

The Role of PR

Why PR?

Today, many of our major brands are formed by public relations over advertising, as public relations can often tell a more complete account of a brand's story or messaging.

In an attempt to help companies build effective and integrated marketing programs, the American Advertising Agencies of America (4As) published a guide to branding which compared public relations to advertising. Their study showed impressions created through public relations were:

- More credible
- More memorable – lasting up to four or five years
- Better at building brand loyalty

A study on corporate reputation management developed for the insurance industry reported that entities with good reputations - as evidenced and reported in the news - are more visible and more likely to be invited into joint ventures and collaborations. This benefit, which is the direct result of PR, dovetails nicely into the goal of FCS professionals.

The most important reason for PR is that it works.

- PR is cost-effective. PR programs can generate coverage that delivers a robust ROI when compared to the same space and time using ad equivalency rates.
- PR delivers a broad reach. PR programs allow you to “cast a wide net” targeting multiple industries, audiences and channels of media with the same information.
- PR builds image. PR programs create unexpected intersections in people's lives, interrupting when they least expect it and engaging them in your brand. The more they know about FCS, the more likely they will be to become active in the field.

How does PR differ from advertising, marketing, and promotion?

While advertising, marketing, and promotion are often confused with public relations, the difference is considerable. Advertising, marketing, and promotion are paid and controllable. PR evolves through non-paid strategies and channels, builds over time, and requires constant attention and nurturing. PR is filtered through the media, through strategic alliances and partnerships, special events, or word-of-mouth-referral, and as such, is more credible and more memorable.

“A typical newspaper is 30 percent editorial and 70 percent advertising. What do you spend most of your time reading? To the average person, the editorial stories are islands of objectivity in a sea of prejudice.”

-The Fall of Advertising and The Rise of PR, Al Ries & Laura Ries, HarperCollins Publishers, 2002

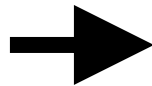
What is PR?

If you don't know, you're in good company. A study of C-level executives fielded some time ago by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) showed that while few executives could define what PR was, most only knew when it was missing or had experienced the negative impact of running a company without it.

One way to understand PR is to understand the form it takes, and perhaps what it can and cannot deliver when compared to advertising and paid promotions.

Advertising

Paid space or time
Controlled
Repetition
Sales focus
Direct impact
Creative – hype
Potentially unbelievable
Intermittent
Targeted
Time efficient



PR

Non-paid
Not controlled – dependent on third parties
One-time opportunity per story per media
Information focus
Indirect contact
Subtle – no nonsense – newsworthy
Credible – unbiased
Constant
Broad outreach
Time consuming

PR by Definition

One of the earliest and best definitions of *public relations* was developed in concept by the *Public Relations News*, a pioneer PR newsletter. It is: “*Public relations is the management function that evaluates public attitudes, identifies and aligns the policies and procedures of the organization with the public interest, and executes a program of action and communication to earn public understanding and acceptance.*”

Key components of this definition are important – particularly to the work of family and consumer sciences.

- Public relations is a **management or strategic function**. It offers a unique capacity for capturing, distilling, and disseminating key messages to a broad spectrum of desired target audiences using a wide range of communications tools without adding considerably to the cost. PR leverages communications, using the art of persuasion to effect changes in perceptions and actions. PR also generates feedback the organization can use to improve its operations.
- A public relations program should be aligned with the **public interest**. Family and consumer sciences is inherently aligned with the public interest, as the overarching goal of the field is to help individuals and families develop skills to successfully live and work in today's world.
- PR helps entities and organizations to **earn** public understanding and acceptance versus buying it. PR moves information and understanding forward by leveraging alignments with community leaders and respected organizations, and from being featured in editorial news coverage.

PR is a Two-Way Street

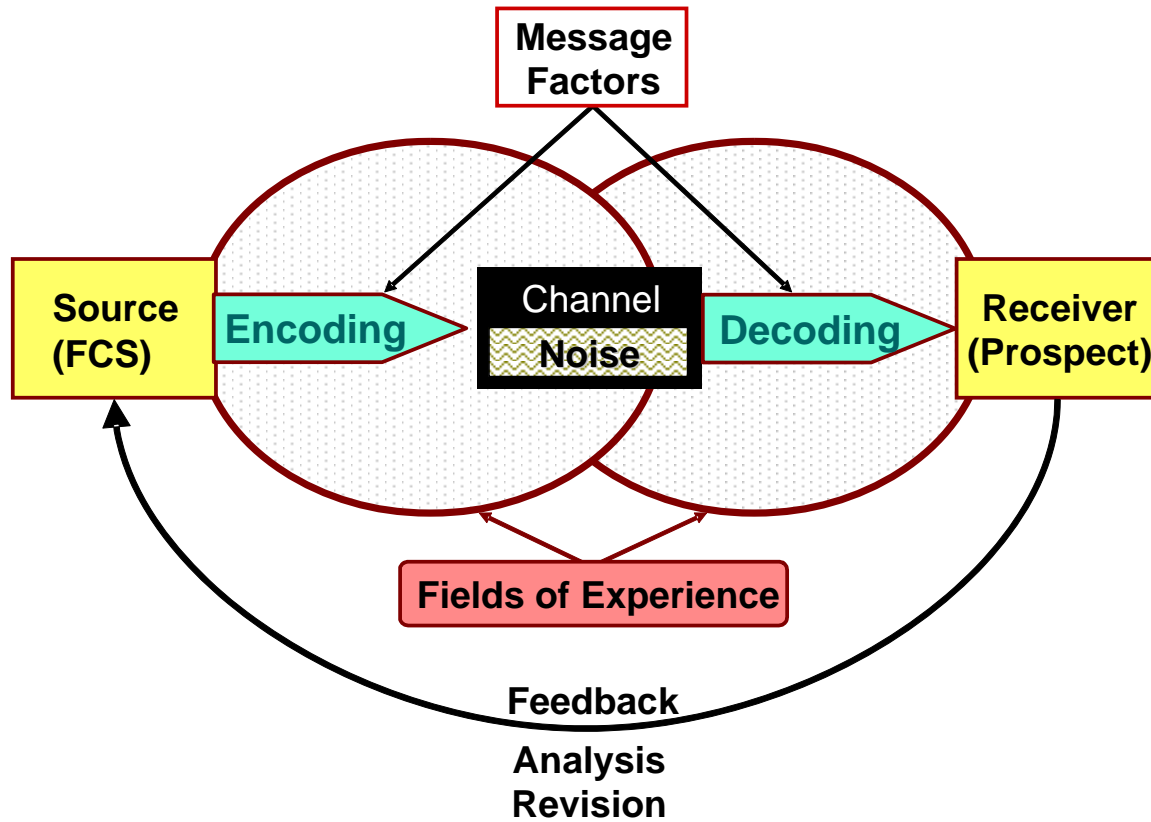
What PR lacks in control, it makes up in credibility and memorability. But, there is a price – an implied expectation for reputation management, openness, and performance.

To create the desired image and visibility through PR, strategies often involve leveraging the news, resources, expertise, and strategic alliances of family and consumer sciences.

To maintain that image and visibility, PR strategies must also offer opportunities for listening, adapting, and responding to audience feedback. They often involve dialogues and forums for two-way communications.

And, because they connect to and reflect public attitudes, rightly considered, PR strategies can become great research tools that form the foundation to the branding process.

The Communication Process



Strategic Components of PR

Different than being neat and orderly, public relations strategies are dynamic – unique in their capacity to be flexible and adaptable to real-life situations that change constantly.

Several aspects of family and consumer sciences work and communications involve PR. They are:

- Strategic planning and communications
- Membership – convening, facilitating, and networking
- Public affairs and advocacy
- Community relations and events
- Publicity and media relations
- Crisis and issues management

Tactical Deliverables of PR

Public relations is as much about planning, writing, and logistics as any of the business and marketing disciplines – particularly in today's online communications environment. However, there are tactical differences in the communications vehicles, nature, and tonality of what is used.

Elements and deliverables most often associated with PR are:

- Background documents
- Media pitching angles and story ideas
- Speeches and presentations
- Press kits and releases
- Features, documentaries, and training
- Prepared TV and radio features
- Prepared internal and external newsletters and articles
- Prepared photography and graphics for demonstration
- Websites, webcasts, and online media development
- Email and fax blasts
- Special events
- Strategic alliance partnerships
- Media training and executive visibility strategies
- Ghost-written Op/Ed articles