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PUBLIC RELATIONS IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS:
A GUIDE TO ESTABLISHING PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS IN
NONPROFIT SETTINGS

By

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PART I

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INTRODUCTION

For many nonprofit organizations (NPOs), public relations, whether to recruit volunteers, publicize an event, or commemorate organizational milestones, is a scary, if not foreign, task. In most situations, employees at NPOs know their programs, the communities they serve, and are knowledgeable about the organization's target social issues, but do not how to perform public relations.

There has been a push in the nonprofit sector in recent years on developing public relations as a core competency, as evidenced by the increasing number of workshops and conference presentations on the subject. Recent workshop offerings include: "The Nuts and Bolts of Public Relations," presented at the 2005 Washington Library Association (WLA) Conference in Spokane, Washington; "Media Management: The Value of Relationships," presented at the 2006 Montana Nonprofit Association Annual Conference in Helena, Montana; and "Branding, Communications, and Public Relations" to be presented at a July 2007 day-long workshop presented by Technical Assistance for Community Services (TACS) in Portland, Oregon. Though these three presentations are but a sampling of the myriad of workshops and presentations directed at nonprofit organizations in the Pacific Northwest, it should be emphasized that all three focus on *media* relations—the composition and distribution of pitch letters, media advisories, press releases, and public service announcements. The truth is, public relations is much more than just press agency. However, with the decreasing emphasis on government funding and increased reliance on independent sources of funding (Frumppkin, 2006), funders want to know that their money will be used wisely, and media clippings are one way to

demonstrate this. Therefore, media relations usually comprises the bulk of NPO's public relations programs.

Many nonprofit organizations are already performing public relations, though not as strategically or effectively as they could. For example, sending out a monthly or quarterly newsletter to clients, employees, and supporters, or writing or distributing press releases and public service announcements in conjunction with a fundraiser or event most certainly qualify as public relations activities. Some NPOs even have established and maintained media contacts, and have impressive databases of supporters, donors, clients, and partners in the community. However, these resources may not be utilized to their fullest potential, and the public relations activities that are being done could be done more efficiently, consistently, and effectively. The purpose of this paper is to establish effective public relations programs in organizations that are either establishing a public relations program for the first time, or to increase the capacity and effectiveness of an existing public relations program.

Though NPOs in general and NPO employees in particular have become increasingly professionalized, public relations has still not been completely embraced by the nonprofit sector for several reasons, including lack of time and resources. Many nonprofit organizations are small operations with few, if any, paid staff. For these organizations, public relations seems a frivolous way to spend time and resources. Staffers already wear many hats in the organization, and deciding who should be charged with the organization's public relations activities may fall on the shoulders of the person with the most available time, not necessarily the person with the most experience. The basic operations of the organization, as dictated by the mission statement, take

precedence over public relations, and the organization's success is measured in quantifiable terms related to service output, not media coverage.

Simply put, many NPOs lack the resources to acquire a full-time public relations practitioner. As a result, many NPOs hire interns to perform public relations functions, as observed by internship postings on any university's career services website, a myriad of online intern search websites, and even job search engines that offer an internship search. At first glance, this seems a viable solution to the resources dilemma many NPOs face. However, most interns work at the NPO during the summer months or for a semester during the year. Interns rarely have the opportunity to meet the person who previously held their position, and as a result, the continuity of the position often suffers. For example, summer interns at an NPO might develop a database of media contacts, and distribute press releases accordingly. Interns who take their place in the fall may not know about the database or who was contacted, and thus relationships with gatekeepers may not be fostered.

If public relations is to be performed in the nonprofit setting, it must take into account the unique climate of NPOs, not be overly time consuming, and encourage continuity while recognizing that many people in the organization may be performing public relations functions. Additionally, given the challenges of establishing a public relations program in the nonprofit setting, nonprofits must be convinced it is an endeavor worthy of their time and energy. These are the aims of this paper, which I have divided into two parts: theoretical basis and practical application. In the theoretical basis section, I will explore relevant theoretical foundations and best practices. In the practical application section, I will apply the theoretical foundations and best practices to a guide

to establishing public relations programs in nonprofit settings. In the first part of this paper, the emphasis is on public relations in general; in the second part, information from the first part is applied to nonprofit settings, specifically for a non-academic audience.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Public Relations

Public relations has grown in importance in the modern business climate for many reasons, the most important being that managers realize that corporate image actually *does* have an impact on an organization's success (Benoit, 1995). Businesses realize that consumers are more loyal to companies with whom they have a relationship or connection, as exemplified by the old advertising adage, "it's cheaper to retain old customers than to recruit new ones." In times of crisis, managers realize that it is easier for an organization to rebound when they have accumulated a reservoir of goodwill—a reservoir contained by the strategies and actions of skilled public relations practitioners (PRPs) (Banks, 2001). In contrast, businesses that have a negative public image can be destroyed in times of crisis. For these reasons, public relations is an integral part of how corporate actions affect the public, and how corporate actions affect the public's *perception* of the organization.

Though public relations purports to improve or reinforce an organization's reputation and support from key publics, the field itself is plagued by an image problem. Since its recognition as a serious field of practice sometime in the early 50s, practitioners and scholars alike have failed to define what, precisely, public relations *does* for, and the value it adds to, an organization. In the modern business climate where much emphasis is placed on an organization's bottom line, it is imperative that those in the practice of "public relations" are able to identify what they do not only for the organizations they promote, but also to provide greater legitimacy to themselves and their field.

Early public PRPs received their training in mass communication (its addition to the canons of communication studies is relatively recent and inconsistent). This makes sense, as much of what PRPs do on a daily basis involves writing and disseminating information to journalists and other members of the mass media (Coombs, 2001). The problem with this approach is that such roots typically emphasize a media relations perspective. While media relations is an inherent facet of public relations, the terms are not interchangeable; that is, media relations describes a *function of* public relations, and is not public relations in and of itself. Especially as PRPs become increasingly more strategic in their planning and execution of public relations plans, and as scholars become increasingly sophisticated in their approach to theory and research, this perspective is very limiting.

From the PRP perspective, a media relations emphasis often fails in the long term, as it focuses on limited interactions with members of the mass media at times of organizational need, such as during financial or organizational crisis (Hallahan, 2001). Interaction with the media and key publics is transitory and infrequent, which can often negate the purpose of interacting with the media in the first place. A better approach is to focus on long-term, sustainable relationships and management of those relationships, as “it is in the organization’s best interest to have a relationship with its community such that the community will try to work out the problem with the organization” (Leeper, 2001, p. 101) when crisis strikes. Additionally, the media relations perspective confines the practice of public relations to simply writing pitch letters, press pleases, media advisories, and public service announcements (PSAs). Though such activities are typical

of PRPs, focusing just on media relations ignores a host of other functions and objectives of the practice of public relations.

From a scholarly perspective, a media relations emphasis ignores a key aspect of public relations: publics. Since it emphasizes relations with the media, it devalues the interactions between what an organization communicates about itself to its stakeholders and how stakeholders in turn respond to the organization. This is significant in that it ignores the importance of internal and external *relationship building and maintenance*. Infrequent interactions with the media only to promote an event, deliver organizational news or to bolster the organization's image when disaster hits, is not very strategic, and thus, does not lend itself to scholarly attention or theory building. Perhaps this is one reason why public relations has not been taken very seriously by scholars until about the mid-70s (Cheney & Christensen, 2001).

More recently, public relations has been cast off into the category of "integrated marketing communications" (IMC) and claimed under the domain of the business literature. Since it does involve the projection of an organization's image, and certain functions of marketing overlap with public relations practices, on the surface it appears this is a more appropriate realm for the discipline than communication literature. Unfortunately, business literature has traditionally "mistaken publicity-or-marketing-related public relations as the whole of public relations, often portraying public relations as an afterthought to an advertising campaign, designed to garner whatever 'free advertising' can be generated to complement the basic ad campaign" (Hutton, 2001, p. 212). Again, public relations does not receive the credit it deserves, as it is recognized primarily as a means of free advertising and not a strategic method of communication that

contributes to organizational outcomes and objectives. Scholars and PRPs alike must question why a field that specializes in the shaping of messages and the crafting of images has been unable to promote itself as a vital, rather than negligible, component of organizational communication. Surely, such ambiguity makes organizations question whether public relations is a necessary element or just another line item.

The image problem that plagues public relations is confounded by the fact that it is both a practice and a discipline:

As a practice, several professional organizations, such as the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), International Public Relations Association (IPRA), and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), differ in the aspects of the practice they emphasize, as do academics trying to define PR. The public is confused as to what it really is and what it is supposed to do (Cropp & Pincus, 2001).

The fact that so many professional organizations exist is not the only problem; the fact that the *disciplines* in which the professional organizations exist differ makes the situation more complex. As discussed above, communication and business scholars come from divergent backgrounds and opinions regarding the scope of public relations.

This is certainly not the first paper to explore the idea that public relations is itself experiencing a public relations crisis; various scholars and PRPs have noted the inconsistencies with how public relations is treated both in inter-and-intra-field contexts. Fortunately, respected scholars, notably, J. Grunig (1992; 2001), Cheney & Christensen (2001), Botan and Taylor (2004), Coombs (1995; 2001; 2004), Hallahan (1999; 2001), and Moffitt (1992; 1994; 2001), to name a few, have recognized the need to define public relations separately from the canons of journalism, mass media, business, and advertising, and have identified characteristics of the field in its own right. Through the lens of communication studies, public relations has the opportunity to be viewed as a

means of strategic communication, not just a half-hearted attempt at damage control or free publicity.

Public relations draws upon several major fields of communication, including: organizational communication, rhetoric, interpersonal communication, and intercultural communication (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). From organizational communication, public relations draws from the study of how communication works in organizations and between organizations. This helps provide a context for the internal and external messages created by PRPs to further the organization's goals. From rhetoric, public relations draws upon the study of audience adaptation, situation analysis, and message content. This helps PRPs craft appropriate, effective messages. From interpersonal communication, public relations draws upon the building and maintenance of relationships. This helps PRPs view the events that occur between the organization and the public as ongoing episodes in an ongoing relationship, and helps to emphasize the importance in the making or breaking of those relationships. Finally, from intercultural communication, public relations draws from the study of how messages are crafted and interpreted in different cultures. This helps PRPs understand the importance of creating messages appropriate to disparate audiences, as well as understand why some messages are received favorably while others are received negatively (Cheney & Christensen, 2001).

From these foundations, communication scholars studying public relations emphasize three essential features or functions of public relations: communication, management, and relationships. Says Coombs, "public relations is defined as the use of communication to manage the relationships between an organization and its

stakeholders” (2001, p. 106). Several other scholars recognize and support this perspective, such as J. Grunig, whose concept of public relations was “building relationships with publics that constrain or enhance the ability of the organization to meet its mission” (Botan & Taylor, 2004, p. 654).

This seminal difference—a focus on public relations as relationship management instead of a function of media relations or IMC—has the advantage of enabling more strategic technical activities in that it allows the organization “first, to identify the relationships among its various publics, and, second, to separate potentially effective rhetoric from ineffective rhetoric based on its unique message points and the relationships with and among its publics” (Springston & Keyton, 2001, p. 117). Additionally, as Ferguson (1984) emphasized, the relationship management perspective “will do as much to ‘legitimize’ the field of public relations, as have past efforts at defining the field in terms of the activities of those who practice it” (Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuro & Jones, 2003, pp. 25–26). It is from this relationship management perspective upon which I base this paper.

Essential features or functions of public relations

Since the relevant literature identifies three features or functions of public relations—communication, management, and relationships—it makes sense to examine how communication studies has contributed to the better understanding of each. In the following section, the various communication perspectives concerning each of these three features to the practice of public relations will be discussed, with the intent of better understanding the theoretical foundations of public relations within communication studies literature.

Communication and public relations

Public relations is essentially a communicative practice; that is, all major tasks carried out by PRPs are enacted by various means of communication. Gibson (1991) identified three conceptual dimensions of PRPs that reflect different varieties of communication—information, persuasion, and refutation (p. 176)—which illustrate this point. Gibson contends that one can best understand public relations by identifying what type of communication is manifested in particular situations, stating that “effective and ethical public relations occurs when organizational or individual needs are identified as informative, persuasive, or refutative, and when appropriate strategies and tactics are implemented based upon socially responsible, theory-based professional communication” (Gibson, 1991, p. 177).

Information, according to Gibson, reflects that standard methods of press agency, such as press releases, media advisories, public service announcements, and press conferences, with the intent of merely presenting information to the public. Persuasion’s role in public relations is best explained by Bettinghaus’ (1980) definition in a popular persuasion text: “a conscious attempt by one individual to change the attitudes, belief, or behavior of another individual or group of individuals through the transmission of some message” (p. 4). Essentially, this variety of communication describes the crux of what most people consider public relations. Finally, refutation occurs when an organization makes a mistake or encounters a crisis, and must respond with communication that mitigates the damage caused by the situation. Comparative advertising, crisis management, and advocacy campaigns are examples of appropriate strategies for situations that threaten an organization’s reputation.

Though the communication continuum described above does much to clarify what it is that public relations actually does, it does not explain *how* communication is or should be enacted. The reigning model, or how public relations *should* be enacted (according to scholars in the field), is the two-way symmetrical model originally developed by Grunig (1984) and his colleagues (See Figure 1.1: Two-Way Symmetrical Model). Essentially, their two-way symmetrical model views excellent public relations as a process of facilitating dialog between an organization and its stakeholders not only to solicit feedback and ameliorate concerns, but to modify an organization's behavior in mutually beneficial ways that facilitate building long-term relationships. As the name implies, it is a two-way model of communication in which the organization and its publics both act as a sender and a receiver. Two-way, symmetrical communication implies "mutual satisfaction rather than sacrifice on the part of one party" (Roper, 2005, p. 70). This is in contrast to the asymmetrical communication model (See Figure 1.2: Asymmetrical Model), in which the organization acts as the sender and its publics act as the receiver. In other words, the asymmetrical model is a one-way communication model.

The symmetrical model has fallen under scrutiny since its inception for several reasons, including the perception that it is overly idealistic, hegemonic, and lacks pragmatics. That is, many critical scholars argue that it is unrealistic for an organization to modify its behavior to appease its constituents, as what publics want may be in contrast to organizational strategy and objectives. It is hegemonic in that, despite the fact that it aims to act in mutually beneficial ways, the organization is promulgating the status quo. Organizations usually wield more power and resources than individuals, and the symmetrical model uses these resources to get stakeholders to behave in ways that further

the organization's agenda. Additionally, the two-way symmetrical model fails to prescribe how an organization is expected to act symmetrically, or to provide guidelines for establishing the symmetrical relationship.

Grunig counters that the symmetrical model better serves organizations than an asymmetrical model because "organizations get more of what they want when they give up some of what they want" (Grunig & White, 1992, p. 39). In other words, accommodating the concerns, needs, and desires of the public may ultimately be of greater benefit to an organization than traditional, autocratic, one-way communication methods.

The critique that symmetrical communication perpetuates hegemony is not so easy to refute. As Roper (2005) succinctly notes, "Hegemony can be defined as domination without physical coercion through the widespread acceptance of particular ideologies and consent to the practices associated with those ideologies. Hegemony includes...the acceptance...that leadership is not achieved through recognized democratic processes of open debate of alternative positions. Rather, it is achieved and maintained through the manufacturing of consent" (p. 70). Roper states that, since an organization actually receives more than it concedes, any attempt at two-way communication merely serves to distribute more power to organizations that already wield a considerable amount of power. Therefore, rather than foster the sort of dialog conducive to public discourse—which is at the opposite end of the spectrum than hegemony—the two-way symmetrical model merely reinforces the status quo. Rather than empowering publics, the organization still initiates communication, and decides the content and desired effect of the communication.

Critics argue that this is inherently manipulative. For example, public radio stations engage in annual pledge drives to raise funds, reconnect with their donors, and gauge the popularity of their programming. Though it is no secret that public radio stations want money, it is often done under the guise of showing support for the station and its programs, and giving the station some feedback. Though this is by no means a covert example, it does demonstrate the perpetuation of the status quo. The station does not overtly solicit feedback unless it needs that feedback to accomplish their objectives.

Though the two-way symmetrical model is commonly regarded as being more ethical than the one-way asymmetrical model, Roper questions that assumption, as the concessions made to stakeholders may be “just enough” to quiet public criticism, allowing essentially a business as usual strategy to remain” (p. 83). Further, by making substantive changes to their practices, businesses do so in order to maintain the status quo, not challenge it. That is, no matter how accommodating, businesses are serving the needs of the public to better serve their interests.

Other scholars, though not quite as critical of the two-way symmetrical model as Roper, have also acknowledged the model’s shortcomings. David (2004) specifically noted that the model lacked a pragmatic dimension. That is, the model contains no operational guidelines. To address this concern, David developed the 3Ps model—professional values, practice, and pragmatics. The addition of pragmatics to the model reorganizes “symmetry and skills into core professional values and professional practice” (David, 2004, p. 208) to make the model more meaningful and readily understandable in practice. However, David fails to operationalize his “model”—that is, he neither explains nor recommends methods for incorporating the 3Ps.

In response to these criticisms, Grunig and his colleagues have readjusted the model somewhat to acknowledge the fact that the original model was somewhat idealistic and perpetuated the status quo. The revised model—the mixed-motive model (See Figure 1.3: Mixed-Motive Model)—acknowledges that situational factors must be taken into account in selecting a communication strategy, and, sometimes, the organization must exert power over its publics to meet the best interests of the organization and its stakeholders. Moreover, the revised model recognizes that PRPs not only must communicate with publics; they also must communicate with the dominant coalition, which is a group of powerful internal stakeholders empowered to make key decisions in an organization, such as strategic planning, resource allocation, and influences of public relations practices (Berger, 2005).

It should be noted that, in order to enact the mixed-motive model, PRPs have at their disposal the communication strategies identified in Gibson's communication continuum. That is, sometimes communicating with both stakeholders and the dominant coalition calls for information dissemination; other times, it calls for persuasion, and still other times, refutation is necessary.

Under the mixed-motive model, PRPs “negotiate both with publics and dominant coalitions to reach an outcome or relationship in the win-win zone. In communicating with publics, public relations practitioners try to persuade publics to move toward their organizations' position. In communicating with dominant coalitions, they try to persuade dominant coalitions to move toward their publics' position” (Grunig, 2001, p. 26). The revised model subsumes the previous symmetrical/asymmetrical models, and recognizes that, in some situations, the symmetrical model will be superior to the asymmetrical

model in accomplishing the organization's objectives, and, in other situations, the asymmetrical model will be superior to the symmetrical model. This should come as no surprise, since, as with Gibson's communication continuum, PRPs must select the appropriate tactics to increase organizational effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction. All communicative needs do not require the same tactics or strategies, especially given the fact that, sometimes, the organization and public interests are in conflict. Notes Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995) of their model, "organizations and publics are viewed as having separate and sometimes conflicting interests. Nevertheless, negotiation and collaboration make it possible for organizations to and publics to find common ground, the win-win zone" (p. 48).

The combination of the symmetrical/asymmetrical models in no way discounts the contributions of press agency and media relations in the practice of public relations. In fact, the mixed-motive model increases the contribution of public relations to organizational effectiveness by increasing the range of options appropriate for a given communication situation. The role of the PRP, then, is to determine which variety of communication is called for in a given situation, and to determine whether that variety will yield the best results enacted symmetrically or asymmetrically.

Relationships and Public Relations

Emphasizing the building and maintenance of relationships is an important element of any public relations program. Inherent in this focus is the constitution of relevant organizational publics with whom to build and manage relationships. So essential is the management of relationships with key publics that Grunig identified their constitution as the core of public relations practice (Springston, Keyton, Leichy &

Metzger, 1992). As Springston, Keyton, Leichty & Metzger (1992) succinctly put it, recognizing an organization's interdependence with relevant publics and cultivating long-term relations with them provides a strong theoretical basis for application to public relations practice. It is worthwhile, then, to define "public," discuss changing perspectives of publics, and explore the connection between relationship management, constitution of publics, and issue management. Such issues will be explored in the context of three levels of relationships: individual, public (referring to a population segment, not a concerning a population as a whole), and community.

Publics have been defined in many ways. Dewey (1927) defined publics as groups of people who recognize a shared interest in an organization and who work towards a common goal. More recently, Heath (2001) defined publics by isolating the idiosyncratic opinions that shape the values and choices of various segments of the population. Because each segment of the population, or "public," expresses its own self-interest in terms of public policy issue positions, product or service choices, and attitudes about a person, group, or organization (Heath, 2001, p. 47), it can be inferred that the shared meanings, attitudes, knowledge, and opinions held by a population segment are characteristics that describe a particular public. Though both Dewey and Heath recognize an interest in an organization as a characteristic of a public, Heath is more explicit in his definition in that he further defines publics as people *whose self-interest is affected by organizational outcomes*.

Though Heath's definition is more inclusive than Dewey's, it fails to address the fact that each individual within a public has the potential to hold and manage multiple images (that is, the collective meanings, attitudes, knowledge, and opinions of a public)

of an organization (Moffitt, 1994). Moffitt (1994) notes that it is important to understand the potential for individuals to have “flexible, multiple, and overdetermining images at any moment” (p. 166) because it is improbable that a segment of the population as defined by Heath and Dewey would share the same set of images of an organization at a given time.

This point is significant in that PRPs need to recognize that a *public's* image of an organization is determined by various organizational, environmental, personal, and media experiences processed *by the individuals within a population segment* (Moffitt, 1994). This is important for three reasons. First, the fact that an individual's experience and individual images of the organization combine to create a public experience and image of an organization should provide an impetus to build meaningful, long-term relationships on both an individual and public level. Second, an individual's images are not *just* formed by the formal, organizationally sanctioned messages received by an individual; they are also formed by the individual's informal history and experience with the organization. Third, an individual's history and experience with an organization does not mean that the individual holds a singular organizational image. In fact, because of an individual's varying levels of involvement with and commitment to an organization, “these individuals vested in the organization hold several public positions and several images within themselves” (Moffitt, 1994, p. 168). Essentially, this means that publics hold many more images than academics and PRPs had recognized in the past, and those images are less rigid and stable than has been previously assumed.

Vasquez and Taylor (2001) reinforce this point in their discussion of the situational perspective of publics, recognizes that publics are not “a permanent collection

of individuals with enduring characteristics; rather, it is viewed as a collection of individuals, identified by social-psychological variables, that emerges in response to a problem” (p. 144). Specifically, Vasquez and Taylor identified four generally enduring publics: all-issue publics (who are active on all issues), apathetic publics (who are inattentive to all issues), single-issue publics (who are active on one or a small set of issues that concern a portion of the population), and hot-issue publics (who are active on issues that affect nearly everyone) (Vasquez & Taylor, 2001, pp. 143-144).

Though individual perceptions of the organization based on relational history are unstable, and, consequently, a public’s perceptions of an organization are unstable, it is interesting to note that communicating with all organizational stakeholders can contribute to a sense of social bonding which helps project a consistent organizational image to the community. As Starck and Kruckeberg explain, “communicating with all environmental constituents equates with building relationships vital to creating a sense of community” (Starck and Kruckeberg, 2001, p. 56). It is difficult, if not impossible, to reach key publics and the individuals who comprise those publics without fostering a sense of community that emphasizes the three dimensions of community building: involvement, nurturing, and organizing (Leeper, 2001, p. 101). Much research has been done in recent years on the importance of building relationships with an organization’s community, as evidenced by the increasing frequency of “good corporate citizenship” programs sponsored by both large corporations and local businesses. This makes sense in that organizations are realizing the importance of building a reservoir of goodwill within the communities they operate to increase favorable perceptions, sway governmental

influence regarding legislation and zoning in the organization's favor, and to stabilize public opinion if and when crisis hits.

Much of what shapes a community's perception of an organization is decided by an organization's dominant coalition. From a public relations perspective, the two products of dominant coalitions—decisions and deliverables—have the potential to build or destroy relationships with individual, public, and community stakeholders. Decisions, which “translate into actions and values, and deliverables... that are delivered to, or enacted with, publics” (p. 13), are transactions that directly or indirectly impact the organization's stakeholders. Deliverables, or the “news releases, speeches, position statements, newsletter copy, (and) announcements” (p. 13) shape the public discourse and the community's impression of the organization. It is essential, then, that PRPs be a part of the dominant coalition. Implicit in the perspective of dominant coalitions is the assumption “that practitioners will do the “right” thing once inside the dominant coalition—they will or will try to represent the voices and interests of others and to shape an organization's ideology and decisions to benefit the profession, the organization, and greater society” (Berger, 2005, p. 5).

Perception of publics. While the concept of “public” has only gradually matured since 1927, the *perception* of publics has shifted substantially. Botan and Taylor's (2004) identification of two historically predominant perspectives of publics—the *functional* perspective and the *cocreative* perspective—calls attention to this paradigm shift. The *functional* perspective, which was characteristic of the early years of the field, “sees publics and communication as tools or means to achieve organizational ends. The focus is

generally on techniques and production of strategic organizational messages” (Botan & Taylor, 2004, p. 651). In contrast, the *cocreational* perspective

sees publics as cocreators of meaning and communication as what makes it possible to agree to shared meanings, interpretations, and goals. This perspective is long term in its orientation and focuses on relationships among publics and organizations (Botan & Taylor, 2004, p. 652).

Importantly, this perspective views publics as partners in the meaning-making process, and not just a means to an end. Notably, the *cocreational* perspective emphasizes relationships (Botan & Taylor, 2004) and is thus consistent with the view of relationship management as a function of public relations.

Management and public relations

Now that the topics of communication and relationship have been discussed, I will focus on how communication is used to manage relationships with key publics. More often than not, PRPs manage relationships with their stakeholders when an issue comes to the forefront. Issues management is considered a means for relationship management in that it allows individuals, organizations, and the media to participate in matters of social or political importance (Botan & Taylor, 2004). Through this participation, relationships between individuals, organizations, and the media may be created, reinforced, threatened, or dissolved. It is important to differentiate issues from crises, as the two terms are often used interchangeably. Issues are important topics or problems being discussed in the public sphere; crises are times of difficulty that threaten an organization’s face.

An issue is not necessarily a face-threatening act (FTA)—issues could be defined as simply as matters of importance for an organization’s stakeholders. In the nonprofit context, issues may justify an organization’s existence; that is, the organization exists to ameliorate some matter of social concern (human rights, improving educational

opportunities, providing affordable housing or healthcare, etc.). It makes sense, then, given this distinction, that issues can be used to communicatively manage relationships. Specifically, public relations can be used as a tool to identify the existence of an issue by calling attention to its significance using standard press agency, and making the issue relevant to key publics via marketing methods and framing (Hallahan, 1999). PRPs can use this attention and significance to implement appropriate response strategies. These strategies could include dissemination of messages to the community at large or specific populations affected by the issue, the building of coalitions to increase impact and effectiveness while lessening duplication of efforts, or the organization of lobbying efforts to address the issue directly. In other words, issues provide an opening for organizations to build or maintain relationships.

Issues undergo a fairly predictable development cycle, which enables strategic campaigns to be developed that are appropriate to varying stages of the issue's life cycle (Botan & Taylor, 2004). The organization can then respond communicatively to the issue based on the context of the situation. Specifically, Botan and Taylor (2004) identify five stages of issue development defined by the role played by communication: preissues (environmental occurrences to which publics have not attached significance but could) imminent (preissues which some group or important individuals have attached significance to), current (issues which have acquired legitimacy in the eyes of others, usually via media exposure), critical (the issue is ready for resolution in the minds of most publics), and dormant (issues are resolved or simply fade from public attention) (pp. 656-657). The wording of the last stage in the cycle—dormant—is significant in that it “suggests that issues do not go away but can come back to the preissue or potential stage,

where both monitoring and response development should continue. Therefore, any “resolution” of an issue is best understood to be temporary, and each apparent resolution has the kernel of one or more issues that are new contained within it” (Botan & Taylor, 2004, p. 657).

Relevance of the Relationship Management Perspective to Nonprofit Organizations

Broadly speaking, nonprofits are essentially a service industry. That is, nonprofits fill a need to provide services and support to people in their communities. Often, an NPO’s clients are underprivileged, and the nonprofit fills the gap between government programs and other social services. If public relations is to be effective in nonprofits, it needs to acknowledge the existence of hegemony as an obstacle in building relationships.

The mixed-motive model advocated by the relationship management approach realizes that hegemony sometimes will manifest itself in an organization’s ongoing relationship with its publics, and also recognizes that this hegemony is sometimes necessary to accomplish organizational objectives. However, the relationship management approach also advocates actions that result with both the organization and its publics in the win-win zone, and, wherever possible, seeks to find mutually beneficial solutions to problems and opportunities. For these reasons, the relationship management perspective is appropriate for public relations in nonprofit settings.

Summary of Theory for Application

In this section, I justified the use of the relationship management approach to public relations, and explored relevant literature that describes effective public relations. Specifically, the roles of communication, relationships, and management were examined.

Based on the literature, the following points are helpful in devising and implementing effective public relations:

1. PRPs need to determine a public's communicative needs; that is, does the public merely need to be provided with information, persuaded to alter a belief or to act on an issue, or sent refutative messages?
2. PRPs need to determine whether it is in the organization's best interest or the public's best interest to use one-way or two-way communication to enact the informative, persuasive, or refutative message. The choice of symmetrical or asymmetrical communication should be based on whether the selection ultimately benefits the organization, the publics, or the dominant coalition. Ideally, the choice will result in both dyads—organization/dominant coalition and organization/publics—falling into the win-win zone.
3. Communication should view publics as partners in the meaning-making process, and not just a means to an end.
4. Publics may hold many different opinions about an organization based on the fact that the individuals that comprise a public do not have a static perception of the organization. That is, individual perceptions of an organization vary based on their interactional history with the organization. Therefore, multiple messages must be disseminated to accomplish the varying communicative needs of publics.
5. Management of publics should be seen as an opportunity to build or maintain relationships with stakeholders. Promoting issues of importance to a public is a good way to build coalitions, reach out to the media, and make connections with

individuals of influence or those who may be interested in becoming involved with the organization.

CHAPTER TWO: RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

Viewing public relations from the relationship management perspective provides many benefits; namely, it provides a more strategic foundation for building effective communication. In the previous chapter, I discussed the rationale for the relationship management perspective. However, I did not discuss how to build a public relations program based on the relationship management approach. That is the focus of this chapter. For public relations to be socially responsible, organizations must be willing not only to provide publics with pertinent information but also to engage the public in their decision-making processes. In this capacity, public relations has the effect of binding individuals to groups, binding groups to institutions, and binding institutions to society, not only weaving people and groups into existing sets of values, but also enabling groups to work together in weaving a new part of the social fabric (Smith & Ferguson, 2001).

Relationship Management Program Planning

Various scholars, including Kelly (2001), Ledingham and Bruning (1998, 2001), Wilson (2001a, 2001b), and Woodward (2000), identify phases in the process of public relations program planning. It is through these phases that relationship management is enacted, and by enacting the phases of relationship management, PRPs elaborate on media relations by fostering relationships with stakeholders. Though phase distinction among the scholars is fairly arbitrary, for the purposes of this paper, I will focus on six phases: research, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and stewardship. Each will be discussed in turn, and I will also discuss how each phase in the relationship management approach differs from the media relations approach.

Research

Research is the first phase in relationship management program planning. In this phase, PRPs take an inventory of the organization's environment to assess the areas where strategic communication can be used to capitalize on strengths and achievements, address weaknesses, enhance opportunities, and protect against threats.

To fully assess the environment, Kelly (2001) recommends examining the organization the PRPs work for, the opportunity, problem, or issue faced by the organization, and the publics related to or affected by the organization and opportunity. Failing to research all three areas can actually decrease organizational effectiveness (Kelly, 2001). That is, if a PRP addresses one area but not another, the organization may benefit at the cost of the stakeholders, or the problem may be solved at the expense of long-term organizational success. If the relationship management approach is to be effective, PRPs must realize that the three areas are interrelated, not separate and distinct. Therefore, a single issue or opportunity will affect all three areas, quite possibly in considerably different ways. By analyzing the environment holistically, PRPs aim to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in all three areas with the intention of better understanding the environment to create a solution for all stakeholders, internal and external.

The three-pronged approach to research is the first difference between relationship management and media relations. To be fair, media relations advocates a careful analysis of the environment, including an analysis of the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis), but the media relations perspective usually just focuses on benefiting the organization by solving a problem

using strategic communication. Again, it should be apparent that the public really isn't involved in the strategy; the organization recognizes that a problem or opportunity affects certain stakeholders, but the effect is actually to save organizational face rather than use the situation calling for strategic communication as an opportunity to better serve the needs of the community.

To address these three areas, Ledingham and Bruning (2001) recommend three steps: (1) creating a list of all key constituencies; (2) circulating the list throughout the organization to gain insight into the relationships between the organization and the key publics identified; and (3) identifying the needs of the community. The research phase should be a participative process, and as many people from the organization as possible should be included both to build commitment to the relationship management process and to create as comprehensive an environmental survey as possible. For the first step, the organization should consider all groups and individuals influenced or affected by the organization, including employees, board members, volunteers, donors, clients, government officials who make decisions regarding issue(s) pertinent to the organization, community members who support and oppose the organization, members of the media who cover the issue(s), specialty publications, organizations which work with the organization, organizations to which the organization is a member, and opinion leaders who support and oppose the organization, to name a few.

Once these stakeholders have been identified, the list should be circulated among the organization to gain more potential stakeholders, and to identify the relationships between the stakeholders and the organization. In this step, the objectives are to precisely identify the nature of the stakeholder/organization relationship, and prioritize those

relationships that are most important both to the organization and to the stakeholders. Though the relationship management approach advocates building relationships with all stakeholders, the simple fact is that organizations—especially nonprofit organizations—have neither the time nor the resources to invest in all relationships equally. Identifying which individuals and groups are most dependent on the organization (usually clients), and which the organization is most dependent on (usually clients and donors) should receive the most attention. It should be noted that in most cases, the media will not be a relational priority, which suggests that PRPs should spend more time and attention fostering relationships higher up on the priority list.

The final step in the research process should be to identify the needs of the community in the organization's area of expertise. Especially in nonprofit organizations, the needs of the community should dictate the organization's actions, and periodically, the organization should adjust its actions to better serve the community's needs. The needs of each constituent identified in the first two steps should be explored both separately and aggregately from the needs of the community. For organizations just starting a public relations program, or for those implementing a relationship management program for the first time, Ledingham and Bruning (2001) advise assembling an advisory panel consisting of representatives from the organization and key constituents to develop organization/community relationships, and design communication programs. PRPs should connect with representatives of identified constituencies and ask them what they want, need, and expect from the organization. Members need not be physically present for the panel—input may be conveniently solicited via phone or email interviews. However, there is some benefit to assembling a few focus groups to gain a gestalt

impression of what the public needs, wants, and expects. Once the research phase has been completed, the information gathered can be applied to the second phase, planning.

Planning

Planning is the second phase. In this phase, a plan is devised for satisfying the opportunity or problem using strategic communication to benefit both the stakeholders and the organization. The first step to planning is to identify the public relations problem after studying stakeholder input (Wilson, 2001b). The public relations problem, by definition, is a problem where strategic communication is expected to change the situation. If the problem does *not* involve communication as part of the solution, it is not a public relations problem (Pearson, 1987). This is a critical point to make; public relations cannot solve *all* of an organization's problems, but it *can* solve the problems related to communication, including image problems, lack of community or financial support, or crisis management.

Define dimensions. The second step is to define the dimensions of the public relations situation (Wilson, 2001a). As Pearson (1987) notes, the dimensions of the public relations situation includes the audience, the communication effect, and the message. This step is where the planning really takes place; the PRP considers the desired effect of strategic communication on each audience, and the best way to present messages to encourage those effects. The answers to these considerations should be phrased as a public relations objective statement that identifies who will be influenced, the desired action resulting from the communication, and the thesis of the message (Pearson, 1987). Each public relations objective (there should be at least one for each of the key

constituencies) becomes a specific goal the public relations program hopes to achieve. This public relations statement acts as the goal for the overall campaign.

Set objectives. The third step is to set specific, measurable objectives and realistic timelines (Kelly, 2001; Wilson, 2001a). Essentially, these objectives clearly outline how the goal will be achieved. Kelly (2001) identifies two types of objectives: output and impact. Output objectives identify what public relations activities should be produced, and direct programming to contribute to future success. Impact objectives identify the desired program effects, and are formulated to “direct programming that will *create* awareness, *change* accuracy and understanding, and *reinforce* positive attitudes and behaviors” (Kelly, 2001, p. 288, emphasis in original). The attainment of both should clearly link with the broader organizational objectives. As Wilson (2001a) notes, public relations “cannot be evaluated as strategic—contributing to the accomplishment of mission and goals—if it is not systematically planned with that mission and those goals in mind” (p. 216).

Identify key publics. The fourth step is to identify the key publics whose actions are necessary to accomplish the program’s objectives (Wilson, 2001a). Specific messages incorporating each audiences’ self interests should be created “in ways that have relevance and meaning for audiences” (Hallahan, 1999, p. 224). Next, appropriate channels to direct the messages to the target audiences should be identified. It is worthwhile at this point to discuss channel selection. At first, it seems contradictory to discuss media selection in a relationship management program, as the bulk of the previous pages have refuted such an approach. However, by this point, it should be abundantly clear that relationship management is far more comprehensive and sustainable

than media relations, and, while relationship management does not rely solely on the media to accomplish its objectives, it is necessary to select appropriate channels for message dissemination, and usually, these channels are controlled by the media.

Proper channel selection is based on media richness theory, which states that “media can be characterized as high or low in ‘richness’ based on their capacity to facilitate meaning” (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987, p. 358). Basically, people match communication tasks with media perceived to be most efficient for accomplishing those tasks. Kelleher (2001) explains that people select rich or lean media based on two factors: richness and equivocality.

Richness is determined by a medium’s ability “to convey (a) quick feedback, (b) personal focus, (c) multiple communication cues, and (d) language variety” (Kelleher, 2001, p. 306). As Kelleher (2001) explains,

Whereas face-to-face communication allows communicators to exchange immediate feedback, vary their tone of voice, use body language and visual aids, and precisely tailor communication for specific individuals, other media are limited in at least one, if not all, of these capacities. According to the basic tenets of media richness theory, then, oral communication is generally richer than written communication (Kelleher, 2001, p. 306).

Equivocality refers to the message’s potential to have “multiple and conflicting interpretations about an organizational situation” (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987, p. 357). As a rule of thumb, messages that have a high potential for confusion, will have a strong impact on stakeholders, or will otherwise substantially alter the organization’s relationship with its stakeholders, should be delivered with a richer, more personalized medium. Messages that are fairly straightforward, are merely disseminating routine information, and either reinforce or don’t substantially alter the organization’s relationships with its stakeholders, should be delivered with a leaner, more efficient

medium (Hallahan, 2001). Thus, channel selection requires PRPs to assess the needs of each public and the potential for equivocation before deciding on a rich or lean medium.

Once PRPs have considered the needs of all target audiences, specific, appropriate media should be selected for each message. Table 2.1: Channel Selection identifies the five main sources of media, and identifies several factors PRPs should consider in selecting appropriate media for public relations programs. As Hallahan (2001) notes, the combined selection of all media should “achieve closely related but separate objectives that together are intended to achieve an overall program goal” (Hallahan, 2001, p. 470). All of these factors should be considered before the program implementation phase.

Create calendar. The final steps are “the creation of a *calendar* or campaign timetable and of a complete public-by-public *budget* for the entire effort” (Wilson, 2001a, p. 220; emphasis in original). Even in nonprofit organizations, some funding is necessary to produce the program, such as printing, mailing, and labor costs. Establishing a budget of both time and money will prevent the public relations program from consuming a considerable amount of organizational resources, and will also provide a definitive deadline for results, which is essential to program evaluation.

Implementation

Implementation is the third phase. In this phase, activities designed to bring about the objectives stated in the planning phase are actually implemented, and publicity campaigns are launched to raise awareness of those objectives (Kelly, 2001). Often, planning and implementation are considered the same phase, but this is problematic in that crafting specific, measurable objectives must guide the identification of activities to accomplish those objectives, and only after those strategic activities have been identified

may they be implemented. As Wilson (2001a) explains, implementation consists of charting “the logic of the communication tactics to ensure that, while tactics are designed with creativity and imagination, they still meet standards established by the analytical planning process” (p. 220).

Monitoring

Monitoring is the fourth phase. In this phase, the organization carefully observes and tracks behavioral, environmental, and attitudinal changes by surveys, questionnaires, or observation (Ledingham & Bruning, 2001). If necessary, the organization must modify its behavior accordingly to make the public feel their needs are being met. Any behavioral modification must be dictated purely by community response. This step entails some sort of mechanism to measure community response, be it an increase in donations during a particular period, a survey sent to a variety of external stakeholders before and after implementation, or a follow-up meeting with the individuals gathered for the focus group in the second step.

Evaluation

The fifth phase is evaluation. In this phase, the overall effectiveness of the public relations program is evaluated in terms of the measurable objectives outlined in the second phase. Evaluation consists of three levels: preparation evaluation, process evaluation, and program evaluation; each will be discussed in turn.

Preparation evaluation. Preparation evaluation consists of assessing messages and techniques. Specifically, it attempts to evaluate whether the public relations strategies identified in the planning stage and executed during the implementation phase were appropriate vehicles for meeting organizational and community objectives. This level of

analysis considers whether the correct steps were taken to effectively disseminate strategic communication, which may be determined by the appropriateness of channel selection, the content of the messages, and the overall effectiveness of planning and implementation.

Process evaluation. Process evaluation consists of monitoring and adjusting programming. As a result of process evaluation, the organization should consider how well the public relations program affected community needs, the relevancy of the needs identified in the first phase (research), whether other needs should have been addressed or should be addressed in the future, the extent to which the program improves the community's perception of the organization/community relationship, and how satisfactorily the program meets organizational and community needs (Watson, 2001).

Program evaluation. Program evaluation consists of three levels, identified by Wilson (2001a), to compare program results to the set objectives: commercial effectiveness, simple effectiveness, and objectives effectiveness. Commercial effectiveness is a justification of resources spent. That is, the overall accomplishments of the program are compared to the resources allocated to the program. A program that was highly successful in accomplishing the program objectives identified in the second phase would thus justify the time and money spent in research, planning, implementation, and monitoring. Conversely, a program that was unsuccessful in accomplishing the program objectives would not. In the case of a successful campaign, public relations practitioners should take care to identify what characteristics made the program successful so the organization can replicate those characteristics in the future. In the case of an unsuccessful campaign, the preparation and process must be carefully examined and

modified, and the characteristics that made the program fail should be identified so they may be avoided in the future.

Simple effectiveness asks whether a program has worked in terms of output, and is a technique derived from the media relations perspective. It is called simple effectiveness because it does not measure attitudinal or behavioral changes, just the amount of coverage garnered by a public relations program. When people consider simple effectiveness, they are usually referring to media measurement. That is, evaluation of simple effectiveness focuses on how many media mentions a campaign garnered, not how effective the messages were in affecting attitudinal and behavioral change.

Simple effectiveness is historically measured by the column inches of press cuttings or mentions on electronic media. As Watson (2001) notes, counting media mentions fail

because they cannot demonstrate the requirements for validity or reliability. They can be skewed by the subjectivity of different personalities undertaking the judgment, and they cannot be replicated. Some are little more than sales lead measures, and others that consider “tone” of articles, opportunities to see, or media ratings are judgments that are made to suit the client/ employer rather than to measure the effectiveness of reaching target markets. Too often, the evaluation is determined after the campaign is set in motion (p. 260).

Another shortcoming of the simple effectiveness measure is that when effectiveness is measured in terms of how much “ink” a campaign achieved, it fails to consider how many people actually received the message. Additionally, the success of simple effectiveness measures places the impetus on the media to deliver results. This is problematic for two reasons: (1) it lessens the organization’s control of the message; and (2) it places the media solely in control of the program’s effectiveness.

Objectives effectiveness evaluates the program in terms of meeting objectives and creating the desired effects (Wilson, 2001b). Referring back to the second phase, objectives effectiveness considers whether the objectives identified in the planning stage were accomplished, and how well those objectives influenced the desired effects. A successful program would be one that both met the objectives and achieved the desired attitudinal and behavioral effects. An unsuccessful program would be one that met the objectives, but did not achieve the desired attitudinal and behavioral effects.

As a result of the three levels of analysis, the organization should determine the overall effectiveness of the program plan, and make adjustments as necessary. If the organization is unsatisfied with the outcomes, the plan must be reassessed, and another program implemented. If the organization *is* satisfied with the outcomes, the organization's work is not over—as Kelly (2001) notes, relationship management is an ongoing process, and, whether successful or unsuccessful, the needs of both the organization and the community are dynamic. Thus, new programs and behavioral adjustments are periodically necessary to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are being met.

Stewardship

The final phase is stewardship. In this phase, public relations practitioners loop back to the first phase, and engage in four elements essential to relationship management as identified by Kelly (2001): reciprocity, responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing. Stewardship is a relatively new phase recognized by the relationship management perspective, but it nicely completes the program, and provides the foundation for future interactions with stakeholders.

Reciprocity involves the organization demonstrating “its gratitude for supportive beliefs and behaviors” (Kelly, 2001, p. 283). The organization may reciprocate by modifying programs or procedures to demonstrate its appreciation for community support, host an event, or give key publics a small token of gratitude.

Responsibility involves the organization conducting business in a socially responsible matter. This is an important element in the relationship management process, as it infers that an organization should act ethically all the time, not just when it is under scrutiny or needs to build alliances to accomplish objectives. Similarly, reporting involves the organization accounting for its business practices and actions, and taking accountability for any organizational misdeeds. People like to believe that the businesses they support conduct business fairly and honestly. Providing accurate accounts of the organization’s doings, in formal communication such as annual reports or in informal communication such as newsletters or in interactions with the media, reinforces the public’s trust in the organization.

Finally, relationship nurturing involves regularly reaching out to key publics, and providing feedback mechanisms to solicit input between major public relations campaigns. Typically, media relations only reaches out to key publics when a campaign is occurring, but relationship management recognizes the benefit of sustaining the organization’s relationships over the long term. As Kelly (2001) observes, the added step of stewardship “not only ensures continuity in the public relations process but also promotes ethical behavior by practitioners and their organizations” (p. 283).

Summary of Theory for Application

In this section I explained the process of performing a public relations campaign from the relationship management perspective, and showed how, in practice, relationship management differs from media relations. Each of the six steps of the relationship management process were explained in detail. Based on the literature, the following points are helpful in establishing a relationship management program:

1. PRPs should conduct extensive research to evaluate the organization the PRPs work for, the opportunity, problem, or issue faced by the organization, and the publics related to or affected by the organization and opportunity. The relationships between an organization and its stakeholders should be defined and documented, and then prioritized according to which stakeholders are most dependent *on* the organization, and which stakeholders are most crucial *to* the organization.
2. Extensive planning should occur to define the public relations problem, and identify communication tactics to address those problems. Feedback from the first step should be considered in defining clear, measurable goals, defining objectives to accomplish those goals, constructing messages to meet the needs of key publics and accomplish the objectives, selecting proper media channels to disseminate those messages, and establishing budgets and timelines. The plan should also include a terminal date for accomplishing the objectives not only to conserve time and money, but also to provide a definitive end to the public relations campaign.
3. During the implementation phase, publicity campaigns are launched to raise awareness of the program objectives. PRPs should consider planning and implementation separately to ensure the plan is executed strategically.

4. PRPs must carefully monitor the plan after it is implemented to make minor adjustments and ensure that the program is meeting the needs of the organization and its stakeholders. PRPs should include some feedback mechanism to gauge community response after the program has been implemented.
5. After the campaign deadline, PRPs should sit down with managers and evaluate the preparation (how well the campaign was researched and planned), process (how well the campaign was implemented and monitored), and program (the overall effectiveness of the campaign). The strengths and weaknesses should be identified and discussed, and plans should be made for what future programs should accomplish.
6. All six steps in the relationship management process are important, but stewardship is the step that really differentiates relationship management from media relations. Based on the evaluation of the campaign, the organization should define the means for building the foundation for future interactions with stakeholders, and demonstrate appreciation for the stakeholders. Even in times the organization is not engaging in public relations activities per se, it should always conduct business in a socially responsible manner, accurately record and report its activities both formally and informally, and consistently nurture and maintain its relationships with stakeholders.

CHAPTER THREE: CRISIS MANAGEMENT

In the previous chapter, I discussed how an organization would actually implement a general relationship management program, and highlighted the differences between relationship management and media relations in public relations programming. The focus of this chapter is on how crises are handled under the relationship management perspective. The purpose of this chapter is to define crises, explain how crises affect reputation and legitimacy, identify crisis clusters, discuss crisis management strategies, and identify guidelines for successful crisis management. Before crisis management is discussed in depth, however, it is necessary to explain the necessity for relationship management in the context of crisis communication.

First, the relationship management perspective provides a more holistic view of how crises affect both organization and stakeholders. Much like an interpersonal relationship, conflicts and crises simply “become a part of the history of a relationship between an organization and a public(s) [that] may strengthen or weaken the position of each, thereby changing the context in which the organization operates and communicates with its public(s)” (Metzler, 2001, p. 331). As a result, relationship management provides insight into how stakeholders perceive a crisis situation. Rather than viewing crises as events that the media can manipulate, the relationship management perspective views crises as episodes in the ongoing relationship between an organization and its stakeholders. Says Coombs (2000),

Viewing crises as one episode embedded in a larger relationship can be a valuable perspective for crisis managers. The ongoing relationships with stakeholders provide a practical context from which to analyze a crisis episode. In turn, this relational perspective helps crisis managers to develop effective responses to the crises. A relational approach can yield new insights into the crisis-management process” (p. 73).

Second, relationship management places the focus of crisis managers on the *publics affected by the crisis*, not the media. The relational perspective recognizes that a crisis is a relationship-threatening act; hence, crisis managers can focus their attention on ameliorating the situation to benefit the public and repair the relationship instead of controlling media access. This is considerably different than previous approaches to public relations in general and crisis management in particular, as former approaches focused on repairing the damage for the benefit of the organization, and controlling media access to mitigate damage.

Third, relationship management is more sophisticated than the media relations approach since it recognizes that by rectifying the situation for stakeholders, both the organization and its stakeholders benefit. For the long-term health of the organization, then, it is in the organization's best interest to realize that the choices they make in resolving a crisis will have far-reaching consequences—either positive or negative—that may affect future relationships. For example, if an organization fails to handle a crisis to the satisfaction of stakeholders, the result will likely be further damage to reputation and legitimacy that may influence the organization's ability to conduct business.

Defining Crisis

Definitions of crises vary, but they are generally acknowledged to be episodes in the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders that potentially threaten the relationships. The effects of a crisis may interrupt “normal business transactions and can, at its worst, threaten the existence of the organization” (Fern-Banks, 2001, p. 480). Examples of crises include product tampering, corporate scandals, sexual misconduct, accidents, injuries, and discrimination, to name a few. Coombs (2001) identifies five

dimensions of crises: threatening or challenging organizational legitimacy, failing to meet the social norms and expectations of stakeholders, financial damage, injuries or loss of life, and reputational damage (Coombs, 2000). Though a crisis does not need to include all five dimensions, the threat to organizational legitimacy increases if more crisis dimensions are present. Each dimension will be discussed in turn, though it should be emphasized that there is considerable overlap and interrelation between these dimensions.

Threatening or challenging organizational legitimacy

The first dimension of crises—and by far the most common—is threatening or challenging organizational legitimacy. Though a crisis undoubtedly affects an organization in measurable, material, ways (e.g., a financial losses in capital and litigation resulting from an accident), it also affects organizations in less measurable but equally destructive ways. Namely, a crisis threatens the organization’s legitimacy and reputation. Legitimacy refers to stakeholders’ perceptions that the organization operates justly and lawfully; reputation refers to the “collective representation of a firm’s past actions and results that describe the firm’s ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders” (Lyon & Cameron, 2004, p. 215).

Coombs and Holladay (2002) assert that both measures of how publics perceive an organization are valued resources threatened by a crisis; therefore, crisis managers should take care not only to contain the actual crisis, but to also ensure that the crisis is handled in such a way that legitimacy and reputation are preserved.

Organizational legitimacy consists of two components: actional legitimacy and institutional legitimacy. Actional legitimacy, which refers to the perception that an organization’s actions are just and lawful, is a component of institutional legitimacy,

which refers to the perception that the institution as a whole operates justly and lawfully, and has the right to exist and operate. As Allen and Caillouet (1994) note, actional legitimacy concerns are less cataclysmic and more commonly demanded than concerns about a corporation's continued existence. That is, a critical issue that questions an organization's actions is less destructive than a critical issue that threatens an organization's existence. For example, questions arising from an organization's handling of an issue will affect an organization's reputation less than questions arising from the necessity or right for an organization to operate.

Essentially, stakeholders look for two criteria in an organization: utility and responsibility (Allen & Caillouet, 1994). Stakeholders want to believe that the organization's actions are useful and necessary, and they also want to believe that those actions will be influenced by a desire to act responsibly. Organizations use their legitimacy to make a myriad of decisions, ranging from justifying risky or controversial behavior, selling stock, changing products or services, and gaining approval and support of proposed corporate policies. As a result, all kinds of organizational decisions require actional legitimation, which is the legitimacy of an organization to act in a manner it sees fit. Failure to gain actional legitimation results in crisis, which, in turn, results in reputational damage.

Social Norms

The second dimension of crises is failing to meet stakeholders' social norms and expectations. Since a crisis negates what stakeholders have come to value and respect in an organization, stakeholders often feel they have been deceived, and may no longer trust the organization, even after the situation has been rectified (Lyon & Cameron, 2004). As

a result, stakeholders or consumers may decide to take their business elsewhere, thus resulting in financial losses for the organization.

Financial Damage

The third dimension of crises is financial damage. A crisis can affect an organization financially in many ways, including damage to property, loss of productivity, and declining profits resulting from the decline in organizational legitimacy. Though all five crisis dimensions are difficult for an organization to recover from, the financial damage is often the most noticeable repercussion from a crisis (Allen & Caillouet, 1994), and often receives the most attention from management.

Injury or Loss of Life

The fourth dimension of crises is injury or loss of life. This dimension may have permanent ramifications for the organization. For example, if a plant encounters a catastrophic incident, such as a fire or explosion that could have been prevented, it is likely that many people will be injured or die. While it is undoubtedly a tragedy from the perspective of family members affected by the incident, the incident is no less devastating for the organization. Costly litigation, settlements, repairs for the facility, and loss of productivity can cause very real financial hardship for an organization; less measurable is the loss of goodwill. Such catastrophic incidents often cause stakeholders to perceive the organization as negligent, untrustworthy, and generally seedy (Allen & Caillouet, 1994).

Reputational Damage

The fifth dimension of crises is reputational damage. Regardless of an organization's past reputation—sterling as it may be—a crisis may cause substantial damage to the organization's image. For example, if an organization has built a

reputation of fair, equitable treatment of its employees and the organizations it does business with, any scandal/crisis that contradicts that reputation may lead the public to be less trusting of the messages produced by the organization.

Since a crisis threatens the organization's legitimacy, reputation, and relationships, PRPs or crisis managers may engage in crisis management, or the strategic use of communication to prevent a crisis or respond to a crisis by removing risk and uncertainty (Fern-Banks, 2001) to prevent or ameliorate the impacts of a crisis. In the following sections, the threats posed by a crisis will be discussed, the stages of crises will be identified, causality of the crisis will be noted, and the ramifications of a crisis will be outlined.

Crisis Clusters

It is unrealistic to assume that all crises are alike or will have similar impact on an organization's assets. Since various crises have different causes that are triggered by different factors, it makes sense both theoretically and pragmatically to classify crises into similar clusters. By grouping crises into "crisis portfolios," complete with response strategies, organizations can save time devising response strategies. That is, "if an organization prepares a crisis plan for one crisis in the cluster, it is reasonably well prepared for all crisis types in that cluster. Crisis portfolios are efficient because an organization may not have the time to develop plans for every major crisis type and subvariation it may encounter" (Coombs & Holladay, 2002, p. 173).

According to Coombs (1995), crises can be categorized as natural disasters, tampering/terrorism, accidents, and transgressions. Coombs' (1995) research on Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) identified ten crisis frames or clusters

(natural disaster, rumors, workplace violence, product tampering/malevolence, technical error accident, technical error recalls, human error accidents, human error recalls, organizational misdeed, and transgressions), but these more specific categorizations merely categorize crisis clusters under the four larger cluster families. Therefore, I will focus just on the broader crisis clusters below.

Natural disasters are likely to include the crisis dimensions of financial damage and injuries and loss of life at minimum; depending on how the organization responds to the natural disaster, the crisis may also contain the dimensions of expectancy violations and reputational damage as well. The scandal that followed the Red Cross' "misappropriation" of funds following Hurricane Katrina in 2005 is an example of a natural disaster situation that resulted in reputational damage, expectancy violations, and financial damage.

Tampering/terrorism are likely to violate stakeholder expectations of the organization, depending on how the situation is handled. A frequent example of this type of crisis in nonprofit organizations is the acts of terrorism frequently incited on Planned Parenthood and women's health clinics. As recently as September 11, 2006, a man "crashed his car into a building in Davenport, Iowa, hoping to blow it up and kill himself in the fire" (Pozner, 2006). In some circumstances, the public may perceive that the organization could have done more to prevent the incident; in other circumstances, the public may perceive that the organization is the victim. In either case, the organization needs to address the cause and effect of the crisis, as well as address how they will remedy the situation.

Accidents may include all five crisis dimensions, as organizational legitimacy, safety violations, financial loss, injury or loss of life, and reputational damage will likely occur, regardless of whether the organization is ultimately deemed to be at fault. A recent example of an accident involving a nonprofit organization that resulted in financial loss, injury, or loss of life is the tragedy befalling Honduras Outreach, Inc. on February 6, 2007 (Scott, 2007). Three missionaries died when the truck they were riding in tumbled over a ravine in Honduras. Such incidents invariably spark speculation and may raise public concern.

Similarly, transgressions may also include all five dimensions, though they differ from accidents in that the organization or representatives of the organization knowingly commit improper acts. A recent example of knowingly committing an improper act is the financial transgression scandal involving a former president of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Conejo and Las Virgenes, California (Ortiz, 2007). The transgression involved the misuse of the nonprofit organization's credit card. It should be noted that the four clusters may be placed on a continuum for assigning blame, with natural disasters being assigned little or no blame for the situation and transgressions being assigned complete blame, with tampering/terrorism and accidents falling somewhere in the middle.

Stages of Crisis

In all operational environments, certain issues are ever-present. For example, in the manufacturing industry, worker safety is an ongoing issue: unions are constantly lobbying for safer working conditions, workers are given extensive training to prevent injuries and fatalities, and much pressure is placed on management to ensure that proper precautions are made. Essentially, a crisis is an issue specific to an organization's

operating environment that has reached a critical stage. Botan and Taylor (2004) note that critical issues or crises share two distinguishing characteristics:

First, a resolution is demanded by some outside force within a time frame that is too short for the organization to engage in its normal decision-making process. Second, a crisis represents a turning point for an organization so that it is unlikely to return fully to its precrisis state, whether for better or worse” (p. 656).

While this perception of crises is helpful in that it perceives all environmental issues as potential crises, Fern-Banks’ (2001) five crisis stages may be helpful in conceptualizing how those issues manifest into a crisis. Hopefully, identifying the issues that could evolve into crises may aid in the early recognition and prevention of crises. Fern-Banks contends that crises are not as sudden and unexpected as previously assumed, especially if the crisis revolves around controversy or negative ad campaigns. Therefore, in the first stage, she advocates for organizations to look for *prodromes*, or early symptoms that a crisis or controversy is about to take place. In this stage, organizations should be monitoring the external and internal environment. Examples of prodromes include increasing employee or stakeholder dissent, increasingly negative media coverage, or declining profits or number of clients served. Too often, organizations ignore the prodromes and assume they will just “blow over;” such a response inarguably sets up the organization to be in a reactive rather than a proactive position, which negates the purpose of crisis management—to restore an organization’s control over its assets and environment.

In the second stage, prevention, crisis managers prevent or prepare for the crisis by “heeding the warning signs and making plans to avoid the crisis through a proactive campaign or preparing a reactive campaign to cope with the crisis” (Fern-Banks, 2001, p. 480). For example, continued equipment failure or machines in poor repair in a

manufacturing plant may indicate that an accident is more likely to occur. Management can replace the equipment or maintain it better to prevent an incident from occurring. Or, if managers hear increasing complaints from employees regarding corporate policies on benefits or time off, or hear talk of strikes, management can choose to be proactive and try to accommodate employees to prevent a strike. In either example, by heeding the prodromes and taking action, management may prevent a crisis at best, and mitigate the damage of the crisis at worst. Either way, the situation is easier to contain and rebound from than acting passively and hoping a crisis never occurs.

In the third stage, containment, the crisis has ensued, and the objective of crisis managers is to shorten the duration of the crisis, mitigate the situation to lessen the severity, and to otherwise gain control over the environment to lessen potential damage. The fourth stage, recovery, attempts to return to business as usual and repair relationships with stakeholders. It should be noted that this stage is ongoing and may take a considerable amount of time. Inevitably, the fourth stage will take longer than the subsequent stages, especially if the prodromes have been ignored, and will consume a considerable amount of time and other organizational resources. Under the relationship management perspective, recovery has not occurred until stakeholders are satisfied with the organization's response and outcome.

Just as the first stage is often overlooked, so is the fifth stage—learning. Crisis managers are usually so relieved once a crisis has been resolved to the satisfaction of both the organization and the stakeholders that they fail to conduct a “post-mortem” analysis and learn from the experience (Fern-Banks, 2001). After any crisis, it is important to reflect upon the prodromes, causes, handling of the crisis and resolution so

that future crises can be prevented, and handled more adeptly if and when a crisis should occur again. In most cases, managers will recognize the prodromes after the crisis has occurred, as evidenced by the all too common cry, "I should have seen that coming!" A careful post-mortem analysis may help make managers more aware of their environment, and recognize warning signs ahead of time in the future.

Attribution of Crisis

Once a crisis occurs, it is normal for the public to seek a cause for the crisis, and, hence, assign blame. To understand how blame is assigned, I turn now to attribution theory. Attribution theory as it applies to crisis management is simple enough to understand: after crisis or conflict, people search for causes of events, and certain conditions help to determine those causes. This is likely because it is important for people to find the causes of events both for to feel they have some control over the situation and for absolution of blame (Coombs, 2000). Says Coombs (2000), "understanding how people make attributions about events allows for the anticipation of their emotional and behavioral responses to events. Typically, greater attributions of individual responsibility for a negative event leads to stronger feelings of anger and a more negative view of the actor" (p. 78). Additionally, attribution theory helps PRPs and crisis managers to anticipate the potential relational effects of a crisis and select appropriate crisis response strategies to match the anticipated level of reputational damage.

Causal dimensions of attributions

Weiner (1988) identifies three causal dimensions of attribution theory to provide a means of gauging responsibility for a crisis and to initiate their attributional search. The three dimensions are: external control, internal locus/personal control, and stability.

Russell (1982) defines external control as the cause being outside of the organization's control, internal locus/personal control as the amount of control within the organization's control, and stability as the constancy or instability of the cause over time. That is, a cause that is ever-present is said to be stable, and a cause that is variable or hardly ever present is unstable. Coombs and Holladay (2002) note that "personal control and crisis responsibility may be so highly correlated as to merit treating them as essentially isomorphic. At any rate, the level of crisis responsibility is a key indicator of the potential reputational damage a crisis might inflict" (p.167).

Weiner's dimensions to the four crisis families identified by Coombs (2000) is seen in Table 3.1: Attribution of Crisis. Natural disasters are likely to rank high on external control, and low on internal locus/personal control, with variance on the stability dimension depending on where the disaster occurred and the specifics of the situation (Weiner, 1988). Therefore, publics will usually not attribute blame or responsibility to an organization or individuals within an organization during a crisis. As a result, there is likely little or no reputational damage.

Similarly, tampering/terrorism incidents will also rank high on external control and low on internal locus/personal control. If the organization has no prior incidents of tampering or terrorism, it is likely to be absolved of blame (Coombs, 2001; Weiner, 1988). If the organization *does* have a prior history of similar incidents, stakeholders are likely to attribute more blame to the organization. Tampering/terrorism incidents, depending on the stability dimensions, will likely result in little or moderate reputational damage.

Accidents will likely be perceived as moderate to low external control and moderate to high internal locus/personal control (Coombs, 2001; Weiner, 1988). Publics assume that accidents can usually be prevented, and attribute most accidents to negligence. If the organization has a previous history of accidents, the organization is more likely to be held responsible for the crisis, resulting in significant reputational damage. If the accident is an isolated incident, the organization is still likely to be held responsible, but reputational damage will be less severe.

Finally, transgressions are perceived as little or no external control and high internal locus/personal control (Coombs, 2001; Weiner, 1988). Recalling that in this situation, the organization responsible for the transgression admits and accepts fault, though they may attempt to justify their actions, as will be discussed below. Reputational damage is perceived to be high for transgressions, regardless of stability, especially if there is considerable damage to consumers. The relative rating of each crisis clusters' causality dimension will affect the selection of crisis management strategies discussed in the following section.

Crisis Response Strategies

Essentially, when crisis managers talk about crisis response strategies, they are discussing image restoration, or how the organization will restore its former image and reputation in the wake of a crisis. Says Coombs and Holladay (2002),

The identification of attributions of crisis responsibility for crisis types and the formation of crisis clusters help crisis managers with their initial assessment of crisis responsibility. Crisis managers can estimate the level of crisis responsibility their crisis will generate among publics by identifying the crisis type they face or by placing their crisis in the appropriate crisis cluster. Once estimated, the level of crisis responsibility serves to narrow the selection of viable crisis response strategies. That is, crisis managers can make a more informed choice about which crisis response strategies to employ" (p. 182).

Broadly speaking, crisis response strategies can be classified as accommodative/defensive, individual/organizational or proactive/reactive. Each will be discussed below.

Accommodative/Defensive Signals

The first classification of crisis response strategy is accommodative/defensive. When an organization uses an accommodative signal image restoration strategy, it “accepts responsibility, admits to the existence of problems, and takes actions to remedy a situation” (Marcus & Goodman, 1991, p. 286). In contrast, when an organization uses a defensive signal image restoration strategy, it “insists that the problems do not exist, tries to alleviate doubts about the firm's ability to generate future revenue, and takes action to resume normal operations rapidly” (Marcus & Goodman, 1991, p. 286). The various strategies of image restoration will each be examined in turn. It should be noted, as discussed below, that accommodative or defensive strategies will be more appropriate or successful in specific situations, especially given attribution of blame or the exact nature of the crisis.

Defensive signal image restoration. Benoit (1995) offers a typology of image restoration strategies that is divided into five categories: denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. The first three categories can be thought of as defensive signals, and the last three categories can be thought of as accommodative signals. In the denial strategy, the organization simply denies responsibility for the act. A variant of the denial strategy—the alibi—provides more substantiation for the denial by providing an explanation for why the organization is not at fault or is not capable of committing the act.

In the evading responsibility strategy, actors attempt to lessen their responsibility for the act by employing one of four sub strategies: provocation, defeasibility, excuses, or justification based on motive or intentions. Provocation claims that the organization was provoked to act in an unacceptable way, or that the organization was used as a scapegoat for some other party. Though not technically a nonprofit organization, an example of the provocation defense is the 1998 ecoterrorism of a ski resort in Vail. The defendants were members of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), who claimed their actions were justified by the fact that the ski resort had plans to expand into endangered lynx habitat (Barnard, 2006). Defeasibility evades responsibility by claiming that a lack of information or control over the situation precipitated the act, such as an executive claiming her actions were defensible because she did not know her plant dumped toxic waste into a local waterway. Excuses are an attempt “to provide information that may reduce his or her responsibility for the offensive act” (p. 76), such as the Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, woman who used her bipolar disorder as an excuse for embezzling \$18,000 from the nonprofit school for special needs children where she was employed (Harper, 2006). Finally, justification based on motives or intentions does not deny responsibility, but rather asks the audience to not hold the organization completely responsible for the act based on the fact that the organization acted on good intentions, such as the use of Minnesota Diversified Industries’ (MDI) nonprofit funds at yacht clubs, golf-spa resorts, and casinos for “strategic planning sessions” (Schaffer, 2007).

Reducing offensiveness has six variants: bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attacking one’s accuser, and compensation (Benoit, 1995, p.74). In any of these situations, “a company's management can project an image at variance with

undesirable interpretations of the crisis by issuing statements to clarify its policies or explain its behavior and announcing its intention to evaluate the situation and rectify matters so it does not recur” (Marcus & Goodman, 1991, p. 284). None of these strategies denies responsibility for the action; rather, the intention is to reduce negative feelings and restore the organization’s face. In bolstering, the organization plays up their positive attributes or past actions with the intent of offsetting negative feelings toward the act, such as an organization playing up its positive contributions to a community to offset negative coverage of its poor environmental record. Minimization attempts to downplay the severity of the act, such as when a major university attempts to show that accusations of discrimination in its application process are really unfounded. Differentiation attempts to compare a reprehensible act with other, similar reprehensible acts to show that, in comparison, the organization’s actions are not that bad, such as when an embezzlement scandal involving local police is compared to Officer Mark Furman’s perjury charge in the OJ Simpson case to show that, in relation, the local situation is not that bad. Transcendence attempts to frame the reprehensible act in a different, more favorable light, such as representatives of Waco, Texas’ nonprofit community speaking out that there would be a myriad of workshops for employees, board members, and staff, to address the legal and fiscal responsibilities of nonprofit organizations in the wake of several embezzlement scandals in the area. The message was clear: though nonprofits in the area had acted inappropriately, the nonprofit community as a whole had learned from the situation, and were working together to ensure that no future incidents would occur (Culp, 2007). Attacking one’s accuser may occur in two ways: 1) To victimize the organization and gain the audience’s sympathy, and 2) To divert the audience’s attention

away from the original accusation. Finally, compensation offers remuneration to the victim to offset negative effects of the act, such as when a pharmaceutical manufacturer offers a generous settlement for unwanted side effects.

Accommodative signal image restoration. As attributions of responsibility and the intensity of reputational damage increase, stakeholders expect more accommodative strategies to be used. Corrective action is a fairly straightforward image restoration strategy. The organization accepts responsibility for the act, and attempts to reduce negative effects by vowing to correct the problem, such as Ford and Firestone Tire's massive product recall. This could be as simple as rectifying an error in billing, or as complex as instating a system of provisions to prevent future negative acts from occurring. It should be noted that "one can take corrective action without admitting guilt" (Benoit, 1995, p. 79), though the organization accepts responsibility for the consequences resulting from that act.

Lastly, an organization may engage in mortification, by which the organization accepts responsibility and asks for forgiveness, such as the massive reparations burdened by Germany following World Wars I and II. Image and face may be restored if the audience perceives the apology to be sincere. The likelihood of accepting a mortification strategy is increased when it is combined with other image restoration strategies, such as bolstering, differentiation, and especially corrective action.

Benoit (1995) mentions a sixth image restoration strategy in a footnote: avoidance. In this strategy, an individual or organization can elect merely to avoid or ignore the accusations or incident, as evidenced by common phrases such as, "I'm not going to dignify that with a response." There is much debate both practically and

academically whether avoidance actually restores face or threatens it further (Benoit, 1995). On the one hand, avoidance is similar to denial in that, rather than flat out denouncing a charge, it functions to restore image by equivocation. On the other hand, by refusing to discuss the issue, publics may view such equivocation as withholding information to avoid becoming the target of blame or accidentally accepting responsibility.

Organizational and Individual-Level Impression Management Strategies

The second classification of crisis response strategy is discussed by Allen and Cailliouet (1994). Their typology is similar to Benoit's (1995), but instead of attributing various strategies to accommodative or defensive signals, they group image restoration strategies according to whether an organization or individual is responsible for the act. Since there is considerable overlap between Allen and Cailliouet and Benoit's typologies, it is not necessary to go into much depth; however, Allen and Cailliouet's conceptualization does prescribe some alternative strategies for image restoration. These six strategies will be discussed briefly in the following paragraphs. Say Allen and Cailliouet (1994), "Organizational-level impression management strategies that attempt to absolve the corporate organization from failure and accentuate the positive meanings of the problematic events include apologies, justifications, and excuses. Additional individual-level impression management strategies identified in the literature include ingratiation and intimidation" (Allen & Cailliouet, 1994, p. 47).

Organizational-level impression management strategies. The three organizational-level impression management strategies—apology, excuse, or justification—all accept fault for an undesirable action. The apology strategy admits the organization's guilt and

requests punishment. The excuse strategy attempts to negate responsibility for an event. An excuse may be followed by the third strategy: justification. With the justification strategy, the organization accepts responsibility for the negative repercussions of the undesirable action, but not responsibility for the *cause* of the action associated with the negative act. Additionally, organizations using excuses or justification may bolster their strategy by using denouncement, which employs statements indicating a particular external person or group is at fault (Allen & Cailliouet, 1994, p. 60).

Individual-level impression management strategies. The three individual-level impression management strategies are ingratiation, intimidation, and factual distortion. Though an organization may engage in these three tactics, they are considered individual-level strategies because these tactics attempt to shift blame from the individual to the organization. This may occur when a CEO or other executive is initially blamed for a crisis, and that individual then attempts to prove that they are not at fault. Ingratiation is “designed to gain audience approval by conveying conformity to the normative institutional environment’s rules. Speakers using ingratiation express belief, value, and attitude similarity; attempt to persuade the target of the organization’s positive qualities, traits, motives and/or intentions; and praise the target to gain approval” (Allen & Cailliouet, 1994, p. 48). Intimidation conveys an organizational identity of danger and potency, and is often used in conjunction with threats. (Allen & Cailliouet, 1994, p. 60). In this strategy, the individual attempts to portray the organization as reckless and dangerous, or as a threat to the organization’s community and stakeholders. The third strategy, factual distortion, “indicates that statements offered in regard to a particular

event are taken out of context or are untrue in some way” (Allen & Cailliouet, 1994, p. 61).

Proactive/reactive Strategies

The third classification of crisis response strategy is proactive/reactive. Proactive strategies attempt to bolster or inoculate key publics against the negative effects of a crisis, much like sandbagging before a flood. Reactive strategies respond to the crisis after it happens. Each will be discussed below.

Proactive strategies. Wan and Pfau (2004) identified two elements in a proactive strategy: issues management and reputation management, noting that

Issues management requires that public relations practitioners seek potential problems and then generate appropriate plans to monitor and prevent those problems from developing. Reputation management, on the other hand, emphasizes establishing positive communication relationships with publics as a base of good will that can lessen the damage to an organization’s reputation that typically accompanies a crisis (p. 302).

As noted above, crises are more foreseeable than previously assumed, which explains the emphasis on a proactive approach. “Preparing” for crises in advance improves the organization’s control over the situation than purely reactive strategies which may be conceived hastily in the wake of a crisis.

Most research on proactive crisis response strategies advocates an “inoculation” treatment. Inoculation acknowledges the organization’s weaknesses in advance, and exposes the target audience to the crisis in small doses, using positive or negative messages. The rationale for inoculation is similar to the rationale for immunization—by exposing people to the crisis in small doses, the public will be able to build up an immunity, and, if and when the crisis hits, the public will be affected to a lesser degree. Positive messages may help place the crisis in perspective, emphasizing what the

organization has done right or is doing to correct the situation. Negative messages may address potential weaknesses and refute them. It should be noted that “inoculation may hurt a company’s image if there is no crisis” (Wan & Pfau, 2004, p. 320); inoculation should only be used to prepare the public for the crisis and attempt to garner support or even sympathy before the crisis occurs.

Reactive strategies. Most research on reactive strategies advocates a “bolstering” treatment. Bolstering reinforces the organization’s positive image to strengthen the public’s favorable attitudes. This may be ineffective for several reasons, including the possibility for an organization to not have a favorable image to start with, less environmental control than the precrisis strategy, and potentially “may leave the public overconfident about the company and thus may reduce the public’s tolerance for allowing potential mistakes made by the organization” (Wan & Pfau, 2004, p. 320).

More often, problems arise post-crisis “when organizations insist that no action is needed despite evidence to the contrary, when they stonewall or deny blame, when they seek to inappropriately shift blame, when they fail to show appropriate and credible remorse for the harm, or when they claim that whatever strategies they adopted initially are sufficient” (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2001, p. 162). A good example of this is when fast-food chain Arby’s denied responsibility for a widespread E. coli outbreak caused by unsanitary iced tea dispensers. The best way to approach reactive strategies is to determine whether a defensive or accommodative strategy is appropriate based on attribution, and to react accordingly.

Summary of Theory for Application

This section has defined crises, identified potential impacts of crises, discussed attribution of blame, and several categories of response strategies. Specifically, PRPs and crisis managers should select an appropriate crisis response strategy based on the organization's relational history with its stakeholders, and the perceived attribution of the cause of the crisis. Based on the literature, the following points are helpful in selecting appropriate response strategies:

1. Crisis managers should constantly monitor their environment by looking for prodromes and critical issues that might turn into crises. Once these are identified, the organization should take steps to amend them, no matter how insignificant they may appear at the time. Being proactive may actually prevent a crisis.
2. An organization should attempt to gain as much control over its environment before the crisis by establishing a crisis plan that includes clusters of potential crises an organization may encounter, and preplanned responses to those clusters. The crisis plan should appoint a crisis management team, develop appropriate responses, establish checklists and protocols, and analyze organizational resources and alliances that may be useful in coping with the crisis.
3. Organizations should engage in relationship management with key stakeholders, including the media, clients, employees, board members, and members of the community, to establish positive relations and corporate image prior to the crisis.
4. Though a crisis plan has been established, crisis managers should acknowledge the fact that, by definition, a crisis is an unplanned act. Therefore, they should remain

- open to new information, perspectives, contingencies, interpretations, and alternatives.
5. Crisis managers should be a part of top management, and should establish a policy to communicate with stakeholders openly and honestly at all times, not just during a crisis.
 6. Crisis managers should establish proactive and reactive strategies, and respond to the crisis as quickly as possible.
 7. The reactions from various stakeholders should be monitored at all times, and crisis managers should keep in mind these reactions as they adjust their strategies throughout the crisis.
 8. Though crisis management requires flexibility, the message should remain consistent. Preferably, the organizations should appoint a credible spokesperson to address the media and answer questions throughout the crisis.
 9. Organizations should always respond to a crisis, and never use a “no comment” response; such responses fail to refute negative accusations, and may reinforce the perception that the organization is at fault.
 10. Organizations should take the time after a crisis has passed to conduct a “post mortem” evaluation. This evaluation should evaluate the effectiveness of how the crisis was handled, modify the crisis plan, and discuss how future crises should be handled differently or the same in the future.

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Figure 1.1: Two-Way Symmetrical Model

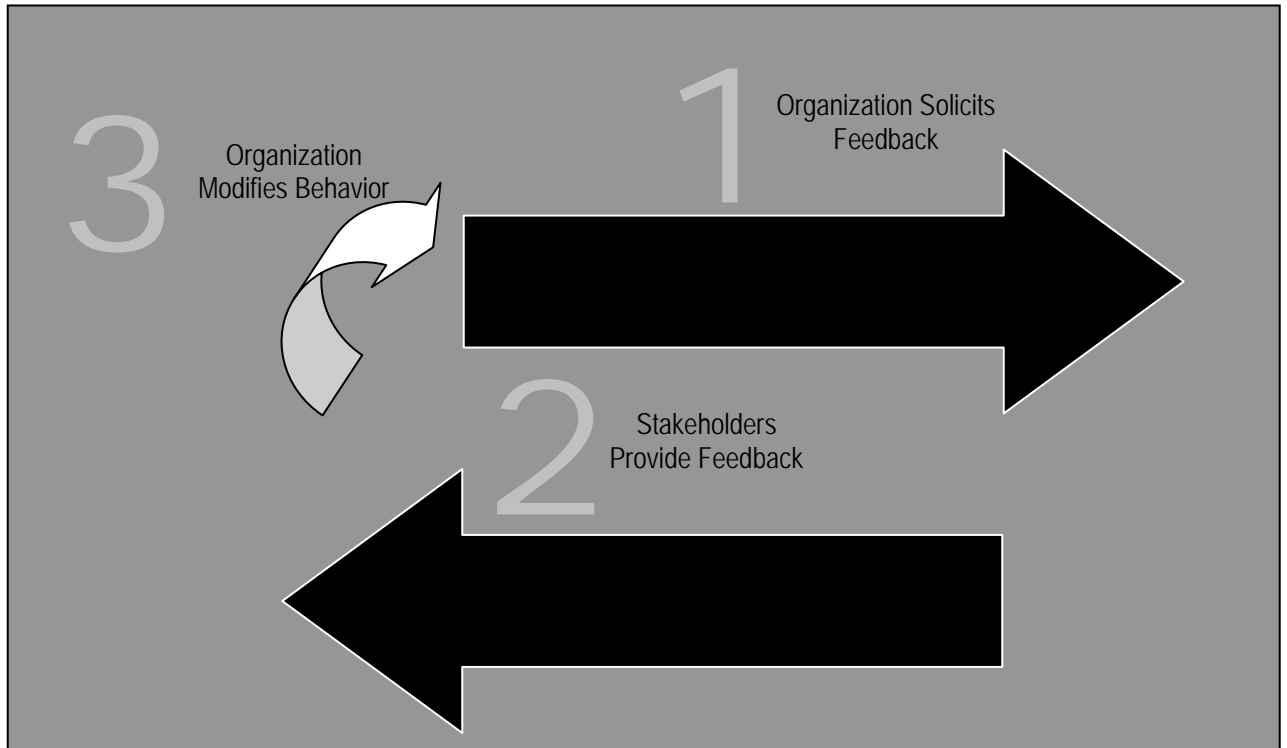


Figure 1.2: Asymmetrical Model

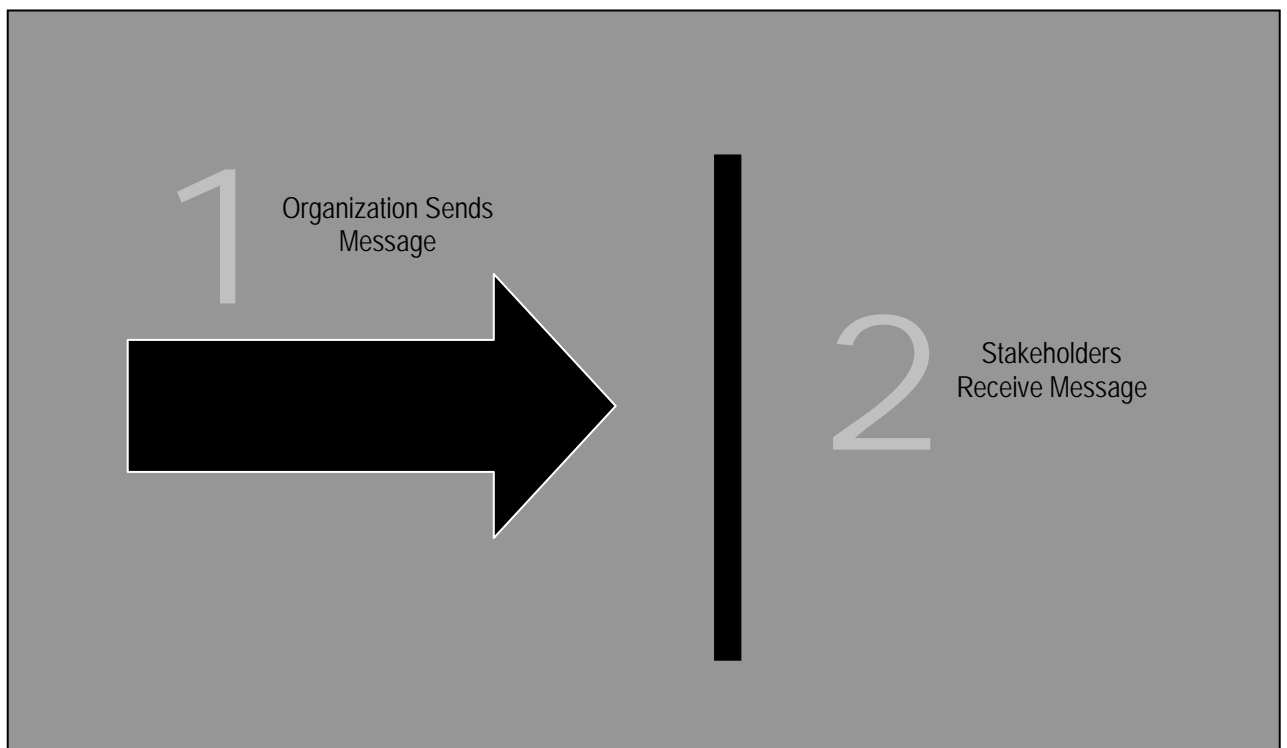


Figure 1.3: Mixed-Motive Model

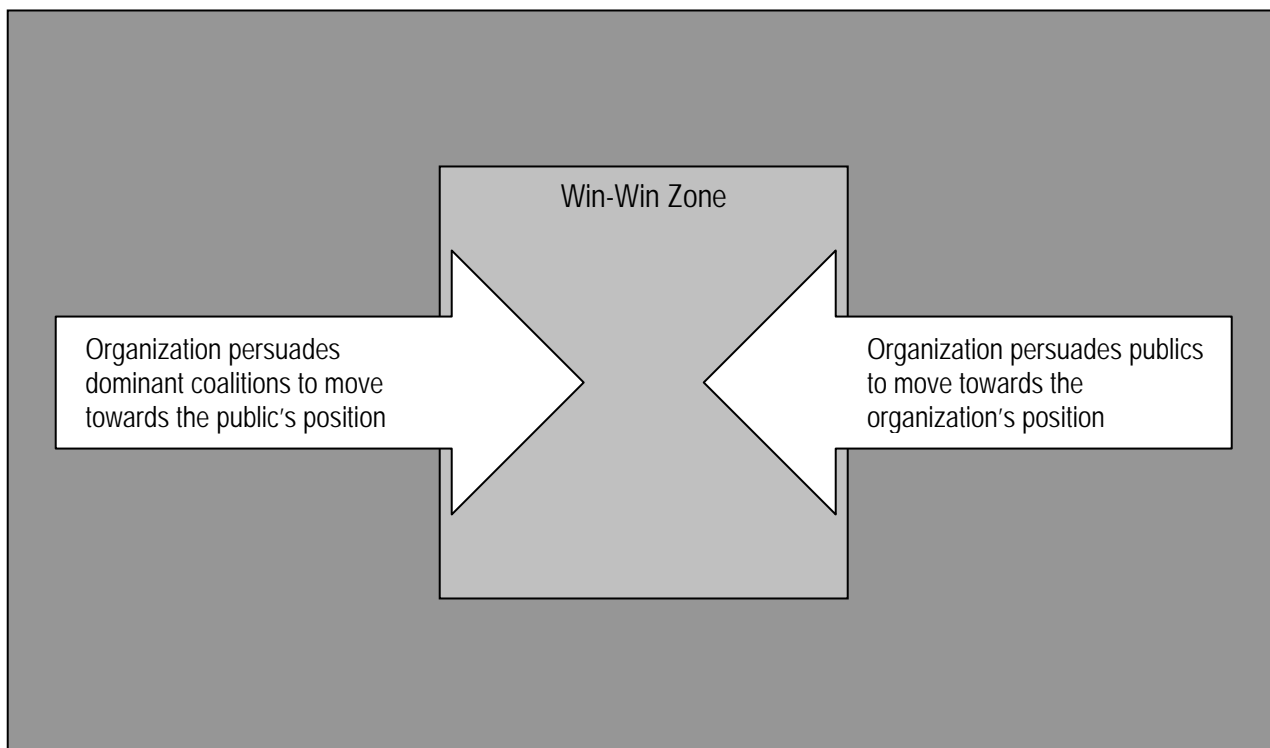


Table 2.1: Channel Selection (Source: Hallahan, 2001, pp. 464-465)

	Public Media	Interactive Media	Controlled Media	Events/Group Communication	One-on-One Communication
Key uses in a public relations program	Build awareness	Respond to queries; exchange information	Promotion; provide detailed information	Motivate attendees; reinforce existing beliefs and attitudes	Obtain commitments; resolve problems
Principle Examples	Newspapers, magazines, radio, television, out-of-home media, directory advertising, special media, movie trailers	Telephone based: automated response systems; audiotext Computer based: Internets, intranets, extranets, databases (e.g., telnet, file transfers, gopher), email and listservs, newsgroups, chat rooms,	Brochures, newsletters, sponsored magazines, annual reports, books, direct mail, point-of-purchase displays, ad specialties, videobrochures	Speeches, trade shows, exhibits, meetings/conferences, demonstrations/rallies, sponsorships, observations/anniversaries, sweepstakes/contests, recognition/awards programs (supported by audiovisuals and multimedia)	Personal visits, lobbying, personalized letters, telephone calls, telemarketing solicitation

		and bulletin boards, electronic kiosks, CD-ROMs			
Nature of communication	Nonpersonal	Nonpersonal	Nonpersonal	Quasi-personal	Personal
Directionality of Communication	One-way	Quasi-two-way	One-way	Quasi-two-way	Two-way
Technological sophistication	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low
Channel ownership	Media organizations	Common carrier or institution	Sponsor	Sponsor or other organizer	None
Messages chosen by	Third-parties and producers	Receiver	Sponsor	Sponsor or joint organizer	Producer and audience
Audience involvement	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate	High
Reach	High	Moderate to low	Moderate to low	Low	Low
Cost per impression	Extremely low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High
Key challenges to effectiveness	Competition and media clutter	Availability and accessibility	Design and distribution	Attendance and atmosphere	Empowerment and personal dynamics

Table 3.1: Attribution of Crisis

	External Control	Internal Locus/Personal Control	Stability	Reputational damage
Natural Disasters	High	Low	Varies depending on where the disaster occurred and the specifics of the situation	Little or none
Tampering/terrorism	High	Low	Varies depending on organizational reputation	Low to moderate
Accidents	Low	Moderate to High	Varies depending on organizational reputation	Moderate to high
Transgression	Low	High	High	High

PART II

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INTRODUCTION

For many nonprofit organizations (NPOs), program planning is already a core competency (Frumpink, 2006). Since programs are the means by which the mission is enacted, it makes sense that executive directors, staff members, board members, volunteers, and clients dedicate a considerable amount of time and resources to ensure that they are developing quality programs that address the needs of the communities they serve. As Weis & Gantt (2002) explain, quality programs “focus on the needs of the customers and...make customers feel as if they are valued individuals and that their involvement with the organization is worthwhile and meaningful” (p. 75). Though Weis and Gantt are discussing program planning, their description of quality programs also describes the hallmarks of quality public relations.

The objective of this guide is to apply the process and outcomes of quality program planning to improve the capacity and effectiveness of public relations in nonprofit settings. Part I explored the theoretical principles underlying the field of public relations in general. Part II applies those principles to the nonprofit setting, and makes recommendations for implementing strategic relationship management programs in nonprofit organizations

Necessity of Public Relations

Traditionally, the programs developed by NPOs were funded by government grants and funding (Frumpink, 2006). The trend is shifting, however, and more and more NPOs are relying on independent sources of funding from private donors or foundations to make ends meet. In order to acquire these grants, NPOs are finding that they must increasingly demonstrate their worth and publicize their successes. Therefore, there has

been a growing emphasis on building public relations as a core competency to increase media exposure, recruit volunteers, donors, and clients, and provide documentation for the activities of the organization that will aid in obtaining funding (Frumppkin, 2006). Given the purpose of developing public relations as a core competency—to increase funding, awareness, and support for programs—it makes sense to take a program planning approach to establish public relations in nonprofit settings.

Defining Public Relations

Before discussing how to incorporate a public relations program into nonprofit settings, it may be helpful to define what public relations is and what it does. Generally, “public relations is defined as the use of communication to manage the relationships between an organization and its stakeholders” (Coombs, 2001, p. 106). Unfortunately, most NPOs’ breadth of public relations knowledge is limited to what is learned during a conference session or during a one-day workshop. An examination of the promotional materials for such events reveals an emphasis on *media* relations, which focuses on building relationships with the media, not public relations, which focuses on building relationships with key stakeholders.

Most nonprofit organizations are at least somewhat familiar with the media relations approach—many NPOs are already familiar with writing press releases, making media contacts, sending out newsletters to clients and stakeholders, or participating in event planning and publicity. The skills necessary to carry out these tasks are somewhat helpful to accomplishing the objectives of public relations, but they fail to foster any real relationships. That is, organizations focus on these tasks in times of organizational

need—to raise funds, recruit volunteers or clients, raise awareness of an event or issue, or mitigate damage in times of organizational crisis.

For public relations to truly be successful, it must use the familiar tools and skills more strategically and consistently to facilitate long-term, mutually beneficial relationships to better serve both the organization and the community the organization serves. This guide uses a *relationship management* approach to public relations, which emphasizes the building of mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its stakeholders to facilitate dialogue, build better programs, and “enhance the ability of the organization to meet its mission” (Botan & Taylor, 2004, p. 654).

Public relations as relationship management is considerably more time consuming, as it requires an organization to communicate with its stakeholders on an ongoing basis, not just in times of organizational need, and requires more advanced planning, implementation, and evaluation than sending off a few press releases and following up on them. Organizations that invest time and other resources into developing relationship management programs experience greater community support and recognition, a reservoir of goodwill, and establish themselves as effective community partners (Botan & Taylor, 2004).

Incorporating Public Relations in Nonprofit Settings

Based on the above description, it may seem that building public relations as a core competency using the relationship management approach is an impractical suggestion in the nonprofit setting for several reasons. First, many small and mid-sized nonprofit organizations have the barely enough time to dedicate to *media* relations activities, much less a full-scale relationship management program. It’s difficult for many

nonprofit organizations to find an individual willing to occasionally draft a press release, distribute it to the media, and follow up with the media, much less expand upon those duties on an ongoing basis. Second, since relationship management is much more time intensive, it almost necessitates hiring a full-time public relations practitioner (PRP). Many NPOs simply don't have the resources to fund such a position. Third, NPOs often assume they can acquire the skills necessary to succeed in their public relations tasks by attending a few workshops or conference presentations. Unfortunately, many of the speakers at such events are professional PRPs who are used to working on a project for a client full-time. Though well meaning, many presenters may be experts at public relations, but they have little experience applying public relations in the context of a nonprofit setting, where both time and resources come at a premium. Many of the ideas presented work excellent in the private sector, but are ill adapted for use in the unique climate of nonprofit organizations.

If public relations in general and relationship management in particular are to be developed as core competencies, it must recognize the concerns unique to NPOs, including fiscal and time restraints, utilize the existing skills and competencies of nonprofit employees, and be flexible enough to adapt to the unique needs and climate of individual NPOs. Below, I address how nonprofits may tackle these concerns.

Addressing Fiscal and Time Constraints

Especially given that public relations has gained attention from nonprofit organizations to increase funding and support, spending time and money to *develop* public relations may seem counterintuitive. However, an investment of time and resources to developing a relationship management program should be viewed as an

opportunity cost, as exemplified by the old adage, “it takes money to make money.” NPOs have recognized the importance of public relations, and have developed many innovative solutions to obtain the resources they need at little or no organizational cost. The suggestions below have been used in other NPOs to help address time and money concerns. Each organization will find a system that works best for them and their public relations objectives; the following suggestions are provided to help nonprofit organizations get started in establishing a relationship management program in their organization.

Establish a public relations committee. Ideally, an NPO could hire a full-time PRP to handle public relations activities, but the reality is that this is not feasible for many organizations. The second best option is to establish a public relations committee to run the relationship management program. The committee should consist of several staff members, interested community members or external stakeholders, and an administrative representative, such as a board member or the Executive Director.

The members of the committee need not have experience in public relations, media relations, or relationship management. Many of the skills already acquired as employees in an NPO may be well-suited to public relations functions, such as interacting with the public, identifying needs, addressing those needs, and communicating ideas—both orally and in writing—clearly and forcefully. Additionally, employees are already experts on the organization, and make excellent ambassadors of the organization to the community.

The purpose of the public relations committee is to utilize talent existing in the organization to delegate the responsibilities of a full-time PRP. The committee should

meet at least once a month to discuss what public relations activities need to be done, and who is to do them, establish a protocol for distributing and following up on press releases, provide progress reports for plans currently being implemented, brainstorm ideas for managing relationships with key stakeholders, and evaluate the effectiveness of completed tasks.

The committee should have a chair who oversees the activities of the committee, and acts as a liaison between the committee, the Executive Director, and the Board of Directors. Usually, this person should act as the main contact person for press releases and events, and as a spokesperson for the organization, so in that regard, the committee chair also acts as a liaison between key stakeholders and the committee. Though public relations experience is not necessary to chair the public relations committee, strong writing, interpersonal, communication, and organizational skills are. Ideally, this person will be from the organization, or at least interact with the organization on a frequent basis and know the ins and outs of the organization's daily operations.

To best use the time and resources of the committee, the committee should initially meet to discuss annual objectives, such as opportunities for outreach and stakeholder input, community celebrations, issue advocacy opportunities, national observance holidays, or other events that are meaningful to the organization or the community it serves. The committee can then assemble a timeline of when these opportunities or events occur, and plan monthly meeting agendas around those events.

Use free or low-cost labor resources. NPOs have two major resources to obtain free or low-cost labor resources: interns from local universities, and AmeriCorps. Both resources can provide individuals who can focus their time and efforts on public

relations-related activities. Using interns or AmeriCorps can be a helpful supplement to the public relations committee, as they can attend committee meetings, participate in planning and evaluation, and can take on a larger portion of the implementation of the activities conceived by the committee. Interns are college students who, in lieu of financial compensation, earn college credit towards their degrees. AmeriCorps is a government granting organization that provides partial funding to support AmeriCorps members for intensive service in their community for qualifying projects.

If your organization is interested in recruiting interns, the first step is to write out a job description. Identify what qualities and skills your ideal intern would possess, decide what jobs they will perform, and determine a length for the internship. The second step is to research local universities and colleges. Look for schools that have programs in communication studies, mass communication, journalism, public relations, or marketing. Another option is to look for schools that have programs in your organization's specific focus. For example, if your organization is a social services organization, look for schools that have social work programs. The third step is to contact the university. This may be done in one of two ways. The first way is to contact the department directly and ask to speak with their internship coordinator. Many departments appoint a faculty member to compile and coordinate internships. This person can tell you precisely what the requirements are for students and organizations. That is, some programs may have very specific guidelines for what the interns can and can't do, minimum time commitments, documentation of job responsibilities, or communication with the department or the intern's advisor during the internship. The second way is to contact the university or

college's career center. Many universities provide free e-Recruiting resources to employers for internships, or may have a campus-wide internship posting board.

If your organization is interested in AmeriCorps, information about the application process is available online at americorps.gov. The application process is somewhat complex; a detailed description is beyond the scope of this guide.

Utilizing Existing Skills and Competencies

As mentioned previously, starting a relationship management program utilizes the process and outcomes of quality program planning to improve the capacity and effectiveness of public relations in nonprofit settings. NPOs are already experts at program planning; the relationship management approach uses the same general steps—planning, implementation, and evaluation—though there are some added features that differentiate standard program planning from relationship management. Figure 1.1: Relationship Management Model vs. Program Planning, illustrates the areas of overlap for these two approaches.

Essentially, the relationship management approach consists of six steps: research, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and stewardship. Research and planning fall under the broad umbrella of planning under the program planning model; implementation and monitoring fall under the umbrella of implementation, and evaluation and stewardship fall under the umbrella of evaluation. These steps will be explained in detail in the following chapters. The skills NPO employees use in program planning are closely mirrored in the relationship management model, and members of the public relations committee may be surprised how natural the relationship management

model feels. Again, it is not necessary for members of the committee to be experts in public relations or even have experience in the field—if they have experience in program planning, they should be more than competent to carry out the six steps described in this guide.

The major differences between program planning and relationship management is that relationship management will usually encompass a wider audience, and is an ongoing effort. In relationship management, the target audience is much broader than the clients the organization serves; in addition to clients, it must also include all internal and external stakeholders, including funders, partners, supporters, opponents, the community writ large, and legislators who have an interest or stake in the organization.

Adapting to the Unique Needs and Climate of Individual NPOs

Just as individual organizations develop their programs to meet the competencies and mission of the organization, and the needs of its clients, individual organizations may adapt the relationship management program to the competencies, needs, and resources of their staff and community. The relationship management approach takes into consideration the fact that there is probably not a full time PRP at the organization, and time and resources are limited. Though the relationship management approach to public relations is admittedly more complex and time consuming than the media relations approach, it is conceivable that the tasks of relationship management can be accomplished by delegating responsibilities to committed members of the organization with a minimal time commitment. The following pages explain relationship management step-by-step, provide forms and worksheets to expedite the process, and provide suggestions for delegation.

CHAPTER ONE: PLANNING

The first step of the relationship management model is planning. This chapter assumes the NPO is using the relationship management approach for the first time. Though your organization may already have established some method for conducting public relations, or have protocols in place for public relations activities, it is still a good idea to work through each of the following steps in this phase to ensure that the planning is strategic, and to ensure that the groundwork for the relationship management program is properly laid.

The planning step consists of five phases: research, conducting a needs assessment, determining program objectives, selecting the program concept, and evaluating resources. Table 1.1: Summary of Planning Step, provides a checklist for each phase in this step for easy reference. Each phase will be discussed in turn.

Research

The purpose of the research phase is to get a gestalt impression of the environment in which the organization operates. The first task that must be accomplished is creating a list of all key stakeholders, both inside and outside the organization. Examples of internal stakeholders are the Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, and clients. Examples of external stakeholders are specific factions of the community, such as groups or individuals your organization has collaborated with in the past, groups or individuals who support your organization, groups or individuals that compete with or oppose your organization, donors, members of the press, national or international affiliation groups, legislative representatives, or influential groups or individuals

affiliated with your organization. Circulate a list throughout your organization to brainstorm as many stakeholders as possible.

Once stakeholders have been identified, the second task to accomplish is to analyze the list to gain insight into the relationships between the organization and the key publics identified (Weis & Gantt, 2002). All stakeholders will not be of equal importance to the organization; likewise, the organization will not be of equal importance to all stakeholders. The public relations committee should prioritize the importance of internal and external stakeholders by conducting a *Stakeholder Priority Analysis*. An example of a stakeholder priority analysis is contained in Figure 1.1: Stakeholder Priority Analysis.

Using a scale of 1-5, 1 being of no importance, 2 being of little importance, 3 being neutral, 4 being of great importance, and 5 being indispensable, the public relations committee rates the stakeholder's importance to the organization, and the organization's importance to the stakeholder. These scores are then combined to form an aggregate score; the stakeholders with higher aggregate scores should be the priority of the committee's efforts.

Though the Stakeholder Priority Analysis is used to rate each stakeholder's relative importance to the organization, it can be used to identify weaker relationships that need bolstering. For example, perhaps your organization already has an excellent relationship with its Board, and the Board of directors has a high aggregate score. Instead of focusing organizational attentions at the Board, the public relations committee may choose to focus its attentions on the stakeholders with the lowest aggregate score. Rather than focus a relationship management campaign on maintaining the relationship with the

board, the committee may focus instead on increasing volunteer's importance to the organization, and the organization's importance to the volunteers.

The third task is to research past programs and outreach efforts. The objective of this task is to find data that explains the current aggregate scores. Perhaps the volunteers have a low aggregate score because the organization has not focused much attention on them in past public relations efforts. Perhaps research reveals that past programs and outreach were unsuccessful. In such a case, it is the responsibility of the public relations committee to determine what made these efforts unsuccessful. How to improve such programs and outreach will be the focus of the second step: conducting a needs assessment.

Conducting a Needs Assessment

The purpose of conducting a needs assessment is to identify the needs and desires important to stakeholders the relationship management program should address. To address these needs, a variety of methods can be employed. The first method is to conduct interviews with stakeholders. Interviews are a method of generating *qualitative* data, or data that defines the quality or character of the relationship. Interviews can be a convenient method for data collection, especially for busy committee members or stakeholders, as they may be conducted over the phone or in person, depending on which is more convenient both the interviewer and the interviewee. For example, it may be easier to conduct interviews with staff members and volunteers in person, while it may be easier to conduct interviews with members of the Board of Directors and donors over the phone. The purpose in either situation is to identify that individual's or group's needs from the organization.

Unlike academic research, it is not necessary to have a scientifically chosen random sample. Participants for the interviews may be recruited based on a volunteer basis. Both internal and external volunteers may be recruited by sending out an email that explains the purpose of the interviews, and estimated time for the interviews, and a way to contact the organization for individuals interested in participating. It is not necessary to have a detailed interviewing guide, though it may be helpful to have the public relations committee compile a list of questions.

The second method is to conduct focus groups with stakeholders. In a focus group, a group of stakeholders is assembled with the purpose of discussing issues in a group setting. Participants for the focus group can be recruited in the same manner as for interviews, and the organization should dedicate a minimum of one hour to the session. Refreshments should be provided, and much attention should be paid to making the session as casual and inviting as possible. Similar to an interview, the purpose of a focus group is to gain insight into the opinions, needs, and desires of the stakeholders. Focus groups differ from interviews in that there are usually many more people present; interviews are usually conducted on a one-on-one basis. Focus groups are usually less structured. There is usually a facilitator who prompts dialogue and probes respondents, and the discussions are usually free flowing and not restricted by an interview guide.

Facilitators should have an objective in mind of what information they want to obtain by the end of the session, and be cognizant of this objective as the session progresses. It may be necessary to ask specific questions to keep the interview on track and prevent participants from straying too far off topic. If necessary, the facilitator may need to neutralize heated debates while encouraging dissenting opinions. Prompts such as “does

anyone else feel that way?” or “does anyone disagree with that statement?” can encourage participants to express their ideas freely.

The third method is to administer surveys. Surveys can be convenient for an organization, as it allows them to blanket a large group of stakeholders very efficiently, they may be customized for each stakeholder, or they may be generalized for all of the organization’s constituencies. The purpose of administering a survey may be to obtain *qualitative* data, as explained above, or *quantitative* data, which generates a numerical value of the questions asked. The structure of questions, how to interpret the data, distribution of questionnaires and maximizing responses are all factors to consider; however, they are beyond the scope of this guide. *The Basics of Social Science Research* by Earl Babbie (2008) is an excellent, readable text that provides more in-depth information of research methods described above.

While it is easy and efficient to distribute a survey, surveys have many disadvantages not associated with interviews or focus groups. First, the data obtained may not be as “rich” as that obtained in an interview or focus group. Having people rank their feelings on a scale of one to five may not yield responses as deep and personalized as a less restricting response. Second, the response rate may be low, and, as a result, repeated notices to increase the number of responses may be necessary to yield a decent amount of responses. This may consume a tremendous amount of time. Third, it may be unwieldy to make sense of the data. It requires a considerable amount of time and money to enter the data and analyze it. Still, especially if the organization is starting up a relationship management program for the first time, the data may be worth the hassle.

For best results, a combination of interviews, focus groups, and surveys should be used. The purpose of these three methods is to determine what the community needs, and how well the organization is currently meeting those needs. After the data have been collected, the dimensions of the public relations situation should be defined. The public relations situation consists of 1) determining the public relations problem, and 2) determining the contributing factors of the public relations problem. The public relations problem, by definition, is a problem where strategic communication is expected to change the situation. If the problem does *not* involve communication as part of the solution, it is not a problem that public relations can help solve. It is not enough to determine what the problem is, however, and then go about the subsequent steps. To do so would be akin to placing a bandage on a leaky pipe. The causes of the problem must also be identified, so that communication tactics in the relationship management program may address the source of the problem, thus affecting some sort of behavioral and/or organizational change.

Determining Program Objectives

The purpose of determining program objectives is to define what the organization hopes to accomplish as a result of the relationship management program. Objectives may be stated qualitatively (a change in behaviors or attitudes) or quantitatively (an increase or decrease in specified factors). Regardless of whether the objective is directed at qualitative or quantitative outcomes, they should be specific, measurable, challenging yet realistic, useful (actually accomplishes or aids in accomplishing objectives), address areas of need identified in the needs assessment, and include program concept and format.

Suppose the needs assessment revealed that stakeholders love the annual summer education seminar, but felt that the seminars were too short and infrequent, and felt this was due to poor attendance. The needs assessment revealed that stakeholders would rather have a new seminar every six weeks throughout the year instead of once a month only in the summer. Presuming the cause of the problem identified in the needs assessment was a lack of presenters due to low interest and inadequate compensation, a specific quantitative program objective would be, “to increase the frequency of the education seminar from once a month during the summer to one every six weeks throughout the year.” Given the same situation, an example of a qualitative program objective would be “to convince members of the community that presenting at the education seminars is a worthwhile use of their time.”

In both the quantitative and the qualitative program goals, they are measurable in that, be it an increase in frequency or a change in attitude, the objective is measurable. That is, both can be measured and compared pre and post campaign. Given the cause of the problem, the objectives are certainly challenging, yet they are not completely unrealistic. Finally, both are useful in that they address the needs identified in the needs assessment.

Once these specific, measurable objectives have been identified, a realistic timeline should be established. A task-by-task timeline need not be established at this point, only a broad timeline to accomplish the program objectives is necessary. The objectives of the campaign timetable established by the public relations committee is to determine an appropriate length to complete the program, both to conserve time and resources, and also to provide a deadline for achieving the desired outcomes. Especially

in NPOs, where resources are finite, there must be a stopping point for efforts to allow for evaluation, and also to redirect attention on other projects.

Selecting the Program Concept

The purpose of selecting a program concept is to develop the means and process for accomplishing the program objectives. A program concept is the framework or model for the program. First, based on the Stakeholder Priority Analysis, identify the stakeholders whose actions are necessary to accomplish the program's objectives. It is entirely foreseeable that a campaign will include several concepts, each geared towards a specific stakeholder. In the education seminar example, one program concept would address attendees of the seminars (to increase awareness of and attendance to the seminars); another would address the presenters (to increase awareness of and build commitment to presenting at the seminars).

Weis and Gantt (2002) identify six approaches to program concepts—traditional, current, expressed desires, prescriptive, and combined—which may be helpful to the public relations committee in devising activities aimed at each stakeholder to accomplish the program objectives. The first approach is the *traditional* approach, which asks the public relations committee, “What have we done in the past that succeeded that we can use again?” (Weis & Gantt, 2002, p. 80). The *traditional* approach takes less time and energy, and if it worked in the past, and people respond favorably to it, it is unnecessary to reinvent the wheel. The benefit to re-implementing an activity the organization has done in the past is that if it *was* successful, the public may be anticipating it. If the activity was unsuccessful, the organization risks further distancing itself from the very stakeholders it's trying to become closer to. Therefore, addressing stakeholders'

responses to past campaign events and activities in the research phase could potentially save the organization from wasting its resources on efforts the public deems frivolous.

The second approach is the *current* approach, which asks the public relations committee, “what is someone else currently doing somewhere else that can be successfully applied here?” (Weis and Gantt, 2002, p. 80). Much like the traditional approach, the current approach saves time. In addition, the current approach adds legitimacy and reduces uncertainty. That is, if something was successful somewhere else in a similar situation, it is likely that it will be successful here. The caveat to this approach is that what works in a large urban area may not work in a rural area because needs and resources are different. It is important to consider transferability when using the current approach, as the differences in the current situation may be so significant as to negate legitimacy and increase uncertainty. In short, if the differences in the original approach and the situation at hand are significant enough, the current approach may ultimately fail.

The third approach is the *expressed desires* approach, which asks the public relations committee to incorporate results from the research phase (interviews, focus groups, and surveys) to reduce risk of frivolous programs (Weiss and Gantt, 2002, p. 80). Ultimately, the entire relationship management approach uses the expressed desires approach, as it greatly emphasizes asking stakeholders what their needs are and then addressing those needs by modifying its behavior. The major benefit to the expressed desires approach is that it clearly addresses stakeholder needs, and delivers on those needs. The result is that stakeholders feel the organization really listens to them and cares about what they have to say. This can only foster more positive feelings about the

organization in the minds of the stakeholders, which is ultimately the purpose of public relations in general and relationship management in particular.

The fourth approach is the *prescriptive approach*, which asks the public relations committee to prescribe solutions to address specific needs and impact specific stakeholders (Weis & Gant, 2002, p. 80). The benefit to this approach is that the resulting program concept is very tailored. The prescriptive approach differs from the expressed desires approach in that, in the expressed desires approach, the stakeholders tell the organization what they *want*. In the prescriptive approach, the organization tells the stakeholders what they *need*. The prescriptive approach is successful in that it utilizes the organization's talent to determine what methods would be most appropriate for each stakeholder, and combats arguments against the expressed desires approach in that what a public wants is not necessarily in their best interest. However, since it "prescribes" a campaign for every single stakeholder necessary to accomplish a program objective, it can be very time consuming and costly.

The fifth approach is the *innovative approach*, which asks the public relations committee to design something new and different that has not been done previously by the organization or other organizations. The benefits to this approach are that it creates excitement and builds interest. The drawbacks to this approach are that it involves separate brainstorming and feasibility meetings, which may be time consuming, and it may create uncertainty at best or fail all together at worst. Still, the innovative approach may be just what the doctor ordered for an organization that is trying to repair negative relationships with its stakeholders, or for organizations looking for an event or fundraiser that is energizing and interesting.

The sixth and final approach is the *combined approach*, which asks the public relations committee to combine any of the five approaches above to maximize the exposure to stakeholders and the success of those efforts. As Weis and Gantt (2002) note, “This concept for program development is highly effective because it combines information from numerous sources in making program decisions. Researching information in making program decisions can be time consuming, but being able to create programs that effectively reach intended objectives has a great deal of merit and is easily worth the effort” (p. 80).

Evaluating Resources

The final stage in the planning phase is to evaluate resources. The purpose of evaluating resources is to take an inventory of all the assets the organization has to implement the selected program concept(s). Resource evaluation should examine such factors as space, supplies, equipment, personnel, finances, and collaborations, all of which will be discussed in turn. For each factor, what the organization currently has versus what the organization needs should be considered, as well as how the organization will compensate for shortfalls.

The first resource to be evaluated is space. Assuming that in most cases, the program concept will involve some sort of meeting or event, it is first necessary to determine a meeting space. Analysis of this resource answers the question, “Where will the event be held?” In the example of the education seminar, the appropriateness of the current location may be considered. That is, perhaps the current location is too remote or small to give stakeholders what they want, or the inaccessibility of the site makes it

undesirable for presenters. In such a case, the current resource should be compared to other options for the space.

The second resource to be evaluated is supplies. Analysis of this resource answers the question, “What do we need to enact the program concept?” Supplies refer to items that facilitate the ease of concept implementation, such as writing utensils, paper, refreshments, and handouts. After determining what the organization needs, the public relations committee should determine what they have in relation to those needs, and decide how they will get the supplies in question, be it donations or purchases. The third resource to be evaluated is equipment. Analysis of this resource answers the question, “What do we have to do it?” Equipment refers to the resources to implement the concept, such as audio/visual devices (televisions, DVD/VCR, LCD projectors), computers, printers, vehicles for transportation, or microphones.

The fourth resource to be evaluated is personnel. Analysis of this resource answers the question, “Who will do the work?” Clearly, there must be people available to enact the program concept, be they representatives of the organization, or volunteers in the community. Again, the key is to identify how many people the organization has versus how many people the organization needs, and to determine how to recruit individuals to adequately cover the need.

The fifth resource to be evaluated is finances. Analysis of this resource answers the question, “How will we pay for it?” Assuming that multiple program concepts have been selected for the campaign, and that each concept is attacking a different facet of the public relations problem and addressing a different stakeholder, a budget for the entire effort should be completed. The budget should be broken down according to each

concept, and each concept should indicate which public it intends to address. This enables to organization to see not only the cost for the campaign, but to document what is spent on each public for grant reporting purposes. Though developing such a complete, detailed budget may be a daunting and time consuming task, it can be made more manageable by having each member of the public relations committee research the necessary funds for each public or concept.

The sixth and final resource to be evaluated is collaborations. Analysis of this resource answers the question, “Whom can we partner with?” Collaborations are helpful in four regards: One, it can help defray the cost of the event; Two, it can help provide personnel; Three, it can help to foster positive relationships with external stakeholders; and four, it can decrease competition for media attention and community resources. Collaborations can help defray the cost of the event in that the cost of space, supplies and equipment can be shared. After the organization and its partner organization(s) have taken inventory of their resources, the resources can be compiled to determine the aggregate assets and needs. This can dramatically cut the cost of hosting an event, as it requires less energy to be spent in donations and less money to be spent on space, supplies, and equipment. What one organization lacks, another organization may have, and vice versa.

Collaborations can help provide personnel in that the human resources necessary to enact a program concept can be increased. Instead of working with just one organization’s volunteers and employees, collaboration potentially doubles the available human resources. This can mean that both organizations only have to put in half the time,

or that less representation from each organization is necessary. Either way, both organizations save time.

Collaborations can help foster relationships with external stakeholders in that it creates a positive public image of two or more organizations working together to accomplish the same objective. A positive partnership can pave the way for future beneficial interactions among the organizations, as relationships are fostered as people from both organizations get to work with and help one another. Conversely, a negative partnership can create negative tensions between the organization and the community, so it is important that all individuals involved in the partnership work together towards a positive outcome. Guidance on improving collaborations is beyond the scope of this guide, but it is worthwhile to do some research in that area if your organization is seriously considering building and sustaining partnerships.

Collaborations can decrease competition for media attention and community resources in that it fosters a sense of partnership instead of competition. For example, if two literacy organizations are planning on hosting an event for International Literacy Day on the same day, they are championing the same cause but are competing with one another, both for media attention and community support. Theoretically, each event will only receive half of the media coverage, half of the traffic, and half of the donations if they proceed with a “go it alone” approach. Collaborating with another likeminded organization to accomplish the same objectives can theoretically double the media coverage—if all media outlets in the area cover the event, the organization gets a larger percentage of the market share, and the larger scale of the event could result in more of a media draw. Since the public no longer needs to decide between attending Organization

A's event or Organization B's, 100% of the public planning to attend an International Literacy Day event will attend, which will increase foot traffic. Especially if the event is funded by a grant, the increased number of attendees is sure to be more impressive than the number attending the event sponsored by a single organization. Again, if both organizations host an event, the financial contributions will theoretically be divided in half, so splitting the proceeds should not cause much of a financial burden.

Conclusion

Regardless of the level of public relations an organization is currently using, all organizations can benefit from a thorough research phase as described in the planning step. Before an organization can begin to solve communication problems using public relations, they must have a complete understanding of what those problems are, and be able to articulate the organization's and stakeholders' needs. Once this preliminary foundation has been laid, the program objectives and program concept can be defined, and the organization can evaluate their resources for implementing the program concept.

Table 1.1 summarizes the planning step for easy reference.

Table 1.1: Summary of Planning Step

Phase One: Research

- Generate a list of internal and external stakeholders
- Prioritize list of stakeholders according to who the organization relies on most, and which stakeholder
- Research existing data
- Conduct interviews, focus groups and surveys to determine what stakeholders desire

Phase Two: Conducting a needs assessment

- Conduct interviews, focus groups and surveys to determine what stakeholders desire
- Identify the needs of the community
- Identify the public relations problem after studying stakeholder input
- Define the dimensions of the public relations situation

Phase Three: Determining program objectives

- Determine what outcomes the campaign aims to accomplish
- Set a campaign timetable to determine when PR activities will occur and to set a termination date

Phase Four: Selecting a program concept

- Identify the key publics whose actions are necessary to accomplish the program's objectives
- Select a program concept (traditional, current, expressed desires, prescriptive, innovative, or combined)

Phase Five: Evaluating resources

- Determine what space, supplies, equipment, personnel, finances, and collaborations the organization currently has
- Compare the organization's current resources to what resources the organization needs to enact the program concept

CHAPTER TWO: IMPLEMENTATION

The second step of the relationship management model is implementation. This chapter utilizes the groundwork laid in the first chapter to enact the activities of the public relations campaign. The implementation step consists of six phases: developing action steps, managing risk, marketing and promotion, rehearsal, implementation and supervision, and monitoring. Table 2.1: Summary of Implementation Step, provides a checklist for each phase in this step for easy reference. Each phase will be discussed in turn.

Develop Action Steps

The first phase in the Implementation Stage is to develop action steps. As discussed in the previous chapter, program objectives define *what* is to be done. Action steps define *how* it will be done. As Weis and Gantt (2002) state, “[a]ction steps should specify (1) which tasks are to be completed to accomplish program objectives, and in what order, (2) who is responsible for completing these tasks, and (3) when the tasks are to be completed” (p. 81). Essentially, this phase requires walking through each program objective and outlining what steps need to occur to complete those objectives.

Since a committee, and not an individual, is running the relationship management program, clearly documenting the action steps allows everyone to know what their specific responsibility is, and how that responsibility contributes to the project outcomes. Figure 2.1: Sample Action Steps Worksheet, illustrates how the program objectives established in the Planning Step can be converted into action steps in the Implementation Step. Notice how steps are numbered in a specific order, and the steps are specific enough that there is no question who should be doing what.

Manage Risk

The second phase in the Implementation Stage is to manage risk. Risk management usually involves reducing the risk the organization will lose money, property, or support, or suffer reputational damage. Because of the potential for negative consequences of risk to evolve into a full-blown crisis situation, risk management is grouped under the broader category of crisis management. From the relationship management perspective, a crisis is an event in the history of an organization that threatens the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders. For these reasons, the following section discusses risk management from the broader crisis management perspective. The following discussion will discuss identifying, evaluating, and handling risks to mitigate potential damages and help organizations to recover.

Identify Risks

Organizations—both for profit and nonprofit—spend a considerable amount of time preparing for crises to manage risk. The process of identifying risks may seem incredibly time consuming, especially given that most of the risks identified and the crisis plans developed for those risks will, hopefully, never be used. However, throughout an organization's lifetime, it is likely the organization will encounter some sort of crisis situation. For nonprofit organizations, the threat is usually negative publicity from opponents, but occasionally, crises do break out that have severe consequences. For example, the former president of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Conejo and Las Virgenes, California, had misused the nonprofit organization's credit card, resulting in the embezzlement of \$100,000. Obviously, the organization suffered some reputational damage as a result of the scandal, and financial damage that exceeded the \$100,000 that

was embezzled—public mistrust of the organization grew, and donations and support decreased as a result.

Identifying risks involves identifying what crises *could* happen, both obvious and obscure, those that have happened in the past, or could happen in the future. To begin thinking about potential crises, it may be helpful to first discuss broad types of crises, or crisis clusters. It goes without saying that all crises are different and will have different impacts on the organization and its stakeholders and assets; this explains why it is so difficult to prepare for crises. Since various crises have different causes triggered by different factors, it makes sense to classify crises into similar clusters that can then be developed into a crisis portfolio. A crisis portfolio is a complete response strategy for each type of crisis that includes contact information, talking points, internal protocols, pre-written outreach pieces, and designated spokespeople. The purpose of a crisis portfolio is to prepare crisis response strategies so the organization may react proactively to the situation instead of reactively. More information about preparing crisis portfolios will be discussed under the “Managing Risk” section. Though academia recognizes a variety of crisis clusters, four seem to be most appropriate for the nonprofit context: rumors, transgressions, accidents, and terrorism, each of which will be discussed in turn.

Rumors. Usually the most common type of risk, rumors can often lead to negative publicity campaigns, mistrust about the organization, and violations of stakeholder expectations. Rumors can vary in their accuracy, but no matter how truthful or fallacious the rumor is, negative consequences abound both internally and externally. Internally, rumors usually concern human resources issues, such as hirings, firings, changes in salaries, and promotions. These sorts of issues often spark rumors because people want to

feel they have control over their environment, or are at least aware of what is going on around them. Human resources decisions have the potential to substantially affect an individual's working environment, as superiors, subordinates, colleagues, or the individual may be affected. As a result, it is natural for individuals to begin talking amongst themselves in times of organizational change. Though the "grapevine" can be a useful tool for monitoring the pulse of the organization, there is a high potential that not all of the information informally passed along is completely accurate, and as a result, the potential for people to get upset is high. For example, if an organization's beloved Executive Director announced her retirement, rumors will likely circulate over who will replace her and how the individual will be selected. This is a decision that will greatly affect both internal and external stakeholders. Or, if the organization has failed to obtain adequate funding, rumors may surface that programs, salaries, benefits, or jobs will be cut. On a more personal scale, many rumors center around the problems of individuals in the organization. Rumors that focus on personal information is commonly known as gossip.

Externally, rumors usually concern organizational affairs or misdeeds. Much like internal stakeholders, external stakeholders want to be informed about their environment, and the informal messages that filter down to them regarding the organization may color the way they perceive an organization. Usually, these external rumors are less informed than internal rumors, which magnifies their destructive potential. External stakeholders form perceptions of the organization based on the informal messages they receive.

Granted, all rumors do not necessarily mean there will be negative consequences. Using

the internal rumor of a lack of funding, for example, the external stakeholders may catch wind of the issue and respond with support.

Though gossip and rumors are common informal channels of communication in all organizations, the problem is that, no matter what the situation, rumors have the potential to disrupt work and cause internal stakeholders to be upset. From a public relations standpoint, rumors are problematic in that messages about internal affairs can begin circulating *externally* without organizational knowledge or approval. This acts to lessen the organization's strategic communication, undermine formally sanctioned organizational messages, and create conflicting messages for internal and external publics. Rumors are perceived as posing a moderate degree of risk to an organization, as the level of control over the situation is moderate. That is, the organization did not formally sanction the information, and the public perceives the organization as having less control over the message.

Transgressions. Transgressions involve misdeeds committed by individuals or groups of individuals in the organization acting together to commit the misdeed. These misdeeds are committed knowingly (intentionally). Examples of transgressions include the embezzlement example involving the Boys and Girls Club as discussed above, or The Red Cross' misallocation of funds following Hurricane Katrina. Transgressions threaten the organization's relationships by increasing mistrust. Especially if the transgression results in substantial harm or damage to stakeholders, as in the Enron scandals, transgressions can threaten the very existence of the organization.

Transgressions could also involve inappropriate contact with clients, such as child molestation in a mentoring program, or sexual harassment charges. Transgressions do not

always occur in the day-to-day operations of an organization, however. Transgressions in the personal lives of employees or organizational representatives can also draw scrutiny. For example, if a member of the Board of Directors is involved in a high-profile extramarital affair, the organization could receive some negative repercussions because the public assumes that if one member of the board is unscrupulous, there is a high likelihood that other members of the organization are unscrupulous, too. Transgressions are perceived as posing a high degree of risk to an organization, as the level of control over the situation is high. That is, individuals have control over their acts and decisions, and those who transgress could have chosen to act more appropriately.

Accidents. Accidents involve mistakes caused by human error that can result in significant damage to the organization. Publics assume that accidents can usually be prevented, and attribute most accidents to negligence. If the organization has a previous history of accidents, the organization is more likely to be held responsible for the crisis, resulting in significant reputational damage. If the accident is an isolated incident, the organization is still likely to be held responsible, but reputational damage will be less severe.

Though “accident” generally refers to damage resulting in physical harm or loss of property, such as an explosion, accidents in the nonprofit context may involve improper labeling of blood collected during a drive, mixing up test results, or minor accounting errors. In each of these examples, the organization’s intent is not to cause harm. For some reason or other, the tasks were not completed properly, which results in harm caused to the client. The problem with accidents is it is difficult to prove intent. Accidents are perceived as posing a moderate degree of risk to an organization, as the

level of control over the situation is moderate. That is, there is usually something an organization could do to prevent the accident, be it more training, more supervision, and more care to avoid human errors.

Terrorism. As in all facets of American life, terrorism is an increasing concern. Terrorism, or the use of violence and intimidation for political aims, is a concern for nonprofit organizations as well. Nonprofit organizations can either be the victims of nonprofit organizations, or, unfortunately, the perpetrators of terrorist acts. Most often, nonprofit organizations are the victim of terrorism. For example, pro-life proponents are often connected to acts of terrorism incited on Planned Parenthood and women's health clinics. In some circumstances, nonprofit groups can commit or be accused of committing acts of terrorism, such as the extreme environmental group, the Earth Liberation Front (E.L.F.), vandalizing a chair lift in Vail, Colorado, to prevent a ski resort from expending into the habitat of an endangered species. If the organization is the victim of terrorism, terrorism is perceived as posing a low degree of risk to an organization, as the level of control over the situation is low. That is, there is little the organization could have done to prevent the situation. If the organization is the perpetrator of terrorist acts, terrorism is perceived as posing a high degree of risk to an organization, as the organization is solely responsible for the act of terrorism.

Evaluate Risks

After the organization's risks have been identified and grouped into the four crisis clusters described above, the risks should be evaluated. Not all risks are equally probable, nor are they all equally severe. For organizations pressed for time, it is necessary to plan for crises by determining where the most attention should be focused. This can be done in

much the same was as the Stakeholder Priority Analysis discussed in Chapter 1. Begin by listing out all possible scenarios in the crisis cluster. For each scenario, rank the probability of the scenario occurring on a scale of 1-5, 1 being not at all likely, 2 being not likely, 3 being possible, 4, being very possible, and 5 being imminent. Next, identify which organizational assets the scenario is likely to affect. Then, rank the amount of damage the scenario is likely to create *for each asset that could be affected* on a scale of 1-5, 1 being no damage, 2 being little damage, 3 being some damage, 4 being considerable damage, and 5 being massive damage. Add up the numbers assigned to the probability of each scenario and the severity of each asset for an aggregate risk score. The scenarios with the highest scores are those that are the highest risk, and are thus the scenarios that require the most organizational attention. Figure 2.1: Risk Evaluation Worksheet, provides an example of how risks can be evaluated using this method.

Handle Risks

Once the risks have been identified and evaluated, plans must be derived that discuss how to handle them. Specifically, handling risk consists of three components: preventing risk (how to avoid it), reducing risk (how to mitigate the damages), and retention or transfer of risk (how loss is handled if it occurs, who is responsible, who will pay). These components coordinate with the five crisis stages identified by Fern-Banks (2001) prodromes, prevention, containment, recovery, and learning. The three components will be examined in the context of the five crisis stages to provide some context for how they are used in a crisis.

Preventing risk. In the first stage of a crisis, prodromes, the purpose is to identify *prodromes*, (the early symptoms that an event is about to take place) to prevent risk. In

this stage, organizations should be monitoring issues in the external and internal environment. Since I define crisis as an event that threatens the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders, it is important to realize the relationship between an *issue* and an *event*. Certain *issues* are ever-present in an organization's environment. For example, Planned Parenthood and other nonprofit women's health clinics constantly deal with the issue of pro-life proponents. This constant issue may have a varying degree of organizational impact, ranging from occasional negative publicity campaigns to protesters blocking the entrance to the clinic. When these issues reach a critical stage, such as lighting messages in fire on the front lawn of clinics, causing physical damage to clinic property, or bombing the clinic, the issues has escalated into an event. It is these events that precipitate a crisis.

Using the hypothetical example of a women's health clinic being bombed is an appropriate example of noting prodromes. The women's health clinic may notice increases in volume and frequency of negative ad campaigns, the number of protesters, and the amount of "hate mail." Though these sorts of activities are normal parts of the organization's operating environment, the fact that they are increasing in number and frequency is a prodrome, and should serve as a warning sign that the issue may turn into an event. Hopefully, identifying the issues that could evolve into crises may aid in the early recognition and prevention of crises. Too often, organizations ignore the prodromes and assume they will just "blow over;" such a response inarguably sets up the organization to be in a reactive rather than a proactive position, which negates the purpose of crisis management—to restore an organization's control over its assets and environment.

Reducing risk. In the second stage of a crisis, prevention, the purpose is to reduce risks. Crisis managers do so by “heeding the warning signs and making plans to avoid the crisis through a proactive campaign or preparing a reactive campaign to cope with the crisis” (Fern-Banks, 2001, p. 480). For example, in response to the increase in negative ad campaigns, the women’s clinic could respond with an awareness campaign of its own to demonstrate that the clinic offers many valuable, less controversial, services to the community. In response to the increase in protesters, the clinic could request more police surveillance to keep the situation under control and protect its clients and employees as they enter and exit the clinic. In response to the increase in “hate mail,” the clinic could prepare a list of talking points to mail in response to recognize the concerns of the public and combat objections. In any of the three examples above, by heeding the prodromes and taking action, management may prevent a crisis at best, and mitigate the damage of the crisis at worst. Either way, the situation is easier to contain and rebound from than acting passively and hoping a crisis never occurs.

In the third stage, containment, the issue has become an event resulting in crisis. At this stage, the objective of crisis managers is to shorten the duration of the crisis, mitigate the situation to lessen the severity, and to otherwise gain control over the environment to lessen potential damage.

Retention of risks. In the fourth stage of a crisis, recovery, the purpose is to return to business as usual and repair relationships with stakeholders. It should be noted that this stage is ongoing and may take a considerable amount of time. Inevitably, the fourth stage will take longer than the subsequent stages, especially if the prodromes have been ignored, and will consume a considerable amount of time and other organizational

resources. Under the relationship management perspective, recovery has not occurred until stakeholders are satisfied with the organization's response and outcome.

Transferability of risks. In the fourth stage of a crisis, learning, the purpose is to learn from the crisis and extract valuable recommendations for preventing future events. Crisis managers are usually so relieved once a crisis has been resolved to the satisfaction of both the organization and the stakeholders that they fail to conduct a "post-mortem" analysis and learn from the experience (Fern-Banks, 2001). After any crisis, it is important to reflect upon the prodromes, causes, handling of the crisis and resolution so that future crises can be prevented, and handled more adeptly if and when a crisis should occur again. In most cases, managers will recognize the prodromes after the crisis has occurred, as evidenced by the all too common cry, "I should have seen that coming!" A careful post-mortem analysis may help make managers more aware of their environment, and recognize warning signs ahead of time in the future.

Crisis Response Strategies

Though it is necessary to understand the phases of crisis in order to handle risk properly, no recommendations have been made yet to respond to risk or to developing the crisis portfolios mentioned in the "Identifying Risks" section. Crisis response strategies can be grouped into three categories: accommodative/defensive, individual/organizational or proactive/reactive. There is an overwhelming number of strategies which are useful under specific circumstances and crisis clusters. To simplify this information, Figure 2.3. Selecting a Crisis Response Strategy, condenses the information below into an easy-to-use table intended to help build crisis response portfolios.

Accommodative/defensive strategies. The first classification of crisis response strategy is accommodative/defensive. When an organization uses accommodative strategies, it “accepts responsibility, admits to the existence of problems, and takes actions to remedy a situation” (Marcus & Goodman, 1991, p. 286). Accommodative strategies should be used when the organization is clearly at fault, such as for situations that fall under the transgression cluster. In contrast, when an organization uses defensive strategies, it “insists that the problems do not exist, tries to alleviate doubts about the firm's ability to generate future revenue, and takes action to resume normal operations rapidly” (Marcus & Goodman, 1991, p. 286). Defensive strategies should be used when the organization is not at fault, or when the fault is indeterminable, such as situations that fall under the rumor cluster.

Defensive strategies are subdivided into two categories: denial and evading responsibility. In the denial strategy, the organization simply denies responsibility for the act. A variant of the denial strategy—the alibi—provides supporting evidence for the denial by providing an explanation for why the organization is not at fault or is not capable of committing the act. In the evading responsibility strategy, actors attempt to lessen their responsibility for the act by employing one of four sub strategies: provocation, defeasibility, excuses, or justification. Provocation claims that the organization was provoked to act in an unacceptable way, or that the organization was used as a scapegoat for some other party. Defeasibility evades responsibility by claiming that a lack of information or control over the situation precipitated the act. Excuses are an attempt “to provide information that may reduce his or her responsibility for the offensive act” (p. 76), such as the Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, woman who used her bipolar disorder

as an excuse for embezzling \$18,000 from the nonprofit school for special needs children where she was employed. Finally, justification based on motives or intentions does not deny responsibility, but rather asks the audience to not hold the organization completely responsible for the act based on the fact that the organization acted on good intentions, such as the use of Minnesota Diversified Industries' (MDI) nonprofit funds at yacht clubs, golf-spa resorts, and casinos for "strategic planning sessions."

Accommodative strategies are subdivided into three categories: reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. Reducing offensiveness has six variants: bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attacking one's accuser, and compensation (Benoit, 1995, p.74). None of these strategies denies responsibility for the action; rather, the intention is to reduce negative feelings and restore the organization's image. In bolstering, the organization plays up their positive attributes or past actions with the intent of offsetting negative feelings toward the act, such as an organization playing up its reproductive education program and free STD screening to offset the controversy of its pregnancy termination services. Minimization attempts to downplay the severity of the act, such as when a major university attempts to show that accusations of discrimination in its application process are really unfounded. Differentiation attempts to compare a reprehensible act with other, similar reprehensible acts to show that, in comparison, the organization's actions are not that bad, such as when an embezzlement scandal involving local police is compared to Officer Mark Furman's perjury charge in the OJ Simpson case to show that, in relation, the local situation is not that bad. Transcendence attempts to frame the reprehensible act in a different, more favorable light, such as representatives of Waco, Texas' nonprofit community speaking

out that there would be a myriad of workshops for employees, board members, and staff, to address the legal and fiscal responsibilities of nonprofit organizations in the wake of several embezzlement scandals in the area. The message was clear: though nonprofits in the area had acted inappropriately, the nonprofit community as a whole had learned from the situation, and were working together to ensure that no future incidents would occur.

Attacking one's accuser may occur in two ways: 1) To victimize the organization and gain the audience's sympathy, and 2) To divert the audience's attention away from the original accusation. Again the women's health clinic provides a myriad of examples. In response to charges of "baby killing," the clinic may respond by condemning the vandalization of clinic property, or attacks on the clinic's clients to play up the perspective that the clinic is the victim. Finally, compensation offers remuneration to the victim to offset negative effects of the act, such as the Catholic diocese offering financial remuneration and paid counseling to members who had been molested by Priests.

Corrective action is a fairly straightforward image restoration strategy. The organization accepts responsibility for the act, and attempts to reduce negative effects by vowing to correct the problem, such as Ford and Firestone Tire's massive product recall. This could be as simple as rectifying an error in billing, or as complex as instating a system of provisions to prevent future negative acts from occurring. It should be noted that "one can take corrective action without admitting guilt" (Benoit, 1995, p. 79), though the organization accepts responsibility for the consequences resulting from that act.

Lastly, an organization may engage in mortification, by which the organization accepts responsibility and asks for forgiveness, such as the massive reparations burdened by Germany following World Wars I and II. Image and face may be restored if the

audience perceives the apology to be sincere. The likelihood of accepting a mortification strategy is increased when it is combined with other image restoration strategies, such as bolstering, differentiation, and especially corrective action.

Individual/organizational strategies. The second classification of crisis response strategy is individual/organizational. Similar to accommodative/defensive, this strategy classifies crisis response strategies according to whether an organization or individual is responsible for the act. Organizational-level crisis response strategies include three variants: apology, excuse, or justification. All accept fault for an undesirable action. The apology strategy admits the organization's guilt and requests punishment. The excuse strategy attempts to negate responsibility for an event. An excuse may be followed by the third strategy: justification. With the justification strategy, the organization accepts responsibility for the negative repercussions of the undesirable action, but not responsibility for the *cause* of the action associated with the negative act. Additionally, organizations using excuses or justification may bolster their strategy by using denouncement, which employs statements indicating a particular external person or group is at fault (Allen & Cailliouet, 1994, p. 60).

Individual-level crisis response strategies also include three variants: ingratiation, intimidation, and factual distortion. Though an organization may also engage in these three tactics, they are considered individual-level strategies because these tactics attempt to shift blame from the individual to the organization. This may occur when a CEO or other executive is initially blamed for a crisis, and that individual then attempts to prove that they are not at fault. Ingratiation is "designed to gain audience approval by conveying conformity to the normative institutional environment's rules. Speakers using

ingratiation express belief, value, and attitude similarity; attempt to persuade the target of the organization's positive qualities, traits, motives and/or intentions; and praise the target to gain approval" (Allen & Cailliouet, 1994, p. 48). Intimidation conveys an organizational identity of danger and potency, and is often used in conjunction with threats. (Allen & Cailliouet, 1994, p. 60). In this strategy, the individual attempts to portray the organization as reckless and dangerous, or as a threat to the organization's community and stakeholders. The third strategy, factual distortion, "indicates that statements offered in regard to a particular event are taken out of context or are untrue in some way" (Allen & Cailliouet, 1994, p. 61). Factual distortion is a particular problem for nonprofit organizations, as many nonprofits are advocacy-based, and sometimes their words are taken out of context.

Proactive/reactive strategies. The third classification of crisis response strategy is proactive/reactive. Proactive strategies catch the issue before it becomes an event. This is the preferred method of crisis response, as it allows the organization to have more control over the environment, and to act strategically. As noted above, crises are more foreseeable than previously assumed, which explains the emphasis on a proactive approach. "Preparing" for crises in advance improves the organization's control over the situation than purely reactive strategies that may be conceived hastily in the wake of a crisis.

Proactive strategies include two variants: issues management and reputation management. Issues management entails watching for and responding to prodromes to prevent issues from evolving into events. Reputation management, on the other hand, emphasizes establishing positive communication relationships with publics as a base of

good will that can lessen the damage to an organization's reputation that typically accompanies a crisis (p. 302). Most research on proactive crisis response strategies advocates an "inoculation" treatment. Inoculation acknowledges the organization's weaknesses in advance, and exposes the target audience to the crisis in small doses, using positive or negative messages. The rationale for inoculation is similar to the rationale for immunization—by exposing people to the crisis in small doses, the public will be able to build up immunity, and, if and when the crisis hits, the public will be affected to a lesser degree.

Positive messages may help place the crisis in perspective, emphasizing what the organization has done right or is doing to correct the situation. Negative messages may address potential weaknesses and refute them. It should be noted that inoculation should only be used to prepare the public for the crisis and attempt to garner support or even sympathy before the crisis occurs. It can actually cause reputational damage if the issue does not evolve into an event, so inoculation should be used with caution.

Unfortunately, too many organizations ignore the prodromes, and manage risk reactively, after the issue has become an event. At this stage, the organization is reacting to the environment, which makes any effort to contain the situation less strategic as there is less control over environmental factors. Most research on reactive strategies advocates a "bolstering" treatment. Bolstering reinforces the organization's positive image to strengthen the public's favorable attitudes. This may be ineffective for several reasons, including the possibility for an organization to not have a favorable image to start with, less environmental control than the proactive strategy, and the potential to reduce the public's tolerance for allowing mistakes made by the organization.

More often, problems arise post-crisis when an organization ignores or denies the fact that action should be taken. Ignoring or denying a situation insinuates guilt, which can magnify the impact of the crisis. The best way to approach reactive strategies is to determine whether a defensive or accommodative strategy is appropriate, and to select an appropriate strategy as listed in Figure 2.3. Crisis Response Strategy Selection.

Building Crisis Portfolios

To build a crisis portfolio, compile all of the information obtained in the “Identifying Risks,” “Evaluating Risks,” and “Handling Risks” sections. A complete crisis portfolio will consist of the risks identified grouped in to the four crisis clusters described in this section with an evaluation ranking to draw attention to the most probable and severe scenarios. After the risks have been identified and ranked, an appropriate response strategy should be selected using Figure 2.3. Crisis Response Strategy Selection. Once the crisis response strategy has been selected, develop action steps to enact that strategy using the same methods for developing action steps discussed earlier in this chapter. The action steps should include accurate, timely reference information, including contact lists of key internal and external individuals. Examples of key internal individuals would be the Executive Director, members of the Board of Directors, and program directors. Examples of key external individuals would be media contacts, the organization’s legal counsel, and emergency services. The contact information should include the individual or organization’s name, number, address, and the role they play in crisis response. This list should be updated at least twice a year, though a quarterly review is preferable.

The action steps should establish a protocol for accomplishing the crisis response strategy. For example, when a crisis hits, the executive director will contact the Board of Directors and the program directors. The program directors will act as the point of contact to their staff, and will report back to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will then contact the public relations committee to implement the crisis response strategy. The public relations committee will delegate responsibilities for enacting the strategy, and identify contact and spokespeople. The crisis portfolio should be detailed enough to provide guidance in a crisis, but not so detailed as to be restrictive.

Figure 2.4: Sample Crisis Portfolio, provides an example of a crisis portfolio for a transgression. Notice how the portfolio combines the elements of identifying risk and evaluating risk to justify the selection for handling risk. In the example, the crisis response strategy is corrective action. Notice that the corrective action is not defined. It would be impossible to prescribe an appropriate corrective action, as all crises are different, and the situation and circumstances will not always be the same as what has been recorded in the crisis portfolio. However, the *process* for determining the corrective action *is* included: the Board of Directors meets with Executive Director and public relations committee to determine appropriate corrective action. Each scenario identified should have its own crisis portfolio. The crisis portfolios should be grouped together with the contact information in a centrally located binder, and distributed to key individuals in the organization.

Marketing and Promotion

The third phase in the Implementation Stage as conceptualized by Weis and Gantt (2002) is marketing and promotion. This phase utilizes the standard vehicles for press

agency familiar to many nonprofit organizations, such as writing and distributing pitch letters, press releases, public service announcements (PSAs), and media advisories. As should be apparent now, the relationship management approach is far more involved and complex than media relations. However, the relationship management approach to public relations still uses media relations tactics to promote relationship management activities; it is not the *only* tactic used. This enables the relationship management approach to be more strategic in that multiple tools and tactics are used to reach program objectives, many of which are under complete control of the organization. In media relations, the organization gives the power to the media to censor, rework, or add to the piece, and the organization has less control over the end product. Still, in order for the public to be aware of the organization's activities, it is necessary to interact with the media. This section discusses some commonsense guidelines to effectively use the media to market and promote programs. What follows discusses the six steps to effective media use, and is modified from an earlier publication by Gale (2003).

Understanding the Media

The first step to effective media use is to understand the media. Often, media relations is presented as a way to do what advertising does, but for free. Media outlets are often portrayed by conference presenters or workshop facilitators as friendly resources who deeply want to help your organization out, and print everything your organization send their way. While some media professionals certainly take an altruistic approach to publishing news provided by nonprofit organizations, and some smaller media outlets outright survive on contributions from the community, the truth of the matter is that, depending on the area your nonprofit organization serves, media outlets can receive

literally hundreds of press releases from organizations vying for press coverage. As a result, much competition exists due to limited time, space, and other resources. In order to stand out from the competition and make it past the “media gatekeepers,” the public relations committee must create media opportunities that are as appealing as possible to increase the likelihood a story will be picked up, and, consequently, the likelihood stakeholders will see it. Presenting appealing media opportunities consists of determining your purpose, determining your audience, using a novel approach, and localizing stories.

Determining the purpose. Before even beginning writing a pitch letter, press release, media advisory, or PSA, consider what you hope to achieve as a result of media coverage. Is it to convince legislators to support your efforts? Increase awareness of program changes? Encourage people to attend an event? Respond to an article or editorial? Whatever the purpose, consider which venues to pursue to best accomplish your objectives. Different types of media are more appropriate for accomplishing certain objectives, as each media has certain advantages and disadvantages. Table 2.1: Types of Media, provides a summary of some common forms of media, and the advantages and disadvantages of each, to aid in selecting appropriate media for your purpose.

Developing a Media Plan

The second step to effective media use is to develop a media plan. The media plan consists of identifying media relations goals to manage time and resources, to provide motivation, and establish criteria for evaluation. A well-thought-out media plan will identify media relations goals, establish a timeline, and define the target audience and identify appropriate means of reaching them.

Identify media relations goals. The public relations committee should identify activities, events, and programs the organization would like to highlight each year. Relating publicity goals back to the organization's mission statement can help achieve purposeful media attention. For example, if a literacy organization's mission statement is "Advancing literacy through access, advocacy, and alliances," the public relations committee may try to highlight events throughout the year that discuss how the organization is increasing access to literacy programs, how the organization is advocating for literacy issues, and how the organization attracts and maintains alliances. Perhaps the organization has an annual fundraiser to support literacy programs. This has a clear connection to the organizational objective of increasing access. Perhaps the organization always lobbies on International Literacy Day. This has a clear connection to the organizational objective of advocacy. Perhaps the organization also uses International Literacy Day as an opportunity to partner with other local literacy organizations to host a community celebration of literacy. This has a clear connection to the organizational objective of building alliances. Setting media goals in terms of the mission statement helps eliminate media campaigns that are not strategic or do not contribute to organizational outcomes, and also helps produce more newsworthy campaigns.

Establish a timeline. At the beginning of each fiscal year, it helps to map out all of the media events identified as media goals, and see where those issues or events fall in relation to media opportunities. News outlets are always looking for ways to localize issues, so try to coordinate efforts on media opportunities that coincide with local, regional, or national events. For example, October is Breast Cancer Awareness month. A local breast cancer advocacy organization could coordinate its media relations efforts to

coincide with an event of national significance. Another example is International Women's Day on March 8. A local feminist organization could use the international celebration as an opportunity to highlight the organization's achievements.

Define the target audience. Reaching the target audience is the objective of any successful media campaign. Strategically, this makes sense, as the public relations committee wants to reach as many people who care about the organization or who *should* care about the organization as possible. Begin by identifying people who are already involved with the organization, Refer to the Stakeholder Priority Analysis for ideas. Try to identify other individuals or groups who may be interested in the organization as well. Next, try to identify media that are appropriate for reaching those individuals or groups. This can be done in several ways, but first it is necessary to identify some demographic factors of the target audience. How old are they? What gender are they? What is their education level? What is their income level? Where do they congregate? What do they like to do in their spare time? It is not necessary to conduct a scientific analysis to determine the answers to these questions. The questions are designed to start thinking about which avenues to pursue to reach the target audience. Scan newspaper announcements about groups that are meeting. Pay attention to television listings. Attend school board meetings. Try to get a sense of who these people are, what information they need, and where they get that information.

Creating a Media List

According to Gale (2003), the third step to effective media use is to create a media list. After the public relations committee has defined its target audiences and how to reach them, the next step is to create a media list. Many organizations that have

previously used the media relations approach to public relations already have a media list compiled. If the organization is compiling a contact list for the first time, the best way to start a list is to begin calling media outlets to obtain or confirm the names of key editors, reporters, and producers. Keep in mind that it is not necessary to have a working list of every reporter at an organization. A list of reporters who cover a “beat” related to your organization, such as the reporter who specializes in environmental news for a nonprofit that focuses on community conservation issues, is all that is necessary. Be sure to obtain the contact’s name, job title, deadlines, address, email, phone, and fax number. As media outlets have a high turnover rate, the list should be updated every three to six months as necessary. The list should include contacts at college, local, regional, ethnic, or special interest newspapers and magazines, community calendars, corporate newsletters, and local television stations, radio stations, news programs, and talk shows.

Remembering that the focus of this guide is relationship management, the public relations committee should make ongoing contact with the media contacts. Send periodic emails to contacts to see if there are any stories they’re working on that the organization could provide information or contacts for. Send out press kits with updated brochures and newsletters as necessary. Send thank-you notes to reporters and editors who have covered your organization, and always invite contacts to events your organization is hosting, even if the intent is not to achieve press coverage.

Writing for the Media

The fourth step to effective media use according to Gale (2003) is to write for the media using appropriate journalistic style. Journalism style is different from creative writing or technical writing in several ways. Whenever submitting a story idea, press

release, or media advisory, using journalism style increase the likelihood that parts of the piece will be used, as there are less modifications necessary. Even though submissions will be revised, edited, and polished, writing in journalism style makes the editor's job easier. The following seven rules are recommended by Gale (2003).

The first rule of journalism style is to show, not tell. Too often, issues effecting nonprofit organizations are reduced to impersonal numbers. Instead of spouting off facts and statistics, use concrete examples that humanize and personalize issues to demonstrate why the statistics are important. People like to read about people, and humanizing and contextualizing information makes it more understandable and memorable.

The second rule of journalism style is to avoid jargon. When writing for the media, the author should always assume readers know nothing about the subject. This means defining technical terms, avoiding acronyms, and writing clearly and concisely. This is a difficult rule to observe, but remember the journalist's creed: "never overestimate what an audience knows, and never underestimate their intelligence."

The third rule of journalism style is to address the 5 Ws and the H. Any news story should contain the 5 Ws (who, what, when, where, and why) and the H (how). Making sure these six questions are addressed ensures that basic questions readers may have about the organization or event are answered.

The fourth rule of journalism style is to avoid linguistic clutter. Journalism writing is more clear and concise than creative writing, and has few big words and even fewer adjectives. Before sending off a press release or media advisory, edit the piece to eliminate any unnecessary words, or repetition of facts and information. Look for sections where one word will suffice instead of two, and use the active voice.

The fifth rule of journalism is to use the inverted pyramid style. In the inverted pyramid style, the first paragraph should contain the 5 Ws and the H. This is the most essential information, and it should act as an internal preview for the rest of the article. The rest of the article should be arranged from most important information to least important information so that if the story needs to be cut, the last paragraphs can be eliminated without detracting from the story. Also, if readers skim the story, they will have at least read the most important information.

The sixth rule of journalism is to use AP style. AP style, or Associated Press style, is a stylebook that establishes basic grammar rules followed by most newspapers. Information contained in the style guide address such issues as which numbers should be spelled out and which should use Roman numerals, use of speaker's last name, abbreviations of states, and using quotes. The AP style guide is available in many larger bookstores or online, and is a useful reference for organizations planning on sending out press releases on a fairly regular basis.

The seventh rule of journalism is to remember voice and audience. Journalism style is more formal than personal correspondence and creative writing, and as such, always write in the third person. Do not address the reader as "you," or refer to the organization as "we," "us," or "our." However, it is not necessary to remove the third person from direct quotations.

Now that the rules have been discussed, the remainder of this section discusses how to write four of the most common forms of press agency: pitch letters, press releases, public service announcements, and media advisories.

Pitch letters. A pitch letter is the public relations equivalent of a screenplay treatment. It should contain all essential information and explain why listeners, readers, or viewers will be interested, the purpose of a pitch letter is to gain the attention of media gatekeepers, and persuade them to cover an event. Pitch letters are the most effective way to propose story ideas when the organization has information that has no immediacy. Pitch letters should be no longer than one page, and should be faxed to each contact on the media list. Though some media outlets will receive more than one pitch letter, this will increase the likelihood that the piece will be picked up.

Pitch letters should be written on a standard sheet of 8.5" x 11" letterhead. In the upper left-hand corner, the name, title, phone, fax, and email of the contact person should be included. The body of the pitch letters should address the 5 Ws and the H described above, and should contain a tantalizing yet brief description of the story idea. Be sure to address the relevance of the story. That is, why should readers or viewers care? Finally, include a *boilerplate*, which is paragraph summarizing the organization's purpose and activities. Figure 2.5: Sample Pitch Letter, provides an example of a pitch letter.

Press releases. A press release is a complete story sent to all media contacts to describe organizational news or events. Some small newspapers use press releases exactly as they are submitted; larger publications may use the release as background information. In either case, the press release should observe the seven rules of journalism, and be as professional and well written as possible. Historically, press releases were printed and mailed to media contacts. With the advent of technology, however fax and email are frequently used. The advantage of email is that the press release can be copied

and pasted into a story, which saves editors and reporters time. When compiling the media list, be sure to ask what format the editor, reporter, or producer prefers.

The press release should include a cover letter that explains the importance of the organization, event, or project to the community. "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" should be written in all caps in the upper left-hand corner of the release along with the date. Immediately below the release date, include the name, title, phone, fax, and email of the contact person. Below this information, write a short, informative headline in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. A subhead may be used under the headline to provide more information about the story. The subhead should be written in capital and lowercase letters. The release should be two pages or less, typewritten and double-spaced on one side of a standard 8.5"x11" letterhead. The first sentence of the actual release should address the 5 Ws and the H. The body should use the inverted pyramid style and AP style. Including quotes wherever possible livens up the story and makes it more human. As a result, a release that includes quotes is more likely to be used in some form. If more than one page is necessary, type "-More-" at the bottom of the first page; type the headline in the upper left-hand corner of the second page with a "2" next to it. If more than one page is necessary, avoid splitting sentences and paragraphs over two pages. At the end of the release, include the boilerplate, and type "###" to indicate end of the release. Figure 2.6: Sample Press Release, provides an example of a press release.

Public service announcements. Public service announcements (PSAs) are free advertisements aired by radio and television stations. To be considered a public service announcement, the message must benefit the community and avoid controversial or self-serving material. PSAs may be used to recruit volunteers, clients, or supporters. Meet

with local public service or program directors to find out PSA requirements such as preferred length and format, as some stations require the submission of a pre-recorded PSA. Other stations require the submission of a script to be read by in-house talent.

The press release should include a cover letter that explains the importance of the organization, event, or project to the community. Include the name, title, phone, fax, and email of the contact person in the upper left-hand corner. Include the date the message is to begin airing, and the “kill” date, or the date the message is to stop airing in the upper right hand corner. In the body, use the active voice to present a sense of immediacy. Remember that PSAs are meant to be heard, and are therefore more conversational and less formal than pitch letters or press releases. The information should be clear, concise, and conversational, as if speaking to a friend. The PSA should be easy to understand the first time it is heard. The PSA should contain accurate times, dates, facts, phone numbers, and web sites to refer listeners to more information. Since people learn from repetition, it is important to incorporate the organization’s name and the event or issue name at least three times in the message. This is a hard task to accomplish, given that most PSAs are about 20 seconds long. When writing copy for a PSA, figure that a 15-second spot uses about 30 words, a 30-second spot uses about 75 words, and a 60-second spot uses about 150 words. It is best to write the 15-second spot first to be sure all of the essential information is contained. As the spot allotment increases, feel free to incorporate more description and information. Keep in mind that, since PSAs are aired as a public service, be it on radio or the television, PSAs are give the time that is left over after paid spots have been filled. For this reason, providing a variety of time spots increases the

likelihood a spot will be used. Figure. 2.7: Sample Public Service Announcements, provides an example of public service announcements.

Media advisories. Media advisories are typically sent out one week prior to an event as a reminder. Unlike press releases, which are full stories, media advisories are one-page fact sheets that provide just the bare essentials. They should contain a brief description of the event, the time, the location, numbers of participants, and any visual opportunities such as live bands, artists, or activities, and a contact name and phone number. Media advisories can be supplemented by phone calls. Phone calls can also be used to pitch story ideas, confirm receipt of pitch letters, press releases or PSAs, or to confirm attendance at an event. Keep calls short and to the point, as members of the press are usually very busy. Provide only essential information, such as date, time, location, and a description of the event, and briefly explain why the media should attend or provide coverage.

Tips for Working With the Media

It's a good idea to establish working relationships with members of the media to get the organization's name out there and differentiate the organization from the competition. Assignment desks in medium to large cities receive literally hundreds of press releases every day, and knowing reporters, editors, or producers on a personal level helps organizations gain priority and influence.

To start a relationship with the media, be proactive. Don't wait for members of the media to come to the organization for story ideas. If the organization is doing something really terrific, send out a press release or make a few phone calls to get the ball rolling. Even if no one is interested in the story, keep trying. The top reasons why stories

aren't covered are that it doesn't meet an outlet's needs or market, or there isn't enough time or space to run it. Offering an exclusive to reporters by pitching different story angles to different outlets is a terrific idea, as reporters love to "scoop" the competition by being the only writer covering a story.

Speaking of being persistent, it's important to follow up on press agency that has been sent out. Don't assume that since a press release, PSA or media advisory has been sent out, the organization will receive coverage. Begin follow up with contacts shortly after (about 1-2 days) the piece has been sent out. Call all contacts to make sure they received the piece, determine their interest level, answer any questions, and confirm attendance. It's advisable to get in touch with contacts periodically to update them on the organization's activities or inquire about response to articles about the organization. In fact, offering periodic assistance is one of the best ways to build and maintain relationships with the press. Offer credible sources to contacts, or provide program history and statistics. If a reporter asks a question the public relations committee does not know, tell them so, and get back to them as soon as possible.

One of the most important things to consider when building relationships with the media is respecting deadlines. Reporters work in a fast-paced, high-stress environment. To make their jobs easier, be aware of and observe deadlines. Never make phone calls to a reporter after 3:00 p.m., as this is "crunch time" when they are usually putting the finishing touches on their stories or preparing copy for the next day. Radio station deadlines vary; public service announcements may need to be submitted up to six weeks in advance, while information for news or talks shows must be in the night before. Magazines, especially local publications, begin production several months in advance. As

stated previously in this guide, show gratitude by sending thank-you notes to reporters covering the organization, or write a letter to the reporter's boss telling them how much the organization appreciated the reporter's work.

Rehearsal or Walkthrough

The fourth phase in the Implementation Stage is to conduct a rehearsal or walkthrough. This may not be necessary in every relationship management campaign, as not all events or activities require a walkthrough. However, if the event is large, or the organization is conducting an event for the first time, it is recommended that the public relations committee or other event organizers do a thorough rehearsal or walkthrough to practice timing and transitions, identify potential snags, and make sure everyone is on the same page. This does not have to be a formal dress rehearsal; simply walking through the venue with staff and volunteers before the event to identify where things will be located, who will be where, and what they will be doing, is usually sufficient. If there will be stations or several different venues, it is recommended that the roles of staff and volunteers be clearly explained prior to the event to avoid confusion and alleviate stress on the day of. Finally, it's very important that, after the rehearsal or walkthrough, staff and volunteers have an opportunity to ask questions. If modifications will be made, make sure everyone understands them and how those modifications will affect the program as a whole.

Implementation and Supervision

The fifth phase in the Implementation Stage is implementation and supervision. During this phase, all of the planning and preparation is set into motion, and the program or event is finally executed. The implementation phase should closely follow related

action steps, though presumably, by this phase, many of the action steps have already been completed. Some agenda should be formulated prior to implementation so that all individuals involved in the execution are aware of what is going on, when it's going on, and who is responsible.

The key to successful implementation is supervision. Just as an Olympic skater doesn't train herself, an event or program cannot be accomplished without some guidance and supervision. Individuals, be they staff or volunteers, should be designated ahead of time to supervise the event or program. The role of the supervisors is to ensure everything runs smoothly, everyone is doing what they're supposed to, and everything runs according to schedule. These individuals should be well informed about the event, and easily identifiable. Some organizations have the supervisors wear special hats, badges, or t-shirts to make them easily recognizable, both to event staff and attendees. It is helpful if these individuals can be easily reached, via cell phones or walkie-talkies. Essentially, these supervisors are responsible for ensuring everything goes according to plan, and making modifications as necessary as discussed in the monitoring phase, below.

Monitoring

The sixth phase in the Implementation Stage is monitoring. People often ask why monitoring is included in the Implementation Stage instead of the Evaluation Stage. If monitoring—which is usually associated with soliciting feedback and opinions post-mortem—is conducted after the fact, there is no opportunity to make modifications to the program. Monitoring allows the public relations committee to make modifications *during* the program to best accommodate the needs of internal and external stakeholders.

For example, midway through the education seminar, the public relations committee may opt to implement a short satisfaction survey to attendees, staff, and presenters. Based upon this feedback, the public relations committee may determine that, although attendees find the room spacious and comfortable, there are external distractions from a neighboring room that make it hard to concentrate. The public relations committee can either change the time or the location to adjust to stakeholder feedback. Staff members may state that they love the seminars, but they feel really rushed to travel from the organization's office to the community center. The public relations committee can either allow staff to leave early, or move up the start time of the seminars. Presenters may state that there have been some inaccuracies in their credentials, both on publicity materials and in introductions. The public relations committee could implement a protocol to ensure that presenter credentials are accurate and current. In any of these examples, conducting the monitoring phase *during* the implementation stage allows the public relations committee to better serve its stakeholders and adjust to their needs. While merely soliciting feedback to file away for next time does have some value, monitoring is more successful and useful if it can be used to modify behaviors *as they're happening*, instead of just after the fact or for preparation in the future.

Monitoring need not be so formal as a survey, however. Such a suggestion would be impractical for one-day events or events that only last a few hours. In these cases, members of the organization, perhaps the same individuals who performed the supervisory function, can roam around informally asking people how things are going and how they are enjoying the event. In addition to roaming, the entrance and exits are terrific locations to greet people and solicit feedback. People are usually very honest,

especially if they are dissatisfied. Such simple, friendly inquiries may reveal the bathrooms are messy, there's no diet soda, the menu doesn't include vegetarian dishes, or they were disappointed an advertised presenter didn't show up. Usually, these situations can be remedied fairly easily, and such remedies form lasting, positive impressions. Be sure to have several people available to monitor shorter events.

Conclusion

The implementation phase can be even more time intensive than the planning stage, but, if done successfully, the rewards can be great. Using the action steps as a guide, what needs to be done, who needs to do it, and when it needs to be done should be fairly straightforward. Steps should be taken to manage risk and establish a crisis response plan. As should be clear by now, the relationship management process is far more involved than the media relations approach practiced in most nonprofit organizations. However, the standard forms of press agency should still be used to promote organizational objectives. To ensure everything runs smoothly, a rehearsal or walk-through should be conducted to identify potential snags, and to ensure that everyone is on the same page. Finally, members of the public relations committee should monitor feedback during the implementation to make adjustments as necessary. Table 2.1 summarizes the implementation step.

Table 2.2: Summary of Implementation Step

Phase One: Develop action steps

- ❑ Specify which tasks are to be completed to accomplish program objectives, and in what order,
- ❑ Specify who is responsible for completing these tasks
- ❑ Specify when the tasks are to be completed

Phase Two: Manage risk

- ❑ Identify risk
- ❑ Evaluate risk
- ❑ Handle Risk
- ❑ Develop crisis response strategies
- ❑ Develop crisis portfolios

Phase Three: Marketing and promotion

- ❑ Understand the media
- ❑ Determine the purpose
- ❑ Develop the media plan
- ❑ Create a media list
- ❑ Write and distribute pitch letters, press releases, public service announcements, and media advisories
- ❑ Initiate and maintain relationships with media contact persons

Phase Four: Conduct a rehearsal or walkthrough

- ❑ Practice timing and transitions
- ❑ Identify and rectify snags
- ❑ Provide an opportunity for staff and volunteers to ask questions

Phase Five: Implementation and supervision

- ❑ Implement the program
- ❑ Supervise to ensure everything goes according to plan

Phase Six: Monitoring

- ❑ Implement satisfaction surveys or seek input
- ❑ Make adjustments as needed to ensure stakeholder expectations are being met

CHAPTER THREE: EVALUATION AND STEWARDSHIP

The third and fourth step of the relationship management model are evaluation and stewardship. Though it may seem that stewardship should be discussed as another step, it is closely related to the evaluation phase in that the evaluation step discusses recommendations for future programs that influence the stewardship step. For that reason, it is included in this chapter. In the constant action of a nonprofit organization, the evaluation phase often gets put on the back burner, or forgotten altogether. As demonstrated in this chapter, evaluation is an absolutely essential step in the relationship management model, both to determine the effectiveness of the campaign in reaching program objectives, for grant reporting, and to decide as an organization what went well that should be repeated, and what did not go well that should be avoided in the future. In this chapter, I discuss the five phases of the evaluation process, and the four elements of the stewardship step.

Evaluation Process

In the evaluation process, three questions are answered: who is involved, what should be evaluated, and how it should be evaluated. Additionally, the evaluation process includes recording and reporting results, and formulating recommendations for future programs, though these phases are discussed in the stewardship step.

Who is Involved?

The first phase in the evaluation process is to determine who should be involved in the evaluation. The simple answer is everyone involved in the planning and implementation of the program. Refer back to the Action Steps Worksheet for a complete list of all players involved in the program. It is best to assign members of the public

relations committee different components of assessment (discussed below (preparation evaluation, process evaluation, and program evaluation) ahead of time so they can come prepared to discuss the results of their assessment at an assigned date.

What Should be Evaluated?

The second phase in the evaluation process is to determine what should be evaluated. A thorough evaluation should assess the preparation, process, and program. Preparation evaluation addresses whether the public relations strategies identified in the planning stage and executed during the implementation phase were appropriate vehicles for meeting program objectives. This level of evaluation considers whether the correct steps were taken to effectively disseminate strategic communication, which may be determined by the appropriateness of channel selection, the content of the messages, and the overall effectiveness of planning and implementation.

Process evaluation addresses monitoring and adjusting programming. As a result of process evaluation, the organization should consider how well the public relations program affected community needs, the relevancy of the needs identified in the first phase (research), whether other needs should have been addressed or should be addressed in the future, the extent to which the program improves the community's perception of the organization/community relationship, and how satisfactorily the program meets organizational and community needs.

Program evaluation consists of three levels intended to compare program results to the program objectives: commercial effectiveness, simple effectiveness, and objectives effectiveness. Commercial effectiveness evaluates the program in terms of the overall accomplishments of the program compared to the costs to implement it. A program that

was highly successful in accomplishing the program objectives identified in the second phase would thus justify the time and money spent in research, planning, implementation, and monitoring. Conversely, a program that was unsuccessful in accomplishing the program objectives would not. In the case of a successful campaign, the public relations committee should identify what characteristics made the program successful so the organization can replicate those characteristics in the future. In the case of an unsuccessful campaign, the preparation and process must be carefully examined and modified, and the characteristics that made the program fail should be identified so they may be avoided in the future.

Simple effectiveness evaluates the program in terms of how much “ink” a campaign garnered. Derived from the media relations perspective, it is called simple effectiveness because it does not measure attitudinal or behavioral changes, just the amount of coverage garnered by a public relations program. When people consider simple effectiveness, they are usually referring to how many media mentions a campaign garnered, not how effective the messages were in affecting attitudinal and behavioral change.

Simple effectiveness is historically measured by the column inches of press cuttings or mentions on electronic media. Counting media mentions fails as a measure of effectiveness in that it does not consider the tone of the articles (how the organization is portrayed), it fails to consider how many people actually received the message, it lessens the organization’s control of the message, and it places the media solely in control of the program’s effectiveness.

Objectives effectiveness involves evaluating the program in terms of meeting program objectives. Referring back to the second phase, objectives effectiveness considers whether the program objectives identified in the planning stage were accomplished, and how well those objectives influenced the desired effects. A successful program would be one that both met the objectives and achieved the desired attitudinal and behavioral effects. An unsuccessful program would be one that met the objectives, but did not achieve the desired attitudinal and behavioral effects, or one that neither met the objectives nor achieved the desired attitudinal and behavioral effects.

How should it be Evaluated?

The third phase in the evaluation process is to decide how the program should be evaluated. All three levels of program assessment—preparation, process, and program—can be conducted using many of the same techniques used in the research phase of the Planning Step, including observation, interviews, focus group, evaluation surveys, and pretest/posttest measures. Ideally, the quantitative and/or qualitative program goals established in the program objectives phase of the Planning Stage are specific and measurable. This allows the public relations committee to refer back to the program objectives to determine an appropriate evaluation measure.

For example, the quantitative program objective was to increase the frequency of the education seminar from once a month during the summer to one every six weeks throughout the year. This is a specific, measurable program objective that can be evaluated at the program level using objectives effectiveness by counting the number of times education seminars were conducted and comparing that to the goal. The qualitative program objective was to convince members of the community that presenting at the

education seminars is a worthwhile use of their time. This is a specific, measurable program objective that can also be evaluated at the program level by using objectives effectiveness. A survey could be administered to stakeholders identified in the Stakeholder Priority Analysis both before and after the campaign. The results of the posttest could be compared to the pretest to determine what attitudinal or behavioral changes took place. The best measures of evaluation will be determined as the program objectives are being written. That is, the specific, measurable objectives should contain a mechanism for measurability at their inception. This simplifies the evaluation process considerably, as the exact method for how the objective will be measured was determined prior even to the program implementation.

Formulate Recommendations for Future Programs

The fourth phase in the evaluation process is to formulate recommendations for future programs. Based upon the outcomes of the evaluations, the public relations committee should determine whether the program should be used again in the future or if it should be discarded. If the committee decides to do the program again in the future, the committee should make recommendations for future improvements. These recommendations should be recorded and filed away for future reference. Such documents become part of the research phase of future campaigns.

Stewardship

Stewardship is the fourth and final step in the relationship management model. It is the step that differentiates the relationship management model from the program planning model, and is the biggest difference between the relationship management approach and the media relations approach to public relations. In media relations, the

program ends when coverage is achieved. Aside from not being strategic, it does not foster long-term relationships with any key stakeholders. At best, members of the public relations committee may contact members of the press and send them information that may be helpful or of interest for a story, or they may send a thank-you note to the writer's editor. Though these are good practices that should be incorporated in a relationship management program, they should not be the only forms of stewardship. Stewardship expands upon these concepts by encouraging reciprocity, responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing. Each of these concepts will be discussed in turn.

Reciprocity

Again, the key to the approach to public relations described in this guide is *relationships*. This means that for every action, the organization should have an appropriate *reaction* to show its gratitude for stakeholder support. The concept of reciprocity goes beyond acknowledging supportive behaviors; it attempts to respond with equally supportive behaviors. For example, if clients participate in a focus group to discuss their positive and negative interactions with the organization, the organization could respond by modifying programs or procedures to demonstrate its appreciation for their time, and to let those stakeholders know their efforts are appreciated. Other common ways organizations reciprocate support are by hosting appreciation events or giving key publics a small token of gratitude.

The purpose reciprocity is to show stakeholders their support does not go unrecognized. A little appreciation goes a long way, and showing stakeholders that their contributions are valued by the organization can do wonders for building up reservoirs of goodwill. The key to successful acts of reciprocity is timeliness. Whether someone gives

a \$10,000 donation or a volunteer gives 1000 hours, a prompt display of gratitude is always appreciated. Thank businesses who donated supplies for the event immediately after it, attend events sponsored by organizations you collaborated with, respond to suggestions, comments, or criticisms in person, and never underestimate the power of a sincere, handwritten thank-you note.

Reporting

Recording and reporting results makes sense both pragmatically and professionally. Pragmatically, it makes sense to record results and report them for grant reporting purposes. Funders want to see how their financial support contributed to program objectives and outcomes, and publishing and distributing results is one way to document that. Professionally, it makes sense to demonstrate the outcomes of the program to stakeholders, and to provide documentation for future programs.

Results can be recorded and reported in several ways, including web postings, newsletters, and the annual report. The public relations committee should post a brief write-up of the campaign or events and post it under the current events or news section on the organization's web page. This information should be updated frequently, and, if possible, archived on the website. The same write-ups that are published on the webpage can be reproduced and included in the organization's newsletter and distributed to stakeholders and funders. Finally, information about the campaign—including quantitative and qualitative measures—should be included in the organization's annual report. The more media used to report and record results, the more stakeholders receive information about the organization's accomplishments. Recording results creates a record

of all of the organizations' activities, successes, and outreach campaigns related to the public relations committee.

Responsibility

Responsibility involves the organization conducting business in a socially responsible matter. This is an important element in the relationship management process, as it infers that an organization should act ethically all the time, not just when it is under scrutiny or needs to build alliances to accomplish objectives. Similarly, reporting involves the organization accounting for its business practices and actions, and taking accountability for any organizational misdeeds. People like to believe that the businesses they support conduct business fairly and honestly. Providing accurate accounts of the organization's doings, in formal communication such as annual reports or in informal communication such as newsletters or in interactions with the media, reinforces the public's trust in the organization.

Relationship Nurturing

The term *relationships* may conjure up images of relationships with loved ones, close friends, or successful working associations. In any of these examples, the parties involved in the relationship do not interact with one another only when they need something. Instead, they foster and maintain positive interactions so that the parties involved in the relationship can interact successfully in the future. Communication transactions are therefore not self-serving—they foster the best interest of all parties involved.

In relationship nurturing, the organization devises ways to continue to enhance the organization's relationships with stakeholders even when the organization is not currently

implementing a major campaign. The public relations committee should be constantly looking for ways to reach out to their stakeholders, even if there is not a clear and direct benefit to the organization. For example, if another nonprofit organization or community group the organization has collaborated with in the past is hosting an event, it is beneficial to the organization to send a few representatives to show their support. This in turn may increase the likelihood that that organization will support your organization in the future.

Relationship nurturing should address the stakeholders identified in the Stakeholder Priority Analysis. The public relations committee should make some effort to maintaining these relationships in the interim between campaigns, be it a volunteer appreciation luncheon, an outing with interns and the Board of Directors, ordering in lunch for the staff once a month, attending a partner's event, or sending off a thank-you note to a member of the press who did a piece on your organization. In this fast-paced world, people often feel disconnected from other people and their communities. These simple gestures can go a long way in making stakeholders feel appreciated, and those feelings can create a stronger bond between the organization and its stakeholders.

There is considerable overlap between reporting, responsibility, reciprocity, and relationship nurturing, and the stewardship phase cannot be successful unless all four elements are consistently attended to. Stewardship should not be viewed as a chore, as a means to an end, or as a form of selfish altruism that ultimately benefits the organization. Rather, stewardship should be viewed as “the way we do business,” and as an opportunity to be a good community partner. Relationships do not exist out of convenience—they exist out of reciprocity and cooperation. While the rewards of stewardship ultimately do

serve the organization's best interest, this is not the primary focus of this step in the relationship management process. Stewardship is a means of encouraging and recognizing that reciprocity and cooperation so the stage will be set for future positive interactions.

Conclusion

As a result of Evaluation and Stewardship Steps, the organization should determine the overall effectiveness of the program plan, and make adjustments as necessary. If the organization is unsatisfied with the outcomes, the plan must be reassessed and reworked, or another program should be implemented. If the organization *is* satisfied with the outcomes, the organization's work is not over. Relationship management is an ongoing process, and, whether successful or unsuccessful, the needs of both the organization and the community are dynamic. Thus, new programs and behavioral adjustments are periodically necessary to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are being met, and the relationships between the organization and its stakeholders are being constantly maintained.

I applied the relationship management model as discussed by Berger (2005), Botan and Taylor (2004), Ferguson (1984) and Ledingham and Brunig (1998) to help nonprofit organizations conduct public relations more strategically and efficiently, taking into consideration the unique concerns and restraints of the nonprofit sector. By focusing more on building, fostering, and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders, the relationship management approach to public relations aims to build long-term, mutually beneficial relationships. As has been demonstrated in the previous pages, the relationship management model closely follows program planning models already familiar to

nonprofit organizations. This approach highlights the organization's existing competencies, and allows nonprofits to develop public relations as a core competency using a familiar process.

Part II was formulated based on theoretical recommendations identified in Part I. Using a theoretical basis for application ensures that the recommendations presented herein have been researched thoroughly, and are therefore more credible. The theoretical recommendations described in the general public relations literature needs to be adapted to the nonprofit setting. As a result, the program planning model described by Weis and Gantt (2002) was used to translate public relations recommendations described in Part I into meaningful terms to increase the capacity and effectiveness of public relations in nonprofit settings.

Though the relationship management model requires considerably more time, attention, and dedication than media relations models frequently found in nonprofit organizations, the rewards are worth the effort. By treating public relations as a managerial function that aids in accomplishing organizational goals, the organization defines its way of doing business and communicating strategically. As an anonymous quote says, "you can do great things or take the credit, but you cannot do both." The relationship management perspective truly enables organizations to do great things, which in turn attract media attention and support. The media relations approach merely takes credit for things the organization has done. The latter detracts from the organization's mission, the former defines and supports the mission. For these reasons, the relationship management perspective is an innovative approach to public relations,

and helps organizations to communicate more strategically with its stakeholders using a familiar and successful approach.

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Figure 1.1: Relationship Management Model vs. Program Planning Model

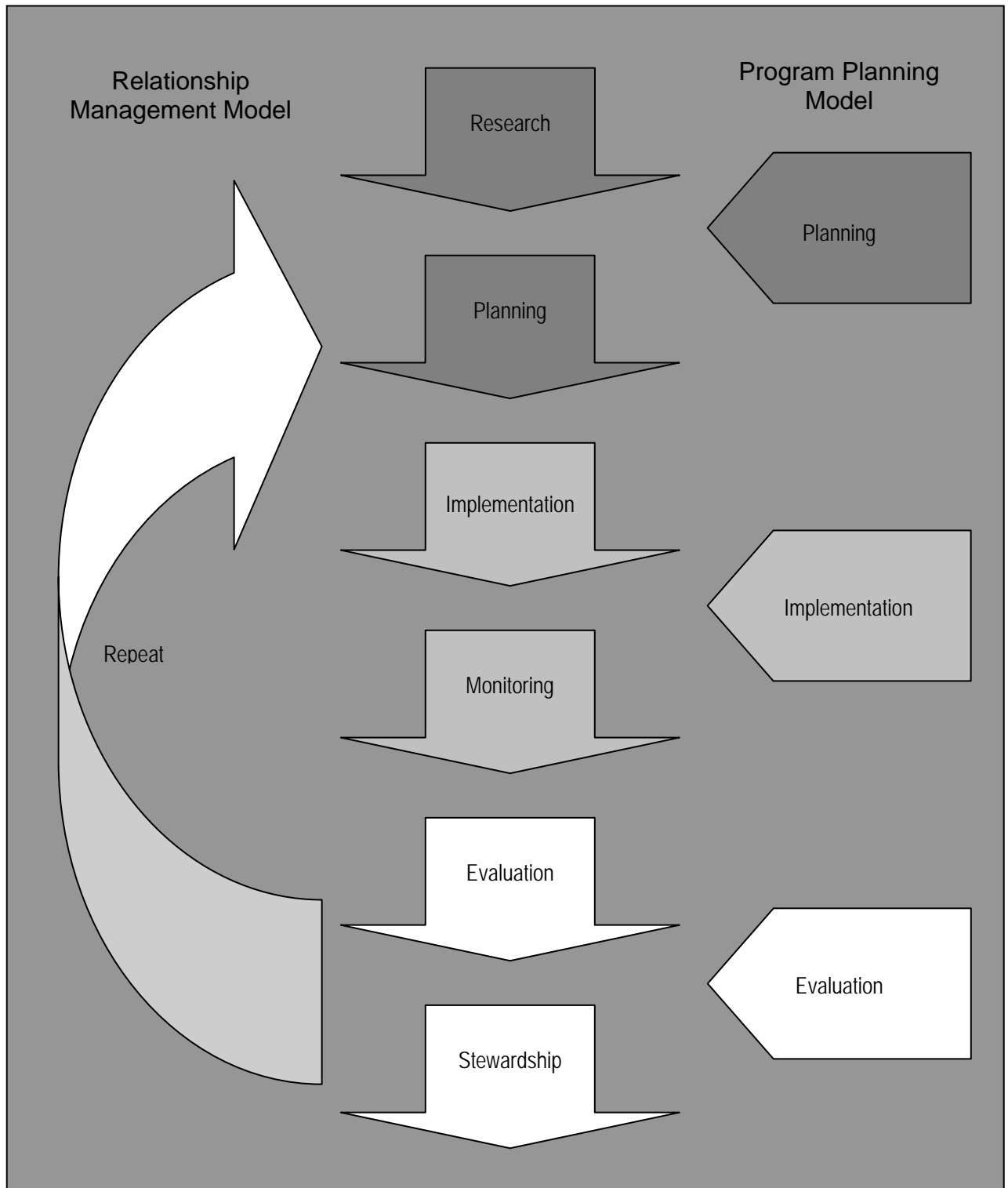


Figure 1.1: Stakeholder Priority Analysis

Internal Stakeholders			
	Stakeholder's Importance to Organization	Organization's Importance to Stakeholder	Aggregate Importance Rating
Staff	5	5	10
Clients	5	4	9
Board of Directors	4	2	6
Volunteers	3	2	5
External Stakeholders			
Nonprofit Action Coalition	5	5	10
Members of the press, local	4	5	9
Members of the press, regional	3	3	6
Senator Smith	2	1	3

Figure 2.1: Sample Action Steps Worksheet

Program Objective: To increase the frequency of the education seminar from once a month during the summer to one every six weeks throughout the year		
Tasks to complete to accomplish program objectives	Who is responsible for completing these tasks	When the tasks are to be completed
1. Seek funding to finance 9 speakers per calendar year Identify possible topic areas and presenters	Anne Jones	May 15 Committee Meeting
2. Identify possible topic areas and presenters	Public Relations Committee	Will brainstorm at July 15 Committee Meeting; come prepared with ideas
3. Identify larger venues to host education seminars	Public Relations Committee	Will brainstorm at July 15 Committee Meeting; come prepared with ideas
4. Forward possible topics/presenters to Jane	Public Relations Committee	July 16

Doe via email: janed@thecenter.org		
5. Contact possible venues to host education seminars/find out about availability and cost	John Smith	July 16
6. Decide on venues for education seminar; vote via email	Public Relations Committee	July 17
7. Reserve venues for education seminar	John Smith	July 18
8. Contact possible presenters to build interest and commitment	Jane Doe	July 30
9. Forward list of 9 presenters to John Smith via email: johns@thecenter.org	Jane Doe	July 31
10. Schedule presenters who commit to the education seminar	John Smith	August 1
11. Write a piece for the Community Center Times announcing the presenters, dates, and locations of the education seminars	Anne Jones	August 2
12. Design a flyer/print ad promoting the education seminar	Tom Stone	August 8
13. Write a press release and PSA promoting the education seminar	Brad Anderson	August 8
14. Distribute press release and PSA to media contacts	Brad Anderson	August 10
15. Follow up on media contacts	Brad Anderson	August 17
16. Send out email reminder to list serve one week prior to first education seminar	Tom Stone	August 21
17. Set up/clean up refreshments for education seminar	Jane Doe, Anne Jones	August 28, 7:00 pm, Township Hall Meeting Room

Figure 2.2. Risk Evaluation Worksheet

Crisis Cluster: Transgressions				
Scenario	Probability	Assets Affected (List separately)	Severity of damage to Assets	Aggregate Rating
Board Member engages in high-profile affair	3	External stakeholder trust	4	10
		Internal stakeholder trust	3	
Grant money is underreported to embezzle money	2	External stakeholder trust	5	17
		Internal stakeholder trust	5	
		Financial support	5	
Staff member engages in sexual misconduct with client	2	External stakeholder trust	5	20
		Internal stakeholder trust	5	
		Organization's reputation	5	
		Financial support	3	

Figure 2.3. Crisis Response Strategy Selection

Type of Crisis	Crisis Response Strategy	Use When...	Variants	Sub-variants	Sub-sub variants
Rumors Accidents	Defensive	Organization is not a fault, or when the fault is indeterminable	Denial	Alibi	
			Evading Responsibility	Provocation	
				Defeasibility	
				Excuses	
				Justification	
Transgressions	Accommodative	Organization accepts fault; intention is to reduce negative feelings and restore the organization's image	Reducing offensiveness	Bolstering	
				Minimization	
				Differentiation	
				Transcendence	
			Attacking one's Accuser	Victimize the actor Divert attention from original accusation	
			Compensation		
			Corrective Action		
Mortification					
Transgressions	Individual	Individual accepts responsibility for action; attempts to attempt to shift blame from the individual to the organization	Ingratiation		
			Intimidation		
			Distortion		
Transgressions	Organizational	Organization accepts responsibility for action; attempts to absolve the corporate actor from failure and accentuate the positive meanings of the problematic events	Apology		
			Excuse		
			Justification		
Rumors Transgressions Terrorism Accidents	Proactive	Organization attempts to prevent issue from becoming an event	Issues Management Reputation Management	Inoculation	
Rumors Transgressions Terrorism Accidents	Reactive	Issue has become an event; organization attempts to mitigate damages		Bolstering	

Figure 2.4: Sample Crisis Portfolio

Scenario	Probability	Assets Affected (List separately)	Severity of damage to Assets	Aggregate Rating
Grant money is underreported to embezzle money	2	External stakeholder trust	5	17
		Internal stakeholder trust	5	
		Financial support	5	

Crisis Response Strategy			
Type of Crisis	Crisis Response Strategy	Use When...	Variants
Transgressions	Accommodative	Organization accepts fault; intention is to reduce negative feelings and restore the organization's image	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corrective Action

Crisis Protocol			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact Executive Director <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Executive Director contacts Board of Directors <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Board of Directors meets with Executive director and public relations committee to determine appropriate corrective action b. Executive Director contacts Program Directors 2. Executive Director contact public relations committee <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Public relations committee delegates responsibilities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Contact legal council: Tom Stone ii. Contact Chief Financial Officer: Jane Doe iii. Contact affected grantors: Executive Director, CFO, Legal Counsel, President of the Board of Directors 3. Meet with victims: Executive Director; Legal Counsel, Board of Directors; Chair of public relations committee 4. See that corrective action is implemented: Executive Director; Legal Counsel, Board of Directors; Chair of public relations committee 5. Implement information campaign to media <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Write press release discussing situation and announcing press conference: Anne Jones b. Distribute and follow-up on press release: Brad Anderson c. Designate and reserve space for press conference: Jane Doe d. Conduct a press conference <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Executive Director, President of the Board of Directors, Legal Counsel, CFO, and Chair of the Public Relations Committee in attendance 			

Table 2.1: Types of Media

	Type of Media	Advantages	Disadvantages	Things to Consider
Print Media	Magazines	Print clippings make impressive additions to grants and presentations; can provide information about program to potential donors and volunteers; can provide more detail than "live" news sources; placing articles in special interest publications or trade journals is an excellent way to reach supportive audiences	Print clippings make impressive additions to grants and presentations; can provide information about program to potential donors and volunteers; can provide more detail than "live" news sources	Ask for a press schedule to see when deadlines are. Be sure to prepare far enough in advance to announce organizational news so it is printed <i>before</i> it occurs to increase the likelihood information will arrive to readers in a timely fashion; concentrate efforts on placing personality profiles and articles in city and regional publications
	Newspapers	Print clippings make impressive additions to grants and presentations; can provide information about program to potential donors and volunteers; can provide more detail than "live" news sources; news is typically locally or regionally focused, which increases the likelihood stories will get picked up	Print clippings make impressive additions to grants and presentations; can provide information about program to potential donors and volunteers; can provide more detail than "live" news sources	Ask for a press schedule to see when deadlines are. Be sure to prepare far enough in advance to announce organizational news so it is printed <i>before</i> it occurs to increase the likelihood information will arrive to readers in a timely fashion
Live Media	Radio	Public service announcements (PSAs) are a low or no cost means of recruiting volunteers, reinforcing other campaign messages; Contain only essential information that can pique the public's interest; may be repeated several times a day	More radio stations play music than carry news and talk shows, so the number of stations willing to run PSAs is decreasing	Submit PSAs at least one month in advance to allow the PSA to be added to a station's rotation. Write several versions of the PSA to provide the station with some options for timing commercial breaks. That is, create a 15, 20, and 30-second version of the PSA so the station has several pre-approved versions to use
	Television	Has the farthest reach of any medium; is effective in delivering basic information to large numbers of people; covers the news as it happens	If a representative of your organization is asked to appear on a television news segment, talk show, or discussion panel, pick someone who is knowledgeable, but also charismatic and will represent the organization positively	Many local stations run talk shows, community calendars, or call-in programs that can provide exposure for your organization. If you have a lot of information to present, consider pitching an idea to a public affairs program or panel discussion.

Electronic Media	Email	Can distribute information frequently and to a large audience very efficiently; personal messages may be sent to respond to stakeholder inquiries or respond to criticism	Communicating via email too frequently can be a nuisance	Email is becoming a popular method for delivering newsletters. For organizations on a budget, electronic newsletters are an excellent way to keep stakeholders informed without incurring printing and mailing costs. Be sure that people who receive electronic communication have consented to receiving it to avoid burdening stakeholders with unwanted communication.
	Blogs	Can solicit stakeholder feedback through every step of the relationship management approach; provides a forum for opinions, suggestions, and information exchange	Since anyone can post to a blog, it may be difficult to monitor the accuracy of information; Opponents may post derogatory, inflammatory, or offensive content	Though blogs may be an excellent way to solicit feedback during the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages, and is an especially effective tool for the monitoring phase, blogs must be monitored for accuracy and offensive content frequently
	Website	Can be updated frequently to reflect changes in the organization, information about programs, and contact information about staffers. Interested parties can find out about the organization at their convenience, and the website can be used to reinforce organizational legitimacy.	Information must be updated frequently to ensure accuracy	Web sites should be created with key stakeholders in mind: clients, funders, employees, and members of the press. Consider what information each audience needs, and be sure to address those needs throughout the website. Links to Press Kits can be helpful for providing information to members of the press that are frequently requested.

Figure 2.5: Sample Pitch Letter

July 7, 2007

CONTACT:

Jane Doe,
Public Relations Committee Chair
(123) 456-7890
Fax: (123) 456-1112
janedoe@thecenter.org

Dear Ms. Smith,

I had the pleasure of meeting with your sales manager, Wayne Skylar, last Thursday to discuss visibility opportunities and possible story ideas for Citiville Parent Magazine. Specifically, we discussed profiling the children's book illustrators who will appear at our fall event, Chalk it Up for Literacy.

Chalk it Up for Literacy is sponsored by the Citiville Community Center and the Citiville Literacy Council, and will be held in Citiville Plaza located between First Street and Adams in downtown Citiville from ten in the morning until two in the afternoon on Saturday, September 8. The family-friendly event will feature over 20 artists creating chalk murals celebrating the importance of art and literacy in family and community development, a book fair sponsored by Citiville Citiville Book Barn, live music, free admission, complementary refreshments, storytelling, face painting, and information on volunteer opportunities.

We discussed writing features on children's book illustrators who will appear at the event, including Uncle Muscle (children's book illustrator, Amelia Holbrook (children's book illustrator and author), and Andy Clooney (children's book author and illustrator). Attendees will be able to watch these artists create beautiful works of art on 3'x5' blackboards, listen as storytellers read from their books, or purchase copies of their books.

The Citiville Community Center and the Citiville Literacy Council are nonprofit organizations dedicated to building stronger communities and raising awareness of literacy issues, respectively. The Citiville Community Center provides space and resources to help community organizations grow and expand. The Citiville Literacy Council increases access to literacy tutors for families and adults, supports volunteer tutors and students, and works with other organizations to promote literacy.

As our target for the event is families with children, I am positive your readers would be interested in reading about Chalk it Up for Literacy. I look forward to discussing coverage of the event with you soon.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe,
Public Relations Committee Chair

Figure 2.6: Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 16, 2007

CONTACT:

Jane Doe,

Public Relations Committee Chair

(123) 456-7890

Fax: (123) 456-1112

janedoe@thecenter.org

COMMUNITY TO CELEBRATE ART, LITERACY

Artists splash color across Citiville Plaza

Citiville, USA—Local artists, storytellers, and literacy advocates will gather for the sixth annual Chalk it Up for Literacy event on Saturday, September 8 from ten in the morning until two in the afternoon in Citiville Plaza, located between First Street and Adams in downtown Citiville. The event connect individuals with volunteer opportunities while celebrating the importance of literacy in building strong communities.

Over 20 local artists will create literacy-themed chalk art of 3’x5’ chalkboards in the heart of downtown Citiville. The event will feature Marimba bands, complimentary refreshments, storytelling, face painting, a book fair, information about literacy programs around Citiville and an area for children to create their won chalk art.

Says Artist Adam Jones, who appeared at last year’s event, “the great thing about [Chalk it Up] is the attention from people just walking by. It’s amazing how each artist’s interpretation of the literacy theme differs.”

--More--

Says Tom Stone, Director of Community Development for the Citiville Community Center and event organizer, “It was really important for us to be festive but not overly commercialized. We want families and individuals to enjoy themselves and celebrate literacy without feeling like they need to spend a lot of money.”

Chalk it Up for Literacy coincides with International Literacy Day on September 8, a global opportunity to focus on the achievements and challenges facing literacy. Says event creator Tairy Green of the Citiville Literacy Council, “Chalk it Up is a celebration combined with information. The public can see great art and hear great music while learning about literacy issues and how to support literacy. Literacy is so incredibly important to a person’s success in our society; not being able to read means not having access to good information.”

The Citiville Community Center and the Citiville Literacy Council are nonprofit organizations dedicated to building stronger communities and raising awareness of literacy issues, respectively. The Citiville Community Center provides space and resources to help community organizations grow and expand. The Citiville Literacy Council increases access to literacy tutors for families and adults, supports volunteer tutors and students, and works with other organizations to promote literacy.

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Figure 7.7: Sample Public Service Announcements

Cityville Community Center
123 Any Street
Cityville, USA

Start Using: Upon Receipt
Stop Using: September 8

CONTACT:

Jane Doe,
Public Relations Committee Chair
(123) 456-7890
Fax: (123) 456-1112
janedoe@thecenter.org

-15 Seconds-

Join the Cityville Community Center and the Cityville Literacy Council in Cityville Plaza, located between First Street and Adams in downtown Citiville, for Chalk it Up for Literacy, Saturday, September 8, 2007 from 10 ‘til 2! Free admission! Call 123-456-1112 or visit thecenter.org for more information.

###

-20 Seconds-

Join the Cityville Community Center and the Cityville Literacy Council in Cityville Plaza, located between First Street and Adams in downtown Citiville, for Chalk it Up for Literacy, Saturday, September 8, 2007 from 10 ‘til 2! Celebrate the importance of literacy with storytelling, live music, and refreshments! Watch local artists create colorful chalk art! Explore volunteer opportunities with local programs, or browse through books from Citiville Book Barn. Free admission! Call 123-456-1112 or visit thecenter.org for more information.

###

-30 Seconds-

Take a moment to imagine your world without words. Imagine not being able to read a menu, find an intersection on a map, look up a number in the phone book, or fill out a job application. For 15% of Citivillians, reading isn’t a reality—it’s out of reach. Cityville Community Center and the Cityville Literacy Council are nonprofit organizations dedicated to supporting adult literacy services in Citiville. Visit us in Citiville Plaza, located between First Street and Adams in downtown Citiville, for Chalk it Up for Literacy, Saturday, September 8, 2007 from 10 ‘til 2! Celebrate the importance of literacy with storytelling, live music, and refreshments! Watch local artists create colorful chalk art! Explore volunteer opportunities with local programs, or browse through books from Citiville Book Barn. Free admission! Call 123-456-1112 or visit thecenter.org for more information.

###

Figure 2.8: Sample Media Advisory

CONTACT:

Jane Doe,
Public Relations Committee Chair
(123) 456-7890
Fax: (123) 456-1112
janedoe@thecenter.org

COMMUNITY TO CELEBRATE ART AND LITERACY

Who: 20 artists, two marimba bands, eight storytellers
What: Chalk it Up for Literacy
When: Citiville Plaza, located between First Street and Adams in downtown Citiville

The Citiville Community Center and the Citiville Literacy Council will host the sixth annual Chalk it Up for Literacy event to celebrate the importance of art and literacy in building strong communities. The event coincides with International Literacy Day.

The event highlights the creation of chalk art on 3'x5' blackboards by area artists. Two marimba bands will perform throughout the day, and eight storytellers will entertain attendees.

The press is invited to attend the event.

The Citiville Community Center and the Citiville Literacy Council are nonprofit organizations dedicated to building stronger communities and raising awareness of literacy issues, respectively. The Citiville Community Center provides space and resources to help community organizations grow and expand. The Citiville Literacy Council increases access to literacy tutors for families and adults, supports volunteer tutors and students, and works with other organizations to promote literacy.