

## Framing the Public Relations Plan

Like other planning efforts, public relations plans begin with and end with research. Formative research discovers audiences, messages and communication channels. Evaluative research measures how well the plan worked.

In between, as outlined below, the PR plan specifies a series of what needs to be done (Goals) and how to get it done (Strategies). It calls for special events, media relations, policy changes and so forth. PR plans should include activities from all four communication channels: electronic, print, special events, and face-to-face.

Follow this detailed outline to ensure that your group completes your PR plan to the best of its abilities:

**1. Cover Letter** – The cover letter has three main purposes:

- 1 Introduce your firm to the potential client
- 1 Briefly summarize the client's challenges and how PR can solve them
- 1 Outline the benefits the client will enjoy by choosing your company to do its public relations work.

### **2. Situation Analysis**

**Goals** – What do you want the PR plan to accomplish? Goals are timely measurable statements that indicate what your PR plan will do for your client. For example: Five percent of key audiences will perceive the Management Institute as a prestigious training/consulting firm within two years.

**Client History** – Includes your client's background. It does not need to be the size of a book. This is an explanation of what you know about your potential client.

**Problem and how PR can Solve It** – This identifies your client's perceived communication problems, whether internal or external. It also identifies the positioning strategies your PR firm will propose to overcome these challenges.

**Formative Research** – This is a detailed outline of the formative research you conduct prior to beginning the PR campaign. Some examples of formative research include client interviews, employee interviews, target audience interviews, target audience focus groups and target audience written surveys. Your plan must have one sample research instrument for your client.

**Audience Segmentation** – A detailed list of internal and external audiences. Audiences should be ranked to show importance.

**Channel and Media Selection** – A list of the best media channels your PR firm will use to reach your client's target audiences. A helpful formula when developing channel and media selection is the MAC triad (Message, Audience, Channel). This list is research

based. In addition, consider the IAB's, the **information** you need to send that will change **attitudes** in order for the audience to **behave** in favor of your client.

**Helpful hint:** One way to succinctly complete this section is to create a three column table that identifies the target audience, the key messages that the campaign will use to persuade that audience, followed by the channels your client should use to reach the target audience. Example:

| <b>Audience</b>          | <b>Message(s)</b>             | <b>Channels</b>  |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| High School Students     | Free Tuition is in the STARS! | Posters<br>Postcards<br>Direct mail brochure<br>Letter from Governor<br>NJ STARS night at<br>local college   |
| Parents of H.S. students | Free Tuition is in the STARS! | Billboards<br>Drive time radio ads<br><a href="http://www.nj.com">www.nj.com</a><br>Direct mail brochure<br>Letter from Governor<br>NJ STARS night at<br>local college |

**Competition Analysis** – Outline your client's competition (if applicable).

### **3. Plan Outline**

This is the most important component of your plan as far as your grade is concerned. Each goal should have supporting strategies. Strategies are the communication or counseling techniques you use to accomplish your goals. They focus on the "how" of getting the job done. Each strategy should have supporting activities. Activities are the specific versions of your strategies. See the attached example of a page from a previous outline.

### **4. Evaluative Research Outline**

A detailed description of the evaluative research you will conduct to measure the effectiveness of your PR plan. This should be presented in order of your goals.

### **5. Gantt Charts**

Gantt charts show your client what you are going to do and when you are going to do it. Gantt charts should be developed by Goal. See the example included in this outline.

## 6. Detailed Budget

A detailed outline of how much it will cost to complete each activity you propose in your plan. It should be presented in the same order that you present your plan outline:

| Goal number   |  |      |
|---------------|--|------|
| Activity name |  | cost |

Total:

## 7. Signed Work Log

Your signed work log is the second most important part of your plan as it relates to your grade. Provide a detailed outline of the work that went into completing the project. List the components of the plan followed by the name of the person responsible for the work. At the bottom of the log, all group members must sign the log in blue or black ink. This will show me what percentage each of you contributed to get the plan done. Don't worry, there are enough components to this project to ensure that each group member is graded fairly. And, some plan components involve more work than others do.

Questions? Call (609) 392-3434 or (609) 802-7814. Send e-mail to [farbman@tcnj.edu](mailto:farbman@tcnj.edu).

Good luck. Be prepared. Be confident. Be professional.

**Objective 1 - Ten percent of Delaware Valley business markets will know of the Management Institute within one year.**

**Strategy 1.1 - Educate Delaware Valley business markets and residents about the MI by increasing media coverage so they will know of the Institute**

Tactic 1.1.1 - Create PSAs/news releases for local media and trade publications featuring "Top Ten Management Tips" with the option to check website or call for a free copy of more "tips," such as:

- Training
- Stress management
- Employee communication

Tactic 1.1.2 - Produce news releases for local media and trade publications on highlights from the *Economic Data of Southern New Jersey* report

Tactic 1.1.3 - Purchase print advertisements in trade publications and target newspapers with the central focus, "We have satisfied customers for over 24 years"

Tactic 1.1.4 - Produce feature articles for trade publications and target newspapers about successful case studies

Tactic 1.1.5 - Send media kits to local media and trade publications stressing the theme, "Excellence in your own backyard"

**Strategy 1.2 - Conduct special events to generate media coverage for the MI**

Tactic 1.2.1 - Host free computer literacy course on Office 97 for employees of non-profit organizations such as the area Chamber of Commerce

Tactic 1.2.2 - Host "25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary" celebration

- Peter Dugan
- Hands-on training
- Raffle off free software and training

Tactic 1.2.3 - Visit organizations and give free presentations on "Easy Steps to Filing Taxes"

**Strategy 1.3 - Publicize MI web site to Delaware Valley business markets and residents**

Tactic 1.3.1 - Incorporate MI website information on all disseminated literature

**Strategy 1.4 - Evaluate the success of Objective 1**

Tactic 1.4.1 - Survey post-plan awareness of MI among the Delaware Valley business markets and residents

*Objective One*

