

FUNDAMENTALS OF

Public Relations

and

Marketing Communications

IN CANADA

William Wray Carney
& Leah-Ann Lymer
Editors



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**Fundamentals of Public Relations and
Marketing Communications in Canada**

This book is dedicated to the reader, whether a student beginning a career in public relations or marketing communications in Canada or a practitioner using this book as a reference.

Foreword

In today's corporate environment, audiences are more interconnected than ever with social networks enabling the democratization and connection of everything in ways that put the reputations of corporations, institutions, products and individuals in the public's hands. Those publics—and there are many—have access to more information than ever before and no longer want that information filtered.

That's where communications professionals come in, as we counsel our colleagues and clients to consider the point of view of all the relevant publics at the most strategic level of decision-making. We also help them to engage the public, co-create ideas, have conversations and tell their stories.

In essence, we put the “public” back in “public relations.” That's because our industry is about so much more than just media relations these days—although that remains important. Today's PR is also about the practice of direct engagement, whether through one-on-one conversations or by reaching thousands of people at the same time via the Internet. This harkens back to the origins of the PR field and the work of trailblazers such as Edward Bernays, broadly regarded as “the father of public relations.” Bernays saw media and other avenues as mere amplifiers used to reach the public and share messages in a smart, strategic fashion.

The tools may have grown but the purpose has stayed the same. It's all about engaging the public.

Today, we have unparalleled access to data that we can use to better analyze the public. This allows us to craft customized, dynamic communications strategies for our clients and to execute them through a broad range of communications channels, including traditional media, social media and a wide variety of digital outlets.

In these pages, you will learn about the varied, adaptable skill set that you will be developing as you begin your journey to becoming a professional communicator. Like any career, there are many valuable lessons to be learned both in and out of the classroom. This text will provide you with a solid grounding in the former and continue to serve you as you embark on your career.

With more than three decades of experience, including my current role as President and CEO, Americas Region of Hill + Knowlton Strategies Canada, the single greatest lesson I have learned is that my education in this field will never end. Every day I come to work is another opportunity to draw on the historical roots of our industry and to take advantage of the most contemporary communications techniques. As professional communicators, this combination of old and new not only provides us with the tools we need to share the stories of our clients in a compelling, authentic fashion, it also makes communications one of the best fields in which to set one's professional stake.

Best of luck on your journey.

Mike Coates

President and CEO, Americas Region

Hill + Knowlton Strategies

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The editors would like to acknowledge the significant number of people who have made this book possible.

First of all, the 19 authors from across the country who have given their time and expertise to this book have showed the highest levels of dedication to the profession and the teaching of it, and such a book would not be possible without their engagement and commitment. The editors would also like to thank the National Council on Education of the Canadian Public Relations Society for its assistance in helping recruit the authors, most of whom are CPRS members.

The funders of this book are Hill + Knowlton Strategies of Canada; without their financial support this book would not have become available to Canadian students and professionals. The editors and the University of Alberta Press deeply appreciate their support for this important project.

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And a personal thank you to Sarah Carney of Montreal and Paul Tymchuk of Sudbury for their constant support.

William Wray Carney

Leah-Ann Lymer

Introduction

William Wray Carney and Leah-Ann Lymer

A long text deserves a short introduction.

This book is intended for use by students of public relations, communications, and marketing communications across Canada. It relates Canadian history, Canadian practice, and Canadian law and cites Canadian examples of public relations excellence. It is also intended as a reference for practitioners since few communicators, if any, have the range of experience the 19 authors of this text have.

The authors are experts in their fields, and as co-editors of this project we cannot thank them enough for their work in this endeavour, at their time and expense, while juggling demanding jobs, usually at a senior level, teaching, research, and personal lives. Please read their biographies at the end of the book; they have done extraordinary work for your benefit.

The work of the co-editors was divided as follows. William Wray Carney acted as the manager for this project, having the idea that the education field sorely lacked an introductory text on the topic. (Unfortunately, US texts have been used up to now, and while these texts are good, they simply do not speak to the significant differences in Canada, of law, language, and culture.) Finding the authors was the main task, working with them as they developed their chapters, and editing as necessary until such time as the book was worthy of going to external peer review. Once this vital step was completed, Leah-Ann Lymer

came onboard to work with the authors to revise and prepare their chapters for publication.

Unit One of the text is required reading because the chapters in this section inform all aspects of public relations, including the role of public relations, its history in Canada, legal issues, ethics, and communications theory. Unit Two explores marketing, the role of marketing communications, research methods, and communications plans. Unit Three is essentially composed of craft chapters, focusing on writing, advertising, and the practice areas of media relations, digital communications, government relations, internal communications, and crisis communications. Instructors can choose which chapters they want to teach depending on the focus of their faculties.

Students should keep this text as a reference throughout their education and use it to start the process of determining what area within this field they wish to major in. As stated, practitioners will also find it useful as a reference text. The book can also be used by practicing communicators and marketers as a reference, along with books such as a thesaurus and dictionary and the *Canadian Press Style Guide*. Because most communicators specialize in one field, having a reference such as this volume will give them an overview of other areas of the field with which they may come into contact.

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The Essentials

UNIT ONE

- 1 • An Overview of Public Relations in Canada
- 2 • A Brief History of Public Relations in Canada
- 3 • Communications and Marketing Law in Canada
- 4 • Ethics: Living Your Professional Values
- 5 • Communications Theory and Application

Charles Pitts

1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

- define public relations;
- describe some of the practice areas in public relations;
- explain the challenges of communicating in a bilingual and multicultural society; and
- identify the skills required to become a public relations practitioner.

INTRODUCTION

Before tackling the multi-faceted questions of what constitutes public relations (PR), it is perhaps worth determining from the practitioner's viewpoint *why* one would choose public relations as a career. The simple answer is that public relations is an exciting and seductive field, one that shows no lack of variety, challenge, or reward—personal or financial. A career in the field will appeal to the person who is inquisitive, communicative, and literate, one who appreciates the importance of social and commercial relationships and of reputation management. PR can be credited with contributing to numerous changes

in social behaviours in Canada and elsewhere, including increased scholarship, public hygiene, and national vaccination levels, reduced tobacco consumption, acceptance of multiculturalism, and many other social shifts.

The PR practitioner is a strategist and a tactician. Often the PR practitioner is credited with being a master of *savoir faire* and *savoir vivre*. In reality, and contrary to general perception, the role of a PR practitioner will appeal in most instances to the people who enjoy behind-the-scenes work. The role is one of a “grey eminence” where the majority of one’s time is not spent interacting personally with clients or other stakeholders, but rather counselling those who are the frontline interface with the public.

From a financial viewpoint, the profession offers a steadily growing level of opportunity. The Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS), in its *Pathways to the Profession*, states that as of September 2009, the unemployment rate of public relations practitioners stood at 4.18 per cent, or half the national average of other fields.¹ Contributing to the positive employment levels is the fact that senior managers in industry, the non-profit sector and government have increasingly seen their businesses founder when the principles of public relations were ignored.

Since the arrival of new media, PR practitioners are now free to telecommute to the office and can work more independently on mandates of widely varying duration and degrees of complexity. For those concerned with life’s other interesting occupations (such as raising a family), public relations in its many forms offers tremendous flexibility in terms of re-entering the job market later in life.

There is such a generalized need for public relations that today’s practitioner in Canada can look forward to an exciting career with few barriers, except one’s own lack of imagination. As to professional longevity, contrary to certain communications management functions, in public relations one does not age, one matures—one more reason that PR makes an excellent career choice for the right candidate.

WHAT IS PUBLIC RELATIONS?

The Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) defines public relations as “the strategic management of relationships between an organization and its diverse publics, through the use of communication, to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals and serve the public interest.”² However, in its attempts to be as comprehensive as possible, the CPRS definition may suggest too vast a range of activities for its meaning to be easily discernible. Simply

stated, public relations includes everything from personal interaction with individual community members to complex management functions, communications planning, the development of strategies, tactics, budgets and financial control, people management, and information release.

Earlier definitions of public relations placed emphasis on developing, projecting, and maintaining the image of business, non-profit organizations, and public figures such as entertainers or politicians. Today, practitioners working for organizations prefer to focus on reputation rather than image. A good reputation is understood to be earned through actions conducted in the public interest—actions that are authentic and contribute to mutual understanding. By contrast, projecting an image is seen as one-way communication that contributes only to how an organization would like its publics to perceive it. A major role of the PR practitioner is to counsel business and association leaders on social, economic, and political issues and their potential impact on an organization and its stakeholders. Consequently, PR practitioners develop programs and activities to meet particular communications challenges with employees, customers, investors, legislators, and voters.

There may be as many ways of viewing public relations as there are types of activity and careers in the field. L.L.L. Golden, a senior Canadian PR specialist operating in the United States, redefined the profession or discipline as maintaining “relations with the public.”³ This sentiment could be rephrased as “relations with ‘a’ public,” since by and large PR practitioners have abandoned the notion of public relations as concerned with a general public. It is now widely recognized that the public is composed of distinct subgroups of communities, each with its own identities, needs, aspirations, attitudes, and opinions.

Public relations programs and activities consist of communications strategies aimed at developing mutually respectful relationships with a variety of publics and earning their understanding of (and, ideally, support for) an organization’s products, services, management, or role in society. To this end, early in any public relations campaign, one must identify the public or publics to whom a message is directed and devise strategies and tactics to convey messages and achieve the desired goals. The strategy defines clear objectives based on properly targeted polling, surveys, focus groups, or other attitude research. The PR practitioner can then define the tools, tactics, and messages to be used to communicate with defined groups. (See Chapter 8 for more on research methods.) While not a panacea for all that ails an organization’s relationships and reputation, public relations does convey a vast array of activities and endeavours