

## Strategic planning for public relations

### Underlying assumptions:

Strategic planning defines an overall framework, focus, and goals which will guide long-term and on-going operations of an organization. For public relations practitioners who believe relationship-building rather than message transmission is the essence of the profession, strategic public relations planning means:

- identifying each target audience(public or constituency) with which the organization wishes to establish or maintain a relationship,
- defining the nature of each desired relationship, and
- outlining general policies and procedures that will lead to and maintain these relationships.

### Working tips:

- ▶ Since public relations exists to help organizations achieve their goals, public relations foremost concern and the starting point of every public relations plan is the organization's mission statement. If it doesn't already have one, developing a mission statement will help the organization focus its overall operations and get its public relations plan off to a good start.
- ▶ The next step is writing a concise yet specific public relations mission statement that explains how public relations efforts should fit into and support the overall mission of the organization.
- ▶ The two mission statements are a preface or introduction to the plan. The rest of it is based on and organized around the publics with whom the organization has relationships.

### Format and organization:

- The ten steps on the attached three-page grid is one of many ways of developing a public relations plan. The specific number, wording, and order of the questions and points enumerated may vary, but such details aren't critical, as long as the process is orderly, thoughtful, and comprehensive.
- Start by identifying as many of the organization's publics and target audiences as possible—perhaps 40, 50, or more—and then use common interests and priorities to combine and narrow them down to 15-25 key audiences. Each audience is then entered, one to a cell, in column #1 of the planning grid, using the unnumbered left column for an ID number or “nickname” that permits quick reference and easy tracking of each public through an extensive plan.
- Continue planning for each audience identified in column #1 by sequentially answering each of the questions in the nine remaining columns that comprise the three-page grid.
- Don't think one three-page grid will complete a strategic plan; it takes at least 3-5 of these worksheets and possibly additional pages of explanatory notes and/or details.

### For additional information:

<http://www.nku.edu/~turney/prclass/plan.htm> — “Public Relations Planning” by Michael Turney.

Chapters 7-10 in *Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) by Dennis Wilcox, Phillip Ault and Warren Agee. HarperCollins Publishers: New York; 1992.





