**Public Relations**

The formal practice of what is now commonly referred to as “public relations” dates to the early 20th century. In the relatively brief period leading up to today, public relations has been defined in many different ways, the definition often evolving alongside public relations’ changing roles and technological advances.

The earliest definitions emphasized press agentry and publicity, while more modern definitions incorporate the concepts of “engagement” and “relationship building.” The PRSA National Assembly adopted the following definition in 1982: "Public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other."

In 2011‒12, PRSA led an international effort to modernize the definition of public relations. PRSA initiated a crowd sourcing campaign and public vote that produced the following definition:
 **“Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.”**

**What are key points in this definition?**

* Simple and straightforward, this definition focuses on the basic concept of public relations — as a communication process, one that is strategic in nature and emphasizing “mutually beneficial relationships.”
* “Process” is preferable to “management function,” which can evoke ideas of control and top-down, one-way communications.
* “Relationships” relates to public relations’ role in helping to bring together organizations and individuals with their key stakeholders.
* “Publics” is preferable to “stakeholders,” as the former relates to the very “public” nature of public relations, whereas “stakeholders” has connotations of publicly-traded companies.

**As a** **management function, public relations also encompass the following:**

* Anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues that might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organization.
* Counseling management at all levels in the organization with regard to policy decisions, courses of action and communication, taking into account their public ramification and the organization’s social or citizenship responsibilities.
* Researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programs of action and communication to achieve the informed public understanding necessary to the success of an organization’s aims. These may include marketing; financial; fund raising; employee, community or government relations; and other programs.
* Planning and implementing the organization’s efforts to influence or change public policy. Setting objectives, planning, budgeting, recruiting and training staff, developing facilities — in short, managing the resources needed to perform all of the above.

# PRO

“A public relations specialist is an image shaper. Their job is to generate positive publicity for their client and enhance their reputation … They keep the public informed about the activity of government agencies, explain policy, and manage political campaigns. Public relations people working for a company may handle consumer relations, or the relationship between parts of the company such as the managers and employees, or different branch offices.”

**Tools of PR:**

Our tools include the following:

* Write and distribute press releases
* Speech writing
* Write pitches (less formal than press releases) about a firm and send them directly to journalists
* Create and execute special events designed for public outreach and media relations
* Conduct market research on the firm or the firm’s messaging
* Expansion of business contacts via personal networking or attendance and sponsoring at events
* Writing and blogging for the web (internal or external sites)
* Crisis public relations strategies
* Social media promotions and responses to negative opinions online

**2. How is public relations different than advertising?**

It’s Unpaid vs. Paid. Earned vs. Purchased. Credible vs. skeptical.  Public relations tastes great, advertising is less filling.

There’s an old saying: “Advertising is what you pay for, publicity is what you pray for.”

Advertising is paid media, public relations is earned media.  This means you convince reporters or editors to write a positive story about you or your client, your candidate, brand or issue.  It appears in the editorial section of the magazine, newspaper, TV station or website, rather than the “paid media” section where advertising messages appear.  So your story has more credibility because it was independently verified by a trusted third party, rather than purchased. Here’s a [good chart](http://www.forbes.com/sites/robertwynne/2014/07/08/the-real-difference-between-pr-and-advertising-credibility/#2715e4857a0b3eaa09ff2270)from a previous column: disbelieving

