

news & views

April 1999

A monthly forum of news and information for members of the Hampton Roads Virginia chapter of the Public Relations Society of America

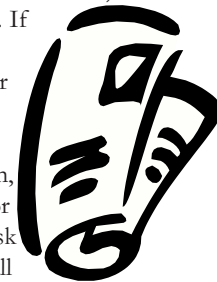
PR's Place In The Management Process

WANTED: Public Relations Professionals—senior-level and entry-level—interested in learning how enlightened management uses public relations as a strategic tool in the management process. Must attend the April 7, 1999, meeting of the Hampton Roads chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. Bob Fort, vice president of public relations for Norfolk Southern Corporation, will address the historic transportation restructuring taking place in the eastern United

States and discuss the major role that public relations has played in bringing this about. This is a case study of how enlightened management uses PR as a strategic tool in the management process.

Give Us Your Newsletter & Program Input

We are seeking member input for future meeting topics and upcoming issues of *News & Views*. If you have suggestions regarding meeting speakers or topics, please contact Carolyn A. Berry, APR, via email (carolynberry@earthlink.net) or phone (757-473-9237). If you have experienced a recent milestone in your career or if you would like to answer a future "Issue Advice" question, write a feature article, or be the expert in the "Ask The Expert" column (all of which will be published in the July and October issues of *News & Views*), please contact Shannon R. GaNun via email (sganun@erols.com) or phone (757-471-4859).



PRSA Luncheon Meeting

Wednesday, April 7, 1999
11:30 a.m.
Holiday Inn Executive Center
Virginia Beach

Registration is at 11:15 a.m.
\$15 Members • \$25 Guests
Reservations Due: Friday, April 2
Call or email Beth Harders for
reservations: 757-664-2531 or
bharders@hrccva.com

When making reservations, please leave your phone number and indicate if you are a member, guest, or student. Promissory billings cannot be accepted. No-shows or cancellations will be billed.

Important Contact Information

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An Effective Communication Plan

By Shannon R. GaNun

Before you start a journey, you have to know where you're going and how to get there. In the public relations field, the roadmap to reach your destination is the marketing/communication plan. By developing a comprehensive plan and religiously following it, companies will see improved communications and increased profits.

Establish A Purpose

The first step in developing a marketing/communication plan is to establish a purpose, which should be the essence of simplicity—people who read it should immediately understand what you're trying to accomplish. Here's an example: "The purpose of this plan is to establish regular communication with existing clients and to market the firm to potential clients."

List Specific Goals

Once your statement of purpose has been established, you need to set specific goals on how to get there. In order to ensure that your plan is followed, limit your goals to no more than five. These goals should be specific and able to be measured. For instance, a specific goal from the above purpose could be the following: "Develop a communication series to be mailed to all clients and prospects." You will develop detailed strategies to accomplish these goals later in the plan.

Determine Your Target Markets

Establishing well-defined markets that are reachable in a targeted manner is essential to the success of any marketing/communication plan. Be as specific as you can regarding your target markets.

Address External Factors

If any external factors are likely to affect your outcome, list them here. If one of your goals is to develop a quarterly newsletter and your competitor is already mailing a newsletter to your target market, write that down.

Develop A Campaign Slogan

This is an optional step in developing a

marketing/communication plan. If your company already has a slogan, you should incorporate it into this plan. If you think your plan would benefit by having a slogan, add it here.

Establish Specific Strategies

Under "strategies" on your marketing/communication plan, list each specific goal from above and then write down strategies to meet each goal. These strategies form the "meat" of the marketing/communication plan, so you should spend a good amount of time brainstorming. If one of your goals is to "Develop a communica-

Marketing/ Communication Plan

- PURPOSE
- GOALS
- TARGET MARKETS
- EXTERNAL FACTORS
- CAMPAIGN SLOGAN
- STRATEGIES
 - GOAL 1:
Strategies:
 - GOAL 2:
Strategies:
 - GOAL 3:
Strategies:
- CALENDAR
- BUDGET
- IMPLEMENTATION
- EVALUATION

tion series to be mailed to all clients and prospects," your strategies could include "Design a quarterly newsletter," "Design a monthly flyer," "Design postcards to be mailed on breaking news items," and "Develop a publication calendar."

Plan to conduct research. Find out what has worked for others in the same field and what can be learned from their experience. That way, you'll save time and avoid costly mistakes. The more information you have up front, the more successful your plan is likely to be. When you're developing strategies, it's important to think in terms of benefit to your customers and to your bottom line. If developing a corporate brochure will make your staff feel good but won't help your customers understand the benefits of your product or service and won't increase your sales, you probably shouldn't develop one.

Establish A Calendar

In order to ensure the success of your marketing/communication plan, establish clear deadlines and make sure all employees and consultants know the consequences of not meeting those deadlines. If you're serious about making the plan a success, you have to be serious about ensuring everyone meets the deadlines.

Develop A Budget

Now that you've determined the strategies, you must develop a budget. Review your strategies and determine a cost for each one.

Implement Your Plan

Once the plan is complete, you should determine the best way to implement it. Your plan will be comprehensive, but that doesn't mean the entire plan will need to be implemented at once. You may want to hire outside consultants to implement certain aspects of the plan, or you may wish to handle the entire implementation in-house. Your plan will be organized in such a way that you can pick the goals and strategies you want to concentrate on, when you want to concentrate on them.

Evaluate Your Plan

Evaluation is one of the most important parts of any marketing/communication

See *Plan* page 4



Shannon R. GaNun is a communication professional with a wide range of experience spanning a decade. She runs Communication Works, a consulting firm that provides quality writing, design, and communication expertise to help clients successfully promote their products and services. She believes that well-written, well-designed materials can increase clients' business and contribute to their bottom line.

“Ask The Expert” is a regular column in *News & Views*, featuring an interview with an expert about an important public relations issue. This month our expert is P. Lee Starkey, APR, who has more than 40 years of public relations experience. He was originally with the armed forces as a public affairs officer and later worked at Virginia Natural Gas for many years before retiring. He is still active with volunteer efforts.

Q: What advice do you have regarding communications for nonprofit organizations?

A: In a nutshell, every nonprofit needs a board communicator. Over the past 25 years I have been privileged to work with a number of nonprofit organizations on their communications. In practically every instance, the organization was seriously inhibited from attaining its potential by not having an effective communicator on its board of directors. In those situations where a board had a communicator with the requisite skills, the organization was not fully using the resource.

Few nonprofits have budgets adequate for all their requirements. This is certainly true when it comes to an organization’s communications. It is imperative that a nonprofit, above all, have at least one communicator director and then use that person fully in meeting public relations needs. Nowhere is this more important than for organizations that have no staff communicator. If your board does not have someone with an advertising, media, or public relations background, then your first priority must be bringing on board someone who does.

Once you have a director with acceptable communications skills, provide him or her with accurate and timely

information about the organization. With oversight from your board guru, your next step is strategic and short term planning. Normally done in the format of an annual campaign plan, it should establish responsibilities and specific tasks to support the key events of the organization’s annual operations. Many of the specifics will be determined by fundraising necessary to furnish revenue. Using the plan as a work document, execute it vigorously. Here your board communicator can advise, counsel, and frequently break trail for staff in reaching news organizations and in planning and conducting events.

As you implement your plan with counsel from your board communicator, be alert for “targets of opportunity” such as putting a local “hook” on a national or regional story. Doing this, you will develop rapport with media representatives and establish yourself as a valuable and credible source.

The final step is for you and your board communicator to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign plan and specific activities undertaken. After evaluation, begin the process anew. Don’t give your board communicator the free ride of just attending an occasional board meeting. Get your “money’s worth” from this valuable resource.

Issue Advice What is the best public relations lesson you ever learned?

Sandy Cameron-Adams Cameron Communications

The best lessons I have learned so far in public relations are very simple. First, make sure you can demonstrate the value of your public relations to your boss, especially in non-profit organizations. For instance, fundraisers can show an increase in funds; you need to find a way to tie that to your communications results. Perhaps even more important: Be nice to *everyone* you meet along the way—you never know when they can *and will* have a direct impact on your career. (Sounds like something your mom always said, but it’s very true!)

Dee-Dee Gee Marketing/Public Relations Manager Tidewater Regional Transit

Making the transition from television news producing to public relations proved to be a challenging transition. In news, I was used to objectively looking at information in terms of who, what, why, when, and where. Now that I’m in public relations, I take those same “5 Ws” and try to figure out the best way to present them to shine the best light on my employer. I recently learned the importance of positive publicity. Now, whenever my employer gets negative press, I immediately send out three positive facts about our organization and how we are handling the situation.

Kimberly K. Hinson, APR Director, Marketing and Development Virginia Air and Space Center

Make the reporters’ job easy by planning and preparing. In a press kit include the basics, but go one step further by providing story ideas, names, and phone numbers of people to interview; images with captions; and trivia in a clear, accurate, and easy to read format. Find ways to make their job easy and they will appreciate you and be more likely to provide positive news coverage of your organization. This concept also works well with other endeavors, such as working with your boss, sponsors, or board.

New Member Profiles

Nancy E. Gray is the public information manager for the Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD), a political subdivision of the state that provides wastewater treatment and related services to 16 cities and counties in southeastern Virginia. As the public information manager, Nancy oversees all aspects of public information, media relations, and environmental education. Before joining HRSD in August 1998, she was the public information specialist for the Norfolk Department of Public Works for nine years. The last four-and-a-half of those nine years were spent creating and implementing the public education program for Norfolk's Environmental Storm Water Management Program. The public education program has been recognized nationally through communications awards and in the state through a Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund grant. Nancy received her bachelor of arts in English and French from Frostburg State University in Maryland and the Universite de Franche-Comte in France and has supplemented her liberal arts education with numerous undergraduate and graduate environmental courses.

Kristen O'Neill joined the team of Barker Campbell Farley & Mansfield Advertising, Public Relations and Promotions in September 1998 as a public relations account manager. She is responsible for all aspects of the client's public relations needs, including media relations, promotions, special events, and strategic image planning. Kristen works with a team of public relations specialists on various accounts including Virginia Beach Tourism, the Revolutionary Fun Package, and Virginia Marine Products Board. Prior to her recent move to Virginia Beach, Kristen was the corporate communications and marketing associate at COLA, a nonprofit healthcare accreditation organization in Columbia, MD. Kristen earned a bachelor of science degree in speech communications/public relations from James Madison University.

Guidelines For Measuring PR Effectiveness

The Institute for Public Relations has published its *Guidelines and Standards for Measuring and Evaluating PR Effectiveness* on its web site (www.instituteforpr.com). The report summarizes the ideas, thoughts, and suggestions of a special task force seeking to set industry-accepted minimum criteria for evaluating public relations outputs and outcomes. It was posted on the internet in response to reports that PRSA was working to produce another set of measurement guidelines.

Dues Deadline Draws Near

If you haven't yet paid your 1999 Chapter dues, you'll want to get your check in by March 31, 1999. That's the deadline for inclusion in the new Chapter Membership Directory, an important benefit of membership. Dues will, of course, be accepted after that date, but you won't get a listing in the directory.

If you haven't received an invoice, please contact Alice Scanlan via email at ascanlan@city.virginia-beach.va.us or by phone at 757-437-6005. Payments should be sent to Nancy Smith, APR, at Virginia Natural Gas, 5100 East Virginia Beach Boulevard, Norfolk, VA 23502. She can be reached at 757-466-5503.

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plan. Establish regular checkpoints throughout the year. Remember that your marketing/communication plan is a long-term strategy designed to get you where you want to be. You may not see immediate results at your initial 90-day review, but don't give up. On the other hand, if you have been using a specific strategy for a year and you fail to see measurable results, you may wish to eliminate or change that strategy. It's important to regularly evaluate your plan so that you are getting the most value for your time and money.



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1988 Chapter Banner Award

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