

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

FIFTH EDITION



Public Relations

WRITING AND MEDIA TECHNIQUES

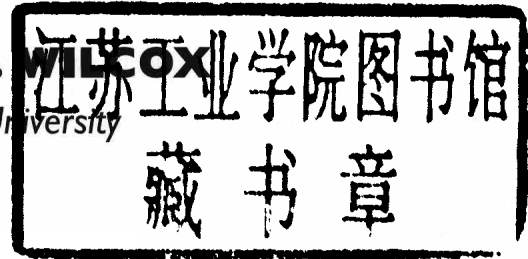
DENNIS L. WILCOX

Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques

FIFTH EDITION

DENNIS L. WILCOX

San Jose State University



Boston ■ New York ■ San Francisco
Mexico City ■ Montreal ■ Toronto ■ London ■ Madrid ■ Munich ■ Paris
Hong Kong ■ Singapore ■ Tokyo ■ Cape Town ■ Sydney

**Dedicated to
Marianne and Anne-Marie,
whose love and support
have made this book possible**

Editorial Director: Jason Jordan
Series Editor: Molly Taylor
Series Editorial Assistant: Michael Kish
Senior Marketing Manager: Mandee Eckersley
Composition and Prepress Buyer: Linda Cox
Manufacturing Buyer: JoAnne Sweeney
Manufacturing Manager: Megan Cochran
Cover Coordinator: Linda Knowles
Editorial-Production Coordinator: Mary Beth Finch
Editorial-Production Service: Modern Graphics, Inc.
Electronic Composition: Modern Graphics, Inc.

For related titles and support materials, visit our online catalog at www.ablongman.com/communication

Copyright © 2005, 2001 Pearson Education, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of the material protected by this copyright notice may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright owner.

To obtain permission(s) to use material from this work, please submit a written request to Allyn and Bacon, Permissions Department, 75 Arlington Street, Boston, MA 02116 or fax your request to 617-848-7320.

Between the time Web site information is gathered and then published, it is not unusual for some sites to have closed. Also, the transcription of URLs can result in unintended typographical errors. The publisher would appreciate notification where these errors occur so that they may be corrected in subsequent editions.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wilcox, Dennis L.

Public relations writing and media techniques / Dennis L. Wilcox.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-205-41849-X

1. Public relations—United States. 2. Public relations—United States—Authorship. I.

Title.

HM1221.W55 2004

659.2—dc22

2004044490

Printed in the United States of America.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 RRDV 09 08 07 06 05 04

Preface

The fifth edition of *Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques* is a comprehensive, up-to-date “how to” manual that will teach you the basic concepts and techniques of effective public relations writing.

It is a user-friendly text written in plain English that contains step-by-step guidelines illustrated by multiple examples from actual public relations programs conducted by many well-known organizations.

Although the emphasis is on the “nuts and bolts” of effective public relations writing and techniques, the text also provides the conceptual framework and broader context of how the techniques of public relations fit into the entire public relations process—research, planning, communication, evaluation. The idea is to ensure that you not only know “how” to write public relations materials, but you also understand “why” they are written in the first place from the standpoint of accomplishing organizational objectives.

This edition has more than 100 major updates, revisions, and additions to reflect today’s public relations practice. The changes range from updated and expanded information on the integration of the Internet and the World Wide Web into all public relations activities to step-by-step guidelines on everything from how to write a news feature to introducing a guest speaker at a meeting. The new artwork includes multiple photos, news releases, and other materials taken from actual campaigns.

This text, more than any other one on the market, also strives to give you some continuity by following a single campaign through multiple chapters. One chapter may illustrate the basic news release and fact sheet used while succeeding chapters will follow the campaign by showing other campaign materials such as (1) radio news releases, (2) media kits, (3) publicity photos, (4) pitch letter to editors, (5) media advisories, (6) invitations to product launches, (7) satellite media tour arrangements, (8) news features, and (9) even the budget for the entire campaign. By the end of the book, you will have a good understanding of how an entire public relations campaign is organized.

There are numerous other programs cited, and many of them are about current issues, events, or organizations familiar to you. Some programs cited include Coke's launching of Vanilla Coke, a new book by the cast of *Queer Eye*, New Zealand's tourist promotion based on the movie *the Lord of the Rings*, the Enron/WorldCom financial scandals, the 100th anniversary of Harley-Davidson motorcycles, and even the SARS outbreak in Hong Kong.

Other major strengths of this new edition are:

- New and updated “Professional Tips” in boxed inserts that provide easy-to-read checklists from seasoned professionals in the field
- New “PR Casebooks” in boxed inserts that highlight a particular issue, situation, or actual public relations program
- Expanded material on the ethics of public relations practice and the responsibilities of the public relations writer
- New lists of additional readings and resources at the end of every chapter
- High readability, clear presentation of ideas, and excellent writing style
- Expanded content on how to write and prepare materials for the internet and digital distribution
- Reorganization of topics and chapters to improve thematic development and continuity
- Updated and expanded content on how the Internet and the World Wide Web are used in public relations practice
- The ability to mix and match chapters, depending on the course and the time available
- Summaries of key points and updated additional readings at the end of every chapter

The text, as in previous editions, is divided into four parts. *Part 1, The Basics of Public Relations*, begins to build this contextual framework by discussing the role of the writer in the public relations process—research, planning, communication, and evaluation. The tools and equipment of the writer are discussed before chapters covering the basic concepts of persuasive writing, legal and ethical guidelines, and finding and creating news.

Part 2, Writing for the Mass Media, emphasizes the nuts and bolts of writing news releases, fact sheets, news features, and what you need to know about publicity photos and graphics. It also covers the techniques of writing pitch letters, sending advisories, compiling media kits, and writing op-ed columns. There are also chapters on the distribution of publicity materials and effective media relations.

Part 3, Writing for Other Media, emphasizes writing for a variety of controlled media—newsletters, brochures, online publications, the World Wide Web, e-mail, memos, reports, direct mail, and advertising. The final chapter in this section gives you valuable information about writing and giving speeches and presentations, complete with PowerPoint slides.

Part 4, Managing Programs and Campaigns, puts everything together by explaining the basics of event meeting and event management, how to write a comprehensive program plan, and how to measure your results.

An expanded and completely revised Instructor's Manual with chapter exercises test questions, prepared by the author and Kathleen Smith, is available for this edition. Please contact your local Allyn & Bacon/Longman sales representative for a hard copy or electronic version.

I am grateful to the following reviewers for comments and suggestions. Second edition: William Baxter, Marquette University; E. W. Brody, Memphis State University; Cathy Morton, Texas Tech University; Susan Pendleton, Mansfield University; Bruce Renfro, Southwest Texas State University; Ed Romanoff, University of Pittsburgh; and Susanne A. Roschwalb, American University. Third edition: Janice Barrett, Boston University; Lena Chau, California State University at Los Angeles; Jan Elliott, University of North Carolina; Terry Rentner, Bowling Green State University; Susanne A. Roschwalb, American University; and Joseph Zappala, Utica College. Fourth edition: Douglas P. Starr, Texas A&M University; Shelly A. Wright, SUNY-New Paltz; Leo J. McKenzie, Marist College; Dean Kruckeberg, University of Northern Iowa; David Dollar, Southwest Missouri State University; and Michael E. Bishop, Baylor University.

And a special thanks to the following educators who provided input for the fifth edition: Donn Silvis, California State University, Dominguez Hills; Brenda J. Wrigley, Michigan State University; Claire Badaracco, Marquette University; and Lora J. DeFore, Mississippi State University.

Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques is for students who want to learn how to write, prepare, and distribute public relations materials. It is for professors who want a comprehensive, up-to-date text that accurately reflects contemporary public relations practice in the "real world."

Contents

Preface xii

PART ONE

The Basics of Public Relations Writing

Chapter 1 **Preparing for Writing** 1

The Framework of Public Relations 2

Writing Is Only One Component 2

Writers as Communication Technicians 2

The Public Relations Writer 3

Objectives 3

Audiences 6

Channels 6

Preparation for Writing 7

Computer 7

References 10

Research: Prelude to Writing 18

Online Networks 19

The Internet and the World Wide Web 19

Writing Guidelines 22

Outlining the Purpose 22

Sentences 25

Paragraphs 25

Word Choice 26

Active Verbs/Present Tense 27

Imagery 28

Errors to Avoid 29

Spelling 29

Gobbledygook and Jargon 29

Poor Sentence Structure 30

Wrong Words 30

“Sound-alike” Words 30

Redundancies 31

Too Many Numbers 32

Hype 32

Bias and Stereotypes 32

Politically Incorrect Language 33

Summary 34

Additional Resources 35

Chapter 2	Persuasive Writing	37
	The Basics of Communication	39
	Receiver	39
	Media	40
	Message	40
	Sender	40
	Theories of Communication	40
	Two-Step Flow Theory	40
	Media Uses and Gratifications	41
	Cognitive Dissonance	41
	Media Effects	41
	Framing	42
	Diffusion and Adoption	42
	Hierarchy-of-Needs Theory	44
	Applying Theory to Practice	44
	Persuasive Writing	48
	Audience Analysis	48
	Source Credibility	49
	Appeal to Self-Interest	50
	Clarity of Message	50
	Timing and Context	51
	Symbols, Slogans and Acronyms	51
	Semantics	52
	Suggestions for Action	53
	Content and Structure	54
	The Ethics of Persuasion	58
	Summary	61
	Additional Resources	62
Chapter 3	Legal and Ethical Guidelines	63
	Examples of Legal Problems	64
	Libel and Slander	65
	The Fair Comment Defense	66
	Invasion of Privacy	66
	Releases for Advertising and Promotion	67
	Regulations of Government Agencies	68
	Securities and Exchange Commission	68
	Federal Trade Commission	72
	Other Regulatory Agencies	73
	Copyright Law	74
	Fair Use and Infringement	75
	The Rights of Freelancers	80
	Trademark Law	80
	Working with Lawyers	84
	Ethics and Professionalism	85
	Summary	90
	Additional Resources	91
Chapter 4	Finding and Generating News	92
	Barriers to Media Coverage	93
	What Makes News?	94
	Timeliness	94
	Prominence	95
	Proximity	96
	Significance	98
	Unusualness	98

Human Interest 99
 Conflict 100
 Newness 101

How to Find News 101

Internal News Sources 101
 External News Sources 103

How to Create News 104

Brainstorming 105
 Special Events 107
 Contests 110
 Polls and Surveys 112
 Top 10 Lists 116
 Product Demonstrations 116
 Stunts 118
 Rallies and Protests 120
 Personal Appearances 121

Summary 122

Additional Resources 123

PART TWO

Writing for Mass Media

Chapter 5 **News Releases and Fact Sheets 125**

The Value of News Releases and Fact Sheets 127

Planning a News Release 127

The Basic Questions 127
 Selection of Paper 128
 Spacing and Margins 128
 Use AP Style 130

Types of News Releases 130

Announcements 130
 Spot Announcements 131
 Reaction Releases 131
 Bad News 133
 Local News 135

Types of Fact Sheets 135

Parts of a News Release 136

Letterhead 136
 Contacts 141
 Headline 141
 Dateline 142
 The Lead 143
 Body of Text 145

Placement 148

Gatekeepers 149
 Deadlines 151
 Getting Maximum Results 151

Summary 152

Additional Resources 154

Chapter 6 **News Features 155**

The Value of Features 156

Planning a News Feature 157

Ways to Proceed 159

Types of Features 160

Case Study 160
 Application Story 162

- Research Study 163
- Backgrounder 165
- Personality Profile 166
- Historical Piece 167

Parts of a Feature 167

- The Headline 167
- The Lead 171
- Body of the Feature 173
- Summary 173
- Photos and Graphics 175

Placement Opportunities 175

- Newspapers 175
- General Magazines 176
- Specialty/Trade Magazines 177
- Internal Publications 177

Summary 177

Additional Resources 178

Chapter 7 Photos and Graphics 179

Elements of a Good Publicity Photo 181

- Quality 181
- Subject Matter 182
- Composition 182
- Action 183
- Scale 185
- Camera Angle 186
- Lighting and Timing 187
- Color 188

Working with Photographers 190

- Finding Photographers 190
- Contracts 190
- The Photo Session 191
- Cropping and Retouching 191
- Ethical Considerations 192

Writing Photo Captions 193

- Distribution of Photos and Captions 196

Graphics 196

- Charts 197
- Diagrams 198
- Renderings and Models 198
- Maps 198
- Line Drawings and Clip Art 199

Photo and Art Files 199

Summary 199

Additional Resources 200

Chapter 8 Pitch Letters, Advisories, Media Kits, and Op-Ed 201

Pitch Letters 203

- Researching the Publication 204
- Preparing the Pitch Letter 205
- Follow Up Your Letter 208

Media Alerts 208

Media Kits 212

- Corporate Profile 214
- Backgrounder 214

	Compiling a Media Kit	216
	Electronic Media Kits	221
	Op-Ed	222
	Op-Ed: A Case History	225
	Letters to the Editor	226
	Summary	227
	Additional Resources	229
Chapter 9	Radio, Television, and Webcasting	230
	Radio	231
	Radio News Releases	231
	Audio News Releases	234
	Public Service Announcements	238
	Radio Media Tours	243
	Television	243
	Video News Releases	244
	Public Service Announcements	253
	Satellite Media Tours	257
	Personal Appearances and Product Placements	262
	Talk Shows	262
	Magazine Shows	266
	Product Placement	266
	Radio Promotions	268
	Community Calendars	269
	Editorials	270
	Free-Speech Messages	271
	Feature Films and Videos	271
	Webcasting	272
	Organizational Web Sites	272
	Summary	274
	Additional Resources	275
Chapter 10	Distribution: Snail Mail to the Internet	277
	Finding the Media	279
	Media Directories	279
	Editorial Calendars	282
	Tip Sheets	283
	Distribution of Materials	284
	Mail	284
	Fax	285
	Electronic Wire Services	287
	Feature Placement Firms	290
	CD-ROM	293
	E-Mail	294
	The World Wide Web	296
	Usenet and Listserv	300
	The Continued Role of Traditional Media	301
	Summary	302
	Additional Resources	303
Chapter 11	Working with the Media	304
	Media Dependence on Public Relations	305
	Public Relations Dependence on the Media	306
	Areas of Friction	307

Hype and Other Irritations	307
Name Calling	309
Sloppy/Biased Reporting	309
Tabloid Journalism	310
Advertising Influence	311
Working with Journalists	312
Media Interviews	313
News Conferences	316
Teleconferences	320
Media Tours	321
Previews and Parties	322
Press Junkets	326
Editorial Board Meetings	327
A Media Relations Checklist	329
Media Etiquette	331
Crisis Communication	333
Summary	336
Additional Resources	337

PART THREE

Writing for Other Media

Chapter 12	Newsletters, E-zines, and Brochures	339
	The Value of Print Publications	340
	The Dual Role of the Editor	344
	Mission Statement and Editorial Plan	345
	Newsletters and Magazines	347
	Meeting Audience Interests	349
	Design	351
	Electronic Newsletters	357
	Using an Intranet	357
	Brochures	360
	Planning	360
	Writing	361
	Production	364
	Paper	365
	Type Fonts	366
	Ink and Color	369
	Desktop Publishing	370
	Summary	373
	Additional Resources	374
Chapter 13	The World Wide Web	375
	The Growth of the World Wide Web	377
	The Web: A Major Source for Journalists	379
	Creating a Press-Friendly Web Site	380
	Writing for the Web	385
	Building an Effective Web Site	388
	Making the Site Interactive	391
	Using Audio and Video Components	393
	Who Controls the Site?	395
	The Cost of a Site	397
	Attracting Visitors to Your Site	398
	Tracking Site Visitors	402

	Summary	404
	Additional Resources	406
Chapter 14	E-Mail, Memos, Letters, Proposals, and Reports	408
	The Challenge of Information Overload	409
	E-Mail	410
	Purpose	410
	Content	411
	Format	413
	Memorandums	414
	Purpose	415
	Content	415
	Format	416
	Letters	417
	Purpose	417
	Content	418
	Format	418
	Proposals	419
	Purpose	420
	Organization	421
	Annual Reports	421
	Preparing an Annual Report	424
	Trends in Annual Reports	425
	Summary	428
	Additional Resources	429
Chapter 15	Direct Mail and Advertising	431
	The Basics of Direct Mail	433
	Advantages of Direct Mail	433
	Disadvantages of Direct Mail	434
	Creating a Direct Mail Package	435
	Mailing Envelope	435
	The Letter	437
	Brochure	439
	Reply Card	440
	Return Envelope	440
	Gifts	441
	The Basics of Public Relations Advertising	442
	Advantages of Advertising	443
	Disadvantages of Advertising	443
	Types of Public Relations Advertising	444
	Image Building	445
	Investor and Financial Relations	448
	Public Service	448
	Advocacy/Issues	450
	Announcements	454
	Creating a Print Ad	454
	Headline	454
	Text	455
	Artwork	456
	Layout	456
	Working with an Ad Agency	456
	Other Advertising Channels	457
	Billboards	457
	Transit Panels	458

- Buttons and Bumper Stickers 458
- Posters 458
- Sponsored Books 460
- T-Shirts 460
- Promotional Items 461
- Product Placements 461

Summary 462

Additional Resources 463

Chapter 16 **Speeches and Presentations 464**

The Basics of Speech Writing 466

- Researching the Audience and Speaker 466
- Laying the Groundwork 466
- Writing the Speech 469

The Basics of Giving a Speech 471

- Know Your Objective 472
- Structure the Message for the Ear 473
- Tailor Remarks to the Audience 474
- Give Specifics 475
- Keep It Short 476
- Eye Contact and Gestures 476

Visual Aids for Presentations 476

- PowerPoint 478
- Slide Presentations 482

Other Speech Formats 486

- Panels 486
- Debates 487

Speaker Training and Placement 488

- Executive Training 488
- Speaker's Bureaus 489
- Placement of Speakers 490
- Publicity Opportunities 492

Summary 495

Additional Resources 496

PART FOUR

Managing Programs and Campaigns

Chapter 17 **Meetings and Events 497**

Staff and Committee Meetings 498

Club Meetings and Workshops 499

- Planning 499
- Registration 502
- Program 503

Banquets 505

- Working with Banquet Managers 506
- Logistics and Timing 507

Cocktail Parties and Receptions 507

Open Houses and Plant Tours 512

Conventions 513

- Planning 513
- Program 516

Trade Shows 517

- Exhibit Booths 518

	Press Rooms	519
	Planning Guidelines	520
	Promotional Events	521
	Summary	525
	Additional Resources	526
Chapter 18	Program Planning	528
	Developing a Plan	530
	Gathering Information	530
	Analyzing the Information	532
	Elements of a Plan	532
	Situation	532
	Objectives	534
	Audience	535
	Strategy	537
	Tactics	537
	Calendar	539
	Budget	541
	Evaluation	543
	Reviewing the Final Draft	543
	Summary	546
	Additional Resources	546
Chapter 19	Measurement & Evaluation	548
	The Importance of Evaluation	550
	Start with Objectives	551
	Measurement of Production/Distribution	553
	Measurement of Message Exposure	553
	Media Impressions	555
	Advertising Value Equivalency	556
	Systematic Tracking	557
	Monitoring the Internet	559
	Requests and 800 Numbers	560
	Cost per Person	560
	Event Attendance	561
	Measurement of Audience Awareness	562
	Measurement of Audience Attitudes	562
	Other Forms of Feedback	563
	Measurement of Audience Action	563
	Evaluation of Newsletters and Brochures	564
	Content Analysis	565
	Readership Surveys	565
	Article Recall	566
	Readability	567
	Advisory Boards and Focus Groups	568
	Writing an Evaluation Report	568
	Summary	569
	Additional Resources	570
	<i>Glossary</i>	<i>571</i>
	<i>Index</i>	<i>575</i>

Chapter 1

Preparing for Writing

Public relations writing is an integral part of communication, the third component in the public relations process of research, planning, communication, and evaluation. It is a highly visible product, involving the implementation and execution of tactics in a public relations plan or campaign by expert technicians. It requires writing tools, the use of basic references, the ability to gather information, and knowledge of basic English composition.

From this standpoint, both the public relations writer and the journalist share a common approach to writing. For both, it is an exacting job that does not allow careless, sloppy work. Facts must be assembled and checked before the actual writing is started. The writing itself is an intense process of wrestling with word choice, sentence structure, and thematic development.

This chapter sets the stage and framework for effective public relations writing. It tells you what equipment you need, how to use print and electronic databases, and how to use the Internet for researching information. It also presents the basic elements of composition.

THE FRAMEWORK OF PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING

This book primarily focuses on one aspect of public relations practice—the writing and distribution of messages in a variety of formats and media channels. To the uninitiated, this activity is the sum and substance of public relations. For them, PR stands for “Press Releases.” Because of this, it’s necessary to first establish the framework in which public relations writing takes place.

Writing Is Only One Component

First, it is important to realize that the preparation of messages for distribution is only one part of the public relations process. Public relations is actually composed of four core components: **research**, **planning**, **communication**, and **evaluation**. Public relations writing is part of the **communication** component, which only occurs after **research** has been conducted and after extensive **planning** to formulate the goals and objectives of a campaign has taken place. Planning also involves the selection of audiences to be reached, the key messages to be distributed, and the strategies that should be used to ensure the overall success of the program or campaign.

Strategies are statements of direction. A strategy, for example, might be to use multiple media outlets to reach women between the ages of 18 to 30 to make them aware of a new cosmetic on the market. In a public relations campaign, each strategy is made operational through a list of tactics. A tactic, for example, might entail the writing and placement of feature articles and “new product” reviews in appropriate women’s magazines. Such a tactic might even be specified to the point of listing how many product news releases and features would be written and what “angle” would be used in each one. Another tactic might be the placement of a celebrity spokesperson on a particular television show that reaches women in the target audience.

Writers as Communication Technicians

Public relations writers and media placement specialists are responsible for implementing the tactics of a campaign or program. They, by definition, fulfill the “technician” roles. They are the “production” staff who write the news releases, formulate the feature stories, and contact the television show producer to make a