

SIXTH EDITION

Public Relations

A Values-Driven Approach



David W. Guth

Charles Marsh

Public Relations

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Preface

Since the publication of the fifth edition of this book, the world has been a tumultuous place. There have been armed conflicts around the globe, including Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. When human beings haven't been trying to kill one another, many have struggled against the forces of nature. Catastrophic earthquakes rocked more than one developing nation. The greatest refugee crisis since the end of World War II has engulfed Europe. Many countries, including the United States, have struggled with weighty issues such as immigration, nuclear proliferation, health care, sexism, racism, violence, and the delicate balance between national security and personal freedoms. Even the sports and entertainment pages of our newspapers continue to read like a police blotter.

It's in this environment that young women and men prepare for what the U.S. government says is one of the fastest-growing careers: public relations. And it is why the authors of this book remain committed to what we call *values-driven public relations*.

The late and highly respected public relations historian Scott Cutlip wrote about the practitioner's potential for helping what he called "our segmented, scattered society" to replace "misinformation with information, discord with concord." Although the profession has fallen short of that goal, we join Professor Cutlip in that hope. It all comes down to who you are, what you believe, and how you want to be seen by others. It all comes down to whether your actions will match your words.

It all comes down to *values*.

It has been more than 100 years since the first public relations agency opened in the United States. During the 20th century, the practice of public relations grew from a vague notion to a powerful force in democratic societies. Today, although the profession has made impressive gains in respect and access to power, public relations has a public relations problem. Although its roots date back to the beginning of recorded history, the fact remains that public relations—both as a profession and as a discipline—remains largely misunderstood.

Public relations is an honorable profession with a glorious past and a brilliant future. Like any other human pursuit, it also has its share of flaws. However, at a time when much of the world is embracing democratic institutions for the first time, public relations is an important catalyst for bringing change and promoting consensus. Through the practice of public relations, organizations and individuals communicate their ideas and advance their goals in the marketplace of ideas.

Public Relations: A Values-Driven Approach introduces this dynamic profession to the practitioners of the 21st century. Through a realistic blend of theory and practical examples, this book seeks to remove the veil of mystery that has shrouded the profession from its very beginnings. Using the conversational style of writing favored by today's college students, this book takes the reader on a journey of discovery, often through the eyes of leading practitioners and scholars.

Values-Driven Public Relations

As the title suggests, however, these pages contain more than just a recitation of facts and concepts. This book champions what we call *values-driven public relations*: an approach that challenges practitioners to align their efforts with the values of their organization, their profession, their targeted publics, and society itself.

Values-driven public relations is a logical response to a dynamic and diverse society in which complex issues and competing values bring different groups of people into conflict. This approach links communication with an organization's values, mission, and goals. Today, public and private organizations are increasingly held accountable for their actions by a variety of stakeholders. No longer is an organization's behavior measured solely by traditional indicators of success, such as profits, stock dividends, and jobs created. Additional measures of social worth now include an organization's relationships with its employees, its communities, its customers, and its physical environment. Stakeholders expect decisions to be made within an ethical framework.

Public Relations: A Values-Driven Approach prepares future practitioners and the organizations they represent for a world of increased responsibility, scrutiny, and accountability.

Public Relations in the Social Context

Another notable feature of this book is its discussion of relevant issues within a broader social context. Public relations did not develop, nor is it practiced, in a vacuum. Throughout history, the practice of public relations has been shaped by great social forces. Its emergence in the United States was linked to the Industrial Revolution and the related Populist Era reforms. The 20th century's military and social conflicts served as catalysts for the profession's growth. Public relations was also transformed by the economic globalization and technological advances of the

1980s and 1990s. *Public Relations: A Values-Driven Approach* provides this broad social context so that future practitioners can have a clearer understanding of the so-called real world they are about to enter. The book includes full chapters on history, ethics, law, cross-cultural communication, and the role of the profession in the Digital Age. Throughout the book, students are directed to online sources of further information.

Features

A major goal of this book is to strengthen students' problem-solving skills. Every chapter opens with a hypothetical but realistic Real World scenario. Each scenario places students in the shoes of a practitioner and challenges them to create an ethical, values-driven, effective solution. Each chapter also includes relevant case studies that expose students to successful as well as unsuccessful public relations approaches. Following each case study are questions designed to engage students in a meaningful analysis of the issues raised. The book further promotes problem-solving skills by introducing a variety of processes that guide students through the stages of research, planning, communication, evaluation, and ethical decision making.

Public Relations: A Values-Driven Approach also contains pedagogical elements that engage students in the subject matter. Each chapter begins with a list of learning objectives that set the stage for the topics that lie ahead. Social Media Apps document how blogs and other new media are changing the profession. Lively and relevant QuickBreaks bring depth and texture to each chapter. In keeping with the values focus of this text, Values Statements from a broad range of organizations are scattered throughout the book. Shared Writing and Journal questions are interspersed throughout each chapter to prompt thoughtful responses to the concepts discussed. Key terms are highlighted throughout each chapter, and a full glossary is provided at the end of the book. Another feature is Memo from the Field, messages to students from some of today's leading public relations professionals. These professionals represent a broad range of public and private interests and reflect the diversity of the society upon which they wield so much influence.

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New to the Edition

We, as authors, share a belief in the value of providing you with the most up-to-date statistics, the latest research, and the most current examples of public relations practice. The sixth edition of *Public Relations: A Values-Driven Approach* reflects our belief that if you are to be prepared for a future in public relations, you need the most current coverage of these exciting and important changes. We remain committed to the text's focus on the role of values in our personal and professional lives. Additionally, every effort has been made to present relevant information in the conversational style of writing that you, our readers, prefer. We value you and your investment in your education.

In our best effort to reflect the public relations profession as it is today, we have made substantial revisions in this new sixth edition. Some changes in this new edition include:

- NEW and entertaining examples of when public relations efforts went both wrong and right to keep you engaged and thinking about the skills you're learning in a real-world context.
- The introduction of new information on social diffusion theory, cognitive dissonance, change theory, and social influence theory in an effort to enhance your understanding of the strong theoretical underpinnings throughout the text.
- Analyses of new-media tactics, including the expanding role of social media, viral marketing, and mobile marketing, to keep you up-to-date with continually changing media platforms and dynamics.
- A vigorously updated feature program that includes 16 NEW Case Studies, 9 NEW QuickBreaks, 4 NEW Memos from the Field, and 11 NEW Social Media Apps.
- The latest reports on the status and future of the profession, including new data on salary, diversity, job duties, job satisfaction, use of social media, and ethics challenges provide you with an accurate and current perspective of the industry.

- Discussions of the public relations implications of recent events, including the Occupy Wall Street protests, the scandal at Penn State University, the Arab Spring, the Boston Marathon bombing, changes in societal demographics, and the growth of social media so that you can apply what you're learning in the text to real-life current events.

Chapter-by-Chapter Revisions

Substantial changes have been made in every chapter of the sixth edition of *Public Relations: A Values-Driven Approach*. New current events include the Occupy Wall Street protests, the scandal at Penn State University, the Arab Spring, the opportunities and challenges of new media, and the Boston Marathon bombing. In addition to a sentence-by-sentence and image-by-image review, the chapters contain the following revisions and additions:

Chapter 1: A new QuickBreak on how to define public relations; a new Social Media Apps on a social media summit hosted by Edelman; new examples of public relations effort gone wrong and right; a new Memo from the Field; and a new case study ("Sad Days in Happy Valley").

Chapter 2: New data on job duties, competencies, salaries, and satisfaction; a new QuickBreak on the job duties of public relations interns and an updated QuickBreak on getting a first job or internship; a new Social Media Apps on social media on the job; new data on why companies hire public relations agencies; a new case study ("Virgin Territory") and an updated case study ("A List to Avoid").

Chapter 3: Expanded coverage on the use of public relations tactics in postwar social activism and a new case study ("Rewriting History").

Chapter 4: New data on employee publics, news media publics, government publics, investor publics, consumer/customer publics, multicultural community publics, constituent publics, and business publics; a new Social Media Apps on social media and new employee recruitment; and an updated case study ("Whirlpool Swings for the Wall").

Chapter 5: Social diffusion theory; cognitive dissonance; a new Social Media Apps on the role of social media in the Arab Spring; and a new QuickBreak on change theory.

Chapter 6: An updated Social Media Apps on ethics challenges in social media; updated reports, including the Edelman Trust Barometer 2015; corporate social responsibility; and a new case study ("Patagonia on the Mountaintop").

Chapter 7: An updated QuickBreak on issues management and a new QuickBreak on analytics; new data on the importance of public relations evaluation; an updated

Social Media Apps on monitoring social media; ethnography; and two new case studies ("From Hashtag to Bashtag" and "Talk to Ted and Tina").

Chapter 8: An updated QuickBreak on organizational planning; a new Social Media Apps on the annual European Communication Monitor report; new data about objectives; updated examples of public relations plans; and a new case study ("Watson and IBM in Jeopardy!").

Chapter 9: A new QuickBreak on the widening scope of public relations; search engine optimization; Super PACs; issues-oriented advertising; a new Memo from the Field; and a new case study ("The Martian Chronicles").

Chapter 10: An updated QuickBreak on the strategic message planner; a new Social Media Apps about Wikipedia; and two new case studies ("FedEx Gets It Wrong and Right" and "Chrysler's Antisocial Tweet").

Chapter 11: A new discussion on storytelling, snackable information, and how to deliver it; the role of social media after the Boston Marathon bombing; social media in healthcare communication; an updated QuickBreak on Internet access and usage; new coverage of media company mergers and net neutrality; the latest statistics on Internet and social media use; a new example of viral marketing; a new QuickBreak on responsible social media use; a new Memo from the Field; and a new case study ("Big Blue's Big Birthday").

Chapter 12: New examples of recent crises; a new Social Media Apps on the "pink slime" crisis; and a new case study ("Say It Ain't So").

Chapter 13: New discussion and example on the intersection of *marketing* and *public relations*; new coverage of the differences between marketing and public relations; a new QuickBreak on marketing 3.0 and an updated QuickBreak on mobile marketing; a new Social Media Apps on social media turf battles between public relations and marketing; a new Memo from the Field; and a new case study ("The Marketing of a Plane Crash").

Chapter 14: New examples of culture clashes; social influence theory; an updated QuickBreak on diversity in public relations; a new Social Media Apps on social media usage among U.S. and European organizations; and a new case study ("The 99").

Chapter 15: A new discussion on the importance of trust; an updated QuickBreak on election finance law and a new QuickBreak on SOPA, PIPA, and CISPA; a new Social Media Apps on social media and disclosure; new coverage of the FCC's enforcement of rules on the use of video news releases; and a new case study ("The Thanks We Get?").

Chapter 16: A new discussion on the future of public relations; two updated QuickBreaks on public relations in China, India, and Japan, and sexual harassment, and a new QuickBreak on Hispanic and Latino clout; a new section

on asymmetric conflict; updated coverage on the feminization of the workplace, salaries, and gender equity; updated coverage on the future growth of public relations, the struggle for credibility, and the nontraditional workplace; a new Social Media Apps on the social media mosaic; and a new case study (“Purple Purse Power”).

Available Instructor Resources

The following resources are available for instructors. These can be downloaded at <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/irc>. Login required.

- PowerPoint—provides a core template of the content covered throughout the text. Can easily be added to customize for your classroom.
- Instructor’s Manual—includes sample syllabi, chapter outlines, discussions of chapter-opening scenarios, and suggested answers to writing assessments.
- Test Bank—includes additional questions beyond the REVEL in multiple-choice and open-ended—short and essay response—formats.
- MyTest—an electronic format of the Test Bank to customize in-class tests or quizzes. Visit: <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/mytest>.

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Public Relations: A Values-Driven Approach would not have become a reality without the unwavering love and support of our families. They are our inspiration and motivation.

David W. Guth, APR

Charles Marsh, Ph.D.

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The authors of this book come from very different backgrounds but share a passion for public relations education. Both teach and conduct research at the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas. In addition to this textbook, they have collaborated on two textbooks: *Adventures in Public Relations: Case Studies and Critical Thinking* and, with colleague Bonnie Poovey Short, *Strategic Writing: Multimedia Writing for Public Relations, Advertising and More*.

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Chapter 1

What Is Public Relations?



Learning Objectives

- 1.1 Describe the ubiquity of public relations
- 1.2 Compare the heuristic and theoretical approaches on how to define public relations
- 1.3 Compare the traditional and dynamic models of public relations
- 1.4 Discuss the importance of values in public relations
- 1.5 Review the approach of values-driven public relations

Questions, Questions

Real World

You have heard the question many times:

“What is your major?”

If your major is English, advertising, business, engineering, history, or any of dozens of other career paths, your answer will usually evoke a response along the lines of “Oh, that’s nice.” However, those who respond by saying “public relations” often get a second, more difficult question:

“What’s that?”

How do you answer?

OK, maybe it isn’t fair to ask that question just one paragraph into your new textbook. Nor will it be comforting to learn that in the century since this dynamic and vital profession was first given its name, neither those who work in it or study it have come to an agreement on what it is.

Where will public relations fit into your career plans? What role does it play in society? What is its place in the Digital Age? Whose values should public relations practitioners follow? And,

perhaps most important, when will the authors of this book stop asking a series of annoying questions and begin helping you answer them?

The answer to that last question: Right now. In the coming pages, we hope to open your eyes to a profession with the capacity to do nothing less than change the world. These pages

are filled with examples of how the profession has shaped and continues to shape society. But as you read this book and learn more about values-driven public relations, yet one more question may come to mind:

“Where do I fit in?”

1.1: Public Relations: Everywhere You Look

1.1 Describe the ubiquity of public relations

The editor of the British journalism trade publication *Press Gazette* asked his readers a provocative question in March 2012: Have you ever been lied to by a public relations practitioner?¹

In his blog, Roy Greenslade of *The Guardian* quipped that he had not been lied to, but “several of them have been extremely economical with the truth.”² While this exchange is hardly representative of the profession, it also exposes a very real problem: Public relations has a public relations problem.

The term **public relations** and its abbreviation, *PR*, are often used (and abused) by those who have little or no understanding of its meaning. Some treat *public relations* as a synonym for words such as *publicity*, *propaganda*, *spin*, and *hype*. Some use the term as a pejorative, something inherently sinister. Others think of it as fluff, lacking in substance. The news media often contribute to the confusion. However, there is a glimmer of hope: A 2010 survey published in *Public Relations Review* said that despite negative connotations within the media, randomly sampled adults viewed public relations as “an important activity that benefits society by providing information that moves an organization forward.”³

There are times when it is easy to see public relations at work. As we move deeper into the 21st century, a variety of critical issues—questions of war and peace, disputes between science and religion, and the balance between public safety and personal freedoms—have dominated the news. Public relations practitioners often play a highly visible role in these debates by articulating their clients’ values and orchestrating events that grab the public’s attention. Other practitioners contribute by communicating vital information to help people important to the success of their organization cope with what are, by any measure, difficult times.

However, it may be more often that people do not recognize the connection between public relations actions and their outcomes. For example, you may recall the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) protests in 2011. They were based on the premise that the wealthy and influential 1 percent of the population should not have a voice in government greater

than the remaining 99 percent. The protest, itself, was a public relations tactic designed to draw attention to the issue. However, in its early stages, the protests drew limited media interest. With the help of Manhattan-based Workhouse Publicity, OWS tapped into the Internet and social media to amplify its message.



Occupy Wall Street protesters felt they were ignored by traditional news media. With the help of a New York public relations firm and social media, their calls for political reform and social justice soon caught the world’s attention.

The campaign was called “The Revolution Will Be Editorialized.” As it reached out through live-streamed video, Twitter, and Facebook, the movement’s following grew. Workhouse also used traditional media outlets and “performance marketing,” live-streamed concerts that included David Crosby; Peter Dinklage; Peter, Paul, and Mary; and Jackson Browne. Within weeks, OWS protests were global. By the end of the year, *Time* cited Occupy Wall Street as one of the reasons behind its decision to recognize “The Protester” as its “Person of the Year.”⁴

1.1.1: The Scope of Public Relations

Many try to define public relations strictly in terms of these kinds of high-profile images. However, *publicity* and *public relations* are not synonymous. Publicity is just one of many tactics used by public relations practitioners. Perhaps it is best to think of public relations as a tapestry, with many parts intricately woven into one whole cloth.

Public relations fosters mutually beneficial relationships. During the 1980s, the Adolph Coors Company was under fire from civil rights and feminist groups over its hiring practices. The brewer also was transitioning from a family-owned private company to a stockholder-owned public company. Through a variety of tactics that included the creation of eight employee diversity councils, Coors

reached out to publics it once had viewed as its sharpest critics. These initiatives brought both financial and social rewards. What is now known as the Molson-Coors Brewing Company posted \$4.02 billion in net sales in 2012 and has been recognized for its diversity efforts by both the media and private organizations, including *Fortune*, *Business Ethics*, and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation.⁵

Public relations also builds corporate and product identities, a process known as **branding**. In their 2002 book *The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR*, authors Al and Laura Ries shook up Madison Avenue with the argument that it was public relations—not advertising—that successfully launched brands such as Starbucks, The Body Shop, Walmart, and Red Bull. They said the key to this success was the credibility associated with effective public relations.⁶

Some of the best public relations activity occurs when it appears as if nothing at all has happened. Few think to attribute high employee morale, increased productivity, or good corporate citizenship to public relations. But they should. When an orchestra sells out a concert or when a growing number of people decide against drinking and driving, it is easy to forget that these successes may well be benefits of sound public relations strategies. Even knowing where to vote, go to school, and shop is often the result of good public relations.

Public relations casts a broad net.

1.1.2: The Search for a Definition

So what is *public relations*?

To update a phrase from a popular 1950s television game show, that is the million-dollar question. Unfortunately, there is no definitive answer. The modern practice of public relations first came under serious study in the early 1900s, and educators and practitioners have struggled ever since with its definition. Even in the 21st century, defining public relations remains an issue.

This confusion was illustrated in a survey of accountants, attorneys, and public relations practitioners. The three groups were selected because they had something in common: a counselor relationship with their clients. Each group was asked about its profession and its place within organizational structures. Although the accountants and attorneys clearly understood their roles, the public relations practitioners did not. This caused the study's authors to raise a pertinent question: If public relations practitioners are unclear about who they are and what they do, why should they expect anyone else to understand?⁷

There isn't even any consensus on what to call the profession. Because of the supposedly negative connotations carried by the term *public relations*, many organizations opt to use euphemisms such as *public affairs*, *public information*, *corporate communications*, or *community outreach* to describe the function. Nor is there consensus on the most appropriate

placement of the public relations function within organizations. Sometimes it stands alone and reports directly to the chief executive officer. However, it also exists under the umbrella of other departments, such as legal or marketing. The Chrysler Corporation's decision to move its public relations function to its human resources department following its acquisition by Cerberus Capital Management in 2007 was controversial. Chrysler's human resources chief said the move was part of a "cultural transformation" and a search for "synergies and efficiencies." Former Chrysler corporate communications head Jason Vines countered,

"Public relations is a service for the entire organization and has to be its voice.

That's why public relations should have unfiltered access to the CEO."⁸

1.1.3: Public Relations Defined

In 1976, in an effort to eliminate some of the confusion, public relations pioneer and scholar Rex Harlow compiled 472 definitions of *public relations*. From those, Harlow came up with his own 87-word definition that stressed public relations' role as a management function that "helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its publics."⁹

In recent years, some have referred to public relations as *reputation management*, *perception management*, or *image management*. However, others express misgivings. They say these are superficial titles that do not reflect the depth of the profession.¹⁰

One area of agreement among public relations practitioners is the definition of the term **public**: any group of people who share common interests or values in a particular situation—especially interests or values they might be willing to act on. When a public has a relationship with your organization, the public is called a **stakeholder**, meaning that it has a stake in your organization or in an issue potentially involving your organization.

The fact is that as long as people are people, they will continue to view the world with differing perspectives. That's why it may be best to avoid the debate over the exact wording of a public relations definition and, instead, to concentrate on the various elements of the profession itself.

Here is where one finds consensus. Common to any comprehensive definition of public relations are the following elements (Figure 1.1):

- **Public relations is a management function.** The relationship between an organization and the publics important to its success must be a top concern of the organization's leadership. The public relations practitioner provides counsel on the timing, manner, and form important relationship-building actions should take. In other words, practitioners aren't just soldiers who

follow orders; they're also generals who help shape policy. And like all managers, they must be able to measure the degree of their success in their various projects.

- **Public relations involves two-way communication.** Communication is not just telling people about an organization's needs. It also involves listening to those same people speak of their concerns. This willingness to listen is an essential part of the relationship-building process.
- **Public relations is a planned activity.** Actions taken on behalf of an organization must be carefully planned and consistent with the organization's values and goals. And because the relationship between an organization and the public is important to its success is a top concern, these actions must also be consistent with the public's values and goals.
- **Public relations is a research-based social science.** Formal and informal research is conducted to allow an organization to communicate effectively, possessing a full understanding of the environment in which it operates and the issues it confronts. Public relations practitioners and educators also share their knowledge with others in the industry through various professional and academic publications.
- **Public relations is socially responsible.** A practitioner's responsibilities extend beyond organizational goals. Practitioners and the people they represent are expected to play a constructive role in society.

You may have noticed a common theme running throughout this list: the concept of **relationship management**. Farsighted, well-managed organizations know they must have good relationships with publics important to their success. A landmark study that sought to define excellence in public relations noted that having good relationships with these publics can save an organization money by reducing the likelihood of threats such as litigation, regulation, boycotts, or lost revenue that result from falling out of favor with these groups. At the same time, the study said that an organization makes more money by cultivating good relationships with consumers, donors, shareholders, and legislators.¹¹ Therefore, nurturing these relationships is one of the most important roles public relations practitioners can play.

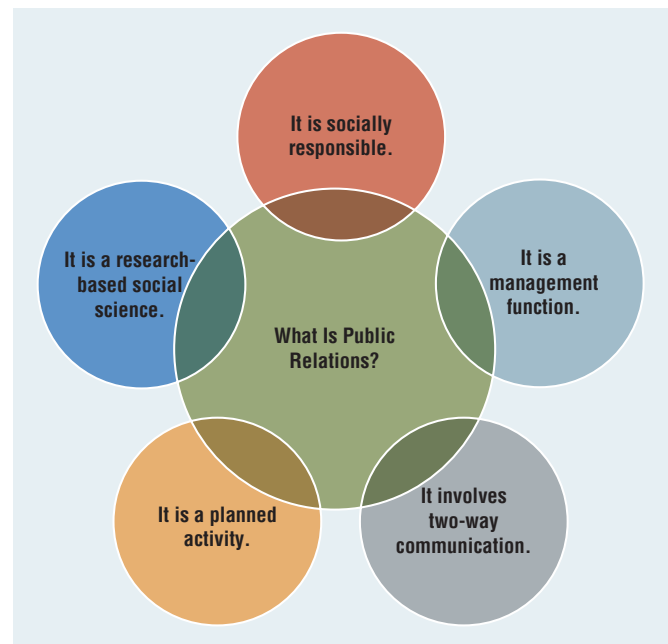
However one chooses to frame its definition, there is one other important aspect to public relations: It plays a critical role in the free flow of information in democratic societies. When American colonists declared their independence from Great Britain in 1776, they said, "Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."¹² The meaning of this phrase is clear: For democratic societies to function in a healthy manner, the government and the people must reach a consensus on matters of importance. Consent cannot occur without the exchange of information and ideas. That, in turn, requires communication. Those who cannot

communicate effectively in democratic societies are left at a distinct and sometimes dangerous disadvantage.

Public relations plays a critical role in effective communications. Through public relations, individuals and organizations enter the great marketplace of ideas. And, through the proper application of public relations, practitioners participate in the search for consensus.

Figure 1.1 The Five Essential Elements in the Definition of Public Relations.

While the practice of public relations is increasingly valued in both the public and private sectors, it is difficult to find agreement on a single definition of the profession. As the profession struggles to define itself, a consensus has emerged that any definition of public relations contains five *essential* elements.



A practitioner's responsibilities extend beyond organizational goals. Practitioners and the people they represent are expected to play a constructive role in society.

Crowdsourcing PR's Definition

QuickBreak 1.1

As we noted in the opening *Real World* scenario of this chapter, it is likely that someone, such as friends or family, will ask you about your major. When you say you are studying public relations, there is the inevitable follow-up question:

What is public relations?

If you have a hard time coming up with a short, pithy answer, you are not alone. The struggle to define the profession of public relations continues well into its second century. Although many may see this as an intellectual exercise, others say the failure to reach consensus on what, exactly, public relations is may undermine its future.

It seems as if William Shakespeare's Juliet was not alone in asking, "What's in a name?" Neither was Romeo alone in struggling for a suitable answer. Unlike those famous star-crossed lovers, the confusion over what it means to be a public relations practitioner doesn't end in tragedy. But well into the second century of this debate, the curtain has yet to close on this long-running drama.

The **Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)** has tried to lay the matter to rest on several occasions. The PRSA Assembly adopted an Official Statement on Public Relations in 1982: "Public relations helps our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring the public and public policies into harmony." The statement went on to describe public relations as a management function that encompasses monitoring and interpreting public opinion, counseling management on communication and social responsibility issues, and researching and managing organizational communication.¹³

Recognizing that its own attempt at defining the profession ran more than 400 words, PRSA then settled on a more concise and somewhat vague alternative: "Public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other."¹⁴

PRSA's efforts to define public relations appear only to have invigorated the debate. The argument over what public relations is and how it should be defined raged throughout the 1990s and into the new century. Practitioners, scholars, and textbook writers (including the authors of this book) continue to add fuel to this fire.

The challenge is deceptively simple: Find concise terminology that captures the values, purpose, and spirit of a complex and dynamic profession. The solution seemed elusive. However, in 2011, PRSA turned to crowdsourcing for a new definition. The organization, in conjunction with a dozen other public relations-related organizations, asked practitioners, educators, students, and anyone else interested how they choose to define the profession. The process "got the public relations industry engaged and talking," said Gerard Corbett, 2012 chair and CEO of PRSA.

"Like beauty, the definition of 'public relations' is in the eye of the beholder."¹⁵

After 927 definitions were submitted and 1,447 votes cast, the winner was selected: "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics."¹⁶

The initial response to the new, concise definition was predictably mixed. Even the authors of this book are not in complete agreement—we would like to see it stress values. However, after a century, did anyone really expect that the debate would be settled in one fell swoop? David C. Rickey, who chaired the crowdsourcing effort, said the continuing controversy didn't surprise him.

"There's never been a consensus definition in the profession's history," Rickey wrote in his blog. "This is why we're still having this conversation today and why, based on the reaction to our proposed definitions, we'll still be having this conversation tomorrow. And the next day. And the next."¹⁷

WRITING PROMPT

Public Relations Defined

You meet with an old friend from your high school and tell her that you are studying public relations. What will you tell her when she asks, "What is public relations?"

▶ The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

1.2: Marrying Theory and Practice

1.2 Compare the heuristic and theoretical approaches on how to define public relations

Because the profession is difficult to define, one might reasonably ask why developing a specific definition of public relations really matters. Some might argue that although they lack the right words to describe public relations, they still know it when they see it. They might also contend that the lessons learned by trial and error are far more tangible—and therefore more useful—than abstract theory. In doing so, they are taking a **heuristic** or practical approach to problem solving. In other words, these practitioners use educated guesses based upon trial and error to reach a satisfactory solution. A heuristic approach is not much different from learning how to drive a car: The driver initially learns from the experiences of others and, gradually, through his or her own experience, gains in confidence and competence.

Although heuristic problem solving can be both useful and easy, it also has its drawbacks.

- Decision making by trial and error can be very costly in many ways.
- It can take a lot of time, drain human and financial resources, and not always lead to the best results.
- It can lead to errors that ultimately cause more harm than good.
- There is also the trap that comes with allowing the prevailing conventional wisdom to go unchallenged. History is filled with examples of great social and technological advancements created because someone chose not to accept the idea of "that's the way it has always been."

However, some practitioners choose to take a **theoretical** or scientific approach, in which decisions rest on tried and tested models verified through social science research. Theory brings a sense of order and structure to social interactions, just as it does to describing the physical actions of nature.

In the case of public relations, theory helps us understand better a constantly evolving profession. However, by definition, theories are educated guesses about the way things are—based on formal research, to be certain, but still conjectural. Because of the complexity of human beings, social science has fewer **axioms** than the natural sciences. Returning to the example of driving a car, there is a lot more certainty in explaining the physics behind one car being faster than another than in using social science theory to explain why racecar driver Helio Castroneves has consistently driven faster than most of his peers.

The discipline we call *public relations* has evolved from the birth of the Industrial Revolution to today's Digital Revolution. In this environment, the 21st-century practitioner requires a healthy balance between practice and theory. We should not discount personal experience, nor should we dismiss theories based on years of research and refinement. Employers value critical-thinking, problem-solving, analytical employees who consider all the options before them, both theoretical and practical.

1.2.1: Public Relations Models and Theories

Since the dramatic growth of the profession following the Second World War, a number of scholars have attempted to describe the practice of public relations through the creation of theories or models. These artifacts are meant to describe the complex roles practitioners play within organizations. As you will see, as the profession continued to evolve and challenges facing practitioners became more complex, so did efforts to describe public relations practice.

CUTLIP, CENTER, AND BROOM MODELS During the early 1980s, public relations scholars Scott M. Cutlip, Allen H. Center, and Glen M. Broom categorized the actions of practitioners into one of four models: *expert prescriber* (seen as an authority on both public relations problems and solutions), *communication technician* (hired primarily for writing and editing skills), *communication facilitator* (who serves as a liaison, interpreter, and mediator between the organization and its publics), and *problem-solving process facilitator* (who collaborates with other managers by helping them define and solve problems).¹⁸ Although every practitioner might play some or all of these roles to varying degrees, the three scholars said that one of these models eventually emerges as a practitioner's dominant role.

HUNT AND GRUNIG MODELS Also in the early 1980s, scholars Todd T. Hunt and James E. Grunig developed their own four-model approach to describe public relations functions. Whereas the Cutlip, Center, and Broom models focused on the *individual's* role in the organization, the Hunt and Grunig models focused on the ways the *public relations function* interacts with the organization and its

publics. Those four models are *press agency/publicity* (the focus is on gaining media coverage), *public information* (the practitioner serves as a "journalist in residence," focused on dissemination of information), *two-way asymmetrical* (research is used to influence publics to accept a particular point of view), and *two-way symmetrical* (the focus is on two-way communication as a means of conflict resolution.)¹⁹ Just a few years later, Grunig, in collaboration with his wife, Larissa A. Grunig, defined two-way symmetry as **normative**, the ideal standard or model for achieving excellence in public relations. However, they acknowledged that there is often a gap between the ideal and the reality of public relations.²⁰

CONTINGENCY THEORY OF ACCOMMODATION The notion of two-way symmetry as the normative public relations model was challenged in 1997 as being simplistic and unrealistic by four researchers representing both the profession and scholars. Led by Professor Glen Cameron, the researchers stated that the four-model approach "fails to capture the complexity and multiplicity of the public relations environment."²¹ Instead, they proposed a **contingency theory of accommodation** in public relations. The four researchers suggested that the practice of public relations rests somewhere within a continuum from *pure accommodation* (where one builds trusts and maintains important relationships) to *pure advocacy* (where one argues on behalf of a particular cause or position). They said practitioners find themselves at different places along that continuum at different times. A practitioner's location on that continuum at any given moment depends on one or more of 87 variables, including threats an organization might face, the issues confronting it, the dominant organizational culture, and the personal characteristics of the practitioner.²²

REFLECTIVE PARADIGM A/K/A REFLECTION The **reflective paradigm** developed from European social research theory in the first decade of the new millennium has gained acceptance in the United States. Public relations practitioners have historically struggled to enhance the credibility of themselves and their profession. The reflective paradigm—often referred to in the United States as *reflection*—takes a much broader view. "The most important problem in public relations is the societal legitimization of organizations," European scholars Betteke Van Ruler and Dejan Verčič wrote in *Communication Yearbook* in 2005. "Because current public relations models are too much oriented at a public's or stakeholder's level, they are insufficient to cope with societal issues."²³ To put it another way, reflection focuses on simultaneous interactions with a broad range of stakeholders and recognizes that organizations can achieve only as much as society permits. Within this broad social context, Van Ruler and Verčič defined the four characteristics of communications

managers as being *counseling* (analyzing changing values, norms, and issues in society), *coaching* (educating members of their organization to behave competently within societal norms), *conceptualizing* (developing strategies for building and maintaining public trust), and *executing* (creating and carrying out the tactics that support those trust-building strategies).

At this point, you might ask yourself which model of public relations is best. That's a question that may not be settled for years—if ever. But that's also not a bad thing. “We would expect any field that fails to develop a paradigm struggle to stagnate and even slip backwards,” wrote researchers Carl Botan and Vincent Hazleton. “Public relations is no exception to this rule.”²⁴ Pat Curtin of the University of Oregon goes a step farther, saying that the quest for a single, overarching model of public relations is ill-advised. Curtin says it is like searching for a black cat in a coal cellar at midnight and wondering why you can't find the cat.²⁵

understanding of business, strategic planning, and research skills.²⁷ “Carlson's Law says that companies do best when innovation is bottom up,” said Edelman Senior Vice President, Digital, Phil Gomes. “Students going into companies want to add value immediately.”²⁸

Another important message was that news is no longer the exclusive domain of journalists. Corporations and organizations have their own online and social media newsrooms to inform stakeholders. “We have moved to a center of excellence across functions,” said Charlie Taylor, head of digital marketing for Volkswagen. “We employ an ‘editor in chief’ who coordinates content. We bring insights back to the company, into customer care and sales.”²⁹

“Technology changes fast,” said Facebook's Tyler Helling. “People do not. It is wiser to study people and the interactions on the Web than to study technology.”³⁰

The overriding message from the professional community at the Edelman Academic Summit was that every employer hires for the future. In other words, while skills are important, critical thinking is much more important.

The View from the Summit

Social Media Apps



Industry and academic leaders gathered at Stanford University in June 2012 to discuss the emerging role of social media in public relations and how educators can prepare their students in their use.

The value of written and visual storytelling was one of the major takeaways from a social media summit hosted by Edelman, the world's largest public relations agency, at Stanford University in June 2012.

Richard Edelman, president and CEO of the agency that bears his family name, said that public relations practitioners “are brilliant with the written word.” However, he noted they must also be able to “show as well as tell” through better use of video and infographics. “Visual storytelling matters more today than ever,” he said.²⁶

According to Institute for Public Relations survey results announced at the gathering, employers also desire an

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Public Relations Models and Theories

What is the reflective paradigm, and how does it differ from other models of public relations?

▶ The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

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1.2.2: Public Relations and Marketing

Another definitional issue is whether public relations should be considered a separate discipline at all. Some very learned people argue that public relations is a component of a different field encompassing many persuasive communications: **integrated marketing communications (IMC)**. However, other equally learned individuals bristle at the thought of public relations' being covered by an all-encompassing IMC umbrella.

The authors of this book support the latter view. We see IMC as a consumer-focused marriage of three distinct disciplines: advertising, marketing, and some functions of public relations. As you may have noticed, some people think of public relations as “free advertising” and of advertising as marketing. However, each term represents a distinct discipline:

- *Advertising* is the use of controlled media (media in which one pays for the privilege of dictating message content, placement, and frequency) in an attempt to influence the actions of targeted publics.

- *Marketing* is the process of researching, creating, refining, and promoting a product or service and distributing that product or service to targeted consumers.
- *Public relations* is the management of relationships between an organization and its publics.

Not every marketing situation requires the use of all three disciplines. Marketing, the central concept in IMC, focuses on consumers. We respectfully suggest that public relations practitioners engage in relationships that go far beyond consumer communications. Although this is a debate that may best be conducted in an atmosphere that includes beverages and peanuts, the debate is indicative of the broader struggle public relations practitioners have faced since the dawn of the 20th century: to have public relations accepted as a separate and significant profession.

A Profession or a Trade?

QuickBreak 1.2

Adding to the confusion about what public relations is and where it fits into an organization's structure is an ongoing debate:

Is public relations a *profession*, or is it a *trade*?

This is a debate over more than mere semantics and prestige. The salaries practitioners earn, their influence on decision making, and the degree to which they are regulated hang in the balance.

What do you think distinguishes professions from other career pursuits?

Compare Your Thoughts

Generally recognized qualities that distinguish professions from other career pursuits are:

- the need for a certain level of education as a prerequisite to entering the profession;
- support of the profession by ongoing research published in scholarly journals or in professional association publications;
- the establishment of ethical standards, usually in the form of a code of ethics; and
- some form of licensing or government control.

Doctors and lawyers are professionals who clearly meet these criteria. Both must receive an advanced academic degree and are expected to remain informed on the latest developments in their fields. Both professions are supported by significant bodies of research and have established codes of ethics. And one cannot be a doctor or lawyer until a state licensing board gives its stamp of approval.

When it comes to public relations, the dividing line between *profession* and *trade* is not as well defined. In one

nationwide survey, there was little consensus on what constitutes a standard of professional performance. Answers varied significantly, depending on the respondent's age, level of education, race, level of experience, and geographic location.³¹

Licensing proponents, including the late Edward L. Bernays, an acknowledged "father" of modern public relations, see licensing as a way of weeding out unqualified practitioners and raising the stature and salaries of those who are licensed. Others see government-sanctioned licensing as burdensome and as an infringement on First Amendment rights to freedom of expression.

Organizations such as PRSA and the **International Association of Business Communicators (IABC)** have sought to promote public relations as a profession through the establishment of voluntary accreditation programs. Practitioners must gain a certain level of experience and demonstrate a certain degree of knowledge before receiving accreditation: **Accredited in Public Relations (APR)** by PRSA and/or **Accredited Business Communicator (ABC)** by IABC. With the creation of the **Universal Accreditation Program** in 1998, PRSA opened its accreditation process to members of eight additional public relations organizations, including the National School Public Relations Association and the Religion Communicators Council.³² Both IABC and PRSA also promote professionalism with support of scholarly research and through the enforcement of codes of ethics.

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Public Relations and Marketing

People sometimes believe that marketing and public relations are synonymous. How are the two disciplines similar, and how are they different?

▶ The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

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Marrying Theory and Practice

Describe one of the four models or theories of public relations discussed in this chapter. Review your classmates' responses. Comment on at least two different models or theories. For each, compare the model or theory you selected with that of your classmate.

▶ A minimum number of characters is required to post. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

Post

0 characters | 140 minimum

1.3: The Public Relations Process

1.3 Compare the traditional and dynamic models of public relations

One of the reasons why many people have problems differentiating public relations from advertising and marketing is the process that they all follow. Although the different disciplines use distinct terminology, each follows a four-step process that involves information gathering, a planning process, the execution of those plans, and the evaluation of those plans. Although this book uses certain terminology for consistency and clarity, *what* you call these four steps is much less important than how you *do* them.

1.3.1: The Traditional Four-Step Model

A variety of names have been used to describe the four steps of the public relations process. Some instructors, in an effort to help students memorize the various steps for the inevitable midterm exam, have favored the use of such acronyms as ROPE (research, objectives, programming, and evaluation) and RACE (research, action, communication, and evaluation). In adding our two cents' worth to the debate over what to call each of the four steps, we opt for a more straightforward—if less glamorous—approach: research, planning, communication, and evaluation (Table 1.1).

1. *Research* is the discovery phase of a problem-solving process: practitioners' use of formal and informal methods of information gathering to learn about an organization, the challenges and opportunities it faces, and the publics important to its success.
2. *Planning* is the strategy phase of the problem-solving process, in which practitioners use the information gathered during research. From that information, they develop effective and efficient strategies to meet the needs of their clients or organizations.
3. *Communication* is the execution phase of the public relations process. This is where practitioners direct messages

to specific publics in support of specified goals. But good plans are flexible: Because changes can occur suddenly in the social or business environment, sometimes it's necessary to adjust, overhaul, or abandon the planned strategies. It's worth repeating here that effective communication is two-way, involving listening to publics as well as sending them messages.

4. *Evaluation* is the measurement of how efficiently and effectively a public relations effort met the organization's goals.

Table 1.1 The Traditional Four-Step Model of the Public Relations Process

Although different practitioners and scholars may refer to the four steps of the traditional public relations process by different names, there is broad agreement that no matter what the steps are called, each of the four serves a basic function.

The Traditional Four-Step Model of the Public Relations Process	
Step 1	<i>Research</i> is the discovery phase of a problem-solving process: practitioners' use of formal and informal methods of information gathering to learn about an organization, the challenges and opportunities it faces, and the publics important to its success.
Step 2	<i>Planning</i> is the strategy phase of the problem-solving process, in which practitioners use the information gathered during research. From that information, they develop effective and efficient strategies to meet the needs of their clients or organizations.
Step 3	<i>Communication</i> is the execution phase of the public relations process. This is where practitioners direct messages to specific publics in support of specified goals. Good plans must also be flexible.
Step 4	<i>Evaluation</i> is the final phase in which practitioners measure whether the plan effectively and efficiently met the organization's goals.

Although there is a simple elegance in defining the public relations process using this traditional model, it does not reflect the real world. It depicts a linear process: Step two follows step one, step three follows step two, and so on (Figure 1.2).

How often does your own life move in such an orderly fashion?

If you are like most people, life is constantly changing and full of surprises. Public relations is no different.

Figure 1.2 The Traditional Four-Step Model of the Public Relations Process

This most-basic model has the public relations process following a linear path. It does not reflect real-world public relations where the various steps are often repeated and/or out-of-sequence.

