

Managers: Get Real, Please!

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By Robert A. Kelly

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Personnel mentions in the newspaper and product plugs on radio hardly qualify as an adequate return on your public relations dollar, and you probably know it!

Especially unfortunate when your PR budget could be doing something really positive about the behaviors of those outside audiences that most affect your business, non-profit or association.

And also when it could be delivering external stakeholder behavior change - the kind that leads directly to achieving your managerial objectives.

And, finally, when you could be persuading those important outside folks to your way of thinking, then move them to take actions that help your department, division or subsidiary succeed.

On the other hand, if all you want is a simple publicity effort, fine. But if you want full-bore public relations performance like that above - performance that really contributes to your success as a manager - here's a blueprint that will start you on your way.

"People act on their own perception of the facts before them, which leads to predictable behaviors about which something can be done. When we create, change or reinforce that opinion by reaching, persuading and moving-to-desired-action the very people whose behaviors affect the organization the most, the public relations mission is accomplished."

What can you expect from such a blueprint? How about heavy-hitter gives eyeing your 501-C-3; newly interested specifying sources asking you for more data; qualified proposals for strategic alliances and joint ventures; prospects showing new interest; growing numbers of requests for membership applications; repeat purchases reappearing; political leaders taking a closer look at your unit as a key member of the business, non-profit or association communities; a delightful jump in sales floor visits; and even community leaders seeking you out.

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If you're a business, non-profit or association manager, you need to take two steps as soon as possible. First, jot down those outside audiences of yours whose behavior helps or hinders you in pursuing your objectives. Then record them according to how severe their impact is, and let's look at the target audience that shows up in first place.

While you probably would have assembled the required data if such activity enjoyed a priority in your shop, fact is you probably haven't gathered the information that tells you what most members of that key outside audience think about your organization. But now, in the absence of a large professional survey budget, you and your colleagues will have to monitor external audience by asking the questions yourselves. questions like "Have you ever met anyone from our organization? Was it a satisfactory experience? How much do you know about our services or products?" Look for negative statements, especially evasive or hesitant replies. And be on the lookout for false assumptions, untruths, misconceptions, inaccuracies and potentially damaging rumors. You'll need to correct any

that you come across because experience shows they usually result in negative behaviors.

With the aim of correcting such aberrations before they become hurtful behaviors, here you select the specific perception to be altered. You have now identified your public relations goal.

However, my friend, a PR goal without a strategy to show you how to get there, is like Quesadillas without fried onions and mushrooms. That's why you must select one of three strategies especially designed to create perception or opinion where there may be none, change existing perception, or reinforce it. But be careful that your new goal and the new strategy match each other. After all, you wouldn't want to select "change existing perception" when you have a good current perception suggesting a "reinforce" strategy.

Enter writing talent. Here your PR team must put those writing skills to work and prepare a compelling message. One structured to alter your key target audience's perception, as called for by your public relations goal.

Here's a good idea -- combine your fixit message with another newsworthy announcement - or include it in a different presentation -- thus lending credibility by downplaying the fact that you're correcting something.

Still, your corrective message must be clear about what perception needs clarification or correction and why. The message must be truthful and your position must be persuasive, logically explained and believable. It is the best way to hold the attention of members of that target audience, and actually move perception your way.

Picking the tools you will count on to carry your persuasive new thoughts to the attention of that external audience (I call such tactics "beasts of burden") will be the easiest part of your campaign.

There is an endless selection of communications tactics available such as group briefings, letters-to-the-editor, brochures, press releases and personal contacts. Or possibly, radio and newspaper interviews, speeches, newsletters, and many others. But again, be cautious about the

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tactics you select. Can they demonstrate a record of reaching the same people as those you call your target stakeholders?

Undoubtedly, the question of progress will come up. And you'll want to be ready for such queries by again monitoring perceptions among your target audience members. But there's a big difference the second time around. Using questions similar to those used during your earlier monitoring session, you now will be on the alert for indications that audience perceptions are beginning to move in your direction. Fortunately for you and I, that means progress.

Once again, we are fortunate in the PR business that we can move almost any program along at a faster rate by using additional communications tactics, AND by increasing their frequencies.

Two final pieces of advice. Keep your attention focused sharply on the very groups of outside people - your key external stakeholders — who play such a major role in just how successful a manager you will be.

And use a workable blueprint such as that outlined at the beginning of this article. In other words, a plan that helps you persuade those important outside stakeholders to your way of thinking, then

moves them to take actions that lead to the success of your department, division or subsidiary.

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Bob Kelly counsels, writes and speaks to business, non-profit and association managers about using the fundamental premise of public relations to achieve their operating objectives. He has been DPR, Pepsi-Cola Co.; AGM-PR, Texaco Inc.; VP-PR, Olin Corp.; VP-PR, Newport News Shipbuilding & Drydock Co.; director of communications, U.S. Department of the Interior, and deputy assistant press secretary, The White House. He holds a bachelor of science degree from Columbia University, major in public relations.

. Visit:

Time Management Tips for Managers

By Lorraine Pirih

Late last year I was presenting a workshop for the senior managers of a major organisation. Whilst doing a pre-workshop survey to assess the challenges these managers were experiencing it became very apparent to me that many of them were showing the signs of business burn-out. And it was no wonder why. They were suffering from 'Priority Problems'. Quite simply they were making the mistake of doing the urgent rather than the important tasks.

They were working extremely long hours, with no time for themselves or the people in their lives. Their offices and departments were cluttered as was their communication as a consequence. This meant

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that they had difficulty communicating effectively with team members and, worse still with their families. Naturally this had a huge impact on the morale and productivity of their teams and the bottom line. What it did on the home front was even worse!

And yet overcoming Priority Problems is pretty easy. All you have to do is look at what successful managers do and model their behaviour. You'll also find that they are very effective with their time management skills.

Five Secrets of Highly Successful Managers:

Highly successful managers are great role models
They practice what they preach.

Highly successful managers invest time and money in their team and themselves
They develop their people and themselves through education and coaching.

Highly successful managers are organised
They learn effective time management skills so they can manage their time and have systems in place which enables them and their team to work on the important issues.

Highly successful managers are fit and healthy
They understand that a healthy mind and body improves their productivity and general well-being.

Highly successful managers have a life
They apply their time management skills so they can enjoy ensure their personal life is a priority. They know by having a balance makes them a happier and more successful manager.

The result of putting these secrets into action is pretty simple. Highly successful managers get their priorities about people, work and home right! They hone their time management skills and apply them to all areas of their life.

Lorraine Pirihi is Australia's Personal Productivity Specialist and Leading Life Coach. Her business The Office Organiser specialises in showing small business owners and managers, how to get organised at work so they can have a life! Lorraine is also a dynamic speaker and has produced many products including "How to Survive and Thrive at Work!" To subscribe to her free ezine visit

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