The Evolving World of Public Relations

THE EVOLVING WORLD OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

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HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

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Chapters and sections were adapted from the the following OER textbooks. Without these foundational texts, a lot more work would have been required to complete this project. Thank you to those authors who shared their work before us.

Information Strategies for Communicators by Kathleen A. Hansen and Nora Paul is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

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Learning Objectives

- Describe the four models of public relations and the four stages of a typical public relations campaign.
- Analyze the role of public relations in media and culture.
- Analyze the ways public relations is taking the place of traditional advertising.
- Explain the concept of branding.
- Describe the uses of public relations in politics, government, and news media.
- Understand what integrated marketing communications (IMC) are.
- Understand why organizations may change their promotional strategies to reach different audiences.
- Understand the different components of the promotion (communication) mix and why organizations may consider all components when designing the IMC program.
- Understand the difference between types of communication that target many people at one time versus types of communication that target individuals.
- Understand the difference between media and vehicles.
- Explain the similarities and differences between advertising and direct marketing.
- Understand the benefits of direct marketing and what types of direct marketing organizations often utilize.
- Understand what a unique selling proposition is and how it is used.
- Understand different types of promotion objectives.
- Identify different message strategies.
- Understand different ways in which promotion budgets can be set.
- Understand how the budget can be allocated among different media.
- Learn about different types of sales promotions companies use to get customers to buy their products.
- Understand the different types of sales promotions companies use with their business customers.
- Understand why sales promotions have become such an integral part of an organization's promotion mix.
- Differentiate between push and pull strategies.
- Understand the concept of public relations and why organizations allocate part of their promotional budgets to it.
- Understand what the different types of public relations tools are.

- Explain how companies use different public relations tools to their advantage.
- Understand the different social media zones.
- Understand how social media can generate publicity.
- Explain how social media keeps changing.

Part 1: The Role of Public Relations

Chapter 1 – History, Impact, and The Big Picture

"Society not only continues to exist by transmission, by communication, but it may fairly be said to exist in transmission, in communication." — *John Dewey in Democracy and Education, 1916*

The purpose of this chapter is to define media, society and culture broadly. Additionally, the term "communication" is defined in its many forms. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with communication theory in more detail. Digital culture is covered in depth in Chapter 2. We will discuss media literacy and media studies in Chapter 3, but we have to learn to walk before we run, as the saying goes.

Bronze bust of John Dewey sculpted by Jacob Epstein, 1927. John Dewey by Cliff. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0.

More than one hundred years ago, John Dewey wrote in *Democracy and Education* that society is not only supported by various forms of communication but also enveloped in communication. Dewey reiterated what philosophers and scholars had noted for centuries: small groups, larger communities and vast institutions — all the things that make up a **society** — function in relation to how communication flows within and between groups.

There are different forms of communication. At the broadest level, **communication** is an exchange of meaning between people using symbols. The most common symbols we use are verbal and written words, but there are also many forms of nonverbal communication such as American Sign Language. What sign language, verbal communication and written communication have in common is the use of abstract symbols to convey meaning. Whether you say "thank you" in face-to-face communication, send someone a card with the words "thank you" written on it, or use nonverbal cues to express thanks, the meaning is the same.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=34#oembed-1

Interpersonal communication generally refers to the exchange of meaning between two or more people on a personal, often one-on-one, level. Interpersonal communication can be verbal or nonverbal. Most often, it happens in face-to-face settings. It differs from **mass communication**, which involves sharing meaning through symbolic messages to a wide audience from one source to many receivers. Sometimes, particularly in **computer-mediated communication**, messages conveyed using computers, it can be difficult to tell the difference between interpersonal communication and mass communication because individuals can send messages intended only for other individuals that might quickly reach large numbers of people. Social media platforms are often structured in ways that allow interpersonal messages to "go viral" and become mass messages whether the original sender intended to address a mass audience or not.

It is not the type of message that determines interpersonal or mass communication. It is the way the message is distributed and the relationships between sender and receiver(s). This text will continue to grapple with the overlap of interpersonal communication and mass communication structures on networked communication platforms, but first, another form of communication commonly studied in academic settings should be introduced.

Organizational communication is the symbolic exchange of messages carrying specific meaning for members belonging to formal organizations. In practical terms, it is the internal communication that helps governments, businesses, schools and hospitals to run.

People working together in organizations get usually things done by communicating directly with one another or in small groups. Organizations cannot function without communication. Organizational communication effectiveness can influence the success or failure of businesses and other social institutions. Thus, communication does not merely happen within organizations; it is an essential part of the way they are structured. Organizational communication is a separate field of study, introduced well in this YouTube video.

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Successful communication, whether intended for personal use, for use within an organization, or for a wide audience, can help people to understand each other and to get things done.

If good organizational communication is necessary for groups to function with a formal purpose, mass communication is essential for societies to function. Societies are made up of formal organizations of various sizes. Usually, the larger the group, the more complex its communication structures.

Communication structure refers to a combination of information and communication technologies (ICTs), guidelines for using those technologies, and professional workers dedicated to managing information and messages. In the mass communication field, communication structures are more than computers and transmission networks. The guidelines for using networks to create and distribute messages for mass consumption are a matter of corporate policy as well as law.

It has been noted that a society is made up of small groups, larger communities, and vast institutions. A more complete definition of the term comes from the field of sociology. A **society** is a very large group of people organized into institutions held together over time through formalized relationships. Nations, for example, are made up of formal institutions organized by law. Governments of different size, economic institutions, educational institutions and others all come together to form a society.

By comparison, **culture** — the knowledge, beliefs, and practices of groups large and small — is not necessarily formalized. Culture is necessary for enjoying and making sense of the human experience, but there are few formalized rules governing culture.

Mass communication influences both society and culture. Different societies have different media systems, and the way they are set up by law influences how the society works. Different forms of communication, including messages in the mass media, give shape and structure to society. Additionally, mass media outlets can spread cultural knowledge and artistic works around the globe. People exercise cultural preferences when it comes to consuming media, but mass media corporations often decide which stories to tell and which to promote, particularly when it comes to forms of mass media that are costly to produce such as major motion pictures, major video game releases and global news products.

More than any other, the field of mass communication transmits culture. At the same time, it helps institutional society try to understand itself and whether its structures are working.

The Mass Media Dynamic

The mass media system is an institution itself. What sets it apart is its potential to influence the thinking of massive numbers of individuals. In fact, the ideas exchanged in organizational communication and interpersonal communication are often established, reinforced or negated by messages in the mass media. This is what it means for societies "to exist in transmission, in communication." Different types of communication influence each other. [1]

But the mass media are also shaped and influenced by social groups and institutions. This is the nature of the mass media dynamic.

Individuals and groups in society influence what mass media organizations produce through their creativity on the input side and their consumption habits on the output side. It is not accurate to say that society exists within the mass media or under mass media "control." Social structures are too powerful for mass media to completely govern how they operate. But neither is it accurate to say that the mass media are contained within societies. Many mass media products transcend social structures to influence multiple societies, and even in societies that heavily censor their mass media the news of scandals and corruption can get out. The mass media and society are bound together and shape each other.

Almost everything you read, see and hear is framed within a mass media context; however, mere familiarity is no guarantee of success. Products in the mass media that fail to resonate with audiences do not last long, even if they seem in tune with current tastes and trends.

The Mass Communication Origin Story

In his book, John notes how, in the early 20th century, the mass media were beginning to connect large institutions in new ways. The production of mass media messages accelerated with the development of the telegraph and the popular newspaper. The spread of telegraph technology that began in the mid-1800s continued through the early 1900s to network the globe with a nearly instantaneous information transmission system. Much of the growth of newspapers occurred as a result of improvements in telegraph technology.

Thus, a primary function of the global mass communication system is to save time. People have a need to understand what is going on in the world, and they desire entertainment. Global electronic telecommunication networks collapse space by transmitting messages in much less time than the older, physical delivery systems.

The television station's webpage at KOMU, a local affiliate owned and operated by the University of Missouri-Columbia, is constantly on display in the newsroom.

The dynamic between society and mass media that is so prevalent today developed throughout the 20th century. Starting near the end of the 1800s, communication flows began to move at electronic speeds. More people knew *about* more things than ever before, but scholars are quick to point out that communication is not synonymous with understanding.

Dewey wanted to focus on educating people so that they could live and work well in societies heavily shaped by global telecommunication networks. For him, education was the meaning of life and the global information and communication system needed to be molded into an educational tool. Many of us still hold out hope for Dewey's educational goals, but as ICTs have advanced over the past century or two, it has become clear that the mere existence of global mass communication networks does not ensure that societies will learn to coexist and thrive.

This can be difficult for people to acknowledge. Shortly after the widespread dissemination of the telegraph, the radio, broadcast television and public internet access, some form of communication utopia was imagined or even expected. The telegraph collapsed space. Radio enabled instantaneous mass communication. Television brought live images from one side of the globe to the other for even larger mass audiences, and internet access gave individuals the power to be information senders, not just receivers. At each step hope and imagination flourished, but social and cultural clashes persisted. Communication systems can be used as weapons. The evolution of mass communication tools is the story of increased capacity to do the same good and evil things people have always done in societies and between them.

Looking beyond technological utopianism — the idea that new technologies (particularly ICTs) will lead to greater social understanding and better conditions for the global population — we are left with a tedious but massively meaningful project. We must find ways to coexist with other societies even as we are constantly aware of our differences and of possible threats that may have existed before but now are much easier to see.

Perhaps if we are to make the best of our digital global communication network, it would help to track the evolution of different forms of mass communication. This text very briefly touched on the continuum from telegraph to widespread internet adoption, but the first mass medium was ink on paper.

The First Mass Medium

The first global medium, besides the spoken word, was neither the internet nor the telegraph. In fact, it was not a mass medium at all. It was paper. Via trade routes, messages in the form of letters moved around the world in a matter of weeks or months. It was global communication, but it was slow.

The development of a global telegraph network made it possible for messages to spread in minutes. When the telegraph was wed to mass-consumed newspapers, the world saw the rise of *fast, global, mass* communication that had the power to potentially influence large groups of people at once.

Books transmitted messages widely and inspired literacy, but they did not establish a channel for consistent, timely communication meant for mass audiences. After the Gutenberg printing press was developed around 1440, the Gutenberg Bible was slowly mass produced and disseminated around the Western world. It opened up access to sacred texts that had been bound up for centuries by large institutions like the Roman Catholic Church, and its dissemination helped fuel the Protestant Reformation. Still, it was an outlier. Most other books, even those that were mass produced from around the 1500s to the 1800s were not disseminated as widely as the Gutenberg Bible. They were simply too expensive.

Nevertheless, mass literacy slowly paved the way for mass newspaper readership to emerge in the 20th century. After the telegraph was invented and developed for wide-scale use and after the cost of printing newspapers dropped, publishers could share news from around the globe with mass audiences. The newspaper, specifically the penny press, was the first mass medium.


THE PENNY PAPER.

LAST EDITION

The front page of the Cincinnati Penny Paper from Monday, May 16, 1881. Source: [The Penny Paper](#) in Wikimedia Commons. CC0 Public Domain.

What distinguished the **[penny press](#)** was affordability. These papers were published in tabloid format, which used small-sized pages and was cheaper to produce. Penny papers were written for and read by working class audiences starting in about the 1830s. They covered all manner of current events. Soon, major institutions such as political parties and unions developed their own papers to cover the topics that suited their agendas and to promote the cultural values that they held dear.

Mass Media Growth And Consolidation

As mass production of all sorts of manufactured goods grew during the 20th century, so did advertising budgets and the concept of brands. Brand advertising became fuel for the mass media, and as profitability rose, newspapers were bought up and organized into chains throughout the 20th century. Many newspapers grew their audience as they merged.

Partisan papers gave way to a brand of news that strived for objectivity. The profit motive mostly drove the change. To attract a mass audience, newspapers had to represent various points of view. This pushed some of the most opinionated citizens, particularly strong advocates for workers, to the fringes of mass discourse. Some advocates developed alternative media offerings. Others went mostly unheard or plied their craft directly in politics.

At the same, throughout much of the 20th century, the journalism workforce became more professionalized. Professional **norms**, that is the written and unwritten rules guiding behaviour decided on by people in a given field, evolved. Many full-time, paid professional journalists stressed and continue to stress the need to remain detached from the people they cover so that journalists can maintain the practice and appearance of objectivity. Journalists emphasized objectivity in order to remain autonomous and to be perceived as truthful. The norm of objective reporting still strongly influences news coverage in newspapers as well as on most mainstream radio and television news networks.

That being said, the practice of maintaining objectivity is being called into question in our current hyper-partisan political media environment. Other strategies for demonstrating truthfulness require journalists to be transparent about how they do their work, about who owns their media outlets, and about what investments and personal views they may have. Chapter 9 covers news norms and their evolution in greater detail.

At the heart of the ethical discussion for professional journalists is a sort of battle between the need to be autonomous to cover news accurately with minimal bias and the need to be socially responsible. **Social responsibility** in the study of journalism ethics is a specific concept referring to the need for media organizations to be responsible for the possible repercussions of the news they produce. The debate goes on even as more and more platforms for mass communication are developed.

Beyond advancements in ink-on-paper newspapers (including the development of color offset printing), technological developments have contributed to the diversification of mass media products. Photography evolved throughout the 20th century as did motion picture film, radio and television technology. Other mass media presented challenges and competition for newspapers. Still, newspapers were quite a profitable business. They grew to their greatest readership levels in the middle-to-late 20th century, and their value was at its high point around the turn of the 21st century. Then came the internet.

Stewing In Our Own Juices

With the rise of global computer networks, particularly high-speed broadband and mobile communication technologies, individuals gained the ability to publish their own work and to comment on mass media messages more easily than ever before. If mass communication in the 20th century was best characterized as a one-to-many system where publishers and broadcasters reached waiting audiences, the mass media made possible by digital information networks in the twenty-first have taken on a many-to-many format.

For example, YouTube has millions of producers who themselves are also consumers. None of the social media giants such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Qzone and Weibo (in China), Twitter, Reddit or Pinterest is primarily known for producing content. Instead, they provide platforms for users to submit their own content and to share what mass media news and entertainment companies produce. The result is that the process of deciding what people should be interested in is much more decentralized in the digital network mass media environment than it was in the days of an analog one-to-many mass media system.

The process of making meaning in society — that is, the process of telling many smaller stories that add up to a narrative shared by mass audiences — is now much more collaborative than it was in the 20th century because more people are consuming news in networked platforms than through the channels managed by **gatekeepers**. A mass media gatekeeper is someone, professional or not, who decides what information to share with mass audiences and what information to leave out.

Fiction or non-fiction, every story leaves something out, and the same is true for shows made up of several stories, such as news broadcasts and heavily edited reality television. Gatekeepers select what mass audiences see, and then edit or disregard the rest. The power of gatekeepers may be diminished in networks where people can decide for themselves what topics they care most about, but there is still an important gatekeeping function in the mass media since much of what is ultimately shared on social media platforms originates in the offices and studios of major media corporations.

On social media platforms, media consumers have the ability to add their input and criticism, and this is an important function for users. Not only do we have a say as audience members in the content we would like to see, read and hear, but we also have an important role to play in society as voting citizens holding their elected officials accountable.

If social media platforms were only filled with mass media content, individual user comments, and their own homegrown content, digitally networked communication would be complex enough, but there are other forces at work. Rogue individuals, hacker networks and **botnets** — computers programmed to create false social media accounts, websites and other digital properties — can contribute content alongside messages produced by professionals and legitimate online community members. False presences on social media channels can amplify hate and misinformation and can stoke animosity between groups in a hyper-partisan media age.

Around the world, societies have democratized mass communication, but in many ways, agreeing on a shared narrative or even a shared list of facts is more difficult than ever. Users create **filter bubbles** for themselves where they mostly hear the voices and information that they want to hear. This has the potential to create opposing worldviews where users with different viewpoints not only have differing opinions, but they also have in mind completely different sets of facts creating different images about what is happening in the world and how society should operate.

When users feel the need to defend their filtered worldviews, it is quite harmful to society.

De-Massification

The infiltration of bots on common platforms is one issue challenging people working in good faith to produce accurate and entertaining content and to make meaning in the mass media. De-massification is another. Professionals working on mass-market media products now must fight to hold onto mass audiences.

De-massification signifies the breakdown of mass media audiences. As the amount of information being produced and the number of channels on which news and other content can be disseminated grows exponentially, ready-made audiences are in decline.

In the future, it is anticipated that audiences, or fan bases, must be built rather than tapped into. One path to growing audiences in digital networks is to take an extreme point of view. Producers of news and entertainment information on the right and left of the political spectrum often rail against mainstream media as they promote points of view which are more or less biased. This kind of polarization along with the tendency of social media platforms to allow and even encourage people to organize along political lines likely contributes to de-massification as people organize into factions.

The future of some mass communication channels as regular providers of shared meaning for very large audiences is in question. That said, claims that any specific medium is "dead" are overblown. For example, newspaper readership, advertising revenue and employment numbers have been declining for about 25 years, but as of 2018, there are still more than 30 million newspaper subscribers.[2] Mass audiences are shrinking and shifting, but they can still be developed.

Convergence

As mass audiences are breaking up and voices from the fringe are garnering outsized influence, the various types of media (audio, video, text, animation and the industries they are tied to) have come together on global computer and mobile network platforms in a process called **convergence**.

It is as though all media content is being tossed into a huge stew, one that surrounds and composes societies and cultures, and within this stew of information, people are re-organizing themselves according to the cultural and social concerns they hold most dear.

Beef stew by Robin DeGrassi from Denver, Colorado, USA. Source: Wikimedia. CC BY 2.0

According to one hypothesis, in a society dominated by digital communication networks, people gather around the information they recognize and want to believe because making sense of the vast amount of information now available is impossible.

This text covers several mass media channels including social media, film, radio, television, music recording and podcasting, digital gaming, news, advertising, public relations and propaganda because these are still viable industries even as the content they produce appears more and more often on converged media platforms.

What we see emerging in networked spaces is a single mass media channel with a spectrum of possible text, photo, audio, video, graphic and game elements; however, the sites of professional production still mostly identify as one particular industry (such as radio and recorded music, film, television, cable television, advertising, PR, digital advertising or social media). Some of these are "legacy" media that have existed as analog industries prior to convergence, while others originated in digital media environments.

For the foreseeable future, we should expect legacy media producers to continue to hold formidable power as elements of larger media conglomerates, which acquired many media companies as a result of industry deregulation. We should also expect audiences to continue to fragment and digital media start-ups trying to build audiences out of fragmented communities to be common even if they are difficult to sustain.

What this means for social structures and for cultural production is disruption, limited perhaps by legacy media traditions and corporate power.

Melding Theories

The world of mass media has witnessed the convergence of media content on digital platforms, the ability of individuals to engage in one-to-many communication as though they were major broadcasters, and the emergence of structures that allow for many-to-many communication. These developments force us to rethink how separate interpersonal, organizational and mass communication truly are.

From a theoretical standpoint, these are well-established approaches to thinking about communication, but in practice, certain messages might fit into multiple categories. For example, a YouTube video made for a few friends might reach millions if it goes viral. Is it interpersonal communication, mass communication or both? Viral videos and memes spread to vast numbers of people but might start out as in-jokes between internet friends or trolls. The message's original meaning is often lost in this process. In a networked society, it can be difficult to differentiate between interpersonal and mass communication. For our purposes, it will be helpful to consider the message creator's intent.

As a user, it is essential to realize the possibility that interpersonal messages may be shared widely. As professionals, it also helps to realize that you cannot force a message to go viral, although most social media platforms now engage in various kinds of paid promotion where brands and influential users can pay to have their content spread more widely more quickly.

Two women discuss a record album selection in a music shop in Amora, Portugal. Choosing Vinyl music by Pedro Ribeiro Simões. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

We must also understand that advertisers treat digital communication platforms much the same way whether they appear to users to be interpersonal or mass media environments. Users can be targeted down to the individual on either type of platform, and advertisers (with the help of platform creators), can access mass audiences, even when users are intending only to participate on a platform for purposes of interpersonal communication.

Scholars are still working to define how these platforms mix aspects of interpersonal and mass communication. Here is one takeaway: If you are not paying to use a platform like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube (Google), Instagram or Snapchat, *you* are the product. It is your attention that is being sold to advertisers.

The Big Picture

Society functions when the mass media work well, and we tend not to think about the technologies or the professionals who make it all possible. Interpersonal communication can function with or without a massive technological apparatus. It is more convenient, though, to be able to text each another. When interpersonal communication breaks down, we have problems in our relationships. When organizational communication breaks down, it creates problems for groups and companies. But when mass communication breaks down, society breaks down.

Cultural Production

There is another way of looking at the mass media that needs to be mentioned after looking in some depth at the structural changes going on in and around the field of mass communication. Mass media channels are also huge engines of cultural production. That is, they make the entertainment that helps us define who we are as large and small groups of people. To quote from *Dead Poets Society*: "We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race, and the human race is filled with passion. Medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for." If you replace "reading and writing poetry" with "creating culture," you get a sense of the importance of cultural production. We can define culture as a collection of our knowledge, beliefs and practices. In practice, culture it how we express ourselves and enjoy life's experiences.

In media, there are three main types of cultural works, those associated with "high" culture, popular culture and folk culture. (Some scholars discuss "low" culture, but it is argued here that "low culture" is just another way of describing the low end of pop culture.)

High culture is arguably the best cultural material a society has to offer. Economic class often comes into play in defining what is "high culture" and what is not.

Pop culture is the vast array of cultural products that appeal to the masses.

Folk culture refers to cultural products borne out of everyday life identifiable because they usually have practical uses as well as artistic value. It is often associated with prehistoric cultures, but that is because the folk culture, pop culture and high culture of prehistoric peoples were often one and the same. Their best art may also have been an everyday object like a bowl or a basket or a doll or a mask. Don't confuse prehistoric art with modern folk art.

Modern folk art has the specific quality of trying to capture what is both beautiful *and useful* in everyday life.

Folk music tends to rely on "traditional" sounds and instruments. Topically, it focuses on the value of everyday existence. Folk music is often built around narratives that carry morals much the same way fairy tales do. Fairy tales are probably the best example of folk literature.

So much of the interpretation and the value of cultural production is culturally relative. This means that an object or work's value is determined by perceptions of people in different cultural groups.

In modern society, mass media often drive our perceptions. It is important to recognize that different cultures have different moral values and to acknowledge that some practices should be universally abhorred and stopped, even if they are partially or wholly accepted in other cultures.

The relationship between culture and mass media is complex; it is difficult to distinguish modern culture from how it appears in the various mass media. Culture in the developed world is spread through mass media channels. Just as society forms and is formed in part by messages in the mass media, so it goes with culture. Cultural products and their popularity can influence which media channels people prefer. Conversely, changes in media and ICTs can lead to changes in how we produce culture.

When we discuss digital culture in the next chapter, we will continue to break down different levels of culture and the relationship between cultural forms and mass communication in the networked communication age. To begin to understand the mass media, their role in society and how they shape culture and are shaped by cultural preferences, it helps to think about how the mass media may influence you.

The internal culture of the media has become more competitive over the years. Given the pressure to be the first to break a story, journalists increasingly feel the need to market themselves as trustworthy news sources. Those who work for the same media outlet may compete with one another. Journalists are expected to create a likeable personal brand. They are rated not only on viewership, but on social media likes, shares, personal appearances, and so on.

Journalists can no longer hide behind their byline; they must put their best face forward and work to increase followers. It is important for you to realize this when pitching a news story to a journalist. These topics will be covered in depth later in the book.

Writing And Communications

Writing is a fundamental business skill that can greatly affect the credibility and success of an organization. A recent survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers [3] found that 70 percent of employers look for evidence of strong writing skills in recent college graduates.

Styles of writing vary with the medium, the type of message being communicated, and the audience.

Students write in a notebook while meeting in a coffee house. People Coffee Meeting Team by Startup Stock Photos. [Source: Pexels](). [CCO]()

Media writing as discussed here differs from academic writing, which most higher education audiences are accustomed to using. Media writing is clear, straightforward, accurate, and appealing to the target audience. It is active and dynamic, and it allows an organization to engage with its key audiences and clearly communicate ideas and goals. It should also influence the target audience's perceptions and/or behaviours. Word choice, tone, and message packaging are some of the techniques you will need to master in order to be a strong communicator.

As with any skill, you have to consistently practice writing and be open to suggestions in order to improve. Because there is a perceived—if sometimes unjustified—association between intelligence and writing ability, you may misinterpret constructive feedback as criticism. However, one of the best ways to learn whether you're clearly communicating through your writing is to get a third-party audience to read and react honestly to it.

The 24-hour news cycle places high demands on journalists and news media professionals to work against tight deadlines while being the first to break news. Strict deadlines are not isolated to the newsroom; public relations professionals also are expected to produce under pressure. For example, if your organization has an unanticipated product recall, audiences will expect some type of official announcement quickly. Furthermore, you often get only one chance to create the right message, one that has its intended effect.

Corporate media organizations compete with one another to break stories or report on events. Being the first to deliver a story brings a media outlet prestige and credibility. Furthermore, being the first to publish often results in a higher search engine ranking, which results in more clicks and stronger viewership.

The onset of cable television in the 1980s changed the media landscape. One of the most notable results is what we refer to as the 24-hour news cycle. Audiences in the past had to wait until specific broadcast times—usually at noon and in the early and late evening—to hear the latest about current events.

Today, many media outlets disseminate news constantly, every hour of the day. This immediacy of news coverage seeks to meet the audience's demand to have essential information quickly. Furthermore, media outlets compete not only against each other but against the Internet. In this fast-paced environment, media professionals are expected to provide quality news stories to the masses even as they find it more difficult to gather and report facts accurately and responsibly.

Notes

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Chapter 2 – Digital Culture and Social Media's Impact on Public Relations

Lighted brushed-steel Google logo sign attached to a marble wall.
I2age by Google. Source: Flickr. CCO Public Domain

"**The Internet is the first thing that humanity has built that humanity doesn't understand, the largest experiment in anarchy that we have ever had.**" **—** Eric Schmidt, former executive chairman of Alphabet Inc.

Origin

Until the end of 2017, Eric Schmidt was the executive chairman of Alphabet Inc. Alphabet emerged out of Google to become a large holding company that would manage Google and several related properties including YouTube and Calico (a biotech company). Schmidt has a Ph.D. in computer science from Berkeley. He serves on advisory boards for Khan Academy, an education company with strong ties to YouTube, and *The Economist*, a global news magazine with both digital and print products. Schmidt's résumé suggests he is intellectually outstanding and that he cares about technology, education and the mass media. If one of the biggest brains of our time, and the former leader of one of the few corporations with direct influence on the way the internet is shaped, describes the internet as "anarchy," it's a good indication that things are in flux in the digital world.

Of course, we should analyze critically any statements coming from someone whose primary purpose it is to maximize profits for their company. At the time he made these statements, Schmidt was running Google. The loyalties of executive-level leaders presumably rest with the corporation that signs their checks and provides their stock options. Google has an interest in making you feel that the internet is a confusing place since their search engine is one solution to the confusion. (However, if you rely on autocomplete, Google's suggestions may not only be confusing; they may even be morally reprehensible.)[1]

Still, Schmidt's characterization of the internet as a place of anarchy is accurate. And as we seek to define digital culture and to discuss the cultural relevance of social media in this chapter, we must recognize that there is no grand plan. The only constant in digital culture is change, which may sound cliché, but the underlying ICT structures shift so often that it can be difficult for cultural trends to take hold.

Chapter 1 of this text defined society and culture in the context of the field of mass communication. It covered the distinction between interpersonal communication, organizational communication and mass communication, and then it delved deeper into concepts relating to mass communication. The purpose of the first chapter was to start a discussion about how evolving information and communication technologies (ICTs) can influence the mass media and contribute to social and cultural change in the process.

A Brief Overview

If you are anticipating a roadmap of neat, organized plans for how the evolution of culture on digital platforms will unfurl, you're gonna have a bad time.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=43

Instead, this chapter offers a brief, lively discussion of how we define digital culture and what we might expect from it as it emerges in online spaces, mobile apps and platforms.
Additionally, this chapter includes a breakdown of the roles social media platforms may play in influencing culture.

If you acknowledge that cultures have always been in flux, then perhaps the concept of a digital culture emerging online amidst anarchy will look less like disruption and more like evolution. However you classify it, the cultural impact of the merger of the mass media and digital networks is vast, and that is the topic of this chapter.

Read: The "backlash" against Star Wars: The Last Jedi, explained By Emily VanDerWerff (Dec 19, 2017) published in Vox.

This chapter begins with a definition of "digital culture" that comes from the media studies portion of mass communication literature. **Media studies** refers to the broad category of academic inquiry analyzing and critiquing the mass media, its products, possible effects of messages and campaigns, and even media history. Chapter 2 then continues with a deeper discussion of identity in the digital age and covers privacy and surveillance as well as the praxis of digital culture as defined by scholars. The term "praxis" here refers to how a theory plays out in actual practice.

This chapter also identifies different levels of culture (a concept borrowed from anthropology) as they relate to cultural products reaching audiences through digital mass communication channels. In other words, we ultimately answer this question: If we take existing theory for describing the *levels* of culture and apply it to digital culture, what are some immediately recognizable traits?

Finally, social media are defined from a scholarly point of view with particular attention given to the cultural potential of digitally networked social platforms.

Digital Culture Defined

Scholars argue whether we can understand what the spread of digital networks will mean for relatively well-established cultures in the tangible world, or predict with any certainty how cultures will evolve on digital platforms. There are two basic schools of thought. The first argues that existing cultures might find themselves essentially recreated in digital form as more and more life experiences, from the exciting to the mundane, play out in digital spaces. The second school of thought posits that the dominant digital culture emerging now is a separate culture unto itself.

It seems likely that neither version of these imagined forms of digital culture will dominate; instead, we will likely see a combination of the two. Parts of existing culture will appear online as they do in the physical world and parts of digital culture will seem completely new, previously unfathomable because they could not or would not appear in the tangible world.

Commuters on the Washington DC Metro use their mobile phones beneath an ad stating, "It Begins with Bonjour." It Begins with Bonjour by Craig Moe. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

Before we delve in with prognostications about where digital culture is headed, let us first define our terms. **Digital culture** refers to the knowledge, beliefs, and practices of people interacting on digital networks that may recreate tangible-world cultures or create new strains of cultural thought and practice native to digital networks.

For example, an online fandom and a real-world fan club are both made up of people who are geographically separated but share a common interest. If a fan club were to "go online," networked communication platforms might make the experience better than it was in the physical world. Before the advent of the internet, most fan clubs produced a newsletter, offered connections with pen pals, and provided early opportunities to buy tickets and merchandise. Online, fans can create deeper relationships with one another. They can connect and communicate on official channels or make their own unofficial groups where they need not communicate through a central authority or gatekeeper. Fan and star interactions can be direct, one-on-one interactions on multiple social media channels. There may be an official, organized fan group, but many other avenues can appear on relatively open platforms with few rules.

The cultural product at the core of a fandom might still be a "legacy media" product. **Legacy media** are any media platforms that existed prior to the development of massive digital networks. Yes, there are people who are "Instagram famous" or "YouTube" famous, but the biggest stars in our cultural world still have many ties to legacy media. Musicians, film stars and comic book heroes come to mind. What other types of "legacy media" stars have huge online fandoms?

Online fandoms may simultaneously expect less centralized authority over the fan experience and more direct access to their heroes. They often expect to see transparency during the creative process, such as Instagram or Twitter posts with "secret" messages[2] for longtime followers or behind-the-scenes videos as albums and movies are made. Fandoms might demand to hear key information first or to have special access via social media.

Similar things could be said of fan clubs in the age of snail mail. Essential elements of the culture of fandom — gaining access to artists and finding friends in a community — have not changed as much in kind as they have in degree.

Is this an example of the transition of an existing cultural form (the fan club) to digital environments, or is online fandom something truly different from a snail mail fan club? This is a good question to debate in the classroom.

It is worth noting that there are also niche fandoms that probably would not exist without the aid of digital networks. With virtually unlimited communication space, there is room for incredibly rarified fan groups to form on platforms such as Tumblr[3], and they are not always socially positive communities. In many cases of hyper-specific fandoms, it is difficult to argue that these cultures existed in the physical world and simply "moved online." Being digitally networked is what makes it possible to find people with particularly narrow shared interests, for better and for worse.

Digital Dynamic

Even with the presence of niche online groups, digital culture cannot currently be separated from the influence of physical-world cultures. We can say two things about the relationship between online and physical-world cultures at this time. First, the growth of interaction on digital networks influences "traditional" cultures. Second, longstanding cultural traditions are influencing digital culture as it takes shape. The ethics and norms established in the physical world shape our views about behaviour and values in digital networks. The term **norm** refers to a behavioural standard. Mutual influences of what is considered "normal" in online behaviour and well established physical world norms are emerging in a dynamic fashion. Sometimes they clash.

One example is online dating. Dating in real life (IRL) is changing as more and more people use dating apps and websites. Previously, dating was limited to the people you were likely to meet. You could meet friends of friends. You could meet people at school, at parties, at bars or on blind dates. Your options were limited geographically and by how outgoing you were, how much time you wanted to spend looking, and who you trusted to set you up. The personal ads in newspapers were often considered sad places for losers. Using a mass medium to find your true love was often considered a risky last resort.

When online dating first became available, it was often compared to posting and perusing digital personal ads. This was a cultural perception based on previous experiences, behaviour and expectations from a pre-Internet culture.

Lindsay Blackwell, My Super Pseudo-Scientific Online Dating Experiment™. Ignite Waterloo 8 by James Bastow. Source: Flickr. CC BY-SA 2.0

Over the course of approximately ten years (1998-2008), what once was considered odd, creepy or desperate in many parts of the Western world came to be considered commonplace. Apps and sites like OkCupid, Tinder, Match.com and eHarmony have millions of users. Culturally, many of us have accepted[4] this new digital form of dating. It's not for everyone, but online dating does not carry the stigma it once did.

Even Tinder, which has a reputation as a "hook-up" app, maintains popularity[5] and cultural significance as it is referenced often on other media platforms.

Whatever it may be in a given culture, sexual morality still exists, even if new technologies make hooking up easier and new capabilities challenge old norms of what dating should be.

This is the dynamic at the heart of this chapter. Digital technology can influence knowledge, beliefs and especially practices around dating. This can, in turn, shape the way people think about dating in general, not just in digital environments. The "old" cultural norms and morals can still be applied to judge those who use digital apps for casual hookups, but the new culture can push back, so to speak, and change how people think about dating even if they never use dating apps themselves.

We have discussed how the digital culture and physical world culture dynamic functions, but we have not yet defined digital culture. For that, we must look to scholars who have spent years trying to pinpoint what emergent digital culture seems to be.

Individualization, Post-Nationalism, And Globalization

We turn to Mark Deuze, a scholar from the University of Amsterdam, for a complete definition. He seeks to provide a preliminary definition of "digital culture" in his 2006 article, "Participation, Remediation, Bricolage: Considering Principal Components of a Digital Culture."[6]

In his analysis of academic literature, Deuze finds that scholars often make assumptions when trying to explain how digital culture works. The main he identifies is the idea that culture moves to digital networks more or less intact. There was, a decade ago, a lack of explanation about what happens to culture in digital environments.

How much might culture change when certain practices move online? How often can existing cultural beliefs and expectations be transferred intact? Deuze does not think digital culture is merely a recreation of physical world culture in online spaces, but he does not have a good answer for what has been emerging. He analyzes independent media sites, blogs and radical online media outlets to see what these new forms of communication demonstrate about digital culture.

That these forms are not meant to represent all culture but rather a cultural vanguard. They are (or were) the tip of the spear of newly evolving digital cultures. These sites are often progressive politically, so this is not as much a prediction of what will happen with all digital culture as it is a discussion of what is possible. Deuze maintains that the real practice of digital culture is "an expression of individualization, post-nationalism, and globalization."[7]

Individualization

Deuze finds individualization in blogs most frequently written by one person and focused on a specific topic or small geographical region. **Individualism**, as it is used here, refers not only to an individual's ability to act as their own publisher online but also to a social condition in which individuals are free from government control. It means that even in authoritarian nations such as North Korea, Russia, China and Iran that try to control the behaviour of their citizens, individuals may seek freedom of expression on the internet, although it comes at a greater risk.

Beyond Deuze's observations, evidence of individualism online comes from partisan news sites such as The Drudge Report and HuffPost. Both are named for individual founders. They are digital mass media outlets that started largely as personal points of view.

The importance of individualized expression on social media is clear. We appear as individuals on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and Tumblr. This increases our reach. Each of us can potentially connect with every other individual on a given social media platform, but these platforms also raise questions about surveillance and privacy.[8]

Digital Individualism Versus Privacy

Eric Schmidt once said about online privacy and Google, "If you have something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place." While this might make sense in a free society, there are many places in the world — North Korea for example — where government surveillance can utilize corporate invasions of privacy to crack down on dissent and severely limit freedom.

Suppose someone living in North Korea would like to use a social media channel such as Twitter to connect with like-minded people without government officials finding out. Should Twitter protect those users? What if a state threatens legal action or violence against Twitter employees? Would social media channels give up their users?

There is a difference between government surveillance (that is, state-sanctioned data gathering and analysis on massive scales) and corporate data aggregation for targeted marketing purposes. Usually, by accepting the Terms and Conditions of apps and web services, you opt in to having your data stored, crunched and analyzed by corporations. Legally, you are responsible for that decision. Technically, the data gathering platform is not supposed to identify you as an individual, but so-called "safe harbor" laws can be ineffectual.[9]

Should Google protect your searches and refuse to divulge information about your habits to governments, even if they share that data with other companies for marketing purposes? Should Google give you a way to hide your online activity? Is there a way for the liberty-loving Southeast Asian to have his privacy protected while still enabling Western governments to watch out for terrorists? These questions relate to larger issues of freedom and individualism in digital culture.

Throughout its history, the United States of America has taken pride in its First Amendment and the rest of the Bill of Rights as guarantees of liberty. After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, many Americans accepted new levels of scrutiny, particularly in digital environments. Support for strong leaders increased until very recently.[10] Concerns about the global rise of authoritarianism have people questioning government surveillance and corporate surveillance as they may limit our ability to engage as individuals in digital culture.

Eric Schmidt's statement implies that privacy in digital networks is limited. This sentiment is echoed by Mark Zuckerberg, who has suggested that privacy is dead.[11] What this means is that physical world behaviour is expected to adapt to the demands of digital culture because the capabilities of digital culture also carry with them unique risks that we are not necessarily adapted to deal with.

Our experience with the anarchy of online mass communication platforms is quite limited. As we learn what government surveillance and corporate invasions of privacy are capable of, it may continue to deeply affect our physical world behaviour.

Many would agree with the sentiment, "If you do nothing wrong, you have nothing to worry about," but even advocates for a more open digital society want their privacy. Zuckerberg bought several properties around his house to keep his physical location secure.[12] Eric Schmidt does not want people to know where he lives. He generally does not invite the public into his private life, and, one might assume, does not want people to examine why his former wife said she felt like a "piece of luggage" when married to him.[13] Such information about Schmidt's personal life is easy to find online and could be used against him, but should we care? Does it matter in the broader cultural sense?

This text argues that privacy does matter. The vast majority of us are not using digital platforms to break laws or to interact in negative ways with others and yet we still have aspects of ourselves that we would like to remain private. Has a parent or guardian ever snooped on your Facebook account or followed your Instagram? We have incredible freedoms and amazing digital communication capabilities as individuals living our lives in the new digital culture. It comes with a price we have yet to grasp.

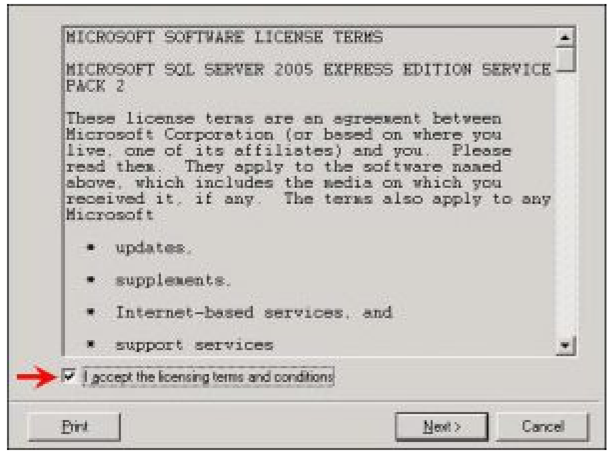
Terms and Conditions

The film *Terms and Conditions May Apply* details the ways our private information, such as our emails and texts, can easily be related to our public information on social networks.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=43

The filmmakers note that the knowledge and hardware needed to snoop on people are bought and sold all over the world and are often unregulated.

Are we becoming more open because of the ways social media function? Is there anything wrong with that? Are we surrendering our privacy in ways that cannot be undone?



An old-school screen capture of Microsoft's Terms and Conditions. I accept the licensing terms and conditions By IvanWalsh.com [Source: Creative Commons.](#) [CC BY 2.0](#)

One of the major cultural challenges of the network society will be to deal with people in power who would like to use our information against us as a means of control. It has already happened in some of the countries where the Arab Spring revolutions took place (Egypt, for one).[14]

You never know what you might need to protest in the future, but we're beginning to see tools deployed to pre-empt protest and other acts of dissent.[15] What this means for our efforts to define digital culture is that digital culture can free us as individuals, but it can also imprison us.

We can use the internet and smartphones to help us to get questions answered and to draw attention to ourselves in good ways. We can coordinate with others for fundraisers and to have parties. Digital communication networks are amazingly sophisticated tools that can help us connect as individuals to form groups to celebrate all sorts of interests, political and otherwise.

On the other hand, if individuals believe they have no privacy, digital networks could become virtual wastelands where innovative collaboration is hindered and where corporate commercial speech and government surveillance dominate.

Capitalism depends on risk-taking, and if you kill risk-taking online, you have hindered the entrepreneurialism that the network society offers. We scholars will study for decades to come how individual behaviour changes and how relationships morph in a digital culture that discourages behaviour we want to keep private while simultaneously encouraging levels of sharing that border on exhibitionism. How can we maintain privacy and gain attention, which is so often the currency of the open Internet? This is an interesting dilemma that arises in an individualistic digital culture.

Post-Nationalism

Post-nationalism is another aspect of digital culture that Deuze notes in his article. It may seem unrelated to our previous discussion of individualism and privacy in digital culture, but in fact, it is an analysis of the ways individuals represent themselves online.

Most simply, "**post-nationalism**" in digital culture means that one's country appears to matter less as an influence on behaviour and values online than it does in the tangible world, perhaps because we can be free of our national identities when engaging in digital networks with people from around the globe.

This does not mean that we should expect to see an end to nationalism in the tangible world. Quite the opposite seems to be true: As post-nationalism appears in digital spaces, nationalism is on the rise in global politics.[16] It might seem odd that people drop their nationalism online but demand it in physical spaces, but if you look at the way culture is expressed online, it is clear that for many people their nationality has little to do with their online identities.

For example, your country may be important to you, but it may not be one of the ways you define yourself in social media environments. You can love America without talking about it all of the time on Facebook or Twitter. Remember as well that national boundaries may be felt more readily in the daily lives of Africans, Asians, Europeans and others living in nations that are geographically smaller, more tightly packed and culturally distinct. In digital spaces, these cultural differences can evaporate.

Although war and immigration are highly influential on the current cultural climate in the physical world, the perception of evaporating culture in networked spaces may help drive the sense that physical world cultures are being threatened.

Recent political developments, however, make it somewhat more difficult to think of digital culture as post-nationalistic given the rise of online nationalism — particularly white nationalism in Europe and the United States. White nationalism is a brand of nationalism related to white supremacy, but it is an identity connected to the nation-state nonetheless. A nationalist's primary *modus operandi* in digital culture may not reflect what nation states ultimately become in the 21st century, but rather what they wish it were. Even so, there is evidence that some factions will use digital spaces to promote a return to nationalism.

Does this mean that post-nationalism in digital culture is a false notion conceived in the early 2000s that has no bearing on culture today? Perhaps, but it is more likely that we are seeing a backlash against the rise of a global post-nationalist space online.

Globalization

Digital culture, Deuze posits, reflects a globalized or globalizing world. Behaviors, interests, and relationships cross international boundaries. The economic structure of digital networks, including the mass media system, is global. For example, multinational conglomerate corporations tend to dominate the media industry, not just in the United States but around the world.[17] Books, academic articles and simple infographics show that most mass media companies fall under the ownership of large corporate firms.[18] It is not accurate to say this represents *all* media or that "the media" are being controlled, but it is accurate to say a significant level of influence can be attributed to a handful of media corporations in most developed parts of the world.

Mass media consumers should be aware of the environment in which media products are produced, but this is not to say that the globalization of mass media is always a negative thing. When it comes to culture, globalization has its supporters. Here is a site in English about K-pop music. The music comes from Korea, but the fanbase is spread worldwide, and the site can reach a global audience only because of the global nature of digital networks. It works only because computer servers are connected by wires all over the globe to make this bit of culture, like many others, available to the entire globe.

There exists a global point of view in both the physical world and in digital culture which is open to all kinds of cultural production as long as it is interesting, funny and shows great talent. There are videos that go viral globally, although it is not always clear why. (If we had the formula, we'd include it here.) All we can say at this time is that you can reach the world with any online message and, for whatever reason, some things are globally likable and "shareable."

A Place Called Gangnam

Humanity's recently developed ability to develop a globalized point of view and to establish a common digital culture is the reason you have heard (and likely tired) of "Gangnam Style." Ironically, PSY, who performs the song, is kind of an anti-pop star within Korea. The song makes fun of the country's higher class, a conspicuously wealthy subculture from a place called the Gangnam District. But PSY is a global success. He is popular, many argue, because he is quite funny and because he is *not* the prototypical K-pop hero.[19] He comes from a particular national cultural tradition, but he also transcends it by being absurd. Thus, as a distinctly individual performer, he personifies a type of post-nationalism and the globalization of digital culture.

> Individualism, post-nationalism and globalization go a long way toward defining the emergent "digital culture." For more information, consult Deuze's article: Participation, Remediation, Bricolage: Considering Principal Components of a Digital Culture.

Digital Culture In Practice

Deuze makes one more observation not about *what digital culture is* but rather *how it works*. Deuze argues that the production of digital culture will be carried out through participation, remediation and bricolage.

Participation means that every individual will have the ability to contribute to online media. Professionals and amateurs will work together much more often than they did on "legacy media" products and projects.

Because people do not want to work for free, they will not flock to an online platform simply because it has been opened up for contributions. If anyone could build a Facebook, there would be hundreds or even thousands of competing platforms. As it stands, there are perhaps ten major social media platforms worldwide, if "major" means they are home to more than 200 million members.[20]

It is also clear from social networking sites, Reddit, and similar social news sharing sites that people will contribute to a platform even if it is not necessarily well-policed or easy to use. In digital culture, it helps to be the first to be big. Success breeds success in an economy based on attention, and what dominates tends to be emotional issues.

Consistency also seems to help, but what matters most is the ability to consistently draw an audience. Think of a person trying to become a YouTube influencer. They must publish interesting content regularly for months or even years before they develop a following that they might be able to sell to advertisers. Once the YouTube star does begin to peddle products, they run the risk of alienating a portion of their audience.

Participation is an essential part of digital culture. It can be easy and fun to do it for free. If you want to make a career out of it, it takes professional-level commitment, and the resulting content often favors what is popular and emotionally gripping rather than what is informative or socially beneficial.

Remediation means that old media are made new again in digital spaces. Television becomes YouTube. Radio becomes podcasting, Spotify and Pandora. Newspapers become … online newspapers! The new media take elements of the old media and repurpose them, while "legacy" media firms copycat digital media trends, buy out media startups, or try to forge new paths at significant expense.

In the practice of digital culture, media are remade in digital environments in a process that combines the appealing parts of existing forms of media with additional functionalities made possible by new ICTs and digital networking capabilities. Poepsel[21] states, that attempts by legacy media organizations to create new businesses online face many institutional hurdles. Remediation is constantly happening, but that does not mean existing media companies can determine how to monetize the practice in a sustainable way. We should expect considerable remediation innovation to come from startup companies and individual tech entrepreneurs with few ties to legacy media.

A good example of remediation is taking classic movies or video games and showing them to young people to record their reactions for YouTube. Reaction videos of all kinds take media products people are familiar with and show them to the unfamiliar so that viewers can judge their reactions. This new media product repurposes old content with an added element designed to pique our interest; however, remediation does not always add much value.

Bricolage is a French term not easy to translate literally to English. A translation offering deep context might be: Do it yourself by combining elements found elsewhere. Much of digital culture is an amalgamation of existing content and new cultural work being done at home by people with amateur skills and affordable but capable tools, such as smartphones and tablet computers. Even basic tools are quite powerful. Smartphones come with front- and back-facing cameras as well as HD-quality video. The computing power of a smartphone is more powerful than a mainframe computer was 70 years ago. Independent producers have video and audio editing software options and can create professional looking, popular media products on their own with little formal training.

Professionalism

What is formal training for, then? It prepares you to transition from making professional looking and sounding media products once in a while to consistently making professional quality media. Formal training prepares you to think strategically about where industries are going so that you know not only how to make mass media products but where to place them and how to use and possibly develop your own communication platforms.

Formal training includes an education in history and ethics. Amateur producers are skilled at chasing trends and gaining popularity, but they often ride cultural waves that last from a few months to a couple of years. Planning for multiple media shifts and seeing digital cultural trends as or before they emerge requires an education in more than the tools and tricks of the trade.

Deuze In Sum

Deuze's analysis suggests that barriers between professionals and amateurs are breaking down. Old media are made new again in digital culture, through a process of making digital media collages, so to speak. (The word "bricolage" is related to "collage.")

Thus, in practice, digital culture is democratizing (though not fully democratic, of course). Amateurs can create media products that challenge the popularity of cultural production made by corporate conglomerates valued at hundreds of billions of dollars. What emerges in terms of popularity, though, is not necessarily high in quality or accuracy. Quality and accuracy are the hallmarks of professional communication (although not all professionals behave as they should).

Levels Of Culture In Digital Media

Let's take a step back and look at the definition of culture again. In the first chapter, this text defined **culture** as being made up of the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a group of people. We need to tweak that definition a little. It is more accurate to say that the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a massive group of people at a certain time and place defines **common culture.**

Three levels of culture exist in anthropology literature, and they apply to the ways culture is expressed in the mass media. The three levels of culture are personal culture, group culture and common culture (similar to pop culture).

Any kind of culture, whether it is personal, group or common culture, relies on shared knowledge. There must be shared experiences and shared stories about those experiences for us to have a common culture. If we did not have shared experiences, cultural references would not make sense. Thus common culture can be arrived at when individuals and groups tell the same stories, or when mass media reach mass audiences with the same messages at the same (or about the same) time.

The more people who know about a song, film, work of art or event with cultural significance, and the more information that they know about it, the more likely it is that event will become part of the common culture. The mass media influence common culture, although it is not correct to say that they directly shape it. There are many other institutional influences on common culture such as governments, churches, families and educational systems.

In fact, messages in the mass media may not be as influential now as they were in the mid-20th century when millions of people watched the same TV shows each week at the same time and read the same major metropolitan daily newspapers and national magazines. Demassification has affected the ways common culture is established and fed.

The mass media influence may have less power to influence common culture directly, but it is still relevant. Think about any major global news event of the past few months. When an event is big enough that it is shared across all media platforms, especially cable television, broadcast television and social media channels, it can form a piece of common culture. If several events occur or if an event has a broad enough global impact, it can enter the global **collective memory**, the shared cultural memory of a group of people.

Group culture is what we used to refer to as a "subculture." It is the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a subset of people considered to be part of a larger culture. Group culture is distinct in some ways from the shared, broader common culture. Group culture might center on religious beliefs and practices, ethnic norms and interests, or food, music and other forms of material production. Groups can be as large as all Chinese-Americans and as small as the remaining St. Louis NFL fan culture.

You have a say in defining your **personal culture** — the knowledge, beliefs and practices held most dear to the individual. You may find yourself identifying with many group cultures or taking most of your interests from the dominant common culture. Do you take your cultural cues about what to think about and talk about from television, social media or small group cultures with which you identify? This much is your prerogative.

You can choose your personal culture. It is based both on what you believe in and what cultural products you consume.

America, 'Merica, Los Estadas Unidos, Etc.

There is a common culture in America, but there is no single, dominant, common culture across global digital networks. There may be a tendency for people to believe that the group cultures they interact with most often online constitute the "real" digital culture, but as yet there is no clear consensus about what our shared digital culture is or even if we will develop one.

Algorithms in search engines and social media platforms determine much of what we find when we search the internet and what we see when we look at news and information feeds from our friends. Do algorithms constitute common culture? They may shape it, and they may be influenced by user preferences, but they are not always designed for truth, accuracy or information literacy. They are most often designed to give consumers whatever makes them consume more of what the platform wants them to consume. Google usually wants you to spend money with its advertisers. Facebook wants your time and your data so it can sell your information to third party advertisers.

What shapes digital culture is often in a "black box": It is the proprietary information of very large corporations, and the public may or may not have access to the code. Even if we did have it, it would be difficult to explain exactly how algorithms work. There are times when the corporations that deploy algorithms seem surprised by how they function in the hands of massive numbers of users.

Major events that cut across algorithms and show up on almost everyone's news feed and in almost everyone's search results are still likely to have an impact on common culture. Major events are likely to shape personal, group, and common culture if they are significant enough. What kind of cultural impact does a given event have? It depends.

The impact of a school shooting near Miami might be felt differently in Florida than in California because of proximity and because the gun laws in each state are quite different. In other words, something can enter the common culture but still be perceived quite differently by individual members of the public.

Norms

By now you should understand that the cultural impact of messages in the mass media at each level — personal, group and common culture — is related to the shared knowledge that existed before the event.

Events are often going to be perceived differently by people identifying with different small group cultures within a larger common culture. Events will usually be interpreted differently by individuals within a small group culture, depending on an individual's beliefs about and personal experiences with the issue at hand.

A person's response to current events as they appear in the mass media is also related to the existence and strength of shared beliefs about the way they think things *ought* to be. We call those beliefs **cultural norms.**

Graffiti explaining the role of women in Egypt's revolution. Women in the revolution by Gigi Ibrahim. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

There is no single, agreed-upon set of norms that everyone in a given group culture adheres to. If you have lived your whole life as part of the dominant culture, and you do not recognize the existence and struggle of various cultural groups, it can be difficult to recognize reactions in digital media spaces that do not relate much to what you see in your physical world. Conversely, if you have grown up being oppressed as part of a small group, you may find it hard to understand how others identifying with the dominant portion of a common culture can miss the cruelty present in some cultural norms they don't think twice about.

Exposure to other groups' cultures in a network society can bring about both greater understanding and greater anxiety. This is something that will be worked out, for better or for worse, over the next several decades as digital culture evolves. Figuring out how groups with different cultural interests, norms, and values can get along while being constantly exposed to one another's views in the free-for-all of network society is the challenge of emergent digital culture.

One response is to run to echo chambers, to partisan spaces that feel safe for certain group cultures and for our personal cultural beliefs and priorities, but this practice can only deepen the divide between cultural groups.

In the early years of working to establish a common culture in the network society, we have managed to inundate ourselves with information from all manner of cultural groups and to isolate ourselves from views that contradict our own group cultural norms. This is anarchy. This is culture without a strong social structure to hold it together.

The question facing mass communication scholars that members of our common culture also face is whether the institutions of the physical world can or should try to control how digital culture is shaped. You have the power to decide if digital culture should be regulated and how. This may be the most important civic responsibility you have, but it is also a matter of cultural power.

Social Media And Social Capital

What do you think it means for society that networked communication platforms can make anybody a mass communicator? One answer is that there is great potential for social change because society, as Dewey said in Chapter 1, is not just transmitted by communication, it exists in it.

That means every individual with a computer or a smartphone has the potential to disseminate messages that influence broader society. Think of the Arab Spring revolutions of 2010-2012. Think of #Ferguson protests in the summer and fall of 2014. Think of the way candidate Donald Trump bypassed mass media outlets to reach voters and to set a separate news agenda in 2015 and 2016. Individuals and small groups are now able to coordinate and to lead social movements using networked communication technologies.

Facebook's Facebook Page by "Christopher". Source: Flickr CC BY-SA 2.0

You have probably heard the term "social movement." In a sense, a social movement is a change in society brought on by communication. What is different about the world of networked communication is how interpersonal messages and message campaigns can shift in an instant to being mass messages or massive campaigns. This makes digital networks battlegrounds because networked public communication platforms are centers of power now more than ever.

Just as they can influence and even disrupt social structures, individuals and small groups can shape culture using social media channels. This makes our communication system as ripe for abuse by outside forces as it is for use by legitimate citizens. Governments, corporations and rogue dictators all have an interest in learning our secrets, and they could potentially hold them against us.

We cannot underestimate how important this is will be in the mass communication field. Individual, group and broader social secrets — including consumer behaviour, political behaviour and even personal thoughts and interests — are easier to discern and possibly manipulate than ever before because of the vast amounts of data collected about us from our social media and other internet habits. This can have a profound effect on our behaviour and on our society, and we are not prepared as a society to defend ourselves against attacks.

Before you get discouraged about digital culture and privacy, and before you get inundated with all of the possibilities and implications of digital culture, consider Clay Shirky's Ted talk, "How social media can make history."

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=43

Shirky outlines the power of social connectivity and applies the concept of **social capital**. The basic definition of social capital is the potential to get help, not just financial assistance, from the people around you when needed. Social media platforms can be great places to build social capital. Thus, they have the potential to be constructive or disruptive. It depends on how you use them. Watch the video for a complete definition.

Interpersonal communication, organizational communication and mass communication are separate areas of academic interest, as stated in the first chapter, but our ability as consumers and as producers to alternate from one to the other is as powerful as it has ever been. Being connected to each other almost at all times by digital networks creates the capacity for relatively quick mass social action. People are beginning to use this power to pull society in different directions. Large numbers of people can be organized and we could see social shifts and rifts develop more quickly than they can be put back together. It will be up to individual users and groups of users to decide how to respond to such social and cultural changes.

Participatory Media

A major shaper of culture and society is the news media. There will be separate sections on the evolution of news in later chapters, but in the context of digital culture, it bears noting that the role of news media within broader media landscapes is also shifting.

Apart from the ability of social movements and cultural movements to arise and take shape on social media platforms, there is also the potential for public opinion to be influenced quickly and deeply when mass media outlets operated in the same digital networks as influential individuals and groups.

You may contribute to news information by volunteering. One of the biggest stories to gain national attention in 2014 that was filmed and posted by a **citizen journalist** was the story of **Eric Garner,** who was seen being put into a chokehold by NYPD Officer Daniel Pantaleo. Reports said that Garner had asthma and that he died of a heart attack. Here the term "citizen journalist" refers to a person who is not a paid professional but who delivers news to audiences nonetheless.

New York tabloid newspapers cover the killing of Eric Garner by police during an arrest. Eric Garner, Daily News & New York Post Covers by Mike Mozart. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

It is doubtful that the story would have received national attention had it not been for the video bystander Taisha Allen took with her mobile phone. When she shared that video, and it went viral on social media channels, she made the mass media story possible.

Allen probably had several reasons for sharing the video of Garner, and she was probably aware of the potential social and cultural impact of the video. You do not have to be a media literacy expert to know that such a video would receive broad attention and generate controversy. Allen chose to share the video because she thought people needed to see what had happened.

Further solidifying the cultural significance of the video, within days of the story breaking, Spike Lee had re-cut a scene from his groundbreaking film *Do the Right Thing* where the character Radio Raheem is choked to death by an NYPD officer. He interspersed his original film clip with bystander video of Eric Garner's death. This almost instant connection between a post made by a citizen using social media and a bit of modern classic film speaks to the rising power and cultural influence of amateur media. Individuals can affect major producers in a mutual effort to shape social norms and structures as well as cultural influences.

We should expect more and more professionals to make these kinds of connections with amateurs and bystanders in the future. Mashups of professionally made mass media messages and citizen-generated messages are likely to proliferate. Can you think of video footage from individuals present during major news events that shaped the news and public opinion?

The events in Ferguson, Missouri followed a similar path as the Eric Garner story: Social media accounts of the killing of Michael Brown were shared virally almost immediately after the incident. Social media activity on YouTube, Twitter and other channels helped shape the way events unfolded. This drove the way the story was covered in the national media in the early reporting, but backlash inevitably followed.

Much of the work done by citizen journalists will be controversial. Media professionals working in news and other fields will have to use discernment in deciding which views to share because in a sense sharing is promoting, even if one disagrees with the sentiment of the tweet, video, or post.

No piece of media that is meaningful on a cultural level is going to be captured and disseminated with universal agreement about its importance or its meaning, but for society to function and for culture to serve its purposes we need to agree in a general sense on what's real and what is not. The real danger in the rise of the power of individuals and small groups in digital culture is that they can pull larger groups away from looking for fact-based discourse.

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Chapter 3 – Public Relations Basics

What is Public Relations?[1]

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) defines public relations as "a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics"[2]. Simply put, public relations helps to influence an audience's perceptions by building relationships and shaping public conversations about a client or company. These public conversations often take place through mass media and social media, which is why public relations professionals need to understand how to work with and write effective messages for the media.

> READ: What is it that public relations professionals actually do?, for more information on what you can expect in a public relations career.

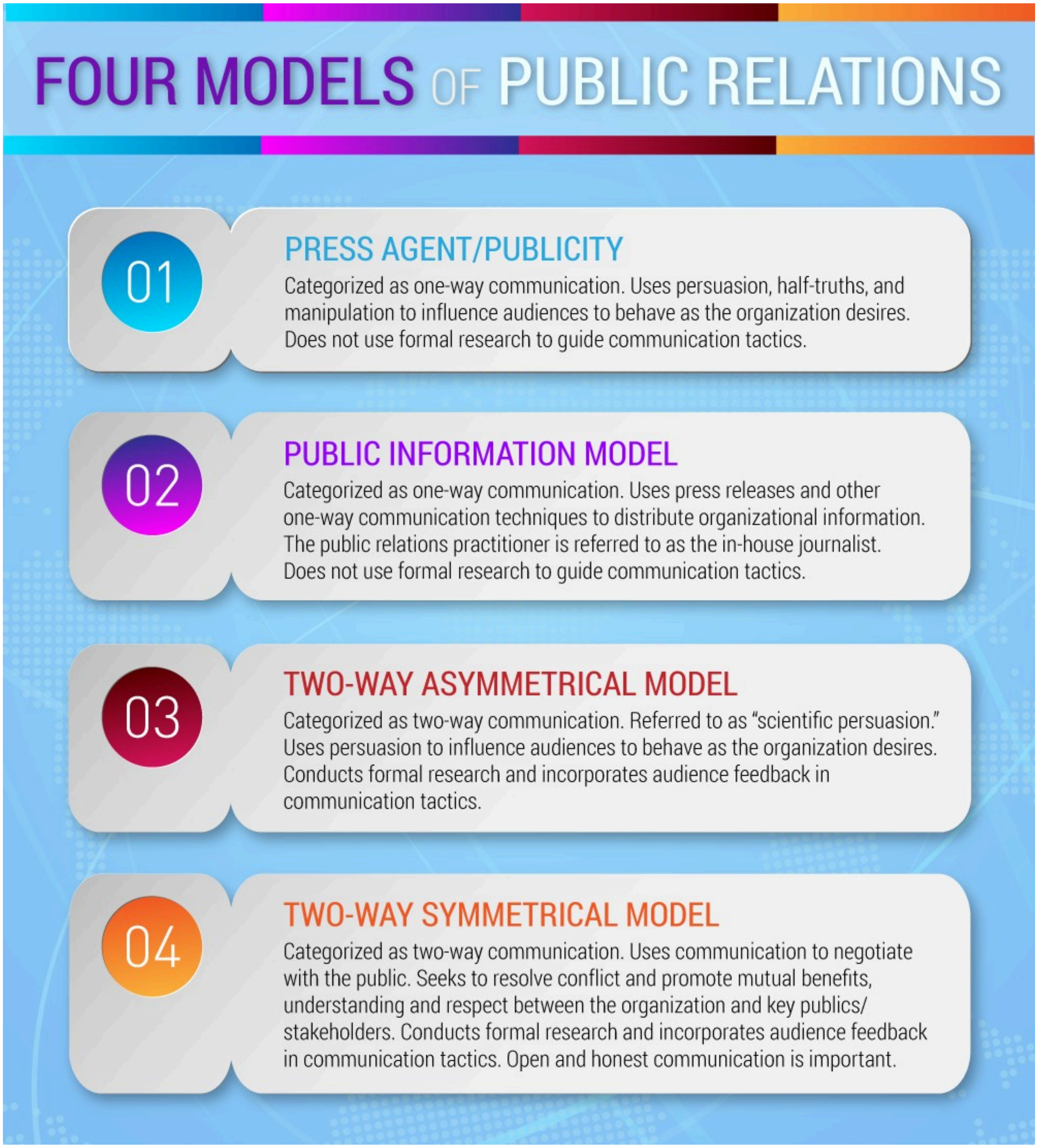
Public relations professionals are in charge of a wide range of communication activities that may include increasing brand visibility and awareness, planning events, and creating content. Some of them also deal with crisis communication and help to salvage a brand's integrity and reputation during a negative event. This video from Kate Finley, chief executive officer of Belle Communications, explains what it is like to work at a public relations agency.

Video : What to Expect from a PR Agency with Kate Finley

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_av8i27di04

Four Models Of Public Relations

Grunig and Hunt (1984) developed four models of public relations that describe the field's various management and organizational practices. These models serve as guidelines to create programs, strategies, and tactics.



Four Models of PR" by Michael Shiflet and Jasmine Roberts is licensed under CC BY 2.0

In the **press agent/publicity model**, communications professionals use persuasion to shape the thoughts and opinions of key audiences. In this model, accuracy is not important and organizations do not seek audience feedback or conduct audience analysis research. It is a one-way form of communication. One example is propagandist techniques created by news media outlets in North Korea.

The **public information model** moves away from the manipulative tactics used in the press agent model and presents more accurate information. However, the communication pattern is still one-way. Practitioners do not conduct audience analysis research to guide their strategies and tactics. Some press releases and newsletters are created based on this model, when audiences are not necessarily targeted or researched beforehand.

The **two-way asymmetrical model** presents a more "scientifically persuasive" way of communicating with key audiences. Here, content creators conduct research to better understand the audience's attitudes and behaviours, which in turn informs the message strategy and creation. Still, persuasive communication is used in this model to benefit the organization more so than audiences; therefore, it is considered asymmetrical or imbalanced. The model is particularly popular in advertising and consumer marketing, fields that are specifically interested in increasing an organization's profits.

Finally, the **two-way symmetrical model** argues that the public relations practitioner should serve as a liaison between the organization and key publics, rather than as a persuader. Here, practitioners are negotiators and use communication to ensure that all involved parties benefit, not just the organization that employs them. The term "symmetrical" is used because the model attempts to create a mutually beneficial situation. The two-way symmetrical model is deemed the most ethical model, one that professionals should aspire to use in their everyday tactics and strategies.[3]

Some experts think of public relations more broadly. For instance, they may argue that political lobbying is a form of public relations because lobbyists engage in communication activities and client advocacy in order to shape the attitudes of Congress (Berg, 2009). However, this book focuses on a public relations approach based particularly on writing for the media. Furthermore, the goal is to disseminate communication based on the two- way symmetrical model presented by. [4]

Discussion Point

Do you think the two-way symmetrical model is plausible? Consider this example from Dr. William Sledzik, associate professor of journalism and mass communication at Kent State University:"Can we realistically serve multiple stakeholders whose needs conflict? For example, can we represent the interests of loyal employee groups while our shareholders demand layoffs in favor of low-cost offshore suppliers?"

Why Do Companies Need Public Relations?

There was a time when many companies did not see the value of public relations, unless a crisis happened. Even now, some public relations professionals face challenges in convincing key executives of their value to the function of the company.

With the abundance of information readily available to audiences worldwide, companies are more vulnerable than ever to misinformation about their brand. An audience's attitudes and beliefs about a company can greatly influence its success. Therefore, the public relations professional helps to monitor and control conversations about a company or client and manage its reputation in the marketplace. Viewing public relations as a key management function of a business or an essential strategy to manage one's individual reputation will help accomplish important goals such as establishing trust among key publics, increasing news media and social media presence, and maintaining a consistent voice across communication platforms.

For more on the impact of reputation on business success, take a look at Brilliant or Burned: Why Managing Your Reputation is Crucial to Success from *The Entrepreneur.*

Public Relations Versus Marketing Versus Advertising

Many people confuse public relations with marketing and advertising. Although there are similarities, there also are key differences.

Probably the most important difference between marketing, public relations, and advertising is the primary focus. Public relations emphasizes cultivating relationships between an organization or individual and key publics for the purpose of managing the client's image. Marketing emphasizes the promotion of products and services for revenue purposes. Advertising is a communication tool used by marketers in order to get customers to act. The image below outlines other differences.

The difference between marketing, public relations, and advertising" by Jasmine Roberts and Michael Shiflet is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

MARKETING

- Systematic process and planning of an organization's promotional efforts
- Larger umbrella term that includes public relations and advertising
- Focused on the promotion of products and/or services in order to drive sales
- Audience is primarily customers or potential buyers
- Paid media: companies have to pay for marketing efforts

P.R.

- Focused on creating a favorable public image through relationship building and reputation management
- Draws attention to public conversations and media coverage. Also diverts attention away from public discussions if damaging.
- Audiences varies; not just customers (examples: media, internal employees)
- Component of marketing
- Earned media: Publicity achieved through pitching or convincing journalists to cover your client or organization

ADVERTISING

- Focused on drawing attention to the product through strategic placement and imagery
- Component of marketing (falls under the umbrella of marketing efforts)
- Execution of some marketing plans
- Paid media: companies have to pay for advertisement creation
- Audience is primarily customers or potential buyers

For more information on the differences between marketing, public relations, and advertising, read the following articles:

- Marketing versus PR: Five ways to tell the difference
- The real difference between public relations and advertising

General Roles In Public Relations

According to Smith[5], public relations practitioners can be placed in two groups based on responsibilities: communication managers and communication technicians. Communication managers assist in the strategic planning of an organization's communication efforts. The broad term "communication manager" includes several similar public relations positions: expert consultant, problem-solving facilitator, and communication liaison. Expert consultants develop a specific communication plan to help achieve organizational goals. Problem-solving facilitators provide crisis management to an organization during an obstacle. Liaisons speak on behalf of the brand and facilitate communication between the organization and its key publics.

Before entering a managerial role, most public relation practitioners begin their career as a communication technician. This can refer to a variety of entry-level positions, including public relations specialist, communication assistant, and junior account executive. Communication technicians write press releases, pitches, feature articles, and other communication materials and assist in event planning. Together, communication managers and technicians play a vital role in relationship building and the management of a brand.

Don Draper seeing a ghost. DON LOOKS UP ...
by Bill Strain. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

"What you call love was invented by guys like me to sell nylons." — Don Draper, fictional advertising executive from the AMC series *Mad Men*

Advertising, Public Relations and Propaganda

Think Critically About Where Persuasion Becomes Propaganda

Advertising is a relatively straightforward process, right? Companies develop brands and specific products they want to sell. They need to make consumers aware of their brands, products and those products' features, so they develop creative campaigns to promote them and often pay ad agencies to do the creative work and place the ads in front of mass audiences. The basic definition of **advertising** is a message or group of messages designed with three intentions: to raise awareness in the population about brands, products and services; to encourage consumers to make purchases; and, ultimately, to inspire people to advocate for their favourite brands. A **brand advocate** is someone who is so supportive of a product or service that they publicly encourage others to buy it. There are paid brand advocates, of course, but in a networked communication environment, even unpaid individuals with modest followings can become **influencers** — people who promote products on their social media streams. Consumers who have been so successfully persuaded to purchase and enjoy a product that they try to persuade others to buy it too extend the reach of advertising potentially exponentially.

A **company** is a business entity that produces several types of product, whereas a **brand** is a term used to label a specific product or a limited family of products. It is important to differentiate between the two. For example, PepsiCo owns the Pepsi brand but also Frito Lay, Gatorade and Quaker, among others. Under the Pepsi brand, there are several products such as Diet Pepsi, Pepsi Wild Cherry and many other variations around the world. Advertising most often focuses on brands and products rather than the companies and large corporations that own them.

As this chapter progresses, it defines the core concept of advertising and its relationship to public relations in more depth. Then, it discusses the history of advertising. It defines two general strategies or approaches known as “above-the-line” and “below-the-line” advertising before examining in detail the “advertising funnel,” or “purchase funnel.” A few other basic theories are introduced. There are sections on content marketing and other forms of persuasion. The big picture of marketing is briefly addressed before the chapter concludes with sections on public relations and propaganda.

Advertising Defined

On one level, advertising is a simple concept. Mass media professionals craft messages to help sell products by raising awareness and pushing people to make actual purchase decisions, but in the network society and the age of targeted marketing, the ability to reach individual consumers who fit precise sets of characteristics is incredible. More is expected of advertisers than to put interesting messages in front of the “right people” based on general demographics. Brands may advertise during certain TV shows or publications to reach a particular type of media consumer. This more traditional form of mass media advertising is still a multibillion-dollar industry, but with data-driven targeting capabilities, brands can reach people based not only on general demographic characteristics but on specific behaviours as well. The combination of detailed demographic information, search and digital media usage behaviours and physical world behaviours (such as whether someone has entered a Walmart or Macy’s in the past week) makes advertising in the information age more powerful, sometimes more meaningful and often more ethically questionable than in the past. The level of targeting that is possible is incredible and would have been unimaginable 20 years ago. Advertising has always been about tapping into consumers’ existing needs or about creating a need and inserting a product to fill it. Now, there is a greater ability than ever to identify and create a need not only for interested members of a mass audience but also for specific individuals in real time based on their online and physical world behaviour.

The History Of Advertising

Before delving into a discussion about the future of advertising, it might help to survey the history of the field. Advertising in the modern sense emerged between the mid-19th and early-20th centuries. At the same time that the concept of brands was developing, mass-media platforms such as daily newspapers and radio broadcasts grew their audiences and spread their influence geographically. Corporations, conveniently, grew large enough to have massive budgets to spend on advertising. The promotion of products dates back thousands of years, but the modern advertising explosion tracks explosive growth in industrial manufacturing from roughly the mid-1800s through the entire 20th century.

HubSpot has a [deck of 472 slides](#) that presents a narrative about the history of advertising. Some highlights are referenced here. One key point made in this visual history is that non-branded newspaper ads would often outnumber branded ads in the early days of the newspaper industry. As uniformity in mass-produced goods became the norm and brand differentiation became possible, so did the need to communicate it.


STARK TREES BEAR

The Experience of Others is a good thing to go by, if it is actual, not manufactured, which is so often dealt out to confiding planters by "paper nurseries."

Early newspaper ad for Stark Trees from the Boston Public Library Collection. [Source: flickr](#). [CC0 Public Domain](#)

Ayer & Son[6] is credited with being the first ad agency to work on commission. In other words, it is known as the first modern ad agency. It was founded in Philadephia in 1869. Today there are about 500,000 ad agencies in the world of all shapes and sizes. They employ ever-evolving techniques to try to stay ahead of information weary consumers.

Categorizing Advertising Methods

From the mid-20th century on, advertisers conceptualized their work by breaking it down into one of two strategic categories: "above-the-line" and "below-the-line" methods. Put simply, "above the line" (ATL) refers to methods of advertising that target mass audiences on mass media platforms with messages usually designed from a one-to-many point of view. Often, "above the line" implies that the ad or **[ad campaign](#)** — a series of related ads meant to work in tandem — appears on legacy media platforms. (Recall that "legacy media" has been defined previously in this text to refer to platforms in existence before the transition to digital.) ATL campaigns most often include television, radio and print ads as well as sponsorships. A **[sponsorship](#)** is when a company pays to support an event or a mass media production in exchange for having its brand [promoted alongside the activity or content](#). The organizing concept for ATL advertising, as the term is used today, is that the ads target a mass audience primarily on "legacy" media platforms.

"Below the line" (BTL) advertising [refers to more one-on-one marketing approaches](#) which can include targeted social media campaigns, direct mail marketing, point-of-sale ads, coupons and deals, and email and telemarketing appeals. This is not an exhaustive list of ATL or BTL methods, but these examples demonstrate that ATL has more in common with the concept of mass communication introduced in earlier chapters, and BTL has more in common with interpersonal communication, also as previously discussed. This is not to say that BTL messages are crafted one at a time for individual consumers. Rather, the tone, style and method of dissemination of BTL advertising are more personal.

Billboards clutter the roadway in Leakey, Texas. Photo by Marc St. Gil. [Source: Wikimedia Commons](#). [CC0 Public Domain](#)

In the 20th century, the term ATL advertising was associated with ad agency work (mostly mass media campaign ads), whereas BTL advertising referred to pamphlets, point-of-sale marketing and other relatively "small" tasks that ad agencies typically did not handle. Now, there are ad agencies of all sizes, and even very large agencies might do BTL marketing. Online advertising and social media marketing have made it possible to target people with personal messages but still purchase the ads on a massive scale. Thus, advertising can be **massively individuated** — that is, produced for mass audiences but having the appearance of personalized messages — much like social media content. The profit in BTL marketing comes from reaching large audiences with tailored messages at specific times in relation to their previous purchasing and shopping behaviours. So much data exists on individual users and on the behaviour of similar people who have made similar purchases that advertisers can try to target people at precisely the right moment to influence their purchase decisions.

ATL and BTL advertising can work hand in hand. Think of a summer soft drink promotion advertised on television and on the radio (ATL) that is also backed up with neighborhood-specific billboards and hyper-targeted Twitter messages with surprise prizes given out (BTL). BTL messages still reach large numbers of people, but they are by definition more tailored than ATL ads. An individual ad in a BTL context may not cost as much as a massive ad buy facilitated by an agency that primarily does ATL advertising; however, BTL advertising can still be costly for advertisers and profitable for ad agencies in the aggregate. For example, an ad agency that does not typically manage multimillion-dollar television ad buys might still put together hundreds of thousands of dollars in targeted social media ads. Rather than displaying one commercial for several months, the BTL social media campaign might be made up of dozens of targeted videos, tweets, influencer posts and online ads. Often software algorithms are used to decide who sees which targeted ad and when.

The Advertising Funnel, And Other Key Concepts

At its heart, advertising is a matter of raising *awareness*, creating a deeper *interest* in a product, and encouraging consumers to *desire* to make a purchase and ultimately to take *action*. Professional communicators tailor messages in relation to the advertising funnel or **purchase funnel**, as shown in the image on the left. Brands, either on their own or with the help of advertising agencies, target audiences in different ways at specific points along the funnel to reach their strategic goals. For example, if an unknown brand launches a new product, people need to be made aware of both the brand and product. The brand may need to establish itself with an awareness campaign. If Nike introduces a new Air Jordan, the branding is easily handled. The top of the funnel areas of awareness and interest will not need as much focus as the decision and action areas, the "down funnel" aspects of a campaign for a well-known and well-loved brand.

Simple graphic representation of the purchase funnel.
Image credit: By BronHiggs. Wikipedia CC BY-SA

Another way to think of this is as a pathway a potential customer makes, also known as the **consumer journey**. First, the consumer needs to be made aware of the brand and its products. Then, they might take an interest in a particular product as they learn more about its features. They need to move from being interested to desiring a product if they are going to make the purchase. Ultimately, from the advertiser's point of view, the goal is not only to move the consumer to purchase the product but also to inspire them to advocate for the brand. This is not conceptually complicated. The idea is to move people in straightforward steps toward desired behaviours; however, there are complex processes of cognition and persuasion that underlie consumer decisions.

Consumer behaviour is about as unpredictable as other forms of human behaviour. There are also ethical concerns. If a product or service proves to be harmful, advertisers and public relations professionals have to decide if and when they will stop marketing the brand. Advertising is challenging enough when products do not raise ethical dilemmas. Promoting harmful products can be damaging socially, professionally and personally. Thus, the world of consumer advertising in the mass media is more complex than the funnel makes it seem, although it is an essential strategic model in the industry. There are two other advertising concepts or theories that this text aims to introduce: the basic rule of seven and the third-person effect.

The Rule Of Seven

The number 7 painted above goods entrance to old Carlton United Brewery, Victoria Street, Melbourne, Australia. Photo by Chris Samuel. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

The advertising **rule of seven** is a rule of thumb, or what social scientists call a heuristic, which suggests that people need to see an advertisement seven times before they act on it. Even then, there is no guarantee that seeing something seven times will *compel* a person to buy a certain product, vote for a particular politician or take any other consumer action. Instead, the point is that consistent messaging is a base requirement for advertising to work.

The purchase decision is ultimately a personal one. You can create the conditions and increase the probability of a product being bought, but it is difficult (perhaps impossible) to predict behaviours based on messaging. Even the most successful advertising and propaganda campaigns only constitute one area of influence on behaviour. As previously stated in this text, social institutions such as your family, friends, church and workplace can influence your behaviour in tandem with or contrary to what you see and hear in the mass media.

The Third-Person Effect

There is a theory in the study of mass communication called the third-person effect that says we tend to think advertising is effective but we believe that it does not affect *us*. Note here that social science theories are based on many observable facts. This is not a flight of fancy. Rather, this is a tested theory demonstrated in multiple studies. Here is how the third-person effect works with regard to advertising: You might think upon seeing a clever advertisement, "Sure, that ad probably got someone *else* to buy the product, but it doesn't influence *me*. I'm a savvy shopper. I don't just go out and buy whatever ads tell me to buy. I'm not Homer Simpson looking at billboards."

And yet we do know that advertising works at least to influence behaviour. It has measurable effects on attitudes, that is, what people think about brands. Advertising influences brand and product awareness in individuals and in groups. We can say with a degree of certainty that some people are directly influenced by some ads some of the time, and we can say that many people are *indirectly* influenced by ads almost all of the time. For example, you may not drink Coke Zero, but you probably know what it is, and you may know that it is now called Coke Zero Sugar after a name change in 2017. Whether you understand the logic behind the name change or you actually buy the soft drink is another question. Campaigns to make consumers *aware* of new brands and products have a track record of widespread but still limited success.

Now here is what's interesting about the third-person effect. Knowing that advertising can influence people's awareness and purchase decisions, we tend to develop a sort of **double delusion** where we think other people are probably affected more than they are, and we think we are influenced less than we are. Sometimes we even base our behaviour on what we think other people will do after receiving a message in the mass media. It works like this: We hear a message that a winter storm is coming, and we worry that other people will be easily influenced by that news. That *worry* and not the original message may influence our behaviour. The author of the original study noted that if there is news of a possible shortage, people sometimes buy up that item at grocery stores. This has happened as recently as 2008. Rice futures went up and up out of fear that people were stockpiling rice. So, what did people do? They stockpiled rice. Costco and Sam's Club even put limits on the number of large bags of rice people could purchase.

How does the bread and milk effect work? Following the third-person effect theory, an individual hears about a storm coming to the East Coast of the United States. He thinks that *other people* are going to feel the need to go out and buy up all of the bread and milk, so, aware of the threat and concerned about *their* behaviour, he goes out and buys bread and milk. Now the concern has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. People are, in fact, buying up the bread and milk. The question is whether they are buying it up because they are unduly influenced by messages in the mass media, or they are responding out of fear of how other people will behave. You can imagine other people foolishly thinking a winter storm is going to be worse than it is and you can think to yourself you had better buy the bread and milk before those fools, but to them, you have become the fool.

Three-person horse graffiti. Photo by Seth de L'Isle. Source: Flickr. CC BY-SA 2.0

The third-person effect is also a major issue in race relations and partisan politics. We often presume that we *know* how individuals from other groups will think because we have seen messages in the media and we presume to know how the "other" will respond. The third-person effect is based on three presumptions. First, we assume that other people have seen the messages we have. Then, we presume that they will be influenced by those messages. Finally, we presume that they will behave in certain ways because of the message and because of our preconceptions about different groups. For the theory to work, it does not matter if the "other" is Democrats, Republicans, frat bros, Mexican people, snobby professors or slacker college students. Our assumptions can be completely wrong and we may still find ourselves acting in ways to pre-empt or counteract the imagined behaviour of the imagined "other." There are different degrees of the third-person effect. Researchers have found it is probably strongest in situations where groups have little understanding of one another and where the messages and perceived outcomes are thought to be negative (note the section on Perloff). This is not to overstate the third-person effect. Like other theories related to persuasion in the mass media the behavioural influences it identifies have to contend with other social forces to influence behaviour. Still, it is one of the most interesting theories in the field of mass communication, and it can explain why people race out to buy a certain product when they perceive it to be scarce. We do not want anyone to beat us to the bread and milk.

Content Marketing

Content marketing refers to a common practice where brands produce their own content, or hire someone else to produce it, and then market that information as an alternative to advertising. It still moves people along the purchase funnel, but there is usually added value in this type of content. If an advertisement for a mattress describes its features and price, a blog funded by the mattress brand might compare the pros and cons of many different mattresses, perhaps with a bias for the brand. It isn't always pretty. Content produced for a brand should ethically be labeled as sponsored, but it is not always done. In cases when consumers have discovered that trusted sources were content marketers rather than independent reviewers, the revelations have created public relations problems for the brands. Content marketing done ethically offers financial transparency while providing valuable information and an emotional connection to the product for consumers. It can take the form of blog posts or entire blogs. Such marketing is usually optimized for search engines, which is to say the posts are written to attract search engine attention as well as outside links, which also alerts search engines that this content is valuable. Done well, branded content can be seen as more authentic than advertising content, and it can be cheaper to produce and disseminate. It is difficult to do well, of course.

The most common types of content created in this context besides blog content are social media profiles and posts, sponsored content in social media spaces and even viral video and meme chasing. Brands might have their own social media profiles, or they might support social media influencers to promote their products in a sponsored way. Brands might also use their influencer teams or their own internal marketing teams to follow viral social media trends and to create memes. In a sense, content marketing allows a brand to create a more human profile in digital spaces. In this manner, brands can engage with potential and repeat customers. Brands can foster relationships and encourage brand advocacy among people not being paid to promote their products. Many brands use this form of marketing to engage consumers on a deep level and to offer information and emotion that might not be present in other forms of advertising.

Marketing Clarified

The more you study the bigger picture of **marketing** — which includes advertising strategies and other research efforts meant to guide advertising strategies as part of larger sales and production strategies—the more you recognize how focused advertising is. It may seem that advertising is the biggest, most important element of the mass communication industry because its revenues fuel other types of mass media production, but advertising is only one piece of the marketing puzzle. **Marketing's four P's** — often described as product, price, place and promotion (or position) — encompass much more than making messages to support brands and products. Marketing professionals worry about all four and consider advertising as just one part of the promotion category. Advertising professionals will often argue that the best branding helps define and redefine the product over time so that the product only exists in consumers' minds as advertising has described it, but marketing gets into the business of deciding what products to make, how to promote them, whom to market them to and when to stop making them.

There is also a thought process that defines a fifth 'P'; Public Relations, and that it should be counted separately from the fourth 'P' of promotion. This thought highlights the growing value and performance of public relations to the marketing mix.

HubSpot, the advertising company that provided the quick history of advertising early on in this chapter also gets credit for helping to popularize **inbound marketing**. The idea of inbound marketing is that you bring people in to learn about your product using content marketing and then you can make sales to them in the context of a relationship where they found you rather than vice versa. In a sense, inbound marketing turns advertising upside down by building spaces and inviting consumers *in* to find what they are already looking for rather than trying to create a need *out* of the glut of information in digital communication networks. Inbound marketing is advertising's answer to de-massification. It involves developing consistent messages and content of uses that are so compelling people will come to the brand to experience them. It is the audience-building aspect of advertising. It relates in many ways to the superbug media concept from previous chapters, and it is growing in popularity as people and companies develop new and better ways of avoiding advertising.

An established method of inbound marketing is to write a blog or develop a podcast that attracts audiences who come for information and who stay for the delicious products. To fully understand the power of inbound marketing, ask yourself if you have ever become a brand advocate. Have you ever sung the praises of your new smartphone or told people they had to try a new restaurant? If you have advocated for a brand and sent people looking for it online, you have probably become part of someone's inbound marketing strategy. In many ways, marketing (particularly content marketing) bridges the concepts of advertising and public relations because it includes content production similar to advertising and it establishes relationships with consumers, which is the ultimate purpose of PR.

Public Relations

The history of the public relations field is often misunderstood. Many think of public relations as organized manipulation made up of corporate, political and even non-profit propaganda. It is often thought of as deception, but this is not always the case. In a society fueled by networked communications, it is becoming less important to ask what messages people receive and more important to ask what messages they seek out, according to Greg Jarboe, author of a brief history of PR. Jarboe worked for a PR firm with offices in San Francisco and Boston, two of the most well-established technology markets in the country. He argues that PR is more about creating a sense of understanding between consumers and brands and that this might be done just as well by the brand in digital spaces just as it is via other mass media channels controlled by other corporate entities. Historically, PR depended on other media platforms such as TV, newspapers and magazines to promote its content. Content marketing means this is no longer the case. Mass media platforms may still be needed to reach mass audiences outside of a brand's collection of fans and followers, but much goodwill can be generated by maintaining a proactive, positive and professional digital presence.

While it is true that PR often tries to put a good face on companies with all manner of reputations and harmful business practices, it also serves charities, governmental services and small local businesses. Not every institutional organization can have a huge PR budget, but the practices can be taught to just about any small business owner.

The History Of PR And Propaganda

At the core of PR is a simple model developed by Harold Lasswell in the 1940s. Developing an effective PR model was an important war effort during World War II when it was essential to develop theories for how propaganda worked to determine what the Nazis were doing and, if possible, how their propaganda could be stopped. Lasswell's model asked five simple questions: *who* (Sender) sent *what* (Message) through which *channel* (Channel) to which *audience* (Receiver) and with what *effect.* This was a way of breaking down mass influence beyond advertising. In a sense, governmental propaganda is PR, but the client is a country. The **S-M-C-R model** (often attributed in that particular configuration to Berlo) is the most efficient model for understanding how to break down and analyze messages in the mass media.

Professionals and academics examine and manipulate all four components to isolate which changes correlate with which behavioural effects. S-M-C-R assumes that the sender comes first and the receiver comes last. There is a time element that must be established in researching the effects of mass-mediated messages, but the point is that this simple model of propaganda became the basis for all sorts of media effects studies. Propaganda and PR messaging does not work immediately to bring about drastic changes in behaviour. Behavioral phenomena, particularly *changes in behaviour*, are driven by many variables, as we have discussed several times; however, if you want to begin to look at an advertising campaign, film or news documentary to examine its effects, this is the model to start with.

“Communication” by Jonny Hughes. Source: flickr. CC BY 2.0

Noise must be accounted for, and in an age dominated by the digital information glut, the opportunity for immediate feedback and engagement must also be considered. Receivers almost immediately become senders in a network. Thus, the S-M-C-R model will often include measures looking at how much noise gets into the system and looking at what happens when receivers immediately start their own S-M-C-R processes. Wherever a message originates, even if it is as simple as clicking “Share” on Facebook, the S-M-C-R model starts again.

More Concepts In PR

For most of the 20th century, the shorthand definition of PR was that it was like advertising only instead of paying a media outlet to run a message, you sent the message out to journalists and other **gatekeepers** (see Chapter 7) in the hopes that they would share the information as news. Now, PR has to work in a digital media system where news reporters and editors are not the major gatekeepers deciding what information will be made public. PR professionals now need to think about search algorithms, search engine optimization, social media trends, social media platform algorithms, social media influencers and social link sharing sites such as Reddit. Publicity on these channels can be worth tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars. PR often measures its worth in **earned media** — the amount of free air time on TV or space in major newspapers and magazines that is earned by getting other mass media channels to tell your product’s stories without having to pay for ad space

An example of earned media is when Apple released a new iPhone, and news organizations provided coverage of the lines that wrapped around city blocks as people waited for the latest gadget. For years, Apple earned millions of dollars in earned media by keeping new features a secret and then releasing new iPhones with considerable hype. Free marketing time and space in digital and print publications can help push a brand from being a leader to being legendary. Global PR is a $14 billion industry.

PR can take the form of an event, a product placement, or a skillfully crafted message delivered during a crisis. It is much less about promoting specific brands and more about promoting and maintaining the image of a brand, company or large corporation. Recall that advertising tends to focus on brands and products. PR can focus on the company and the **corporate narrative**, the story of how the company came to exist and how it represents certain values and ideals — at least in theory.

Sometimes it helps us to understand an element of mass media if we discuss when it all goes wrong. When British Petroleum (BP) had an oil gusher erupt in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20, 2010, after the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded, 11 people died, and more than three million barrels of oil leaked into the gulf. It took almost three months to cap the oil gusher. The CEO of BP, Anthony Bryan "Tony" Hayward, lost his job because he made a major PR blunder when he said he just wanted his "life back." Eleven people were dead. The fishing and tourism industries of Louisiana, Mississippi and parts of Texas, ravaged by hurricanes just years before, were being threatened again. This time, though, Mother Nature was not to blame. It was BP, a multinational corporation that up to that point had been working to create a more environmentally friendly image. It took BP years to come back from that disaster, and it was made worse because of poor crisis communications. PR is about promoting good relationships with your consumers, your employees and the communities where your products are made. It is about earning "free" news and social media coverage, but perhaps most importantly it is about managing crises so that people are not given a reason *not* to buy your products.

Crisis Management

The best way to build good PR is to carefully maintain a good reputation over time and to avoid behaviours as an individual, company or corporation that might harm others. The best prevention against bad PR is to follow your industry's and your own ethical codes at all times, whatever they are. Even if you do this, you might face a PR crisis. For example, a politician might decide to target your brand regardless of whether your business practices are ethical. All the more reason to maintain good longstanding relationships with your consumers.

The first rule of crisis communications is to plan ahead by anticipating the kinds of problems your company might have. Chemical companies should prepare for chemical spills. Sports teams will probably not prepare for environmental disasters, but they may have to prepare for the social media scandals that players sometimes land themselves in. If there is a disaster, the advice is to "be truthful and transparent," to not say too much and to correct any exaggerations that emerge in the news media and on social media, within reason. Engaging in social media arguments is almost never productive for a brand, unless you have Wendy's level of Twitter clapback. A major goal of PR efforts during a crisis is to try to make people forget there ever was a crisis.

"War on the bullshit!" graffiti in London. Photo by Duncan Hull. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

Journalists often have the opposite interest because reporting on conflict is interesting. Helping people to survive is one of the primary functions of journalism. This explains why negative news gets so much more attention than positive news. No one dies when people do their jobs salting the roads and drivers maneuver safely in snowstorms. When people crash, that, sadly, is news. Journalists know that people care about safety perhaps more than any other issue, so they focus on safety concerns during times of crisis. At these times, PR and journalism can be at odds, but truth and transparency are still advisable to the PR professional. You do not legally have to tell journalists everything that has happened (depending on the circumstances and whether your institution is funded by taxpayers), but if journalists discover a negative impact that you failed to disclose, they will wonder what else you are hiding, and they may give your critics and detractors extra consideration and attention.

PR professionals work to manage story framing. (Recall that framing was defined in Chapter 9.) PR pros often work with journalists to cover negative stories with clarity and honesty rather than trying to hide the facts about a crisis. Finally, in PR there is the need to learn from mistakes and to analyze a company or corporation's crisis responses. As difficult as it might be to go back and discuss where communication failed, it is essential. Reflection is a critical step in learning and corporations are like any other social institution. They need to learn to survive and to thrive.

Handling Unfavourable Publicity

Handling unfavorable publicity means being honest with consumers and putting public interest first.

Key Takeaways

Being prepared for harmful situations is imperative. It is important to map out potential negative scenarios and have a PR plan for each one. It is important to have a crisis management team who can handle these situations.

Protecting the integrity and reputation of an organization is important, but putting public interest ahead of the organization's interest is key to gaining consumer trust and loyalty.

A media reaction plan should include a company media representative as part of the crisis management team. Firms need to show that they are working toward positive resolutions to deflect the negative publicity.

Crisis Management Team A team in an organization that prepares contingency plans in advance, as part of a crisis management plan.

Examples

In 1982, Johnson & Johnson's Tylenol medication commanded 35% of the US over-the-counter analgesic market and represented 15% of the company's profits. Unfortunately, one individual succeeded in lacing the drug with cyanide. Seven people died as a result, so a panic ensued about how widespread the contamination might be. By the end of the episode, everyone knew that Tylenol was associated with the scare. The company's market value fell by $1 billion as a result. When the same situation happened again in 1986, the company had learned its lesson. It quickly ordered that Tylenol be recalled from every outlet, not just those in the state where it had been tampered with. The company also decided that the product would not be re-established on the shelves until something had been done to provide better product protection. As a result, Johnson & Johnson developed the tamperproof packaging that would make it much more difficult for a similar incident to occur in the future.

Crisis communication planning can help a firm deal effectively with unexpected disasters, emergencies, or other unusual events that may lead to unfavorable publicity. Effectively responding to any crisis means both controlling the public narrative and ameliorating any harm done, whether tangibly or to a company's reputation.

The following principles represent best practices in crisis management: be prepared, do the right thing, communicate quickly and accurately, and follow up.

Be Prepared

Although emergencies are by their very nature unpredictable, it is possible to list and prepare for negative scenarios that might occur. It is also possible to set up a communication system that can be activated in almost any emergency situation.

PR Wars | PR And Advertising | PR And Marketing

Besides the conflict during crisis situations between journalists and PR professionals, there are PR battles that go on between competing brands and between non-profits, corporations and government officials all the time. Lobbyists make demands on politicians but also push agendas on mass media and social media platforms. In an age of digital communication, it is cheap and easy to develop detailed, professional messages employing a variety of media types that PR pros can try to spread around the world instantaneously. You should be aware as an information consumer that there are ongoing battles for your allegiance. Corporations engage in PR combat all the time, though they often try to work undetected. This is not to claim conspiracy or to frighten readers. It is simply a matter of fact that PR efforts are ongoing and that attacks within these battles do not always take the form of headlines. They may come in the form of messages from Twitter bots, **botnets,** collections of fake social media profiles run by software or blogs, or email spam.

You can influence other people by what you read and share, and you are encouraged once again to be aware of where your news sources get *their* information. Read and think before you share. It has become easy for individuals and fake accounts to publish information into the world's information glut. Twitter and Instagram followers and Facebook friends can easily be bought. Major political influence is now wielded by fake accounts working to drum up anger and to promote misinformation to sway public opinion. Individual information consumers must take responsibility for their own consumption and for what they spread. Your media health is as important as your sexual health. Protect yourself and those you share information with.

What you need to be able to do is to consider a source, consider how it is presenting its message, and consider the source's sources. Media literacy is about what enters your mind: what stays in (that is, what is **salient**) and what goes out. We are all publishers now. Media, society, and culture will always influence you to some degree, but they are also yours to try to control. Mass audiences may be in decline but entities who know how to build mass networks of users and how to successfully, if not always ethically, use their information are only starting to show their power.

Public Relations

Whereas advertising is the paid use of media space to sell something, public relations (PR) is the attempt to establish and maintain good relations between an organization and its constituents (Theaker, 2004). Practically, PR campaigns strive to use the free press to encourage favorable coverage. In their book The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR, Al and Laura Ries make the point that the public trusts the press far more than they trust advertisements. Because of this, PR efforts that get products and brands into the press are far more valuable than a simple advertisement. Their book details the ways in which modern companies use public relations to far greater benefit than they use advertising (Ries & Ries, 2004). Regardless of the fate of advertising, PR has clearly come to have an increasing role in marketing and ad campaigns.

Grunig and Hunt's Four PR Models

A table describing Grunig and Hunt's Four PR Models

Type of Model	Description	Example
Traditional publicity model (the press agentry model)	Professional agents seek media coverage for a client, product, or event.	Thong-clad actor Sacha Baron Cohen promotes Bruno by landing in Eminem's lap at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards.
Public information model	Businesses communicate information to gain desired results.	Colleges send informational brochures to potential students; a company includes an "about" section on its website.
Persuasive communication model (the two-way asymmetric model)	Organizations attempt to persuade an audience to take a certain point of view.	Public service announcements like the one that shows "your brain" and "your brain on drugs."
Two-way symmetric model	Both parties make use of a back-and-forth discussion.	A company sends out customer satisfaction surveys; company Facebook groups and message boards.

Source: James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt, Managing Public Relations (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1984).

Todd Hunt and James Grunig developed a theory of four models of PR. This model has held up in the years since its development and is a good introduction to PR concepts (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Traditional Publicity Model

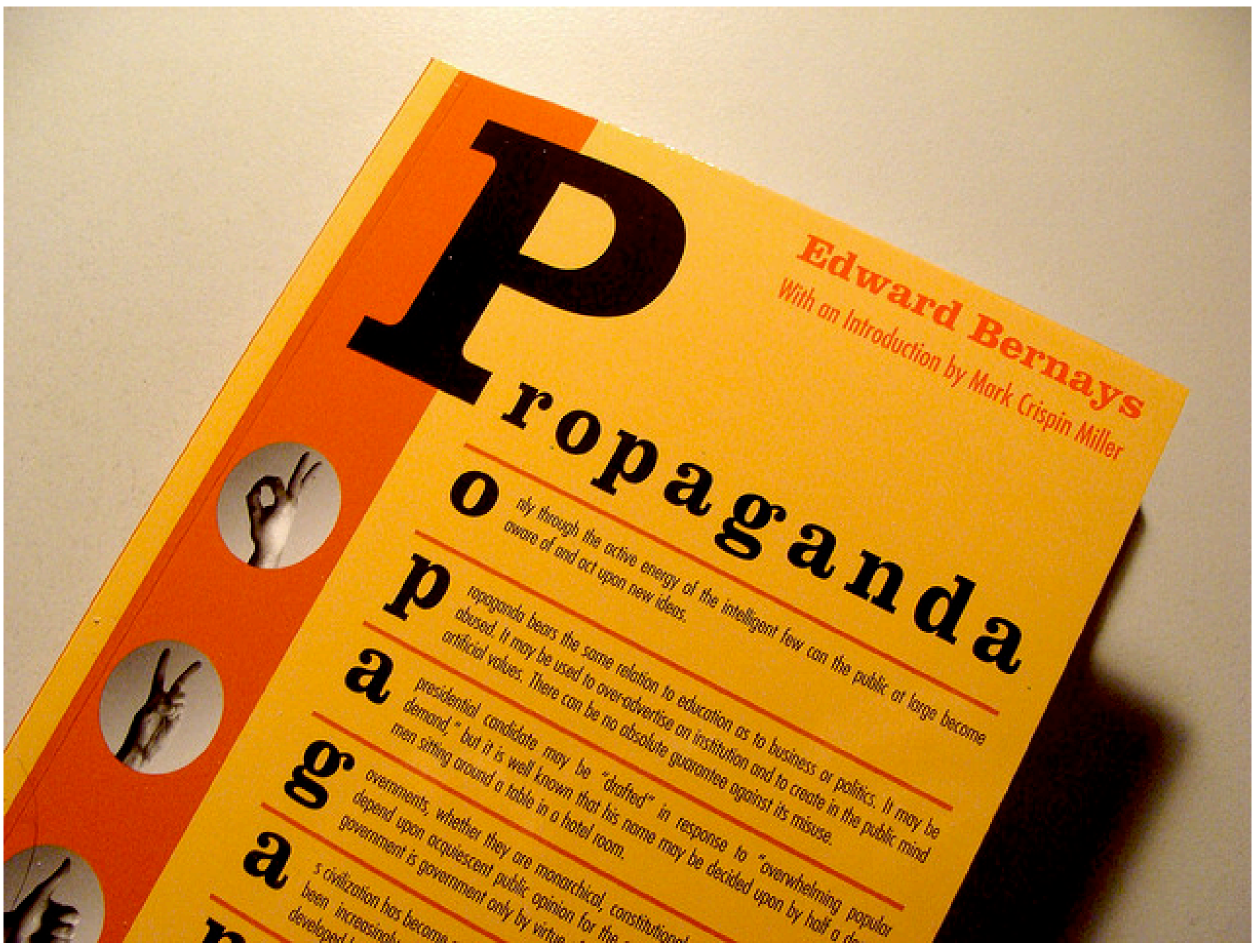
Under the traditional publicity model, PR professionals seek to create media coverage for a client, product, or event. These efforts can range from wild publicity stunts to simple news conferences to celebrity interviews in fashion magazines. P. T. Barnum was an early American practitioner of this kind of PR. His outrageous attempts at publicity worked because he was not worried about receiving negative press; instead, he believed that any coverage was a valuable asset. More recent examples of this style of extreme publicity include controversy-courting musicians such as Lady Gaga and Marilyn Manson. More restrained examples of this type of PR include the modern phenomenon of faded celebrities appearing on TV shows, such as Paula Abdul's long-running appearances on American Idol.

Public Information Model

The goal of the public information model is to release information to a constituency. This model is less concerned with obtaining dramatic, extensive media coverage than with disseminating information in a way that ensures adequate reception. For example, utility companies often include fliers about energy efficiency with customers' bills, and government agencies such as the IRS issue press releases to explain changes to existing codes. In addition, public interest groups release the results of research studies for use by policy makers and the public.

Persuasive Communication: Two-Way Asymmetric

The persuasive communication model, or the two-way asymmetric, works to persuade a specific audience to adopt a certain behaviour or point of view. To be considered effective, this model requires a measured response from its intended audience.



Edward Bernay's Propaganda Textbook. Edward Bernays created campaigns using the persuasive communication model. By chrisch_ Source: Flickr CC BY-NC 2.0

Government propaganda is a good example of this model. Propaganda is the organized spreading of information to assist or weaken a cause (Dictionary). Edward Bernays has been called the founder of modern PR for his work during World War I promoting the sale of war bonds. One of the first professional PR experts, Bernays made the two-way asymmetric model his early hallmark. In a famous campaign for Lucky Strike cigarettes, he convinced a group of well-known celebrities to walk in the New York Easter parade smoking Lucky Strikes. Most modern corporations employ the persuasive communication model.

Two-Way Symmetric Model

The two-way symmetric model requires true communication between the parties involved. By facilitating a back-and-forth discussion that results in mutual understanding and an agreement that respects the wishes of both parties, this PR model is often practiced in town hall meetings and other public forums in which the public has a real effect on the results. In an ideal republic, Congressional representatives strictly employ this model. Many nonprofit groups that are run by boards and have public service mandates use this model to ensure continued public support.

Commercial ventures also rely on this model. PR can generate media attention or attract customers, and it can also ease communication between a company and its investors, partners, and employees. The two-way symmetric model is useful in communicating within an organization because it helps employees feel they are an important part of the company. Investor relations are also often carried out under this model.

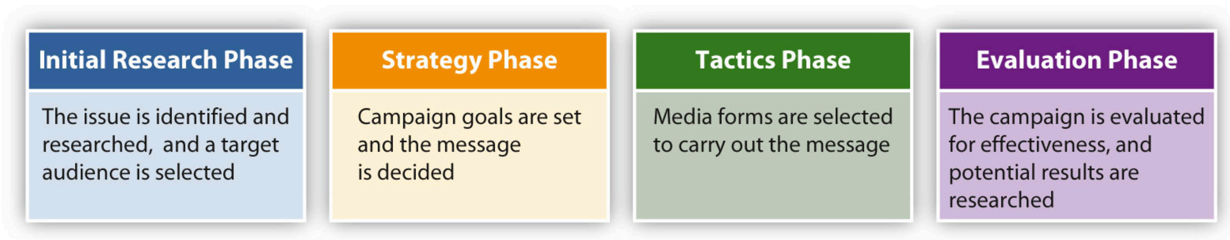
PR Functions

Either private PR companies or in-house communications staffers carry out PR functions. A PR group generally handles all aspects of an organization's or individual's media presence, including company publications and press releases. Such a group can range from just one person to dozens of employees depending on the size and scope of the organization.

PR functions include the following:

- **Media relations:** takes place with media outlets
- **Internal communications:** occurs within a company between management and employees, and among subsidiaries of the same company
- **Business-to-business:** happens between businesses that are in partnership
- **Public affairs:** takes place with community leaders, opinion formers, and those involved in public issues
- **Investor relations:** occurs with investors and shareholders
- **Strategic communication:** intended to accomplish a specific goal
- **Issues management:** keeping tabs on public issues important to the organization
- **Crisis management:** handling events that could damage an organization's image1

Anatomy of a PR Campaign



PR campaigns occur for any number of reasons. They can be a quick response to a crisis or emerging issue, or they can stem from a long-term strategy tied in with other marketing efforts. Regardless of its purpose, a typical campaign often involves four phases.

Initial Research Phase

The first step of many PR campaigns is the initial research phase. First, practitioners identify and qualify the issue to be addressed. Then, they research the organization itself to clarify issues of public perception, positioning, and internal dynamics. Strategists can also research the potential audience of the campaign. This audience may include media outlets, constituents, consumers, and competitors. Finally, the context of the campaign is often researched, including the possible consequences of the campaign and the potential effects on the organization. After considering all of these factors, practitioners are better educated to select the best type of campaign.

Strategy Phase

During the strategy phase, PR professionals usually determine objectives focused on the desired goal of the campaign and formulate strategies to meet those objectives. Broad strategies such as deciding on the overall message of a campaign and the best way to communicate the message can be finalized at this time.

Tactics Phase

During the tactics phase, the PR group decides on the means to implement the strategies they formulated during the strategy phase. This process can involve devising specific communication techniques and selecting the forms of media that suit the message best. This phase may also address budgetary restrictions and possibilities.

Evaluation Phase

After the overall campaign has been determined, PR practitioners enter the evaluation phase. The group can review their campaign plan and evaluate its potential effectiveness. They may also conduct research on the potential results to better understand the cost and benefits of the campaign. Specific criteria for evaluating the campaign when it is completed are also established at this time.[7]

Public Relations Tools

Public relations (PR) is the practice of managing the flow of information between an individual or an organization and the public. The aim is to persuade the public, investors, partners, employees, and other stakeholders to maintain a certain point of view about the company and its leadership, products, or political decisions. Common PR activities include speaking at conferences, seeking industry awards, working with the press, communicating with employees, and sending out press releases.

Public relations may include an organization or individual gaining exposure to an audience through topics of public interest and news items.

A group of reporters recording and taking notes looking to the anouncement

The Media in Action: The media is often utilized in PR campaigns. The Media. By Bart Everson. Source: Flickr CC BY 2.0

Building and managing relationships with those who influence an organization's or individual's audiences is critical in public relations. When a public relations practitioner is working in the field, they build a list of relationships that become assets, especially in media relations. The ultimate objective of PR is to retain goodwill as well as create it; the procedure to follow to achieve this is to first do good and then take credit for it. The PR program must describe its target audience—in most instances, PR programs are aimed at multiple audiences that have varying points of view and needs.

There are several PR tools firms can utilize to ensure the efficacy of PR programs: messaging, audience targeting, and media marketing.

Messaging

Messaging is the process of creating a consistent story around a product, person, company, or service. Messaging aims to avoid having readers receive contradictory or confusing information that will instill doubt in their purchasing choice or spur them to make other decisions that will have a negative impact on the company. A brand should aim to have the same problem statement, industry viewpoint, or brand perception shared across multiple sources and media.

Audience Targeting

A fundamental technique of public relations is identifying the target audience and tailoring messages to appeal to them. Sometimes the interests of different audiences and stakeholders vary, meaning several distinct but complementary messages must be created.

Stakeholder theory identifies people who have a stake in a given institution or issue. All audiences are stakeholders (or presumptive stakeholders), but not all stakeholders are audiences. For example, if a charity commissions a public relations agency to create an advertising campaign that raises money toward finding the cure for a disease, the charity and the people with the disease are stakeholders, but the audience is anyone who might be willing to donate money.

Media Marketing

Digital marketing is the use of Internet tools and technologies, such as search engines, Web 2.0 social bookmarking, new media relations, blogs, and social media marketing. Interactive PR allows companies and organizations to disseminate information without relying solely on mainstream publications and to communicate directly with the public, customers, and prospects. Online social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter ensure that firms can get their messages heard directly and quickly. Other forms of media include newspapers, television programs, radio stations, and magazines. Public relations people can use these various platforms and channels to publish press releases. It is important to ensure that the information across all channels is accurate and as complementary as possible.

The amount of money spent on traditional media channels has declined as more and more readers have turned to favor online and social media news sources. As the readership of traditional media shift to online media, so has the focus of many in public relations. The advent and increase of social media releases, search engine optimization, and online content publishing and the introduction of podcasts and video are related trends.

Sponsorship is often used as part of a public relations campaign. A company will pay money to compensate a public figure, spokesperson, or "influencer" to use its logo or products. An example of sponsorship is a concert tour presented by a bank or drink company.

Product placement is basically passive advertising in which a company pays to have its products used prominently in a photograph, film, or video message or during a live appearance. The most common use of product placement is in films where characters use branded products.

Both product placement and sponsorship decisions are based on a shared targetmarket. No matter the public relations vehicle, there must be a common buyer that all parties want to reach.

Examples Of PR Campaigns

Since its modern inception in the early 20th century, PR has turned out countless campaigns—some highly successful, others dismal failures. Some of these campaigns have become particularly significant for their lasting influence or creative execution. This section describes a few notable PR campaigns over the years.

Diamonds For The Common Man

During the 1930s, the De Beers company had an enormous amount of diamonds and a relatively small market of luxury buyers. They launched a PR campaign to change the image of diamonds from a luxury good into an accessible and essential aspect of American life. The campaign began by giving diamonds to famous movie stars, using their built-in publicity networks to promote De Beers. The company created stories about celebrity proposals and gifts between lovers that stressed the size of the diamonds given. These stories were then given out to selected fashion magazines. The result of this campaign was the popularization of diamonds as one of the necessary aspects of a marriage proposal.[8]

Big Tobacco Aids Researchers

In response to the increasing number of health concerns surrounding smoking, tobacco companies began running ads that argued the benefits of smoking their brand. Big Tobacco. By Ceylon Standard 190706.08 Source: Wikimedia. CC0 Public Domain

In 1953, studies showing the detrimental health effects of smoking caused a drop in cigarette sales. An alliance of tobacco manufacturers hired the PR group Hill & Knowlton to develop a campaign to deal with this problem. The first step of the campaign Hill & Knowlton devised was the creation of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee (TIRC) to promote studies that questioned the health effects of tobacco use. The TIRC ran advertisements featuring the results of these studies, giving journalists who were addressing the subject an easy source to quote. The groups working against smoking were not familiar with media relations, making it harder for journalists to quote them and use their arguments.

The campaign was effective, however, not because it denied the harmful effects of smoking but because it stressed the disagreements between researchers. By providing the press with information favorable to the tobacco manufacturers and publicly promoting new filtered cigarettes, the campaign aimed to replace the idea that smoking was undeniably bad with the idea that there was disagreement over the effects of smoking. This strategy served tobacco companies well up through the 1980s.

Taco Bell Targets Mir

When the Russian space station Mir was set to crash land in the Pacific Ocean in 2001, Taco Bell created a floating vinyl target that the company placed in the Pacific. Taco Bell promised to give every American a free taco if the space station hit the target. This simple PR stunt gave all the journalists covering the Mir crash landing a few lines to add to their stories. Scientists even speculated on the chances of the station hitting the target—slim to none. Ultimately, the stunt gained Taco Bell global advertising.[9]

PR As A Replacement For Advertising

In some cases, PR has begun overtaking advertising as the preferred way of promoting a particular company or product. For example, the tobacco industry offers a good case study of the migration from advertising to PR. Regulations prohibiting radio and TV cigarette advertisements had an enormous effect on sales. In response, the tobacco industry began using PR techniques to increase brand presence.

Tobacco company Philip Morris started underwriting cultural institutions and causes as diverse as the Joffrey Ballet, the Smithsonian, environmental awareness, and health concerns. Marlboro sponsored events that brought a great deal of media attention to the brand. For example, during the 1980s, the Marlboro Country Music Tour took famous country stars to major coliseums throughout the country and featured talent contests that brought local bands up on stage, increasing the audience even further. Favorable reviews of the shows generated positive press for Marlboro. Later interviews with country artists and books on country music history have also mentioned this tour.

On the fifth anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1987, Marlboro's PR groups organized a celebration hosted by comedian Bob Hope. Country music legends the Judds and Alabama headlined the show, and Marlboro paid for new names inscribed on the memorial. By attaching the Marlboro brand to such an important cultural event, the company gained an enormous amount of publicity. Just as importantly, these efforts at least partially restored the stature that the brand lost due to health concerns .footnote](Saffir, 2000).[/footnote]

Branding

While advertising is an essential aspect of initial brand creation, PR campaigns are vital to developing the more abstract aspects of a brand. These campaigns work to position a brand in the public arena in order to give it a sense of cultural importance.

Shift From Advertising To PR

Pioneered by such companies as Procter & Gamble during the 1930s, the older, advertising-centric model of branding focused on the product, using advertisements to associate a particular branded good with quality or some other positive cultural value. Yet, as consumers became exposed to ever-increasing numbers of advertisements, traditional advertising's effectiveness dwindled. The ubiquity of modern advertising means the public is skeptical of—or even ignores—claims advertisers make about their products. This credibility gap can be overcome, however, when PR professionals using good promotional strategies step in.

The new PR-oriented model of branding focuses on the overall image of the company rather than on the specific merits of the product. This branding model seeks to associate a company with specific personal and cultural values that hold meaning for consumers. In the early 1990s, for example, car company Saturn marketed its automobiles not as a means of transportation but as a form of culture. PR campaigns promoted the image of the Saturn family, associating the company with powerful American values and giving Saturn owners a sense of community. Events such as the 1994 Saturn homecoming sought to encourage this sense of belonging. Some 45,000 people turned out for this event; families gave up their beach holidays simply to come to a Saturn manufacturing plant in Tennessee to socialize with other Saturn owners and tour the facility.

Recently Toyota faced a marketing crisis when it instituted a massive recall based on safety issues. To counter the bad press, the company launched a series of commercials featuring top Toyota executives, urging the public to keep their faith in the brand (Bernstein, 2010). Much like the Volkswagen ads half a century before, Toyota used a style of self-awareness to market its automobiles. The positive PR campaign presented Toyotas as cars with a high standard of excellence, backed by a company striving to meet customers' needs.

Studies In Success: Apple And Nike

Apple has also employed this type of branding with great effectiveness. By focusing on a consistent design style in which every product reinforces the Apple experience, the computer company has managed to position itself as a mark of individuality. Despite the cynical outlook of many Americans regarding commercial claims, the notion that Apple is a symbol of individualism has been adopted with very little irony. Douglas Atkin, who has written about brands as a form of cult, readily admits and embraces his own brand loyalty to Apple:

I'm a self-confessed Apple loyalist. I go to a cafe around the corner to do some thinking and writing, away from the hurly-burly of the office, and everyone in that cafe has a Mac. We never mention the fact that we all have Macs. The other people in the cafe are writers and professors and in the media, and the feeling of cohesion and community in that cafe becomes very apparent if someone comes in with a PC. There's almost an observable shiver of consternation in the cafe, and it must be discernable to the person with the PC, because they never come back.

Brand managers that once focused on the product now find themselves in the role of community leaders, responsible for the well-being of a cultural image.[10]

Kevin Roberts, the current CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi Worldwide, a branding-focused creative organization, has used the term "lovemark" as an alternative to trademark. This term encompasses brands that have created "loyalty beyond reason," meaning that consumers feel loyal to a brand in much the same way they would toward friends or family members. Creating a sense of mystery around a brand generates an aura that bypasses the usual cynical take on commercial icons. A great deal of Apple's success comes from the company's mystique. Apple has successfully developed PR campaigns surrounding product releases that leak selected rumors to various press outlets but maintain secrecy over essential details, encouraging speculation by bloggers and mainstream journalists on the next product. All this combines to create a sense of mystery and an emotional anticipation for the product's release.

Emotional connections are crucial to building a brand or lovemark. An early example of this kind of branding was Nike's product endorsement deal with Michael Jordan during the 1990s. Jordan's amazing, seemingly magical performances on the basketball court created his immense popularity, which was then further built up by a host of press outlets and fans who developed an emotional attachment to Jordan. As this connection spread throughout the country, Nike associated itself with Jordan and also with the emotional reaction he inspired in people. Essentially, the company inherited a PR machine that had been built around Jordan and that continued to function until his retirement.[11]

Branding Backlashes

An important part of maintaining a consistent brand is preserving the emotional attachment consumers have to that brand. Just as PR campaigns build brands, PR crises can damage them. For example, the massive Gulf of Mexico oil spill in 2010 became a PR nightmare for BP, an oil company that had been using PR to rebrand itself as an environmentally friendly energy company.

In 2000, BP began a campaign presenting itself as "Beyond Petroleum," rather than British Petroleum, the company's original name. By acquiring a major solar company, BP became the world leader in solar production and in 2005 announced it would invest $8 billion in alternative energy over the following 10 years. BP's marketing firm developed a PR campaign that, at least on the surface, emulated the forward-looking two-way symmetric PR model. The campaign conducted interviews with consumers, giving them an opportunity to air their grievances and publicize energy policy issues. BP's website featured a carbon footprint calculator consumers could use to calculate the size of their environmental impact (Solman, 2008). The single explosion on BP's deep-water oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico essentially nullified the PR work of the previous 10 years, immediately putting BP at the bottom of the list of environmentally concerned companies.

A company's control over what its brand symbolizes can also lead to branding issues. The Body Shop, a cosmetics company that gained popularity during the 1980s and early 1990s, used PR to build its image as a company that created natural products and took a stand on issues of corporate ethics. The company teamed up with Greenpeace and other environmental groups to promote green issues and increase its natural image.

By the mid-1990s, however, revelations about the unethical treatment of franchise owners called this image into serious question. The Body Shop had spent a great deal of time and money creating its progressive, spontaneous image. Stories of travels to exotic locations to research and develop cosmetics were completely fabricated, as was the company's reputation for charitable contributions. Even the origins of the company had been made up as a PR tool: The idea, name, and even product list had been ripped off from a small California chain called the Body Shop that was later given a settlement to keep quiet. The PR campaign of the Body Shop made it one of the great success stories of the early 1990s, but the unfounded nature of its PR claims undermined its image dramatically. Competitor L'Oréal eventually bought the Body Shop for a fraction of its previous value (Entine, 2007).

Other branding backlashes have plagued companies such as Nike and Starbucks. By building their brands into global symbols, both companies also came to represent unfettered capitalist greed to those who opposed them. During the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, activists targeted Starbucks and Nike stores for physical attacks such as window smashing. Labor activists have also condemned Nike over the company's use of sweatshops to manufacture shoes. Eventually, Nike created a vice president for corporate responsibility to deal with sweatshop issues.2

Adbusters, a publication devoted to reducing advertising's influence on global culture, added action to its criticisms of Nike by creating its own shoe. Manufactured in union shops, Blackspot shoes contain recycled tire rubber and hemp fabric. The Blackspot logo is a simple round dot that looks like it has been scribbled with white paint, as if a typical logo had been covered over. The shoes also include a symbolic red dot on the toe with which to kick Nike. Blackspot shoes use the Nike brand to create their own antibrand, symbolizing progressive labor reform and environmentally sustainable business practices [12]).

Blackspot shoes developed as an antibrand alternative to regular sneakers. Black Spot Sneakers. By TenSafeFrogs. Source: Flickr CC BY 2.0

Relationship With Politics And Government

Politics and PR have gone hand in hand since the dawn of political activity. Politicians communicate with their constituents and make their message known using PR strategies. Benjamin Franklin's trip as ambassador to France during the American Revolution stands as an early example of political PR that followed the publicity model. At the time of his trip, Franklin was an international celebrity, and the fashionable society of Paris celebrated his arrival; his choice of a symbolic American-style fur cap immediately inspired a new style of women's wigs. Franklin also took a printing press with him to produce leaflets and publicity notices that circulated through Paris's intellectual and fashionable circles. Such PR efforts eventually led to a treaty with France that helped the colonists win their freedom from Great Britain[13].

Famous 20th-century PR campaigns include President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Fireside Chats, a series of radio addresses that explained aspects of the New Deal. Roosevelt's personal tone and his familiarity with the medium of radio helped the Fireside Chats become an important promotional tool for his administration and its programs. These chats aimed to justify many New Deal policies, and they helped the president bypass the press and speak directly to the people. More recently, Blackwater Worldwide, a private military company, dealt with criticisms of its actions in Iraq by changing its name. The new name, Xe Services, was the result of a large-scale PR campaign to distance the company from associations with civilian violence.[14]

The proliferation of media outlets and the 24-hour news cycle have led to changes in the way politicians handle PR. The gap between old PR methods and new ones became evident in 2006, when then–Vice President Dick Cheney accidentally shot a friend during a hunting trip. Cheney, who had been criticized in the past for being secretive, did not make a statement about the accident for three days. Republican consultant Rich Galen explained Cheney's silence as an older PR tactic that tries to keep the discussion out of the media. However, the old trick is less effective in the modern digital world.

That entire doctrine has come and gone. Now the doctrine is you respond instantaneously, and where possible with a strong counterattack. A lot of that is because of the Internet, a lot of that is because of cable TV news.[15]

PR techniques have been used in propaganda efforts throughout the 20th century. During the 1990s, the country of Kuwait employed Hill & Knowlton to encourage U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf region. One of the more infamous examples of their campaign was a heavily reported account by a Kuwaiti girl testifying that Iraqi troops had dumped babies out of incubators in Kuwaiti hospitals. Outrage over this testimony helped galvanize opinion in favor of U.S. involvement. As it turned out, the Kuwaiti girl was really the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador and had not actually witnessed any of the alleged atrocities.[16].

Lobbyists also attempt to influence public policy using PR campaigns. The Water Environment Federation, a lobbying group representing the sewage industry, initiated a campaign to promote the application of sewage on farms during the early 1990s. The campaign came up with the word biosolids to replace the term sludge. Then it worked to encourage the use of this term as a way to popularize sewage as a fertilizer, providing information to public officials and representatives. In 1992, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency adopted the new term and changed the classification of biosolids to a fertilizer from a hazardous waste. This renaming helped New York City eliminate tons of sewage by shipping it to states that allowed biosolids.[17]

Political Branding

Politics has also embraced branding. Former President Bill Clinton described his political battles in terms of a brand war:

[The Republicans] were brilliant at branding. They said they were about values…. Everybody is a values voter, but they got the brand…they said they were against the death tax…what a great brand…. I did a disservice to the American people not by putting forth a bad plan, but by not being a better brander, not being able to explain it better.[18]

Branding has been used to great effect in recent elections. A consistently popular political brand is that of the outsider, or reform-minded politician. Despite his many years of service in the U.S. Senate, John McCain famously adopted this brand during the 2008 presidential election. McCain's competitor, Barack Obama, also employed branding strategies. The Obama campaign featured several iconic portraits and slogans that made for a consistent brand and encouraged his victory in 2008. Before Obama's inauguration in January 2009, an unprecedented amount of merchandise was sold, a further testament to the power of branding.[19]

The 2008 Obama campaign used logos as a way to publicize Obama's brand. Obama '08 Logo. By Phillip Jeffrey. Source: Flickr CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Do The Right Thing

In any emergency situation, it is imperative that a company put the public interest ahead of the organization's interest. The company's first responsibility is to the safety and well-being of the people involved. Once safety has been restored, the company needs to face the public and face the facts. The company should never try to minimize a serious problem or "smooth it over" in the hope that no one will notice. Conversely, don't blow minor incidents out of proportion or allow others to do so. Social media has accelerated the speed at which information about a crisis can spread; the viral affect of social networks such as Twitter means that stakeholders can break news faster than traditional media, which makes managing a crisis harder. However, a company should not speculate; if they don't know the facts, they should say so and promise to get back to the media as soon as possible.

Communicate Quickly And Accurately

Positive, assertive communication focuses attention on the most important aspects of the problem and moves the process forward to resolution, even in the face of antagonistic news media. Media representatives have an obligation to provide reliable information to their audiences, and they will get that information whether or not company spokespeople cooperate; if a company will not comment on the situation, someone else will. Serving as one of the major sources of media information in a crisis is a means of maintaining control. If necessary, activate the crisis management team. Act quickly and spare no expense in distributing the information you determine the media and others should have.

Follow Up

It is important to make amends to those affected and then do whatever is necessary to restore the organization's reputation in the community. It is helpful to perform an act of goodwill during or immediately after a crisis when possible. Internal policies should be changed to minimize a repeat of the crisis situation. The crisis communication plan should be revised based on any new learnings.

Two open pill bottles of Tylenol one with a blue label and a red label

TYLENOL MEDICATION. Johnson & Johnson's Tylenol medication was once laced with cyanide. In time, Johnson & Johnson learned to deal with the negative public relations. By Ragesoss Source: Wikimedia. CC BY-SA 4.0

Branding As A New Form Of Communication

That so many different groups have adopted branding as a means of communication is a testament to its ubiquity. Even anticommercial, antibrand groups such as Adbusters have created brands to send messages. Social media sites have also encouraged branding techniques by allowing users to create profiles of themselves that they use to communicate their core values. This personal application is perhaps the greatest evidence of the impact of advertising and PR on modern culture. Branding, once a technique used by companies to sell their products, has become an everyday means of communication.

The four models of PR include traditional publicity, public information, persuasive communication, and two-way symmetrical models. PR campaigns begin with a research phase, develop objectives during a strategy phase, formulate ways to meet objectives during the tactics phase, and assess the proposed campaign during the evaluation phase. Branding focuses on the lifestyles and values inherent in a brand's image as opposed to the products that are manufactured. It can be quickly undone by PR crises such as the BP oil spill. PR has always been an important part of political campaigning and activity. In recent years, branding has become an important part of national political campaigns.

Public Relations' Components and Roles

Components of Public Relations	Explanations of Role
Counseling	Providing advice to management concerning policies, relationships, and communications
Research	Determining the attitudes and behaviours of groups to plan public relations strategies. Such research can be used to generate mutual understanding or influence and persuade publics.
Media Relations	Working with mass media (television, web sites, newspapers, magazines, and the like) by seeking publicity or responding to their interests in the organization.
Publicity	Disseminating planned messages through selected media to further an organization's interests.
Employee Member Relations	Responding to concerns, informing, and motivating and organization's current employees or members.
Community Relations	Undertaking activities within a community to maintain an environment that benefits both an organization and the community .
Public Affairs	Developing effective involvement in public policy and helping an organization adapt to public expectations. The term "public affairs" is also used by government agencies to describe their public relations activities and by many corporations as an umbrella term to describe multiple public relation activities.
Government Affairs	Relating directly with legislatures and regulatory agencies on behalf of an organization. Lobbying can be part of a government affairs program.
Issue Management	Identifying and addressing issues of public concern that affect an organization.
Financial Relations	Creating and maintaining investor confidence and building good relationships with financial community.
Industry Relations	Relating with other firms in the industry of an organization and with trade associations.
Development/ Fund-Raising	Demonstrating the need for and encouraging the public support charitable organization primarily through financial contributions.
Multicultural Relations/ Workplace Diversity	Communicating with individuals and groups in various cultural groups.
Special Events	Stimulating an interest in a person, product, or organization by means of focused "happenings" as well as other activities designed to encourage interacting with publics and listening to them.
Marketing Communications	Employing a combination of activities, designed to sell a product, service, or idea, including advertising, collateral materials, publicity, promotions, direct mail, trade shows, and special events.

Notes

1. Parts of this chapter remixed from Curation and Revision provided by: Boundless.com is licensed under a Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.
2. (2016, para. 4)
3. (Simpson, 2014)
4. Grunig and Hunt (1984)
5. (2013)
6. http://adage.com/article/adage-encyclopedia/n-w-ayer-son-n-w-ayer-partners/98334/

7. (Smith, 2002).
8. (Reid, 2006).
9. (BBC World, 2001).
10. (Atkin, 2004)
11. (Roberts, 2003).
12. (New York Times, 2004
13. Isaacson, 2003)
14. (Associated Press, 2009)
15. (Associated Press, 2006)
16. (Parsons, 2005)
17. (Stauber & Rampton, 1995)
18. (Kiley, 2008)
19. (Alberts, 2009)

Chapter 4 – Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) and Public Relations

Once companies have developed products and services, they must communicate the value and benefits of the offerings to current and potential customers in both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) markets. **Integrated marketing communications (IMC)** provide an approach designed to deliver one consistent message to buyers through an organization's promotions that may span all different types of media such as TV, radio, magazines, the Internet, mobile phones, professional selling, and social media. For example, Campbell's Soup Company typically includes the "Mm, mm good" slogan in the print ads it places in newspapers and magazines, in ads on the Internet, and in commercials on television and radio. Delivering consistent information about a brand or an organization helps establish it in the minds of consumers and potential customers across target markets. Although the messages are very similar, Campbell's uses two variations of commercials designed to target different consumers. Watch the following two YouTube videos. You'll notice that the message Campbell's gets across is consistent. But can you figure out who is in the two target audiences?

Campbell's Soup Commercials

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=76#oembed-1

A Meal That's Always Popular with the Group.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=76#oembed-2

So Many Possibilities for Enjoying Soup. Campbell's soup pleases people of all ages.

Changes in communication technology and instant access to information through tools such as the Internet and **social media** (online communication among interdependent and interconnected networks of organizations, people, and communities) explain one of the reasons why integrated marketing communications have become so important. Consumers are also changing. With access to many sources of information and often an interest in interactive media, consumers may collect more product information on their own. Marketers must organize and assemble available information to build a consistent brand message and make it relevant. With IMC, organizations can coordinate their messages to build the brand and develop strong customer relationships while also helping customers satisfy their needs.

FedEx's two recent campaigns, the "We Understand" tagline launched in 2009 and the "Solutions that Matter" tagline launched in 2011, illustrate examples of IMC campaigns they used to deliver a consistent message across all media channels including television commercials, e-mails, social media, mobile marketing, direct mail, and the FedEx channel on YouTube (Dilworth, 2010). Watch the following videos to see examples of commercials in the FedEx campaigns.

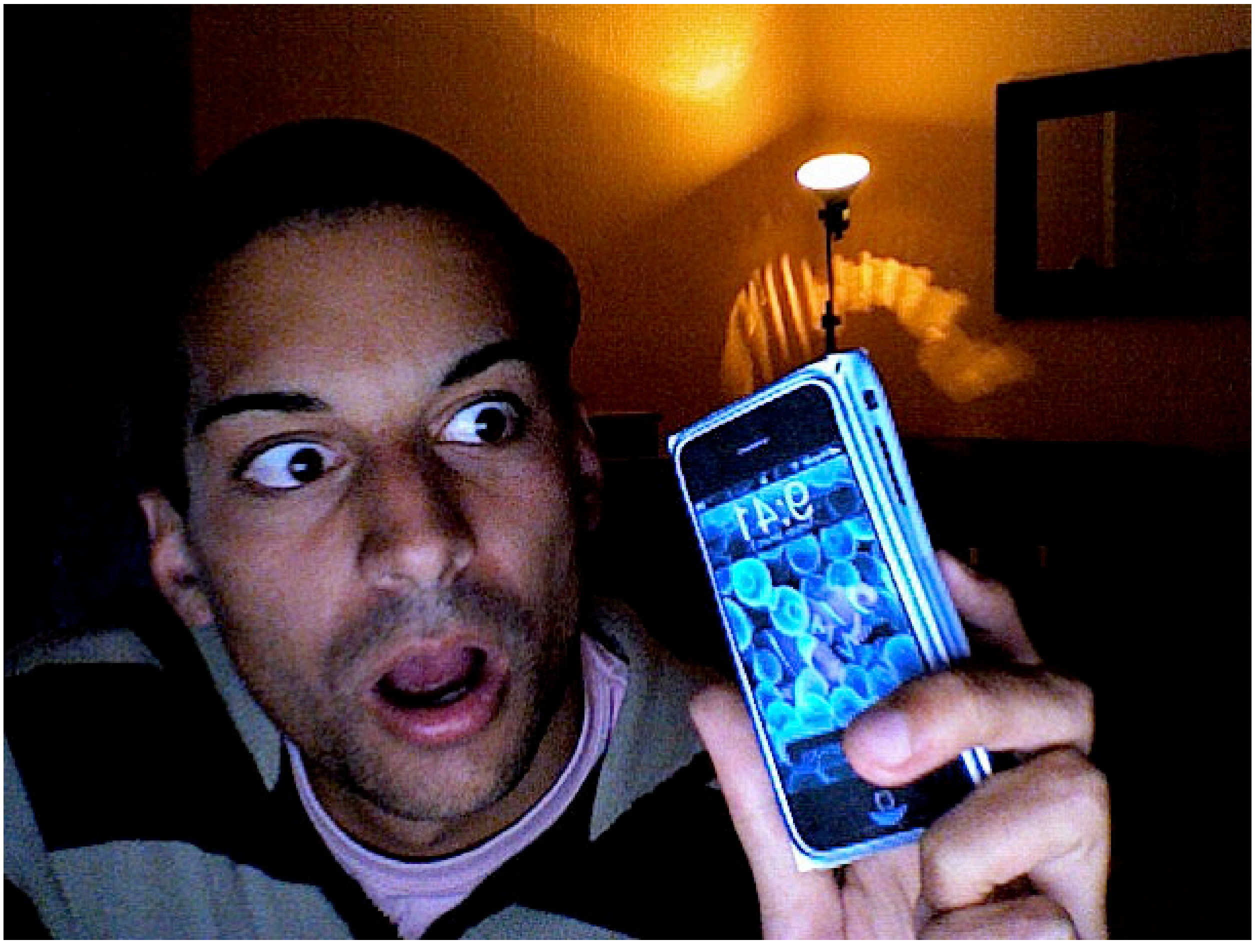
FedEx Shipping Commercial

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=76#oembed-3

The "We Understand" at FedEx Shows Customers that They Understand and Can Satisfy Their Needs. FedEx often uses a humorous appeal.

Changing Media

Many consumers and business professionals seek information and connect with other people and businesses from their computers and phones. The work and social environments are changing, with more people having virtual offices and texting on their cell phones or communicating through social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Twitter. As the media landscape changes, the money that organizations spend on different types of communication will change as well. Some forecasts indicate that companies will spend almost 27 percent of their total promotional budgets, or $160 billion, on electronic or non-traditional media by 2012.



“iPhone” by Yeray Hdez Guerra. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0.

Some consumers feel lost without their cell phones. Phones such as the one pictured provide a source of information for consumers and a new medium for advertisers to deliver information.

Many college students are part of the millennial generation, and it is consumers from this generation (people like you perhaps) who are driving the change toward new communication technologies. You might opt to get promotions via **mobile marketing**—say, from stores on your cell phone as you walk by them or via a mobile gaming device that allows you to connect to the Web. Likewise, advertisements on Facebook are popular as businesses continue to utilize more social media. For example, when Honda let people on Facebook use the Honda logo to give heart-shaped virtual gifts on Valentine’s Day, over one and a half million people participated in the event and viewed the Honda Fit online in the process. Imagine the brand awareness generated for the Honda Fit.

Search-Engine-Marketing by Danard Vincente. Source: Flickr. CC BY-NC-SA.

Marketing based on the Internet and wireless technology is popular.

Traditional media (magazines, newspapers, television) compete with media such as the Internet, texting, mobile phones, social media, user-generated content such as blogs, and YouTube as well as **out-of-home advertising** such as billboards and movable promotions. You might have noticed that the tray tables on airplanes sometimes have ads on them. You have probably also seen ads on the inside of subway cars, in trains and buses, and even in bathroom stalls. These, too, are examples of out-of-home advertising.

The inside walls of many subways provide an opportunity for advertisers to reach commuters with their messages. Image credit: Interior of an unrefurbished R160A car by Gh9449. [Source: Flickr](). [CC BY-SA 4.0]()

As the media landscape changes, marketers may change the type of promotions they use in order to reach their target markets. With changing technology and social media (e.g., Facebook), less money is being budgeted for traditional media such as magazines and more money is budgeted for "non-traditional media." Regardless of the type of media used, marketers use integrated marketing communications (IMC) to deliver one consistent message to buyers.

The Promotion (Communication) Mix

Although the money organizations spend promoting their offerings may go to different media channels, a company still wants to send its customers and potential consumers a consistent message (IMC). The different types of marketing communications an organization uses compose its **promotion or communication mix**, which consists of advertising, sales promotions, direct marketing, public relations and publicity, sponsorships (events and experiences), social media and interactive marketing, and professional selling. The importance of IMC will be demonstrated throughout the discussion of traditional media as well as newer, more targeted, and often interactive online media.

Advertising involves paying to disseminate a message that identifies a brand (product or service) or an organization being promoted to many people at one time. The typical media that organizations utilize for advertising of course include television, magazines, newspapers, the Internet, direct mail, and radio. Businesses also advertise on mobile devices and social media such as Facebook, blogs, and Twitter.

Consumer sales promotions consist of short-term incentives such as coupons, contests, games, rebates, and mail-in offers that supplement the advertising and sales efforts. Sales promotions include promotions that are not part of another component of the communication mix and are often developed to get customers and potential customers to take action quickly, make larger purchases, and/or make repeat purchases.

In business-to-business marketing, sales promotions are typically called **trade promotions** because they are targeted to channel members who conduct business or trade with consumers. Trade promotions include trade shows and special incentives given to retailers to market particular products and services, such as extra money, in-store displays, and prizes.

Direct marketing involves the delivery of personalized and often interactive promotional materials to individual consumers via channels such as mail, catalogs, Internet, e-mail, telephone, and direct-response advertising. By targeting consumers individually, organizations hope to get consumers to take action.

Professional selling is an interactive, paid approach to marketing that involves a buyer and a seller. The interaction between the two parties can occur in person, by telephone, or via another technology. Whatever medium is used, developing a relationship with the buyer is usually something the seller desires.

When you interview for internships or full-time positions and try to convince potential employers to hire you, you are engaging in professional selling. The interview is very similar to a buyer-seller situation. Both the buyer and seller have objectives they hope to achieve. Business-to-business marketers generally utilize professional selling more often than most business-to-consumer marketers. If you have ever attended a Pampered Chef party or purchased something from an Amway or Mary Kay representative, you've been exposed to professional selling.

U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Sean Gallagher. Source: Wikimedia Commons. CC0 Public Domain.

Pampered Chef and Tastefully Simple have built their businesses primarily on the professional selling skills of their consultants. Professional selling is used more in business-to-business markets than in business-to-consumer markets.

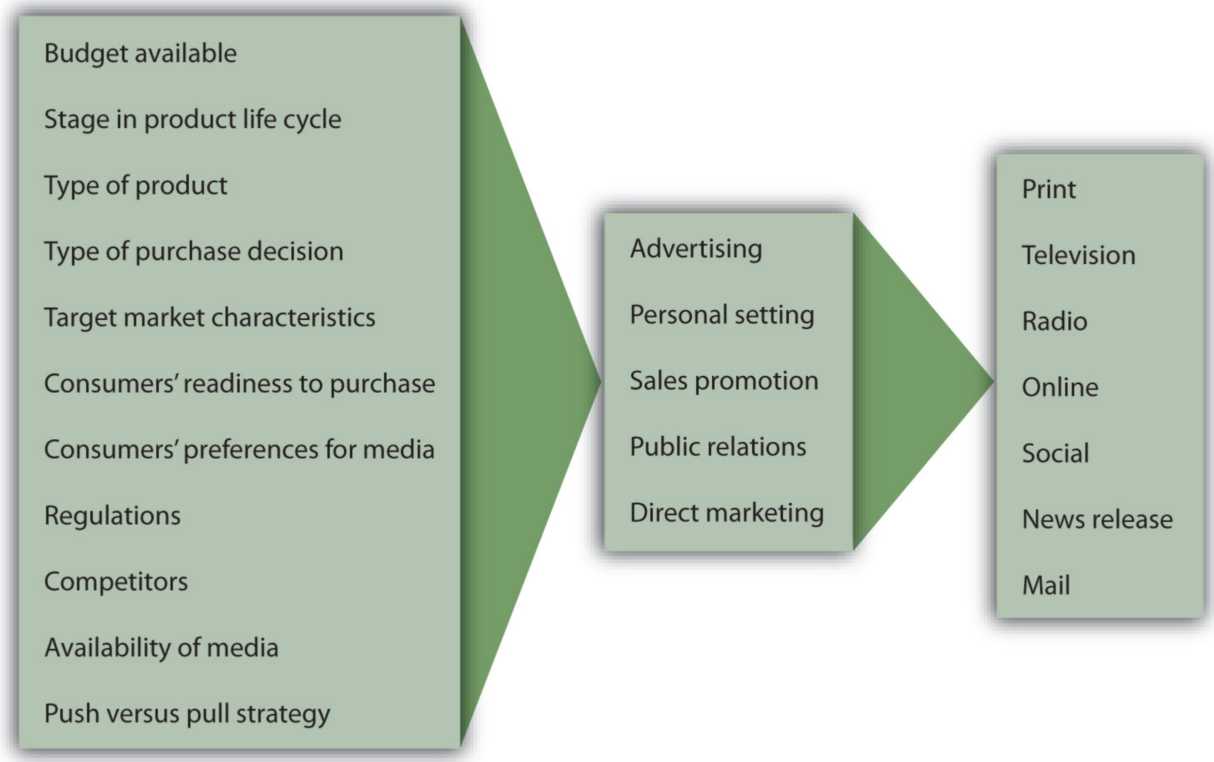
Public relations (PR) involves communication designed to help improve and promote an organization's image and products. PR is often perceived as more neutral and objective than other forms of promotion because much of the information is tailored to sound as if it has been created by an organization independent of the seller. Public relations materials include press releases, publicity, and news conferences. While other techniques such as product placement and sponsorships, especially of events and experiences, tend to generate a lot of PR, the growth of expenditures and importance of sponsorships are so critical for so many companies that it is often considered a separate component in the communication mix. Many companies have internal PR departments or hire PR firms to find and create public relations opportunities for them. As such, PR is part of a company's promotion budget and their integrated marketing communications.

Sponsorships typically refer to financial support for events, venues, or experiences and provide the opportunity to target specific groups. Sponsorships enhance a company's image and usually generate public relations. With an increasing amount of money being spent on sponsorships, they have become an important component of the promotion mix.

Technology is changing the way businesses and individuals communicate. Organizations use Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) to deliver a consistent message across all components of the promotion mix. The promotion (communication) mix is composed of advertising, professional selling, public relations, sponsorships (events and experiences), sales promotion, direct marketing, and online media, including social media.

Factors Influencing The Promotion Mix, Communication Process, And Message Problems

A marketing manager from one company might decide to focus on social media, whereas a marketing manager from another company might decide to focus her company's efforts on television commercials. Why do companies select different types of media for what may be perceived as similar messages? As "Factors That Influence Selection of Promotion Mix" shows, a number of factors affect the choice of promotion mix elements.



Factors That Influence Selection of Promotion Mix. [Long Description 4-1]

Factors That Influence Selection of Promotion Mix.

Budget Available. For many companies, the budget available to market a product determines what elements of the promotion mix are utilized. The budget affects a promotion's **reach** (number of people exposed to the message) and **frequency** (how often people are exposed). For example, many smaller companies may lack the money to create and run commercials on top-rated television shows or during the Super Bowl. As a result, they may not get the exposure they need to be successful. Other firms such as McDonald's may come up with creative ways to reach different target markets. For example, McDonald's targeted college students with a special promotion that it filmed live in a Boston University lecture.

Stage in the product life cycle. The stage in the product life cycle also affects the type and amount of promotion used. Products in the introductory stages typically need a lot more promotional dollars to create awareness in the marketplace. Consumers and businesses won't buy a product if they do not know about it. More communication is needed in the beginning of the product life cycle to build awareness and trial.

Type of product and type of purchase decision. Different products also require different types of promotion. Very technical products and very expensive products (high involvement) often need professional selling so the customer understands how the product operates and its different features. By contrast, advertising is often relied upon to sell convenience goods and products purchased routinely (low involvement) since customers are familiar with the products and they spend relatively little time making purchase decisions.

Target market characteristics and consumers' readiness to purchase. In order to select the best methods to reach different target markets, organizations need to know what types of media different targets use, how often they make purchases, where they make purchases, and what their readiness to purchase is as well as characteristics such as age, gender, and lifestyle. Some people are early adopters and want to try new things as soon as they are available, and other groups wait until products have been on the market for a while. Some consumers might not have the money to purchase different products, although they will need the product later. For example, are most college freshmen ready to purchase new cars?

Consumers' preferences for various media. We've already explained that different types of consumers prefer different types of media. In terms of target markets, college-aged students may prefer online, cell phone, mobile marketing, and social media more than older consumers do. Media preferences have been researched extensively by academics, marketing research companies, and companies to find out how consumers want to be reached.

Regulations, competitors, and environmental factors. Regulations can affect the type of promotion used. For example, laws in the United States prohibit tobacco products from being advertised on television. In some Asian countries, controversial products such as alcohol cannot be advertised during Golden (prime) time on television. The hope is that by advertising late at night, young children do not see the advertisements. The strength of the economy can have an impact as well. In a weak economy, some organizations use more sales promotions such as coupons to get consumers into their stores. The risk is that consumers may begin to expect coupons and not want to buy items without a special promotion.

Availability of media. Organizations must also plan their promotions based on availability of media. The top-rated television shows and Super Bowl ad slots, for example, often sell out quickly. Magazines tend to have a longer lead time, so companies must plan far in advance for some magazines. By contrast, because of the number of radio stations and the nature of the medium, organizations can often place radio commercials the same day they want them to be aired. Social media and online media may be immediate, but users must be careful about what they post and their privacy. Uncontrollable events can affect a company's promotions, too. For example, when a disaster occurs, TV stations often cut advertisements to make way for continuous news coverage. If there is a crisis or disaster and your company is in the middle of a promotion being advertised on TV, you will likely have to scramble to reach consumers via another medium.

The Communication Process

Do you use TiVo or a digital video recorder (DVR) to record movies or television shows so you can watch them when you want without television commercials? Do you ever use the remote to skip the commercials or zap (change channels) to look at different shows? Think about which television shows you choose to watch, which magazines you read, which radio stations you select. The **perceptual process** is how a person decides what to pay attention to and how to interpret and remember different things, including information in advertising. By selecting a magazine, a television show, or even an elective class in school, you're selecting what you're exposed to and deciding what gets your attention. However, your selection does not insure you'll either pay attention or remember or correctly interpret what you see or hear.

Think about what else you are doing when you watch television, when you are studying, or when you are listening to the radio. It's a hot day in July and you're enjoying a day at the beach. Your friends brought a radio and the volume is turned up so you can hear all the music. If you're listening to the music or talking to a friend at the beach while you're listening to the radio, do you hear or pay attention to the commercials? Do you remember which products were advertised? If you're with a friend and hear someone else say your name, do you pay more attention to the person talking about you than to your friend?

The same thing happens when you are watching a television show, reading a magazine, or studying for a test. The phone rings or your friends show up and your attention shifts to them. With so many different types of distractions and technology (such as recording devices), imagine how difficult it is for an advertiser to get you to pay attention much less remember the message. Do you remember the terms you memorized for a test a day later? Do you know your friends' phone numbers and e-mail addresses or do you just find their names on your contact list? To increase retention, advertisers may repeat the same message multiple times in different places, but they must be careful that consumers don't get so tired of the message that there is a negative effect.

The communication process illustrates how messages are sent and received, as shown in "The Communication Process". The source (or sender) **encodes**, or translates, a message so that it's appropriate for the message channel—say, for a print advertisement, TV commercial, or store display—and shows the benefits and value of the offering. The receiver (customer or consumer) then **decodes**, or interprets, the message. For effective communication to occur, the receiver must interpret the message as the sender intended.

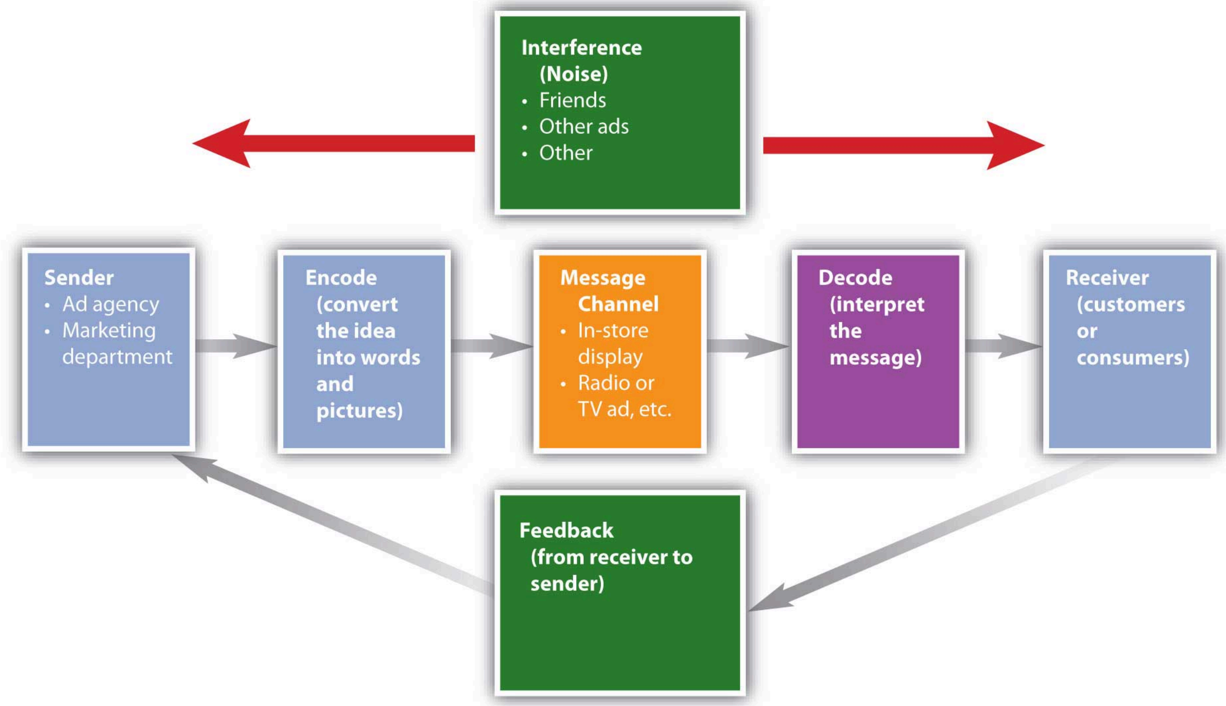
MESSAGE PROBLEMS

You're ready to go home on a Friday afternoon and you hear someone mention an upcoming event on Saturday. However, you did not listen to all the details and assume the event is the next day, not the following Saturday. Since you already made other plans for the next day, you don't even consider showing up the following Saturday. Has this ever happened to you? You don't show up at an event because you didn't interpret the message correctly? If you do not hear someone correctly, misread information, or misinterpret a message, you might think a product or service provides different benefits or is easier or harder to use than it really is.

Interference, or noise, can distort marketing messages. Factors such as poor reception, poor print quality, problems with a server, or a low battery can interfere with your getting messages. Interference includes any distractions receivers and senders face during the transmission of a message. For example, when you were growing up did you see commercials for toys such as the pogo ball, which appeared to be so easy to use but when you tried to jump up and down on it, you found out it was extremely difficult? The same thing may happen if you're studying for an exam while you're talking on the phone. The conversation interferes with remembering what you're reading. If a friend tells you a story, then you tell another friend, and that person tells someone else, will the message be the same after it is relayed to multiple people? If you miss class and borrow someone else's notes, do you understand what they mean? Not only must advertisers try to present consistent messages (IMC), they must also try to ensure that you interpret the message as they intended.

Purchasing a product provides the sender with **feedback**, which often tells the seller that you saw information and wanted to try the product. If you use any coupons or promotions when you buy a product, the advertiser knows which vehicle you used to get the information. Market research and warranty registration also provide feedback.

We tend to purchase products and remember information that has some relevance to our personal situation or beliefs. If you have no need for a product or service, you might not pay attention to or remember the messages used to market it. Advertisers also want you to remember their brands so that you'll think of their products/services when you need to make a purchase.



The Communication Process. [Long Description 4-2]

The Communication Process

Many factors, such as a firm's marketing budget, the type of product, regulations, target customers, and competitors, influence what composes the promotion mix. Depending on what medium is used, marketers use the communication process to encode or translate ideas into messages that can be correctly interpreted (decoded) by buyers. However, marketers must determine how to get consumers' attention and avoid as much interference and noise as possible. Perceptual processes include how a person decides what to pay attention to and how to interpret and remember different things.

Advertising

Advertising is paid promotion with an identified sponsor that reaches many people at one time and can be repeated many times. One of the biggest issues an organization must address is which **medium** or media provides the biggest bang for the buck, given a product's characteristics and target market. For example, a thirty-second ad aired during Super Bowl XLII cost $2.7 million. Since 97.5 million people watched the game, the cost per ad was less than three cents per viewer. For Super Bowl XLVI, the cost for a thirty-second spot increased to $3.5 million, and approximately 111.3 million viewers watched. However, do the ads pay off in terms of sales? Many advertising professionals believe many of the ads don't, yet the ads probably do create brand awareness or a public relations type of effect since many people tune in and then talk about Super Bowl commercials.

Whether it's a commercial on the Super Bowl or an ad in a magazine, each medium (e.g., television, magazines, mobile phones, social media) has different advantages and disadvantages. Mobile phones provide continuous access to people on the go, although reception may vary in different markets. Radios, magazines, and newspapers are also portable. People tend to own more than one radio, but there are so many radio stations in each market that it may be difficult to reach all target customers. People are also typically doing another activity (e.g., driving or studying) while listening to the radio, and without visuals, radio relies solely on audio. Both television and radio must get a message to consumers quickly. Although many people change channels (zap) or leave the room during commercials, television does allow for visual demonstrations. In an effort to get attention, advertisers changed the volume for television commercials for years. However, the Federal Trade Commission passed a regulation effective in 2010 that prohibits advertisers from changing the volume level of commercials on television, although consumers still notice that some commercials are louder than the regular shows.

People save magazines for a long time, but advertisers must plan in advance to have ads in certain issues. With the Internet, both magazines and newspapers are suffering in terms of readership and advertising dollars. Many major newspapers, such as papers in Seattle and Chicago, have gone out of business. Other newspapers, such as *USA Today* are free online, although printed copies are also available. The fact that local retailers get cheaper rates for advertising in local newspapers may encourage both local businesses and consumers to support newspapers in some markets.

Within each different medium, an organization might select a different vehicle. A **vehicle** is the specific means within a medium to reach a selected target market. For example, if a company wants to develop television commercials to reach teenagers, it might select *Gossip Girl* on the CW as the best vehicle. If an organization wants to use magazines to reach males interested in sports, it might use *Sports Illustrated*. *Sports Illustrated* launched SI.com so readers could get up-to-date information on the Web. On SI.com, readers can also access links to popular articles and "SIVault" (https://www.si.com/vault), where they can search articles and pictures that have run in the magazine since it was launched in 1954. The printed SI swimsuit edition continues to be one of the most popular issues of any magazine. Over 67 million consumers saw the 2010 SI swimsuit franchise (via magazine, mobile, SIVault, etc.).[1]

Direct Marketing

Direct marketing allows organizations to target a specific set of customers, measure the return on investment (ROI), and test different strategies before implementing to all targeted consumers. It can be personalized as a call for consumers to take **action**, which is a desired response. However, direct marketing is very intrusive, and many consumers may ignore attempts to reach them. Catalogs and **direct mail** provide popular alternatives for many marketers, although the volume of mail sent may drop significantly in a weak economy.

Telemarketing involves direct marketing by phone. You may have just sat down for dinner when the phone rings with a local charity calling to raise money. The calls always seem to come at dinner or at other inconvenient times. Although expensive, telemarketing can be extremely effective for charitable organizations and different service firms and retailers. However, because some consumers have negative perceptions of telemarketers, many organizations do not use it. The **Do Not Call Registry**, which was established in 2008, prevents organizations from calling any numbers registered with the Federal Trade Commission.

Direct response advertising includes an offer and a call to action. You may be watching television when an interesting product is shown. The announcer says, "Call now and receive a bonus package." They want consumers to call to purchase the product or to get more information. The Internet provides the preferred direct response medium for direct marketing because it is less expensive and easier for the organization to utilize.

Advertising is paid for communication that has an identified sponsor and reaches many people at one time. Once companies decide on different media (e.g., magazines or television), they must also select specific vehicles (e.g., *Sports Illustrated* or the Super Bowl), Direct marketing allows organizations to target specific individuals and use direct response advertising. Telemarketing, the Internet, direct mail, and catalogs are popular direct marketing methods.

UTILIZING A PRODUCT'S UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION (USP)

When organizations want to communicate value, they must determine what message strategies work best for them. Smart organizations determine a product's **unique selling proposition (USP)**, or specific benefit consumers will remember. Domino's "Pizza delivered in 30 minutes or it's free" is a good example of a unique selling proposition. Likewise, Nike's global slogan "Just Do It" helps athletes and other consumers realize their potential, and many consumers may think of all the things that they do when they use Nike products. Watch the following video on Nike to get an idea of the many different activities people from different countries do when using Nike products.

Nike Just Do It Commercial.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=76#oembed-4

People around the World Use Nike Products. Nike products are used for many different sports by all types of athletes.

Nike and Coca-Cola have been extremely successful in adapting their promotions to different international markets. Both companies have very popular global brands. Sometimes the same promotions work in different cultures (countries), but others must be adapted for different international audiences—similar to the way products may be adapted for international markets. Companies must be careful of how words translate, how actions are interpreted, how actors (or models) look, and what different colors in ads may mean.

When deciding on a message strategy, organizations must consider the audience, the objectives of the promotion, the media, and the budget, as well as the USP and the product. Knowing your audience and whom you are trying to reach is critical. The more advertisers know about the consumers (or businesses) exposed to the message, the better. Commercials for golf products shown during golf tournaments focus specifically on golfers. Other commercials, such as several recent ones for the fast-food chain Hardee's, are on the risqué side. They may appeal to some college students but may offend other consumers such as senior citizens. What do you think? Do you think Hardee's is trying to reach a younger demographic? Do the ads make you more inclined to purchase fast food from Hardee's? See the Hardee's commercial in the video below.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=76

The Organization's Promotion Objectives

Advertisers must also examine their promotion objectives. What are they trying to accomplish with their promotions? Are they trying to build awareness for a new product, are they wanting to get people to take action immediately, or are they interested in having people remember their brand in the future? Building **primary demand**, or demand for a product category, such as orange juice, might be one objective, but a company also wants to build **selective demand**, or demand for its specific brand(s), such as Tropicana orange juice.

Other common objectives follow the **AIDA model** (attention, interest, desire, and action). AIDA objectives typically are achieved in steps. First, companies focus on attention and awareness of a product or service, which is especially important for new offerings. If a consumer or business is not aware of a product or service, they won't buy it. Once consumers or businesses are aware of products or services, organizations try to get consumers interested and persuade them that their brands are best. Ultimately, companies want consumers to take action or purchase their products or services.

Message Characteristics

Organizations must also determine what type of appeal to use and how to structure their messages. Some of the common advertising appeals are humorous, emotional, frightening (fear), rational (informative), and environmentally conscious. If you were asked to name your favorite commercial, would it be one with a humorous appeal? Many people like commercials that use humor because they are typically entertaining and memorable. Humor sells, but firms must be careful that the brand is remembered. Some commercials are very entertaining, but consumers cannot remember the brand or product.

Each year, some of the most talked-about commercials take place during the Super Bowl. Many people watch the game just to see the commercials. Watch the following YouTube videos to see one of the top ten Super Bowl commercials of all time and how newer commercials relied on a similar approach. Notice how many of them use a humorous appeal. But do you think some are more effective than others? In other words, will viewers actually buy the product(s)?

Mean Joe Green Coke commercial

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=76#oembed-5

This Mean Joe Green Coke commercial uses a child and fun to appeal to many consumers and is often rated the best Super Bowl commercial ever

Funny Coke Zero Commercial with TRoy Polamalu

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=76

Rated One of the Best Super Bowl Commercials of 2009, Coke Zero uses the same approach in 2009 as the award-winning commercial in the 1980 Super Bowl.

Pepsi's Version of "Asking for a Shirt"

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=76#oembed-6

Pepsi uses a humorous approach for a commercial although it was not a Super Bowl commercial.

Pepsi's You're a Winner

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=76#oembed-7

See the Coke man in a Pepsi commercial.

Pepsi and the Song, "Your Cheatin Heart"

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=76#oembed-8

Pepsi used a similar strategy in 1996.

Companies must also be careful when using fear appeals so consumers don't get too alarmed or frightened. A few years ago, Reebok had to discontinue a TV ad because it upset so many people. The ad showed a bungee jumper diving off a bridge, followed by a shot of just his shoes hanging from the bridge by the bungee cord. That ad provoked people because it implied the jumper had fallen to his death.

Firms also decide whether to use strategies such as an open-ended or closed-ended message; whether to use a one-sided or two-sided message; and whether to use slogans, characters, or jingles. An **open-ended message** allows the consumer to draw his or her own conclusion, such as a commercial for perfume or cologne. A **closed-ended message** draws a logical conclusion. Most messages are one sided, stressing only the positive aspects, similar to what you include on your résumé. However, two-sided messages are often utilized as well.

Pharmaceutical companies often show both the positive aspects (benefits) of using a drug and the negative aspects of not using it. (Of course, U.S. laws require companies to list the side effects of prescriptions—hence the long "warnings" you hear and read about in conjunction with drug ads.)

Example of an Open-Ended Commercial

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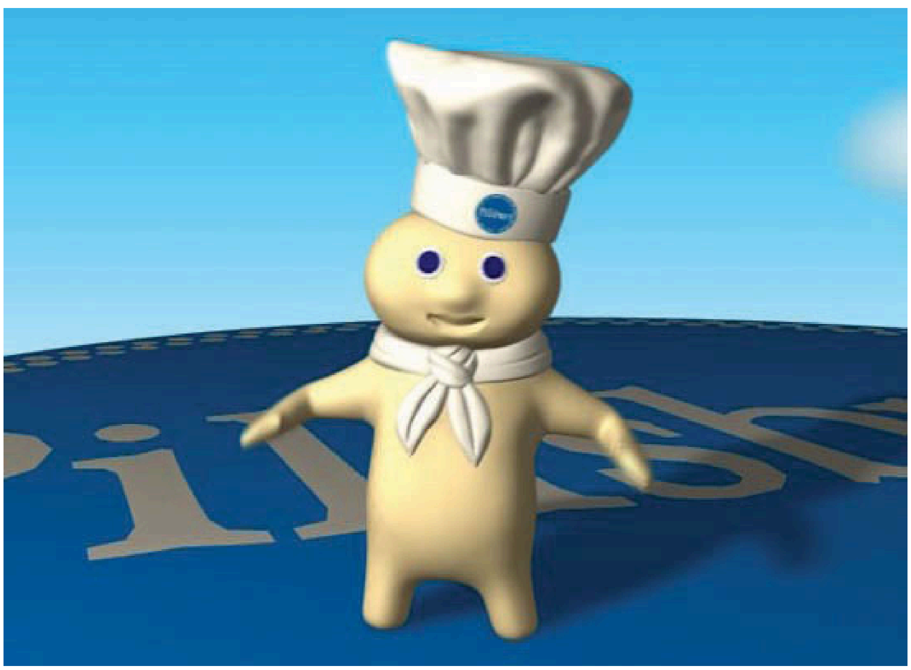
Do you interpret cologne and perfume ads the same way you see them portrayed on television?The order of presentation also affects how well consumers remember a brand. If you forgot about a twenty-five-page term paper that you had to write before the next day of class, which sections of the paper would be the strongest? Would the beginning, the end, or the middle be the best section? Many students argue that either the beginning or the end is most important, hoping that the instructor does not read the entire paper carefully. The same strategy is true for commercials and advertisements. The beginning and the end of the message should be strong and include the brand name. That way, if consumers hear or read only part of the message, they will hopefully remember the brand name.

he Jolly Green Giant helped kids remember the Green Giant jingle and hopefully reminded them to eat their vegetables. Jolly Green Giant by greefus groinks. Source: Wikimedia Commons. CC BY-SA 2.0.

Some companies use characters or mascots and/or jingles or slogans. Although media is changing, many of the characters and jingles have stayed the same for decades. When you think of Campbell's soup, do you think "Mm, mm good"? Just as the commercials viewed in the beginning of the chapter focused on "Mm, mm good," Campbell's has used the same slogan since the early 1900s, and the Campbell Soup Kids were created in 1904. Although Campbell's changed its slogan in 1998, the company still uses the "Mm, mm good" slogan in most of its promotions across different media. Apparently, the slogan still resonates with consumers. Other jingles, characters (mascots), or symbols you may be familiar with include the Jolly Green Giant, the Wienermobile, and the Pillsbury Doughboy known as Poppin' Fresh. How successful are advertisers in making sure consumers know their brands? Try the brand quiz and see how many brand icons you know. The following figures also illustrate some of these characters and symbols.

The Wienermobile tours the country. Wienermobile-Bologna by Scottfamily5. Source: [Wikimedia Commons](). [CC0 Public Domain]().



The Pillsbury Doughboy, Poppin' Fresh, is popular around the world. Pillsbury doughboy by Giora Eshkol. [Source: Wikimedia Commons](). [CC BY-SA 3.0]().

Do you remember the Oscar Mayer jingles? Watch the video below and see if you find yourself singing along. The jingle was originally developed in 1963 and is now recorded in different languages. In 2006 Oscar Mayer promoted a singing contest for the jingle, which still remains popular. Kraft's promotions are also consistent across media, using the visuals from commercials as pictures in their print ads in both English and Spanish versions, following the IMC concept.

Organizations must determine promotion objectives, or what they want to accomplish with their promotions. For example, if a company has a new brand they may want to generate awareness or attention. Later, they may focus on persuading customers to buy their brand. Each brand needs to have a unique selling proposition (USP) for customers to remember and want their product. Depending on their objectives and their USP, marketers must develop a message strategy. Some companies prefer humor or rational appeals while others may use a fear appeal.

The Promotion Budget

An offering's budget is a critical factor when it comes to deciding which message strategies to pursue. Several methods can be used to determine the promotion budget. The simplest method for determining the promotion budget is often merely using a **percentage of last year's sales** or the projected sales for the next year. This method does not take into account any changes in the market or unexpected circumstances. However, many firms use this method because it is simple and straightforward.

The **affordable method**, or what you think you can afford, is a method used often by small businesses. Unfortunately, things often cost more than anticipated, and you may not have enough money. Many small businesses think they're going to have money for promotion, but they run out and cannot spend as much on promotion as they had hoped. Such a situation may have happened to you when you planned a weekend trip based on what you thought you could afford, and you did not have enough money. As a result, you had to modify your plans and not do everything you planned.

Other companies may decide to use **competitive parity**—that is, they try to keep their promotional spending comparable to the competitors' spending level. This method is designed to keep a brand in the minds of consumers. During a recession, some firms feel like they must spend as much—if not more—than their competitors to get customers to buy from them. Other companies are forced to cut back on their spending or pursue more targeted promotions. When Kmart faced bankruptcy, they cut back on expenditures, yet they kept their advertising inserts (free-standing inserts, or FSI) in Sunday newspapers to remain competitive with other businesses that had an FSI.

A more rational and ideal approach is the **objective and task method**, whereby marketing managers first determine what they want to accomplish (objectives) with their communication. Then they determine what activities—commercials, sales promotions, and so on—are necessary to accomplish the objectives. Finally, they conduct research to figure out how much the activities, or tasks, cost in order to develop a budget.

>Part of the budgeting process includes deciding how much money to allocate to different media. Although most media budgets are still spent predominantly on traditional media, shifts in spending are occurring as the media landscape continues to change. Mobile marketing continues to become more popular as a way to reach specific audiences. Over one-third of cell phone users were exposed to mobile advertising in 2009 and 16 percent of the people exposed to mobile advertising responded to the ads via text messaging. Younger people are typically the most accepting of mobile advertising (Loechner, 2009). Spending on mobile ads is expected to grow 80% from $1.45 billion in 2011 to $2.61 billion in 2012. A big part of the growth is due to the mobile search business of Google (Cotton, 2012).

The manufacturers of most major brands use texting and multimedia messages. Mobile marketing allows advertisers to communicate with consumers and businesses on the go. Over half of Chinese, Korean, Indian, and Thai Internet users access social media sites through their phones rather than through computers[1]. While many marketers plan to use electronic devices for their mobile-marketing strategies, other firms may use movable or mobile promotions, which, as discussed earlier, are also considered out-of-home advertising.

Companies can determine how much to spend on promotion several different ways. The percent of sales method, in which companies use a set percentage of sales for their promotion, is often the easiest method to use. Small companies may focus on what they think they can afford while other organizations may try to keep their promotions relatively equal to their competitors'. The objective and task approach takes objectives into consideration and the costs of the tasks necessary to accomplish objectives in order to determine the promotion budget.

Sales promotions are activities that supplement a company's advertising, public relations, and professional selling efforts. They create incentives for customers to buy products more quickly and make larger purchases. Sales promotions are often temporary, but when the economy is weak, sales promotions become even more popular for consumers and are used more frequently by organizations.

Consumer Sales Promotions

Samples, coupons, premiums, contests, and rebates are examples of consumer sales promotions. Do you like free samples? Most people do. A free **sample** allows consumers to try a small amount of a product so that hopefully they will purchase it. The strategy encourages trial and builds awareness. You have probably purchased a product that included a small free sample with it—for example, a small amount of conditioner packaged with your shampoo. Have you ever gone to a store that provided free samples of different food items? Although sampling is an expensive strategy, it is usually very effective for food products. People try the product, and the person providing the sample tells them about the product and mentions any special prices for it.

In many retail grocery stores, coupons are given to consumers with the samples. **Coupons** provide an immediate price reduction off an item. The amount of the coupon is later reimbursed to the retailer by the manufacturer. The retailer gets a handling fee for accepting coupons. When the economy is weak, more consumers cut out coupons and look for special bargains such as double coupons and buy-one-get-one-free (BOGO) coupons. They may also buy more store brands.

Consumers cut out and use more coupons in a weak economy. Coupon Pile Stock Photo by Carol Pyles. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0.

While many consumers cut coupons from the inserts in Sunday newspapers, other consumers find coupons online or on their cell phones. **Point-of-purchase displays**, including coupon machines placed next to products in stores, encourage consumers to buy a brand or product immediately. When a consumer sees a special display or can get a coupon instantly, manufacturers hope the sales promotion increases sales. Stores may also provide coupons for customers with loyalty cards to encourage them to select particular brands and products.Mobile marketing and the Internet provide consumers in international markets access to coupons and other promotions. In India, the majority of coupons used are digital, while paper coupons have the largest share in the United States. Over 80 percent of diapers are purchased with coupons; imagine how much easier and less wasteful digital coupons scanned from a mobile phone are for both organizations and consumers.

>Other sales promotions may be conducted online and include incentives such as free items, free shipping, coupons, and sweepstakes. For example, many online merchants such as Shoe Station and Zappos offer free shipping and free return shipping to encourage consumers to shop online. Some firms have found that the response they get to their online sales promotions is better than response they get to traditional sales promotions.

Another very popular sales promotion for consumers is a premium. A **premium** is something you get either for free or for a small shipping and handling charge with your proof of purchase (sales receipt or part of package). Remember wanting your favorite cereal because there was a toy in the box? The toy is an example of a premium. Sometimes you might have to mail in a certain number of proofs of purchase to get a premium. The purpose of a premium is to motivate you to buy a product multiple times. What many people don't realize is that when they pay the shipping and handling charges, they may also be paying for the premium.

Contests or sweepstakes also attract a lot of people. **Contests** are sales promotions people enter or participate in to have a chance to win a prize. The Publisher's Clearing House Sweepstakes and the Monopoly Game at McDonald's are both examples. The organization that **Loyalty programs** are sales promotions designed to get repeat business. Loyalty programs include things such as frequent flier programs, hotel programs, and shopping cards for grocery stores, drugstores, and restaurants. Sometimes point systems are used in conjunction with loyalty programs. After you accumulate so many miles or points, an organization might provide you with a special incentive such as a free flight, free hotel room, or free sandwich. Many loyalty programs, especially hotels and airlines, have partners to give consumers more ways to accumulate and use miles and points.

Rebates are popular with both consumers and the manufacturers that provide them. When you get a rebate, you are refunded part (or all) of the purchase price of a product back after completing a form and sending it to the manufacturer with your proof of purchase. The trick is completing the paperwork on time. Although different types of sales promotions work best for different organizations, rebates are very profitable for companies because many consumers forget or wait too long to send in their rebate forms. Consequently, they do not get any money back. Rebates sound great to consumers until they forget to send it back.

Trade Promotions

In business-to-business (B2B) marketing, sales promotions are typically called trade promotions because they are targeted to channel members who conduct business or "trade" with consumers. **Trade promotions** include trade shows, conventions, event marketing, trade allowances, training, and special incentives given to retailers to market particular products and services, such as extra money, in-store displays, and prizes.

Trade shows are one of the most common types of sales promotions in B2B markets. A **trade show** is an event in which firms in a particular industry display and demonstrate their offerings to other organizations they hope will buy them. There are typically many different trade shows in which one organization can participate. Using displays, brochures, and other materials, representatives at trade shows can identify potential customers (prospects), inform customers about new and existing products, and show them products and materials. Representatives can also get feedback from prospects about their company's products and materials and perhaps about competitors.

Companies also gather competitive information at trade shows because they can see the products other firms are exhibiting and how they are selling them. While approximately 75 percent of representatives attending trade shows actually buy the product(s) they see, 93 percent of attendees are influenced by what they see at the trade shows. However, only 20 percent of organizations follow up on leads obtained at trade shows and only 17 percent of buyers are called upon after they express interest in a particular company's products (Tanner & Pitta, 2009). The image below is an example of a booth display at a trade show showcasing the Korean electronics firm Samsung. Trade shows can be very successful, although the companies that participate in them need to follow-up on the leads generated at the shows. With changing technology, Webinars are being used to reach businesses that may not be able to attend trade shows. Follow-up after a Webinar is also essential.

LG CES 2010 by LGEPR. [Source: Wikimedia Commons](). [CC BY 2.0]().

Conventions, or meetings, with groups of professionals also provide a way for sellers to show potential customers different products. For example, a medical convention might be a good opportunity to display a new type of medical device. Sales representatives and managers often attend conventions to market their products.

La Clínica IMQ… by Docor Comunicacion. [Source: Flickr](). [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0]().

Intuitive Surgical is the maker of the da Vinci robot, a new type of technology used to make surgeries easy to perform and less invasive. Intuitive Surgical often demonstrates the robot at surgical conventions.

Sales contests, which are often held by manufacturers or vendors, provide incentives for salespeople to increase their sales. Often, the contests focus on selling higher-profit or slow-moving products. The sales representative with the most sales of the product wins a prize such as a free vacation, company recognition, or cash.

Trade allowances give channel partners—for example, a manufacturer's wholesalers, distributors, retailers, and so forth—different incentives to push a product. One type of trade allowance is an **advertising allowance** (money) to advertise a seller's products in local newspapers. An advertising allowance benefits both the manufacturer and the retailer. Typically, the retailer can get a lower rate than manufacturers on advertising in local outlets, saving the manufacturer money. The retailer benefits by getting an allowance from the manufacturer.

Another sales promotion that manufacturers, such as those in the tool or high tech industries, offer businesses is **training** to help their salespeople understand how the manufacturers' products work and how consumers can be enticed to buy them. Many manufacturers also provide in-store **product demonstrations** to show a channel partner's customers how products work and answer any questions they might have. Demonstrations of new video game systems and computers are extremely popular and successful in generating sales.

Free merchandise, such as a tool, television, or other product produced by the manufacturer, can also be used to get retailers to sell products to consumers. In other words, a manufacturer of televisions might offer the manager of a retail electronics store a television to push its products. If a certain number of televisions are sold, the manager gets the television. Have you ever been to an electronics store or a furniture store and felt like the salesperson was pushing one particular television or one particular mattress? Perhaps the salesperson was getting **push money**, or a cash incentive from the manufacturer to *push* a particular item. The push to sell the item might be because there is a large amount of inventory of it, it is being replaced by a new model, or the product is not selling well. Figure 11.15 "Examples of Sales Promotions" recaps the different types of sales promotions designed for both consumers and businesses.

Consumer Sales Promotions, and Business-to-business sales promotions

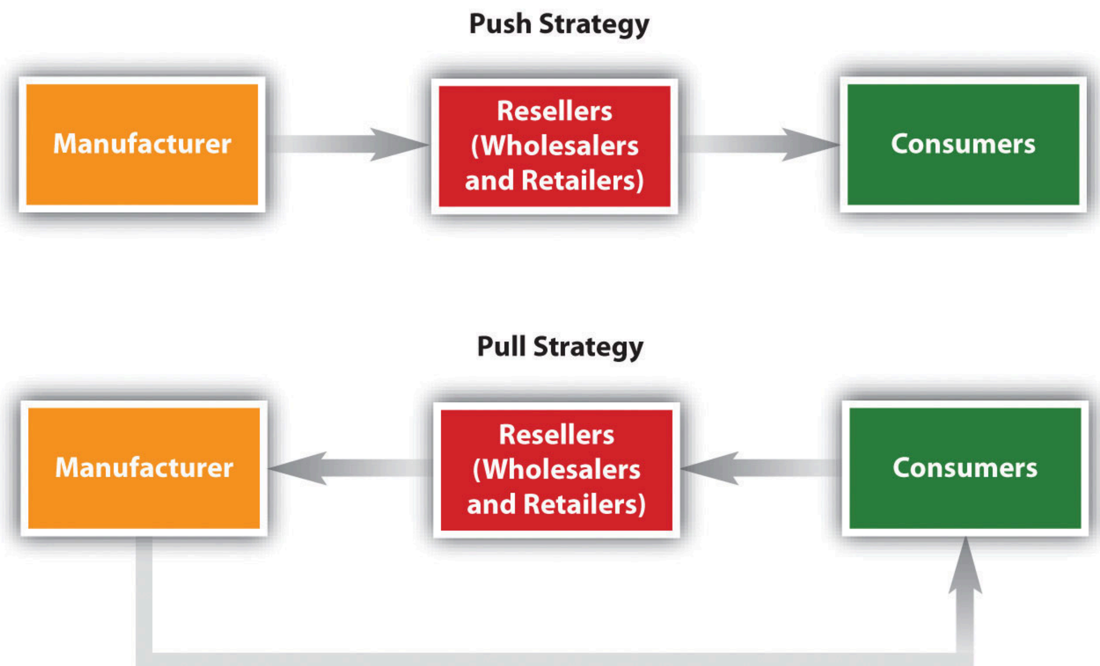
Consumer Sales Promotions	**Business-to-Business Sales Promotions**
Coupons	Trade shows and conventions
Sweepstakes or contests	Sales contests
Premiums	Trade and advertising allowances
Rebates	Product demonstrations
Samples	Training
Loyalty programs	Free merchandise
Point-of-purchase displays	Push money

Push Versus Pull Strategy

Businesses must also decide whether to use a push strategy, a pull strategy, or both push and pull strategies. A **push strategy** involves promoting a product to businesses (middlemen), such as wholesalers and retailers, who then *push* the product through the channel promoting it to final consumers. Manufacturers may set up displays in retail outlets for new products or provide incentives such as price discounts to the retailer so the retailer can promote or push the product to consumers.

Companies use a **pull strategy** when they target final consumers with promotions. In other words, a company promotes it products and services to final consumers to *pull* consumers into the stores or get the consumers asking for the product. If a company sends coupons to the consumers, hopefully the consumers will take the coupons (sales promotion) to the store and buy the product. A manufacturer promotes its new product on television to consumers and places coupons in the newspaper inserts, hoping consumers will demand the product. Their pull causes wholesalers and retailers to buy the product to try to meet the demand.

Many manufacturers use both a push strategy and a pull strategy, promoting their products and services to both final consumers and their trade partners (e.g., retailers and wholesalers). The image below "A Push versus a Pull Strategy" shows how push strategy differs from a pull strategy.



Push vs Pull [Long Description 4-3]

Companies use sales promotions to get customers to take action (make purchases) quickly. Sales promotions increase the awareness of products, help introduce new products, and often create interest in the organizations that run the promotions. Coupons, contests, samples, and premiums are among the types of sales promotions aimed at consumers. Trade promotions, or promotions aimed at businesses, include trade shows, sales contests, trade allowances, and push money.

Public Relations Activities And Tools

Good public relations efforts can help a firm create rapport with its customers, promote what it has to offer, and supplement its sales efforts. PR puts a positive spin on news stories and is often perceived as more neutral and objective than other forms of promotion because much of the information is tailored to sound as if it has been created by an organization independent of the seller. Public relations materials include press releases, publicity, and news conferences. Companies also use PR to promote products and to supplement their sales efforts.

Many organizations that engage in public relations have in-house PR departments, media relations groups, or investor relations groups. Other organizations sometimes hire external PR firms or advertising agencies to find and create public relations opportunities for them. PR specialists must build relationships with people at different media outlets to help get their stories placed. Universities, hospitals, government organizations, and charitable organizations often hire PR people to help disseminate positive information about their services and to increase interest in what they do. As such, PR is part of a company's promotion budget and their integrated marketing communications.

PR specialists also help political campaign managers generate positive information in the press. PR specialists can handle crisis communication and put a positive view on situations when something bad happens to an organization or person. In foreign markets, PR agencies may help ensure product concepts are understood correctly. Getting all PR stories placed in desired media is not guaranteed. A lot of time and effort is spent getting to know people who can help publish or announce the information to the public.

Companies use a variety of tools for their public relations purposes, including annual reports, brochures and magazines for both employees and the public, Web sites to show good things they're doing, speeches, blogs, and podcasts. Some of the most commonly used PR tools include press releases, news conferences, and publicity. Sponsorships, product placements, and social media also generate a lot of positive PR.

Press Releases

Part of a company's public relations efforts includes putting a positive spin on news stories. A **press release** is a news story written by an organization to promote a product, organization, or person. Consider how much better a story or a product recommendation is likely to be perceived when the receiver thinks the content is from an objective third party rather than an organization writing about itself. Public relations personnel frequently prepare press releases in hopes that the news media will pick them up and disseminate the information to the public. However, there is no guarantee that the media will use a press release. Some of the PR opportunities that companies may seek to highlight in their press releases include charity events, awards, new products, company reports, and things they are doing to improve the environment or local community.

Read the following two examples of press releases. The first story sounds like it was written by a news organization, but it was created by Apple and their public relations people to highlight the introduction of the new iPhone 3G. The second press release provides an example of how a company like Stubb's Bar-B-Q teams up with Mobile Loaves & Fishes, a charity that helps feed the hungry, to help feed homeless and poor people and restock food banks around the country. The story enhances the positive image of both organizations.

AN EXAMPLE OF A PRESS RELEASE TO INTRODUCE A NEW PRODUCT

Apple Introduces the New iPhone 3G

Twice as Fast at Half the Price

SAN FRANCISCO—June 9, 2008—Apple® today introduced the new iPhone™ 3G, combining all the revolutionary features of iPhone with 3G networking that is twice as fast* as the first generation iPhone, built-in GPS for expanded location-based mobile services, and iPhone 2.0 software which includes support for Microsoft Exchange ActiveSync and runs the hundreds of third party applications already built with the recently released iPhone SDK. In the US the new iPhone 3G is priced at a stunning $199 for the 8GB model, and just $299 for the 16GB model.** iPhone 3G will be available in more than 70 countries later this year, beginning with customer availability in 22 countries—Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and the US—on July 11.

*Based on 3G and EDGE testing. Actual speeds vary by site conditions.

**Based on iPhone 3G (8GB) and first generation iPhone (8GB) purchases. Requires new two year AT&T rate plan, sold separately[1].

AN EXAMPLE OF A PRESS RELEASE TO SHOW HOW A COMPANY HELPS FEED THE HUNGRY AND RESTOCK FOOD BANKS AROUND THE COUNTRY

Stubb's Teams Up with Mobile Loaves & Fishes to Launch "Feed the World Tour"

Tuesday, May 26, 5 p.m. @ Wooldridge Park

AUSTIN—Stubb's Legendary Kitchen will kick off its 12-city "Feed the World Tour" this Tuesday, May 26 at 5 p.m. in Wooldridge Square Park, 9th and Guadalupe Streets, by serving chopped beef sandwiches with famous Stubb's barbecue sauce to homeless and working poor people from one of Mobile Loaves & Fishes' special catering trucks, which serve people in six cities every day.

Kurt Koegler, president of Stubb's Legendary Kitchen, will join Alan Graham, Mobile Loaves' founder/president, and volunteers from the company and MLF volunteers to serve the sandwiches and distribute Stubb's T-shirts. The Austin-based company chose Mobile Loaves as its partner to kick off the "Feed the World Tour," which is named for the stated mission of Texas Bar-B-Q legend, C.B. "Stubb" Stubblefield, who said: "I was born hungry I want to feed the world."

After leaving Austin, the tour will swing through the Southeast, up the East Coast and into Washington, D.C. where the Stubb's team will compete at the annual BBQ Battle on Pennsylvania Avenue. In each city, Stubb's Legendary Kitchen and company president Koegler will barbecue for the homeless and help restock depleted food banks.

"Stubb was a cook but more than that, a lover of people. The values that guided his life still guide the company that bears his name. Stubb's life truly is in every bottle of sauce and marinade we make. All of us at Stubb's are thrilled to be working with Mobile Loaves and bringing all of Stubb's Love and Happiness to those who all too often need it most" said Koegler.

"The economy has placed greater demand on organizations like Mobile Loaves and local food banks, so we couldn't think of a better time to show our support," Koegler said. "Stubb's greatest joy was feeding the people who came from all around for a taste of his famous barbecue, and it is an honor for us to fulfill his mission with our Feed the World Tour."

"We're honored to be selected as Stubb's charity partner for the kick-off of this awesome tour," Graham said. "As someone who once was poor and hungry, C.B. 'Stubb' Stubblefield is smiling in heaven to know that his creation is helping feed brothers and sisters on the street here in Austin and around the country. We look forward to connecting Stubb's with people on the streets here and in the other cities we serve[2]."

Press releases and other PR activities can also be used for damage control purposes. **Crisis communication** is the process of countering the extreme negative effects a company gets when it receives bad publicity. Domino's Pizza was forced to engage in damage control after two of its employees created a video doing disgusting things to pizzas and then posting it to YouTube. If the publicity is particularly bad, as it was for Domino's, a company might hold a press conference or prepare a speech for the top executive to give. For example, the president of Domino's spoke on video to try to control the damage to Domino's business. The company then posted the following video on YouTube.

Dominos Pizza Video

An Example of Crisis Communication

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Patrick Doyle, the president of Domino's, responds on YouTube to a video created by two Domino's employees, who were subsequently fired by the pizza chain.

Similarly, companies that move into foreign markets are sometimes perceived negatively by locals because they have little information about the firms. In India, the reputation of companies is very important to workers and their families. As a result, U.S. employers recruiting in the tech industry in India often have to work hard to make their brands and products known so people will want to work for them. The firms do so via various PR efforts.

Just as press releases can be used to promote the good things an organization or person does, press conferences can also be held when a company is simply seeking good PR. An organization might hold a press conference to announce that it has hired new, highly sought-after executives, that it is breaking ground on a new building, or to talk about its community service projects.

Sponsorships

Many of you have heard of the Staples Center, where the Los Angeles Lakers play basketball. But imagine how many *more* people heard about the Staples Center following the announcement that Michael Jackson's public memorial would take place there. All the news stories talking about tickets and information about the memorial provided "free" publicity for the center and for the office supplies store, Staples, for which the center is named. Staples paid $375 million for naming rights of the center, which was built in 1998[3]. Indeed, the chain has gotten a huge return on its sponsorship of the center.

The Staples Center in Los Angeles is an example of a venue sponsorship. The office supplies store Staples paid for the naming rights to the stadium.

Staples Center by Ms. Highsmith. [Source: Wikimedia Commons](). [CC0 Public Domain]().

A **sponsorship** involves paying a fee to have your name associated with different things, such as the following:

- A particular venue (Wrigley Field; the Staples Center)
- A superstar's apparel (Tiger Woods wearing Nike hats and shirts)
- An event (the AT&T National Golf Tournament; the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl)
- A cause (M&M's support of the Special Olympics)
- An educational workshop or information session
- A NASCAR vehicle (by Pfizer, the maker of Viagra; see image below)

Even though sponsorships are expensive, they are growing in popularity as corporations seek ways to strengthen their corporate image, increase their brand awareness, differentiate their products, and reach their target markets. Worldwide, corporations spent over $43 billion on sponsorships in 2008[4]; however, the recession has taken a toll and the new stadium for the Dallas Cowboys still doesn't have a sponsor with naming rights. Over two-thirds of the sponsorships in North America are for sports, followed by entertainment (e.g., music and performing arts) and causes (e.g., the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure and "alternative spring breaks" for college students). Other organizations and structures, such as buildings and bridges, may seek sponsorships as a means of generating revenue. Imagine how many people drive across the Brooklyn Bridge in New York or the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and how much awareness an organization would get if they were allowed to pay to have their name on either of the bridges.

Pfizer, the maker of Viagra, is one of many companies that sponsor NASCAR racing teams. Image credit: scan0070 by Jay Bonvouloir. [Source: Flickr](#). [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#).

Cause-related marketing is one of the fastest-growing types of sponsorships. It occurs when a company supports a nonprofit organization in some way. For example, M&M's sponsors the Special Olympics and American Airlines raises money for breast cancer research with an annual celebrity golf and tennis tournament. The airline also donates frequent flier miles to the cause. Yoplait Yogurt donates money for breast cancer research for every pink lid that is submitted. Cause-related marketing can have a positive PR impact by strengthening the affinity people have for a company that does it.

Product Placements

Getting a company's product included as part of a television show, movie, video game, special event, or book is called a **product placement**. When you watch reruns of *Seinfeld*, you often see different Coca-Cola products being consumed. Likewise, you might see a Nissan Maxima on *Desperate Housewives*. Over four hundred product placements typically appear in each episode of *The Biggest Loser*. Apple placed products in twenty-four movies that reached number one between August 1, 2008, and August 1, 2009, while Ford products appeared twenty times and Budweiser products appeared twelve times[5].

Example of Product Placement

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Although the video sounds like a paid commercial, it is actually part of an episode of *30 Rock*.

Typically, a company pays a fee to have one of its products placed. But sometimes the company pays nothing if the product is needed for a show in some way or as part of the plot. FedEx did not pay for product placement in the movie *Cast Away*[6]. Product placement can improve a brand's awareness and exposure and often increase its sales. Given the number of exposures an organization receives with product placement, the cost of a product placement can be less expensive than commercials might cost.

Although most product placements appear in television shows and movies, corporations are pursuing other options. For example, they are now placing products in online videos, computer games, and books. The number of product placements is expected to increase as consumers continue to skip commercials and advertisements using digital video recorders (DVRs).

Public relations (PR) are the activities organizations engage in to create a positive image for a company, product, service, or a person. Press releases, a commonly used PR tool, are designed to generate publicity, but there is no guarantee the media will use them in the stories they write. Sponsorships are designed to increase brand awareness, improve corporate image, and reach target markets. Product placements are designed to generate exposure, brand awareness, and interest.

Social media uses technology and mobility to provide an interactive means of communication among people, organizations, and communities who are interconnected and interdependent. Many channels and vehicles are available for social media just as there are many different television shows and magazines. With changing technology, new vehicles are added frequently.

With over half of Americans participating in social networks, people and organizations who don't participate may be at a disadvantage with some groups in society. Not only does the majority of the population in the United States have a profile on a social network, but at least one-third of those people access the sites multiple times a day. Not only is social media popular for keeping in touch with friends, but companies use social media to promote their brands and as a tool for recruiting and hiring. People follow companies and brands on social media, especially on Facebook, whereas LinkedIn generates more job referrals. Just as companies are allocating more of their promotion budget to social media, they are also increasing their expenditures on social recruiting.

Social media is complex and rapidly changing. While there is some overlap between personal and business, one way to improve the understanding of social media is to think about social media zones. Social media zones include social communities, social publishing, social entertainment, and social commerce. Think about the different ways you use social media and which zones you utilize. You probably use all of the zones.

Social communities are channels that focus on activities and relationships and include social networking sites (online hosts such as Facebook and LinkedIn), forums, wikis, and message boards, channels where you may already participate. Think about your profile. Whatever you type becomes a digital version of you. In social communities, you communicate and socialize with others. While you may share information with others, you must be careful how much and what information you choose to post.

Social publishing helps distribute information to different audiences and includes channels such as **blogs** (Web sites with content that is updated regularly) and media sharing sites with searchable content featuring videos (YouTube), photos (Flickr), and music (iTunes). Think about videos you may have posted. When companies pay to have product reviews posted or to promote contests or their brands, they may use social publishers to write blogs and generate word of mouth. Many companies are also posting their own commercials and other content on YouTube.

Opportunities for games and entertainment are part of the **social entertainment zone**. Social games like FarmVille, entertainment networks, action games, puzzle games, and reality games have increased revenues in the social gaming industry. Social gaming appears to be growing in popularity.

Do you remember talking about e-commerce? Well, the **social commerce zone** is part of e-commerce where people buy and sell products on the Internet. Social commerce provides a means for interactive shopping, including reviews, ratings, and social shopping Web sites where you can chat with merchant personnel or with friends while you are shopping. Think about the questions you may ask a customer service person in a chat room versus what you may ask at a store in a mall.

While organizations are allocating more of their promotion budgets to social media, they are also generating a lot of buzz or talk without a lot of expense. To see the impact social media has, consider the buzz created by Old Milwaukee's commercial shown during Super Bowl XLVI, which only aired locally in North Platte, Nebraska. North Platte is the second smallest television market in the country with only 15,000 homes but it is hometown to New England Patriots Danny Woodhead, While the thirty-second spot only targeted a small audience at a cost of $700–$1500 in the local market (compared to $3.5 million for national thirty-second spot), the commercial created more buzz than many of the nationally broadcast commercials (Gillette, 2012). The YouTube version shown in the following video has been viewed over a million times, much more than the always popular Budweiser commercials. The commercial became so popular that Old Milwaukee put a link to the commercial on their Web site. Talk about the impact of social media and bragging rights!

Old Milwaukee and Will Ferrell in the Super Bowl

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Old Milwaukee and their strategy to play during the Super Bowl.
Social media uses technology and mobility to provide an interactive means of communication among people, organizations, and communities who are interconnected and interdependent. Social media zones include social communities, social publishing, social entertainment, and social commerce. More companies are using social media to promote their products as well as for recruiting.

Chapter 5 – Why Public Relations Writing Matters

Ethics

Ethics is a moral code that serves as a compass for individual or societal behaviour. Engaging in unethical behaviour or messaging can be particularly damaging for business brands. Countless businesses have been involved in scandals and crises stemming from unethical behaviour and judgment. Recovering from these instances is difficult, and the effects are sometimes irreversible.

Most subfields related to the broader strategic industry have what is called a code of ethics or a collection of rules and values that play a foundational role in conduct and the decision-making process. The links below explain the code of ethics for public relations, journalism, and advertising:

- Public Relations Society of America Code of Ethics
- Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics
- Principles and Practices for Advertising Ethics

Defamation

Compromising the code of ethics may have legal consequences, depending upon the situation. One of the most common ethical problems that occur in court cases is defamation. Defamation is intentional damage done to one party's reputation by another party. Although it is not a crime, it is considered a civil suit in a court of law. Individuals or organizations with particularly high stakes attached to their reputation (for example, celebrities, public figures, renowned educators, or popular businesses) are more inclined to sue for defamation.

A recent example is the defamation cases filed by comedian Bill Cosby. In 2015, Cosby faced allegations of sexual assault from more than 50 women, resulting in civil lawsuits and criminal investigations against him. The tremendously negative effect on his reputation resulted in the rescinding of several honorary degrees he had received as well as the cancellation of reruns of his popular TV program from the 1980s and early '90s, *The Cosby Show.* In response to the damages, Cosby sued some of the women for defamation, but the cases were later dismissed. The allegations continue to have an impact on Cosby's image and legacy.

Slander And Libel

There are two categories of defamation: slander and libel. Slander is the spoken version of defamation, when something is said verbally that harms another party's reputation. Libel is the written version of defamation, when something is published that damages a party's reputation. Because this textbook focuses on writing, libel will be discussed in greater detail.

Libel includes both print and online publications; even social media posts can be grounds for a libel suit. In 2011, lawyer Rhonda Holmes sued her former client, punk rocker Courtney Love, over a disparaging tweet Love had sent in reference to Holmes's work ethic. Love was the first person in history to stand trial for social media defamation; prior to her case, there was no record of someone being sued for defamation because of something posted on Twitter (Chow, 2014). Popular media dubbed the case "Twibel." A jury acquitted Love of all charges.

> For more information on the case and its implication read: How Courtney Love and U.S.'s first Twitter libel trial could impact journalists By: Ellyn Angelotti published in Poynter.

Winning a libel suit is difficult. Five elements have to exist in order to render a statement as libelous (Harrower, 2012):

- The statement was published
- The statement is conveyed as a fact, not an opinion.
- The statement is false.
- The statement is identifiable with or made about the plaintiff.
- The statement was published with intentional negligence or malice.

The last element is particularly challenging to prove. Many libel suits are dismissed because the plaintiff fails to provide evidence for the existence of each element.

The possibility of defamation is of great concern to every strategic communication professional. Careful information gathering and rigorous fact checking are vital in order to avoid defamatory communication. Double- checking quotes and sources helps minimize the risk of publishing libelous statements.

Conflict Of Interest

> **Reflection Point**
> Before reading the section on conflict of interest, think about the following situation:Should a newspaper travel writer accept a free hotel stay, airline ticket, meals, and so on from a resort as an enticement to get the writer to do a story? Does this produce real or perceived bias in the resulting reporting? Is this arrangement disclosed to readers? What if the only way the newspaper could afford to have a travel writer was to accept such free offers? What kinds of conflicts, real or perceived, need to be considered?

Conflict of interest is "a clash between a person's self-interest and professional interest or public interest" (Business Dictionary, 2016). Communication professionals should try to eliminate any action that may compromise their impartiality or the interests of their organization. That includes separating personal interests from the organization's goals.

The definition seems straightforward, but real-life situations can be murky. As a professional working at an advertising agency, should you take on two clients who are competitors? Most within the industry would say that you should inform both parties of the situation and let them decide if they want to proceed. However, let's say your agency takes on a client who has a history of using unethical labor practices, something that you staunchly oppose. How do you remain impartial in this situation? How do you write material that benefits your client when your personal opinions may affect the content? Or, should you, as a journalist, accept a small gift from a source (for example, a five-dollar Starbucks gift card) before or after an interview? Most journalists would say no, because accepting a gift from a source, no matter how small, could affect your feelings toward the individual, which could be reflected in your writing.

There are several ways to avoid a conflict of interest. Gather as much information as you can about the potential conflict in order to make an objective decision (or as objective as possible). Firms should have formal rules, and conflicts should be disclosed to supervisors. To safeguard your career and reputation, it's important to always uphold high ethical standards and conduct yourself in a manner above reproach. You may want to ask colleagues or supervisors for advice. Also, be as upfront as possible with the parties involved.

> Learn more about conflict of interest.
> Read the article CANADIAN JOURNALIST SUSPENDED FOR CONFLICT OF INTEREST ROLE IN PR FIRM By Patrick Coffee (January 9, 2015) in ADWEEK.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is an issue in both academic and professional situations. The term refers to using another person's work without proper credit or attribution. Plagiarism is a very serious offense in the strategic communication field, and is particularly egregious in journalism. In 2011, a *Washington Post* journalist, Sari Horwitz, was accused of directly copying content from the *Arizona Republic* while covering the shooting of congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords. The *Post* issued an apology and suspended Horwitz for three months (Memmott, 2011). Horwitz also expressed her remorse and released a statement as reported by NPR:

"I am deeply sorry. To our readers, my friends and colleagues, my editors, and to the paper I love, I want to apologize. … Under the pressure of tight deadlines, I did something I have never done in my entire career. I used another newspaper's work as if it were my own. It was wrong. It was inexcusable. And it is one of the cardinal sins in journalism" (Memmott, 2011, para. 2).

Plagiarism is not committed primarily by students or those new to the field. Horwitz was an experienced journalist who had received the Pulitzer Prize three times.

A more recent and highly publicized case of plagiarism involved a speech given at the 2016 Republican National Convention by Melania Trump, wife of the party's presidential nominee, Donald Trump. Soon after she delivered the speech, some took to social media to point out similarities to a speech given by Michelle Obama at the 2008 Democratic National Convention. News media outlets later reported that parts of the speech were lifted directly from Obama's speech (Horowitz, 2016). Meredith McIver, Melania's speechwriter and an employee of the Trump organization, took responsibility for the incident and stated that it was a mistake (Horowitz, 2016). McIver was not fired, and many outraged observers questioned the integrity of the Trump campaign.

Lack Of Transparency

Most crisis communication experts agree that transparency is key to maintaining or regaining the public's trust. Lack of transparency can have devastating effects that sometimes leave a permanent stain on a company or brand's image. Brands cannot thrive without the public's trust.

A recent case that demonstrates the negative outcomes of failing to be transparent is the emissions scandal at Volkswagen. In 2015, news outlets reported that the German car company used a "defeat device" in many of its cars as far back as 2009 to cheat on several emissions tests conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency. These devices were able to detect when tests were being conducted and help reduce toxic emissions during the procedures. In reality, the vehicle emissions were well above the levels permitted by the EPA.

Watch the The Verge YouTube video The Volkswagen Scandal.

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Soon after the public received the news, Volkswagen sales plummeted and a social backlash against the company ensued. As a result, the CEO resigned and the company lost the public's trust. The organization is still going through damage control and court settlement procedures. Compromising transparency to benefit a company's bottom line may seem like a good idea in the moment, but the long-term damages can be significant.

Misleading Advertisements

Similar to public relations agencies, advertising firms often have a reputation for using manipulative tactics at the expense of the consumer. This is largely due to consumers' experiences with misleading advertisements, or promotions that exaggerate claims or misinform audiences. The goal of an advertisement is to emphasize the benefits of a product or service over any drawbacks or shortcomings.

Source: Pxhere. CC0 Public Domain

However, agencies should not create deceptive advertisements at the expense of consumers, or those that "raise health and safety concerns … and those that cause economic injury".[1] By law, claims in advertisements have to be truthful and supported by evidence. Going back to the Volkswagen emissions scandal, the company also faced legal troubles for falsely advertising that its cars had low emissions. The Federal Trade Commission filed a complaint against Volkswagen in federal court, arguing that the company deceived its consumers through unsubstantiated claims and corrupt evidence.

> Learn more about false advertising scandals. Read the article 18 false advertising scandals that cost some brands millions (March 2016) by Will Heilpern in Business Insider.

FTC consumer protection laws vary from state to state. These laws ensure that consumers are not misled and that agencies provide fair communication to their target audiences. The FTC can determine whether an advertisement is deceptive. The criteria for deception are as follows:

- The advertisement should have a high probability to mislead the average, reasonable consumer; and
- Advertisement claims should cause the consumer to buy the product or service based on misinformation.

If consumers report an advertisement to the FTC, the organization then goes through a series of steps to decide whether the ad is truly deceptive. You can find a list of the steps on the Small Business FAQ section of the Federal Trade Commission.

Ethics In Public Relations

The issue of ethics is important in the strategic communication profession. Creators of content should heavily rely on a code of ethics when carrying out various tasks. Using ethical reasoning, whether you're designing a campaign or writing a newspaper article, demonstrates basic understanding of the influence of messages on audiences. Ethical communication also helps an organization avoid dilemmas and compromising situations.

Several cases covered in the press highlight the ramifications of failure to use ethical and honest standards in communication effort

Notes

1. (Federal Trade Commission, "Division of Advertising Practices," 2016, para. 1)

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Part 2: Public Relations Writing – Skills and Basics

Chapter 6 – The Role of Writing in Public Relations

Previously, we touched on using the news media as an informational tool to achieve your organization's communication goals. One useful writing material is a feature article. Features are more in-depth than traditional news stories and go beyond providing the most important facts. The purpose of these stories is to provide a detailed description of a place, person, idea, or organization.

Although reporters and editors classify features as news stories, they are not necessarily structured using the inverted pyramid style. Instead, features use storytelling devices to help the reader connect with the overall narrative and its central characters. Features are particularly common in magazine writing, although they frequently appear in other mediums.

Profiles or personality features that give insight into a person's role, experience, or background are one type of feature. Among the most common subjects of profiles are celebrities, athletes, individuals who overcome challenges, and high-profile executives.

More information on the different types of features. Read: Types of Feature Stories for Journalists By

Tony Rogers in ThoughtCo.

It is important to understand the circumstances that warrant a feature piece from a strategic communication perspective. Communication professionals write feature articles to provide in-depth exposure for their client or organization. A feature can increase a client or company's visibility and even help find new key audiences.

If you need to quickly get information about your client or organization to the media, a feature article may not be the best tool because it typically is longer than a traditional news story. However, you could write a feature article on, for example, your company's new CEO to provide more background information to key audiences. Feature stories are also used in an organization's internal communications, such as newsletters and magazines.

Overall, feature articles use an informative tone while incorporating creative and descriptive devices in order to increase audience appeal.

Here is an example of a feature article from the *New York Times:* The American Who Accidentally Became a Chinese Movie Star,

By Mitch Moxley.

Unlike the traditional summary lead, feature leads can be several sentences long, and the writer may not immediately reveal the story's main idea. The most common types used in feature articles are anecdotal leads and descriptive leads. An anecdotal lead unfolds slowly. It lures the reader in with a descriptive narrative that focuses on a specific minor aspect of the story that leads to the overall topic. The following is an example of an anecdotal lead:

> *Sharon Jackson was sitting at the table reading an old magazine when the phone rang. It was a reporter asking to set up an interview to discuss a social media controversy involving Jackson and another young woman."Sorry," she said. "I've already spoken to several reporters about the incident and do not wish to make any further comments."*

Notice that the lead unfolds more slowly than a traditional lead and centers on a particular aspect of the larger story. The nut graph, or a paragraph that reveals the importance of the minor story and how it fits into the broader story, would come after the lead. There will be more on the nut graph later in this chapter.

Descriptive leads begin the article by describing a person, place, or event in vivid detail. They focus on setting the scene for the piece and use language that taps into the five senses in order to paint a picture for the reader. This type of lead can be used for both traditional news and feature stories. The following is an example of a descriptive lead:

> *Thousands dressed in scarlet and gray T-shirts eagerly shuffled into the football stadium as the university fight song blared.*

For each article below, identify whether it uses a descriptive or anecdotal lead:

- A thin line of defense
- Pediatric patient
- Inside Jay Z's Roc Nation

The content in a feature article isn't necessarily presented as an inverted pyramid; instead, the organization may depend on the writer's style and the story angle. Nevertheless, all of the information in a feature article should be presented in a logical and coherent fashion that allows the reader to easily follow the narrative.

As previously stated, the nut graph follows the lead. This paragraph connects the lead to the overall story and conveys the story's significance to the readers.[1]

The nut graph comes from a commonly used formula for writing features, known as the *Wall Street Journal* (*WSJ*) formula.[2] The formula was named after the well-known and respected publication, which created the term “nut graph” and mastered feature news writing.[3]

The formula consists of beginning the story with feature-style leads to grab the reader’s attention, followed by the nut graph.[4] After this comes a longer body of the story that provides the usual background, facts, quotes, and so on. The formula then specifies a return to the opening focus at the end of the story using another descriptive passage or anecdote, also known as the “circle kicker”.[5] This could be, for example, an update on what eventually happened to the main character or how the event or issue turned out.

> The blog post *Writing a Feature Story using the Wall Street Journal Formula* written by Charnay916 provides a detailed example of the *WSJ* formula.

Literary Devices

Feature writers use a particular style of writing to convey the story’s message. The use of literary devices helps in this task. These devices include similes and metaphors, onomatopoeia (use of words that mimic a sound), imagery (figurative language), climax, and more. Here are a few examples of onomatopoeia and imagery:

Onomatopoeia: The tires screeched against the concrete as she hit the pedal.

Imagery[6]**:** The apartment smelled of old cooking odors, cabbage, and mildew; . . . a haze of dusty sunlight peeked from the one cobwebbed, gritty window.

> Have a look at the website ***Literary Devices*** for more information on literary devices, including specific examples.

Descriptive Writing

A good feature writer uses plot devices and dialogues that help move the story forward, while focusing on the central theme and providing supporting information through descriptive language and specific examples. You want to show readers what’s happening, not simply tell them. They should be able to visualize the characters, places, and events highlighted in the feature piece.

Show versus tell

Tell: Friends describe Amariah as a generous and vibrant person who was involved in several nonprofit organizations.

Show: Tracey proudly recalls her friend’s generosity. “Amariah is usually the first person to arrive at a volunteer event, and the last to leave. She spends four hours every Saturday morning volunteering at the mentoring center. It's rare to not catch her laughing, flashing her perfect smile. She's just a burst of positive energy."

It's often tempting to end a feature piece with a summary conclusion. Instead, use an anecdote, passage, or compelling quote that will leave a lasting impression on your readers.

Notes

1. (Scanlan, 2003).
2. (International Center for Journalists, 2016).
3. (Rich, 2016).
4. (Scanlan, 2003).
5. (Rich, 2016).
6. (example modified from Butte College, 2016)

Chapter 7 – Public Relations Writing Basics

Information Strategy Process and the Needs of Communicators

Information for Messages

Communicators perform two basic tasks: they gather and evaluate information, and they create messages. This course focuses on the information strategy skills communicators must hone to find the information they need to form effective messages.

Media messages take myriad forms and serve different functions. In this lesson, we will discuss the variety of media message types.

To get started, answer this – which of the following is **not** a media message?

- Editorial about mass transit needs
- Branded content (advertorial) about nursing home services
- News release announcing a company's merger with another company
- TV commercial for dog food
- Breaking news story about a tornado
- Profile of a performance artist
- Billboard for a mobile phone company
- Five-part series on climate change
- Pop-up ad on your mobile device for cheap car insurance
- Reporter's Twitter post linking to a new investigative report

The answer, of course, is that they all are media messages.

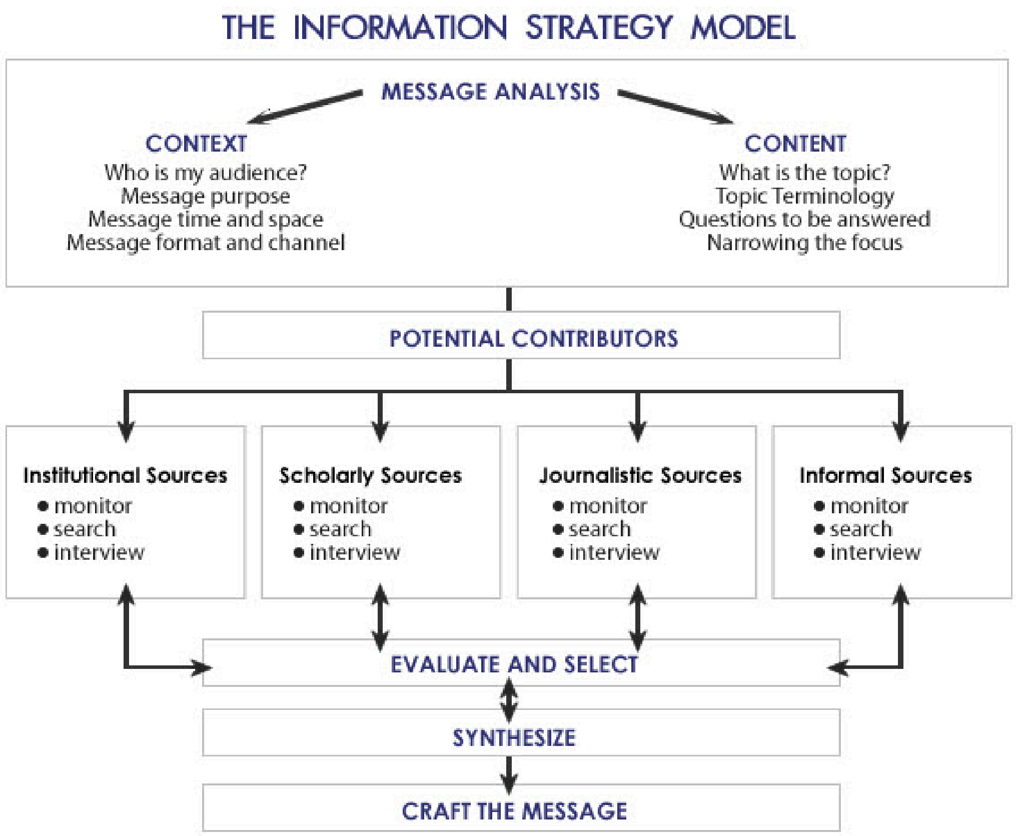
The differences in these messages, though, are readily apparent. Where you find them, what purpose they serve, and what the message creator hopes you will do with the information contained in the message are all different. So are the information requirements in creating these different messages. The pop-up ad just needs the facts about the insurance company and a link, whereas the series on global warming needs extensive information from reports and experts to effectively create the message.

Whether you are a reporter, a public relations specialist, or someone who works in advertising, the main output of your work will be a media message.

Ceramic Pot by OpenClipart-Vectors. [Source: Pixabay](). [CC0 Public Domain]().

According to Wikipedia, *"A message in its most general meaning is an object of communication. It is a vessel which provides information."* Just as it takes clay to make pottery, it takes information to craft a message. At all stages in the process of crafting a message, information is the essential material. Just as pottery can come in many shapes and forms and serve various purposes, so, too, do the information "vessels" communicators create.

The Information Strategy Process



The Information Strategy Process. Credit: Information Strategies for Communicators by Kathleen A. Hansen and Nora Paul. University of Minnesota Libraries. CC BY 4.0 [long Description 7-1]

These steps, by way of review, are:

- clarify the parameters of the message assignment.
- identify potential audiences.

- generate ideas and bring focus to the topic.
- understand the variety of potential contributors of information.
- appreciate the ethical and legal considerations required.

Models can be useful ways to illustrate often complicated processes. The Information Strategy Process model below recognizes that in an information-rich environment, it is impossible to remember thousands of specific information-finding tools and resources for answering specific questions. Instead, the model suggests a systematic course to follow when developing a strategy for determining, and seeking, the information needed for any message type or topic.

The model identifies the steps in the information strategy process and indicates the paths between the steps. As the two-way arrows indicate, the process may include some backtracking in the course of verifying information or raising additional questions. As a graphic representation of both the steps to take in the process and the sources that might meet a particular information need, the model serves as the outline of your entire information-gathering process.

The model also identifies the contributors to an information strategy. Information is created by many different types of sources and is intended to meet a wide variety of needs for both the information creator and for anyone who might gather and use that information. The model points out the major contributors or sources of information: institutional sources (which include both public-sector and private- sector institutions), scholarly sources, journalistic sources, and informal sources.

The information strategy model for mass communicators applies to any type of message task and any topic that you may be working on. The process applies to an information search for news, advertising, public relations or even for an academic paper. The information strategy process can facilitate the search for information on any topic and for any audience.

For mass communicators, the information strategy process will help you:

- think through the message's purpose, context, audience, and key topics
- identify and select a manageable portion of the topic which needs to be examined
- develop a method for an in-depth examination of a segment of the topic selected
- identify appropriate potential sources of information
- select effective techniques for researching the topic
- determine a vocabulary for discussing your message analysis, information gathering and selection process with others (colleagues, supervisors, critics, audience members. etc.)
- save time by helping you avoid wading through masses of information that may be interesting, but in the end, not very useful for the message task

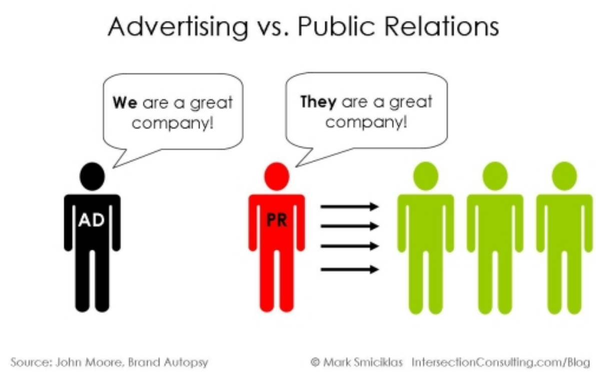
We will use this conceptual map as a way to think about how to accomplish each of the information tasks that communication professionals might face.

Information Tasks of Communication Professionals

Each of the mass communication professions – journalism, advertising, public relations – serve different information objectives for their organizations.

Journalistic organizations want to inform and engage the readers / viewers / listeners of their messages through publishing stories about current events, people, ideas, or useful tips. By providing compelling and interesting information they hope to draw an audience to the publications in which their messages appear.

Advertising firms create messages for their clients that inform or persuade potential customers to purchase a product or service or adopt an idea or perspective. Ads generally include a "call to action" that identifies the intended outcome of the message.



Advertising vs PR by Mark Smiciklas. Source: Flickr. CC BY-NC 1.0.

Public relations firms help their clients influence legislators, stakeholders (ie: regulators, business partners, media organizations and the general public) to think positively about the company or organization and manage the organization's information environment.

They serve these key objectives using a variety of message types. Let's look at the different forms of media messages in news organizations, advertising agencies, and public relations firms and the information tasks of the professionals creating those messages.

News Messages

Newspaper by geralt. Source: Pixabay. CC0 Public Domain

News messages are often broken into three categories: "hard" news, "soft" news or features, and opinion. "Hard" news comprises reports of important issues, current events, and other topics that inform citizens about what is going on in the world and their communities while "soft" news covers those things that are not necessarily important and are handled with a lighter approach. Opinion pieces, unlike the other two which value "objectivity," are subjective and will have a specific point of view.

Hard News

Breaking news – Sometimes referred to as "the first take on history" breaking news stories provide as clear and accurate an accounting of some kind of event as possible while it is happening. In reporting about wildfires raging in the west, the breaking news story requires a timely accounting of what's happening, with a tight focus on the "who, what, when, where, why" and it requires well-honed observation and interviewing skills. For the breaking news story, the information tasks for the reporters are to show up, assess the situation, use their senses to cover the event and learn more information through first-person interviews. Breaking news provides the "need to know" information as an event unfolds.

Depth report – The depth report is the story after the breaking news report. The goals for journalists preparing a depth report are to try to help people understand how the event happened, who was affected, what is being done about it, how people are reacting. For instance, in the aftermath of a story about wildfires in the West, the reporter's information tasks would include gathering background information about the firefighting efforts, the economic impact of the fires, the reactions of home and business owners, the potential impact that the weather might have on future similar events. As with the breaking news story, the journalist is transmitting information, not opinion and they must be able to identify the most knowledgeable sources.

Analysis or interpretive report – The focus here is on an issue, problem or controversy. The substance of the report is still a verifiable fact, not opinion. But instead of presenting facts as with breaking news or a depth report and hoping the facts speak for themselves, the reporter writing an interpretive piece clarifies, explains, analyzes. The report usually focuses on WHY something has (or has not) happened. The information tasks are greater for this type of report, due to the need to clarify and explain rather than simply narrate. An analysis of the wildfires might look into how environmental policy or urban sprawl factored into the event. Analyses generally require learning about different perspectives or ranges of opinion from a variety of experts and more "digging" into causes.

Investigative report – Unlike the analysis which follows up on a news event, the information tasks for an investigative report require journalists to uncover information that will not be handed to them, these stories are reported by opening closed doors and closed mouths. These are the stories that expose problems or controversies authorities may not want to see covered. This requires unearthing hidden or previously unorganized information in order to clarify, explain and analyze something. A key technique used in investigative reports is data analysis. In the aftermath of the wildfires, a news organization might investigate the insurance claims process or how a charitable organization that received relief funds for fire victims actually allocated the money. The investigative report requires the communicator to have a high level of information sophistication, and the ability to convey complex information in a straightforward way for the audience.

Soft News

Feature – The feature differs from the other types of news reports in intent. The previous examples seek to inform the audience about something of importance or concern. Features, on the other hand, are designed to capture audience interest and are more about providing entertainment than critical information. The feature story depends on the style, great writing, and humor as much as on the information it contains. There are several types of features:

News – A story about a man who used cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to revive a pet dog rescued from the bottom of a pool might be reported as a news feature. It is based on an event, but covered as a feature, but the information tasks require gathering material to put more emphasis on the drama of the event than on the information about how to do CPR on a dog.

Personality sketch or profile – A story about the accomplishments, attitudes and characteristics of an individual seeks to capture the essence of a person. This requires both thorough backgrounding of the subject and skills in interviewing as information tasks. The communicator has to have a well-honed ability for noticing details that bring to life what is interesting or unique about the person.

Informative – A sidebar to accompany a main news story might be written as an informative feature. For example, an informative feature that describes the various methods firefighters use to combat wildfires might accompany a breaking news story. The information tasks for the reporter include a good command of sometimes-technical information to convey the story to the audience.

Historical – Holidays are often the inspiration for this type of piece, with focus on the history of the Christmas tree, the first Thanksgiving dinner, etc. The curious communicator could also create features about the anniversary of the founding of an important local business or the celebration of statehood using background archival documents. The information tasks for these types of reports obviously require locating and interpreting extensive historical information.

Descriptive – Many features are about places people can visit, or events they can attend. Tourist spots, historical sites, recreational areas, and festivals all generate reams of feature story copy, pictures and video. Public relations specialists often have a significant hand in generating much of the background information in these types of features and promoting these events or places to the news media. The information tasks include finding a fresh and engaging angle for the content.

How-to – Some features are created to provide information about how to improve your golf game, become a power-shopper, install your own shower tile. The communicator has to have a solid grasp of the subject matter to do a respectable job with this type of piece. The information tasks for how-to features include the need for material that is descriptive, specific, and very clearly communicated.

Opinion:

These types of reports include editorials, columns, and reviews. They are characterized by the presentation of facts and opinion to entertain and influence the audience. Nonetheless, they still require correlation and analysis of information. Because their purpose is persuasion, they must contain clear, detailed information and make logical and understandable arguments in support of the point of view being presented.

The Editorial Page Is One Means Of Conversation Between a Newspaper and Its Readers, But Look Closer and You'll Find Reporting, Advocacy and Some Wicked Humor. Who Knew Something So Gray Could Be So Colorful?

The editorial page is the one daily section of a newspaper that always voices an opinion. Unlike news articles, editorials are allowed to be for or against decisions of government, choose favorites in elections and take a stand in debates on public issues.

The editorial page is not only allowed to take a stand, it's *supposed* to take a stand. That is its role.

News writers are supposed to report all sides. Editorial writers get to take sides. News writers get in trouble if they say what they favor or oppose. Editorial writers get in trouble if they don't.

On the editorial page, readers of the paper get to take a stand as well—in letters to the editor. It's a great "conversation" between the paper and its readers, says Fred Hiatt, editor of The Washington Post editorial page. It's unique to democratic societies.

Hiatt is head of the editorial board, made up of nine experienced writers. The board meets once a day to discuss the news and choose topics and opinions for editorials. Occasionally, the chairman of The Washington Post, Donald E. Graham, sits in.

Board members need not agree on everything. That would produce "mush," says Hiatt. But he prefers that they reach some rough agreement (or consensus) because their editorials "speak for the newspaper."

The Editorials

Choosing a Topic: The editor of the editorial page is chosen by the chairman of The Washington Post, Donald E. Graham. The editorial board meets each morning, discusses and debates the news, decides on topics for the next day's page and tries to reach a rough consensus on what to say.

Fred Hiatt, the editor, usually asks the writer most knowledgeable on the subject to write the editorial. Unlike a news story, it does not have the name of the writer on it. That's because it is written in the name of The Washington Post.

Some editorial writers, including Hiatt and deputy editors Jackson Diehl and Colbert I. King, also write "signed" columns for the page opposite the editorial page—the op-ed page. When their names show up, they speak only for themselves.

Getting it right: The independence of the editorial board doesn't mean it can be unfair.

A good editorial, Hiatt says, must

Inside Journalism by The Washington Post [Source: Washington Post Newspapers]

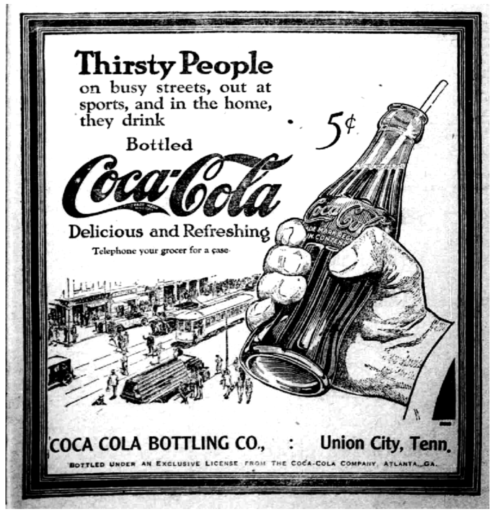
Editorials – The editorial is a reflection of management's attitude rather than a reporter's or editor's personal view. Most are unsigned and run on a specific page of the newspaper or website or during a particular time of the broadcast. Editorials usually seek to do one of three things: commend or condemn some action; persuade the audience to some point of view; or entertain and amuse the audience. The information tasks for an editorial include locating and using credible information as evidence for whatever position is being taken.

Columns – A column includes the personal opinions of the writer on the state of the community and the world. Many columns are written by syndicated, national writers, but local commentators and columnists also have a following in their communities. Columnists use information selectively, based on their point of view and the argument they are making. Columnists' information tasks include maintaining a consistent "voice" and approach to each topic.

Reviews – Reviewers make informed judgments about the content and quality of something presented to the public–books, films, theater, television programs, concerts, recorded music, art exhibits, restaurants. The responsibility of reviewers is to report and evaluate on behalf of the audience. The information must be descriptive as well as evaluative. The reviewer describes the concert and then makes an evaluation of the quality of the performance. Reviewers' information tasks require them to be deeply knowledgeable about the type of content or activity they are reviewing, as well as having an opinion about it.

Advertising Messages

Advertising is defined as a paid form of communication from an identified sponsor using mass media to persuade or influence an audience. Because there are so many diverse advertisers attempting to reach so many different types of audiences with persuasive messages, many forms of advertising have developed. We will discuss nine types of advertising and the information tasks they require of the communicator.



1922 Coca-Cola ad by Coca-Cola. Source:Wikimedia Commons. CC0 Public Domain

1) Brand or national consumer advertising – This type of advertising emphasizes brand identity and image. Advertising campaigns for Coca-Cola, Nike, or American Express are examples. Brand advertising seeks to generate demand for a product or service, and then convince the audience that a specific brand is the one they want. For example, Nike ads seek to generate demand for expensive athletic shoes and to convince purchasers that they want Nikes rather than Reeboks. The information tasks for these types of campaigns are extensive but much of the information that is gathered usually does not actually appear in the content of the ads themselves. Rather, the information informs the development of the advertising campaign strategy and the choice of media in which to place the ads.

2) Retail – Advertising that is local and that focuses on the store where products and services can be purchased is called retail advertising. The message emphasizes price, availability, location and hours of operation. Nike, for example, might generate a brand ad about their shoes, but the local department store would generate a retail ad telling about the great sale they are having on Nikes and other shoes. The department store managers don't care which brand of shoe you buy as long as you shop in their store rather than their competitor's store. The information tasks for these types of ads include gathering a lot of highly specific information about the retailer, given the purpose of the advertisements.

3) Directory – Ads that help you learn where to buy a product or service are directory ads. The telephone yellow pages are the most common form of directory ads, but many other directories perform the same function. The ads that appear as "sponsored links" next to your results from a search in a search engine are a form of directory ads. They are classified and served to you according to the terms in your search. These types of ads are almost purely information-based and meet an already-expressed need for information on the part of the audience member. The information tasks connected to directory ads include analysis of vast data sets of information about consumers, much of which is done by computer algorithms. But the ad creators need to understand how and why a particular consumer was targeted for a particular ad in order to be effective.

Nixon_handout_1950 by Nixon for U.S. Senate campaign. [Source: Wikipedia Commons](). [CC0 Public Domain]()

4) Political – Ads designed to persuade people to vote for a politician are familiar fixtures on the media landscape every political season. We can all recall candidate ads we've seen during each election cycle. Information tasks for this type of ad include gathering background research about the opposition candidate as well as material about the candidate sponsoring the ad, the latest polls of likely voters, public attitudes about the issues, and other facts that inform the strategy for the copy and placement of the ad. Communicators also must know the relevant legal and regulatory restrictions for political advertising in each market where the ads may run.

5) Direct-response – These types of ads can appear in any medium. A direct-response ad tries to stimulate a sale directly. The consumer can respond by phone, mail, or electronically, and the product is delivered directly to the consumer by mail or to a mobile device (a coupon for the pizza parlor you just passed on the street). On television, the infomercials for hair-care products, exercise equipment, or kitchen gear are examples of direct-response ads. Flyers you get in the mail to "Buy this Product" are also examples. These ads have a high information component and the communicators' information tasks reflect the need to be well-informed. The message-makers assume the audience is already interested in or curious about the goods or services since they are watching the infomercial, reading the catalog, or have gone to the website. The direct-response piece includes lots of information about the products, and the goal is to make the sale. Mobile versions of direct response ads have to have a good "hook" to get the receiver to pay attention and act.

6) Business-to-business – Messages directed at retailers, wholesalers, distributors, industrial purchasers, and professionals such as lawyers and physicians comprise business-to-business advertising. These ads are concentrated in business and professional publications. For example, banks advertise to small business owners; or equipment manufacturers advertise to factory managers, hospital administrators, restaurant owners, and others who might purchase their equipment. Unless you do the type of work that makes you an audience member for these kinds of messages, you aren't likely to see very many business-to-business ads. Because these types of ads require that they are directed toward a specialist audience with specific needs for products or services tailored for a particular industry, the information tasks required to produce these ads are highly detailed.

7) Institutional – This form of advertising is sometimes called corporate advertising. The focus of the message is on establishing a corporate identity or winning the public over to the organization's point of view. Rather than outlining the product or service offered by the institution, the ad attempts to create an image or reinforce an attitude about the company as a whole. Also, the ad may attempt to influence policymaking by advocating a particular position on some national issue that affects the interests of the sponsoring institution. The information component of this type of ad usually consists of extensive background research about the attitudes and psychologies of the intended audience, and the information tasks include gathering in-depth knowledge about the sponsoring institution and its goals for the message.

Pinder's Optometrists Advertorial by Nigel Lamb. Source: Flickr. CC BY 1.0

8) Advertising features – Also referred to as an advertorial, branded content or native ads, this form is becoming more common. Many magazines carry inserts that look like a feature piece but are actually generated by an advertiser or a public relations firm, not by a journalist. For example, you might find an insert in a newsweekly magazine about living a healthy lifestyle, with articles and photographs that are sponsored by a pharmaceutical company. The communicator must have solid background information about the product, service or topic AND must know how to write like a journalist. Hence, the information tasks for this type of content include both content and stylistic aspects.

9) Public service – This type of ad communicates a message on behalf of some good cause, such as stopping drunk driving or preventing AIDS. Unlike the other types of advertising, media professionals create these ads for free, and time or space to run the ads are donated by media outlets. The ads typically include some information that emphasizes the nature of the problem or the cause so as to induce the audience to take the problem seriously. Information tasks for public service ads or PSAs usually includes identifying an emotional or psychological "hook" for the audience to get engaged with the ad content. Watch the YouTube video UNEP World Environment Day PSA, created for World Environment Day 2014.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=128

Much of the information that is used in the creation of advertising never actually appears in the copy of the ad or in the visuals that are produced. Instead, extensive information is uncovered to help the advertising professionals understand the background of the audience and message. For instance, communicators need to understand the product or service they will be pitching, the interests and needs of the intended audience, the competitors' product advantages and disadvantages, all of which help them decide how much money should be spent on the campaign and where the ads should appear.

Public Relations Messages

Public relations messages are sometimes referred to as "earned media" (as opposed to "paid media" like advertising.) This means that the PR professional has "earned" the attention of the journalist who decides to use the information the PR professional supplied as the germ of a news story. The messages created by public relations professionals get a major portion of their exposure through journalism organizations – output from public relations professionals is a major source of news. A significant routine for news professionals is the monitoring and use of news releases generated by public relations specialists, attendance at news conferences organized by PR professionals, coverage of events sponsored by PR strategists, and use of material from the media kits that PR firms create for their clients.

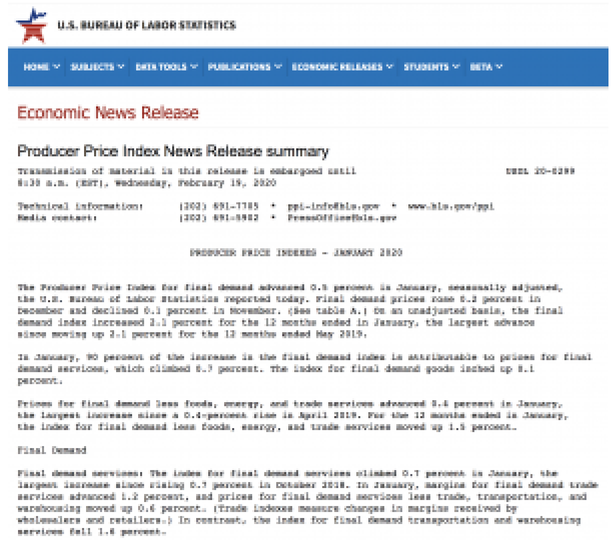
Generally speaking, the policy of news organizations is that PR-generated messages are checked, edited, and supplemented by information independently generated by news professionals before running. In fact, much PR appears in mass media, but most of it is produced for specialized media such as trade, association, and employee publications. Public relations messages are also a part of what is referred to as "strategic communications" along with advertising in that there is a strategic objective in the crafting of the message to influence people's opinions or purchasing decisions.

Just as there are various forms of news and advertising messages, there are a number of forms of public relations messages, and a set of information tasks for communicators.

1) Internal PR – These include corporate newsletters, crisis management plans, corporate intelligence reports, and other forms of communication that are intended for the internal audience of employees and officers of a company. Also included here are the annual reports prepared for stockholders in publicly-held firms. These types of public relations media are information-rich and the information tasks include having an extensive understanding of the company, the issues and problems the company faces, the finances of the firm and any other factors that employees and stockholders would have an interest in knowing about.

2) News releases – News releases are sent to media outlets by PR specialists who want to generate interest for their client or company. A news release might be prepared:

- as a simple announcement story (*IBM's 3rd quarter profits rose*)
- as an advance story (*The circus will be unloading animals for the 3-day stay in town at such-and-such a place and time*)
- as a follow-up after an event (*Ground was broken for a new nursing home*)
- in response to a trend, current event or unfolding crisis (*Interest rates are at an all-time low, so ABC Mortgage is offering the following tips to consumers about refinancing*).



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Economic News Release

Producer Price Index News Release summary

Transmission of material in this release is embargoed until 8:30 a.m. (EST), Wednesday, February 19, 2020 USDL 20-0299

Technical information: (202) 691-7705 • ppi-info@bls.gov • www.bls.gov/ppi
Media contact: (202) 691-5902 • PressOffice@bls.gov

PRODUCER PRICE INDEXES – JANUARY 2020

The Producer Price Index for final demand advanced 0.5 percent in January, seasonally adjusted, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Final demand prices rose 0.2 percent in December and declined 0.1 percent in November. (See table A.) On an unadjusted basis, the final demand index increased 2.1 percent for the 12 months ended in January, the largest advance since moving up 2.1 percent for the 12 months ended May 2019.

In January, 90 percent of the increase in the final demand index is attributable to prices for final demand services, which climbed 0.7 percent. The index for final demand goods inched up 0.1 percent.

Prices for final demand less foods, energy, and trade services advanced 0.4 percent in January, the largest increase since a 0.4-percent rise in April 2019. For the 12 months ended in January, the index for final demand less foods, energy, and trade services moved up 1.5 percent.

Final Demand

Final demand services: The index for final demand services climbed 0.7 percent in January, the largest increase since rising 0.7 percent in October 2018. In January, margins for final demand trade services advanced 1.2 percent, and prices for final demand services less trade, transportation, and warehousing moved up 0.6 percent. (Trade indexes measure changes in margins received by wholesalers and retailers.) In contrast, the index for final demand transportation and warehousing services fell 1.6 percent.

US Bureau of Statistics

The best news releases are produced to have the look and feel of a news story that might have been produced by news professionals. They, therefore, share many of the same information characteristics as news reports. The one big difference, as we have already stated, is that PR specialists are not obligated to tell all sides of the story. The information tasks for news release producers are very similar to those for feature story journalists.

3) Broadcast (video) news releases – A video news release (VNR) is simply a news release in the form of a broadcast news story. The video and voice-over are designed to look like a piece that you would see on any television news program. B-roll footage, or video images sent to the media, is closely related to a VNR. The difference is that b-roll does not include a narrated voice-over, and is not edited as a ready-to-go news package. Reporters use b-roll footage from companies to enhance their own stories. For example, for a new movie release, the promotion company might send out b-roll footage of the filming to be used in a story or review.

An audio news release (ANR) is designed to be played on the radio. The audio clip might be a "voicer," a news story recorded by a PR professional in the style of a radio announcer; or the clip might be an "actuality," the actual voice of a newsmaker or news source speaking. These types of messages are usually accompanied by a print news release or an announcement to alert news professionals that the VNR or ANR is available.

Watch the YouTube video from News Generation for an explanation of Audio News Releases (ANR).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=128

Once again, these announcements are produced to have the look and sound of reports produced by news professionals, but with a different standard for completeness of the information. PR news releases rarely include information representing all sides of the issue. For that reason, it is generally considered an ethical breach to use information from a VNR or ANR without attributing it to the source so the news audience isn't confused about where the information originated. But the information tasks are again similar to those for feature journalists.

4) Media kits – Media kits consist of a fact sheet about the client or event, biographic sketches of major people involved, a straight news story, news-column material, a news feature, a brochure, photographs, and for those kits delivered digitally, audio and video segments. Often, media professionals package these materials in a folder or other unique format that is professionally designed and printed or post the materials on a website specifically created for the distribution of the media kit content. Public relations organizations create media kits with the intent of providing story ideas for news professionals, as well as to generate interest and attention for the client. For example, the Salvation Army might update its "Kettle Bell Ringing" media kit before the holiday season each year. Magazine publishers create media kits to attract advertisers by highlighting the size and quality of their audiences, the effectiveness of their editorial content and the prices for placing an ad. With all the different components that go into a media kit, you can understand that the information tasks for communicators producing these types of messages are large in number and detailed requirements.

5) Backgrounder or briefing session – PR specialists provide in-depth information about an issue or event for reporters in backgrounders or briefing sessions. The PR people offer handouts (information sheets or reports) and the principal news source about the issue or event makes a presentation. Unlike news conferences, there is little give and take between reporters and the moderator of these sessions. They are used to explain a policy or situation rather than to announce something. The National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB), for example, might hold a briefing session following an airplane crash. The handouts prepared for these sessions are sometimes quite extensive, requiring solid information preparation among the PR specialists working on the handouts. The information tasks for the PR specialists include the need to anticipate the types of questions journalists will ask and the depth of follow-up material they need to provide.

Pentagon Press Secretary George E. Little briefs… by Glenn Fawcett. Source: Wikimedia Commons. CC0 Public Domain.

6) News conferences – There are two categories of news conferences: information or personality. The information news conference usually has a single motive – someone wants media attention for an announcement, for an update on a breaking event, for a follow-up about an investigation, or some other specific item of interest to news professionals. There is give and take as reporters ask questions of the person at the podium.

The *personality news conference* is designed to provide news professionals with access to someone famous, about-to-be-famous, or otherwise in the public spotlight. Whenever a professional sports team signs a major college star, for example, there is usually a personality news conference where the individual

Information tasks for a news conference include preparing an opening statement, a briefing paper for the person which anticipates reporters' questions, and social media content that can be shared during and after the news conference. There may also be a handout outlining the major points made in the announcement. Again, PR specialists must understand what makes news and prepare their news conference information to meet those requirements.

NYFF 2010 "Hereafter" Press Conference by aphrodite-in-nyc. Source: Wikimedia . CC BY 2.0

Media Tour by Petty by Dustin Knight . Source: Wikimedia Commons. CC0 Public Domain.

7) Media tour – Like a briefing or background session, the purpose of a media tour is to provide in-depth information to reporters. However, the format of the meetings that take place on the media tour is often highly interactive, with one-on-one between a reporter and company official (and public relations specialist). The nature of the information provided as part of a media tour is generally slightly less timely than what would be discussed as part of a news backgrounder or briefing. A media tour might be arranged so that reporters can "demo" a new high-tech product while a company representative walks them through the features. PR specialists' information tasks include knowing what will be most interesting to the journalists on the tour and what can and can't be shared as part of the event.

Adm. Samuel J. Locklear III completes crosses the finish line… by U.S. Navy. [Source: Wikimedia Common](). [CC0 Public Domain]()

8) Special events – PR specialists may plan special events (sometimes disparagingly-labeled "pseudo-events") for clients who want media attention for a cause or issue. There may be a jump-rope-a-thon for cancer research, or a grain company may sponsor a food lift for famine victims. These events must be planned to have news value, and the information that is generated to announce and entice coverage by news professionals must have all of the same characteristics that we have already mentioned. Coverage of these types of events is usually framed as a feature, with similar information tasks for PR practitioners.

9) Responses to media inquiries – There are cases when a company may not proactively send out a news release or hold a press conference but may receive requests from the media for comment. Public relations employees are there to respond to reporters' requests for quotes, examples or explanations. In these cases, the public relations practitioner needs to act quickly to help meet the journalist's deadline, and the information tasks involve gathering additional background information about the situation and arranging a meeting or conference call with company management to discuss how best to respond. Getting back to a reporter in a timely manner is key to maintaining good relationships with the media, even if the response is that your company will not be able to provide the requested statement or information at that particular time. Keeping the reporter informed is always a better approach than "stonewalling."

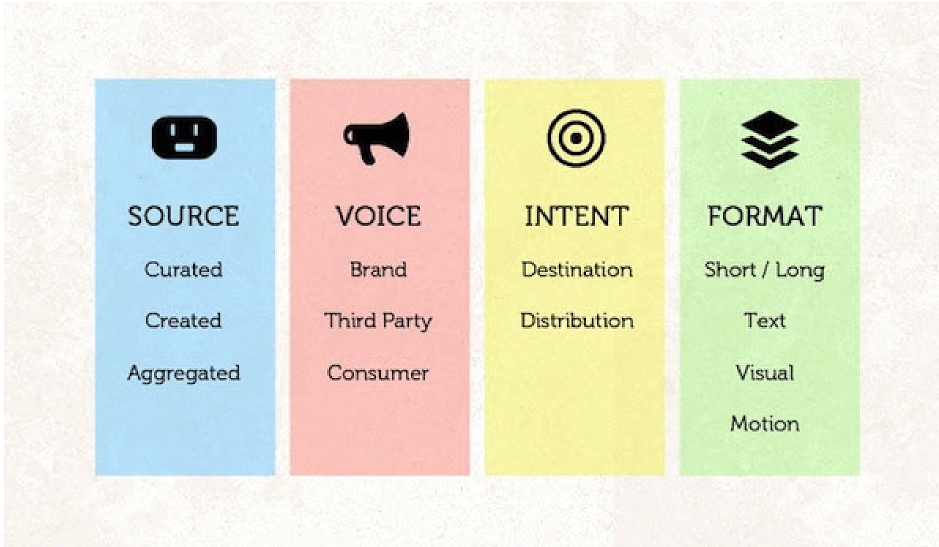
10) PR features – As is the case for advertising message types, many PR firms and corporate communications professionals are creating *branded content* or *native ads*. This is sometimes referred to as "owned media" when it is created by the sponsoring company itself. Companies may create entire websites, magazines or video channels specifically for this type of "owned media" content. The communicator must have solid background information about the product, service or topic AND must know how to write like a journalist as part of the information tasks necessary to be successful.

Storytelling and the Information Strategy

The way information is crafted into the final media message depends on two key factors:

- how the message is being delivered (a story in a newspaper versus on a mobile device, a TV brand ad or one in an interactive magazine)
- the audience for whom the message is intended

The storytelling techniques you use must take into account the media format in which the information is delivered and the audience's expectations for the message.



Storytelling by Beth Kanter. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

While this course does not delve into the actual construction of the messages themselves – you will get those skills in your reporting or strategic writing classes – it is worthwhile to acknowledge some of the considerations that message creators must keep in mind – and the information requirements there might be for different storytelling conventions.

Goals of Storytelling

Storytelling can serve different kinds of goals. Determining the intention or purpose of the story or message is an important first step in crafting the message. As you have learned, messages can inform or enlighten people about current events or issues or about the availability of products or services. They can provide background and context to a discussion of ideas. Stories can be written to persuade people to make certain purchases or hold certain views. News, advertising and public relations messages perform some or all of these functions while employing different storytelling techniques and formats to communicate with audiences in the most effective way.

There are a number of different storytelling decisions to make as a producer of media content. Regardless of which type of media you are working within, it is important that you, the communicator, are aware of the fundamental storytelling devices you might want to use to tell your story in a way that is direct, efficient, and appropriate for the story's objective. Therefore, you will want to have a full and accessible set of tools that you are ready to employ for any kind of message, depending on the type of media you are creating, your chosen channel of communication, as well as the specific style, tone, and needs of your story subject.

Characteristics of Good Storytelling

Usually the word "story" implies something fictional. But in the case of media messages, "story" refers to fact-based information about products, or events, or the actions taken by a company. The distinction between fiction and non-fiction stories is an absolutely critical one for you to grasp. It affects every decision that you make about the selection and evaluation of information for messages.

Good storytelling consists of knowing your audience. Is the audience going to be reading the story, hearing it, experiencing it in a non-linear fashion online? What kind of background information does the audience for the story already have about the topic?

Good storytelling also begins with a foundation in the subject matter. The storyteller must have a firm grasp of the subject matter in order to effectively communicate the story to someone else.

Good storytelling demands that the storyteller have command of the mechanics of writing.

Good storytelling understands how different media elements play into the effective telling of the story.

Good storytelling demonstrates ethical standards for accuracy, truth, verifiability, sufficient evidence, and information reliability. Non-fiction stories, especially, require a solid grounding in factual information that can withstand scrutiny by the most skeptical audience members.

Storytellers must deliver within the parameters and requirements of the story assignment.

They must:

- meet the deadline
- follow directions on the expected length and focus for the story
- meet the expectation for clean, distribution-ready copy
- use proper grammar, word choice, and style
- apply the appropriate story characteristics for the channel of message delivery

The information strategy skills you will learn in this course will provide you with the tools you need to meet these storytelling requirements. Moving confidently through the information strategy process will help you identify your audience, locate the relevant content for your message, ensure the accuracy of your information and provide the details that will make your message stand out.

ADVERTISING

- Examples of Advertising Techniques
- How to Develop your Brand's Story

JOURNALISM

- The Transition to Digital Journalism: a guide to resources about storytelling online
- Journalists as Storytellers

PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Storytelling and PR
- The Art of Storytelling in PR

Question Analysis: From Assignment to Message

As students, you've all dealt with frustratingly ambiguous assignments. Knowing how many pages you are required to write, how the document should be formatted, whether and how to cite the information used – all of these are specifics of the assignment that you hope your instructors spell out for you. If those specifics aren't clear, you ask your teachers to give you more detail on the parameters of the assignment and on the "metrics" that will be used to judge the quality of the work you turn in.

When on the job, the assignments you get will usually not have this level of detail. In fact, "deals well with ambiguity" is often a line on job descriptions about the ideal candidate. Clarifying the task will be one of the first steps the communicator must take when a supervisor throws out an assignment like, "One of our clients is interested in exploring e-wallets. What do we know about them?" or "We have to do a better job of getting legislators to understand our company. Do an analysis." or "There have been lots of motorcycle accidents in the past month – we ought to do an in-depth story."

Determining as completely as possible the "context" for the message will help you begin to put parameters around the task.

In this lesson, we will discuss the aspects of a message assignment that you should clarify with the "gatekeeper." The more you know about what the "gatekeeper" in a communications organization looks for and values, the more you will be able to pursue a strategy that leads you to successfully fulfilling the message mission.

Understanding the Gatekeeper Audience

As we will discuss in Lesson 4, determining and researching the key audience for the message you will be creating is one of the most important parts of message development. But there is another, perhaps even more, the important initial audience for your work, and that is the person in the organization who will approve, support, or squash your ideas.

Referred to as "gatekeepers" these are the people within the organization who not only hand out the assignments, they are also the ones with the power to decide:

- which messages are produced
- who produces the messages
- where the messages will appear
- what the messages will contain

Gatekeeper by Luca Sartoni. Source: Wikipedia Commons.

Examples of "gatekeepers" in communications or business organizations include:

- a newspaper's assistant managing editors who assign stories to appropriate reporters
- a television station's producers and assignment editors
- advertising agency account executives

- public relations firm client services managers
- a corporation's chief communications officer who decides whether the new communications plan is ready to present to the CEO

An important function of gatekeepers is to maintain the standards and the "voice" that define the specific organization for which they are "keeping the gates."

Within a newspaper organization, the assistant managing editor who assigns stories to various reporters on a beat has the responsibility to decide whether the reporters' stories are acceptable before the stories are sent along to the next step in the process of getting printed in the newspaper and posted online.

Reporters learn to anticipate the kinds of stories that their editors (the gatekeeper audience members) want. One editor may respond positively every time a reporter writes a story that includes a quote from a particular source. That reporter will try to include that source in her stories as often as possible. In a television news operation, the newscast producer might respond well every time a reporter/photographer team does a story that is accompanied by particular types of images. Again, that reporter/photographer team will try as often as possible to select that type of video to please the producer and thus assure a spot on the newscast.

In an advertising agency, the account management professionals perform a similar gatekeeper function. Client services managers in a PR firm perform the same function. They are responsible for contact with the client who is paying to have the ads created or the public relations work done. If the account manager is unhappy with the advertising or PR campaign that the other professionals have created, it may not get passed along for client approval. Communicators learn to adjust their efforts and create ads or PR work that account managers or client services managers are most likely to define as acceptable and ready for client review.

In a business, non-profit organization, government agency or similar type of institution, the communications manager for the organization plays the gatekeeper role. Any content that appears on the organization's website, the social media content that is produced, the promotions sent to mobile devices and any other messages directed at the public go through a review process. Communicators inside an organization have to conform to the rules, processes and expectations of the communications manager if their work is going to be delivered to audiences.

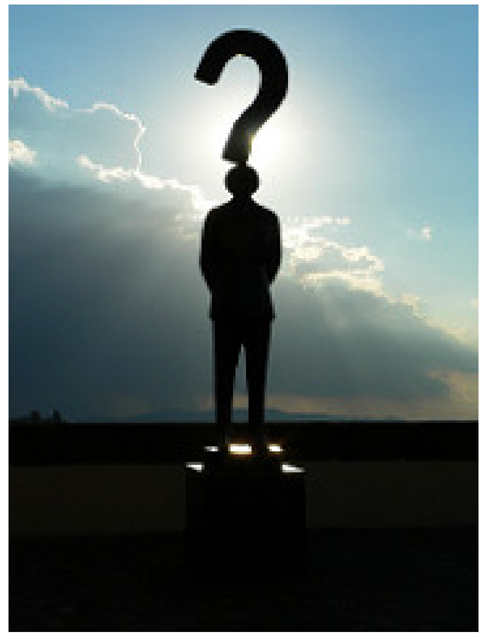
At the initial stage in the message, process gatekeepers are the ones who will be issuing assignments. They are the ones who will determine if you delivered what was requested and they are the ones you will need to work with to clarify the assignment so you have the best chance of successfully delivering what is needed.

Gatekeepers will have in mind the needs of the ultimate "client" for whatever work you produce. The editor of a publication will understand who the readers are and what they look for in the articles that run. The PR client manager will understand the objectives of the client for the campaign. The advertising account manager will know the advertiser's sales goals. The corporate communications manager will know what image the company is trying to project. Your job is to interpret the work assignment given to you and know how the work you produce will ultimately help everyone's objectives be met.

Journalist Checklist for Public Relations

The "5 Ws and H" (Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How) checklist that journalists use in covering a story or that strategic communicators would need to consider when developing a campaign can be used with a slightly different orientation for communicators who need to clarify an assignment.

Let's imagine that in the strategic communications context your boss sends the following text: "Our client is interested in exploring bitcoin. See what you can find out." Or in the newsroom, your editor drops by and says, "The Times had a big story about bitcoin. Should we cover this?" How do you even start? In upcoming lessons we will delve into the kinds of questions you'll ask and answer when developing a research agenda (who is the audience, what are the angles of the topic, where might you find information.) But before you can begin to understand the specifics of the research task itself you need further clarification about the gatekeeper's expectations. Following are some of the kinds of questions you might ask to clarify the assignment.



Question Mark by Marco Belluci. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

WHO? Who will be seeing the report you produce? This will give you clues as to the nature of the language to use, the formality or informality of the report you deliver. Previous experience with this person or team will inform you about their expectations.

WHAT? What form should the information take? Learn if this is just an informal backgrounder, information needed to justify a whole new campaign or series idea, or a competitive intelligence report. Knowing what type of report or document is expected will help you set a framework for the task.

WHEN?When is the work to be delivered? Knowing the deadline or desired delivery date for your work will help you gauge what level of work can be done (and help you manage your boss's expectations.)

WHERE? Where will the report be delivered? Do they want a written report, a briefing at a meeting, a document shared on the office cloud?

WHY? Why is the information needed? Is a campaign / series already planned and they need concrete information to move the plan forward? Is this just exploratory to see if there is justification for a particular direction?

Once these questions are answered, the **HOW** to begin researching will be much easier to answer.

Most of the assignments you are given are intended to ultimately lead to a communications message of some type. Whether it will result in a news release, or a new advertising campaign, or a news story, knowing as much as possible about the intended outcome of the research work you do will help you understand the amount and type of information you'll need to research.

Although the answers to these questions might be revealed later in the process, it is important to understand that the answers will help form your information strategy.

Message Purpose

Another important consideration when clarifying a message task is to determine the ultimate purpose of the message. Messages fulfill seven functions:

1. they provide **information** about the availability of products and services: advertising and publicity
2. they **entertain**: special features, advertising
3. they **inform:** basic news, advertising, publicity
4. they provide a **forum for ideas**: editorials, interpretive stories, documentaries, commentaries
5. they **educate**: depth stories, self-help stories and columns, informative pieces, advertising with product features and characteristics
6. they **serve as a watchdog** on government: investigative pieces and straight coverage of trials and other public events
7. they **persuade**: advertising, publicity, editorials and commentaries

Communicators pay attention to these expectations as they seek information for messages. In order for a message to have audience appeal, it must meet the audience's expectations in purpose and form. Analyzing the context for a message includes the task of clearly understanding the purpose of the message. All of the subsequent information-gathering steps are affected by this basic requirement.

Time / Space

Messages must be tailored to meet the time and space constraints imposed by the context within which the message is being created. You cannot explore all the information available for every message on every occasion. Deadlines and costs involved in collecting some information forces you to make choices about particular angles and information sources.

Clock Alarm Clock Question Mark by geralt. [Source: pixabay](). [CC0 Public Domain]()

A long, interpretive news story on which a reporter might work for days must use many information sources. That stands in contrast to a breaking news story about a fire that must be posted immediately to the news website or sent out as a 140-character tweet.

The brand advertising campaign that will run over many months and include ads in several media is likely to rest on a large information base. But one retail ad placed in a local newspaper by the neighborhood shoe store does not require such an extensive information search. You make choices about the management of both time and money based on the time and space constraints of your message task.

Time factors in broadcast news, for example, may be the major information constraints. If you have just 1 minute and 20 seconds to tell a story with words and pictures, you must tailor the information strategy to help in identifying the most efficient sources for telling that story.

Space factors may be the major information constraints for a message that will be delivered on a mobile device. The efficient information search is essential to the audience's expectation of effective storytelling and the media organization's requirement for the economy in producing a message.

Formats / Channels

An important consideration when developing a research plan is the ultimate delivery method for whatever will be produced. You will learn a great deal in your reporting or strategic writing classes about how the format and channel(s) used for your message affect the actual creation of the message. For the purposes of clarifying your information task, consideration of format and channels can help define the scope of information needed.

The Blaze Dallas Studios… by LibertarianGuy. Source: Wikimedia Commons. CC BY-SA 3.0

For example, if you are assigned to cover a trial and expected to simply tweet ongoing developments, the information you need will be gleaned from your eye-witness account of the proceedings. But if you are expected to develop an in-depth story to run online and in the newspaper that will comprehensively explain the case, you will need deeper background, sources that can help you describe and explain facets of the cases from different perspectives, advice or insight from experts. Producing the story for a video news report will require finding sources you can get on camera or researching locations that can give visual appeal to the story.

Eats Flies, Dates a Pig by Jan Tik. Source: FLickr. CC BY 2.5.

If you understand from your assignment that the ultimate output of your work will be recommendations on a key message to display on a billboard it will make the scope of your information seeking different than if you are creating a multi-channel campaign.

All of these message context issues must be analyzed at the start of an information search. In upcoming lessons, we will begin to develop techniques for asking, and answering, questions about the audience for the message, the facet or angles of the topic or product being researched, and who are the likely sources of information on the topic. But it is only after asking and answering the basic questions about the initial task assignment that you can begin to delve into the creative work of developing a more clearly outlined information process. The rest of the information strategy is highly dependent on the parameters of the information task.

- How to Get Clear Direction from your Boss, by Alexandra Levit, posted 3/18/13.
- Resolving Ambiguity and Uncertainty, posted 9/22/12.

Question Analysis: Who's the Audience?

Types of Audiences

Audience Clapping by honey74129. Source: Photobucket. CC0 Public Domain

As we begin the process of analyzing the message assignment archery might be a good metaphor to use. If the arrow is your message, the audience is the target you are shooting for. Without the audience "target" your soaring arrow will just fly through the air and land uselessly. Scoping out the target helps you adjust the way you deploy the arrow to most effectively hit the bullseye. Whether you are working in a newsroom or in an advertising or public relations context, your ultimate goal as a communicator is to create messages / stories / advertisements / public relations materials that effectively engage the audience with whom you most want to connect. It is your ability to connect the message content with the valued audience that will determine how successful your communications effort has been.Advertisers want to expand their products' market reach. The advertising communicator's job, then, is to determine the story to tell about the product that will most effectively appeal to the audience that has been targeted for that expanded reach. They need to understand who the current audience is for the product.Questions advertisers will ask about audience include:

- Who is the product not currently effectively marketed to?
- What do the people who use the product like, or dislike about the product?
- Who are the people who use a competitor's product and what do the competitors in the marketplace offer?
- What would an ideal customer for the product look like?
- Who buys similar products and who might find this product attractive?

Public relations professionals want to ensure positive opinions about their organization. The public relations professional's task, then, is to create messages that will influence the important stakeholders.

Questions public relations professionals will ask about audience include:

- Who are the people or groups we need to influence?
- What concerns might different stakeholders have?
- What impact would negative opinion by certain stakeholders have on the company?

Journalists' communications work is intended to inform, entertain, persuade, mobilize and/or engage the readers or viewers of the publications for which they work.

Questions journalists will include about audience:

- Who is reading/listening/viewing the news message?
- What is it that that audience already knows?
- What does the audience need to know?

As these examples indicate, each type of communicator has different types of people that they need to keep in mind and they need to understand different things about that audience they will be targeting. Before we discuss how to analyze these audience needs, we should point out two other audiences that communicators must consider as they develop their message.

Gatekeepers

We've already introduced the concept of the "gatekeepers" and their importance in the message creation process. At the start of an information task, the most important audience might be the organizational gatekeeper who will give you an assignment and who you must please with your work. Journalists will want to keep the editor in mind as they set out to define the parameters of the assignment and strategic communicators will need to be sure they understand what their boss needs. Researching these "audiences" will be an on-the-job task and can require a clear conversation to clarify the assignment as discussed in Lesson 3. The gatekeepers' concern is that the message is constructed in such a way that the goal of communication is accomplished.

Colleagues and Professionals

Communicators also keep in mind their colleagues or professional audiences when they consider how best to accomplish a message task. These are the people you work with and others in the same profession who you want to influence or impress.

For example, public relations professionals quickly learn to produce news releases that fit the formula sought by the media organizations they are trying to influence. The only way to be effective with a news release is to have a news organization "pick it up" or run a story based on it (this is why PR is referred to as "earned media.") Effective PR specialists are those who can mimic the news style of their colleagues in the local media market and tailor their news releases so that they get the maximum exposure. In this case, the colleagues in the news organization are both part of the colleague AND the gatekeeper audience. Similarly, reporters might be tempted to write their stories in a way that they know (consciously or unconsciously) will avoid offending their most important sources (the professionals from whom they have to seek information on a regular basis).

Some advertising copywriters and art directors create ads with the hope that they will get nominated for the advertising awards that help boost careers and increase salaries. The awards are almost always judged by fellow advertising professionals.

These colleagues or professional audience members exert an enormous influence on the way communicators in all media industries do their work. Communicators rely heavily on each other for ideas, and the rewards in most areas of communication work are measured by professional reputation and recognition rather than by high salaries. It is not surprising that communicators seek to create messages that will garner attention and recognition from peers in the industry.

Also, many communicators, especially those who work in news, are heavily reliant on information provided by others (government officials, industry sources, etc.). Therefore, communicators might be reluctant to do anything objectionable that will cause someone to "turn off" the information flow. That is one of the reasons news organizations may rotate journalists off a specific beat – they don't want reporters to get too close to their sources.

And all communicators understand that if the communications they create are seen as unethical or irresponsible it harms not only their own professional careers but the credibility of the entire professional.

As important as it is to recognize the gatekeeper and colleague audiences when constructing a message, it is ultimately the target audience for the message that requires creative and careful consideration. Understanding to whom the message will be directed and doing the research to ensure you have identified and understand that "end-user" is a critical, and complicated, skill.

Target Audience

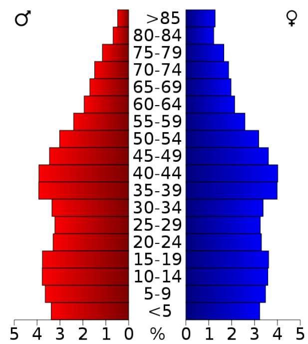
Amazon Web Service logo by Amazon. Source: Amazon Web Service. CC BY-SA 3.0.

This is the audience that most people think of when they hear the word. But all audience members are not identical. Therefore, communication researchers have devised many ways to categorize the target audience. Let's look at the the various ways target audiences might be understood.

Target Audience Segments

One way to distinguish different types of audience members is to identify the audience segment(s) into which someone might fall. Communications professionals, and especially advertisers, use a number of categories to more precisely identify who they should target with messages. Audience members can be segmented according to demographic, geographic or psychographic characteristics, or some combination of those categories. There are a number of sophisticated research tools and sources that provide detailed information about these types of categories for audience analysis.

Audience Segments: Demographics



USA Missouri age pyramid by Mulat. Source: Wikimedia Commons. CC BY-SA 2.5

There are social and economic characteristics that can influence how someone behaves as an individual. Standard demographic variables include a person's age, gender, family status, education, occupation, income, race and ethnicity. Each of these variables or characteristics can provide clues about how a person might respond to a message.

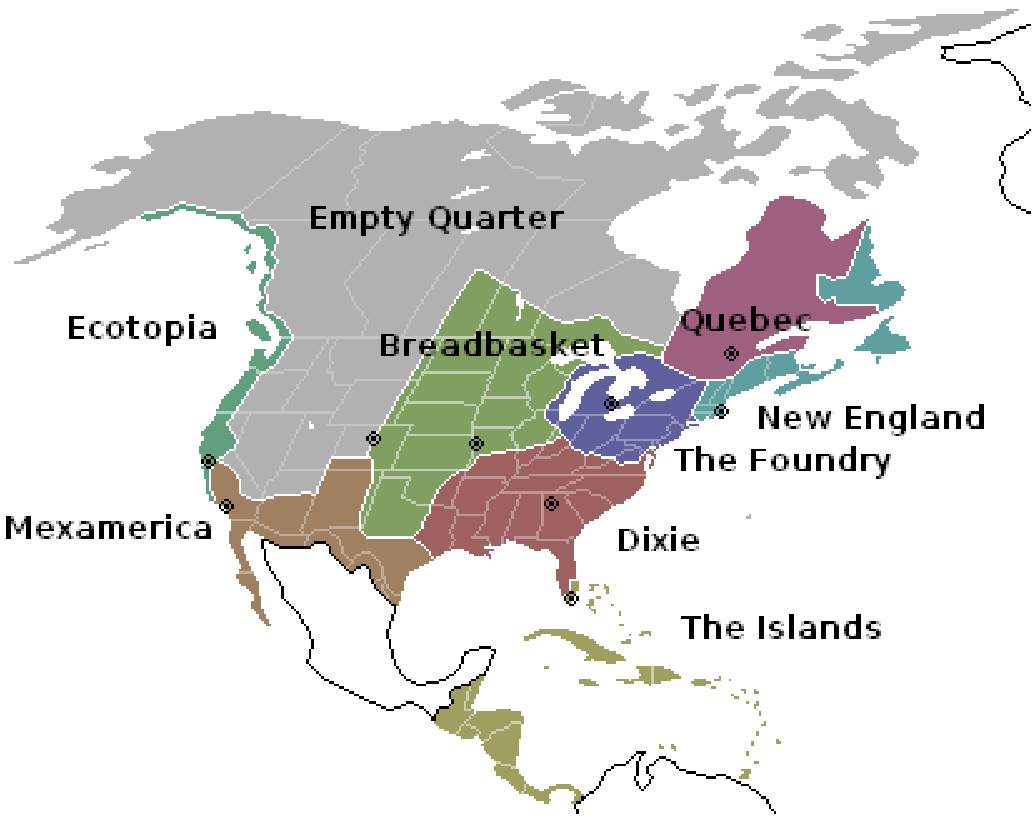
Advertisers are clearly interested in knowing, for instance, how age influences a person's need for goods and services. Think about the kinds of items teenagers purchase, the programs they watch on TV and online, and the magazines they read. Advertisers then compare those to the products that their parents purchase, the programs they watch, and the magazines they read.

The influence of an audience member's age is also a factor in the types of news messages that appeal to one group versus another. Younger people (teens, young adults) generally do not watch the national evening news on television or read a daily newspaper, for example. The news stories on those programs or in the newspaper reflect the knowledge that the audience is more mature, settled, and concerned about different topics and issues than are the younger members of the household. Each of the other demographic variables mentioned can be examined for their influence on messages and how they are tailored to meet specific audience characteristics.

Audience Segments: Geographics

We all understand geographically-defined political jurisdictions such as cities, counties, and states. These are important geographic audience categories for politicians and for news stories or ads about politics and elections. Also, local retail advertisers want to reach audiences who are in the reading or listening range of the local newspaper or radio station and within traveling distance of their stores. The audience for a newspaper is generally defined as those within a specific metropolitan area–stories and ads are written to appeal to the residents of a well-defined locality. Local television stations tailor their messages to the audience reached by their broadcast signal.

Larger, more abstract geographic definitions help define the audience for national advertisers and those creating news or public relations messages for a regional or national audience. Washington Post reporter Joel Garreau (1989) argued that regional differences in North America (Canada, the U.S., and Mexico) are important markers for understanding differences in populations that span a continent. He invented nine "nations" or non-political regions whose boundaries don't correspond to any current political jurisdictions. They are New England, The Foundry, Dixie, The Islands, MexAmerica, Breadbasket, Ecotopia, The Empty Quarter, and Quebec.



Ninenations by A Max J. Source: Wikipedia. CC BY 3.0

For one example of how Garreau determined the boundaries for each "nation," we can look at his examination of three major cities in Texas. By political considerations, the three are all part of one jurisdiction: the state of Texas. But to Garreau, Fort Worth is actually part of the Breadbasket because of its strong cattle-town heritage; San Antonio, with its large, urban Spanish-speaking community fits into MexAmerica; and Dallas is part of Dixie, with dramatic social change and economic growth.

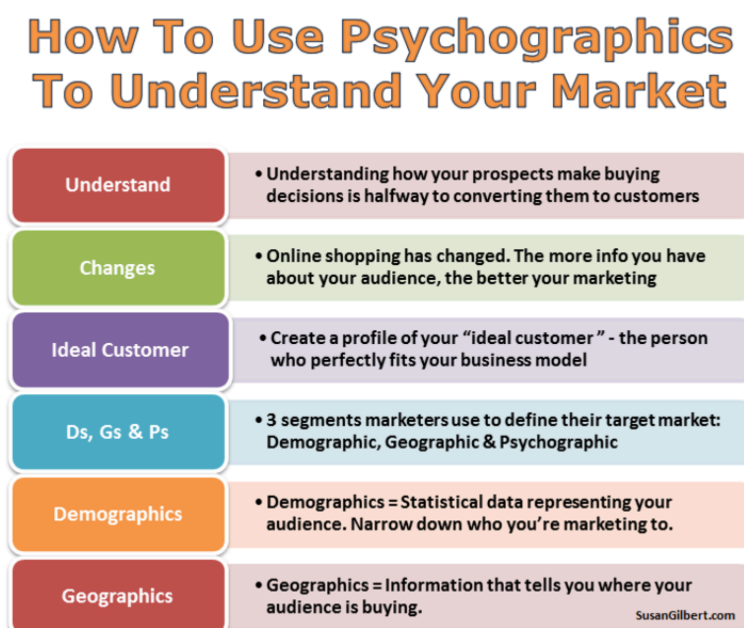
These distinctions may be irrelevant to those who draw political boundaries, but the cultural implications are crucial for those who create messages. Audience members for some types of messages in San Antonio cannot be characterized as "Texans" or even "Southerners" if one of their main cultural and regional identifiers is their close affiliation with other inhabitants of "MexAmerica." Garreau's characterizations have been widely accepted by media professionals, businesses and social scientists around the country.

Another geographic definition segments audiences into rural, urban, suburban, and edge communities (the office parks that have sprung up on the outskirts of many urban communities). These geographic categories help define rifts between regions on issues such as transportation, education, taxes, housing and land use.

Politicians have long understood that voters can be defined using these types of categories. Those who create media messages pay attention to these categories as well. Newspaper publishers in major metropolitan areas, for example, have long struggled with how to maintain their focus on the central city that defines the newspaper, while also attracting and keeping readers who live in the suburbs and work in an edge community high-rise office building.

Demographic and geographic audience characteristics are gathered from many sources. These include the U.S. Census as well as thousands of individual studies and research services conducted by media industry professionals.

Audience Segments: Psychographics



Different Ways to Use Psychographic Data in Online Marketing by Karlhain. Source: Wikimedia Commons. CC BY-SA 4.0

Psychographics refers to all of the psychological variables that combine to form a person's inner self. Even if two people share the same demographic or geographic characteristics, they may still hold entirely different ideas and values that define them personally and socially. Some of these differences are explained by looking at the psychographic characteristics that define them. Psychographic variables include:

Motives – an internal force that stimulates someone to behave in a particular manner. A person has media consumption motives and buying motives. A motive for watching television may be to escape; a motive for choosing to watch a situation comedy rather than a police drama may be the audience member's need to laugh rather than feel suspense and anxiety.

Attitudes – a learned predisposition, a feeling held toward an object, person or idea that leads to a particular behaviour. Attitudes are enduring; they are positive or negative, affecting likes and dislikes. A strong positive attitude can make someone very loyal to a brand (one person is committed to the Mazda brand so she will only consider Mazda models when it is time to buy a new car). A strong negative attitude can turn an audience member away from a message or product (someone disagrees with the political slant of Fox News and decides to watch MSNBC instead).

Personalities – a collection of traits that make a person distinctive. Personalities influence how people look at the world, how they perceive and interpret what is happening around them, how they respond intellectually and emotionally, how they form opinions and attitudes.

Lifestyles – these factors form the mainstay of psychographic research. Lifestyle research studies the way people allocate time, energy and money. One of the most well-known lifestyle models is the Values and Lifestyles System (VALS™) devised by research firm Strategic Business Insights. The model categorizes people according to their psychological characteristics and their resources. Advertisers use it to determine what kind of products and advertising appeals will best work with an anonymous audience member who falls into one of the eight categories, or mindsets, in the VALS™ model.

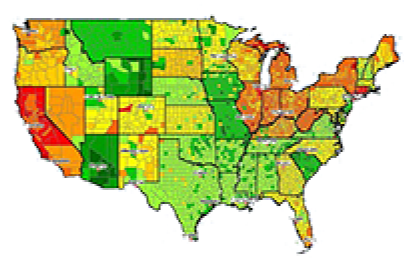
For example, someone who falls into the "*Striver*" category is said to be seeking self-definition, motivation and approval, and is low on economic, social and psychological resources. The "*Innovator*" group is comprised of successful people with high self-esteem and high income, with a wide range of interests and a taste for finer things.

These categories are most useful for advertisers in helping determine a "unique selling proposition" that would be most appealing to one type of person or another, but they also help other message creators understand WHY advertisers support the types of media they do and why some types of messages are created while others are not.

Combining Segment Data

As audience segmentation techniques become more sophisticated, we see new ways of organizing and clustering individuals according to a combination of characteristics. For instance, the Jefferson Institute has created a project called "Patchwork Nation."

According to their website, Patchwork Nation "*aims to explore what is happening in the United States by examining different kinds of communities over time. The effort uses demographic, voting and cultural data to cluster and organize communities into 'types of place.' Patchwork divides America's 3,141 counties into 12 community types based on characteristics such as income level, racial composition, employment and religion. It also breaks the nation's 435 congressional districts into nine categories, using the same data points and clustering techniques.*"



US Gas Price Temperature Map by pushandplay. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

The characteristics of Patchwork Nation locations incorporate demographic, psychographic and political data to generate a map of the country that might be used to define an advertising audience, explain voter behaviour for a news story, or target a community for a PR campaign. Examining the elements of regional characteristics can give you ideas about the diversity of audiences and an appreciation for the challenge of understanding how best to reach specific segments.

News

Journalists produce their work with the readers, listeners or viewers of the publication for which they work in mind. A journalist who works for the daily news organization in a town needs to understand the characteristics of subscribers. And if they work for a particular beat, for example, the business section, they need to understand what it is that readers of that section are looking for and how they would use the information they get.

Why does this matter? If journalists don't create stories that inform and engage their audience those people will find other outlets to satisfy their information needs. Journalism serves not only a public need, but it is also a business and a business without customers won't be in business for long.

News organizations conduct user surveys and track audience behaviour just as other kinds of companies do. The better journalists are able to understand their readership the better they will be able to anticipate and address their audience's needs.

For those journalists who work as freelancers (defined by Merriam-Webster as "*a person who pursues a profession without a long-term commitment to any one employer*"), it is essential that they learn about the target audience for the publication to which they want to pitch a story. If they don't understand the characteristics of the audience who reads *Sports Illustrated* versus *The Atlantic*, they will not be able to effectively position (or "pitch") their story idea.

In the case of pitching a story idea, they need to understand that the publication's editor is the ultimate decider on whether they get the assignment or not, and the editor's ultimate concern is to keep the publication's audience satisfied. In order for the freelancer to get the "gatekeeper's" go-ahead on a story idea, they must demonstrate they understand who the target audience is for the publication and what will appeal to them.

Advertising

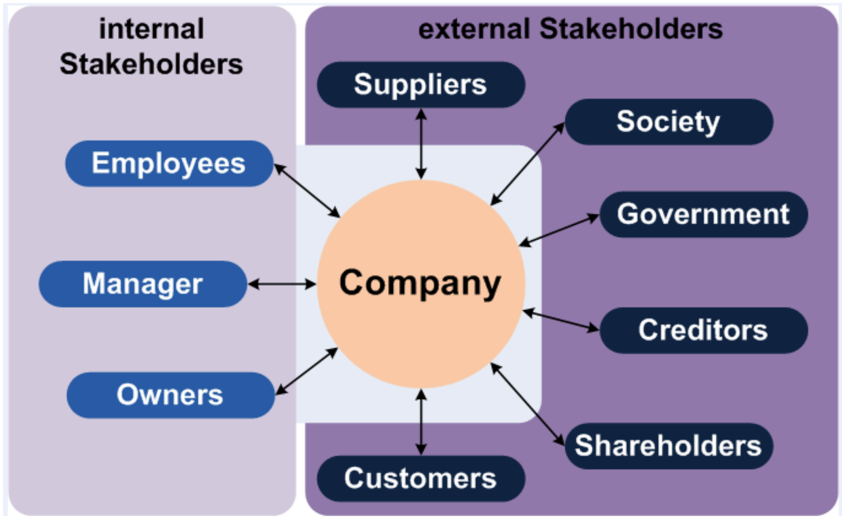
In an age of increasing competition and consumer choice, advertisers must have a highly developed understanding of the audience (customers or consumers) they want to reach. Audience research is, perhaps, the biggest information gathering task for advertisers. Information about potential or desired audiences is required at every stage of developing an advertising campaign.

The kinds of questions an advertiser will want to answer about their potential audience include:

- **Who are our current customers?** You need to know who you are already reaching, and how to keep them as satisfied customers.
- **Who are our competitors' customers?** Understanding who uses the competitors' products or services is key to figuring out how to create a campaign that could convince them to try your company's products.
- **What do our desired audience members watch / read?** Knowing where to find the kinds of customers you want to attract is an essential part of media buying work. The dollars spent placing advertisements will be thrown away if the message doesn't reach the audience you desire.
- **How happy are our customers with our products?** Keeping a pulse on consumer attitude and opinion of your product will help to refine the story you want to tell.

Until you have a set of questions to ask about the target audience, you won't know how to go about finding answers.

Public Relations



Stakeholder by Grochim. Source: Wikimedia Commons. CC BY-SA 3.0

In public relations work, the target audience is often referred to as the "stakeholder." Defined by Merriam-Webster as *"one who is involved in or affected by a course of action"* the stakeholders are those groups of people that an organization must positively influence. Just as the advertising message is intended to influence customers to regard your product positively, the public relations message is intended to influence stakeholders to regard your organization positively.

Stakeholders whose opinions or actions can positively or negatively affect an organization include:

- **Customers:** people who don't feel good about a company won't buy their products
- **Investors**: bankers, stockholders, financial analysts and others who have committed (or advise others to commit) funding to an organization won't maintain their support if they don't believe in what the company is doing
- **Legislators / government regulators:** lawmakers who feel a company or industry is doing harm, or who get complaints from their constituents, will be likely to propose restrictions or regulations
- **Employees:** the people who work within an organization must have high regard for their employer or they won't be good representatives of the organization
- **Activists / philanthropic groups:** organizations that have an interest in the area in which the organization operates can exert economic or policy pressure if they don't support the organization's work
- **Business partners**: most organizations work with a network of suppliers, vendors, and other types of business partners who help them maintain their position in their industry or field; partners are an important stakeholder audience for PR professionals

Who's the Audience for News?

reading-man-reading-magazine by Luis Wilker Perelo WilkerNet. Source: pixabay. CC0 Public Domain

In some ways, the audience for journalistic messages is the most concrete and pre-determined of the three communications professions' work. Journalists write for publications or produce reports for media outlets that have a great deal of information about their subscribers or viewers. With the ability to track digital readership, journalists know what articles people read. At the start of the message analysis process, journalists must ask a set of questions about their target audience that will help them identify the treatment of the topic about which they will be writing and make decisions about the kind of reporting they must do.

Understanding the audience that uses the publication or media outlet for which they are producing a news report will help clarify some of the following questions:

- **WHO:** Who reads / views the publication? Who would be interested in this topic? Who needs to know about this topic? Who is the media organization interested in attracting with its offerings?
- **WHAT**: What would the potential audience member want to know about the topic? What kind of report would be most informative or helpful for the audience? What kind of information will be useful? What does the audience already know about this?
- **WHERE:** Where else do people interested in the topic find information? (For freelancers) Where should I pitch my story idea?
- **WHEN:** When does the audience need to get this information (is this fast-breaking news, or something that will be used as analysis after the event?)
- **WHY:** Why does the audience need to know this? Why does the audience care? Sometimes the audience member just wants to fill empty minutes with a news message (reading news briefs on a mobile device while standing in a line or eating alone at a restaurant). Sometimes the audience member needs to answer a specific question (who won the baseball game this afternoon? when does the movie start?). Each of these "why" questions suggests a different strategy for the communicator.
- **HOW:** How can we best communicate to the audience? How much background do they need to understand what we are writing about? How technical can we be? How might the audience react to this report?

Who's the Audience for Advertising?

Advertising professionals have also developed a standard set of questions that they ask at the start of a message task, many of which specifically address audience considerations. These questions also address elements of the subject matter of the ads, the best approaches for creating the ad copy and placing the ads in the most appropriate vehicles. We will come back to many of these questions in subsequent lessons.

- **What should our advertising accomplish?** Again, sometimes the audience member just needs to find a nearby place to buy a specific product, or the hours and phone number of a business. Filling that immediate information need for the audience member requires a different strategy than trying to encourage the audience member to change their brand loyalty, think positively about your service, purchase your product. You want to know if the ad is intended to fill an immediate information need or to include a "call to action" on the part of the audience member.

- **To whom should we advertise?** Who was the target audience in previous campaigns and who has not been targeted yet that should be? Who are the competitors' customers?
- **What should we say that will most effectively convince the audience** to respond to our call to action? What have our client's ads said to similar audiences in the past? What do our client's competitors' ads say?
- **How should we frame our message for this specific audience?** How will our proposed creative strategies work for this client's messages? How do our competitors position their creative strategies?
- **Where should we place or message** to reach this audience most effectively? Which media will best reach our target audience?
- **How much should we spend** in order to reach this audience in a cost-effective way? What has our client spent in the past? How much do our competitors spend?

Montaña Rusa Hopi Hari by Arturo de Albornoz. [Source: Flickr](). [CC BY-SA 2.0]().

Who's the Audience for Public Relations?

Public relations professionals ask a similar set of questions when they are doing their strategic planning research. Again, these questions apply not just to the audience aspects of the message task but also to the other parts of the information strategy process.

- **Defining the problem:** Monitor audience knowledge, opinions, attitudes, and behaviours to answer the question, "What is happening now?" among our stakeholder audiences? In our industry or area of activity? Sometimes your goal is to help your client provide good customer service to the audience. Sometimes the goal is to positively affect audience members' opinions. You need to understand what you are trying to accomplish in order to be successful in reaching the audience with your PR message(s).
- **Identifying the stakeholder audiences:** Who has an interest in or to whom might the public relations message be addressed? Sometimes you are focusing on a single stakeholder and sometimes you need information for an entire campaign that would address a variety of stakeholder concerns.
- **Planning and programming:** Use the information gathered to determine what should be done to most effectively reach your stakeholder audiences. What type of message(s) will best address your goals and engage the audience?
- **Taking action and communicating:** Design a message or program to meet specific objectives by answering the questions: "How do we do it and say it to reach our audiences?" If your goal is to create content that encourages audience members to share (in other words, for them to become your

"advocates" through word-of mouth-endorsement), you have to ensure that the content is useful and easy to share.

Summary

It should be clear that for every type of communication message that this step of generating the questions you need to ask about the audience is very important. The number and variety of questions that might be asked about the audience also indicate the many different ways a communications professional can approach an information and message task. Brainstorming with colleagues and gatekeepers about the nature of the target audience at the start of the information strategy process is an essential step to ensure that you will be able to conduct an efficient and effective search for appropriate information.

Resources

Steps To Decoding Your Target Audience, by Jayson DeMers, Forbes, 8/27/13: https://www.forbes.com/sites/jaysondemers/%202013/08/27/6-steps-to-decoding-your-target-audience/

Garreau, J. (1989) The Nine Nations of North America. New York: Avon Books.

Question Analysis: What's the Topic?

Overview

If you would like to see steam coming out of a research librarian's ears, just go up and ask a question like, "Do you have anything on the environment?" A trained research librarian will quickly begin a "reference interview" designed to help the person asking that incredibly broad question to narrow and clarify his/her actual information need.

- **What part of the environment?** Air? Water? Soil? Weather? Plants? Animals?
- **Is there a particular issue?** Global warming? Pollution? Renewable energy?
- **Is there a certain geographic area of interest?** North America? Antarctic? Minnesota?
- **Why are you seeking the information?** Writing a term paper? Checking a specific fact? Just interested in keeping up on the topic?

In this lesson, we will discuss the importance of having that "research interview" with yourself.

What's the Angle?

Black and White Lines and Angles by Lyn Greyling. Source: PublicDomainPictures.net CC0 Public Domain 1.0

You arrive in your newsroom and the editor stops by to say, " There's going to be a decision about the expansion of the light rail line. We need something for the local section."

At the morning strategy meeting for the railroad company client, your strategic communications firm represents the account manager says, "Our client is concerned that people aren't thinking positively about traveling by train. We need some ideas."

For each of these scenarios, the topic is transportation by rail. But depending on the audience that might be identified as the target for the message, the angle of that broad topic could be very different.

Let's play through scenarios for news and strategic communications.

News Angle

For a local news story, the people that read the section are interested in or concerned about things going on in their community. There could be a number of angles about the light rail line and different questions that could be asked:

- **Economic:** What will be the cost of the line and impact on taxpayers?
- **Housing:** Will light rail affect property values for nearby homeowners and if so, how?
- **Quality of Life:** Will construction disrupt current neighborhoods or businesses?
- **Public Safety:** What has the existing light rail line done to public safety, accidents or crime?

Tramway Strasbourg Broglie by Pontauxchats. Source: Wikimedia Commons. CC SA 3.0 Unported. GNU Free Documentation License

If the story was being written for a business news segment there would be a different set of questions based on the interests and needs of the audience for business news:

- How will construction affect the local economy or employment?
- What businesses might prosper (or be hurt) if the proposal goes through?
- What has happened to businesses on the current line?
- How will the construction contractors be selected?

Depending on the audience's needs, the questions that might be explored about a broad topic like light rail transportation can quickly get quite specific. This specificity helps to narrow the focus of the information you will need to find.

Strategic Communication Angle

In the case of advertising and public relations messages, the target audience and the message's goals will be critical to figuring out the appropriate topic angle.

If, for example, the railroad's communication concern is how to expand the appeal of train travel to people not currently using trains, the questions you might want to ask (and answer) include:

- What methods of transportation are travelers currently choosing other than trains?
- What are the demographics of current train travelers (and what demographics might be ones to be targeted?)
- What reasons do travelers give for their choosing particular traveling modes?

If, on the other hand, the communications' goal is to gain support in the legislature for an expanded train system, key questions that maybe need answers include:

- What are the environmental advantages of train travel over other transportation modes?
- How might an expanded rail system benefit local economies (jobs, commuter travel, health of rural communities?)

Once again, the topic is broadly train travel, but the possible angles to the topic and the questions that must be examined become increasingly specific (and manageable) with some brainstorming.

Key Questions to Answer

Here are some key questions to be answered in this step of the message analysis process:

Why has this topic or the need for this message come up?

What is the broad topic of interest? What product, service, event or issue at the center?

What are the possible "angles" of the topic that could be considered?

What must we know about the topic before beginning the information search?

Who would know about or have a perspective on the topic?

Storefront(2012-03-22%2012.29.39) by Mike Linksvayer. Source: Flickr. CC0 Public Domain

If you can clearly answer these questions, you'll have a solid foundation for building your information strategy.

The communications objectives are different for journalists, advertising professionals, and public relations practitioners. So, too, is the information needed for each media professional to accomplish their message goals. Where a journalist may need to become an "instant expert" on a topic they will be covering, for the PR professional it may be more important to understand the prevailing opinions about the topic, and for the advertiser finding information that helps him understand the audience's interests in the topic to determine the most appropriate "selling proposition" would be key.

Idea Generation

Every message begins with an idea. While it is true that many tasks are assigned by others, the actual creative work of crafting a message still rests on the skill and imagination of the individual doing the information searching and writing (that's you!)

Mind-mapping vector 2 by Greg Williams. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

One important skill that good communicators develop early in their careers is the ability to understand what it is possible to ask about. Any idea is fair game. Because solid information strategy skills allow you to find answers to just about anything, you are not limited to those questions that can be answered easily and quickly. Advanced methods for finding these answers free you up to ask unusual, different, and perhaps difficult questions.

A variety of techniques help you generate ideas for messages. Brainstorming, making idea maps and point-of-view diagrams, keeping a journal or daybook for scribbling notes, and reading everything you can get your hands on are all methods you can use to provide grist for the idea mill. A well-developed sense of curiosity will open you to new ways of looking at the world around you. Common sense and healthy skepticism (not cynicism) keep you grounded.

Donald Murray, in *Writing for Your Readers*[1], describes the idea-generation techniques of idea mapping and creating point-of-view diagrams for communication professionals. Idea mapping, he explains, is a more creative way of exploring a subject than using traditional subject outlines. The central, broad subject or topic is drawn in a circle in the middle of a page. All of the related ideas that occur to the "mapper" are drawn out along lines that emerge from the center circle. The new lines stemming from the central idea are like branches on a tree, each of which may have more related, narrower ideas that branch out from the ideas derived from the center.

In idea development, this technique is not intended to serve as a definitive method of topic outlining, but as a quick and intuitive first step in thinking about possible angles of the topic. You may need to spend no more than five minutes making a map.

A point-of-view diagram uses a similar technique. A subject or topic is again drawn in a circle in the middle of a page. Draw as many "arrows" pointing inward—toward the central topic—as you can imagine. The arrows represent the different people or organizations whose points of view on the subject or topic can be tapped. By diagramming the topic in this way, you can generate a variety of perspectives on that idea and even begin to identify possible audiences or interviewees for the message.

It is easy in the idea generation stage to fall into the overuse of clichés and stereotypes. It is a challenge finding a fresh, unique perspective for the message on which you are working. One of the best ways of ensuring that you'll avoid clichés and maintain a fresh perspective is to truly understand all angles or perspectives from which a message topic might be seen.

As a journalist dealing with the issue of the U.S. government drilling for oil in the Alaskan wildlife refuge, for instance, you would probably expect widely varying perspectives from an environmentalist, a major oil company executive, the governor of Alaska, from a political science professor at the University of Minnesota, and from a park ranger in Alaska. As an advertising professional for the National Park Service, you might use many of these same sources to understand the topic even though your intent for the information will be quite different than the journalists. For any type of media, however, getting these collective, diverse perspectives will help you to find a fresh approach for addressing this issue. This will also help you narrow a broad topic to an interesting and manageable sub-topics.

Observation for Idea Generation

You should also consider yourself and your personal observation about what is going on around you as a key source of ideas. Having a "nose for news" generally means that you are tuned in to your surroundings and can gauge when something is "off" or different and worth checking into. For example:

- Noticing the long lines in front of the automatic teller machines, for example, may be the start of a PR effort for your bank client to improve customer service
- Observing that a waterfront is eroding from the massive number of people who jog by the lake shore can lead to a series of news articles on conflicts between the goals of recreation and preservation in park systems.
- Seeing "teachers wanted" classified ads may signal the education reporter that a decade of teacher layoffs is ending.
- Standing in the grocery checkout line behind teenage shoppers can alert the advertising researcher to do further study on which family members purchase the groceries.

Keeping your eyes open, being curious about what is going on around you, listening in to what people are talking about – all of these are ways that you can generate new ideas or develop fresh angles on a topic.

Bus stop posters, bumper stickers, bulletin board copy, T-shirt messages, and other informal messages visible in every community (and in digital sites like Pinterest) can also trigger ideas or perspectives for the more formal part of the information strategy.

If you are in charge of an advertising account for a shoe manufacturer, being attuned to what people are wearing in different situations might give you an idea for an interesting approach to take in an ad campaign.

If you are writing about light rail issues, attending meetings where community members express their concerns will give you tips on aspects of the topic that you need to research more deeply.

Communicators need to keep their eyes open to these informal information sources. They can provide clues about changing public opinion, lifestyles and attitudes in an area – and can signal emerging trends.

Types of Observation: Routine

Routine observation is the most frequently used type of observation. It is "routine" in that it involves simply going to the scene of the action and observing. Professionals in all fields of mass communication perform these routine observations. The things that you might see and hear can spur new ideas.

Quick Brainstorming:

You are walking through campus one evening and see that every third street light is out. If you were a reporter for the Daily, what kind of questions might you ask as a result of this observation? If you worked for the University's public relations office, what kind of questions might you ask? If you were developing an advertising campaign for the "Campus Escort" service, what ideas might this trigger?

Types of Observation: Participant

Participant observation involves joining or living with a group and becoming a part of the action. Members of the group being observed — for instance, prison inmates — may or may not know the observer's true identity, but he or she is seen as being part of the group.

This method of observation is common in sociological and anthropological research, as well as in communication research. It allows the information gatherer to get direct experience and to reduce reliance on the expertise or testimony of others. In becoming part of the "scene," the observer begins to understand it as an insider and come up with ideas that might need to be explored.

Nellie Bly was an early proponent of participant observation as a way to get an enterprising news report. She arranged to have herself declared mentally incompetent in order to be committed to a mental hospital so that she could see, first-hand, the conditions in which mental patients lived.

Nellie Bly bids fairwell by Library of Congress. Source: Wikimedia Commons. CC0 Public Domain

Participant observation is an expensive technique, requiring a substantial amount of time in the field. It is also fraught with ethical and legal issues. Members of ABC News' Prime Time Live got jobs in several Food Lion supermarkets in order to place hidden cameras and capture video of employees re-dating the expiration labels on old meat and, in some cases, repackaging the meat to be sold as fresh. The report resulted in a lawsuit against ABC and in a jury verdict that awarded Food Lion $5.5 million in damages. The television network eventually prevailed in having the verdict overturned, but not until it had spent millions in legal fees.[2] This is why it is important to consider the ethical and legal implications of the techniques you employ in researching as we will discuss in Lesson 7.

Types of Observation: Unobtrusive

In some circumstances, unobtrusive observation may be more effective than participant observation, especially if the observer's presence will change the situation under observation.

Hidden camera investigations have traditionally been one of the most obvious types of unobtrusive observation examples. After careful deliberation within the news organization about the ethical and legal ramifications of using a hidden camera, a journalist may use unobtrusive observation techniques that capture activities or conversations. Investigative reports may rely on such observation techniques as a way to document improper behaviour or malfeasance.

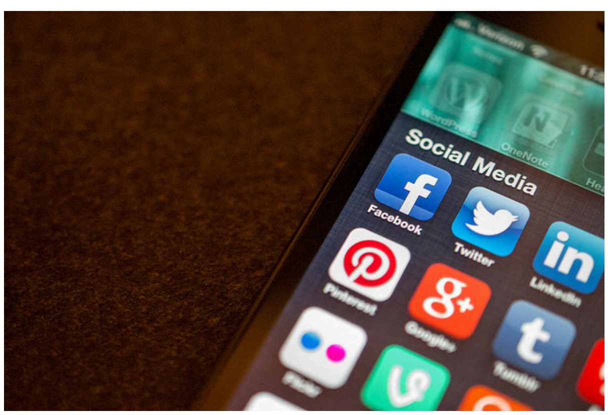
Unobtrusive observation techniques also are used by advertising professionals. A very large Chicago agency had an ongoing research project in a town of 8,000 to 12,000 about 150 miles from Chicago. Advertising researchers visited the town on a regular basis and politely listened in on conversations in coffee shops and churches, hairdressers' shops, and taverns.

The agency professionals were trying to learn what is important to average folks, what occupies their hearts and minds. In the process, they thought they would gain clues as to why people don't always follow cooking directions for frozen pizzas, or what they really think about prunes. The advertising professionals learned to prepare themselves well for their visits. One agency employee's too-hip hairdo marked her as an outsider in her observer role, while another employee learned that driving a pickup truck rather than his Audi to town would help him blend into his observation environment.[3]

Spy Cam Surveillance... by Mike Mozart. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

A more recent version of this type of observation involves ad agency personnel asking consumers to take video cameras into their homes to record their every-day activities in the kitchen, while cleaning the house, and other typical household behaviour. The idea is to learn more about how consumers use products in their day-to-day lives rather than in the artificial environment of a focus group room or a mock living room set up in a research lab. Viewing videos posted by consumers on YouTube as they talk about how they use various products, along with their opinions about them, would be another way of conducting an unobtrusive observation.

Types of Observation: Social Listening



Social Media apps by Jason Howie. Source: Flickr:CC BY 2.0

The rise in social media has provided communicators with another excellent technique for using unobtrusive observation for idea generation. Reading over the comments on a Facebook page for a group of fans, or the user comments on a news story on a topic might give you an idea for a fresh approach to covering a story or an issue that you had not even considered.

For public relations professionals, social listening can lead to important insights on issues that might be brewing. "Sentiment analysis" (also referred to as "opinion mining") is one of the emerging skills required for savvy PR practitioners. It requires consistent attention to the online opinions and reactions in different social media platforms. While there are sophisticated tools to analyze large numbers of postings, even routine scanning can give you ideas for themes or trends that might require attention.

Advertising professionals can use the comments in social spaces to learn more about positive, or negative, opinions there might be about a product (or about the competition.) These comments can provide fodder for ad copy or inspire a new direction for a campaign.

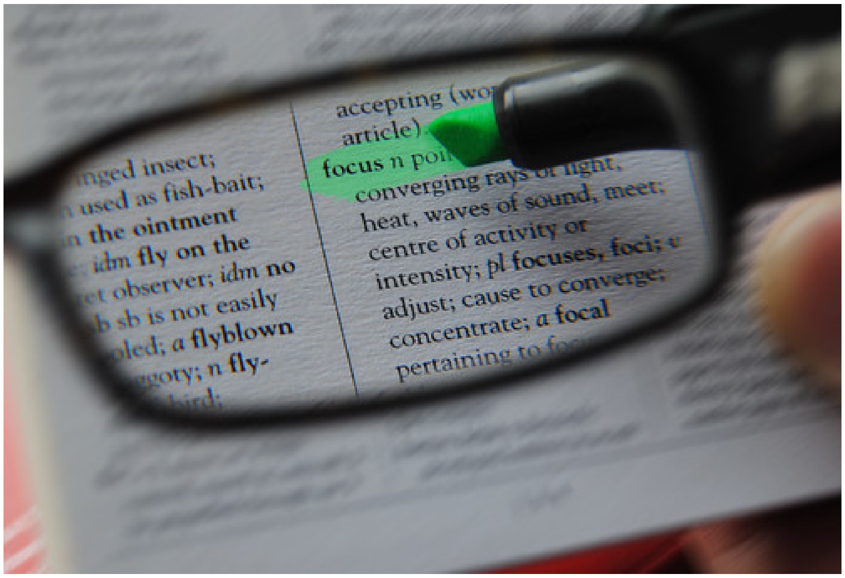
Narrowing the Focus

These techniques of idea mapping and observation can help you think expansively about the potential aspects of a topic but no one, especially not a busy reporter or strategic communicator juggling multiple clients' demands, can address all of those aspects. What is needed now is a way to narrow the focus.

The following set of questions can help you identify and define a more specific aspect of a topic on which to focus.

- What disciplines of knowledge might deal with this topic – and what would their focus be? To understand "disciplines of knowledge," think about the departments that offer majors on a university campus — economics, political science, biology, etc.
- What parts of the city / state / country / world are dealing with this – or how are they dealing with it differently?
- Is this a new topic? How has it evolved over time? Where might it be going in the future?
- What kind of groups have a stake in this topic and what are their positions?

Once all of these questions have been posted, you are in a position to focus selectively on some aspects of the larger question and develop an exacting standard for raising questions and seeking information to address your information needs. Going through this routine frequently allows you to revise or refine the question, making your information-seeking tasks much more manageable.



Focus by Mark Hunter. [Source: Flickr](): [CC BY 2.0]()

For example, if the broad topic is, "*homelessness*" the formula for focusing the topic might work this way:

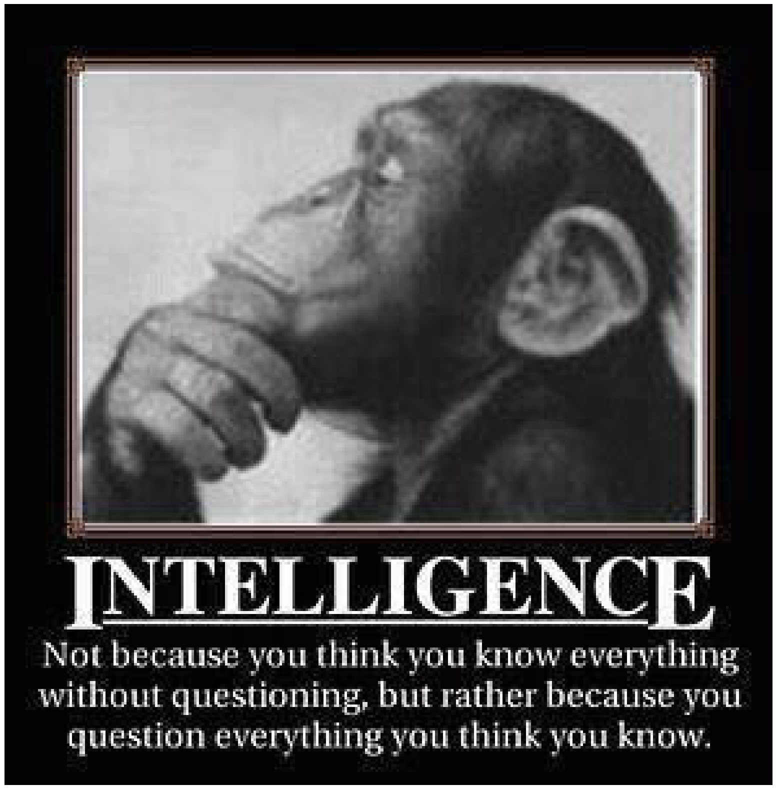
Disciplines: Economics, sociology, urban planning, and psychology are a few of the disciplines that might provide insight – each would have a specific aspect on which they focus – and their disciplinary focus might inform your own.

Geographic limits: Although homelessness exists throughout the U.S., how the condition is understood and approached varies from community to community and from state to state. In one area concerns about immigration policy might be big while in another it might be how to help the homeless during cold winter weather.

Time period limits: Much of mass communication work emphasizes recency. Therefore, the newest information is likely to be stressed. However, trends in homelessness over time (particularly the last decade or so) will surely help put the problem into a historical context. And some types of messages would benefit from an overview of how homelessness has been handled throughout many decades since this is a problem that has been with us for a very long time.

Stakeholders: Academics, politicians, social workers, activists and advocates for the homeless have entirely different ways of approaching the issue and defining the problem. The homeless themselves are certainly another stakeholder and one that isn't often featured in messages about the problem.

Conventional Wisdom



Intelligence and Questioning… by Digital Ralph. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

For reasons of time savings, you often concentrate on obvious or simple approaches to a message. But this may lead to a message that does nothing more than conveying the conventional wisdom in an area, failing to provide the audience with a more creative, original, or, perhaps, accurate approach. The information strategy process provides you with a method for identifying fresh angles or new twists on a topic. One of the advantages of using idea-mapping and point-of-view diagrams is that they help you identify what we think we know about a topic and to challenge yourself to come up with a fresh approach to the topic.

The media are often accused of being trapped by conventional wisdom. In order to get beyond the conventional wisdom, it is first necessary to understand what it is. Conventional wisdom usually contains a grain of truth. It is different than faith, blind prejudice, or stereotypes. The essential elements of conventional wisdom about any topic can usually be demonstrated in some sense. For example: conventional wisdom says that cats are difficult to train, Midwestern universities have good hockey teams, and women are good listeners. Each of these is based on some socially-arrived-at assumptions about reality.

Conventional wisdom abounds in every field and for every topic. Advertisers and marketers operated under the assumption that women generally were not big purchasers and users of technology until a study done for a women's magazine showed that 65 percent of the women surveyed had purchased a personal computer for home use in the previous two years. And 53 percent of those surveyed said that advertising for computer-related products did not appeal to them because it was aimed at men. Advertisers trapped by the conventional wisdom about who purchases products and services lose opportunities to create messages with a fresh, new and effective appeal.

Conclusion

One of the most important skills communicators can develop is a method for quickly and creatively analyzing potential angles or aspects of a given message topic. But that is just the first step. Just as important is learning how to focus, out of all the possible angles, on the one aspect of the topic that best matches the audience's needs and the communication objectives.

As with all skills practice, open-mindedness, and curiosity will serve you well as you develop these skill sets.

Question Analysis: Who Contributes Information?

Overview

Continuing with the archery analogy from, when you are deciding the best way to hit your target, you need to choose the appropriate type of arrow. Good archers understand that some arrows are made of carbon and are very light but shatter easily; aluminum arrows break less easily and are stiffer; wooden arrows use feathers rather than plastic for the vanes at the back end and should not be used with high-power bows. Each arrow type is chosen for its characteristics and the type of target the archer is trying to hit.

Similarly, there are many different possible contributors to an information search for a message task. One of the key analysis tasks at the start of your information strategy process is to brainstorm the possible contributors that might meet your information needs. This lesson will outline the types of contributors that are useful for communications professionals, how and why they create the information they create, and some of the types of message tasks they can help you accomplish.

Where Information Comes From: An Overview of Contributors

Whether you are seeking a specific fact, a good anecdote to illustrate your story, background information about the product or service you are advertising, or promotional or persuasive publications to understand different points of view, you will need to know how to find, and use, the information provided by public-sector and private-sector institutional sources, scholarly sources, journalistic sources, and informal sources.
Understanding how, and why, each of these types of sources creates information is one of the most important skills you will need as you start your information strategy.

Institutional Sources

An institution, broadly defined, is *"an organization, establishment, foundation, society, or the like, devoted to the promotion of a particular cause, product, or program.*[4]" You can see that this is a catchall term that can cover all kinds of contributors. Therefore, it helps to break this large category into two very different kinds of institutions: **Public** and **Private**.

The corner drug store is in the *private sector*, while the police precinct station next door is in the *public sector.* The elementary school maintained with tax revenues is part of the *public sector*, while the church-affiliated school is in the *private sector*.

These lines are hardly neat, however. Almost all private colleges, for instance, enroll students whose financial support comes partly from state and federal sources. Most corporations are in the private sector, but some operate with charters from the federal government, such as Amtrak (rail service) or the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Institutions in both the public sector (*governments at all levels*) and the private sector (*businesses, political organizations, trade and industry associations, foundations, religious organizations, unions and professional associations, etc.*) generate information for a number of purposes. You must recognize that institutions develop information for their own internal purposes and may be disclosed to you selectively and with a specific purpose in mind. Organizations as different from one another as the U.S. Department of Defense and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom share this characteristic.

Let's discuss the distinctions between the types of institutional sources and describe how and why they create and contribute information of use to researchers.

Public Sector Institutions

Capitol Building Architecture Usa by Jens Junge. Source: pixabay. CC0 Public Domain

Public institutions are, essentially, all of the agencies, offices, and other entities that constitute local, state and federal governments. These organizations are funded by tax dollars and operate in the service of the citizens that pay those taxes.

The information they generate comes from the work they are charged with performing. The output of agencies that regulate particular industries might include databases of licenses issued, rules and regulations for the operation of an organization, analyses of business conditions, censuses of operations. The output of agencies that monitor the environment, or transportation, for example, would be reports and studies and statistics that track current conditions or make projections.

Organization of Public-Sector Institutions

One way to picture the complex organization of public-sector institutions that generate information is to visualize the information as it is presented below.

Table of Public-Sector Institutions

Branch	Local	State	National
Legislative	City Council	Legislature	Congress
Judicial	Municipal Courts	State Courts	Federal Courts
Executive	Mayor	Governor	President

Private Sector Institutions

Each level and each branch of government generates information. The information sources are so voluminous that it would require a book for each of the branches to discuss comprehensively the material available at each level and in each branch, and the tools to locate that material. The important thing for you as a communications professional is to understand that each level of government generates information that is likely to be important for most messages you will work on and that there are efficient and effective ways to locate that information if you know how and where it is generated.

Private-sector institutions are funded by revenues made from the sale of products or services, through investment by stockholders, or through donations. There are two types of private-sector institutions: for-profit and non-profit. Under for-profit institutions, there are two types: Publicly-held and privately-held. The distinction is important because different types require different kinds of reporting of information.

For-profit private-sector institutions:

By definition, a for-profit institution *"is a corporation that is intended to operate a business which will return a profit to the owners.*[5]" There can be two types of for-profit private-sector institutions: **publicly-held** and **privately-held**. The distinction between the two is that the publicly-held corporation sells stock in the company – the public, therefore, can essentially be "co-owners." Privately-held corporations do not sell stock; all of the company's assets are in private hands.

McDonald's Corporation is one of the most… by Astros4477. Source: Wikipedia"-CC BY 2.0

For-profit private-sector institutions generate multiple types of information in support of the running of the business, to promote their products, or as required by the government. The required documentation for government differs from publicly-held corporations requiring more reporting than privately-held corporations (this is due to the government's interest in protecting citizen's investment in companies.)

Unlike public-sector institutions where some neutrality of position is expected, private-sector institutions may be more agenda-driven since their information is generated to support their product, organizational goals or policy line. Much of what private-sector institutions produce is for their internal use only, but some are created for use both inside and outside of the institution.

Non-profit private-sector institutions

Non-profit private-sector institutions differ from the for-profit in their ultimate objective. The for-profit's goal is to generate revenue through the sales of goods and services. The non-profit's goal is to influence, persuade, or receive support for a cause. They generate donations that support the efforts of the organization but that funding is invested back into the organization, not as revenue that delivers income to "owners."

United Way of Dane County, Madison by Channel 3000 Communities. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

Non-profits are organizations like associations, churches, fraternal organizations, and other groups that have a focused set of activities that support the interests or concerns of the organization.

In both for- and non-profit private-sector institutions, information is generated and used for different purposes: some because law requires they make the information available, some to promote the organization, some to satisfy the organizational mission to inform the public or stakeholders about an issue or topic, some to support the network of members of the organization. The information may be available in databases of statistics, on institutional websites, as part of media kits prepared by the public relations department, in directories or annual reports, and in many other formats.

Private-sector institutions generate both public and private records about their own activities.

Private information created by both for-profit and non-profit private-sector institutions is intended for use by the company or organization and can be difficult to obtain by someone outside the institution. These can include:

- internal correspondence
- proprietary product recipes or unique manufacturing processes (for profit)
- marketing research about their customers or constituencies
- business plans for product line expansions (for-profit) or service expansions (non-profit)

But other records generated by private-sector institutions are public and more easily obtained. These can include:

- Public financial disclosure documents if they sell stock to shareholders or operate as a non-profit institution with tax exemption
- Compliance documents if they operate in an environment that requires licenses or regulatory oversight
- Information verifying compliance with tax laws, social security contributions, worker's compensation payments for employees
- Evidence they are complying with federal and international trade and commerce laws and regulations if they operate overseas

You have legal and legitimate access to much more information from private-sector institutions and through public records than you would likely ever think to request. In fact, the potential problems involved in seeking information about for-profit and non-profit institutions is not the chance that your requests might be denied but, rather, that you will be overwhelmed by the quantity and complexity of it all.

You can reasonably expect for-profit and non-profit institutions to be reliable, accurate and complete in their information-producing and -disseminating functions. But you should not expect the information to be neutral in respect to social values and social structures. Nor should you expect that institutions will remain static as laws change and as social values and structure evolve. Rather, you should recognize that when you use information from these institutional sources, you have to decode the biases, assumptions and vested interests inherent in the information.

Scholarly Sources

Another major category of information sources is scholarly information produced by subject experts working in academic institutions, research centers, and scholarly organizations. Scholars generate information that advances our knowledge and understanding of the world. The research they do creates new opportunities for inventions, practical applications, and new approaches to solving problems or understand issues.

Google Scholar by AJC1. [Source: Flickr](). [CC BY-SA 2.0]()

Scholars introduce their discoveries to the world in a formal system of information dissemination that has developed over centuries. Because scholarly research undergoes a process of "peer review" before being published (meaning that other experts review the work and pass judgment about whether it is worthy of publication), you can be assured that the information you find from scholarly sources has met the standards for accuracy, credibility, and validity in that field.

Academics, researchers, and students at universities make their contributions to scholarly knowledge available in many forms:

- masters' theses
- doctoral dissertations
- conference papers
- academic reports
- scholarly journals
- books
- individual scholars' web pages
- web pages developed by the scholars' home institution

All serve the purpose of publishing and distributing the new knowledge gleaned from the research efforts of these scholars.

Journals that publish scholarly contributions are different than the journals that might be published by an institution such as a think tank or by a media organization. Scholarly journals have a board of editors and a panel of peer reviewers who will determine whether the submitted material has sufficient merit to be published.

Materials from scholarly sources are usually found most readily in libraries with large collections of scholarly journals and books. Some scholarly materials can be located in the sponsoring institution's library. For example, a dissertation written by a University of Texas student would be available at the University of Texas library.

There are now "digital only" scholarly publications that uphold the same rigorous peer review and high academic standards as their printed predecessors. An example is the Journal of Interactive Advertising. Research projects and papers of professors, doctoral students and researchers can be found on university websites. In some cases, institutional sources – such as associations – will make compilations of scholarly papers available, like the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's database of AEJMC conference papers.

The supporting datasets used to analyze the research are rarely available online, but the clever communicator will know that the database must exist and that the scholar will be the source they need to contact to find out about it. Since one of the tenets of scholarly research is replicability, scholars have an interest in making their data available.

Making distinctions between types of disciplines may help you determine the types of scholarly information sources that are most useful for your purposes. The clearest distinction is between the sciences and the humanities. The scientist and the humanist use different sorts of research methods and study different phenomena. They publish their findings in forms that are characteristic of their disciplines and make these documents available through a variety of tools.

Scientists seek experimental validity by studying the natural world and examining the regularities or irregularities that seem to govern natural phenomena. Their methods must be open to scrutiny and, in the best of circumstances, must be reproducible by others following the same procedures. Experimental validity, rather than an individual interpretation of events or phenomena, is paramount. Immediacy in sharing results is very important for professionals in the scientific fields, so scientists rely on the research report and journal article.

The humanist's method is shaped for interpretive validity; that is, the humanist tries to interpret a poem, a painting, a novel or a musical score by presenting an interpretation that will be considered valid. Humanists study the products of human imagination and combine a personal, unique perspective with the framework of accepted concepts and knowledge that their discipline provides. Humanists rely on books as the primary method of expressing their knowledge of a field because the book allows the in-depth exploration of context that characterizes humanistic investigation.

Social and policy scientists rely on a combination of experimental and interpretive methods. They have adopted the scientific method for much of their work and exhibit the same concern for openness and validity exhibited by scientists. However, because the subject of much of their study is a human social activity, social scientists work interpretively as well. For the most part, they are concerned with the present and with the implications of their work in social organizations and in public decision making. Social and policy scientists publish their findings in a number of forms. Journals are important, but research reviews, yearbooks and handbooks are also valuable.

While it is easy to understand why it is important for scholars to share their work among themselves, why would scholars want to share their information with you as a communications professional? For one thing, scholars are as eager as anyone else to have their work recognized and appreciated. Taking a call from a reporter or public relations specialist seeking the most reliable "expert" on a particular subject is an ego-boost for the scholar who is used to toiling in relative anonymity in the quiet of the academic or research center environment.

Another motivation for scholars to talk to you is that they might be conducting their work with the help of a grant or financial backing from a foundation or research organization that would appreciate the wider distribution of the findings and a larger public audience for the organization's work.

In fact, it is your job as a communications professional to ask scholars who is supporting their work financially. It is not unusual for scholars to have grants from large companies (pharmaceutical companies, for instance) or government agencies (the U.S. Defense Department, for instance), and the work they do may reflect the interests or priorities of the funding source.

Scholars typically must reveal their funding sources in manuscripts they submit to journals for peer review so the experts reviewing the work know who "paid the piper" and who may be "calling the tune." This is not to disparage the independence of scholars who work with grant funding but rather to alert you, the information seeker, to ask for full disclosure about the nature of the funding of the scholarly work you intend to use in your research. Bias comes in many different forms and even if a funding source is a reputable governmental organization such as the National Science Foundation (NSF), you should acknowledge that the agenda and interests of this organization are important for understanding the perspective of that research.

Much of the work you do as a communications professional requires you to range across many disciplines of knowledge and skim across many fields of expertise. That usually means that you will not, as the media professional, become an "expert" in any one subject area.

You must rely on scholars to help you accurately interpret information for your audience. You seek the help of scholarly sources to identify emerging social or scientific trends, to decipher specialist information or jargon that you cannot understand, to comment on the work of other scholars, to critique institutional policies or procedures, and for a wide variety of other purposes. The main use of scholarly sources in mass communication messages is as a source of expertise and knowledge about audiences, subject matter, or effects of messages.

As you move through the information strategy process, you will begin to identify the individual scholars and/or the scholarly publications or resources that are most appropriate for your message task. For instance, if you are working on the advertising account for a new type of low-fat snack food, your initial discussions about the product with the client may direct you to several researchers whose work documents the dietary effects of the new food.

If you are writing a news story about the possible effects of a new government-imposed tariff on imported steel, you are likely to want to discuss the policy with economics scholars who study trade policy whose names you find in the transcripts of testimony before Congress about the policy.

If you are preparing the news release about the introduction of curtain airbags in next year's models, your supervisor may ask you to seek the expertise of a scholar studying the effects of the new devices on the injury rate in auto accidents.

In every case, the scholarly source is intended to provide credibility, depth, balance and/or expertise to your message. Rather than asking your audience to trust that you, the communicator, just happened to get it right, you seek the help of scholarly sources to ensure that audiences are receiving complete, accurate, and fair information in their news stories, advertisements and public relations messages. If you choose your scholarly sources carefully and with attention to their credentials, expertise and relevance for your topic, you are likely to produce a much more reliable and credible message for your audience. We will go into more detail about locating and using scholarly sources in later lessons.

Journalistic Sources

Another major category of information sources is journalistic materials produced for a general audience and distributed through popular media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television, Web sites, etc.). Journalistic sources also include industry-specific news sources such as PRWeek, Advertising Age, or Editor & Publisher magazine—we will commonly refer to these specialized business-oriented sources as trade publications.

Much of the work that media professionals do relies on the previous journalistic work in that area. The basic rule to "check the clips" before starting on any information task applies to newsrooms of all types. Advertising libraries maintain "tear sheet" files of ad examples from magazines and newspapers in a myriad of product and service categories so ad professionals have some idea about how a particular item has been advertised before launching off on a new campaign. Public relations professionals are judged, in part, by the coverage their clients receive in the popular media and therefore use a variety of means to document where their news releases were published in media outlets.

News media moved to the digital production of their newsprint products more than thirty-five years ago. News organizations, with rare exceptions, now have a digital version of their print, television or radio counterpart available on the Web. And in the last decade, many digital-only news publications have been created. What this means for the communicator is unprecedented access to the news coverage from journalistic organizations around the world.

Press Conference – Sunita Lyn Williams by Biswarup Ganguly. [Source: Wikimedia Commons](). [CC BY 3.0 Unported]()

Many news sites will give access not only to current stories but to the archive of previously published stories. Sometimes free, sometimes for a fee, these archives will be important resources to communicators needing background on a topic or event. Often, news sites will make the databases of statistics they have used to report a story available. The "computability" of the digital space allows the user of a news database to find the crime statistics, or school test scores, for example, for the specific area they are interested in.

Many journalistic organizations are making interactive, digital versions of their publications available in addition to their print versions, so you can see all the articles and ads as they appeared in the print publication. This is of particular interest to strategic communicators who need to track the placement and play of stories and ads.

As potential contributors to your information search, journalistic sources might be helpful in generating ideas for your news message (how have others written about this and what could we choose as a new "angle"), identifying possible problems or crises you might need to address with your PR messages (a news report identifies falling public confidence in your client organization) or suggesting an opportunity for a new ad approach (a news report might document that more women are doing home repairs so your client home improvement store should target women).

Depending on the context of the information request you present them, you will get different kinds of information from journalists as interviewees. If the media organization itself is the focus of the research, the information you will get is likely to be the "party line" of the organization. If you are tapping one of the employees of a media organization about a story they have written, you are likely to get more of a personal view of what went on in the crafting of that message. If you are seen as any kind of competitor, you are unlikely to get any information at all. The products of journalistic organizations are messages and if the journalist believes you are going after the same sort of message, that reporter won't be a very willing contributor.

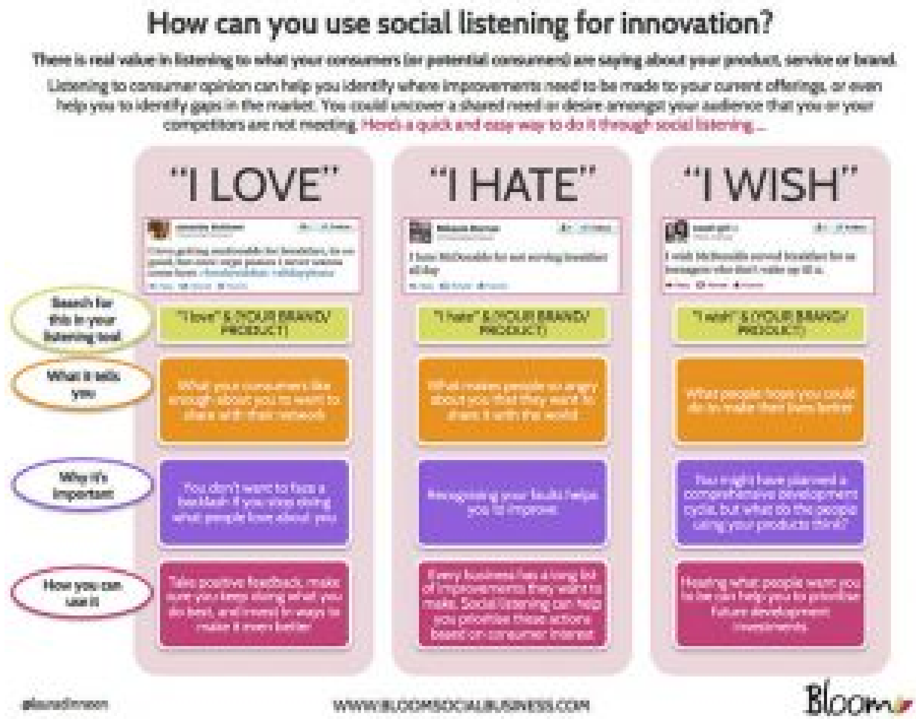
Informal Sources

Getting started on a new subject and grounding the information in "reality" are just two challenges you'll face early in the information strategy. The best route to meet both of these challenges can be consulting people informally and observing the world around you.

Just a face in the crowd by Scott Cresswell. Source: Flickr. CC BY 2.0

When describing how informal sources might be helpful, we are talking about what people know, feel, and believe in their life experiences. A person you might consult as an informal source might also be an institutional, scholarly, or journalistic source in another context – one in which the information you are trying to get from them is related to their work.

Monitoring online forums, chat rooms and social networking sites has become a routine part of a communicator's daily work routine. These sites allow individuals to share what is sometimes a disconcerting amount of personal information about their lives, interests, activities, acquaintances and future plans. Social networking sites as sources of information from informal contributors provide the communicator with a rich vein of material that was once non-existent or nearly impossible to tap.



Social listening for innovation by Laura Dinneen – [Source: Flickr]() – [CC BY-NC 2.0]()

The ability to find information sources and "listen in" on what they are talking about has been greatly enhanced with the rise of social networks and microblogging services like Twitter. A challenge, though, is identifying those messages truly contributed by unaffiliated people and messages that look like they are from "informal" sources but which are actually marketing-sponsored messages.

Even at their best, informal sources provide just a portion of the information that is needed for a message. Informal sources may be incomplete, outdated, self-serving or contain errors of fact or interpretation. They are most likely to provide you with a "slice of life" perspective rather than an informed, credible perspective that other types of sources might provide.

Disciplines of Knowledge

Another major aspect of identifying possible contributors involves drawing the boundaries for the information strategy.

It is never possible to examine an idea in its entirety. You have to carve out a manageable portion of an idea if you are going to make your deadline and do a credible job with the message. When drawing these boundaries for the strategy, it helps to think about how and where information is produced. For this, you need to identify the disciplines of knowledge production in a subject area.

The information does not exist in the environment like some kind of raw material. It is produced by individuals who work within a particular field of knowledge and who use specific methods for generating new information. Disciplines are knowledge-producing and -disseminating systems. Looking through a college course catalog gives clues to discipline structure. Fields such as political science, biology, history and mathematics are unique disciplines with their own logic for how and where new knowledge is introduced and made accessible.

By geralt. Source: pixabay. CC0 Public Domain

You must become comfortable with identifying the disciplines that might contribute information to any strategy. You must learn how to:

- move seamlessly from one discipline to another during your strategy
- compare and evaluate information that comes from a variety of perspectives and knowledge systems
- decode the way people talk about a topic within a discipline

For example, think about the disciplines that might contribute information to a search on the topic of the role of sports in society. Try to anticipate the type of perspective each discipline might have on the topic. Consider the following types of questions as you examine what different disciplines might contribute:

- What is important about the topic to the people in that discipline?
- What is most likely to be the focus of their study about the topic?
- What perspective would they be likely to have on the topic?

We might identify three disciplines that have something to say about the role of sports in society: medicine, sociology, and economics. What would each of these disciplines raise as key questions or issues related to that topic?

- **Medical scientists**
  - how sports affect individuals' health and well-being
  - sports injuries
  - physical conditioning for those who take part in sports
  - life-expectancy for those who regularly exercise
- **Sociologists**
  - how sports affect social relationships
  - how society treats its sports heroes
  - how young people are socialized into the idea of team cooperation
  - differences between boys and girls and their participation in organized sports
- **Economists**

- financial aspects of sports
- the kinds of economic contribution a major-league sports franchise makes to a city
- public financing for building new sports facilities when a team threatens to leave
- management-labor relations represented by negotiations in major league sports contracts

So we see that a single topic can be approached from many different perspectives depending on how the disciplinary boundaries are drawn and how the topic is framed. This step of the information strategy process requires you to make some decisions early on in order to focus the topic on a manageable and appropriate scope for the rest of the strategy.

The Library as a Contributor

For all that it offers in the information gathering process, the most essential resource for information from all types of contributors is the library. Libraries can be affiliated with a particular contributor type or they can be totally independent entities that contain information from different kinds of contributors.

Libraries are storehouses of recorded knowledge in print, digital, and other formats. But with all of the digitally stored and accessible information available from any computer with access to the Internet, it may not be easy to see why you would need to use the resources of a library at all.

P1000583 by Mike Linksvayer. Source: Flickr: CC0 Public Domain 1.0.

The main reason why libraries continue to be major contributors to the communicator's information process is that library material has been organized, indexed, and coherently arranged for ease of use. Despite the best attempts of the creators of some of the best digital services, most still lack even the more rudimentary organization schemes and retrieval systems that have been in use in libraries for centuries.

Quality control is an even worse problem for some digital services. Libraries continue to be among the few information repositories that clearly organize their collections and allow for evaluation of the relative quality and usefulness of almost everything retrieved.

Libraries are set up to preserve, collect, and make accessible recorded intellectual products. Most libraries have

- a catalog that lists the contents of their collections
- both book collections and periodical / magazine collections
- the tools (indexes, abstracts, bibliographies) to help searchers find what they need in the collections
- access to the Internet
- access to electronic databases of information
- the most important resource of all – the librarian or archivist – the person who knows the most about the

collection and about how best to use it

It is especially important when you are working under a deadline and need accurate, appropriate, and verifiable information to understand how libraries differ from one another and how those differences affect the information strategy. Especially for freelance communicators and for those working in organizations without an in-house library, it is useful to know about the kinds of libraries that may be available in the community. There are five types of libraries that are important for communicators: public libraries, academic libraries, special libraries, archives, and media-organization libraries.

Types of Libraries: Public

Public libraries exist to serve a very special function. The need for an informed electorate is considered so important that residents are willing to tax themselves to make libraries available to the entire community.

Madison Public Library interior by John Benson. Source: Wikimedia Commons. CC BY 2.0

Many public library collections reflect the history and makeup of the neighborhoods in which they are situated. They may include materials in the languages of the most dominant ethnic groups of that section of the city. The materials you will find in the public library reflect this community mission. The collection reflects the library's attempt to meet the recreational and day-to-day informational needs of the general public.

Most public libraries are not equipped to handle in-depth or technical research projects or questions but it might well be the best source for in-depth and retrospective information about the community: telephone books and city directories, electoral-district maps, photographs of city landmarks over the years, and other community-related material.

At the start of your information strategy process, you might determine that it is crucial for you to have locally-relevant information about your topic, your community or your audience. In that case, some of the resources available from a public library might be good contributors to your process.

Types of Libraries: Academic

Library by TaraRoss7 Source: Flickr. CC0 Public Domain 1.0

Academic libraries serve a very different function from the other types of libraries. These collections exist to support the teaching and research needs of the scholars, students, and researchers of the institution with which they are affiliated. Large academic libraries collect scholarly materials published in many languages and from all over the world. Even small academic libraries reflect the teaching mission of the institution. Specialized, technical, detailed materials are the norm in most academic collections of any size.

Unlike the use of public libraries, the use of academic library collections may be restricted to some extent. You may have to apply for a special privilege card or pay a fee in order to gain access to the online catalog and check out materials, or you may only be able to use materials if you go in-person to the library. In extreme instances, unauthorized users may not even be able to enter the building.

However, if the topic you are researching is of a national or international nature, if it involves specialized or technical subject areas, or if it is likely to cover controversial ideas, then an academic library collection is probably one of the best places to look. In addition, if you have been a student at a university and are an alumni society member, it is likely that you have free access to that library system and to a network of materials from other academic libraries as well.

Types of Libraries: Special

The term special refers to a broad category of various kinds of libraries. The collection, the clientele, or both may be special. For instance, most companies have some kind of library or information center that houses books, journals, documents, and materials relevant to that industry. Historical societies usually have libraries. Museums have libraries geared toward the subject matter of the museum collection. The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. is a special library in the sense that it collects books and materials by and about Shakespeare. Insurance companies, law firms, churches, hospitals, oil companies, and banking institutions are other kinds of places where a special library might be located. The Special Libraries Association has 26 different divisions of special librarians in its membership.

You may want to use these special libraries for the kinds of unique materials they make available. For instance, if you are involved with an advertising campaign for a brand of beer, you may wish to use the library collection at the brewery in order to get an understanding of the history of the company and the nature of past campaigns. If the information is not proprietary (that is, held by the company to be private because it involves trade secrets or financial information), you may want to look for clues about the unique brewing process or chemistry that sets that brand of beer apart from its competitors.

Special library collections may or may not be open to the public because corporate secrets are often housed alongside the usual industry or company information. The best rule of thumb is to check the website and call ahead as the hours and visiting policies are likely to differ from collection to collection.

Types of Libraries: Archives

Archives differ from libraries in mission and operation. Whereas libraries have a selective collection development policy, archives attempt to be a comprehensive collection of a business, organization or social movement. An archive is responsible for keeping a permanent record of the history, transactions, and operations of whatever it is that is being archived and thus, the materials in an archive usually do not circulate.

There are governmental archives responsible for keeping the permanent record of that organization or branch. The National Archives in Washington, D.C., for example, maintains treaties, maps, photographs, motion pictures, sound recordings, correspondence files, and other documentation of the operations of the administrative branch of the federal government.

Corporations and businesses house archives that serve both a public relations function and provide historically accurate information about the company and clients. For instance, the Coca-Cola archive includes such materials as original Coke bottles, print and broadcast ads, drugstore signs, decal-covered serving trays, and other Coke-related paraphernalia. The manager of the archive is called upon regularly by the legal department to produce documentation to protect the Coca-Cola trademark.

At the start of your information strategy process, you may determine that it is crucial for you to gather information about the history or operation of the organization or business you are reporting on or for whom you are preparing a strategic communications message. That organization's archive is the place to start.

Types of Libraries: Media

The libraries supported by media organizations are types of special libraries. Both the materials and the clientele are unusual. As the likely first stop for the communicator during the early stage of the information search, media libraries are crucially important. Many media organizations – whether in the business of producing a newspaper, a national magazine, a local television news broadcast, advertising campaigns, or public relations materials – have some sort of library collection or research function.

The in-house library of a newspaper office may have a small, current collection of major reference tools (dictionaries, directories, almanacs), may subscribe to a handful of magazines and journals, may have access to online database services, and most likely is staffed by a professional librarian. But by far the most important resource, in the opinion of the newspaper staff, is the backfiles of the newspaper itself.

Today, every large-circulation newspaper has its content stored and searchable through a digital library system. With the growth of online news publications, the challenge of reconciling the archive of the print edition of the newspaper and the digital version of the newspaper has grown and often news organizations will have two separate and not entirely equal database representations of news products they create.

Broadcast news libraries may not have as many of the print and digital reference tools found in a newspaper or magazine library, but they do have a major resource for their employees – the archive of tapes or digital files of previous broadcasts. When you see file footage flashed on the screen during a television news report, you are seeing one use of this archive of materials. Broadcast news organizations keep archives of their own broadcasts, but journalists also have access to Web-based archives of streaming audio/video files through services such as those provided by the Vanderbilt Television News Archive. Current clips can sometimes be found using YouTube, Google News or Yahoo! News.

Strategic communications agency libraries are designed to meet the information needs of communicators creating the ads or news releases, preparing the media kits, conducting market research, studying audiences or clients, and developing “new business pitches.” The library for an advertising agency or department, for instance, may include tear sheets, pages ripped out of magazines and newspapers that serve as examples of ads for particular products or services. The library may have files of pictures and photos so artists have examples if they need to draw a cheetah or a cricket bat. The library has industry and trade information so communicators can do background research on potential and current clients and their products and services. And these libraries have all of the specialized market and audience research tools that help determine the message context. A public relations agency library will subscribe to the important media tracking services and provide access to the databases and digital services that help the PR professionals follow news about their clients.

Media organization libraries, then, serve a special function. Those creating messages must have at their fingertips examples of the own organizations’ output; materials produced by other communicators around the country or the world; information about the industries, products and audiences for whom messages are produced; and general fact-finding sources for quick reference.

The Library in the Process

As we’ve indicated, the library houses information from all contributors – public-sector institutional, private-sector institutional, scholarly, journalistic and informal. No matter what you are looking for, a library is likely to have at least a portion of what you need. As such, the library is an integral part of your information-gathering routine.

Libraries make accessible the materials you need for your initial message analysis work, for your topic-specific information-gathering needs, for your in-depth information evaluation requirements, and for your synthesis work as you create the message. In other words, libraries contribute to every step of the information strategy, not just at this early step of the process.

Planning Your Strategy

Identifying a number of the possible contributors to your information strategy at this early step of the process will help focus your efforts and narrow the range of information you need to locate and evaluate. It is an important time-saver and a key aspect of your work as an efficient and effective communications professional.

Notes

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Chapter 8 – Ethical and Legal Considerations

Previously we discussed the personal attributes that will help you succeed on the job. There are also standards for conducting your professional work ethically and legally that must be understood and heeded. Missteps in these areas will undermine not only your own credibility but can have wide-ranging repercussions for the organization and profession within which you work.

Following is a discussion of the levels of responsibility that affect the information you gather and use, and the messages you create. Once you understand the constraints you must acknowledge in your work as a message creator, you'll be able to think strategically about the information you need to create that outcome. Having this foundation will also help you evaluate the appropriateness of the information you find.

Being a socially responsible communicator requires attention to both ethical standards and legal requirements. First, we need to draw a distinction between ethics and law.

Distinction Between Ethics and Law

Ethics

- A branch of philosophy
- Deals with values relating to human conduct
- Concerned with "rightness" and "wrongness" of actions
- Self-legislated and self-enforced
- Sometimes difficult to determine because of competing, equally-valid possible choices

Law

- Derived from ethical values in a society
- Formally / institutionally determined and enforced through courts and law enforcement officials
- Easily determined because it is a matter of statute and the legality of action and consequences for not adhering to the law is spelled out

Scales of Justice by Karen Arnold PublicDomainPictures.net. CC0 Public Domain

In the previous lessons on developing your information task list and determining questions to answer, we've focused on specific information-seeking goals. In each of the communication professions, there are key legal considerations that must be understood that will either help or hinder, the seeking of information to meet those goals.

In news, for example, if some of the information needed requires the use of public records then an understanding of public records and privacy laws will help you know what it is possible to get, and how to legally use these records.

In advertising, you might want to make the most of the attributes of the product you are promoting, but you will need to abide by laws dictating the substantiation of product claims.

For public relations professionals, you may need to issue a corporate response to a crisis, therefore it is important to understand the requirements or restrictions of corporate disclosure laws. We will discuss these legal perspectives later in this lesson.

Socially responsible communicators are not content with just staying on the right side of the law. While the law embodies a significant portion of our values, individuals and organizations that want to be considered socially responsible must go beyond the rough requirements of the law itself and adopt higher and more thoughtful standards.

In some cases, these standards may have a legal basis as well as an ethical one. Following these standards requires the communicator to consider both "positive obligations" (things that you must always strive to do) or "negative obligations" (things that you must guard against doing).

Let's look at the positive and negative obligations that apply to those crafting news messages. These are drawn from the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists, a long-standing professional association for news professionals.

Positive Obligations (goals you try always to achieve)

Society of Professional Journalists logo by Wikipedia. Source: Wikipedia. Fair use

1) Seek truth and report it. This requires that you:

a. test the accuracy of information from all sources.

b. fairly represent multiple perspectives and viewpoints.

c. identify sources whenever feasible so the public may judge the reliability of the information.

d. safeguard the public's need for information.

Despite the rhetoric of First Amendment attorneys, the public does not have a "right to know" per se. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States says that citizens have a right to assemble, speak, practice their chosen religion, petition the government for a redress of grievances, and that the Congress shall make no law limiting the freedom of the press. It does not address the public's "right to know" anything. But most communication scholars acknowledge the crucial role that the media play in nurturing an informed electorate and citizenry.

2) Minimize harm. This requires that you:

a. avoid privacy violations. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy and such intrusion may invoke legal sanctions if a source can demonstrate harm. In the context of information seeking, information that can be found should not necessarily be used.

b. be cautious about naming criminals before the formal filing of charges, identifying juvenile suspects or victims, or seeking interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.

3) Act independently. This requires that you:

a. be wary of sources offering information for favors or money.

b. disclose potential conflicts of interest. IE: failing to label the content from a video news release in a TV broadcast story is a breach of ethics.

c. hold those with power accountable.

4) Be accountable. This requires that you:

a. admit mistakes and correct them promptly. Libel law may be invoked if the mistake injures a news subject.

b. stand up for what is right in the media organization.

c. abide by the same high standards to which you hold others.

Negative Obligations: (actions that must be avoided)

1) Plagiarism. Never, ever, ever represent someone else's work as your own. Never. Ever.

2) Concealing conflicts of interest, real or perceived, in seeking or using information. If you have a stake in the outcome of what you are reporting on, you must acknowledge it and perhaps suggest that someone else cover the story.

3) Distorting the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is permissible, but any other type of manipulation must not happen.

4) Eavesdropping. Listening in on others' conversations, electronically or otherwise, is a form of information-stealing and may invoke wiretapping laws or other legal sanctions.

5) Breaking the "contract" with a source. Publicly identifying a source who provided information confidentially, for instance, is both an ethical and a legal violation. We will discuss the details of the source contract in lesson 9 on interviewing.

These are a sample of the negative and positive obligations that help you weigh your decisions when a situation arises in your information gathering for a news message.

Ethical thinking requires that you establish for yourself, ahead of time, how you value these various obligations and which take precedence in your own scheme of decision-making. You also must be fully aware of how your media organization has ordered these priorities for their own publications, and comply with the standards that your organization has established.

Just as in news, advertising professionals adhere to a number of constraints when gathering and using information, regardless of the type of advertisement they may be creating. We can once again understand these in the context of positive and negative obligations. These are drawn from the principles and practices of the Institute for Advertising Ethics.

Positive Obligations

1) Create messages with the **objective of truth and high ethical standards** in serving the public. Advertising is commercial information that must be treated with the same accuracy standards as news and there may be legal repercussions if the standards are not upheld.

2) Apply personal ethics, like being an honest person, in the creation and dissemination of commercial information to consumers.

3) Clearly distinguish advertising from news and editorial content and entertainment, both online and offline.

4) Clearly disclose all material conditions, such as payment or a free product, that affects endorsements in social media and traditional message channels. This is both an ethical and a legal requirement, enforced by the Federal Trade Commission and other regulatory bodies. For example, a blogger who is paid by a company to spread positive information about the company's product or service must disclose she being paid for her opinions

5) Treat consumers fairly, especially when ads are directed at audiences such as children. In fact, the legal requirements for advertising aimed at children are increasingly stringent.

6) Follow all federal, state and local advertising laws, and cooperate with industry self-regulatory programs for the resolution of complaints.

7) Stand up for what is right within the organization. Members of the team creating ads should express their ethical or legal concerns when they arise. This is a good example of the personal ethics that must factor in decision-making in creating messages.

Negative Obligations

These are obligations that represent both an ethical and, in most cases, a legal/regulatory element. The National Advertising Division of the Council of Better Business Bureaus, the National Advertising Review Board, the Federal Trade Commission, the Federal Food and Drug Administration and many other bodies enforce these obligations when necessary.

1) Do not plagiarize. Never, ever, ever represent someone else's work as your own.

2) Do not use false or misleading visual or verbal statements.

3) Do not make misleading price claims.

4) Do not make unfair comparisons with a competitive product or service.

5) Do not make insufficiently supported claims.

6) Do not use offensive statements, suggestions or pictures.

7) Do not compromise consumers' personal privacy, and their choices as to whether to participate in providing personal information should be transparent and easily made.

Let's look at the positive and negative obligations that help PR specialists gather and use information responsibly. These examples come from the *Public Relations Society of America Member Code of Ethics*.[1] Once again, many of these obligations refer to both ethical and legal responsibilities.

Positive Obligations

1) Serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for those the PR firm or professional represents.

2) Adhere to the highest standards of truth and accuracy while advancing the interests of those the PR firm or professional represents.

3) Acquire and responsibly use specialized knowledge and experience in preparing public relations messages to build mutual understanding, credibility, and relationships among a wide array of institutions and audiences.

PRSA Foundation logo by PRSA Foundation. Source: Wikimedia Commons. CC0 Public Domain

4) Provide objective counsel to those the PR firm or professional represents. For example, the best advice for a client may be to admit wrongdoing and apologize. The PR practitioner must objectively weigh this advice and offer it if it is the best option.

5) Deal fairly with clients, employers, competitors, peers, vendors, the media and the general public.

6) Act promptly to correct erroneous communication for which the PR firm or professional is responsible. Again, failure to do this could invoke both ethical and legal sanctions.

Negative Obligations

1) Do not plagiarize. Never, ever, ever represent someone else's work as your own.

2) Do not give or receive gifts of any type from clients or sources that might influence the information in a message beyond the legal limits and/or in violation of government reporting requirements.

3) Do not violate intellectual property rights in the marketplace. Sharing competitive information, leaking proprietary information, taking confidential information from one employer to another and other such practices are both legal and ethical violations.

4) Do not employ deceptive practices. Asking someone to pose as a "volunteer" to speak at public hearings or participate in a "grass roots" campaign is deceptive, for instance.

5) Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived. PR professionals and firms must encourage clients and customers as well as colleagues in the profession to notify all affected parties when a conflict of interest arises.

You can see from the sampling of positive and negative obligations that as a communications professional you must weigh a wide variety of considerations when gathering and using the information to create a message. The intended audience, the purpose of the message, the intent of the communicator, the ethical considerations, the legal constraints, and many other variables help determine how you pursue the information strategy.

Leadership and Social Responsibility by Peter Durand. [Source: Flickr](). [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0]()

As a communications professional you must also conduct your work in the context of a commitment to social responsibility at a number of levels. Because mass communication messages are pervasive and influential, media organizations and professionals are held to high standards for their actions. The social responsibility perspective helps outline how this works.

There are three levels of responsibility that affect your work as a communicator. These are:

- **Societal:** the relationships between media systems and other major institutions in society.
- **Professional / OrganizationalL:** your profession's and your media organization's own self-regulation

and standards for professional conduct.

- **Individual:** the responsibility you have to society, to your profession, to your audience and to yourself.

We'll examine each of these in turn.

The societal perspective examines how media institutions interact with other major institutions in society. As a communications professional, it is important to understand the societal implications of your work and the rules under which you operate.

Professional education and licensing have been traditional means by which society has sought to ensure legal and ethical behaviour from those who bear important social responsibilities. For law, medicine, accounting, teaching, architecture, engineering and other fields of expertise, specific training is followed by examinations, state licensing and administration of oaths that include promises to live up to the standards established for the profession.

However, there is no U.S. law that requires communicators to be licensed. Without the power to control entry into the field and withdraw the license to operate as in these other professions, it is even more important for mass communication professionals to police themselves. Especially in light of the huge explosion of "fake news" being generated by individuals with political, cultural or financial motives, legitimate news professionals must defend their crucial role in society.

Let's look at examples of the way the media interact with other major social institutions. One of the major tenets of journalism is the goal of exposing public officials or business executives to public scrutiny. This "watchdog" role, one of the most important functions of the press, is used to justify journalists' behaviour in investigating what public officials or corporate executives are doing and whether or not they are meeting their responsibilities to constituents, citizens or shareholders. The First Amendment protects journalists' rights to challenge government power.

However, serious observers argue that when overly aggressive investigative techniques expose individual politicians or corporate executives to scrutiny about their private lives that may have nothing to do with the performance of their official duties, it causes cynicism, it undermines public confidence in major social institutions, and it drives people away from participation in public and civic engagement. How far does the "watchdog" role go? When is a journalist crossing the line from examining public behaviour to voyeurism about private lives?

Similarly, strategic communications professionals face questions about their interactions with other major social institutions. There is more and more agitation for government regulation of advertising because people perceive that advertisers do not police themselves enough.

ftc.gov on skechers by Betsy Lordan Source: FTC. CC0 Public Domain

In 2012, the Federal Trade Commission imposed the largest fine in its history on the company that manufactures Skechers athletic shoes and apparel. The company paid $40 million because its ads falsely represented clinical studies backing up claims that Shape-Ups, Resistance Runner, Toners, and Tone-Ups would help people lose weight, and strengthen and tone their gluteal, leg and abdominal muscles. The ads used lines such as "Shape up while you walk," and "Get in shape without setting foot in a gym." As part of the settlement, Skechers had to take down the advertising and inform retailers to remove the deceptive claims. It also agreed to stop misrepresenting any tests, studies, or research results regarding toning shoes. And customers who purchased the shoes or apparel were able to file through the FTC for a refund from the company.[2]

The example points out the interactions between advertisers, government regulators and the public at the societal level.

Another example points out the social responsibility interactions between advertisers, corporations and the customers they serve around the sensitive issue of personal privacy.

The social network Facebook, used by 900 million people worldwide, agreed in June 2012 to pay $20 million to settle a lawsuit in California that claimed Facebook publicized that some of its users had "liked" certain advertisers but didn't pay the users, or give them a way to opt-out.

The so-called "Sponsored Story" feature on Facebook was essentially an advertisement that appeared on the site and included a member's Facebook page and generally consisted of another friend's name, profile picture and a statement that the person "likes" that advertiser. The suit was one in a long list of complaints against the social media giant and other online organizations such as Google that appear to be working with advertisers to intrude on consumers' privacy.[3]

A group of digital advertising trade organizations called the Digital Advertising Alliance is concerned enough about advertisers' interaction with consumers, technology companies, privacy advocates and federal/state regulators that it has created a way for people to opt out of having their online behaviour tracked. A turquoise triangle that appears in the upper right-hand corner of banner ads on web sites allows users who click on it to remove themselves from having personalized advertising directed at them.

Digital Advertising Alliance Icon by Digital Advertising Alliance. Source: Logolynx. DMCA license

The group created the option in reaction to pressure from other institutions, including the Federal Trade Commission, which is threatening to regulate mobile and digital privacy and exert more control over children's privacy online. The example points out how various societal-level institutions interact to impose social responsibility on media practitioners if they do not regulate themselves.

As strategic communicators have adopted social media platforms to distribute their messages, scrutiny by other societal institutions has increased. The Federal Trade Commission was so concerned about claims being made by advertisers and PR practitioners via social media that they updated their social media guidelines in 2013.

The new FTC guidelines require social media marketers to:

- fully disclose their sponsorship of the information. If an advertiser has hired a blogger to endorse a product or service, the blogger MUST disclose that he or she is working for that advertiser; if a PR firm posts positive comments about its clients on social media, the firm MUST disclose that they are working on behalf of the client. Further, the disclosure must be clear and conspicuous; it cannot be buried in the fine print.
- monitor the social media conversation and correct misstatements or problematic claims by commenters.
- create social media policies to instruct employees about the expectations and practices that will be enforced.

The mention of company-specific social media policies leads us to the next category of responsibility: the professional or organizational perspective.

In addition to the societal level of interactions, communication organizations and professionals engage in self-criticism and set standards for their own conduct and performance as information gatherers. One of the most conspicuous examples of this lies in the proliferation of codes of conduct for mass communication activities at all levels. As our discussion of positive and negative obligations (above) demonstrated, every mass communication industry develops these professional and organizational guidelines for its practitioners.

In the news industries, codes have expanded in number and scope over several decades. Organizations that have adopted such codes include the American Society of News Editors, the Society of Professional Journalists, the Associated Press Managing Editors Association, the Radio Television Digital News Association, and the National Press Photographers Association. Individual news organizations and publications frequently establish their own codes to which they expect their staff to adhere.

Advertising codes reflect some of the specific criticism directed at the field, such as charges of deceptive advertising, unfair stereotyping, false testimonials, and misleading claims. Organizations as diverse as the Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association, the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America and the Beer Institute have guidelines and codes for the content and placement of advertisements in their respective industries or for the audiences with which they are concerned.

For instance, here is a portion of the Advertising and Marketing Code for the Beer Institute. Any advertising professional working with a client who sells and advertises beer would need to adhere to this industry code.

"Brewers should employ the perspective of the reasonable adult consumer of legal drinking age in advertising and marketing their products, and should be guided by the following basic principles, which have long been reflected in the policies of the brewing industry and continue to underlie this Code:

- Beer advertising should not suggest directly or indirectly that any of the laws applicable to the sale and consumption of beer should not be complied with.
- Brewers should adhere to contemporary standards of good taste applicable to all commercial advertising and consistent with the medium or context in which the advertising appears.
- Advertising themes, creative aspects, and placements should reflect the fact that Brewers are responsible corporate citizens.
- Brewers strongly oppose abuse or inappropriate consumption of their products."[4]

Individual advertising agencies and corporate advertising departments also have codes and standards to help employees recognize and deal with ethical questions.

Most media outlets accept or reject ads submitted to them using a set of guidelines about what types of ads are acceptable and what type of content they will allow.

For example, here is a portion of the policy for acceptance of advertising that appears in Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine

- All advertisements are subject to the approval of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (Publisher), which reserves the right to reject or cancel any ad at any time if the ad does not conform to the editorial or graphic standards of the magazine as determined by the Publisher.
- Advertisements that are not appropriate for viewing by youth will not be accepted. Advertisements will not be accepted for tobacco or alcohol products. (Tex. Parks & Wild. Code §11.172(c); 31 Tex. Admin. Code §51.72. Other products that are not compatible with the mission of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will also not be accepted.
- Advertisers must keep in mind the diverse audience of the magazine when determining the suitability of an ad. That audience includes hunters, anglers, campers, bird watchers, state parks visitors, other outdoor enthusiasts and readers of all ages including children.[5]

Any advertising professional gathering information and creating an ad for a product or service that might appear in this magazine would need to be aware of the publication's organizational level guidelines about acceptable advertising, and the societal level regulations (Texas state laws) about tobacco or alcohol advertising in this publication.

Public relations practitioners, like advertising specialists, work closely with clients. Through these associations, legal and ethical decisions often arise as clients and publicists discuss information-gathering strategies. For example, the Securities and Exchange Commission monitors the way corporations report their financial affairs, scrutinizing information about stock offerings and financial balance sheets for accuracy and omission of important facts. Their objective is to ensure that investors and stock analysts can get accurate information about the companies that are offering securities.

Increasingly, legal and ethical standards are holding public relations practitioners, along with stockbrokers, lawyers, and accountants responsible for the accuracy of the information they communicate to the public. When public relations professionals find themselves on the losing side of an important ethical question with a client, it is not unusual for them to resign their positions as a matter of principle.

The Public Relations Society of America's Code of Ethics[6] emphasizes honesty and accountability, in addition to expertise, advocacy, fairness, independence, and loyalty. The public relations code, like those for advertising and journalism, reflects the concerns of society as well as the practitioners who adopt the codes. Provisions of all the codes are designed, at least in part, to provide the public with reasons to have confidence in communicators' integrity and in the messages they create. Of course, the codes are also there to help keep communicators out of court.

For example, a large multinational PR firm resigned its account with a major tire manufacturer just months after landing the account. The reason was that the tire manufacturer failed to disclose to the PR firm that it knew about defects in its tires that had caused a number of fatal accidents. The PR professionals decided they could not ethically represent the tire manufacturer to the public under such circumstances and ended their relationship with the company. The PR firm's adherence to professional and organizational standards was more important than the income that would have been generated from the account with the tire manufacturer.[7]

There is an individual level of responsibility for your own behaviour. As a communications professional, you may find yourself confronting conflicting obligations in your daily routine. You will be doing your work in a decidedly ambivalent atmosphere. News professionals are criticized for reinforcing the assumptions of those in power and ignoring reality as experienced by most of the population. Advertising is criticized for contributing to materialism, wasteful consumption, and the corruption of the electoral system. Public relations is criticized for creating and manipulating images on behalf of those with narrow interests, failing to give public interest information a priority.

In confronting your social responsibility using the individual perspective, you are likely to place duty to yourself at the top of the list. You always need to abide by your own moral standards. But this may conflict with more worldly ambitions – the desire for recognition, advancement, and financial security. The duty to the organization may be at odds with the loyalty to colleagues or to the profession. Let's look at a few examples that illustrate these tensions.

Am I Comfortable Working on Advertising for This Client?

Individual-level responsibility may arise when ad professionals object to ads they have to work on or have to accept. It is usually not necessary to violate your own standards.

Question Problem Think Thinking Reflect by geralt. [Source: pixabay](). [CC0 Public Domain]()

Concerns about taking on an assignment will be something to discuss during the message clarification step. If, for example, you are a strict vegetarian, it may be difficult for you to work on a campaign to sell bacon.

Or let's say that you are the advertising manager for a local magazine. You receive an ad that you think is offensive, even though the product or service being advertised is perfectly legal and the company is a big advertiser in your publication.

You don't have to accept that offensive ad, but you also don't have to forgo the ad revenue for your publication (again, we're weighing two competing obligations—your obligation to your own standards against your obligation to your media organization to generate revenue).

The way to resolve this dilemma is to call the ad agency and ask for another version of the advertisement. Advertisers almost always have another version in anticipation that some media outlets will refuse to run a potentially-offensive version of an ad. With this solution, you can adhere to your own standards and still generate revenue for your publication by accepting the more appropriate ad.

There are entire texts and semester-long courses that examine the specific laws and regulations under which mass communicators operate. We will discuss here briefly a few of the most relevant types of legal and regulatory constraints that affect communicators' gathering and use of information in messages in this lesson. We will return to some of these examples in more depth throughout the rest of the lessons where appropriate.

Journalism Law and Regulation

You will learn about the relevant legal and regulatory framework for your career as a journalist in later classes. We will mention just a couple of examples that demonstrate the way that laws and regulations affect journalists' information strategy process.

Federal, state and local law outlines the way journalists gather information. For example, photographers/videographers have a constitutional right to photograph anything that is in plain view when they are lawfully in a public space. Police officers may not confiscate or demand to view journalists' photographs or videos without a warrant. However, the right to photograph does NOT give journalists the right to break other laws. For example, you may not trespass on private property to capture an image.

Likewise, there are a wide variety of laws that detail the types of information that are accessible to the public, including journalists. Public records laws will be discussed in more detail in *Lesson 13*. Suffice it to say that journalists have many tools in their toolbelt when they are seeking access to public record information.

Libel law defines the ways that journalists USE the information they gather in their messages. Again, there are many nuances in libel law and journalists generally defer to the experts within their media organizations when questions arise about whether a particular item in a news story exposes the news organization to a charge of libel. It is most important for you, as an information gatherer, to understand that best practices require you to double- and triple-check any facts, claims or evidence you intend to use in a message and to vet that information with the appropriate gatekeepers in your organization.

The advertising substantiation rule is of paramount importance for anyone collecting and evaluating information to use in a comparison ad. The advertiser must be able to substantiate any claim about a product or service with information that backs up such claims. This means that you, as the advertising professional, will follow a comprehensive information strategy in preparing the background information for any such ad.

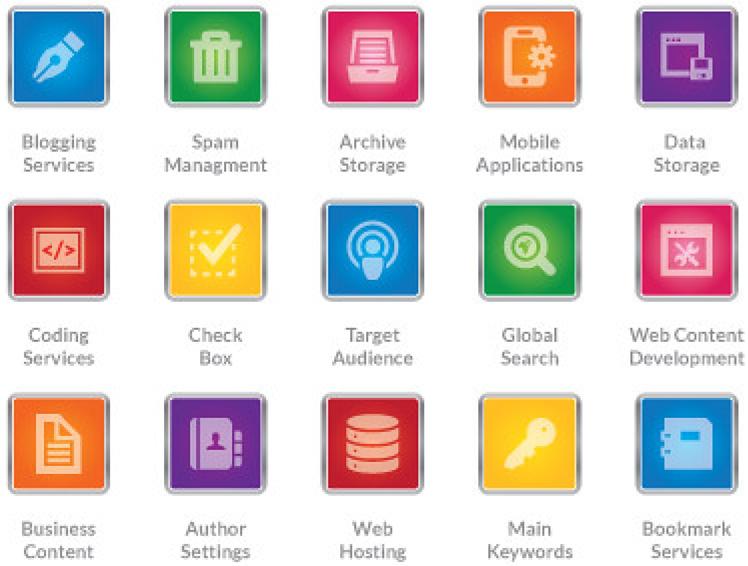
The main governmental regulatory agency for advertising is the Federal Trade Commission. The FTC regulates unfair and deceptive practices on a case-by-case basis and occasionally with industry-wide regulations.

The FTC has the power to require that advertisers prove their claims. If the FTC determines that an advertisement is deceptive, it can stop the ad and order the sponsor to issue corrections. Corrective advertising provides information that was omitted from a deceptive ad. Some companies are fined for their illegal acts. It is extremely rare, but someone could also be jailed for a deception.

Many states also have laws that regulate deceptive advertising. Individual consumers also have the right to sue companies for deceptive advertising.

The advertising industry also has a two-tiered self-regulatory mechanism. Advertising that is charged with being deceptive can be referred to as the National Advertising Division (NAD) of the Council of Better Business Bureaus. For cases that are not satisfactorily resolved through NAD, appeals can be made to the National Advertising Review Board. The Board can put pressure on advertisers through persuasion, publicity or even legal action if it is deemed necessary.

Public relations firms increasingly are investigated along with the corporations they represent in situations of litigation, disputes about investor relations, etc. In fact, after a number of highly publicized cases of major corporate financial malfeasance came to light, public relations departments and firms reviewed their own roles in unwittingly misleading the public about the financial health of organizations that were in deep trouble. In another example, athletic apparel giant Nike was taken to court by a workers' safety advocate because it released press statements defending its reputation against charges of mistreating overseas workers. The news releases were said to represent false advertising. The case served as a wake-up call to public relations firms that send out press releases every day.[8]



Chromium – Search Engine Optimization Icons by Kabedi Fernando. [Source: Flickr](). [CC BY 2.0]()

In a relatively new twist, a number of "guerilla marketing" firms tout their ability to generate "buzz" about products and services on web sites populated by teens. The firms were recruiting young people with promises of gifts and access to the newest gadgets. In exchange, the teens agreed to go online to popular social networking sites and sing the praises of the products they had received and encourage their peers to buy the merchandise, all without disclosing that they were actually working for a marketing firm.

These practices raised ethical questions about the truthfulness of messages that fail to disclose conflicts of interest (one of the negative obligations mentioned earlier). When confronted with ethical concerns, many of the marketing and promotion firms claimed that if someone asked, their operatives were instructed to say that they were working for the movie studio, the gadget company or the bubble gum producer. But how many audience members, especially younger ones, were likely to ask?

As we've said, the Federal Trade Commission has now ruled that "word-of-mouth" endorsers of products or services (such as those who post positive messages on social networking sites, etc.) must disclose that they are being compensated with money or free goods and services as part of their posts to these sites. Guidelines originally issued by the Food and Drug Administration regarding direct-to-consumer pharmaceutical advertising now include similar advice for any person or company making claims about medical, food or cosmetic products through social media.

All of these levels of responsibility influence how communicators weigh their actions and make their decisions. Societal expectations, organizational and professional routines and norms, and individual standards are going to play a role in each decision you are faced with making. As long as you have a systematic method for evaluating each situation and for applying your professional standards, you should be able to make your information decisions in an ethical and defensible manner.

The information strategy provides you with the skills to ensure that you don't have to resort to inappropriate, unethical, or illegal means to gather information. If one method of gathering information seems inappropriate, your skill with a well-developed information strategy means you can use another, more appropriate, method to find what you need. Being a highly skilled information gatherer in an information-overloaded society brings credibility to you and to your organization.

Further, using an explicit information strategy helps you explain your standards to others. When the public, colleagues, or supervisors challenge the information on which you base a message, you can present an ordered, rational account of your information search and selection process. Using the standards and methods available in the information strategy allows others to evaluate your skill and expertise as a communications professional.

RESOURCES

A collection of news organizations' ethics codes can be found at The Center for Journalism Ethics' Ethics Resources page.

Notes

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Chapter 9 – Tools and Tactics for the PR Toolbox

In the 1960s, researchers Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge examined news stories worldwide to determine their similarities footnote](Galtung & Ruge, 1965)[/footnote]. Their seminal study created the first news value list, which is still referred to today by journalists and strategic communication professionals. News values have evolved over time, and there is much debate over whether journalists should consider other criteria to select newsworthy content. Currently, eight values are used to determine a story's newsworthiness.[1] Some of the values' names may differ slightly in other sources, but their meaning is the same.

More Information about Galtung and Ruge's Research
Delving into the Discourse: Approaches to News Values in Journalism Studies and Beyond a University of Oxford white paper on Galtung and Ruge's research.

On considering a New Set of News Values
It's time for a new set of news values. Here's where we should start by Dr. Meredith Clark's in Poynter.

Immediacy/Timeliness

Events or stories that have recently taken place or will happen in the immediate future have immediacy or timeliness. Breaking news stories or stories about unexpected events that are developing are good examples. Media gatekeepers deem these stories so important that they often interrupt regular television schedules to immediately give audiences the information. Recent happenings typically carry more news value than less timely events.

Timeliness also takes into consideration factors such as seasonal events, commemorations, and holidays. A strategic communication professional may pitch an activity that connects with this type of timeliness—for example, a fundraiser that distributes toys to low-income children during the holiday season.

Proximity

Proximity considers the location of the event in relation to the target audience of the media outlet. Audiences are more likely to pay attention to stories that take place in their local communities. For example, a news station in Ohio usually wouldn't cover day-to-day events at the Indiana State Fair. However, happenings at the annual Ohio State Fair always get daily coverage in central Ohio news outlets.

Human interest

Stories that are emotionally compelling capture the audience's attention and appeal to their attitudes and beliefs. Feature articles often are good examples of human interest stories when they depict a person, organization, or community in a way that triggers an emotional connection between the audience and the characters. Other examples are a behind-the-scenes look at the life of an athlete or the story of a person struggling to overcome an obstacle.

An example of a human interest story that contains strong emotional elements is that of Leah Still, daughter of National Football League player Devon Still. Leah captured the hearts of many when news outlets began to cover her battle with cancer in 2015 when she was four years old. Many people admired Leah's positive attitude and determination to beat her illness. Now cancer-free, Leah continues to be an inspiration to thousands of people. For more information about this story and its human interest elements, take a look at this video:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=149

Currency

Topics that are trending in news media and other media, such as Twitter and Facebook, are considered newsworthy. "Hot topics of the day" or stories that are in the general public discourse are other examples. In 2015, many media outlets covered a story about a meme featuring a dress that appeared blue and black to some people and white and gold to others. The phenomenon was dubbed "dressgate" and went viral on social media. Since many people discussed and debated the colour of the dress, some news outlets decided to cover the story. However, topics that have currency value generally have a short life span in the news cycle because they are discussed only briefly by the public.

For more information on the "dressgate" discussion read If you saw that dress your brain was working overtime by Sarah Knapton in The Telegraph.

News Value Types

Prominence

Stories that feature well-known individuals or public figures such as politicians and entertainers carry news value. News outlets covered the story when model Tyra Banks completed a management program at Harvard's School of Business in 2012. Banks' celebrity profile raised the news value of a story that would have received little or no attention had it involved just about anyone else.

Impact

The United Kingdom's vote to exit the European Union in June 2016 had global implications, and many media outlets in the U.S. and abroad reported the story. However, British news stations such as BBC News and Sky News covered the event more extensively than American media did because the decision impacts Britain's economy and citizens much more so than Americans. Generally, people are more likely to care about stories that directly affect their lives; therefore, media gatekeepers often devote more time and resources to stories that have implications for their respective audiences.

Novelty

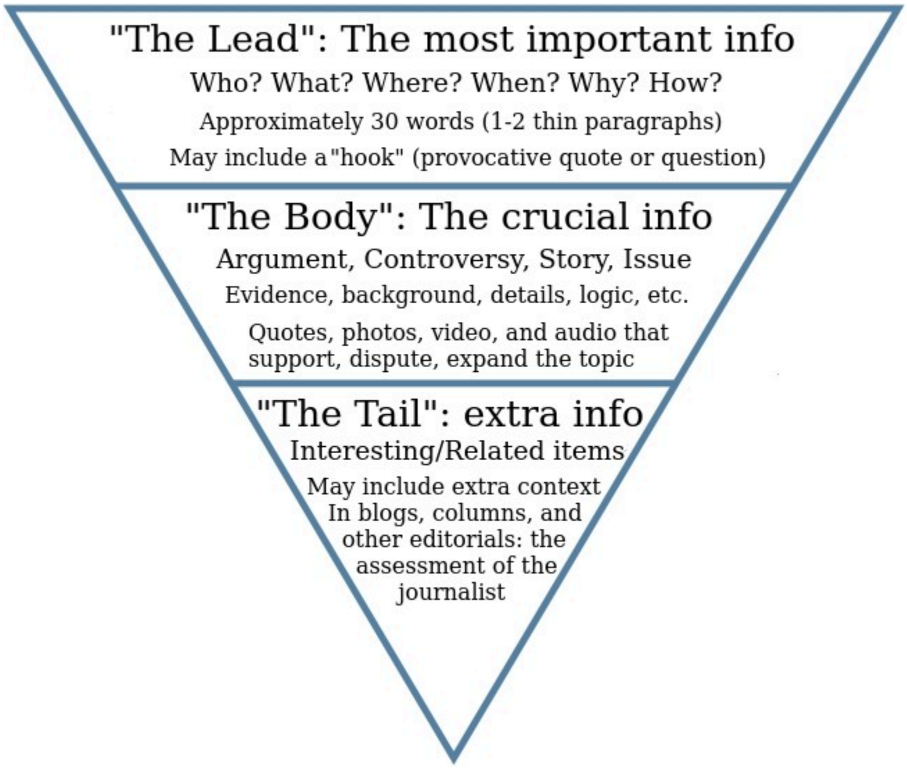
Stories that are odd, unusual, shocking, or surprising have novelty value. An example would be a story about an unusual animal friendship, such as that between a dog and a deer. Because such a friendship is not a normal occurrence, it sparks the curiosity of audiences. In 2015, CNN covered a story about a weatherman who was able to correctly pronounce the extremely long name of a Welsh village. Take a look at this clip of the story:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=149

Conflict

Strife or power struggles between individuals or ethnic groups or organizations contain a conflicting value and often grab the attention of audiences. For example, stories about war, crime, and social discord are newsworthy because their conflict narrative spurs interest. The continuous coverage by U.S. media outlets of worldwide terrorism is another example. Stories about major sports competitions, such as the National Basketball Association finals or the Super Bowl, also contain a conflict element because teams are vying for a prestigious title.

In general, news stories are organized using the inverted pyramid style, in which information is presented in descending order of importance. This allows the audience to read the most crucial details quickly so they can decide whether to continue or stop reading the story. From an editing perspective, using the inverted pyramid style makes it easier to cut a story from the bottom, if necessary. Invented more than a century ago, the inverted pyramid style remains the basic formula for news writing [2].



Inverted pyramid in comprehensive form by Christopher Schwartz Source: Wikimedia CC BY-SA [Long Description 9-1]

It is important to note that some news stories do not strictly follow the inverted pyramid style, although the lead for a hard news piece always does. Furthermore, not everyone in the journalism field embraces the style; some detractors believe it is an unnatural way to engage in storytelling and present news to the public. Yet, proponents believe it is an efficient way to organize and share information in a fast-paced society.[3]Therefore, it's important for students to learn the style; one good way to do so is to regularly read hard news stories and pay attention to how the leads are structured. The lead (also known as the summary lead) and the body of the inverted pyramid style are discussed in the next sections.

>A summary lead concisely tells the reader the main idea of the story or conveys its news value. Most journalists and editors believe that the lead should come in the first sentence or first few sentences of a hard news article. Reporters use the term "burying the lead" or "delayed lead" to describe one placed later in an article. A buried lead may give the impression that the writer wasn't able to determine what the real newsworthy material was, and can, therefore, reflect poorly on his or her journalistic judgment. In features or other soft news stories that use more dramatic storytelling techniques, the lead sometimes is buried in order to increase suspense or add an element of surprise.

A summary lead should address the following questions:

- ***Who*** *is the story about?* or ***Who*** *is involved?*
- ***What*** *is the story about?* or ***What*** *happened?*

- ***When*** *did the event take place?*
- ***Where*** *did the event take place?*
- ***Why*** *did the event take place?*
- ***How*** *did the event happen?*

Keeping the 5Ws and H in mind when writing a news story will help you organize the content and find a focus for the article. News judgment consists of figuring out the organization of these aspects of the content and prioritizing them in terms of their importance. It's not necessary to cram the 5Ws and H into one sentence for the lead; however, the lead usually should contain information about the Who and What.

> Take a look at the **lead** in this *Washington Post* article, *Survey: More than 1 in 5 female undergrads at top schools suffer sexual attacks*
> by Nick Anderson, Susan Svrluga and Scott Clement, September 21, 2015 edition of the *Washington Post.]*

Now, let's answer the 5Ws and H for the lead:

- **Who?** Female undergrads
- **What?** Claims of unwanted sexual advances
- **When?** 2015
- **Where?** Universities
- Why?
- **How?** Large study

In this case, the Why of the story is not addressed in the summary lead, perhaps because of the complexity of the issue. Still, the reader can easily understand the main idea of the article. When you're practicing writing summary leads, remember to keep the sentence(s) relatively concise, with no more than 30 words.

Once you've created the lead, give the reader more information in the body of the article. This is your opportunity to elaborate on what else you know about the story. In keeping with the inverted pyramid style, present the information in decreasing order of importance, not necessarily in chronological order. The least important details should appear at the end of the article, where they could be omitted by an editor if necessary.

Use direct and indirect quotes from sources to tell the reader the origin of the information (there is more about this below), and remember to maintain an objective tone. Use the third person; avoid pronouns such as I, me, you, or us that are more suited to opinion pieces. Use short, simple sentences and organize them into paragraphs of no more than three or four sentences.

Indicate the source(s) of the information presented in the article through attribution, which typically takes the form of paraphrases as well as direct and indirect quotes. Attribution is very important in media writing, as it helps to establish an objective tone and adds credibility to an article (Harrower, 2012). Attribution also explains how the writer retrieved the information and why a particular source was quoted. Most of a story's major information should be attributed, through phrases such as "she said" or "according to a recent report."

Attribution can be placed at the beginning of a sentence to introduce information or added after a statement. Pay close attention to verb tense and choice when attributing sources. For example, the most common verbs used for attributing human sources are "said," "stated," and "asked." For records or documents, use "reported," "claimed," and "stated." Direct quotes should be surrounded by quotation marks and include the source's exact words. Paraphrased statements and indirect quotes should not be placed in quotation marks.

Here are examples of attributed statements:

- "The libraries are usually crowded and filled with students around this time in the semester," said Laura Skyler, a sophomore at The Ohio State University.
- A heavy cloud of smog hung over the city Wednesday, National Weather Service officials said.
- According to a statement from the White House, the president will announce his pick for the vacant Supreme Court seat on Monday.

When initially referencing a human source, include the person's full name. Use only the last name for subsequent references.

> Read this CNN article: Texas correctional officer killed in prison for an example.

Include important qualifiers with the first reference to demonstrate that the source has expertise on the topic. For example:

- "Using Twitter in the classroom actually enhances student engagement," Jasmine Roberts, strategic communication lecturer at The Ohio State University, said.

Notice that the direct quote with attribution uses the qualifier "strategic communication lecturer at The Ohio State University" to indicate the source's credibility.

Qualifiers are also used to explain a source's relevance to the topic. The following example might be used in a news article reporting on crime.

- "It was just complete chaos in the store. The police were trying very hard to catch the shoplifter," eyewitness Angela Nelson said.

The qualifier "eyewitness" helps to establish Nelson's relevance to the narrative.

Finally, attribution should flow well within the story. Avoid using long qualifiers or awkward phrases.

A headline concisely states the main idea of the story and is further elaborated on in the lead. It should clearly convey a complete thought. Headlines have become increasingly important in today's society; people tend to look only at headlines rather than reading complete stories, especially online. An effective headline encourages the reader to take the time to read the article.

Print versus web headlines

Print headlines tend to be concise (using fewer than six or seven words) and straightforward. Online headlines tend to be longer and use catchy language. Images, captions, and subheadlines are more common with print headlines than web headlines (Davis & Davis, 2009).

Web headlines usually appear as links that lead the reader to the actual article. Given the acceleration of media consumption, many readers simply want to know the basic information about an event. The headlines used with web publications give readers enough information to understand what is happening without reading the story.

How to create a headline

Writing headlines takes practice. You need to select words carefully and use strong writing in order to entice the audience to read the article.

Create the headline after you finish writing the article so that you have a complete understanding of the story. Focus on how you can communicate the main idea in a manner that will capture the reader's attention. Also, focus on keywords and do not include articles such as a, an, and the. Use present-tense verbs for headlines about events in the past or present. For events in the future, use the infinitive form of the verb: for example, "Local store to open a new location."

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1844 • GLOBEANDMAIL.COM • WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2001

Bush promises swift revenge as hijackers strike the world's financial heart, killing thousands and ushering in a chilling new age of terror

A day of infamy

INSIDE

45 PAGES OF COVERAGE

U.S. will never be the same

MARGARET WENTE

Markets are paralyzed, banks try to ease jitters

Know how to be early?

Canon

This print news headline includes a subheadline and an image that provides context and uses an attention-grabbing phrase. "The Globe and Mail, Toronto, ON Canada" by Cliff. Source: Flikcr.

Unlike the traditional summary lead, feature leads can be several sentences long, and the writer may not immediately reveal the story's main idea. The most common types used in feature articles are anecdotal leads and descriptive leads. An anecdotal lead unfolds slowly. It lures the reader in with a descriptive narrative that focuses on a specific minor aspect of the story that leads to the overall topic. The following is an example of an anecdotal lead:

> *Sharon Jackson was sitting at the table reading an old magazine when the phone rang. It was a reporter asking to set up an interview to discuss a social media controversy involving Jackson and another young woman. "Sorry," she said. "I've already spoken to several reporters about the incident and do not wish to make any further comments."*

Notice that the lead unfolds more slowly than a traditional lead and centers on a particular aspect of the larger story. The nut graph, or a paragraph that reveals the importance of the minor story and how it fits into the broader story, would come after the lead. There will be more on the nut graph later in this chapter.

Descriptive leads begin the article by describing a person, place, or event in vivid detail. They focus on setting the scene for the piece and use language that taps into the five senses in order to paint a picture for the reader. This type of lead can be used for both traditional news and feature stories. The following is an example of a descriptive lead:

> *Thousands dressed in scarlet and gray T-shirts eagerly shuffled into the football stadium as the university fight song blared.*

For each article below, identify whether it uses a descriptive or anecdotal lead:

- A thin line of defense
- Pediatric patient
- Inside Jay Z's Roc Nation

The content in a feature article isn't necessarily presented as an inverted pyramid; instead, the organization may depend on the writer's style and the story angle. Nevertheless, all of the information in a feature article should be presented in a logical and coherent fashion that allows the reader to easily follow the narrative. As previously stated, the nut graph follows the lead. This paragraph connects the lead to the overall story and conveys the story's significance to the readers.[4]

The nut graph comes from a commonly used formula for writing features, known as the *Wall Street Journal* (*WSJ*) formula.[5]The formula was named after the well-known and respected publication, which created the term "nut graph" and mastered feature news writing.[6]
The formula consists of beginning the story with feature-style leads to grabbing the reader's attention, followed by the nut graph.[7] After this comes to a longer body of the story that provides the usual background, facts, quotes, and so on. The formula then specifies a return to the opening focus at the end of the story using another descriptive passage or anecdote, also known as the "circle kicker"[8] This could be, for example, an update on what eventually happened to the main character or how the event or issue turned out.

This blog post provides a detailed example of the *WSJ* formula.

Literary Devices

Feature writers use a particular style of writing to convey the story's message. The use of literary devices helps in this task. These devices include similes and metaphors, onomatopoeia (use of words that mimic a sound), imagery (figurative language), climax, and more. Here are a few examples of onomatopoeia and imagery:

Onomatopoeia: The tires screeched against the concrete as she hit the pedal.

Imagery[9]**:** The apartment smelled of old cooking odors, cabbage, and mildew; . . . a haze of dusty sunlight peeked from the one cobwebbed, gritty window.

The website Literary Devices has information on literary devices, including specific examples.

Descriptive Writing

A good feature writer uses plot devices and dialogues that help move the story forward while focusing on the central theme and providing supporting information through descriptive language and specific examples. You want to show readers what's happening, not simply tell them. They should be able to visualize the characters, places, and events highlighted in the feature piece.

Show Versus Tell

Tell: Friends describe Amariah as a generous and vibrant person who was involved in several nonprofit organizations.

Show: Tracey proudly recalls her friend's generosity. "Amariah is usually the first person to arrive at a volunteer event and the last to leave. She spends four hours every Saturday morning volunteering at the mentoring center. It's rare to not catch her laughing, flashing her perfect smile. She's just a burst of positive energy."

It's often tempting to end a feature piece with a summary conclusion. Instead, use an anecdote, passage, or compelling quote that will leave a lasting impression on your readers.

As with any professional relationship, there are do's and don'ts to be aware of when developing relationships with journalists. Take the time to research reporters or bloggers to identify those who will help you achieve your organization's publicity goals. Once you've found an appropriate journalist or blogger, think carefully about how you plan to pitch your story to the individual. Avoid gimmicky or hyped-up press releases; they may catch the reporter's attention, but for the wrong reason. Also avoid jarring language such as "urgent," "must read," or "extremely important," even if you need to secure media coverage quickly.

In general, developing a rapport with journalists takes time, strategy, skill, and practice. For more information on what you can do to develop a good working relationship with the media, take a look at this video with Alissa Widman Neese, a journalist at the *Columbus Dispatch*. She discusses her experiences working with public relations professionals and some of the factors that made them positive. Watch the YouTube video, A Journalist's Perspective on Pitching with Alissa Widman Neese.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/evolvingpr/?p=149

Simply contacting the media will not guarantee coverage for your client. You have to persuade the journalist that your story idea is newsworthy. Public relations professionals typically pitch to reporters, editors, bloggers, and social media influencers. Pitches can take place via email, phone calls, and increasingly through Twitter. The channel you choose for your pitch depends upon the intended individual's preference.

Pitching is a skill that requires creative thinking, persuasive communication skills, and knowing how your story idea benefits the reporter and the audience. Your pitching skills can improve with time and practice. You will feel more confident reaching out to reporters if you write pitches regularly.

Before Pitching

Before you send an email pitch or call a reporter, it is important to have a solid understanding of your key audience. Carefully examine the interests, preferences, media consumption behaviours, and key demographic information associated with that group. Then you can more accurately select which media outlet will help reach the target audience.

Go where your audience is located. For example, as you conduct research about your target audience, you might learn that members read blog posts more than news articles. Therefore, reaching out to bloggers could be more beneficial than targeting news reporters. Place your message or story in media outlets that your intended audience frequently visits or reads.

One of the most common complaints from journalists about public relations pitches involves the use of mass emails. Generic pitches sent out to anyone and everyone come across to reporters and bloggers as careless and can compromise your credibility among media professionals. Remember, reporters are going to look at how your story will appeal to their specific readers; therefore, your pitch needs to be strategic. Failure to keep this in mind may result in a rejected pitch or no response at all.

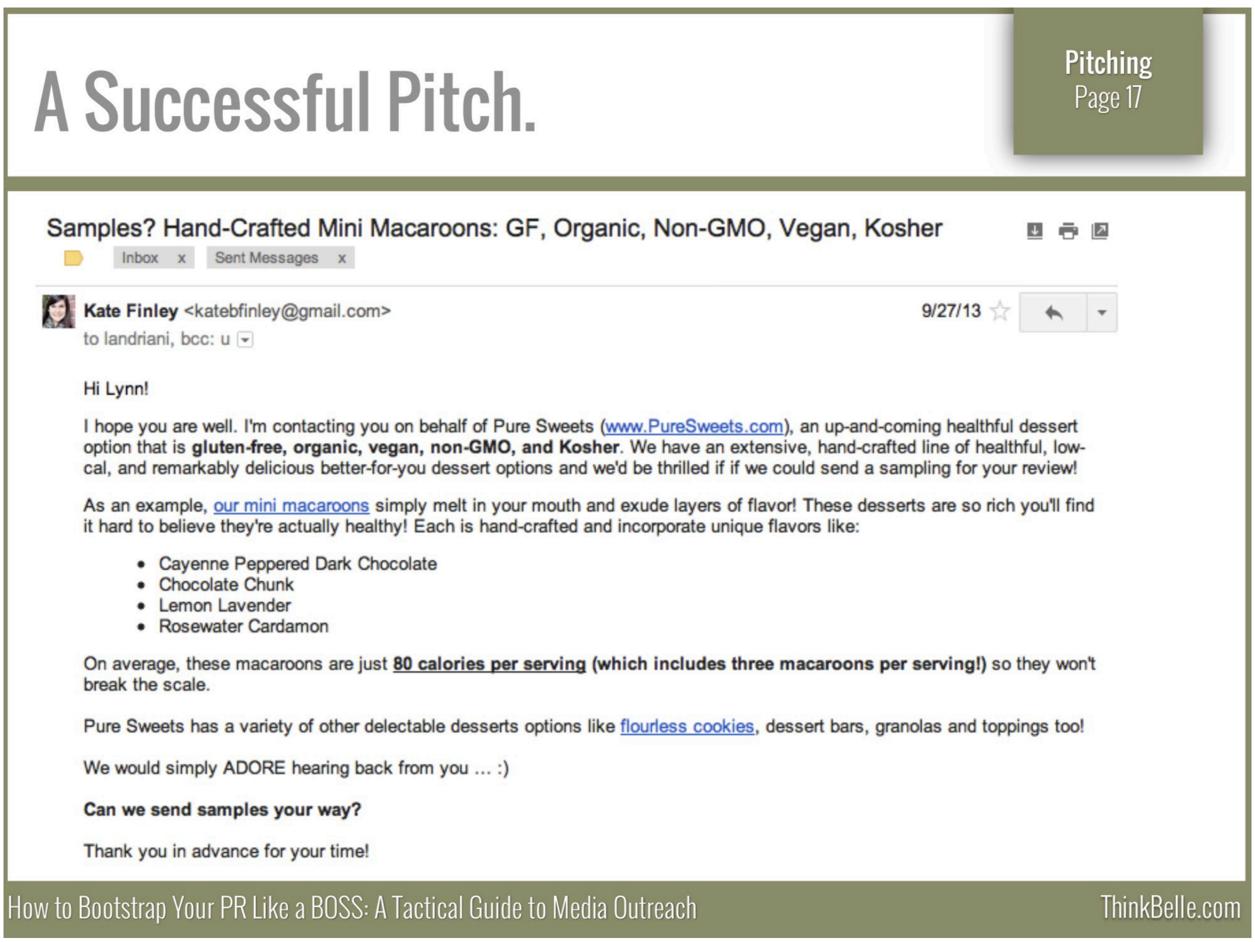
Before you pitch to a particular media outlet, be sure to research which specific writer within the organization can help you target your audience. Each reporter covers a different topic, or "beat." Reading some of a reporter's previous stories will give you an indication of whether he or she is the right person to cover your story. Let's say your client is a restaurant that wants to publicize the opening of a new location. A reporter who covers food topics and brands, lifestyle topics, or the restaurant industry would be the most logical choice to write your story.

Writing the Pitch

Now that you've done your homework on the audience, media outlet, and specific writer, pay close attention to how you craft your pitch message.

The subject line is especially important if you're using email. It needs to be creative enough to catch the attention of the writer; however, avoid exaggerated phrases or visual gimmicks such as all capital letters. Do not use generic headlines such as "Story Idea" or "Cool Upcoming Event." Try to create a headline similar to one the journalist might use in writing the story.

Next, address the reporter or blogger by name and begin the body of the pitch. State why you're writing, and provide some information about yourself and the company or client you represent. Next, summarize the lead of the story. Writing in this manner resonates with some reporters, as it is the style they are accustomed to. You also can start the email with a catchy line that will hook the journalist, but be careful not to overdo this. Reporters and editors do not like flowery or gimmicky language because it sounds more like a hard sales pitch than a public relations pitch. Continue with the pitch by providing important details about the story and talking about why it would be interesting to the media outlet's audience. Doing this indicates that the story has news value, which is very important in pitching. Toward the end of the email pitch, state when you would like a response, indicate when you plan to follow up if necessary, and offer specific help. Be sure to thank the reporter or blogger for his or her time.



"How to Bootstrap Your PR Like a Boss" by Kate Finley. [Source: slideshare](#) . [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)

Don't feel discouraged if the person does not respond immediately. Journalists are extremely busy, and sometimes they simply overlook emails. If necessary, send a reminder email by the follow-up date you mentioned in the first communication. This date depends on when the story should hit the press. If you pitched a story that needs to be published relatively quickly, you may want to follow up no later than two days after sending the initial pitch. If there's more flexibility in the desired publication date, you may indicate that you will follow up within a week. If the person still does not respond to your pitch, move on to another outlet, reporter, or blogger who can help you accomplish your publicity goals. It is important to also consider timing; for example, do not make a follow-up call at 4:55 P.M. on a Friday when the journalist may be getting ready to head home for the weekend.

Grammar, punctuation, tone, and spelling are important when writing email pitches. Some journalists have admitted to not responding to a pitch that contains grammatical and spelling errors. Reread your message several times to check for errors. Here are more articles that discuss media relations, proper etiquette, and tips on gaining media exposure:

- Surprising tips to get the media's attention
- 9 pitch tips from PR News Online
- How not to pitch

The press release or news release is one of the most common communication materials written by public relations professionals. Press releases are sent to outlets such as newspapers, broadcast stations, and magazines to deliver a strategic message from an organization that the media ideally will publish or broadcast. The primary audience for the press release is reporters and editors, although some organizations publish press releases on their own websites for audiences to view. This may be done due to shrinking newsroom staffs and insufficient resources to develop original content.

Journalists use press releases as a reporting tool, relying on them to provide essential information and therefore make it easier for them to cover a variety of events. With the increase in media channels and demand for social content, some view press releases as an uninteresting way to distribute information and connect with audiences (Galant, 2014). Others see them as a concise and straightforward way to communicate to key publics.

Although the emergence of digital media has challenged public relations professionals to think of nontraditional ways to garner publicity, the use of press releases is still widespread in the profession. Therefore, public relations practitioners should know how to write an effective press release.

Traditionally, press releases use the inverted pyramid style, which makes it easy for journalists and editors to receive the most essential information first. This means the news hook should be revealed in the headline and lead of the release. Journalists will not take your press release seriously if the content is not newsworthy and it is not written in an accepted style, such as AP style. Make sure that the press release contains attributed information with proper sources and is error-free.
Before writing the release, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the announcement or event newsworthy? Does it appeal to the media outlet's audience? Some announcements do not warrant a press release and can simply be posted on the company website.
- What is the key message? What should the reader take away?

- Who is the target audience for the release? Although you're writing the release for the media, you need to keep in mind the kind of readers or listeners you hope to attract.

In this video, Gina Bericchia, senior media strategist at Nationwide Children's Hospital, discusses proper press release writing.

Discussion on Press Release Writing with Gina Bericchia

This article from Ragan Communications discusses when to send a press release to the media.

Press Release Structure and Format

The release should be written on the company letterhead, with the words "Press Release" or "News Release" at the top left corner of the page. Below this, indicate when the information is available for publication. The term "immediate release" means the information is ready to publish and can be used by journalists as soon as they receive it. Occasionally, you might want more time to gather other information, or would prefer that the journalist publish the announcement at a later date. In this case, use the term "under embargo until" followed by the embargo date, which is when you will allow the journalist to publish the information. Put the press release date below the "immediate release" or "under embargo until" statement. Always include contact information for the journalist's reference, preferably at the top right corner.

Write the body of the press release using news writing techniques and style. Be sure to include a headline; you also may include a subheadline. Provide a dateline, followed by the summary lead. Here's an example:

THE CITY OF COLUMBUS
MICHAEL B. COLEMAN, MAYOR
RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov. 12, 2015

Contact: Danika Wellington
Media Liaison
614-555-5678
wellington.41@columbus.gov

Empty Bowls to feed the hungry

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The City of Columbus Recreation and Parks Department will host its 18th annual Empty Bowls event to raise much needed funds for the Mid-Ohio Foodbank.

There will be 17 Empty Bowls events starting Saturday until Dec. 10 throughout the Columbus area, which will feature unique pottery and handmade soup for a $10 donation.

Wendy Frantz, Empty Bowls coordinator at Columbus Recreation and Parks, said it is a great way to give back to the community.

"For every dollar that is raised through the Empty Bowls Project for the Mid-Ohio Foodbank, $10 worth of groceries can be given to families in need," Frantz said.

The ceramic bowls are donated by people of all ages and skill level, varying from professional potters and artisans to children. Marcy's Clayground also contributes about 200 bowls annually for the event.

The project is a collaborative effort between Columbus Recreation and Parks, several churches, businesses and program sponsors to help combat hunger. Volunteers make homemade soup and many local businesses donate goods including bread and water.

Yolanda Owens, communications and digital media manager at Mid-Ohio Foodbank, said Columbus Recreation and Parks have been a great partner over the last 17 years, raising over $193,000.

"These much needed funds help to ensure that all of our neighbors have access to nourishing foods to put on their tables for the holidays," Owens said.

The Mid-Ohio Foodbank is a non-profit organisation that partners with more than 650 community partners across Ohio to provide food to half a million hungry citizens.

This year, Empty Bowls events extended to three productions of "Oliver!" in late October at the Westgate Recreation Center, in conjunction with the Westgate Theater Co. and Carriage Place Players.

During the intermission of the performances, a silent auction for the locally made bowls was held to maximize funds raised, which overall totaled $3600.

\- more -

Empty Bowls to Feed the Hungry News Release . Credit:"Writing for Strategic Communication". Industries Student example of a press release for a school assignment. Danika Wellington is not affiliated with The City of Columbus Recreation and Parks Department. CC BY-NC 4.0. [Long Description 9-2]

Be sure to use the inverted pyramid to organize the information throughout the press release. Include at least two quotes, one from the company or organization and another from a third party (example: customer, volunteer, a current or former attendee at the event). After you've finished with the body, put the boilerplate at the end of the document. The boilerplate provides information about the company or organization, similar to the "About Us" section that you might find on a company website.

The press release should be as concise as possible and ideally no longer than one page. If it exceeds one page, do not split paragraphs. Instead, put the word "more" at the bottom center of the first page to indicate to the reader that there is more content on a second page. Include three pound signs (###) or "-30-" at the bottom of the press release to indicate the end.

These sample press releases contain some of the basic elements:

- The Ohio State University
- Forever 21
- St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

Further Reading

This article from Ragan's PR Daily provides suggestions to improve your public relations writing.
An additional article from Ragan's PR Daily explains common press release mistakes.

Press kits or media kits are packages or website pages that contain promotional materials and resources for editors and reporters. The purpose is to provide detailed information about a company in one location. Although a press kit delivers more information than a press release, the overall goal is similar: to secure publicity for a company or client.

Major events or stories that require more information than is typically included in a press release warrant a press kit. Examples include a company merger, the launch of a new product, a rebranding campaign, or a major change in organizational leadership. Press kits can be hard copy or digital. Hard-copy press kits use folders with the company logo, whereas digital press kits use a website page or are sent in a zip file via email.

The following materials are found in a press kit:

- Backgrounder
- Press release
- Fact sheet
- Publicity photos or list of photo opportunities
- Media alerts

Click here for information on how to assemble a press kit.

Backgrounder

A backgrounder contains the history of a company and the biographies of key executives. The purpose is to supplement the press release and explain the company's story or event, products, services, and milestones. It is in paragraph format and relatively brief (one to two pages).

Click here for a sample corporate backgrounder from GainSpan, a semiconductor company (creator: Javed Mohammed).

Fact Sheet

A fact sheet provides a summary of an event, product, service, or person by focusing only on essential information or key characteristics. It is more concise than a backgrounder and serves as a quick reference for reporters. However, the fact sheet is not meant for publication. The headings of a fact sheet vary; the creator of the document chooses how to categorize major information. The most common type of fact sheet is the organizational profile, which gives basic information about an organization. This includes descriptions of products or services, annual revenues, markets served, and the number of employees.

The standard fact sheet contains a company letterhead and contact information. The body is single-spaced, with an extra space between paragraphs and subheadings. Although the fact sheet is typically one page, put the word "-more-" at the bottom of the first page to indicate additional pages. Similar to the press release format, include three number signs or "-30-" at the bottom of the document to indicate the end. To make it easy to read, group similar information together and include bulleted items if appropriate.

Click here or an example of a fact sheet. Keep in mind that the subheadings/categories used in this example may not be used in another one. Writers have some flexibility in the categories they choose in a fact sheet.

Media Alert

There are times when announcements do not require the distribution of a press release, but rather a concise notice to the media. This is called a media alert or advisory. Media alerts are memos to reporters about an interview opportunity, press conference, or upcoming event. They use the 5Ws and H format to quickly deliver information.

The illustration below explains the key differences between a press release and a media advisory:

"News Release vs. Media Advisory" by Alyson Moses and Mary Sterenberg. Source: Ohio State University. CC BY 2.0 [Long Description 9-3]

Here are some examples of media alerts:

- Economic Policy Institute
- Institute for Women's Policy Research

Before they begin the design process, advertising professionals work on explaining and outlining the advertising plan in a creative brief. This is a document for the creative team, the advertising director, and the client that gives a clear objective for the copied material and explains the overall concept of the campaign. The creative brief is like a game plan—without it, the advertisement may not be successful. You do not have to use a particular writing style, such as AP style when completing the creative brief. However, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and concise writing are still important. Here are several broad categories to consider when completing the creative brief.

Key Consumer Insight

The key consumer insight demonstrates a clear understanding of the consumer's general behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes as they relate to the message topic. It also considers general opinions and thoughts about the subject matter. Let's say you're developing a creative brief for a cookie brand. Market research and careful audience analysis can reveal key insights into consumer behaviours, such as the fact that many consumers believe that so-called healthy cookies do not taste as good as their high-calorie, sugar-filled counterparts. This knowledge will help you as you design your advertisement.

Advertising Problem

The phrase "advertising problem" does not refer to addressing a problem within the advertisement itself, or challenges in advertising to the key audience. The term refers to the product's biggest consumer-related stumbling block. In the cookie example above, the advertising problem is that consumers face a choice between buying great-tasting cookies that are loaded with calories and sugar and buying ones that are low in sugar and calories but don't taste as good. The consumer insight can inform or help you to come up with the advertising problem. The advertising strategy should address a consumer need or consumer-related problem. Without this, the advertisement will appear pointless.

Advertising Objective

The advertising objective explains the intended effects of the promotion on the target audience and clearly articulates the overall goal. The goal is not simply to persuade the audience. Think about how you want the audience to feel or believe about the featured product or service. Or, what do you want them to do in response to seeing the advertisement? An example of the objective for the cookie advertisement might be to convince cookie lovers that the featured product is a healthy option that doesn't compromise rich, fulfilling taste.

Target Consumer

The target consumers are people you specifically want to communicate the message to. In order to fully understand the audience, consider their psychographics, or the analysis of their lifestyles and interests. Also include information about demographics, as this factor influences the audience's day-to-day experiences. Clarify why you've chosen this particular audience. Why would these people be attracted to the featured product or service? How would it help the organization achieve its goals? What are the benefits of targeting this particular group? Answering these questions will help justify the selection of the target audience.

Competition

In this section of the creative brief, perform a complete assessment of the competition that considers strengths and weaknesses. Specifically, examine the competitor's history, products, services, brand, and target audiences. Analyzing key competitors will help you articulate your company's or product's marketplace niche, which is very important. You need to establish how your product or company stand out from similar products or companies.

Key Consumer Benefit

The key consumer benefit describes what the consumer would gain from using the advertised product or service. This section also discusses how the product or service solves the advertising problem laid out earlier in the creative brief. Narratives, testimonials, and sometimes research findings can be used as support in the actual advertisement, which helps enhance its persuasiveness.

Support

The support section explains the validity of the proposed advertising plan. It makes a case for why the campaign will motivate the audience or make them believe that the claims are true. This is particularly important because, in order to secure the advertising account, you need to convince your client or high-level executives that the plan will work. Include evidence from third-party sources such as external research studies or polls. Also, include feedback from focus groups to persuade the client that the advertising plan is effective.

Other Categories to Consider

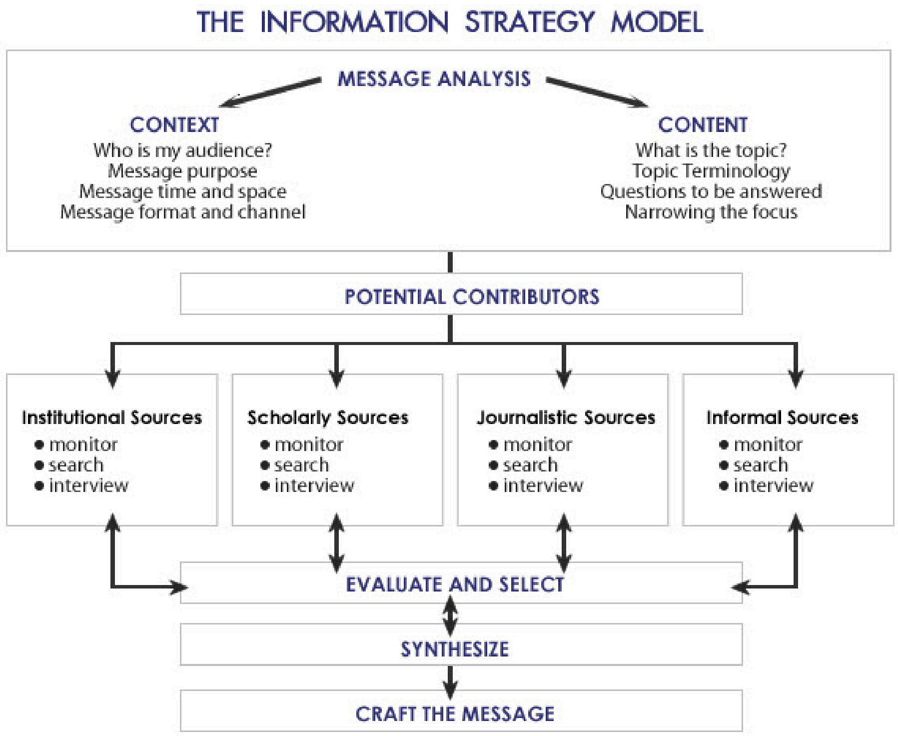
Some creative briefs might include a section called tonality. This explains the desired feel or attitude of the advertising campaign, such as "hip," "classy," "fun," "flashy," or "modern." You could also include a description of the advertisement's visual elements, or the creative mandatories. This section should provide a detailed explanation of the images, slogan, logo, and other visual factors so that the client can imagine how the advertisement will look. The creative team usually presents a sample advertisement to the client in the pitch presentation.

After completing the creative brief and receiving approval from the client, it is now time to develop the advertisement. A large part of this process involves copywriting. Copywriting puts together the headlines, subheadlines, and images included in the advertisement. It uses persuasive communication to influence the target audience. It also helps to create the advertisement's call to action, logo, and slogan.
The AIDA model is a popular framework used in designing advertising copy. The acronym stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. Good advertising copy should effectively grab the audience's attention through words and/or imagery. This can be challenging. Because consumers may see thousands of advertisements daily, capturing their attention needs to be informed by strategy.

After getting the audience's attention, the copy should maintain the focus of the consumer by generating interest. This involves creating messages that are relevant to the target audience (Altstiel and Grow, 2016). The AIDA model states that the copy should provoke a desire for the advertised product or service. When the desire is instilled, the copy should then motivate the audience to act or perform the call to action in the advertisement. This could be buying the product, visiting the organization's social media page, volunteering, or attending an event. The call to action should be memorable.

> For further information on the AIDA model, click on this article.

Over the course of the semester, we've examined the steps a communications professional must take when trying to tackle a new information task or message assignment.



Flow chart of the Information Strategy Model. Image from the Pressbook "[Information Strategies for Communicators]" -CC BY 4.0 [Long Description 9-4]

These steps, by way of review, are:

- clarify the parameters of the message assignment.
- identify potential audiences.
- generate ideas and bring focus to the topic.
- understand the variety of potential contributors of information.
- appreciate the ethical and legal considerations required.

These first steps of the process will help you generate a set of questions or information "tasks" that you will need to perform in order to create the required communication message. Thinking about the potential contributors that could provide information to complete those tasks or answer the questions will get you started on the information strategy process. Knowing the ethical expectations and how to craft a message that meets legal standards will help guide you as you find and select information to use.

We've also discussed the key skills researchers must hone to be efficient and strategic in their information strategy tasks. These skills are:

- **Searching:** understanding how and where to locate both traditional repositories and databases of material and more esoteric or specialized resources, and constructing an effective search "equation" with appropriate keywords and utilizing search fields.
- **Interviewing:** finding and "vetting" people from a variety of contributor types who might have information, insights, or perspectives on whatever you are searching and developing the techniques to

best engage and elicit helpful responses from them.

- **Evaluating:** knowing how to detect bias, misinformation, or unsubstantiated information you might find through searching or interviewing.
- **Managing and Synthesizing:** developing techniques for keeping track of the information you locate, methods for synthesizing key points or ideas to generate new insights and criteria for selecting (or discarding) the information you find.

Finally, we've discussed the forms in which information appears. We've looked at the tools, techniques and special requirements for understanding and using information from:

- data and statistics
- polls and surveys
- public records
- periodical publications

Now it is time to apply all of these skills and use the suite of resources for specific kinds of information requirements. Here's how to apply all of these skills and resources. The following scenarios will step through the thinking process and track the information-seeking path.

An information strategy is used throughout the message generation process. Here are the various stages at which communication researchers will need to locate information to complete the required tasks:

- Initial idea generation or project focusing
- Understanding the intended audience / who they are, what they do, where they are, how to reach them
- Understanding an unfamiliar topic
- Finding information from various types of contributors using different information gathering skills
- Understanding what the information means and how to organize and synthesize it for your message task

In this lesson we will work through several specific communication task scenarios and detail the thought processes and research strategy used when:

- analyzing the message needs
- clarifying the audience to address
- generating ideas and focusing on angles of a topic
- finding information on the topic / angle from a variety of types of contributors
- synthesizing and selecting material that was found

The Atlantic magazine

Freelance Magazine Scenario: You are a freelance reporter and you've been interested in the use of drones, particularly as the market is growing for non-combat use of "unmanned aerial vehicles." You have a good contact at the Atlantic Monthly magazine and think you might be able to pitch a story to them.

Your task: what should you pitch, and how would you research the topic?
You've identified the Atlantic as the magazine you want to target.
Questions to ask:

- *How long are Atlantic articles?*
- *How much are freelancers paid?*
- *How do I submit a proposal?*
- *To whom should I submit a proposal?*

Your questions are all about what a writer needs to know to sell their article. The Writer's Market is a reference work that all freelance writers should have. There is a fee but it is well worth having the "bible" for freelance writers.
You need to learn about both the "gatekeeper" audience (the editor to whom you want to pitch your story) and the magazine's target audience (the main concern of the editor.) Answering these questions will help clarify the orientation of the article you will pitch.

Questions to clarify audience:

- *Which editor would actually read the pitch and decide? What can I learn about them?*

Sometimes it is hard to know when the submission just goes to a general "pitch" box. But you can find the names by going to the magazine website. Find on the homepage where the key personnel is listed (hint: in this case, it is referred to as the Masthead.) Links are provided to the editors' pages; in some cases, they have a little biographical information. If they don't, it is worth checking on LinkedIn or Facebook to get a sense of their interests through posting (and it's a good strategy to "like" or "connect" with them – people like to help out people who like them.)

- *Who is the audience for the magazine? What would they be interested in? Are they highly educated?*

A magazine's media kit is compiled to provide advertisers and media buyer information about the audience it would reach if they placed an ad in that magazine. Every magazine site will have a button called "media kit" or "advertise" that will give valuable demographic and psychographic information about the audience for that publication. Here is The Atlantic's media kit.

Your broad topic of interest is "drones" – but what angle on this should you take? Given your knowledge of the Atlantic's audience, how do you start to zero in on potential ways to focus the topic?

Questions to clarify topic focus:

- *What, if anything, has the Atlantic already written about drones?*

Search the Atlantic's website. Scanning through the articles retrieved (what is a good search strategy?) will give you some ideas of things they have covered – and help you find some different angles.

- *What are some of the angles on the topic of drones that others are writing about?*

Do a quick check on Google News – scanning the headlines might give you insights on a new angle. And you'd want to stay up to speed on the topic, so set several Google Alerts on different aspects of the topic (drones and legislation, drones and public safety, drones and shopping)

- *What are people saying about drones? What are their issues or concerns?*

Social media sites are a great way to see new and emerging topics of discussion or concern. Go to Facebook and see if there is an interest group – and who is talking about it. Follow a Twitter hashtag (like #drone or #dronesforgood)

After brainstorming angles and understanding the interests of the Atlantic audience, you decide the use of drones for delivery services would be an interesting focus. As commercial firms from Amazon to local breweries and drug stores explore drone delivery, the regulatory or safety concerns this raises would be a great topic for Atlantic readers.

Package copter microdrones by Frankhöffner – Source: Wikipedia CC BY-SA

Now you need information. You develop a set of questions that could be answered with information from a variety of potential contributors. There are many ways to do this kind of brainstorming and if you have a very specific question, thinking through what kind of agency or organization would be likely to have information or data or expertise on that specific question is the logical first step.

For example, if you want to know what the outlook is for the drone industry, you might want to find a public sector agency that generates industry outlooks and see what they have published. Check the government search engine USA.gov for drone manufacturing and you get a report published by the Congressional Research Service on UAS manufacturing trends.

But if your specific question is *"how many accidents have there been from the use of drones?"* it would be logical to think about which agency is likely to track that sort of information. At the national level, it would be the Federal Aviation Administration. You do a search on drone accidents at faa.gov and the second item looks perfect: A Summary of Unmanned Aircraft Accident / Incident Data. Sadly, on further examination, you see that it doesn't pass the recency or relevance tests of evidence. But you have identified the likely agency for this kind of information – so it might be time to pick up the phone and make a call to see if you can locate someone who knows about those types of records and ask for the most recent version of the report.

At the beginning stages of the information strategy, sometimes you are better off with imagining the kinds of information that different contributors could offer – and the sort of questions they can answer. Here's how that brainstorming might look for this particular topic:

Public Sector Institutions: government agencies could provide answers to questions about drones and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) related to:

- **Economy:** Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Commerce: census of business and manufacturing, specific financial information about companies in the drone business, the employment outlook for the industry
- **Safety:** Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, Homeland Security: concerns about usage, creative uses of drones (for traffic regulation or monitoring road conditions)
- **Regulation:** Department of Justice, State Legislatures: laws regulating use can be handed down at different levels of government
- **Technology**: National Technical Information Service: technical reports

A good strategy for finding public sector sources that might have information to gather or experts to interview is to look through the directory of government agencies.

Private-Sector Institutions: You've decided your angle is the regulation of drones for commercial use. Clearly, you would want to identify some commercial enterprises that would be affected. Researching the background of this angle provides stories about a drug store in San Francisco, a brewery in Minnesota, and the mega-online store Amazon as having used, or want to use, drones to deliver products. Going to the corporate sites for QuiQui, Lakemaid Beer, and Amazon would provide answers to questions about their use of drones – and more importantly, the names of people you might want to interview.

On the non-profit side, talking to people in advocacy groups or organizations with concerns about the use of commercial drones can help fill in questions about the different perspectives on the issue that should be considered. These are often good places to check for backgrounders or "white papers" on the topics of most interest to those associations.

Do a search in Google for drones and association – look at their websites to see issues they cover. For a more authoritative source on associations, check the Associations Unlimited database (found on the UMN library website.)

Scholarly: Conducting a search for scholarly articles in the Business Source Premier database using the search equation *("drone aircraft" OR "unmanned aerial vehicles") NOT war*, you locate a number of relevant articles. One that appeared in Computer Law and Security Review is titled "Drones: Regulatory challenges to an incipient industry," and the abstract of the article sounds like it is a good fit for your needs. A challenge with using scholarly sources can be deciphering the specialist language they use in their writings. For journalists, it can be better to find sources to interview – scholars will speak more conversationally than they will write. In the Lesson on Interviewing we talked about sources for locating scholars to interview. In this case, you would read the article and then contact the author, David Wright, for an interview.

Journalistic: News articles are essential sources for other journalists – not only to find out what has been covered but also to see the types of sources that have been used. You'll want to search one of the news archives services such as Google News (if you only want recent stories) or LexisNexis for broader coverage. In this case, however, you also find that journalists themselves are interesting sources of information because many of them want to use drones in their news work. So, journalistic sources are not only fodder for background and places to cull for good sources to find, but they are also sources themselves. You might want to contact the Professional Society of Drone Journalists.

Informal Sources: If you are writing about how drones for commercial or non-military use are being regulated, you'd want to find some "just folks" to represent the impact of regulation. You'll need to brainstorm the kinds of people you would want to hear from: people who use drones for fun, those concerned about drones flying over their neighborhood, people who have been injured by a drone, people who can't wait to have their latest purchase from Amazon dropped on their doorstep. Locating informal sources might mean finding specific people who have posted on social media sites (look for tweets or pages related to drones) or it might be posting a "call" for comment on these sites and seeing what kinds of response you get. Reading the comments on articles you found through journalistic sources might lead you to interesting informal sources to interview.

Search Tip: A term like "drone" has multiple related terms and different ways different disciplines will refer to the term. Take care when searching to try different versions (drone, UAV, UAS, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle…)

As you can see from this scenario, there are many steps and hundreds of information sources that could help with this message task. We are just scratching the surface of what you would actually need to do to prepare this type of story pitch to the editors of The Atlantic.

You work as a Communications Manager for the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA), the trade group that represents the country's wind energy industry. An article appears in the Journal of Raptor Research that reports on the results of a study by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The study found that wind energy facilities have killed at least 85 golden and bald eagles between 1997 and 2012—and those eagle fatalities possibly may be much higher. The study also indicated that eagle deaths have increased dramatically in recent years as the nation has turned increasingly to wind farms as a source of renewable, low-pollution energy, with nearly 80 percent of the fatalities occurring between 2008 and 2012 alone.

Your Executive Director (ED) asks you to prepare the Association's response to the questions and requests for comments that are certainly going to be pouring in as the results of the study start to gain public awareness. You need to get up to speed quickly on the topic of bird mortality due to wind energy facilities. Let's look at how you would prepare to respond to this "crisis."

Your discussion with the Executive Director would include seeking the answers to these questions:

Wind Turbines by stevebidmead. Source: pixabay. CC0 Public Domain

- Does the ED want to issue a statement to the media on behalf of the AWEA?
- If yes, should that be in the form of a news release, a news conference, a streaming web conference, something else?
- Does the ED want to consider posting something on the AWEA's website as part of the response?
- If yes, you need to determine "best practices" for how to do this effectively.
- Does the ED want to provide "talking points" to the industry members of the AWEA so they know how to respond if they get questions? How should those "talking points" be distributed most effectively?
- Similarly, should the AWEA communicate with other stakeholders with an interest in the work of the AWEA? What form would that take?

Once you clarify the types of messages and the communications strategy your ED wants you to pursue, you need to determine the audiences who will be targeted. This leads to another set of questions:

- Which media outlets should we target with our news releases/news conference/web conference messages? Are we trying to reach media organizations that produce news and information for the general public or for specialist audiences? Who are those specialist audiences?
- What will our industry members need to have in the "talking points" material we create for them? We need to anticipate their information needs since our mission is to help association members be effective advocates for the wind power industry as well as succeed in their individual business endeavors.
- Who are the other stakeholders we might target with our response? Our partner organizations and associations at the state and national level? Regulators at the state and national level who govern our industry? Bird enthusiasts, who oppose wind turbines? Environmentalists, who care about both renewable energy AND wildlife protection? Researchers inside and outside the government who study bird mortality and wind power?
- Once we know which stakeholder audiences we want to address, how can we best reach them with our messages?

Based on your discussions with the ED, you start to brainstorm some of the ways you might address the message task. Again, you identify some questions that can help you focus on the right angle.

- Aside from this one study, what do we know about bird mortality caused by wind energy facilities and who has studied the issue?

- What else kills birds and how does that compare with avian deaths from wind turbines?
- What are our member industries doing right now, if anything, to reduce bird mortality?
- How does energy production using other methods affect wildlife and how does that compare with wind energy production?
- What regulations are in place that our industry members must follow to protect birds? How are we doing with compliance?

Here is just a tiny sample of the information contributors you could tap and the information they might provide to help you focus your messages.

Public-sector Institutions

The Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wind Energy Guidelines provide detailed specifications for the way wind energy facilities must operate, including ways to reduce bird and other animal mortality. You might suggest posting a link to these guidelines on the AWEA's website and include some narrative about the ways your members are complying with the regulations. You might also include this document and some of the data about compliance with your association members as part of their "talking points" material. This document could also be shared as part of a news conference or in any statement, your ED might issue to the media.

Private-sector Institutions

The National Academy of Sciences, a widely-respected, private-sector, non-profit organization, conducted a study about other causes of bird mortality in addition to those caused by the wind power industry. It appears from this study that bird mortality from other causes is much greater than bird deaths from wind power facilities. You might, once again, consider posting a link to this study on the AWEA's website, compose some narrative that summarizes the findings of the study and make sure any public statements or "talking points" include the results. At the same time, you need to be sure that you don't minimize the concern for bird mortality rates caused by wind power.

The National Wind Coordinating Collaborative is a private-sector, non-profit organization with partners from the wind industry, science and environmental organizations, and wildlife management agencies. They did a study of wind-wildlife interactions that summarized a huge amount of scientific and scholarly data and produced a fact sheet that outlines how the wind power industry and environmentalists are responding to the issue. This document would clearly be part of your information package.

Scholarly Sources

Conducting a search in Google Scholar using the search statement "bird mortality from wind energy" uncovers hundreds of scholarly studies done in the U.S. and around the world. The general consensus appears to say that there is a clear link between wind turbines and bird mortality, but there are lots of caveats in the findings.

One article in the scholarly journal Biological Conservation shows that bird mortality is greater with a type of wind turbine that is being phased out (lattice vs. monopole); that taller monopole turbines may pose more risk of raptor bird mortality than shorter monopole turbines because raptors fly at a higher elevation than songbirds (the usual victims of wind turbines), but that the blades on taller monopole turbines turn at a slower rate than the blades on shorter turbines so those risks may offset one another. Again, the data from studies such as this one would need to be summarized and included in any messages you generate.

Journalistic Sources

A search for journalistic coverage of this issue turns up thousands of news stories, including recent reports about offshore wind farms that pose fewer risks to birds than land-based turbines. Many news stories have been written about opposition to wind farms because of concerns about wildlife mortality, and there are state and local-level opposition as well as national-level concern. At the same time, editorials supporting wind energy as an alternative to the more harmful effects of other types of energy production have appeared in a number of newspapers in communities where the issue is of particular concern. This might suggest a list of news organizations you would want to target for your news releases since you know they have written about the issue and are open to a nuanced approach to the problem. You could also create a Google Alert on the topic so you would be notified whenever a new news story appears.

Informal Sources

You would want to monitor social media chatter about the most recent raptor mortality/wind power study and pay attention to those individuals and groups who seem to be most influential or have the largest followings. You could create a set of alerts on the most popular social media sites to be notified whenever there are new postings. You could then decide whether or not to respond based on the type of information in the postings or the likely impact of the messages. Additionally, you might suggest that the AWEA reach out to the most vocal individual opponents of wind energy (you would be able to generate a list of their names from the news stories you found) and incorporate their perspectives and concerns into your responses where appropriate.

The information you locate from a variety of contributors appears to show that there is definitely a problem with bird mortality and wind energy. At the same time, the wind power industry, private-sector institutions, public-sector institutions and scholars are working on ways to lessen the impact. Also, the potential danger to animal life from wind-power appears to pale in comparison to the danger posed to ALL life from other forms of energy generation (climate change due to rising CO_2 levels, strip coal mining, fracking, oil pipeline construction through wildlife habitat, deepwater oil drilling, etc.).

You would want to be sure that your message strategy does not minimize the harm to birds, but also points out the efforts being taken by the industry to address the problems with newer technologies, additional precautions, changes in turbine sitings (offshore rather than on land), compliance with existing and emerging regulations and related initiatives.

The message strategy you might propose to your Executive Director would include recommendations to include these types of arguments, with plenty of links and references to the information and evidence you have located, in any public comments, website content, news releases, "talking points" documents, and related messages to address the immediate "crisis" and to address longer-term communication needs for the association.

Let's say that you are working on a new business pitch for a possible advertising client. A new business pitch is the presentation and supporting documentation that an agency prepares to show to a prospective client in an effort to win that advertiser's business.

United Airlines image provided by the website Logo. -CC BY-NC

The company whose advertising account you would like to win is United Airlines. The airline currently works with McGarryBowen advertising agency but since the merger with Continental Airlines, the company is considering other options for their advertising business.

The agency for which you work has not had a commercial airline account in the past so the first task in your preparation of the new business pitch is to get up to speed quickly on the passenger airline industry.

Questions to Pose:

- What is the overall economic health of the passenger/commercial airline industry?
- Who are the main players — the airline companies, the aircraft manufacturers, the regulators, the workers' unions, the customers, the other stakeholders? What perspective or position does each player take on the industry?
- What does airline advertising look like? Who is advertising, where do the ads appear, what do the ads say, how effective are the ads?
- What restrictions and regulations, if any, govern advertising for this industry?
- Who comprises the largest and most lucrative group of airline travelers? In other words, who are airlines trying to reach with their ads?

Depending on the questions you need to answer, there is a vast array of potential sources of information. Following is a sampling of the contributors that would have relevant information and the kinds of information you could find.

Private-sector Institutional Sources:

- associations that are important for that industry (Airlines for America, Airline Passenger Experience Association, etc.)
- trade journals that discuss the most recent news and trends for that field (Aviation Week, etc.)
- financial records that detail the industry's economic health from the company itself and from financial analysts who monitor the industry
- unions that represent the workers in that field (Airline Pilots Association, Association of Professional

Flight Attendants, Transport Workers Union, etc.)

- demographic data that describe the customers for that industry's products/services and the audiences for its ads
- syndicated research service reports about airline advertising

Public-sector Institutional Sources:

- court records that document the interactions the company and competitors in the industry have had with the U.S. justice system
- government records that document regulation of the industry (Federal Aviation Administration reports, Occupational Safety and Health Administration reports, etc.)
- government records that provide insight into the financial health of the industry (Bureau of Transportation Statistics reports)
- government records about consumer complaints about the industry (Aviation Consumer Protection agency reports which are housed in the U.S. Department of Transportation)

Scholarly Sources:

- experts who can speak authoritatively about the commercial airline industry
- experts who can speak about the effectiveness of advertising in that industry

Journalistic Sources:

- news operations that write about the industry or are published in towns where key companies in that industry operate

Informal Sources:

- social media pages where people talk about that industry and its products/services

Once you have a good understanding of the industry overall and the types of advertising that are typical for companies in that sector, you can start to search for specific information about United Airlines, the company for which you are preparing the new business pitch.

Again, you would identify a number of important questions to answer:

- How does United stack up against its competitors?
- Is the company financially sound?
- Does the company have a "unique selling proposition"?
- Who are United's current customers and what do customers think about United?
- What do relevant workers' groups think about United? (pilots, flight attendants, baggage handlers, air traffic controllers, aircraft manufacturers, etc.)
- What have United's ads looked like in the past? To whom were they targeted? Where did the ads appear? Were they effective?

- How much has United spent on advertising in the past?
- Who should we propose that the airline target with their advertising? Business travelers, families, retirees, customers currently flying with other airlines or those who are traveling by other means, etc.?

A tiny sample of what you could find:

Private-sector Institutional Sources

- United's own demographic data about customers
- United's corporate information
- McGarryBowen's advertising work for United
- Google Finance's compilation of public-sector and private-sector data about the company
- Customer ratings for United produced by other organizations
- Syndicated research services reports about ad spending for United; this would tell you where United ads are currently appearing and would help you identify the audiences that are currently being targeted with the advertising

Public-sector Institutional Sources

- Securities and Exchange Commission annual reports for United
- Air Travel Consumer Reports from the U.S. Department of Transportation

Scholarly Sources

- scholars who have studied the company specifically
- scholarly studies about airline customer satisfaction that include United's rankings

Journalistic Sources

- news stories about United in general
- business journalism reports about United as a company and an investment
- journalistic reports about United's advertising

Informal Sources

- United's social media accounts
- Other social media accounts that discuss United
- FlyerTalk and related blog posts about United

After reviewing the information you have found, you have learned that United is doing well financially but their customer satisfaction ratings are at the bottom of the heap and their current advertising campaign, which resurrected the 30-year-old slogan "Fly the Friendly Skies," has been widely ridiculed as ineffective and downright misleading. Especially after the airline's horrendous treatment of a passenger forcibly removed from a United flight in spring 2017, the company has a major PR problem. The company has simmering labor problems with its workforce (dissatisfied pilots, flight attendants, airplane mechanics, etc.) and a public image problem as a large, impersonal corporate behemoth after its merger with Continental.

Synthesizing all of this information, you would want to focus your brainstorming on a possible new advertising direction on a recommendation that the company repositions itself away from the claim about customer satisfaction because it cannot live up to that promise, especially after the fiascos of customer mistreatment in 2017. You and your advertising colleagues would want to identify other possible unique selling propositions on which the company could actually deliver (more non-stop routes to popular destinations, newer aircraft, more hubs, etc.) and be sure that any advertising claims could be clearly demonstrated and backed-up by the reality of the company's performance.

Furthermore, you would want to examine in more detail the specifics of different audiences for the advertising — what appeals would work better with business customers vs. leisure travelers, etc.? If you find that the airline could have better results by targeting a subset of its customers with its new advertising rather than producing a general audience ad campaign, that is where you would focus your news business pitch.

The new business pitch to United's decision-makers presents an opportunity for you and your advertising agency colleagues to demonstrate your command of the facts about the airline industry overall and the relative position of United Airlines within that industry. It also provides an opportunity for you to generate creative and effective suggestions for ways the company could improve its advertising and its public image.

All of the scenarios and examples we've provided here are intended to give you concrete insights into the way the information strategy process works for real-life communications message tasks. Internalizing the process will prepare you for the work you will do in the rest of your coursework and your career in journalism or strategic communication.

News Value and the Strategic Communication Professional

While watching or listening to a major media network, you may occasionally find yourself thinking, "Why is this story considered news?" Audiences assume that the role of the media is to provide them with the most important information about issues and events happening locally, nationally, and worldwide. Therefore, media outlets send an indirect message to audiences about a story's perceived importance through the selection and how much time and exposure they give the story.

A story's newsworthiness is largely determined by its news value, a standard that determines whether an event or situation is worth media attention. News value is referred to as "criteria used by media outlets to determine whether or not to cover a story and how much resources it should receive" (Kraft, 2015). Journalists and reporters are likely to spend their limited time and resources on a story that has many news values.

Strategic communication professionals who understand what constitutes newsworthy content will increase their chances of gaining media coverage for their brand or organization. In fact, there is a saying that "the most successful public relations professionals are those who think and act like reporters" (Caruso, 2011, para. 1). Because journalists are more interested in stories that will appeal to their readers or listeners, understanding the news value of your messages will help to enhance your company's media relations and general coverage.

The Role of Writing in Public Relations

Public relations professionals at all levels need to have solid writing skills. White (2016) says, "To succeed as a PR pro, it's vital to have a passion for writing and communication and to be committed to excelling in both. You're bound to fail if you don't" (para. 9). Public relations professionals are responsible for developing communication materials intended to influence the attitudes and/or behaviours of key publics. Many employers require candidates for public relations positions to complete a writing test and provide a writing sample to demonstrate proficiency in this skill. Therefore, it is critical to understand how to craft effective messages through written communication.

Here are some of the many materials and messages that public relations professionals have to write:

- Press/News releases
- Fact sheets
- Feature articles
- Social media messages
- Blog posts
- Speeches
- PowerPoint presentations
- Brochures
- Media pitches
- Statements
- Website messages

News Writing Versus Public Relations Writing

Effective public relations writing draws from news writing principles because the news media is one of the preferred channels for promoting products and services. However, news writing and public relations writing differ in terms of audience, tone, and media channels. News writing should be objective in tone, with the purpose of presenting information to educate an audience about newsworthy events. On the other hand, public relations writing advocates for the client. It is informative, but it should also influence key publics' perception of the organization. Some would also argue that public relations writing is even more concise than new writing.

Reporters usually write for one audience: readers or listeners of the respective media outlet. Public relations professionals may have to write for a variety of audiences, including internal audiences (such as employees, shareholders, and distributors) and external audiences (such as the media, customers, volunteers, and bloggers). News writing uses one primary communication channel, the news outlet (which can be a newspaper or a television or radio broadcast). Although journalists are increasingly using Twitter to post their articles, this usually entails posting a link that directs the audience to the news outlet's primary website. Public relations professionals use a variety of channels to distribute their messages, including news media, social media, advertisements, blogs, press kits, and many more.

Notes

1. (Kraft, 2015).
2. (Scanlan, 2003)
3. (Scanlan, 2003).
4. (Scanlan, 2003).
5. (International Center for Journalists, 2016).
6. (Rich, 2016).
7. (Scanlan, 2003).
8. (Rich, 2016).
9. **example modified from Butte College, 2016**

Chapter 10 – Establishing a Professional Portfolio

When considering what to include in your writing portfolio, look at relevant class assignments or work produced in a previous or current role. Save everything in a file, especially work from a class that requires you to write common communication materials such as newsletters, press releases, brochures, and news articles. If you do not have internship or work experience, try to do volunteer writing for a nonprofit organization or a small project for a startup company. What matters is that you have writing samples to show, not whether you were paid to do the work.

The first page of a hard-copy portfolio is usually a resume. Online portfolios include a description or summary of your professional background. From there, create clear sections and headings and arrange the content by article or document type. Tailor the portfolio to jobs or industries you're interested in and by chronological order, with the most recent work first or at the top of the online portfolio. For example, if you're applying for a job that requires proficiency in AP style writing, include writing samples that use this style, such as press releases or feature articles. If you're applying for a job that requires social media writing skills, make sure to include social media posts that you've created for an organization. Here's a list of some of the materials you could include in the portfolio:

- Press releases
- Website copy
- Feature articles
- Media pitches
- Social media posts that you created for an organization
- A sample RFP (request for proposal) for a campaign or a detailed public relations campaign proposal
- News media clippings of coverage you secured from pitches (it helps if you provide the original pitch that led to the media coverage)

Include brief information about each document, such as the name of the organization it was created for and the date. Be ready to discuss your writing samples during a job interview. You may explain why you created the material and the results that came from it, such as increased website traffic and Twitter followers from a news article publication.

More examples of writing portfolios

- How to make an impressive writing portfolio. By Jane Smith published in the Houston Chronicle August 08, 2018.
- Gari Cruze Copywriter Blog
- Brandi Uyemura, freelance features writer website

Other important points about the writing portfolio

As you work on more projects and articles, remember to include them in your portfolio. Constantly update the portfolio so that employers and professional contacts can see your most recent work. Include a minimum of two to three writing samples, although the quality of the portfolio materials matters more than the quantity (Lovering, 2016).

Some employers may not ask for a portfolio but will require you to take a writing test. Employers use this assessment to determine your editing skills, understanding of AP style, knowledge of grammar and punctuation, and ability to write under a strict deadline. It might be a timed test or a take-home assessment.

Platforms to create your online writing portfolio:

- clippings.me
- WordPress
- Wix

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Appendix

Glossary

Ad campaign

a series of related ads meant to work in tandem.

Advertising

a message or group of messages designed with three intentions: to raise awareness in the population about brands, products and services; to encourage consumers to make purchases; and to inspire people to advocate for their favorite brands.

Appointment viewing

watching a show as it airs live at the same time every week or every day. This refers largely to a time before DVRs or VCRs when you had to catch a show live in order to see it. Appointment viewing is largely a thing of the past; however, the popularity of major shows and the frequency of live events are bringing back appointment viewing in limited ways. For example, people will view live sporting events as they happen, and people will try to watch new *Game of Thrones* episodes as soon as they air.

Binge-watching

consuming several hours of video content in a single viewing or in a very limited time frame.

Botnets
appears in Ch. 1 and Ch. 3

computers programmed to create false social media accounts, websites and other digital properties.

Brand

a term used to label a specific product or a limited family of products.

Brand advocate

someone who is so supportive of a product or service that they publicly encourage others to buy it.

Bricolage
appears in Ch. 2

in the context of the praxis of digital culture, it means to "do it yourself," or to make a creative work on any media platform of your choosing using available tools and content. From the French and related to another French word, "collage."

Citizen journalist
appears in Ch. 2

a person who is not a paid professional but who delivers news to audiences nonetheless.

Collaborative television

a media phenomenon in which content producers work with the audience to produce, alter or enhance content, including to decide the outcomes of televised competitions.

Collective memory

the shared cultural memory of a group of people.

Common culture

the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a massive group of people at a certain time and place.

Communication

an exchange of meaning between people using symbols, which can include spoken, written or signed words as well as other nonverbal forms such as shared images and sounds.

Communication structure

a combination of information and communication technologies (ICTs), guidelines for using those technologies, and professional workers dedicated to managing information and messages.

Company

a business entity that produces several types of product.

Computer-mediated communication

messages conveyed using computers.

Consumer Journey

see “Purchase funnel”

Content marketing

a common practice where brands produce their own content, or hire someone else to produce it, and then market that information as an alternative to advertising.

Convergence

the process by which various types or formats of media (audio, video, text, animation and so forth) and the industries they are tied to merge on global computer and mobile network platforms.

Corporate narrative

the story of how the company came to exist and how it represents certain values and ideals — at least, this is how such stories are framed from a marketing point of view. Many corporate narratives are based only partly in fact.

Cultivation theory

a mass communication theory, which some argue is more of a hypothesis. It states that media effects build up over time and that through TV, video games and online media, the United States (and perhaps other cultures) is becoming a culture centered on violence that has devalued sex and succumbed to hyper-consumerism. This is a contested theory. There is evidence of cultivation, but its mechanisms and its importance in the context of other social influences such as family, friends, churches and other institutional influences besides the mass media are not well developed from a theoretical standpoint.

Cultural norms

shared beliefs about the way things *ought* to be.

Culture
appears in Ch. 1 and Ch. 2

the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a group of people.

De-massification

the breakdown of mass media audiences. As the amount of information being produced and the number of channels and platforms on which news and other content can be disseminated grows exponentially, massive ready-made audiences are in decline.

Digital culture

the knowledge, beliefs and practices of people interacting on digital networks that may recreate tangible-world cultures or create new strains of cultural thought and practice native to digital networks.

Double delusion

this delusion is at the core of the third-person effect theory, wherein we think other people are probably affected more by advertising and other mass media content than they are, and we think we are influenced less than we are.

Dreck

trash.

Earned media

the amount of free air time on TV or space in major newspapers and magazines that is earned by getting other mass media channels to tell your product's stories without having to pay for ad space.

Echo chamber

a space in a communication platform, or a whole platform, where like-minded people congregate to speak only or mostly to one another.

Encoding

voluntarily or involuntarily paying attention to a message and its underlying symbols.

Entry point

a position in an industry that an individual can use to gain the experience needed to move up the career ladder.

Episodic media

a type of storytelling often used in radio and television in which shows usually feature a different story with each episode.

Filter bubbles
appears in Ch. 1

a space or a set of habits using mass media and social media preferences where the user hears or sees almost exclusively the voices and information that they want to hear.

Folk culture

the cultural products borne out of everyday life with practical uses or purposes.

Gatekeeper
appears in Ch. 1, Ch. 2 Gate Keeper, Ch.3 Gate Keeper, Ch. 7, Ch. 8, and Ch.9

as the concept relates to the study of mass communication, a gatekeeper is someone, professional or not, who decides what information to share with mass audiences and what information to leave out.

Gatewatching

when someone takes a message already published by professionals or amateurs and shares it for others to see.

Group culture

the phenomenon formerly referred to as a "subculture." It is the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a subset of people considered to be part of a larger culture. Group culture is distinct in some ways from the shared, broader common culture. Group culture might center on religious beliefs and practices, ethnic norms and interests, or food, music and other forms of material production.

High culture

arguably the best cultural material a society has to offer. Economic class often comes into play in defining what is "high culture" and what is not.

Inbound marketing

inviting customers into social media spaces or to view messages on other platforms so that the potential customer can experience your brand-related content in your territory, rather than going out and demanding their attention with more traditional forms of advertising.

Individualism

(as used here) refers not only to an individual's ability to act as their own publisher online but also to a social condition in which individuals are free from government control.

Influencers

people who promote products on their social media streams.

Information economy

an economic system where manufacturing and services still exist, but they are dependent upon information and communication technologies for strategic planning capabilities, transaction management, moving and storage of currency and the ability to automate tasks.

Intermedia agenda setting

related to the broader theory of agenda setting, it is the idea that many journalists, particularly in broadcast journalism, rely on other news media to set the agenda for them, which they then pass along to their audiences. In digitally networked communications, it has been noted that newspapers and their digital counterparts still generate much of the original reporting that then is spread through broadcast journalism and social media the world over.

Interpersonal communication

the exchange of meaning between two or more people on a personal, often one-on-one, level. Interpersonal communication can be verbal or nonverbal. Most often, it happens in face-to-face settings.

Intertextual media

mediated messages that combine various types of text into one. Texts are broadly defined here to include video, audio, animated, graphic and other forms of textual information.

Legacy media

media platforms that existed before the development of massive digital networks.

Limited capacity model

a theory that states that our cognitive abilities are limited, so we are unable to process all of the information that we see, hear and read.

Limited effects

a paradigm, which is to say a collection of mass communication theories based on thousands of empirical studies. All of these studies found in one way or another that the direct effects of messages or message campaigns on mass society are limited. This is not to say that the mass media are inconsequential, only that to directly influence the behaviour of massive numbers of people via message campaigns is difficult in part because there are so many other social and cultural factors influencing behaviour.

Marketing

a branch of the field of economics and also a practice which includes developing advertising strategies and other research efforts meant to guide advertising strategies as part of larger sales and production strategies. Put simply, it is the entire process of strategizing to sell a product.

Marketing's four P's

produce, price, place and promotion.

Mass communication

involves sharing meaning through symbolic messages to a broad audience from one source to many receivers.

Mass-mediated messages

usually professionally selected and produced messages on topics meant for widespread dissemination.

Massively individuated

content produced for mass audiences but having the appearance of personalized messages.

Media literacy appears in Ch. 1, Ch. 2, and Ch. 3

a term describing media consumers' understanding of how mass media work. Being media literate means knowing where different types of information can be found, who owns various mass media channels and products, how messages are produced and how they are framed to suit various interests.

Media studies

the broad category of academic inquiry analyzing and critiquing the mass media, its products, possible effects of messages and campaigns, and media history.

Metropolitan daily newspapers

newspapers that cover large cities or a few geographically connected smaller cities.

Modernity

in reference to art and other forms of cultural production, a purposeful break from the past.

News frame

the way a story is presented including which sources and facts are selected as well as the tone the story or message takes.

News norm

see “Norm”

Nickelodeon

a parlor or theater housing kinetoscopes, which were early machines used for viewing motion pictures. So named because kinetoscopes usually cost a nickel to play. Nickel + odeon, which itself is a classical term (Greek and Roman) for a building dedicated to singing or poetry productions.

Norm appears in Ch. 1 and Ch. 2

a behavioural standard. Professional norms are the written and unwritten rules guiding behaviour decided on, and often contested by, people in a given field.

Objectivity appears Ch. 1 and Ch. 7

in news, this is a professional norm or normative practice that refers to efforts to keep individual biases out of the published news and to consider the information presented by sources with an open mind during the information gathering process. No one is completely objective, and no news outlet is, either; however, the guiding principle is to attempt to take personal and institutional biases out of news reporting.

Organizational communication

the symbolic exchange of messages carrying specific meaning for members belonging to formal organizations. In practical terms, it is the internal communication that helps governments, businesses, schools and hospitals to run.

Participation

in the context of the praxis of digital culture, a term indicating that everyone with access to the internet has the ability to contribute to new media products and platforms. Contributions could come in the form of text, photos, videos, audio clips, graphics or memes.

Penny press

the first mass medium. They were tabloid-style newspapers written for and read by working-class audiences. The small-sized pages were cheaper to produce and relatively easy to distribute.

Personal culture

the knowledge, beliefs and practices held most dear to an individual.

Platform appears in Ch.1, Ch.2, Ch.3, Ch.7, Ch.8, and Ch.10

a digital space where creation may happen. For example, Facebook is a platform where people can communicate with friends, share content and see ads purchased on behalf of Russian intelligence officials. Facebook produces almost none of its own content. Instead, it brings people together to share the content they find and create. Reddit is a platform where news and image links are shared and voted on. It is a sort of platform popularity contest. In digital gaming, a digital platform is a space where people can create their own worlds or their own gaming experiences (Minecraft is a good example of this kind of digital space).

Pop culture

the vast array of cultural products that appeal to the masses.

Post-nationalism

in the context of a discussion of digital culture refers to the way one's country appears to matter less as an influence on behaviour and values online than it does in the tangible world, perhaps because we can be free of our national identities when engaging in digital networks with people from around the globe. Note that the rise of online nationalism calls into question the validity of the argument that digital culture is post-nationalistic.

Purchase funnel

a conceptual model depicting different stages at which audiences can be reached with advertising messages. It progresses from the very broad Awareness phase through garnering Interest and creating the Desire for a product before finishing with Action, or closing the deal.

Remediation

old media products, concepts and practices presented in new ways on new platforms as new information and communication technologies (ICTs) make it possible.

Retrieved appears in Ch.7 and Ch.9

according to the Limited Capacity Processing Model, the term used when ideas communicated to us are recalled when we wish to remember them.

Rule of seven

a rule of thumb, or what social scientists call a heuristic, in the advertising field that suggests that people need to see an advertisement seven times before they act on it.

S-M-C-R model of communication

a basic communication model indicating that all messages begin with a Sender, are conceived of as individual Messages, travel along a Channel and reach a Receiver. Models built on S-M-C-R also account for noise, which can confuse message transmission, and it must be noted in a networked communication environment it is quite easy for receivers to become senders instantaneously by clicking "share" or performing similar actions.

Salience

the acceptance of messages in the mass media as being true or, at least, worth remembering.

Second screen experience

consuming media on one platform (usually television) while interacting with the show, the show's producers or other fans on a second media platform such as social media or a voting website, in the case of contest shows such as *American Idol* or *Dancing with the Stars.*

Serialized media

a way of organizing stories in which an ongoing narrative with several threads is told in a series of episodes. Each episode, more or less, picks up where the last one left off. This form dates back to the serial publication of novels in the 19th century, but it has also been used in radio, television and podcasting.

Slow journalism

a movement in the field of journalism that aims to protect accuracy and care in journalism by prioritizing fact-finding above covering breaking news with speed and perhaps recklessness.

Social capital

the potential to get help, not limited to financial assistance, from the people in your social networks, in the tangible world and online, when needed.

Social responsibility

in the study of journalism ethics, social responsibility is a specific concept referring to the need for media organizations to be responsible for the possible repercussions of the news they produce.

Society

a very large group of people held together over time through formalized relationships. Relationships can be economic, legal, political, or some combination of these. Society may be viewed as a hierarchy where individuals come together in small groups which then join or form bonds to create larger, more formalized groups called institutions. A large enough collection of institutions can be said to form a society.

Sponsorship

when a company pays to support an event or a mass media production in exchange for having its brand promoted alongside the activity or content.

Stored appears in Ch.2 and Ch.7

according to the Limited Capacity Processing Model, the term used when ideas communicated to us are recorded in our memories.

Superbug media products

podcasts, web series, independent news websites and other digital media products that survive and thrive in highly competitive environments with limited initial access to traditional media resources.

Symbolic interactionism

a communication theory stating that people assign symbolic meaning to phenomena around them. It suggests our behaviour is guided and influenced by our perceptions of reality interpreted through symbols.

Transparency appears in Ch.2, Ch.3and Ch.5

as a normative news practice, it refers to showing audiences how the news is made. In some cases, it may even mean inviting audience members to join in the process of reporting professional news stories. Journalists who prioritize transparency over objectivity will strive to demonstrate to audiences how they know what they know rather than merely presenting two or three extreme points of view on a news topic and calling the news fair and balanced.

Voice-over

voiced information edited to accompany video such that the audio overrides the sound of the original video. Voice-overs can complement the video but do not necessarily reference it directly. As an editing technique, using voice-over is common in entertainment and video news production.

Review Questions Repository

Review Questions

- What are the four models of PR and the four stages of a typical PR campaign?
- Analyze the role (or roles) of PR in media and culture.
- In what ways is PR taking the place of traditional advertising?
- What is branding and how is it important to PR?
- How is PR used in the news media?
- In which ways is PR used in politics?
- How did advertising shape early consumer culture during the 1920s?
- Explain how government legislation has regulated advertisements and their claims.
- How did the creative revolution of the 1960s change advertising?
- How did the multiple-sponsor format change TV?
- Give an example of a digital media format and explain how it has incorporated advertising.
- What PR model did P. T. Barnum utilize the most?
- Which phase of a PR campaign involves creating objectives?
- What was the focus of BP's PR campaign before the 2010 oil spill?
- What are some of the key components of Apple's branding strategy?
- How would you describe Barack Obama's brand during the 2008 presidential campaign?
- Explain the concept of integrated marketing communications.
- How is the media used by organizations changing? What age group is driving the change?
- What factors are causing the media landscape to change?
- What are some different types of online media? Which types are most popular with college students?
- Define each component of the promotion (communication) mix.
- Why is public relations considered a key part of the promotion mix?
- Explain the communication process and factors that can interfere with interpretation of messages.
- What is the perceptual process and how does it relate to promotion?
- What is the difference between encoding and decoding a message?
- Why do you think so many organizations rely on advertising to communicate with customers and

potential customers?

- What is the difference between a medium and a vehicle? Give examples of each.
- Why is direct marketing successful even though some consumers may not like it?
- Identify the different promotion objectives companies may use.
- What are some of the message strategies organizations use?
- What is the difference between an open-ended and a closed-ended message?
- Explain four different ways to set a product's promotion budget.
- What is mobile marketing?
- What are the objectives of sales promotions?
- What is a trade promotion?
- Identify and provide an example of three sales promotion tools targeted at consumers.
- Identify and provide an example of three sales promotion tools targeted at businesses.
- Explain the difference between a push strategy and a pull strategy.
- Why are public relations efforts funded by firms?
- Who does the public relations for a firm?
- Why are sponsorships becoming more popular?
- What is social commerce and how do you as a customer use it?
- Why do you think Facebook is the most popular social media networking site?
- How would you define social media?

Critical Thinking Questions

- Do you think that government regulation of advertising is justified? Explain your answer.
- In your opinion, would most Americans give up their privacy in order to retain free, advertiser-supported services such as e-mail? Explain your answer.
- Do you think that print media can survive without traditional forms of advertising? Explain your answer.
- How do you think branding has affected American culture?
- How has branding affected political discourse in the United States?

Career Connection

- Advertising has had an enormous influence on the ways that people present and imagine themselves. Personal branding has become an industry, with consultants and coaches ready to help anyone find his or her own brand. Creating a personal brand is a useful way to assess your skills and feelings about the advertising or PR professions.
- Research the term personal brand using a search engine. Look for strategies that would help you

construct your own brand. Imagine that you are a brand and describe what that brand offers. This does not need to be limited to professional capacities, but should represent your personal philosophy and life experiences. In 15 words or less, write a description of your brand.

- Answer the following questions about your brand description:
- How well does the brand description capture your personality?
- How appealing do you think this brand would be to potential employers?
- How appealing do you think this brand would be to potential friends?
- Are you comfortable with the idea of promoting your own brand? Explain your answer.
- How do you think the personal branding process is different from or similar to the corporate branding process?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Provide an example of how an organization, such as your university, uses different media to present a consistent message using integrated marketing communications (IMC). Who is their target, what is their message, and what media should they use?
- In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of advertising on the radio, in magazines, on television, through direct marketing, and on the Internet?
- Give an example of an organization's promotional strategy and how it gets consumers to select it, pay attention to it, and retain it as intended.
- Give an example of the unique selling proposition for one of your favorite brands. What is your unique selling proposition?
- Explain why companies might use different budgeting methods to set their promotional budgets.
- Think about and provide examples of two different message strategies you've seen in commercials in the last year. Why do you think they were or were not effective?
- As the manufacturer of small appliances, explain how you might plan to use both a push strategy and pull strategy.
- What type of sales promotions do you feel are most effective for college students?
- Explain three different types of public relations tools that a company can use to generate interest in its products.
- What types of sponsorships are becoming more popular and why?
- How can an organization use all four social media zones?

- What are the risks of posting information on social media?

ACTIVITIES

- Identify your three favorite and least favorite commercials and explain why you like or don't like each one. Notice whether there are similarities in your preferences. In other words, are your favorite commercials humorous? Are your least favorite commercials annoying?
- Create a message strategy for a cover letter to go with your résumé.
- Outline three message strategies that you feel would get consumers' attention in television commercials and in print ads.
- Create a sales promotion you think will attract a lot of students to your favorite fast-food restaurant.
- You are applying for a job in an advertising agency. Write an ad about yourself, explaining your unique selling proposition and why they should hire you.
- Watch television at three different times (late night, mid-day, and prime time). What types of commercials were shown at each time? Did you notice a difference in quality, products/services advertised, or creativity? Why do you think there was a variance?
- What media do you think would be most (and least) effective for college students? Why?
- Create a product review or a blog for your favorite fast-food restaurant that you would like other people to see on social media. Where would you post it?
- Write a press release about special activities your college or university is doing to help the environment or community.
- Identify your favorite television show and explain what product placements you think would be successful. Would you change your recommended product placements if you were making recommendations for shows that appealed more to parents or grandparents?
- You've been asked to create a new social media networking site. What would you name the site and what would you suggest to make it better than existing sites?

Public Relations Outcomes Checklist

- Identify the elements and sequence of steps in the information strategy process.
- Identify the five types of information contributors.
- Understand the differences between types of media messages.
- Recognize the various purposes of media messages.
- Understand the characteristics of good storytelling and elements important in crafting media messages.
- Understand that an information strategy is needed at each stage in the creation of messages.
- Understand the types of assignments that might trigger the need to develop a comprehensive information strategy.
- Articulate the questions you need to ask of your supervisor/colleagues to clarify the message task.
- Determine what the person giving the assignment requires.
- Determine the parameters of the information task.
- Determine the purpose of the message.
- Brainstorm the variety of potential audiences for a message.
- Consider the different attributes or expectations that specific audiences might have and how they affect the development of your information strategy.
- Articulate message "purpose" and understand how the intended message outcome informs the choice of message audience.
- Develop a set of questions that will help identify "high-value" potential target audiences for a messages.
- Analyze a broad topic to identify angles or aspects that might be researched.
- Tie the message content to the needs of the identified audience.
- Generate new and interesting ideas for messages.
- Develop point-of-view diagrams, idea maps, and other techniques to spur idea generation.
- Understand how you can effectively use the above techniques in the development of story ideas.
- Use observation as an idea generation strategy.
- Understand how identifying relevant disciplines can aid in brainstorming topic angles.
- Identify the conventional wisdom and stereotypes related to the topic.
- Identify the broad characteristics of public-sector institutional, private-sector institutional, scholarly, journalistic and informal contributors of information for messages.
- Understand the nature, characteristics and limitations of information available from these contributors

and sources.

- Identify the relevant disciplines of knowledge that can contribute to an information strategy.
- Identify the specific perspective a discipline of knowledge provides on a topic.
- Identify the types and characteristics of libraries that might contribute to an information strategy.
- Recognize the social constraints under which communicators work.
- Identify the characteristics of ethical thinking and the forms of ethical decision-making that guide mass communication professionals.
- Identify the positive and negative obligations that communicators weigh in their work.
- Consider the cultural climate within an organization.
- Articulate some of the legal and regulatory standards that must be considered by communicators as part of an information strategy process.
- Apply the information strategy process to a variety of information and message tasks.
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of an information strategy as it has been applied to a particular type of information or message task.

Long Descriptions

Chapter 7

Long Description: The Information Strategy Process.

Step 1: Message Analysis: arrows point to Context (Who is my audience? Message purpose. Message time and space. Message format and channel.) and Content (What is the topic? Topic Terminology. Questions to be answered. Narrowing the focus.). Step 2: Potential Contributors: 4 arrows point to: #1 Institutional Sources (monitor, search, interview), #2 Scholarly Sources (monitor, search, interview) #3 Journalistic Sources (monitor, search, interview) #4 Informal Sources (monitor, search, interview). Each of these 4 has 2-way arrows pointing to Evaluate and Select which has a 2-way arrow pointing to Synthesize which then has an arrow pointing to Craft the Message.

Chapter 9

Long Description 1: News Release

NEWS RELEASE Contact: Danika Wellington FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Nov. 12,2015 Media Liaison 614-555-5678 wellington.41 @columbus.gov

Empty Bowls to feed the hungry. COLUMBUS, Ohio – The City of Columbus Recreation and Parks Department will host its 18th annual Empty Bowls event to raise much needed funds for the Mid-Ohio Foodbank. There will be 17 Empty Bowls events starting Saturday until Dec. 10 throughout the Columbus area, which will feature unique pottery and handmade soup for a $10 donation. Wendy Frantz, Empty Bowls coordinator at Columbus Recreation and Parks, said it is a great way to give back to the community. "For every dollar that is raised through the Empty Bowls Project for the Mid-Ohio Foodbank, $10 worth of groceries can be given to families in need," Frantz said. The ceramic bowls are donated by people of all ages and skill levels, varying from professional potters and artisans to children. Marcy's Clay ground also contributes about 200 bowls annually for the event. The project is a collaborative effort between Columbus Recreation and Parks, several churches, businesses and program sponsors to help combat hunger. Volunteers make homemade soup and many local businesses donate goods including bread and water. Yolanda Owens, communications and digital media manager at Mid-Ohio Foodbank, said Columbus Recreation and Parks have been a great partner over the last 17 years, raising over $193,000. "These much needed funds help to ensure that all of our neighbors have access to nourishing foods to put on their tables for the holidays," Owens said. The Mid-Ohio Foodbank is a non-profit organization that partners with more than 650 community partners across Ohio to provide food to half a million hungry citizens. This year, Empty Bowls events extended to three productions of "Oliver!" in late October at the Westgate Recreation Center, in conjunction with the Westgate Theater Co. and Carriage Place Players. During the intermission of the performances, a silent auction for the locally made bowls was held to maximize funds raised, which overall totaled $3600.

Long Description 2: Inverted pyramid

The Lead: The most important info

- Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
- Approximately 30 words (1-2 think paragraphs)
- May include a “hook” (provocative quote of question)

The Body: The crucial info

- Argument, controversy, story, issue
- Evidence, background, details, logic, etc.
- Quotes, photos, video and audio that support, disputes or expands the topic

The Tail: Extra info

- Interesting/Related items
- May include extra context in blogs, columns and other editorials: the assessment of the journalist

Long Description 4

Step 1: Message Analysis: arrows point to Context (Who is my audience? Message purpose. Message time and space. Message format and channel.) and Content (What is the topic? Topic Terminology. Questions to be answered. Narrowing the focus.). Step 2: Potential Contributors: 4 arrows point to: #1 Institutional Sources (monitor, search, interview), #2 Scholarly Sources (monitor, search, interview) #3 Journalistic Sources (monitor, search, interview) #4 Informal Sources (monitor, search, interview). Each of these 4 has 2-way arrows pointing to Evaluate and Select which has a 2-way arrow pointing to Synthesize which then has an arrow pointing to Craft the Message.