

Proven Public Relations Techniques from the New Testament

Noah Eskew

Regent University

MKTG 250: Public Relations

Takenya Fulks

September 10th, 2020

Groups, individuals, and corporations relying on PR must know how to operate within its system. Not everyone in an organization has to be an expert on dealing with their publics, but a familiarity with basic best practices will bring many benefits. Biblical guidelines can be easily applied to a business' PR practice. Surely, God knows how people interact, after all, He created us. Therefore, public relations managers would be wise to apply the God-given concepts from His word. Here are 10 principles from the New Testament that should be included in public relations campaigns:

Principle 1

In the book of Acts chapters 1 and 2, the Church is being established. Luke records that many miracles were performed. "Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles." (Acts 2:43) He also noted that the congregation was compiled from a diverse set of backgrounds: "Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians..." (Acts 2:9) David Guzik highlights the diversity of the crowd at Pentecost: "the group spoken to was uniquely multi-national and multi-lingual." (2001) People with such various backgrounds, cultures, native languages, and ideas concerning Jesus could have easily gathered totally different conclusions of what was happening. The crowd began to fill with curious bystanders (v. 6), and some people thought that it was all a drunken mess (v. 13). Peter recognized the opportunity and began preaching a

sermon with the purpose of collecting and connecting everyone's thoughts. His actions assisted in **getting everyone on the same page**. Peter stood and declared the message about how he (along with the apostles standing behind him) was an eye-witness of the Lord Jesus (v. 32). He spoke about how God used miracles as evidence that Jesus was the Messiah: "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22) Peter taught that He was sent by God to die (v. 23) and was later raised up (v. 24). Finally, he commands them to: "...Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..." (Acts 2:38a)

The purpose of this sermon was to preach the Gospel and to establish unity of mind among those in attendance: "And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;" (Acts 2:44) Public relations practitioners should note that having everyone agree on the processes, goals, methods, and messages is an essential portion of campaign preparation. Differing messages coming from the same source (company, organization, or church) can cause confusion amongst your publics. Peter helped organize the core beliefs of the Church and managed to get everyone in fellowship with each other despite their initial differences. Was his method successful? "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41) God blessed the early Church through Peter and the apostles by giving them wisdom to handle a variety of situations.

Principle 2

The Apostle Paul had to overcome many hurdles in his life. He had a plethora of experiences and hardships to go along with his ministry. In 1 Corinthians 9:22b Paul says: "...I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some." Here, Paul implies that his delivery of a message depends on the listeners. Paul is NOT saying that the Gospel message can change, but that he himself can relate to a variety of circumstances. He had methods for the Jews (v. 20), Gentiles (v. 21), and for the weak (v. 22). Here's an explanation of Paul's approach in greater detail:

when speaking to educated Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, Paul pointed out his own high level of education in order to earn their respect (Acts 22:1-2). Later, when in Roman custody and about to be flogged, Paul mentioned that he was a Roman citizen and avoided the flogging (Acts 22:25-29). (Houdmann, 2019)

As you can see through his own writings, Paul had to **adjust the delivery from situation to situation and from person to person**. This should also be true in a strategic communication setting. You wouldn't address company shareholders in the same way as your teenage boy customers. Messages, presentations, and modes of delivery may require customizations that are specific to each public. While the theme of your announcement may be the same across the board, it is likely that different presentations will have better impacts on certain publics.

Principle 3

Before spending time, money, and effort designing a new product or advertisement, it is best to **define your objectives**. It has often been said that “failing to plan is planning to fail.” Likewise, if your plans don’t include performance expectations, you have not yet thought things out thoroughly. This concept is played out in the life of Jesus. He had clear objectives. At the end of Mark 1, Jesus woke up early one morning and snuck away to pray. Some followers informed Jesus that a big crowd was searching for Him. Based on the context, it is likely that these people wanted to see more miracles from Jesus. But, He explained to the disciples what He was truly focused on. “He said to them, ‘Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for.’” (Mark 1:38) Charles Spurgeon expounded upon this verse by saying: “Jesus Christ came forth from God the Father that he might proclaim throughout the land the message of redeeming grace and dying love.” This verse makes it obvious that Jesus had a mission to complete, and He was focused on preaching. Jesus also divvied out objectives to His disciples.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

(Matthew 28:19-20)

God Himself modeled the way of setting and accomplishing objectives. Public relations campaigns without aspirations, goals, and objectives are trivial.

Principle 4

Once a team has defined their objectives, it is imperative for them to **discover the target audience**. Jesus made it very clear who His audience was. “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10) Many thought that if Jesus was indeed sent from God, then He would not associate with a tax-collector like Zacchaeus. But Jesus explained that He was here to save and reconcile sinners back to God. This was not the only time that Jesus’ identity or intentions were questioned because of converting a tax collector.

When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: ‘Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ On hearing this, Jesus said to them, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.’ (Mark 2:16-17)

God’s audience is described even in the Old Testament: “The Lord mocks the mockers but is gracious to the humble.” (Proverbs 3:34) For anyone working towards a PR goal, they must have a target audience. A company should identify the problems of their publics and seek the solutions like Jesus sought after saving the lost.

Principle 5

When trying to establish good rapport with consumers, the general public, or

investors, an organization must **provide something of value**. Jesus had an immeasurable impact on His apostles. Even when circumstances were tough, the 12 stood by Jesus because He had something of the utmost value: the Word of God. In John 6:60, some people stopped following Jesus: “This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?” Later, Jesus asked the men where their loyalties lied. “Simon Peter replied, “Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:68-69) John Piper explains:

...we may not have all the problems solved – the problems of following Jesus and saying yes to his teaching and his Lordship and his saving work. He may confuse us at times, and baffle us with things he says, and provoke us, and offend us. And yet, we say with Peter, “To whom shall we go?” (2009)

Even though the situations were hard, the 12 disciples realized that they had better cling to Jesus. In a companies’ actions with the community or its publics, they must provide something of unmatched value in order to maintain relevancy. It doesn’t have to be expensive gifts or elaborate prizes; meaningful gestures can be small while leaving a lasting impact.

Principle 6

Pay attention to whether or not the pending press release, company statement, or social media post is necessary. There are some definite topics that your company needs to address. If a subject is applicable, go for it! However, **don’t comment on anything and everything**. Paul wrote to Timothy: “Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid

arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.” (2 Timothy 2:23) This verse means:

“When we are wise in a useful manner, then alone are we truly wise.” (Calvin, 1840) Feel free to address topics when your comments are informed and helpful. But as a general rule, staying in your lane will lessen the opportunity for a poorly-worded statement.

Principle 7

It’s a possibility that your previous flyers, brochures, and videos have been physically or mentally discarded. A public relations practitioner needs to solve this problem. Take a play out of Jesus’ book. Instead of listing complicated features and boring processes in an announcement – **tell a story!** “The most liked, most memorable ads usually are stories...” (Neveril, 2008) Of course, the best example of storytelling was from Jesus. He used parables to convey key concepts about the Kingdom of God. His purpose for parables is a little different than a company utilizing a story: “This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” (Matthew 13:13) While Jesus’ stories confounded some hearers, they were capable of capturing attention from listeners. If you want people to pay attention – use a story!

Principle 8

As ideas come and go, and products become obsolete, don’t let the same thing happen to your public relations strategy. A constant emphasis on evaluation is a great tool. After it is complete, you must **evaluate the campaign’s performance**. Were the goals met or exceeded? Could the strategy be enhanced going forward? Questions like this will lead to

better success the next time around. The Bible even tells us to do self-evaluations and examinations. 2 Corinthians 13:5a says: “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!” Obviously, a Christian, who is living out their sanctification, must conduct evaluations of behavior, attitudes, and actions so that they can improve through the power of the Holy Spirit. In business, constant reviews of results are needed so that profits and reputations can be upheld.

Principle 9

Mass emails, pre-recorded phone calls, and general information don’t always achieve a proper return on investment. Some companies opt for a more personal approach; incorporating word-of-mouth marketing and one-on-one calls and visits. Public relations managers should **understand the value of building lasting relationships**. God has graciously allowed us to have a personal relationship with Him. Think about John 1:14a, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.” It doesn’t get much more personal than Jesus coming to earth and living like we live. All the times He washed people’s feet, fed them, or taught them, He was prioritizing relationships in His ministry. He even had a private conversation with Nicodemus (John 3) in the middle of the night! Organizations would do well to recognize that being friendly, approachable, caring, and honest is an effective policy.

Principle 10

Out of all the ways that God could communicate with us in the 21st century, He chose the written word. Moses, David, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, John, Paul, and Peter were all

used as vessels to relay Holy Spirit inspired words. They were entrusted with the most valuable information of all, and they wrote it down.

GIFs, graphics, and flashy videos are sometimes beneficial. But **never underestimate the power of words**. The best advertisers in the world get consumers to support a product or service “by using some of the most powerful words in the English language.” (Whitehead, 2003) Remember, God spoke the world into existence: “...God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” (Genesis 1:3). Paul wrote letters to churches and pastors that contained instructions from God: “I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand...” (Philemon 19a) Well-written letters, documents, and emails can be the foundation of a powerful movement – whether it’s PR or Christianity.

Final Charge

Practical procedures for reaching your important audiences are all throughout the Bible. If public relations managers can make the commitment to building their campaigns on these principles from the New Testament, they can expect future programs to be honest, compelling, tested, proven, and authoritative. Carrying out the 10 Biblical techniques for public relations is a dependable way to set a high standard within the industry.

References:

Calvin, J. (1840). Commentary on 2 Timothy 2:23. Calvin's Commentary on the Bible.

Guzik, D. (2001). *Study Guide for Acts 2 by David Guzik*. Blue Letter Bible. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/archives/guzik_david/StudyGuide_Act/Act_2.cfm.

Houdmann, S. M. (2019, October 10). *What does it mean to become all things to all people (1 Corinthians 9:22)?* <https://www.gotquestions.org/all-things-to-all-people.html>.

Neveril, T. (2008). CONSUMERS IGNORE ADS THAT AREN'T TELLING THEIR STORIES. *Advertising Age*, 79(10), 16.

Spurgeon, C. (2011). *Mark 1 Commentary - Spurgeon's Verse Expositions of the Bible*. StudyLight.org. <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/spe/mark-1.html>.

Whitehead, A. (2003). Words that sell. *Verbatim*, 28(4).