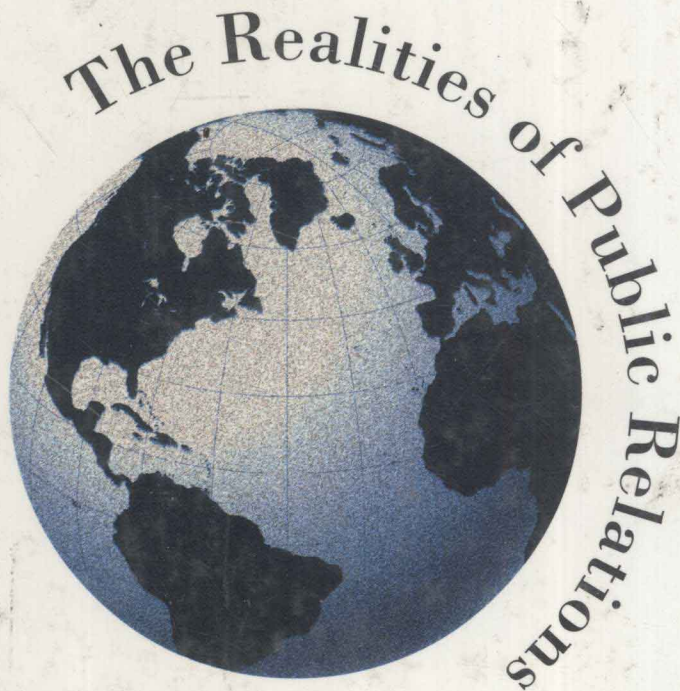


THIS IS PR

Seventh Edition



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THIS IS PR

THE REALITIES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

S E V E N T H E D I T I O N

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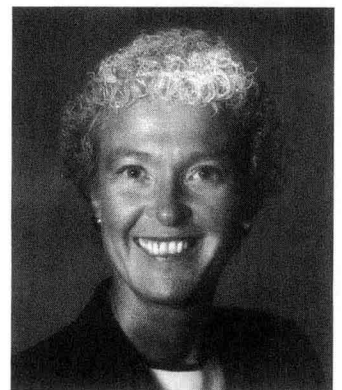
*To Our Colleagues and Our Students,
Who Have Made Us
Better Teachers and Practitioners*

DOUG NEWSOM, Professor of Journalism at Texas Christian University, is the senior coauthor of *This Is PR and Public Relations Writing*, 5th ed., with Bob Carrell. She is also the editor, with Bob Carrell, of *Silent Voices*. Dr. Newsom has been chair of the College of Fellows in the Public Relations Society of America, and has been president of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Southwest Education Council for Journalism and Mass Communication, Texas Public Relations Association, the North Texas Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America and the Greater Fort Worth Chapter of PRSA. She has also been chair of



TCU's Faculty Senate. In 1982 she was named Educator of the Year by the Public Relations Society of America. In 1988, while a Fulbright lecturer in India, she gave public relations workshops and seminars throughout the country. In 1998–99 she was in Singapore on a Fulbright. She also has given workshops in South Africa (1992), Hungary (1995 and 1994), Bulgaria (1993), Poland (1995) and Vanuatu (1997), and has consulted in Romania and taught in London and Latvia.

JUDY VANSLYKE TURK, Dean and Professor at the College of Journalism and Mass Communications, University of South Carolina, was 1994–95 president of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and was 1997 chair of the College of Fellows of the Public Relations Society of America. She was PRSA's Educator of the Year in 1992, and is a former co-chair of PRSA's Educational Affairs committee and Educators Academy. She currently serves PRSA as a member of the Task Force on the Future of Public Relations and the Commission on Public Relations Education. She is co-editor of a new scholarly journal, *Journalism Studies*, the first issue of which will be published by Routledge in 2000.



Through grants from the United States Information Agency and the Soros Foundation, she has conducted workshops for public relations faculty and practitioners in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania and Russia.

DEAN KRUCKEBERG, Professor and Coordinator of the public relations degree program in Communication Studies at the University of Northern Iowa, co-authored a book with Dr. Ken Starck called *Public Relations and Community: A Reconstructed Theory*. That book won the first PRIDE Award from the Public Relations Division of the National Communication Association. Dr. Kruckeberg was named the 1995 Educator of the Year by the Public Relations Society of America and is a member of PRSA's College of Fellows. He won the 1997 Pathfinder Award given by the Institute for Public Relations. He has served as the national faculty adviser to the



Public Relations Student Society of America, Midwest District Chair of PRSA and Chair of the Educators' Academy. He has been head of the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and head of the PR Division of the National Communication Association. He is on PRSA's Educational Affairs Committee and co-chair of the National Commission on Public Relations Education. In 1994, he was a resident adviser for public relations education in the Department of Mass Communication, United Arab Emirates University, and part of the project team that developed its public relations degree program. In 1998 he taught in Latvia and Russia and presented workshops in Bulgaria.

Revising textbooks every three years brings authors to the reality of holding down two jobs—one for the university and one for the publisher. With limited “life” of an edition, on the surface it would seem that there’s not much to change for each revision. However, as each edition is scheduled to be sent to the publisher, there’s a last minute flurry—trying to squeeze in new developments and deciding what to remove in order to put in something new.

The real problem is that the field of public relations is changing and changing swiftly. Mapping the growth and development of public relations practice and education around the world is something we’ve been doing both academically and physically, and we all have rather ragged passports to prove it. You’ll see more international emphasis in this edition than in the previous one, although, like earlier editions, the international aspects are integrated throughout the book. One reviewer suggested we write an international chapter, but trying to confine all that is going on globally and capture it in one chapter didn’t seem to make sense—globalism is affecting everything about public relations from its definition to public understanding of what PR is and does.

We also focus on international aspects in the materials we’ve chosen for InfoTrac® College Edition, a new feature that Wadsworth is offering to amplify information about a particular area of interest (additional information is available on InfoTrac® that we wanted to incorporate into the text but didn’t have room for). This on-line library offers a wealth of materials and is available 24 hours a day and updated daily. And it gives us a chance to keep adding to the book’s knowledge base as we discover new articles or changes in the field.

The fact that InfoTrac College Edition can be offered shows the degree to which cyberspace has had an impact not only on the academy, but on everything we do—particularly this is true in public relations. The facility of getting information to publics certainly has improved dramatically with the Internet. Organizations have Web sites to communicate with any public who wants to log on, and Intranets that are secured for use only by special publics, each as members or employees. The digital world has changed the form and scope of all communications.

The positive aspects of this new world are as overwhelming to communicators as a truckload of candy is to a three-year-old. But there is a downside. The Internet has no editors, and anyone can put up a Web site. Organizations are having to combat rumors spread in chat sessions and deal with mock Web sites that imitate an organization and attack it, often viciously. Misinformation abounds. While crisis managers like to say each crisis offers an opportunity, some now could do with fewer opportunities. Managing public relations is a good bit more complex than before.

■ Perspectives

Our responsibility in *This Is PR, 7th Edition*, is to offer information that will be useful to the experienced practitioner as well as to the new student just learning about the field. We are objective in discussing communication theories and paradigms because we frankly don't believe there is a perfect fit for all situations. Our approach is comprehensive and provides a toolbox of useful information and examples to illustrate key points. There is a Glossary at the end of the text, which helps to clarify terms and is useful as a study aid.

Traditions for *This Is PR* include easy readability and gender-neutral language. In an effort to be sensitive in the use of language, we eliminated expressions peculiar to the USA because we've used this book all over the world and know that some of our readers—students, teachers and practitioners alike—live outside the USA.

As in previous editions, Part One sets forth some of the basic information about public relations practice, gives a brief summary of its development and indicates some trends that might predict the future.

This time Part Two begins with a chapter on publics because we don't think you can begin to think about public relations without that critical element. It then moves into a discussion of the two types of public relations research—one for planning and the other for monitoring and evaluating.

Part Three discusses theories that are the underpinnings of public relations practice, and then explores the ethical and legal environment for public relations practice.

Part Four takes you into the strategies and tactics used in public relations practice. Here you'll find chapters on management, communication channels, tactics, campaigns, cases and crises. The tactics, campaigns, cases and crises are just illustrations to round out your understanding of the total picture of public relations practice. There are books devoted to these topics, so perhaps this exposure will invite you to learn more.

As with earlier editions, we are also providing an *Instructor's Manual*. This useful instructor's manual comes replete with detailed chapter outlines, objectives and testing questions in a variety of formats.

■ Contributors and Critics

A word of advice to those who have never written a book: Don't try to do it without lots of friends. We are indebted to many for contributing ideas, examples and suggestions for changes. Especially good advice comes from students who are trying to learn from the text and teachers who are trying to teach from it. Those are informal reviewers. But, we also want to thank our formal reviewers for this seventh edition: William Briggs, San Jose State University; O. Patricia Cambridge, Ohio University; Melissa Motschall, Eastern Michigan University; John E. Guiniven, University of South Carolina; Bill Dean, Texas Tech University; Ann Marie Major, Pennsylvania State University; and Cynthia E. Clark, Boston University. And those for the sixth edition were Pam Creedon, Ohio State University; Timothy Coombs, Illinois State

University; Kathy Fitzpatrick, Southern Methodist University; and Gayle Pohl, University of Northern Iowa.

In the process of completing this book, we got a new editor, Karen Austin, and the Wadsworth Communication team got a new executive editor, Deirdre Cavanaugh. Fortunately for us, former editorial assistant Matthew Lamm, a wonderfully responsive helper, was a familiar voice on the phone; and assistant editor Ryan Vesely also provided continuity. We want to express our gratitude, too, for the production of the book to Julie Kranhold and thoughtful copyeditor Madeleine Clarke. And thanks finally to our research assistant Dalia Hamed.

DN, JVT, DK

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CHAPTER 1

THE REALITIES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations practitioners should demonstrate a systematic approach leading to measurable results.

KIRSTEN BERTH AND GÖRAN SJÖBERG,
FROM *QUALITY IN PUBLIC RELATIONS*, ISSUED BY IPRA, CERP, ICO.

The public relations field, in all its variety, inventiveness, flamboyance and solemn pretentiousness, can perhaps best be approached, at the outset, by an examination of a representative sampling of its hardest practitioners.

IRWIN ROSS, *THE IMAGE MERCHANTS*

Things start as promotions and when it goes beyond expectations and well beyond reason and into the realm of semi-belief, you might term it "hype."

HOWARD RUBENSTEIN, NEW YORK CITY PROMOTER QUOTED IN *USA TODAY* (AUGUST 31, 1993)

The mail box was full—the electronic mail box, that is, when the public relations practitioner found the correct connection for her laptop and plugged it into the wall socket in Caracas, Venezuela. A case study that was due at a London journal was getting some finishing touches by a colleague in Frankfurt, Germany. The entire project was in the e-mail bag to be read and dispatched electronically to the journal. An anticipated crisis brewing in Belgium needed attention, according to the on-site staff person who wanted her to call so they could discuss the strategy.

The other messages involved meetings in Caracas, relays via the home office from other worldwide clients, and a personal message from home. Prioritizing the responses was the first choice she had to make, and the major decision every public relations practitioner must make, because there is literally something to do every minute—no “down” time and very little personal “space.”

Diversity of tasks and high pressure are part of the public relations environment. Furthermore, for individuals who are comfortable only in one culture, a career in public relations is less and less a realistic option—if, indeed, it ever was. And, while some people like to do only one thing at a time, that never has been the case in public relations. It is even less so now that businesses are reducing staffs and having much of their work, including public relations jobs, performed outside.

As the scenario illustrates, technology has changed the way we communicate. It's no longer necessary to be "on site" to handle an assignment. Business cards carry phone and fax numbers and e-mail addresses, as well as physical location addresses. The practice of public relations has emerged in recent years as a global phenomenon. The consistency of the practice, despite differences in the social, economic and political climates in various parts of the world, can be traced to the growing body of knowledge about and the general acceptance of what public relations is. *The creator of public relations' international code of ethics, Lucien Matrat, offers these thoughts:*

Public relations, in the sense that we use the term, forms part of the strategy of management. Its function is twofold: to respond to the expectations of those whose behaviour, judgements and opinions can influence the operation and development of an enterprise, and in turn to motivate them. . . .

Establishing public relations policies means, first and foremost, harmonizing the interests of an enterprise with the interests of those on whom its growth depends.

The next step is putting these policies into practice. This means developing a communication policy which can establish and maintain a relationship of mutual confidence with a firm's multiple publics.¹ [Emphasis ours.]

Consequently, the PR practitioner has responsibilities both to the institution and to its various publics. He or she distributes information that enables the institution's publics to understand its policies.

Public relations involves research into all audiences: receiving information from them, advising management of their attitudes and responses, helping to set policies that demonstrate responsible attention to them and constantly evaluating the effectiveness of all PR programs. This inclusive role embraces all activities connected with ascertaining and influencing the opinions of a group of people. But that is just the communications aspect. As a management function, *public relations involves responsibility and responsiveness in policy and information to the best interests of the organization and its publics.*

The complexity of PR's role prompted the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) to define fourteen activities generally associated with public relations: (1) publicity, (2) communication, (3) public affairs, (4) issues management, (5) government relations, (6) financial public relations, (7) community relations, (8) industry relations, (9) minority relations, (10) advertising, (11) press agency, (12) promotion, (13) media relations, (14) propaganda. PRSA's definitions of these activities are listed in the Glossary.

Another organization produced a consensus definition of PR much earlier than PRSA did. The First World Assembly of Public Relations Associations, held in Mexico City in August 1978, defined the practice of public relations as "the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organizational leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the organization and the public interest."

Yet another definition of public relations as "reputation management" has gained currency. The British Institute of Public Relations (IPR) offers this:

Public relations is about reputation—the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public Relations Practice is the discipline which looks after reputation with the aim of earning

WHAT IS PUBLIC RELATIONS?

The public relations practitioner serves as an intermediary between the organization that he or she represents and all of that organization's publics.

*understanding and support, and influencing opinion and behaviour.**

As a practical matter, **good public relations involves confronting a problem openly and honestly and then solving it.** In the long run, the best PR is evidence of an active social conscience.

ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE & FUNCTION: 10 BASIC PRINCIPLES

As the definitions suggest, the result must be the real behavior of the organization and perceptions of that behavior by its publics. Therefore, among the various titles now being used for the role of the public relations function are communications management (or sometimes communications standards management), reputation management and relationship management. In delineating these, Fraser Likely, Canadian Public Relations Society, Inc., says all are managerial roles.²

We can describe the function and role of public relations practice by stating ten basic principles:

1. **Public relations deals with reality, not false fronts.** Conscientiously planned programs that put the public interest in the forefront are the basis of sound public relations policy. (*Translation:* PR deals with facts, not fiction.)
2. **Public relations is a service-oriented profession in which public interest, not personal reward, should be the primary consideration.** (PR is a public, not personal, service.)
3. **Since the public relations practitioner must go to the public to seek support for programs and policies, public interest is the central criterion by which he or she should select these programs and policies.** (PR practitioners must have the guts to say no to a client or to refuse a deceptive program.)
4. **Because the public relations practitioner reaches many publics through mass media, which are the**

public channels of communication, the integrity of these channels must be preserved. (PR practitioners should never lie to the news media, either outright or by implication.)

5. **Because PR practitioners are in the middle between an organization and its publics, they must be effective communicators—conveying information back and forth until understanding is reached.** (The PR practitioner probably was the original ombudsman/woman.)

6. **To expedite two-way communication and to be responsible communicators, public relations practitioners must use scientific public opinion research extensively.** (PR cannot afford to be a guessing game.)

7. **To understand what their publics are saying and to reach them effectively, public relations practitioners must employ the social sciences—psychology, sociology, social psychology, public opinion, communications study and semantics.** (Intuition is not enough.)

8. **Because a lot of people do PR research, the PR person must adapt the work of other, related disciplines, including learning theory and other psychology theories, sociology, political science, economics and history.** (The PR field requires multidisciplinary applications.)

9. **Public relations practitioners are obligated to explain problems to the public before these problems become crises.** (PR practitioners should alert and advise, so people won't be taken by surprise.)

10. **A public relations practitioner should be measured by only one standard: ethical performance.** (A PR practitioner is only as good as the reputation he or she deserves.)

PR AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

Public relations involves many activities. People's participation in the activities of public relations and their subsequent assertion that, therefore, they are "in public relations" often cause confusion

*PR News, October 10, 1994, p. 3.

in others' understanding of what public relations is. The *activities* of PR practice include: press agency, promotion, publicity, public affairs, research (primary and secondary), graphics, advertising, marketing and merchandising support. But public relations is something greater than just this collection of activities.

Changes in the environment for public relations can shift the emphasis from one activity to another over time. Recently, advances in technology—such as significant differences in the way the news media operate—have driven many of these shifts. Another result of these advances has been increased globalization, affecting both internal and external communication and significantly altering the way crises are handled. All crises now get global attention which creates considerable urgency for appropriate organizational responses that are destined to be weighed in the world court of public opinion.

■ Press Agency

Because PR's origins are associated with press agency, many people think that press agency and public relations are the same. But press agency involves planning activities or staging events—sometimes just stunts—that will attract attention to a person, institution, idea or product. There is certainly nothing wrong with attracting crowds and giving people something to see or talk about, provided that no deception is involved. Today's press agents are polished pros who steer clear of fraud and puffery, unless it is done strictly in fun and is clearly recognizable as such.

■ Promotion

A hazy line separates yesterday's press agency from today's promotion. Although promotion incorporates special events that could be called press agency, it goes beyond that into *opinion making*. Promotion attempts to garner support and endorsement for a person, product, institution or idea. Promotional campaigns depend for their effectiveness on the efficient use of various PR tools, and in

many cases more is not better (see Chapter 4 on publics and public opinion). Examples of promotion are the various fund-raising drives conducted by churches, charities, health-care groups and conservation interests. Among the most successful promoters in the country are the American Red Cross, American Cancer Society and United Way. Promotion, fund raising and all the attendant drum beating constitute one variety of PR activities that may be incorporated into an overall public relations program. What makes promotion activities worthwhile is the merit of the cause. The legitimacy of the cause is also important from a purely pragmatic viewpoint: It won't receive media coverage if it isn't legitimate news and if it can't maintain public support.

■ Publicity

Because publicity is used to call attention to the special events or the activities surrounding a promotion, there is confusion about this term. *Public relations* is often used as a synonym for *publicity*, but the two activities are not the same. Publicity is strictly a communications function, whereas PR involves a management function as well. Essentially, publicity means placing information in a news medium—either in a mass medium (such as television, newspapers or the Internet) or in a specialized medium (such as corporate, association, trade or industry magazines, newsletters, brochures, including quarterly corporate reports or CD-ROMs).

Publicists are writers. Use of the term *public relations* by institutions to describe publicity jobs is unfortunate. Publicists perform a vital function—disseminating information—but they generally do not help set policy. Only PR counselors, usually at the executive level, are in a position to effect substantive management changes.

Publicity isn't always good news. In a crisis, for example, it's often important for the organization to tell its story before the news media develop it on their own. In these situations, the publicist is an inside reporter for internal and external media.

Publicity is *not* public relations. It is a tool used by public relations practitioners. Some writers