Running head: CROSS-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO ADDRESSING PA ISSUES

The Planning Wizard: A Model for Public Affairs Planning and Execution

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Abstract

Military Public Affairs (PA) and civilian Public Relations (PR) are often misconstrued as being one in the same. Although they have been benchmarking off each other for generations, their missions are different. PA is the discipline of communication that informs and educates, while the definition of PR is a source of contention among scholars. The only consistently identifiable and legally mandated dividing line between PA and other aspects of the informational instrument is the *design or intent* of the communication (MCWP 3-33.3). There is simply no way of anticipating the "who, what, when, where and whys" of the next crisis. The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast PR and PA in order to identify techniques from both fields that can be integrated into a unified planning model to benefit military public affairs. A model for effective integrated public affairs cross-functionality was developed and explained.

The Planning Wizard: A Model for Public Affairs Planning and Execution

"Plan your work for today and every day, then work your plan."
--Norman Vincent Peale
Author: *The Power of Positive Thinking*

"If we do not choose to plan, then we choose to have others plan for us."
--Richard I. Winwood
Author: *Time Management*

Military Public Affairs (PA) and civilian Public Relations (PR) are often misconstrued as being one in the same; although they have been benchmarking off of each other for generations, their missions are different. PA is the discipline of communication that informs and educates, while the definition of PR is a source of contention among scholars. E.L. Bernays originally defines the function of public relations in terms of using information, persuasion and adjustment to engineer public support. J.E. Grunig counters that argument with the idea that PR doesn't require the aspect of persuasion (Pfau & Wan, 2001). The only consistently identifiable and legally mandated dividing line between PA and other aspects of the informational instrument is the *design or intent* of the communication (MCWP 3-33.3).

Public Affairs

Military public affairs among all the services — U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard — is composed of three main functional areas that all contribute to the success of the overall mission: 1) Internal information is that information which informs the military public and their families, 2) media relations is the functional area that works with media representatives to inform the external public and 3) community relations fosters support of America's Armed Forces within local communities. All three areas, the three-pronged approach, define the purpose of PA — to conduct comprehensive programs that provide service members, the public, Congress and media representatives timely, accurate and authoritative Department of

Defense (DoD) and service specific information that contributes to awareness and understanding of the service's mission.

<center>Civilian/ Corporate Public Relations</center>

Throughout this study we identify corporate PR and civilian PR as two separate entities. Corporate PR practitioners are professionals who work for a large corporation and work within one department of the organization. They operate in much the same capacity as military PA. Civilian public relations are firms whose sole purpose is PR. These organizations are hired by other corporations and businesses to "help its public adapt mutually to each other" (PRSA, http://tampa.prsa.org/pr101.html).

<center>Statement of Problem</center>

Communication planning is commonplace in PA and PR staffs outside the military. If research, planning, execution and evaluation serve as the standard for public relations professionals around the world, PA staffs should make them priorities as they plan their communication initiatives (Respondent #1). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to compare and contrast the function of PA as defined by the DoD and each branch of the service with corporate PR cross-functional approaches to issue solving. The study identifies PA strengths and weaknesses within the military services; outlines civilian PR "best practices" that have application in military PA; and uses organizational systems theory to develop unified models for strategic and tactical PA planning which PA practitioners can use with their existing "resource toolboxes" to execute and measure the effectiveness of PA plans.

As PA practitioners, the research team believes PA talks a good game with regard to planning, and a couple of the armed services even include planning as a PA practice in regulations, policies and doctrine. Yet, for the most part, PA practitioners at all levels, tend to be

more reactive than proactive when it comes to addressing issues. But PA is more than reacting

to others; PA also must take the initiative to communicate its key messages to important

audiences on its own terms (Respondent #1).

There is a benefit to planning; it gives the military's PA professionals the opportunity to

deliver key messages to internal and external audiences. One of the most obvious ways PA can

benefit from strategic and tactical planning is by bringing all available resources and talents to

bear on issues. Strategic planning considers the mission and direction of the organization; and

tactical planning focuses on elements to help achieve the strategic plan's goals. The tactical plan

is more specific and reflects how the organization (PA) will approach an issue. The way to do

this is to not think of internal information, media and community relations as exclusive parts of

PA operations, but as inclusive tools vital to the success of the mission.

Three-Pronged Approach

A model (Figure 1), advanced by the research team, takes into account the research and

social science elements introduced by Bernays and Cutlip, et al. Grunigs' models were evaluated

to determine the ideal structure for a public affairs office, taking into account their desired

outcomes. The model emphasizes the inherent strengths of military PA. The internal

information, media and community relations functions are depicted as intertwined webs working

together to meet the strategic objectives, rather than three separate entities working against each

other.

How many times has PA looked at an issue and at first blush said, "Oh, this is a media

issue?" If it is an issue the media might be interested in, would the internal audience be

interested? Should PA make sure the message gets communicated not only to the media but also

to the community? Figure 2 represents how some PA offices function in reality. The three

functional PA areas do not always communicate with each other and tend to work independently

toward the overall organizational goals.

A number of problems can develop by not using all three functional areas together, these

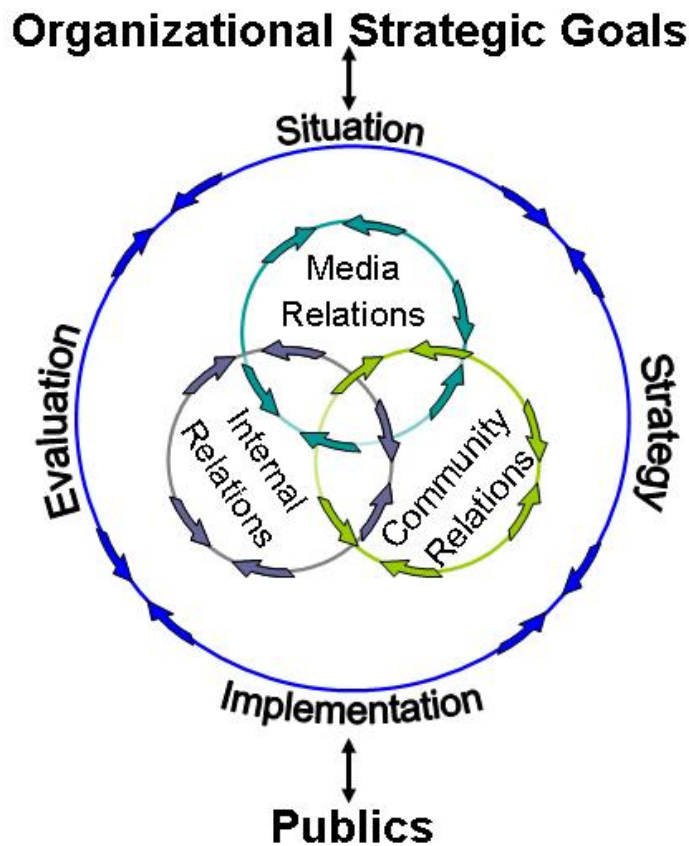may include: 1) PA practitioners not seeing the big picture which may lead to tunnel vision;

Organizational Strategic Goals

Figure 1: Walton et. al. Planning Model

when only one functional area of the office is working an issue, the other two are unable to bring

their unique capabilities and perspectives to the table. 2) The approach to addressing issues can

be ineffective if only one section is working it. 3) The intended audiences might receive mixed

messages if PA does not take a cross-functional approach to solving the issue; as a result, the

public can lose confidence in the military. 4) The public's lack of confidence can lead to a poor

perception of the military, which in turn leads to a number of profound negative implications including reduced support for military spending, loss of standing in the community, and in extreme cases, call for base closures. 5) In the absence of a unified approach to addressing PA issues, offices waste man-hours and tax dollars by going in different directions, possibly duplicating efforts and not covering all aspects of PA issues, therefore causing a possible increase operating costs. 6) All of the above then leads to possible recruiting and retention difficulties.
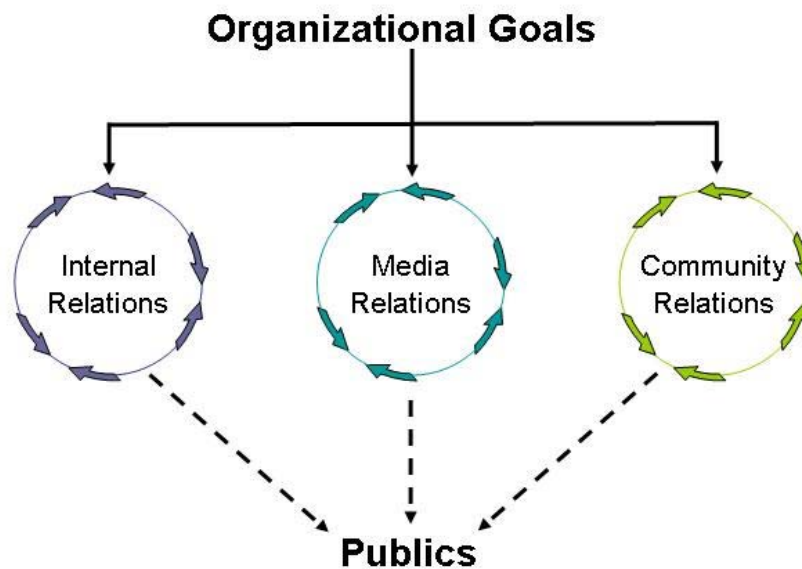

Figure 2: Assumed Reality Model

Bringing all three functional areas — internal information, media and community relations — together, under an effective, proactive, strategic and/or tactical plan may increase the success of military PA efforts. There is precedent to support this idea of a cross-functional approach to addressing issues. Within the civilian sector, PR firms provide clients with services designed to communicate messages through as many avenues as possible to as many specific audiences as possible. Conducting research and providing an overview of the research on the development of

systems theory, organizational communication, cross-functionality and public relations theory establishes a foundation for the analysis of corporate PR and military PA approaches to addressing issues.

<div align="center">Conceptualization</div>

Systems Theory

First identified in the 1940s, systems theory achieves insights into communication (Heath & Bryant, 2000). Especially influential on organizational communication, systems theory explains how and why people form groups, each of which is a system as well as part of a larger system. Its focus is on the whole system rather than on its parts, and how these parts interact to affect the whole system. Infante, Rancer and Womack (1997) define a system as hierarchical — a set of interdependent units working together to adapt to a changing environment. It can be divided into smaller subsystems or incorporated with other systems to create larger systems, referred to as suprasystems or environments (Heath & Bryant, 2000). A systems approach to organizational communication expands the basic model of sender-receiver to feature communication networks; this explains how systems adapt to their environments (Heath & Bryant, 2000).

As previously stated, PA is composed of three basic subsystems: internal information, media and community relations. Although the military mainly uses each subsystem interdependently, the entire system is much more than the sum of the contributions of each individual part. As Infante, Rancer and Womack explain it, "every system is like a cake in the sense that if you take away or change one individual part, the entire system is affected" (1997, p. 91). The focus of organizational communication is on the whole system, rather than on parts of the system (Katz & Kahn, 1996).

Communication systems, such as public affairs, are "open" systems — they interact with their environments. Open systems "continually take in new information, transform that information and give information back to the environment" (Shockley-Zalabak, 1999, p. 43). By contrast, "closed" systems are characterized by a lack of input communication, making it difficult to make good decisions and stay current with the needs of the environment (Shockley-Zalabak, 1999). Closed systems lean toward entropy, chaos or total disorganization (Infante, Rancer & Womack, 1997). Applying the open systems approach to military PA requires a purposeful sensing of the environment to anticipate and detect changes that affect the organization's relationships with its publics (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1985). Ultimately, the systems approach should serve as the foundation for a more effective management practice. This becomes the basis upon which our ideal model for PA interaction was created (Figure 1).

Development of Organizational Communication

"Communication serves as the basis for control and coordination in organizations; it also provides information essential to effective completion of the organizational mission" (Poole, 1978, p. 493). But, what "exactly" is communication? In layman's terms, communication is the interchange of information between two or more persons. Farace, Monge and Russell (1977) define communication as the exchange of symbols that are commonly shared by the individuals involved, and which evoke quite similar symbol-referent relationships in each individual. Organizational communication goes a bit further. Organizational communication is "both similar to and distinct from other types of communication" (Shockley-Zalabak, 1999, p. 28). It is more than the daily interactions of individuals within organizations, it is the process through which organizations create and shape events (Shockley-Zalabak, 1999).

The study of organizational communication centers on processes of interaction means by which people obtain information, form opinions, make decisions, merge into the organization, leave the organization and create rapport with one another (Shockley-Zalabak, 1999). Through communication, people coordinate their actions to achieve individual and organizational goals (Shockley-Zalabak, 1999). Effective organizational communication within the PA arena is critical. The public's perception of credibility and validity of any PA office depends largely on the successful transmission of verbal and nonverbal messages and the sharing of information at all links (subsystems) through the organization's channels.

According to Huse and Bowditch (1973), an organization is effective and efficient when it has the ability to be integrated and to consider three different perspectives simultaneously: structural design, flow and human factors. Looking into this further, a literature review by Campbell (1977) found that more than 30 different criteria were used for the measurement of organizational effectiveness (Praeger, 1986). These measurement criteria ranged from specific aspects of organizational effectiveness to a global view. Campbell's (1977) review also finds some of the measurement criteria to be inconsistent, in that few studies used multivariate measures of effectiveness and the same criteria were rarely used across studies (Praeger, 1986).

Herein lies the basic theme of this paper, suggesting that military PA organizations, in an effort to gain greater efficiency, should attempt to both integrate and simultaneously consider its three subsystems (internal information, media and community relations) as well as best practices in the civilian corporate PR arena, when approaching organizational issues.

Cross-functionality

Cross-functionality is the idea that members from different departments of a unit or organization form teams, bringing a variety of talents and resources to bear on the

accomplishment of the overall mission of the unit or organization (Proehl, 1997). This method

has proven positive results within AT&T and Hewlett Packard (Jayaram & Ahire, 1998). It also

has application to PA in two ways: 1) Cross-functionality can be applied to the relationship

between PA and other organizations within a command; and 2) it can be applied within the PA

organization itself — this is the idea behind the three-pronged approach.

Cross-functional teams consist of people who serve in different departments or perform

different functions within the organization (Wellins, et al., 1994). Some companies establish

permanent and temporary cross-functional teams. The permanent teams work on issues

companies face on a routine basis, while temporary teams are formed to handle special projects

such as implementing new procedures, reorganizing procedures and processes, or solving

unexpected problems.

By their nature, cross-functional teams offer members opportunities to receive training and

experience outside their areas of expertise in order to meet the goals of the team (Wellins, et al.,

1994). This has several benefits including team flexibility, understanding among the functional

areas of how the others work, and an increased sense of ownership and pride among team

members.

Applications for Public Affairs at the Command Level

Previous studies suggest the idea that marketing is here to stay and that successful

companies must integrate marketing departments into their strategic planning or suffer for it in

their profit margins (Shipley, 1994). The difficulty is successfully integrating marketing, or in

the military's case public affairs, into a strategic operational role after having been a support

function for so long. Many people within organizations have preconceived notions about the

value of marketing or PA, and based on outdated ideas that do not consider the important role

they play in the overall mission accomplishment; resist their inclusion into the upper echelons.

Shipley (1994) suggests a number of ways to combat this: 1) It is essential that the role of PA be

thoroughly understood and communicated to all levels by the commander. 2) Commanders

should ensure their PA officers are "politically shrewd, experienced, tough and able" (Shipley,

1994, p. 20). 3) Training should be offered to all department heads and essential personnel with

the goal of altering false perceptions. 4) Commanders should build internal motivation within the

command. PA practitioners need to understand that achieving a shift in mindset like this is

extremely difficult. With that in mind, practitioners need to do all they can to fit in. Some

suggestions include "building a professional image for [public affairs]; ensure frequent

communication and personal interaction with other departments; do not laud the importance of

[public affairs]; recognize the equal importance of other [departments]; acknowledge their

viewpoints, strengths and constraints; build allies and tight relationships; be tactful, amicable and

harmonious; go to "war" as a last resort; involve top management in disputes as a last option; be

unselfish about the 'ownership' of good ideas; use finance and other resources wisely; and

always stress the commonsense view" (Shipley, 1994, p. 20).

Cross-Functionality Applications for Public Affairs at the Office Level

Many of the theories used in developing cross-functional teams find their origins in small

group organizational communication theories. A model that has utility for cross-functional

application in PA, both at the organizational and departmental levels, is discussed by Tjosvold

(1991). He discusses D.L. Gladstein's 1984 model (Figure 3) for group behavior within an

organization (Tjosvold, 1991, p. 61).

In this model there are two inputs: The composition and structure of the group and the

resources and structure of the organization. The inputs work together forming the group process.

The process interacts with the task to determine the group's effectiveness. Using those inputs,

the group develops a process to work together, and then applies that process to whatever tasking

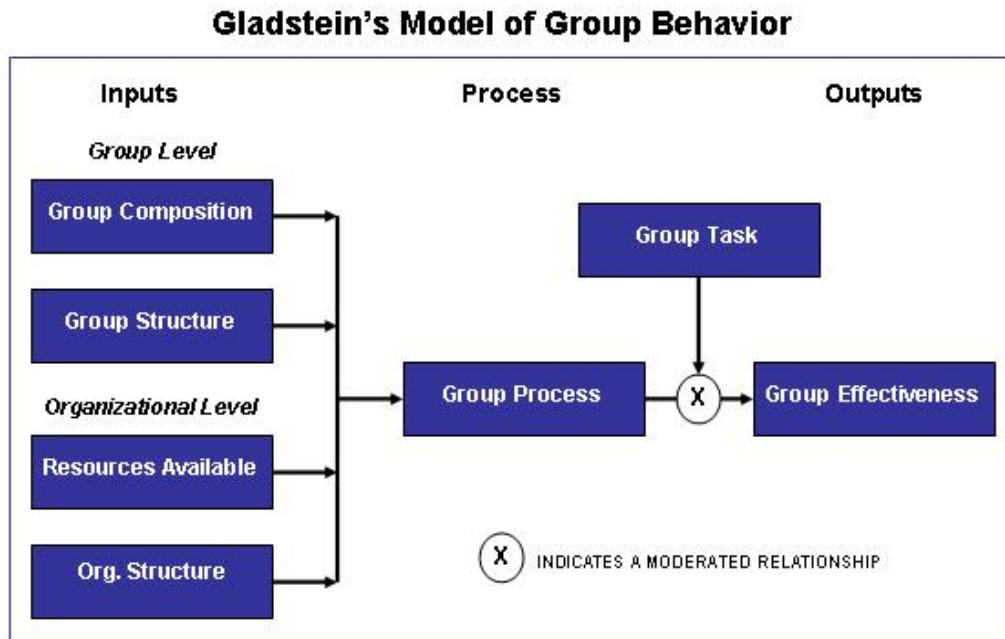comes down the road. The nature of the tasking and its interaction with the group's processes

Gladstein's Model of Group Behavior

Figure 3

determines the effectiveness of the group's output. Gladstein's Model of Group Behavior

explains how the PA three-pronged approach can be more effective. Figure 1, The Walton, et al.

Planning Model, draws upon Gladstein's model to illustrate how PA and cross-functionality

work together.

Public Relations Theory

Public relations is the attempt by information, persuasion and adjustment to engineer

public support for an activity, cause, movement or institution (Bernays, 1955). The field

borrows theories of communication from the social science disciplines; however, there is no one

theory that *is* PR. The field also lacks a sense of identity, failing to define its purpose, scope and

dimension (Leeper & Leeper, 2001). There appears to be a widely held definition that PR is "the

manipulation of public behavior for the benefit of the manipulated publics as well as the sponsoring organizations" (Grunig, 1989, p. 18 – 19). Grunig's (1989) research explains PR using four models. Grunig calls them "press agentry/publicity," "public information," "two-way asymmetrical" and "two-way symmetrical" (Grunig, 1989, p. 29). According to Grunig (1989), the four models are representative of the goals, values and behaviors held or used by an organization when practicing PR.

Grunig's (1989) press agentry/publicity model is descriptive of the propaganda feel of PR, seeking media attention in almost any way possible. The basis of this approach is the amount of mass media coverage determines the relative importance of the topics (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994). Grunig suggests those who practice the press agentry model fully intend to persuade or manipulate publics (Grunig, 1989). Grunig's public information model is similar to the press agentry/publicity model. Practitioners of this model provide generally accurate information, but usually do not volunteer negative information. Both the press agentry/publicity and public information models are one-way they give information about the organization to the identified publics but do not actively seek information in return from the publics through research or informal means (Grunig, 1989).

Grunig's two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models are more sophisticated, they include the element of research; however, only one of these models holds real promise toward attitudinal change. The two–way asymmetrical model uses research to identify messages most likely to produce support of the publics without having to change the behaviors of the organization. Practitioners of the public information model change public behaviors and opinions, even though that may not be their intent (Grunig, 1989).

The fourth model defined by Grunig is the two-way symmetrical model. This model has effects that benefit both the organization and the public. Organizations practicing this model employ bargaining, negotiating and strategies of conflict resolution to bring changes in both the organization and the public (Grunig, 1989). This model has one presupposition; communication leads to understanding among people and organizations (Grunig, 1989). Grunig's research and formulation of these four models serve as a map of the major stages of development in the PR field, providing clarification and serving as a basis for a classification system (Neff, 1989). Organizations practice several of the models together, with the press agentry model being the most popular (Grunig, 1989). Grunig's (1989) research suggests the two-way asymmetrical model is most popular in corporations.

The function of PR practitioners is to help an organization adjust and adapt to their environments by monitoring public opinion, social change and cultural shifts (Cutlip, et. al., 1994). How an organization accomplishes these tasks in an effective manner is subjective. Bernays, (1955) suggests that to carry out PR effectively, one must follow this process: 1) define your objectives, 2) research your publics, 3) modify the objectives, 4) decide upon a strategy, 5) set up a theme, 6) establish an effective organization, 7) chart a tactical plan and 8) carry out the tactics. PR is a part of any organization's problem-solving function, practitioners with this view use social scientific theory and the best available evidence in a four-step problem solving process (Cutlip, et. al., 1994). This process is similar to Bernays' work with the obvious difference being some of Bernays' steps are integrated to shorten the process. The four-step process involves: 1). Situational analysis — what is happening now? 2) Strategy — what should we do, say and why? 3) Implementation — how and when do we say it? 4) Assessment — how did we do (Cutlip, et. al., 1994)? Each step of the model is as important as the other steps, with the process being

continuous, overlapping and cyclical (Cutlip, et. al., 1994). To get the most out of any PR effort

it is necessary to have a master plan. Just having a plan doesn't necessarily guarantee success,

but it allows the practitioner to focus and determine the ultimate success or failure of the

communication effort (Ginsburg, 1955). The ramifications to military PA is twofold, first;

Grunig's models provide an assessment for military practitioners to determine how their

respective programs currently fit in the arena of strategic planning within their military services.

As Grunig suggests, most organizations combine all four models making it difficult to determine

PA effectiveness.

Second, research introduced by Bernays advances elements from the social sciences into

the practice of public relations. Bernays' contributions are significant in that the element of

identifying and measuring public opinion is a critical first step before embarking on an effort to

change or modify those opinions. This idea continues today through the use of Cutlip, et al's

four-step public relations planning tool.

Rationale and Hypotheses

The bottom line in the great proactive vs. reactive debate is that to a certain degree, PA

will always be reactive. "While PA must continue to react to the requests and situations that pop

up unexpectedly, it also must take the initiative to create strategic and tactical plans that allow it

to put the right information in the hands of the right audiences at the right time" (AFI 35-101,

p.49). There is simply no way of anticipating the who, what, when, where and whys of the next

crisis. But, rather than not planning at all and waiting for the next situation, there are areas

where PA practitioners can benefit from thorough prior planning. This rationale — prior

planning will assist PA in effectively solving issues — and the use of theoretical perspectives

offered by systems theory, organizational communication, cross-functionality and identified PR

"best practices," is what led the research team on the quest to develop a unified model for

strategic and tactical planning. In placing emphasis on cross-functionality to more effectively

communicate, our research questions are:

RQ1: *What are the differences between each branch of the military in respect to PA?*

RQ2: *What are the differences between civilian PR and military PA?*

RQ3: *When addressing issues, what aspects of civilian PR can be incorporated into*

military PA?

Method

Participants

There are four categories of participants in this study: 1) PR agencies, typically those with

national accounts; 2) national and local non-profit organizations; 3) top-level PR professionals

currently serving as senior members of their department; and 4) military PA officials within each

service. Each category is equally important as they provide the basis for how PR is conducted in

"the field." Several sampling techniques were used in conjunction with the other to gather the

study participants: 1) Network — we used our personal networking abilities to contact senior

military public affairs and volunteer agency PR leadership. 2) Volunteer — we solicited

volunteers willing to complete our survey and provide candid responses to the questions given

through posting the surveys on two electronic mail PA forums. 3) Convenient — Due to time

constraints we solicited individuals as respondents who were readily available. 4) Snowball —

we used volunteers to pass surveys on to others.

Materials

Other than typical office materials used by researchers, there were no special resources

used. The research team used resources located at a mid-western university and consulted

several members of the university's communication department for input and feedback at several

points during the course of the study.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Content analysis is a technique for systematically describing the form and content of

written and spoken material and "allows for the simultaneous application of quantitative and

qualitative techniques" (Sommer & Sommer, 1997, p. 171). Content analysis is an appropriate

research method of choice comparing trends across cultures. The results of content analysis are

more descriptive but do not have much explanatory power. However, the researchers'

interpretations of the content imply something about the nature of the communicators or effects

of communicators (Keyton, 2001). Content analysis is used in this study to compare and contrast

the latent content of military PA regulations, instructions, policies, directives and doctrine among

each of the U.S. military services, as well as to compare them collectively to civilian and

corporate PR. In this report, we identify all written content analyzed as "regulations." In

addition to the written content, the verbal responses received from the field surveys were also

analyzed and included in our interpretations. The results of this comparison are descriptive rather

than explaining a causal affect and give a deeper understanding of the content which can be

generalized to the military services for the purpose of application. Figure 4 visually depicts how

the data is collected for this study.
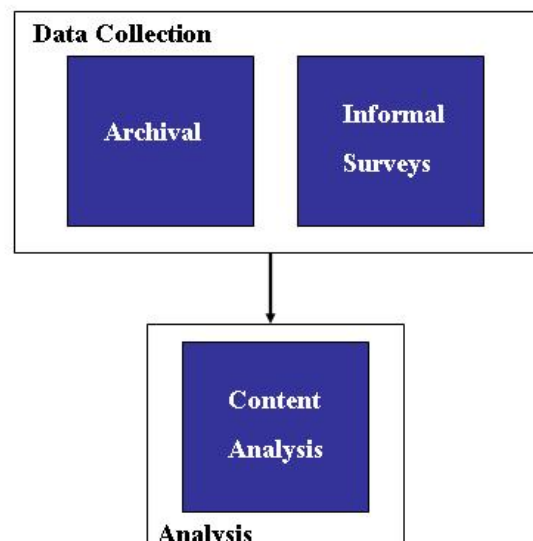
Field Interviewing

Interviews are a sensible method for discovering how communicators feel about their practices and can be both formal and informal (Keyton, 2001). "Field interviewing, as a qualitative research method, is a semidirected form of discourse or conversation with the goal of uncovering the participant's point of view" (Keyton, 2001, p. 294). Interview questions for this study were conceptualized and tailored to particular audiences — military PA practitioners, civilian PR firms and corporate PR representatives. The interviews are conducted using three approaches: 1) electronic mail interviews, 2) telephone interviews and 3) one face-to-face interview. The interview survey contained open-ended questions to initiate dialogue and obtain in-depth descriptions and answers about PA and PR practices from the respondents. An electronic mail interview survey was sent to 40 organizations. The survey was also initially sent to 14 senior military officials; it was then posted on two military PA forums to gather additional responses. Some interviewees had reservations about the nature of the research and would only respond in general terms, others chose not to respond, explaining they did not want or could not give out "corporate secrets." The research team did receive a total of 36 military and civilian responses. It should be noted that with a longer research period, we would have been able to sample a larger portion of the PR and PA fields, resulting in a more in-depth study.

Results

Our interpretations of the content and answers to the open-ended interviews imply the nature of public affairs, its value to the DoD branches of service and the emphasis each place on communication planning as a common practice. Findings indicate that there are differences between each of the services in regard to PA planning. The services' stance on PA and its value to the organization and the DoD is relatively similar; however, the importance each service place

on planning, within the regulations as well as interpretation of participant responses, is significantly different. The categories of written and verbal content analysis are as follows: Value of PA to the organization and DoD; emphasis on PA planning and whether it was described as a systematic approach; the use of cross-functionality when approaching issues; and the importance of research and resources.

It should be noted that much of the survey input we received from PA professionals was contradictory in nature. For instance, one senior PA officer recommended areas of improvement in the public affairs curriculum at the Defense Information School (DINFOS), while a senior PA officer from a different branch of service, finds the training at DINFOS adequate. That subject alone is a good topic for future research, but more importantly it suggests a greater need for the services to communicate more efficiently between themselves to achieve mutually agreeable joint PA training and practices.

PA Value to the Organization

Within the regulations and interview responses, it was confirmed that PA is essential to the organization — the organization being defined as a particular unit, command, branch of service or the DoD. To be an effective element of mission execution, PA must be at the table when all command policies and issues are in the formative decision-making stage (Respondent #3). Public affairs activities are an "operational function" (PA Joint Pub 3-61, p. III-6) and PA is an integral element of the decision-making process at all levels of command, and across the continuum of operations (AR 46-1). But PA officers cannot expect to simply be given this position of trust; they must prove their worth and work their way up to the status of equal players in their commands.

A senior PA reserve officer, working in a corporate communications office in his civilian capacity, stated that civilian PR practitioners must prove their value to the company or face dismissal. As a result, there seems to be a greater sense of urgency in civilian PR to communicate with their publics in meaningful ways that have positive impacts on the success of the organization. Public relations "strategies and tactics must be on time and on target if we're to be an important contributor to success, i.e., profitability and growth. "If we're not agile contributors, we're relieved of duty" (Respondent #4). Although military PA practitioners often operate at this same level of urgency, it is the belief among members of other service departments that PA brings nothing to the table that ultimately causes problems (Respondent #4).

Public affairs practitioners must validate their worth to the mission of their service and their organization by showing they make direct contributions to the success of those missions. Organizations within military commands have traditionally fallen into either operational or support roles within those units and PA has typically been considered a support function — but that is changing. As the flow of information regarding the military and its operations becomes more and more important to the American public, PA practitioners are increasingly finding themselves included in the operational realm. This is due in part to the realization by commanders in chief that PA can help achieve operational goals. "What we do is not for the sake of PA itself, but for the sake of achieving specific communication objectives that we are uniquely situated and trained to achieve" (Respondent #5).

Responses received from corporate and civilian PR validates the importance of PR as important to the overall success of the organization. Public relations teams, within a firm, attempt to operate close enough to their clients so they are considered to be a part of the client's internal team (Respondent #6). Successful PR firms employ two-way communications.

Although the firm brings communication consulting, guidance and support to the table, they

recognize that nobody knows the clients needs and operating environment as well as the client

(Respondent #6). "We are partners with our clients, sharing the successes and the failures"

(Respondent #7). Military PA practitioners can adopt this mindset to further the efficacy and

value of PA to their organization. PA practitioners who incorporate themselves into their

"client's" environment are better able to communicate their needs to the intended audience;

therefore, increasing the value PA brings to the overall objective.

Systematic Approach to Planning

Four out of the five services explain the importance of planning within their written

regulations — the fifth did not contain documentation of planning, nor did we receive any verbal

responses in regard to planning. The other services dedicated sections of their regulations to

planning, although each approaches the issue from different directions. The over-arching

perspective gathered from the data is that planning is accomplished primarily for operational and

contingency purposes; and each service does include a plan within the operational or strategic

plan. This plan is commonly referred to among all the services as "Annex F." This annex is

extremely important in the overall planning picture but it is not perfectly clear within the written

content as to whether or not the plans can be used for daily operations — the context of planning

we are looking at in this study. The problem most recognizable from the data received is that

each service addresses the planning process, but there is no uniformity across the services' PA

fields as to its purpose. It can be noted that when comparing the written content to verbal

responses, PA practitioners feel planning is being accomplished but not as thoroughly as it

should be. The responses also reflect that the process is conducted differently within each

service.

The following examples of thorough planning were extracted from the regulations. The Navy documents that a "public affairs plan is customarily a three-part, comprehensive statement of the authority, purpose, objectives and specific actions or milestones to be undertaken by a particular command in preparing for contingencies, exercise, operations or routinely planned events" (SECNAVINST 5720.44A, 1987). The Army documents in great detail the importance of planning, primarily from the perspective of strategic contingency and war planning. In fact, PA planning is stated as a core process within Army regulations and distinguishes different types of plans, including deliberate or peacetime planning, and time-sensitive or crisis-action planning. Each plan has a systematic approach. The Air Force dedicates a chapter to planning within their regulations and follows a five-step model similar to that proposed by Grunig — 1) assess the situation; 2) conduct research about the situation and how it affects the military and the civilian community; 3) plan; 4) execute; and then 5) conduct a follow-up assessment to determine the level of success achieved. This planning method can work for all PA missions "from dealing with an aircraft crash to conducting a civic leader tour" (Respondent #1). The best way to approach any PA issue is with a strong plan, but before you can plan, you have to take a close look at the organization (Respondent #1). With a strong organization in place, the most essential element in PA mission effectiveness is proper planning.

Plans need to include, at a minimum, an analysis of the potential impact on the organization and the response needed to handle the issue (Respondent #3). Every PA issue can be resolved if you do effects-based planning. You determine the results you want to achieve (effects), identify your targets (audience) and the facts of the current situation, assess your capabilities, establish specific and measurable objectives, apportion your resources, execute, and then evaluate. It is essentially the same process used in wartime planning, commercial marketing

and risk management (Respondent #5). One military respondent did not have the same outlook on planning. "Some senior leaders have insisted on plans, measurement, evaluations over the years, but when crises emerge, those were never worth much. It was always just having the savvy to do the job that worked" (Respondent #13). And, yet another senior official said that he believes there is not a best approach to solving an issue. "Common sense and good problem-solving skills and attention to details is key" (Respondent #14). What we bring to your attention is that although PA issues are situational, prior planning along with savvy and good problem-solving skills will only help the PA practitioner become more effective — the Walton et al., Planning Model is that tool.

Responses from the corporate and civilian public relations practitioners bring to light one interesting point. That is, corporate PR is much like military PA in that they are just one of the many departments within a larger organization; whereas, civilian PR firms are the organization. Many firms use proprietary planning tools (Respondent #9); they generally do not have preexisting or a standard plan to use with all clients (Respondent #6). However, the four-step PR process taught in college forms the basis from which most PR firms begin their planning (Respondent #7). Where PR firms depart from this approach is the additional formulation of a strategic overall communication approach, and the tactical elements of the plan used to execute strategic goals (Respondent #7).

None of the interview respondents consciously use specific communication or PR theories when putting together PR plans. Overall, the lack of identifiable theories is the result of the fact that no two clients are the same, so there are no "cookie-cutter" solutions to how they do business (Respondent #7). Corporate organization members interviewed, admitted that while they should spend more time planning and organizing their approach to solving an issue, they are

frequently in a reactionary mode. Two of the corporate respondents indicated that leadership of

the organization becomes the "pacesetter" (Respondent #10) and as a result, PR works through

the leadership's vision rather than through a strategic plan of action (Respondent #11). All

corporate respondents report that planning is not given the attention it should be.

Our interpretations of the responses indicate that while planning is an ideal practice and

can be explicitly documented in regulations; both military PA and corporate PR do not use this

practice to its fullest extent. PR firms tend to use planning more often due to the nature of their

organizations. The challenge PA practitioners need to overcome is the mindset that there isn't

time for planning. Making the paradigm shift of technician (knowing how to do the task and

doing it), to managing the issue through planning is the ultimate goal of a PA practitioner. The

practitioner then becomes the manager and can see the bigger picture; therefore, the practitioner

enhances the value of PA in the organization in achieving its strategic goals.

Cross-functional Approach

As stated in the Joint Public Affairs doctrine (PA Joint Pub 3-61). "Most issues, plans

and events contain elements which may be of interest to the general public, the media and the

committed forces and their families. This interest should be part of the normal planning process.

Complete integration of PA personnel in all staff planning is essential to ensure an effective PA

operation" (PA Joint Pub 3-61, p. vii). Fully integrating all three functional areas of PA is an

"essential element to successfully addressing PA issues. When many voices speak, they're using

a unified, agreed-upon message (Respondent #1). According to Navy regulations, a plan reflects

the way in which a command, unit, etc., will communicate with external and internal publics,

bringing together the three components of PA — internal information, media and community

relations (SECNAVINST 5720.44A). Although all but one service's regulations allude to the

use of cross-functionality, it wasn't completely apparent. This fact only confirms our thoughts

that a unified planning model will enhance the effectiveness of PA.

Some of our military PA respondents have experience in the civilian PR field also. They

are perhaps the best sources for comparison data regarding the differences between PA and PR.

According to one senior officer with PR experience, there are some important differences in how

the two fields have conducted business in the past (Respondent #12). First, civilian PR

communication practices are cross-functional. Their efforts are directly tied to their firms'

strategies, and account managers report directly to firm management on how they are meeting

their clients' goals within those strategies (Respondent #12). Civilian PR organizations attempt

to fully integrate their efforts. Although the specialized departments in civilian PR firms retain

their autonomy, they all bring individual talents and resources to bear on the same issues; they

are all "integrated into one team, one fight" (Respondent #12).

Another senior officer said that PA practitioners are all trained to be generalists in the

sense that the schoolhouse teaches them to practice all aspects of PA (Respondent #3). "We

might focus on one area more than another during a given assignment, but we should never

become strict specialists in media or community relations — when we do, we lose sight of the

bigger picture" (Respondent #3). Civilian PR respondents unanimously agreed that their firms

use some type of cross-functional approach. It was determined that there are two ways for

civilian PR companies to tackle an issue: 1) Use a single account manager who calls on the

various assets of the company to meet their client's needs; 2) use a cross-functional team

approach where experts of the various departments work together as a single unit with the goal of

meeting the client's needs. With the obvious benefit the team approach offers, some companies

only use the cross-functional team approach (Respondent #9).

One corporate respondent, who relies on military practitioners to be part of the team, stated that the military members work as "mission specialists" versus as a team (Respondent #11). "What we would like to see is the idea that PR doesn't consist of just writing the release or talking with the press. It is the whole meal of serving up the meat and potatoes, the dessert and the veggies to the public." (Respondent #11). This statement is a good example of how the civilian PR field functions and how some military practitioners maintain their technician title. As mentioned earlier, Respondent #3 states that being a specialist can make a practitioner lose sight of the big picture. Yet, another corporate PR practitioner said that the cross-functional approach is situational. When a crisis arises, they are reactive rather than using a cross-functional approach that can be used for established or predictable events. While there is no one specific method which can be transposed to military usage, elements from civilian practices can assist military PA practitioners to be more responsive and more integrated as a team.

Research and Resources

Central to the planning process is the research accomplished before the plan is created and executed. Research is a comprehensive look at all the variables that will have an impact on planning to communicate (AFI 35-101). It sets the direction a PA practitioner will take and gives him/her a foundation of knowledge on which to build upon. The Air Force takes an academic stance on research within their regulations and discusses two methods, quantitative and qualitative. The regulations go into great detail about what type of questions a PA practitioner should consider when scoping out a communication environment (AFI 35-101). The regulations also discuss a variety of methods of collecting this information, for example: Surveys, content analysis and public opinion polls. This thorough explanation of research in the regulations is

beneficial but raises the question: Are PA practitioners knowledgeable about how to implement these methods?

The Army also documents within its regulations the idea or practice of research, titled an "Information Environment (IE) Assessment." The IE analysis provides the basis for the development of all PA operational plans (FM 3-61.1). "It is a method of identifying factors within the information environment that have potential implications for the planning and execution of Army operations. PA planners study and evaluate the dynamics of the area information environment to identify specific public affairs operational considerations" (FM 3-61.1, p.5). Although the IE is a more operational vs. academic approach to research it can translate into the tactical planning environment.

The problem with conducting research is not necessarily the research itself but whether or not resources and the time are available. One senior PA practitioner stated the problem with conducting research in military PA is the scarcity of time and resources (Respondent #12). Some services have research assets available to them at the upper-levels of the chain of command, but they are virtually non-existent at the lower levels where the vast majority of PA work is done (Respondent #8). But the military already dedicates resources to the type of research in the recruiting domain which could be of use to PA. However, that information is not usually shared across functional areas (Respondent #12).

One civilian PR respondent stated that they assess the overall marketing climate to build a plan. That climate being the client's position in that environment; the behavior and perceptions of publics and media in relation to the type of business in which the client is engaged; and the client in particular. Another civilian PR representative, currently serving on active duty as a military PA, stated that "Good PR professionals think outside-in, not inside-out" (Respondent

#12). They research and understand the publics that are most important to their communication efforts and choose the most effective media for that communication (Respondent #12). Although some practitioners feel time constraints play into the inability to properly conduct research, it is evident from the written and verbal analyzed content that research should be an important step in the planning process.

<div align="center">Discussion</div>

The purpose of this study was to compare and contrast the function of PA as defined by the DoD and each branch of the service with corporate PR cross-functional approaches to issue solving; identify PA strengths and weaknesses within the military services; outline civilian PR "best practices" that have application in military PA; and use organizational systems theory to develop a unified model for strategic and tactical PA planning which PA practitioners can use with their existing "resource toolboxes" to execute and measure the effectiveness of PA plans. The research team began this study under the assumption that there were significant differences in how military PA and corporate/civilian PR practitioners approached issues when they arose. This assumption led us to our first two research questions: 1) *What are the differences between each branch of the military in respect to PA? 2) What are the differences between civilian PR and military PA?*

Our results indicate that there are differences; however, those differences are very slight. PA and PR practitioners across the spectrum have similar ideals as to the value of their field and how to approach solving an issue. The difference lies in the minds of each individual practitioner. On paper, the military services easily document the importance of using the three-pronged approach to planning with one service in particular documenting the process in-depth. However, a deeper understanding of how PA practitioners operate is reflected by the field

interview responses. The respondents gave insight into how PA is actually conducted in the

field. One point in particular we were searching for was whether or not PA practitioners utilize

the three-pronged approach to solving issues. Our results counter our assumptions. In fact, we

found from our respondents that a large majority of PA practitioners do consider all three

functional areas of PA when approaching an issue. What we found was that not all respondents

actually use a plan to respond but rather react to a situation. It should be noted that if the

research team had not originally targeted senior military practitioners solely as respondents,

those PA practitioners at the lower level offices may have had different opinions regarding the

subject. Therefore, our results cannot be generalized to the greater PA population. Although the

results are not concrete, they do give an indication that military PA practitioners may not be

using the most effective planning methods to communicate messages.

     As a result of our research, the team advanced a planning model that can assist the PA

practitioner. In the rapidly changing environment of the information age, PA must continue to

search for and implement innovative ways to effectively communicate, helping commands stay

ahead of the curve. This model, The Walton et. al. Planning Model & Worksheet, provides a

comprehensive framework that can be included in any PA toolbox. The model maximizes

functionality within the PA arena by incorporating all three subgroups of the PA organization at

the planning stage. The following table is a detailed description of steps to take when

approaching a PA issue. This table has been transformed into a worksheet that is attached at

Appendix A.

Public Affairs Planning Worksheet

1. COMMAND	2. DATE
3. ISSUE	4. ACCOUNT NO.
5. COMMAND STRATEGIC GOAL SUPPORTED	
6. PUBLIC AFAIRS OFFICER (NAME, RANK, CODE)	7. ACCOUNT MANAGER (NAME, RANK, CODE)

I. SITUATION

8.   RESEARCH METHODS USED IN SITUATION IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

Before you can begin working an issue, you must first fully identify the situation and conduct a thorough analysis of the situation. Doing so will require research. The PA planning process begins with determining which research methods you will use. When gathering all this information, try to make it as scientific as possible. However, time and cost may prevent a purely scientific study. In that case there are a number of informal research methods at your disposal, including: personal contacts, key informants, focus groups, community forums, advisory committees and boards, ombudsman, call-in telephone lines, mail analysis and field reports. If you are fortunate enough to have the resources to conduct a more scientific study of the problem, you should consider more formal research options such as secondary analysis and on-line databases, content analysis and surveys.

9.   SITUATION IDENTIFICATION
(WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW? WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF THE CONCERN? WHY IS IT OF CONSEQUENCE TO THE COMMAND?

The first step in the PA planning model is getting a handle on exactly what the issue is you are facing or planning for. Start by identifying the problem, concern, or opportunity. What's happening now? What is the source of the concern? Why is it of consequence to the command?

10a. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SITUATION ANALYSIS
(WHERE IS THIS A PROBLEM? WHAT POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FORCES ARE OPERATING NOW? WHO IS INVOLVED AND/OR AFFECTED? HOW ARE THEY INVOLVED AND/OR AFFECTED? WHAT ARE THEIR ATTITUDES ABOUT THE PROBLEM/SITUATION? HOW MUCH DO PEOPLE USE INFORMATION IN THE PROBLEM/SITUATION? WHAT KINDS OF INFORMATION DO PEOPLE USE? HOW DO PEOPLE USE NFORMATION? WHAT PREDICTS INFORMATION USE?

This should be followed by an analysis of the internal and external situations. This two-part step should provide background information needed to expand upon and illustrate in detail the meaning of a problem statement.

10b. COMMAND STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES RELATED TO THE ISSUE

Second, take a thorough look at your command and determine the organizational strengths and weaknesses within to identify opportunities and threats related to the problem.

II. STRATEGY

11a. INTERNAL TARGET AUDIENCE

Formulating a strategy on how to deal with the situation is the next step. First you need to define your publics. Who – internal and external – must the program respond to, reach, and

affect? It's also important to define your publics as narrowly as possible. Do this by identifying sub-targets of your public.

11b. INTERNAL SUB-TARGET(s)

You can define them in a number of ways with various characteristics including:

(1) Demographics - individual characteristics such as age, gender, income, etc.
(2) Psychographics - psychological or lifestyle characteristics
(3) Sociographics - environmental characteristics

12a. EXTERNAL TARGET AUDIENCE

(4) Geographics - natural or political boundaries indicating location
(5) Covert power - opinion leaders
(6) Position - roles played in the target publics, influence over others

12b. EXTERNAL SUB-TARGET(s)

(7) Reputation – opinion leaders (not always VIPs)
(8) Membership - appearance on relevant organizational charts, lists or affiliations
(9) Roles in decision processes - those who make decisions, take action and communicate

After dividing your publics into sub-targets you will be prepared to devise specific strategies for reaching each audience.

13. OJECTIVE
WHAT MUST BE ACHIEVED WITH EACH PUBLIC TO ACCOMPLISH THE STRATEGIC GOALS OF THE COMMAND? HOW DOES YOUR PLAN MEET THE GOALS OF LEADERSHIP? HOW DOES YOUR PLAN ENHANCE MORALE AND/OR READINESS? HOW DOES YOUR PLAN HELP BUILD PUBLIC TRUST AND SUPPORT?

But first it's time to finalize your objective. Again, it is exceedingly important that this goal have the strategic goals of the command in mind. This is a good point in the planning process to make sure you and the boss are on the same sheet of music. When setting objectives it is important that they not be abstract or generic. Start with a broad goal and refine it until it becomes an operational goal or statement of intent so that it motivates and directs immediate action on the part of the targets.

14. METRICS THAT WILL BE USED TO MEASURE OUTCOME

Traditional four-step PA planning processes usually include the evaluation portion of the plan at the end. This one does as well, but the strategy step is the phase where you want to establish some evaluation parameters. You need to determine at this point how you will measure the outcomes specified in your objectives. Set measurable, scientific metrics ensuring reliability and validity of the data they produce. The best measures of PA effectiveness are those that look for attitude change. In order to measure change you need to start from a baseline. A simple, easy to use global attitude scale that has been repeatedly tested for reliability and validity is included in appendix 1. The scale can be used to test attitude about any questions.

15a. INITITIAL ATTITUDE MEASURE RESEARCH QUESTION(s)

Conduct research about attitudes of the issue you are looking at before building a plan.

15b. INITITIAL ATTITUDE MEASURE FINDINGS

16. RESOURCES NEEDED

The final step in the strategic phase is to determine the resources you will need to carry out your plan (time, money, people, expertise, planning, etc.).

III. IMPLEMENTATION

17. MESSAGE CONTENT

Now it's time to plan your action strategies; determining the message content and style that must be used to achieve the outcomes stated in your objective. At this point you should consider how you are going to use all three functional areas of your PA operation to communicate your message to as many people as possible. Not only does this give you more "bang for the buck," it also guarantees that all your audiences are getting the word. Although one will almost always be more important to your objectives than the others, you should never miss the opportunity to use these areas to tell your command's story.

18. MESSAGE STYLE

Also, remember the best communication strategy does not impose change from the outside, but helps change evolve from the inside facilitated by communicators (or change agents).

19. SPECIFIC MESSAGES/COMMUNICATION POINTS (SPECIFY INTERNAL, MEDIA, COMREL)

When crafting your message or messages, they should be built around a single overarching communication theme. Under that theme you can construct specific messages that will help you achieve your goals. These themes are your communication points and should be used by all communicators involved in the project to present a unified message.

20. MEDIA TO BE USED, NAME, AFFILIATION, REPORTER, CONTACT INFO (SPECIFY INTERNAL, MEDIA, COMREL)

Determine what media best delivers that content to the target publics. Again research is important. You must know the media with which you are attempting to communicate.

21. CHANGE AGENTS/COMMUNICATORS (SPECIFY INTERNAL, MEDIA, COMREL)

Who will you be using to communicate your messages to which audiences?

22. TEAM ASSIGNMENTS (SPECIFY INTERNAL, MEDIA, COMREL)

The next step is to make assign team members. Who will be responsible for implementing each of the actions and communication tactics? How will you use internal information, community relations and media relations to get your message out?

23. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS/SCHEDULE (SPECIFY INTERNAL, MEDIA, COMREL)

What is the sequence of events and the schedule?

IV. EVALUATION

24. POST-EVENT ATTITUDE MEASURE FINDINGS (SAME QUESTION[s] AS IN BLOCK 15a)

Many PA practitioners fail to recognize the importance of evaluation. Since it requires research, it is viewed as time taken away from more active efforts. Also they feel their goals and strategies are the best possible, otherwise they wouldn't have chosen them in the first place. But you (and your boss) can never be totally sure you achieved your goals. If you've followed this plan so far, you have already identified countable units or quantitative measures for an indication of the direction your efforts have taken preferably with an emphasis on the

program's impact on the attitudes of your publics. After having executed your plan, it is important to re-test your publics to determine if your efforts affected attitudes.

25.   WAS YOUR PLAN APPROPRIATE TO MEET THE OBJECTIVE? WAS YOUR CHOSEN APPROACH THE BEST ONE TO USE? WHAT WAS THE IMPACT ON TARGET AUDIENCE(s)?

26.   LESSONS LEARNED

Your brief should always include a "lessons learned" section to help improve future PA efforts.

27.   ADJUSTMENTS NEEDED TO CORRECT SHORTFALLS IN THIS PLAN OR TO REINFORCE MESSAGES

28.   RETURN TO BLOCK 8

V. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS (INCLUDE PERTINENT BLOCK NO.)

After gathering feedback and evaluation, compile results into a brief that provides tangible evidence of the program's success (or lack thereof). This is an especially useful tool for showing the boss and other department heads in credible terms how you were able to impact the command's mission. Keep these reports handy for inclusion in regular (monthly, quarterly or annual) "how goes it" reports to the chain of command.

Only careful evaluation allows you to perceive trends and make adaptations that are necessary as our circumstances change, ensuring our efforts achieve maximum benefit. After gathering feedback and evaluation, return to the situation stage where new resources are gathered, goals are developed or modified, more people are brought in (if needed), and the plan is updated to either reinforce the messages or correct shortfalls in the plan – the PA planning process is a continuous one.

Limitations

Time constraints played a significant factor in this study. Considering the time limitations, a significant proportion of PA practitioners responded to the field surveys providing the research team pertinent information on which to draw conclusions. If we had conducted a more lengthy study, we would have been able to reach a larger audience with the surveys. Another limitation as mentioned earlier was the fact that we had originally targeted senior military leaders in the upper echelons of the PA field. If we had opened up the field of respondents we would have possibly seen a more balanced view from the field. Considering the

majority of the military respondents were senior officers, the view on whether or not PA

practitioners focus on planning and the three-pronged approach was biased. Senior military

leaders tend to be assigned to positions where they are required to think as the "manager" and

tend to look ahead while the field PA practitioners fight the fires.

Future Research

Heuristic provocativeness abounds in this report. As an extension of this pilot study, a

more in-depth questionnaire and subsequent analysis is recommended as a guide to stipulate

specific ways to effectively implement planning within the military field. Future research can

also focus on resources available to field PA practitioners to thoroughly conduct research prior to

developing a communication plan. Quantitative studies measuring the effectiveness and value of

PA to the overall organization are also appropriate.

In summary, as a result of conducting qualitative content analysis of the military PA

regulations and doctrine, as well as verbal responses to a field interview survey, data indicates

that PA is on the right track when it comes to approaching issues. However, considering the

nature of public affairs is situational and no two issues are alike, planning doesn't always come

into play. The Walton et. al. Planning Model was developed to assist PA practitioners in the

field and is the ideal situation to approaching a PA issue. Adopting this model into your PA

"toolbox" will ensure practitioners take all aspects of a situation into consideration before

"reacting" to a situation. This tool is also an efficient way of documenting public affairs value to

the organization in achieving its overall strategic goals.

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