

A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A PR CAMPAIGN



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01 CONTEXT

To plan and manage the company's programmes and campaigns it is vital to analyze the context in which public relations activities will take place because every company operates in a specific environment with its own rules and principles, issues and opportunities. Gregory (2015, pp. 25 - 37) suggests to look at the following factors:

- **Stakeholders and publics:**
What stakeholders does the company communicate with?
(Numbers and location, influence and power)
- **Sectoral considerations:**
In which sector does the company operate?
(Education, charity, NGO)
- **Organizational development:**
At which stage of development does the company find itself?
(Start-up, growth, maturity, decline?)
- **Organizational characteristics:**
What is the company's history, current status, future plans?
(The company's ins and outs)
- **Issues:**
What issues are affecting the society or the industry in which the company operates?
(Structural, external, internal, potential)
- **Public opinion:**
How does public opinion influence the company?
(Positively, neutrally, negatively)
- **Timescales:**
When should activities be performed?
(Depending on the internal and external factors)
- **Resources**
What resources are needed to perform public relations activities?
(Human and financial resources)

Many public relations practitioners do not undertake a full contextual research in which their company operates and in which specific PR activities will take place. A failure to research the context may result in a failure of the overall public relations efforts which could lead to a damaged reputation of the company.

02 PLANNING

Before diving into the planning process, it is crucial to formulate a **public relations policy** which sets the ground rules for operation. It also clarifies who is responsible for a specific activity and helps non-public relations staff feel secure when communicating on behalf of the company.

Why to plan?

Planning is important for many reasons. Among these are:

- focus is on effort and the most necessary activities;
- effectiveness is improved;
- focus is on the long-term view;
- budget is adequately distributed;
- different scenarios are considered;
- both reactive and proactive approaches are acknowledged.

Anne Gregory (2015, p. 48) proposes a **planning process consisting of 12 steps** (Figure 1):



Figure 1: The Planning Process (A. Gregory, 2015)

When planning a public relations campaign be ready to adapt to circumstances and adjust your PR efforts.

03 ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

A strategic public relations programme is always founded on research which is of a paramount importance in the planning process. Research can be undertaken either by trained in-house researchers or by external researchers from specialized consultancies.

1. Analyze the environment (internal and external context):

- PEST Analysis / political, economic, social and technological factors;
- Issue Management (controllable and non-controllable issues).

2. Analyze the organization:

- SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats).

3. Analyze the stakeholder:

- Primary / secondary/ tertiary and key stakeholders;
- Dimensions: Power, Influence, Interest/Need, Support/Attitude.

4. Research techniques:

- Quantitative / qualitative research;
- Primary / secondary research.

An example of using different analysis techniques based on the case of a PR Instagram Campaign for Lindt & Sprüngli can be found [here](#).

TIP: **UNDERTAKE APPROPRIATE RESEARCH FOR A SPECIFIC PR CAMPAIGN.**

04 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

An **aim** is a broad statement of what the PR or communication professional wants to achieve.

An **objective** encompasses specific and measurable activities that help to achieve the desired aim.

Aims should be:

- singular, clear and easily understandable by everyone involved in the campaign;
- framed in terms of outcomes and should contain a detailed description of the process by which they will be achieved;
- able to be measured and evaluated by the end of the campaign.

Remember to:

- * set public relations aims that you can deliver;
- * link your aim(s) to the overall business objectives of your organization;
- * be specific about the publics you are targeting.

Objectives should be set according to three levels:

- **awareness:** objectives focus on knowledge and information;
(inform, create awareness, promote understanding)
- **attitudes/opinions:** objectives focus on the people's reaction to information;
(encourage belief, overcome misunderstanding)
- **behavior:** objectives focus on promoting a desired action.
(encourage participation, change behavior)

Remember to:

- * base your objectives on research;
- * set measurable objectives and link them to the aim(s);
- * focus on outcomes of your objectives.

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You can find more information about the importance of setting objectives in public relations campaigns in this [article](#).

TIP: DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.

05 PUBLICS AND MESSAGES

Publics: "Who shall I talk with?"

Always perform a thorough chopping up of the publics that your organization has because every organization contains individuals who all act in different ways. Groupings of publics that are common to most organizations are shown in Figure 2:

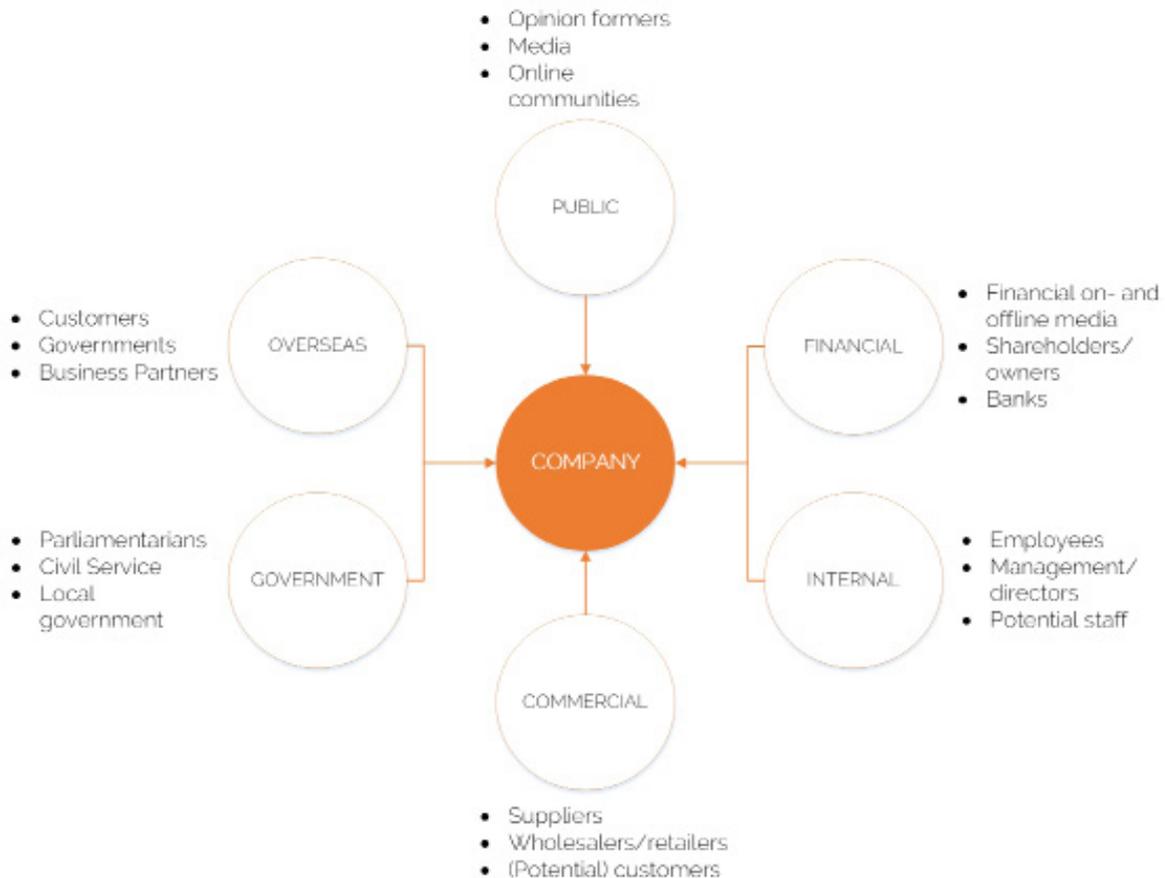


Figure 2: Publics common to most organizations (A. Gregory, 2015)

Messages: "What shall I say?"

When devising the content of your campaign, consider the nature of the campaign (information, persuasion, dialogue-based). Then develop the content accordingly. Content and the messages within it should be meticulously crafted. Here are 4 steps to craft effective messages:

1. take existing perceptions about your company/products/services;
2. define what shift in these perceptions can be made;
3. identify elements of persuasion based on facts;
4. ensure that these messages are delivered through public relations.

TIP: CAREFULLY SEGMENT YOUR PUBLICS AND METICULOUSLY CRAFT YOUR MESSAGES.

06 STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Considering how the overall approach to a campaign should be shaped is the most difficult question. Designing the strategy for a PR campaign should be your priority.

Strategy is the guiding principle behind your campaign upon which you should build your tactical programme. The question is how you will achieve your objectives.

Tactics are methods used to execute the strategy. The question is what you will do to achieve your objectives.

Some of the **tactics** available to PR specialists are:

- media relations: press releases, interviews, press conferences;
- advertising: magazines, newspapers, radio, TV;
- direct mail: newsletters, brochures, merchandise;
- internal communication: briefings, newsletters, meetings;
- corporate identity: website, publications, product branding;
- sponsorship: sport, charities, arts;
- other.

Depending on the nature of your campaign and the strategy you will have to deploy different set of tactics.

Risk Planning

Another important point to remember is risk planning. As a PR pro you should be prepared for the unexpected at both the strategic and the tactical levels and undertake a thorough risk assessment of your campaign.

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An example of risk assessment and management using the case of the Siemens' 'Future Makers' campaign can be found [here](#).

07 TIME-FRAME AND RESOURCES

When talking about timescales, there are two interlinked key factor that you must observe: deadlines and resources.

Deadlines

- Must be agreed in advance so that all the tasks in a project can be executed on time;
- Can be imposed internally (company keynote, internal announcement) or externally (fixed events);

To ensure that deadlines are met, you should identify individual tasks that have to be carried out so that the project can be completed.

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Task planning techniques: [Gantt Charts](#), [Critical Path Analysis](#).

Resources

- Human resources
(public relations specialist with specific skills / depending on the PR activity);
- Operating or materials cost
(banners, merchandise, media pack etc. / items associated with delivering the project);
- Equipment
(office furniture, mobile technology, video conferencing etc.);

For the above-mentioned resources carefully calculate a budget. Remember that every public relations campaign requires a different set of resources and that you should plan all activities in as much detail as possible.

TIP: [AGREE UPON DEADLINES AND MANAGE RESOURCES APPROPRIATELY.](#)

08 EVALUATION AND REVIEW

With your public relations campaign you have to demonstrate to senior management that PR adds value to the organization.

When talking about longer-term campaigns, **evaluation** is an ongoing process, also known as monitoring.

Review, on the other hand, is a regular management practice. It involves looking at more strategic changes that should occur. Review your PR activities on a yearly basis.

Evaluation Models and Processes in PR

- Preparation, Implementation, Impact (PII)
- Macnamara's Pyramid Model
- CIPR's Planning, Research and Evaluation (PRE) process

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In this [article](#) you can read about each model and the process in detail.

Principles of PR Evaluation

Paul Noble (1999, pp. 19-20) formulated **seven principles of evaluation**:

- Evaluation is research;
- Evaluation looks both ways;
- Evaluation is user and situation dependent;
- Evaluation is short-term;
- Evaluation is long-term;
- Evaluation is comparative;
- Evaluation is multifaceted.

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In this [article](#) you can read about each evaluation principle in detail.

TIP: **EVALUATE YOUR PR CAMPAIGN ON AN ONGOING BASIS AND REVIEW YOUR PR ACTIVITIES ON A YEARLY BASIS.**

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