication outlets, a majority of public relations analyses and research reports do not get published and widely disseminated. Most of the research conducted by and for public relations departments and firms is considered proprietary and is therefore not shared beyond the sponsoring organization.

ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PROFESSIONALISM

One key characteristic of professional education in any field is an emphasis on professional ethics. Yet, even as the majority of professionals in a field do their work ethically, there are always those few who harm the profession's reputation through their lack of ethics. News reports tell of insurance fraud, unnecessary medical tests, or risky but unnecessary surgery. Lawyers are known for filing absurd claims to harass, intimidate, or frustrate the judicial process. Dentists, pharmacists, accountants, and other professional occupations also have their share of scandal. In public relations, practitioners have been convicted of defrauding their clients, among other crimes.[16]

Ideally, professional societies or associations engage in self-policing to deter malfeasance, to enforce the collective morality, and to ensure that professionals will engage in what one writer calls "right conduct."[17] Surely, the primary goal is to protect the clients of professional services. At the same time, however, self-policing in the professions protects the professional franchise and maintains public trust and support for professional privilege.

Professional Ethics

Ethical conduct suggests that actions are consistent with moral norms in a society. In professions, the application of moral values in practice is referred to as "applied ethics."[18] Established professions translate widely shared ideas of right conduct into codes of ethics. These statements of applied ethics guide professional practice and provide the basis for enforcement and sanctions. For instance, an attorney convicted of perjury or witness tampering can be disbarred and no longer be allowed to practice law.

Why this concern for professional ethics and enforcement of codes of conduct? The answers are both simple and complex. The simple answer is to protect those who entrust their well-being to the professional. The more complex answer also includes concerns about protecting the profession itself: professional privilege, status, and collegiality.

The Imperative of Trust

Clients' relationships with professionals differ from their relationships with other providers of skills and services. For example, if you go to a hospital emergency room, you will most likely have some degree of confidence that the physicians and nurses are qualified and capable and, furthermore, that it is their ethical duty to perform with your best interests in mind. It is unlikely

that you will delay their performance while you check their transcripts to make sure they took the appropriate courses and passed all their exams. Contrast your relationship with these doctors and nurses with the one you establish with a mechanic when your car needs repair service.

The difference centers on the nature of **fiduciary relationships**. When you seek the services of a professional, you put yourself—not just your things—at risk. Your well-being is subject to the judgment and actions of the professional. Professional privilege maintains confidentiality when you must reveal aspects of your person and behavior that normally remain private. In other words, you trust the professional with information and access that often are withheld from even your closest friends and family. Often, you actually entrust yourself and your possessions to the professional. That is, you enter a fiduciary relationship, meaning the professional holds you, and possibly your possessions, in trust and is obliged to act in your best interest. This obligation differentiates the professional from other occupations.[19]

The importance of fiduciary relationships was well-illustrated by a public relations executive for Toyota, who urged his colleagues to "come clean" about problems with some vehicles' accelerators: "We are not protecting our customers by keeping this quiet," he wrote in an email.[20]

Professional Privilege

Professionals traditionally hold privileged positions in society because of the value and trust inherent in fiduciary relationships. Additionally, professionals do work that is seen as especially valuable, in part because of the preparation and practice needed to develop the required knowledge and skills. Not only must professionals invest a great deal of time and effort to acquire their knowledge and skills, but they must also commit themselves to uphold the profession by honoring its obligations and values. For example, the Hippocratic Oath, written in 400 BCE, obligates physicians to work for the benefit, not harm, of patients.

When professionals violate fiduciary relationships or otherwise exploit clients, or when they perform substandard practice, they threaten not only their client's welfare, but also that of their entire profession. Professional privilege rests on the foundation of public trust and confidence in both the professional's expertise and right conduct.

To protect both clients and their own privileged positions in society, professions establish codes of ethics and standards of practice. These codes often have the weight of law and the power of state sanctions. The argument for codes and rigorous enforcement rests on the belief that professional work involves special and valuable knowledge and skill essential to the public good and is so complex that only those deemed qualified may engage in practice.[21]

Social Responsibility

Professions must also fulfill expectations and moral obligations at the level of society. Commitment to serve society applies to both individual practitioners and the profession collectively. It means that right conduct takes into account the welfare of the larger society as the professional helps clients solve problems. It also means that associations of professionals exercise collective power as moral agents for the betterment of society. One example of a "guerrilla marketing stunt" that failed to consider its potential impact on society occurred in January 2007, when a promotional campaign for a television show planted "briefcases with blinking lights in locations around 10 cities nationwide." In Boston, panicked citizens reported the devices to authorities, who shut down highways and bridges thinking terrorists were involved.[22]

Ultimately, public relations is judged by its impact on society. Public relations' value to society is enhanced when (1) it promotes the free, ethical competition of ideas, information, and education in the marketplace of public opinion; (2) it reveals the sources and goals of participants in the debate; and (3) it enforces high standards of conduct. Value to society is diminished when (1) it suppresses or otherwise limits competition of ideas; (2) it hides or ascribes to others the true sources of public relations efforts; and (3) it leaves unchallenged incompetent or unethical practice.