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The Practice of Public Relations

THIRTEENTH EDITION

Fraser P. Seitel

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The Practice of **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

THIRTEENTH EDITION

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Dedicated to

The world's greatest kiddies—**David, Hunter, Raina,**
and **Theo.**

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Foreword



David Rockefeller (Photo courtesy of Virginia Sherwood)

Opaque, confused, and inadequate communications by business and financial leaders characterized both the response to the 2008 financial crisis and the dizzying descent into global economic recession, as well as the subsequent effort to recover and rebuild. Unfortunately, their political brethren did not do a much better job then and sowed confusion rather than enlightenment in the years since. As a result, all institutions are under unprecedented stress and scrutiny, and the level of public dissatisfaction with both the private sector and government is at very high levels.

As Fraser P. Seitel shows in the 13th edition of his text, good public relations will not solve these problems, but the dissemination of principled policies by seasoned professionals will allow the rest of us to understand the basic issues and lead to the formulation of more appropriate and effective policies.

Regaining and maintaining public confidence is essential as we move forward. But saying it and doing it are two different things. For students, and even for professionals who have worked in the field for some time, *The Practice of Public Relations* is an excellent place to start. Seitel bridges the gap between theory and practice in a compelling and vivid way. His use of case studies, interviews, news photos, and other techniques, as well as his humorous and lucid text, brings the process brilliantly to life.

Leaders in the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors have learned from painful experience that they should rely on their public relations counselors for cogent advice on strategy and policy as well as communications. I learned to trust Mr. Seitel's instincts and abilities long ago when I was the chair and chief executive officer of The Chase Manhattan Bank. I continue to rely on his advice to this day.

For those who are working to restore and enhance the capacity of our institutions and their leaders to deal honestly and effectively with the public, this book will provide useful and essential guidance.

—David Rockefeller

David Rockefeller, who celebrated his 100th birthday in June 2015, is one of the most influential figures in the history of U.S. business, finance, and philanthropy. He is considered by many to be "America's last great business statesman." Over four decades, Mr. Rockefeller served as an executive with The Chase Manhattan Bank, joining as assistant manager in the foreign department in 1946 and retiring in 1981, after 11 years as chair and CEO. During the 100 years of his life, Mr. Rockefeller has met hundreds of world leaders and traveled around the globe many times. Since his retirement, Mr. Rockefeller has continued to stay active, with wide-ranging interests and involvement in the fields of international relations and civic affairs. He is the last remaining child of John D. Rockefeller Jr., who hired Ivy Lee in 1914 as the first modern-day public relations counselor.

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Preface

First, thank you for buying my book. I appreciate it.

This book has been around for a good while, as have I.

Public relations continues to be a practice that is “contemporary” in every respect: new research findings, new communication methods, new social media communication techniques, and constantly changing case studies. Stated another way, a text like this one can’t afford to rest on its laurels. It has to keep up to remain current.

In that context, your author is fortunate to continue to spend each day engaged in the practice of public relations, as a teacher and working consultant, with real clients, who demand real publicity and occasionally find themselves in real crises.

This helps keep the text fresh and up-to-date and practically grounded, so that events and innovations can be approached in proper public relations context. For example, social media, which has become so important in the field, is approached here in a realistic, practical application sense as an important public relations “tool,” but a tool nonetheless.

The point is that the approach of this book, unlike other basic texts, is intensely practical—long on reasoning and justification and applications that work and short on ethereal philosophy, dubious theory, or new wave communication panaceas. This 13th edition of *The Practice of Public Relations* will prepare you for real-world public relations work in the second decade of the 21st century.

What’s New in the 13th Edition of *The Practice of Public Relations*?

- **Twelve new, full cases featuring the most current and relevant topics in the industry, including:**
 - General Motors recall
 - National Football League’s domestic abuse scandal
 - Uber’s global problems
 - Sony’s e-mail embarrassment
 - Chris Christie’s “Bridgetate”
 - China’s “Under the Dome” scandal
 - Walmart’s Tracy Morgan crash
 - Starbucks’ gun policy
 - Alex Rodriguez’s comeback
 - Bill Cosby’s meltdown
 - The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge
- **Refortified emphasis on ethics with 17 brand-new ethics mini-cases, including:**
 - Vladimir Putin’s public relations counsel
 - Alec Baldwin’s meltdown
 - Brian Williams’ fall from grace
 - Product claims of Dr. Oz

- New England Patriots' Deflategate
- Edward Snowden: Criminal or hero?
- Diet Soda is good for you study
- Violating Wikipedia's rules
- Dolce Gabbana's same sex marriage battle
- Subway Jared's child pornography scandal
- The death of Cecil the lion
- **Five new "From the Top" interviews with today's top authorities in the worlds of management, media, and academia, including:**
 - Obama Presidential Press Secretary Josh Earnest
 - Noted public relations professors Denise Hill and Jay Rayburn
 - Reputation management leader Sandra Macleod
 - Writing specialist Hoa Loranger
- **New, expanded social media content in Chapter 10, "Public Relations and Social Media," encompassing the most up-to-date (at least as we write this) analysis of social media applications to public relations practice. In addition, comprehensive coverage of the role of social media in Public Relations is discussed throughout the text.**
- **Updated "Public Relations Bookshelf" features the most current public relations literature—primarily post-2005—as well as one new contemporary "Pick of the Literature" per chapter.**
- **Every chapter begins with a contemporary issue relating to the chapter content—from Sharapova's sudden retirement from pro tennis to Kim Kardashian's tweeting controversy to her stepfather Caitlyn Jenner's coming-out communications.**

Social media applications run throughout the chapters and, as noted, the chapter devoted to "Public Relations and Social Media" offers a comprehensive, updated discussion of social media vehicles and how they relate to public relations practice.

As important as social media has become to public relations work, the field still depends on technical skill, experience, and judgment, all grounded in solid relationships with colleagues, constituents, and media.

Above all, public relations responses and relationships must be based on the single concept of *doing the right thing*. Indeed, acting *ethically* lies at the heart of the solutions for the more than three dozen case studies that this edition presents.

With economic and political uncertainty around the world, the practice of public relations has never been a more potent force in society or a more valuable factor in an organization's reputation. In the second decade of the 21st century, public relations crises and opportunities are front-page news on a daily basis.

The field remains, at heart, a personal, relationship-oriented practice, demanding experienced judgment, and finely-honed interpersonal communications skills. And so, this 13th edition of *The Practice of Public Relations* places its emphasis on the principles, processes, and practices that lead to building positive relationships in a 24/7 communications environment.

This contemporary, real-life approach is intended to increase your enthusiasm for public relations study and practice.

Among the highlights of the 13th edition:

Comprehensive Social Media Content

As in so many other lines of work, mastering social media has become a key tool for public relations practitioners to engage in “direct conversations” with public relations publics. Public relations professionals must understand the communications opportunities and limitations of mobile and tablets; Facebook, Twitter, SnapChat, and YouTube; blogs, podcasts, and Pinterest; and all the rest.

No public relations textbook offers a more comprehensive discussion of social media than the 13th edition of *The Practice of Public Relations*.

Refortified Emphasis on Ethics

Proper public relations practice must be underpinned by a strong sense of ethics. The principle of *doing the right thing* is what should distinguish the practice of public relations.

This edition of *The Practice of Public Relations* focuses on the ethical base that provides the theoretical foundation of effective communications and public relations.

The book’s introductory chapters place significant attention on how an understanding of and facility with communications research, theory, and public opinion can be applied to strategic public relations planning and creation of believable and persuasive messages.

Also included is a mini-case “A Question of Ethics” in each chapter. These cases bring to life the daily ethical dilemmas that confront professional public relations practitioners.

New Contemporary Cases

Public relations practice confronts an ever-changing landscape of problems and opportunities. It is imperative, therefore, that a textbook in the field keep current with the most contemporary examples of the good, the bad, and the ugly in public relations work.

This 13th edition does so by chronicling the most important contemporary public relations cases—from GM’s troubling cover up and then recall of unfit automobiles to Taylor Swift’s use of public relations to rise to the top of the world popularity, from Sony’s mishandling of hacked e-mails to Alex Rodriguez’s astonishing reputational comeback from baseball purgatory.

Every case is designed to test your application of the theories discussed in solving real-world challenges.

Additional New Elements

The strength of this book continues to reside in its application of theory to real-life practice.

In addition to the new, contemporary cases and the expanded Social Media discussion, unique elements in the 13th edition include:

- **NEW! From the Top** interviews with distinguished communicators including President Obama’s press secretary. These complement interviews with legendary public relations counselors Harold Burson, Howard Rubenstein, and Richard Edelman; former Johnson and Johnson communications director Ray Jordan; and three late icons, management guru Peter Drucker, USA Today founder Al Neuharth, and Edward Bernays, one of the “fathers” of public relations.
- **NEW! PR A Question of Ethics mini-cases**, which highlight the ethical challenges that public relations professionals face on a daily basis—from the harsh employee communications of Cosi’s CEO to the forced resignation of a star-crazed congressman to Target’s savvy handling of a plus-sized controversy.
- **NEW! FYI** features that expose off-line curiosities that make the practice of public relations such a fascinating art form.
- **NEW! Public Relations Bookshelf and Pick of the Literature** features, encompassing the most comprehensive, post-2005 bibliography in public relations literature.
- **NEW! Newscom photos**, taken straight from the news wire, add a real-life feel to this edition that isn’t found in any other textbook.

All of these elements add to the excitement of this book. So, too, does the full-color format that underscores the liveliness, vitality, and relevance of the field.

Student Resources

Companion Web site: This text’s Companion Web site at www.pearsonglobaleditions.com/Seitel offers free access to self-assessment quizzes and applicable links.

Unique Perspective

This book is a lot different from other introductory texts in the field. Its premise is that public relations is a brutally practical field, whose emphasis is on doing the work—counseling, writing, promoting, and dealing with constantly changing circumstances. The extensive explanation of Social Media and its application to public relations practice is unique in public relations textbooks.

Although other texts may steer clear of the contemporary major cases, perplexing ethical mini-cases, thought leader interviews, “how to” counsel, and the public relations conundrums that force you to think, this book confronts them all.

It is, if you’ll forgive the vernacular, an *in-your-face* textbook for an *in-your-face* profession.

Most important, *The Practice of Public Relations*, 13th Edition, is built around the technical knowledge of theory, history, process and practice, judgmental skills and personal relationships that underlie public relations practice and will be so essential in building the trust and respect of diverse communities in the second decade of the 21st century.

Happy reading, and thanks again for buying the book.

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About the Author



Fraser P. Seitel is a veteran of five decades in the practice of public relations, beginning, he claims, “as a child.” In 2000, *PR Week* magazine named Mr. Seitel one of the *100 Most Distinguished Public Relations Professionals of the 20th Century*.

In 1992, after serving for a decade as senior vice president and director of public affairs for The Chase Manhattan Bank, Mr. Seitel formed Emerald Partners, a management and

communications consultancy, and also became senior counselor at the world’s largest public affairs firm, Burson-Marsteller.

Mr. Seitel has been a regular guest on television and radio, appearing on a variety of programs on the Fox News Network and CNN, ABC’s *Good Morning America*, CNBC’s *Power Lunch*, as well as on MSNBC, Fox Business Network, the Fox Radio Network, and National Public Radio.

Mr. Seitel has counseled hundreds of corporations, hospitals, nonprofits, associations, and individuals in the areas for which he had responsibility at Chase—media relations, speech writing, consumer relations, employee communications, financial communications, philanthropic activities, and strategic management consulting.

Mr. Seitel is an Internet columnist at Forbes.com and odwyerpr.com and a frequent lecturer and seminar leader on communications topics. Over the course of his career, Mr. Seitel has taught thousands of public relations professionals and students. For the past decade, Mr. Seitel has been an adjunct professor in public relations at New York University.

After studying and examining many texts in public relations, he concluded that none of them “was exactly right.” Therefore, in 1980, he wrote the first edition of *The Practice of Public Relations* “to give students a feel for how exciting this field really is.” In four decades of use at hundreds of colleges and universities, Mr. Seitel’s book has introduced generations of students to the excitement, challenge, and uniqueness of the practice of public relations.

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The Practice of PUBLIC RELATIONS

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