Appendix A

Code of Professional Standards
for the Practice of Public Relations

Public Relations Society of America

LETTER FROM THE PRSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

It is with enormous professional pleasure and personal pride that we, the Public Relations Society of America Board of Directors, put before you a new Public Relations Member Code of Ethics for our Society. It is the result of two years of concentrated effort led by the Board of Ethics and Professional Standards. Comments of literally hundreds and hundreds of members were considered. There were focus groups at our 1999 national meeting in Anaheim, California. We sought and received intensive advice and counsel from the Ethics Resource Center, our outside consultants on the project. Additional recommendations were received from your Board of Directors, PRSA staff, outside reviewers, as well as District and Section officers. Extensive research involving analysis of numerous codes of conduct, ethics statements, and standards and practices approaches was also carried out.

In fact, this Member Code of Ethics has been developed to serve as a foundation for discussion of an emerging global Code of Ethics and Conduct for the practice of Public Relations.

This approach is dramatically different from that which we have relied upon in the past. You'll find it different in three powerfully important ways:

1. Emphasis on enforcement of the Code has been eliminated. But, the PRSA Board of Directors retains the right to bar from membership or expel from the Society any individual who has been or is sanctioned

      by a government agency or convicted in a court of law of an action that is in violation of this Code.

2. The new focus is on universal values that inspire ethical behavior and performance.
3. Desired behavior is clearly illustrated by providing language, experience, and examples to help the individual practitioner better achieve important ethical and principled business objectives. This approach should help everyone better understand what the expected standards of conduct truly are.

Perhaps most important of all, the mission of the Board of Ethics and Professional Standards has now been substantially altered to focus primarily on education and training, on collaboration with similar efforts in other major professional societies, and to serve an advisory role to the Board on ethical matters of major importance.

The foundation of our value to our companies, clients, and those we serve is their ability to rely on our ethical and morally acceptable behavior. Please review this new Member Code of Ethics in this context:

- Its Values are designed to inspire and motivate each of us every day to the highest levels of ethical practice.
- Its Code Provisions are designed to help each of us clearly understand the limits and specific performance required to be an ethical practitioner.
- Its Commitment mechanism is designed to ensure that every Society member understands fully the obligations of membership and the expectation of ethical behavior that are an integral part of membership in the PRSA.

This approach is stronger than anything we have ever had because:
- It will have a daily impact on the practice of Public Relations.
- There are far fewer gray areas and issues that require interpretation.
- It will grow stronger and be more successful than what we have had in the past through education, through training, and through analysis of behaviors.

The strength of the Code will grow because of the addition of precedent and the ethical experiences of other major professional organizations around the world.

Our new Code elevates our ethics, our values, and our commitment to the level they belong, at the very top of our daily practice of Public Relations.

PRSA Board of Directors

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRSA BOARD OF ETHICS
AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Our Primary Obligation

The primary obligation of membership in the Public Relations Society of America is the ethical practice of Public Relations.

The PRSA Member Code of Ethics is the way each member of our Society can daily reaffirm a commitment to ethical professional activities and decisions.

- The Code sets forth the principles and standards that guide our decisions and actions.
- The Code solidly connects our values and our ideals to the work each of us does every day.
- The Code is about what we should do, and why we should do it.

The Code is also meant to be a living, growing body of knowledge, precedent, and experience. It should stimulate our thinking and encourage us to seek guidance and clarification when we have questions about principles, practices, and standards of conduct.

Every member's involvement in preserving and enhancing ethical standards is essential to building and maintaining the respect and credibility of our profession. Using our values, principles, standards of conduct, and commitment as a foundation, and continuing to work together on ethical issues, we ensure that the Public Relations Society of America fulfills its obligation to build and maintain the framework for public dialogue that deserves the public's trust and support.

The Members of the 2000 Board of Ethics and Professional Standards

Robert D. Frause, APR, Fellow PRSA Chairman BEPS Seattle,Washington	Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, APR Gainesville, Florida	Linda Welter Cohen, APR Tucson, Arizona
James R. Frankowiak, APR Tampa, Florida	James E. Lukaszewski, APR, Fellow PRSA White Plains, New York	Roger D. Buehrer, APR Fellow PRSA Las Vegas, Nevada
Jeffrey P. Julin, APR Denver, Colorado	David M. Bicofsky, APR, Fellow PRSA Teaneck, New Jersey	James W. Wyckoff, APR New York, New York

PREAMBLE

Public Relations Society of America Member Code of Ethics 2000

- Professional Values
- Principles of Conduct
- Commitment and Compliance

This Code applies to PRSA members. The Code is designed to be a useful guide for PRSA members as they carry out their ethical responsibilities. This document is designed to anticipate and accommodate, by precedent, ethical challenges that may arise. The scenarios outlined in the Code provision are actual examples of misconduct. More will be added as experience with the Code occurs.

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is committed to ethical practices. The level of public trust PRSA members seek, as we serve the public good, means we have taken on a special obligation to operate ethically.

The value of member reputation depends upon the ethical conduct of everyone affiliated with the Public Relations Society of America. Each of us sets an example for each other - as well as other professionals—by our pursuit of excellence with powerful standards of performance, professionalism, and ethical conduct.

Emphasis on enforcement of the Code has been eliminated. But, the PRSA Board of Directors retains the right to bar from membership or expel from the Society any individual who has been or is sanctioned by a government agency or convicted in a court of law of an action that is in violation of this Code.

Ethical practice is the most important obligation of a PRSA member. We view the Member Code of Ethics as a model for other professions, organizations, and professionals.

PRSA MEMBER STATEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL VALUES

This statement presents the core values of PRSA members and, more broadly, of the public relations profession. These values provide the foundation for the Member Code of Ethics and set the industry standard for the professional practice of public relations. These values are the fundamental beliefs that guide our behaviors and decision-making process. We believe our professional values are vital to the integrity of the profession as a whole.

ADVOCACY

- We serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for those we represent.
- We provide a voice in the marketplace of ideas, facts, and viewpoints to aid informed public debate.

HONESTY

- We adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of those we represent and in communicating with the public.

EXPERTISE

- We acquire and responsibly use specialized knowledge and experience.
- We advance the profession through continued professional development, research, and education.
- We build mutual understanding, credibility, and relationships among a wide array of institutions and audiences.

INDEPENDENCE

- We provide objective counsel to those we represent.
- We are accountable for our actions.

LOYALTY

- We are faithful to those we represent, while honoring our obligation to serve the public interest.

FAIRNESS

- We deal fairly with clients, employers, competitors, peers, vendors, the media, and the general public.
- We respect all opinions and support the right of free expression.

PRSA CODE PROVISIONS

Free Flow of Information

Core Principle

Protecting and advancing the free flow of accurate and truthful information is essential to serving the public interest and contributing to informed decision making in a democratic society.

Intent

- To maintain the integrity of relationships with the media, government officials, and the public.
- To aid informed decision making.

Guidelines

A member shall:

- Preserve the integrity of the process of communication.
- Be honest and accurate in all communications.
- Act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which the practitioner is responsible.
- Preserve the free flow of unprejudiced information when giving or receiving gifts by ensuring that gifts are nominal, legal, and infrequent.

Examples of Improper Conduct Under This Provision:

- A member representing a ski manufacturer gives a pair of expensive racing skis to a sports magazine columnist, to influence the columnist to write favorable articles about the product.
- A member entertains a government official beyond legal limits and/or in violation of government reporting requirements.

Competition

Core Principle

Promoting healthy and fair competition among professionals preserves an ethical climate while fostering a robust business environment.

Intent

- To promote respect and fair competition among public relations professionals.

- To serve the public interest by providing the widest choice of practitioner options.

Guidelines

A member shall:

- Follow ethical hiring practices designed to respect free and open competition without deliberately undermining a competitor.
- Preserve intellectual property rights in the marketplace.

Examples of Improper Conduct Under This Provision:

- A member employed by a "client organization" shares helpful information with a counseling firm that is competing with others for the organization's business.
- A member spreads malicious and unfounded rumors about a competitor in order to alienate the competitor's clients and employees in a ploy to recruit people and business.

Disclosure of Information

Core Principle

Open communication fosters informed decision making in a democratic society.

Intent

- To build trust with the public by revealing all information needed for responsible decision making.

Guidelines

A member shall:

- Be honest and accurate in all communications.
- Act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which the member is responsible.
- Investigate the truthfulness and accuracy of information released on behalf of those represented.
- Reveal the sponsors for causes and interests represented.
- Disclose financial interest (such as stock ownership) in a client's organization.
- Avoid deceptive practices.

Examples of Improper Conduct Under This Provision:

- Front groups: A member implements "grass roots" campaigns or letter-writing campaigns to legislators on behalf of undisclosed interest groups.
- Lying by omission: A practitioner for a corporation knowingly fails to release financial information, giving a misleading impression of the corporation's performance.
- A member discovers inaccurate information disseminated via a Web site or media kit and does not correct the information.
- A member deceives the public by employing people to pose as volunteers to speak at public hearings and participate in "grass roots" campaigns.

SAFEGUARDING CONFIDENCES

Core Principle

Client trust requires appropriate protection of confidential and private information.

Intent

- To protect the privacy rights of clients, organizations, and individuals by safeguarding confidential information.

Guidelines

A member shall:

- Safeguard the confidences and privacy rights of present, former, and prospective clients and employees.
- Protect privileged, confidential, or insider information gained from a client or organization.
- Immediately advise an appropriate authority if a member discovers that confidential information is being divulged by an employee of a client company or organization.

Examples of Improper Conduct Under This Provision:

- A member changes jobs, takes confidential information, and uses that information in the new position to the detriment of the former employer.
- A member intentionally leaks proprietary information to the detriment of some other party.

Conflicts of Interest

Core Principle

Avoiding real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest builds the trust of clients, employers, and the publics.

Intent

- To earn trust and mutual respect with clients or employers.
- To build trust with the public by avoiding or ending situations that put one's personal or professional interests in conflict with society's interests.

Guidelines

A member shall:

- Act in the best interests of the client or employer, even subordinating the member's personal interests.
- Avoid actions and circumstances that may appear to compromise good business judgment or create a conflict between personal and professional interests.
- Disclose promptly any existing or potential conflict of interest to affected clients or organizations.
- Encourage clients and customers to determine if a conflict exists after notifying all affected parties.

Examples of Improper Conduct Under This Provision

- The member fails to disclose that he or she has a strong financial interest in a client's chief competitor.
- The member represents a "competitor company" or a "conflicting interest" without informing a prospective client.

Enhancing the Profession

Core Principle

Public relations professionals work constantly to strengthen the public's trust in the profession.

Intent

- To build respect and credibility with the public for the profession of public relations.
- To improve, adapt, and expand professional practices.

Guidelines

A member shall:

- Acknowledge that there is an obligation to protect and enhance the profession.
- Keep informed and educated about practices in the profession to ensure ethical conduct.
- Actively pursue personal professional development.
- Decline representation of clients or organizations that urge or require actions contrary to this Code.
- Accurately define what public relations activities can accomplish.
- Counsel subordinates in proper ethical decision making.
- Require that subordinates adhere to the ethical requirements of the Code.
- Report ethical violations, whether committed by PRSA members or not, to the appropriate authority.

Examples of Improper Conduct Under This Provision:

- A PRSA member declares publicly that a product the client sells is safe, without disclosing evidence to the contrary.
- A member initially assigns some questionable client work to a non-member practitioner to avoid the ethical obligation of PRSA membership.

Resources

Rules and Guidelines

The following PRSA documents, available in *The Blue Book*, provide detailed rules and guidelines to help guide your professional behavior:

- PRSA Bylaws
- PRSA Administrative Rules
- Member Code of Ethics

If, after reviewing them, you still have a question or issue, contact PRSA headquarters as noted below.

Questions

The PRSA is here to help. Whether you have a serious concern or simply need clarification, contact Judy Voss at judy.voss@prsa.org.

Appendix B

Code of Professional Ethics and Practices

We, the members of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, subscribe to the principles expressed in the following code. Our goals are to support sound and ethical practice in the conduct of public opinion research and in the use of such research for policy- and decision-making in the public and private sectors, as well as to improve public understanding of public opinion and survey research methods and the proper use of public opinion and survey research results.

We pledge ourselves to maintain high standards of scientific competence and integrity in conducting, analyzing, and reporting our work; in our relations with survey respondents; with our clients; with those who eventually use the research for decision-making purposes; and with the general public. We further pledge ourselves to reject all tasks or assignments that would require activities inconsistent with the principles of this Code.

THE CODE

I. Principles of Professional Practice in the Conduct of Our Work

    A. We shall exercise due care in developing research designs and survey instruments, and in collecting, processing, and analyzing data, taking all reasonable steps to assure the reliability and validity of results.

       1. We shall recommend and employ only those tools and methods of analysis that, in our professional judgment, are well suited to the research problem at hand.

       2. We shall not knowingly select research tools and methods of analysis that yield misleading conclusions.

3. We shall not knowingly make interpretations of research results that are inconsistent with the data available, nor shall we tacitly permit such interpretations.

4. We shall not knowingly imply that interpretations should be accorded greater confidence than the data actually warrant.

B. We shall describe our methods and findings accurately and in appropriate detail in all research reports, adhering to the standards for minimal disclosure specified in Section III.

C. If any of our work becomes the subject of a formal investigation of an alleged violation of this Code, undertaken with the approval of the AAPOR Executive Council, we shall provide additional information on the survey in such detail that a fellow survey practitioner would be able to conduct a professional evaluation of the survey.

II. Principles of Professional Responsibility in Our Dealings With People

A. The Public:

1. When preparing a report for public release we shall ensure that the findings are a balanced and accurate portrayal of the survey results.

2. If we become aware of the appearance in public of serious inaccuracies or distortions regarding our research, we shall publicly disclose what is required to correct these inaccuracies or distortions, including, as appropriate, a statement to the public media, legislative body, regulatory agency, or other appropriate group, to which the inaccuracies or distortions were presented.

3. We shall inform those for whom we conduct publicly released surveys that AAPOR standards require members to release minimal information about such surveys, and we shall make all reasonable efforts to encourage clients to subscribe to our standards for minimal disclosure in their releases.

B. Clients or Sponsors:

1. When undertaking work for a private client, we shall hold confidential all proprietary information obtained about the client and about the conduct and findings of the research undertaken for the client, except when the dissemination of the information is expressly authorized by the client, or when disclosure becomes necessary under the terms of Section I-C or II-A of this Code.

2. We shall be mindful of the limitations of our techniques and capabilities and shall accept only those research assignments that we can reasonably expect to accomplish within these limitations.

C. The Profession:

1. We recognize our responsibility to the science of survey research to disseminate as freely as possible the ideas and findings that emerge from our research.
2. We shall not cite our membership in the Association as evidence of professional competence, since the Association does not so certify any persons or organizations.

D. The Respondent:

1. We shall avoid practices or methods that may harm, humiliate, or seriously mislead survey respondents.
2. We shall respect respondents' concerns about their privacy.
3. Aside from the decennial census and a few other surveys, participation in surveys is voluntary. We shall provide all persons selected for inclusion with a description of the survey sufficient to permit them to make an informed and free decision about their participation.
4. We shall not misrepresent our research or conduct other activities (such as sales, fund raising, or political campaigning) under the guise of conducting research.
5. Unless the respondent waives confidentiality for specified uses, we shall hold as privileged and confidential all information that might identify a respondent with his or her responses. We also shall not disclose or use the names of respondents for non-research purposes unless the respondents grant us permission to do so.
6. We understand that the use of our survey results in a legal proceeding does not relieve us of our ethical obligation to keep confidential all respondent identifiable information or lessen the importance of respondent anonymity.

III. Standards for Minimal Disclosure

Good professional practice imposes the obligation upon all public opinion researchers to include, in any report of research results, or to make available when that report is released, certain essential

information about how the research was conducted. At a minimum, the following items should be disclosed.

1. Who sponsored the survey, and who conducted it.
2. The exact wording of questions asked, including the text of any preceding instruction or explanation to the interviewer or respondents that might reasonably be expected to affect the response.
3. A definition of the population under study, and a description of the sampling frame used to identify this population.
4. A description of the sample design, giving a clear indication of the method by which the respondents were selected by the researcher, or whether the respondents were entirely self-selected.
5. Sample sizes and, where appropriate, eligibility criteria, screening procedures, and response rates computed according to AAPOR Standard Definitions. At a minimum, a summary of disposition of sample cases should be provided so that response rates could be computed.
6. A discussion of the precision of the findings, including estimates of sampling error, and a description of any weighting or estimating procedures used.
7. Which results are based on parts of the sample, rather than on the total sample, and the size of such parts.
8. Method, location, and dates of data collection.

From time to time, AAPOR Council may issue guidelines and recommendations on best practices with regard to the release, design and conduct of surveys.

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As revised in 2005.

Appendix C
Guidelines and Standards for Measuring and Evaluating PR Effectiveness

The Institute for Public Relations Research and Evaluation

GETTING SPECIFIC:
STANDARDS FOR MEASURING PR *OUTPUTS*

There are many possible tools and techniques that PR practitioners can utilize to begin to measure PR *outputs*, but there are the four that are most frequently relied on to measure PR impact at the *output* level: Media Content Analysis, Cyberspace Analysis, Trade Show and Event Measurement, and Public Opinion Polls.

1. Media Content Analysis

This is the process of studying and tracking what has been written and broadcast, translating this qualitative material into quantitative form through some type of counting approach that involves coding and classifying of specific messages.

Some researchers and PR practitioners in the U.S. refer to this as "Media Measurement" and/or "Publicity Tracking" research. In the United Kingdom, the technique is often referred to as "Media Evaluation;" and in Germany as "Media Resonance." Whatever the terminology used to describe this particular technique, more often than not its prime function is to determine whether the key messages, concepts, and themes that an organization might be interested in disseminating to others via the media do, indeed, receive some measure of exposure as a result of a particular public relations effort or activity.

The coding, classifying, and analysis that is done can be relatively limited or far-reaching, depending on the needs and interests of the

organization commissioning the research. More often than not, Media Content Analysis studies take into consideration variables such as these:

Media Vehicle Variables, such as date of publication or broadcast frequency of publication or broadcast of the media vehicle, media vehicle or type (i.e., whether the item appeared in a newspaper, magazine, a newsletter, on radio, or on television), and geographic reach (i.e., region, state, city, or ADI markets in which the item appeared).

Placement or News Item Variables, such as source of the story (i.e., a press release, a press conference, a special event, or whether the media initiated the item on their own), story form or type (a news story, feature article, editorial, column, or letter to the editor), degree of exposure (i.e., column inches or number of paragraphs if the item appeared in print, number of seconds or minutes of air time if the item was broadcast), and the story's author (i.e., the byline or name of the broadcaster).

Audience or "Reach" Variables. The focus here usually is on total number of placements, media impressions, and/or circulation or potential overall audience reached—that is, total readers of a newspaper or magazine, total viewers and listeners to a radio or television broadcast. The term "impressions" or "opportunity to see" usually refers to the total audited circulation of a publication. For example, if *The Wall Street Journal* has an audited circulation of 1.5 million, one article in that newspaper might be said to generate 1.5 million impressions or opportunities to see the story. Two articles would generate 3 million impressions, and so on. Often more important than impressions is the issue of whether a story reached an organization's target audience group by specific demographic segments. These data often can be obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau or from various commercial organizations, such as Standard Rate and Data Services. In addition to considering a publication's actual circulation figures, researchers often also take into consideration how many other individuals might possibly be exposed to a given media vehicle because that publication has been routed or passed on to others.

Subject or Topic Variables, such as who was mentioned and in what context, how prominently were key organizations and/or their competitors referred to or featured in the press coverage (i.e., were companies cited in the headline, in the body copy only, in both, etc.), who was quoted and how frequently, how much coverage or "share of voice" did an organization receive in comparison to its competitors, what issues and messages were covered and to what extent, how were different individuals and groups positioned—as leaders, as followers, or another way?

Judgment or Subjective Variables. The focus here usually is on the stance or tone of the item, as that item pertains to a given organization and/or its competitors. Usually, tone implies some assessment as to whether or not the item is positive, negative, or neutral; favorable, unfavorable, or balanced. It is extremely important to recognize that measuring

stance or tone is usually a highly subjective measure, open to a possibly different interpretation by others. Clearly defined criteria or ground rules for assessing positives and negatives—and from whose perspective—need to be established beforehand in order for stance or tone measures to have any credibility as part of Media Content Analysis.

"Advertising Equivalency" is often an issue that is raised in connection with Media Content Analysis studies. Basically, advertising equivalency is a means of converting editorial space into advertising costs, by measuring the amount of editorial coverage and then calculating what it would have cost to buy that space, if it had been advertising.

Most reputable researchers contend that "advertising equivalency" computations are of questionable validity. In many cases, it may not even be possible to assign an advertising equivalency score to a given amount of editorial coverage (e.g., many newspapers and/or magazines do not sell advertising space on their front pages or their front covers; thus, if an article were to appear in that space, it would be impossible to calculate an appropriate advertising equivalency cost, since advertising could never ever appear there).

Some organizations artificially multiply the estimated value of a "possible" editorial placement in comparison to advertisement by a factor of 2, 3, 5, 8, or whatever other inflated number they might wish to come up with, to take into account their own perception that editorial space is *always* of more value than is advertising space. Most reputable researchers view such arbitrary "weighting" schemes aimed at enhancing the alleged value of editorial coverage as unethical, dishonest, and not at all supported by the research literature. Although some studies have, at times, shown that editorial coverage is sometimes more credible or believable than advertising coverage, other studies have shown the direct opposite, and there is, as yet, no clearly established consensus in the communications field regarding which is truly more effective: publicity or advertising. In reality, it depends on an endless number of factors.

Sometimes, when doing Media Content Analysis, organizations may apply weights to given messages that are being disseminated, simply because they regard some of their messages as more important than others, or give greater credence (or weight) to an article that not only appears in the form of text, but also is accompanied by a photo or a graphic treatment. Given that the future is visuals, organizations are more and more beginning to measure not only words, but also pictures.

It should be noted that whatever ground rules, criteria, and variables are built into a Media Content Analysis, whatever "counting" approaches are utilized to turn qualitative information into quantitative form, it is important that all of the elements and components involved be clearly defined and explained up front by whoever is doing the study. The particular system of media analysis that is applied and utilized by one researcher

should—if a second researcher were called in and given the same brief and the same basic criteria pertaining to the aims of the study—result in broadly similar research findings and conclusions.

2. Cyberspace Analysis

Increasingly, a key measure of an organization's image or reputation and of how that organization might be positioned is the chatter and discussion about that organization in cyberspace—specifically, in chat rooms, forums, and new groups on the World Wide Web. The same criteria used in analyzing print and broadcast articles can be applied when analyzing postings on the Internet.

What appears in print is frequently commented about and editorialized about on the Web. Therefore, one component of *PR output* measurement ought to be a review and analysis of Web postings.

In addition, a second *output* measure of cyberspace might be a review and analysis of Website traffic patterns. For example, some of the variables that ought to be considered when designing and carrying out Cyberspace Analysis might include deconstructing "hits" (i.e., examining the requests for a file of visitors to the Internet), a review of click-throughs and/or flash-click streams, an assessment of home page visits, domain tracking and analysis, an assessment of bytes transferred, a review of time spent per page, traffic times, browsers used, and the number of people filling out and returning feedback forms.

Best practices for this type of research are covered in "Getting Started On Interactive Media Measurement," available from the Advertising Research Foundation, 641 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10022, and "Hits Are Not Enough: How to *Really* Measure Web Site Success," prepared by *Interactive Marketing News* and available from Phillips Business Information, Inc., 1201 Seven Locks Road, Potomac, MD 20854.

3. Trade Shows and Event Measurement

Frequently, the intent of a public relations programs or activity is simply to achieve exposure for an organization, its products or services, through staging trade shows, holding special events and meetings, involvement in speakers' programs, and the like.

For shows and events, obviously one possible *output* measure is an assessment of total attendance, not just an actual count of those who showed up, but also an assessment of the types of individuals present, the number of interviews that were generated and conducted in connection with the event, and the number of promotional materials that were distributed. In addition, if the show is used as an opportunity for editorial visits, one can

measure the effectiveness of those visits by conducting a content analysis of the resulting articles.

4. Public Opinion Polls

Although most surveys that are designed and carried out are commissioned to measure *PR outcomes* rather than *PR outputs,* public opinion polls are often carried out in an effort to determine whether or not key target audience groups have, indeed, been exposed to particular messages, themes, or concepts and to assess the overall effectiveness of a given presentation or promotional effort. For example, conducting a brief survey immediately following a speech or the holding of a special event to assess the short-term impact of that particular activity would constitute a form of *PR output* measurement.

GETTING SPECIFIC:
STANDARDS FOR MEASURING PR *OUTCOMES*

Just as there are many tools and techniques that PR practitioners can utilize to begin to measure PR *outputs*, there also are many that can be used to measure PR *outcomes*. Some of those most frequently relied on include surveys (of all types), focus groups, before-and-after polls, ethnographic studies (relying on observation, participation, and/or role playing techniques), and experimental and quasi-experimental research designs.

Best practices for both qualitative and quantitative research are covered in the Advertising Research Foundation's two documents: "Guidelines for the Public Use of Market and Opinion Research" and the *ARF Guidelines Handbook: A Compendium of Guidelines to Good Advertising, Marketing and Media Research Practice.* Both are available from the Advertising Research Foundation, 641 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10022.

Ultimately, one intent of public relations is to inform and persuade key target audience groups regarding topics and issues that are of importance to a given organization, with the hope that this will lead those publics to act in a certain way. Usually, this involves four different types of *outcome* measures: Awareness and Comprehension Measurements, Recall and Retention Measurements, Attitude and Preference Measurements, and Behavior Measurements.

1. Awareness and Comprehension Measurements

The usual starting point for any PR *outcome* measurement is to determine whether target audience groups actually *received* the messages directed at them, paid *attention* to them, and *understood* the messages.

Obviously, if one is introducing a new product or concept to the marketplace for the first time—one that has never been seen or discussed before—it is reasonable to assume that prior to public relations and/or related communication activities being launched, that familiarity and awareness levels would be at zero. However, many organizations have established some type of "presence" in the marketplace and, thus, it is important to obtain benchmark data against which to measure any possible changes in awareness and/or comprehension levels.

Measuring awareness and comprehension levels requires some type of primary research with representatives of key target audience groups.

It is important to keep in mind that **Qualitative Research** (e.g., focus groups, one-on-one depth interviews, convenience polling) is usually open-ended, free response, and unstructured in format; generally relies on nonrandom samples; and is rarely "projectable" to larger audiences.

Quantitative Research (e.g., telephone, mail, mall, fax, and e-mail polls), on the other hand, although it may contain some open-ended questions, is far more apt to involve the use of closed-ended, forced choice question that are highly structured in format, generally relies on random samples, and usually is "projectable" to larger audiences.

To determine whether there have been any changes at all in audience awareness and comprehension levels usually requires some type of comparative studies—that is, either a *before* and *after* survey to measure possible change from one period of time to another, or some type of "test" and "control" group study, in which one segment of a target audience group is deliberately exposed to a given message or concept and a second segment is not, with research conducted with both groups to determine if one segment is now better informed regarding the issues than the other.

2. Recall and Retention Measurements

Traditionally, advertising practitioners have paid much more attention to recall and retention measurement than have those in the public relations field.

It is quite common in advertising, after a series of ads have appeared either in the print or the broadcast media, for research to be fielded to determine whether or not those individuals to whom the ad messages have been targeted actually recall those messages on both an unaided and aided basis. Similarly, several weeks after the ads have run, follow-up studies are often fielded to determine if those in the target audience group have retained any of the key themes, concepts, and messages that were contained in the original advertising copy.

Although recall and retention studies have not been done that frequently by public relations practitioners, they clearly are an important form of

outcome measurement that ought to be seriously considered by PR professionals. Various data collection techniques can be used when conducting such studies, including telephone, face-to-face, mail, mall, e-mail, and fax polling.

When conducting such studies, it is extremely important that those individuals fielding the project clearly differentiate between messages that are disseminated via PR techniques (e.g., through stories in the media, by work of mouth, at a special event, through a speech, etc.) from those that are disseminated via paid advertising or through marketing promotional efforts. For example, it is never enough to simply report that someone claims they read, heard, or saw a particular item; it is more important to determine whether that individual can determine if the item in question happened to be a news story that appeared in editorial form or was a paid message that someone placed through advertising. Very often, it is difficult for the "average" consumer to differentiate between the two.

3. Attitude and Preference Measurements

When it comes to seeking to measure the overall impact or effectiveness of a particular public relations program or activity, assessing individuals' opinions, attitudes, and preferences become extremely important measures of possible *outcomes*.

It needs to be kept in mind that "opinion research" generally measures what people say about something; that is, their verbal expressions or spoken or written points of view. "Attitude research," on the other hand, is far deeper and more complex. Usually, attitude research measures not only what people say about something, but also what they know and think (their mental or cognitive predispositions), what they feel (their emotions), and how they are inclined to act (their motivational or drive tendencies).

"Opinion research" is easier to do because one can usually obtain the information desired in a very direct fashion just by asking a few question. "Attitude research," however, is far harder and often more expensive to carry out because the information desired often has to be collected in an indirect fashion. For example, one can easily measure people's *stated* positions on racial and/or ethnic prejudice by simply asking one or several direct questions. However, actually determining whether someone is *in actual fact* racially and/or ethnically prejudiced usually would necessitate asking a series of indirect questions aimed at obtaining a better understanding of people's cognitions, feelings, and motivational or drive tendencies regarding that topic or issue.

Preference implies that an individual is or will be making a choice, which means that preference measurement, more often than not, ought to include some alternatives, either competitive or perceived competitive products

or organizations. To determine the impact of public relations preference *outcomes* usually necessitates some type of audience exposure to specific public relations *outputs* (e.g., an article, a white paper, a speech, or participation in an activity or event), with research then carried out to determine the overall likelihood of people preferring one product, service, or organization to another.

Usually, opinion, attitude, and preference measurement projects involve interviews not only with those in the public at large, but also with special target audience groups, such as those in the media, business leaders, academicians, security analysts, and portfolio managers, those in the health, medical, and scientific community, government officials, and representatives of civic, cultural, and service organizations. Opinion, attitude, and preference measurement research can be carried out in many different ways, through focus groups, through qualitative and quantitative surveys, and even through panels.

4. Behavior Measurements

The ultimate test of effectiveness—the highest *outcome* measure possible—is whether the behavior of the target audience has changed, at least to some degree, as a result of the public relations program or activity.

For most media relations programs, if you have changed the behavior of the editor and/or reporter so that what he or she writes primarily reflects an organization's key messages, then that organization has achieved a measure of behavior change.

However, measuring behavior is hard because it is often difficult to prove cause-and-effect relationships. The more specific the desired *outcome* and the more focused the PR program or activity that relates to that hoped-for end result, the easier it is to measure PR behavior change. For example, if the intent of a public relations program or activity is to raise more funds for a nonprofit institution and if one can show after the campaign has been concluded that there has, indeed, been increased funding, then one can begin to surmise that the PR activity had a role to play in the behavior change. Or, to give another example: for measuring the effectiveness of a public affairs or government relations program targeted at legislators or regulators, the desired *outcome*—more often than not—would *not only* be to get legislators or regulators to change their views, but *more importantly* to have those legislators and regulators either pass or implement a new set of laws or regulations that reflect the aims of the campaign. Behavior change requires someone to act differently than they have in the past.

More often than not, measuring behavior change requires a broad array of data collection tools and techniques, among them before-and-after surveys, research utilizing ethnographic techniques (e.g., observation, participation, and role playing), the utilization of experimental and

quasi-experimental research designs, and studies that rely on multivarlate analyses and sophisticated statistical applications and processes).

What is crucial to bear in mind in connection with PR *outcome* behavior measurement studies is that measuring *correlations*—that is, the associations or relationships that might exist between two variables—is relatively easy. Measuring *causation*—that is, seeking to prove that X was the reason that Y happened—is extremely difficult. Often, there are too many intervening variables that need to be taken into consideration.

Those doing PR *outcome* behavior-measurement studies need to keep in mind these three requirements that need to exist in order to support or document that some activity or event caused something to happen: 1) cause must *always* precede the effect in time; 2) there needs to be a relationship between the two variables under study; and 3) the observed relationship between the two variables cannot be explained away as being due to the influence of some third variable that possibly caused both of them.

The key to effective behavior measurement is a sound, well thought out, reliable, and valid research concept and design. Researchers doing such studies need to make sure that study or test conditions or responses are relevant to the situation to which the findings are supposed to related, and also clearly demonstrate that the analysis and conclusions that are reached are indeed supported and documented by the fieldwork and data collection that was carried out.

QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE PUT TO THOSE ORGANIZATIONS THAT COMMISSION PR EVALUATION STUDIES

Here are some of the key questions that those who commission PR evaluations studies ought to ask themselves before they begin, and also the types of questions that those who actually carry out the assignment ought to ask their clients to answer before the project is launched:

– What are, or were, the specific goals and/or objectives of the public relations, public affairs, and/or marketing communications program, and can these be at all stated in a quantitative or measurable fashion (e.g., To double the number of inquiries received from one year to the next? To increase media coverage by achieving greater "share of voice" in one year than in a previous year? To have certain legislation passed? To enhance or improve brand, product, or corporate image or reputation)?
– Who are, or were, the principal individuals serving as spokespersons for the organization during the communications effort?
– What are, or were, the principal themes, concepts, and messages that the organization was interested in disseminating?

– Who were the principal target audience groups to whom these messages were directed?
– Which channels of communication were used and/or deemed most important to use in disseminating the messages (e.g., the media, word-of-mouth, direct mail, special events)?
– What specific public relations strategies and tactics were used to carry out the program? What were the specific components or elements of the campaign?
– What is, or was, the timeline for the overall public relations program or project?
– What is, or were, the desired or hoped-for outputs and/or out-comes of the public relations effort? If those particular hoped-for outputs and/or outcomes could, for some reason, not be met, what alternative outputs and/or outcomes would the organization be willing to accept?
– How does what is, or has happened, in connection with the organization's public relations effort related to what is, or has happened, in connection with related activities or programs in other areas of the company, such as advertising, marketing, and internal communications?
– Who are the organization's principal competitors? Who are their spokespersons? What are the key themes, concepts, and messages that they are seeking to disseminate? Who are their key target audience groups? What channels of communications are they most frequently utilizing?
– Which media vehicles are, or were, most important to reach for the particular public relations and/or marketing communications activities that were undertaken?
– What were the specific public relations materials and resources utilized as part of the effort? Would it be possible to obtain and review copies of any relevant press releases, brochures, speeches, and promotional materials that were produced and distributed as part of the program?
– What information is already available to the organization that can be utilized by those carrying out the evaluative research assignment to avoid reinventing the wheel and to build on what is already known?
– If part of the project involves an assessment of media coverage, who will be responsible for collecting the clips or copies of broadcast material that will have been generated? What are the ground rules and/or parameters for clip and/or broadcast material assessment?
– What major issues or topics pertaining to the public relations undertaking are, or have been, of greatest importance to the organization commissioning the evaluation research project?
– What is the timeline for the PR evaluation research effort? What are the budgetary parameters and/or limitations for the assignment? Do priorities have to be set?
– Who will be the ultimate recipients of the research findings?

– How will whatever information that is collected be used by the organization that is commissioning the research?

QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE PUT TO THOSE RESEARCH SUPPLIERS, AGENCIES, AND CONSULTING FIRMS THAT ACTUALLY CONDUCT PR EVALUATION STUDIES

Here are some of the key questions that ought to be put to those who actually are asked to carry out a PR evaluation research project before the assignment is launched:

– What is, or will be, the actual research design or plan for the PR evaluation project? Is there, or will there be, a full description in non-technical language of what is to be measured, how the data are to be collected, tabulated, analyzed, and reported?
– Will the research design be consistent with the stated purpose of the PR evaluation study that is to be conducted? Is there, or will there be, a precise statement of the universe or population to be studied? Does, or will, the sampling source or frame fairly represent the total universe or population under study?
– Who will actually be supervising and/or carrying out the PR evaluation project? What is, or are, their backgrounds and experience levels? Have they ever done research like this before? Can they give references?
– Who will actually be doing the field work? If the assignment includes media content analysis, who actually will be reading the clips or viewing and/or listening to the broadcast video/audio tapes? If the assignments involve focus groups, who will be moderating the sessions? If the study involves conducting interviews, who will be doing those and how will they be trained, briefed, and monitored?
– What quality control mechanisms have been built into the study to assure that all "readers," "moderators," and "interviewers" adhere to the research design and study parameters.
– Who will be preparing any of the data collection instruments, including tally sheets or forms for media content analysis studies, topic guides for focus group projects, and/or questionnaires for telephone, face-to-face, or mail survey research projects? What role will the organization commissioning the PR evaluation assignment be asked, or be permitted, to ply in the final review and approval of these data collection instruments?
– Will there be a written set of instructions and guidelines for the "readers," the "moderators," and the "interviewers"?
– Will the coding rules and procedures be available for review?
– If the data are weighted, will the range of the weights be reported? Will the basis for the weights be described and evaluated? Will the effect of the weights on the reliability of the final estimates be reported?

– Will the sample that is eventually drawn be large enough to provide stable findings? Will sampling error limits be shown, if they can be computed? Will the sample's reliability be discussed in language that can clearly be understood without a technical knowledge of statistics?
– How projectable will the research findings be to the total universe or population under study? Will it be clear which respondents or which media vehicles are under-represented, or not represented at all, as part of the research undertaking?
– How will the data processing be handled? Who will be responsible for preparing a tab plan for the project? Which analytical and demographic variables will be included as part of the analysis and interpretation?
– How will the research finding and implications be reported? If there are findings based on the data that were collected, but the implications and/or recommendations stemming from the study go far beyond the actual data that were collected, will there be some effort made to separate the conclusions and observations that are specifically based on the data from those that are not?
– Will there be a statement on the limitations of the research and possible misinterpretations of the findings?
– How will the project be budgeted? Can budget parameters be laid out prior to the actual launch of the assignment? What contingencies can be built into the budget to prevent any unexpected surprises or changes once the project is in the field or is approaching the completion stage?