

Writing a Public Relations Plan – 10 Step Process

Tip: These 10 steps for writing a plan follow the research phase. Begin here after you decide what you want to accomplish and identify the things you want to correct, prevent or preserve.

1. Overall goals for public relations

- Keep these few in number. Identify no more than three to five. One may be enough.
- Be consistent with management goals and mission.
- Think in terms of end results, not process alone.

2. Target audiences or publics

- Groups or sub-groups with which you need to communicate (talk *and* listen).
- Consider:
 - ✓ Who needs to know or understand?
 - ✓ Who needs to be involved?
 - ✓ Whose advice or support do you need?
 - ✓ Who will be affected? Who has something to gain or lose?

3. Objectives for those audiences

- Think in terms of the awareness, attitude or action you desire. Not the process but the end result.
- Articulate with verbs: Recognize, favor, accept, endorse, support, oppose, ban, buy, discard, etc.
- Phrase objectives in terms of specific results you desire, and what you think is possible.
- Each objective should cite an audience, outcome, attainment level (%) and time frame. (*Example:* At the end of six months, 65 percent of employees will be in a car pool or ride-share program.)
- The same objective may fit a number of audiences but strategies may need to be different.

4. Strategies

- Military definition: science and art of employing political, economic, psychological and military forces to support policies or achieve goals; to meet the enemy under advantageous conditions.
- In planning, how will you approach the challenge of working toward your objectives? On what can you build or take advantage in your situation? What devices will you employ?

- Your strategy may describe the diplomacy, psychology, philosophy, themes and appeals you will use, or the message you will convey.
- It may describe how you will work with community groups.
- You probably will have several strategies for an objective.
- Some strategies may serve several objectives.
 - *NOTE: Messaging follows Strategies and has been included as a separate step in the process.*

5. Tactics

- How will you use your resources to carry out your strategy and work toward objectives?
- You can have several tactics per strategy.
- Some plans stop with tactics, omitting detail of activities.

6. Activities

- Include specific activities required under your tactics to carry out strategies.
- Informal plans often jump from objectives to activities.
- Vehicles or channels you will use to communicate can appear here.

7. Evaluation

- Are you reaching your objectives?
- Measurement? Observation? Opinion? Feedback?

8. Materials

- What do you need to implement/execute tactics?

9. Budget

- Out-of-pocket costs, staff time, volunteer energy, transportation, images, materials, fabrication, etc.

10. Timetable and task list

- Who does what when? Work backward from deadline or forward from start date.

Courtesy of Ferne G. Bonomi, APR, Fellow PRSA